Roman grinding stones from Northern Britain with two opposed perforations

John Cruse

Abstract: Two different designs are considered. The first, a rotary hand quern with characteristic D-shaped hoppers, is described and its links to the Earlier Roman military supply system are explored. The second is a powered millstone, but without hoppers, mainly from later Roman contexts. Evidence that its opposed perforations were twin feed-pipes is reviewed and its distribution along Roman roads, near good agricultural land is examined. Whilst earlier hand querns with twin feed-pipes are known in the Rhineland, the design appears to evolve independently in northern Britain. Suggestions are made for naming the two hand quern variants. Comparable millstones are also reported in Germany. As more examples of both designs are recognised, their study could improve our understanding of the Earlier Roman military support system and of aspects of later Roman economic activity.

Keywords: Rotary hand querns, opposed d-shaped hoppers, twin feed-pipe, mechanically powered millstones with opposed holes, distribution grooves, links to auxiliary forts

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Introduction

David Peacock has observed that, compared to ceramic studies, the development of quern typologies is still in its infancy (2013a, 58). This paper provides an opportunity to examine a distinctive group of stones, to investigate their background and to review their typology. Figure 1 illustrates their main features. They range from smaller diameter upper stones, such as those from a) Bramall, Stockport (Heginbotham 1892, 135-6) and from b) Templeborough fort, S Yorks (May 1922, 124), which both have D-shaped hoppers feeding into opposed sets of perforations, but with different profiles. In contrast, the larger diameter stone from c) Wattle Sykes, W Yorks (Cruse and Heslop 2013, 173) lacks any hopper over its opposed holes. We will look in more detail at these 'variations on a theme', starting with the smaller querns.

Rotary querns - past studies

From the two examples illustrated, we can note that querns with two hoppers and a central reinforcing rib were first published over a century ago. They attracted little further attention until Eric Cowling (1969, 6) discussed three comparable West Yorkshire querns. He suggested that they were a Roman design, whose ‘two feed holes were better than one’ and whose central hole was ‘to take the spindle’.

When similar examples were found in 1964-78 at Doncaster, Buckland and Magilton (1986, 102) described them as an “uncommon” type, which was ‘widespread on Roman military sites in northern Britain’ and occurred in late 1st or 2nd century AD contexts. Buckley and Major (1998, 246) saw comparable stones from Castleford in 1974-85 as a ‘distinctive group’ of Millstone Grit querns. They were ‘a specifically northern form typified...
by a strengthening central rib, produced by local craftsmen, possibly into the 3rd century AD. Since then, further examples have been noted, but the type has not yet acquired a generally accepted name.

The main features of rotary querns

Over the last decade, the Yorkshire Archaeological Society Quern Survey has recorded an increasing number of upper stones with off-centre perforations. Initially the fragmentary nature of the evidence made confident reconstruction difficult. However, with over 50 examples now known, including intact examples, we are now starting to understand their main features. These can be summarised as follows (Fig. 2):

- The presence of opposed D-shaped hoppers to hold the grain and funnel it into the feed-pipes.
- A central ‘bar’ occurs with two different profiles. The first is curved such as in the cases of Bramall (Fig. 1a and 3a) and Walton-le-Dale (Fig. 2b) while the second is flat-topped such as at Templeborough (Fig. 1b), Newstead (Fig. 2a) and Doncaster (Fig. 3b).
- The diameter is normally in the range 35-50 cm. The flat bar types are typically 40-44 cm, whilst the curved bar variants are 36-42 cm, with a smaller group around 50 cm.
- The ‘eye’ that restrains the spindle is usually circular and set centrally into the ‘bar’. It is typically 25-30 mm in diameter. Its size does not increase with the increase of quern diameter.
- The feed-pipes are easily recognised in the hopper base. The are symmetrical with the outer edge of the ‘D’ shaped hole being typically about 40-50% of the overall diameter.
- The outer rims have a profile that is flat or curved and normally is parallel to the ‘bar’ profile.
- The rim height is initially estimated at 10-12 cm. Due to wear it can be reduced to about 5 cm.

Fig. 1: Roman querns and millstones with double opposed perforations: a) Bramall, Stockport, Lancashire: Heginbotham, 1892, diameter 45 cm; b) Templeborough, South Yorkshire, May, 1922, diameter 42.5 cm; c) Wattle Syke, Bramham, West Yorkshire: Cruse and Heslop, 2013, diameter 63 cm (mid-late 4th century AD).

