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## **Assessment of the ceramic building material from Crossrail, Tottenham Court Road (XRX10)**

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### ***Introduction***

A total of 473 pieces of ceramic building material (CBM) weighing 101.090 kg. were recovered. This material currently fills 19 half-sized museum boxes. Apart from a small assemblage of residual Roman brick and tile and a few pieces of residual medieval tile virtually all this material appears to be of post-medieval date with the 17th and 18th centuries particularly well represented. Only one or two contexts contained a small amount of material as late as the 19th-20th centuries - in common with the pottery dating. The material was recorded following standard OA procedure and using templates established for other CBM assessments in southern England.

### ***Methodology***

The CBM assemblage here contains two distinct elements which reflect two distinct methods of retrieval. There is a small collection of 23 complete (or nearly complete) post-medieval bricks (totalling 26 pieces, 47.592 kg.). Around half of these have small finds numbers and were evidently sampled from standing structures. These have been catalogued in detail on an Excel Spreadsheet (see 'Complete bricks catalogue'). The latter records details including context number, small find number, approximate date, number of pieces and weight per brick and the length, width and thickness of each brick. A comments field describes other attributes such as colour, fabric and method of manufacture. Besides complete bricks, sampled from structures, several other complete bricks were recovered from excavated contexts along with the 'Mixed CBM' but were not assigned small finds numbers. For convenience and to avoid re-handling at a later date these were also included in the complete bricks catalogue (see below).

The bulk of the assemblage, in terms of fragment count, has been designated 'Mixed CBM' and been treated in rather less detail. This comprises 447 pieces weighing 53.498 kg. and was catalogued on an Excel spreadsheet at an 'intermediate' level of detail - somewhere between a basic catalogue (ie. recording just sherd counts and weight per context) and a detailed catalogue (recording all the types of CBM and their dimensions, per context). By this system broad predictable functional categories of CBM were recorded by sherd count per context (ie. plain roof tile, brick fragments, floor tile and 'other' types of CBM). A whole weight was recorded for each context but not for each type. This gives a more detailed snapshot of the composition of the assemblage than a basic catalogue but it falls short of the detail found in a detailed catalogue. Measurable dimensions were recorded (in the comments field) for many of the more complete or unusual pieces and an approximate spot-date was assigned to the latest material in each context. Spot-dates assigned are based on the character of the material itself and are of necessity quite broad due to the highly conservative nature and regional variation of this class of building material. CBM dates should therefore be used with caution and regarded as of secondary importance to dates based on pottery or clay pipes.

### ***Postscript (16 July 2013)***

Subsequent to this assessment a further 86 pieces of CBM was produced by Watching Briefs. This breaks down as follows:

Complete bricks: 13 pieces - bringing the site total to 39 pieces.

Mixed CBM: 73 pieces - bringing the site total to 520 pieces.

This additional material will be reported on in the grey literature reports. Any significant items however may be considered for academic journal publication and any intrinsically interesting items will appear in the popular publication.

### ***Character and condition of the assemblage***

The CBM assemblage is generally in a fragmentary but fairly fresh condition depending on the type of CBM in question. The predominant post-medieval roof tile assemblage is generally very fresh with many large fragments surviving but no complete examples. Bricks, being softer (as here), exhibit more wear and have often crumbled into many small lumps and scraps - apart from the sample of 23 complete bricks. The condition of other types is variable. The 'Mixed CBM' assemblage breaks down into two main components the predominant class of which comprises flat roofing tile (298 pieces) and all other types of CBM (149 pieces). The other types comprise brick (79 pieces), floor tile (13 pieces) and 'other' or miscellaneous types of CBM (57 pieces) which here includes pantiles, tin-glazed wall tiles and any other unusual or unidentifiable types including residual Roman material. The majority of context assemblages of 'Mixed CBM' have been spot-dated as '17-19C' mainly by the presence of flat roof tile (peg tile) in a smooth red post-medieval looking fabric which shows little or no development during this period - up to the point where it was commonly replaced in London by Welsh roofing slate during the 19th century. However most other indications derived from the ceramic evidence on this site (pottery, pipes and CBM) suggest that the roof tiles are likely to be mainly of 17th- and early 18th-century date. A few pieces of late-looking brick however are almost certainly of 19th- and even 20th-century date. Individual types or classes of CBM are briefly described below (for more detailed descriptions see the two attached spot-dates spreadsheets).

