

### **7.13 ASSESSMENT OF BONE AND ANTLER OBJECTS**

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#### *Summary*

- 7.13.1 Two antler objects were recovered, one by hand excavation and the other from a sample. One is a fragment of a double-pointed pinbeater and the other is a small piece of the connecting plate from a composite comb. Both objects are of Anglo-Saxon date.

#### *Introduction*

- 7.13.2 A single, fragmentary example of an antler pinbeater was recovered by hand excavation. The object has been examined by a conservation assistant. In addition, a small section of the antler connecting plate from a composite comb was found

- 7.13.3 The objects are relevant to the following Fieldwork Event Aims;

- To recover artefact assemblages (especially pottery) to elucidate the sequence of site development; to provide information on the status and economy of the site and data on trade and exchange
- To recover environmental and other economic indicators if these are found to be present on site

#### *Methodology*

- 7.13.4 The objects have been examined with the aid of a hand lens and their original dimensions have been noted. Both have been identified to material by visual examination alone.

#### *Quantification*

- 7.13.5 A fragment from the central section of a double-ended pinbeater has an oval section at one end and a slightly broader, flattened oval section at the other. It stems from the central section of the object, most of whose original dimensions cannot now be reconstructed.

- 7.13.6 The section of connecting plate comes from a composite comb with five teeth per centimetre on one side. Unfortunately, only one part of the connecting plate survives, so that it is not clear whether it comes from a single-sided or double-sided comb. The connecting plate is noticeably shallow in section and is decorated by bands of vertical incised lines. There are no other diagnostic features, and the comb can only be said to be of Anglo-Saxon date.

#### *Provenance*

- 7.13.7 Both objects were probably made locally, at or near the site, using antler that may have been supplied by market, or gathered locally from the forest. The pinbeater came from the fill of a ditch that formed a boundary to the area of industrial activity (context 395, sub-group 36, Group 26, Phase 4). Associated pottery is noticeably mixed and of late pre-Roman Iron Age, early medieval and late medieval date. The comb fragment came from the fill of a pit, which also contained domestic debris, as well as the skeleton of a horse (context 403, sub-Group 129, Group 11, Phase 3).



### *Conservation*

- 7.13.8 Both objects are fragmentary, with fractures that appear to have occurred in antiquity. The surface of the pinbeater retains traces of polish but is pitted and abraded as a consequence of its burial environment.
- 7.13.9 Further analysis would be entirely descriptive and non-destructive, and would not conflict with any issues of long-term storage. The objects should be retained for future study, and should not be discarded. They should be kept in a controlled environment, in accordance with the conservation requirements for organic materials.

### *Comparative Material*

- 7.13.10 The cross-section of the pinbeater indicates that it is of double-ended form. Double-ended pinbeaters occur in late Iron Age and Roman contexts, but the majority come from Anglo-Saxon deposits. They are associated with the warp-weighted loom (Walton Rogers 1997, 1755; Riddler forthcoming). The single-ended pinbeater occurs in contexts from the ninth century onwards and at some sites, including London, Winchester and York, the double-ended variant is not seen beyond the tenth century. At Canterbury, however, it appears that this trend is not maintained, although the small quantity of double-ended pinbeaters from eleventh century contexts may well be residual (Elder and Riddler 1988, 135-8 and figs 26.94 and 27.95; Blockley *et al.* 1995, 1173-4). At the present time, there are few examples of mid Anglo-Saxon or later double-ended pinbeaters from East Kent outside of Canterbury itself. Current evidence suggests that they were used during the fifth to tenth centuries, with some slight changes in formal design over that period (Riddler forthcoming).
- 7.13.11 The comb fragment comes from a composite comb whose type cannot be identified with any certainty. The connecting plate has a shallow cross-section, which may be indicative of a double-sided composite. The decoration would also fit that comb type, which is largely of early and mid Anglo-Saxon date, rather than later. However, too little of the comb survives to be absolutely sure about this identification.

### *Potential for further work*

- 7.13.12 It should be noted that both these objects were residual and found in later contexts.
- 7.13.13 The pinbeater should be seen in the context of the other objects from Mersham that relate to textile manufacture (see Appendices 5, 11 and 14). As noted above, our understanding of textile production in East Kent in the late Anglo-Saxon and early medieval periods is fairly limited and the Mersham evidence is particularly welcome in this respect. However, the potential for further work on this piece is also limited; it is recommended that it be drawn and fully catalogued, with reference made to parallels from other assemblages.
- 7.13.14 The section of the comb is too fragmentary, unfortunately, to be able to place it within an appropriate context. Although there is a good Anglo-Saxon comb sequence for Canterbury, too little survives of this object to be able to relate it to other examples, and its presence should merely be noted, as another piece of evidence for domestic activity of Anglo-Saxon date.

### 7.13.15 Bibliography

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Riddler, I. D., forthcoming; Quantifying Pinbeaters, *Archaeologia Cantiana*.

Walton Rogers, P., 1997; *Textile Production at 16-22 Coppergate*, The Archaeology of York 17/11, London.