

A Roman stamped tile from Newstead

J Walter Elliot*

INTRODUCTION

While engaged in a long term programme of field-walking over the Roman military complex at Newstead, Roxburghshire, the writer picked up a fragment of stamped tile. It was found within the fort approximately 30 m to the south of the commemorative stone at national grid reference NT 5686 3449. Since this is the first from Newstead and seems to be unknown elsewhere, it was felt that a short note would be in order while a more detailed look at the tile/brick finds from the site is being undertaken.

THE TILE

The term tile is used generically since the fragment is comparatively small and there is no way of determining the size or use of the original whole object. The fragment is the lower part of a larger tile. Only the middle of the stamp and a little of the border remain from the original outer surface. The stamped letters are intaglio in the tile and there is a slight raised bead on the lower edge of the inscription. The fragment measures 70 mm in length, 40 mm in height and 60 mm in depth.

Illustration 1 shows the letters]R̄T̄O[plainly; this seems to be followed by a much abraded R, thus making a likely reading]R̄T̄O[R[. This would suggest a Roman personal name eg Se]r̄to[r̄[ius, rather than a unit title. Legionary tiles are known with personal names, presumably the unit commander or the officer in charge of the tiler. The alternative to this would be a private tiler which had been set up in the vicinity of Newstead.

DISCUSSION

The writer has long considered that there must have been a Roman kiln, or kiln complex, in the immediate area of the fort (cf Hartley 1976 for the probable manufacture of pottery at Newstead). There is suitable clay within one kilometre and there is a local tradition that the Romans dug clay 'for their pots' from a series of pits in a field to the east of Oakendean House. A considerable tonnage of tile, brick and water-pipe must have been needed to supply the fort and its annexes. Fragments of these can be picked up in most sections of the fort complex. Concentrations have been noted in the baths area and in the south-west corner of the fort. This latter is a low-lying piece of ground which is liable to flooding during wet weather. There may have been an attempt in Roman times to raise the ground level by bringing in the kiln wasters and slag which can be found here. There is also the faint possibility that this could be the site of a kiln in one of the earlier phases of occupation.

* Raycot, 9 Whinfield Road, Selkirk, TD7 5DT



ILLUS 1 The Newstead tile (scale 1:1)

A more feasible kiln site is in the fields to the south-west of the fort. In one of these sloping fields about 400 m from the fort, two black patches are clearly visible after ploughing. At casual glance, these seem to have been early Victorian rubbish pits but Roman tile fragments are also present. Could these be Roman kilns which had been used as dumps during land improvements? Likewise could the hazily-described 'earth-houses' in the same area, have also been kilns? Further work is being done.

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REFERENCE

Hartley, Katharine F 1976 'Were mortaria made in Roman Scotland?', *Glasgow Archaeol J*, 4 (1976), 81-9.

Another part of a Pictish symbol stone from Little Ferry Links, Golspie, Sutherland

Gillian Harden*

INTRODUCTION

During preparatory work for the opening of a new gallery at Inverness Museum and Art Gallery in 1982, it was realized that a hitherto unprovenanced and unpublished fragment of a Pictish symbol stone in the collections formed a larger part of a piece found in 1880 by the Rev Dr J M Joass on Little

* Museum and Art Gallery, Castle Wynd, Inverness