

ASSESSMENT OF THE FIRED CLAY

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1. Introduction

- 1.1 Most of the fired clay was retrieved by hand from features within the site excavated by the Canterbury Archaeological Trust. Additionally, a small quantity of daub weighing 1.211kg was extracted from the soil samples.
- 1.2 A small amount of material retrieved from a watching brief carried out by the Oxford Archaeological Unit (OAU) has also been included in this report. No daub /fired clay from the evaluation carried out by the Museum Of London (MoLAS) has been seen by the author and it has not been included in this report, although it is described in their evaluation report (URS 1998, Appendix 2, 21). This consisted of eight fragments, four of which came from a context close to Structure 3.
- 1.3 Due to the poor quantity and quality of the material, the daub is unlikely to address any of the fieldwork aims. Although daub/fired clay is present in the area of excavation, it is far too sparse in quantity and too poor in quality to provide much indication of the presence and nature of a wattle and daub lined structure in the area of excavation. It is likely that it relates to a structure situated nearby, probably Structure 3.

2. Methodology

- 2.1 All the daub has been recorded by number and weight and scanned for features such as wattle impressions and flat surfaces. The material was then divided up into fragments to be kept in long-term storage (those pieces with wattle impressions and surfaces) and those pieces that can be discarded after recording.

3. Quantification

- 3.1 The daub retrieved from the excavation consists of 157 fragments weighing a total of 1.590kg. This includes 34 fragments weighing 515g that have features such as flat surfaces and wattle impressions. The remaining material (excluding the daub retrieved from the soil samples) amounts to 123 fragments weighing 1.075 kg. This material is abraded and has no diagnostic features. The daub retrieved from the soil samples weighing 1.211kg is also abraded and has no diagnostic features. The daub and fired clay retrieved by OAU during field walking is of the same poor condition.
- 3.2 The daub with diagnostic features has been separated from the remainder and is outlined in Table 5. The daub present in Table 5 consists of mainly small, abraded fragments. Although the majority of this material had wattle impressions and/or surfaces, the general condition of the daub is poor.

4. Provenance

- 4.1 The majority of the daub was retrieved from medieval or post-medieval contexts (Phases 3 and 4 of the CAT excavation). 83 fragments came from Phase 3 contexts, and 63 from Phase 4 contexts. The remaining few fragments were either unstratified or came from features thought to be of prehistoric date. No distinctions could be seen between the prehistoric and the later fired clay.
- 4.2 The fired clay from Phase 3 contexts stems largely from sub-groups 12, 21 and 45. As noted in the stratigraphic narrative, the debris from the pit which forms sub-group 21 probably came from a building nearby, almost certainly a structure which can be identified to the west of the pit (Structure 3). Sub-group 12 represents the beam slot for one of the walls of this structure. Most of the daub of Phase 3, therefore, lies close to the location of this structure.

5. Conservation

- 5.1 The poor condition of the daub suggests that no conservation work is appropriate or deemed necessary. The daub has been stored in plastic bags with waterproof labels and then placed in museum boxes. It is stored as a bulk commodity.
- 5.2 The fired clay with recordable features (such as wattle impressions and surfaces) is recorded in detail and is kept for possible future analysis. The daub with no diagnostic features is usually discarded after recording and assessment has taken place.

6. Comparative Material

- 6.1 Because of the lack of work carried out on daub and fired clay, it is difficult to find any published work on comparative material. However, the CTRL excavation at Mersham produced quantities of daub that appear to be of a similar quality to that from Westenhanger. Additionally, the daub from Mersham was dated (by the pottery) to the early medieval period, which is broadly contemporary to the Westenhanger material.

7. Potential For Further Work

- 7.1 The daub discussed above is both poor in quality and condition. The presence of the daub and its location indicate that there were wattle and daub lined structures present nearby. However, the lack of large quantities of good quality material from secure contexts and features suggests that any further work on the material is unlikely to contribute to any significant extent to the Land Zone Priorities and the Fieldwork Event Aims. The principal use of the material will be to provide some (admittedly limited) information on the nature of Structures 3 and 4, according with one of the Fieldwork Event Aims, but without using the narrow definition of the utilisation of archaeomagnetic techniques alone.
- 7.2 In the light of this, it is thought that a small note including the quantity, condition and location of the daub is all that is required. The spatial location of the material in relation to nearby structures is a key element of any further analysis.

Table Five

The Quantity and Weight of Fired Clay with Diagnostic Features

Context	Sub-Group	Group	Phase	Count	Weight	Comments
51	49	15	4	2	55	with wattle impressions
57	51	15	4	1	25	with wattle impressions
88	49	15	4	1	20	with wattle impression
89	49	15	3	25	270	

138	12	12	3	1	75	with wattle impression
189	45	7	3	4	70	with wattle impressions