

NOTES

¹ P.-R. Giot, 'La ceramique onctueuse de Cornouaille', *Bulletin de la Société Archéologique du Finistère*, xcvi (1971), 109-30. Professor Giot introduced me to *ceramique onctueuse* and kindly sent me samples of it: I am very grateful to him for his assistance and encouragement. I am obliged to the chief petrographer of the Institute of Geological Sciences for making Dr Sabine's thin-section available. Dr David Peacock advised me on the interpretations of the sections, and to him I am most indebted. Finally, Miss L. Dyson-Bruce kindly prepared the drawings from my originals.

² M. M. Rix and G. C. Dunning, 'Excavation of a medieval garderobe in Snargate Street, Dover, in 1945', *Archaeologia Cantiana*, LXIX (1955), 132-58.

³ *Ibid.*, 151.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 152; P.-R. Giot, 'Les sites "protohistoriques" des dunes de Guisseny, Finistère', *Annales de Bretagne*, LXXX (1973), 105-27; cf. Giot, *op. cit.* in note 1, 125.

⁵ Giot, *op. cit.* in note 1, 109.

⁶ P.-R. Giot, 'Penmarc'h et Geoffrey Chaucer', *Bulletin de la Société Archéologique du Finistère*, xcix (1973), 117-19.

MEDIAEVAL TUNING PEGS FROM WHITBY, N. YORKSHIRE (FIG. 7)

In a recent volume of this journal,¹ Professor Donald Fry described in detail four small bone artefacts illustrated in Peers's and Radford's report of the 1924-5 excavation at Whitby, N. Yorkshire.² These he correctly identified, for the first time, as tuning pegs from stringed musical instruments, and suggested that they are to be associated with the large amounts of other Whitby bonework which, where stratified, dates mostly between A.D. 657 and 867, the first occupation of the site.

Unfortunately, however, the results of some recent research tend to suggest the likelihood of a date very much later than this, and that the instruments concerned are rather unlikely to have been lyres. Besides the circumstantial evidence of the presence of early Anglo-Saxon bone on the site, support for assigning the pegs to such a period is somewhat lacking, for, as Fry remarks, they were found in an unstratified context.³ As such they join the rapidly increasing ranks of very similar objects found in museum collections and during recent excavations elsewhere in England.⁴ These they resemble not only in size but also in shape and material, and there are currently upwards of twenty such bone pegs known (excluding more than a dozen of a shorter type), many of them from sites with occupations beginning in Saxon times, just as at Whitby, but with human activity continuing unbroken throughout the middle ages. Fortunately a good number of these pegs are stratified, some very closely, and none of them is earlier than the example from Wallingstones near Hereford, which dates from the end of the 12th century (FIG. 7, e).⁵

If, moreover, we turn to the known instruments of the first millennium, we can see there immediately the apparently exclusive use of wood, and soft wood at that, in the making of their tuning-pegs. Of the ten lyres known to have been excavated⁶ less than half bore any trace of surviving pegs, and despite extensive research no stray individual finds have been made (a fact that in itself might suggest that the material used was customarily a soft one). The four known sets of pegs⁷ were in fact all of wood, which was identified in the case of the Sutton Hoo lyre as being of a particularly soft type,⁸ and so we are faced with a complete absence of any early parallels for the material composition of the Whitby pieces; since none of the surviving wooden pegs could be said to have any structural characteristics it is impossible to assess the significance of any morphological similarities.

The contention that bone is not a characteristic of Anglo-Saxon lyre tuning-pegs has further support from the practicalities of fitting-out and operating instruments of this sort. For both structural and functional reasons it is not advantageous for such moving parts to be made from a material harder and stronger than that of the wooden structure into which they fit, unless the instrument is either to have metal stringing or is

