

REPUBLICAN DRESSSEL 1 AMPHORAE FROM EAST WEAR BAY, FOLKESTONE

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East Wear Bay is located at one of the shortest sea crossing points of the Dover Strait. As a shallow bay protected from the westerly winds by the ridge of Copt Point, its situation would have facilitated a safe and sheltered landing for traders crossing the strait from ports on the French coast (**Fig. 1**). The prehistoric bay would have looked somewhat different from today, with Copt Point most likely forming a more prominent ridge and extending further out to sea. Traders arriving on the foreshore in the late Iron Age are likely to have encountered a gentle slope rising up to the extensive settlement that was located on the East Cliff adjacent to the bay. The settlement was principally engaged in the manufacture of quernstones (Green 2016, 160-163), an industry that flourished from at least the first



Fig. 1 East Wear Bay, Folkestone, looking down from the site of the Iron Age settlement.

century BC. The construction of a large villa complex over part of the settlement took place at the end of the first century AD, possibly contemporaneous with the decline of the industry.

During the Iron Age, East Wear Bay was likely to have formed the main focus of Folkestone, rather than the modern area of the town now centred around the Pent Stream. Its close proximity to the long-distance prehistoric trackway, the North Downs Way, would have facilitated easy movement of goods bound for the interior of Kent and beyond (Parfitt 2013a, 22-23). A large quantity of Dressel 1 wine amphorae together with other imported pottery and coins from Gaul have been found on the beach, and during recent excavations at the settlement site. These finds provide substantial archaeological evidence for a pre-Roman port of entry (Parfitt 2013b, 36-37), which may have performed a similar function to that of Hengistbury Head in Dorset.

What goods were traded in exchange for the wine and pottery can only be speculated at. They may have included any of the items listed by the Greek historian and geographer Strabo as being exported from Britain during the late Iron Age such as grain, cattle, hides, silver, iron, slaves and hunting dogs. Although a number of querns of French origin have been found at Folkestone, querns of Folkestone origin appear at present to be almost absent from Gaul (Green 2016, 163) and therefore may not have formed a significant part of this cross-channel trade.

The geology of East Wear Bay makes it prone to instability, when high ground water levels saturate the Gault Clay it begins to liquify and lose cohesion where it joins the Lower Greensand. This causes rotational slippage, a process that is resulting in the East Cliff slowly slipping down into the bay below and subsequently succumbing to sea erosion. Extensive rotational slippage in the 1990s left significant archaeological material exposed on the surface of the foreshore, with much of it still in stratified layers. It was during this time, in these exposed layers that most of the Dressel 1 amphorae were recovered by the writer. Simultaneously two local fossil collectors found a number of other significant Dressel 1 fragments in the same area, and latterly gave these to the writer with the intention of keeping this important material together.

Dressel 1 Amphorae

Dressel 1 is the most common type of late republican amphorae, produced from c.150-10 BC. It is traditionally sub-divided into three sub-types, 1A, 1B, and 1C (Lamboglia 1955) (**Fig. 2**). Production was concentrated along the western coast of Italy from Etruria to Campania, in what may have been up to 100 production sites (Thierrin-Michael and Picon 1994, 144), together with much smaller scale production in Spain and the south of France. The principal contents were undoubtedly wine, with some Dressel 1 bearing inscriptions that refer to them carrying the famous Falernian and Caecuban wines (Sealey 1985, 23). Other commodities that may have been occasionally carried include garum, defrutum and olive oil, although it is not certain if some of this trade involved the reuse of containers (Loughton 2014, 73-74). Dressel 1 are found in very large numbers around the western Mediterranean, especially the coasts of southern France and

