



# Long-lived Samian?

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## INTRODUCTION

Residual samian pottery (*terra sigillata*) in later contexts is commonplace. Reasons for this seem under-explored. Some may be due to variations in the dating methods used by different specialists. There remains the possibility that some samian remained available and/or in circulation for quite some time. The study of closed groups, especially grave-assemblages, seems a useful starting point for examining this possibility. The following review suggests that it is reasonable to expect some complete first-century samian vessels to have survived into the second century and some second-century vessels to have survived into the fourth century at least throughout Roman Britain.

Thanks to the modern ability to ‘date’ even poorly-preserved sherds of samian, readers have become familiar enough with the widespread occurrence of residual samian pottery in first- to fourth-century and later sequences on Romano-British sites, for example, the impressive amounts of South Gaulish samian in contexts of the Hadrianic period onwards and of Central Gaulish samian in contexts of the third century onwards inside the fort at Caernarfon.<sup>1</sup> What significance these have is another matter. In an attempt to tackle this question, one can continue to quantify the material and then assess brokenness and completeness, to discuss redeposition,<sup>2</sup> or to collect examples that are either of long-lived samian vessels/sherds<sup>3</sup> or of problems in reconciling samian and coarse pottery dating.<sup>4</sup>

The most famous case, perhaps more to do with reconciling divergent samian and samian dating in the interests of looking for a date-range for the associated other pottery, is provided by the material within the quay structure on the late Roman waterfront at New Fresh Wharf, London, excavated in the 1970s. Here, (allegedly) deposited contemporaneously above a coin of A.D. 197, in a structure dendrochronologically-dated to A.D. 209–244, were unused Central Gaulish samian of c. A.D. 170–180, contemporary used samian, and East Gaulish samian of c. A.D. 235–245.<sup>5</sup> Discussion of this material still continues: some would support a move away from a ‘single group’ explanation, while others contest this;<sup>6</sup> two later London waterfront

<sup>1</sup> King and Millett 1993, 246.

<sup>2</sup> Timby 2000, 180–2.

<sup>3</sup> For example, Henrietta Quinnell’s recent discussion of the survival of samian on Cornish sites (Quinnell 2004, 98–9).

<sup>4</sup> For example, Alcester Gas House Lane, where Jeremy Evans argued for an early third-century date for the earliest activity on the basis of the coarse pottery evidence (1996, 59), while Margaret Ward (in Evans 1996, 76–7) preferred to interpret the accompanying — predominately later Antonine Central Gaulish — samian assemblage as no later than the end of the second century. Stephen Cracknell’s overall account (1996, 123–4) was fair to both sides, if a little uncritical in the absence of a good review of the basis of samian dating in Britain. The negative effects of an over-reliance on samian (and coins) for the dating of some of the sequences at Verulamium in the 1930s have been discussed by Rosalind Niblett (1987, 57).

<sup>5</sup> Bird 1986.

<sup>6</sup> Careful reading of Beth Richardson’s discussion (1986, 96–8), which itself is much concerned with shortening the dendrochronological date-range (to A.D. 209–224), would support a contextual detachment of the East Gaulish samian from all the rest.

excavation reports are relevant here to any argument against a 'single group' explanation.<sup>7</sup> However, a more recent review of the general samian pattern and the stratigraphical problems has concluded that the New Fresh Wharf samian group was homogeneous typologically and chronologically (including the majority of the Central Gaulish samian) and that it did constitute a single shipment dumped to consolidate the quays.<sup>8</sup> The original work was, of course, carried out in the early days of the application of tree-ring dating in London;<sup>9</sup> Ian Tyers has pointed out to me that from the mid-1980s onwards dendrochronological sampling was being carried out in a more comprehensive way.

The present paper has been written because the interpretation of the occurrence of samian on non-Roman and post-Roman sites in Scotland is a live issue<sup>10</sup> and yet modern discussions tend to ignore evidence from south of the modern border about the life of samian. So it has been felt worthwhile to compile and present the following notes as a contribution to the newly increased interest in samian pottery in Britain. Here is gathered the evidence (principally from burials, but not totally) for long-lived samian.

#### A CATALOGUE OF 'ANTIQUÉ' SAMIAN IN ROMANO-BRITISH GRAVES

The following evidence from burials, never collected together before,<sup>11</sup> is sufficient to demonstrate that first- and second-century samian vessels could have survived into later centuries.<sup>12</sup> For the South Gaulish examples, the 'time drift' varies from around thirty to sixty years. At the extreme, some of the Central and East Gaulish samian listed was more than a century and a half old; otherwise some vessels were just a little old, while others were between fifty and a hundred years old.

