

Chalgrove, Oxfordshire CHEA18

Roman pottery

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Introduction

Some 755 sherds of Roman pottery, weighing *circa* 10.34 kg, were recovered from the excavation. The assemblage was recorded following guidelines set out by PCRG et al (2016).

Each context group was sorted into wares, which were assigned codes taken from Oxford Archaeology's guidelines for recording Roman pottery (Booth 2016). Ware codes pertaining to regionally significant fabrics were cross-referenced with the National Roman Fabric Reference Collection (Tomber and Dore 1998). Forms were identified by rim and similarly assigned standard OA form codes (expressed as a two-letter code, such as CK for 'cooking pot' type jar, sometimes followed by a three-digit rim code, for example JB 110, a plain-rimmed curving-sided dish) and cross-referenced to Young's (1977) corpus of Oxford industry forms where possible. Each vessel was quantified by sherd count, weight, number of vessels (MV) based on rim, and sherd count estimated vessel equivalent (EVE), which measures the surviving percentage of the circumference of a rim (thus, a complete rim is recorded as 1 EVE, while half a rim is 0.5 EVE). Quantification of forms and fabrics is given in Tables 1 and 2. A date for deposition, or spot-date, was provided for each context group on the basis of the pottery it contained.

INSERT TABLE 1

INSERT TABLE 2

Assemblage composition and supply

Pottery groups recovered from features assigned to Phase 3 (early Roman) made up the bulk of the assemblage (74.4% by weight and 59.3% by EVE). The assemblage was recovered from a series of ditches in Area C forming a trackway and associated enclosures. The phased group was dominated by reduced coarsewares (R20, R30, R90 and R95) which made up 46% of the phase group by weight although a substantial component of E-wares (E30, E50, E60, E80 and E810) were also present (36.7% of the phased group).

The most common fabrics were coarse sandy wares (R20) available as jars and bowls, followed by coarse grog tempered fabrics, including Savernake ware (R90 and R95) which was mainly available mostly as storage jars (CN) but also bowls. **Two fragments of straight sided bowl in ditch groups 2267 and 2270 in fabric R20 are possibly from the same vessel; a copy of a black-burnished ware form that dates to after AD 150 and must therefore be intrusive. Similarly, an Oxford white ware mortarium (fabric M22, Young (1977) type M2) also from ditch group 2267 must date after AD100.** A wide mouthed jar in greyware fabric R30 was paralleled in the Oxford Roman pottery industry (Young 1977, type R26) and dates to AD 40-250.

Wares of late Iron Age/early Roman tradition (E wares) were also well represented in groups assigned to phase 3, accounting for 36.6% of the phase 3 assemblage by weight. The fabrics were varied and included sand tempered fabrics (E30), a small number of flint tempered sherds (E60) and a single limestone tempered sherd (E50). The majority of the E-wares were in grog (E80) or grog and sand (E810) tempered fabrics. E-wares were available as high shouldered necked jars as well as thicker walled bead rim jars, bowls/jars (where there was not enough of the profile present to determine which) and storage jars in a coarser fabric. Some of these vessels were decorated with vertical incised lines. There was also a

single handmade globular jar with an everted rim and a single curving sided bowl with everted rim.

Oxidised coarsewares formed a small part of the phase 3 assemblage (3.6% by weight) but included a globular/bulbous beaker (ED) in fine oxidised ware (O10) with the remnants of white painted decoration and a storage jar (CN) in sandy oxidised ware (O20). Body sherds in a coarse grog tempered fabric (O80) were also probably from a storage jar. Similarly, a small proportion (7.5%) of the assemblage was made up of sandy white ware, probably from the Oxford industry. **One of these (ditch group 2166) was a lid seated form paralleled at Gill Mill (Figure 7.16, 116) and dated to the 2nd or early 3rd century.** Other identifiable forms represented by rims included a storage jar (CN) and a medium mouthed jar (CD).

Pottery recovered from features assigned to Phase 4 (middle Roman) was from a small number of features (a ditch and three pits) in Area C. This made up 20.19% of the total assemblage by weight and 27.8% by EVE. The phased group contained a wider variety of forms than the phase 3 assemblage, and included jars and indeterminate jars or bowls and a straight sided bowl with a flat rim copying a black-burnished ware form dating to the latter half of the second century or early third, mainly in reduced coarsewares, (R20 and R30), Savernake ware (R95) continued to be represented in this phase, although there were no rims recovered. There were two beakers in fine reduced ware (R10) and decorated with fine vertical lines and in fine oxidised ware (O10), and a small ring-necked flagon (BA) in sandy oxidised ware (O20). Two Oxford white ware mortaria were recovered (Young 1977, types M2 and M3). Sandy white ware sherds (W20) from probable jars were recovered from ditch group 2271 and fill 2241 of pit 2242 may also have been products of the Oxford industry.

