

Post Roman Worked Bone Assessment

Site code: ONE94, BUC87, CID90

Undated

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Poultry Post-Roman worked bone assessment

Introduction

The following is a table of worked bone (inc antler and horn) and ivory objects listed by area.

Area	Number of accessions
Area 1 (Part 1)	4 bone, 4 ivory, 1 bone composite
Area 2	2 bone
Shaft 4	1, probably Roman
Area 1 (Part 2)	6 bone
Area 8	32 bone, 1 bone composite
Area 9	31 bone, 2 bone composites
Service Yard	12 bone
Area 10	42 bone, 1 bone composite
Area 11	50 bone, 1 bone composite, 1 ivory
Area 12	6 bone
TOTAL	197

The assemblage (includes ivory, bone, antler and horn)

Late Saxon/early medieval

The vast majority of bone/antler accessions were recovered from deposits of this date.

Category type	Accession Numbers	Quantity
Bone waste		11
Antler waste		103
Bone 'motif' piece	<3187> <3552> <3682> <4020-22> <4025> <4101>	8
Bone skate	<2274> <2992> <3550> <4139> <4208> <4222> <4601> <4608-10>	9 + 1 unfinished
Bone/comp comb	<730> <783> <979> <1041> <4515> <4724>	5 (2 + 3 composites)
Bone spindlewhorls	<340-1> <430> <2801> <4688>	5 (2 possible gaming pieces)
Bone handle	<646> <846> <1153> <3261> <1862> + <2980> ?handle	6
Bone pin, pinbeater, needle		25
Bone goad	<2512>	1
Bone counter	<1053> <5217-8>	3 (poss Roman)
Worked horn	<2941>	1
Unidentified		8
TOTAL		186 accessions

More than 10 accessions from each type are not listed individually. Accessions may be made up of more than one object in the case of the waste fragments.

Other sites nearby have relevant material, such as CID90 (Pit 2347 Group 36 in Open Area 33) which has a bone trial piece<241> and an antler awl <657> from (2455). Other finds of relevance from the site include bone combs <242>, <422>, a spindlewhorl <274>, and 5 accessions of bone and antler waste. BUC87 also has some early medieval bone skates which should be considered with similar artefacts from ONE94 (<130>).

Medieval

Very few bone artefacts associated with the high medieval period were recovered, the exceptions being two parchment pricklers <3963> (15428) and <4984> (18172), a plain finger-ring <3270> (16760). A fragment of an ivory comb <91> was found in a deposit dating to the thirteenth century (675). This is part of a double-sided comb, with only some of the solid zone and wider teeth still surviving.

Post-medieval

Two ivory double-sided comb fragments were found, initially thought to be of post-medieval date <131> (297) and <440> (129). A third ivory fragment, carved longitudinally has a small peg of ivory attached to it at one end. It is possibly part of a cross <123> (97). Additionally a small fragment possibly of waste ivory <5506> was found in the large group of artefacts (16004).

Other post-medieval bone artefacts include a small bowl with perforations which has a screw fitting, rather like a pot-pourri container <132> (442).? In with human bone, and a biconical bead <93> likely to have come from a rosary from (789).

A turned bone shaft with screw fitting incised at both ends and remains of an iron fitting at the narrow end was found <300> (363). It is inscribed with R Wedgwood along the shaft. The object was found with Victorian pottery and mid nineteenth century clay pipes.

The potential of the material

Late Saxon/early medieval

1. A large quantity of bone and antler artefacts could be found in tenth to eleventh century deposits. The artefacts may have the potential to provide information on the domestic environment of the inhabitants during this period, and on their recreational and domestic tasks.
2. Any evidence of bone-working should be studied closely, and any concentrations of material in any particular area should be noted. Unfinished or trial pieces may be of particular interest, and provide information on the types of artefacts which were being attempted.

Sites in the vicinity such as CID90, CED89, PLY87 and BUC87 have relevant material.

3. Waste fragments of antler and bone may raise important questions on animal management and husbandry at this time. For example, were the antlers naturally shed or were they removed from the skull after death? What type of deer were being used for this, and what other animals?
4. The artefacts may be of intrinsic artistic merit and promote a discussion on the stylistic influences apparent in decorated pieces.
5. The distribution of the bone and antler may provide information on the function of individual buildings/rooms associated with the production of artefacts, or even in terms of the domestic environment.
6. Bone artefacts may be considered as part of a study of the pottery and other finds from pits and other well-stratified features of this date.

Medieval

7. The bone artefacts may provide important evidence on the later medieval occupation of the site, both in terms of domestic and personal items and in relation to trade and other work

activities. Distribution of such objects should be considered along with the documentary evidence, and where appropriate, artistic influences and a discussion on wealth and status.