<sup>7</sup> James Parry has interpreted the evidence from the (dendro.-dated) early third-century quay at the Thames Exchange site on the western end of the waterfront as indicating an open-work structure (1994, 265–6); he further suggested that the sequence (openwork → silting → dumping of demolition debris) at Thames Exchange may help resolve the New Fresh Wharf dating discrepancies (1994, 267), if it is accepted that the latter quay was never actually solidly infilled in a single episode. Alternatively, in the light of the nearby Billingsgate Lorry Park site, Trevor Brigham (1990, 129) has suggested a mid-third-century phase of dismantling and reconstruction to which the dumping of the East Gaulish samian may belong.

<sup>8</sup> Monteil 1999 and pers. comm. Gwladys Monteil. Some alternative considerations, in a broader Roman military/stockpiling context, are provided by Vivien Swan (in Swan and McBride 2002, 205–11), who also favours a 'single group' explanation.

<sup>9</sup> After the work on the timbers published in the New Fresh Wharf monograph, material from the waterfront at the nearby Billingsgate Lorry Park site was analysed in 1986/89. The report on the Billingsgate dendrochronology (Hillam in Brigham 1990, 164–70) confirms the (shorter) A.D. 209–224 date range given for the third-century quay in the New Fresh Wharf report. A single timber from that excavated at the Thames Exchange site was felled sometime between A.D. 201 and 237 (Parry 1994, 266).

<sup>10</sup> e.g. the discussion in Hunter 2001, 292, *contra* Alcock and Alcock 1988, 131 and 1991, 130–6. An earlier suggestion about long-lived samian was that made by John Gillam in the Hownam Rings report, as a way of explaining the association there between some plain samian and some late Roman BB1 (Gillam in Piggott 1950, 217; cf. Hartley 1972, 54).

<sup>11</sup> But see Richard Pollard's remarks on Kentish examples (Pollard 1988, 117–18).

<sup>12</sup> Some might balk at the suggestion that pottery grave-goods closely reflect suites of vessels in everyday use in Roman Britain and are a valid indicator of contemporary 'life assemblages', although comparisons made between phases of the Duckend Farm, Stansted cemetery and contemporary quantified groups suggested that for most of the time it was the settlement assemblages that could be considered unrepresentative of the range of vessel forms available (Wallace in prep.). My point here is solely to present the cumulative evidence for the survival of individual vessels, in support of the idea that they might be susceptible to a general explanation rather than a series of site-specific ones. This paper is offered at a time when, in Howard Williams' words, renewed attention is being paid to 'the equally important question of why certain artefacts were so commonly and repeatedly placed with the dead' (Williams 2004; cf. the discussion in Cool 2004). The placing of old objects in new contexts has also been discussed recently by Hella Eckardt in her review of memory practices (2004).

### **Stansted: Flavian decorated samian in a Hadrianic–early Antonine cremation**

Cremation 26 (possibly of a juvenile) in the long-lived cemetery at Duckend Farm, Stansted Airport, Essex, had as one of its grave-goods an early example of the South Gaulish decorated bowl form 37.<sup>13</sup> The specialist who reported on it considered it unlikely to be later than *c.* A.D. 75, while the rest of the samian (unworn) from this cremation was of Hadrianic to early Antonine date. This bowl was the only decorated samian from the (excavated) cemetery and was probably the oldest samian vessel from the site. A contemporary burial nearby (25) contained six metal vessels that were significantly older than the rest of the grave-goods.

### **Canterbury: Flavian plain samian in a second-century cremation**

Cremation Group I (adult, probably male) on the Rosemary Lane Car-Park site in southern Canterbury<sup>14</sup> contained a stamped South Gaulish form 15/17 platter<sup>15</sup> as well as an early/mid-second-century Central Gaulish form 36 dish. The other two pottery vessels in the group seem to be first-century too.

### **Braughing: Flavian plain samian in a second half second-century cremation**

Burial XLVII (female, elderly) in the cemetery at Skeleton Green, Braughing, Herts.<sup>16</sup> contained a South Gaulish form 36 dish as well as an Antonine East Gaulish form 46 cup.

### **Chichester: Hadrianic plain samian in a ?fourth-century cremation**

Burial 59 in the St Pancras, Chichester cemetery<sup>17</sup> contained a Central Gaulish form 18 (presumably 18/31) dish stamped by Donnaucus<sup>18</sup> and a burnt, ?East Gaulish second- to early third-century form 33 cup, as well as two bowls, a bowl-jar, and a New Forest greyware Type 20 jug of *c.* A.D. 270–350.

### **Hassocks: Antonine plain samian in some early third-century cremations**

Grave Group 9 in the Hassocks, East Sussex cemetery<sup>19</sup> contained two worn Central Gaulish Walters 79/80 platters, a handmade necked jar, and a late Roman brooch, while Grave Group 2<sup>20</sup> contained a very worn Central Gaulish form 31 bowl, a form 72 beaker, and a handmade jar. Further examples of old South Gaulish samian may have been present in other burials here.

