

Southampton French Quarter 1382

Specialist Report Download F10: Worked Bone

By Rosemary Grant

A total of 44 worked bone objects were recovered from excavations at Southampton French quarter. The assemblage includes objects from a range of functional groups. These are, Games and toys, Personal objects, Implement handles and Textile working. There are also a number of fragments from Bone and Antler working.

The condition of the assemblage is good and covers all of the phases on the site. The majority of the worked bone objects can be directly associated with a tenement however eleven of the objects can not. Thirty-six of the forty-four objects were recovered from pit fills.

Chronology of assemblage.

Late Saxon

Five objects were recovered from the Late Saxon phase. There are two ices skates, one made from cattle metacarpal and the other from a Red Deer radius. Both have been flattened and polished on the underside and show extensive wear to the underside through use. There is an incomplete scale tang handle made from antler. Only one side of the handle survives but there is decoration visible in the form of horizontal bands running along the length. There is also a point made from cattle metatarsal and a piece of worked Red Deer antler.

Anglo Norman

Fourteen objects were recovered from the Anglo Norman Phase making this phase the most represented in the worked bone assemblage. Objects from this phase include four needles, a worked pig fibular, an ice skate, a single sided composite comb and a side plate from another, a gaming piece, three pieces of Deer antler tine and a point also made from deer antler. Lastly there is an off cut of bone. Three of the needles are complete and one is incomplete. Two are made from pig fibulae and two from mammal long bones. The worked pig fibular is flattered and perforated at both ends. Worked pig fibulae were used as pins.

The ice skate is made from horse metacarpal and is flattened and polished on the underside with an up swept toe. The gaming piece is made from Deer antler. It is oval with a domed top. It has 3 incised lines that encircle the shoulders with another 3 encircling the base. The top is worn away but a small amount survives in the centre showing evidence of ring and dot motif. The complete single sided composite comb is decorated with bands of horizontal grooves on one side whilst the other side is plain.

High Medieval

Thirteen objects were recovered from the High Medieval phase. This is the second largest phase represented by the assemblage and the objects include, three ice skates, three needles, a pin, a scale tang handle, a double sided composite comb, two pieces of worked antler and an off cut of ivory. The three Ice skates are all made from horse metatarsal. Each has a flattened and polished under surface and an up swept toe. Two of the three needles are incomplete. The other is made from deer antler and is roughly carved. All three have relatively small holes compared to the head and shaft.

The scale tang handle has both side plates remaining and is decorated with ring and dot motif. There is evidence of an iron tang through the centre of the plates. The double-sided composite comb has a small amount of side plate remaining and it is decorated with horizontal grooves and ring and dot motif. There are three rivet holes visible where it would have been attached. The teeth are fine and worked into fine points at the ends. A crossbow bolt retrieved from tenement 170 is described separately below.

Late Medieval

Two objects were recovered from the Late Medieval phase. A needle and a plate from a scale tang handle both made from large mammal long bones.

Post Medieval

Five objects were recovered from the Post Medieval phase. Three of the five objects are made from Ivory. There are two Ivory double sided simple form combs, one complete and one incomplete. The third Ivory object is a whittle tang handle which has a bulbous end. There is threading on the inside of the handle to hold a bung. The two other objects are a possible peg made from a horn core and an off cut of rib from a large mammal.

Early Modern

Five objects were recovered from the Early Modern phase. There is a whittle tang handle with a plane shaft. It has threading on the inside to hold a bung. There is also a possible handle, which has a polished shaft with flattered spatula like end. The centre section of the shaft is raised and decorated with a band of horizontal grooves. There is also a brush, a mah-jong tile and an off cut of long bone. The brush is incomplete. It has green staining at the holes suggesting that the bristles were of copper. The Mah-jong tile has the number 5 with 5 bamboos. The tile would have been backed with felt or such like and the fixing for this is visible.

