

1998 Figurines Report – Naomi Hamilton

Burials, Figurines, and Miscellaneous 1998

Naomi Hamilton

Burials and Grave Goods

This year only three Neolithic burials, and one late Roman burial, were excavated. Grave goods were found in three of these.

Burial 271 in space 112 contained the skeleton of a juvenile, number 2842. Beside the skull was a small stone mortar, 2841.X1, with traces of red ochre ground into its interior surface. Below the mortar were organic remains which have not yet been identified. Below the skull was half a mussel shell containing red ochre, 2842.X2. This is the first time we have found red ochre in a burial during the new excavations, and the mortar is the first of its type known from the site.

Burial 274 was also in space 112, adjacent to burial 271, and contained an adult skeleton. A mussel shell was found beneath the skull.

Burial 285 was in space 115. It contained the tightly crouched burial of a sub-adult with seriously diseased bones. This space was an external area when the burial was made, which makes it unique in the records so far. There is plenty of room for speculation about the reason, including the possibility that disease made the person a social outcast.

Burial 158 in Building 3 was an extended burial of a mature adult from the late Roman occupation of the site. It contained a lamp (2263.X2) and two ceramic bowls (2263.X3, 2263.X4). A number of iron coffin nails (2263.H1) were also recovered.

Three items were also recorded from Burial 153, excavated last year. 2235.X1 is a sub-circular/sub-triangular item of copper alloy, almost certainly an ear-ring since the base of the 'triangle' is substantially thicker than the top and it resembles Roman ear-rings seen elsewhere. 2235.D1 is a circular bone bead with bi-conical section, found inside 2235.X1. 2235.D2 is a small seed-like ovoid bead found inside 2235.D1. It may be made of faience, but specialist examination is required to confirm this.

Although few burials were excavated this year, burial in the external area gives us much to consider, and the grave goods have been interesting both in type and, for the Neolithic ones, in contextual information.

Figurines

A total of 93 figurines fragments was recovered this year. The vast majority were small fragments only, and a number were found in re-sorting heavy residue from previous years' excavation. They came from all excavation areas. None was a human figurine, although a few fragments appear to be schematic human representations. Many are parts of humanoid figures, and the rest are animal, mainly pieces of horn or limb. A few are particularly interesting. 3632.H3 is a fragment of a miniature schematic human made of clay. It has a triangular head like a humanoid figure, and stub arms, but a concave vertical back. Broken at waist level, this fragment is only 13mm high, and the complete figure must only have been 20mm high or less. Despite this, it is carefully made.

2268.H1 is a fragment of a large schematic figure, consisting only of part of the head, neck and top of a shoulder. It is 64mm high. The head resembles a couple of other large examples found during the survey and cleaning of the mound - flat on top, roughly rectangular with a forward curve for the face. No features are shown apart from the line of the chin. Very poorly preserved unbaked clay.

4011.H1 is a complete miniature humanoid clay figurine, with conical body and triangular head. Height 18mm.

3053.X1 is a large, extremely crudely made figure, almost certainly humanoid but with phallic aspects. One of a number of very roughly made figurine fragments found in scorched deposits outside Building 1, it was made of unbaked clay which may account for its unusual appearance with body leaning forward. One leg is missing. The forward-leaning shape has been seen in other humanoid figures (e.g. 3021.H1, 3061.H1), but this one is particularly roughly made. Height 65mm.

2229.D1 is a carefully modelled humanoid with head-scarf. The angles of the face are unusually accentuated, and eyes may be indicated by incisions. The body tall is very upright. Broken in several parts, it is nevertheless substantially complete. Height 35mm, baked clay.

2207.X6 is an unusually squat, dumpy humanoid figure, with a large round head which accounts for half the height. Large prominent nose, sturdy base. Height 30mm, made of baked clay. Rather reminiscent of 1073.X1, although that had a mid-body bulge probably representing arms or breasts.

2899.D1 is a head, probably belonging to a humanoid figure. It has a slightly unusual shape, with a round top/back on a slope, and prominent nose in front. The top/back is encircled by an incised groove, and incisions also run from front to back in parallel lines within the circle. This appears to represent either a hat or a hair-style. Mellaart found a large humanoid with similar incisions on the head which clearly represented a fabric hat. Height 20mm.

2229.D2 is a typical triangular humanoid head, but it has deeply incised eyes. This is the first humanoid to be found with definite eyes (another, 2229.D1, has possible eyes, see above). There are other similarities with 2229.D1 - a scar on the back of the head suggests a head-scarf, and the

lines delineating the nose are strongly shown, although not as accented as on 2229.D1. Both these figures came from the same deposit. Only the head and upper neck of 2229.D2 remains. Height 24mm. Well made, baked clay.

2250.X2 is an animal figurine. Almost complete, it shows a standing quadruped with a resemblance to a goat. Unfortunately the horns are broken. Well made, baked clay.

3037.H1 is a crudely modelled animal figurine. The head is missing. It depicts a standing quadruped which was stabbed twice, through each left leg. It was found outside Building 1, and had been burnt post-deposition, during the severe fire in Building 1. It was probably unbaked when deposited.

2270.X3 is the front half of a fairly large animal figurine. It shows a horned quadruped lying down. This pose is unusual, but has been seen a few times before. It looks bovine. Carefully made, baked clay.

3044.H2 is the front half of a large animal figurine. It also shows a horned quadruped lying down. Well modelled, unbaked clay. Badly damaged. Unusually large. Overall, the figurines found this season have followed the general lines discovered in previous years. There is the same range of general types but also the wide variability in terms of detail which I have come to expect. The discovery of many roughly made, generally unbaked figurines outside Building 1 is exciting, but further work is required on these items and others found with them before they can be understood properly.

Miscellaneous

2833.X2 is a copper alloy bead. Cylindrical in shape, it is probably a rolled sheet of copper but no analysis has yet been carried out. Badly corroded since discovery in 1997 between two walls in Mellaart area.

2833.X3 is a small fragment of a circular marble bracelet. White, well polished. Not circular in section, rather sub-rectangular with two angles on the inner surface. Found between two walls in Mellaart area in 1997.

2250.X3 appears to be a leg of a triangular miniature table made of clay. The leg is sub-rectangular in section, but at the top retains parts of the upper surface of the table. One outer face of the leg is incised at the top in a geometric pattern of zig-zags and dots filled with a white substance to make them show against the dark burnished surface. A couple of other miniature clay tables have been found previously, but not triangular ones.

3366.H1 is a very unusual clay item. It is a small fragment of what appears from its shape to be the rim of a pot, but the fabric is not normal for pottery and is very soft. It has been rejected as pottery! It has two holes pierced through near the 'rim', level with each other, and a number of dots have been incised on the outer surface around these two holes.

2961.X1 is a polished stone pendant from the West Mound. An elongated oval, with a thin even section, it is pierced at one end. Polished stone.

2902.H1 is a fragment of worked shell from the West Mound. It has two holes drilled through along one edge, and is typical of the shell pendants found in the burials of babies on the East Mound.