

Ancient Monuments Laboratory
Report 15/87

QUERNSTONES AND HONESTONES FROM THE
1986 EXCAVATIONS AT THE 8TH/9TH C.
SAXON SITE AT MAIDEN LANE,
COVENT GARDEN, LONDON.

D F Williams PhD FSA

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Summary

Identification of a number of quern fragments of a nepheline-tephrite rock from the Mayen-Niedermendig area of the Eifel Hills of Germany, a region well-known in both Roman and Saxon times for supplying quernstones and millstones. Also present was a ?quernstone fragment of grey glauconitic limestone, probably from the Hythe Beds of Kent. Two honestones were noted: one from a piece of Kentish Ragstone belonging to Ellis' Type IVB classification, and the other a small rounded fragment of fine-grained sandstone.

Similar fragments of Mayen lava and two types of limestone mentioned above are also present at the nearby Saxon site of Jubilee Hall, Covent Garden.

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QUERNS TONES AND HONESTONES FROM THE 1986 EXCAVATIONS AT THE 8/9TH CENTURY

SAXON SITE AT MAIDEN LANE, COVENT GARDEN, LONDON

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Lava querns

178-135

108-167

183-43

168-36

178-37

201-38

230-50

240-138

245-102

201-47

244-94

351-112

302-140

328-99

279-119

139-36

244-82

Smallish quern fragments of a dark grey, fairly coarse vesicular lava, containing conspicuous dark phenocrysts of pyroxene. A small sample was thin sectioned and studied under the petrological microscope. This revealed that the most prominent minerals are frequent grains of green and colourless clinopyroxene, mainly 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 classified as a nepheline-tephrite. This

type of rock is found in the lavas of the Mayen-Niedermendig area of the Eifel Hills of Germany, a region well-known in both Roman and Saxon times for supplying quernstones and millstones (Parkhouse, 1976; Kars, 1980; Peacock, 1980). The Maiden Lane lava quernstones undoubtedly originate from this part of Germany.

Grey Limestone

226-93

A ?quernstone fragment of grey limestone. Thin sectioning shows a granular mosaic of calcite grains with organic fragments. Glauconite and quartz occur as scattered grains. This is a glauconitic limestone, probably from the Hythe Beds of Kent (Smart et al, 1966).

Sandy Limestone

215-46

Small fragment of honestone of light grey sandy limestone. Thin sectioning shows a matrix of platy calcite crystals with frequent well-sorted angular quartz grains, together with a scatter of fossil fragments and some glauconite. This is probably a piece of Kentish Ragstone and would seem to belong to Ellis' Type IVB in his classification of Anglo-Saxon honestones (1969).

It may be of interest to note that all of the above three rock types are also present at the nearby site of Jubilee Hall, Covent Garden (see previous report).

Sandstone

282-85

Small rounded fragment of ?honestone of fine-grained sandstone.

Others

231-56

Piece of antler.

241-71

Piece of modern ? tar.

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