Marcham Ceramic and stone tesserae

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A total of 2,284 tesserae were recorded, 880 (39%) for zone MF and 1,404 (61%) for zone MFNA, with no tesserae found in zone MFP. No tesserae were found *in situ*. The majority of the 2,284 tesserae (93%) were made from ceramics, with 7% made of stone (further detail is given in the Appendix Figure 1). Stone tesserae occurred in the same trenches where there were significant numbers of ceramic tesserae. By weight the relative percentages are similar at 97% for ceramic and 3% for stone tesserae (Appendix Figure 2).

The distribution of ceramic and stone tesserae across the three zones is shown in Figure 1. Significant numbers of tesserae occur in six trenches. For zone MFNA, 441 (19.3%) tesserae were found in Trench 6, 881 (38.6%) in Trench 7, and 77 (3.4%) in Trench 8, all related to the temple building. For zone MF, 402 (17.6%) tesserae were found in Trench 26, which is over an area of the path leading to the temple, 109 (4.8%) in Trench 18, a set of buildings at the entrance to the precinct, and 57 (2.5%) in Trench 14, an area of pits and cuts in the South East corner of the precinct.

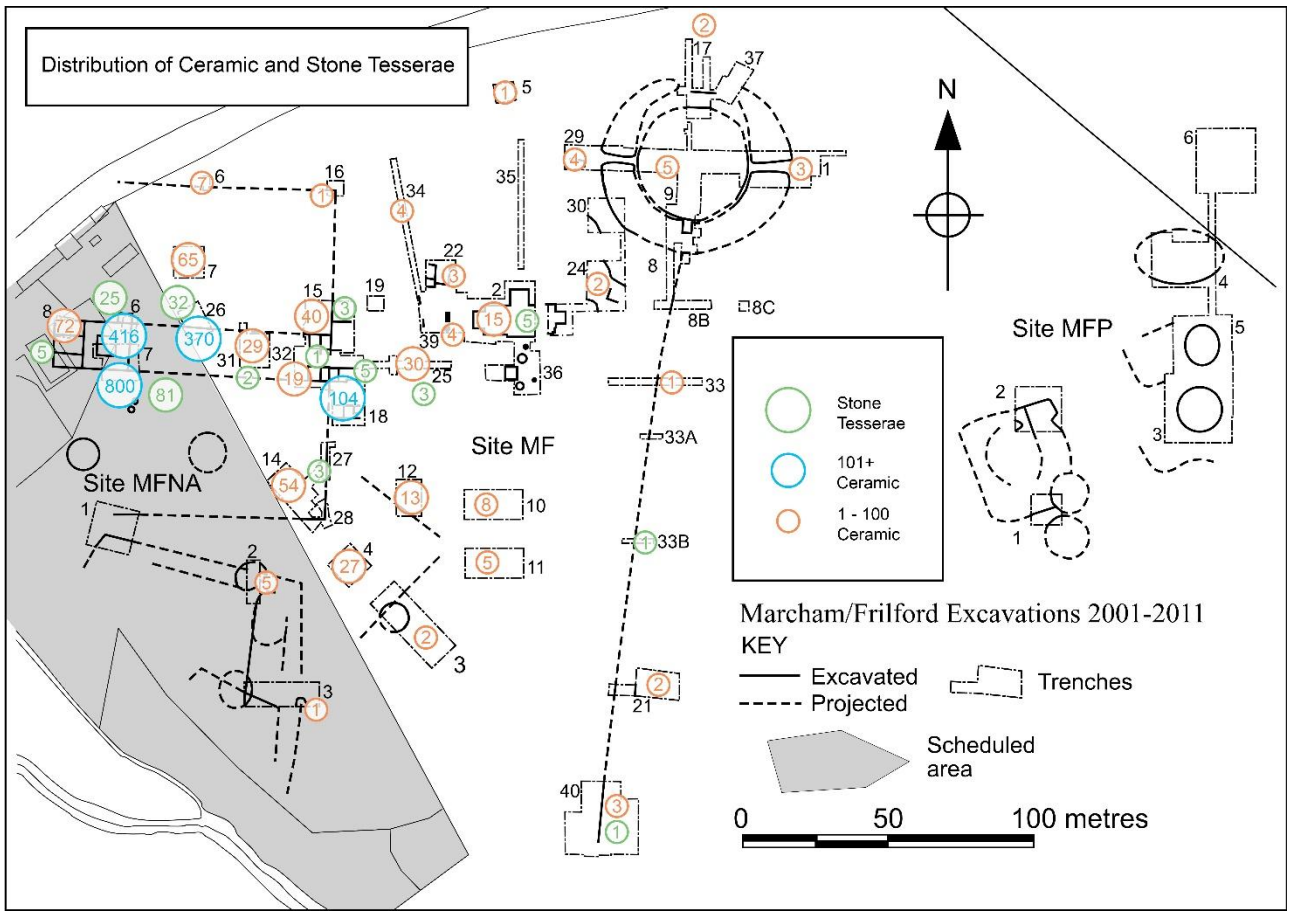


Figure 1. The distribution of ceramic and stone tesserae

Ceramic tesserae were mostly rectangular (48%) or square (36%) in shape with small numbers of triangular and diamond shapes (Appendix Figure 3). Stone tesserae were also mostly rectangular (42%) or square in shape (47%) with a small number of triangular and diamond shapes. The majority of ceramic tesserae were medium[1] in size (76%), with some small ceramic tesserae (14%), compared with 39% of stone tesserae of medium size and a greater number of very small tesserae (30%), noting however that size had not been recorded for all stone tesserae recorded. There were no clear associations of a particular tessera shape with a particular size (Appendix Figure 4) noting when comparing graphs that the overall numbers of stone tesserae are significantly lower than those for ceramic tesserae. When comparing fabric

[1] See key in Appendix Figure 3

type (Appendix Figure 5 and 6) with shape, the relative proportions of the fabric types are similar for the square and rectangular tesserae which form the majority of the tesserae found.

