

4 Lithic Artefacts *by Alan Saville*

4.1 Struck lithic artefacts

A small collection of 17 artefacts was recovered from a variety of contexts. Few, if any, of the artefacts are likely to be contemporary with these contexts, in which they are probably residual. [Table 2](#) gives the typology and raw material of the struck artefacts and [Table 3](#) summarizes their contexts.

None of the artefact types is clearly diagnostic of period, but a very wide chronological range is almost certainly represented. There are two unretouched bladelets, one of grey-green chert (SF 6, topsoil), the other of flint (SF 83, Area C, context 1013), which could both be of Mesolithic date, while the edge-trimmed flake (SF 44, Area B, context 543) is an incomplete blade perhaps more likely to be Neolithic. One of the miscellaneous retouched pieces (SF 45, Area B, context 589) is a fresh flint

flake with denticulate scraper-like retouch at the distal end and could be of Middle Bronze Age date. Another of the (?flint) unretouched flakes (SF 10, context 046) could possibly be Mesolithic, as could the core rejuvenation flake (SF 86, Area C, context 1013) from the platform edge of a flint bladelet core. While none of these attributions is certain, it can at least be concluded that this is not a homogeneous assemblage.

The raw material, both numerically and by weight, is predominantly flint of mixed colour and type, with grey-green chert the only other significant material exploited. Two pieces are so heavily burnt that it is difficult to say if they are of flint or chert, and a further two unretouched flint flakes and one flint miscellaneous retouched piece have been burnt.

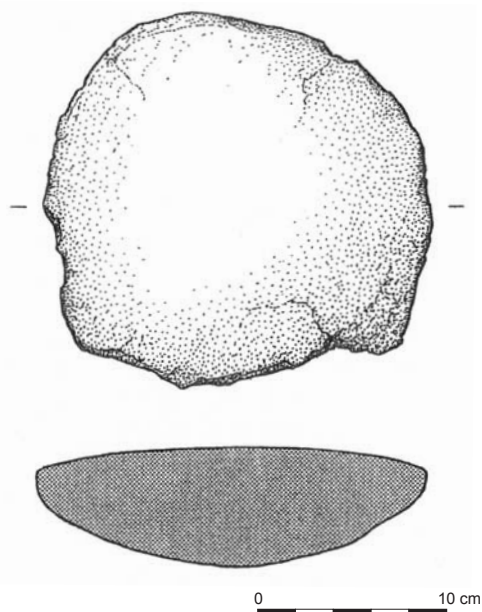
That some actual knapping was taking place in the vicinity is attested by the fragmentary core

Table 2 Typology and raw material of the struck lithic artefacts

	Grey-green chert	Purple chert	Flint	Flint or chert, burnt	Quartz	Total nos	Weight in grams
Unretouched flakes	4	1	4	1	1	11	20.3
Core fragment	–	–	–	1	–	1	1.6
Edge-trimmed flake	–	–	1	–	–	1	1.9
Miscellaneous retouched pieces	1	–	3	–	–	4	20.1
Total numbers	5	1	8	2	1	17	
Weight in grams	11.7	1.7	26.5	3.1	0.9		43.9

Table 3 Struck lithic artefacts by context

Context	Unret. flakes	Core fragment	Edge-trim flake	Misc. retouched	Total
Topsoil	3	–	–	–	3
25	1	–	–	–	1
37	1	–	–	–	1
46	1	–	–	–	1
50	1	–	–	–	1
103	–	–	–	1	1
104	–	1	–	–	1
520	1	–	–	–	1
543	–	–	1	–	1
560	1	–	–	–	1
589	–	–	–	1	1
1001	–	–	–	1	1
1007	–	–	–	1	1
1013	2	–	–	–	2
Total	11	1	1	4	17



Illus 17 Quernstone (SF 79)

(SF 19, context 104) and the presence of two core platform rejuvenation flakes, one of flint (SF 86, Area C, context 1013), the other of grey-green chert (SF 25, topsoil), among the unretouched flakes. However, the very low numbers of struck artefacts as a whole indicate no intensity to this knapping, and no significant conclusions can be reached on the basis of their presence.

4.2 Coarse stone artefacts

Four modified coarse stone items were recovered. These are described separately and each one is illustrated.

Quernstone (SF 79, Area B, context 760, *illus 17*). This small quernstone of diorite, green-grey-buff in colour, is broken at one end and has several cracks, perhaps the result of heat damage. It has an oval planform and a basically semi-circular cross-section, though the upper surface is slightly convex. The quernstone has been shaped by pecking and the upper surface is worn smooth by use. Length 200mm; maximum width 205mm; thickness 50–80mm. Weight 3.9kg.

