

Some Perforated Stone Artefacts from Northumberland and Durham

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The subjects of this note are six perforated and one cup marked stone implements from Northumberland and Durham in the Sturge Collection at the British Museum and as far as is known to the writer they are the only ones in the British Museum from our area outside the Greenwell Collection. This latter collection is presently being worked on for publication by the British Museum authorities. Perforated axe-hammers and battle axes have also been excluded as a corpus of such implements is being compiled by C.B. Burgess (Pers. Comm.). The artefacts illustrated here comprise two maceheads, three pebble hammers, a possible perforated adze, and a stone with corresponding medial cup marks. There are no available details of exact provenance, or of the circumstances of the finds, but a generalisation has been made by Fiona Roe (1968,1979) that maceheads from funerary contexts are usually whole and complete while those from domestic contexts are broken. This may apply to Nos. 1 and 2 but such inferences must only be applied with extreme caution. The dateable examples of these artefacts show that they started in the late Neolithic and extended into the Earlier Bronze Age with objects like No. 7 probably extending later. This type of artefact has been fully discussed by Mrs. Roe (op. cit) and it is her typology that is used here.

No. 1. FAWNLEES, WOLSINGHAM, CO. DURHAM

STURGE COLL. No. 341.

A macehead of cushion type though only about half now survives. This example would appear to have been typical of the class in that it is carefully made and well-finished with a polished feel. It has also been squared off as is apparent from the section drawing. The shaft-hole is vertical sided unlike the hour-glass perforation of pebble-hammers. The surviving end has been chipped.

surviving length 5.5 cm.

surviving width 5.0 cm.

surviving thickness . 1.6 cm.

No. 2. TWIZELL, NORHAM, NORTHUMBERLAND

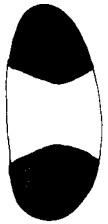
STURGE COLL. No. 303.

A pestle macehead of Thames type which differs from the Orkney type in that on the latter the sides are more concave than the straight sides of the former. As the name suggests, the distribution of this type is more southern than the Orkney type but the distribution of both is markedly eastern. The perforation is typically towards the narrower end and is straight in section. The stone is hard and gritty and the artefact is slightly damaged with traces of abrasion on the broader end.

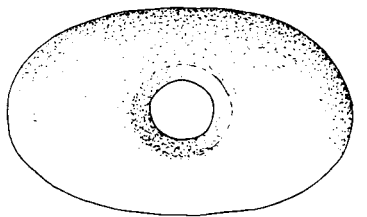
Max. length 8.0 cm.

Max. width 6.0 cm.

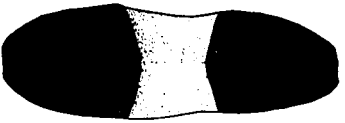
Min. width 4.4 cm.



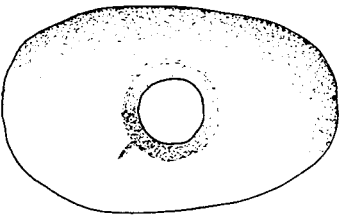
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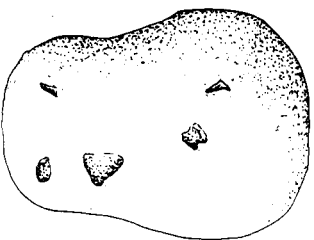
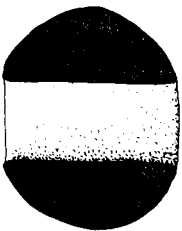
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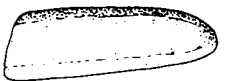
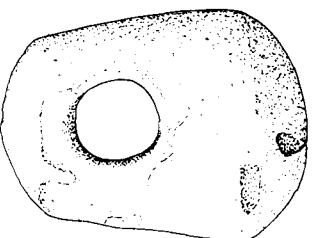
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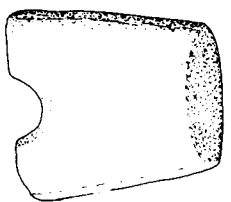
CMs



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1



No. 3. COVES HOUSES, WOLSINGHAM, CO. DURHAM

STURGE COLL. No. 468.

A pebble-hammer in hard igneous rock. The sides have probably been artificially flattened slightly, but it can not be said to have been squared off in the same way as cushion maceheads. The shaft-hole has an hour-glass profile and is central. This hour-glass perforation is the main distinguishing feature of these pebble-hammers. Both ends are slightly flattened due to use, but it is unknown whether they derive from primary or secondary use as a label with the artefact states that the finder used it as a door knocker.

Max. length 9.0 cm.

Max. width 5.5 cm.

Max. thickness .. 2.4 cm.

No. 4. MILNE HOUSES, FROSTERLEY, CO. DURHAM

STURGE COLL. No. 309.

An example of an oval pebble-hammer very similar to the above, but in a slightly softer stone. The hour-glass perforation is slightly off centre. Both ends of the object have been slightly flattened and roughened by use.

Max. length 8.6 cm.

Max. width 5.4 cm.

Max. thickness .. 2.2 cm.

No. 5. BELFORD, NORTHUMBERLAND

STURGE COLL. No. 308.

A circular pebble-hammer in a light coloured gritty stone with a pitted surface. The central hourglass perforation is considerably more rounded in section than the examples above. One part of the edge is considerably flattened and roughened by use.

Max. diameter 5.9 cm.

