
Copyright:

Internet Archaeology is an open access journal. Except where otherwise noted, content from this work may be used under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution 3.0 Unported licence, which permits unrestricted use, distribution, and reproduction in any medium, provided that attribution to the author(s), the title of the work, the Internet Archaeology journal and the relevant URL/DOI are given.

DOI link to article:

http://intarch.ac.uk/journal/issue41/3/

Date deposited:

08/03/2018

This work is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution 3.0 Unported License
Ceramic Imports to Britain and the Atlantic Seaboard in the Fifth Century and Beyond

Maria Duggan

School of History, Classics and Archaeology, Newcastle University, Newcastle Upon Tyne, NE1 7RU UK. Email: maria.duggan@newcastle.ac.uk

Cite this as: Duggan, M. (2016) Ceramic Imports to Britain and the Atlantic Seaboard in the Fifth Century and Beyond, Internet Archaeology 41. https://doi.org/10.11141/ia.41.3

Summary

In western Britain, particularly the south-west, imported pottery of Mediterranean origin has provided an important means of recognising 5th and 6th-century sites. The ability to link these finds to typologies established in the Mediterranean has led to sherds of imported amphorae or fineware being considered as key chronological markers or indicators of long-distance connections. The arrival of new forms of pottery in the mid-to later 5th century, with a distinct western and coastal distribution, has been used to indicate the emergence of a new and separate post-Roman import system, characterised by a model of direct shipment from the east Mediterranean. This model has been reinforced by a relative absence of known, comparable finds along the Atlantic Seaboard. Recent publications from the Continent, however, are starting to fill this 'gap'. Revised patterns of ceramic distribution in western France and north-west Spain suggest that British sites were integrated into a more complex Atlantic system of trade or exchange. This article will discuss some recent
publications on ceramic imports to Britain, particularly those that offer new interpretations of the date and character of this import system. It will highlight emerging evidence from the Continent, particularly southwestern France and, specifically, relevant publications on Late Antique pottery in Bordeaux. This will allow new comparisons to be drawn between patterns of pottery importation and use in Britain, France and the wider Atlantic region in the 5th and 6th centuries.

Go to article Table of Contents.

Features

- Key words: pottery; amphora; Atlantic; imported; Phocaean; post-Roman; Byzantine; Devon; Mothecombe; Tintagel; Bantham; Bordeaux; Vigo
- Publication date: 11 March 2016

Internet Archaeology is an open access journal. Except where otherwise noted, content from this work may be used under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution 3.0 (CC BY) Unported licence, which permits unrestricted use, distribution, and reproduction in any medium, provided that attribution to the author(s), the title of the work, the Internet Archaeology journal and the relevant URL/DOI are given.

University of York legal statements
Ceramic Imports to Britain and the Atlantic Seaboard in the Fifth Century and Beyond

Maria Duggan

Table of Contents

- Summary
- Table of Contents
- List of Figures and Tables

- 1. Introduction
- 2. The Pottery
- 3. Interpreting the Imports
- 4. Imported Pottery on the Atlantic Seaboard
- 5. Recent British Finds
- 6. Discussion
- Acknowledgements
- Bibliography

Internet Archaeology is an open access journal. Except where otherwise noted, content from this work may be used under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution 3.0 (CC BY) Unported licence, which permits unrestricted use, distribution, and reproduction in any
medium, provided that attribution to the author(s), the title of the work, the Internet Archaeology journal and the relevant URL/DOI are given.

University of York legal statements
List of Figures and Tables

**Figure 1**: Map of selected sites mentioned in text

**Figure 2**: Bantham Sands, south Devon

**Figure 3**: Late Roman amphorae 1-7 (redrawn from Riley 1981, 117)

**Figure 4**: Curvilinear structures excavated at Mothecombe, south Devon

© Copyright Sam Turner. This image is not covered by CC-BY 3.0 and permission will be required for any further use

**Figure 5**: Imported amphora sherds from Mothecombe

Internet Archaeology is an open access journal. Except where otherwise noted, content from this work may be used under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution 3.0 (CC BY) Unported licence, which permits unrestricted use, distribution, and reproduction in any medium, provided that attribution to the author(s), the title of the work, the Internet Archaeology journal and the relevant URL/DOI are given.

[University of York legal statements](#)
1. Introduction

Figure 1: Map of selected sites mentioned in text

The recognition that Mediterranean pottery was imported to sites in post-Roman Britain emerged primarily through Radford's excavations at Tintagel (Radford 1956) (see Figure 1). Since then, an increasing number of sites have been identified in western Britain and Ireland and catalogued, principally by Charles Thomas (1959; 1981) and Ewan Campbell (2007). Despite the relatively small number of vessels involved, these post-Roman Mediterranean imports have been ascribed significance in revealing connections between western Britain and the eastern Mediterranean after AD 410. Tintagel remains by some margin the site with the largest quantity of material, both by sherd and vessel counts, with estimates of 150 amphorae and 80 fineware vessels recovered from the areas investigated to date (Thorpe 2007, 246). The recently published report from excavations at Bantham in south Devon has revealed an assemblage with a significant, if smaller, quantity of vessels (Reed et al. 2011) (Figure 2). This pottery has additional value in that it allows the identification and dating of 5th- and 6th-century sites in Britain and
Ireland, which may otherwise produce limited datable material. The apparent disappearance of imported pottery in Britain in the early 5th century suggested that supply networks broke down until the arrival of these Mediterranean imports in the mid- to later 5th century (Campbell 2007, 138). As such, the systems by which the later imports arrived have typically been seen as distinct from patterns of importation to Roman Britain. In particular, these post-Roman imports have been interpreted as representing direct shipments from the east Mediterranean, therefore implying some sort of direct connection to the Byzantine world between the 5th and 6th centuries.

