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Archaeometallurgical Residue from
the A5: Sollus A

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Abstract

This report details a single fragment of archaeometallurgical residue (slag) from Sollus A.

The piece was a worn fragment of a smithing hearth cake. Its modest size probably indicates that it was produced during blacksmithing (the end use of iron), rather than in any process associated with iron production. The piece is not strictly datable, but is likely to be pre-modern.

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Methods

The material was examined visually (with a low-powered microscope when required). As an evaluation, the material was not subjected to any high-magnification optical inspection, not to any form of instrumental analysis. The identifications of materials in this report are therefore necessarily limited and must be regarded as provisional.

This project was commissioned by Carmelita Troy, of Rubicon Heritage Services.

Results

The submitted material comprised a single fragment of slag (TR.20.1, Find #201.002.002, Context 002) weighing 270g. The fragment is a broken and abraded part of a concavo-convex smithing hearth cake (SHC), formed of porous slag (with the porosity largely being moulds of charcoal fuel fragments). The slag is internally prilly. The upper surface of the cake appears less porous than the lower parts.

Interpretation

The fragment is from a slag cake produced during charcoal fuelled smithing. The relatively low weight (even considering that the surviving fragment is probably less than 50% of the size of the original cake) suggests that this cake was likely to have been formed during blacksmithing (the end use of iron), rather than at any stage in the process of the production of iron.

The piece is not strictly datable (apart from being Iron Age or younger), but is probably unlikely to be of modern or later post-medieval age (when SHCs tended to become smaller and more compact and when coal increasingly became the preferred fuel).

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