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Ancient Monuments Laboratory
Report 37/90

LATE IRON AGE/EARLY ROMAN POTTERY
AND AMPHORAE FROM STANWICK,
YORKSHIRE.

D F Williams PhD FSA

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Summary

A small programme of thin sectioning was carried out on some late Iron Age / early Roman pottery, together with imported early Roman amphorae. The former pottery was divided into a number of fabrics based on the principal non-plastic inclusion types present: (1) limestone, (2) calcite, (3) quartz, (4) sandstone, (5) dolerite, and (6) granite. All of this pottery could easily have been made in the general area of the site, and it seems likely that the local Boulder Clay was utilized to some extent. The amphorae consisted of a number of first century A.D. forms: Haltern 70/Camulodunum 185A from southern Spain, Rhodian style from the Rhodian Peraea, Dressel 2-4 and ?Dressel 28.

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LATE IRON AGE / EARLY ROMAN POTTERY AND AMPHORAE FROM
STANWICK, YORKSHIRE

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Introduction

A small number of representative late Iron Age / early Roman coarse ware pottery sherds from the recent excavations at Stanwick, Yorkshire, were submitted for a detailed fabric examination by thin sectioning and study under the petrological microscope. The main objective of this work was to confirm the validity of a provisional fabric classification in the hand-specimen by the excavators, while at the same time see if any useful suggestions might be made about the likely origins of the pottery. All of the sherds submitted were initially studied macroscopically with the aid of a binocular microscope (x20). Munsell colour charts are referred to together with free descriptive terms. The fortifications at Stanwick are situated on deposits of Millstone Grit

and Glacial Sand and Gravel, closeby to formations of Permian and Carboniferous Limestone and Carboniferous Sandstone. Boulder Clays cover most of the region (Geological Survey 1" Map of England Sheet no. 32).

In addition to the above mentioned pottery, a small group of imported Roman amphorae sherds recovered from the site were also examined, and these are reported on below.

Petrology and Fabric

On the basis of the range and texture of the non-plastic inclusions present in the Iron Age / early Roman pottery sherds sampled, a number of broad fabric divisions have been tentatively made. The original fabric numbering of the sherds has been retained throughout.

(A). Limestone

1. SW 81 24 209 Fabric 51

Hard, rough, burnished bodysherd in a light red colour throughout (2.5YR 6/8), somewhat sandy fabric with the odd small irregular piece of white limestone appearing at the surfaces. Thin sectioning shows plentiful subangular

quartz grains, average size under 0.30mm, with a few slightly larger grains, together with a scatter of small fragments of cryptocrystalline limestone, flecks of mica and a little chert and iron ore. The common nature of the non-plastic inclusions makes it difficult to predict anything other than a fairly local source.

(B). Calcite

2. SW 81 24 (211) Fabric 2 (bodysherd)
3. SW 84 II (1009) Fabric 9 (bodysherd)
4. SW 84 II (1098) Fabric 14 (thick collar-rim)
5. SW 85 (2007) Fabric 18 (bodysherd)

All four sherds are in a fairly coarse, somewhat vesicular fabric, normally various shades of grey in colour, with plentiful inclusions of white crystals of calcite seen in fresh fracture. Thin sectioning shows large twinned angular fragments of calcite scattered throughout the clay matrix. In some cases the calcite appears to have been dissolved out of the fabric, leaving behind distinctively formed voids in the shape of rhombs. In addition, frequent quartz grains, mica and a little sandstone appear in sherd Fabric 9, while the remaining three sherds are more finer-textured, with a smaller amount of quartz and mica in the clay matrix. Calcite-

tempered ware was noted in the native pottery by Wheeler during the previous excavations at Stanwick, and seems to be fairly common in the region (1954,38-44). Crystalline calcite is a fairly common mineral and in this case may easily have derived from the many limestone formations in the region.

(C). Quartz

6. SW 85 (2012) Fabric 8 (Part of the rim of a small
?jug, in a hard, rough sandy
fabric, pinkish-grey to white
in colour (7.5YR 7/2 - 2.5Y))
7. SW 84 II (1005) Fabric 39 (Thick bodysherd, fairly
hard smoothish fabric,
light grey surfaces (10YR
6/- to 5/-) and darker grey
core))
8. SW 83 (32) Fabric 60 (Very small worn sandy sherd,
light pink throughout (between
5YR 7/6 and 7/8))
9. SW 85 (2007) Fabric 12 (Thick bodysherd, fairly hard
sandy fabric, dark grey in
colour (10YR 4/1))

In thin section all four sherds can be seen to contain

very little else but subangular quartz grains and flecks of mica. However, there are some slight textural differences: Fabrics 39 and 12 have frequent well-sorted quartz grains mostly under 0.30mm in size; Fabric 8 is somewhat less sandy with slightly larger-sized grains; while Fabric 60 contains quartz grains up to 0.60mm across. This seemingly would suggest that all four vessels were not made from exactly the same raw materials, but whether the origins are all local or from some way away is difficult to say at present.