Figure 2: Bantham Sands, south Devon
2. The Pottery

The imported pottery from the Mediterranean comprises two main categories: amphorae and Red Slip fineware. The amphorae are principally of east Mediterranean and, to a lesser extent North African types. Grouped as 'B wares' in earlier British publications they are now, more usefully, matched to amphora classifications established in the Mediterranean (Riley 1979; 1981; Campbell 2007, 4). Similarly the 'A wares' coined by Radford were matched to Mediterranean classes 'African Red Slip Ware' (ARS) and 'Phocaean Red Slip Ware' by Thomas' 1981 catalogue (Thomas 1981, 3). The latter class has occasionally returned to its earlier designation 'Late Roman C' (LRC) in more recent publications (such as Fernández 2014) following the recognition of parallel production at a variety of centres in the west of modern Turkey (Cau et al. 2011, 6).

The main types of amphorae identified in British contexts are Late Roman 1 (hereafter LRA1) and Late Roman 2 (LRA2), previously classified in Britain as 'Bii' and 'Bi' respectively (Thomas 1959) (Figure 3). The cylindrical amphora LRA1 was produced in the north-east Mediterranean, particularly in Cilicia (southern Turkey) and Cyprus. The globular LRA2 was produced in the Aegean, with production sites identified on Chios and Cnidos and in the Argolid region of Greece (University of Southampton 2005; digital archive). Both types were produced between the 4th and 7th centuries, but they are not thought to have been imported into Roman Britain and their identification on sites in western Britain is taken to
indicate some connection to a separate import system commencing in the 5th century (Campbell 2007, 19).

Figure 3: Late Roman amphorae 1-7 (redrawn from Riley 1981, 117)

Other East Mediterranean amphorae LRA3 and LRA4 are less common at the post-Roman import sites, but have been identified in late Roman contexts in Britain (Campbell 2007, 19-20, 125-6). Amphorae of North African origin were imported into Roman Britain, particularly in the 3rd and 4th centuries (Williams and Carreras 1995, 234) but are also thought to be found in post-Roman assemblages – though in a smaller proportion to the east Mediterranean types. These later 'North African' imports have usually been grouped within a broad class 'Bv' in British publications, limiting comparison to continental or Mediterranean examples, but reflecting the difficulties in identifying published types based on fragmentary vessels (Campbell 2007,19). Similarly, recent continental reports commonly subdivide the east Mediterranean amphora types into more closely datable sub-types (see Pieri 2005). Such refinements may prove useful for future comparisons with the British pottery, but given the scarcity of large or diagnostic sherds on many of the British sites, such precision might not always be possible. The forms of amphorae are long lasting and cannot usually be closely dated in themselves. Instead, the dates reflect production dates based on typologies established in the Mediterranean, particularly for the Red Slip finewares (Campbell 2007, 19).

Beyond amphorae, the presence of imported Mediterranean coarsewares in Britain has been debated following identifications at Tintagel (Batey et
al. 1993, 55-9; Thorpe 2007, 233). Campbell suggested that only a very limited quantity of these sherds might represent imported coarsewares - the majority might instead be from amphorae, possibly of types previously unrecognised among the British assemblages (Campbell 2007, 24).

A secondary and subsequent phase of imported pottery from the Continent was later identified (Thomas 1959). 'E ware' is a coarse ware, possibly produced in western Gaul, which has a wide distribution in western Britain and Ireland (Campbell 2007, 46-7). The main period for its importation is thought to be the later 6th and 7th centuries, and as a result this ware is less relevant to this specific discussion (Campbell 2007, 46). Present only in very small numbers in insular contexts, a second ware, 'Dérivées Sigillées Paléochretiennes' (DSP), is of more relevance as its importation is thought to overlap the main phases of Mediterranean and continental imports (Campbell 2007, 133). The 'Atlantic group' of DSP, typically non-oxidised and thought to represent imports to Britain (Campbell 2007, 27) is likely to have been produced in Bordeaux (Soulas 1996, 237).
University of York legal statements
3. Interpreting the Imports

Finds of imported Mediterranean pottery of 5th- and 6th-century date have been seen as directly connected to the formation and maintenance of secular, hierarchical power structures in post-Roman Britain (Harris 2003, 147; Campbell and Bowles 2009, 301). The imported wares have been identified at a number of British and Irish sites thought to be centres of local political control such as South Cadbury and Cadbury Congresbury in Somerset, Dinas Powys in Glamorgan and Garranes in Co. Cork (Campbell 2007, 62,138). Tintagel, despite earlier interpretations as a religious site, is now also interpreted as a centre of high-status, political control (Barrowman et.al. 2007, 335). Other sites with imported pottery have been interpreted as seasonal 'beachmarket' or trading centres, although Bantham has recently been described as a 'port' (Reed et al. 2011, 132), while structures excavated at Mothecombe in south Devon provide evidence of 'long-standing settlement' (Agate et al. 2012, 390) (Figs 4 and 5).
west Britain, or those with smaller quantities of pottery, may represent secondary redistribution systems within Britain and Ireland (Campbell 2007, 138) connected to political or ecclesiastical networks (Harris 2003, 147).

