

Site: Spong Hill
Parish: North Elmham
County: Norfolk
Code: 1012 ELN
Director: C. Hills
Period: Anglo-Saxon
Geology: Pleistocene outwash gravels
Type of material: Soil samples containing various organic
residues from inhumations

By P. MURPHY

Spong Hill (1012 ELN): Samples from the inhumations

The freely-draining, well-aerated sand and gravel fills of the graves generally did not provide suitable conditions for the preservation of organic materials. Several of the samples of 'organic stains' consist of little more than dark humose sand. However, material buried in proximity to metal grave-goods was in a better state of preservation. The wood samples fall into two categories: material completely replaced by insoluble metal compounds; and wood preserved by the fungicidal and bactericidal action of metal salts in the surrounding soil without being heavily impregnated with metal compounds. The replaced wood is hard and brittle, but the remaining wood samples are soft and crumbling. The cell structure of the wood is generally badly deformed, and in most cases it is not even possible to be sure whether ring-porous or diffuse-porous wood is present. Textile and leather (?) fragments have been preserved by similar means, and grave 45 produced some metal-replaced impressions of fly puparia. Bronze wrist-clasps from Inhumation 29 show metal-replaced fossils of Nematode worms on their inner surfaces. Small fragments of bone are present in a few samples. Graves 3 and 40 produced off-white porous concretions of powdery material.

Inhumation No	Grave-good no. (where given)	Description
2	1	Wood associated with brooch. Also sample of organic material from near teeth: includes some (?) wood and indeterminate organic residues
3	3	Wood associated with bronze fittings. Some off-white concretions
12	5	Wood
17	?	Soil sample containing small bone fragments
18	2	Wood. ? Coffin lid. Ring porous-possibly oak (<u>Quercus</u>)
22	?	Organic material from under brooches. Traces of ? wood and textile
24	4h	Organic material associated with chatelaine, beads, knife etc. Wood with traces of textile and ? leather
24	5	Textile (green-stained) and wood close to brooch
26	?	Indeterminate organic residue
29	2,3,4	Nematode worms on wrist-clasps
31	?	Wood and indeterminate organic residue
40	1	Wood and ? bone fragments associated with spearhead
40	5	Wood and off-white concretions - sword handle
40	7	Black indeterminate organic residue with off-white concretions
40	?	Wood of bucket. Identified as <u>Rhamnus catharticus</u> (buckthorn) by C. Keepax
41	?	Shield/coffin. Wood (N.B. Sample includes some metal fittings)
42	5 & 6	Brooches. Textile and wood
42	6	Wood from around brooch
45	1	Textile beneath brooch
45	5 + 9	Bronze ring and iron knife. Wood
45	8	Textile, wood and metal-replaced fly puparia associated with brooch
46	1 & 2	Wood with some textile associated with brooches
46	3	Some wood, some indeterminate organic residue
46	5	Wood associated with bronze clasp
46	8	Wood and indeterminate organic residues associated with iron knife
46	?	'Coffin' wood

Inhumation No	Grave-good no (where given)	Description
46	?	'Below Ae ring' wood
46	?	'On top clasp' indeterminate organic residue
46	?	'On top Ae ring' wood
46	?	'On top brooch' wood
48	2	Textile and ? wood associated with iron knife
56	5	Wood and textile with brooch
	6	Wood with brooch
57	5	Wood associated with wrist-clasps
57	7	Some wood, some indeterminate organic residues associated with brooch
58	2	From around skull. Small bone fragments, some indeterminate organic residues
58	3	Textile associated with brooch
58	4	Indeterminate organic residue associated with knife
58	6	Indeterminate organic residue associated with brooch