



making sense of heritage

Land at Damson Parkway, Solihull

Finds

By Grace Jones and Lorraine Mephram



FINDS

The quantities of finds recovered were relatively small, and the range of material types limited (see Table 1, which includes finds from both evaluation and excavation). Most datable material (pottery, ceramic building material) is Romano-British, with a small quantity of later material (all from evaluation contexts). The condition of the assemblage is variable, but is generally fair to poor; it is highly fragmented, and all material types have suffered high levels of abrasion. Only the Romano-British pottery is reported on here in any detail, with a brief summary of other finds.

Table 1: Finds totals by material type

Material Type	Evaluation		Excavation	
	No.	Wt. (g)	No.	Wt. (g)
Animal Bone	15	93	145	636
Ceramic Building Material	57	3009	77	6871
Fired Clay	1	23	3	92
Iron	2	31	2	81
Pottery	89	1086	339	5324
Slag	15	573	1	13
Stone	17	2516		

Pottery

By Grace Jones

The pottery assemblage (428 sherds, 6410 g) was largely of 2nd- to 4th-century AD date, with a small quantity of post-medieval wares (Table 2). It was recovered from 72 contexts across the site, of which 62 produced ten sherds or fewer and only two (from gully 1124 and ditch 1107) contained more than 25 sherds, the minimum number that is considered useful for dating a feature (PCRG 2010, 15, after Shennan 1981). The material is in moderate condition to poor condition, with many of the softer oxidised and fineware sherds exhibiting abrasion to their surfaces, despite an overall mean sherd weight of 15 g.

Table 2: Quantification of pottery by ware (number and weight in grammes)

Ware group	Ware	Number	Weight (g)
Imported finewares	Central Gaulish samian	1	81
	East Gaulish samian	1	3
	samian, unsourced	8	36
Amphorae	Dressel 20	2	212
Mortaria	Mancetter-Hartshill mortaria	38	1014
	Oxfordshire colour-coated mortaria	1	19
	Oxfordshire whiteware	1	44
	Unsourced whiteware	2	49
British finewares	Nene Valley colour-coated ware	5	31
	Oxfordshire colour-coated ware	4	44
Oxidised wares	Fine, micaceous oxidised ware	2	24
	Severn Valley oxidised ware	13	357
	Oxidised ware, unsourced	68	785
	Whiteware	3	15
Coarsewares	SE Dorset Black Burnished ware	22	196
	SW Black Burnished ware	1	17
	Greyware	215	3165
	Grog-tempered ware	1	14
	Sandy	18	148
	Shell-tempered	13	125
	Vesicular fabric	5	14
Post-medieval	All wares	4	17
<i>Total</i>		<i>428</i>	<i>6410</i>

Composition of the assemblage

The pottery assemblage is relatively small, with few diagnostic vessels. Most were drawn from the local industries, predominantly the Mancetter-Hartshill kilns. Located just over 20 km to the north-east of the site, production flourished from the beginning of the 2nd century, continuing until an undefined point in the 4th century (Booth 1986). A major producer of mortaria, the potters also made a range of reduced and oxidised coarsewares and colour-coated wares, particularly in the 2nd century AD. The greywares from the site comprised a selection of utilitarian cooking and serving vessels including flanged bowls with grooved rims of 2nd- to 3rd-century date, drop-flanged bowls of late 3rd- to 4th-century date, a plain rimmed dish of 2nd- to 4th-century date, narrow-necked jars, necked jars with beaded or everted rims, and everted rim jars, of 2nd-century date or later.

