

NORECF 07: Northmore Rectory Farm: Assessment of finds.

Material	Fragment Count	Box Number	Specialist
Animal Bone	330	B.01	Lena Strid
Burnt Flint	8	Misc.02	Hugo
CBM	3	Misc.01	Cynthia Poole
Copper alloy	2	FE.01	Ian Scott
Fired Clay	38	Misc.01	Cynthia Poole
Flint	4	Misc.01	Hugo
Iron	7	FE.01	Ian Scott
Pottery	619	P.01	Paul Booth
Shell	1	Misc.02	
Slag	295	Misc.02	
Stone	8	Misc.01	Ruth Shaffrey

Animal Bone

A total of 507 animal bones were recovered from this site. Most bones were in a fair condition (see table 1). Sixteen bones were burnt, and only four bones displayed gnaw marks. The bones were recovered through hand collection during excavation and from wet sieved bulk samples (processed using a 500 µm residue mesh). 19% of the assessed bones derive from hand-retrieved contexts, and 81% from sieved contexts. However, most of the bones from the sieved contexts were very small (4% of the total weight) and, as is often the case, mainly unidentifiable to species.

The predominance of cattle and sheep/goat in the assemblage (see table 2) is usual for rural sites in this time period (Maltby 1981:163-164). The presence of dogs is evidenced by gnaw marks on a cattle tibia and on bones from medium and large mammals. Mole is an unusual animal in Roman deposits, but as this is a burrowing species, it may be intrusive. The same problem is found with the lagomorph incisor. If it derives from a hare it may be Roman, but if it's rabbit, it is likely a post-Roman intrusion.

Judging by tooth wear, epiphyseal fusion and surface structure of the bones, the cattle, sheep/goat, pig and horse bones derived from sub-adult or adult animals. An atlas from a medium mammal was the only juvenile bone present.

Butchering marks were found on two bones. A femoral head of cattle had been chopped off, suggesting dismembering of the hip, and a rib from a medium mammal had been chopped off mid-rib, indicating portioning of the ribcage.

No further information can be gained from such a small sample of bones, but the data should be further considered should the site proceed to full excavation in the future.

Bibliography

Maltby, M. (1981). "Iron Age, Romano-British and Anglo-Saxon animal husbandry - a review of the faunal evidence," in M. Jones and G. Dimbleby (eds), *The environment of man: the Iron Age to the Anglo-Saxon period*. BAR British Series 87. ISBN: 0-86054-128-2. pp.155-203.

	N	Bone surface preservation stage					
		very good	good	fair	poor	very poor	impossible to identify bone
NORCEF07	507	1.0%	20.5%	45.8%	31.0%	1.8%	0%

Table 1. Preservation level for bones from the NORCEF07 assemblage.

APPENDIX - Number of bones and weight per context.

Context	Species	No. of bones (refitted)	Sum of weight (g)
4	Sheep/goat	3	76
	Pig	1	
	Amphibian	1	
	Medium mammal	7	
	Large mammal	1	
	Indeterminate	83	
6	Horse	1	330
	Medium mammal	2	
	Large mammal	6	
7	Sheep/goat	1	16
9	Cattle	1	44
	Large mammal	1	
	Indeterminate	1	
10	Cattle	1	7
	Large mammal	1	
12	Large mammal	1	18
16	Sheep/goat	1	13
	Medium mammal	1	
20	Indeterminate	33	6
22	Sheep/goat	1	8
	Indeterminate	1	
26	Sheep/goat	2	30
	Lagomorph	1	
	Rodent	1	
	Vole	1	
	Bird	1	
	Amphibian	1	
	Fish	1	
	Micromammal	1	
	Small mammal	3	
	Medium mammal	18	