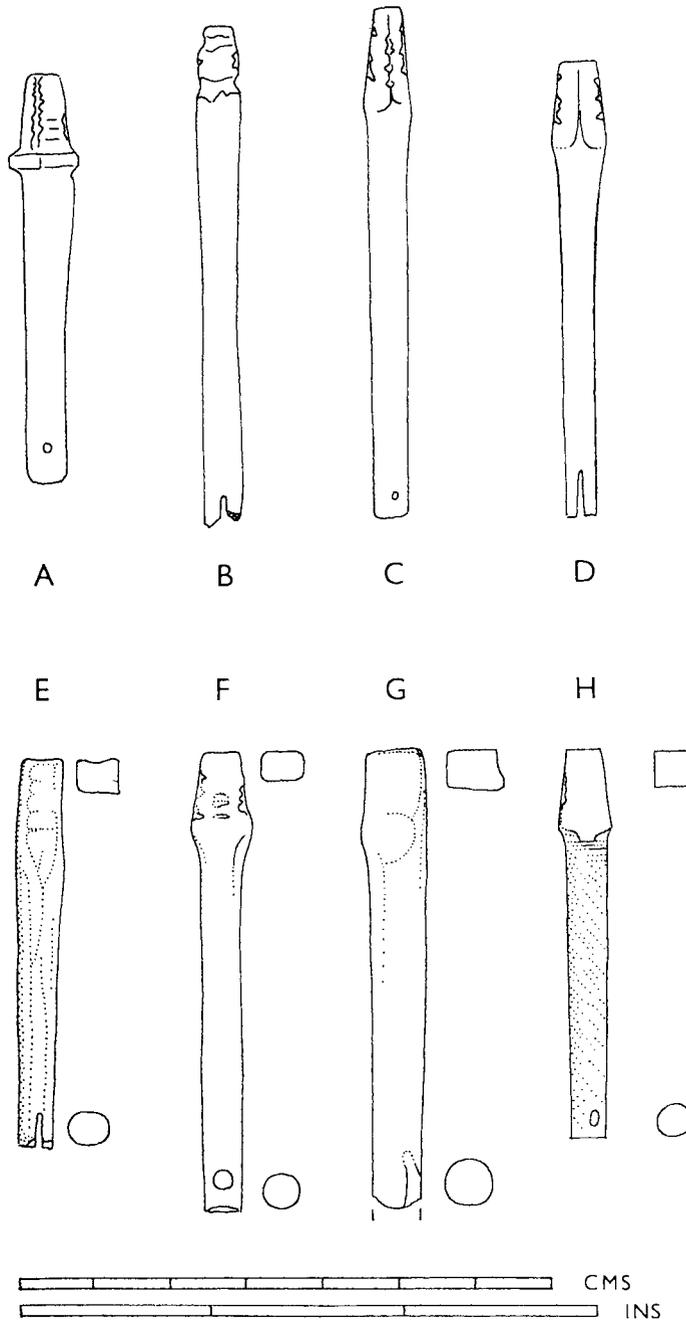


FIG. 7

MEDIEVAL TUNING PEGS

A-D. From Whitby, N. Yorks; *E.* Hereford: Wallingstones. Late 12th century; *F.* Winchester: Lower Brook Street. 14th century; *G.* Gloucester: 38-44 Eastgate Street. 15th century; *H.* Oxford: 79-80 St Aldates. 15th century. Sc. 1:1

of a softwood construction itself. Neither of these two conditions is met by the Anglo-Saxon lyre,⁹ which is known to have had a hardwood frame, and is now believed to have been strung with gut.¹⁰

The form of the four Whitby pegs clearly indicates their suitability for both lyres and harps, as Fry states, but in view of their unstratified nature, comparative material would now tend to suggest that they are more likely to date from the 13th century or later. If this should prove to be true they would then probably be associated with the large English harp, during the decline of the lyre in this country, while at the same time the possibility of a connexion with the lute and fiddle families cannot be ruled out. Unfortunately, an example of direct association between such pegs and actual instrumental remains has yet to be excavated.

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¹ D. K. Fry, 'Anglo-Saxon lyre tuning pegs from Whitby', *Medieval Archaeol.*, xx (1976), 137-9.

² C. Peers and C. A. R. Radford, 'The Saxon monastery of Whitby', *Archaeologia*, lxxxix (1943), 27-88.

³ Miss Bruce-Mitford has noted in correspondence that the Whitby pegs may have been found apart from one another, and that they probably represent musicians' rejects (not manufacturers' rejects as implied by Fry in note 34, p. 139).

⁴ R. G. Lawson, 'Stringed instrument remains in English museum collections' (forthcoming).

⁵ Hereford City Museum, Wallingstones A.I.81. For further details of finds from Oxford, see B. Durham, 'Bone instrument pegs' in B. Durham, 'Archaeological investigations in St Aldates, Oxford' *Oxoniensia*, xlii (1977), 163-166. For details of finds from Winchester and elsewhere, see R. G. Lawson, 'Stringed musical instrument remains' in *Winchester Studies*, vii (forthcoming), and op. cit. in note 4 above.

⁶ The Bergh Apton 22 and Morningthorpe 97 remains (Norfolk), appear in R. G. Lawson 'The lyre from grave 22' in B. Green and A. Rogerson, *The Anglo-Saxon cemetery at Bergh Apton, Norfolk* (East Anglian Archaeol., vii (1978)), 87-97. The others are referred to in R. L. S. and M. Bruce-Mitford, 'The Sutton Hoo lyre, *Beowulf*, and the origins of the frame harp', *Antiquity*, xliiv (1970). I include in this category the Broa i Halle (Gotland) and Concevreux (Aisne) instruments, which were buried in one piece even if they did not survive as such.

⁷ These four sets were excavated along with the Sutton Hoo, Köln and two Oberflacht (Württemberg) instruments, although only the Sutton Hoo pegs survive today. The Köln pegs in fact disintegrated on exposure to the air; see F. Fremersdorf, 'Zwei Wichtige Frankengräber aus Köln', *I.P.E.K.* (1943), 136-7.

⁸ Poplar or willow: see R. L. S. and M. Bruce-Mitford, op. cit. in note 6 above.

⁹ Nor in all probability are they met by the later Saxon harp, as far as can be seen at present.

¹⁰ This is evident from the softness of the Sutton Hoo pegs, and also, perhaps, from the predominantly red colouration of strings (wine-soaked?) in contemporary European manuscript illustrations. It is also interesting to note the correlation between the first appearance of metal strings and bone pegs after *circa* A.D. 1100.

THE BRISTOL CONFERENCE, 1978

The 21st Annual Conference of the Society was held in Bristol from 14 to 17 April 1978. The theme was 'The Development of Medieval Bristol'. On the first evening, after a sherry party given by the University of Bristol, Frances Neale lectured on 'The topography of medieval Bristol: the documentary evidence'. On 15 April the following lectures were given: M. Ponsford on 'The development of medieval Bristol: the archaeological evidence', A. Vince on 'Medieval pottery from the Lower Severn Valley', D. Twohig on 'Medieval Cork', Carolyn Heighway on 'Medieval Gloucester', and K. Barton on 'Ham Green pottery'. In the evening members were entertained by the Deputy Mayor at a Civic Reception held in St Nicholas Church Museum. On 16 April members were guided round medieval Bristol before departing on an excursion to Croscombe Manor and Cheddar. On 17 April an excursion took place to Westbury College, Olveston Court and medieval Gloucester (Blackfriars and St Oswald's Priory). The Society must record its considerable gratitude to David Dawson, of the City of Bristol Museum and Art Gallery, who acted as local secretary.

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