Fig. 2. Features found on two main types of twin hopper rotary querns in Northern Britain: a) Newstead, Melrose, Borders (FRA 1643), diameter 41.5 cm and b) Walton-le-Dale, Preston, Lancs (SF 6300), diameter 37.5 cm (YQS archive: J. Cruse).
- The grinding surface is usually pecked. There are no furrows in ‘harp’ patterns. The curved bar type are slightly more concave (c. 13 mm +/- 5 mm max.) than those on flat types (7 mm +/- 5 mm).
- The weight of an unworn quern is about 20 kg but can be reduced to less than 10 kg by heavy use.
- The handle holes are typically 6 cm (+/- 1 cm) long and set horizontally into the side of the ‘bar’. This is indicative of a manual drive. Two querns have no handle hole and are thus possibly driven by means of a handle fixed with an external band.
- The querns are predominately (85%) made from Millstone Grit (MSG), a coarse-grained feldspathic Namurian sandstone, which outcrops widely in the Pennines (for more details see Heslop 2008, 34-7), plus other local sandstones.

Two key conclusions can be drawn. The first is that their diameters are small, they are light in weight and their handle holes are consistent with manual operation. The second is that the characteristic hoppers leave no doubt that the opposed perforations are feed-pipes, with the small central hole or ‘eye’ only servicing the quern’s rotation around the spindle.

The distribution of rotary hand querns

Apart from outliers in forts at Maryport (Cumbria) and Newstead (Borders), these querns are mainly found in a limited area of c. 150 x 100 km of the Southern Pennines between Chester and York (Fig. 4). Confirming Buckland and Magilton’s observation, 19 definite and 7 probable querns have been recorded from auxiliary forts in the Pennines or from military supply bases like Wilderspool and Walton-le-Dale on the west coast.

A further 20 examples are known from non-military rural sites, often in a more fragmentary condition. These have a more easterly distribution, extending from the eastern Pennine fringe into the Vale of York and are not found south of a line between Chester and Lincoln. No examples have yet been found from legionary contexts at York and none are known from Chester; suggesting that this type was only issued to auxiliary troops, but not apparently to the legions.

An un-provenanced Millstone Grit rough-out is known in Ribchester museum. As this curved-bar quern was discarded before its feed-pipe holes were completed and it was made of a local stone, we can reasonably suspect that it was manufactured nearby. Similarly, with the flat-bar querns being strongly represented at Castleford and Doncaster, it would not be surprising if other well established MSG sources in South or West Yorkshire, previously used for pre-Conquest beehive querns (Heslop 2008, 34) continued to be exploited. To answer the question how the quern supply was organised, we turn to a previous study into the provision of coarse wares to the Roman army.

Roman coarse ware pottery production parallels

Val Rigby (1998) assembled a distribution (Fig. 5) of coarse pottery with stamps of ‘Cen’, ‘Sace’ and ‘Red(i)tas’. She described it as ‘one of the most convincing and extensive regional (ceramic)groups in Britain’, whose marked focus on Doncaster makes ‘it an obvious candidate for one or more workshops’. These stamped wares were produced from the late 1st century AD until the construction of Hadrian’s Wall in AD 122, based on 14 stamps, mainly from auxiliary forts. Using this evidence, she deduced that individual potters were acting as contractors to the army, servicing the needs of auxiliary units. Similarly in York, Patrick Ottaway has noted that, by the Hadrianic period, Ebor Ware pottery was no longer produced by legionary specialists, but was made for the army by civilian entrepreneurs (2013, 200).
As we have roughly three times more hand querns than Rigby had coarse ware stamps, and they have a very similar distribution, we similarly suspect that they were also made by army contractors. Additionally, from the lack of uniformity in their individual details, it looks as if this was a relatively small-scale artisan activity, lacking the uniformity expected from a factory.

With Castleford being an early focus for the flat-topped bar variants and also being somewhat nearer to the Millstone Grit rock sources than Doncaster, it provides a plausible manufacturing site, east of the Pennines, which geographically complements production of the curved-bar variant at Ribchester, in the western Pennines.

