

7.9 ASSESSMENT OF COINAGE

Ian Anderson

Summary

- 7.9.1 A single coin was retrieved from the excavation; a silver half-penny of Edward I/II, which was probably lost in the fourteenth century though, it may have survived in circulation into the following century. It has been recorded and no further work is envisaged.

Introduction

- 7.9.2 The only coin to be recovered from the site is a silver halfpenny, which was retrieved by hand excavation from 'the surface of cut 5' (sub-group 56, Group 27, Phase 4). No other coins came from any of the sampled deposits.

Methodology

- 7.9.3 The coin has been examined under magnification and has been identified by the author, following cleaning.

Quantification

- 7.9.4 The coin is a silver Class 10 halfpenny of Edward I/II (c. AD 1302-1310). It is heavily worn on the obverse and less worn on the reverse. It could have remained in circulation throughout the fourteenth century and up until the weight reductions of 1412 and 1464, which took many earlier coins out of circulation.

Provenance

- 7.9.5 The coin came from the London mint, the major mint of that period. Its discovery on the surface of cut 5 means that it is not securely stratified, unfortunately and the dating of the coin is a little earlier than that provided by the ceramics for this phase of activity on the site. However, coins of this type were in circulation for a long period of time.

Conservation

- 7.9.6 The coin has been cleaned by a conservation assistant. No further work on the coin is necessary, given that it has been identified and recorded. It should certainly be retained although it is heavily worn and is not of a standard for museum display. As a silver coin, it also falls under the regulations of the Treasure Act (1996).

Comparative material

- 7.9.7 Medieval coins are generally scarce on excavations within East Kent, and particularly those in rural locations. They are not common even in urban contexts of this date. However, some comparable coinage is known from East Kent as, for example, at Ospringe (Smith 1979, 127).

Potential for further work

- 7.9.8 The coin has been identified and it is not relevant to the main phases of activity on the site. No further work is envisaged, although a summary note of its type and date should be included in the archive.

7.9.9 Bibliography

Smith, G. H., 1979; The Excavation of the Hospital of St. Mary of Ospringe, commonly called Maison Dieu, *Archaeologia Cantiana* **95**, pp81-184.

7.10 ASSESSMENT OF COPPER ALLOY OBJECTS

Ian Riddler

Summary

- 7.10.1 Fragments of two copper alloy objects were retrieved from samples taken for metallurgical residues. Both are probably from dress accessories, in one case a pin and in the other a domed stud that may have come from a buckle. Unfortunately, both pieces are too small to be diagnostic.

Introduction

- 7.10.2 There are just two copper alloy objects from the site. Both are small and fragmentary; each came from a sieved sample rather than from manual excavation. The first is a small fragment of tapering wire which is probably part of a pin shaft, the second a curved section which stems from the base of a domed stud. Details of each object are provided in Table One.

Methodology

- 7.10.3 Each object has been examined under a hand lens and identified to type.

Quantification

- 7.10.4 Details of the two objects are summarised in Table One.

7.10.5 Table One

Copper Alloy Objects

Context	Group	Sub-Group	Phase	SF	Sample	Object	Period
573	4	101	2	701	1070	Pin shaft	Late Anglo-Saxon
383	6	131	3	692	1079	Stud	Anglo-Saxon

- 7.10.6 The tapering wire is of circular cross-section with a curve at its terminal, suggesting that it might be part of a small hook, although it is more likely to be part of the shaft of a copper alloy pin. It is not possible to date this object with any precision although it can at least be said that it would not be out of place in the late Anglo-Saxon period.
- 7.10.7 The stud fitting is a little more substantial and closely resembles mounts for jewellery settings. These are familiar from the early and mid Anglo-Saxon periods (note Wamers 1985, tafn 1, 3, 7 and 16, for example), although it could possibly be of late Anglo-Saxon date.

Provenance

- 7.10.8 The pin shaft comes from a late Anglo-Saxon context and may be of a similar date. The stud is from a piece of jewellery, probably of early or middle Anglo-Saxon date, and is residual within its context, which also yielded prehistoric and early and late medieval ceramics.

