

7.1 Assessment of Anglo-Saxon Beads

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Introduction

7.1.1 A total of 834 beads of varying type were recovered during excavations at Saltwood, of which 813 derived from grave contexts. The total includes not only those extracted through hand-excavation, but examples subsequently recovered during post-excavation sieving of grave-fills.

7.1.2 The study of this material will assist in the following Field Event Aims:

- *to establishment a chronology for the Anglo-Saxon burials,*
- *To indicate the general development of the cemetery,*
- *To establish the range in burial rites, and to view possible change in rite over time.*

Methodology

7.1.3 All recovered material has been used in this assessment, approximately 75% of the assemblage having been examined in detail, with the remaining material receiving more cursory attention. The manageable number of beads retrieved meant that little or nothing would have been gained from sub-sampling the group.

7.1.4 The beads have yet to be catalogued. This will be achieved during analysis using standard form types, relying largely on the typologies established in the Buckland and Mucking excavation reports, as detailed by Hirst (Hirst 1999).

Quantification

7.1.5 Total quantities by cemetery/ feature and the major relevant bead classifications are shown on **Table 34** (representing total material recovered). In instances where the material is in very poor condition (finely powdered on excavation and recovery), an estimate of quantity and type has been made (indicated thus ‘*’ in **Table 34**). An unknown number of additional beads remain in an unexcavated soil-block.

7.1.6 Of the total of 834 beads, 21 examples came from ditch fills or were unstratified finds (comprising 19 from ARC SFB99 and 2 from ARC SLT99). The remaining 813 beads were recovered from 32 grave contexts. The common bead-forms, in the expected quantities, appear to be well-represented at Saltwood.

Provenance

7.1.7 The vast majority of beads were recovered from grave-fills, the majority (40%) deriving from the central cemetery. The beads were subject to detailed planning on site, with position within the grave and probable location on the body noted.

Table 34: Beads by site

Event code	Feature	Monochrome glass	Polychrome glass	Amber	Other	Totals
ARC SLT98C	Grave C9	9	1	0	2	12
ARC SLT98C	Grave C11	20	0	0	0	20
ARC SLT98C	Grave C16	113	3	2	2	120
ARC SLT98C	Grave C25	10	8	1	1*	20
ARC SLT98C	Grave C38	132	1	0	0	133
ARC SLT98C	Grave C41	0	0	9	0	9
ARC SLT98C	Grave C55	1	0	0	0	1
ARC SLT98C	Grave C70	8	1	0	0	9
ARC SLT99	Grave C112	0	0	1	0	1
ARC SLT99	Grave C113	0	0	60	0	60
ARC SLT99	Grave C114	0	0	2	0	2
ARC SLT99	Grave C117	10	3	25	0	38
ARC SLT99	Grave C129	6	0	1	0	7
ARC SLT99	Grave C134	3	0	0	0	3
ARC SLT99	Grave C136	0	1	0	0	1
ARC SLT99	Grave C141	1	0	0	0	1
ARC SLT99	Grave C146	80	0	0	0	80
ARC SLT99	Grave C151	0	1	0	0	1
ARC SLT99	Grave C155	11	0	0	0	11
ARC SLT99	Grave C156	3	0	0	2	5
ARC SLT99	Grave C170	0	0	9	0	9
ARC SLT99	Ditch 2278	0	0	1	0	1
ARC SFB99	Ditch W3	3	0	1	0	4
ARC SFB99	Ditch W8	1	0	0	0	1
ARC SFB99	Grave W17	2	0	0	0	2
ARC SFB99	Grave W18	0	1	0	0	1
ARC SFB99	Grave W23	0	1	0	0	1
ARC SFB99	Grave W38	1	0	1	0	2
ARC SFB99	Grave W40	5	0	25	0	30
ARC SFB99	Ditch W44	0	0	1	0	1
ARC SFB99	Grave W57	8	1	0	0	9
ARC SFB99	Grave W60	38	1	164	2*	205
ARC SFB99	Grave W84	11	0	0	0	11
ARC SFB99	Grave W111	2	0	1	0	3
ARC SFB99	Grave W125	2	0	0	0	2
ARC SFB99	Grave W126	4	0	0	0	4
ARC SFB99	Unstratified	0	0	13	0	13
?	Unstratified	0	1	0	0	1
Totals		484	24	317	9	834

