

Assessment of non-pottery finds from Elloughton, East Yorkshire (OSA02 EX08)

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Nineteen finds from the On Site Archaeology excavations at Elloughton (OSA02 EX08) were individually registered, of which 18 were submitted for assessment. In addition, this assessment covers shell and wood finds. An unstratified fragment of unworked stone was recognised amongst the pottery and discarded.

The finds are described and discussed here by material.

Catalogue

Ceramic

A fragment of fired clay from context 1071 (SF14), broken into four pieces is possibly a piece of hearth lining. It has no curvature and only one good face, which is more heavily vitrified than the other, rough face. An x-ray (Plate 3) showed no signs of metal. Alternatively, the object could be an accidentally burnt fragment of prehistoric or early Roman pottery.

Glass

A fragment of light blue window glass (SF8) was recovered from context 1077. The fragment is probably of mid Roman date and would have been used in a Romanised structure. Like the fragments of Roman tile from this site the glass was probably scavenged from a nearby villa, either for re-use or simply as a curiosity.

Iron

Nine iron objects were recovered. All were x-rayed and this revealed that six of the objects were nails, made with a square-sectioned shank, tapering to a point, and a subrectangular or oval head. These nails varied in size but are mostly incomplete which makes any comparison difficult.

The other objects are a washer from context 1214 (SF6), an unidentified object from context 1216 (SF4) and a collection of hobnails from a shoe from context 1077 (SF9).

The washer, SF6, is trapezoidal in shape and x-ray reveals a central circular hole (X-ray Plate 3).

