

Ancient Monuments Laboratory
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QUERNSTONES AND HONESTONES
FROM THE ROMAN TOWN AT
SANDY, BEDFORDSHIRE

D F Williams

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Summary

Fifty-six fragments of quernstone and twelve honestones were examined. This showed that many different types of stone were employed coming from a wide variety of sources, the majority of which must be located at some distance from the find-site.

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QUERNSTONES AND HONESTONES FROM THE ROMAN TOWN AT SANDY,
BEDFORDSHIRE.

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[HBMC Ceramic Petrology Project]

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INTRODUCTION

A detailed examination was undertaken of fifty-six fragments of quernstone and twelve honestones recovered from the recent excavations at Sandy. This showed that many different types of stone were employed coming from a wide variety of sources, the majority of which must be situated at some distance from the find site.

ROTARY QUERNSTONES

Mayen Lava

Quernstones [11] - [13] are in a grey, fairly coarse vesicular lava in which it is occasionally possible to see dark phenocrysts of pyroxene. This distinctive textured rock can visually be identified as a lava from

the Mayen and Niedermendig area of the Eifel Hills of Germany, a region well-known in the Roman period for producing and exporting quernstones and millstones [Peacock, 1980].

[1]. *SC 87 (71)*

Medium-sized fragment [702gms].

[2]. *SC 87 (78)*

Medium-sized shaped segment from a top stone, with characteristic raised edge on upper surface. The working surface is very worn, though the radial tooling lines can still be seen [819gms].

[3]. *SC 87 (78)*

Medium-sized fragment [660gms].

[4]. *SC 89 384 (1)*

Two small irregular fragments [89gms].

[5]. *SC 89 1778 (853)*

Two small irregular fragments [86gms].

[6]. *SC 89 1761 (1072)*

Small irregular fragment [294gms].

[7]. *SC 89 454 (202)*

Five small irregular fragments, one of which shows signs of radial tooling marks [432gms].

[8]. *SC 89 1717 (1047)*

Large segment from a lower stone in which the central pivot hole rises up in the centre, 34-60mm thick [2815gms].

[9]. *SC 1777 (848)*

Two small irregular fragments [45gms].

[10]. SC 90 2785 (2008)

Three small irregular fragments [29gms].

[11]. SC 90 2152 (2000)

Twenty-four small irregular fragments [492gms].

[12]. SC 90 2216 (2015)

Three small fragments, one piece 48mm thick with one possible flat surface [121gms].

[13]. SC 90 2651 (2165)

Small shaped fragment from outer edge showing radial tooling marks on the working surface, 40mm thick [210gms].

Hertfordshire Puddingstone

All the stones in this section are from the distinctive flint conglomerate known as Hertfordshire Puddingstone.

[14]. SC 87 (108)

Large segment of upper stone 92mm thick at the centre with part of a central feed-shute. Upright rounded form with a flat grinding surface [1722gms].

[15]. SC 87 (138)

Large segment of upper stone showing traces of the central feed-shute, 110mm thick at the centre [1784gms].

[16]. SC 89 1781 (896)

Small fragment with one flat surface [439gms].

[17]. SC 89 1776 (1)

Large segment, possibly from an upper stone, similar form to no. [14] [1342gms].

[18]. SC 89 1709 (1039)

Two separate pieces of quern. One fragment with a flat grinding surface [1516gms]. The other a segment of upper stone 100mm thick, of a similar form to no. [14], with a large central feed-shute [2275gms].

[19]. SC 89 1103 (1)

Large segment of upper stone, 115mm thick at centre, same form as no. [14] [7000gms].

[20]. SC 89 1089 (412)

Large segment of upper stone, 115mm thick at centre, same form as no. [14] [5250gms].

[21]. SC 90 2662 (2000)

Large segment of upper stone 88mm thick at the centre with part of a central feed-shute [2554gms]. Similar form to no. [14].