As no *in-situ* tessellated pavements or mosaics were found at Marcham, the presence of different coloured tesserae was examined to explore the potential use of decoration or plain tessellated pavements in relation to specific trenches. Most trenches with significant numbers of tesserae (as noted above) included a range of fabric types (Appendix Figure 7).

The ceramic and stone fabrics were combined and grouped into broad colour groupings (Appendix Figure 8) to provide an overview of the use of colour. 52% of tesserae were 'red-orange' and 38% 'pale orange', both derived from brick/tile fabrics. Roman brick and tile fabrics are generally found in a range of shades of red and orange colours, reflecting the local clays and manufacturing process. It is not clear whether a distinction was being made in practice at Marcham between 'pale orange' and 'red-orange' colours recorded. It is possible, given the approximately equal numbers of both 'red-orange' and 'pale-orange' tesserae, some distinction may have been made between these colours, by using these in some form of pattern, perhaps a geometric or chequer board design using these two colours. However, such distinctions would be subtle, and tessellated pavements can be observed elsewhere where there is a range of pale orange to red colours as part of one, plain pavement, with no such distinction made.

The numbers of black, white and blue/grey colours were small (1%, 3% and 7% respectively of the total number of tesserae). Where these colours occur, all three (black, white and blue/grey) are usually present together (Appendix Figure 9) but in small numbers. Given the relatively low numbers of these black, white and blue/grey tesserae, it does not seem likely that these were used as part of an 'all over' pattern across the whole tessellated payment. The relatively limited colour palette used makes it unlikely that these were used in a figurative design. It is more probable that these black, white and blue/grey tesserae were used in a border around a central tessellated pavement comprised of the 'red-orange'/'pale-orange' tesserae. Alternatively, it is also possible that there were some small pavements using the red, orange, black, white and blue/grey tesserae in a multi-coloured design and some plain 'red-orange'/'pale-orange' one-colour pavements.

