

XSM10

Worked Stone Assessment

James Wright
14th February 2014 (edited 6th March 2014)

Site archive: finds and environmental, quantification and description

Table 1 Finds and environmental archive general summary

Building material	Seven worked stones were recovered from site. Five of these warranted recording, and of these one stone was fractured into three pieces and another into four pieces. The remaining two stones were noted but not recorded as they could not elicit sufficient information. All stones were retained.
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The worked stone

Introduction/methodology

All of the worked stone has been recorded using the standard worked stone recording forms used by MOLA. The stones were photographed and where appropriate a 1:1 or 1:2 profile drawing was made, a 1:1 rubbing or a scaled plan drawing was made. Fabric analysis was undertaken with a x10 binocular microscope and a comparison was made with the MOLA stone library. The information on the recording forms has been added to an Oracle database.

The medieval period

Moulded stones

[Context 1296] is a fragment of moulded oolitic limestone similar in character to that quarried at Grange Hill and Oathill in Gloucestershire (Fig 1). The stone is so fragmentary that it is no longer possible to determine its original purpose within the built environment, however it is potentially part of the jamb of a door surround. This conclusion also fits with the level of weathering that this stone has experienced which suggests that it was once at least partially open to the elements (although it is admitted that this could be secondary use weathering).

Its size and moulding forms suggest a medieval or early modern date, although it is unlikely to date past the first quarter of the 17th century.

A possible V shaped banker mark was recorded on a face with a corona moulding (Fig 2).



Fig 1 Context [1296]



Fig 2 Banker mark on context [1296]

Context [1299] is a fragment of moulded oolitic Bath limestone similar in character to that mined at Box in Wiltshire. The stone is a very heavily weathered and fragmented section of window mullion which still has a recognisable external nose moulding as well as its internal rebates. The glazing channels have both been weathered away and no longer survive.

Its size and moulding forms suggest a medieval or early modern date, although it is unlikely to date past the first quarter of the 17th century.



Fig 3 Context [1299]

The post medieval period

Gravestones

Two fragmentary gravestones were recovered from the core of a post-medieval wall (Contexts [1115] and [1135]).

Context [1115] consists of three fragmentary pieces of slate similar to that quarried at Berwyn, Denbeighshire (Fig 4). The fragments all interlock but do not represent a complete stone. The reverse face of the stone has a chamfer cut along one side and the entire face has been dressed roughly indicating that it was never intended to be seen. The thickness and surface wear suggests that the stone was a ledger slab which was laid horizontally and flush with the ground level around it.

The wear may therefore relate to footfall which has polished the surface and reduced the inscription to a very truncated appearance which is not coherently legible. The partial inscription reads:

HERE ALSO
W[?]LLI
OF CABT[?]IA
& SAMVELL
PACK &

The use of the words “HERE ALSO” along with the wear on the upper part of the stone suggests that several people were memorialised by this stone and that alongside the principal incumbent there may be up to three other individuals represented here: one probably called William, another with the first name Samvell and a third with the surname Pack. The use of the letter “V” in “SAMVELL” is an archaic form of “U”.

No date appears on the ledger however the use of the double-V version of the letter W indicates that this stone was cut during the second half of the 17th or very early-mid 18th century. Given the re-use of the stone in an 18th century wall along with context [1115] the balance of probability suggests that this ledger is also 17th century. The double-V version of the letter W may also have an apotropaic function of warding off evil spirits from the grave and may reflect the folk beliefs of either the mason or patron or possibly both.



Fig 4 Context [1115]

Context [1135] consists of four fragmentary pieces of Portland base bed limestone from Dorset (Fig 5). The fragments all interlock but do not represent a complete stone. The reverse face of the stone is fair faced and was clearly meant to be visible. The thickness and decorative scheme on the front face suggests that the stone was a vertical headstone.

The inscription reads:

SARAH LONG
 N
WIFE OF S[E]JETO
LONG WHO DYED
MAY TH[E] [?]2
1672 AIG[ED]
[17?] WITH

The use of the word “WITH” at the end of the inscription indicates that Sarah Long may have been also buried with another person(s), or may be relating to a formulaic such as “WITH HOPE” etc.

The stone is approximately 80% complete and is characteristic of the very low headstones of the late 17th and early 18th century which were laid directly into the earth. Such stones often featured two or three carved scrolls above the lettering. There is an indication of this in the breakage scarring of the stonework as well as a complete carved ring in the centre immediately above the name. The lettering panel also has evidence of a sunken channel running around it which would have given emphasis to the text.

The date is very precise and probably read “MAY THE [1]2” or “[2]2” 1672. A search of the births, deaths and marriages register on ancestry.com did not reveal any matches for either Sarah or Seeton long although it was noted that both names were very common during this period in London. It is also possible that both may have been Non-conformist and would therefore not exist within the Church of England registers, however it is also possible that the registers with their details no longer exist.

The letter-cutting is very crude and belies some evidence that the mason was illiterate given that the letter “N” on three occasions is reversed and in the case of the word “SEETON” the mason was unable to resolve the spacing satisfactorily and placed the “N” above the “O”.

