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Bearsden

A Roman Fort on the Antonine Wall

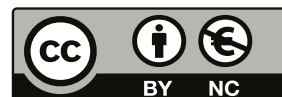
David J Breeze

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Chapter 6

BRICK AND TILE

6.1 INTRODUCTION

DENNIS B GALLAGHER

The excavations produced a total of 115.45kg of ceramic building material, most of which was associated with the bath-house. The main concentration was found in the pits immediately west of the bath-house changing room. There was, however, a scatter of fragments across the fort. Placing aside deposits of less than three fragments, there were seven fragments in building 1, 14 on the east intervallum, 20 at the west end of building 3, 30 in and around building 4 (the north granary), and 85 in the area of

'building' 16 with a further six on the intervallum to its east. It is not surprising that so many fragments came from what appears to have been an industrial area, building 16, nor that some were found with the other material apparently dumped on the east intervallum of the fort. The more interesting collection is from the north granary and the fragments from the adjacent area to the north may be related. The implication is that the granary had a tile roof. The much smaller area of the south granary which was excavated provided only one fragment.

Most of the tile was in a soft orange-red fabric, with a grey core, similar to pottery Fabric 4. There was a small amount in a



Illustration 6.1
Photograph of box tiles.

BEARSDEN: A ROMAN FORT ON THE ANTONINE WALL

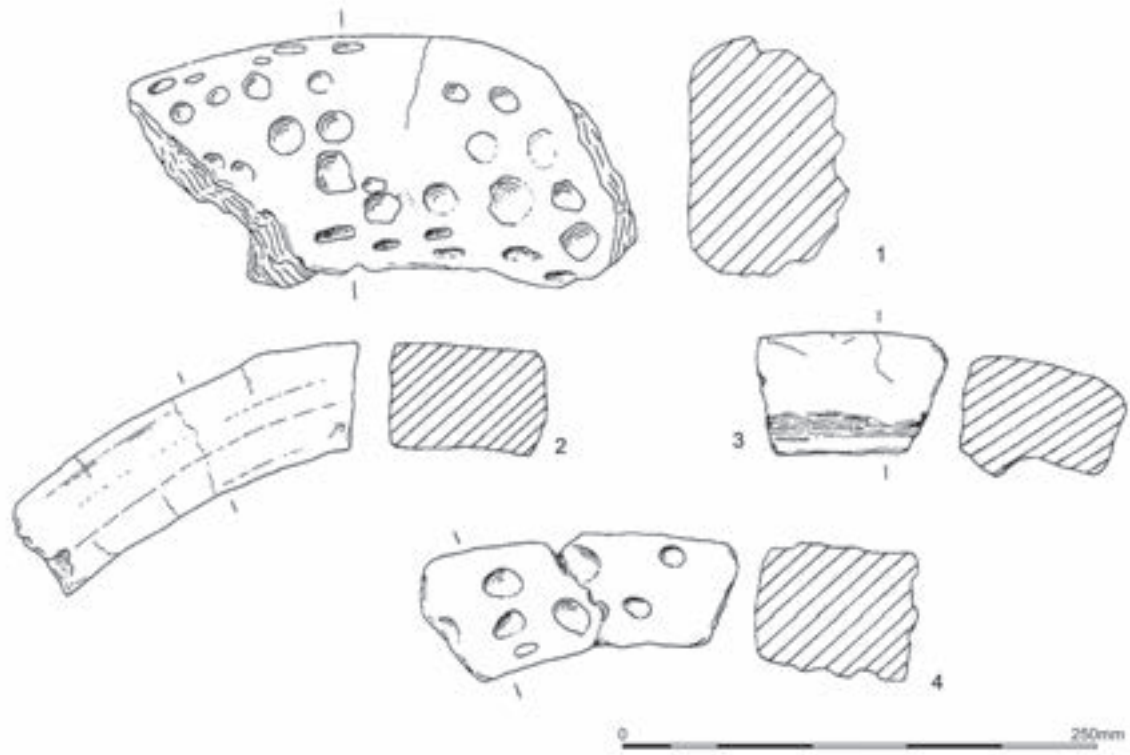


Illustration 6.2
The curved bricks.



Illustration 6.3
Photograph of the curved bricks.

hard buff-coloured fabric and several brick fragments in a very hard purple/red fabric.

6.2 TYPES

All the ceramic building material was very fragmented and no complete tiles were recovered. The fragmentary nature of the material meant that it was difficult to distinguish with certainty between box tile and *tegula*.