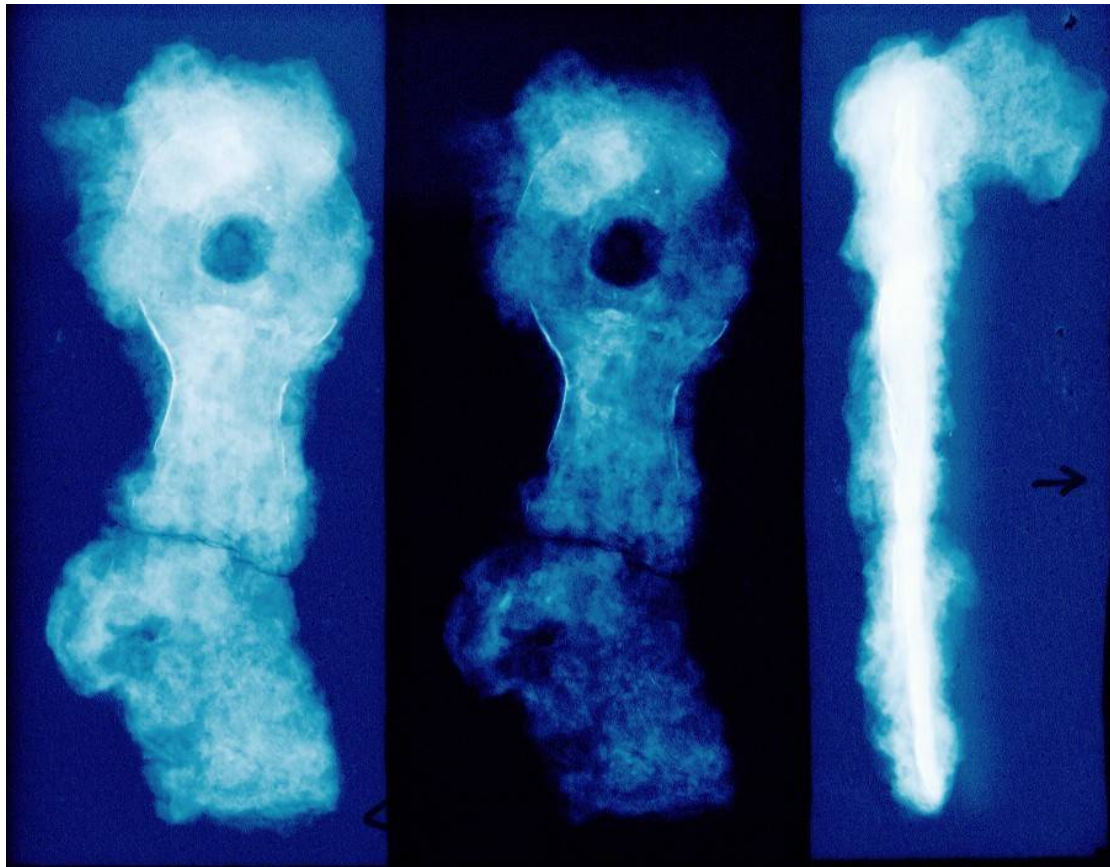


Figure 1 Iron Object, SF4

The unidentified object, SF4, was fashioned from a thin sheet of iron and has a circular terminal with a central hole. The other end of the object is indistinct, even in x-ray. The object has non-ferrous plating at the terminal end. It is possible that investigative cleaning would reveal more of the shape and would allow a spot test to identify the plating, although it is almost certainly a tin alloy.

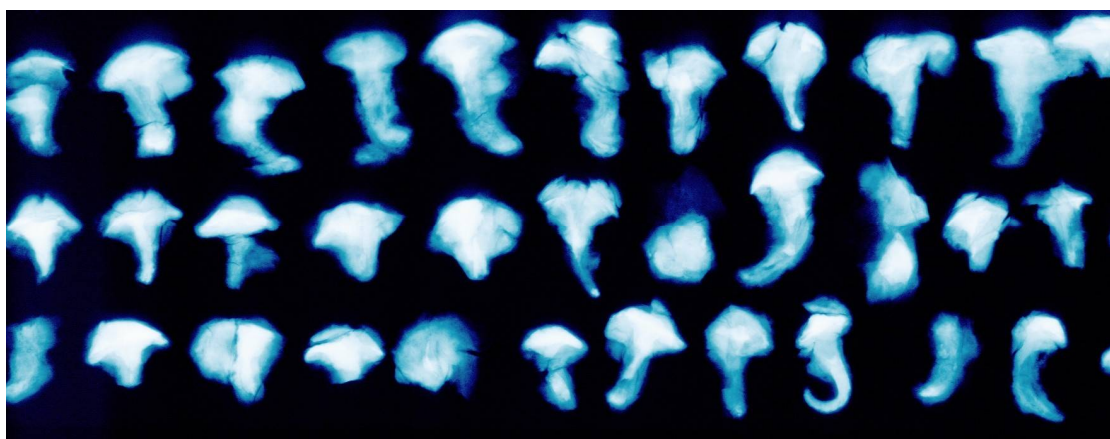


Figure 2 Iron hobnails, SF9

The shoe remains, SF9, consist of 44 hobnails. In x-ray these are shown to be dome-headed tails with their shanks bent over, and sometimes turned back on themselves, to secure them to the leather. All of the nails are of similar size and shape.

Shell

Oyster shells were recovered from two contexts, 1075 (7 shells) and 1079 (1 shell).

Stone

Flint

A flint flake was recovered from context 1220 (SF15) and a tool was recovered from an unstratified context (SF2). The latter is complete and unpatinated and requires identification and study by a lithics specialist.

Other stone

Six stone objects were recovered from the excavation. Of these, two appear to be unworked pebbles, one an iron-rich nodule and the other of oolitic limestone. Two fragments of micaceous sandstone may be stone roof tiles (SF11, context 1077 and an unregistered fragment from context 1166. Such sandstones do not outcrop in the Elloughton area and fragments suitable for use as roof tiles would have been obtained by quarrying. It may be worthwhile submitting these fragments for identification by a geologist with a knowledge of local strata, although like the glass and tile it is likely that they were scavenged from a villa (or from Brough upon Humber) rather than used initially on this site.

Two collections of lava fragments were recovered, from context 1210 (SF18) and unstratified (SF16). Both consist of featureless lumps and indicate the presence of one or more Mayen lava querns on the site.

Wood

A fragment of burnt black, tarry material from context 1225 may either be burnt wood or jet. An unstratified fragment is most likely to be wood. The identify of the object from context 1225 might be established through specialist analysis, but since the form of the object is unknown and only a single piece was recovered, and since jet is present in boulder clays in East Yorkshire (albeit, on the east side of the Wolds rather than the west) it is probably not worth undertaking that identification.

Stratigraphy

Most of these finds come from deposits which can be dated roughly by pottery. Of these, the ceramic object is the earliest, coming from a pre- or early Roman deposit. This would probably favour the interpretation of the object being over-fired pottery. If so, the flatness of the sherd could be due to its coming from the base of a jar.

One of the wood/jet pieces (context 1225) comes from a mid-Roman deposit.