	Large mammal	2	
	Indeterminate	95	
28	Cattle	1	130
	Sheep	1	
	Large mammal	2	
	Indeterminate	1	
31	Large mammal	1	11
34	Sheep/goat	1	55
	Rodent	1	
	Medium mammal	4	
	Large mammal	7	
	Indeterminate	32	
35	Cattle	5	392
	Large mammal	1	
36	Large mammal	2	26
	Indeterminate	1	
43	Cattle	1	7
	Sheep/goat	1	
	Indeterminate	31	
54	Indeterminate	1	4
56	Indeterminate	1	13
59	Horse	1	114
	Large mammal	1	
	Indeterminate	2	
60	Cattle	2	315
	Large mammal	1	
62	Cattle	1	3
64	Indeterminate	1	8
68	Large mammal	1	26
81	Cattle	1	25
	Sheep/goat	1	
84	Large mammal	1	66
	Indeterminate	2	
85	Sheep/goat	1	37
	Horse	1	
94	Cattle	1	20
	Large mammal	1	
	Indeterminate	2	
96	Pig	1	20
	Mole	1	
	Medium mammal	2	
	Indeterminate	24	
97	Cattle	1	36
	Indeterminate	50	
98	Cattle	3	383
	Large mammal	1	
	Indeterminate	1	

101	Cattle	2	106
103	Cattle	1	65
	Sheep/goat	2	
	Medium mammal	2	
	Indeterminate	15	
104	Cattle	1	127
	Horse	1	
116	Cattle	1	101
122	Cattle	1	47
	Medium mammal	3	
	Large mammal	1	

CBM and Fired Clay

A small quantity of fired clay and ceramic building material was recovered from nine contexts. This amounted to a total of 68 fragments of fired clay weighing 138 g and three fragments (93 g) of ceramic building material. Sixty fragments of fired clay (38 g) were recovered from sieved samples, the remainder from hand excavation.

The assemblage has been visually examined with the aid of a x10 hand lens, quantified and categorised in relation to form and fabric. The record appears in the table below.

The Fired Clay

Fabrics

Two fabrics were identified.

FC1: orange-brown, reddish yellow mottled / laminated silty - sandy clay containing small red iron oxide clay pellets

FC2: red, yellowish red, reddish brown, grey, black sandy clay containing coarse quartz sand and small shell / limestone grit 1-3mm.

The clays are likely to derive from locally available clays in the vicinity of the site, fabric 1 from alluvial clay deposits in the river valley and fabric 2 from the Oxford Clay.

Forms

The pieces from contexts 35 and 36 are both interpreted as pieces of flat oven plate. They measured 25 and 28 mm thick and one had part of the convex edge surface surviving, though insufficient survived to judge whether the plate was circular or rectangular. Both had one surface burnt grey. The fragment from context 108 may be some sort of oven furniture such as the end of a small fire bar or support. It had a diameter of c. 30 mm. These forms are likely to be Iron Age or Roman in date.

The Ceramic Building Material

Fabrics

Two fabrics were identified.

Fabric C was an orange red, fine silty clay containing frequent medium-coarse rose and clear quartz sand. The moulding sand appears to be the same as mixed into the fabric.

Fabric F was a yellowish red laminated silty clay with pale brown/cream streaks containing a high density of poorly sorted fine-coarse quartz sand, small red iron oxide grits and buff clay pellets.

Forms

None of the fragments retained any diagnostic features. The fragments in fabric F from context 2 were amorphous. Fabric F is similar to clays commonly used to make post-medieval brick. The fragment in fabric C is a piece of plain Roman tile 18-20 mm thick, probably a piece of tegula.

Discussion

The assemblage is typical of a small rural settlement of iron Age – Roman date. The fired clay artefacts indicate the presence of ovens for low temperature activities, such as cooking or grain drying. The fragments from the sieved material are the sort that come from scraping the burnt floor or sides of ovens or hearths cut into a clayey subsoil when cleaning out cinders. Flat Roman tile is normally associated with ovens or similar structures in non-villa rural settlements and appears to be used for supports across flues, covering vents or stokeholes or similar functions

