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## **Assessment of the ceramic building material from Crossrail, Bond Street (XSC10)**

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### ***Introduction***

A total of 146 pieces of ceramic building material (CBM) weighing 115.542 kg. were recovered. This material currently fills 20 half-sized museum boxes. All this material appears to be of post-medieval date with the 18th and 19th centuries particularly well represented. Only one or two contexts contained material as late as the late 19th-20th century - 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 collection of 37 complete (or nearly complete) post-medieval bricks (totalling 37 pieces, 80.066 kg.). Most 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 condition etc. Besides complete bricks, sampled from structures, a few 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). Similarly, one or two items labelled (along with the others) as 'brick samples' proved not to be bricks in the normal sense but related types of CBM. The latter were therefore recorded as 'Mixed CBM'.

The bulk of the assemblage, in terms of fragment count, has been designated 'Mixed CBM' and been treated in rather less detail. This comprises 109 pieces weighing 35.476 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. Several bags of mostly very small, crushed and featureless scraps of CBM (including coal and mortar) were recovered as a by-product of environmental sampling and sieving. These were briefly scanned, approximately dated and noted in the comments of the 'Mixed CBM' catalogue but their quantification has been excluded from the totals above which relate only to 'hand excavated' material. This sieved material totalled 177 pieces (2.247 g.). After recording the sieved material was discarded.

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

Subsequent to this assessment a further 38 pieces of CBM was produced by Watching Briefs. This breaks down as follows:

Complete bricks: 15 pieces - bringing the site total to 52 pieces.

Mixed CBM: 23 pieces - bringing the site total to 169 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*

Aside from the 37 complete brick samples the CBM assemblage is generally in a fragmentary but fairly fresh condition depending on the type of CBM in question. The predominant material in the 'Mixed' assemblage is brick fragments and these are mostly very fragmentary. The condition of other types is variable. Post-medieval flat roof tile or 'peg' tile is quite common but mostly very fragmentary. Pantile is also quite common and some large fragments of these have survived - though no complete or nearly-complete examples. A single smallish hip tile is the only complete item of roofing material present. The 'Mixed CBM' assemblage breaks down into three main components the predominant class of which comprises brick fragments (38 pieces) followed by flat roofing tile (28 pieces) and 'other' or miscellaneous types of CBM (41 pieces) which here includes pantiles, tin-glazed wall tiles and any other unusual or unidentifiable types. The majority of context assemblages of 'Mixed CBM' have been spot-dated as 18th or 19th century mainly by the presence of pieces of pantile or 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 they were commonly replaced in London by Welsh roofing slate during the 19th century. A few pieces (bricks included) could be as early as the ?late 17th century but there is little in the way of diagnostic evidence to prove this. Most, if not all of the assemblage, has therefore been dated from the 18th century onwards. Individual types or classes of CBM are briefly described below (for more detailed descriptions see the two attached spot-dates spreadsheets).

#### *Flat roof tile: 28 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. The assemblage here is mostly very fragmentary and unremarkable. A few very late-looking regular pieces could be as late as c 1875-1925 (3068). Another possibly early 20th-century item (context 3073) - apparently a complete peg tile or flat roof tile - preserves its complete dimensions but only because it appears to have been bonded to another tile with a strong grey mortar and used as a floor tile as it is heavily worn from use on its exposed side. It is also unusual in that there is no evidence of suspension holes.

#### *Brick: 37 complete bricks plus 38 pieces*

As mentioned above, some of the plain handmade un-frogged red bricks could possibly be as early as the ?late 17th century but the general character of most of the complete bricks suggests a later date is more likely. The presence of a shallow frog in several examples indicates an early 19th-century date for these. Many of the un-frogged bricks have an almost identical size and hard purplish-red appearance to the frogged bricks suggesting they may be of similar date - or perhaps a little earlier - and mostly perhaps from the same general source. Many could be described as 'Stock' bricks - which were produced in north Kent from the late 18th century onwards and sent in their millions to London and its growing suburbs. The majority of complete bricks are around 220-30 mm. long x 110 mm. wide x 60 mm. thick. Most are in a hard purplish-red sandy fabric with yellowish surface patches and contain random flint grits and pebbles which can be very coarse. They appear to have been made in a mould rather than hand-formed. One or two yellow bricks also occur including a possible Stourbridge firebrick of 19th-century date. Mostly however they are ordinary house bricks. Three ?mid 19th-century Stock bricks with shallow frogs have the same (or similar) weakly stamped maker's mark - possibly 'HSI' - although this not clear on any example (3069, 3071, 3213) although it does confirm that some of the bricks come from the same manufactory. More unusual items include a pair of identical curved red ?architectural bricks (3198) and a complete but warped small Dutch 'clinkard' or paving brick of the 17th or 18th century (3003 and another fragment in 3017). No bricks clearly later than c 1850/75 were noted.

#### *Floor or 'quarry' tiles: 2 pieces*

A single worn scrap from a red 'quarry' tile was noted in context (2006). This might be of Flemish origin and 17th/18th-century date. The only other floor tile was a small complete square tile in a dense black fabric similar to those found in Victorian churches and civic buildings (context 3068).

*'Other' or 'miscellaneous' CBM: 41 pieces*

This mainly comprises red sandy pantile fragments. 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. These include a few black-glazed pieces possibly of late 18th- or early 19th-century date. There is a single complete smallish hip tile (from a roof corner) in a red post-medieval fabric (3017) and there is one small piece of plain white tin-glazed wall tile of 18th-century date (3043). The most unusual items recovered (both from 3068) are two large refractory 'slabs' in yellowish Stourbridge fireclay. These are broken and of uncertain original form and function but seem to have been either slab-shaped with a rounded end/top or possibly oval or circular. Both are intensely scorched from use and both seem to be worn on the edges (like a grindstone). One example has a smallish perforation and both bear a fragmentary marker's stamp - legible on the larger perforated example as HICKMAN STOURBRIDGE - a known producer of firebricks in the late 19th century. The objects may be from a furnace or some sort of industrial hearth. Another unusual category here - not strictly CBM - are 10 pieces of thick broken slab- or tile-like asphalt or Tarmac (context 3017), which probably date to the early 20th century. These could have been used as roofing or flooring material.

**Summary**

The CBM appears to be almost exclusively of 18th- and 19th-century date and includes a high proportion of both complete and fragmentary house bricks. A smaller collection of other CBM types is also present including roofing materials (pantile, pegtile) and parts of a possible furnace structure in late 19th-century Stourbridge fireclay. A small number of early 20th-century items are also present including roof tile and some pieces of asphalt or Tarmac. The assemblage suggests a mixed domestic/industrial use for the site.