Tenement	Phase	Context No	Small Find No	Description	Parallel
167	PMED	7536		Top of horn core. Possible peg.	
170	AN	6257	215	A complete needle made from a Pig fibular or large mammal long bone. It has a polished shank with an ovoid section. It has a roughly shaped head with a hole which has been drilled from both sides. Bends along the length most likely through use.	(Harvey (Southampton) p.272 Fig.247 no.1929)
170	AN	7267		Worked Pig Fibula. It has a simple shaft with an ovoid section. Both ends are flattened with wholes drilled transversely. through them.	
170	HMED	6729		Ice skate made from a Horse metatarsal. The skate has a slightly flattened and polished under surface and an up swept toe.	(Macgregor1985 p.143 fig.76)
170	EMOD	6438		Whittle tang handle. Made from a large mammal long bone. Plane shaft. There is threading on the inside of the handle to hold a bung.	
170	HMED	6054		Crossbow bolt	
172	LSAX	106		Point. Cattle metatarsal worked into a point by chopping obliquely across the bone. The point has been smoothed into a more rounded	(MacGregor 1985 p.175 fig.93 b).

Tenement	Phase	Context No	Small Find No	Description	Parallel
				point possibly through use.	
172	AN	7338	279	Bone single sided composite comb. Central tooth plate. Two side plates , one each side. Three rivets are visible on both sides. One side plate is decorated with bands of horizontal groves whilst the other side plate is plain. There is evidence that the teeth were carved whilst the tooth plate was in place as there are cut marks extending from the teeth onto the side plate.	(MacGregor.1985 p.89 fig.50 o).
172	HMED	349		Piece of worked antler tine. From a Red Deer. There is a hole drilled transversely through the antler near the base. There is slight polish to the tip.	
173	AN	939		Piece of worked antler tine. From a Red Deer. The base of the tine has been roughly chamfered and there are saw marks where the tine has been removed from the main branch.	
173	AN	941		Possible comb side plate. Two visible rivet holes with iron staining. Large mammal rib.	(Galloway (Winchester.) p.687 fig189)
173	AN	265	25	A complete Needle made from a large mammal long bone. It has an ovoid section with a highly polished shank and head. It has a hole which has been drilled from both sites. Bends along the length most likely through use.	(Harvey (Southampton)p.27 2 Fig.247 no.1929).
173	AN	281	27	Needle made from a Pig Fibula. It has a roughly shaped head with a hole drilled from both sites. Bends along the length most likely through use.	(Harvey (Southampton)p.27 2 Fig.247 no.1929).
173	HMED	599		Ice skate fragment made from a Horse metatarsal. The skate has a flattened and polished under surface and an up swept toe.	(MacGregor. (Winchester)1990 p.709 fig.199).
173	HMED	599		An incomplete ice skate made from a Horse metatarsal The skate has a flattened and polished under surface. .	(MacGregor. (Winchester)1990 p.709 fig.199).
173	HMED	1018	55	Pin. Made from a large mammal long bone. It has a plain shaft with a ball head set in a collar with two ridges.	(Harvey (Southampton)p27 3 fig248 no. 1936)
173	HMED	1078		Scale tang handle. Made from a large mammal long bone. Both sides of the handle survive and there is evidence of staining from the iron tang through the centre of the plates. Three rivets are visible. Decoration consist of a four dot motif which continues along the length.	
173	HMED	979	54	An incomplete needle. It is polished through use and has a large flat head with relatively small hole and an ovoid section.	(Margeson 1993 p.186 fig.137 no. 1450).
173	HMED	1111		An incomplete needle made from a large mammal long bone. It is polished through use and has a large flat head with relatively small hole and an ovoid section. Bends along length most likely through use.	(Margeson 1993 p.186 fig.137 no. 1450).

