

The slags from Whitton (Norfolk)

The slags were found in fairly small quantities inside a number of grubenhäuser. These were excavated by a number of individuals over a considerable period of time and it is not sure that all the slag was kept so no useful comparisons between the quantities found in different structures can be made. A variety of types were noted but no division is made as there are many intermediate types and the range found increased with the sample size.

The evidence all points to iron-working. There must have been some smelting as tap slag was noted, and iron smithing too as there were a few pieces of porous smithing slag including a hearth bottom - a solidified pool of slag that collected in the bottom of the hearth. The majority of the iron slag however was fairly dense and broken into pieces far smaller than their original size. This must have been formed at a higher temperature than ordinary smithing slag and so is probably produced in a smelting furnace, but not one that was tapped.

In addition there were smaller quantities of hearth and furnace lining - baked clay that has become vitrified on one surface from contact with the fire. The changes go deeper into the clay when the fire is hotter so the varying thicknesses may represent features containing fires at various temperatures or just different parts of the same structure. A few of the slag pieces had adhering red-baked clay, the remains of the walls of the feature which had contained it.

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