

The worked stone

Ruth Shaffrey

Introduction

A total of eight stone tools were recovered and submitted for analysis. These were individually examined for evidence of manufacture and traces of use wear, and six were found to be worked. Two unusually shaped cobbles have not been used and are not discussed further (SF 739, BM-CFCCB2 and SF 741, BM-CF87FC). Details of all objects have been entered into a Microsoft Excel spreadsheet and can be found in the project archive.

Description

Three items are stone discs. Two of these are small examples but while one has been chipped into a crudely circular shape (SF 4005/ BM-DAA5D9), the other has been smoothed around the circumference (SF 4065/ NCL-3B8924). Such discs serve no obvious function and may have been counters or tokens. A larger disc of 17.5cm diameter (BH-DBD5EF) is perforated in the centre and burnt on one face and part of the circumference. The type of burning present on this disc (blackening) is caused by direct exposure to flames (rather than just extreme heat) and it seems likely that this was used as a pot base, or more likely a pot lid (the perforation allowing for the release of some steam from a cooking vessel). Discs, of both small counter size, and larger pot base/lid size, are relatively common finds on Roman sites, typically found in multiples and sometimes in large groups, as at Crosskirk broch where 34 were found in total (Fairhurst 1984, 126-7). However, a Roman date is by no means certain, since discs of all sizes are also found on medieval and post-medieval sites (eg Shaffrey 2015; Woodfield 1981, 105).

Two unshaped cobbles appear to have been used as hones. One has evidence for sharpening cross all four faces (SF 740/ BM-CF77A2). The other has some faceting across one end (SF 742/ BM-CFB553). Neither of these have been extensively used and their use cannot be definitively dated but there is no reason to dispute a possible Roman date.

A final piece of worked stone is a fragment of an unfinished curved item (SF 4020/ BH-FE73E7). The curvature suggests it was intended to be used as a large mortar but an architectural function is also possible. The top of the rim is very smooth suggesting subsequent use as a hone.

The types of stone tools retrieved are typical of Roman occupation sites although the number is quite small. None of the stone types are distinctive in hand specimen and are likely to have been sourced locally.

Catalogue of worked stone

SF 4005. Disc. Fine-grained pale brown very micaceous sandstone. Small approximately circular disc. Chipped into shape and broken along the natural bedding to form the flat disc. Measures 27-29mm diameter x 3mm thick. Weighs 5.5g. BM-DAA509

SF 4065. Disc. Fine-grained pale brown very micaceous sandstone. Small approximately circular disc. Smoothed around the circumference to make a fairly neat shape and broken along the natural bedding to form the flat disc. Measures 41mm diameter x 7mm thick. Weighs 22g. NCL-3B8924

Disc. Fine-grained brown micaceous thinly bedded sandstone. Half a large disc, chipped into an approximately circular shape with perforation of 14mm. Made from naturally thinly bedded stone. Burnt and blackened on one face and around the circumference. Some burning to the edges of the opposing face. Measures 175mm diameter x 7mm thick. Weighs 260g

SF 740. Hone. Ironstone. Elongate cobble with triangular section. Unshaped but all four faces are flat and show traces of having been used for sharpening, with some residual polish. Measures 130 x 30 x 10-35mm. Weighs 297g. BM-CF77A2

SF 742. Hone. Fine-grained brown sandstone. Flat cobble, unshaped, triangular in plan view. Mostly unused but with some slight facetting across one end. Measures 142 x 67mm at widest point and 10-35mm thick. Weighs 315g. BM-CFB553

SF 4020. Worked stone. Fine-grained well-sorted reddish-brown quartz sandstone. Fragment of incompletely made curved item. Curvature suggests an internal diameter of 37cm and wall thickness of 36mm. The top of the rim is very smoothed. Measures >112 x >66 x >55mm thick. Weighs 402g. BM-FE73E7

Bibliography

Fairhurst, H. 1984 *Excavations at Crosskirk Broch, Caithness*, Society of Antiquaries of Scotland monograph 3, Edinburgh

Shaffrey, R. 2015 The Worked Stone Objects in S. Ratkai, *Wigmore Castle, North Herefordshire: Excavations 1996 and 1998*, Society for Medieval Archaeology Monograph 34, 133–135

Woodfield, C 1981 Finds from the Free Grammar School at the Whitefriars, Coventry, c 1545 - c 1557/58, *Post-medieval Archaeology* 15, 81–159