

## **Tewkesbury Abbey: The Stone Roof Tiles**

### ***Alan Vince and Kate Steane***

One hundred and three fragments of stone initially identified as roof tile were recovered, representing 96 tiles. Two of these are probably unworked cobbles and eight are probably building stone (six unspecified limestone, one oolitic limestone and one burnt fragment of micaceous sandstone).

The remaining 93 fragments are all probably from roof tiles. Most were unspecified limestone, probably of Middle Jurassic age (84 fragments) with one probable Lias Limestone; two micaceous sandstone; one unspecified sandstone and five fragments of slate. The micaceous sandstone is probably of Carboniferous age and either from the Forest of Dean or a northwest Worcestershire source. The unspecified sandstone could be of Triassic or Carboniferous age and the slate is probably of south-western English origin.

One of the micaceous sandstone roof tiles is probably from a hexagonal tile and has two drilled holes. It is 245mm long, probably also 245mm wide and probably of Roman date.

The limestone roof tiles include fragments of 14 tiles with a complete length. They range from 140mm to 400mm. Thirty-five tiles have complete widths, which range from 95mm to 340mm. Seventy-five tiles have drilled holes. Only two examples with two holes survive but probably all the tiles were two-holed (8mm and 10mm diameter and 8mm and 9mm diameter respectively). The drilled holes range from 5mm to 14mm in diameter. In one case two secondary holes, only 2mm diameter, were present.

Fifty two of the limestone tiles have a limescale deposit on the upper surface, presumably deposited by rain. This deposit is present on the tiles from Phase 3 onwards, indicating that all of these tiles were discarded after use rather than during construction. Ten tiles had mortar on one face, which could therefore indicate that the roof was mortared on the underside. These tiles include two from Phase 3, one from Phase 4 and seven from dissolution or later contexts. Seven tiles had traces of mortar on both sides and sometimes also across breaks. These were clearly reused in walling or foundations. A single fragment came from Phase 4 and the remainder from dissolution or later deposits.

Only two roof tiles were recovered from Phase 2 deposits, one of these was of Lias limestone and the other of micaceous sandstone. Both are probably residual Roman tiles.

Seventeen tiles were recovered from Phase 3 deposits. Twelve of these are limestone roof tiles with drilled holes (contexts 2010, 2047, 2075, 2086, 2091, 2122, 2170, 2330, 3047, and 3111); one is a sandstone tile and two are slate tiles (context 2073). The limestone tiles are

The Alan Vince Archaeology Consultancy, 25 West Parade, Lincoln, LN1 1NW

<http://www.postex.demon.co.uk/index.html>

A copy of this report is archived online at

<http://www.avac.uklinux.net/potcat/pdfs/avac2006119.pdf>

of a range of sizes (lengths: 140mm, 182mm, 240mm and 400mm. Breadths: four between 148mm and 180mm and one 340mm). The tiles are between 9mm and 28mm thick.

Ten tiles were recovered from Phase 4 deposits. All were limestone roof tiles with drilled holes (contexts 1002, 1035, 1048, 1051 and 2014). One had a complete length (235mm), four had complete breadths (133mm to 150mm) and all had measurable thicknesses ranging from 10mm to 29mm.

Two tiles were recovered from Phase 5 deposits. They consist of a limestone roof tile from context 2241 and a micaceous sandstone tile from context 2178.

The remaining tiles all come from Phase 6 or 7 deposits. They consist of 47 limestone roof tiles (3 complete lengths: 179mm, 198mm and 250mm; 21 complete widths ranging from 95mm to 185mm and 50 complete thicknesses ranging from 10mm to 33mm) and two slate tiles (from context 3000, 11mm and 19mm thick).

The stratigraphic evidence suggests that the Lias limestone and micaceous sandstone tiles may have been of Roman date. Limestone roof tiles were being discarded from Phase 3 onwards and could therefore have been present on the roofs of Phase 2 structures. They are of a wide range of sizes and probably either come from different structures or were graded in size on the roof. The slate tiles, on the other hand, only include two fragments of one tile from a medieval deposit (context 2073) and this suggests that slate may not have been used until the post-medieval period.