Vessels were also brought in from other regional producers such as the Severn Valley and South-East Dorset Black Burnished ware industries. The latter comprised

5.1% of the assemblage by count and 3.1% by weight, and included mid and late Romano-British forms such as a flanged bowl with irregularly applied burnished line decoration (Seager Smith and Davies 1993, type 22, and D50) and a drop-flanged bowl (*ibid.* type 25). Comparable quantities were recorded from Crewe Farm, near Kenilworth, rather lower than sites such as Alcester, Coleshill and Tiddington (Booth 1986, 36). One body sherd may have come from the south-western Black Burnished ware industry. Similar vessel forms were noted amongst the unsourced sandy wares. A small quantity of shell-tempered pottery, including fragments from triangular-rimmed necked jars, may have come from the Harrold kilns, Bedfordshire, an industry that produced such forms from the 2nd century onwards, with an increase in production in the 4th century (Marney 1989, 58–64).

The oxidised wares were abraded but included white and orange-coloured fabrics, and a very fine, micaceous fabric. Most would have been produced relatively locally, the finer sherds may have once been colour-coated but are now abraded. The vessel forms comprise a pulley-wheel flagon, a globular bowl/jar with short, everted rim, a flanged bowl with beaded rim and a copy of a samian form 38 bowl, from the Mancetter-Hartshill kilns. A wide-mouthed necked bowl/jar from feature 1240 may be a product of the Severn Valley industry (Webster 1976, Class C), and it possible that some of the softer and more abraded, featureless body sherds may also have come from vessels produced at these kilns. Finer tables wares from Oxfordshire and the Nene Valley were reaching the site, but in fairly small quantities. They included part of a moulded face mask from an Oxford colour-coated ware flagon, dating from the second half of the 4th century (wall trench 1079; Young 1977, C11).

The mortaria were mostly drawn from the Mancetter-Hartshill industries. The vessels included three with hammerhead rims (Perrin 1981, fig. 28, 336) and one with reeded rim (Perrin 1981, fig. 42, 582), broadly dated to the 2nd to 4th centuries AD. Mortaria from the Oxfordshire industry comprised a wall-sided vessel copying samian form 45 (Young 1977, C97) and a whiteware vessel (Young 1977, M22), both dating from the late Romano-British period. The latter was one of the most commonly occurring forms in the Oxfordshire mortaria assemblage from Alcester (Ferguson 2001, 177). A rim fragment and a spout fragment were both in unsourced whiteware fabrics.

There is also some evidence that the occupants of the site had access to imported products. Two sherds of Dressel 20 amphora (Peacock and Williams 1991, 136, class 25) suggest the importation of olive oil from Southern Spain; a samian dish (form 18/31) came from Central Gaul and a small beaded rim bowl from Eastern Gaul (2nd to 3rd century AD) had been repaired with a lead staple.

Other Finds

By Lorraine Mephram

Most of the ceramic building material (CBM) recovered is of Romano-British date. The assemblage is fragmentary and heavily abraded; mean fragment size is 78g. The total of 119 fragments includes eight examples of *tegulae* roof tiles, 23 *imbrices* and 11 box flue tiles (*tubuli*). Other fragments can be classified broadly as flat fragments, with a few pieces that are completely undiagnostic. No fragments are of sufficient thickness to be classified as 'brick' (e.g. *pedalis*, *bessalis*, etc). The quantities of CBM recovered, and its condition, suggest that this material has been redeposited, but that it has probably not travelled very far from its original source, and thus indicates the presence of a substantial building (or buildings) in the vicinity of the site.

The animal bone (58 fragments once conjoins are taken into account) is in a highly fragmented state and the preservation condition varies from fair to very poor, hence only a very small fraction of the material (c. 22%) can be identified to species and skeletal element. All of the identified bones belong to cattle and the range of elements is heavily biased in favour of more durable elements such as teeth.

Other finds comprise four small fragments of undated and undiagnostic fired clay (one might possibly be a loomweight fragment); four iron objects (two probable nail shanks; pointed object, possibly part of a tool; curved, tapering bar); a small quantity of unworked sandstone and rounded pebbles, some burnt; and a small quantity of ironworking slag. None of these finds are datable, although most came from Romano-British contexts.

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