As Ballin Smith has discussed (*Ballin Smith 1994*, 204), small plano-convex quernstones of this type are somewhat problematic in terms of function. They are too large to be a hand-held upper stone or rubber, but as a lower stone it is difficult to envisage the purpose of the abrasive use which would produce a convex surface.

Stone block with two opposed hollows (SF 38, Area B, context 506, *illus 18*). An irregular block of sandstone (grey-buff-brown colour) with diametrically opposed hollows or cups pecked into the upper

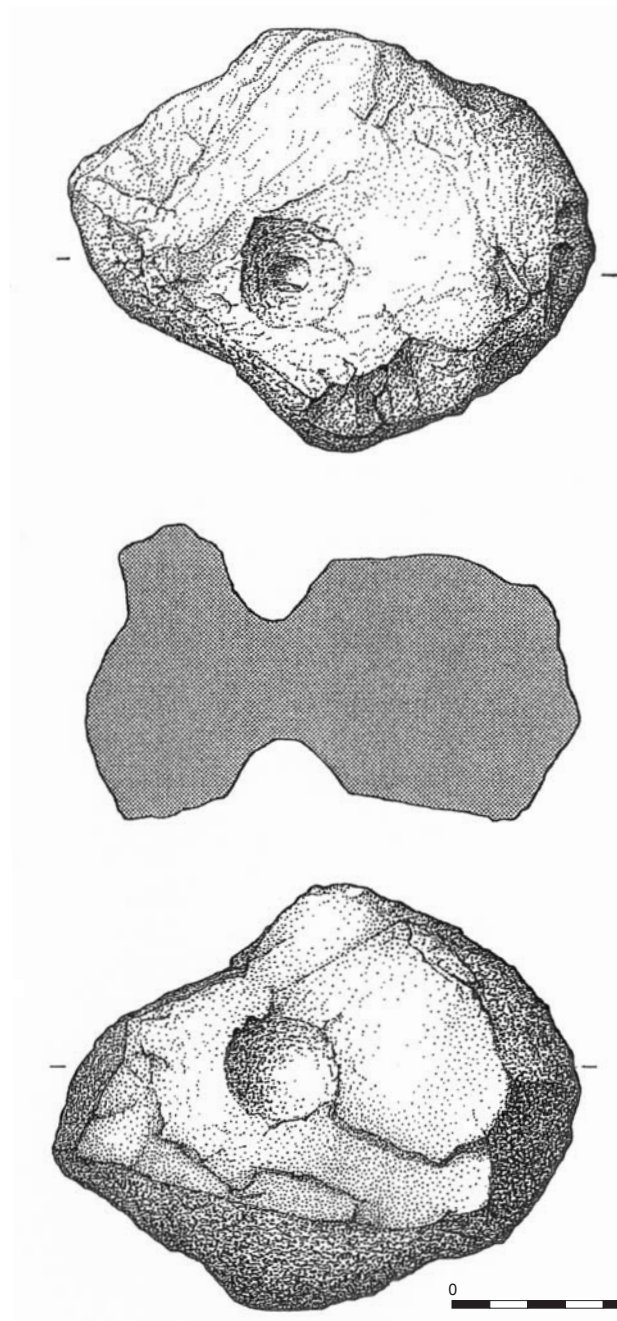
and lower flattish surfaces. The hollows are conical in profile, one 60mm diameter and 35mm deep, the other 59mm in diameter and 30mm deep. The block is approximately 280mm by 215mm in planform and 145mm deep/thick. The weight is approximately 9kg. The interiors of the hollows are rough and show no signs of use. There is some shaping of the block by pecking, including the dished surface with the lower hollow in the illustration, while other facets appear unpecked and the result of breakage.

Given the character of this piece, and its association with a Beaker vessel in a pit, an interpretation as a double cup-marked stone is a distinct possibility. In this case a reasonably close parallel (though with shallower cups) would be provided by the double cup-marked sandstone block from the mound of a round barrow at Kilburn in North Yorkshire (*Kinnes & Longworth 1985*, 90). Alternatively, it is possible that the two hollows relate to an intended but unfinished perforation. The reason for the perforation being abandoned could be that the block broke into an unsuitable form. The most obvious purpose for shaping and perforating a stone like this would, in that case, be to produce an upper quernstone, but this would assume the block was originally much larger and capable of being appropriately shaped, which is now impossible to determine, and would also imply a chronological mixture of Beaker and later artefacts within this feature, which is unlikely on stratigraphic grounds.

Stone block with a shallow hollow (SF 99, Area F, context 1105, *illus 19*). A roughly cylindrical block of an igneous porphyritic rock (buff-brown with red amphibole and green olivine phenocrysts) has been pecked to shape. The upper flat surface (illustrated) is smooth and has been used for some abrasive purpose, presumably grinding. It is flat apart from a small central dimple, 20mm in diameter and of maximum depth 2mm. The lower surface is less flat and has an approximately central shallow hollow of maximum diameter 79mm and depth 17mm. The surface within the hollow is smooth but with no trace of rotary motion. The block is roughly 320–350mm in diameter and 170mm deep/thick. The weight is approximately 38kg.