Conservation

- 7.10.9 Both objects have been stabilised and placed in appropriate packaging. They are in good condition, if fragmentary. Further study or long-term storage would not conflict with any conservation requirements, which are largely a question of monitoring their condition. Both objects should be retained for future study although the pin shaft cannot be assigned to type and it could perhaps be discarded, once recorded. Both objects are small and would not be onerous to store.

Comparative Material

- 7.10.10 The pin shaft cannot be identified as to type but it can be compared in general terms with those known from middle and late Anglo-Saxon contexts (Hinton 1996, 14-37). Copper alloy dress pins of such date are familiar from East Kent sites at Canterbury and *Sandtun* (Blockley *et al.* 1995, 1042-6; Riddler, forthcoming).
- 7.10.11 The setting comes from a piece of jewellery that, at this period, could be of Insular character and ecclesiastical origin (Wamers 1985). Equally, however, such mounts occur with early Anglo-Saxon jewellery, but usually in silver or gold, other than with buckles, which are mostly copper alloy (MacGregor and Bolick 1993, 70-81 and 193-7). Too little survives of the object to be more certain of its identification.

Potential for further work

- 7.10.12 Both objects, although small and fragmentary, provide a further tentative hint of mid Anglo-Saxon occupation at the site. It is not possible to assign the pin shaft to type and no further work is recommended on it. The mount should be viewed alongside jewellery of the period in the hope of deciding on the type of object that it once adorned. Given that it cannot yet be assigned to a specific object type, it is currently not directly relevant to the Fieldwork Event Aims. Both objects do, however, indicate that there was a wider range of Anglo-Saxon activity present on the site than is revealed from hand-collected material alone, given that they are both elements of dress accessories. Group 4, for example, has been regarded as an industrial area of the site, given the proximity of ironworking debris, but (like Group 6) domestic material is clearly also present. Both objects therefore strengthen the evidence for domestic occupation in these areas.

7.10.13 Bibliography

Blockley, K., Blockley, M., Blockley, P., Frere, S. S. and Stow, S., 1995; *Excavations in the Marlowe Car Park and Surrounding Areas*, The Archaeology of Canterbury 5, Canterbury.

Hinton, D. A., 1996; *The Gold, Silver and other non-Ferrous Alloy Objects from Hamwic*, Southampton Finds Volume Two, Stroud.

MacGregor, A. and Bolick, E., 1993; *A Summary Catalogue of the Anglo-Saxon Collections (non-Ferrous Metals)*, Ashmolean Museum/British Archaeological Reports, British Series 230, Oxford.

Riddler, I. D., forthcoming ; The Small Finds, in M. Gardiner (ed), *Continental Trade and non-Urban Ports in middle Anglo-Saxon England*; Excavations at Sandtun, West Hythe, Kent, *Archaeological Journal* **157**.

Wamers, E., 1985; *Insular Metallschmuck in wikingerzeitlichen Gräbern Nordeuropas*, *Offa Bücher* **56**, Neumünster.

7.11 ASSESSMENT OF IRON OBJECTS

Ian Riddler

Summary

- 7.11.1 The majority of the iron objects from the site are contemporary with the early medieval ironworking. They include an awl, fibre processing teeth, knives, nails, strips and bindings. A few pieces may perhaps represent stock iron from smithing, and the presence of hammerscale on a few objects reflects their local production.

Introduction

- 7.11.2 A total of 47 iron objects were recovered by hand excavation and a further twelve came from sieved samples. The objects include fibre-processing teeth, a buckle frame, a horseshoe, knives, nails and strips of iron (Table One).

Methodology

- 7.11.3 All of the objects have been examined visually and most have been x-rayed (with the exception of obvious nails, of which 24 were recovered from the site). The objects have been examined alongside the x-rays and have been identified as to type where possible.

Quantification

- 7.11.4 The objects (excluding the nails) are summarised by type in Table One and broken up into functional groups in Table Two.

