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Ancient Monuments Laboratory
Report 58/87

A PETROLOGICAL NOTE ON A FIFTEENTH
CENTURY QUERNSTONE FROM COGGESHALL,
ESSEX.

D F Williams PhD FSA

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Summary

Small topstone (19cm x 3cm) of a quern in a coarse grey vesicular lava found at Coggeshall in a 15th c. A.D. context, and one of some twenty-odd similar small querns found in Essex and the surrounding region (information H. Major). Thin sectioning showed that the stone is a lava from the Mayen-Niedermendig region of Germany, an area well known in Roman and Medieval times for its supply of quernstones and millstones.

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A PETROLOGICAL NOTE ON A FIFTEENTH CENTURY QUERNSTONE FROM

COGGESHALL, ESSEX

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The top stone of a small quernstone 19cm diameter by 3cm in height. One of some twenty-odd similar pieces from various sites in Essex (information from H. Majors). The stone is a fairly coarse grey vesicular lava. A small slither was thin sectioned and studied under the petrological microscope. This showed frequent grains of green and colourless clinopyroxene, predominantly augite, set in a groundmass of small lath-shaped crystals of andesine/labradorite feldspar, opacite, leucite and some xenomorphic nepheline. The composition of the rock is particularly distinctive and it can be classed as a nepheline-tephrite, a type of rock found in the Mayen - Niedermendig area of the Eifel Hills of Germany, a region well-known in Roman and Mediaeval times for its supply of quernstones and millstones (Kars, 1980; Peacock, 1980). This is undoubtedly also the source of the Coggeshall quernstone.

References

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- Peacock, D.P.S. (1980) 'The Roman millstone trade: a petrological sketch', World Archaeology, 12(1980), 43-53.