<sup>13</sup> Dickinson in Havis and Brooks 2004, 231 and fig. 155.85.

<sup>14</sup> Macpherson-Grant 1982, 120–2.

<sup>15</sup> Stamped by Iullinus, *c.* A.D. 75–95.

<sup>16</sup> Partridge 1981, 264.

<sup>17</sup> Down and Rule 1971, fig. 5.21 no. 59c; for the jug cf. Fulford 1975, 98. The original excavator had suggested a late Roman date for Burial 59 (Clark 1939, 190), on the evidence of the New Forest vessel. By contrast A.E. Wilson used the association with the (earlier) samian to redate the New Forest form (1957, 121), something not accepted in later works on the industry. Down and Rule's report generally avoided questions of dating; it would seem to accept both late Roman burials and an earlier date than Clark's for Burial 59 (1971, 69–70).

<sup>18</sup> Down and Rule 1971, 97.

<sup>19</sup> Lyne 1994, 81, 57, 60 and fig. 4.23–26. The author offers a date-range for the accompanying glass centre-boss brooch of *c.* A.D. 200–330, presumably after Hattatt's suggested early third- into fourth-century dating for the type (Hattatt 1987, 253).

<sup>20</sup> Lyne 1994, 80–1, 57 and fig. 2.3–4. The burial is assigned by Lyne to his '150–270' date-range, but his argument for an early third-century date appears to be based on the worn condition of the samian bowl and the fact that Grave 2, like the better-dated Grave 9, also contained a handmade vessel in an unusual fabric. It is therefore a much less certain example.

### **Little Waltham: second half second-century plain samian in a mid- to late third-century cremation**

Burial 6 in the Roman Road, Little Waltham, Essex cemetery<sup>21</sup> contained a near-complete, badly-abraded Central Gaulish form 38 bowl acting as the lid for a double-handled Hadham ware flagon of much later date, which was minus its handles and neck.

### **Brougham: later second-century decorated samian in four third-century cremations**

The Brougham cremation cemetery in Cumbria was considered unusual in having a high quantity of samian and finewares deposited in the graves. One Central Gaulish form 30 and three form 37 bowls might be called old or antique:<sup>22</sup> vessel 273.14 (dated *c.* A.D. 160–190 and with an unworn footring) in a Phase 1, A.D. 200/220+, grave; vessel 107.7 (dated *c.* A.D. 165–200 and with a slightly-worn footring) in a Phase 2, A.D. 240–270, grave; vessel 102.16 (dated *c.* A.D. 170–200 and with an unworn footring) in another Phase 2 grave; and vessel 191.6 (dated *c.* A.D. 175–200, footring well worn) in a Phase 3, A.D. 270–300/310, grave. All of these were the cremations of mature older adults (male; unknown; male; female respectively). The material has been hailed by the samian specialists as good evidence for survival in use; the recent report argues that they are part of a more widespread pattern of objects specially selected and/or removed from active use rather than simply being ‘heirlooms’.<sup>23</sup>

### **Ospringe: late second-/early third-century plain samian in a late Roman cremation**

Group LXVIII at Ospringe, Kent<sup>24</sup> contained an East Gaulish form 36 dish and a later third-/fourth-century pentice-moulded beaker.

### **Ospringe: later second-century plain samian in a late Roman inhumation**

Ospringe group CXLIX<sup>25</sup> contained a stamped Central Gaulish Walters 79 dish<sup>26</sup> and a fourth-century Oxfordshire red colour-coat flagon.

### **Hurstbourne Priors: later second-century plain samian in a late Roman inhumation**

An isolated inhumation burial (probably male, aged 35–50) at Hurstbourne Priors, Hants.,<sup>27</sup> contained a stamped Central Gaulish form 31 bowl<sup>28</sup> and a later third-/fourth-century one-handled Alice Holt greyware flagon. The flagon form was the commonest type in the fourth-century Lankhills cemetery, there given a date-range of *c.* A.D. 270–370.<sup>29</sup>

<sup>21</sup> Drury 1978, 46, 92 and 94.

<sup>22</sup> Cool 2004, 220–1 [273.14], 124–5 [107.7], 118–19 [102.16] and 168–9 [191.6]. I am indebted to Hilary Cool for access to the relevant sections of this report in advance of its publication.

<sup>23</sup> Contrast Cool 2004, 362–3 and 450 with the comment by B. Dickinson, B.R. Hartley and H.W. Pengelly on p. 346 of that report. The discussions of the Oakridge well, noted later, consider that it was obviously filled with some ritual purpose in mind, that might have extended to the selection of samian items for the fill (e.g. Bird 1993).

<sup>24</sup> Whiting *et al.* 1931, 14–15 and pl. XXVI.233 [beaker] and 234 [samian]; the beaker could be colour-coated or ‘streak-burnish’ ware from the description, for the form cf. Monaghan (1987) Class 2C3.

