

ANCIENT MONUMENTS LABORATORY

REPORT

2562

SERIES/No	CONSULTANT
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TITLE	Report of visit to Dorchester Roman Baths

WORCHESTER, Roman Baths.

Visited 13th. June, 1978. Report 16th. June 1978, by F.W. Anderson.

The site is on Chalk but above the solid rock is a considerable thickness of typical flinty soil overlain by a darker, more organic soil.

Most of the building stone used is Purbeck Limestone from the Isle of Purbeck but with a considerable amount of Portland Stone probably from the same area. There is Flint (from the local Chalk), Tufa (probably from Blashenwell), a fair amount of Lias Limestone (the nearest source is Winterbourne Abbas, about 10 miles to the west), a little Ham Hill Stone from the Yeovil area. The few fragments of ironstone (ferruginous sandstone) are most likely to have come from the Tertiary and Recent deposits in the Moreton-Wareham area.

Identifications on the site (see the accompanying plan)

- Locality 1. Wall of Purbeck Limestone rubble.
- 2. Wall, some Portland Stone on foundation layer.
- 3. Tesserae, red tile and white Portland.
- 4. Wall, Flint core faced with Purbeck limestone.
- 5. Wall faced with Purbeck limestone.
- 6. Hypocaust piers packed round with grey clay. The clay, probably Kimeridge, has the appearance of having been puddled and washed in in a semiliquid state. Was this done deliberately to reinforce the piers ?
- 7. Wall of Purbeck limestone, Portland Stone and Hamm Hill Stone with some brick facing.
- 8. Large Portland Stone flags in floor.
- 9. Wall of Purbeck ashlar.
- 10. Large blocks of Portland Stone. Are these a later insertion?.
- 11. Wall of Lias Limestone.
- 12. Walls of white and blue Lias. Walls 11 and 12 appear to be later than buildings to west.
- 13. Walls of Purbeck Limestone.
- 14. Walls of Purbeck Limestone with some burnt Ham Hill Stone.
- 15. Walls mainly of Purbeck Limestone but with some Portland Stone.
- 16. A rendered wall. Sample taken.
- 17. Wall, Purbeck Limestone.
- 18. Wall, Purbeck Limestone. Portland Stone flagstones.

Small Finds.

7816456. Quern fragment, Purbeck Marble.
7816656. Purbeck ^{lime} ~~limestone~~ (Slatt)
7816850. Purbeck Limestone, roofing tile.
7816732. Ironstone (Carstone, a ferruginous sandstone).
7816888. Tufa, probably from Blashenwell.
7816772. A tufaceous Purbeck Limestone.
7816715. Hone stone. A hard dark fine-grained sandstone (?Palaeozoic). Imported.
7816107. Quern fragment. Purbeck Limestone (Feather Bed). This is the Purbeck limestone most often used for querns.
7816887. Ham Hill Limestone.
7816081. Black baked clay.
7817032. A dark reddish brown sandstone. Probably a beach pebble.

Conclusions.

1. The main stones used in this building were Purbeck and Portland limestones brought from the Isle of Purbeck.
2. Some Ham Hill stone was found. Several of the coffins at Poundstary were of this material so it was obviously being brought from Yeovil to Barchester.
3. The Flint is almost certainly local material.
4. The Tufa (probably for bath house ceilings) and the ironstone are both likely to have been brought from the Wareham area.
5. The use of Lias from the west is not easily explained, it is a poor building stone. May have been brought in the first instance together with some clay for making hydraulic cement

Quefies.

1. The absence of Chalk in the foundations is surprising. It serves well in foundations and is easy to work. This and some Greensand could have been expected (cp. Fishbourne).
2. More Flint could have been expected in the wall cores. It is a local material (cp. Sparsholt).

J. Anderson
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