Reviewing the distribution of potential patterned floors across the zones, the colour groupings were considered for those trenches which had black, white or blue/grey tesserae, where the total of these three colours (taken together) amounted to more than ten tesserae (Appendix Figure 9). Trenches with significant numbers of these coloured tesserae occur within the temple precinct – MFNA Trench 6, MFNA Trench 7 (over the temple building) - and in MF Trench 26 (part of the path leading to the temple). Fewer coloured tesserae occur in other trenches such as MF Trench 18 (the buildings at the entrance to the precinct), the temple building in MFNA Trench 8 and in MF Trench 14 (an area within the precinct), which may indicate some use of patterning although the numbers of tesserae are very small. All these trenches were located within the main temple precinct or at its entrance, so that it is probable that tessellated pavements with some form of multi-coloured decoration were focused within the temple structure itself. For MF Trench 2, and MF Trench 15 where much smaller numbers of tesserae were found, it is difficult to conclude whether these represent pavements or merely dispersal across the site.

Whilst small numbers of tesserae were found in most trenches across both the MFNA and MF zones, the largest concentration of both stone and ceramic tesserae were found in the temple area itself (in trenches MFNA 6 and MFNA 7), Figure 1. Significant concentrations of tesserae were also found in the temple path area in MF26 within the temple precinct, and at the buildings at the entrance to the temple precinct (in MF18). It is likely that the main temple structure, and possibly the buildings in the Trench 18 area, had tessellated pavements of orange/red ceramic tesserae, which included some form of limited patterning.

In contrast, no tesserae were recorded at Nettleton (Wedlake 1982:32), and floors comprised limestone slabs. At Uley surviving floors were made of closely set pieces of local limestone, but a section of plain

buff tessellated flooring, made form fine grained lias limestone, was found in a structure within the temple courtyard (Woodward and Leech 1993:179).

