Conservation Unit Laboratory Record Card

UL No: 09 / 245

Object Name: Roman Flagon

Owner: Saffron Walden Museum

Owner's No: 5323

Treatment Instructions: Thoroughly clean, stabilise a running crack and fill for support purposes only. Colour match replacement areas in detail

Description

Materials: Ceramic- It is an archaeological earthenware with a pale body and no applied decoration

Dimensions: The circumference around the largest point of the body measures approximately 53cm.
It is 24cm in height.

Construction / manufacture: It can be defined as a coil pot, a method which layers rolled out strips of clay into the desired shape of the pot. These were then worked together by hand and fired. The distinguishing spiral pattern can be seen on the inside of the pot.

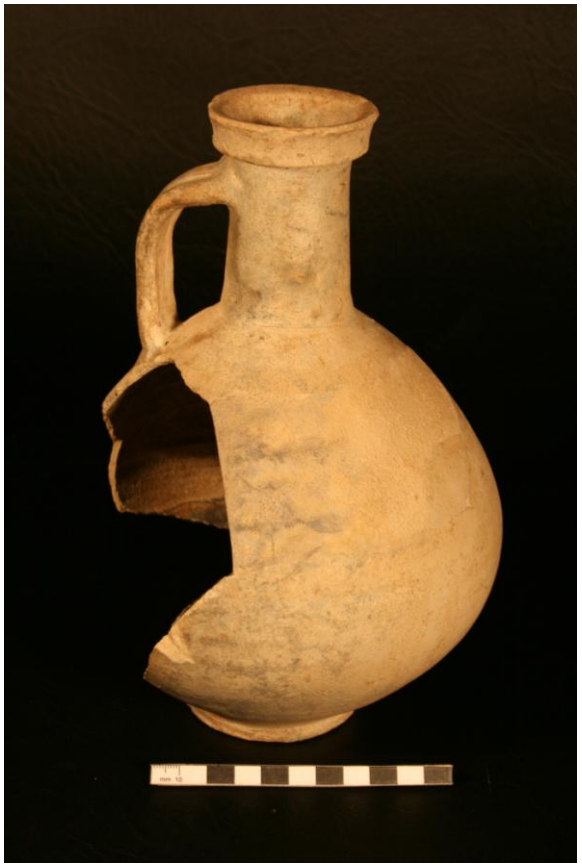
Historical / cultural background: Its thin neck, small handle and bowled base can be categorised as the shape of a flagon. It was made in the Roman period and was used to hold liquid, most commonly wine. They are therefore practical, and were used equally across all social classes.

Condition

Structure: It was broken into three pieces, and had suffered a substantial loss. There was a running crack crossing the base shard from the edge in to the centre. It was not stable, and any mishandling would have resulted in further breakages.

Surface: The surface was extremely dirty with a mixture of engrained soil and small hardened deposits. On the inside of the base and neck the surface changed to a dark charcoal colour which appeared less porous. This most likely was a result to a reducing atmosphere in the kiln when firing.

Photo / Drawing, with scale.



Treatment.

The removal of surface dirt:
Hard deposits were first lifted with a scalpel; the pot was then dusted with a hard haired brush. This removed a substantial amount of loose dirt, but could not penetrate into the small pores of the surface. Therefore each shard was suspended in turn in a solution of water and symperonic, and a tooth brush was used to scrub each surface.

Stabilising
The running crack which appeared in the base shard was stabilised using a mixture of Paraloid B72 and acetone. Paraloid was chosen for its brilliant durability and strength, whereas acetone was added to make it more fluid. It was applied by dripping the solution in to the crack from the end of a cocktail stick. The opposing sides of the crack were pulled together and held in place until adequate tack permitted removal.

Bonding
The shards were bonded using Paraloid B72 as it is reversible, strong and colourless. It was applied neat to all break edges using a small paint brush to maximise the strength of the adhesive. This was important due to the missing support of absent shards.

Filling
Due to its large size, the fill was done in two steps. Dental plaster was used for its ease of application, reversibility and soft finish. It was dispensed from the inside onto the positioned dental wax mould using a pipette. It was then left to dry for 24 hours, and the second part of the fill was done following the exact process. Once dry, the fill was delicately sanded using an increasing grade of micromesh.

Colour Matching
Colour matching was carried out using a mixture of liquid golden acrylics, powder pigment and a small amount of fumed silica. This created a slightly drier and more powdered paint, which helped in creating a textured surface to match that of the porous body. A more fluid base colour was washed on to the fill first, with the textured paint being stippled on afterwards.
Pigment variations within the surface of the pot were then worked across the fill using a small stippling brush.

Results of analysis / tests.

N/A

Aftercare / environmental recommendations.

- If being displayed, the cabinet should be placed in an area which is not susceptible to large measures of vibrations. It should also not be over crowded with objects.
- If being placed into storage, the flagon should be appropriately supported and covered to avoid the development of further surface dirt. Again this storage should not be overcrowded, as this may lead to accidents
- Ceramics can tolerate a wide range of RH and temperature, however drastic or regular fluctuations may cause surfaces to spall. Therefore these must be kept constant.
- However to prevent the growth of fungus or bacteria especially on the packaging, RH must be kept under 65%