

## Ancient Monuments Laboratory Report No 4806

The slag from Dorchester Hospital site C

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A total of about 2 kg of slag was submitted for examination. It came from a number of contexts, many of them disturbed. Small quantities were associated with two of the 'furnaces' in Building 1 which probably date to the 4th century.

Almost all the slag was smithing slag, produced in a blacksmith's hearth. There was a minor amount of fuel ash slag, which forms from the reaction of ash with silica-rich material such as clay at high temperatures; this was almost certainly a by-product of smithing. The small overall quantity of slag suggests that metal-working was being carried on near the site but not actually in the excavated areas. A smithy would be expected to produce far larger concentrations of slag; what is present here represents the normal background level of this very durable material which is usually found on every occupation site. The presence of slag in the fill of the 'furnaces' is probably purely fortuitous.

The 'furnaces' (as described in the draft excavation report) are unlikely to have been used in a high temperature process such as metal-working as they do not appear to show any signs of vitrification.