Tankards of the British Iron Age

Appendix S2: Chronology of British Tankards

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**Aylesford, Kent**

The Aylesford tankard was deposited with a cremation (Grave ‘Z’) and is dated by its association to a number of pedestalled cinerary urns. Birchall (1964, 22–3) dated the grave, based on the pedestalled cinerary urns, to the later period of cemetery use from 50–10 bc. These wheel-made pedestal urns are of a type known to be common in 1st century bc burials with examples from Hinxton Rings dated 50–10 bc (Hill *et al.* 1999, 262).

Summary: 50–10 bc, Group I

**Bartlow, Cambridgeshire**

The tankard from Bartlow (now lost) was deposited within a sealed sepulchre alongside a coin of Hadrian dating ad 117–138 (Gage 1834) giving a *terminus post quem* for the burial of ad 117. These burial mounds have been dated by their grave goods to the 1st and early 2nd century ad (Eckardt *et al*. 2009, 62). Therefore a date around ad 117–125 is plausible for this burial.

Summary: ad 117–125, Group V

**Biddlesden, Northamptonshire**

The tankard fittings and handle from Biddlesden have been dated by their close stratigraphic association with Claudio-Neronian pottery dating ad 41–68 (Joy 2006).

Summary: ad 41–68, Group IV

**Brecon Gaer, Powys**

The two tankard handle fragments recovered by a metal detectorist at Brecon Gaer Roman fort (Lewis 2011) can be tentatively dated by the scatter of other metal detected finds from the site. These include terrets, strap unions, and early Roman coinage dating primarily from the mid-1st to early 2nd century ad (Gwilt & Lodwick pers. comm.).

Summary: AD 50–125, Group IIa

**Bredon Hill (Kemerton Camp), Worcestershire**

This handle was originally dated contextually to the ‘reconstruction period’ of the hillfort in the early 1st century ad (Hencken 1938, 67; Corcoran 1952a, 88). This date range seems probable given the similarity of form to the handle from Colchester, Essex similarly dated to the mid-1st century ad.

Summary: ad 1–50, Group IIa

**Bulbury Hillfort, Dorset**

The metalwork from Bulbury hillfort includes metalwork fragments from a tankard, sword, mirror, copper-alloy bowls, cast bull figures, and iron firedogs. This assemblage was likely to have been heavily disturbed by ploughing and Cunliffe (1972, 306) has suggested that these objects probably represent a pair of burials and a blacksmiths hoard. There is certainly precedence for the tankard being included in a burial along with other feasting equipment or swords as at Aylesford, Welwyn B, Elveden, or Kelvedon. As such, a comparable date range of 50–10 bc can likely be attributed to this example.

Summary: 50–10 bc, Group II

**Caerleon**, **Newport**

Recovered during excavations at Caerleon Roman fort, this handle was found in Block B, Phase II and is dated contextually to *c.* ad 90 or later (Evans & Metcalf 1992, 152).

Summary: ad 90–125, Group VII

**Caernarfon, Gwynedd**

The Caernarfon handle was found within an unstratified context within the Roman fort but is dated to the late-1st and early 2nd century ad by material found close by (Casey & Davies 1993). This example shares strong stylistic links to the polychrome enamelling style witnessed on the Staffordshire Moorlands Pan which dates to the mid-2nd century ad (Opper 2008). MacGregor (1976) also points out its similarities to the dragonesque brooch type which date to the 1st and 2nd centuries ad.

Summary: ad 90–125, Group VIIa

**Camerton, Somerset**

Three tankard handles were recovered at Camerton as part of a large group of metal detector finds. Jackson’s (1990) study of the site showed that of the 125 datable copper-alloy finds about 75% were datable to the mid-1st century ad. A further 15% lay within a broader dating bracket, from the 1st century bc to 1st century ad (Jackson 1990, 18). The nature of the site and the material evidence suggest that the three tankard handles recovered were likely to have been part of a large metalwork hoard deposited at the closing of the nearby Roman fort (Jackson 1990). Based on strong stylistic comparisons to examples from Seven Sisters and Biddlesden a mid–late 1st century ad date is probable.

