

## **A copper Alloy bowl from Holme Church Lane, Beverley (OSA04 EV01)**

### ***Alan Vince***

A complete copper alloy bowl was recovered from an evaluation at Holme Church Lane, Beverley, carried out by On Site Archaeology (Site code OSA04 EV01). The vessel came from context 2039 which from its position in the stratigraphic sequence is clearly of mid 13<sup>th</sup>-century or earlier date.

The bowl was lifted in a soil block and submitted to Lincoln Conservation Laboratory for X-radiography. Three X-ray plates were taken (Table 1).

Plate No.	Orientation	Detail
OSA04 EV01 1	Vertical view	110/2.5
OSA04 EV01 2	Vertical view	110/15
OSA04 EV01 3	Horizontal view	110/10

### **Description**

The bowl is \*\* mm diameter and \*\* mm tall. It is made from sheet metal and was probably beaten over a wooden former and then spun on a lathe to produce the finished appearance. This is the standard method for producing shallow sheet metal vessels. If the vessel is too deep or has a closed profile then the vessel would have to have been made in several parts and riveted together. There is no evidence for any such riveting nor for any repair and there is evidence for lathe turning, in the form of parallel lines on the walls in the vertical x-ray plates, caused by slight variations in thickness. There any evidence from the x-radiographs for decoration, although shallow incision would only be visible by eye.

One side of the bowl has been crushed, although it is not possible from the x-ray plate to see if this was pre- or post-burial damage.

There is no sign of any contents in the x-rays although there is a single nail, presumably an accidental inclusion in the soil block.

### **Discussion**

Sheet metal bowls of this type are shown on medieval manuscripts (often representations of the Last Supper) where they were used alongside ewers or aquamaniles for the ritual washing of hands before a feast. The shape and size of the Beverley bowl are similar to an

example from London which was decorated with shallow burnished design (LMMC 1940, Fig 65. Acc No. 40.15). This vessel was thought to be of German manufacture.

## Assessment

Complete copper alloy bowls are rare and this example might be worthy of cleaning and museum display. A conservation assessment should be undertaken to establish how stable the metal is and to determine the type of packaging and storage required. It is uncertain what the value of retaining the vessel in its soil block might be. Having determined that the context does not include any associated artefact or contents, the soil could be removed and the vessel cleaned. At this stage a second examination of the bowl should be undertaken, by a specialist in such metalwork. It is likely that a specialist report would take a full day, c.£176 plus VAT, and would include a survey of the academic literature.

## Bibliography

LMMC (1940) *London Museum medieval catalogue*.