The remaining objects either come from late or very late Roman deposits or from undated deposits. The late/very late Roman deposits produced the flint flake, the window glass, three nails, the shoe and the unidentified iron object. In addition, the oyster shell and one of the micaceous sandstone roof tiles came from these levels.

Deposits undated by pottery produced an iron nail (context 1181), a micaceous sandstone roof tile (context 1166) and one of the lava collections (context 1210). On the basis of these finds, it is likely that all three contexts are of Roman date.

Finally, the flint tool, an iron nail, the other collection of lava fragments and a piece of charred wood were unstratified. Of these, the lava fragments are likely to be Roman, the flint is likely to be early prehistoric and the nail and wood are undatable.

Assessment

The Elloughton site produced a small and unremarkable collection of finds, which is consistent with its interpretation as part of an agricultural settlement at the foot of the Wolds. The site did, however, produced evidence for an imported quern and for the presence of debris from Romanised structures – window glass and stone roof tiles. The iron nails may also have been structural debris but they are too few and too poorly preserved for further study.

The only item which requires further work is the unidentified iron object. This should be submitted to a specialist in Roman ironwork (such as Dr Hilary Cool), possibly cleaned and then illustrated, using the x-radiograph and any information from the investigative conservation.

Appendix: List of Registered and other non-ceramic finds

period code	context group	Context	class	cname	subfabric	Form	Nosh	NoV	Pot Catalogues.Description	REFNO	L	B	T
PRE- EROM	1072	1071	ceramic				4	13	MIGHT BE HEARTH LINING;VITRIFIED ON ONE SIDE;SHERD HAS NO CURVATURE; XRAY SHOWS NO SIGN OF METAL;XRAY OSA02 PLATE	14			
MROM	1228	1225	WOOD	WOOD			1		1TARRY CHARCOAL? OR POSSIBLY BURNT JET/COAL				
VLROM	1221	1220	flint	flint		flake	1	1		15			
LROM	1078	1077	glas	glas	light blue Roman?	window	1	1		8			
LROM	1108	1107	IRON	IRON		NAIL	1		1OVAL HEAD 16MM BY 9MM	17		28	
LROM	1169	1167	iron	iron		NAIL	1		1XRAY OSA02 PLATE 4;HEAD AND PART OF SHANK;HEAD 12MM WIDE	3		13	
LROM	1078	1077	iron	iron		shoe	1		44 DOME-HEADED NAILS, SEVERAL BENT OVER AT TIP;ALL ONE SIZE	9			
VLROM	1212	1211	iron	iron		NAIL	1		1WITH HEADS 2-8MM DIAMETER;LEATHER 5-7MM THICK	5		275	5
VLROM	1221	1216	iron	iron		object	1		1XRAY OSA02 PLATE 3;NFP;FLAT OBJECT WITH CIRCULAR END WITH	4			
LROM	1170	1075	shel	shel	oyster		7	1	1CIRCULAR HOLE;SPECIALIST REQUIRED				
VLROM	1080	1079	shel	shel	oyster		1	1					
LROM	1078	1077	STONE	stone	micaceous sandstone	roofer?	1	1		11			
VLROM	1254	1253	STONE	stone	oolitic limestone		1	1		10			
VLROM or earlier	1213	1214	iron	iron		WASHER	1		XRAY OSA02 PLATE 3;TRAPEZOIDAL WASHER WITH CENTRAL	6		27254	
									1CIRCULAR HOLE				

VLROM or earlier	12131214	iron	iron	NAIL	2	1XRAY OSA02 PLATE 3; SHAFT FRAGMENTS	7		
no pot	11821181	iron	iron	NAIL	1	1XRAY OSA02 PLATE 4;TIP OF SHANK	13	28	
no pot	11411166	STONEstone	micaceous sandstone	roofer?	1	1	12		
no pot	12091210	STONEstone	lava		6	1	18		
US	US	us	flint	flint	tool	1	1	2	
us	us	SUBSOIL???	IRON	IRON	NAIL	1	1XRAY OSA02 PLATE 3;SMALL SUB-RECTANGULAR HEAD	19	85
US	US	us	STONEstone	iron oxide	natural	1	1		
US	US	us	STONEstone	lava		1	1	16	
US	US	SURF	TARRY WOOD WOODCHARCOAL		1	1FRAG BLK			