Table 1: Record of fired clay and ceramic building material

Cntxt	<S.No>	Nos	Wt g	MFW	Form	Description	Comments
35		2	49	24.5	FC: oven furn	Two flat smooth surfaces, forming top & base of an oven plate. One surface burnt slightly grey.	Occasional impressions of grass/straw stem
36		3	41	13.7	FC: oven furn	Flat smooth surface on top curving into rounded edge, which in turn forms continuous surface to slightly rougher more uneven base surface. The edge may be curving rather than straight. Most probably the edge of an oven plate, either circular, rectangular or subrectangular with bowed edges. An alternative is some sort of fire bar, though this is considered less likely. Top surface very slightly greyer.	Occasional impressions of grass/straw stem
108		1	10	10	FC: oven furn	Irregular curving / convex moulded surface with depressions from shaping.	Possibly some small object of oven furniture such as support or end of bar.
4	<8>	50	15	0.3	FC: unid	Amorphous; rounded worn.	12 fragments retained; rest discarded
20	<4>	6	3	0.5	FC: unid	Amorphous; rounded worn.	
34	<5>	4	13	3.25	FC: unid	Amorphous mostly; possible hint of surface.	
96	<2>	2	7	0.14	FC: unid	Amorphous	
2		2	28	14	CBM: unid	Broken amorphous	Fabric is similar to that often found in Pmed brick.
122		1	65	65	CBM: Rom tile	Flat smooth surface burnt grey; underside rough, irregular with coarse moulding sand.	Probably tegula
Total:		71	231	3.25			

Copper alloy and Iron

Metal objects

A small number of metal objects was recovered. There are about 12 iron objects and two possible copper alloy coins. The latter are encrusted with corrosion products are consequently illegible. Both coins form slightly irregular circles and are quite small (D (context 10 sf 8) 20 mm x 18mm; (context 62 sf 8) 21 mm x 19 mm).

The iron objects are limited in number a range (Table). There are two possible pieces of blade (Sfs 2 and 6), of uncertain form, but possibly from sickles or hooks, rather than knives. A small number of hobnails were recovered from sieving (samples 4, 5 & 8). Three of the remaining iron objects (nail; length of iron bar; and possible nail head, much encrusted) are from context 9.

None of the finds is closely dateable, although the coins may be legible if cleaned, or may reveal any details if x-rayed.

Summary Catalogue of metal finds

Context	Sf	Description	Metal
context 10	sf 8	possible coin, encrusted. Diameter 20 mm x 18 mm	cu alloy?
context 62	sf 5	possible coin, encrusted. Diameter 21 mm x 19 mm	cu alloy?
context 9	sf 3	length of bar . Length 168 mm	fe
context 9	sf 4	circular object, encrusted. Possible nail head. Diameter 23 mm	fe
context 9	sf 7	nail	fe
context 12	sf 6	blade fragment of triangular section. Uncertain blade form. L 94 mm	fe
context 18	sf 2	curved flat object, with possible socket at one end. A possible blade, uncertain form. L 85 mm	fe

context 18	sf 1	Strip, thick at one end than the other. Possibly a wedge. L 62 mm	fe
context 62	-	nail	fe
context 4	sample <8>	2 x hobnails	fe
context 20	sample <4>	2 x hobnails, heads only	fe
context 26	sample <3>	very small piece of plate, and nail stem fragment	fe
context 34	sample <5>	2 x hobnails	fe

Ian Scott

Flint

The struck flint

by Hugo Lamdin-Whymark

A single struck flint and five pieces/ 26 g of burnt unworked flint was recovered from the watching brief. The worked flint, from context 51, is a blade that was struck from an opposed platform blade core. The flint exhibits a heavy white surface cortication and considerable post-depositional edge-damage; the latter suggests the flint exposed and redeposited in a later archaeological context. The scars of earlier blade removals on the dorsal surface suggest the flint was the product of an industry aimed at blade production. A Mesolithic or early Neolithic date is most appropriate for such industries. The burnt unworked flint was recovered from contexts 4, 26, 34 and 108.

Pottery

Introduction

Some 437 sherds (7259 g; 8.95 REs) of pottery were recovered during the watching brief, almost all of mid to late Roman date. The total includes 73 sherds (467 g, 0.53 REs) from the larger fraction of a number of sieved soil samples. This material was recorded. A further 189 fragments (102 g) from the smaller fraction of sieved soil samples were noted but not otherwise examined and are not included in the figures.

