

**Channel Tunnel Rail Link
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**Building material and fired clay from Bower Road,
Smeeth, Kent (ARC 440/99)**

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

1	INTRODUCTION	3
2	ROMAN CERAMIC BUILDING MATERIAL.....	3
2.1	Fabrics	3
2.2	Forms.....	3
3	MEDIEVAL/ POST-MEDIEVAL CERAMIC BUILDING MATERIAL.....	4
4	FIRED CLAY FRAGMENTS.....	4

1 INTRODUCTION

The material comprises Roman ceramic material, a few insignificant scraps of medieval/post-medieval ceramic material, and some fired clay of indeterminate form, not necessarily building material. All was examined microscopically (x10); Museum of London (MoL) fabric numbers were used where appropriate during recording.

2 ROMAN CERAMIC BUILDING MATERIAL

2.1 Fabrics

Several fabrics were identified, mostly orange or red and distinguished by the amount of sand and by the presence or absence of iron and/or silty streaks or inclusions. In view of the fragmentary nature of the material and its lack of direct association with structural remains, only a very summary account is appropriate here.

Some 40.3% (by count) is in fabrics belonging to the MoL fabric group 2815: most is probably from Brockley Hill or neighbouring kiln sites along Watling Street north of London, with a date range of *c* AD 50–160, although some may be a Kent variant, not necessarily with the same date range. Other fabrics are present only in small quantities, ranging from 1.6% (one fragment) to 12.9% (eight fragments). A very few are of 1st-century date, others of 1st- or 2nd-century date; some are in fabrics which it is not at present possible to date. As well as the Brockley Hill area, manufacturing centres represented are the Eccles villa estate, Kent (producing a distinctive off-white or pinkish fabric: MoL fabric 2454 = Canterbury Archaeological Trust fabric 8) and possibly Hartfield, East Sussex, although each is represented by a single fragment only. The provenance of other fabrics is not currently known, although it seems likely that some at least would have been in Kent.

2.2 Forms

Much of the material is fragmentary, with forms unidentifiable, and with no complete lengths or breadths preserved. Definite forms present are: bricks (18 examples), imbrex (1), tegulae (17), and box flue tiles (3). The disparity between the single imbrex and the eighteen tegula fragments (a proportion of 1:59 by weight) suggests that the assemblage may not represent primary destruction deposits (since tegulae and imbrices would occur in approximately equal numbers on a roof) but material which has been deliberately selected for secondary use, possibly agricultural. The box flue tiles (*tubuli*), used in their primary application in connection with hypocaust heating systems, have knife-scored mortar-keying in a lattice

pattern. A possible *tegula mammata* is present, although this may be no more than a slightly faulty brick.

3 MEDIEVAL/ POST-MEDIEVAL CERAMIC BUILDING MATERIAL

This is limited to one small (20 g) fragment and two probable fragments (total 20 g) of plain roofing tile; a fourth possible fragment of only 10 g weight may not be building material at all.

4 FIRED CLAY FRAGMENTS

More than eight hundred small fragments of fired clay (or possible fired clay), with an average (mean) weight of only 4 g, were recovered. One has what may just possibly be a wattle impression, indicating use as daub. Otherwise, it is impossible to be sure whether these fragments are burned daub or from objects such as loomweights or other artefacts. Most is fine-textured and orange or brown; the most common inclusion is quartz sand; a few fragments contain fairly fine organic material. In a very few cases there is mortar adhering to the clay. It is, of course, impossible to date such fired clay fragments, although in view of the general activity on the site it is likely to be either of late Iron Age or of Roman date; that with mortar attached is probably not earlier than the Roman period.