

The non-ceramic finds from Sewerby Cottage Farm, East Yorkshire (OSA02 EX09)

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All the non-ceramic finds from the 2002 excavations at Sewerby Cottage Farm were assessed by Alan Vince, as a result of which the glass and copper alloy finds were submitted to Hilary Cool for specialist study.

The finds included objects of bone, copper alloy, fired clay, glass, iron and stone (Table 1). With the exception of eight fragments from unphased deposits all the finds come from features ranging in date from the Neolithic period (Phase 1) to the late Iron Age or early Roman period (Phase 3).

phase	period	BONE	COPP	FCLAY	GLASS	IRON	STONE	Grand Total
							8	8
1	Neo			1			7	8
2	LIA						3 38	41
3	LIA/RB			1	8		27 10	46
3?	LIA/RB?	2			5	5	7 1	21
Grand Total		2	1	14	5	37	64	124

Retention and Storage

A number of objects were identified as unworked stone of types known to occur locally in boulder clay. These were listed and discarded. A few objects were probably also unworked stone but have been retained for a second opinion by future researchers.

Description

Only one assemblage of artefacts was recovered, from cremation burial 3258. The remainder are described below by material.

Cremation burial 3258. by H. E. M. Cool.

The goods that were burnt on the pyre of the individual in 3258 included a necklace (no. 1), a glass vessel (no 2) and three bone hair pins (nos. 3-5). It is not possible to identify the types of glass beads represented because they are so badly melted. Necklaces with small glass beads start to become fashionable in certain, mainly military, milieus in the mid 2nd century; but are commoner in the 3rd to 4th centuries. It is possible that the small fragments of blue/green glass (no. 2) might also have come from beads; but blue/green beads are not common, whereas the remains of blue/green glass vessel such as unguent bottles and flasks are often found amongst pyre goods. The balance of probabilities has to be that these fragments came from glass vessels. The colour suggests a 1st to 3rd century date. Two of the hair pins (nos. 3-4) had knob heads and thus belonged to Crummy type 3, which were common in the 3rd and 4th centuries (Crummy 1979, 161). No. 5 most likely came from the form where a knob is

separated from the shank by one or more collars (*ibid* 162 Type 5). These were also a later Roman form.

The combined date of the objects suggests that the cremation took place in the 3rd century. the combination of hair pins and a necklace, strongly suggests that the individual was a female. This is not just to be stereotypical. At a large 3rd century cremation cemetery in Cumbria, for example, the association of bead necklaces with individuals identified as female in the study of the cremated bones was shown to be statistically significant (Cool 2004); whilst hair pins too are regularly associated with women and girls in both artistic representations and in graves (Allason-Jones 1989, 134-9).

1. Beads. Translucent mid blue glass. Melted fragments of four small beads; original shape not now ascertainable. Largest fragment (two beads) dimensions 6.5 x 4 x 4mm. (3258) sf19.
2. Melted glass. Blue/green. 3 fragments. Less than 1g. (3258). sf19.
3. (not illustrated) Hair pin. Bone. Spherical head, broken at junction with missing shank. Burnt. Diameter 5 x 4.5mm. (3258) sf19.
4. Hair pin. Bone. Long oval knob head; broken shank. Burnt. Present length 13mm, head diameter 4mm. (3258). sf334.
5. Hair pin. Bone. Collar with scar from missing head and circular-section broken shank, in two fragments. Burnt. Present length 23mm; collar diameter 5mm.(3258). sf333.

Copper Alloy

A fragment of a copper alloy brooch was recovered from context 4040, the fill of a post hole associated with a probable rectangular building of late Iron Age or early Roman date. The fragment includes the trumpet-shaped terminal of the brooch with remains of the connecting pin on the back. Remains of textile have been preserved on the back of the brooch only, suggesting that it had been buried attached to the item of clothing which it was used to secure or decorate. This suggests that the brooch might originally have accompanied an inhumation and was subsequently redeposited in the post hole.

Dr Cool comments that too little of the brooch remains for any close identification to be made but that in general, trumpet brooches were in use during the later 1st to mid to late 2nd centuries.

A second brooch, a headstud brooch, was found during the evaluation. Dr Cool comments that the brooch (no. 7) is a most unusual find. It belongs to a variant where the headstud, instead of being an integral cast cell was separately attached by a rivet. Such brooches frequently have a similar arrangement on the underside of the foot-knob to attach another decorative setting there (Hattatt 1987, 120). In the case of no. 7 an unusual block with the remains of wire has been inserted into the underside of the foot. Whether this was an original feature, or one that was attached when the original setting fell out, is unknown. There was obviously a problem with the loss of the riveted headstuds in antiquity. One in the Hattatt collection, for example, had a rivet inserted after the original setting went missing (*ibid* 121 no. 940). Quite what the purpose of the block was is unknown. It could perhaps have been intended for the attachment of a chain; but in that case the brooch would have had to have been worn upside down, i.e. with the wings at the top. In general Headstud brooches were in use from

the later 1st to mid to late 2nd century. There is little good dating for the variant with separately applied headstuds, but Mackreth has suggested they are most likely to belong to the first half of the 2nd century (Mackreth 1985, 289 no. 24). Unfortunately the enamel pattern, which might have provided a clue for dating the brooch more closely is entirely obscured.