Appendix - Analysis of data

Figure 1: Tesserae numbers

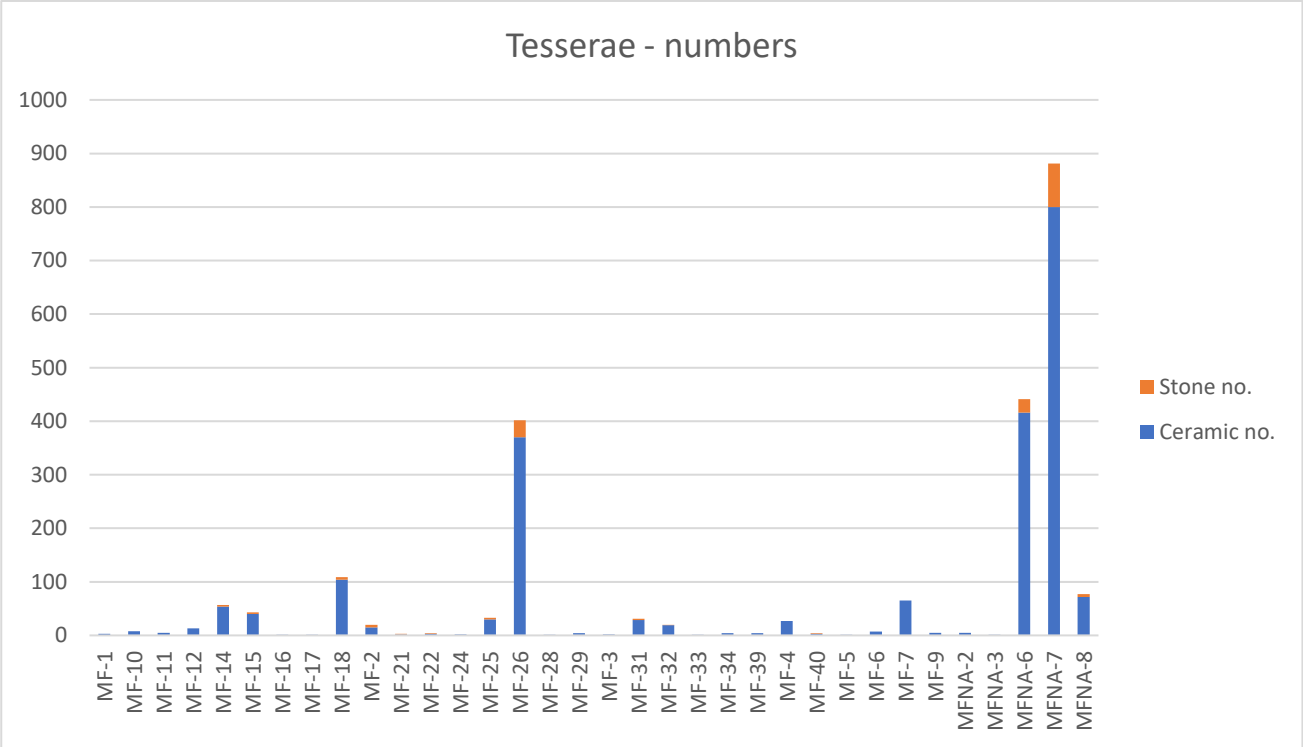


Figure 2: Tesserae weight

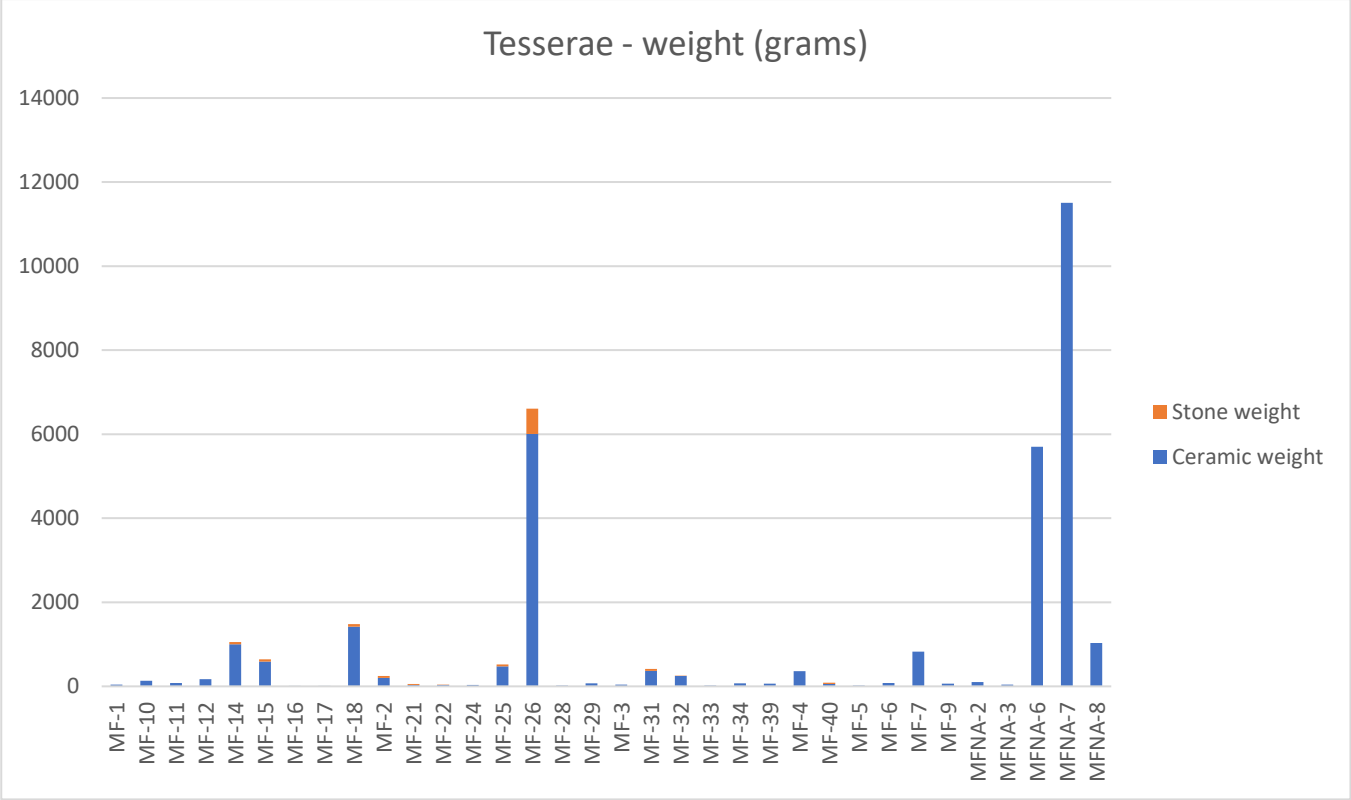


Figure 3: Tesserae shape and size

Shape	Ceramic tesserae		Stone tesserae	
RE	1007	48%	70	42%
SQ	761	36%	79	47%
TR	61	3%	5	3%
DIA	67	3%	2	1%
OTH	220	10%	12	7%
	2116		*168*	

Size	Ceramic tesserae		Stone tesserae	
VLG	9	0%	1	2%
LG	178	8%	11	19%
MED	1610	76%	22	39%
SM	304	14%	6	11%