The lower hollow is obviously deliberate, the upper dimple could conceivably be the result of damage. Because the lower hollow is worn smooth it cannot be regarded as the beginning of an attempted perforation and its purpose, as does that of this object as a whole, remains obscure.

Stone block with large hollow (SF 100, Area F, context 1103, *illus 20*). A large block of sandstone, buff-brown in colour, is irregular in planform but has a flattish upper surface. This surface has a large U- to V-shaped hollow 200–210mm in diameter and 145mm deep. The hollow has been formed by coarse pecking, the marks from which are clearly visible for most of its depth. The bottom 20mm or so of the hollow are worn completely smooth, but without any indication of rotary motion. Adjacent to the large hollow (both at 30mm from its edge) are two small



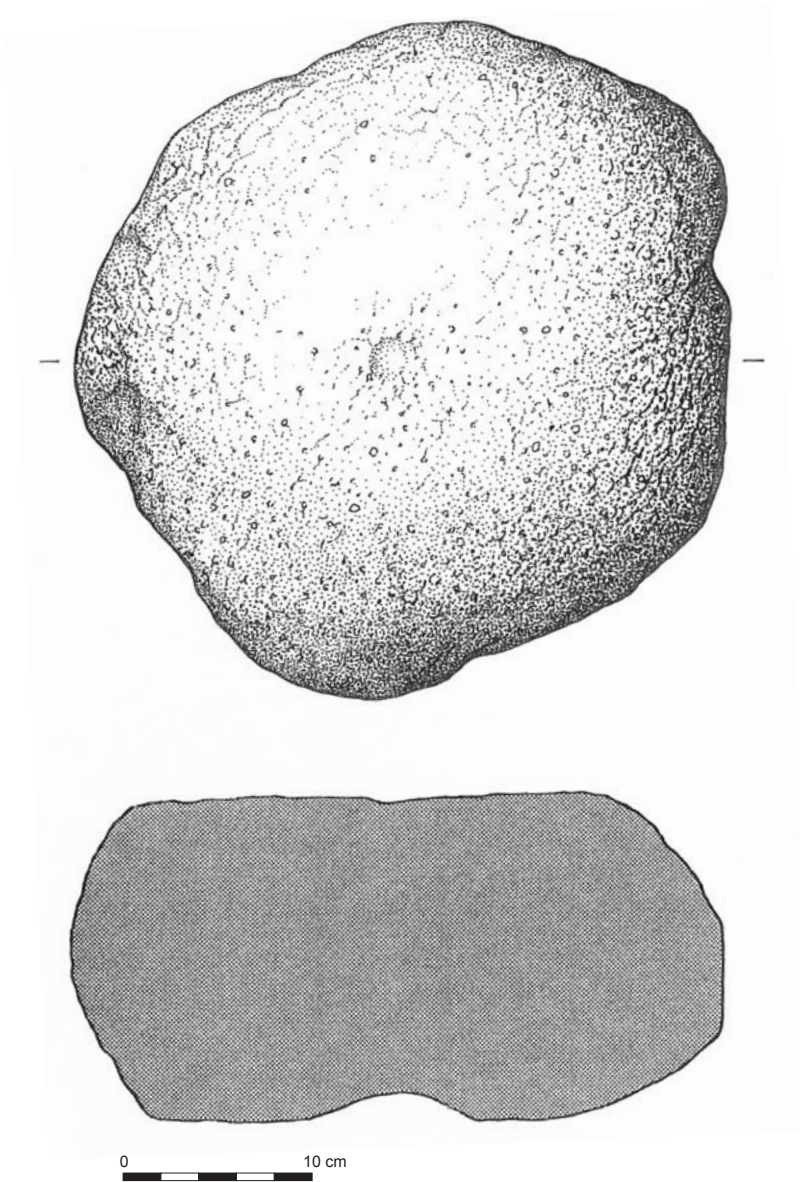
Illus 18 Stone block with two opposed hollows (SF 38)

drilled hollows, one 34mm in diameter and 27mm deep, the other 31mm diameter and 27mm deep. The interiors of these holes are worn smooth. The distance between the two small hollows is 140mm centre to centre. The opposite surface or base is partly convex but otherwise irregular, and the block does not sit upright with the hollowed surface uppermost. The flattish surface with the hollows is approximately 470mm by 410mm, and the block is 260mm deep/thick. The weight is approximately 57kg.

Because there is no indication of rotary wear in the main hollow this cannot be a socket or pivot stone, and it seems more likely to be a kind of mortar.