7.11.5 Table One
Iron Objects

<i>Context</i>	<i>Group</i>	<i>Sub-Group</i>	<i>Phase</i>	<i>SF</i>	<i>Object</i>	<i>Period</i>
0	0	0	0	511	Horseshoe	Post-Medieval ?
0	0	0	0	1	Knife	Post-Medieval
328	10	33	3	67	Awl	Early Medieval
383	6	131	3	690	Binding	Early Medieval
600	13	161	3	644	Binding	Early Medieval
432	12	145	3	559	Binding	Early Medieval
527	11	152	3	584	Binding	Early Medieval
613	8	70	3	475	Chisel ?	Early Medieval
562	13	109	3	473	Fibre Processing Tooth	Early Medieval
568	13	104	3	389	Fibre Processing Tooth	Early Medieval
431	12	146	3	297	Fibre Processing Teeth	?Early Medieval
318	11	23	3	66	Knife	Early Medieval
347	6	25	3	220	Knife	Early Medieval
385	6	131	3	224	Knife	Early Medieval
338	12	134	3	218	Metallurgical Waste ?	Early Medieval
575	25	102	3	702	Metallurgical Waste ?	Early Medieval
382	11	129	3	69	Object	Post-Medieval ?
367	10	73	3	514	Ring Collar	Early Medieval
350	10	166	3	687	Sheet	Early Medieval
580	12	117	3	474	Sheet (4 fragments)	Early Medieval
629	10	73	3	476	Sheet	Early Medieval
421	11	129	3	513	Staple	Early Medieval
451	18	175	3	388	Staple	Early Medieval
362	22	167	3	689	Undiagnostic Strip	Early Medieval
603	15	9	3	693	Strip	Early Medieval
370	36	26	4	179	Knife	Post-Medieval ?
422	22	63	4?	223	Sheet	Post-Medieval ?
496	34	46	5	639	Undiagnostic Strip	Post-Medieval
390	30	86	5	70	Buckle Frame	Post-Medieval
353	33	99	5	2	Object	Post-Medieval
397	29	90	5	181	Pin ?	Post-Medieval

7.11.6 Table Two

Objects by Functional Category, within Period Bands

<i>Object</i>	<i>Early Medieval</i>	<i>Late Medieval</i>	<i>Post-Medieval</i>	<i>Undated</i>
Awl	1			
Binding	4			
Buckle			1	
Fibre Processing Tooth	3			
Horseshoe			1	
Knife	3	1	1	
Pin				1
Ring	1			
Ring Collar	1			
Sheet	6	1	1	
Staple	2			
Strip	1			2
Object			2	
Total	22	2	6	3

7.11.7 Most of the 32 identifiable objects belong to the early medieval period and come from contexts of Phase 3. They include an awl and two fibre-processing teeth, to which can be added a second group of iron rods (297) that are now accreted together and resemble wool comb teeth in section. The two knives which can be identified as to type are both angled-backed, the most common form in East Kent between the seventh and eleventh centuries (Riddler forthcoming). The function of the ring is unclear, although it is much too big to be a finger ring. It can be compared with examples from Shakenoak and York (Brodribb *et al.* 1972, fig 41.190; Ottaway 1992, 648-9). The ring collar (514) is an unusual item to find in an Anglo-Saxon context and it may possibly be of Roman date. The quantities of thin iron sheet are similar to those seen at Shakenoak and some, at least, may be related to the bindings which have also been identified (Brodribb *et al.* 1972, figs 45-6). The bindings include wider pieces, which resemble those seen on chests and doors at this time, and one example (584) of a smaller, more decorative mount with closely spaced rivets.

Provenance

7.11.8 The objects are widely dispersed within contexts of Phase 3 and later, as seen in Table One. The majority belong to that phase and, typologically, they can be provided with a late Anglo-Saxon or early medieval date. None of the items can be closely dated and, therefore, no items can be identified as being residual elements of the Anglo-Saxon assemblage.

Conservation

7.11.9 All of the iron objects have been packaged with silica gel and are kept in a controlled environment. All the items, save those that were obviously nails or of late post-medieval date, have been x-rayed.

7.11.10 The iron objects are currently stable and they will remain in reasonable condition in the short term, allowing selected items to be catalogued and recorded in more detail. In the longer term their condition can be monitored but they will gradually and inexorably decay.