Many aspects of the relationship between this pottery and other imported material (including glass) and their significance to post-Roman economic and political systems remain to be fully established, particularly the exchange of commodities that these finds might represent. Demand for minerals, specifically tin, has been typically seen as the driving force of this exchange (Radford 1956, 59; Campbell 2007, 138), although some have proposed an underlying political or diplomatic function to this exchange system rather than a purely commercial basis (Harris 2003, 152). Olive oil and wine have been proposed as the potential contents of the LRA1 and LRA2 amphorae, although wine seems increasingly likely (University of Southampton 2005; Pieri 2005, 85, 93; Campbell 2007, 24). LRA4, specifically, has associations with fine wine from Gaza (Pieri 2007, 152), although this type is noted by Campbell as rare within British post-Roman imports (Campbell 2007, 22). However, the amphorae and finewares can potentially be considered as proxies for other commodities such as grain. Paul Reynolds has suggested that the presence of ARS without accompanying North African amphorae at sites on the Atlantic Seaboard and in Britain might indicate that these regions were receiving grain shipments (Reynolds 2010, 111).
In spite of a long period of data collection and extensive publications on the Mediterranean imported pottery, interpretations have remained relatively static, particularly in relation to the chronology and logistics of its arrival. Radford's 1956 publication laid the foundations for these interpretations, suggesting the mid-5th century or later for the beginning of this exchange. The distribution of these wares is described as 'western and exclusive of Roman Britain' and belonging 'to an age when trade was once more flowing along the Atlantic Seaways' (Radford 1956, 67). Thomas' 1959 article describes pottery 'being brought directly by sea from the Byzantine world through the Straits of Gibraltar' (Thomas 1959, 105). The mechanisms for the importation of this pottery are formalised in Michael Fulford's 1989 article; direct shipment from the east Mediterranean is proposed, which is used to demonstrate direct contact between parts of Britain and the Byzantine world in the period c.AD 475-550 (Fulford 1989). He suggests that any Tunisian material might have been collected en route (Fulford 1989, 4). Campbell's synthesis presented a refinement of this model into two non-exclusive phases of Aegean imports c.AD 475-525 and African imports c.AD 525-550, again based on direct, though not 'non-stop', shipments (Campbell 2007, 26, 138).

The model of direct shipment to Britain has a dual foundation – the relative scarcity of comparable pottery on the Atlantic Seaboard, and observations of the unique composition of the British assemblage. In particular, the higher proportion of east Mediterranean ceramics (amphorae and LRC) to North African products (amphorae and ARS) in British assemblages is seen as distinctively different from the pattern in the west Mediterranean (Fulford 1989, 3). This is taken to indicate that
the shipments reaching Britain originated in the Byzantine east and were not redistributed from the west Mediterranean, while the smaller quantities of imported DSP argue against a model of redistribution through Gaul (Fulford 1989, 3). The specific and consistent character of the British assemblages is therefore used to argue for Britain being a 'deliberate objective' of east Mediterranean shipments as part of a wider expansion of east Mediterranean trade in the later 5th century; a model reinforced by reference to contemporary texts and epigraphic evidence (Fulford 1989, 4-5).

Variations on this argument have been proposed, principally Wooding's 'tramp-steamer' model, which, nevertheless, argued for shipments of east Mediterranean origin taking on additional cargo further west (Wooding 1996, 15). Although Wooding incorporated the 'scattered' finds of imports in Atlantic Portugal and Spain into his model, the apparent absence of comparable Mediterranean imports in western France (specifically LRA2 and LRC at urban sites such as Bordeaux) led him to conclude that that shipments did not land between 'Iberia and Cornwall' (Wooding 1996; 41-3) For Campbell, however, the 'coherence' of the 'Aegean package' of imports argued against a model of 'tramp-steaming' and instead for a model of direct transport from the two respective Mediterranean sources (Campbell 2007, 128).

It must be noted that Fulford raised the possibility of future discoveries on the Atlantic Seaboard, highlighting two isolated sites with late Mediterranean imports, specifically Phocaean Red Slip Ware/LRC at Conimbriga in Portugal, and a sherd of Late Roman 1 amphora from
Brittany (Fulford 1989, 3). Likewise, Campbell's 2007 published database includes isolated finds of Mediterranean pottery at sites in western France, while the accompanying monograph presents a map of the distribution of Phocaean Red Slip Ware (LRC) across the western Mediterranean and Atlantic Seaboard (Campbell 2007, 16). In general, however, the limited analysis of comparative data from sites on the Atlantic Seaboard has left the British finds to be largely examined in isolation, which, in turn, has reinforced the apparent exceptional character of the British assemblage. Recent publications from the Continent, particularly on sites in north-west Spain and south-western France, have, however, offered new information on the supply of late Roman pottery to the Atlantic region. These emerging data provide a new opportunity to question these established models, and as a result, to examine patterns of trade or exchange to Britain through the 4th, 5th and 6th centuries.

Internet Archaeology is an open access journal. Except where otherwise noted, content from this work may be used under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution 3.0 (CC BY) Unported licence, which permits unrestricted use, distribution, and reproduction in any medium, provided that attribution to the author(s), the title of the work, the Internet Archaeology journal and the relevant URL/DOI are given.
4. Imported Pottery on the Atlantic Seaboard

Dominique Pieri's study of the Byzantine east Mediterranean wine trade compiled published and unpublished data on imported East Mediterranean amphorae in France of 5th- to 7th-century date, although he noted that his conclusions necessarily focused on sites in the south, given the rarity of examples and generally poorer data in northern regions (Pieri 2005, 2). The number of vessels recorded from sites on the western seaboard was relatively small in comparison with the large quantities of imported amphorae recorded in the south-east, especially at Marseille (Pieri 2005, 7). Nevertheless, isolated finds of late Roman amphorae at sites in western France were noted, including the fragment of LRA1 from l’Île Lavret, Bréhat, in Brittany (as previously mentioned by Fulford) (Pieri 2005, 50). Within the Pays de la Loire a sherd of LRA1 was also identified at Vaas close to the sanctuary at Aubigné-Racan as well as a sherd of LRA2 at Nantes (Pieri 2005, 49-53).