Tenement	Phase	Context No	Small Find No	Description	Parallel
174	AN	1326	104	An incomplete needle made from a long bone. It is polished through use and has a kidney shaped section.	(Harvey (Southampton)p.272 Fif.247 no.1929)
176	AN	3734		Piece of worked antler tine. From a deer. There is evidence of saw marks at the base of the tine where it has been removed from the main branch. There is evidence of working towards the tip.	
179	LMED	5105	79	Plate from a scale tang handle. Made from long mammal long bone.	
180	LSAX	5313		Piece of worked antler tine. From a Red Deer. There is evidence of saw marks at the base of the tine where it has been removed from the main branch. There are horizontal striations along the length.,	
180	HMED	5373	145	Bone double sided composite comb. Convex ends. There are three rivet holes visible on the central reservation of the comb where the side plates would have been attached. A small amount of side plate survives which is decorated with horizontal grooves and ring and dot motif. Two rivets are attached. The comb has fine and coarse teeth. The teeth are worked into fine points at the ends.	(MacGreagor 1985p.93 fig.51 d).
234	AN	8113		Possible off cut of bone.	
237	AN	3314	144	Gaming piece made from Deer antler. It is oval with a domed top. It has 3 incised lines that encircle the shoulders with another 3 encircling the base. The top is worn away but a small amount survives in the centre showing evidence of ring and dot motif.	(Brown (Winchester)1990 p.705 fig.196 no.2237)
237	AN	4497		Point made from Deer antler.	
237	HMED	4317	184	Needle/point. Made from Deer antler. It is roughly carved with an ovoid section along entire length of needle. Worked to a fine point at the end. Very small hole relative to shaft.	(Harvey(Southampton)p.273 fig248 no.1931).
237	LMED	3148		Needle. Made from Large mammal long bone.	(Harvey (Southampton)p.272 fig.247 no.1921).
237	PMED	3641		Possible off cut from working. Rib of large mammal.	
237	PMED	3189	122	Ivory double sided simple form comb. Central reservation widens at one end. Course and fine sets of teeth. Ends are straight along the length and rounded at the bottom.	(Harvey (Southampton) p274 fig249)
237	PMED	3323	100	Ivory whittle tang handle. Evidence of where a metal band may have been at tang entrance. Bulbous end. There is threading on the inside of the handle to hold a bung.	
239	LSAX	657	30	Scale tang handle. An incomplete scale tang handle made of antler. Only one side of the handle survives and there is evidence of two rivets. Decoration is in the form of horizontal	

Tenement	Phase	Context No	Small Find No	Description	Parallel
				bands running along the length.	
	LSAX	185		Ice skate made from a Red Deer radius. The skate has a flattened and polished under surface. There is extensive wear to the underside.	(MacGregor. (Winchester) 1990 p.709 fig.199 900-1066)
	LSAX	3758		Ice skate made from a Cattle metacarpal. The skate has a polished and flattened under surface. There is extensive wear to the underside at each end.	(MacGregor. (Winchester)1990 p.709 fig.199)
	AN	889		Ice skate made from a Horse metacarpal. The skate has a flattened and polished under surface and an up swept toe.	(MacGregor. (Winchester) 1990 p.709 fig.199)
	AN	3734		Piece of worked antler tine. From a Deer. It has been cut off at the base and the tip so that only the centre section remains.	
	HMED	4418		Ivory working off cut.	
	HMED	5064		Piece of worked antler burr. From a Red Deer. There is a hole drilled transversely though the thinnest part of the burr.	
	PMED	4148		Incomplete ivory double sided simple form comb with one set of teeth being fine and the other coarse.	(Harvey (Southampton) p.274 fig.249 no.1944)
	EMOD	6000		Possible off cut of Long bone.	
	EMOD	6016		Possible handle. Polished shaped shaft with flattered spatula like end. The centre section of the shaft is raised and decorated with a band of horizontal grooves.	
	EMOD	5200		Brush made from a large mammal long bone Incomplete. Polished. Green staining might indicate that tufts were of copper wire. One side has three parallel grooves. The other side has three rows of holes.	(MacGregor 1985 p.183 fig.99)
	EMOD	6016		A mah-jong tile. Highly polished. Rectangle. The front has the number 5 with 5 bamboo's. The tile would have been backed with felt or such like and the fixing for this is visible.	

The crossbow bolt

By Edmund Simons

Tenement: 170, Cxt: 6054, Cxt date:1250-1350

Finds retrieved from Southampton French Quarter include this antler bone 'nut' which forms part of the firing mechanism for a crossbow (or arbalest).