<sup>25</sup> Whiting *et al.* 1931, 64 and pl. XL.479 [flagon] and 480 [samian]; for the flagon cf. Young 1977, Type C8.5.

<sup>26</sup> Stamped SENATOR, mid to late Antonine (*c.* A.D. 160–190/200), pers. comm. Brenda Dickinson.

<sup>27</sup> Allen 1992; for the flagon cf. Lyne and Jefferies 1979, fig. 40:8.10.

<sup>28</sup> Stamped by Celsianus, *c.* A.D. 160–190.

<sup>29</sup> Fulford in Clarke 1979, 226.

### **Chalk: plain samian in a late Roman inhumation**

There were nine late Roman inhumations with pottery grave-goods from Lower Shorne Field, Chalk, Kent.<sup>30</sup> Eight of them contained fourth-century pottery (including imported/Lower Nene Valley colour-coat, Oxfordshire red colour-coat, (?)Portchester D, and (?)late shell-tempered wares), while the ninth was accompanied by a much worn form 18/31 platter. No skeletal remains survived.

### **Colchester: later second-/third-century plain samian in a late Roman inhumation**

Butt Road, Colchester Grave 291 (sex and age unknown) in the earlier fourth-century cemetery<sup>31</sup> contained a complete, slightly damaged East Gaulish form 38 bowl along with late Roman pottery (a BB1 conical flanged bowl and a greyware Going B3 dish) and a glass and jet bead armlet.

### **Colchester: later second-century plain samian in a late Roman inhumation**

Grave F22 (that of a child) at St John's Abbey Grounds, Colchester<sup>32</sup> contained a well-used East Gaulish form 32 dish, a miniature jar, and four later third-century coins.<sup>33</sup>

### **Canterbury: later second-century plain samian, possibly in a late Roman inhumation**

One of a number of pottery grave-groups salvaged in the 1920s from St Martin's Hill to the east of Canterbury city centre<sup>34</sup> contained an almost complete, worn Central Gaulish form 31 bowl. Inside the footring is what seems to be a simplified chi-rho (of the late fourth century onwards).<sup>35</sup> Associated was 'a red pottery vessel 3" high'.

### **Samian in early medieval burials**

Complete plain samian bowls (one late first-century, the other mid-second-century, from the stamps) have been found in graves in two seventh-century cemeteries in Kent. Both came from old excavations; in discussing them, Roger White could point to no comparable modern discoveries,<sup>36</sup> although there is a possible case at Canterbury<sup>37</sup> and Paul Bidwell has recently published an East Gaulish form 37 bowl of *c.* A.D. 130–160, possibly associated with late or post-Roman inhumation burials at Tynemouth.<sup>38</sup> White did, however, note a similar occurrence in a sixth-century Merovingian cemetery in Gaul.<sup>39</sup> Half a stamped Antonine Central Gaulish form 33 cup has also been found in a grave broadly dated *c.* A.D. 550–800 in southern Sweden.<sup>40</sup> Roger White's

<sup>30</sup> Warhurst in Allen 1955, 152–7.

<sup>31</sup> Going 1993, 44 and figs 2.16 and 2.19.

<sup>32</sup> Symonds and Going in Crummy *et al.* 1993, 210, 212 and fig. 5.7.

<sup>33</sup> Crummy 1993, 208.

<sup>34</sup> *Antiq. Journ.* 7 (1927), 321–2; Thomas 1981, 108 and figs 5.3 and 23; Mawer 1995, 36–7.

<sup>35</sup> Thomas 1981, 88 and fig. 5.1–3. A 'samian vessel and two saucers', one with a possible chi-rho and the other with an 8-pointed star, came from near Breach Downs, Barham, Kent in 1870 (Wheeler 1932, 145). This might be a find comparable to the Canterbury one, but Mawer (1995, 35) is properly circumspect as these pieces had not been found for re-examination.

<sup>36</sup> White 1988, 116, 117 and fig. 62.

<sup>37</sup> Bennett 1987, 70.

<sup>38</sup> Bidwell 1998.

<sup>39</sup> White 1988, 158.

<sup>40</sup> Stamped by Cintusmus, *c.* A.D. 160–180: Helander 1997.

research assembled a considerable body of evidence for the use of ‘Roman’ objects in later contexts; Hella Eckardt and Howard Williams have more recently argued that the antiquity and character of re-used Roman objects in the fifth to seventh centuries A.D. in Britain were central to the ways of their re-use, rather than simply availability and practicality alone.<sup>41</sup> The catalogue above shows that one of these practices had much earlier roots (and see note 90 here).