Larger quantities of late Roman amphorae have been identified further to the south, in the region surrounding Bordeaux. Amiel and Berthault's study of late imported amphorae in south-west France discussed the types and relative proportions of North African, East Mediterranean and Spanish amphorae found in the region between the 3rd and 6th centuries, drawing specific distinctions between pottery supplied to the main urban centres at Bordeaux and Toulouse (Amiel and Berthault 1996). Small
quantities of late amphorae were documented at a number of villa and rural sites in the south-west, principally African amphorae and LRA4, but the authors noted that beyond the 5th century, imports were, on the whole, only recovered at the larger urban sites (Amiel and Berthault 1996, 257). Relatively small amounts of 3rd-century imported amphorae were identified both at Bordeaux and Toulouse, but from the 4th century there seems to have been a considerable increase of Spanish and North African imports, with a higher proportion of Spanish vessels at Toulouse, and North African amphorae at Bordeaux (Amiel and Berthault 1996, 256). East Mediterranean amphorae appear at both cities from the 5th century (Amiel and Berthault 1996, 256), linked to a general expansion of east Mediterranean wares (Reynolds 2010, 105) and paralleling their 5th-century distribution in western Britain.

The 6th-century data from Toulouse were limited, but the authors were able to conclude that the two urban centres were tied into different systems of supply. The continuing importation of considerable quantities of Spanish amphorae to Toulouse in the 5th century was in contrast to their infrequency at Bordeaux, where North African vessels were more common and where, by the 6th century, east Mediterranean imports came to dominate (Amiel and Berthault 1996, 256). Observations of proportional differences in the origin of imported amphorae were used to indicate that both cities were ultimately supplied by seaborne commercial routes crossing the Straits of Gibraltar; one route from Lusitania supplying Toulouse via Narbonne, with another, separate channel, conveying North African and eastern products to Bordeaux (Amiel and Berthault 1996, 262; Berthault 1999, 284). Bordeaux, by this date, would
appear not to have been supplied overland via Toulouse but instead by an Atlantic route, which, Berthault argues, ties the settlement to systems reaching the British Isles (Berthault 1999, 153; 2012, 317). These observations refute the model of supply to Britain via overland routes from southern France, as suggested by Bowman (1996, 102).

The ceramic imports to Bordeaux, which seem likely to increase as further excavations are published, demonstrate the significance of this site within exchange systems operating on the Atlantic façade between the 4th and 6th centuries. Reynolds suggests that Bordeaux may, in fact, have been operating as an entrepôt on the Atlantic route supplying post-Roman Britain (Reynolds 2010, 109). Nevertheless, the specific forms of pottery imported to Bordeaux must be considered against the British material before a closer connection can be established. Pieri’s catalogue notes three sites in Bordeaux with late Roman Mediterranean imports. The excavations at Saint-Christoly have not been fully published but produced North African amphorae and LRA4 from 5th-century deposits (Berthault 2012, 311; Pieri 2005, 50). The excavations of the necropolis beneath the basilica at Saint-Seurin again produced North African amphorae and LRA4, here reused for infant inhumations (Pieri 2005, 50; Watier 1973). The recent full publication of the excavations at Place Camille-Jullian, Bordeaux, presented additional data of relevance to the British imports and contrasting evidence for potential connections between the city and sites in western Britain (Maurin 2012). The particular importance of this excavation is that it revealed a continuous stratigraphic sequence between the 1st and 15th centuries and has the potential to provide information on the very latest Mediterranean imports to Bordeaux (Amiel
and Berthault 1996, 255). In addition, the site produced the first Byzantine coins identified from Bordeaux of 6th- and 7th-century date (Bost 2012, 397-8).

Place Camille-Jullian produced significant quantities of late Roman imported pottery, specifically ARS and LRC (Bonifay 2012) and amphorae of Spanish, North African and east Mediterranean origin (Berthault 2012). The amphora assemblage demonstrates parallels with the post-Roman imports in Britain, comprising largely of North African and East Mediterranean amphorae, although there is a higher proportion of the former in the 5th century and the latter in the 6th (Berthault 2012). The 5th-century examples were also reported to include four amphorae of Lusitanian origin; one Almagro 51C and three Almagro 51B amphorae (Berthault 2012, 315). Iberian amphorae have not generally been seen as part of the 'package' reaching post-Roman Britain, although amphorae of southern Spanish and possibly Portuguese origin may have been identified at Tintagel (Reynolds 2010, 108, 292-3).

Again, Berthault proposes that the East Mediterranean amphorae arrived at Bordeaux via the same Atlantic channels supplying Britain, and, citing Fulford's model, interprets these as representing direct shipments from the Byzantine world via Atlantic channels (Berthault 2012, 317). However, some differences with the established pattern of post-Roman imported amphorae in Britain must be noted. The excavations produced six vessels of LRA1, two LRA2 and one LRA3, but also a total of twelve LRA4 (Berthault 2012, 314-16). The latter type, as mentioned, has only been identified in small numbers as a post-Roman import in Britain (Campbell...
In contrast, Place Camille-Jullian was the first site in Bordeaux to reveal East Mediterranean amphorae of types other than LRA4 (Berthault 2012, 317). Pieri notes that away from south-east France only LRA1 and LRA4 are well diffused, and suggests links between LRA4 and the supply of highly prized wine to religious sites – including to Lyon, Tours and Bordeaux (Pieri 2007, 152). Notably, for comparisons with Britain, LRA2 is less common.