Millstone Grit

The material in this section is dark grey to greyish-buff in colour and uneven in grain-size, ranging from medium to fairly coarse grained. In the hand-specimen the

most prominent grains are angular quartz, together with some quartzite, felspar, lithics and occasional mica. The stones are almost certainly Millstone Grit, originating from either the Derbyshire/Yorkshire region or, less likely, the west of the country, from Devon, the Mendips or South Wales.

[22]. *SC 87 (138)*

Large segment of upper stone with central food-shoot and handle-socket cut into the side of the stone, 32-72mm thick [2448gms].

[23]. *SC 87 (135)*

Joining segment with no. [20].

[24]. *SC 89 692 (254)*

Small irregular fragment [135gms].

[25]. *SC 89 187 (001)*

Segment of upper stone with worn, gently sloping grinding surface, 37-43mm thick [985gms].

[26]. *SC 89 529 (214)*

Segment of upper stone with grinding surface 40-50mm thick [1479gms].

[27]. *SC 89 1403 (382)*

Almost complete upper stone with wide central feeder-shute and very worn grinding surface with deep radial grooves, d. 496mm, 42mm thick [13250gms].

[28]. *SC 89 617 (206)*

Small segment of upper stone with worn, gently sloping grinding surface, 50mm thick [432gms].

[29]. *SC 89 (248)*

Small segment possibly from an upper stone with radial grooves on the grinding surface, 36mm thick [444gms].

[30]. *SC 89 1754 (1060)*

Segment of ?upper stone in coarse millstone grit, 40-50mm thick [2122gms].

[31]. *SC 89 175 (001)*

One irregular fragment [407gms]. Two small segments [2078gms].

[32]. *SC 89 1718 (1047)*

Segment of ?lower stone [1283gms].

[33]. *SC 89 635 (1)*

Segment of upper stone with grinding surface marked with shallow circular grooves, 48-80mm thick [1580mm].

[34]. *SC 89 667 (202)*

Large segment of upper stone in coarse millstone grit 30-46mm thick [3268gms].

[35]. *SC 89 1429 (529)*

Large, thick [uniformly 90mm] segment of bottom stone of coarse millstone grit.

[36]. *SC 89 813 (370)*

Large segment of upper stone, d. 490mm, 53-58mm thick, with central feed-shute and radial grooves on the grinding surface [9250gms].

[37]. *SC 89 1774 (425)*

Two large joining segments of lower stone with raised edge on upper surface, 82-105mm thick [8000gms].

[38]. *SC 90 2725 (2773)*

Segment of upper stone, 50-55mm thick [3000].

[39]. *SC 90 2658 (2000)*

Segment of ?lower stone, 40-72mm thick, with central pivot hole [6400gms].

[40]. *SC 90 2243 (2001)*

Large segment of upper stone, d. 540mm, 35-50mm thick, with a central feed-shute and radial grooves on grinding surface [13500gms].

[41]. *SC 90 2667 (2368)*

Three irregular fragments [2101gms].

[42]. *SC 90 2786 (2656)*

Fragment with grinding surface marked with shallow grooves [220gms].

[43]. *SC 90 2451 (2169)*

Large segment of upper stone with central food-shute in coarse millstone grit, 20-58mm thick [2150gms].

[44]. *SC 90 2198 (2008)*

Segment of the upper stone in coarse millstone grit, 24-44mm thick [1401gms].

[45]. *SC 90 2668 (3012)*

Segment of an upper stone in coarse millstone grit, upright rounded shape, 90mm thick towards the centre [1882gms].

[46]. SC 90 2659 (2000)

Fragment of ?upper stone [1487gms].

[47]. SC 90 31 (29)

Large segment of upper stone, 33-40mm thick, in which the food-shute rises up in the centre [3700gms].

[48]. SC ? 1120 (404)

Large segment of upper stone, d. 520mm, 45-60mm thick, with vertical handle-socket hole [10800gms].

Quartz Conglomerate

[49]. SC 90 2650 (2528)

Large segment of upper stone, 60-92mm thick, with central feeder-shute [6100gms]. A quartz conglomerate, probably from the Forest of Dean, Gloucestershire.