#### THE LIFE OF SAMIAN

Settlement sites do not readily provide evidence for how long-lived samian pottery vessels can be, with the exception of evidence for repair work.<sup>42</sup> One piece of information, arising from Jeremy Evans’ survey of graffiti on pottery in Roman Britain, is that ‘there is a positive preference for placing ownership marks on “finewares” ... “finewares”, or at least samian ware, were regarded differently from coarsewares in antiquity and were more highly valued’.<sup>43</sup> Other demonstrations that samian was treated differently from other types of pottery, and was more prized, have been provided by the more recent work of Steven Willis.<sup>44</sup>

In the 1970s, Clive Orton did some work on calculating the life-span of samian vessels, using sequences of deposits from a number of London-region sites.<sup>45</sup> He suggested a three-stage pattern as one interpretation of increasing divergence between the context date and the average date of the samian in it: an ‘early’ phase, with relatively recent vessels discarded; a ‘steady’ phase of constant use (mostly new samian, with some old); a ‘decline’ phase, with declining use and a high proportion of old samian.<sup>46</sup> In reply, Martin Millett made the fundamental point that Orton was working with an aggregate date of deposition (i.e. a date-range): ‘this has not always been recognised by archaeologists who have sometimes developed sophisticated procedures for estimating the average age of sherds at deposition without taking into full account the fact that the date already by definition incorporates this element’;<sup>47</sup> there the matter has rested.

Samian sherds of course can be re-used or collected at all periods,<sup>48</sup> for example one from London seems to have become a trial piece for Late Saxon interlace patterns and another from Worcester bears a ?Middle Saxon runic inscription.<sup>49</sup> There was even a sherd of samian (and a Roman coin) from the large mid- to late seventeenth-century refuse assemblage in a stone-lined pit at the rear of 31 Church Street, Oxford,<sup>50</sup> and three sherds from an early seventeenth-century wreck-site in Castle Harbour, Bermuda, which are presumed to have come from England in the ballast.<sup>51</sup>

#### OTHER SAMIAN EVIDENCE

The evidence from burials is generally easier to interpret as showing that some first- and second-

<sup>41</sup> Eckardt and Williams 2003.

<sup>42</sup> e.g. Marsh 1981, 227–9 and Ward 1995, 19–20; a burial example in Stead and Rigby 1986, 73. Strictly speaking, with such a more ‘valued’ class of pottery, repairs could equally be evidence for the exceptional regard in which samian was held (a point I owe to Joanna Bird).

<sup>43</sup> Evans 1988, 202.

<sup>44</sup> Willis 1997.

<sup>45</sup> Orton and Orton 1975; Orton 1978.

<sup>46</sup> Orton 1978.

<sup>47</sup> Millett 1987a, 101.

<sup>48</sup> cf. Alcock and Alcock 1988, 131; Clemens 1998.

<sup>49</sup> Wheeler 1935, 194 and pl. XXI; Page 2004.

<sup>50</sup> Hassall *et al.* 1985, 165 and 191.

<sup>51</sup> Noël Hume 1991, 301.

century samian vessels survived into later centuries, often in a well-used state. There are a few cases from other contexts worth mentioning.

For example, on the earliest floor of **Hadrian's Wall Turret 48a** (Willowford East) was a large part of a South Gaulish form 37 bowl, dated *c.* A.D. 80–100.<sup>52</sup> Donald Atkinson was not perturbed by such a case of later Flavian samian from a Hadrianic context, noting that the bowl had been broken and repaired with lead rivets in antiquity. A Flavian South Gaulish form 37 bowl occurred in a Hadrianic context in the **Housesteads vicus**.<sup>53</sup> The destruction of the headquarters building in the Hadrian's Wall outpost fort at **Bewcastle**, in the A.D. 270s/280s, preserved a group of third-century pottery that included a form 31 samian bowl.<sup>54</sup> Among the pottery vessels furnishing the later third-century *mithraeum* at **Carrawburgh** were two Central Gaulish samian mortaria from the previous century.<sup>55</sup>

In the late third- to early fourth-century group of pottery from the second stage of dumping (Phase 3B) in an abandoned well at **Oakridge**, Basingstoke, was a pair of virtually undamaged Central Gaulish samian flagons of Antonine date.<sup>56</sup> Margaret Bulmer has suggested that several Central and East Gaulish decorated bowls from the **Chester mansio** site survived in use well into the third century, if not later.<sup>57</sup> Drawing on his wide knowledge of assemblages of samian from Essex, Warwick Rodwell was able to argue that the state of preservation of fragments of several mid- and late second-century Central Gaulish decorated bowls from late Roman contexts at **Great Dunmow** indicated survival in use.<sup>58</sup> A virtually-complete but broken Central Gaulish (Les Martres-de-Veyre) form 30 bowl of *c.* A.D. 100–125 was the only dating evidence for early Roman activity on a West London site at **Acton**.<sup>59</sup> Close reading of the report suggests that it may in fact have been deposited in the late Roman period, for which there is at least good pottery dating evidence (including some definitely residual samian sherds). The major later Roman **Oxfordshire** pottery industry copied preceding plain samian forms from *c.* A.D. 240,<sup>60</sup> demonstrating that such bowl-shapes and their appearance were still 'marketable' and perhaps still in circulation.