Additionally, four Palestinian LRA5/’Bag shaped’ wine amphorae of probable 5th- or 6th-century date were identified at Place Camille-Jullian (Berthault 2012, 316); a type that has not been recognised among the British imports (Campbell 2007, 19). Finally, whereas the ceramic data from Saint-Christoly and Saint-Seurin would suggest exchange with the Mediterranean ceased by the start of the 6th century, the latest East Mediterranean and North African amphorae from Place Camille-Jullian indicated importation into the early 7th century (Berthault 2012, 317), well beyond the mid-6th century date generally given for the end of Mediterranean pottery imports to Britain. If Bordeaux was indeed supplied as part of the same exchange systems, this might indicate a foreshortening of the northern extent of the Atlantic routes by the later 6th century.

Michel Bonifay’s report on the fineware from Place Camille-Jullian also discusses possible links with supply to Britain, but he suggests that the forms do not necessarily reveal a straightforward parallel. The identified LRC from Place Camille-Jullian (five sherds from two vessels) is of the same form LRC3 that characterises its British distribution (Bonifay 2012,
257-8). A sherd of LRC of Hayes Form 3C was also previously recorded from the excavations at Saint-Christoly, Bordeaux (Hayes 1972; Mayet and Picon 1986, 130). Reynolds notes that the majority of LRC found in Britain fits into the period AD 460–550, but mentions the presence of a few early 7th-century LRC Form 10 vessels at Tintagel (Reynolds 2010, 108), as originally identified by Thomas (Thomas 1981, 6). Campbell has, however, identified these same sherds as LRC Form 3E, reaffirming the 'tight' chronology (c.AD 475-525) he proposed for the importation of this ware (Campbell 2007, 14). The ARS from Place Camille-Jullian (a minimum of 14 vessels) also shows some similarities to the vessels recovered in post-Roman contexts in western Britain, principally Hayes Forms 91C, 99A, 103 and 104 (Bonifay 2012, 256). Bonifay, however, identified other, later forms that have not been observed within British assemblages, specifically Hayes 90, 105 and 109A, which again indicate importation to Bordeaux into the first half of the 7th century (Bonifay 2012, 256).

The Place Camille-Jullian excavations may have additional relevance for dating finds of 'DSP' in Britain and Ireland; it produced 4680 sherds of this ware, although a high proportion was thought to be residual in later contexts (Soulas 2012, 247). Campbell suggested a largely 6th-century date for the Insular examples (29 vessels), as the forms encountered seemed to belong later in the DSP repertoire (Campbell 2007, 27-8). Soulas' table of DSP frequency from Place Camille-Jullian records the presence of Rigoir Form 29 mortaria (as found at Tintagel and Dinas Powys) from the later 5th century and throughout the 6th, and Form 16 (also found at Dinas Powys) intermittently from the early 5th, though
more frequently from the mid-5th century onward (Soulas 2012, 247). Considerations of the stratigraphic relationship between DSP forms and the imported Mediterranean wares emerging from excavations at Bordeaux might have further implications for the chronology of Mediterranean and continental imports to Britain.

Research currently being carried out in France by Joachim Le Bomin has further potential to increase the available information on imported pottery in Atlantic regions. Beyond this growing French data, increasing amounts of imported Mediterranean pottery have also been identified from sites along the north and west coast of Spain and Portugal. As mentioned, the imported late Roman pottery at Conimbriga has been referred to in research on the British finds (Fulford 1989, 3; Campbell 2007, 16). Significant quantities of late imported fineware have been identified at the Suevic capital Braga/Bracara Augusta, principally ARS, but also LRC – of which Hayes Form 3 dominates – and two sherds of LRD/Cypriot Red Slip Ware, a ware not yet identified in Britain or Ireland (Quaresma and Morais 2012, 375). Conversely, the site produced a larger proportion of East Mediterranean to North African amphorae – echoing the British pattern – despite the absence of LRA2 (Quaresma and Morais 2012, 380). Mediterranean imports, including LRC form 3 have been identified from various excavations at A Coruña, also in Galicia (López Pérez 2004). The fish-salting complex at Tróia in Portugal has likewise produced imported pottery, mostly dating up to the early to mid-5th century, but with some later fineware forms, including ARS Hayes Forms 91B and 91C and one LRC Hayes form 3, associated with a necropolis at the site following its 5th-century abandonment (Magalhães 2012 365-70). One LRA1 was
identified at a villa site at Gijón in northern Spain (Fernández Ochoa et al. 2006, 143) extending the distribution of these imports.

Of crucial importance to these Atlantic systems, however, is the pottery recovered from recent excavations at the city of Vigo in north-west Spain (Fernández 2010; 2014), where the largest quantity of 5th to 7th-century Mediterranean imports has been identified on the Atlantic. The quantity of LRC alone identified at Vigo exceeds the entire British and Irish assemblage of all contemporary Mediterranean imported pottery (Campbell 2007, xiv; Fernández 2014, 222). As with the British material, the amphorae are principally of east Mediterranean origin, but following the pattern at Bantham rather than Tintagel, LRA1 dominates the assemblage (Fernández 2010, 234-5). Bonifay notes that only the sites of Vigo and Place Camille-Jullian, Bordeaux have the latest imports on the Atlantic Seaboard (dating into the 7th century) (Bonifay 2012, 256). Both locations have examples of late ARS forms that have not been identified in Britain or Ireland. However, Bonifay identifies certain differences in the composition of the two assemblages, specifically the relative proportion of finewares (mostly ARS at Place Camille-Jullian but LRC in contemporary contexts at Vigo), as well as the scarcity of LRA4 at Vigo in comparison with Bordeaux (Bonifay 2012, 256). The incorporation of Vigo into a more complex system of Atlantic transport – as revealed by the work of Adolfo Fernández Fernández – is acknowledged to make sense over the earlier, simple model of direct connection between the east Mediterranean and Britain, but Bonifay indicates that these specific distinctions leave room for the possibility that some goods also arrived at Bordeaux via inland channels (Bonifay 2012, 256). Nevertheless, the
presence of Atlantic DSP at Vigo clearly indicates some sort of direct connection between Vigo and Bordeaux (Reynolds 2010, 105; Bonifay 2012, 256).
5. Recent British Finds

