

# Roman Middlewich Teachers' Pack

## Roman Pottery

### Information sheet 2

#### Types of pottery commonly found in Britain

- Grey ware (Black Burnished Ware): often used for cooking though finer types might be used at table
- Samian ware : copper-coloured and highly glazed. Used for tableware. Often highly decorated. Imported from Gaul.
- Red Sandy ware. Locally made in Cheshire. Very absorbent so tended to be disposed of readily and replaced.
- Nene Valley ware: made in eastern Britain. Some of this was quite ornate. Typically it had a dark slip.

#### Some common pots:

##### **Amphora (plural amphorae)**

These were large containers made of pottery that were used to transport a range of liquids and solids. They might contain dried fruits, capers and alum from the central Mediterranean islands; olive-oil from southern Spain; sweet wine from southern France. They were also used for storage in the kitchen for dried foods and liquids. The shape enabled them to be stacked in the hold of a ship.

##### **Mortarium (plural mortaria)**

Mortaria were pottery vessels which were lined with grit inside and were used for mixing and grinding food in (i.e. a pestle and mortar). They had a spout for pouring and a heavy rim that was easy to hold.

Other uses for pottery:

- briquetage – baked clay used to make pans for use in saltworking.
- chimney-pot – one was found in Middlewich.
- oil lamps – these were used to light rooms and corridors and were usually placed on metal sconces set into a wall. A look at photographs of Roman finds will show a wide variety of decoration on lamps.
- spindle whorl – used as a weight for spinning wool.

A source of information at many different levels is

[www.romansussex.co.uk](http://www.romansussex.co.uk). Type in the word "pot" and many examples will be found, with useful descriptive text.

Roman coins were distributed throughout the empire and were the common form of currency. This made trade easier.