The double-V version of the letter W occurs on three occasions and may also have an apotropaic function of warding off evil spirits from the grave and may reflect the folk beliefs of either the mason or patron or possibly both.

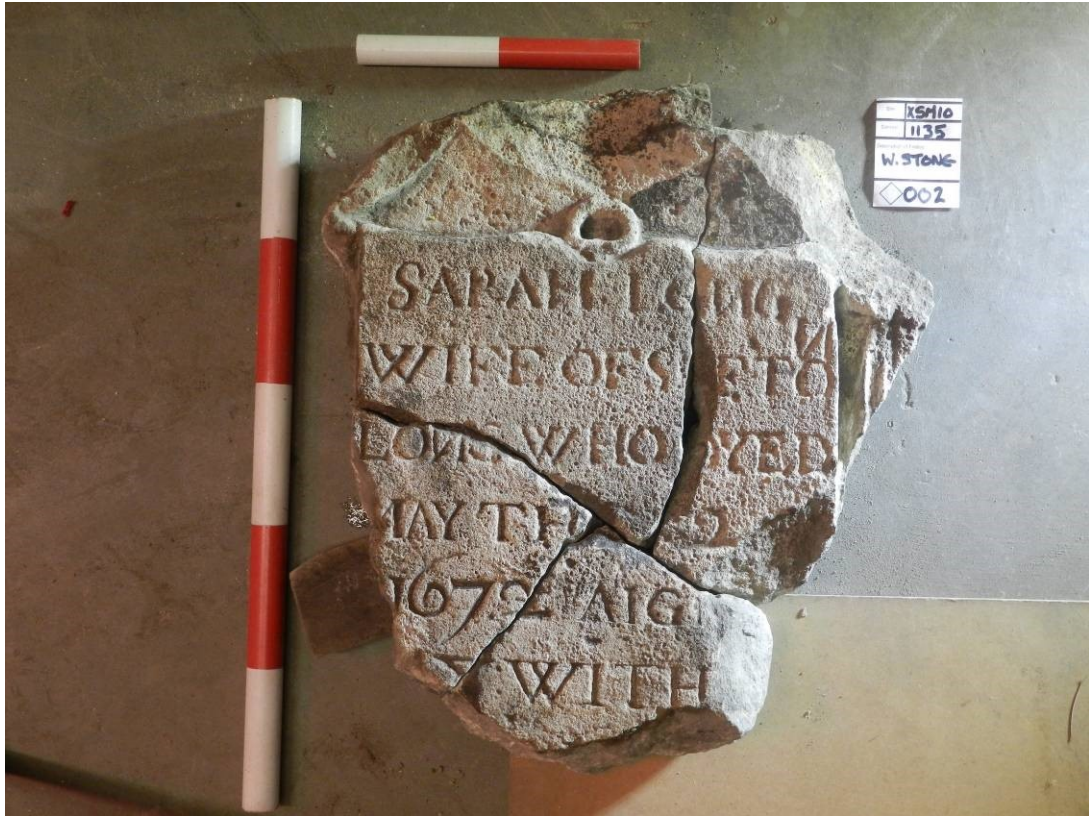


Fig 5 Context [1135]

Unknown date

Ashlar masonry

Context [1297] is a fragment of ashlar masonry in Lower Carboniferous Crag Hill sandstone quarried at Hazeldean in Northumberland. The stone is very weathered on its face although there is evidence of a batted finish. Part of the joint survives and has a boastered tooling. The area of the stone that is fractured also displays heavy weathering which is indicative of its re-use.



Fig 6 Context [1297]

Analysis of potential

The material all relates to a post-medieval wall, however contains stonework from earlier periods. There are two stones which have characteristic medieval or early modern mouldings and two gravestones which can be firmly located in the second half of the 17th century which were reused in the 18th century. It is difficult to relate the moulded stones to a previous structure as it is not clear where they originated and could conceivably come from a wider area, but it is possible that they may have come from the late medieval hospital on the site. The gravestones almost certainly relate to a previous burial ground on the site prior to the Bethlem Burial Ground as laid out in the mid 18th century.

It is interesting to note that there are a number of petrologies represented, with material being imported from quarries as disparate as Gloucestershire, Dorset, Wiltshire, Northumberland and Wales. This variety of material is not unusual within London which is an area poor in quality building stone yet rich in finance and infrastructure – particularly the sea routes which are made accessible by the Thames estuary. There is some potential for relating the headstone of Sarah Long to a documentary and genealogical history for the period of the late 17th century.

Significance of the data

Whilst moulded stone always represents a significant investment of income and therefore relates to a high status structure, it is not possible to say precisely what the function, location or specific date or dates of these buildings was. Therefore the significance of the moulded stone is low.

The post-medieval gravestones relate to an early burial ground opened as a non-parochial cemetery in 1568/9 on land taken from the Bethlem Hospital. The latest burials recorded are from 1714, although it is conceivable that internments were made into the mid 18th century. The reuse of the late 17th century gravestones relates to an early encroachment into the cemetery by the built environment and consequently they were reused less than a century after the initial interment. Therefore the significance of the gravestones is considered to be medium to high.