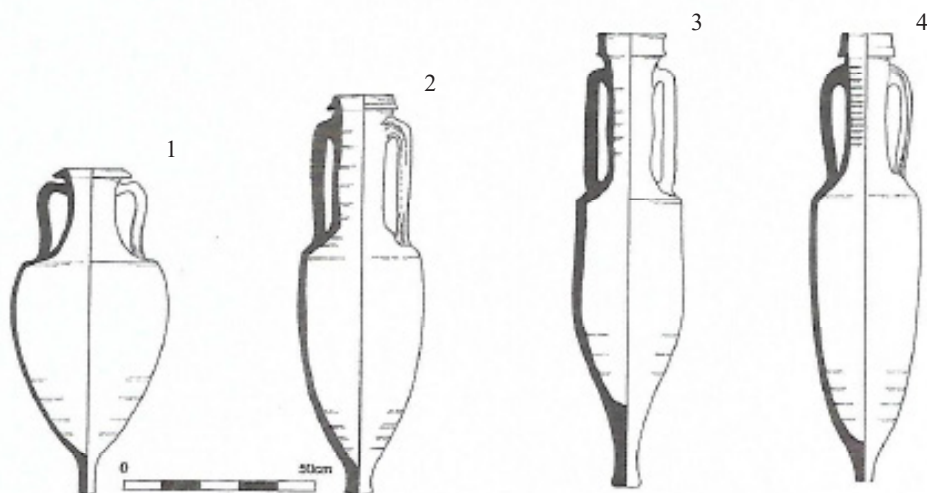


Fig. 2 Republican Amphorae: 1. Greco-Italic. 2. Dressel 1A. 3. Dressel 1B.
4. Dressel 1C.

Spain. In the late Iron Age, Britain lay at the very edge of the distribution of Roman wine and as a consequence received relatively small numbers of amphorae. The British distribution is centred in two main areas, namely around Dorset and Hampshire, and Kent/East Anglia. Dressel 1 are occasionally stamped, taking the form of a name or more often a series of two or three letters; the stamp is usually located on either the rim or handle. A gazetteer of find spots in Britain records seven stamps (Carver 2001, 82-93).

The *Dressel 1A* evolved *c.*150 BC (Hesnard 1990, 51), from earlier Greco-Italic amphorae and might still have been in circulation *c.*50 BC. It is characterised by a short triangular rim, 30-50mm high, a rounded shoulder, and an overall vessel height in the range 0.9-1.05m with a capacity of *c.*16-20 litres.

The *Dressel 1B* possibly appeared as early as the beginning of the first century BC (Parker 1992, 32), but the traditional date for its evolution from the 1A form is *c.*50 BC. With a vessel height in the range 1.1-1.2m and a capacity of *c.*25 litres, the 1B was slightly larger and more robust than the 1A. It is characterised by a tall concave rim over 45mm in height, an angled shoulder and a tall base.

The *Dressel 1C* first appeared in Gaul *c.*130-120 BC (Loughton 2014, 56), and continued in use throughout most of the first century BC. Its overall height is in the range 1.1-1.2m with a capacity of *c.*25 litres. Its shape is more spindle-like than the 1A or 1B. Its most distinctive feature is a high rim, 60-80 mm high that usually flares out at the base. The diameter of the rim is always 150mm or less, considerably smaller than that of a 1B. It is much less common than the 1A and 1B. Its rarity as a find may suggest that it was primarily used to carry commodities other than wine.

The Folkestone Dressel 1 foreshore assemblage

Dressel 1 amphorae are readily identified by rim and handle fragments. The collar rims are very distinctive in appearance and the long straight oval to slightly rounded handles are completely different from the bifid (composed of two rods) handles of its successor, the Dressel 2-4. Body fragments cannot always be assigned to Dressel 1 or the later Dressel 2-4 as both exist in the same fabrics. Because the Dressel 1 has a sturdier construction than its successor, most archaeologists take the view that body sherds in Italian fabrics with a thickness of 20mm or more can be assigned to Dressel 1. Any remaining sherds below this thickness are classified as belonging to either Dressel 1 or 2-4. By following these rules it has been possible to identify 50 sherds recovered from the foreshore that can be positively attributed to Dressel 1 (**Figs 3-5**). This assemblage weighing 9,644 grams includes 14 rim sherds from 10 amphorae, 17 handle sherds and 19 body sherds. A further 15 body sherds weighing 1,790 grams with a thickness below 20mm have been classified as belonging to either Dressel 1 or 2-4. The minimum number of Dressel 1 amphorae present in this assemblage is 23 (**Table 1**). Excavations at the settlement site conducted as part of the Folkestone *A Town Unearthed* project (2010-11) have resulted in a further significant assemblage of Dressel 1 amphorae being recovered. These include a large number of rim and handle sherds equal in quantity to that already recovered from the foreshore. The total area excavated so far is very small in relation to the likely size of the settlement, therefore the potential exists for further Dressel 1 material to be found in the future.