VSM	15	1%	17	30%
	2116		*57*	

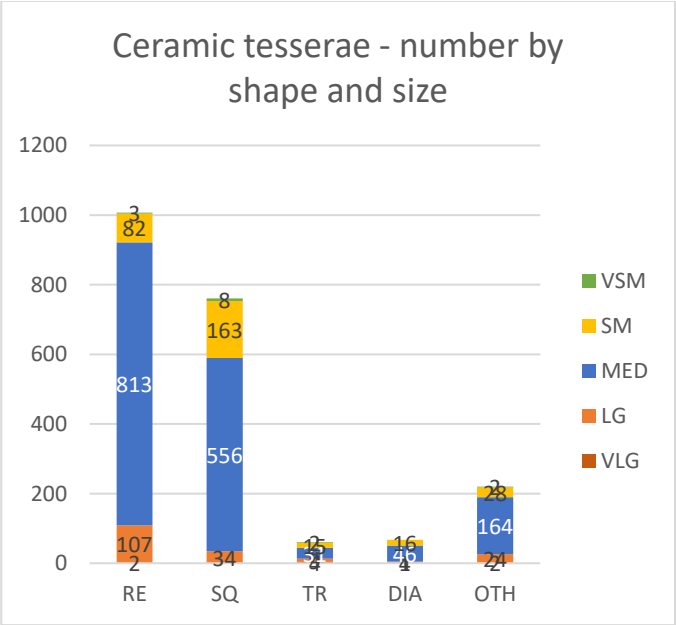
Note that size had not been recorded for all stone tesserae.

Key:

Size	
VLG	= over 41mm
LG	= ranging from c. 31mm - 40mm
MED	= ranging from c. 21mm - 30mm
SM	= ranging from c. 16mm - 20mm
VSM	= ranging from c. 9mm - 15mm

Shape	
RE	= rectangular
SQ	= square or sub-square
TR	= roughly triangular shape
DIA	= diamond or squashed square shape
OTH	= any other shape

