Flemingate House, Beverley (OSA05 EV09): Other Finds

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The excavation at Flemingate House produced a small quantity of iron, copper alloy, bone, leather and glass artefacts. Twenty seven finds were recovered, weighing 598 gm in total. These include a possible fragment of leather shoe upper, cut for reuse and therefore probably cobbler's waste, a 6-pronged implement of iron and a heavy-duty copper alloy needle, probably used in some craft or industry, from Phase 1 deposits, a small die, probably ivory, from a Phase 2 deposit and a small collection of tools associated with wood working from Phase 6 deposits. The remaining finds are typical of medieval and later urban sites and were recovered from Phase 5, 6, 7 and unstratified contexts.

It is probably significant that the three items from Phase 1 could all be related to industries. Similarly, the gouge, the spoonbit auger, four nails, a pintle and a staple all come from the fill of features in Phase 6, possibly indicating the presence of a workshop.

Methodology

All the finds were examined prior to conservation assessment by AV and an assessment report written. The finds were then submitted to York Conservation Laboratory where the metal finds were x-rayed and a conservation assessment prepared by M Felter. Selected items were then partially or completely cleaned and the finds and x-ray plates returned to AV. QM then commented upon photographs and verbal descriptions by AV and the report jointly prepared.

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Bone (Fig 1)

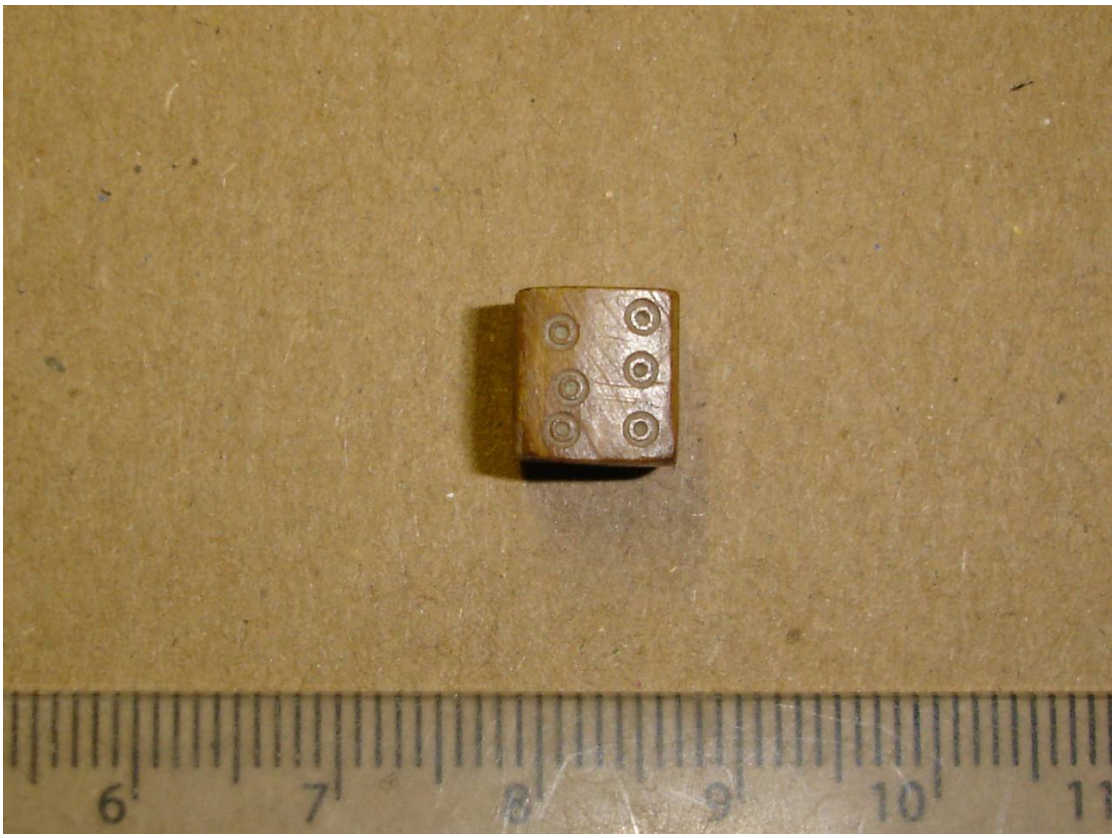

Figure 1

SF1. Phase 1. From a layer of dark blue clay interpreted as either ploughsoil or bank make-up. A gaming die constructed from a cube of ivory (identified at x20 magnification, species unknown), sides 8 mm. The numbers are drilled ring and dot 1.9 mm diameter arranged as follows: 5 is opposite 6; 3 is opposite 4 and 1 is opposite 2. This is the standard arrangement in the medieval period.

Copper Alloy (Fig 2)

Figure 2

SF 3. Phase 1. From final fill of channel F1091. A needle, 3 mm diameter tapering to 2mm near the tip, 124 mm long with broken tip. The head is flattened and 5mm wide. The shaft is bent, 120 mm from the head. The eye is oval and set in a groove to aid threading extending towards both the head and tip of the needle.

SF15. Phase 7. From a make-up deposit. A section of a large ring, diameter c.25 mm (distorted), with a circular cross-section 2.4 mm diameter. Probably made from drawn wire but burnished on the outer surfaces.

SF2, Unstratified. A buckle and buckle plate. The D-shaped buckle frame, 25mm by 17mm, was cast in a one-piece mould and has a decorative, collared knop at the end and two slight projections close to the pin bar. The plate is formed from a plain rectangle of sheet metal, 44mm long by 10mm wide, rounded at the corners and wrapped around the buckle frame and secured by a single copper alloy rivet. The copper alloy pin has snapped off.