The writer has adopted the practice whereby rims are recorded as a series of measurements consisting of the rim diameter, height, thickness and angle of inclination. **Fig. 6** explains how these measurements are arrived at. This practice, widely used in amphorae reports from France, is gaining popularity in Britain and enables the comparison of assemblages from different sites, many of which will have known date ranges.

The Folkestone Dressel 1 Amphorae in a wider context

The East Wear Bay Dressel 1 assemblage is certainly the largest and most important so far found in Kent. Canterbury has the second largest assemblage, although still a relatively small amount when considering both the extent and the timescale of excavations there (Pollard 1991, 57-58). A handful of other Kentish sites have realised just one or two sherds.

In a wider national context the East Wear Bay assemblage is comparable in size and importance to the assemblages from Hengistbury Head, Dorset, and Elms Farm, Heybridge, Essex, which are two of the largest recorded in Britain. The Hengistbury Head assemblage is typologically the earliest in Britain, dominated by the 1A type with a few possibly earlier Greco-Italic amphorae dating to the second century BC. Conversely, the Elms Farm assemblage is dominated by the later 1B type, which may have arrived over a short period of time towards the last quarter of the first century BC. It has been generally accepted that the main emphasis of the wine trade with Britain moved from Hengistbury Head and the Dorset-Hampshire region in general, to South-East England around the middle of the first century BC (Peacock 1984, 37-8).

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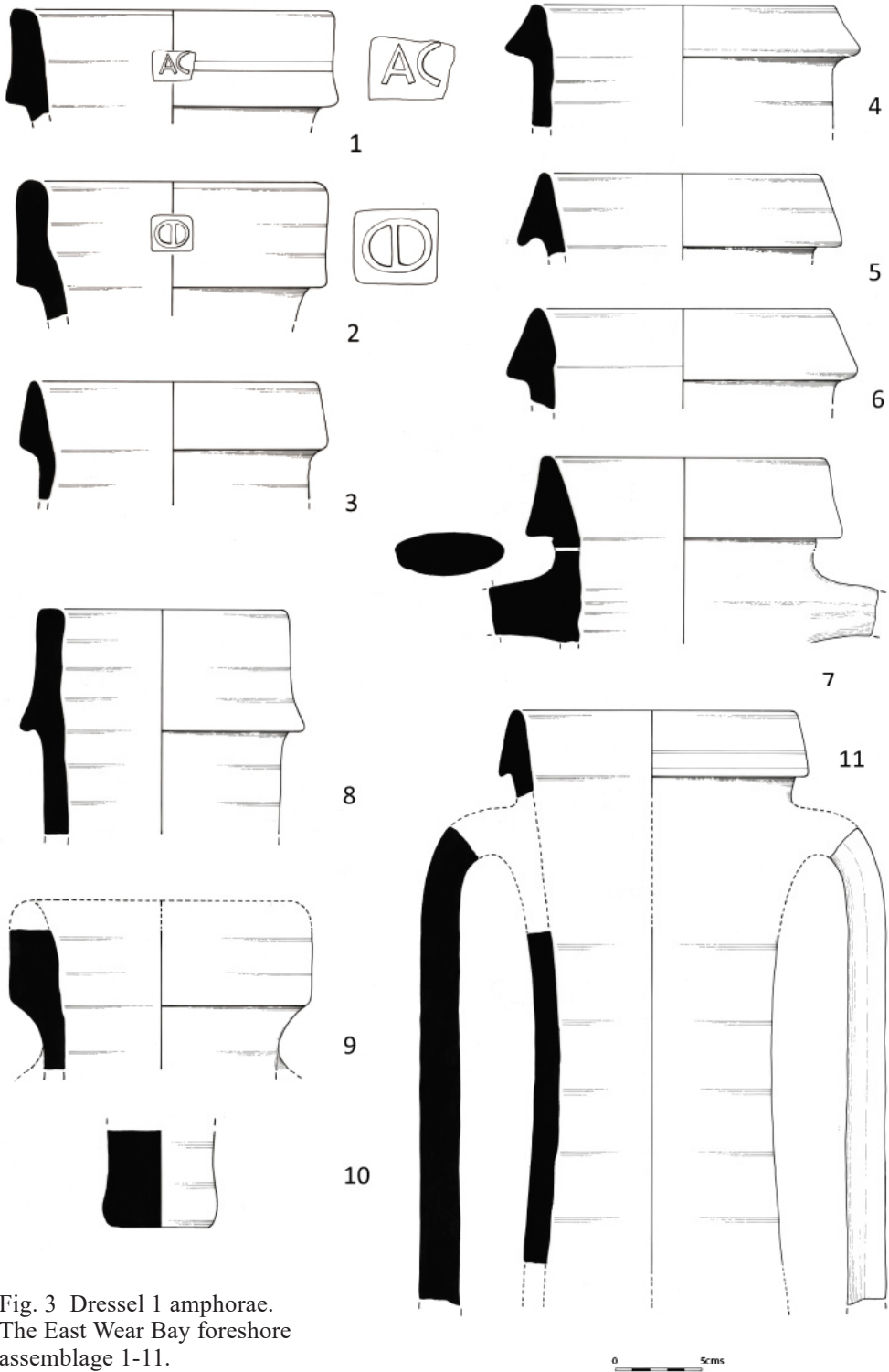


