

4830

Note on the Petrology of a Roman Tile from Chatley Farm, Cobham, Surrey (CCF/80/101)

D.P. Williams, Ph.D., FSA

(HBMC Ceramic Petrology Project)

Department of Archaeology, University of Southampton

The small fragment of tile (approx. 5½cm x 4½cm) is light red (between Munsell 2.5YR 6/6 and 6/8) in colour, with a scatter of dark crystals of pyroxene easily picked out with a handlens. Thin sectioning shows inclusions of quartz (discrete and polycrystalline grains), potash and plagioclase felspar, green or occasionally colourless augite, amphibole and pieces of lava, set in an anisotropic matrix of baked clay. A thin section of a representative sample of the usual tile fabric from the site revealed a quite different range of non-plastic inclusions, namely frequent well-sorted grains of quartz, 0.20mm and under in size, with plentiful flecks of mica and the odd piece of chert.

Part of a quernstone made from the lavas of the Mayen-Niedermendig region of the Eifel Hills of Germany was also found at Chatley Farm, but the composition of the volcanic inclusions found in the former tile would appear to preclude the notion of crushed pieces of this quernstone being used as a 'tempering agent' for the tile. Instead, it seems likely that this tile originates in an area of recent igneous rocks and Italy at once springs to mind. A variety of Italian tiles and pottery sectioned by the writer have a fairly similar range of inclusions, which point to the Italian volcanic tract as a possible source for the Chatley Farm tile. To the best of the writer's

knowledge this tile may be the only example in Britain of an Italian Roman tile recovered from an archaeological context.