

Assessment of the Fired Clay, Ceramic Building Material and stone artefacts from the Wickenby-Lissington parish boundary (WILI04)

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A small collection of fired clay, ceramic building material and stone from fieldwork on the site of a Romano-British settlement located near to the Wickenby and Lissington parish boundary was submitted for identification and assessment. The majority of the material appears to come from triangular loom weights. In addition, a single fragment of medieval flat roof tile was present.

Description

Fired clay

Thirty-eight fragments of fired clay were recovered, from nine contexts. In total they weigh 1.382 Kg.

The fired clay all has a similar fabric. It is poorly mixed and includes large rounded fragments of chalk, subangular flint, rounded haematite all up to 4.0mm across. The fabric contains abundant illsorted quartz sand, with some matt-surfaced grains up to 1.0mm across but mostly smaller and subangular. The groundmass is variegated and includes lenses with little or no quartz, some of which are light-firing.

This fabric is almost certainly derived from a chalky boulder clay, outcrops of which occur locally.

Most of the fragments are small and at most 20mm thick. They were divided into those with no recognisable surfaces, those with a flattish surface and those with a concave surface. It was noted that the latter included fragments with a variety of curvatures. The fragments from context 112, however, appear to come from the top half of a triangular loom weight with a 'horned' top. It is likely that this is the case for the other fragments too although individual pieces with flat surfaces might be from daub. No fragments with wattle impression, nor with sharp angular corners (as found at the base of a triangular loom weight) or any strong evidence for a suspension hole (a *sine qua non* for a loom weight) were found and a more cautious identification would have a single loom weight from context 112 and unknown objects from the remaining contexts.

It was noted that many of these fragments had oxidized surfaces, but that where these fragments had broken recently they had a black core. This suggests that in fact the weights were not fired but were used in a dry, unfired state and were subsequently burnt after they had spalled.

Ceramic Building Material

A single fragment of flat roof tile was recovered from context 202. The fabric is a calcareous yellow clay with sparse large red haematite-rich pellets. The tile has a sanded base.

Yellow flat roof tiles are a common type in the later medieval and post-medieval periods in Eastern England. The earliest examples are probably low countries imports of 14th or 15th-century date but there is also evidence for their manufacture at a later date in Eastern England. Most likely, this example is of post-medieval date and present as a result of manuring of ploughed land.

Stone

Three fragments of stone were submitted for identification. Two of these are unworked fragments mistaken for fired clay. The third fragment is part of a rotary quern from context 211. The quern is made from Millstone Grit, the most common material for rotary querns in the Roman period in Lincolnshire, and was probably made in the Peak district or Pennines. The fragment comes from the upper stone of the quern and has traces of the original tooled grooves on the working surface but has been heavily worn. There is a small hole in the upper surface which might be deliberate (it is thought that the upper stone was sometimes turned using a stick and that holes such as this were used to stop the stick from slipping). However, it is perhaps narrower and shallower than normal.

Discussion

Triangular loom weights are normally dated to the Iron Age to early Roman period although it is not clear what sort of loom weight would have been used in the later Roman period before the introduction of the circular, 'doughnut-shaped' weight in the early Anglo-Saxon period. Several weights would have been needed for a single loom and it is likely that these fragments represent the weights from a single loom.

Rotary querns, however, were a Roman introduction, replacing the beehive quern during the early Roman period (i.e. probably during the 2nd century).

Assessment

Only the fragment of loom weight from context 112 could possibly be drawn and it is unlikely that this drawing would be very informative, although it would reveal the tenuous nature of the identification. The quern, however, could be reconstructed. However, such querns are well-known and it is doubtful whether another drawn example would be of much value.

It is therefore recommended that no further work takes place on these finds but that they are retained for potential future study.

Appendix. List of recorded finds

Context	Cname	Form	Nosh	NoV	Weight	Subfabric	Part	Use	Condition	Description
323	FCLAY	TRIANGULAR LOOM	5	5	130	CHALKY BOULDER CLAY?	BS		OXIDIZED WITH BLACK CORE	NO FACES
323	FCLAY	TRIANGULAR LOOM	16	16	367	CHALKY BOULDER CLAY?	BS		OXIDIZED WITH BLACK CORE	ROUGHLY FINISHED, CONVEX FACE
323	FCLAY	TRIANGULAR LOOM	5	5	92	CHALKY BOULDER CLAY?	BS		OXIDIZED WITH BLACK CORE	ROUGHLY FINISHED, FLATTISH FACE
204	FCLAY	TRIANGULAR LOOM	1	1	28	CHALKY BOULDER CLAY?	BS			ROUGHLY FINISHED, FLATTISH FACE
202	MTIL	FLAT	1	1	15	YELLOW CALCAREOUS;RED HAEMATITE INCLUSIONS	BS			SANDED BASE
202	FCLAY	TRIANGULAR LOOM	1	1	3	CHALKY BOULDER CLAY?	BS			NO FACES
202	STONE	GEOL	1	1	26	SANDY CLAY MATRIX;ABUNDANT SHELL	BS	BURNT?		
303	FCLAY	TRIANGULAR LOOM	1	1	5	CHALKY BOULDER CLAY?	BS			NO FACES
303	STONE	GEOL	1	1	6		BS			
211	FCLAY	TRIANGULAR LOOM	1	1	103	CHALKY BOULDER CLAY?	BS			NO FACES
211	FCLAY	TRIANGULAR LOOM	1	1	111	CHALKY BOULDER CLAY?	BS			ROUGHLY FINISHED;FLATTISH FACE
112	FCLAY	TRIANGULAR LOOM	3	1	443	CHALKY BOULDER CLAY?	BS			TOP OF WEIGHT BUT NO SIGN OF SUSPENSION HOLE WHICH MUST BE LOW IN THE BODY
302	FCLAY	TRIANGULAR LOOM	2	2	30	CHALKY BOULDER CLAY?	BS			FLAT SURFACE
302	FCLAY	TRIANGULAR	4	2	17	CHALKY BOULDER	BS			NO FACES

Context	Cname	Form	Nosh	NoV	Weight	Subfabric	Part	Use	Condition	Description
		LOOM				CLAY?				
103	FCLAY	TRIANGULAR LOOM	1	1	49	CHALKY BOULDER CLAY?	BS			FLAT SURFACE
119	FCLAY	TRIANGULAR LOOM	1	1	4	CHALKY BOULDER CLAY?	BS			NO FACES
211	STONE	ROTARY QUERN	1	1	1409	SSTMG	BS			EDGE FRAGMENT FROM UPPER STONE. SMALL HOLE IN TOP POSSIBLY A REPLACEMENT TURNING HOLE;A FEW TOOLING GROOVES ON LOWER FACE BUT MOSTLY WORN SMOOTH