6. Trumpet brooch. Trumpet head with broken lug behind; one edge of head broken, other had groove parallel to one side. Width of head 13mm.(4040) sf332.
7. Headstud brooch. Short wings with cast semi-cylindrical closed hinge cover on back retaining hinge bar and pin, tip broken; front of wings obscured by corrosion but appear to have vertical grooves or cells. Small crest lug and recessed circular cell with perforation all the way through the bow on head. Front of bow very obscured but includes cells with blue enamel. Trapezoidal catch-plate running up back of bow to end just below head. Triple ribbed foot knob, now with a separate rectangular perforated block inserted into it; two curved fragments of wire threaded through box. Length (without block) 35mm, wing width 16mm. EV07: (701).

Fired Clay

Fragments of fired clay were recovered from eleven contexts. All shared a similar fabric, consisting of a clay containing abundant subangular quartzose sand with moderate rounded and angular rock fragments. These fragments include sandstones, siltstones and shales, probably mainly of Jurassic origin, and fragments of igneous rock, mostly black fine-grained basic rocks but including some coarser-grained acid igneous examples.

Three of these collections consisted of samples of clay structures: the abandonment and backfill of crop drier 2 (context 3611) and the flue lining of crop drier 3 (contexts 3811 and 3856). None of the three groups were heavily burnt and in two cases faces remained on some of the fragments. Those from context 3611 had curved faces suggesting the rounded corners of a clay structure. No wattle impressions were noted and in some cases the 'back' of the fragments were less heavily burnt than the surfaces, suggesting the clay lining of a cut feature rather than a clay domed superstructure.

Most of the remaining samples also came from the crop driers and were of similar character to the large samples.

Fired clay was also recovered from two soil samples from cremation pits. From one, context 3258, the fragments appear to be accidentally burnt crumbs of soil, presumably scraped up from the funeral pyre. From the other, context 3797, came a single fragment which has the appearance of being from a wattle and daub structure. The actual piece represented is typical of the pieces which were squeezed through between two wattles on a structure which has wattle on one side only. This fragment is the only one to have organic inclusions, presumably deliberately added.

The three final collections consist of rounded gravel-sized pieces of fired clay. Two come from late Iron Age or early Roman pits, 3869 and 4179, and the remaining collection comes from a soil sample taken from a Neolithic pit, 3805. The latter fragments look somewhat different and may in fact be naturally cemented fragments of soil, not subjected to heat at all.

Iron

Twenty one collections of iron were recovered. Of these, one was a knife, nine were nails, three were thin strips and the remainder were unidentifiable lumps, most of which were x-rayed but could still not be identified. The knife was found in context 3403, the fill of late Iron Age/early Roman ditch 3404. The iron strips include two with parallel sides. Such strips were used to decorate and bind together wooden objects made from multiple pieces of wood. The third piece is irregularly-shaped. None of the three pieces showed any signs of rivets or rivet holes. The nails include four examples in which the head is an elongated rectangle, an unusual shape for Roman nails which are usually either dome-headed or have flat square heads. It is possible, therefore, that the nails had a specialised function. With this in mind, it may be significant that six of the nails were recovered from context 3795, the cremation deposit in pit 3796, suggesting either than a nailed object was burnt on the funeral pyre or that debris from this object was used as fuel. The unidentifiable objects were mainly heavily corroded, such that the original iron object had been completely or partly removed leaving a void surrounded by concentric layers of corrosion products.

8. Knife. Complete blade and whittle tang. The knife has a deep, short, pointed blade No sign of minerally-preserved organic remains were noted on the handle, which therefore either rotted before corrosion of the blade took place or was removed before burial (3403). sf337.

Stone

Twenty nine collections of stone were recovered from the excavation. However, 24 of these were unworked pebbles or cobbles, all of which were discarded. The remaining five objects consist of two putative hone stones, a spindle whorl, a quern fragment and two flakes of a metamorphic rock which might be waste, but are probably not, given that they come from a hearth pit.

9. Hone. A light green-coloured oval-sectioned pebble with no signs of use, from context 3716, the backfill of the cut for corn drier 3. sf350.
10. Hone. A trapezoidal slab of mudstone with scratches on its two flat surfaces, from context 3256, the fill of beamslot 3257. sf125.
11. Spindle whorl. Carved by hand from a lump of chalk. It comes from context 4040, the fill of late Iron Age/early Roman posthole 4058. sf349.
12. Quern. The bottom stone of a millstone grit rotary quern. The bottom and sides have been pecked and the upper surface has concentric grooves caused by wear. (3112). sf345.

Discussion

The only possibly humanly-worked objects from Phase 1 (Neolithic) consist of fragments of putative fired clay.

Phase 2 (Late Iron Age) produced two iron objects, neither identifiable, from the packing fill for the screen in the square mortuary enclosure.

The remaining finds, where phased, come from Phase 3 (Late Iron Age or Early Roman). Of these, the cremation burial has been dated by Dr Cool to the 3rd century and the brooch from the evaluation has been dated to the later 1st to mid 2nd century.

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