The pottery (apart from the last mentioned material) was recorded by context group using the system employed for all Roman pottery from OA projects (Booth 2007). Details of fabrics, vessel forms and decoration etc were recorded using standardised codes which allow ready comparison between assemblages. Quantification was by sherd count, weight and rim equivalents (REs). The full records are on sheets which are contained in the project archive.

The pottery was in reasonable condition, with quite large sherds (average weight 17.2 g), though some sherds were fairly abraded and evidence for surface treatment (such as burnishing or colour-coating) tended not to survive. This caused problems with the identification of some fabrics, particularly Oxfordshire colour-coated ware (see below).

Fabrics

Identification of fabric was at a fairly generalised level, usually at an intermediate stage of the fabric/ware definition hierarchy used in the recording system. The major ware groups represented in the Northmoor assemblage were: S - samian ware, F - fine wares, M - mortarium fabrics, W - white wares, O - oxidised 'coarse' wares, R - reduced 'coarse' wares, B - black-burnished ware and C - calcareous (usually shell-tempered) fabrics. Most sherds were assigned to subgroups of these categories (eg R30, a general grouping for moderately fine sandy reduced wares), though some were identified at the level of specific fabric (eg M22, Oxfordshire white ware mortaria). In view of the fairly

small size of the assemblage, more detailed recording of the fabric of each sherd was not justified.

Brief descriptions of the fabrics present in the group, or familiar names of well-known wares, are given with quantification in Table 1 below. Fuller descriptions can be found in the documentation of the recording system contained in the project archive.

Table 1: Quantification of pottery fabrics

Ware		No.sh	% sherds	Weight (g)	% weight	REs	% REs
S	samian ware, source uncertain	1	0.2	1	+		
S20	South Gaulish samian ware	1	0.2	3	+	0.03	0.3
S30	Central Gaulish samian ware	16	3.7	289	4.0	0.47	5.3
<i>S subtotal</i>		18	4.1	293	4.0	0.50	5.6
F51	Oxford colour-coated ware	7	1.6	172	2.4	0.12	1.4
OF	?Oxford colour-coated ware (surfaces eroded)	5	1.1	117	1.6	0.30	3.4
<i>F subtotal</i>		12	2.7	289	4.0	0.42	4.7
M22	Oxford white mortarium fabric	9	2.1	489	6.7	0.63	7.0
M31	Oxford white slipped mortarium fabric	1	0.2	67	0.9	0.15	1.7
M41	Oxford red colour-coated mortarium fabric	2	0.5	42	0.6		
<i>M subtotal</i>		12	2.7	598	8.2	0.78	8.7
W11	Oxford parchment ware	1	0.2	41	0.6	0.13	1.5
W12	Oxford white ware	2	0.5	78	1.1		
<i>W subtotal</i>		3	0.7	119	1.6	0.13	1.5
E80	Grog-tempered 'Belgic type' coarse ware	1	0.2	1	+		
O	Oxidised coarse ware unspecified	1	0.2	5	0.1		
O10	Fine oxidised coarse ware fabrics	27	6.2	289	4.0	0.17	1.9
O20	Sandy oxidised coarse ware fabrics	1	0.2	62	0.9	0.08	0.9
O30	Medium sandy oxidised coarse ware fabrics	8	1.8	127	1.7	0.11	1.2
O37	Medium sandy oxidised coarse ware	1	0.2	6	0.1		
O80	Coarse (mainly grog-tempered) oxidised fabrics	1	0.2	11	0.2		
<i>O subtotal</i>		39	8.9	500	6.9	0.36	4.0
R	Reduced coarse ware unspecified	1	0.2	1	+		
R10	Fine reduced coarse ware fabrics	65	14.9	600	8.3	0.88	9.8
R11	Oxford fine reduced coarse ware fabrics	20	4.6	177	2.4	0.48	5.4
R20	Sandy reduced coarse ware fabrics	7	1.6	66	0.9		
R30	Medium sandy reduced coarse ware fabrics	142	32.5	2276	31.4	2.77	30.9
R37	Medium sandy reduced coarse ware	20	4.6	369	5.1		
R38	As R37 with additional grog inclusions	1	0.2	58	0.8		
R50	Medium sandy reduced with black surfaces	7	1.6	48	0.7		
R86	Fine sandy reduced ware, very micaceous	23	5.3	932	12.8	1.26	14.1
R90	Coarse (mainly grog-tempered) reduced fabrics	6	1.4	102	1.4	0.23	2.6
<i>R subtotal</i>		291	66.6	4629	63.8	5.62	62.8
B11	Dorset black-burnished ware (BB1)	37	8.5	612	8.4	0.86	9.6
B30	Black-burnished ware copies	1	0.2	43	0.6	0.10	1.1
<i>B subtotal</i>		38	8.7	655	9.0	0.96	10.7
C10	Shell tempered ware unspecified	15	3.4	61	0.8	0.02	0.2
C11	Late Roman shell-tempered ware	8	1.8	114	1.6	0.16	1.8
<i>C subtotal</i>		23	5.3	175	2.4	0.18	2.0
TOTAL		437		7259		8.95	