The most closely-comparable example from a 'consumption' site to the 'antique' samian in Romano-British graves occurs at the Roman fort of **Rocester** in the West Midlands. Here, from an area of hearths and ovens inside the Antonine-period fort (Phase 2B), was excavated a group of near-complete, burnt, unworn early to mid-Flavian South Gaulish samian dishes (form 18) and cups (form 27).<sup>61</sup>

There was a sherd of Italian-type sigillata, of Tiberian date, among the pottery from the Claudian-Neronian fort at **Hembury** in Devon.<sup>62</sup> Mid-Roman (second- to third-century) samian

<sup>52</sup> Atkinson in Shaw 1926, 449–50.

<sup>53</sup> Birley 1961, 312, 314 and fig. 3. 'Normal' late South Gaulish samian, of *c.* A.D. 90–110, is noted by Brian Hartley from several sites on Hadrian's Wall (Hartley 1972, 13 n. 58 and 15) and may represent more long-lived samian.

<sup>54</sup> Richmond *et al.* 1938, 225 and fig. 23.22.

<sup>55</sup> Richmond and Gillam 1951, 62 and 70. To Joanna Bird (pers. comm.), the lion-head spout on at least one of the samian mortaria from this mithraeum might be evidence of a more general element of keeping or dedicating bowls where the decoration was of religious significance.

<sup>56</sup> Bird 1993; Oliver 1993, 75, 84 and fig. 10.2–3.

<sup>57</sup> Bulmer in Mason 1980, 48, 52, 56 and 89.

<sup>58</sup> Rodwell 1988, 76. Other samian specialists are more cautious about the sheer difficulty of assessing the state of samian at its time of deposition, given the variety of context formation processes at work (pers. comm. Joanna Bird).

<sup>59</sup> Cotton 1996, 5; Bird in Cotton 1996, 10–11.

<sup>60</sup> e.g. Young 1977, 125–7.

<sup>61</sup> Dickinson 1996, 80 (for the main context, 1378) and 91; cf. also Esmonde Cleary and Ferris 1996, 21. Brenda Dickinson had suggested that this material might represent the unused contents of a pottery store.

<sup>62</sup> Todd 1993.



from sites newly founded in the late Roman period, like **Lympne** (mid to late A.D. 270s), **Portchester** (of c. A.D. 285–290 or slightly later), or **Filey** and other Yorkshire signal-stations (late A.D. 360s–380s) is relevant too.<sup>63</sup>

Then there is the famous case of the **Corbridge** ‘Pottery Shop’. A stone building excavated at Corbridge in 1907 contained a thick deposit of ashes, burnt wood, and broken pottery on a reddened clay floor, overlain by burnt clay;<sup>64</sup> plain samian, coarsewares, some colour-coats, and mortaria were represented.<sup>65</sup> In his later autobiography,<sup>66</sup> the site supervisor (Leonard Woolley) described it as ‘a fourth-century potter’s shop with the different sorts of pots grouped according to type, and a number of coins, all close together, representing the shopkeeper’s till. This last discovery was rather a controversial one ...’ This was because the hoard of c. 490 late Roman coins, found in the same deposit as the pottery and baked into a solid mass, is dated to the reign of Gratian (A.D. 367–383).<sup>67</sup> The ‘obvious problems’ that were presented by the association of second/third-century samian with a fourth-century coin deposit were, the 1907 report says, ‘reserved for fuller consideration’. In his subsequent paper, F.J. Haverfield duly tried to explain away the coin hoard as intrusive, dating the mortaria, the samian and the whole deposit to the (first half) second century A.D.<sup>68</sup>

Re-excavation of the 1907 site (West Compound, Site iv) in 1940 allowed Ian Richmond to compare the actual whiteware mortaria from the ‘Pottery Shop’, which had been discarded by the original excavators, with mid-fourth-century examples from Bewcastle (Gillam Types 282, 285, and 278) and to discern that the 1907 building overlay his third-century Temple VI. His conclusion,<sup>69</sup> from the evidence of both the pottery and the stratigraphic sequence, was that the associated second-century samian ‘must thus represent a mass of material surviving in official store’. This is echoed by various secondary works which continue to consider the ‘Pottery Shop’ as a special case (e.g. ‘how could any *negotiator* have run a commercial enterprise with such a slow turnover’, asked C.R. Whittaker<sup>70</sup>).

