

GeoArch

Report 2009/25

Evaluation of Archaeometallurgical
Residues from the
M8/N8 Cullahill-Cashel: AR2 (E2816)

GeoArch Report 2009/25: Evaluation of Archaeometallurgical Residues from the M8/N8 Cullahill - Cashel: AR2 (E2816)

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Abstract

The submitted material comprised two pieces of iron slag, both from c329. One of these was indeterminate, but the other, despite having accreted sediment, was identifiable as a small smithing hearth cake (SHC). The low weight and small size of the SHC indicate an origin in blacksmithing (end-use iron-working). The material is not indicative of age, although it was noted that the accreted sediment contained fragments of coal. Coal may occur naturally in superficial sediments of this area, but if this material was of anthropogenic origin, then it would suggest a later post-medieval date.

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Methods

All investigated materials were examined visually, using a low-powered binocular microscope where necessary. All significant macroscopic materials were summarily described and recorded to a database (Table 1). As an evaluation, the materials were not subjected to any high-magnification optical inspection, nor to any other form of instrumental analysis. The identifications of materials in this report are therefore necessarily limited and must be regarded as provisional.

Results

The submitted materials included two slag fragments, one indeterminate, the other a small smithing hearth cake (SHC), of a size compatible with an origin in blacksmithing. Such material is not indicative of age (Iron Age – modern), particularly since the fuel employed in this cake was not identified. However, it was noted that the sediment accretion on the SHC contained some fine-grained coal particles – if these are of anthropogenic origin (coal may occur naturally in the superficial sediments of this area) then it would suggest a later post-medieval age.

Evaluation of potential

There is no inherent benefit of further analysis or retention of this material, unless the occurrence of such material in this context was of unexpected or unusual nature.

site	sample	context	weight	no	notes
e2816	54	329	238	1	65x90x40mm heavily concreted slag, large lobes on upper surface, smaller prilly lobes on base, accretion includes pieces of probable coal. A small SHC
e2816	52	329	52	1	irregular indeterminate slag nub

Table 1: summary catalogue

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