The assemblage was dominated by local or regional products. Imported fabrics consisted exclusively of samian ware, mostly from Central Gaul and the only extra-regional imports were black-burnished ware (BB1, OA fabric B11) from south-east Dorset and a few shell-tempered sherds in fabric C11 which may have derived from the industry at Harrold, Bedfordshire (Brown 1994), although a more local origin is possible.

With the exception of samian ware, all the ‘fine and specialist’ wares (fine wares, mortaria and white wares) were from the Oxford kilns, as would be expected. Sherds probably of Oxford colour-coated ware, but with no surviving trace of the characteristic surface treatment, were recorded under a separate heading (OF) from certain Oxford products (F51).

It is also assumed that the majority of the oxidised and reduced coarse wares derived from the Oxford industry, but this is less easily demonstrated since other products, potentially even more local in origin, are not necessarily easily distinguished either in terms of fabric or typological range. Fabrics R37, R38 and O37, however, are assigned to a non-Oxford source. This is currently unlocated but thought to lie in the area between Witney and Akeman Street to the north, perhaps in the vicinity of the Akeman Street settlement of Wilcote. These fabrics only comprised a small part of the assemblage, however, although it is possible that other examples were subsumed in the R30 and O30 groupings. A further individual fabric identified in this assemblage was R86. This was a fine slightly sandy fabric, typically (but not invariably) with black surfaces, characterised by the presence of abundant mica inclusions, which produce a particularly striking effect on the black-surfaced sherds. The range of forms identified in this fabric consisted almost entirely of jars, with a single probable example of a beaker of Young (1977) type R34. Typologically these vessels are comparable to the Oxford repertoire, but the marked mica content appears to distinguish fabric R86 from other Oxford products, and a more local source may be suggested.

Vessel types, use and reuse

Quantification of vessel types by ware group is given in Table 2. The group is fairly small and therefore susceptible to imbalances based on a few well-represented vessels, but the general pattern is comparable with other assemblages in the regional with a late Roman bias.

Table 2: Quantification (by REs) of vessel types by ware group

Type	Description	Ware group								TOTAL	%
		S	F	M	W	O	R	B	C		
B	Flagon/jug						0.45			0.45	5.0
CD	Medium mouthed jar						1.12			1.12	12.5
CK	'Cooking pot type' jar							0.10		0.10	1.1
CM	Wide mouthed jar					0.08	0.65			0.73	8.2
C	Jar, total, including unspecified subtypes					0.08	3.23	0.10	0.18	3.59	40.1
D	Jar/bowl						0.27			0.27	3.0
E	Beaker						0.85			0.85	9.5
F	Cup	0.06								0.06	0.7
HA	Carinated bowl				0.13					0.13	1.5
HB	Straight sided bowl						0.06	0.25		0.31	3.5

HC	Curving sided bowl		0.10			0.18				0.28	3.1
H	Bowl, total, including unspecified subtypes	0.44	0.42		0.13	0.18	0.19	0.25		1.61	18.0
I/IA	Bowl/dish					0.01		0.03		0.04	0.4
JA	Straight sided dish					0.09	0.34	0.58		1.01	11.8
K	Mortarium			0.78						0.78	8.7
L	Lid						0.29			0.29	3.2
	TOTAL	0.50	0.42	0.78	0.13	0.36	5.62	0.96	0.18	8.95	
	%	5.6	4.7	8.7	1.5	4.0	62.8	10.7	2.0		