Figure 4: Tesserae numbers by shape and size



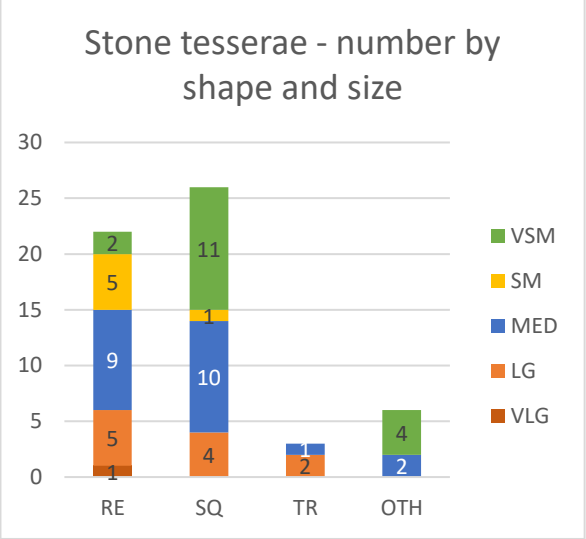
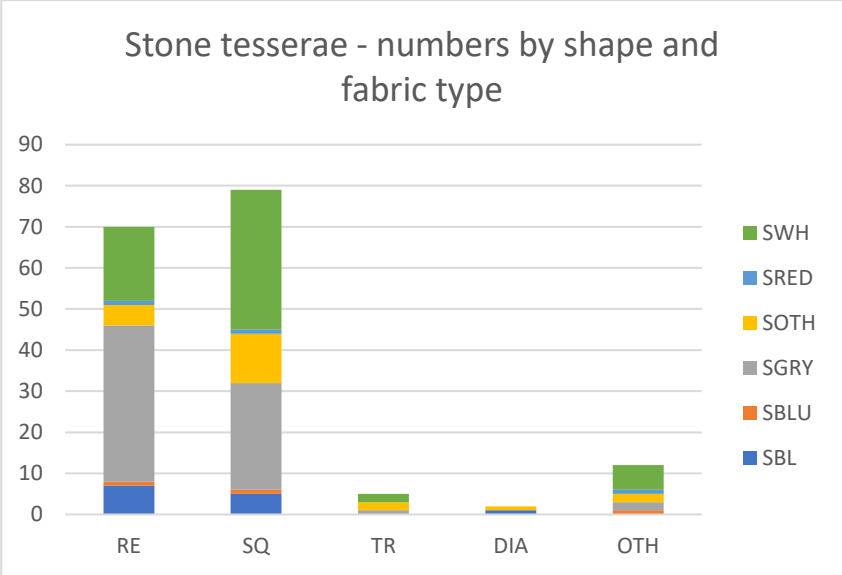
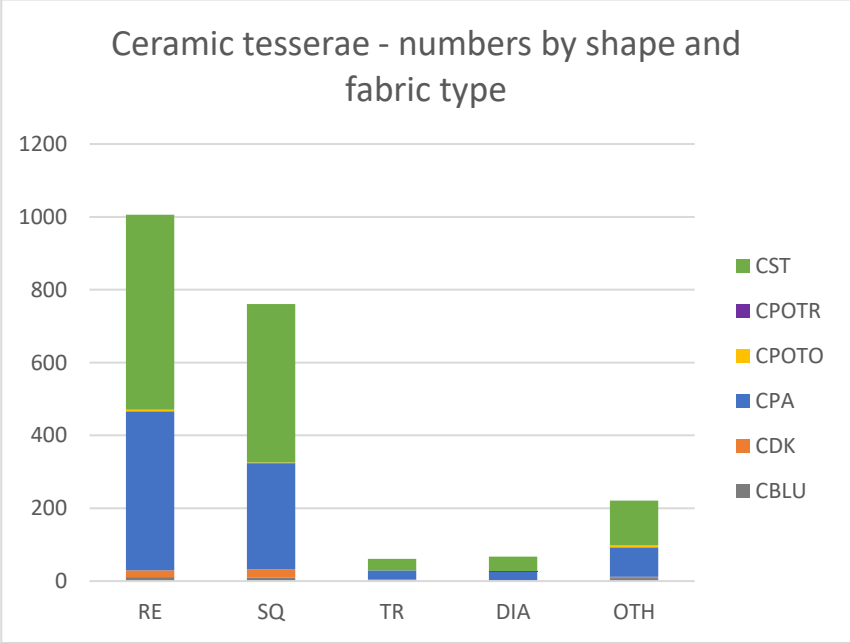


Figure 5: Tesserae numbers by fabric and shape



Stone tesserae - fabric types	
SWH	= stone white/cream
SRED	=stone red/orange
SOTH	=stone - other
SGRY	=stone pale grey
SBLU	=stone bluish grey
SBL	=stone dark grey/black

Figure 6: Tesserae numbers by fabric and shape



Ceramic tesserae - fabric types	
CST	= ceramic standard red-orange brick/tile fabric
CPOTR	= ceramic cut down pottery sherd - grey/black or reduced
CPOTO	= ceramic cut down pottery sherd - buff/orange/red
CPA	= ceramic pale orange/buff brick/tile fabric
CDK	= ceramic darker red/and sometimes with grey core brick/tile fabric
CBLU	= ceramic blue/grey brick/tile fabric

