

Ancient Monuments Laboratory  
Report 134/90

THE IDENTIFICATION OF THE SLAGS  
FROM GAS HOUSE LANE, ALCESTER,  
WARWICKSHIRE (SITE AL23)

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#### Summary

The identification of a small quantity of Roman smithing slag and other residues which were recovered from the excavation.

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# **The Identification of the the Slags from Gas House Lane, Alcester, Warwickshire (Site AL23)**

**By Dr G McDonnell**

## **1 Introduction**

The slags and residues were visually examined and the classification is solely based on morphology. In general they are divided into two broad groups. First are the diagnostic slags which can be attributed to a particular industrial process; these comprise the ironworking slags, i.e. smelting or smithing slags. The second group, the non-diagnostic slags, could have been generated by a number of different processes but show no diagnostic characteristic that can identify the process. In many cases the non-diagnostic residues, e.g. hearth or furnace lining, may be ascribed to a particular process through archaeological association.

The residue classifications were defined in the previous Alcester slag report (AML report 3/90, "Report on the Slags Recovered from the 1964-66 excavations at Birch Abbey"). The slags identified on the site included smithing slag lumps (SSL), cinder (CIN), hearth lining (HL) and other material (OTHER).

## **2 Site Description**

The Gas House Lane site lay on the edge of the defended area of the Roman town, and included occupation deposits and defences. Occupation began at the end of the second century, with the greatest activity in the third century. After a lapse it was reoccupied in the last quarter of the fourth century. At the same time the early ditch and bank defences were replaced by a wall.

### **2.2 Slag Classification**

The only diagnostic slag recovered was a small quantity of smithing slag lumps (1.8kg). One fragment of hearth lining and less than 0.3kg of cinder was also identified. The material classed as other mainly comprised iron fragments. This quantity of slag is considered to be a background level of slag, ie fragments of slag that were accidentally included in other domestic rubbish. A full listing by context is given in Appendix 1. There was no evidence from this excavation for smithing activity associated with the construction of the town wall.

# Appendix 1

## ALCESTER SITE AL23 Slag Listing (weight in grammes)

Context	SSL	CIN	HL	OTHER
5		1		
20	25			
21	7			
22	30			
55				62
103		1		
113		140		
252	20			
261		7		
300	135			
308		40		
317	85			
401	1060			
1002	112			
1009	40	15		
1024			1	
1063		42		
1102	1			
2000	112			
2001		30		172
2059		10		
2061				42
2084				1
2111				75
2113				170
2114	12			
2122	175			
7000				30
7080	2			
7091	1			
7199		2		18
7205	7			
7217				8
7224	2			
7225				160
7226	8			
7231				42
7245				100
7258				42
7265		3		
8212	22			
*****				
Total on Site	1856	291	1	922
*****				