Crossbows have existed in Europe since the late Roman period. The main advantage they have over normal bows is they allow the crossbowman to take careful aim at a target without any physical effort. As such they could be used by untrained troops or for sniping. In the early 13th century new ways of spanning (pulling back the string) on these weapons using windlass pulley systems enabled the building of much bigger and more powerful bows.

These new bows were so powerful that they soon changed not only how battles were fought but how castles were built and special cross shaped loops were inserted into many castles to accommodate the new weapon. In England there were lots of ordinances against private individuals keeping crossbowmen although exceptions to these laws included certain seaside towns (like Southampton).

The size of the nut shows that it belongs to a very large military crossbow, possibly even a heavy siege bow. The iron remaining on one side of the nut may even be the remains of the trigger. These very large bows were used from behind cover (either a wall or a man-sized shield called a pavise) and were effectively long-range sniping weapons.

The nut would have sat within the bows wooden stock and would have held the string until the bow was aimed and shot. Although short, the bows of crossbows were very thick and made up of layers of material, they were far too powerful to span by hand. The notches in the back of the nut were used to hold the crossbow string after it was pulled back by the windlass. The bolt (arrow) was held by the notch running along the rim of the nut (an iron plate would have also kept the bolt in place and this allowed shooting downwards without loosing the bolt) The trigger was a long pivoted iron bar beneath the stock and held the nut in a V shaped notch. When the trigger was pressed the nut was released and the bolt would shoot.