Pennant Sandstone

[50]. SC 89 1775 (977)

Three fragments of quernstone, each with one smooth surface, in a dark grey medium-grained sandstone containing quartz and micaceous grits [6450gms]. Very probably Pennant Sandstone from the Bristol

and South Wales region.

Sandstone

Medium grained and well cemented ?Tertiary sandstone.

[51]. *SC 89 280 (1)*

Segment of ?upper stone with deep radial grooves in the grinding surface, 48mm thick [859gms].

[52]. *SC 89 606 (1)*

Segment from an ?upper stone with deep slanting grooves on the edge, 50mm thick [1190gms].

Coarse Ferruginous Sandstone

[53]. *SC 89 1721 (1048)*

Roughly half of an upper stone of a coarse ferruginous sandstone, d. 410mm, 50-65mm thick, with wide central feeder-shute [10750gms]. Possibly from the Tertiary.

Greensand

[54]. *SC 90 2663 (2000)*

Fragment of Greensand saddle quern, 47-82mm thick
[3250gms].

[55]. *SC 90 2730 (2840)*

Almost complete Greensand saddle quern, squarish in
shape and 78mm thick [7600gms].

Micaceous Sandstone

[56]. *SC 87 (78)*

Part of a saddle quern in a light grey micaceous
sandstone, 196mm long [2000gms]. Possibly from the
Coal Measures.

HONESTONES

[1]. *SC 90 2179 (2015).*

Fragment of a light grey calcareous sandstone
honestone with scattered grains of glauconite,
rectangular to oval in section and broken at one
end. L: 78mm; W: 23mm; Th: 15mm. This is a similar
stone to that noted by Peacock at Fishbourne [1971],

and ascribed to the Kentish Greensand. Recent analysis of Roman honestones of this type of stone found in London, have pointed to the Kentish Rag as a likely source [Rhodes, 1986].

[2]. *SC 90 2270 (2090)*

Fragment of a light grey calcareous sandstone honestone similar to no. [1], oval in section with both ends broken. L: 58mm; W: 21mm; Th: 18mm.

[3]. *SC 90 2151 (2000)*

A large honestone of reddish-brown ironshot sandstone, probably from the Tertiary, tapering to a ?broken end. L: 130mm; greatest W: 70mm; Th: 44mm.

[4]. *SC 90 2664 (2898)*

Large, smooth, broken slab of dark grey medium-grained sandstone containing quartz and micaceous grits. Very probably Pennant Sandstone from the Bristol and South Wales region. L: 97mm; W: 91mm; Th: 45mm.

[5]. *SC 90 2574 (2678)*

Heavy, broken, irregular-shaped dark grey piece of Pennant Sandstone, which may have been used as a honestone.

[6]. *SC 90 2180 (2015)*

Heavy broken slab of dark grey Pennant Sandstone, smooth on one side. L: 87mm; W: 104mm; Th: 54mm.

[7]. *SC 90 2422 (2224)*

Small, very smooth light grey quartzite honestone, squarish in section. L: 55mm; W: 10mm; Th: 10mm.

[8]. *SC 90 2105 (2008)*

A dark grey quartzite pebble showing wear lines on the edges, suggesting that it may have been used as a honestone.

[9]. *SC 90 3099 J458*

Broken reddish pebble of quartzite, which may have been used as a honestone. L: 117mm; W: 63mm; Th: 17mm.

[10]. *SC 90 2169 (2002)*

A broken grey quartzite pebble, possibly used as a honestone, roughly rectangular in section.

[11]. *SC 90 2248 (2090)*

A small broken reddish-grey quartzite pebble, possibly used as a honestone.

[12]. *SC 90 2784 (2859)*

Two small fragments of a reddish-grey quartzite pebble, possibly used as a honestone.

MISCELLANEOUS

[11. SC 90 2636 (2554)]

Small rounded pebble of quartzite, possibly used as a gaming counter.

[21. SC 90 (2341)]

Natural silicified concretion.

[31. SC 90 (2446)]

Small piece of tephrite lava, possibly from Italy.
It may have been used as a pumice-stone.

[41. SC 90 2503 (2313)]

A heavy, light grey, naturally shaped beach pebble;
and therefore imported to the site.

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