**Rotary quern chronology**

Excavated rotary hand querns are rarely found in well-sealed primary contexts. Their destiny is often to be re-used in later structures or to be fragmented into residual fills. In consequence, their chronology is poorly defined. Our hand querns largely confirm the Earlier Roman dating of Buckley and Major (1998, 246) who note that the two Castleford querns have late 1st century AD dates. A further nine examples have come from contexts which were definitely before 250 AD. Another eight are probably in this range, as their sites were little used after 250 AD. A minority of five come from post-250 AD contexts, but could well be residual (Figs 6 and 11). Without tighter dates, we cannot currently recognise any chronological difference between the flat-topped and the curved bar variants of this rotary quern type.

**Rotary quern overview**

As Buckley and Major (1998, 243) have noted, Mayen lava disc querns “were imported into Britain in large quantities” as a “standard item of legionary equipment”. Their presence in published quern assemblages is probably understated by the tendency for lava fragments to degrade in acid.
soils and by the practice of earlier excavators to only record the semi-intact examples. Despite these limitations, such imported disc querns, together with their locally manufactured equivalents, dominate reported military quern groups. Thus, of the 492 querns recorded in the YQS archive from 20 Roman military sites in the central Pennine area (south of Hadrian’s Wall), just over 75% are disc querns, of which 198 (40%) were made of imported lava and 174 (35%) of local sandstone.

The main features of a distinct type of rotary hand quern are now recognisable. Its distinguishing features are that its opposed hoppers have a diagnostic D-shape, that they are separated by a central bar and that the opposed perforations are undeniably acting as feed-pipes. There appear to be two variants of the basic design, with the dividing bar being either flat-topped or curved.

The quern type was in use at Castleford before AD 100 and deposition peaks in the later 2nd century AD. The relative chronology of the two variants is unclear. Finds distribution and parallels from stamped coarse ware manufacture suggest that small-scale contractors were producing these querns for use by auxiliary soldiers at southern Pennine forts.

If such a link to the auxiliary units is accepted, then scholars will have a new route to investigate the workings of the military food supply system. It also raises the question how to interpret the presence of often fragmented querns in the ‘civil’ settlements along the Magnesium Limestone ridge and into the Vale of York. Possibly they represent ‘leakage’ of querns from the military supply system, perhaps being taken by veteran soldiers for personal use after their discharge. Alternatively, it could be that the producers responded to a downturn in military demand by developing sales into civilian areas. As more excavated examples are recognised, a clearer story of how such quern use developed should emerge.

Fig 7: Healam Bridge, N Yorks (SF 28): Late Roman millstone showing the grinding surface, with ‘distributor groove’ around feed-pipes and notches around its perimeter (for an external band?). Diameter 65 cm (Cruse 2017, fig 244, no. 18).
**Rotary querns vs millstones**

Before addressing the larger diameter stone types with opposed perforations, we need first to consider how to best distinguish between rotary hand querns and powered millstones. Potential criteria were suggested in the Wattle Syke report (Cruse and Heslop, 2013, Table 30). Further work by Shaffrey (2015, 73-8) on southern English examples has expanded our range of informative features. For the purposes of this paper, Table 1 summarises the main criteria which have been found helpful to identify mechanically-powered millstones.

- The stone’s diameter and the presence/absence of a handle hole for manual rotation are reasonably self-evident.
- Where the grinding surface is dressed with asymmetric patterns of narrow furrows (‘harps’), they can be recognised as suitable for either clockwise or anticlockwise rotation (Watts 2002, 102). However, about 25% of dressing patterns are symmetrical, thus most suitable for operation in manual ‘back and forth’ mode. In the latter case, 92% of such querns have a diameter of less than 52.5 cm.
- The weight limit of 30-35 kg reflects the practicality for conveniently lifting.
- For twin ‘feed-pipe’ stones, the presence or absence of a D-shaped hopper.

Although these criteria usually provide a consistent determination, there are some stones, usually with diameters around 50-55 cm, where ambiguity remains. Better understanding of millstone features associated with geared manual systems (Peacock 2013a, fig. 6.14b) or perhaps with animal power (Appleby 2013, 112) may clarify our understanding of this interface.

