Dressel 1 amphorae from Kent

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The publication of the author's thesis (Pollard 1988) contains a reference to a gazetteer of Dressel 1 finds from Kent (p33). This was omitted inadvertently from the book, and the opportunity is taken here to make good this oversight incorporating information of which the author was previously unaware. It must be stressed that this gazetteer is not exhaustive, for the author was selective in his examination of assemblages. The reader is referred to the aforementioned publication for a list of sites examined.

Bigberry: one Dr 1 sp. and probably a Dr 1B (Sealey in Thompson 1983, 265, fig. 12, 105; see also Arthur 1986, 257).

Bridge Hill, near Canterbury: one + Dr 1 (Peacock 1971, 182); Peacock's Fabric 1.

Canterbury: finds from several sites within the Roman city, including Dr 1B (Arthur 1986, 240–3; Peacock 1971, 182); Peacock's Fabrics 1 and 2 recorded.

Highstead: six body sherds suggested by Dr Paul Arthur to be Dr 1B or possibly Dr 1/Pascual 1 (report in Macpherson-Grant forthcoming; see also Arthur 1986, 257).

Quarry Wood, Loose: one Dr 1 sp, stamped ED (Kelly 1971, 84, fig. 12,33; Peacock 1971, 182; Arthur 1986, 257 and fig. 2.9). There is a vessel from Nages stamped ED (Callender 1965, 124, No. 566) which may actually be EB. There is a Dr 1A with the stamp EB but from a different die to the Loose example from Alba Helviorum (Lauxerois and Vichy 1975). The chronology of Nages would allow its amphora to be Dr 1 A, B or C; this does not necessarily imply that the Loose handle is from a Dr 1A vessel, but the possibility is worth noting (I am grateful to Andrew Fitzpatrick for discussing this stamp with me).

Rochester: Dr 1B rim from site behind 50–54 High Street excavated in 1961–62 but never published (Chaplin 1962). Examination at 20x magnification suggests fabric is Peacock's Fabric 3 (Peacock 1971, 164). Associated with bank and ditch running parallel to the line of Watling Street but probably of pre-conquest date. 170mm diameter. (Context recorded as ‘tail of bank overlying fill of ditch’, site code E2 layer 15A — originally layer 6; see Pollard 1988, Appendix Five, 'Rochester' for quantification of contents of layer 15A+B ('tail of bank' + 'fill of ditch').

Worth: rim, probably Dr 1B, 130mm diameter. Fabric appears at 20x magnification to be Peacock's Fabric 3. From Iron Age/Romano-British temple site (Klein 1928). Context unknown. In British Museum, accession number 1938.5.7.

Three points that arise from this gazetteer are worth making. Firstly the total of 12+ Dr 1 sp from Canterbury is quite high for a British site, and more or less on a par with the number of vessels identifiable from Braughing, Hertfordshire (Fitzpatrick 1985). It has to be borne in mind, of course, that excavations in Canterbury have been extensive; one of the weaknesses of published gazetteers is that they fail to convey the various degrees of intensity with which sites have been investigated.

Secondly, none of the Kent finds are from obvious funerary contexts. Indeed, in Britain the use of Dressel 1 amphorae as grave-goods appears to be confined to the area of the Catuvellauni and Trinovantes. The significance of this phenomenon is unclear, but it certainly does not reflect the availability of amphorae, which are of course widespread in central southern England (Peacock 1971, Fitzpatrick 1985, eg).

Thirdly, Dressel 1 has yet to be recorded west of the River Medway, that is to say in west Kent, although the type is present on two sites in the Medway valley area (Rochester and Loose). There are differences in the 'native' pottery assemblages of east and west Kent which suggest that the Medway valley represented a boundary between the communities of the eastern and western halves of the area destined to become the civitas Cantiacorum, with a narrow zone of interaction at the level of local trade/exchange lying along the valley itself (Pollard 1982, 43–68; 1988, 29–33). Dressel
I has so far proved elusive in east Sussex also, an area in which the 'native' pottery is different again from both east and west Kent by and large (eg Green 1980). The mechanisms that controlled the distribution of imported wine amphorae may well have differed from those that determined the style and distribution of 'native' pottery and too much weight should not be placed on the latter commodity to explain the spatial patterning of the former.

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Notes
1 Peacock (1971, 182) thought that the three sherds from Rose Lane were probably from different vessels. Arthur (1986, 240–1) identified nine sherds from Canterbury Archaeological Trust excavations as Dressel 1B, including four rims; the type is present on at least seven of the Trust’s sites. He also notes that further Dressel 1B’s are represented in assemblages from earlier excavations (239, footnote 1).
2 Fitzpatrick (1985) lists Dressel 1 amphorae in burials from four English counties: Buckinghamshire (one burial), Cambridgeshire (two possible burials), Essex (six + four ‘possibles’), and Hertfordshire (five + three ‘possibles’). The presence of more than one amphora in the burial is restricted to Dorton, Bucks (three, one of which is Dr 1B, one Dr 2–4, one unidentified); Welwyn B, Herts (five Dr 1B); Welwyn Garden City, Herts (five Dr 1B); and the Lexden Tumulus, Colchester, Essex (four + Dr 1B).

3 Fitzpatrick 1987. Dr 1 has also been recorded at Boxgrove, West Sussex (A Fitzpatrick, pers comm).

Bibliography