The main feature, determined largely by chronology, is the relatively low proportion of jars, which form only 40% of the assemblage. Open forms (bowls and dishes combined) amounted to another 30%. Flagons/jugs and lids are represented by single vessels only (the former a possible jug form in reduced fabric R30), and the figures for beakers and mortaria are based on only two or three examples of each type. The mortaria included an example of Young type M22, and sherds of type M12 from two different contexts, but perhaps from the same vessel. In terms of individual vessels the assemblage contains no real surprises, the most striking piece being a poppyhead beaker in fine Oxford reduced fabric R11. This vessel, broadly of Young (1977) type R34, had a well-defined, angled and tapered rim more like that of type R32; the present vessel may be seen as a hybrid of the two types (the type R34 vessel in fabric R86, noted above, was a more typical example).

The slightly eroded condition of some of the sherds meant that evidence for use, for example in the form of wear, was not well preserved. A samian ware sherd from topsoil, probably of form 38, did show heavy wear both internally and on the underside of the footring, but such evidence was otherwise scarce. Sooting was noted occasionally, mainly on reduced fabrics. Most notable was the evidence for burning on a number of mortarium sherds, including the M12 vessel(s) already mentioned. A single white Oxford mortarium sherd, from a different vessel, had a large rivet hole; such evidence for repair of mortaria is rare.

Discussion

The assemblage is, as might be expected, very similar to a smaller group recorded from an adjacent area examined in 1995. Together the material indicates settlement activity through the Roman period from the 2nd century onwards; the principal question is how early in the 2nd century did such activity commence. On ceramic evidence this is unlikely to have been much before the middle of the century. A tiny fragment of late Iron Age/early Roman pottery (fabric E80) is clearly residual and other 1st century indicators are rare. Although samian ware is reasonably represented this consists almost entirely of Central Gaulish sherds, 1st century South Gaulish material being largely absent. Black-burnished ware is well-represented for a rural assemblage - identifiable forms date from the later 2nd century onwards.

The assemblage clearly extends into the 4th century, but may be lacking material of the second half of the century. Relatively few Oxford colour-coated ware sherds were present, suggesting a reduction in the level of 4th century activity. The other Oxford

types are not closely dated, but all would be consistent with a late 3rd-early 4th century emphasis for the later activity, while not in themselves precluding the possibility of a later date.

The pottery suggests a low status settlement, in socio-economic terms, based on the representation of fine and specialist wares. At just over 10% of the total sherds this places the assemblage at the bottom of the range seen for later Roman rural sites in the Upper Thames Valley, discussed recently (Booth 2004, 46-49, 51).

References

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Stone

By Ruth Shaffrey

Nine pieces of stone were retained. These include eight unworked pieces and a single upper rotary quern fragment. The quern fragment is probably Old Red Sandstone from the Wye Valley, a material common in this region during the Roman period, although it is possibly Millstone Grit; a thin section would be required to make a certain distinction. The quern fragment is unusual in that it has evidence for radial grooving on the grinding surface and vertical grooves on the edges, a style of dressing usually reserved for querns of Lava and almost certainly in imitation of them.

Ct	SFN	Notes	Size	Lithology
68	9	About 1/6th of an upper rotary quern of flat-topped type with flat top, straight vertical sides and slightly curved concave grinding surface. Upper surface is pecked with large pitting. Sides are dressed with vertical	Measures 350mm diameter x 29-42mm max thickness at	ORS or possibly MG Coarse grained and graded

Recommendations for further work

It is unlikely that the dating of the quern will be refined any closer than 'Roman' but it should be thin sectioned and examined microscopically to determine the source of the stone. It will then be possible to determine how unusual the quern is in terms of its dressing and thus say something about the status of the site.

Thin section	£30
Analysis of thin section	1 day
Report on quern	1 day
TOTAL	2 days + £30 costs