

A LATE-SAXON COMB HANDLE FROM BAWDRIP

During an archaeological evaluation (see p. 230) within an orchard adjacent to Grange Cottage, Bawdrip, (NGR ST 3405 3958) in November 1997, a carved object was recovered from a possible beam slot. The object is 53–60mm long, top diameter 18–20mm and is hollow for a depth of 40mm. Holes have been drilled through the upper part into the hollowed section and there are bands of shallow, incised horizontal grooves above and below the perforations. Below the lower band of horizontal incisions under the perforations is a series of shallow vertical grooves, not particularly straight, cut down the front of the object but not down the back or sides and below these are further groups of shallow horizontal and vertical grooves, again cut into the front of the handle. The handle is slightly shiny from use and appears to have broken over a rivet hole. The object is of antler.

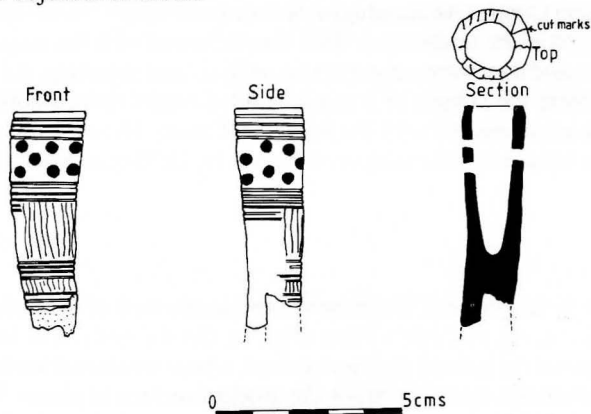


Fig. 1 Comb handle; scale 1:2

The Bawdrip find is a perforated comb handle, possibly originating from Frisia, and probably dating to the 9th or 10th century. Only a very few of these objects have been found. In 1990 fourteen examples were known, six from East Anglia, three from Canterbury and others from London and sites in south-east England plus two Baltic-coast examples from the trading centres

of Haithabu (Hedeby) and Dorestad (Riddler 1990). The nearest example to Bawdrip was recovered from the Saxon trading centre at *Hamwic*, Southampton. The hollowed chamber is assumed to have been sealed by a plug of antler or other material and to have been used as a receptacle for some anhydrous substance, possibly fragrant or pungent plant remains.

Thanks are due to the landowners, Mr and Mrs Shaw, Stephen Minnitt and Mark Davis of the Somerset County Museum, Arthur MacGregor of the Department of Antiquities at the Ashmolean Museum in Oxford and Dr Ian Riddler. The object is in the Somerset County Museum with other material from the watching brief (Accn no. TTNCM 103/1996).

REFERENCE

Riddler, I, 1990. 'Saxon handled combs from London', *Trans London Middlesex Archaeol Soc*, 41, 9–20

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