* denotes estimate of quantity, item(s) too degraded for precise identification/ quantification

Conservation

- 7.1.8 The general condition of the material is good, allowing for easy identification of colour and bead-type. The amber items, as expected, required immediate conservation care and those intact upon excavation have survived their removal from their burial environment well.
- 7.1.9 The glass and amethyst beads appear to be in fairly stable condition, having survived the sandy environment very well. These items should require little by way of further conservation. The stabilisation of the amber beads is almost complete at the time of writing. As a whole, the assemblage needed little attention other than basic mechanical cleaning.
- 7.1.10 Further conservation of the monochrome glass material will be minimal, as these beads appear clean and stable. The polychrome glass items are similarly in good condition, though one bead in particular (a millefiori type recovered from grave C151) which is heavily chipped and worn, may need further analysis in order to establish both its colour and method of manufacture. The amber objects are currently being stabilised.

7.1.11 The amethyst items require little further work. Although the amethyst intaglio bead or setting (grave C156) may justify further study, this is not a conservation issue.

7.1.12 The conserved state of the material is unlikely to be compromised by further analysis. It is recommended that all bead material be retained, as even the drastically fragmented items can be identified in terms of material and colour and a reasonable estimate of numbers and size can be made.

Comparative material

7.1.13 Locally, the main cemetery sites that have produced valuable comparative material are Buckland (Dover; Evison 1987), Mill Hill (Deal; Parfitt & Brugmann 1997) and Lyminge (Warhurst 1955). At Buckland, 45 graves (from a total of 170) produced a total of 1,442 beads of which 1,116 were glass, 275 amber, and 51 of other material. At Mill Hill, 25 graves (from a total of 76) produced a total of 1,724 beads, of which 1,019 were glass, 698 amber, and 7 of other material. At Lyminge, 7 graves (from a total of 44) produced 174 beads in total. Although no detailed breakdown of beads is available for the Lyminge site, it is noteworthy that one grave produced 105 beads - more than half the site total. Whilst producing less material than the other cemeteries, the Lyminge site is significant due to its proximity to Saltwood, lying some 4km to the north.

Potential for further work

7.1.14 In the past, beads have often been overlooked and only sketchily referred to in reports, deferring to more obvious displays of wealth and craftsmanship such as ornamented buckles and swords. Having been excavated to current professional standards, the Saltwood beads (which provide some of the best-preserved artefacts recovered) offer the opportunity to add to the existing body of knowledge, both regionally and nationally.

7.1.15 The Anglo-Saxon beads from Saltwood have the potential to address a number of the Field Event Aims:

- *to establish a chronology for the Anglo-Saxon cemetery;*
- *To establish the range variation in burial rites, and to view possible change in rite over time;*

7.1.16 The bead assemblage will assist in the establishment of a chronology of each cemetery as indicated by the study of period-specific bead-forms, in conjunction with other artefact chronologies and typologies. The material may also assist in shedding light on the similarities and differences in burial practice over a given period within each cemetery by reinforcing the evidence provided by other recovered material.

- *to indicate the general development of the cemetery.*

7.1.17 The use of the bead data is important to assist in the understanding of how the Saltwood cemeteries relate to other Anglo-Saxon burial sites in East Kent, This will aid discussion of the general development of the cemetery as a whole and its context within the historical funerary landscape. Despite the overall differences between the grave-goods recovered at Saltwood and Lyminge, the close proximity of these two burial sites suggests that further comparative study would be both positive and productive.

7.1.18 The study of the Anglo-Saxon beads from Saltwood will also assist in the following further research objective:

- *To examine the nature of female costume over time, in terms of regional styles and the emulation of continental fashion.*

Bibliography

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