Fig. 3 Dressel 1 amphorae.
The East Wear Bay foreshore
assemblage 1-11.

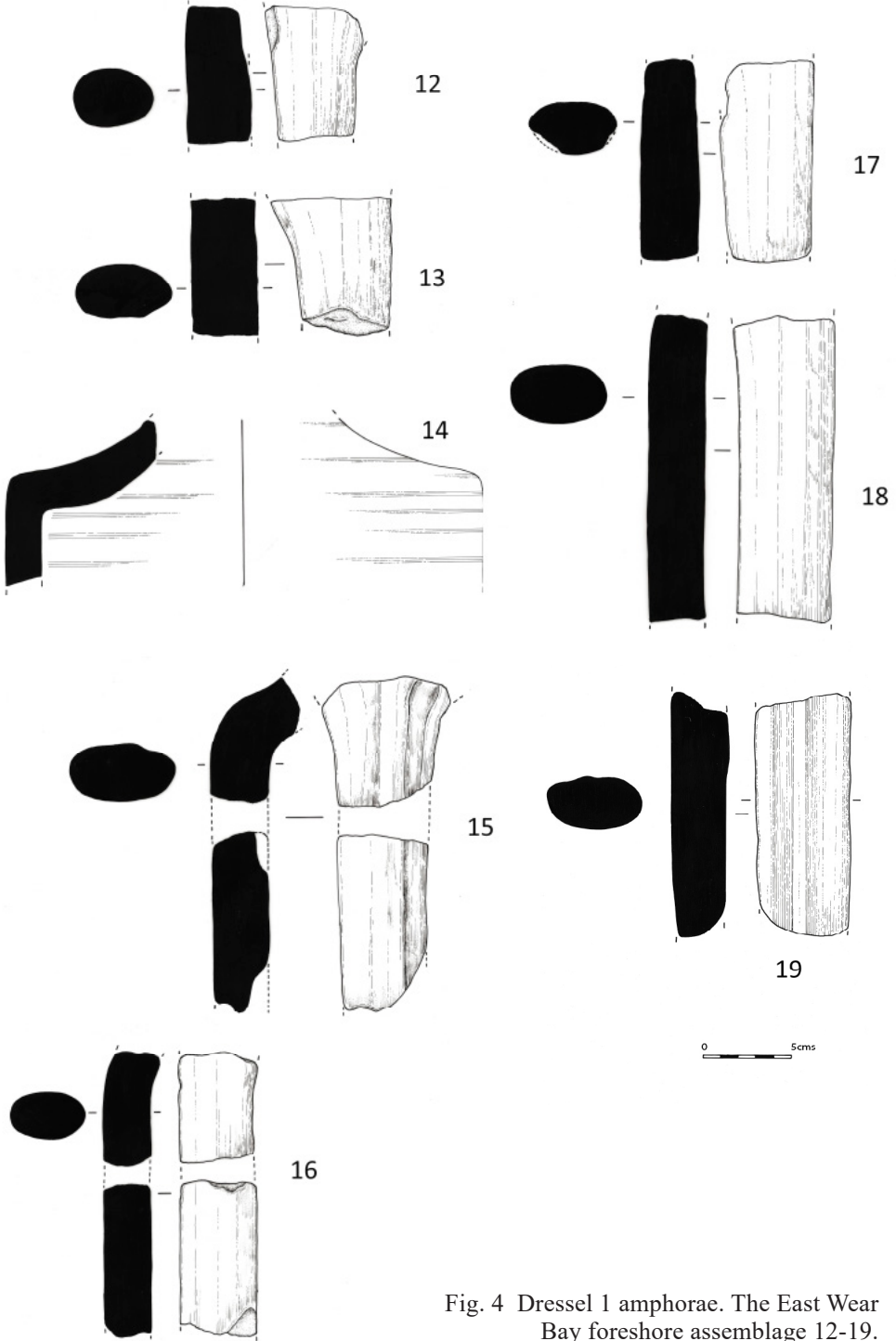


Fig. 4 Dressel 1 amphorae. The East Wear Bay foreshore assemblage 12-19.

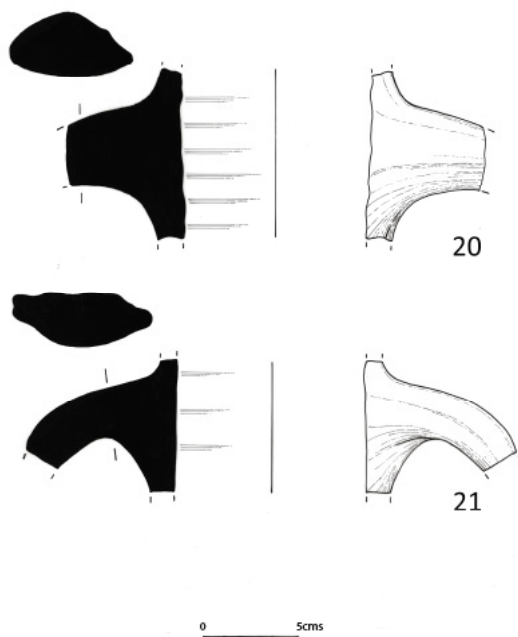


Fig. 5 Dressel 1 amphorae.
The East Wear Bay foreshore
assemblage 20-21.

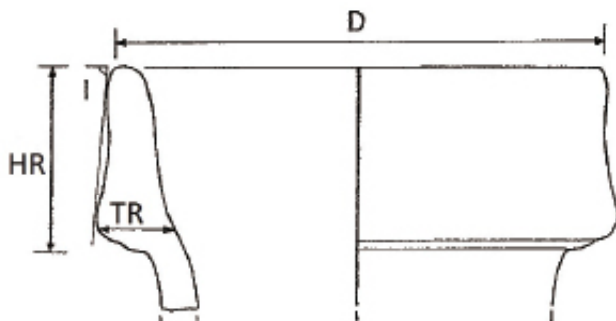


Fig. 6 Dressel 1 rim metrology: D = Diameter of rim; HR = height of rim; TR = maximum thickness of rim; I = angle of inclination (amended from Maza 1998, fig. 2).

The majority of Dressel 1 amphorae previously found in Kent and Essex have been of the 1B type, with a few exceptions in Essex. A large proportion of the East Wear Bay assemblage is composed of the 1A type, some of which are typologically very early. This suggests that wine imports commenced at East Wear Bay whilst the Hengistbury Head trade was still in operation, with imports continuing to arrive throughout the first century BC. However, the early first century AD saw a dramatic reduction in supplies of Italian wine reaching Britain due largely to increased wine consumption in Italy itself (Sealey 2009, 22) and East Wear Bay was to prove no exception to this.

