

NOTE ON THE PETROLOGY OF A MORTARIUM FROM USK

D.F. Williams, Ph.D., F.S.A.

(DOE Ceramic Petrology Project)

Department of Archaeology, University of Southampton

This work is part of a long-term project on the petrological analysis of Roman mortaria.

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The sherd is pinkish white (Munsell 7.5YR 8/2) in colour and crowded with rounded brown and red lava inclusions up to 5mm across. In thin section the lava can be seen to have a dominantly trachytic texture. Sanidine feldspar is abundant but there is some plagioclase and augite as well as occasional grains of biotite and zeolite.

There can be little doubt that this mortarium originates in an area of recent igneous rocks and Italy would be an entirely appropriate source region. There are some volcanic rocks to be found in the north of the country, but the main concentration lies in the volcanic tract that covers large areas of Etruria, Latium and Campania (Desio, 1973). Without further comparative material and geological information it is impossible to be more specific.

Reference

Desio, A. (1973) Geologia Dell'Italia (Torino, 1973).