

Assessment of the Fired Clay from the Lower Quinton to King's Coughton Pipeline (QKC02)

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Sixty eight pieces of fired clay were recovered from fieldwalking on the line of the QKC02 pipeline. They weigh in total 1.385 Kg. A few fragments are definitely daub, and therefore likely to be of medieval or earlier date and few are possible brick fragments. The remainder appear to be accidentally fired subsoil fragments and probably result from some agricultural activity carried out *in situ*. Such material is known from fieldwork on the lines of several other pipelines and the identity of the process in which they were created, and their age, are both questions which at present cannot be answered.

Description

Most of the fired clay has a similar fabric, coded here FCLAY1. It contains sparse to moderate rounded quartz sand up to 1.0mm across, sparse rounded fragments of sandstones, up to 4.0mm across, sparse rounded fragments of red, iron-rich clay up to 3.0mm across. The groundmass contains sparse quartz silt and sparse calcareous microfossils. Organic inclusions are present but appear to be both larger and less frequent than that caused by the deliberate addition of straw or dung.

In two cases, a different fabric, containing few large inclusions with a variegated groundmass of micaceous clay, was evident (FCLAY2). One of these fragments is possibly an abraded piece of brick.

Both of these fabrics have similarities with those used for the production of the ceramic building material found on the pipeline, although the calcareous marl and calcareous groundmass found in some of those fabrics and interpreted as evidence of the use of Mercian Mudstone is absent from these clay fragments. The calcareous microfossils hint at the use of Jurassic clays whilst the quartzose inclusions are probably due to contamination with superficial detrital sands.

In many cases it is clear that the fragment has been burnt in its present amorphous state, since where the fragments are broken they often have a dark, carbon-rich core whereas the surfaces are oxidized and a uniform light brown colour. There are no certain examples of surfaces; no evidence for human working and only one fragment with signs of wattle impressions (Plot 65 B618).

Assessment

The fragment from Plot 65 is clearly from a wattle and daub structure. Such structures were produced from the prehistory through to the medieval period and without further evidence it is not possible to date the find. It may be significant, however, that the same field produced Romano-British pottery. The piece is unweathered and relatively large and may therefore indicate a structure on the site.

Plot 65 also produced the largest collection of amorphous fired clay, 661gm. Plots 61 and 65 were also the only fields where more than one fragment was picked up at any one time which again indicates

activity on site rather than the material being burnt elsewhere and entering the field with manure or hard core. It is possible that excavation or magnetometry in the areas of high concentration might reveal the source of the burnt material. The nature of the burning does not suggest that they originated from the burning of a subsoil or soil surface, since many of the pieces have oxidation on all sites and show no signs of a heat gradient. It is possible, however, that stubble burning in a ploughed field might produce amorphous fired clay lumps of this sort.

Appendix

sitecode	trench	context	CLASS	cname	form	NOSH	WEIGHT
PI44			23CBM	FCLAY1	FIRED CLAY	1	16
PI44	E		138CBM	FCLAY1	FIRED CLAY	1	17
PI44	B		577CBM	FCLAY1	FIRED CLAY	1	10
PI52	E		243CBM	FCLAY1	FIRED CLAY	1	15
PI52	E		246CBM	FCLAY1	FIRED CLAY	1	40
PI52	D		681CBM	FCLAY1	FIRED CLAY	1	18
PI60	E		671CBM	FCLAY1	FIRED CLAY	1	9
PI61	D		224CBM	FCLAY1	FIRED CLAY	1	17
PI61	C		225CBM	FCLAY1	FIRED CLAY	2	27
PI61	C		652CBM	FCLAY1	FIRED CLAY	1	42
PI69	C		657CBM	FCLAY1	FIRED CLAY	1	69
PI61	B		661CBM	FCLAY1	FIRED CLAY	1	35
PI61	A		662CBM	FCLAY1	FIRED CLAY	24	177
PI65	D		182CBM	FCLAY1	FIRED CLAY	1	169
PI65	D		190CBM	FCLAY1	FIRED CLAY	10	309
PI65	B		618CBM	FCLAY1	DAUB/FIRED CLAY	1	53
PI65	B		619CBM	FCLAY2	BRICK/FIRED CLAY	1	42
PI65	B		620CBM	FCLAY1	FIRED CLAY	1	86
PI65	B		621CBM	FCLAY1	FIRED CLAY	1	44
PI64	B		201CBM	FCLAY1	FIRED CLAY	3	28
PI64	B		202CBM	FCLAY1	FIRED CLAY	1	19
PI64	B		205CBM	FCLAY1	FIRED CLAY	1	11
PI64	E		628CBM	FCLAY1	FIRED CLAY	1	15
PI64	C		635CBM	FCLAY2	FIRED CLAY	1	39
PI67	A		101CBM	FCLAY1	FIRED CLAY	1	15
PI67	B		103CBM	FCLAY1	FIRED CLAY	4	21
PI68	E		601CBM	FCLAY1	FIRED CLAY	2	33
PI71	B		88CBM	FCLAY1	FIRED CLAY	2	9