

Assessment of stone objects from Winteringham, North Lincolnshire (WWTW03)

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Four stone objects from an archaeological investigation at Winteringham, carried out by Lindsey Archaeological Services, were submitted for identification and assessment.

Description

Table 1 lists the three finds.

Table 1

Context	REFNO	Description	Trench	TSNO	Cname	Form	Nosh	NoV	Weight	Subfabric
1004		RECESSED			STONE	QUERN	5	1	305	MAYEN LAVA
1043		RECTANGULAR BLOCK; TOO HEAVY TO WEIGH			STONE	BLOCK	3	1	0	OOLITIC LIMESTONE
1085					STONE	COBBLE	3	1	749	FINE-GRAINED BASIC IGNEOUS ROCK
1092	3	LOWER STONE FROM ROTARY QUERN; TOO HEAVY TO WEIGH; 360MM DIAM			STONE	QUERN	1	1	0	SPILSBY SST

Discussion

Both of the querns are of the shallow rotary type which replaced the beehive quern in the early Roman period. Spilsby Sandstone was widely used for quernstones in the Iron Age and early Roman periods even though the friability of the stone must have led to a high amount of grit being present in the resulting flour. Its use seems to have ceased or declined with the introduction of Mayen lava and Millstone Grit querns, both of which are much better suited for grinding. Although most of the fragments of the Mayen lava quern are undiagnostic there is one fragment from the edge of a stone which identifies it as the upper stone from a quern with a recessed top, presumably designed to act as a hopper for the unground grain (for a similar example see McIlwain 1980). The cobble from context 1085 is a glacial erratic. It has been broken into three fragments which may be due to thermal shock or to being hit with a pick or other implement during excavation. There is no sign of grinding or other working on any surface and it is probably either completely unworked or was used for cooking food or generating steam (by sprinkling water onto heated stones).

The oolitic limestone block was examined by Dr Peter Hill, who comments that it is probably from the Lincolnshire Limestone, but not the exposures close to Lincoln itself. The closest stone in his experience is Ancaster or Ketton. However, at least one of the faces appears to be a natural joint, lined with redeposited calcite, and it is therefore unlikely that the stone was worked. Furthermore, it is inconceivable that limestone would have been brought from southern Lincolnshire to Winterringham for use as rubble. Therefore, a source closer to the site is likely. It is likely that the Lincolnshire Limestone is exposed along the south bank of the Humber immediately to the west of the site.

Recommendations

The stone cobble from context 1085 has not been humanly worked. At most, it might have been fire-cracked. It should therefore be discarded.

The remaining two quern fragments should both be retained as it may be possible in future to identify specific quarries from the petrology of the stones and to place the objects into a typology which may provide information on chronology.

The Lincolnshire Limestone block could be discarded, although a sample should be retained for eventual comparison with local exposures.

Bibliography

McIlwain, A. (1980) "Quernstones." in D. M. Jones, ed., London Middlesex Archaeol Soc Spec Pap 4 London Middlesex Archaeol Soc, London, 132.