Comparative Material

- 7.11.11 There are few published items of late Anglo-Saxon or early medieval ironwork from East Kent, outside of Canterbury, where a number of comparable items have been found, particularly in respect of the knives (Driver *et al.* 1990, 193-206). Fibre-processing teeth, knives and other items are known also from Dover and *Sandtun*, allowing the Mersham finds to be placed within a broader context. There are also a few iron finds from the early medieval site at Monkton (Parfitt *et al.*, forthcoming; Gardiner forthcoming; Pratt *et al.*, forthcoming).
- 7.11.12 Angled-back knives are the most common form of knife to be seen in East Kent from the seventh to the twelfth century, and they are known from Dover Buckland, Saltwood, Canterbury and *Sandtun*, amongst other sites. There are few indications of any change in their form over time, although it has been noted elsewhere that a transition can be seen during this period from the use of horn handles to those of wood, which are more popular in early medieval deposits. The knives from Mersham can be contrasted with those from contemporary or slightly later deposits at Monkton and Dover, where the angled-back form is not as common, and it is possible that the Mersham examples are of eleventh century date.

Potential for further work

- 7.11.13 The range of iron objects from Mersham is relatively small, as is the overall quantity of material. Nonetheless, it is possible to link the objects with the waste products and to explore their relationship. A brief view of the presence of hammscale on the iron objects, for example, does suggest that some, at least, were manufactured locally. A closer, specialist examination of the strips, bindings and sheet material may also link the processes together. Little attention has been paid to the later material, but the documentary evidence does indicate that the iron industry prevailed here in the later medieval period. More attention should be paid, therefore, to its nature at that time, and material that has been considered residual could, in fact, be of later date.
- 7.11.14 Appendix 7.8 has highlighted the potential of the iron residues from Mersham and the same general points apply also to the sample of iron objects. Some, like the knives and fibre processing teeth, will assist in dating the assemblage, or at least in confirming its broad date range. The remainder provide some indication of the types of product under manufacture in the late Anglo-Saxon and early medieval periods.

7.11.15 Bibliography

Brodribb, A. C. C., Hands, A. R. and Walker, D. R., 1972; *Excavations at Shakenoak Farm, Near Wilcote, Oxfordshire. Part III; Site F*, Oxford.

Driver, J. C., Rady, J. and Sparks, M., 1990; *Excavations in the Cathedral Precincts 2; Linacre Garden, 'Meister Omers' and St Gabriel's Chapel*, The Archaeology of Canterbury 4, Maidstone.

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7.12 ASSESSMENT OF LEAD OBJECT

Ian Riddler

Summary

- 7.12.1 A small strip of lead alloy was retrieved from the fill of a medieval ditch. It is of no particular relevance to the aims of the project.

Introduction

- 7.12.2 A small strip of lead alloy was recovered by hand excavation. Its original function is unclear although it may be no more than a small offcut. It is not directly relevant to the Fieldwork Event Aims.

Methodology

- 7.12.3 The object has been examined with the aid of a hand lens.

Quantification

- 7.12.4 This small strip represents the only item of lead alloy to have come from the excavations. It consists of a length of undecorated, tapering flat strip that is curved upwards towards one end.

Provenance

- 7.12.5 The object was retrieved from the fill of a ditch in the northern part of the site (context 457, sub-group 62, Group 26, Phase 4).

Conservation

- 7.12.6 The object has been cleaned and is stored within a stable environment. It has little intrinsic value and it could be discarded, once it has been fully recorded.

Comparative Material

- 7.12.7 Objects and waste of lead alloy occur in copious quantities in East Kent from the Roman period onwards. This particular example came from a medieval context. It has few distinguishing features and it is not possible to tell whether it is residual in that context.

Potential for further work

- 7.12.8 The object is too small and indistinct to be of any real value for the project. It does suggest (very tentatively) that lead alloy was trimmed for use in the vicinity of the site, probably during the medieval period. Beyond this, it has little potential for further analysis, particularly as it is not associated with the principal period of site activity.