Summary: ad 50–75, Groups IIa & IV

**Carlingwark Loch, Dumfries & Galloway**

Part of a hoard of native and Roman metalwork contained within a cauldron (Piggott 1953). Material likely dating to the late 1st or 2nd century ad.

Summary: ad 75–150, Group VI

**Castle Craig, Perth & Kinross**

Recovered in the excavation of a broch overlying the ramparts of Castle Craig hillfort. Within the same context (601) was found a finger ring, fibula brooch, copper-alloy sheet, and a sherd of samian ware (James 2012). A date of mid-1st to 2nd century ad has been proposed for these finds, though considering the tankard handle parallels, a 2nd century ad date seems more convincing.

Summary: ad 100–200, Group VII

**Catterick, Yorkshire**

The Catterick tankard handle was deposited at a Roman canabae and is contextually dated to Period 6a, spanning ad 355–380 (Wilson 2002, 57–8). However, this dating should be called into question due to the clear parallels in form and decoration shared with the Caernarfon handle and the Staffordshire Moorlands Pan, both of which date to the 2nd century ad. It is therefore argued that this tankard handle is likely either residual within its stratigraphic context, or a re-deposition of a 2nd century deposit within a later context. The attachment lugs parallel those on the independently dated examples from Caernarfon, Okstrow Broch, and Castle Craig, adding credence to the aforementioned 2nd century date.

Summary: ad 100–200, Group VIIa

**Corbridge, Northumberland**

The tankard from Corbridge Roman fort was recovered from a wooden chest beneath the floor of an early Roman building and was originally attributed to the earliest phase of occupation at the site, from ad 98–105 (Daniels 1968). This has since been reinterpreted on the basis that the lid of the chest was originally misinterpreted as the floorboards sealing the chest (Allason-Jones & Bishop 1988). Based on a revised contextual understanding of the hoards deposition it has instead been placed to Phase II or III, dating ad 122–138 (Allason-Jones & Bishop 1988, 6). This is confirmed by the presence of a 2nd century AD enamel inlaid belt plate within the hoard. It is worth noting that this example shows evidence of repair and handle replacement suggesting multiple owners and long use-life prior to deposition.

Summary: ad 122–138, Group V

**Elveden, Suffolk**

This pair of tankards (or single two-handled tankard) was originally dated to the middle of the 1st century ad (Corcoran 1952a, 88). However, the cinerary urns are parallels of those found alongside the Aylesford tankard, as well as to examples from Hinxton Rings, therefore arguing instead for a similar date range of 50–10 bc.

Summary: 50–10 bc, Group I

**Greenhill, Weymouth, Dorset**

This tankard handle was found in association with a group of copper-alloy objects including a ‘Wraxall’ type neck-ring, nail cleaner, an ivy-leaf horse pendant, and a belt plate with niello decoration (Megaw 1971, 149–53). The horse trappings and plaque are well-dated to the early campaigning period in Britain and similarities of the neck-ring to the Boverton burial group suggest a date span of ad 50–80.

Summary: ad 50–80, Group V

**Hallaton, Leicestershire**

A tankard handle from the votive site at Hallaton, though unstratified, has been dated by its location close to pits containing pig bone, suggesting a mid-1st century ad date (Score 2011). This dating is supported by stylistic similarities shared in the Seven Sisters, Biddlesden, and Camerton tankard handles.

Summary: ad 50–75, Group IV

**Hayling Island, Hampshire**

Two tankard handles were deposited within the votive material associated with this late Iron Age shrine (Downey *et al.* 1980). The majority of this votive material is dated 50 bc to ad 50 though there is some coinage and metalwork dated earlier (Soffe pers. comm.). The Hayling Island I and II tankard handles share strong stylistic links to the Holcombe and Aston mirrors respectively, with the former dating ad 25­–60 and the latter dating 75–25 bc (Joy 2010). The 50 bc to ad 50 deposition date for these tankard handles is therefore consistent.