A similar buckle was found in the City of London in a late 14th-century deposit at Billingsgate Lorry Park (Egan and Pritchard 1991, 94, Fig 59. No.421). The plate on that buckle, however was wider than the hinge and was recessed to fit. It also had transverse engraved zigzags absent from the Beverley example. Closer to home, another was found at the pelvis of a child buried to the south of the tower of St. Peter's Church, Barton-upon-Humber, Lincs in a grave (3078) dated to the late Middle Ages from AD1300 onward.

Glass

Eleven fragments of glass from the site come from phases 6 and 7. They consist of dark green bottle glass, light green window glass and clear window glass.

Iron (Figs 3 to 5)

Thirteen nails were recorded, all from Phase 6 or 7 deposits. Details are present in the site archive.

Figure 3 (Photographer: YAT Conservation Lab)

SF5. Phase 1. From the final fill of channel F1091. An implement 131mm long consisting of six rods twisted together to form a tang at one end and splayed at the other into six tines

(one now broken off), in the manner of an eel fork. The pointed tang to fit into a wooden handle appears to be complete, giving a total handle length of 65mm with tines of c.50mm long.

The object appears to have been a tool but its use is uncertain and no close parallels are known.

SF16. Phase 5. F1053. unidentified lump surrounded by mineralised straw

SF16. Phase 5. F1053. Possible fiddle-key nail.

SF25b. Phase 6. F4056. Two fragments of a possible gouge with a U-shaped section, heavily corroded. Total length c.150mm. Width 13-18mm.

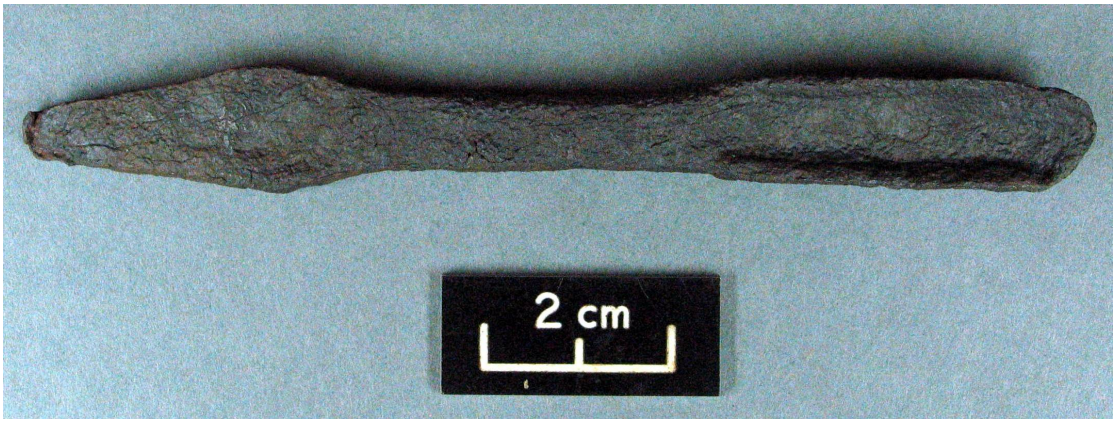

Figure 4 (Photograph: YAT Conservation Lab)

SF18. Phase 6. F4058. A complete spoonbit with a lanceolate head for a drill or an auger turned with a cross handle. 113mm long. Blade 11mm wide.

Figure 5

SF4. Phase 6. Make-up deposit. A scale-tang knife with antler plates and a thick, round-sectioned bolster of 16th century type. The x-ray plate shows that the blade, which was either snapped or worn to a stump, had a groove along the back. The handle comprising a pair of plano-convex sectioned antler plates has a rounded ‘pistol’ end and is attached by three iron

rivets. Between the rivets are small diamond shaped panels of decoration, consisting to nine drilled holes arranged in a lozenge shape. The decoration suggests that this was a table knife.

SF23. Phase 6. F4030. A large staple, 95mm long with tines up to 25mm long. The back of the staple is wider than the tines, 15mm at the centre narrowing to c.10mm at the ends.

SF17. F4058. A pintle. 85mm by 50mm. The spike is 72mm long and the hinge pivot arm 33mm.

SF25a. Phase 6 make-up. A knife blade. The x-ray shows two areas of non-ferrous metal inlay. The first may be a plait of different wires close to the back of the blade (just possibly pattern welding) and the second a single strip down the middle of the blade. Investigative cleaning of a section of this blade by York Conservation Laboratory did not reveal any metal, which was therefore probably only present in corrosion products. Knives Inlaid in this way are mostly of Anglo-Scandinavian and early medieval date (examples occur in the City of London in late 12th-century contexts on the Thames waterfront, Cowgill and Griffiths 1987). If this is a late example then it is likely to have been residual from the earliest phases of occupation on the site in the late 12th century. A second line visible in x-ray is likely to be due to the welding of a steel blade to an iron back.

SF33. Phase 7. F3026. A fragment of whittle-tang knife. C.60m by 20mm. Whittle-tang knives were replaced by scale-tang knives in the later medieval period and this example, which the x-ray shows is heavily pocked with corrosion, is probably residual (although whittle-tang knives do continue to be made to the present day).

SF32. Phase 7. F3026. A curved rod, flattened at one end. If not for the curvature of the body this could be a punch. Probably complete.

Leather (Fig 6)

Figure 6 (Photograph: YAT Conservation Lab)

SF35. Phase 1. Final fill of channel F1091. An incomplete leather panel with a grain/flesh stitched seam and an edge/flesh seam at right angles to it. A second length of edge/flesh seam is present at the opposite side to the first, all other edges are torn. Likely to be torn from a shoe upper of one piece construction with the edge/flesh stitched seam being the lasting margin and the edge/flesh seam at right angles to it being the closing seam. No other diagnostic features visible.

Bibliography

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