

Small counters

Glass

There are 28 glass plano-convex counters. The majority are recorded as white (**9111-2, 9116, 9122-3, 9131, 9183-4**). There are six black counters (**9114-5, 9117-8, 9125** and **9130**) and Bliss noted that **9119, 9127** and **9185** were very dark blue appearing black. **9120, 9126** and **9132** are blue and **9182** are green.

There are also two polychrome counters. **9113** is black with red and white dots. Bliss also recorded **9128** as being black with blue dots, though the illustration does not show any decoration

Bone

The database print-out records 133 counters. Bliss noted 125 counters, including two ivory examples, with a further six examples being classed as ‘rough/roundels’ for gaming pieces. In addition the astragali (knucklebones) catalogued under ‘miscellaneous uncertain’ may also have been used in games.

The counters are typed using a typology offered by Greep (1983, 255-61; 1986, 202). Four of his types are present, and in addition 28 show graffiti marks scratched, incised, or engraved on the obverse, reverse or sides of the counter, and sometimes in more than one location. Greep has identified six groups of graffiti, five of which are represented at Wroxeter (1983, 255, 263-5). In the Type field of the database here the first figure is the counter type and the second figure after the colon is the graffiti type.

1 – Plain with a flat obverse and reverse surfaces with a regular cross-section, rounded or slightly angled to give a bevelled section.

Twenty-three counters are included in this type (**93, 95, 101, 102, 104, 106-11, 114-22, 150, 217, 219**). They show little variation although there are a few atypical examples. **119** is perforated through its centre. None is stained green although this occurs on examples from other sites.

The diameters range from 14 to 23mm and the thicknesses from 2 to 4mm. The average diameter (18.07mm) compares well with the modal sizes (18-20mm (three examples of each). This corresponds closely with the average size of 17.63mm given by Greep (1983, 257).

2 – Plain with slightly sunken or dished obverse surfaces and central ring.

Forty-one counters are included in this type which shows little variation between its members (**94, 123-49, 151-60, 195, 216** and **220**). However, some are atypical examples of the type. **130** has a central ‘knob’. **126** has a deep groove across its reverse side. Its purpose is unknown, **143** is perforated. Some show graffiti on the reverse. Marks of groups 1, 4, 5 and 6 are represented.

The diameters range from 15mm to 24mm and the thickness from 2 to 8mm. The average diameter is 19.6mm and the modal one is 21mm (12 examples). This compares well with Greep’s average diameter of 20.2mm and his range of 12-25mm (Greep 1983, 258).

3 – Obverse surfaces with a series of concentric circles.

Fifty examples are included in this group (**96-7, 161-94, 196-208, 218**). There is a wider range of variation than in the other groups. This is seen in the number, width and depth of the grooves and in the size of the counters. The number of rings varies from one to six. **165** is an unusual example having a complete central perforation and only one deep concentric groove. It is also very thin and may represent a split counter from the original. Graffiti was found on the sides, reverse and obverse

of the counters although normally it is restricted to the reverse sides only. The graffiti is predominantly of Group 1 but Groups 2 and 3 are also present.

The diameters range from 12.5mm to 24mm, the average is 19mm and the mode is 17mm. This again compares well with Greep's results. He gives a range of 13 to 27mm and an average of 19.75mm (Greep 1983, 258).

3a – similar to 3 but with a dished central area, a raised point, and a serrated edge.

One example (**161**) is represented of this relatively uncommon type. It is 20mm in diameter and is without any graffiti.

4 – Plano-convex with a V-shape nick in the centre.

There are seven examples of this type which shows some variation within it (**98, 209-214**). No. **213** has a double ring around the central dot and then a further three incised circumferential lines. Two counters are stained black and thus have a similar appearance to glass counters. Only one piece possibly shows graffiti marks, and in general this type rarely displays inscriptions. The marks are of Group 1. The diameters range from 11.5mm to 26mm, with an average of 21mm and a mode of 25mm. The thickness varies from 5mm to 10mm. This type is larger than the previous ones and Greep comments (1983, 260) that it is usually up to 10mm larger. It is possible that some may represent spindle whorls since these have a strong resemblance. Further examples may exist amongst the object catalogued as 'miscellaneous uncertain'.

Counters with graffiti

The counters with marks were are classified using the typology of six groups offered by Greep.

1 – Numerals.

The most common form is X. Greep sub-divides this into:-

Type 1a – a simple X.

Type 1b – an X with a horizontal groove through the centre.

Type 1c – an X with both horizontal and vertical grooves through it.