Figure 7: Fabrics present in each trench

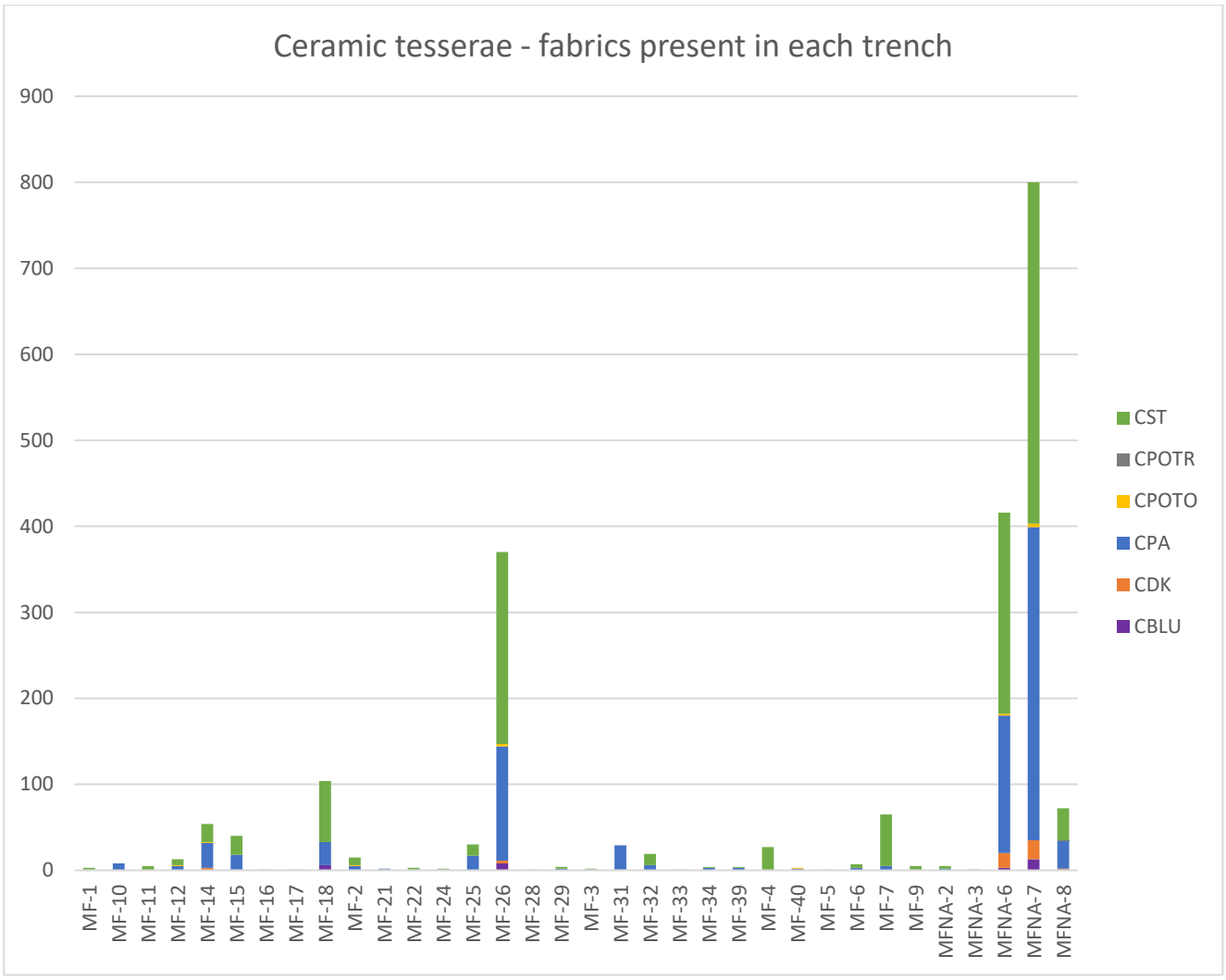
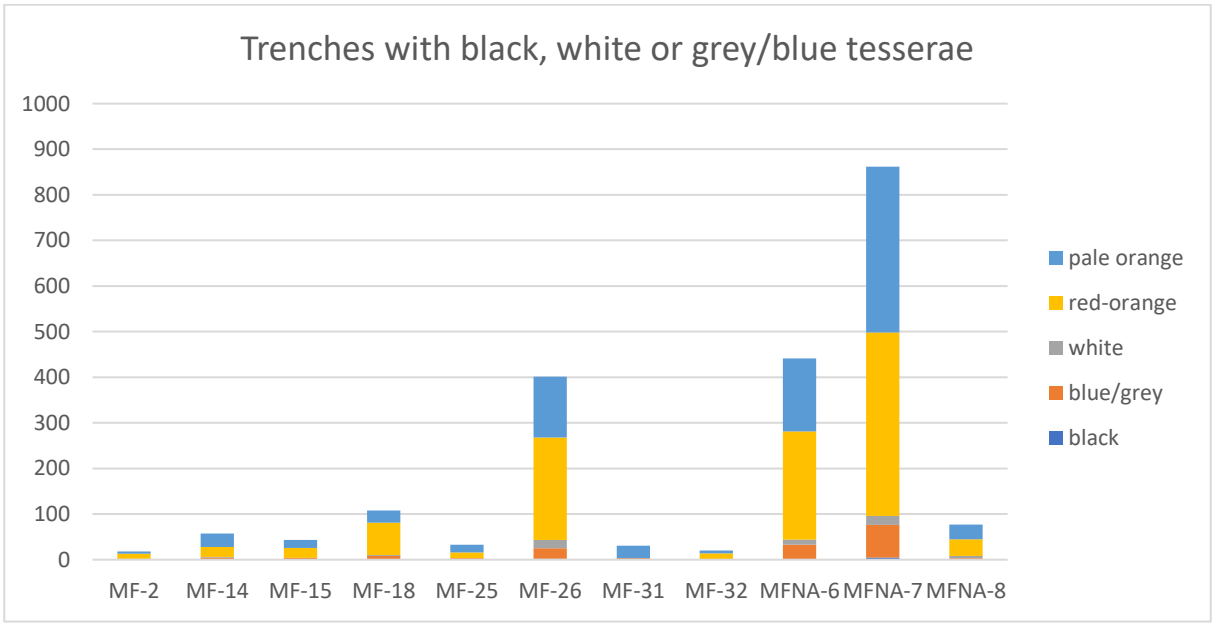




