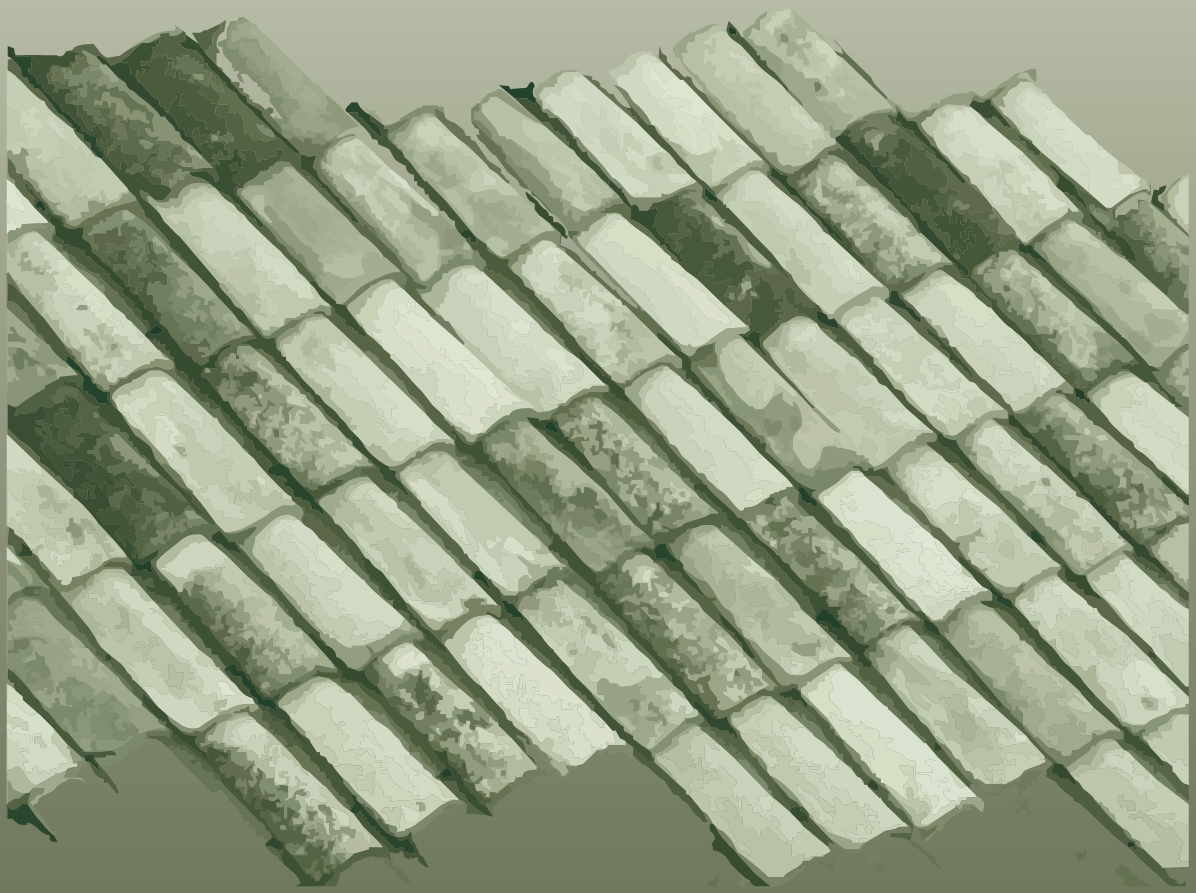
Landscape Evolution in the Middle Thames Valley
Heathrow Terminal 5 Excavations Volume 2

Ceramic Building Material

(Section 8)



by Kayt Brown

SECTION 8

CERAMIC BUILDING MATERIAL

by Kayt Brown

Introduction

A total of 992 fragments (82342g) of ceramic building material was recovered from the excavated areas at Terminal 5. Of this material 158 fragments (16900g) and 77 fragments (5020g) could be dated to the Roman and medieval periods respectively. The majority of material was post-medieval in date and given the absence of any post-medieval structures this material has not been examined further than the initial assessment, details of which can be found in the archive. Following initial spot dating and basic quantification, the material was re-examined for basic fabric and form analysis and to record other variables such as thickness and the presence of distinctive features such as signature or tally marks. The assemblage was fragmentary, with no examples of complete tiles. It was not possible to obtain any complete width or length dimensions, and un-diagnostic fragments dominated all periods. The mean fragment weight was 107g for the Roman period and 65g for the medieval period.

Table 1: CBM by period

Period		Number	Weight (g)
Roman		158	16900
Medieval		77	5020
Post-medieval		406	27783
Modern		98	21433
Unidentified		253	11206
Total		992	82342

Roman ceramic building material

Fabrics

Given the nature of the assemblage, detailed fabric analysis was not undertaken as it was apparent at an early stage that fabric variation was likely to be very limited. The vast majority of the assemblage occurs in a single basic fabric, characterised by a fine sandy clay matrix with sparse iron oxides and argillaceous inclusions. This fabric is often fully oxidised, orange in colour with powdery surfaces and accounts for 94% by count (93% by weight) of the Roman assemblage. Occasionally it has been hard fired to red with reduced surfaces. Five fragments occurred in a slightly sandier version of the same basic fabric.