Summary: 50 bc–ad 50, Groups II & IIa

**Hod Hill, Dorset**

Two tankard handles were recovered from ploughing of the hillfort in the mid-19th century. A Roman fort on the western half of the site makes up much of the area ploughed at this time (Brailsford 1962, viii). It is therefore likely that the tankard handles were originally deposited within the Roman fort. Given the short occupation of structural elements indicated by finds – including coinage, samian ware, and military fittings – Brailsford (1962, viii) suggests a duration of ad 43–60 for the fort. This date range is in agreement to other handles with similar form.

Summary: ad 43–60, Groups III & IV

**Intercisa, Dunaujváros (Fejér County), Hungary**

The tankard handle found at Intercisa Roman fort might be linked to the British auxiliary unit which inhabited the site from ad 101–105 (Lőrincz 2001, 17). This is confirmed by funerary inscription that reads ‘In Intercisa died a Sesquiplicarius the alae [I] Britannica, where his brothers and heirs put the grave stone’. The suggested date range is in agreement with comparable examples from Caernarfon and Catterick.

Summary: ad 100–120, Group VIIa

**Kelvedon**, **Essex**

The warrior burial from Kelvedon contained tankard fittings and a handle indicating the likely interment of a complete vessel. Sealey (2007, 13) has dated this example to 75–25 bc based on the Aylesford-Swarling pottery within the grave combined with the lack of imported Roman tableware. This is supported chronologically by the stylistic similarities to the mirror handles from Aston, Colchester, and Dorton (Sealey 2007, 13; see Joy 2010, 129–31). Given the stylistic and deposition parallels to other tankard handles this example likely dates to around the mid-1st century bc.

Summary: 75– bc BC, Group I

**Kew, Middlesex**

A sample of the yew stave was radiocarbon dated 350–50 cal. bc (OxA-17509, 2131±29 bp) though it is probably 210–110 cal. bc (68% probability) (Garrow *et al.* 2009). Yew is a slow growing and long-lived tree species and likely suffers from the old wood effect; therefore the radiocarbon dating of this sample is unreliable. Stylistically the handle of this tankard fits into Group IIa with a suggested date range of ad 1–60.

Summary: No dating possible (though ad 1–60 is suggested based on stylistic parallels only), Group IIa

**Langstone, Newport**

The Langstone tankard was recovered from a field at a distance of 12.8 m from a hoard consisting of two bronze bowls and a strainer. The hoard itself is dated stylistically to ad 50–75 (Gwilt 2012). Given its proximity and the association of drinking vessels it is likely that the tankard shares a roughly similar deposition date of around ad 50–125 (Gwilt pers. comm.). It is notable that the Langstone tankard handle is an exact parallel of one found at Loughor Roman fort (see below). The handle of the Langstone tankard was a replacement for an earlier handle and can therefore only be used to date the later use of this vessel.

Summary: ad 50–125, Group misc.

**Loughor,** **Swansea**

The tankard handle from Loughor Roman fort was deposited within a late infilling material of a well and its deposition probably dates to a period long after the well had gone out of use (Gwilt & Chapman pers. comm.). The dating of this context is unclear and has a date range of ad 115/120–260 (Marvell & Owen-John 1997, 69–70) though is regarded to have likely been deposited in the early- to mid-2nd century AD (Gwilt & Chapman pers. comm.). Given the parallel to the handle from the Langstone tankard this date should be extended to cover the late 1st century ad.

Summary: ad 75–150, Group misc.

**Newstead, Scottish Borders**

Two tankard handles were recovered from excavations at Newstead Roman fort. Newstead I was associated with material from one of the ‘early’ pits underlying a cobbled surface which was deemed contemporary with the bath house dated ad 88–90 (MacGregor 1976, 290). Thus a deposition date range of ad 70–90 is suggested. Strong parallels to the Seven Sisters V handle are visible in the sheet metal form and zigzag incised decoration technique, further endorsing the suggested dating. The Newstead II handle was recorded as an unstratified find, though its similar form would suggest a date in line with that of the Newstead I handle.

