

7.1 Assessment of Romano-British Worked Stone

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Introduction

- 7.1.1 The four stone objects of Roman date were hand-recovered from the Late Iron Age/Romano-British settlement (C15) towards the western end of the site, and include two incomplete shale bracelets, part of a hone and a fragment from a quern stone.
- 7.1.2 The study of the Roman stone objects assists with the following Fieldwork Event Aim:

to recover dated environmental and economic indicators if these are found to be present on site.

Methodology

- 7.1.3 The objects have been examined with the aid of a hand lens and have been cleaned, stabilised and packaged. They have been identified to type and the raw materials have been checked against the comparative collection of stone types at the CAT.

Quantification

- 7.1.4 The four stone objects consist of two incomplete shale bracelets, part of a hone and a fragments of a quern. The hone has been cut from micaceous Kentish ragstone and is unusually thin, with two broad, flat faces. The quern fragments do not include any original faces or measurable dimensions; the quern is made from basalt lava. No bias is evident in the collection of the material.
- 7.1.5 All of the objects survive in good condition and are relatively unaffected by the acidic soil conditions and it is therefore unlikely that further objects of this type have been lost or damaged in this way.

Provenance

- 7.1.6 The hone came from the same context as the silver pin (sf C993) and was produced from a local Kentish stone. The raw material for the shale bracelets almost certainly came from Dorset; the basalt lava is likely to be of Rhenish origin.

Conservation

- 7.1.7 The objects have been cleaned and packaged by a conservation assistant. The shale bracelets were placed in water on site and have been gradually dried in laboratory conditions. They are now stable although they are maintained in environmentally-controlled conditions.

Comparative Material

- 7.1.8 Shale bracelets are not particularly common in East Kent, although examples have been published recently from Maidstone and Canterbury, and another example is known from nearby at Church Hougham (Houliston 1999, 108-9; Blockley *et al* 1995, 1188-90; Riddler in Parfitt forthcoming). They occur throughout most of the Roman period and although many can be placed in the middle or late Roman centuries, they cannot be dated on intrinsic characteristics alone.

7.1.9 Fragments of basalt lava querns are frequently found in Roman and post-Roman contexts. Usually, as here, insufficient survives to allow them to be closely dated.

7.1.10 The hone is made from a local stone and, like the other objects, it cannot be closely dated.

Potential for further work

7.1.11 The study of the Roman stone objects is relevant to the following Fieldwork Event Aim:

to recover dated environmental and economic indicators if these are found to be present on site.

7.1.12 All four objects are made from stone types which are not found at Saltwood itself. The hone may have been made in the immediate locality, although the other objects came from some distance. Both form part of the trade network in stone objects established for East Kent in the Roman period and they extend known distributions of these stone types. The objects themselves cannot be closely dated but they do come from stratified and phased deposits of Late Roman date. They are directly relevant, therefore, to the stated Fieldwork Event Aim.

7.1.13 The fragments of the quern have the potential to develop the understanding of trade networks in south-east England during the late Roman period. It has been stated that basalt lava querns were imported into Kent and London in the early Roman period, but not in the late Roman period. The Saltwood evidence tends to contradict that assertion (as does evidence from elsewhere in Kent) and it could be collated with the evidence from other sites, including other CTRL excavations, to revise this outdated understanding of late Roman trade with the continent.

7.1.14 Comparisons can also be drawn between different types of site (rural, urban, villa, ritual etc) and the occurrence of this material in the late Roman period. It is also clear now that the lower greensand quern production centre at East Wear Bay, Folkestone, continued in use into the late Roman period. But neither the querns from Saltwood nor from Church Hougham are made of that material, although those from Cheriton are lower greensand. The Saltwood material, therefore, has the potential to assist in the understanding of regional preferences for quern manufacture and use in east Kent in the late Roman period.

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7.2 Assessment of Anglo-Saxon Stone Object

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Introduction

7.2.1 The spherical rock crystal came from western cemetery grave C117. It was hand-excavated and packaged for transportation at Canterbury, before being removed to the City of Lincoln Conservation laboratories.

7.2.2 The object is relevant to the following Fieldwork Event Aims:

to establish a chronology for the Anglo-Saxon cemeteries;

To establish the range of variation in burial rites, and to view possible change in rite over time;

Methodology

7.2.3 The extremely fragile nature of the object means that it had not been handled at the time of assessment and it had remained within its packaging. It was examined with the assistance of a conservator and the photographic record for the object has also been consulted.

Quantification

7.2.4 Only one spherical rock crystal was retrieved from the Saltwood excavations. It presumably lay between the legs of the deceased in grave C117, although no human bone was recovered from this grave. It was originally in a leather pouch, traces of which could be seen during excavation as a black soil in the vicinity of the object. The sphere is confined within a fragile silver frame, which includes a mount for suspension.

Provenance

7.2.5 The spherical rock crystal was found in a burial that probably dates to *c.* AD 525-575 and can be assigned to Kentish Phase III.

7.2.6 Rock crystal is not native to this country. The nearest mainland source would be Scotland, which in this context is very unlikely, and the established trading links with Europe suggest that it almost certainly came from there. Precise provenance is very difficult to establish because the principal source areas are all quite close to each other and are all part, in effect, of the Alps. It may, therefore, have been shaped and assembled in Germany, Switzerland or northern Italy. It is, however, difficult to provenance and there are other possible (if less likely) locations in Europe.