8. The evidence for bone and antler working should be considered as for the early medieval period. There may be artefacts which could be related to the cutlers craft which could be associated with the medieval guild of cutlers. High quality bone/ivory objects of a medieval date may have belonged to rich merchants or foreigners living in the area during this period. This may tie in with documentary evidence.

9. Artefacts associated with the church or with the burials may provide evidence on ritual practice or burial practices in the medieval period. Such objects may be used to contribute to an assessment on the wealth of St Benets at a particular period, or provide more detail on a particular burial.

Post-medieval

10. The bone/ivory artefacts may provide information on the occupation, wealth and status of the inhabitants of the area throughout the post-med period.

11. Bone/ivory may supply additional evidence of post-medieval burial practices.

Revised research aims

Late Saxon/early medieval

1. What do the bone/antler/ivory artefacts contribute to providing information on the domestic, and occupational details of the lives of the inhabitants of the tenth-twelfth century? Do they provide evidence on their cultural influences? Can any artefacts be attributed to a particular building or structure?

2. There are several artefacts which can be categorised as textile equipment, such the pinbeaters, and pins/needles/shuttles, together with possibly two spindlewhorls in the assemblage (one ceramic). <2792> <2943><2989> What does this suggest about the organisation of the weaving, was it mainly domestic in nature?

3. What is the evidence for bone and antler working? Is there a particular concentration of material on one particular area of the site, and how does this change chronologically and spatially? Can the boneworking be associated with other types of industry such as metalworking or leatherworking?

Is it possible to describe the scale and organisational details of the boneworking? Can it be compared with the earlier industry recorded at *Lundenwic*? Is there evidence on site of boneworking workshops? Why is there no indication of unfinished objects or trial pieces apart from the motif pieces of worked bone? Were they not actually making artefacts on site, but just preparing raw material? What was the relationship between boneworkers and other workers in animal products such as tanning, and skinning,

4. What do the technological details concerning the construction of the composite combs tell us about the medieval craftsmen's understanding of the properties of different types of material such as antler and bone? <730> <783> <979> <4515> <4724>. How do they compare with other combs of the same date from excavations in the City and with continental parallels? How does the use of material-type fit into the overall history of the craft with the move away from antler for comb use generally observed at this period, and noted in particular at the early medieval settlement at Schleswig (MacGregor, 1989, page 113). Does it reflect a recognition by the Norman kings of the value of venison and antler as a raw material and their imposition of harsh game laws or were other factors involved? (Macgregor, ibid page 113).

5. What is the function of the flat discoid counters <340> and <341> which are post-conquest in date, decorated in ring-and-dot decoration. Are they spindlewhorls or gaming pieces? (MacGregor, page 135 and 187, Pritchard, page 206).

6. How do the intricately carved trial bone objects compare with others found in the vicinity, as described in publications such as *Aspects of Saxo-Norman London*? How do they compare with the fragments found at Guildhall, and do they fit into a similar date range? What is the documentary evidence for boneworking and metalworking covering such a wide area of the City during the early medieval period? Is there any evidence from peripheral sites such as Cheapside (CID90)? What are the parallels from other sites in Britain?

7. Are there any objects which can be related to animal management and to the use of the site for a market area? <2512> Goad and <1361> iron and wood goad.

8. What was the function of the worked horn <2941>, was it recreational or ceremonial? It does not appear to be a drinking horn, since the perforations in it are regular and deliberately achieved. Since large fragments of horn rarely survive in the archaeological record, especially of an early medieval date, the artefact is of great significance. What are the parallels for this unusual find elsewhere in Britain and in Scandinavia?

Medieval

9. The bone/ivory may contribute to providing information on the domestic and occupational detail of the inhabitants of the site during the medieval period. In view of the scarcity of medieval bone artefacts this may be done with other artefact types. Ivory comb<91>, finger ring.

10. What kind of ivory was the comb <91> made from? How does it compare with other parallels?

11. Is there evidence of medieval boneworking, perhaps associated with the medieval Cutlers' Company itself?

12. Do any of the bone objects originate from the church of St Benets or its graveyard? Associated artefacts may include parchment pricklers <3963> <4984> and possibly the pommander <132> or rosary bead <93>.

Post-medieval

13. Does the bone/ivory assemblage provide information on the wealth and status of any of its occupants? Possible artefacts include ivory combs <131> <440> and fragment <123>. Also a fragment of ivory <5506>, possibly waste, from the group (16004). How does the dating of this group fit into the re-introduction of ivory manufacturing in Britain in the seventeenth century?

Bibliography

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