**Mechanically powered millstones with opposed holes**

A second group of upper stones exist which, although they have opposed perforations, lack any grain hoppers, so they possess no ‘bar’. Using the above criteria, they can usually be clearly identified as powered millstones (Peacock 2013, 110). At least 21 examples are known, whose opposed holes are distinctly separated from their central ‘eye’. Such detached perforations differ from stones with integrated ‘bow-tie’ central openings (discussed in Peacock 2013b, 212) that are largely found in the Midlands and Southern England. Their features are more difficult to understand and still await detailed study. Our millstone type, well represented by an intact example from Healam Bridge, N Yorks (Fig. 7), has the following features:

- External diameters extend from 50 to 80 cm, with most in the range 58-67 cm.
- Absence of any horizontal handle holes in the rim suggests a mechanical drive.
- Grinding faces are generally concave, confirming that they are upper stones.
- Upper surface is usually dressed flat or slightly domed and can be cut by pits or slots.
- Central ‘eye’ is round, with a typical diameter of 8 cm +/-3 cm (a conventional millstone of the same diameter is somewhat larger, being 10.5 cm +/- 2.5 cm).
- Only one example has rynd-slots hence the means of power transmission needs more study.
- Opposed perforations are generally D-shaped or oval.
- Circular ‘distributor’ grooves, cut into the grinding surface, lie under the outside of the ‘D’.
- Maximum rim height is 9-11 cm, with worn examples being only 3-5 cm thick.
- Maximum weight is typically 60 kg, attaining 30-40 kg after wear.
- Lithologically, they use local stones. Approximately 50% are of Millstone Grit.
- Chronologically, they are usually Late Roman, with 70% from contexts dating to the 3rd or 4th century AD (Fig. 11).

**Interpretation of the function of the millstone features**

Publication of the fragmentary pieces of such unusual stones is quite rare. Specialist comments are normally restricted to describing their obvious features and to deciding between a quern or a millstone, with little discussion of ‘how’ these stones worked. A common assumption is that the central ‘eye’ acts as in a conventional millstone, serving both as the centre of rotation and also as

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Criteria</th>
<th>Rotary quern</th>
<th>Powered millstone</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Diameter</td>
<td>&lt; c. 55 cm</td>
<td>&gt; c. 50 cm</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Handle-holes</td>
<td>Present</td>
<td>Absent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-Directional Grinding Surface Grooves</td>
<td>Can occur</td>
<td>Absent</td>
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<tr>
<td>Estimated Intact Weight</td>
<td>&lt; 30-35 kg</td>
<td>&gt; 30-35 kg</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>For Double Feed-Pipe Stones</td>
<td>D-shaped hopper</td>
<td>No hopper</td>
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the entry point for the cereal feed (fed from an external suspended hopper). The opposed holes are implied to serve another function, often linked to a form of top-driven, power mechanism (Peacock, 2013, 118; Shaffrey, 2015, fig. 3).

To test the validity of this hypothesis, the following questions were investigated:

Q1: Is the ‘eye’ diameter of an ordinary millstone comparable to one with opposed holes?
A1: No. The ‘eye’ of a conventional 65 cm diameter millstone is typically 10.5 cm +/- 3 cm, but, for a comparable diameter opposed perforation stone, the ‘eye’ is smaller at 8 cm +/- 3 cm, a reduction of working area of 42% suggesting that, when the holes are opposed, the ‘eye’ served a more restricted function.

Q2: Do the opposed holes have any internal abrasion from the inserted drive mechanism?
A2: No. In the 12 examples personally examined by the author, there was no sign of such abrasion, or of a ‘stop’ to avoid a projecting insertion from rubbing against the base stone.

So the conclusion from these checks is ‘not proven’ (at best). An alternative hypothesis was therefore sought which might better explain the observed features. Using our previous hand quern experience (see above), we explored whether the opposed holes could also be twin feed-pipes, with the ‘eye’ solely servicing the rotational/power mechanism. We looked at the following areas:

Q3: Does the ‘straight line’ length of the D-shaped hole increase with millstone diameter?
A3: Yes: the ‘D’ of a 60 cm diam. stone is 9 +/- 5 cm long, but for an 80 cm stone, the ‘D’ is 12 +/- 5 cm, providing a roughly 75% greater area for grain moving through the two perforations - supporting the idea that the larger stones achieved a greater grain input. It also seems that the orientation of the ‘D’ changes with millstone diameter. Whereas the smaller stones have oval or ‘D’ holes with the curved face on the outside, those larger than 65 cm diameter mainly have their ‘D’s flat faces to the outside, hinting that the hole’s outer shape seeks to closely follow the moving arc of the grinding surface.