7.2.7 To confidently determine its provenance the crystal would need to be examined by a specialist at the Natural History Museum, who can initially determine whether provenancing is even feasible (depending on the type of rock crystal utilised). If so, a sliver of the crystal can be subjected to X-ray fluorescence (XRF) analysis.

7.2.8 Furthermore, the 'cage' for the crystal is made of silver and that could be examined by XRF to determine its purity, again with the removal of a small and unobtrusive sample (usually from an inconspicuous part of the object). For silver the same principals of purity apply as with the gold coinage (see **Appendix #00**) and

there is a reasonable sample (from coinage and other sources) against which it could be compared, including the two crystal ball settings from Dover Buckland II.

Conservation

- 7.2.9 The sphere is complete and survives in excellent condition. Its silver frame is extremely fragile and has been cleaned and packaged for long-term storage in such a manner as to reduce the likelihood of handling in the future, given its fragility. Both components of the object are stable and are kept in appropriate environmental conditions.
- 7.2.10 Further analysis is non-destructive and would not conflict with any issues of storage or display. The object should be retained, given its rarity value.

Comparative Material

- 7.2.11 Just under forty spherical rock crystals are known from Early Anglo-Saxon England. The majority of these have come from East Kent cemeteries (Meaney 1981, 82-8; Huggett 1988, 71-2). Single examples are known from a wide range of cemeteries, with larger collections from Bifrons and Dover Buckland. Examples from cemeteries near to Saltwood include those from Lyminge and Folkestone, Dover Hill. They were often (but not invariably) accompanied by sieve spoons; although this was not the case at Saltwood. continental examples come from graves of the middle of the 6th century to the early 7th century and a broadly similar date range may also apply to East Kent (Hinz 1966; Meaney 1981, 84). From the later 6th century onwards they are also found outside Kent in small numbers.
- 7.2.12 Their precise function remains unclear and numerous suggestions have been offered, ranging from personal ornaments to magical, ritual devices, amulets, medical implements and coolants for wine (crystal balls for divination were a Renaissance introduction to the culture of western Europe).

Potential for further work

- 7.2.13 The Saltwood spherical rock crystal is a useful addition to an Early Anglo-Saxon object series which, although discussed on a number of occasions, has not been considered in any detail since the important work of Meaney (1981). Meaney's summary remains invaluable but does not include recent discoveries from Mill Hill Deal and Dover Buckland, or subsequent continental literature. The recent discoveries (including Saltwood) come from well-excavated graves whose objects have been examined by a range of specialists, allowing questions of dating, gender associations and social issues to be better considered.
- 7.2.14 The spherical rock crystal has the potential to assist in the following Fieldwork Event Aims:

To establish a chronology for the Anglo-Saxon cemeteries;

To establish the range of variation in burial rites, and to view possible change in rite over time.

- 7.2.15 The rock crystal itself suggests provisionally that the objects within grave C117 were deposited between *c.* AD 525 and 575 (within Kentish Phase III), where most of the well-recorded graves of this type can be placed (Parfitt and Brugmann 1997, tables 9 and 10). Further research needs to be undertaken on East Kent graves with

crystal balls in relation to Kentish phasing, in order to review their dating in the light of recent discoveries which tend to suggest that the continental dating is broadly followed in East Kent as well. The range of grave goods in grave C117 is sufficiently wide and well-studied to provide the potential to achieve this objective.

7.2.16 The spherical rock crystal comes from a rich female grave that can be placed within a sequence of rich female interments within this landscape extending across almost two centuries. The rock crystal forms a part of the range of variety in grave goods within this rich burial sequence and is characteristic of a particular phase of burial. Both the presence and absence of spherical rock crystals in particular graves can be used (alongside other grave goods) in determining the changes of burial rite in female graves.

7.2.17 The spherical rock crystal assists in the following additional research questions:

To determine the range of imported objects within the Early Anglo-Saxon cemeteries; to establish their original provenance and to determine the means of trade or exchange by which they came to East Kent;

7.2.18 The trade routes can be examined by consultation with recent European literature and with colleagues there, who can provide updated information on the distribution of crystal balls. Detailed measurements of the object (i.e. the crystal itself) and its translucence (some examples are very ‘misty’) will allow for comparisons with the existing corpus. Many of the existing examples from Kent remain in Maidstone Museum and it would be useful to make direct comparisons with these, always bearing in mind the fragility of the Saltwood example (it may have to travel with a conservator). The existing corpus of literature will allow the object to be placed in a context in terms of how it was worn and its dating can be established from the accompanying grave goods. The mechanisms of the distribution of such items in Europe have been considered (Hinz 1966; Martin 1984) and possible trade routes can be identified. As noted above, the function of these objects is unclear, although their association with rich female interments is unequivocal.

To examine the nature of female costume over time, in terms of regional styles and the emulation of continental fashion.

7.2.19 The spherical rock crystal is not a specific item of women’s costume and is more of an adjunct, suspended either from the waist or from the arm (Owen-Crocker 1986, 58). In England they are only associated with women; on the continent, some occur with men. Further comparative research, specifically on the associations visible in East Kent costume, particularly from recent discoveries, has the potential to place rock crystals within a better framework with respect to the manner in which they were worn or (as here) were deposited in the grave.

7.2.20 In order to achieve the Fieldwork Event Aims and additional Research Objectives, a comparative study could be undertaken, centred in particular on Saltwood grave C117 and other recent discoveries, both in England and on the continent.

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