

Assessment of the Metal Finds from Holbeach Road, Spalding (HOLS04)

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A number of fragments of iron were found during archaeological excavations at Holbeach Road, Spalding, undertaken by Pre-Construct Archaeology Ltd. With two exceptions, the finds were submitted to the Lincoln Conservation Laboratory for an assessment of their stability, x-radiography and packaging.

Description

Fifteen artefacts were recorded. Two could not be identified whilst thirteen were identified as a result of study of the x-ray plates.

Nails

Four nails were recovered, from contexts 7, 22, 26 and unstratified. None warranted further description.

Horse shoes

Two horse shoes were recovered, from contexts 11 and 25. That from context 11 is from a wide shoe with a plain outer edge. Two of the nails remain in place. The shoe probably came from a medium-sized animal and measures 100mm from the front to the rear. That from context 25 is of a similar shape but is smaller, measuring 80mm from front to rear.

The wide horse shoe with a smooth outline is a late medieval innovation which continued in use into the post-medieval period.

Staples

Two staples were recovered, from contexts 7 and 26. Amongst other uses, staples could be used to hang gates to a gate post.

Tools

Two possible tools were recovered, from contexts 25 and 27. That from context 25 might simply be a long nail but it could be an awl.

Hooks

A large hook for use with a looped "eye" as a fastener was recovered from context 25. The hook has a 32mm wide attachment plate with four holes, each 3-4mm diameter, by which it

could be riveted or sewn onto the canvas or leather strap. The hook is decorated with transverse grooves, filled with non-ferrous metal plating.

Shears

A blade from a small pair of shears was recovered from context 25. The blade itself measures 51mm in length and is 12mm wide at its thickest point. Shears were used for a number of purposes later carried out using scissors and the size of this blade suggests that these shears were small and multi-purpose rather than a specialised trade tool.

Strip

A metal strip was recovered from context 16. The strip is 37mm long, 11mm wide and 4mm thick (to judge by the x-ray plate). Such strips were often used for binding but in this case there is no sign of any nail or rivet hole.

Table 1

Context	SF No	Form1	Weight	Description	Condition	X-Ray Plate
007		STAPLE	0			HOLS04 PL2
007		HOOK	0	HOOK FROM HOOK AND EYE;32MM WIDE ATTACHMENT WITH FOUR 3-4MM DIAM HOLES;HOOK IS DECORATED WITH PLATED TRANSVERSE STRIPES		HOLS04 PL3
007		NAIL	0			HOLS04 PL5
011		OBJECT	18	POSSIBLY A BLADE		
011		OBJECT	26	POSSIBLY A FLAT SHEET OR WIDE BLADE		
011		HORS	0	WIDE HORSE SHOE WITH PLAIN OUTER EDGE;FROM MEDIUM ANIMAL FRONT:BACK = C.100MM;TWO NAILS IN SITU		HOLS04 PL1
016		STRIP	0	RECTANGULAR STRIP;37MM LONG;11MM WIDE;4MM THICK		HOLS04 PL2
022		NAIL	0		COMPLETE	HOLS04 PL2
025		SHEARS	0	BLADE FROM A PAIR OF SHEARS;BLADE EDGE = 51MM;MAX WIDTH= 12MM	BLADE BROKEN BEFORE SPRING	HOLS04 PL2
025	SF1	TOOL	0	MIGHT JUST BE A LONG, NARROW NAIL SHANK		HOLS04 PL3
025	SF2	HORS	0	WIDE HORSE SHOE WITH PLAIN OUTER EDGE;FROM SMALL ANIMAL FRONT:BACK = 80MM		HOLS04 PL5
026	SF3	NAIL	0		COMPLETE	HOLS04 PL1
026	SF4	STAPLE	0			HOLS04 PL5
027	SF6	TOOL	0			HOLS04

				PL4
US	NAIL	0	COMPLETE	HOLS04 PL3

Discussion

The Spalding excavation revealed a sequence of occupation starting in the 12th century and extending to the post-medieval period. The earliest stratified find is a nail from context 22, dated to the medieval period.

One of the two unidentified tools, from context 27, comes from a deposit dated to the late medieval or early post-medieval period (i.e. 15th or 16th century).

Five finds come from a pit group, dating to the 16th or early 17th centuries. They include one of the horse shoes, the second tool, the shears blade, a nail and a staple.

Finally, four objects were recovered from occupation deposits of post-medieval date (17th/18th century). These include the second horse shoe, two unidentified objects, and the strip.

Assessment

The iron finds are mostly from late medieval or later deposits and do not provide much information about activities being carried out on the site or in its environs. They were recovered from three groups of deposits but in no case is the assemblage of metalwork large enough for any useful information to be gained by further study. The finds and their x-ray plates should, however, be deposited in an archaeological archive for future study.