

Suburban life in Roman *Durnovaria*

Additional specialist report



Finds
Ceramic building material

By Kayt Brown

Ceramic building material (CBM)

Kayt Brown

A total of 16420 fragments (926743g) of Roman ceramic building material was recovered from the three areas excavated, of which 61 fragments were retained. A range of different tile types were identified (Table CBM1), however the material was in a very fragmentary state with few complete dimensions present.

Quantification of the assemblage was by count and weight for each tile type by context. Additional information such as the presence of signature marks or cutaways on *tegula* were also noted. No detailed fabric analysis was undertaken but observations were made regarding the range of fabrics present. Recording of the ceramic building materials, prior to discard, was by Jan Symonds.

Tile types identified are listed in Table CBM1. Coarse ceramic *tesserae* were numerous, accounting for almost half the assemblage, (47% by fragment count, 18% by weight), with over 7700 recorded examples. Length and width measurements ranged from 14mm to 35mm with groupings at 20mm, 25mm and 30 mm. Thickness of *tesserae* ranged from 8mm to 25mm, with a peak at 15mm to 20mm. No record was made of the fabric of these *tesserae*, although it would appear some have been made by re-shaping fragments of pottery, including amphora. Given the large number recorded, and low weight for each *tesserae*, they have been excluded from quantification of other tile types discussed below.

Roofing tile comprised 30% of the remaining assemblage, (45% by weight), with *imbrex* better represented than *tegula*, possibly a result of plain *tegula* fragments being recorded as flat tile fragments, in the absence of any diagnostic features. The *tegula* recorded were notable for the almost complete absence of a finger smear along the flange edge, an indicator of manufacturing technique (Warry 2006, 33). There was a single example of a *tegula mammata* (context 1513). Unusual *tegulae* forms included a fragment which displayed signs of being cut, pre-firing, diagonally from flange to flange, perhaps to fit around a flue or chimney (context 1383), while another *tegula* fragment had a post-firing nail hole in an unusual position, possibly indicating re-use of the tile. Adaptation of tiles or bricks for specific use was also noted at Wollaston House (Seager Smith 2005, 3). A range of very thin *tegula* were recorded at the County Hospital site, measuring 15-16mm in thickness, a feature also observed with some *imbrices* where tile thickness was recorded at 10-11mm. There were only two examples of complete or near complete *imbrex* where width and height measurements were obtainable. Both were of typical tapering shape; A complete tile (context 1271) measured 285mm in length, 120mm at the narrow end with a height of 45mm and 160mm across the widest end of the tile with an arch height of 75mm. A second example (context 2274) was larger measuring 370mm in overall length, with a wide end width of 150mm, height 70mm and a narrow end width of 100mm, 55mm high. This latter tile also had a three finger smear to the curve at the wide end of the tile. A small number of *imbrex* had been over-fired. A single *antefix* fragment, part of the lower rectangular section, with twined decoration, was identified, from Building 7 (SF 397, context 1382, Fig. CBM1). Other, similar *antefix* fragments are known from Greyhound Yard (Bellamy 1993, 174, fig. 96.26) and Charles Street (Adam 1989, 106; 1993, 66).

Flat tile fragments are likely to include fragments of *tegula* as well as other tile types, such as *bessales*, a tile type often used in flooring, arches and boding courses and in the construction of *pilae*. A small quantity of brick was present in the assemblage ranging in thickness from 40mm to 80mm.

Flue tile was poorly represented, at less than 2% by count and by weight. This tile type was presumably incorporated into the excavated areas from elsewhere within the town, given the fragmentary nature of material and lack of evidence for any hypocaust structures during excavation. There was much variation in the combing designs noted, frequently based on a geometric or cross hatched design. There was a single example of a roller stamped tile (context 1043). The only fragment of a possible hollow *voussoir*, a tile type used in the construction of arches, was identified (context 1172).

A number of marks were observed on the tile fragments. These include five fragments with paw prints (Fig. CBM2) and a single fragment with a very clear finger print (Fig. CBM3). Signature marks were common on *tegula* and also occurred on other tiles classified within the flat tile category. Most were incomplete curvilinear designs, drawn with between one and four fingers. A signature mark on a *tegula* (context 1051) was unusual in that it was very small; a double curvilinear design, 60mm across the wide end. An *imbrex* fragment also displayed a triple signature motif. Incised marks comprised two fragments with 'X' incised onto the curved end face (Fig. CBM4), while three *imbrex* fragments had been incised with the letter 'R' (Fig. CBM5).

Two stamps were recorded, on a *tegula* and *imbrex*, (both from context 1207). The rectangular stamp contained the letters [NVND], Nundinarius, or Nundinus (Fig. CBM6). Recorded elsewhere within Dorchester at Greyhound Yard (Bellamy, 1993, 172, fig. 94.14) and at Charles Street (Adam 1993, 67); it has no other known parallels outside of Dorchester.

A small amount of ceramic building material was recovered from pre-town deposits, while more substantial quantities were identified within phases 2, 3 and 4 and also as residual material in later phases. The majority of the assemblage was located in blocks 1 and 3. Within phases 2 and 3 this included the stamped *imbrex* and two incised *imbrex* from a layer of dumped material (context 1207) and a substantial amount of material from Building 6, particularly *tesserae*, which probably derive from the large mosaic revealed in room 1 of this building.

Table CBM1: Quantification of Roman ceramic building material by count and weight

Type	No fragments	Weight (g)
Brick	188	74888
Featureless	3788	104900
Flat frags.	1926	221995
Flue tile	118	12467
Imbrex	1714	159549
Tegula	968	185621
Tessera	7718	167323
Total	16420	926743

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Plate CBM1: Antefix fragment with twined decoration, from Building 7, context 1382



Plate CBM2: Tile fragment with paw print, context 1436



Plate CBM3: Finger print on tile, context 2075



Plate CBM4: Tile fragment with an incised 'X', context 2187



Plate CBM5: Tile fragment with an incised 'R', context 1207



Plate CBM6: Tile fragment with NVND stamp, Nundinarius or Nundinus, context 1207

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