Q4: Where harp grooves or peck-dressing improve the milling efficiency of the grinding surface, do these features extend inwards, beyond the outer edge of the ‘D’ perforation?
A4: No: See Fig. 8 (Heslington East, Cruse and Heslop, forthcoming) – thus the grinding starts outside the ‘D’.

Q5: Over 25 conventional millstones have now been recorded with a single circular groove, cut into their grinding face at 37% +/- 7% of overall diameter. This feature seems to occur where the grain transitions from being transported between the faces to starting to be ground between them. Are such ‘distribution’ grooves found on double hole stones and where?
A5: Yes: Five examples are known (i.e. Figs 6 and 7). In each case, the groove is placed immediately beneath the outer edge of the D-shaped hole and lies at 37 +/- 6% of the overall diameter. This close connection suggests that grain moves through the hole and is then routed into the effective grinding area at the same point as in a conventional millstone.

Thus there is little support for the idea that the perforations in these larger millstones are part of the drive mechanism, but strong indications that the opposed holes act as twin feed-pipes, as in the

Fig. 8: Views of the upper and lower surface of a Late Roman millstone runner from Heslington East, North Yorks: a) surface pits on its upper surface, b) harps outside the opposed feed-pipes on its grinding surface. Diameter 68 cm.
In southern Gaul, Longepierre’s Type D driven millstones comparably have their drive linkage set directly into the skirt (2012, 489). We also note that he considers both Type D and E linkages to be specific to water-powered mills.

How was the grain fed into the rotating twin feed-pipes? The normal system for a conventional millstone, suspending a detached wooden, single-chute hopper above the central ‘eye’, is obviously inappropriate. One solution might be to attach a wooden, twin-chute hopper onto the upper stone, using the fixture points, so that this external hopper rotated with the stone. Alternatively, if these slots were to fix a metal framework for the drive mechanism, such a hopper could also have been held within the framework.

Do any millstone features inform us about the likely power source? Diocletian’s Edict on Maximum Prices (15.52-5) of 301 AD tells us that different types of millstone were sold to be driven by horses and by water-wheels (Wilson 2002, 6). However, there are no agreed criteria by which such millstones can be differentiated. As the price of a water-powered millstone was 30% greater than that for a horse-driven stone, we probably can safely assume that the larger stones were water driven. In addition, Robert Spain (2002, 22) estimates that Roman disc millstones required a power input of c. 1-2 horsepower to operate satisfactorily, suggesting that a vertically driven water-wheel was needed to power these larger stones. More research is needed.

An alternative option was to wrap an iron band around the stone’s circumference and connect it to the rynd. First suggested by Rahtz and Greenfield (1977, 202) to explain four ‘nicks’ around the rim of a ‘bow-tie’ millstone at Chew Valley, this feature has also been noted at Healam Bridge, N Yorks (Cruse 2017) where five angled notches were cut into the skirt, presumably improve the grip (Fig 6).

Fig. 9: Distribution of Roman millstones.

Definite
Probable

Healam Bridge
Wattle Syke

Millstones – areas for further work

As our corpus of millstones slowly increases (15 examples have been recognised since 2005), we can expect to make progress on some of the outstanding problems, such as:

How was the power transferred to the upper stone? Only the Birdoswald millstone (SF133) preserves evidence of a rynd-chase (but this stone, with its large ‘eye’, is atypical) (Coulson 1997, 293). For the rest, one possibility is that the circular/rectangular pits cut into the upper surface could have enabled the rynd to be connected to an ‘iron frame, fixed to the stone by lead’, as proposed by Tilson (1973, 61) for an example from Bromham, Beds. Longepierre (2012, 489) reached a similar conclusion for his Type E millstones in southern Gaul based on the system of iron crampons, fixed into a regular series of holes on the top of the volcanic upper millstones as identified at the watermill of En Chaplix in Switzerland (Castella 1994).

