

Ancient Monuments Laboratory
Report 126/89

EXAMINATION OF THE SLAGS FROM
FURZTON, BUCKS.

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Summary

Excavation of a late Iron Age enclosure produced under 3 kg of smithing slag and cinder. The small quantities suggest that metalworking was not carried out in the excavated area.

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Examination of the Slags from Furzton, Bucks

By Dr Gerry McDonnell

Excavation of a Late Iron Age enclosure at Furzton produced a small quantity of slag and/or residues. The overall quantity of finds was small, and it is believed that the site was occupied for a short period of time. The "quality" of the finds is low, indicating a poor, subsistence economy.

A listing by context number of the slags is given in Table 1. There were only 4 pieces of blacksmithing slag (Context 315, 0.590kg). This is not sufficient to show that iron smithing was carried out on the excavated areas of the site, although some level of smithing activity is common, and is to be expected, on most rural Iron Age settlement sites. The slag may have been intrusive to the site. A single piece of a ferruginous, "earthy" stone was identified from Context 164. This was probably a "bog ore" type deposit, ie precipitation of iron rich salts from solution. It is not evidence for iron smelting. The majority of the material (1.630kg) was classified as cinder, an iron rich fuel ash slag. This can be generated by metalworking activity, but can also be formed during any high temperature activity, including bonfires or destructive fires. A similar type of material, was recovered in large quantities from the Iron Age site of Beckford, Worcestershire (McDonnell 1986). No satisfactory explanation has been proposed for the generation of this material, but the destruction of a timber/thatched building, and the resulting high temperature soil/ash reactions might have formed this residue.

The slags and residues recovered from Furzton are not interpreted as evidence for ironworking, or any other metalworking, having been carried out on the site.

Table 1 Furzton, Bucks, Slag Listing (Weight in Grammes)

Context - Context Number
 Smith - weight of smithing slag
 Cinder - " " cinder
 Other - " " "other material"
 Type - Description of "other material"

Context	smith	cinder	other	type
105		2		
109		175		
129		35		
136		5		
137		130		
141		25		
149		955		
159		2		
164			485	ferruginous stone
206		10		
210		20		
226		2		
230		50		
235		2		
240		2		
251		125		
262		70		
263		20		
315	590			
Total	590	1630	485	

Reference

McDonnell JG (1986) Report on the Slag Recovered from Excavations at Beckford, Worcestershire. A.M. Lab Report 64/86