Tile Types

A significant proportion of Roman ceramic building material could not be assigned to specific type and the poor condition of this material is highlighted in that it comprises 38% of Roman material by count but only 16% by weight. Where it was possible to identify types plain tiles accounted for 37% of the assemblage by count, (43% by weight), followed by *tegulae* at 20% (by count, 34% by weight). Many of the fragments identified as plain tile may in fact be *tegulae*, but in the absence of any diagnostic features (such as finger grooves, flange scars or signature marks) they will have been classified as plain tile.

Tile thickness was recorded where possible and flange measurements were also taken. Plain tiles ranged in thickness from 17mm to 39mm, while *tegulae* were more restricted, ranging from 15 mm to 32mm with the majority in the range of 20 – 26mm. There was some variation in flange heights recorded, from 19mm to 33mm, and likewise with flange thickness 16mm – 30mm. Most flanges were flat-topped and one example of a cut away was evident. Two of the t*egulae* displayed concentric ring curved signature marks.

Imbrices were poorly represented with only two recorded examples, both from area 58. These occurred in the same fabric as the *tegulae* and measured 15-16mm thick.

Bricks (defined as plain tiles with a thickness greater than 40mm) were also rare. There was no evidence of cavity walling within the assemblage.

Table 2: Roman tile types

Form	No	%	Wt	%
Brick	2	1.3	831	4.9
Imbrex	5	3.2	344	2.0
Plain tile	58	36.7	7219	42.7
Tegula	32	20.3	5789	34.3
Unidentified	61	38.6	2717	16.1
TOTAL	158	100.0	16900	100.0

Discussion

Roman ceramic building material was collected in varying quantities across the excavated areas. Over 80% (by count) of the Roman ceramic building material was recovered from areas 58 and 61, which corresponds with a concentration of other Roman artefacts. Within area 58 all the Roman ceramic building material was recovered from Roman features, principally waterholes and ditches, with over 40% by count, (51% by weight) of material in waterholes. This material was also in marginally better condition having a larger mean fragment size than the material from the ditches. These deposits are unlikely to represent dumps of material as out of the 39 contexts containing ceramic building material only five contexts produced more than two fragments. A similar pattern occurs in area 61 where out of 18 contexts containing material, only one ditch fill contained more than one fragment and only three fills from waterholes produced four or more fragments. Almost 60% of material (by count) recovered from this area was from deposits within two waterholes [569187] and [611022].

A small quantity of material (13 fragments, 4687g) from area 14 was recovered from the Saxon waterhole [555805], along with a range of other artefact types from these deposits. This material comprised four fragments of *tegulae* (one with a signature mark), and a single fragment of plain tile. Single fragments of ceramic building material were recovered from post-Roman ditch fills in areas 15, 16, 26 and 51 and a single fragment from a medieval pit fill (5682020) in area 77. The material from area

49 (eight sherds; 735g) is also all from later ditch fills, a medieval posthole and waterholes [563060] and [569022].

Medieval ceramic building material

Fabric and type

The medieval ceramic building material occurred in two fabrics. A small proportion of material comprised a fine sandy clay matrix with sparse iron oxides, argillaceous inclusions, often oxidised orange in colour with powdery surfaces. The majority of material occurred in a coarser sandy fabric also with iron inclusions but consistently harder fired to pink/orange, with rare coarse argillaceous material and often laminating surfaces.

It was not possible to assign a large proportion of material to specific type, and the material that could be identified comprised predominately roof tile. Some 37 fragments of roof tile were identified, ranging from 10-15mm in thickness. There is a single decorated floor tile with a small amount of glaze surviving from (533017).

Discussion

By far the bulk of material was recovered from Area 49, which corresponds to the main concentration of medieval pottery. Ceramic building tile was retrieved from the following medieval features: ditches [577027], 582123], waterholes [529139], 533018], [569022], postholes [543105], [529114] and deposit (562154). Medieval ceramic building material also occurred within post-medieval ditches [513016], [583008], [568060] and pit [529200]. Over half of the material from this area occurred in waterhole deposits (25 fragments) including a single floor tile with glazed decoration was recovered from 9533017), a fill within the waterhole [533018]. This material would indicate that there were tiled (rather than thatched) buildings within the vicinity, although not within the area excavated.

A total of 7 fragments of roof tile, including a peg tile fragment, were recovered from area 61. All were retrieved from ditch fills, with the exception of a small fragment

from posthole [518169]. Area 51 produced 9 fragments of tile, comprising small fragments from ditch [552084] and gully [575033].

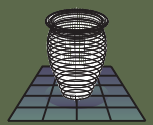
A thin scatter of medieval ceramic building material was recovered from across a number of the excavated areas. In the case of areas 14,16, 24, 34, 45, 54, 100, 42a, and 89c this amounted to no more than 2 sherds from each area. Area 75 produced 3 fragments of medieval roof tile from three separate ditch fills.

Landscape Evolution in the Middle Thames Valley
Heathrow Terminal 5 Excavations Volume 2

This is one of the
24 specialist reports
provided with
the above publication.

Framework Archaeology
Monograph 3

ISBN 978-0-9554519-2-8



Framework Archaeology

BAA Heathrow