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Finally, although we know that the double-hopper variant is a comparatively rare type of disc hand quern (see section 2.6), we are less well informed about the frequency of the various millstone variants. From data on the double feed-pipe variant, we seem to need at least 25% of the stone before we can be confident in its attribution; on this basis, 17 double feed-pipe examples are known. Applying the same criteria to the ‘conventional’ millstones (i.e. with only a central ‘eye’) from our study area, only 30 of the upper stones (which are only 35% of the 86 recorded) pass this test, with the remaining 65% being less than 25% intact and thus too small for their defining features to be recognisable. So, if this overall sample is representative, the double feed-pipe variant of powered millstone could be comparatively common, perhaps constituting 30-40% of all upper millstones.

**Double feed-pipe rotary querns and millstones**

Having studied these individual groups of hand querns and millstones, we can now look at their:

1. **Diameters:** from Fig. 10, we can see that hand querns and millstones can be separately recognised by their own distinct size ranges, with the two types overlapping at around 50-55 cm diameter.

2. **Chronology:** Agglomerating the depositional dates for the two variants (Fig. 11), we can see that the bulk of the hand querns come from pre-AD 250 contexts, whereas the millstones are mostly used post-AD 250, with deposition peaking after 350 AD.

3. **Links to the military?** We have already seen that there was a strong military connection to the hand querns. Whilst Ottaway (2013, 300) has noted that ‘little can be said’ for the known presence of late 4th century forts along Dere Street, Moorhead and Stuttard (2012, 216) interpret the coinage evidence as suggesting that these forts were bases for ‘highly mobile, probably cavalry units’. Bland et al. (2013, 133) have argued that these troops could have been used ‘to enforce the production of food’.

4. **Links to the Cura Annonae in Rome?** Now that we can more confidently recognise these fragmentary millstones, we can start to recognise where large-scale cereal processing was taking place. Initial indications from the Dere Street area suggest that Later Roman millstone use was focused on a fertile, adjacent strip of Permian limestone, which raises the question; ‘who was this flour for?’ Wilson (2002, 13) has noted that, between the late 2nd to mid-3rd centuries AD, the anonna system in Rome was reorganised to provide a hand-out of baked loaves, rather than of grain, and that this change was replicated at other municipal sites in the Mediterranean area. With our apparent local combination of late 4th century military enforcers and milling capacity, we can now investigate whether, as well as periodically facilitating cereal exports to the Rhine (Moorhead and Stuttard 2012, 207), this system was also tasked to deliver flour (or bread) to designated local users. Indeed, Gerrard (2013, 249) has noted that the armed body guards of local notables in the late 4th century were nick-named bucellarii (‘bread-eaters’).

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**Possible Rhineland precursors with double feed-pipes**

Following my paper at the March 2014 colloquium, Martin Watts kindly provided a translation of Dietwulf Baatz’s paper (2010, 607-14) about a similar group of upper stones from the German Rhineland. Significantly, Baatz notes that the earliest fragmentary examples from Waldgirmes (Hesse) have very early 1st century AD military dates. They are lava hand querns with a central ‘eye’ to align the stone and ‘offset, rectangular chute-holes’ which ‘feed in the mill-charge’, but lack the hoppers of our Pennine examples. Comparable stones, usually made from

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**Fig. 10: Diameters of rotary hand querns and millstones.**

**Fig. 11: Chronology of quern and millstone deposition.**
local sandstone, are found elsewhere in Germany into the first half of the 2nd century AD, but thereafter are replaced by querns with triangular (or circular) ‘chute-holes’ (Fig. 12). Their development sequence thus differs from that in Britain, where feed-pipes are oval or ‘D’ shaped.

This evidence importantly demonstrates that the idea of separating the feed and rotation roles was first incorporated into military hand quern design well before the Claudian invasion of Britain and that this German design subsequently evolved differently to that in Britain. As none of these Rhineland-type lava hand querns with twin feed-pipes have been found in Britain, it appears likely that the manufacturers of these British twin feed-pipe querns chose to incorporate this pre-existing idea into their new design, which was specifically tailored to utilise the excellent milling characteristics of the local Millstone Grit.

