Report on the metalworking remains at Oldtown, Co. Dublin (16E0342)

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Introduction

Excavations carried out in July and August of 2016 before the laying out of a sports field and pond at Oldtown, Co. Dublin revealed a large enclosure with internal features and an isolated kiln with pits to its south (Clancy 2016). One of these pits contained ironworking waste which was identified as likely originating from both smelting and smithing activities. The weathered nature of the material together with the lack of charcoal in the feature suggest that the metalworking itself took place elsewhere.

Description of the residues

All the metalworking residue were retrieved from a single isolated pit (C16) measuring 0.58m by 0.57m by 0.20m. Its fill (C15) had, next to the ironworking waste, occasional inclusions of decayed stone.

The metalworking residues consisted of three types of material.

A single partially preserved smithing hearth cake was retrieved (Fig. 1). It was rather dense and would have originally weighed *c.* 340g. Adhering clay on its base indicates that the cake formed at the bottom of the smithing hearth.

Thirty fragments of dense to rather dense slag (168g) could be identified as likely smelting slag (Fig. 2). Due to the small size of the preserved particles, the direction of flow could not be determined and hence no furnace type can be suggested. Both the smithing hearth cake and the smelting slag were weathered.

Finally, five fragments of lighter, vesicular slag (35g) were included.

Conclusions

The material from pit C15 contained residues from both iron smelting and iron smithing. The weathered nature of the material, together with the lack of charcoal recorded from the fill of the pit, strongly suggest that the waste found was deposited in the pit while the ironworking activities took place elsewhere.

Bibliography

Clancy P. 2016 *Archaeological Monitoring and Excavation. GAA Pitch and Attenuation. Oldtown, Swords, County Dublin*. Courtney Deery Heritage Consultancy, Draft Interim Excavation Report

Catalogue

Cut no.	Fill no.	Sample no.	Feature type	Description of the material	Weight (g)
16	15	10	Pit	Rather dense, weathered smithing hearth cake (c. 80% preserved) with adhering clay on its base. Upper surface shows signs of oxidization. The interior is compact with only a few air bubbles.	270
15	16	10	Pit	Eight pieces of dense to rather dense iron slag with clear flow structure. The material is weathered. Most like smelting slag.	124
15	16	10	Pit	Two fragments of rather light, irregular lumpy slag	9
15	16	11	Pit	Twenty-one fragments of dense to rather dense iron slag with clear flow structure. The material is weathered. Most like smelting slag.	64
15	16	11	Pit	Three pieces of rather light, irregular lumpy slag. These fragments have frequent entrapped air bubbles	26

Figures

Fig. 1. Partial smithing hearth cake

Fig. 2. Fragments of drippy likely smelting slag