Max. thickness ... 2.1 cm.

No. 6. WEARDALE, CO. DURHAM

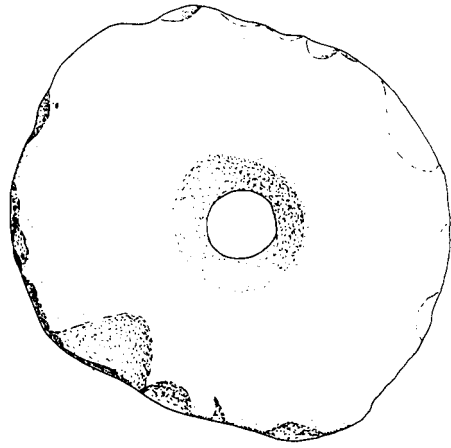
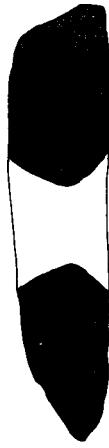
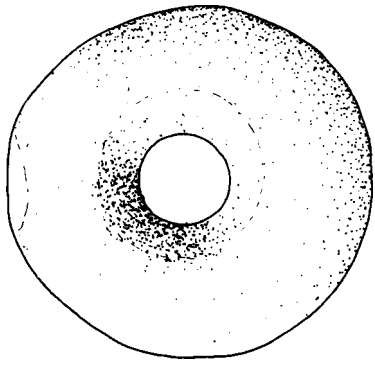
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A slightly squared perforated stone disc of a type described as a stone adze by Fiona Roe (op. cit) and characterised by the hour-glass profiled shaft-hole and the sharpened edges. This example is in a light coloured soft sedimentary rock, and the edges seem to have been deliberately chipped or flaked to provide a sharper edge.

Max. length 10.5 cm.

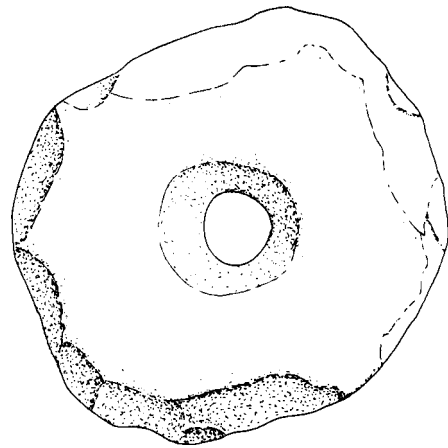
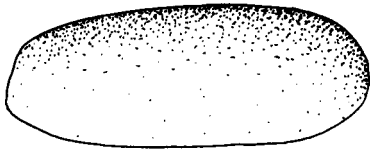
Max. width 10.5 cm.

Max. thickness .. 2.4 cm.

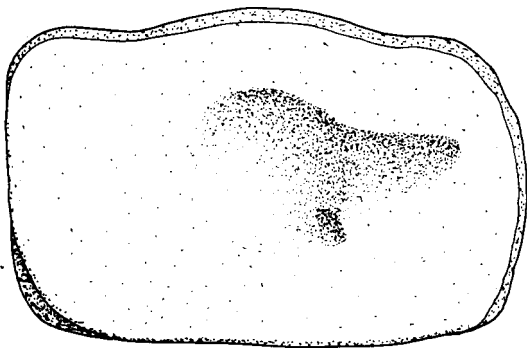


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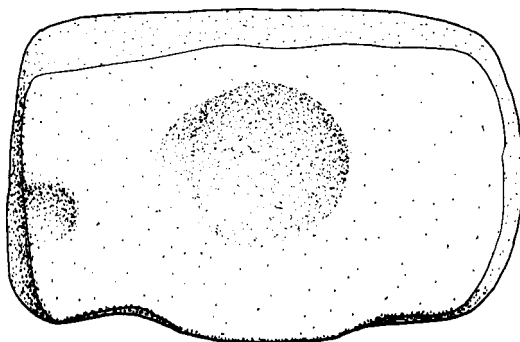
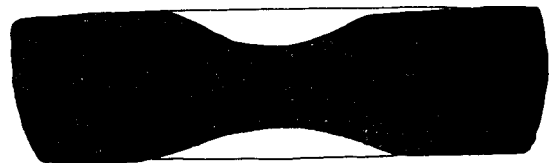
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cms



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No. 7. RIDING MILL, NORTHUMBERLAND

B.M. No. 1911.10-21.56

This is stated to have been bought from a Mr. Henry Slater from Bridgewater and the entry in the British Museum accessions register and on a label enclosed with the object reads:

'Found about half a mile south east of the Roman bridge at Riding Mill on Tyne, and not far off the line of the Watling Street. 1874.'

It is a rectangular piece of hard, dense, igneous rock with apparently squared off and smoothed edges. There are corresponding cup-marks on both of the broad faces, both of which appear smooth and polished. This may have been intended as a perforated hammer, but the shaft hole was never completed, but it is more likely that it was used as a hand-held hammer-stone with the cups giving extra grip to the thumb and fore-finger.

Max. length 14.0 cm.

Max. width 8.6 cm.

Max. thickness .. 3.9 cm.

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| ROE | F. | 1979 | 'Typology of stone implements with shaft-holes' in <u>STONE AXE STUDIES, C.B.A. RESEARCH REPORT NO. 23</u> eds. T.H. McK. Clough and W.A. Cummins. London. |