

Assessment of Ceramic Building Material from Back Newton Lane, Ledstone, West Yorkshire (BNE07)

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Two fragments of ceramic building material were recovered from the fill of a shallow feature (context 700) revealed by archaeological excavation at Back Newton Lane, Ledstone, West Yorkshire, undertaken by Archaeological Services WYAS. These were associated with a single sherd of Roman pottery and were submitted for identification and assessment.

Description

Ceramic Building Material

The two fragments are similar in appearance and could come from the same object.

This object was produced in a sanded mould from relatively dry, poorly mixed clay and then moulded over a semi-circular-sectioned former. Drag marks on the upper surfaces indicate where a tool was used to level the surface of the moulded clay.

The fabric is variegated and contains fragments of mudstone several mm long and thin lenses of light-coloured clay (7.5YR 6/6 reddish yellow) in a groundmass of light red clay (2.5YR 6/8) containing abundant well-sorted subangular quartz sand c.0.2mm across. Similar sand was used to line the mould used in manufacture.

Assessment

The tile(s) were made using simple techniques which were employed in the Roman period and then from the 12th century into the early 19th century, at which time mechanised production started to replace these techniques.

The shape of the object(s) suggests two possible identifications – an imbrex tile of Roman date or a field drain of 19th century date. The thickness and cross section of the object certainly support a Roman date and most field drains made using these handmade methods were more U or horse-shoe sectioned. Also, by the later 19th century field drains tended to be produced using a machine which extruded the clay, which was therefore used in a more plastic state and shows signs of the metal former on both sides of the circular drain.

If the tile is indeed of Roman date then a possible source would be at Castleford and it would be possible to test this identification by comparison with dated tiles from Castleford.

Imbrex tiles were used together with *tegulae* on the roofs of Romanised buildings (military constructions, villas, temples) and not on peasant settlements. Therefore, if the tiles can be confirmed as being of Roman date they indicate the presence nearby of such a building.

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Retention

The tiles should be retained for further study.

Further Study

The tiles could be compared with imbrex tiles from the Castleford excavations, looking at fabric, thickness and cross-sectional profile.