

Burdale 2006 (BUR06) excavation: spindle whorls

Tony Austin & Elizabeth Jelley, April 2012

Department of Archaeology, University of York

Four spindle whorls were present within the assemblage. Three are complete and one a fragment (Fig. 1). All four are made from stone. Penelope Walton Rogers has developed a typology of dominant types of spindle whorl from the Iron Age through into the Medieval period (1993, 1734 – 41; 1997, 1266 – 9; 2007, 23 -6). The whorls here correspond to types A1 (one flat face) and A2 (two flat faces of unequal size). Spindle hole diameters also tend to increase over time at least into the 11th century.



Fig 1 Spindle Whorls from BUR06

Clockwise from the top (Small Find numbers)

SF55

Material: Chalk (burnt)?

Profile: A1

Maximum hole diameter: 8mm

Description: This fragment as surviving is decorated on its curved face with three incised concentric rings around the hole and a further one where it meets the flat side. There appears to be panels defined by incised lines between these inner and outer rings. The only panel surviving to any degree is filled with cross hatching. The decoration has some similarities to one of the spindle whorls (6552) recovered from excavations at Coppergate (*ibid*, 1997, fig. 808) although the Burdale example appears much better made.

SF304

Material: Chalk

Profile: A2

Maximum hole diameter: 10mm

Description: Undecorated but well made.

SF141

Material: Mudstone?

Profile: A1

Maximum hole diameter: 7mm

Description: Decorated with incised concentric rings on both curved and flat surfaces

SF284

Material: Chalk

Profile: A2

Maximum hole diameter: 9mm

Description: Crudely made and undecorated

Walton Rogers notes that at Flixborough, West Heslerton and York type A whorls are seen as becoming the main type during the 7th century dominating type B (two flat faces of equal size) and type C (no flat faces) popular in the Iron Age and Roman periods. The mid 10th century sees a resurgence of type B although type A is still popular but in the 11th century type C comes to dominate for the rest of the Medieval period. She also notes the trend of an increasing spindle hole diameters from 4 – 8mm in the Iron Age and Roman, 6 – 9mm in the Early and Middle Anglo-Saxon (i.e. Anglian) and 9 -11mm for Later Anglo-Saxon (i.e. Anglo-Scandinavian) period.

Thus profile and spindle hole size suggest a 7th to 10th century date for the Burdale whorls. The presence of Organic Tempered pottery and lack of 10th century pottery (Austin & Jelley, 2009) perhaps refine this to an 8 – 9th century date.

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