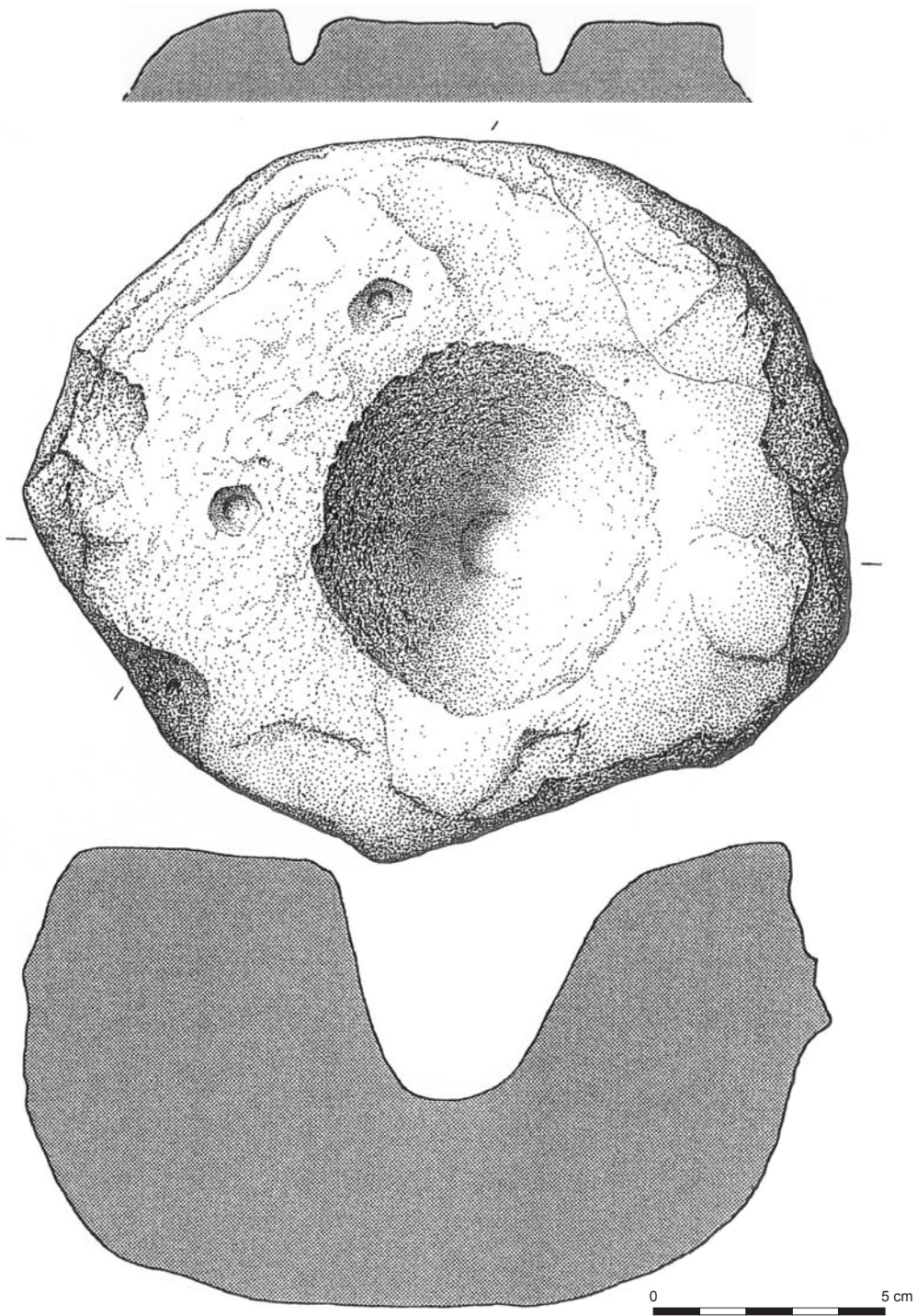
However, the base of the large hollow is too narrow for it to have served as a grain mortar, for which a shallower or more cylindrical hollow is required. The two smaller holes suggest the possibility of being the seating for a cover or flap of some kind for the main hollow.

None of the four coarse stone objects is in itself conclusively diagnostic as to period, though in general terms the small, plain quernstone is unlikely to post-date the Iron Age and the double cup-marked stone would be appropriate to a Late Neolithic/Bronze Age context. There are no positive indications of metal tools having been used to work these stones and a prehistoric attribution is certainly most likely,



Illus 19 Stone block with hollow (SF 99)

though later manufacture cannot be entirely ruled out for those examples where the contextual association is ambiguous. The apparent absence from the site of the hammerstones used to work these stones, or the grinders used on the two with abraded surfaces, may hint that the contexts in which they were found bear no relation to their original manufacture and/or use.



Illus 20 Possible mortar (SF 100)