TABLE 1. CATALOGUE OF ILLUSTRATED DRESSSEL 1 FINDS FROM EAST WEAR BAY; DIMENSIONS IN CM

No.	Component(s)	D	HR	TR	I	S	Comments
(Type)							
1 (1B)	rim and neck fragment with a two-letter stamp: A C (see Fig. 7)	19	5.6	2.7	86°		Other examples of this stamp have been found at Clermont-Ferrand (Puy-de-Dôme), France (Loughton 2001, vol. 2, 334), Alesia (Côte-d'Or), France (Mangin 1981, pl. XIX no 54), Titelberg, Luxembourg (Callender 1965, no. 13) and Mt Beuvray (Bourgogne), France (Olmer 2003, no 212). This amphora originates from Albinia, Italy, and dates to the last quarter of the first century BC
2 (1B)	rim and neck fragment with a two-letter stamp: C D (see Fig. 7)	17	6.2	2.5	85°		Two other examples of this stamp have been found at Mt Beuvray (Bourgogne), France (Olmer 2003, nos 259, 260). This amphora originates from Albinia, Italy, and dates to the last quarter of the first century BC
3 (1A)	rim and neck fragment	16	4.2	2	82°		
4 (1A)	rim and neck fragment (see Fig. 7)	16	3.2	3	60°		Typologically the earliest Dressel 1 rim found at Folkestone, probably dating to the second century BC
5 (1A)	rim and neck fragment	16	4	3	75°		
6 (1A)	rim and neck fragment	17	4.2	2.7	67°		
7 (1A)	rim and neck fragment and neck and handle fragment	16	4.5	3	80°		(See Fig. 7)
8 (1C)	rim and neck fragment (See Fig. 7)	14	7.3	2.5	87°		A tall upright rim with an out-flaring base and a narrow mouth typical of the 1C form. A substantial fragment reconstructed from 4 adjoining rim sherds which were found over a period of three years

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No.	Component(s)	D	HR	TR	I	S	Comments
9	rim and neck fragment	18	>5	3	87°		
(1B)							
10	base						
(?)							
11	rim, handle (two adjoining sherds), and a neck fragment	14	4.2	2	80°	4.5x	4 adjoining sherds from the same amphora
(1A)						2.6	
12	handle					4.6x	
(?)						3.5	
13	handle					5x	
(?)						3.2	
14	shoulder						A sharp angular shoulder typical of the 1B form
(1B)							
15	handle					5x	Two sherds
(?)						2.7	
16	handle (two sherds)					4.4x	from the same small handle, probably from a Dressel 1A
(1A?)						2.4	
17	handle					4.8x	
(?)						3.1	
18	handle					5.1x	
(1B)						3.3	
19	handle					5x3	
(?)							
20	handle stub						
(?)							
21	handle stub						
(?)							

Note. D = diameter of rim; HR = height of rim; TR = maximum thickness of rim; I = angle of inclination; S = section of handle.



Fig. 7 Dressel 1 amphorae. The East Wear Bay foreshore assemblage.
Top left – Dressel 1C (8);
Top right – Dressel 1A (7);
Bottom left – Dressel 1A (4);
Bottom right – Dressel 1B (1)/ Dressel 1B (2).

DISCUSSION

The Dressel 1 amphorae recovered from East Wear Bay constitute a group of national importance both in terms of the quantity and range present; in fact no other site in Britain has recorded all three sub-types. The range of sub-types provides substantial evidence for the prolonged importation of these amphorae to East Wear Bay; however, it is uncertain how much of this wine was being traded with the interior of Kent. On the basis of the scarcity of Dressel 1 finds inland it would appear that most of the wine was being consumed at the settlement site itself, although the possibility of wine being decanted from amphorae into other more readily transportable containers cannot be ruled out.

The exceptionally large number of Dressel 1 amphorae together with the extensive range of fine-ware imported pottery found at the site indicate a high status settlement. The leading citizens of this settlement may have been expatriate maritime traders as has been proposed at Heybridge (Sealey 2015). Such traders would no doubt have appreciated fine Italian wine themselves and may well have also been involved in the local quern-stone industry. What effect the Roman Conquest had on East Wear Bay is still uncertain. One of the wealthy trading families may have built the villa, or control of the whole trading establishment by the *Classis Britannica* on behalf of the state remains a possibility (Weston 2017, 307).

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