
10 THE DAUB AND OTHER CLAY MATERIALS,

by Beverley Ballin Smith

A small assemblage of a total of 13 pieces of daub or clay came from across the central and western areas of the site (see [Appendix 5](#)). Only a few of these pieces contained evidence of being directly associated with wattle hurdles, but catalogue nos 24 and 37 from the central area were positively identified as daub. Most of the rest of the pieces were very small, rolled and heavily abraded, and their positive identification as daub is less secure.

Daub is earth with clay, sand, small stones, straw, dung or grass, which was used as a building material and was applied to wooden buildings to make them wind- and water-tight throughout prehistory. The use of daub continued into historical times as a common infilling to wooden-walled buildings (see [Graham 2003](#)). Occasionally daub was burnt in situ to harden it ([Shaffer 1993](#)), and it is burnt daub which survives longest in the archaeological record, although not all the Laigh Newton examples were burnt. The occurrence of this small assemblage indicates the presence of wooden structures at Laigh Newton and that clay or daub were also used for purposes other than building. However, it is not thought likely that any of this assemblage derived from the clay lining to a furnace as there was no evidence of slag from any of the sites.

The colour of daub varied from pale brown through reddish yellow to orange to pale grey, and the pieces were extremely light in weight. The total assemblage weighed 20.9g, equivalent to a little over 1g per piece. The lightness was probably due to the burning away of strengthening materials such as straw or grass, which were added to prevent shrinking and cracking, and to provide some flexibility ([Pritchett 2001](#); [Graham 2003](#), Section 4.30). Evidence of this can be seen as impressions of a seed in Catalogue 58 from the west area.

A small number of fine flat pieces were possibly part of a clay/daub artefact or plaque with smoothed surfaces and slightly rounded edges (Catalogue 58), which came from an evaluation trench south of Laigh Newton West. The actual shape of the artefact could not be reconstructed from the three fragments which joined. Catalogue 67 was also a small roundel of clay/daub.

Daub is often an underrepresented man-made material on archaeological excavations. Its soft, loose structure leaves it vulnerable to decay and abrasion but its presence at Laigh Newton indicates there were wattle and daub structures on the central site, or close by. Two pieces from the western area were probably artefacts, but there is little decisive about their form.