Bliss stated that there were 11 examples of Type 1a, three of Type 1b and two of Type 1c. A further six counters showed other numerals including 'V', 'I' and IIN' or IIVI' depending on which way the counter was views. In the database print-out 21 counters have a coding of 1 for the graffiti but the sub-coding (a, b, c) is not stated. The illustrations of the pieces do not always show the graffiti that were observed, probably because the drawings were the work of students and graffiti of this class can be difficult to see for novices. The numbers with graffiti of this sort would appear to be.

103, 105, 112, 124, 125, 139, 144, 147, 158, 220, 171, 180, 189, 191, 193, 196, 199, 220, 206, 214.

Group 3 – Names and mottos.

One example which may be read PRAIL or YRA (**173**).

Group 4 - dots.

Three examples have either a dot or ring and dot motif (**132, 145, 135**). Two are on the reverse and one on the side of the counters. They are arranged in groups of five or three or two.

Group 5 – Miscellaneous.

Two examples. One is cross-hatched on the reverse, and the other has a diagonal line and two 'loops'. In the database print-out, the only counter with this coding is **113**.

Group 6 – Side graffiti, usually a single series of numerals.

Bliss stated that there were four examples but only **134-5** are so coded. Bliss noted that side graffiti are usually found in association with another group and this is the case at Wroxeter where it is seen

with Group 1 as is commonly the case, but also with Group 4. The database print-out only notes a combination in one case (**135**). The purpose of side graffiti may have been to allow easy recognition of the counter values when stacked. The graffiti at Wroxeter consisted of two dots, one of three vertical grooves arranged in two units of two and of one, and possibly two examples of numerals or letters, a VI and a series of letters which are not easily identifiable.

Stone

The small finds appendix divides the counters into two categories small and large, with the latter possibly being pot lids. The database print-out makes no distinction between the two categories and it is difficult to equate the numbers quote in the appendix with the diameters quoted which range from 9.75mm to 130mm. The whole group is catalogued as **8343-8440**.

Fired clay

The database print-out lists 26 items as fired clay counters, ranging in diameter from 12mm to 63mm (**8596-8620, 8624**). There are 90 items identified as re-used pot sherds which would equate with the larger counter category of the small find appendix (**8625-714**). They range in diameter from 7mm to 128mm with 69 having diameters greater than 40mm

Dice

Seven bone dice were found. They all single piece and so belong to Greep's Type 1 category. He divides them into Type 1 proper with regular dimensions and Type 1a with irregular dimensions.

Two fall into Type 1 and have maximum dimensions of 9mm and 16.5mm. One (**449**) has an irregular value configuration with only one set of opposing sides adding up to the normal 7. The others add up to 6 and 8. This example is also the only one in the Wroxeter collection to have one face with abnormal pips, i.e. those making up the six value being a single ring and dot. The rest being double ring and dot as is normal for Roman dice. The other Type 1 die (**454**) has the normal configuration of opposing sides adding to 7.

Four examples of Type 1a, the commonest Roman type were found (**450 - 453**). The irregularity consists of larger sides for the values of one and six and the edges and sides show relatively more wear (i.e. fainter 'pips' and more worn sides), notably on **455**, they consistently show maximum dimensions of 15mm or 16mm. The dice follow the normal configuration and the pips consist of a double ring and dot

Marbles

The database records three fired clay marbles (**8621-3**). There were no stone marbles but there were three stone balls (**8459, 8461-2**).

Figurines

Copper alloy

Four parts of figurines were recovered. All represent limbs. **2378** is the most realistically and carefully sculptured piece of a finger (53mm long). It has a lead core. **2380** is a crude and simplistic representation of an arm: a corroded rod with a spatulate end tapering to a pared rounded end. At the thicker end there is a peg for attachment to a torso and perhaps the attached limb was moveable, as in a doll. A similar form of attachment is seen on more realistic arms from Colchester (Crummy 1983, fig. 169 no. 4265) and Verulamium (Frere 1972, fig. 49 no. 136).

The identification of the other two pieces as being from figurines is less certain. **2377** is a slightly tapering uneven rod with the widest end wedge-shaped to create a flat surface for attachment to a torso. **2379** has a deep groove in its expanded end and is a heavily corroded, slightly curved rod.

Fired clay

Ten fragments of pipe clay figurines are recorded (**8550-59**). The majority would appear to come from figurines of Venus.

Other religious material

Copper alloy

The sheet **2399** is an eye-shaped appliqué and there are traces of perforations at either end. The top and bottom edges have cross-hatches which may represent lashes at the margins. It is 41mm long and 25mm wide.

Stone

8452 is a small uninscribed altar

Fired clay

The small finds index records a samian sherd re-worked as an eye. There is no entry in the database print-out which corresponds to this. **9280** has been created from information in the drawings.

Plaster

The re-worked fragments of plaster interpreted as votive eyes are **9191-9279**.