ASSESSMENT OF SMALL FINDS
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1. Introduction

1.1 The small finds from the CAT excavations consist of two iron knives and three hones. All of the objects come from Phase 3 (early medieval) contexts. Both object categories are amongst the most common to be seen at this period, but they do nonetheless add significant information to our understanding of the material culture of rural sites at this time.

2 Methodology

2.1 The iron knives have been radiographed at the City of Lincoln Conservation Laboratories. They have been recorded and added to the database of Anglo-Saxon and early medieval knives held at the Canterbury Archaeological Trust. The hones have been weighed and identified to stone type.

3 Quantification

3.1 The two knives are of contrasting types. The smaller knife (Sf 81) is of angled-back form, with the back rising from the tang towards the point. It is a noticeably small knife, with a blade length of around 50mm. The second knife (Sf 82) in contrast, includes a large wide blade with a tapering back and edge. A copper alloy hilt-plate lies at the junction of the blade and the tang.

3.2 All three hones have been cut from a local, fine-grained grey siltstone. This stone type is commonly seen in the Hythe area and is local to Westenhanger, stemming from the Folkestone Beds.

4 Provenance

4.1 Both knives came from Phase 3 contexts. The small knife was retrieved from the fill of the L-shaped feature (sub-group 55) which has been interpreted as an annex to Structure 3. The larger knife came from the fill of the ditch (sub-group 20), a little to the north of Structure 3. The hones were retrieved from features around Structure 3, in association with the knives. All of the objects are therefore tied to Structure 3.

5 Conservation

5.1 The knives have been radiographed and are now packaged in a stable environment. A full record should be made of each during the analysis phase, before they inevitably decay. They will not survive in the longer term without a full cleaning programme. The larger knife, in particular, is a composite object utilising both copper alloy and iron, and it may require a limited amount of investigative conservation during the analysis phase.

5.2 The hones have been cleaned, stabilised and packaged. They can be placed in long-term storage and treated as a bulk item without any problems.

6 Comparative Material

6.1 The small angled back knife belongs to the most common type of knife of the Middle and Late Saxon periods in East Kent. The type, which is first seen in the later sixth or early seventh centuries, becomes very common thereafter. Examples are known from a variety of East Kent sites, including Canterbury, Mersham, Saltwood and *Sandtun* (Frere, Bennett, Rady and Stow

1987, fig 121.20-3; Garrard and Elder 1988, fig 21.52; Driver, Rady and Sparks 1991, fig fig 70.137 and 144; Blockley *et al* 1995, fig 468.750-3; URL 2000; Riddler forthcoming). This particular example has a back which slopes upwards towards the point, which allows it to be defined as an Ottaway type A2 (Ottaway 1992, 561). During the middle and late Anglo-Saxon periods this is the most common sub-type of angled back knife to be seen in East Kent. The type continues in use beyond the Conquest, and occurs, for example, at Townwall Street, Dover (Riddler and Walton Rogers forthcoming). By the thirteenth century, however, this type of knife had gone out of use.

6.2 The larger knife has a blade form which is commonly seen from the Roman period onwards, and is not overly diagnostic. The presence of a copper alloy hilt-plate, however, allows the knife to be placed firmly in the early medieval period. Hilt-plates of this type can be seen on comparable knives from Winchester of late tenth to eleventh century date, and they are known also from other sites, although they are not common (Biddle 1990, 838 and figs 254.2704 and 255.2748).

6.3 The hones include two examples of rectangular form with concave sides, and one broader example with a diagonal groove across one face. The broader hones are thought to have been used for sharpening larger implements, and the same can be said for the rectangular-sectioned examples, both of which are relatively substantial. The use of this fine-grained stone type for hones is unusual and, as a relatively soft stone, it may not have been overly useful. Contemporary deposits in Canterbury and particularly in Dover include imported mica schist hones, which became widespread in East Kent before the Norman Conquest. In rural environments, however, both here and at Monkton, local stones were adapted as hones, and a clear distinction can currently be drawn in the supply of imported materials between urban and rural contexts.

7 Potential for further work

7.1 The two knives both add to our understanding of domestic and craft implements of the early medieval period. The example with a copper alloy hilt-plate represents a comparatively rare type, which is almost unknown in East Kent. The small angled-back knife, although of a common type, is nonetheless important in providing additional evidence for the continuation of this style of implement beyond the Conquest.

7.1 The same can be said, in effect, for the hones, which also indicate the nature of implements used in a rural setting at this time. Little can be said about rural settlement in East Kent at this time, and these objects thus form useful cultural indicators. The hones can be viewed against the trading network in stone implements that developed in East Kent during the early medieval period.

7.3 The material culture of early medieval rural settlements in East Kent is sparse, and an interesting comparison can be drawn between the presence of knives and hones both here and at Monkton, where the early medieval small finds assemblage was not much larger. In part, this follows from the types of surface-built building seen at both sites and the relative lack of pits, into which domestic rubbish was thrown. The excavation strategy employed in each case may also have influenced the recovery of cultural material.

7.4 All of the small finds assist therefore in one of the Fieldwork Event Aims:
Determine the function and economic basis of the site.

7.5 Both sets of implements warrant publication alongside the other early medieval material from the excavations and the watching brief. The knives provided useful corroboratory dating evidence and the hones relate to aspects of trade and the utilisation of local resources.