

Objects of Bone and Antlers by S J Greep and G G Jones¹

- 1 Type 1 gaming counter with a plain obverse and reverse surface. This, and the Type 2 gaming counter below, are common Roman forms at Caerleon and elsewhere (e.g. Greep 1986b, 202 for Caerleon example; Greep 1993, 1125-7 for general discussion of the type). 16mm diameter, 2mm thick. These forms are datable c. A.D. 40-200/250. (E1, SF3 Phase VI).
- 2 Type 2 gaming counter with a counter-sunk obverse and plain reverse surface (e.g. Greep 1986b, 202 for Caerleon examples; Greep 1993, 1125-7 for general discussion). A type later than
- no. 1 (above) but possibly not as late as previously indicated. 15mm diameter, 4mm thick. On present evidence it is not possible to demonstrate a chronological range other than the mid-second to mid-third centuries (cf. Greep forthcoming). (Unstratified).
- 3 Type 1 gaming counter with counter-sunk circular depression (diameter 4mm) in centre of obverse face. Edge chamfered top and bottom. 20mm diameter, 3mm thick. (D4 SF80 Phase III).
- 4 Broken bone pin or stylus. 45mm long. (D4 SF30 Phase III).
- 5 Tip of red deer antler tine, worked smooth and worn. Snapped from the remainder of the tine. 70mm long. (E2 SF8 Phase VI). (Unillustrated).
- 6 Broken lower tusk of male pig. The enamel

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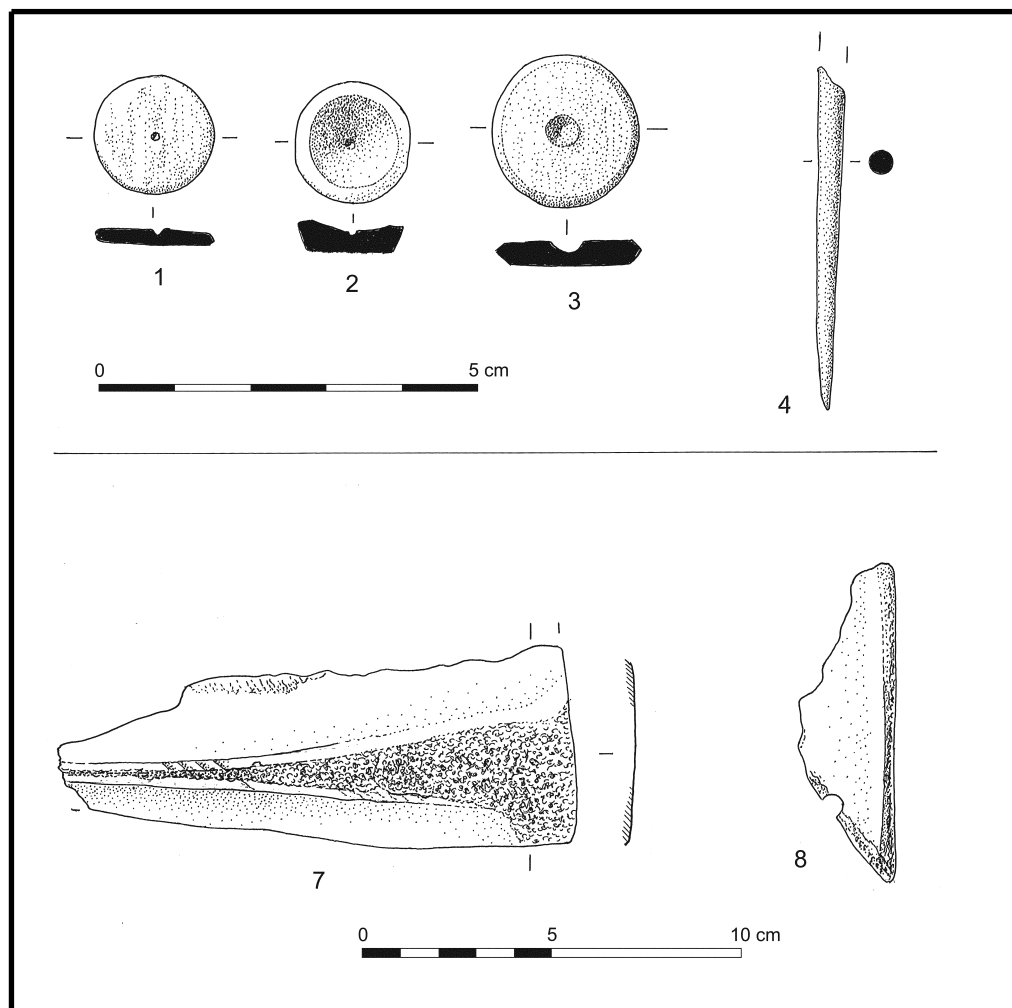


Fig. 52: Bone and antler artefacts

is worn through and is polished around the tip in a way not characteristic of normal tooth wear. Possibly used as a point. (Unstratified). (Unillustrated).

- 7 Incomplete section of worked cattle scapula, 135mm long. (D7 Phase II).

This belongs to a small class of worked scapula of the Roman period, though of uncertain function, characterised by 'the removal of the acromion process, the coracoid process and the projecting rim of the glenoid.... Sometimes the sharp inferior edge of the neck is also cut away' (Marples 1974, 123). There is an obvious difficulty in differentiating 'working' from 'butchery' but some objects in this class are clearly worked; some are perforated (e.g. no. 5 below) or decorated and one from London (Chapman 1980, 93-5, fig. 54.490) carried the graffito CIIRIIS IIQITIS (Ceres Equitis) which may imply use for scrapping wax.

A number of worked scapulae have previously been recorded from Caerleon. Worked bos and sheep scapulae were recorded from the 'Roman Gates' excavations (Greep 1992, 189-90) from barrack accommodation of Antoinette date. Of the two, from Flavian-Trajanic contexts from the Legionary Museum site (Zienkiewicz 1993, 117), one was thought possibly to have been employed to burnish and clean plates of lorica (based on a similar find associated with the Corbridge Hoard), although alternative uses, such as a connection with leather working were suggested. Apart from the Caerleon examples there are parallels from other military contexts (e.g. Frere and St. Joseph 1974, 222-3 where 13 examples came from pre-Flavian contexts; Curle 1911, pl. LXXXIII.2 for a Flavian example), suggesting a multi-purpose tool for which a specific function may often be difficult to ascribe.

- 8 Fragment of cattle scapula. 83mm long. There are the remains of a single, drilled, perforation, 6mm diameter across which the object has broken, cf. No. 4 above. (D5 Phase III).