Figure 8: Fabrics as broad colour groupings

					Broad colour grouping				
		Number	%		Pale orange	Red-orange	Black	White	Blue/grey
Ceramic tesserae - fabric types									
CST	= ceramic standard red-orange brick/tile fabric	1164	51%			1164			
CPOTR	= ceramic cut down pottery sherd - grey/black or reduced	1	0%						1
CPOTO	= ceramic cut down pottery sherd - buff/orange/red	13	1%			13			
CPA	= ceramic pale orange/buff brick/tile fabric	858	38%		858				
CDK	= ceramic darker red/and sometimes with grey core brick/tile fabric	49	2%						49
CBLU	= ceramic blue/grey brick/tile fabric	31	1%						31
Stone tesserae - fabric types									
SWH	= stone white/cream	60	3%					60	
SRED	=stone red/orange	3	0%			3			
SOTH	=stone - other	22	1%						
SGRY	=stone pale grey	67	3%						67
SBLU	=stone bluish grey	3	0%						3
SBL	=stone dark grey/black	13	1%				13		
		2284			858	1180	13	60	151
					38%	***52%***	***1%***	***3%***	***7%***

Figure 9: Use of coloured tesserae



Note: Above analysis excluded trenches with only red-orange or pale orange tesserae and with fewer than ten black, white and blue/grey tesserae (taken together).

Bibliography

Wedlake WJ. (1982) *The excavation of the Shrine of Apollo at Nettleton, Wiltshire, 1956-1971,* London: Society of Antiquaries of London.

Woodward A and Leach PE. (1993) *The Uley shrines : excavation of a ritual complex on West Hill, Uley, Gloucestershire 1977-9,* London: English Heritage in association with British Museum Press.