

Suburban life in Roman *Durnovaria*

Additional specialist report



Finds
Mortar and *opus signium*

By Kayt Brown

Mortar and *opus signium*

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(The cross references denoted 'SL' in this report relate to *Suburban life in Roman Durnovaria Excavations at the former County Hospital site Dorchester, Dorset 2000-2001* M Trevvarthen 2008)

A small quantity of mortar (193 fragments, 7824 g) and *opus signium* (131 fragments, 19210 g) was recovered from the three excavated areas (Tables M1 and OS1). Quantification was by count and weight, with a brief description for each context. All the mortar was discarded at the assessment stage. The data for both mortar and *opus signium* was entered into an Excel spreadsheet, a copy of which has been deposited with archive.

The only mortar from early Roman features comprised three fragments from the double oven and associated structure G.575. The majority of the mortar assemblage came from features phased to the mid-Romano-British period. This included 95 fragments within pit G.535 (1052), which also contained the base of a pottery vessel. Small quantities were also identified from deposits G.631 and G.617. Only six fragments were recovered from late Roman features, from ditch G.605, and features within Building 12.

Table M1: Quantification of mortar by count and weight in grammes

Area	Count	Weight (g)
Blocks 1 & 3	145	3150
Block 2	15	984
Block 4	33	3690
Total	198	7824

Opus signium was recovered as fragments and also surviving *in situ* as a continuous layer covering the floor and walls of room G.501, Building 8 (SL Fig. 60). A fragment from this room measuring 320mm by 180mm comprised mixed tile chippings sparsely interspersed with much larger tile pieces and large stone chippings. A single fragment was recovered from early Roman pit group G.646. Thirty-four fragments were from middle Roman features, including well head G.502 and deposits comprising G.617, with a similar quantity (40 fragments) from late Roman features in blocks 2 and 4. A significant proportion of the *opus signium* was residual in later contexts.

Table OS1: Quantification of *opus signium* by count and weight

Area	Count	Weight (g)
Blocks 1 & 3	40	4301
Block 2	63	9293
Block 4	28	5616
Total	131	19210

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