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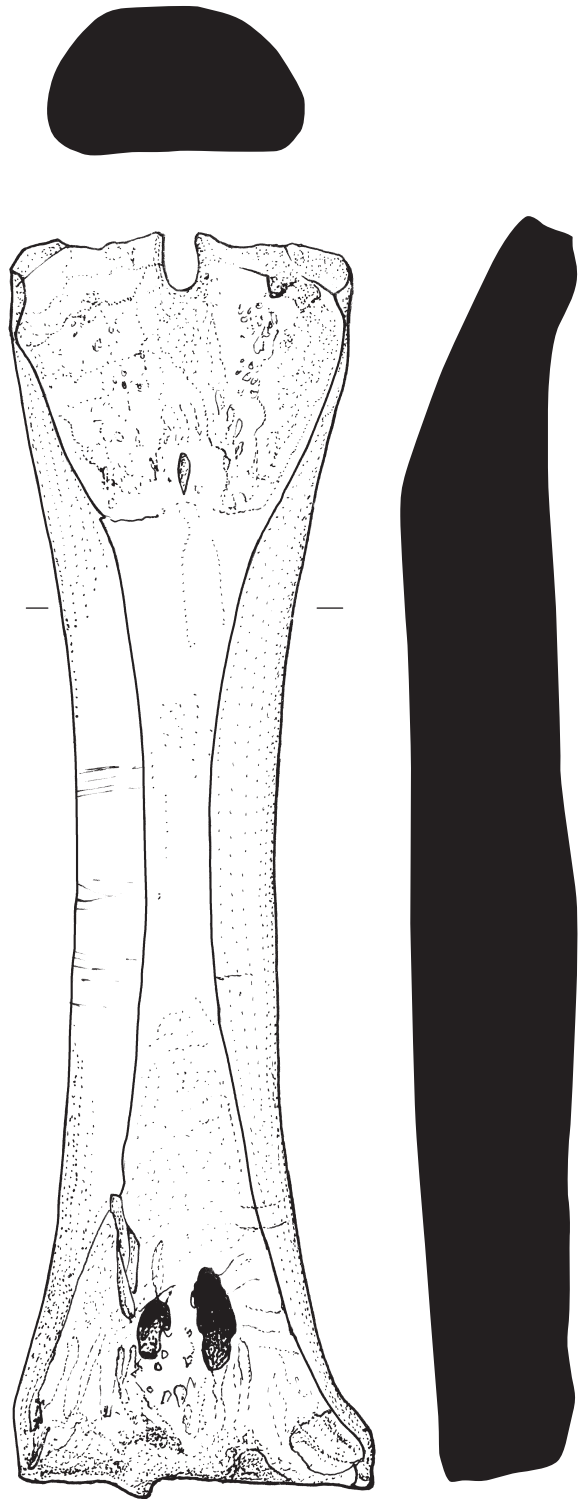
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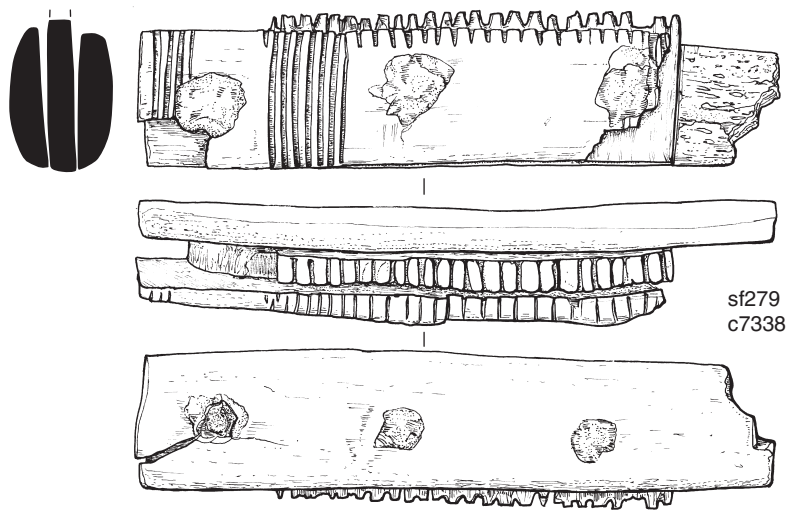
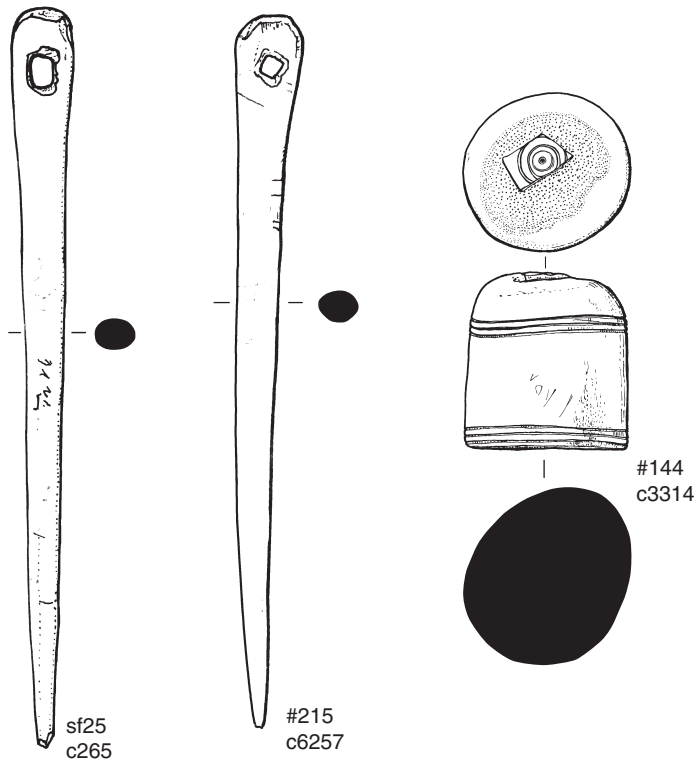
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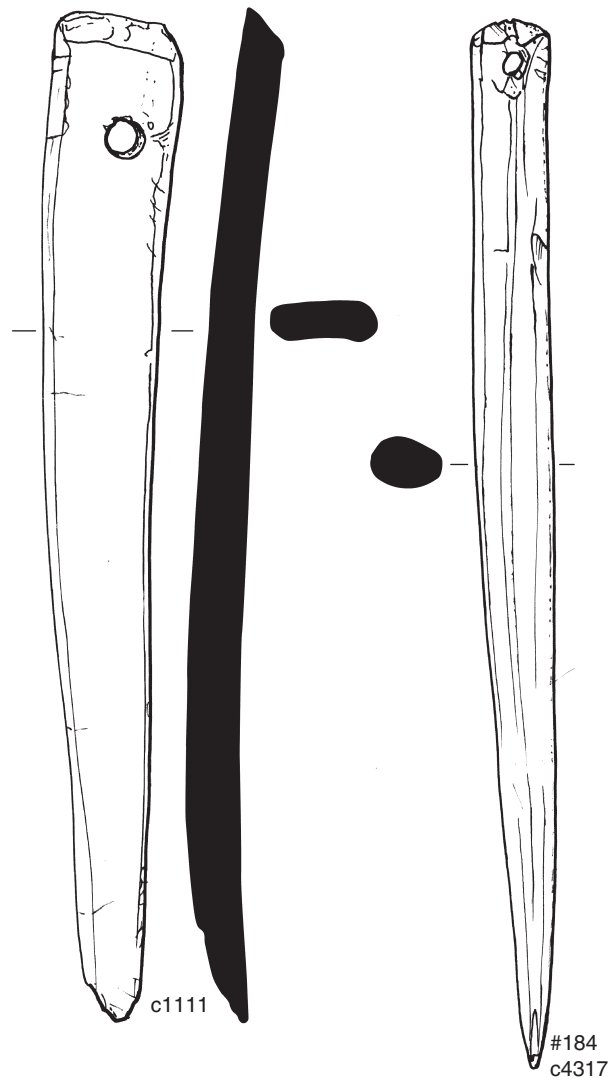
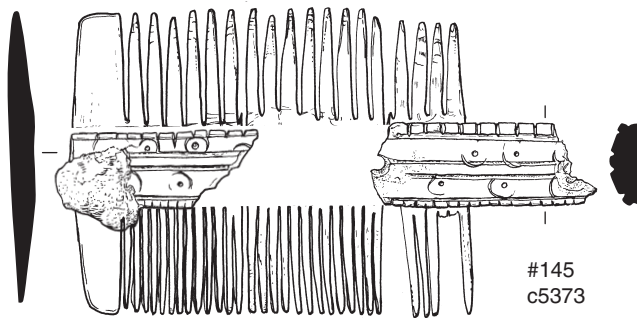


