

1.1 Ceramic Building Material and Fired Clay

by Susan Pringle

Introduction

- 1.1.1 A small amount of ceramic building material, 2 kg in weight, including 1.5 kg of fired clay, was recovered during the watching brief. It was hoped that this material would provide evidence for activities and structures on the site. The recovery and study of the ceramic building material and fired clay was undertaken in accordance with the Fieldwork Event Aims (see Section 2.2), in particular Aim 1.

Methodology

- 1.1.2 All the ceramic building material, including the fired clay, was examined. Ceramic building material has been divided by form, and fragments counted and weighed. The presence of distinctive fabric types has been noted and compared to the Museum of London ceramic building material fabric series, but no analytical work has been done on the fabrics from the site, as this task is more appropriately carried out at the next stage, should the material merit it. The CAT fabric series was not consulted at this stage. Other information recorded includes the presence of combing tally or signature marks, the presence or absence of glaze, and any complete dimensions.
- 1.1.3 The fired clay fragments have been counted and weighed, and notes made of the most distinctive fabrics and any unusual inclusions. Exceptionally reduced (blackened) or vitrified material has been noted. The presence of original surfaces, imprints and tempering has been noted. No analytical work has been carried out on the fabrics.

Quantifications

- 1.1.4 Of the total weight of ceramic building material from the site, 0.42 kg was ceramic building material (Table 1.3.1). Apart from one scrap of probable Roman date, all the ceramic building material was medieval or post-medieval.

Table 1.3.1: Summary of ceramic building material

Context	Count	Weight (g)	Type	Period	Early date	Late date	Comments
87	1	225	Brick	MD-PM	1350	1500	Whitish sandy fabric, prob Flemish. Odd moulded depression in top
87	2	118	Peg tile	MD-PM			1 nr Mol 3201, overfired; 1 light red; unglazed
227	1	6	Tile	RO	43	400	Flake, orange fabric, abraded
227	2	122	Peg tile	MD-PM			1 fine orange, med sand; 1 red with post-firing n/hole, reused as small square

- 1.1.5 Tile types present consist of a brick in a Flemish-type yellow fabric, which is probably of medieval date. It pre-dates the use of brick as a major component of load-bearing walls, and would probably have been used for paving, nogging, or the construction of a fireplace or chimney. Peg tile occurs in at least three fabrics, one of which is close to MoL fabric 3201; the others are orange and red, and unglazed.
- 1.1.6 The total weight of fired clay assemblage is 1.5 kg (Table 1.3.2). The assemblage includes a number of triangular loomweights, that are typical of the Iron Age. Some had a distinctive appearance, with a reduced pale brown surface and a fabric containing quartz grains, flint flakes and organics.

Table 1.3.2: Summary of fired clay

Context	Count	Weight (g)	Type	Period	Comments
11	8	21	Fired clay	E-MIA	Loomweight; reduced pale brown surface, with quartz, flint and organics
11	80	124	Fired clay	E-MIA	Loomweight; reduced pale brown surface, with quartz, flint and organics
11	6	217	Fired clay	E-M-LIA	Loomweight
18	3	24	Fired clay		Dark chocolate brown - burnt natural?
114	34	116	Fired clay		Coarse orange lumpy/sandy daub, smoothed surface, no impressions
172	1	946	Fired clay	E-MIA	Loomweight
178	1	4	Fired clay		Orange sandy lumpy daub
178	1	52	Fired clay	E-MIA?	Loomweight? Fragment, similar to that in [172]

Provenance

- 1.1.7 The datable material came from a variety of features. A few fragments of fired clay were found in pit 19 associated with Grooved Ware. They support the suggestion that the group of features to which this pit belongs (Group 66) were related to some kind of structure. The small piece of probable Roman tile in context 227 came from the upper fill of ditch 229, but this also contained peg tile, so the Roman material is likely to be residual. The other medieval/post medieval building materials were from context 87, the upper fill of ditch 85. This ditch may be related to ditch 229. There are no good groups of ceramic building material, and the assemblage is of little potential value.
- 1.1.8 The Iron Age loomweights come from the western group of large pits, specifically two adjacent pits, both tentatively dated to the early-middle Iron Age on the basis of the pottery they contain (170 and 175; contexts 172 and 178 respectively), and from a subsoil layer (context 11).
- 1.1.9 The condition of the material is fairly abraded, but there is no risk to its preservation.

Conservation

- 1.1.10 Further analysis will be needed on some of the material, so it should not be placed in long-term storage until this has been carried out. There are no special requirements for long-term storage, other than the use of robust packaging materials and a dry environment.
- 1.1.11 At this stage, all the material should be retained. In the future, after the tile has been fully recorded and quantified by fabric and form, the majority can be discarded. Material to be retained includes samples of the tile fabrics, and the fired clay, which has features of interest and is likely either to be of assistance in the interpretation of the site or to provide useful comparanda with similar material from other sites.

Comparative Material

- 1.1.12 Comparanda for the fired clay assemblage may be provided by other sites in the project such as Tutt Hill or from sites of similar date in the area.

Potential for Further Work

- 1.1.13 The tile fabrics are most significant here as evidence for the date of two ditches, and contribute little else to the interpretation of the site. The fired clay and daub is a potential source of information on the types of structure.

1.1.14 The Iron Age loomweights provide evidence for textile manufacture associated with prehistoric occupation of the area, and are also significant as chronological evidence. Although no textiles have been recovered there is evidence for their production in the form of a possible Neolithic spindlewhorl and Iron Age loomweights. Further analysis of their context, associations and parallels from other sites, may shed light on the production process.