New identifications of Mediterranean imports continue to be made in Britain, permitting understanding the nature of this exchange to be revised. The recent publication of excavations at Bantham produced not only significant quantities of pottery (52 imported amphorae of diverse types and at least two LRC vessels of Hayes Form 3 (Bidwell et al. 2011), but an assemblage revealing some similarities to the emerging pattern seen on Atlantic sites. The amphorae include two examples of LRA4, as well as at least two amphorae of North African origin (Bidwell et al. 2011, 94). Perhaps more significantly, the assemblage is dominated by LRA1, with only a single body sherd of LRA2. The authors note that this might indicate a generally early date for the assemblage (Bidwell et al., 2011, 94; 112), while for Reynolds it indicates LRA2 and LRC did not necessarily travel together (Reynolds 2010, 110). The high proportion of LRA2 has been seen to mark the British assemblage as very distinct in character from that of the west Mediterranean, where LRA1 is typically the most common eastern type (Reynolds 2010, 106). The quantity of LRA2 in Britain and Ireland is certainly, relatively high, but LRA1 would appear to be the most common. Like Bantham, the site at Mothecombe produced a higher proportion of LRA1 (five vessels) to LRA2 (two vessels) (Duggan 2012). This emerging pattern might represent regional differences in supply or variations in the chronology of importation but might also
suggest the British assemblage to be less 'unique' than previously considered, and instead, more closely aligned to Atlantic assemblages.

The 2011 Bantham report also proposed an earlier date than AD 475 for the first Mediterranean imports, possibly AD 450, and as a result raised the possibility of continuous, uninterrupted importation of commodities via Atlantic sea-routes from the later 4th century and throughout the 5th century (Reed et al. 2011, 113). The authors note that North African and possibly 'Palestinian' imported amphorae have been identified in late Roman contexts at Exeter and therefore suggest that the Atlantic sea-routes were still open in the very late Roman period (Bidwell et al. 2011, 113-14). The presence of céramique à l'éponge at Exeter is also seen to reveal late Roman contacts with western France (Bidwell et al. 2011, 114). They propose a model whereby the sites negotiating the exchange of minerals shifted between the late 4th and late 5th century, but although the sites receiving imported Mediterranean pottery changed, the routes of supply did not (Bidwell et al. 2011, 115). The narrow date range of c.AD 475-550 for the importation of Mediterranean pottery has also been questioned at Tintagel, where imports may again have arrived by the mid-5th century, and may, potentially, have continued beyond AD 550 (Barrowman et al. 2007, 332).

Another example from Britain with potential implications for the chronology, and indeed distribution, of Mediterranean imports is the recently reported identification of ARS at Pevensey Castle in East Sussex (Fulford and Rippon 2011). Although African Red Slip ware is an occasional find in Roman contexts up to the 4th century (Bird 1977; Tyers
its 5th/6th-century distribution has been seen as completely separate and associated with the new system supplying imported goods to western parts of Britain. This discovery, therefore, represents the site furthest east with late forms of this pottery, well beyond its established, post-Roman distribution. A body sherd of a possible East Mediterranean amphora may be associated with these finds (Fulford and Rippon 2011, 125).

One sherd of ARS was tentatively identified as the flange from a bowl of Hayes Form 91; variant C of this form has previously been recognised among western British imports at Tintagel and Dinas Powys (Thomas 1981, 8; Campbell 2007, 17), as well as at Bordeaux (Bonifay 2012, 253). Timby suggests an early to mid-5th century date for the Pevensey sherd, in line with earlier variants, 91A and B (Timby 2011, 145), whereas in western British contexts 91C is usually seen as a 6th-century find. A second sherd was matched to Hayes Form 99, which again has been identified previously, although variant 99C, as identified here, is potentially very late – indeed later than any other British or Irish examples of ARS. Thomas catalogued variants 99A and 99B of this form, including examples from Tintagel (Thomas 1981, 8–9). Within the Pevensey report a late 6th to 7th-century date is given for 99C (Timby 2011; Bonifay 2004, 179), although LRFW1 suggested production up to the later 7th century (Cau et al. 2011, 5). Unfortunately these two sherds are not illustrated, preventing comparison with other British finds. Two sherds were from the same vessel, the rim of which was illustrated in the report. It is described as being closest to Hayes Form 75, which has not previously been identified at any British site (Timby 2011, 145). The early
to mid-5th century date given for this sherd is noted to be 'late amongst the British finds' (Timby 2011, 145).

Referring to Bird's study of African Red Slip in Roman Britain (Bird 1977, 272), Timby suggests that these vessels are unlikely to represent 'traded cargoes' directed to the site, but instead might represent personal belongings (Timby 2011, 145). A similar discovery in western Britain would, doubtlessly, be automatically tied to post-Roman, long-distance import systems. The discussion chapter within the report, however, does describe these finds as altering the view that post-Roman Mediterranean imports are only to be found in western Britain (Fulford and Rippon 2011, 125). The authors also suggest a possible association with the previous discovery of DSP at the site (Lyne 2009, 101; Fulford and Rippon 2011, 125). It may be that the ARS from Pevensey raises the possibility of future identifications of Mediterranean pottery in post-Roman Britain beyond the traditional, western distribution. These sherds, however, demonstrate both the difficulties and importance in identifying known and datable forms based on incomplete or fragmentary vessels. As the chronology for the 5th- and 6th-century importation of Mediterranean pottery to Britain is largely founded on matching abraded fragments of fineware to published typologies, such attributions can have far-reaching implications.

