

Latton Lands, Wiltshire: Roman Ceramic Building Material

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Introduction

The majority of the ceramic building material recovered was unidentifiable flat tile with no distinguishing marks (55% by weight). Roofing tile was well represented in the identifiable pieces (25% tegulae, 2% imbrices), while there was very little remains of cavity walling (8%). No bricks were found (defined as flat pieces over 40mm thickness), neither were there any flat pieces approaching this size. It therefore seems likely that at least 80% of the material was roof tile.

Fabric

Six fabric types were identified. All but one were predominably sandy, the other showing a high calcareous content. Many pieces were heavily abraded, both due to weathering on site, and subsequent washing.

Fabric 1: This was a fine sandy matrix, a pale orange exterior, with a thin grey layer at its centre. Inclusions were of miscellaneous rock types, plus a large amount of quartz (10%).

Fabric 2: Another fine material, this type was of a darker orange, with some examples being quite brown in colour. Inclusions consisted of a large amount of quartz and iron grains.

Fabric 3: This was a more coarse material. Again quartz grains were present, in this case being rather large (>0.25mm) in comparison with other fabrics from this site. Moulding sand was prevalent, and it contained occasional calcareous flecks, although none were seen in the tiles themselves. There were also grey clay lumps found in the matrix, in some cases these had been blackened by the firing process.

Fabric 4: This was a poorly mixed fabric, containing laminations of pale yellow and almost white clay. There were rare calcareous chunks in the matrix, and again in the moulding sand where present, where they were largest (>0.5mm).

Fabric 5: This fabric type was extremely coarse, often fragile. Quartz inclusions were frequent, with infrequent pieces of other rock. The matrix was dark brown, with occasional blackened parts of the interior.

Fabric 6: This was the only predominantly calcareous fabric. It was pale pink in colour, fading to grey, frequently with a grey interior. There were frequent calcareous inclusions, in addition to occasional quartz inclusions.

Form

Table 1: Form

<i>Form</i>	<i>No</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>Weight (g)</i>	<i>%</i>
Tegulae	9	9	1691	25
Imbrices	1	1	121	2
Flat	20	21	3703	55
Box Flue	4	4	580	8
Unidentifiable	62	64	596	9
TOTAL	96	100	6691	100

Roofing Material

Only a minority of the pieces analysed in this assemblage do not fall under this heading, which includes tegulae, imbrex and ridge tile (the last of which none were found).

Tegulae: All nine tegula fragments were of a thickness between 15 and 20mm. Flanges were of uniform shape, consisting of a curved inner top edge with straight sides, in measurable cases to around 50mm in height. The flat tiles without identifying marks ranged in thickness from 12 to 35mm, but there was a cluster between 17 and 30mm (12 pieces out of 19) so we can reasonably assume that these are also fragments of tegulae.

Imbrices: Only one example of this tile type was found, although it was fairly substantial, measuring 19mm in thickness.

Cavity Walling

This category covers all tile types used to construct hypocausts: box flue, half box flue, voussoir and certain types of plain flat tile (e.g. tegula mammata). From this assemblage only box flue were found. There were four fragments, seen to have extremely abraded combing on, for the purposes of keying in plaster. In all cases no more than five teeth were evident, in single stretches, or two, crossing over at a midpoint.

Markings

Almost all known tile manufacturers marked their products in some way, either with a maker's 'signature' or with tally marks, or perhaps accidentally. Only signature marks were found on tiles from Latton Lands. One piece shows two faint finger impressions, tracing a curvilinear path, while another has a similar, but three fingered pattern.

Discussion

The extent of the Roman remains on this site consist entirely of ditches at the south east end of the excavation. Several are associated with a trackway which runs north-east to south-west, and interventions into this feature brought up several pieces of tegulae (two from context 926 at the junction of the trackway with a small east to west gully and another from where the trackway ditch runs off the edge of the area excavated).

Another trackway running parallel to the west of that mentioned above produced some undiagnostic flat tiles. One of these was relatively thin (15mm, context 1449) and was most likely a roof tile (tegula) while the other was rather large (35mm) and may have been a brick, although no full dimensions were recorded and its thickness overlaps with that of roof tiles. These pieces were from the upper fill. To the south a single piece of tegulae was recovered from the primary fill of the same ditch (context 838). From another ditch associated with the trackway came one of the few examples of box flue (1560). This was a highly abraded piece, and evidence for combing was very poorly preserved.

An enclosure located between the two trackways also produced a small amount of building material. Another single example of box flue was found in the single fill of the enclosure ditch. It was extremely soft, and had abraded both before excavation and during washing. Evidently it had moved quite a way from its *in situ* position. Nearby (993) a quarry fill contained 3 fragments of tegulae, slightly better preserved, but with no complete dimensions. The western side of the enclosure consisted of a linear north-south ditch, filled with a slow accumulation of silt. This produced one fragment of undiagnostic tile, probably a tegula, at 22mm thickness (context 1007) and two other similar pieces from 1015. Finally, part of a drainage channel nearby (1015) contained 4 undiagnostic tiles plus an unusual triangular piece of CBM.

Overall, there was very little CBM of diagnostic quality found at Latton Lands. What material there was tended to be heavily abraded, and located in trackway and drainage ditches. This material had been moved, possibly quite a distance, from its original place of deposition. As the final place of

deposition consisted of drainage channels, the CBM probably came from ploughsoil layers, washed off into ditches. The most likely origin of the building material was from structures within the settlement further to the south, as none were excavated at this location.