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**Early Anglo-Saxon textile manufacturing implements
from Saltwood Tunnel, Kent**

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ILLUSTRATIONS

All artefact catalogue descriptions and illustrations are included in the illustrated grave catalogue

1 INTRODUCTION

Textile manufacturing implements were not common within the early Anglo-Saxon cemeteries and are limited to a weaving batten from grave C3762 in the Western cemetery and two three sets of iron shears, one set from grave C3762 and the other two from graves C4699 in the Western cemetery and W1279 in the Central cemetery.

2 THE WEAVING BATTEN

by Penelope Walton Rogers

An iron weaving batten, or sword-beater (*ON 2048*) was recovered from grave C3762 (Fig. 86). To judge from the position of teeth, beads and buckle in relation to the batten, it must have lain, point down, to the right of the woman's waist. The batten is 523 mm long, of which 100 mm is the pointed tang for the handle and 15 mm the incomplete remains of a tongue-like projection at the tip. The tang has remains of a wooden handle. The blade is heavily corroded but Brian Gilmour (2006) has identified it as of composite construction and purpose made and not from a cut-down sword.

These battens were used to beat up the weft when weaving on the warp-weighted loom. The sword-shaped form with tang handle and an extension on the tip is typical of east Kent, where there have been 12 similar finds, and another from Chessell Down, Isle of Wight, belongs in the same group (reviewed in Walton Rogers forthcoming). There are also five examples from graves in the East Midlands and East Anglia and a sixth from the settlement at West Stow, Suffolk. This distribution continues into the Continent, where a related form of beater has been found mostly north and east of the Rhine (*ibid.*). These sword-shaped beaters contrast with the spear-shaped form with socketed handle of northern England, which has its closest links with Norwegian beaters (Walton Rogers 1998, 292-4).

The Saltwood batten comes from a particularly well furnished burial and the other Kent battens also come from graves of women with jewellery and accessories indicative of rank. Battens made of wood would also have been in use, but it is probable that the owner of the iron batten was a senior member of the household who was responsible for overseeing cloth production (Chadwick 1958, 21; Walton Rogers forthcoming).

Sword-beaters first appear in graves in the early-mid 6th century. There is a steady lengthening of the blade from 376 mm in the earliest from Buckland I G20, which has recently

been re-dated to the early part of Buckland Phase 2, 510/30-550/60 (Brugmann forthcoming); to 765 mm in the Final Phase bed burial at Edix Hill G18 (Malim and Hines 1998, 52, 219, 234, 282-7). The Saltwood example, which before breakage of the tip was probably 530–540 mm long, fits the date in the mid to late 6th century (Phase 3) provided by the Kentish disc brooch and Costume Style V.

3 SHEARS

by Ian Riddler

Three sets of iron shears came from two graves in the Western cemetery (C3762 and C4699) and one in the Central cemetery (W1279) (Figs. 86, 119 and 218). With the two sets from the Western cemetery the blades extend to approximately half of the length of the object, whilst with the other set they are somewhat longer. All three are graves of female gender and two are late graves of phase 5 – 6. Shears have also been found in east Kent cemeteries including Cuxton, Dover Buckland, Finglesham and Polhill, again in late contexts, and often in association with other items of textile manufacture (Evison 1987, 113; Hawkes 1973, 198). They can be differentiated from the miniature versions found in male graves of fifth and sixth century date, which formed a part of toilet sets (Blackmore 2004). Richardson notes the presence of 33 examples from Kent (Richardson 2005, 156). It had previously been thought that full-sized shears only occurred in 7th century graves but the set from grave C3762 adds to the growing evidence for their presence in graves of 6th century date (Geake 1997, 96). This complements the evidence from the Continent (and from southern Germany in particular) where shears appear in both male and female graves, those of males being generally longer than those of females, and those of females occurring in 6th century contexts and firmly associated with textile manufacture (Koch 2001, 240). The same association has been made for those of Middle and Late Saxon date (Riddler 2001A, 244-5). It remains true, however, that in early Anglo-Saxon England the majority stem from graves of the second half of the 7th century or later. Geake (1997, 97) has questioned the association of shears with textile manufacture and two of the graves from Saltwood do not include any further items of that type. The third grave (C3762) did, however, also include a weaving batten, as noted above.

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