This phase also saw vessels from regional sources and included five sherds of black-burnished ware (B11) from Dorset, available as a cooking pot type jar (CK), and two rim sherds (in different features but possibly from the same vessel) of a Central Gaulish samian ware (S30) Drag. 18/31 dish. There was also a base of another samian ware vessel from Les Martres-de-Veyre (S32), which would have reached the site in the first quarter of the second century.

Pottery recovered from features assigned to Phase 5 (late Roman) made up 5.4% of the site assemblage by weight and 13.5% by EVE. The material was from a pit and two ditches in Area B and a pit in Area C. Ditch group 1130 contained part of a curving sided bowl/dish in fabric B30 (illus 1) with a plain rim and a groove just below it. [EB1] It was comparable to one from Asthall (Booth 1997, Fig. 5.5, 56) dating to the 3rd century although the vessel from Chalgrove has more upright curving sides. The exterior surface was burnished. Ditch 1133 contained a larger group which included four jars in reduced ware (R30); two were from medium mouthed jars, and one of these had a hooked rim. There was also a cooking pot type jar in black-burnished ware (B11). This group was also dated by the presence of late Roman fabrics, with three body sherds of Oxford colour-coated ware (F51) and nine sherds of shell tempered ware (C10). This is the only phase on the site in which this material is present and therefore they may be possibly from the South Midlands/Harrold kilns, although it impossible to be certain without the presence of diagnostic forms or the characteristic rilling on the body common on vessels from this source.

Chronology

The phase 3 group represents a mixture of late Iron Age to early Roman coarser handmade grog tempered pottery, in use from the first century BC to the first century AD, and finer 'belgic' forms which in Oxfordshire are most likely to date to the 1st century AD. Much of this material was associated with 'Romanised' reduced wares and therefore dates to the post-conquest period and the latter half of the first century. A limited amount of activity in the

middle Roman period is indicated by the presence of mortaria of 2nd to early 3rd century date and at least one straight sided bowl (a black burnished ware copy) that must date to AD120 at the earliest. Some material of middle Roman date was recovered from features that have been phased as early Roman and may have been deposited during the final infilling phase of these features. Material of middle Roman date was also recovered from a ditch and two pits phased to this period amounting to a relatively small quantity of pottery and demonstrates low level or peripheral activity on the site in this period. A small number of features in Areas B and C date to the late Roman period and a small assemblage of clearly late Roman date included forms and fabrics that were diagnostic. This suggests activity in Areas B and C during this period, albeit again at a much lower level than during the early Roman period.

Preservation, distribution and use

The mean sherd weight of 13.6g suggests a moderately well preserved assemblage. The surfaces of the sherds were well preserved and not significantly abraded. Pottery was recovered mainly from ditches, which contained 75.4% of the whole assemblage by weight, mainly of Phase 3. Twenty-five per cent of the total assemblage came from pits. Only a single sherd came from postholes. The distribution of pottery indicated that deposition was concentrated during Phase 3 in trackway and enclosure ditches. A small number of these ditches continued to receive a very small amount of material in the middle Roman period, alongside deposition in three pits. In the late Roman period pottery was deposited in the two ditches of a possible enclosure and a pit in Area B and a pit in Area C. Evidence of use was restricted to three vessels. One coarse sandy jar base in ditch group 2267 had limescale deposits on the interior. Whiteware sherds from ditch groups 2270 and 2266 may have been from the same vessel and were sooted on the interior. The curving sided shallow bowl from context 1024 described above was damaged on the side and this may have been caused by spalling during manufacture or by wear during use.

The fairly small size of the assemblage and the restricted range of fabrics and forms makes it difficult to ascertain status, although the paucity of imported wares is notable, although undue significance should not be inferred mainly due to the rural status of the site, where this would not be unusual.

Catalogue of illustrated pottery

1. Curving sided bowl with plain rim, sandy black-burnished imitation fabric. Context 1024, fill ditch (group) 1130. Phase 5.

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