

Stamped and Impressed Tile by Howard Mason

- 1 Legionary stamp on roof tile fragment. Boon type A.ii.2 (1972, fig. 6.d; 1984, 24). (Unstratified). (Unillustrated).
- 2 Unshod, human footprint on roof tile fragment.

The footprint is situated in the bottom left-hand corner of the tile. When in position on a roof the toes would have pointed downwards although it is uncertain whether the tile was actually used or whether it was a waster. Its thickness (c. 30mm) suggests it was not one of the later Antonine varieties which were thinner (Boon 1972, 125, fn. 74).

The footprint's position, close to and parallel with the edge of the tile in a space just wide enough to accommodate it between the lip of the tile and the fingered test-loop (used to test the hardness of the clay prior to firing), suggests the impression was deliberate. The distortion of the print around the end of the big and second toes was caused by the foot being in forward motion. Observation of unshod footprints made on wet sand suggests that this type of distortion is only attainable at a walking pace.

The impression is of a left foot and was probably made when the tile was lying on the ground prior to firing. If the tile had been supported clear of the ground then greater distortion of the whole tile would have



Fig. 46: Tile impressed with human footprint

occurred. The footprint, after firing, measured 257mm in length and had a maximum width of 103mm. The clay is estimated to have shrunk by 6-10% during firing (P. Webster *pers. com.*) suggesting the original length of the footprint was 276-288mm and its original width was 109-112mm. These dimensions correspond to a British shoe size of 11 to 12 with a width greater than Clarks' size G (the widest fitting on their scale). Although more precise measurement of the original size of the foot is impossible, and a variety of factors precludes estimating the height and weight of the individual who made the impression, the foot definitely belongs to the upper end of the size range and can be assumed to have belonged to a larger than average size individual.