#### *Roman CBM: 30 pieces*

These have been classified under the 'other' or miscellaneous CBM category but have also been individually quantified in the comments field. Up to 30 pieces of definite and probable Roman CBM have been identified - mostly from contexts in the 800s. These are all probably residual in post-medieval contexts and most are fairly or very abraded. All but two pieces occur in orange-red fabrics. They include (in context order) pieces from contexts 814, 815 (8 pieces), 817 (9 pieces), 818, 819, 820, 825, 830, 5182 and 5368. Types present include pieces of flat roofing tile (tegula), curved roofing tile (imbrex) and brick. One piece of flat tile has traces of curved 'signature' mark (817). Two smallish brick or tile fragments occur in a distinctive yellow fabric which may be from the Eccles kiln near Maidstone in Kent. Although probably dumped here in the post-medieval period, the quantity of Roman CBM suggests the presence of one or more Roman buildings somewhere in this part of town - which lies well to the west of the Roman city wall of London.

#### *Flat roof tile: 298 pieces*

Also known as peg tile. These are of typical rectangular shape and fairly crude manufacture with a pair of circular nail holes at one end. None preserves its complete dimensions but at least three examples have measurable widths (between 124-150 mm.). These are mostly in a hard smooth orange-red sandy fabric but are not closely datable - although most probably date to the 17th and 18th centuries. A few examples in a slightly sandier fabric have square nail holes and may be of 18th- or 19th-century date. Two or three small pieces in much sandier fabrics with a greenish-brown glaze on the upper surface are probably of medieval date but are residual.

#### *Brick: 23 complete bricks plus 79 pieces*

Most of the 23 complete or nearly complete bricks (present as 26 pieces) are of very similar appearance. These are likely to be of the same date - probably 17th century - and possibly from the same brick manufactory or the same general area. The majority are around 230 mm. long x 100 mm. wide x 60 mm. thick. Most are in a fairly soft red or purplish-red sandy fabric containing random flint grits and pebbles which can be very coarse. They are unfrogged, handmade and generally fairly crude in appearance which - along with their relative thinness - suggests an early post-medieval date. One or two pieces of thinner 'Tudor' brick were also recovered but these were very worn and either residual or reused as rubble. A few thicker reddish-yellow 'stock' bricks as late as the 19th century were also recovered and one small piece from a dense granular 'modern' brick - probably of 20th-century date (context 5084).

#### *Floor or 'quarry' tiles: 13 pieces*

The are all fragmentary and fairly worn from lifetime usage. None preserves complete measurable dimensions apart from thickness - although some fairly large corner and edge pieces survive. Most

examples are quite thick (24-41 mm.) and occur in a soft sandy yellowish fabric. Most appear to be unglazed although this could have been worn off of some examples. The thickness and bevelled edges are similar in style to late medieval/early post-medieval Flemish (or Dutch) 'quarry' tiles but the absence of glaze from most suggests they are fully post-medieval and possibly English - although a Flemish origin cannot be ruled-out. They are tentatively dated here to the 16th to 18th centuries. The thinnest example (context 5021; 24 mm thick.), though very worn, has tiny traces of an allover white slip over its upper surface under a green glaze. This makes it a likely candidate to be genuine Flemish import - possibly of 15th/16th-century date - although perhaps residual in its context? A couple of examples have blackened or scorched upper surfaces and may come from hearths.

*'Other' or 'miscellaneous' CBM (excluding Roman): 27 pieces*

This mainly comprises red sandy pantiles (17 pieces). These specialised curved roofing tiles were introduced to England from Holland in the late 17th century but the fragmentary examples here have been dated to the 18th-19th century. Five pieces of early post-medieval tin-glazed wall tiles (or possibly floor tiles) were also recovered (contexts 710, 814, 5001, 5067 and 5268). These are in a fine cream-coloured fabric and generally quite thick (13-19 mm.). One tile (from 5268) is about half complete (132 mm. wide). The polychrome painted designs on these tiles are only intelligible in one or two cases but include a flower vase within a central lozenge (5001) and part of a popular Renaissance-style mosaic scheme of interlocking geometric shapes including stars, elongated prisms and rectangles derived from a well-known tile pavement in Herckenrode Abbey, Flanders. The style of these tiles suggests they are Dutch imports of the period c 1575-1625 or very early English copies. They were probably quite old on disposal and to varying extents probably residual in their contexts. There are five other pieces of miscellaneous or unidentified CBM - mostly odd bits of post-medieval red tile. One piece however is from a 19th- or 20th-century yellow fireclay fireback or furnace lining (context 5109).

***Summary***

The CBM is mostly, apparently, of 17th- and 18th-century date and includes a high proportion of flat roof tile (peg tile) fragments plus a fairly large number of handmade red bricks (some complete). A smaller collection of other CBM types is also present including a few early Dutch or Dutch-style tin-glazed wall tiles. The assemblage would appear to be fairly typical for an early post-medieval domestic property in this part of London. The collection of 30 worn Roman brick and tile fragments is unusual however - particularly so far west and outside of the city wall - and suggests the presence of a Roman building somewhere in the general area.