

Ancient Monuments Laboratory
Report 210/88

ROMANO BRITISH POTTERY FROM THE
ROUND AT REAWLA, CORNWALL.

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Summary

Petrological analysis of a range of mostly later Roman pottery suggested the following fabric groups: (1) Dorset BB1 (no sign of a local fabric copying BB1 forms), (2) Gabbroic from the Lizard (including so-called "micaceous gabbroic" and sherds originally thought to be amphorae) and (3) South Devon Ware (including a hard-fired version).

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1). BB1 Pottery (Black-Burnished Ware Category 1)

Each of the listed sherds below appear to be in the normal dark granular fabric associated with BB1 production at the large Wareham - Poole Harbour centre which was in existence throughout most of the Roman period in Britain (Williams, 1977).

Context 307 711 Due to the fragmentary nature of the sherd it is difficult to say to which precise form this vessel belongs. There does seem to be some evidence for an incipient flange. In which case it may belong to the flanged bowl forms Gillam 226 or 227 (c. A.D. 200-240/210-300) or the dish 314 (c. A.D. 220-300).

Context 23 540 Part of the base and shoulder of a cooking-pot and three small bodysherds.

The following sherds were tentatively separated out by the excavator as possibly representing a local Cornish production centre copying BB1 forms, on the hand-specimen evidence of some pieces of ?slate in the fabric. However, examination suggests this is more likely to be shale, scattered inclusions of which have previously been noted by the writer in 'waster' sherds from a number of likely production sites in the Wareham - Poole Harbour area of Dorset. There seems no reason, therefore, not to regard these sherds as being Dorset products.

- Context 161 107 Two rim sherds probably belonging to the flanged bowl form Gillam 228, but with a slightly smaller flange than normal (c. A.D. 290-370).
- Context 148 219 Cooking-pot with wide outbent rim, probably oversailing the girth, Gillam 147 and 148 (c. A.D. 290-370).
- Context 6 445 As above.
- Context 148 293 As above.
- Context 321 P 696 Straight-sided, plain-rimmed dish, but with an external groove just under the rim. Possibly Gillam 330 (c. A.D. 300-380) or a two-handled shallow dish (Williams, 1977, fig. 3, no. 4, late third and fourth centuries A.D.).
- Context 148 P 386 Possibly Gillam 330. This sherd appears to have suffered from adverse soil conditions.

2). Gabbro

Selected thin sectioning and study under the petrological microscope of the following sherds shows that the dominant inclusions are made up of angular grains of partly decomposed felspar, some of which has altered to sericite, fresher plagioclase and colourless or brown grains of amphibole, many of which appear as fibrous aggregates. Also noted were some pyroxene, serpentine and grains of quartz. This distinctive fabric closely matches Peacock's (1969) description of the natural weathering clays overlying the gabbro on the Lizard Head, Cornwall, and this group of sherds almost certainly belong to this source (see also Peacock, 1988).

- Context 187 Box 17 Ten bodysherds.
- Context 148 Five bodysherds.

- Context 227 P 299 Plain-rimmed bowl in a slightly finer-textured fabric.
- Context 175 Three bodysherds in a fairly coarse-textured fabric.
- Context 140 Box 14 Two bodysherds.
- Context 46 One bodysherd.
- Context 2 430 Upright-rimmed cooking-pot.

The following sherds were listed as 'micaceous gabbroic', but they are in fact normal gabbroic fabric except that the amphibole grains are more prominent on the surface of the sherds, producing a slightly 'glistening' appearance:

- Context 157 664 Two bodysherds, one ribbed.
- Context 168 578 One base sherd.
- Context 235 654 One bead-rimmed cooking-pot.
- Context 183 P 52/510 One upright-rimmed cooking-pot.

Context 1 P 438 'Mediaeval' cooking-pot rim. The gabbroic clays of the Lizard were utilized during the Mediaeval period as the Twelfth century A.D. example from Southampton shows, though the quantity of pottery involved appears to have been much reduced compared to earlier periods (Peacock, 1975).

The following group of sherds were submitted as fragments of possible amphorae. However, they are in fact gabbroic fabric. All the sherds are small and some are rather friable:

- Context 227 One bodysherd.
- Context 53 Two bodysherd.
- Context 307 One bodysherd.

Context 26	Two bodysherds.
Context 1	Twenty-plus bodysherds.
Context 235	Three bodysherds.
Context 151	Four bodysherds.
Context 148	Four bodysherds.
Context 6	One bodysherd.

South Devon Ware

The following group of sherds are in a very distinctive fabric, which contains much dark-coloured plates of mica on the surfaces. In thin section there are many discrete subangular grains of quartz, potash and plagioclase felspar, biotite mica and some grains of tourmaline. It has been noted before that this fabric no doubt derives from a tourmaline-granite, either crushed prior to use or obtained from a river sand not far from a granite outcrop (Phillips, 1966, 23), and a source near to the Dart Valley has been postulated (Quinnell, 1986). The majority of finds seem to come from the third and fourth centuries A.D. (ibid., Bidwell, 1979, 191-192).

Context 1 153	Cavetto-rimmed cooking-pot.
Context 1 169	Cavetto-rimmed cooking-pot (?same vessel).
Context 1 111	Small piece of rim.
Context 1 165	Base sherd.
Context 1 189	Base sherd.
Context 1	Nine bodysherds.

The following sherds appear to be a harder-fired version of the above group:

Context 1 170	Small piece of rim.
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Roman tile

This is a small fragment of tile rather than a piece of amphora:

Context 1 175

Unassigned

The following sherds are too small to be confident about the fabrics involved in the hand-specimen, while their size rules out thin sectioning:

Context 1 254	One bodysherd.
Context 1 46	One bodysherd.
Context 1 182	Two bodysherds.
Context 1 168	Five bodysherds.
Context 1 168 575	A larger sherd than the others, but cannot be sure if this is amphora or not.
Context 1 53	One bodysherd.
Context 1 153	One bodysherd.
Context 1 182	One bodysherd.
Context 1 2	One bodysherd.

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