Summary: ad 70–90, Group V

**Okstrow Broch, Orkney**

This tankard handle was associated with two fragments of type D45 samian ware dating to the late 2nd or 3rd century ad and a penannular brooch dating to the 3rd or 4th century ad (MacGregor 1976, 291). However, MacGregor (1976, 291) notes that the excavators were unsure of the phasing for occupation at the site and therefore this may indeed be earlier. The Caerleon tankard handle is a close parallel, dating ad 90–125. This may therefore suggest a likely date in the 2nd century ad for the Okstrow Broch tankard handle.

Summary: No dating possible (though ad 90–150 is suggested based on stylistic parallels), Group VII

**Ornavasso, Piedemont, Northern Italy**

Recovered from a burial (grave 1) within San Bernardo cemetery in northern Italy. Originally dated to the early 1st century bc; Spratling (1972, 216) gives a revised date based on the re-analysis of the site chronology which is likely to have a *terminus post quem* of 50 bc (Graue 1974; Haeussler 2013, 138–9).

Summary: 50–1 bc, Group II

**Pentuan, Cornwall**

A sample of one of the yew staves from this tankard was radiocarbon dated giving a date range of 200–40 cal. bc (OxA-17366, 2096±27 bp) (Garrow *et al.* 2009). However, the wooden staves probably had a large inbuilt age and therefore this date can only provide a *terminus post quem*. Stylistically this example shows links to later tankard handles with perforating lugs and is therefore suggested as dating to the 2nd century ad.

Summary: No dating possible (though ad 90–200 is suggested based on stylistic parallels only), Group VII

**Porth Dafarch, Anglesey**

This tankard handle was recovered in the 19th century and dated by Corcoran (1952a, 90) to the 3rd or 4th centuries ad. However, Stanley (1876, 140) describes this example, excavated in 1875–6, as being found at a depth of just under 2 m (6 ft) within one of a cluster of chambers. No reliable contextual or stratigraphic evidence is identified and therefore this example should be deemed an unstratified find. This tankard handle shares strong similarities with the Puddlehill, Ornavasso, and Hayling Island examples and therefore a strong case can be made for its likely deposition within the 1st half of the 1st century ad or earlier.

Summary: No dating possible (though 50 bc–ad 50 is suggested based on stylistic parallels only), Group II

**Puddlehill, Bedfordshire**

This tankard handle was deposited in the upper layers of a V-shaped boundary ditch (enclosure ditch 1) at the Iron Age settlement of Puddlehill (Corcoran 1952b, 233; Matthews 1976, 177–8). The handle was closely associated with two sherds of Iron Age pottery; using the pottery sequence from the site Corcoran (1952b, 234) dates this example to the turn of the 1st century ad (Matthews 1976, 181). The linked ring style of the Puddlehill tankard finds strong parallels in mirror handles from Joy’s (2010) type IV with dated examples from Holcombe (ad 25–60) and Portesham (ad 40–60).

Summary: 10 bc–ad 60, Group II

**Salmondsbury, Gloucestershire**

An iron tankard handle recovered from Site III at Salmondsbury Camp was found underneath paving slabs and is dated to Period II, phase 1 (Dunning 1976, 111). A coin of Claudius I and two brooches overlie the paving in this area providing a probable *terminus ante quem* in the late 1st century ad.

Summary: ad 50–90, Group V

**Seven Sisters, Neath Port-Talbot**

The five tankard handles deposited in the Seven Sisters hoard have been dated by their association to diagnostic pieces of Roman military equipment within the hoard dating ad 50–75 (Davies & Spratling 1976, 139). This has been re-assessed and confirmed based on the reappraisal of diagnostic metalwork and the technology of decorative features (Davis & Gwilt 2008).