Imbrices

Only a small fragment of a possible *imbrex* was noted in the ceramic building material. One must conclude either all the *imbrices* were removed before demolition or, more likely, that the roof construction consisted only of overlapping *tegulae*.

Tegulae

No complete *tegula* was found; restored examples had a length of 302+mm and a maximum width of 154mm.

Box Flue (tubulum)

About 350 fragments of box flue were recovered, with the exception of five, all from the bath-house area (illus 6.1). Restored fragments indicated a length of 302mm. Widths varied between 132 and 145mm at the front, and back and 104 and 111mm at the sides. The average thickness of the fabric was 12mm. Many fragments were incised with a lattice pattern, to provide a key for mortar. This keying was mostly produced in a series of single lines, using with a narrow implement such as a stick. Another method involved the use of a comb; three and four-toothed combs are recorded.

Unflanged tile

Restored tiles measured 290mm by 280mm, with a thickness of 30<35mm. The estimated weight of a single floor tile was 4.2kg. A total of 41.34kg was recovered during the excavation, which represents about ten tiles, a fraction of the number needed for the bath-house. The similarity of width with that of the box flue suggests that they were designed to fit as infill tiles between the



Illustration 6.4
Marks on tiles.

stone voussoirs, as part of the vault structure. Tiles of a similar width, 303mm, which may have served the same purpose were found at Stanton Low (Woodfield & Woodfield 1989: 250). There were also a number of fragments of smaller, unflanged tile in a hard buff fabric.

Curved brick

The brick and tile assemblage included a number of distinctive curved bricks which were likely to have been architectural elements such as door or window surrounds (illus 6.2 and 6.3). Their total weight of the fragments was 5.8kg. They were in two widths; one fragment had a thickness of *c* 120mm, while the others were *c* 60mm. A projected reconstruction of the largest fragment (illus 6.2.1) indicates that it could form an arch with a 0.58m interior span. It had one flat face, which was probably intended to be seated flush against a wall. This fragment was coated with soot, which may indicate that it may have been part of a stoke hole or situated in the upper part of the heating system, although it could have occurred after the building was dismantled. This and a smaller example (illus 6.2.4) were indented with numerous sockets where the potter had thrust his fingers deeply into the brick, possibly as a seating for plaster. The smaller fragment may have been part of a different opening or, if situated with the former example, it could have formed an inner moulding. Similar curved fragments with depressions are recorded from the bath-house at Wiggonholt, Sussex, now in the collection of Worthing Museum (E Black, pers comm). Here, the furnace flue was lined with tile, of which only the lower courses survived (Winbolt & Goodchild 1940: 58).

Other brick

There were a few fragments of brick which were thicker in width than the normal floor tile. Some were in a hard purple-red fabric. Their total weight was 3.1kg.

6.3 SIGNATURE MARKS

Stamps

Two stamped tiles were found. One was a fragment of a *tegula* stamped on the edge with a cross motif (illus 6.4.5). The other was a fragment of a box flue with a T-shape impression near its vent (illus 6.4.6). It had a maximum thickness 12mm. It was a deep, sharply defined impression, possibly made by a metal instrument; a letter y was noted in a similar position on a box tile from Beaufort Park, Sussex (Brodrribb 1979b: 149–50).

Signatures

A fragment of a box tile was incised with a cross composed of three strokes (illus 6.4.7). This signature is identical to that incised on a stone voussoir from the bath-house (5.2.4.76).

Graffiti

There were several examples of deliberate graffiti. These included a fragment of a *tegula* lightly incised with a letter S (illus 6.4.8), with a maximum thickness of 30mm; a *tegula* fragment with a lightly incised triangular mark, possibly a letter A (illus 6.4.10); and a fragment of a *tegula* lightly incised possibly with the letters TI (illus 6.4.9). There were examples of concentric grooving with fingers on a *tegula*, possibly a personal mark by the potter (ills 6.4.11); this form of concentric marking is very common on British *tegulae* (Brodrribb 1979a: 215–16).

Faunal

Faunal impressions included part of a shoe print, with hobnails (NK73CO; annexe, south-west of the bath-house) (illus 6.4.13). The dense nail pattern is typical of military footwear, as seen in the shoe fragments from the site (19.1). There was one example of a dog pawprint (NK73CN; bath-house, unstratified) (illus 6.4.12).