

## Residual Stones at the 'Sheepwash' Excavation, Wray Wood, Boston Spa, SE 42154690

Stuart Ogilvy, York Museum, March 2007

### 1. Stone Anvil or 'Rough-out' for Quern Stone?



This large stone, initially thought by the excavators to be a 'rough-out' for a quern stone, has been looked at by the geological and archaeological departments and, interestingly, they have an alternative theory for its use. They completely concur that it has been worked. However, they think that the flat worked side may have been the base allowing the stone to sit firmly without moving. The "roughened" surface would then be the upper surface and they believe that it may well have been an **anvil stone**. They also agree with the possibility that it may have been a 'rough-out' for a quern stone, but favour the alternative theory.

### 2. Ventifact



The second sandstone specimen, which I personally was interested in, is indeed intriguing. A closer look at it shows it have a polished surface and not a complete quartz overgrowth cement as I initially thought. If it had been found in a geological rather than archaeological context I would be 100% certain what it is. I am, however, convinced on the basis of its surface polishing and shape that it is a ventifact.

These are stones that have been rolled and polished by wind-borne sand. This occurs in desert conditions and periglacial areas. In Yorkshire ventifacts have been found in several places and are indicative of periglacial conditions at several times throughout the Devensian glaciation. I have seen several in the past (but very sporadically, as they are not particularly common) and, although varying in size, are very similar to this one. Camilla is also convinced that my identification is correct.

The question of why it was there is another interesting area. It is tempting to speculate that it was picked up deliberately because of its nature, naturally polished, rather than crafted by man. The significance attached to this I suspect may well give you something to debate around the fire on cold winter evenings!