Assessment of the Non-ceramic finds from the Manor House, Stamford Bridge, North Yorkshire (OSA02 WB36)

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Fragments of 19 metal artefacts were recovered from a watching brief at the Manor House, Stamford Bridge, North Yorkshire (OSA02 WB36).

The finds consist of one copper alloy coin (a late 18th-century penny) and 18 iron objects. Four objects were found in contexts of high to late medieval date (i.e. late 13th to 15th century). Two objects were found in late medieval contexts, associated with late 14th-century pottery. Seven objects were found in early post-medieval contexts (associated with 16th-century pottery) and six objects were unstratified and can only be dated by their intrinsic characteristics.

Description

Copper Alloy

An unstratified copper alloy penny of George III, minted in 1779 (SF3). The amount of wear on this piece suggests that it may have been in circulation for decades and was probably lost in the 19th century.

Iron

The finds include a horse shoe, a knife with a bone or antler handle, a lock, nails, a pintle, sheet metal and a wedge.

Unidentified

Eleven unidentified iron fragments were recovered from context 1816, of late medieval date.

Horse Shoe

A large horse shoe with one remaining nail was recovered from an unstratified context. Large horses were initially selectively bred for battle (to take the weight of a knight in full armour) and subsequently replaced the ox as the standard beast of burden in agricultural communities. A late medieval or post-medieval date is likely.

Knife

The handle from a knife was recovered from an early post-medieval context (2400). The knife had a scale tang and the handle was composed of plates of bone or antler riveted in place by three circular iron rivets. The end of the knife handle is shaped on one side. The xray shows no sign of non-ferrous metal but indicates that there are triangular shoulder plates at the blade end of the handle. Such plates might have been non-ferrous metal or iron. The xray is not powerful enough to reveal any details of the relative density to xrays of the shoulder plates and the knife blade.

Lock

A lump of corroded iron from context 1816, associated with late 14th-century pottery, was identified in xray as a lock (SF2). The main types of medieval lock were the barrel padlock, the box padlock and the standard lock. The first two were used with a padlock bolt, a U-shaped rod of iron with iron springs soldered to one of the pointed ends. The bolt was pushed through a narrow slot, the springs then opened up and the only way the bolt could be extracted was to slide a key over the springs to compress them. The most common forms had one or two flat springs and the key simply had a narrow slot cut in it. In the box padlock the main body of the lock was rectangular whereas in the barrel padlock the main body had a circular or ovoid cross section. The standard lock worked in the same way as those used in recent times, with a key being inserted in a key hole and rotated to slide a bolt in or out.

The xray and visual examination shows that the Stamford Bridge lock had a rectangular box shape with a cylindrical tube added to one of the smaller sides and a hollow tube added to the side furthest from that tube. Thus, one of the prongs of the padlock bolt was plain and slotting into a narrow tube on the side of the padlock and the other prong must have had springs attached and fitted into the body of the lock. There is a trace on the xray of a rod within the lock which is roughly in line with the external tube. All the iron components in the lock are coated with non-ferrous metal plating, which corrodes to a green colour and therefore includes copper.

It is clear that about a third of the lock is missing and that even the surviving part has been contorted out of shape during burial. Investigative cleaning would therefore not be very productive except to establish the shape and arrangement of the key hole and internal structure around the rod.

Nails

Eleven iron nails were recovered. Four come from high medieval contexts (1017 SF12, SF13 and unnumbered and 2212 SF20), five from early post-medieval contexts (1011 SF1, 2400 SF18, SF20 and unnumbered) and four were unstratified (SF5 and SF14).

Pintle

A pintle was recovered from a post-medieval context (2400 SF17). Pintles consist of an iron spike, which would have been driven into a thick wooden beam, such as a gatepost, door frame or window frame. At the end of the spike and at right angles to it was a cylindrical rod on which a gate, door or window would have been hinged.

Sheet

A plain rectangular sheet of iron was recovered from a probably post-medieval context (4000 SF4). There is no sign of any holes in the sheet so it cannot have been mounted on a wooden base and its function, if any, is unknown.

Wedge

An unstratified iron wedge was recovered (SF11). Such wedges can have many functions and it may well be of recent origin.

Assessment

These metal finds are in the main typical of domestic activity and building. The large horseshoe probably indicates the presence of a cart horse but at what period is unknown.

The only unusual find is the lock, which is unfortunately not complete and not in good condition. It was, however, recovered from a rather late context since such locks were used mainly in the 11th and 12th centuries. It may therefore have been a late example of the type or it may have been in use for some time before being discarded or it may indeed be residual from 11th/12th-century occupation.

Appendix One. List of metal finds

Context	REFNO	Cname	Form	Nosh	NoV	Description	Condition	class	date
1816		IRON		11	1	UNIDENTIFIED SCRAPS		IRON	late medieval
US	3	COPP	COIN	1	1	GEORGE III HALFPENNY 1775. LITTLE WEAR SO PROBABLY LOST IN L18TH/E19TH C	BRONZE DISEASE	COPP	unstrat
US		IRON	HOSH	1	1	LARGE WITH ONE NAIL REMAINING		IRON	unstrat
2400		IRON	KNIFE	1	1	XRAY OSA02 WB36 PLATE 2;SCALE TANG WITH ?BONE HANDLE;SHAPED END;ATTACHED WITH THREE IRON RIVETS; TRIANGULAR SHOULDER PLATES IRON?		IRON	post medieval
1816	2	IRON	LOCK	1	1	XRAY OSA02 WB36 PLATE 1;BARREL PADLOCK		IRON	late medieval
1017	13	IRON	NAIL	1	1			IRON	high medieval
1017	12	IRON	NAIL	1	1			IRON	high medieval
1017		IRON	NAIL	1	1			IRON	high medieval
2212	20	IRON	NAIL	1	1			IRON	high medieval
1011	1	IRON	NAIL	2	2			IRON	post medieval
2400	18	IRON	NAIL	1	1			IRON	post medieval
2400		IRON	NAIL	1	1			IRON	post medieval
2400	21	IRON	NAIL	1	1			IRON	post medieval
US	5	IRON	NAIL	1	1			IRON	unstrat
US	14	IRON	NAIL	2	2			IRON	unstrat
US		IRON	NAIL	1	1			IRON	unstrat
2400	17	IRON	PINTLE	1	1			IRON	post medieval
1400	4	IRON	SHEET	1	1	XRAY OSA02 WB36 PLATE 2;ROUGHLY RECTANGULAR SHEET. NO FEATURES VISIBLE IN XRAY		IRON	post medieval
US	11	IRON	WEDGE	1	1			IRON	unstrat