(D). Sandstone

10. SW 84 II (1009) Fabric 5 (medium thick bodysherd in a hard coarse fabric with angular inclusions protruding through the surfaces, dark grey in colour (10YR 4/1))
11. SW 84 II (1009) Fabric 6 (medium thick bodysherd, sandy fabric, grey in colour (5YR 5/1))
12. SW 84 II (1001) Fabric 38 (medium thick bodysherd in a sandy fabric, light grey in colour (2.5Y N5/))
13. SW 85 (2012) Fabric 42 (small bodysherd in a thin smooth sandy fabric, light red outer surface (2.5YR 6/6) and dark grey inner surface)

In thin section all four sherds can be seen to contain inclusions of sandstone, but there is some textural variation between the samples. For example, the fragments of sandstone present in Fabrics 5 and 6 is composed of roughly equal-sized quartz grains, with frequent discrete quartz grains and the odd grain of feldspar scattered throughout the clay matrix. The paste of Fabric 42 is of a finer texture than the above mentioned two sherds, with smaller-sized fragments of quartz-sandstone. In contrast, Fabric 38 is the coarsest of all of these sherds, with large inclusions of a quartz-sandstone and arkose sandstone scattered throughout, together with large grains of quartz and quartzite ranging up to 2mm across in size. Deposits of Carboniferous sandstone can be found in the Stanwick area and may account for some of these sandstone inclusions. However, with regard to Fabric 38, the presence of two quite different types of sandstone strongly suggests that in this case a local Boulder Clay was used .

(E). Dolerite

14. SW 84 II (1001) Fabric 23

A small flat base in a hard, rough fabric, white (10YR 8/3) outer surface, dark grey inner surface and core

(10YR 4/1). Thin sectioning reveals large fragments of dolerite, together with frequent subangular quartz grains, some flecks of mica and chert. A small group of dolerite dykes occur some seven miles to the north of Stanwick, but again it seems more likely that these particular inclusions found their way into the local Boulder Clays, which were used to make the vessel.

(F). Granite

15. SW 81 24 (209) Fabric 7

Thick, hard bodysherd in a sandy fabric, dark grey throughout (10YR 4/1). Thin sectioning shows frequent subangular grains of quartz, discrete grains of potash and plagioclase felspar, flecks of mica and small fragments of granite. There are no granite outcrops in the region of Stanwick, but granite erratics do occur in the local Boulder Clays, and this might once again point to the latter's use for pottery making.

THE AMPHORAEHaltern 70 / Camulodunum 185A

(1) SW 81 24 (206) Fabric 36

A vestigially collared rim sherd of the form Haltern 70 / Camulodunum 185A, in the usual hard, rough, buff-coloured sandy fabric which is similar to the more commonly found Dressel 20 amphora, and so therefore probably indicates an origin in the region of the River Guadalquivir in the southern Spanish Roman province of Baetica (Peacock and Williams, 1986, Class 15). Amphorae of Haltern 70 form recovered from the Port Vendres II Claudian dated shipwreck, were found to carry inscriptions which described their contents as *defrutum*, a sweet liquid obtained by boiling down the must (Colls et al, 1977; Parker and Price, 1981). However, for a more recent discussion of the contents of Haltern 70 and an interpretation of *defrutum* as belonging to the *vins cuits*, see van der Werff (1984).

The date range for Haltern 70 is from about the mid first century B.C. to around the middle of the first century A.D. The Stanwick rim can be paralleled with examples from the Port Vendres II, wreck which is dated to the Claudian period (Colls et al, 1977, fig. 13) and

from the Claudian-Neronian site at Colchester-Sheepen (Seeley, 1985, fig.8).

RHODIAN STYLE

(2) SW 84 II (1001) Fabric 53E

Part of a single rod-shaped handle belonging to the Rhodian style amphora (Peacock and Williams, 1986, Class 9). Thin sectioning shows that the Stanwick sherd belongs to Peacock's Fabric Group 1, with a likely origin in the Rhodian Peraea (1977), where a number of amphorae production sites have recently been discovered (Empereur and Tuna, 1989). The texture of the fabric of this example is similar, but nevertheless slightly different, to a previous sherd examined by the writer from this site (SW 88 4051), suggesting two separate vessels.

This form of amphora, which probably carried wine, is often found on early Roman military sites in Britain, and possibly arrived by way of a tribute imposed on Rhodes by Claudius (Peacock, 1977). There is now no evidence to suggest that this type of amphora arrived in Britain during the pre-Roman Iron Age (see Williams, 1986).

? DRESSEL 28 or PELICHET 47/GAULOISE 4

(3) SW 81 24 (206) Fabric 54

Part of a flat base with a small footring, in a hard, fairly fine-textured reddish-buff fabric. It is difficult to be certain of the precise form represented here. Two flat-based amphorae which at once spring to mind are the pulley-ring rimmed Dressel 28 and the more common Pelichet 47/Gauloise 4. However, the latter type does not appear to have been imported into the country before the Boudiccan revolt, and so may be too late for the context of the find. Dressel 28 are claimed to be present at Claudian Colchester-Sheepen (Sealey, 1985, Fig. 17). Unfortunately, the petrology does not help much here, for the non-plastic inclusions of the Stanwick sherd consist of little else but frequent well-sorted quartz grains under 0.30mm in size, with flecks of mica and some iron ore. This gives little indication of a likely origin or of the type represented.

? DRESSEL 2-4

(4) SW 85 (2001) Fabric 49 light red

(5) SW 84 II (1011) Fabric 53A very light reddish

(6) SW 81 24 (209) Fabric 47 light reddish-buff

All three bodysherds are possibly from three separate Dressel 2-4 amphorae. This form, which seems to have been in production from the latter part of the first century B.C. until the second century A.D., was made in many different regions of the Roman world (Peacock and Williams, 1986, Class 10). The usual contents carried were wine.

UNDESIGNATED

- (7) SW 84 II (1005) Fabric 53C light reddish-buff
- (8) SW 81 24 (206) Fabric 53B white outer surface, light
reddish-buff inside
- (9) SW 81 24 (209) Fabric 55 light grey
- (10) SW 81 24 (209) 53F light reddish-buff
- (11) SW 81 24 (206) light reddish-buff

The remainder of the amphorae material consists of undiagnostic bodysherds which give no certain indication of the form involved.

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