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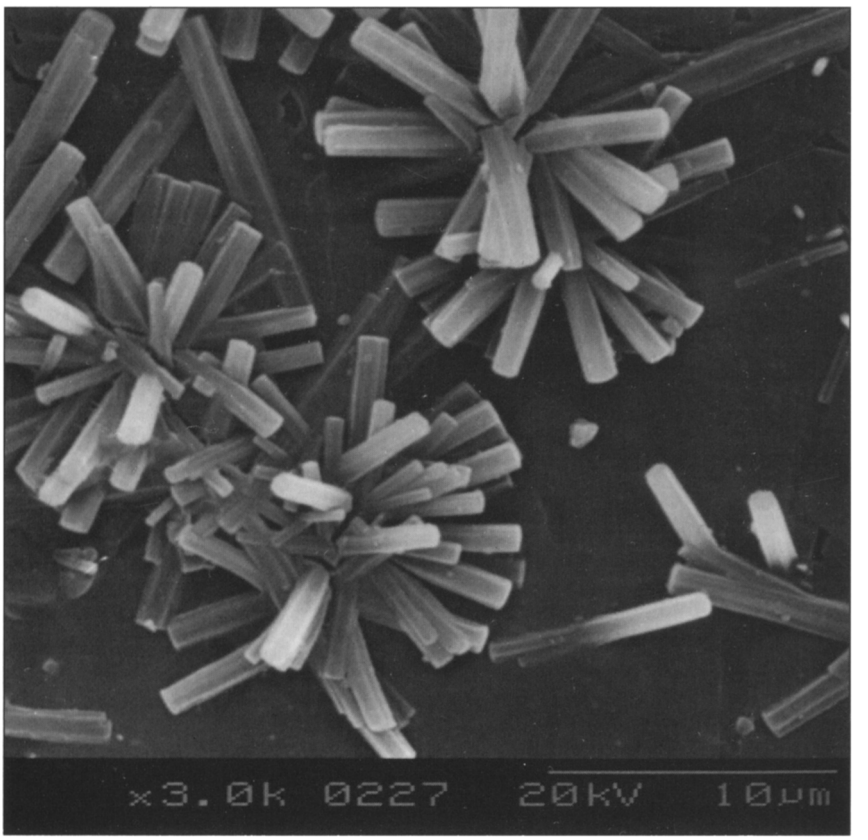

If the scale on this month's EDITOR'S CHOICE photo were ten meters instead of ten microns, we'd be looking at the makings of Maginot-style, concrete antitank obstacles, and the clunk of a tank encountering one would be unmistakable. What sound would an encounter with a cluster of crystal rods like those actually pictured in produce? A clank? Not likely! These seem too delicate for the heavy sounds of chains and leg irons. If not a clunk or a clank, then it would, of course, have to be a clink—that high-pitched reverberating emanation characteristic of fingered ring on a half-full glass. (And a mighty high-pitched clink it would be, given the size of the oscillator.) Is it any wonder then that these rods of sulphoaluminate hydrate have grown on a clinker—yes, on a Portland cement clinker to be precise. When P.M. Wang, P.F. Xia, and Z.Y. Chen (in *Microstructures of Cement-Based Systems/Bonding and Interfaces in Cementitious Materials*, ed. by S. Diamond, et al., *Proc. Mater. Res. Soc.*, vol. 370 [1995], pp. 143–151) exposed a polished clinker coupon for six minutes to an aqueous solution of calcium hydroxide and hydrated calcium sulfate containing additives of 0.3% sucrose and 0.2% molar potassium hydroxide, this is the morphology they observed. They were studying the effect of additives on the early hydration behavior of this important structural material, hydraulic cement, which is an ingredient in a common form of concrete. Naturally, they noticed that the sweeter the solution (i.e., the greater the concentration of sucrose), the easier it is for these clinkery clusters of so-called AFt to form. (Cement chemists use a shorthand notation, to avoid constant repetition of "O" for oxygen, that translates AFt into aluminoferrite trisulphate, even though in this case there is no ferrite present.) The walls of Southwark's Clink itself are no doubt better understood AFter this effort of materials clinkerers.

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https://doi.org/10.1557/S0883769400032504 Published online by Cambridge University Press