The distribution pattern of the imported pottery has also been extended by the discovery at Rhynie in eastern Scotland of a small group of amphora sherds of types LRA1 and LRA2 (Noble et al. 2013, 1142).
Excavations at this Pictish site also produced fragments of glass vessels imported from western France (Noble et al. 2013, 1142).

Overall, these recent publications allow the imported material in Britain to be better aligned with patterns in the west Mediterranean, and reveal that imported pottery in post-Roman Britain is both more varied and more widely distributed than traditionally assumed. It is clear that the later 5th and 6th century witnessed the unprecedented supply of east Mediterranean imports – including new types of amphorae and fineware – to a new group of sites in western Britain and Ireland. There remains, however, a level of uncertainty regarding the first half of the 5th century, and the potential continuation of late Roman patterns. As mentioned, LRA1 and LRA2 are not thought to be imported to Roman Britain, unlike North African amphorae and the East Mediterranean LRA3 and LRA4. Campbell describes the increasing identification of North African and Palestinian amphorae at late Roman urban contexts, including examples from London, Gloucester and Exeter (Campbell 2007, 19-22, 125-6). However, as these could not be confirmed as post-Roman imports he did not include them in his distribution. Typically, the North African amphorae found at these urban sites are of 3rd to late 4th/early 5th century types, and cannot be easily equated with the later African amphora imports identified in the Atlantic and west Mediterranean. The continuing use of the 'Bv' category has somewhat complicated this distinction.

Similarly, Bird's review did not record any forms of ARS that were necessarily 5th-century imports. The latest identified form, a base of ARS 67 from Southwark, was noted to be from a late 4th-century context (Bird
More recently, sherds of ARS were identified at Shadwell in London, but the identified form – Hayes 50/50A – is of 3rd/4th century date (Douglas et al. 2011, 177-9). This site also produced a number of North African amphorae of 3rd/4th century date as well as a *spatheion* type 1; the latter was found in a probable 5th-century context and might feasibly have arrived in the first half of the 5th century (Douglas et al. 2011, 68, 172; Williams 2011, 80). Three small body sherds of LRA3 were also found at Shadwell, but it was not clear if these belonged to the earlier one-handled type or the two-handled type that characterises the post-Roman imports (Williams 2011, 81). Elsewhere, the presence of 'Palestinian' amphorae has suggested a general background of East Mediterranean amphora importation to Britain in the first few decades of the 5th century. An amphora recovered at Billingsgate in London, for example, has been considered to date to the first-half of the 5th century (Marsden 1980, 80-1; Campbell 2007, 125).

In the light of new Atlantic data, such as the amphora group from Bordeaux, as well as the recent evidence from Bantham and Pevensey, future considerations of the Mediterranean amphorae and fine ware interpreted as late Roman imports to Britain have the potential to increase both the chronological range of the post-Roman imports and the extent of their distribution. Certain factors suggest, however, that the western British 'post-Roman' imports represent a separate dynamic – and that there was some break in supply via the Atlantic channels. Firstly, the shift in the focus of Mediterranean imports from urban sites to fortified, hill-top centres and coastal 'beachmarket' sites. Secondly, the lack of locations in Britain with Mediterranean imports of both late 4th/early 5th
century date and later 5th/6th century types (LRA1, LRA2; LRC; late forms of ARS) (Campbell 2007, 126). An unprovenanced LRA1 was noted by Roberta Tomber from the Museum of London collections, but this was discounted as a 'genuine London find' (Tomber 2003, 107). The ARS from Pevensey also presents a possible exception, although it is feasible that these vessels arrived via an alternative, Rhineland, route (Fulford and Rippon 2011, 125). Finally, the evidence emerging from the Atlantic suggests some continuity in exchange, but an overall reduction in importation from the Mediterranean in the middle decades of the 5th century (Fernández 2014, 128, 415-30). It is likely that this pattern will have been reflected, and potentially exaggerated, at the northern reaches of this system.
6. Discussion

This review has not offered an exhaustive list of Atlantic sites with 5th, 6th or 7th century Atlantic imported pottery, but has demonstrated the potential value of comparisons between Britain and sites across the Atlantic region. Further analysis of patterns of Mediterranean imports between Bordeaux, Vigo and other Atlantic sites, and how this compares to Britain, is clearly needed. Nevertheless, this increasing evidence clearly indicates that Britain was not an isolated destination for exchange within the Atlantic, but part of a widespread and persistent Atlantic network. Our understanding of ceramic imports to Britain in the 5th and 6th centuries must now involve a consideration of patterns of supply along Atlantic channels in the same period.

