

# A Romano-British rural site at Eaton Socon, Cambridgeshire

## Specialist Report

### Small Finds



*by Rob Court*

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### **Fired clay**

Twenty-six fragments of fired clay (weighing 454g) were recovered, all from Romano-British features, from both pits and gullies. All are featureless, and there are no identifiable objects. Some pieces have irregular surfaces suggesting they are structural in origin, either from pit or hearth linings or from wattle and daub structures, although only one piece, from quarry pit 949, had a clear wattle; this feature (which also contained Romano-British pottery) produced 87% (by weight) of all the fired clay from the site.

### **Ceramic building material**

Forty-one fragments (2260g) of ceramic building material, of both Romano-British and medieval/post-medieval date, were recovered. The Romano-British material (15 fragments, 941 g), which were found in a variety of features including as gullies, wells and pits, comprised 14 pieces of tile and one piece of brick. The Romano-British tiles, which included three *tegulae* and one abraded piece of box flue tile, are thicker and not as well fired as the medieval/post-medieval tiles, and are also more abraded.

The medieval/post-medieval material (23 fragments, 1065g) which represents 47% of the assemblage, is made up predominantly of tile, with some brick present. The objects were recovered from a range of feature types including ditches, pits and wells. There are also three pieces of modern land drain.

### **Clay pipe**

Four clay pipe stems (weighing 10g) were recovered but showed no obvious distribution pattern across the site.

### **Stone**

Four fragments of stone were recovered, all were from Romano-British contexts. A single piece, from context 970 (droveway ditch 60), may have been worked; it is very smooth with fairly regular sides, but is too incomplete to indicate its original size and shape. A stone from context 568 (pit 567) could have been used as a rubber. Both of these pieces show evidence of being burnt. The other two pieces have no signs of working, burning or other activity; that from context 375 (enclosure ditch 9) could have arrived on site by glacial, rather than human, action.

### **Worked flint**

Thirty-eight pieces of flint (weighing 387g) were recovered from 19 features, all but two of which also contained Romano-British pottery (or were stratigraphically later than Romano-British features). All appear to have derived from gravel flint, and their condition ranges from fresh to heavily patinated, with some pieces showing evidence of edge damage.

The assemblage consists of flakes and core material, and there are no tools or utilised pieces. Two flakes from tree-throw 1001 are much longer and thinner than the rest, possibly indicating a Mesolithic/Neolithic date; the others are generally

broad and squat and have been struck with a hard hammer, suggesting a Bronze Age date.

### **Burnt flint**

Thirty-six pieces of burnt, unworked flint (weighing 381g) were recovered from eight features. This material is intrinsically undatable but is usually associated with prehistoric activity. Hearth 96, which contained 82% (by weight), is the only feature that contained no other diagnostic finds; the other seven features contained either Romano-British pottery or post-medieval ceramic building material and the burnt flint from them is probably residual..

### **Worked bone**

One piece of worked bone was recovered from quarry pit 949 (context 866). It is part of a needle/pin, 41mm long, that has been broken and the head is missing (SF 23).

### **Glass**

Seven pieces of glass (weighing 27g), all from Romano-British vessels, were recovered. They were found in a variety of Romano-British feature types, but with no discernible distribution pattern. One sherd has ribbed decoration and is likely to be from a convex jug of the late 1st/early 2nd century (Price and Cottam, 1998, fig. 66).

### **Metalwork**

Sixty-six pieces of metalwork (weighing 1857 g) were recovered, including 50 of iron (1718g), 12 of copper alloy (42g) and four of lead (97g). All have been X-radiographed, and some of the copper alloy objects have been cleaned and conserved.

The copper alloy pieces include six coins, a Colchester-type two-piece brooch, a large spherical headed pin (possibly a hair pin), a bracelet and a piece of sheet metal. Most of these objects came from the east of the site, from a variety of feature types.

The iron objects consists largely of structural pieces; most are nails and two parts of hinges were also found. All but eight were found in Romano-British features. The only possible tool is a punch recovered from Romano-British pit 524.

Two of the pieces of lead were identifiable objects: a disc with hole in the centre (SF 52), possibly a weight, and a Romano-British pot mend (SF 53) – the only lead object recovered from a dated context.

### **Slag**

Metalworking debris is entirely made up of iron working slag, comprising 20 pieces (weighing 6082g), with 70% of it coming from unphased gully 68. The rest came from other features concentrated along the line of the Romano-British driveway ditch 60.

### **Shell**

The shell (210 pieces, 3750g), consisting mostly of oyster, came predominantly from Romano-British features in the eastern half of the site, with only a few fragments from west of driveway ditch 60. The assemblage comprised 89 left valves, 77 right valves

and 44 unknown, but there was no pattern in the distribution of the valves, suggesting that there were no specific areas of preparation or consumption.

### **References**

Price, J. and Cottam, S., 1998, *Romano-British Glass Vessels: A Handbook*, CBA Practical Handbook in Archaeol. **14**



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