Summary: ad 50–75, Groups III, IV & V

**Shapwick, Somerset**

The complete tankard from Shapwick was recovered from a peat bog and found along with a lead-alloy (pewter) pedestalled bowl and a copper-alloy bowl. This hoard has a suggested deposition date of ad 388 based on nearby hoards (Gray 1939, 202). These three hoards are dated by their inclusion of coins dating to the 4th century ad (Dewar & Godwin 1963, 41). The lead-alloy bowl found in the tankard hoard is comparable to examples from Appleshaw, Hampshire (Engleheart *et al.* 1898) and Chew Stoke, Somerset (Rahtz & Greenfield 1977, fig. 110) which date to the 4th century ad. Furthermore, a study on the bog stratigraphy showed that all four hoards were in the same ‘Pollen Zone VIII’ (Dewar & Godwin 1963). The form and decorative style of the handles attachment is unique, though otherwise the features of the vessel parallel other extant examples. Therefore, its inclusion within a late 4th century votive deposit is indeed unusual. As such it is argued that this example is likely to be an heirloom (Earwood 1993, 75) curated and subsequently deposited along with later drinking or feasting vessels a significant period after its initial construction.

Summary: Deposition ad 388–400 though probably an heirloom, Group VII

**Colchester (Sheepen), Essex**

This tankard handle was recovered from a stratified context in period IV, site A1 at Camulodunum (Hawkes & Hull 1947, 329). Other finds within this context included coins of Claudius as well as pottery and has been dated to ad 49–61 (Hawkes & Hull 1947; Corcoran 1952a, 88).

Summary: ad 49–61, Group IIa

**Trawsfynydd, Gwynedd**

A yew stave from this tankard has been radiocarbon dated to 400–200 cal. bc (OxA-17439, 2270±30 bp) (Garrow *et al.* 2009). This dating has been suggested as being unreliable as the yew species is long lived, and the staves could have been hundreds of years old prior to being utilised. In comparison to the radiocarbon dates from the Kew and Pentuan tankards, the Trawsfynydd tankards dating is significantly earlier. This is likely due to the use of wood with a significantly higher inbuilt age than was used in the other tankards. Stylistically the Trawsfynydd tankard handle features a hybridised form with the reverse s-shaped openwork motif which is typical of the Curvilinear Group, whilst the almond shaped display panel and perforating lugs are typical of the Lugged Group. The edge clasp on the rim of this tankard shares stylistic similarities to features on horse bits, vessel fittings, and brooches dating to the mid–late 1st century ad (Gwilt pers. comm.). Yet it is with the enamelled and lugged Caernarfon and Catterick handles where the style of the Trawsfynydd handle truly resonates. Bearing these factors in mind, it is suggested that this tankard fits into an intermediate date within the conflict horizon of the Curvilinear and Lugged handle groups. Therefore a date range of ad 75–125 is proposed.

Summary: ad 75–125, Group VIIa

**Waddon Hill (Stoke Abbot), Dorset**

This handle was found at the Roman military fort and therefore must postdate the Roman invasion in ad 43. Identifiable coins from the site include 7 Durotrigian staters, 3 Republican, 1 Augustus, 1 Agrippa, 1 Tiberius, 1 Germanicus, 1 Nero Drusus, 2 Caligula, 15 Claudius which Webster (1960, 88) argues is strongly indicative of early and limited occupation of the fort by the Roman army. Consequently a date range of ad 43–60 is suggested.

Summary: ad 43–60, Group III

**Waterhouses CP, Staffordshire**

Recorded under the Portable Antiquities Scheme, the tankard handle from Waterhouses CP was found within 17 square metres of a number of Roman period objects including a brooch, steelyard weight, iron snaffle, and ring (Slarke 2008). The brooch is of the Polden Hill type which is dated to ad 75–175 (Worrell 2007). Considering the proximity it is likely that these objects were deposited together and therefore a deposition date of late 1st to 2nd century ad is likely.

Summary: ad 75–175, Group VII

**Welwyn B, Hertfordshire**

This tankard was deposited alongside other feasting materials including iron firedogs, patera, Dressel 1b amphorae, and two silver cups (Smith 1912). Stead (1967) dates the burial assemblage by the amphorae and silver cups to the last quarter of the 1st century bc. This has since been revised by Sealey (2009, 7–8) based on the re-dating of the Dressel 1 amphorae within this assemblage to *c.* 75–25 bc.

Summary: 75–25 bc, Group III