

Metal finds from Sprotbrough Gardens, Sprotbrough, South Yorkshire (OA01 EX03)

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Twenty-six metal artefacts were recovered from excavations at Sprotbrough Gardens, Sprotbrough, South Yorkshire, carried out by C Fenton-Thomas for On Site Archaeology (Site Code: OSA01 EX03).

The excavations revealed that the site had been occupied intermittently from the prehistoric period onwards and that during the 18th and 19th centuries earlier levels were disturbed and redeposited as part of the landscaping of the gardens. There is also a moderate amount of disturbance of earlier levels, indicated by the presence of modern material in small quantities in otherwise well-stratified assemblages. Thus, it is not possible to reliably date any of the undiagnostic metalwork by its associations. Despite this, the collection includes one pin of 7th to 9th-century date, late medieval or early post-medieval cauldron and possible chafing dish fragments and one unidentified object which is stratified in a Phase 1 deposit which is otherwise completely devoid of finds.

Catalogue

Copper Alloy

Five copper alloy artefacts were recovered. One of these was stratified in a Group 1 deposit in Phase 1 (and is the only artefact from these deposits), one is a 7th-9th-century dress pin and the other three are of late medieval to 17th-century date.



Plate 1 SF1

SF1. (2184) Phase 1 Group 1 (Fig 000 No. 1; Plate 1). A fragment of a copper alloy object cast in a one-piece mould. The remaining fragment consists of a thin sheet with a roughly semi-circular-sectioned ridge, 45mm long with mouldings at either end, with a semi-circular thin strip on one side. This sheet has been wrapped back over the ridge. The identity of this object is unknown whilst its archaeological context suggests that it may be prehistoric.



Plate 2 Polyhedral-headed pin (photo: K Steane)



Plate 3 Polyhedral-headed pin (photo: K Steane)

Cleaning above (2009). Unstrat (2009 is a Phase 3 wall) (Fig 00 No.2; Plate 2). A polyhedral-headed pin, 58 mm long and approximately 2mm diameter. The head (Plate 3) has 6 square faces and eight triangular ones (ie a cube with its corners cut off). The shaft is bent at a sharp angle in the middle and has a slight swelling in its diameter (maximum 2.5mm) in the end closer to the pointed tip. Such pins were used for securing items of clothing in the 7th to 9th centuries and the bent shaft is typical and suggests that the clothing they secured put the pin under some strain, a cloak fastened at the neck, for example.

(2148). Phase 4.Fill of stone-lined culvert (Fig 00 No.5). A thin rectangular strip, 44mm by 13mm, with five circular holes, probably for rivets. The holes are arranged with two at either end of the strip and one in the middle. There is evidence for faint incised decoration in a narrow band running along one long edge. The strip has a curiously rough surface but no signs of what has caused this uneven finish. The strip is possibly a stiffener, riveted onto a leather belt. Sheet metalwork decorated with faint incised lines is typical of the later medieval and early post-medieval periods, consistent with the phase of the context in which it was found.



Plate 4 Chafing dish handle – front view (photo: K Steane)



Plate 5 Chafing dish handle – side view (photo: K Steane)

(4113). Phase 5. Fill of channel 4079 (Fig 00 No.4; Plates 4 and 5). The drop handle from a metal vessel. The handle consists of a cast attachment with a rivet at the end but no trace of the original vessel wall (which would have been 2.5mm thick) and a trapezoidal drop handle, 39mm tall and 45mm wide. Such handles were used, for example, on chafing dishes in the 15th, 16th and 17th centuries and this is consistent with the date of the deposit although the vessel would probably have been of some age by then.



Plate 6 Cauldron rim - exterior (*photo: K Steane*)



Plate 7 Cauldron rim - interior (*photo: K Steane*)

(4109). Phase 5. Backfill of construction cut for a tanning trough (Fig 00 No.3; Plates 6 and 7) The rim and neck of a cast copper alloy cauldron. The rim is sharply everted with a flattened top (facing inwards). The fragment has sooting on the exterior. Such vessels were used in the kitchens of well-to-do households in the later medieval and early post-medieval periods.

Iron

Twenty iron objects were recovered of which the majority were nails whilst those which were not nails were in the main clearly of 19th-century or later date.

Three nails were recovered from medieval contexts: (2135) Phase 1, upper fill of pit 2136, associated with later 12th-century pottery, and (3079) Phase 3 Group 11.

A modern wing nut and bolt (marked ACE on one of the wings) was recovered from a dump assigned to Phase 3c (context 2010) and is therefore intrusive.

The remaining stratified pieces consist of five nails, one inserted through a rhomboid rove or washer, one possible bar (which might be a large nail shank) and one rectangular sheet with two centrally-placed holes. Such strips were used for binding, for example in chests and boxes, and for providing strengthening and protection to wooden objects. All of these pieces come from Phase 5 or 6 deposits which contain mainly 17th-century material.

Unstratified finds are three nails, a door knob of late 19th or 20th-century type (a copper alloy sphere attached to a square-sectioned rod), a solid iron loop handle from a wooden drawer or door (oval cross section, broken attachments with evidence for countersunk screw holes) and a pair of calipers. All of these finds are likely to be of modern date.

Lead Alloy

An unstratified lead disk was found during cleaning of (2009). The disk is circular with a central circular hole and two smaller opposed oval holes. The metal around these latter holes has broken away, suggesting that these holes were used to attach the disk. The precise function of the disk is unclear but the regularity of its manufacture suggests a 19th century or later date, perhaps the backing plate for a door handle (but rather plain) or associated with the supply of gas within a house.

