

The slags from Baldock, Herts.

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The slag from the 1972 excavations (site codes JA-JG) was a very homogeneous group. It was almost all vesicular iron-working slag, most of it in fairly small, thin pieces. There were some larger hearth bottoms, the buns of slag that collect in the bottom of smithing hearths, but these were all under 10 cm in diameter and either plano-convex or concavo-convex in cross-section with a maximum thickness of about 2 cm. Some of the slag contained imprints or actual pieces of wood or charcoal, indicating that this was the fuel used. Other pieces contained lumps of flint which had apparently fallen into the hearth accidentally. A few fragments had traces of burnt sandy clay on their undersides which had been picked up from the hearth structure. The few pieces that were not iron slag were either burnt and fluxed clayey hearth lining or fuel ash slags, sand or clay that has reacted with the ash in the fire at high temperatures giving a vesicular, light-weight slag.

Contexts JA	5	
JB	8	
JC	3	Approx. weights of slag(kg)
JD	9	
JE	1	
JF	1	
JG	0.1	

The slag from the 1968-71 excavations was similar to that described above, being mainly iron-working slag. It was however more variable in size and texture, suggesting origins in less uniform processes. Small quantities of hearth lining and fuel ash slag were also noted.

Contexts TJ	2	
TK	0.3	
TL	0.6	
TU	3	Approx. weight of slag (kg)
TV	1	
TY	1	
TZ	2.5	
T(other letters)	2	

The slags described above were probably all produced as by-products of iron smithing operations. This sort of metal-working is to be expected in any settlement of reasonable size.