Baatz also notes that these Rhineland ‘runners’ (like our British examples) do not have ‘harp’ dressing patterns on their grinding surface. However, they were worn into concentric grooves. Seeing this as a less efficient form of milling, he deduces that in Germany, rather than being used to grind wheat, they were used for some other purpose, such as dehusking spelt or barley (or perhaps ore grinding?). From a British perspective, we have more than 30 examples of conventional querns and millstones with similar deep concentric grooves on their grinding surfaces (i.e. Shiptonthorpe, E Yorks: Gwilt, 2006) which may well have been used for de-husking grain or perhaps for crushing malted barley, to release the sugars prior to mashing. However, as none of these concentrically-grooved examples have opposed feed-pipes, it implies that, at least in Britain, our ‘chute-holes’ served some other purpose.

What should we call these distinctive stones?

Historically, British quern researchers have adopted something of an ad hoc approach to typology. Indigenous rotary quern types have been named descriptively (i.e. ‘Beehive’, Curwen 1937, 140), or by a regional concentration (i.e. ‘Wessex’, Curwen 1937, 142), or by a type site where particular diagnostic features were first noted (i.e. ‘Hunsbury’, Curwen, 1941, 19). No accepted name has so far emerged for our particular type of hand quern. Amongst the descriptive terms used have been “quern with crescentic hopper” (Curle 1911), “quern which had a central rib” (Buckley and Major, 1990) and “spectacle-type” (Gregory 2013, 34). This multiplicity of names cannot assist their comprehension. To improve the position, we could:
Option 1: Use a neutral catch-all term, which describes the key identifying characteristic of each of these distinctive stones, such as "Twin hopper hand quern" and "Twin feed-pipe millstone."

Option 2: If the distinction made in section 2.6 is accepted, each variant could be named after the published location where their features were first recorded; thus:

- Twin hopper hand quern - Flat bar = 'Templeborough' variant (May 1922, 124).
- Twin hopper hand quern - Curved bar = 'Bramall' variant (Heginbotham 1892, 135-6).

Decisions about the naming of individual millstone variants is probably best deferred until a representative selection of British millstones with bow-tie 'eyes' have been examined and their links with Type 'A' examples from the Rhineland (Baatz 2010, 609) are better understood.

Conclusions

We can now recognise a characteristic group of upper stones from north Britain with opposed perforations either side of a central 'eye'. These can be distinguished into a manually rotated 'twin hopper hand quern' and a powered 'twin feed-pipe millstone'.

The idea of using separate features to rotate the upper stone and to feed the grain into the grinding space is present at Waldgirmes Fort in the Rhineland from the first decade of the 1st century AD (Baatz 2010).

When a network of auxiliary forts was established in the Pennines in the latter part of the 1st century AD, it would appear that their soldiers were provided with a new hand quern design, made from local Millstone Grit, but applying an earlier design concept, previously used for some specialised lava querns in the Rhineland. They incorporated D-shaped feed hoppers and a strengthening central bar (which removed the need for an iron rynd). These querns were probably manufactured by local army contractors.

The design of these rotary querns was developed in north Britain, largely independently of those in Germany, with their main period of use being pre-250 AD.

Two variants have been recognised, one with a flat central bar and another with a rather taller, arched bar. 'Templeborough' and 'Bramall' are suggested names for these respective variants.

Previous fragmentary evidence of the larger powered millstones with opposed feed-pipes, but no hoppers, has been confirmed by the recent excavation of a complete example. This twin feed-pipe design, which is also known in the Rhineland, is mainly found on sites adjacent to Dere Street and along the York to Brough road from the 2nd century AD, with deposition peaking after AD 350.

One characteristic of the twin feed-pipe design is that the central 'eye' has a smaller diameter than for a conventional millstone and another is that its feed-pipe area is capable of expanding as its millstone diameter increases. This provided an improved ability to handle higher feed-rates than a conventional millstone, which was probably more constrained by the dual role for its eye.

Fixture points, cut into the upper surface, are comparable to those on conventional millstones and probably served to attach an external wooden hopper, which rotated with the upper stone. Similar explanations have been proposed in southern Gaul, where such large stones are considered to be water-powered. As twin feed-pipe millstones usually lack any rynd slots, these fixture points may also be associated with the drive mechanism.

The recognition that post-AD 250 millstone finds are focused on the cereal producing farmland, such as the Magnesian Limestone, traversed by Dere Street, opens up a new source of data about Late Roman economic activity in the region.

As their novel features become better appreciated by other researchers, we can be reasonably confident that more of these unusual stones will be found, both in Britain and on the Continent.

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