

CHEVIOT QUARRY COARSE STONE

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The coarse stone assemblage comprises a small number of artifacts all of which came from the northern area of the site. The artefacts came from a restricted number of features these being the fills of one of the Neolithic artefact-rich pits (F9), one from a pit associated with Building 3 and two quernstones from the fill of an artefact-rich pit inside one of the Late Bronze Age roundhouses (Building 4). Eleven coarse stone objects were recovered including two quernstones, one small rubbing stone, one hammerstone and a possible hammerstone, two whetstones, a shaped stone ball and a quartz nodule, a smoothed granite piece – possibly a roughout of some sort, and a group of degraded sandstone fragments.

Stone Ball

Stone balls are known from North-East England and include examples from Hetton to the east of the Milfield basin (Speak and Aylett 1996) and Houghton-le-Side in County Durham (Marshall 1977; Speak and Aylett 1996). The one reported here has quite clearly been intended to have six faces, which would place it in Marshall's Type 4a classification (1977), but a flaw in the rock has meant that two of the faces were damaged during the chipping process by too much being removed and the piece has then been discarded. Though unprepossessing in comparison to some of the more finely decorated specimens, this example is still important as it adds to a growing corpus of such artefacts from Northern England. Other isolated examples are known from Cumbria and Yorkshire. Identifying a use for such an object is fraught with difficulty as they evidently have some kind of symbolic value rather than being tools designed for a manual task. Given their size they appear to be for holding in the hand – as far as human contact goes, but equally they could have been intended for display items perhaps intended for special placement within the home. Elaborately carved stone balls and related objects have been found in domestic settings, as at Skara Brae (Childe 1931), and so the presence of this ball in a pit filled with discarded domestic material does not mean this site has to be interpreted as a strictly ritual site. Rather it is in keeping with the site's interpretation as a predominantly residential site – though this is not to say that activities at the site did not include ritualised and symbolic behaviour.

Quartz Nodule

A single smooth white quartz nodule was found in the same pit as the stone ball. Being alien to the immediately surrounding geology this suggests that this piece may have been deliberately selected for inclusion in the fill of this pit. An interest in white quartz is well testified across Neolithic monuments in the British Isles and if this stone was intended as something deserving of deposition in this pit it would not be unusual given the wider interest in this rock type.

Whetstones

One whetstone came from the Neolithic pit that contained the stone ball and this has some chips evident on it. It is possible this whetstone may have been used as a smoothing in the manufacture of other stone tools and artefacts. The second whetstone is from the Dark Age

building 3 and, given the date of these buildings, is more likely to be associated with sharpening metal objects.

Hammerstones

The quartzite hammerstone shows wear at both ends indicating its use in the process of lithic reduction. Being harder than flint the quartzite, which can be found locally, appears to have been specially selected for use in the knapping process. Other quartzite hammerstones are known from North-East England (e.g. Fig 27 in Waddington 2004, 18). The granite cobble, interpreted as a hammerstone due to its symmetrical ovoid shape, does not have obvious signs of wear so may have been new or unused.

Querns

The presence of quernstones from the Late Bronze Age building 4 indicates that grain was being grown nearby and processed into flour for use, no doubt, in a range of flour-based products. This supports the botanical macrofossil evidence from the same pit (see specialist report) which revealed that barley and wheat were both being cultivated close to the site.

Northern Area Coarse Stone Catalogue

Context	Context Description	Small Find No	Description	Max Dimens. Length Width Thickness	Chronol. Diagnost
009	F9 upper pit fill	92	This shaped quartzite nodule has been deliberately shaped into a ball and then two of the six facets chamfered flat. This appears to have been attempted unsuccessfully on two of the other facets, but these have resulted in uneven surfaces. This is almost certainly a discarded attempt at a carved stone ball (see Marshall 1977; 1983) intended to have 6 facets, which would place it in Marshall's Type 4a (1977).	67mm 67mm 62mm	Early Neolithic
009	F9 upper pit fill	105	A small natural white quartz nodule, alien to the immediate surrounding geology. This may be a natural inclusion within the stony fill but it was retained as it could also have been thought to have special significance.	62mm 38mm 37mm	Early Neolithic
009	F9 upper pit fill	-	A concentration of heavily degraded unmodified sandstone fragments were found in the west side of the upper pit fill [009] some against the side of the pit.		
051	F9 lower pit fill	23	A remarkably flat and symmetrical sandstone whetstone. It has four chips missing from it but is otherwise in pristine condition. There is an area of pitting or wear at the broad end of the convex surface. The piece is symmetrical along its long axis when set on its widest plane but on its narrow side the stone has a plano-convex section. It has evidently been	109mm 54mm 17mm	Early Neolithic

			smoothed into shape.		
051	F9 lower pit fill	24	Quartzite hammerstone with wear and crushing at two opposed ends. Evidently used for knapping flint or other hard stone.	75mm 65mm 58mm	Early Neolithic
051	F9 lower pit fill	71	A large smoothed piece of granite found nestling within a large sherd of Grimston Ware pottery lying on its side. Although not obviously an artefact, the frost-shattered igneous rocks of the Cheviots are rarely found so smooth, and given its position within the large discarded pot sherd and its possible shaped sides (one is flat) into a shape resembling a macehead, suggest this could perhaps be a macehead roughout.	136mm 55.5mm 55mm	Early Neolithic
133	Fill of pit associated with building 3	23	Symmetrical small whetstone that appears to be made from sandstone.	73mm 26mm 16mm	Early Neolithic
342	Fill of hearth associated with building 4	283	A small irregular-shaped, angular granite rubbing stone with two shaped sides, one of which is very flat and suited to rubbing. Located within a pit inside one of the Late Bronze Age roundhouses (building 4) along with two quernstones.	100mm 59mm 57.5mm	Late Bronze Age
262	Fill of pit	221	A possible hammerstone made from granitic rock with quartz inclusions with no obvious wear/possibly unused. Symmetrical, smooth oval shape with slight tapering to one end.	82mm 61mm 51mm	
340	Fill of pit associated with building 4	266	Granite quernstone segment with one flat, smooth side. Actual size not known due to fresh breakages across either end. The quernstone is broader (239mm) at one end, tapering to a depth of 11mm at the other. Found in a pit inside one of the Late Bronze Age roundhouses (building 4) along with another quernstone and other domestic waste.	187mm 158mm 63mm	Late Bronze Age
340	Fill of pit associated with building 4	?	Large, irregular angular pink granite quernstone with two flat sides. Its total length is not known due to a fresh breakage at one end. The quernstone is soot-blackened on both of the flat sides and the underneath. The burning may be the result of its use close to a hearth.	183mm 22.5mm (Full width not known) 122mm	Late Bronze Age

References

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