

Appendix 3.4

Assessment of a Worked Stone from Thorpe in Balne, South Yorkshire (TIB 08)

Alan Vince

A single worked stone was recovered from an excavation at Thorpe in Balne, South Yorkshire. The stone is probable cut from tufa of geologically recent age (Fig 1). The form of the stone suggests that it was used as ornamental vaulting (i.e. not load-bearing) and is from a high status structure of later medieval age.

Description

Stone

The stone, from context 004, the demolition level from a medieval manor house, had a lenticular cross-section, being 135mm thick and 95mm wide with a short, flat back. There is no sign of longitudinal curvature. Neither of the short faces are complete indicating an original length in excess of 280 mm. Fine toothed working is visible over all original surfaces but is of higher quality on the curved faces. There is a single empty tapering hole visible in one end, suggesting that the stone was held in place by a series of spikes. The surviving fragment weights 5.332 Kg.



Figure 1 Close-up photograph of freshly broken edge of stone (width of field of view c.3.4mm)

Assessment

The stone is clearly intended to be part of a vaulted structure but is much too flimsy to bear any weight. Also, it clearly could not have been supported by the wall against which it rested.

The Alan Vince Archaeology Consultancy, 25 West Parade, Lincoln, LN1 1NW
<http://www.postex.demon.co.uk/index.html>
A copy of this report is archived online at
<http://www.avac.uklinux.net/potcat/pdfs/avac2008124.pdf>

Most true vaulting ribs carry the majority of the load of the roof and at least a third of the rib would have been intended to sit within the wall, whereas this piece is clearly designed to rest up against walling. It is therefore suggested that the piece was meant to be used with a timber, or part-timber structure.

The pointed cross-section indicates that the piece is medieval, of later 13th century or later date. In terms of architectural styles, the piece is probably part of a Gothic or Perpendicular structure.

Tufa deposits suitable for production of stonework of this type occur widely in the midlands (Hains & Horton 1969, 101).

Further work

The piece should be illustrated.

Costing

Illustration and production of png format image: £25.00 plus VAT

Bibliography

Hains, B. A. and Horton, A. (1969) *British Regional Geology: Central England*, HMSO,
London