



The Finds

Excavations at Main Road, Dumbleton, Gloucestershire

Archaeology Explained

Most archaeology in a rural setting, as here, lies just below the topsoil - with cut features dug directly into the natural geology. When archaeological features are encountered, 'slots' are dug in order to examine a section of the infill. This establishes what they are and whether they represent single or multiple events of use.

The slots are used to retrieve artefacts such as pottery for dating or organic materials for radiocarbon dating along with the taking of samples to examine environmental evidence such as from seeds and cereal grains preserved by charring.

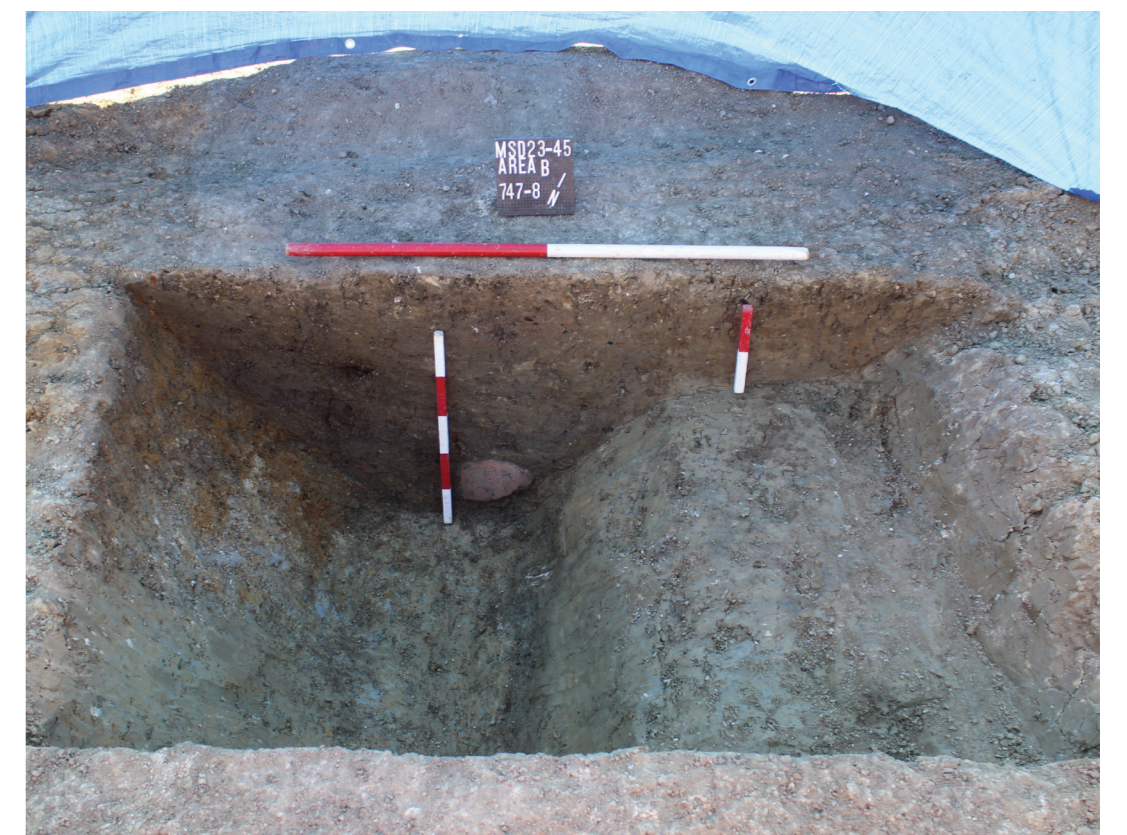


Above:
Ceramic gaming pieces or counters that were found with the broken rim and body of a larger pot in the base of a ditch (see right and bottom left).

Dating

The dating of archaeological features and ultimately the site, primarily comes from pottery evidence. However, when this is not available, relative dating can be used (i.e. 'earlier than' or 'later than').

A number of the features at the Dumbleton site can be relatively dated, some visibly overlie earlier features. Where the relationship is unclear between two features a slot is dug across both to attempt to establish the correct dating sequence, which can be seen by different colours or textures in the soil.



Above: The ditch 'slot' section with the pottery remains in situ at the base.



Above:
A circular lead weight probably a loom weight for weaving fabric.

The Finds

At the current point in the excavation the majority of the recovered finds consist of pottery, a few coins and metal finds and a lot of animal bone. No perishable artefacts have been recovered due to soil conditions which affect the preservation rates of different materials. Many of the pottery sherds come from the body of individual pots but there are also a good number of rim sherds amongst the recovered material. Rim sherds are important as they help us to reconstruct what the pot may have looked like and used for. Changes in form over time are key indicators of their date and therefore the deposits and other finds which they are associated with.

As with today's pots, the Roman vessels had different functions: many would have been everyday cooking or storage vessels, whilst others served a specific function such as *mortaria* which had small pieces of grit embedded into the fabric to allow foodstuffs to be ground up, much like modern pestle and mortars. Occasionally we find sherds of pottery classed as fine wares such as samian ware (imported from Gaul), equivalent to our best crockery today.

The importance of pottery in archaeology cannot be understated and much information can be gleaned from its study. As well as the date of the site and changes through time, it can also inform us about the social status of the inhabitants and their economic links.



Above: A small fragment of Roman glass.

Right:
Coin of Hadrian, Rome mint AD118-122, front with standing figure.

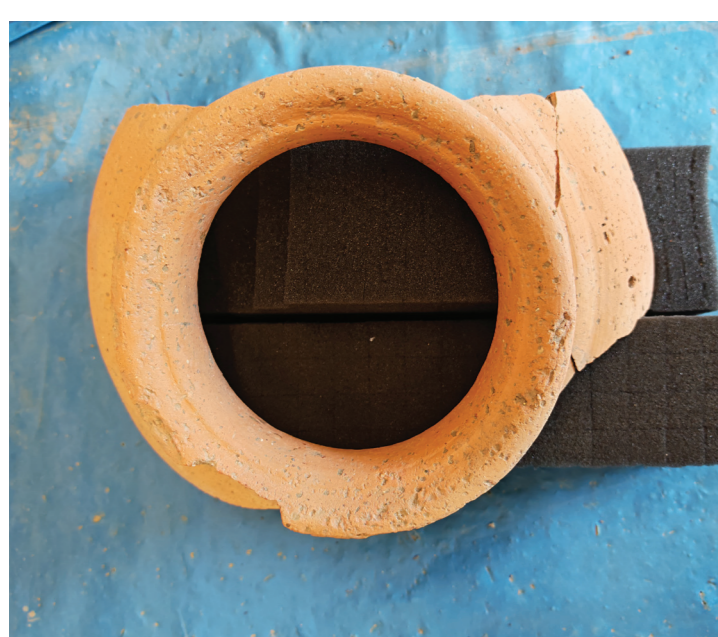
Far Right:
Same coin showing reverse with bust of the emperor.



Left:
Decorated pottery base in-situ in the surface fill of a ditch.

Below left:
Exterior of the vessel after cleaning shows a decorated mortarium.

Below right:
Interior of vessel showing gritty fabric to enable use for grinding.



Left:
The rim, neck and shoulders of a storage jar, found at the base of a ditch along with pottery 'counters'.



Below : Bone-handled iron object.

