

7.4 ASSESSMENT OF FIRED CLAY

Louise Harrison

Summary

- 7.4.1 Excluding material covered elsewhere (see Appendices 5 and 8), only a small assemblage, of poor quality, of fired clay was recovered from the excavation. Most if not all of this material probably represents burnt daub from wattle and daub structures.
- 7.4.2 It is suggested that no further analytical work be carried out on this material although a small note including basic details regarding its quantity, quality and location should be included with the archive.

Introduction

- 7.4.3 Excluding very heavily fired clay, often vitrified, adhering to ferrous residues (see Appendix 7.8) and part of a loomweight (see Appendix 7.5) almost all of the material was retrieved by hand from the excavated features although a small quantity, weighing 363g, was extracted from samples. About 33.6% of this assemblage (38.8% by weight) held wattle impressions and most if not all of the material probably derives from wattle and daub structures, having been preserved by incidental exposure to low to moderate heat in the vicinity of hearths *etc.* or in more destructive fires.
- 7.4.4 Due to its small quantity and poor quality, further analysis of the material is unlikely to address any Fieldwork Event Aims. However, its occurrence does suggest that wattle and daub-lined structures were present on the site, probably in the Anglo-Saxon or early medieval period.

Methodology

- 7.4.5 All of the daub was counted and weighed and scanned for features such as wattle impressions and flat surfaces. The resultant information is presented in Table One.

Quantification

- 7.4.6 The daub retrieved from the excavation consists of 357 fragments, weighing a total of 6.620kg. This includes 122 fragments (2.615kg), which have features such as flat surfaces and wattle impressions. The remaining material (including all the daub retrieved from the samples) amounts to 235 fragments (4.005kg). This was abraded and had no diagnostic features.

7.4.7 Table One
Diagnostic Fired Clay, by Phase

<i>Context</i>	<i>Sub-Group</i>	<i>Group</i>	<i>Phase</i>	<i>Count</i>	<i>Wt(g)</i>	<i>Phase Period</i>	<i>Comments</i>
622	160	2	2	1	30	Anglo-Saxon	wattle impressions and surfaces
318	23	11	3	2	45	Early medieval	flat surfaces
385	131	6	3	1	5	Early medieval	wattle impressions
386	131	6	3	31	250	Early medieval	wattle impressions
391	129	11	3	4	85	Early medieval	wattle impressions
432	145	12	3	2	40	Early medieval	wattle impressions and surfaces
488	157	6	3	24	1060	Early medieval	wattle impressions
511	128	11	3	1	30	Early medieval	wattle impressions
525	152	11	3	46	645	Early medieval	wattle impressions and surfaces
561	108	12	3	1	15	Early medieval	wattle impressions and surfaces
587	162	13	3	6	95	Early medieval	wattle impressions and surfaces
620	68	8	3	1	15	Early medieval	wattle impressions and surfaces
659	72	10	3	4	295	Early medieval	wattle impressions and surfaces
465	8	32	5	1	5	Post-medieval	wattle impressions

7.4.8 The fired clay tabulated above consists mainly of small, abraded fragments. Although the greater part, by weight, of this material has wattle impressions and/or surfaces, its condition is generally poor and none of it shows signs of exposure to very high temperatures.

7.4.9 A brief scan of the material suggests that it was all of the same clay type, varying in colour from an orange through to a pale brown shade. It has a fine, sandy texture with no other common inclusions present.

Provenance

7.4.10 The fired clay was retrieved from various-sized pits associated with ironworking debris and domestic waste, generally dated (by the pottery) to the early medieval period. Almost all of these contexts have been assigned to Phase 3. Although three (context 386, sub-group 131, Group 6, Phase 3; context 488, sub-group 157, Group 6, Phase 3; context 525, sub-group 152, Group 11, Phase 3) yielded moderate quantities of daub, the majority of contexts contained only small amounts.

Conservation

- 7.4.11 Due to the already poor condition of the fired clay, no conservation work is deemed appropriate. In keeping with the CAT's retention and discard policy for such material, the fragments with features such as wattle impressions and flat surfaces have been placed in plastic bags with waterproof labels and stored in museum boxes for possible future analysis whilst undiagnostic pieces were discarded following quantification and assessment.

Comparative material

- 7.4.12 Due to a general lack of work carried out on burnt daub, it is difficult to find published comparative material. However, the assemblage from another CTRL site, at Saltwood Tunnel, appears to be similar in quality and fabric type as the Mersham material. A non-CTRL excavation carried out at St Augustine's, Chartham (Rady 1996) has been assessed (by the author) and also appears similar to the Mersham group.

Potential For Further Work

- 7.4.13 The fired clay discussed above is small in quantity and poor in both quality and condition. Although the presence of the daub suggests that there were probably wattle and daub lined structures on the site, the lack of large quantities of good quality material from secure contexts suggests that any further work on the material is unlikely to contribute to the Land Zone Priorities and the Fieldwork Event Aims. It is therefore thought that a small note covering the quantity, condition and location of the daub is all that is required for inclusion in the archive.

7.4.14 Bibliography

Rady, J., 1996; *Evaluations and Excavations at St. Augustine's Hospital, Chartham, Kent. Phase 1A*, Canterbury Archaeological Trust Client Report.