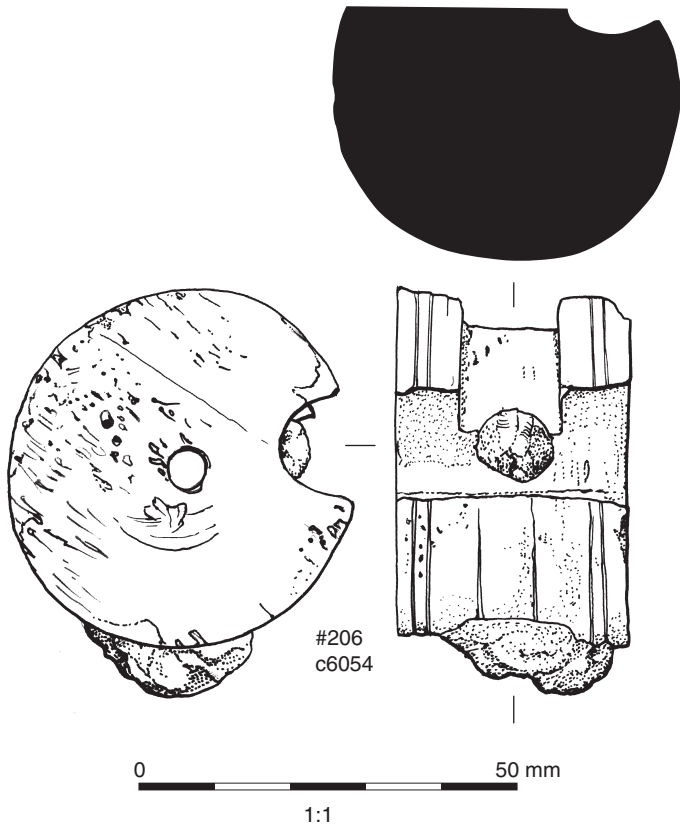


c889

0 50 mm

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Medieval crossbow bolt