#### OTHER POTTERY

Jeremy Evans’ survey of graffiti on pottery proposed that finewares were treated differently by their Romano-British users compared to coarsewares. While the bulk of the evidence for long-lived pottery is confined to samian wares, see also the Cologne colour-coat beaker, dated c. A.D. 100–140, which was at least a century old when placed in a late Roman inhumation burial in the eastern cemetery of Roman **London**.<sup>71</sup> The foundation deposit from the Phase 6 ?Christian structure (of the mid-fourth century) at **Ivy Chimneys**, Witham, Essex was a miniature colour-coat beaker of second-century type, containing a second-century *as*.<sup>72</sup>

<sup>63</sup> Young 1980, 275 and 277; Morris 1975; Monaghan in Ottaway 2001, 141. Joanna Bird (pers. comm.) notes that one of the curious aspects of the samian from Lympne and Portchester was the absence of decorated ware dating up to the middle of the third century, i.e. definitely late samian.

<sup>64</sup> Forster 1908, 247–58.

<sup>65</sup> Forster 1908, 248.

<sup>66</sup> Woolley 1953, 21.

<sup>67</sup> Robertson 2000, no. 1421.

<sup>68</sup> Haverfield 1910, 114–15. Most commentators place the ‘Pottery Shop’ in the late second-century destruction, but these writers, such as Maurice Brassington (1975), maintain the modified Haverfield line by the same means — that of simply discounting the coin hoard associated with the destruction.

<sup>69</sup> Richmond 1943, 145.

<sup>70</sup> Whittaker 1994, 110. Michael Rhodes has drawn attention to the possibility of mixed stock in another pottery shop at Gauting in Bavaria (1989, 49 and 52).

<sup>71</sup> Groves and Symonds in Barber and Bowsher 2000, 122 and 175 [Burial 326].

<sup>72</sup> Wallace in Turner 1999, 172 and fig. 100.207.



In the report on the late Roman cemetery at Butt Road, **Colchester**, C.J. Going has discussed cases of coarse pottery vessels that are many decades older than the burials they accompany,<sup>73</sup> their use linked perhaps to periods of low ceramic supply. In contrast, Hilary Cool promotes the 'cultural biography' approach as worthy of consideration, whence 'old' grave goods from the late Roman cemetery at **Brougham**, Cumbria can be seen as owing their distinctiveness partly to having been set apart from active use.<sup>74</sup>

#### DISCUSSION

It can be argued that from *c.* A.D. 60 samian vessels were generally significantly over-represented among burial groups, relative to their frequency among site assemblages.<sup>75</sup> Thus there was some deliberate selection of samian vessels for inclusion in graves during the period of samian importation into Britain.<sup>76</sup> However, some of the pre-Flavian evidence is for relative under-representation. In neighbouring *Gallia Belgica*, when comparing cemetery and occupation sites in and around Arras (*Nemetacum*), it has been noted that samian ware was absent in Augustan-Claudian cemeteries, present on habitation-sites of the same period, and made an appearance in cemeteries only after the Claudian period.<sup>77</sup> Marie Tuffreau-Libre and Alain Jacques preferred a cultural explanation for this difference over one suggesting any scarcity of samian. Study of two early burial-groups in Essex suggests a similar pattern.<sup>78</sup> In the west Essex/east Herts. region, the work of Martin Millett has provided first a quantified comparison which underlines the very different fabric-preferences between settlement sites and cemeteries and then a discussion of the possible rejection of samian vessels as grave-goods.<sup>79</sup> South Gaulish samian was present in quantity at Verulamium in the pre-Flavian period, while it was observed to be very much less common than Gallo-Belgic wares in the (contemporary and earlier) King Harry Lane cemetery. We have seen that a modest proportion of burials from the late Roman period continued to include samian. This evidence of curation reflects a continuity in burial practice and (apparently) in evaluation by those burying the dead.<sup>80</sup>

All the samian evidence presented here — of long life, selection, and continuity — points perhaps to the larger question of a review of the basis of samian dating: of samian in circulation. This is something that does not yet exist for Britain on the same level as in Germany and beyond.<sup>81</sup> Questions about what samian dates mean and whether they mean the same at all times, as opposed to applied research like Brian Hartley's Antonine Wall paper or Martin Millett's

<sup>73</sup> Going 1993, 47–9. See also pp. 122–3 of Barber and Bowsher 2000 for other ideas on the lives of burial pots. A vessel dug up and re-used from an earlier burial was Brenda Dickinson's suggestion to me about the Stansted find, not least in view of the long date-range (early first to later second century A.D.) for the Duckend Farm cemetery (see also Cool 2004, 379 n. 2).

<sup>74</sup> Cool 2004, 452.

<sup>75</sup> Steven Willis, pers. comm.

<sup>76</sup> On this subject, see Biddulph 2005.

<sup>77</sup> Tuffreau-Libre and Jacques 1985, 143. Millett 1993, 273–5.