This new understanding allows the established interpretations arising from the British imports to be questioned, particularly the idea of direct connection between the Mediterranean and post-Roman Britain. As discussed, this model is based on the relative scarcity of comparable material on the Atlantic Seaboard, and on the apparent distinctive nature of the British material. The increasing amounts of Mediterranean imports identified on the Atlantic Seaboard certainly refute the first argument. The second factor, the specific composition of the British import assemblage, requires further consideration. Campbell summarised five specific features of the 'Atlantic' group of Mediterranean imports that distinguish it from the pattern in the west Mediterranean and which necessitate an
alternative interpretation of supply. These comprise: a lack of Gazan or Palestinian amphorae, a disproportionately high amount of LRA2, a low proportion of ARS to LRC, an absence of LRD and, finally, the restricted date-range of the imports (Campbell 2007, 127). Each of these factors can be questioned, to some degree, by the recent research and publications that have been discussed, although a number of these observations would appear to remain valid. The new evidence from the Atlantic Seaboard reveals sites that certainly show similarities to the pattern observed in post-Roman Britain but also indicates a greater degree of complexity within the Atlantic region as a whole. The complexities of the relationship between post-Roman Britain, these wider Atlantic systems and between the Atlantic and the Mediterranean can only be understood by further research and analysis on patterns of ceramic distribution between these regions.

Nevertheless, as there is significant evidence of 5th to 7th century imports on the Atlantic Seaboard, and there are sites that share characteristics with the British assemblage, it seems possible that some of the Mediterranean imports on sites in Britain or Ireland may have been redistributed from sites in France or Spain. This might easily be the case for some of the British or Irish sites with only a few sherds and which were already thought to have been supplied by systems of redistribution from south-west Britain. The ultimate origin of the imports cannot be denied, but the argument for simple, direct contact between Britain and the Byzantine world in the 5th century, based solely on the pottery, seems less convincing.
It remains to be clarified, additionally, whether trade with Britain was the driving force of this system. Reynolds questioned whether Atlantic sites such as Braga, Vigo, Conimbriga and Tróia were able to 'make a market in their own right' or simply took advantage of passing shipments to Britain (Reynolds 2010, 108). The continuation of imports to Vigo and Bordeaux beyond the mid-6th century nevertheless suggests that, unless the conventional end-date for the British imports is too early, connections between the Mediterranean and the Atlantic continued after exchange between Britain and the Mediterranean had ceased. Even if trade with Britain was the impetus for the Atlantic system in the 5th century, this may not have remained the case. These questions need to be fully addressed, but regardless, the emerging data from Atlantic sites clearly indicate that 5th and 6th century Britain was part of a more complex system of exchange than previously recognised.
Bibliography

http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/00665983.2012.11020918


Campbell, E. and Bowles, C. 2009 'Byzantine trade to the edge of the world: Mediterranean pottery imports to Atlantic Britain in the 6th century' in M.M. Mango (ed) *Byzantine Trade, 4th-12th Centuries: the archaeology of local, regional and international exchange*, Farnham: Ashgate. 297-313.


Fulford, M.G. 1989 'Byzantium and Britain: a Mediterranean perspective on post-Roman Mediterranean imports in Western Britain and Ireland', Medieval Archaeology 33, 1–6.


Gerrard, J. 2011 'Other imports' in A. Douglas, J. Gerrard and B. Sudds (eds) A Roman Settlement and Bath house at Shadwell: excavations at
Tobacco Dock and Babe Ruth restaurant, The Highway, London, Shadwell
Excavations 1, London: Pre-Construct Archaeology. 81.

Harris, A. 2003 Byzantium, Britain and the West: the archaeology of
cultural identity AD 400–650, Stroud: Tempus.


López Pérez, M.C. 2004 'El comercio de terra sigillata en la provincia de A
Coruña' Brigantium 16, 5-525.

Lyne, M. 2009 Excavations at Pevensey Castle 1936 to 1964, Oxford:
British Archaeological Reports British Series 503.

Magalhães, A.P. 2012 'Late sigillata from fish-salting workshop 1 in Tróia
(Portugal)', Rei Cretariae Romanae Fautorum, ACTA 42, 363-71.


Maurin, L. (ed) 2012 Un quartier de Bordeaux du Ier au VIIIe siècle: les

Mayet, F. and Picon, M. 1986 'Une sigillée phocéenne tardive ('Late
Roman C ware') et sa diffusion en Occident', Figlina 7, 129-42.

Noble, G., Gondek, M., Campbell E. and Cook, M. 2013 'Between
prehistory and history: the archaeological detection of social change
among the Picts', Antiquity 87, 1136-50.

http://dx.doi.org/10.1017/S0003598X00049917


http://dx.doi.org/10.1179/174581711X13103897378447


Riley, J.A. 1979 'Typology of the Hellenistic and Roman coarse pottery of Berenice' in J.A. Lloyd (ed) *Excavations at Sidi Khrebish Benghazi (Berenice)*, Supplements to Libya Antiqua, 6.2, Tripoli: Dept. of
Antiquities, Ministry of Teaching and Education, People's Socialist Libyan Arab Jamahiriya. 112-236.


Thomas, C. 1959 'Imported pottery in Dark Age western Britain', *Medieval Archaeology* 3, 89–111.

Thomas, C. 1981 *A Provisional List of Imported Pottery in post-Roman Western Britain and Ireland*, Redruth: The Institute of Cornish Studies.


http://dx.doi.org/10.2307/526878

Wooding, J.M. 1996 Communication and Commerce along the Western Sealanes AD 400-800, Oxford: Tempus Reparatum.
Acknowledgements

I am grateful to Michel Bonifay, Ewan Campbell, James Gerrard, Sam Turner, Mark Jackson, Amanda Kelly, Kevin Greene, Adolfo Fernández Fernández, Ana Patrícia Magalhães, Joachim Le Bomin and Frédéric Berthault for providing information of assistance to this article.

Internet Archaeology is an open access journal. Except where otherwise noted, content from this work may be used under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution 3.0 (CC BY) Unported licence, which permits unrestricted use, distribution, and reproduction in any medium, provided that attribution to the author(s), the title of the work, the Internet Archaeology journal and the relevant URL/DOI are given.

University of York legal statements