

APPENDIX 1 - WORKED BONE

1.1 Assessment of the Worked Bone

By Hilary Cool

Introduction

- 1.1.1 A small assemblage of worked bone was recovered during excavation works at Thurnham Roman Villa (ARC THM 98). An additional item, a clasp knife with a bone handle (sf 10850) and iron blade, has been included in the assessment of the metalwork.
- 1.1.2 All of the material was recovered by hand excavation.
- 1.1.3 The recovery and study of worked bone was undertaken in accordance with the Fieldwork Event Aims for the site, which are set out in section 2 of the main report, above. The principle aims to which this material can contribute are the dating of the occupation sequence for the villa's development, and establishing the status, economic orientation and patterns of contact and trade of the settlement.

Methodology

- 1.1.4 The material was assessed by personal inspection of the items. A basic archive catalogue was compiled following the guidelines set out by the Roman Finds Group and Finds Research Group (RFG & FRG 1993).
- 1.1.5 Where appropriate, entries given in the description have used names derived from standard typologies. The counters use that of Greep (1995) and the hair pins that of Crummy (1983).

Quantification

- 1.1.6 The worked bone consists of 12 items. There are five fittings and inlays from boxes or other pieces of furniture, four hair pins, one shaft fragment from a hair-pin or needle, and two counters. The precise range of material is shown in Table 6.1.
- 1.1.7 The counters and pins are mainly common 1st to 2nd century types. The inlays and fittings are not closely datable within the Roman period.

Provenance

- 1.1.8 The worked bone shows an interesting spatial distribution with most of the material coming from the vicinity of the aisled building. This type of distribution has not been noted in any of the other categories of material (metalwork and glass) inspected by this writer. In the interim report it was noted (2.5.1) that the animal bone showed varied preservation across the site. The spatial concentration of the worked bone may be reflecting a similar phenomenon.
- 1.1.9 It is noteworthy that the reports on the earlier excavations (Pirie 1961; Ashbee 1986) make no mention of any worked bone items. They are normally a common find on sites where bone survives well, so this too suggests there may be differential preservation.
- 1.1.10 The condition of the pieces in the assemblage is good. If the worked bone is suffering from differential preservation as suggested above, however, then the potential of the material will be limited.

Conservation

- 1.1.11 The bone items need no conservation input. The current packaging is adequate for long term storage.
- 1.1.12 It is not normal practice to discard Roman worked bone objects.

Comparative material

- 1.1.13 There is a very large group of worked bone reported on from the Marlowe excavations in Canterbury (Greep 1995). This report provides one of the standard references for the study of worked bone throughout the province, as well as providing useful local *comparanda*.
- 1.1.14 Very little worked bone has been recovered during the CTRL excavations, and this almost certainly reflects the generally poor preservation of bone in soils of the region. A few objects of worked bone were recovered at Pepper Hill/Waterloo Connection. No worked bone is reported from Northumberland Bottom, although the preservation of animal bone on that site appears to be better than most, and it is possible that worked bone objects will be identified at assessment stage. The four bone items recovered at Cuxton Anglo-Saxon cemetery are reported as in a poor state of preservation, and it was considered likely that other worked bone objects would originally have been present but had not survived.

Potential for further work

CTRL Landscape Zone Priorities and Fieldwork Event Aims

- 1.1.15 The following section discusses potential for further work in the light of the Landscape Zone Priorities and Fieldwork Event Aims.
- 1.1.16 If the site is suffering from the differential preservation of worked bone, the potential of the assemblage will be low to moderate. This possibility will need to be checked by examining the state of preservation of the animal bone in a range of contexts that normally have large finds assemblages such as ditch 20400.
- 1.1.17 The worked bone assemblage has some potential for contributing to the establishment of a dated sequence as several of the contexts in which the more closely dated items have been found do not appear to have pottery spot dates (contexts 15001, 15028, 15266, 20002, 20112).
- 1.1.18 If it is found that the spatial concentration of the bone in the vicinity of the aisled building is not just the result of differential preservation, then the material may help define the nature of the activities that were carried out there. The number of bone hair pins is especially interesting as two of the copper alloy hair pins (sf 10098 and 10104) were also found in the vicinity of this building. As these items are associated with female dress and adornment, such a concentration might suggest the aisled building was a place where females regularly gathered to a greater extent than elsewhere on the site. This would clearly contribute to the fieldwork event aim of establishing the status of the settlement, and perhaps also to identifying functional zones.
- 1.1.19 It is likely that the greatest potential of the worked bone will emerge when it is considered as an integral part of the whole material culture assemblage. The potential of the hair pin evidence when both the metal and bone pins are considered has already been noted. Similarly, the inlays and furniture fittings provide additional evidence to that of the metal furniture fittings for a lifestyle of some pretension.

Again this would contribute to the Fieldwork Event Aim establishing the status of the settlement.

Bibliography

Ashbee, P, 1986 A Roman building remnant at Thurnham: Excavations 1933, *Archaeologia Cantiana* CIII, 141-58

Crummy, N, 1983 *The Roman small finds from excavations in Colchester 1971-9*, Colchester Archaeol. Rep. 2, Colchester

Greep, S, 1995 Objects of bone, antler and Ivory from C.A.T. sites in Blockley, K, Blockley, M, Blockley, P, Frere, S S and Stow, S, *Excavations in the Marlowe car park and surrounding areas*, Archaeology of Canterbury V, Canterbury, 1112-52

Pirie, E, 1961 Thurnham Roman villa, *Archaeologia Cantiana* LXXIV (1960), 162-70

RFG & FRG 1993 Roman Finds Group and Finds Research Group AD 700-1700, 1993. The guidelines for the preparation of site archives and assessments for all finds other than fired clay vessels.

Table 6.1: Thurnham Roman Villa ARC THM 98: Worked Bone, context and descriptions

Context	Sf no	Material	Count	Period	Date Range	Simple name	Comments
10349		Bone	1			Inlay	decorated, iron rivet ?
10772		Bone	1			Hinge	Fragment
12101	10936	Bone	1			Inlay	Strip, stained green
15001	10996	Bone	1	RO	C1-C2	counter	Greep Type 1
15001		Bone	1			Pin/needle	Shank fragment
15028	10825	Bone	1	RO	C1-C2	Pin	Crummy Type 2 complete
15106	10855	Bone	1			Inlay	Strip fragment
15190	10871	Bone	1	RO	C1-C4	Pin	Crummy Type 1 fragment
15263	11000	Bone	1			Fitting	angled strip, ? Box
15266	10992	Bone	1	RO	C1-C2	Pin	Crummy Type 2 fragment
20002	10715	Bone	1	RO	C1-C2	Pin	Crummy Type 2 fragment
20112	10867	Bone	1	RO	C1-C2	counter	Greep Type 1