

EVALUATION OF AN ASSEMBLAGE OF
ARCHAEOLOGICAL RESIDUES FROM
AREA 2, WOODSTOWN, CO. WATERFORD
(E3434/A037)

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Evaluation of an assemblage of archaeometallurgical residues from Area 2, Woodstown, Co. Waterford (E3434/A037)

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Abstract

Approximately 200 artefacts from the top-soil and surface of fields 20 and 21 were examined macroscopically. The majority of the assemblage is likely to be modern. This combined with its lack of contextual information means it has very little archaeological value.

Methodology

The artefacts were inspected macroscopically for diagnostic morphologies, textures, colours and weights. Individual magnetism was also tested where necessary.

Results

Field 20

The material from Field 20 included a significant proportion (c.50%) of corroded iron fragments, none of which were of a sufficient size to suggest a function. The rest of the material was made up largely of dark, non-magnetic slag: light in weight and probably derived from the burning of coal. There was also a small amount of fuel-ash slag, very light in both colour and weight indicating a high silica content.

Field 21

Field 21 produced similar material but in different proportions. There was a larger proportion of dark, non-magnetic clinker material as well as quite a few stones. A number of corroded iron pieces were identified, including the hexagonal head of a screw, likely to be modern. Small amounts of fuel-ash slag, vitrified clay and coal were also identified.

Conclusion

The residues presented for examination are of very little archaeological value with much of the assemblage likely to be modern. The clinker material could derive from any high temperature process involving the use of coal including forges and domestic or industrial boilers. Fuel-ash slag can be created during any high-temperature process where silica (i.e. sand) is present and is not necessarily metallurgical.

No evidence for bloomery technology (pre- 17th century) was identified and none of the iron fragments were diagnostic of age apart from the probably modern screw-head. The lack of contextual evidence or diagnostic pieces mean the assemblage has very little archaeological value or potential. For this reason, storage of the assemblage is not necessary and the material should be discarded in an appropriate fashion.