<sup>78</sup> With the pre-Flavian burials (Group B) in the long-used Duckend Farm (Stansted Airport Project) cremation cemetery it was notable that among the imported vessels there were none to be found in samian ware (Wallace in Havis and Brooks 2004, 241–2). Commenting on the absence of samian from a burial, comparable to the Stansted Group B ones, of *c.* A.D. 50–60 at Little Waltham in central Essex (a site where Claudian-Neronian samian was present), Drury saw this as an indication of 'a conservatism not found higher up the social scale', citing the samian in the rich Claudian-period burials at Stanfordbury, Beds. (Drury 1978, 136).

<sup>79</sup> Millett 1993, 273–5.

<sup>80</sup> A point I owe to Steven Willis.

<sup>81</sup> e.g. Pferdehirt 1986; Eschbaumer and Faber 1988; Gabler 1985.

study of material from the Boudiccan burning of several cities,<sup>82</sup> are worthy of a new review to set the sort of ‘anecdotal’ evidence gathered above into proper context — not least in order to take a proper look at the first and third centuries A.D., where existing assumptions have come in for some discussion recently.<sup>83</sup>

The impressive methodology set out in Anthony King’s PhD thesis of 1985<sup>84</sup> is as yet unpublished and is neglected in the same author’s outline discussions of the results,<sup>85</sup> to their disadvantage. This is not to discount the strong feelings raised among samian specialists by this particular work, but rather to ask that the debate be made fully public through publication. For the moment, see Martin Millett’s critique of chronology-building;<sup>86</sup> some promising new lines of enquiry have been developed during the pilot study for the English Heritage Samian Project run by Steven Willis.<sup>87</sup> Meanwhile in France, the thoughtful work of studying and publishing good third-century assemblages goes quietly on,<sup>88</sup> in contrast to the problems experienced in Britain (where the samian and the coarse pottery evidence tend not to be well-integrated, see the review by Joanna Bird<sup>89</sup> or the various recent urban syntheses).

In the meantime, this paper has gathered the evidence to suggest that it is reasonable to expect some complete first-century samian vessels to have survived into the second century and some second-century vessels to have survived into the fourth century at least throughout Roman Britain.<sup>90</sup> The by-products of this are to make a fourth-century date for the Corbridge ‘Pottery Shop’ seem less unreasonable than it did in 1907 and to open up a third way between the ‘reliquary’ and the ‘residual’ explanations for the Scottish material.

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<sup>82</sup> Hartley 1972 and Millett 1987b.

<sup>83</sup> Ian Caruana has entertained the notion of there being pre-Agricolan garrisons in southern Scotland under the governor in the early A.D. 70s, Q. Petilius Cerealis, on the evidence of early Flavian pottery found there (Caruana 1997). He takes an entirely uncritical view of the basis of pottery dating and of what date-ranges mean, despite the importance of these to his case (contrast this with the observations in the Rochester report: Esmonde Cleary and Ferris 1996, 219). For the third century, see the work by Anthony King mentioned below and contested by, for example, Bird 1986, 146 n. 2 and Ward 1995, 17. PhD research in progress by Gwladys Monteil (Birkbeck College, University of London) on samian distribution in London is in part concerned with re-opening the ‘last Central Gaulish imports’ debate, drawing on the work by Richard Delage, in the context of the ten phases of Lezoux production extending into the fourth century (Bet *et al.* 1989).

<sup>84</sup> King 1985.

<sup>85</sup> e.g. King 1984 and 1991.

<sup>86</sup> Millett 1987a. I am grateful to Steven Willis for reminding me that the general life-span of samian vessels might not conform to the normal distribution curve for pottery set out in Millett’s paper (1987a, fig. 2). The tail of the curve, in the case of samian, might be thicker and longer than with other wares, because samian was probably curated more diligently than other vessels. There is also the possibility that the demonstrated periods of low importation (Marsh 1981, 184; 193) may have resulted in even more careful curation.

<sup>87</sup> e.g. Willis 1999, 102–5, 107 and 108.

<sup>88</sup> e.g. Moireau 1992; Navarre 1995; Delage and Guillier 1997; Bayard 2001; Jardel 2002; cf. Delage 1998, 293–8 and 2003.

<sup>89</sup> Bird 1995, a useful paper but one with self-defined limits, where the samian is disconnected from the coarse pottery and any other dating evidence in the assemblages concerned. Problems beset the recently-published material from Shadwell, where all the other pottery from the 1974 excavations and some of that from 1976 was unavailable, so that the samian has perforce had to stand alone (Bird 2002).

<sup>90</sup> The data collected by Hilary Cool made it seem very likely that there was significant late Roman use of sherds of samian to make counters and spindle whorls, compared to the picture for the first and second centuries (Cool 2000, 52–3). This was part of a new, distinctive ‘suite’ of material culture from the later fourth century onwards. Slightly later, it is from the areas of ‘Anglo-Saxon’ occupation in southern and eastern Britain that there comes evidence of the collecting and re-use of Roman red-coloured pottery sherds (including samian) in the fifth and sixth centuries A.D.

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