Discussion

The metalwork from this site in the main confirms the impression gained from other artefacts, that the site is close to an important pre-conquest settlement, was occupied in the medieval and post-medieval periods and includes a scatter of modern finds. The late- to post-medieval artefacts include a chafing dish or brazier handle. Such objects were used to either provide warmth for personal comfort or to keep food warm. They are shown on Flemish genre paintings of the 17th century and are probably a sign of reasonable prosperity. Similarly, the use of cast copper alloy cauldrons was probably also restricted to the more wealthy members of society. This provides more support for the idea that the material dumped on the site as part of the construction of the Phase 5 buildings originated in the manor house demolished in 1671. Neither find is consistent with the light industrial activity actually taking place on the site in Phase 5.

| Context | period | context group | Description | class | Form | Nosh | Description | Weight | Condition |
|---------|--------|------------------|---|------------|--------------|------|---|--------|-----------|
| 2010 | 3c | | Buried soil or dump | IRON | NUT AND BOLT | 1 | WING NUT AND BOLT | 44 | |
| 2054 | 6 | | Dump deposit/ levelling layer. Same as (2055) | IRON | NAIL | 1 | | 8 | |
| 2087 | 5 | 6 | Levelling layer pre construction of walls (2011) and (2048) (group 6) | IRON | | 1 | | 6 | CORRODED |
| 2087 | 5 | 6 | Levelling layer pre construction of walls (2011) and (2048) (group 6) | IRON | | 1 | | 4 | CORRODED |
| 2087 | 5 | 6 | Levelling layer pre construction of walls (2011) and (2048) (group 6) | IRON | | 1 | | 2 | CORRODED |
| 2088 | 5 | 6 | Rammed stone surface (group 6) | IRON | NAIL | 1 | | 8 | |
| 2135 | 3a | | Upper fill of pit [2136] sealed by floor deposit (2100) in med building | IRON | NAIL | 1 | | 1 | |
| 2135 | 3a | | Upper fill of pit [2136] sealed by floor deposit (2100) in med building | IRON | NAIL | 1 | | 2 | |
| 2148 | 4 | Culvert | Fill of stone lined culvert (2145)/ [2147] | COPPSHEET | | 1 | THIN SHEET WITH FIVE CIRCULAR HOLES - TWO AT EACH END AND ONE IN MIDDLE;VERY ROUGH BATTERED SURFACE;FAINT INCISED DEC ALONG ONE LONG EDGE | 2 | |
| 2184 | 1 | 1 | Fill of gully [2185] (group 1) | COPPOBJECT | | 1 | RECTANGULAR STRIP ATTACHED TO SHEET ON ONE SIDE. THIS SURVIVES AS A SEMI-CIRCULAR SHEET WHICH IS WRAPPED BACK ONTO THE STRIP | 7 | |

| | | | | | | | | |
|----------------------|---|-----------------------------|---|----------------|---|--|----|----------------|
| 3043 | 5 | 10 | Foundation deposit for building (group 10) | IRON BAR | 1 | RECT-SECTIONED BAR;POSSIBLY A LARGE NAIL SHANK | 50 | |
| 3043 | 5 | 10 | Foundation deposit for building (group 10) | IRON NAIL | 1 | | 17 | |
| 3043 | 5 | 10 | Foundation deposit for building (group 10) | IRON NAIL;ROVE | 1 | NAIL STICKING THROUGH RHOMBOID SHEET | 30 | |
| 3079 | 4 | Group 11 | Upper fill of ditch re-cut [3218] (group 11) | IRON NAIL | 1 | BENT INTO BROAD U-SHAPE | 5 | NOT CORRODED |
| 4000 | 6 | | Dump deposit across area 3 | IRON NAILS | 1 | FRAGMENTS | 2 | |
| 4051 | 6 | | Dump deposit | IRON SHEET | 1 | RECTANGULAR SHEET WITH TWO CENTRALLY PLACED HOLES, ONE AT EITHER END | 30 | |
| 4109 | 5 | tanning trough 4068 | Backfill of construction cut [4143] for tanning trough [4068] | COPPCAULDRON | 1 | CAST COPPER ALLOY CAULDRON RIM AND NECK | 56 | SOOTING ON EXT |
| 4112 | 5 | stone lined channel 4112 | Stone-lined channel bonded to [4137] | IRON NAIL | 1 | | 12 | |
| 4113 | 5 | stone channel 4079 etc fill | Fill of stone channel (4079) (4096) (4112) Same as (2041) | COPPHANDLE | 1 | DROP HANDLE | 33 | |
| CLEANING ABOVE 2009 | | | | COPPPIN | 1 | POLYGONAL-HEADED PIN;BENT IN MIDDLE OF SHANK | 3 | |
| CLEANING TOP OF 2009 | | | | IRON NAIL | 1 | | 21 | |
| CLEANING TOP OF 2009 | | | | IRON NAIL | 1 | | 21 | |

| | | | | |
|----------------------------|-------------------|---|--|-----|
| CLEANING TOP OF 2009 | IRON NAIL | 1 | | 5 |
| CLEANING TOP OF 2009 | LEAD DISK | 1 | THIN SHEET CUT TO CIRCULAR DISK WITH CENTRAL CIRCULAR HOLE AND TWO OPPOSED OVAL HOLES | 16 |
| US | IRON CALIPERS | 1 | SLIDING MECHANISM MISSING OTHERWISE COMPLETE | 207 |
| US | IRON DOOR KNOB | 1 | | 63 |
| US | IRON HANDLE | 1 | DRAWER HANDLE | 194 |