

Ancient Monument Report No. 4054

The identification of bone small finds from Blackfriars, Carlisle.

D. J. Rackham.

The following small finds were studied and where possible identified as to the bone, and species from which derived, used in its manufacture. Where this was not possible a cruder non-specific identification was made, such as long bone shaft, large animal or even just bone. This latter category, bone, is used to distinguish non-antler bone from antler, such that bones that could not be identified at all are cataloged as bone or antler.

Site Code CAR 77 BLA

Context and Small Find Code	Description	Identification
A+ B1	Pierced disc.	Bone.
B2	Object? Burnt.	May have been an artefact, since split with two polished faces. Bone.
A41 B3	Object? Scoop or point.	Long bone shaft from an ox-sized animal.
A29 B4	Possible artefact.	Long bone shaft fragment from an ox-sized animal. No good evidence that the object was utilised.
A94 B5	Half a counter.	Bone or antler.
A253 B6	Bone fragment decorated with dot & circle pattern.	Made from the cortex of a red deer antler beam.
A404 B8	Counter.	Bone or antler.
A446 B9	Counter.	Long bone shaft of an ox-sized animal.
A+ B11	Last part of needle	Probably split long bone shaft.

Site Code CAR 77 BLA

Context and Small Find Code	Description	Identification
A142 B12	Object?	Bone fragment - no evidence of working or utilisation.
A528 B13	Part of die. Burnt.	Bone-calcined by fire.

Site Code CAR 78 BLA

B+ B1	Counter.	Long bone shaft, ox-sized animal.
B+ B2	Counter.	Bone or antler.
B+ B3	Pin head.	Probably made from a split long bone shaft.
B160 B4	Gaming Counter.	Bone or antler.
B210 B5	Needle.	Long bone shaft of ox-sized animal.
B210 B6	Awl.	Long bone shaft of ox-sized animal.
B42 B7	Pin.	Probably split long bone shaft.
B264 B9	Gaming Counter.	Long bone shaft of ox-sized animal.
B432 B10	Counter.	Long bone shaft of ox-sized animal.
B433 B11	Vertebra.	Vertebra with Foramina possibly artificially enlarged, but no evidence for use or function.
B608 B12	Die.	Made from a longbone shaft of an ox-sized animal.
B615 B13	Part of needle?	Bone or antler, but more likely to be bone.
B574 B14	Part of needle?	Bone or antler, but more likely to be bone.
B8 B24	Counter.	Longbone shaft.
B101 B25	Fragment with carved spirals.	Long bone shaft of a sheep-sized animal, calcined by burning.

Site Code CAR 77 BLA

Context and Small Find Code	Description	Identification
045 B26	Counter	Antler cortex
0336 B27	Counter	Antler cortex
0336 B28	Counter	Long bone shaft, ox-sized animal.
0+ B29	Counter	Bone or antler
0485 B30	Counter	Long bone shaft, ox-sized animal.

Discussion

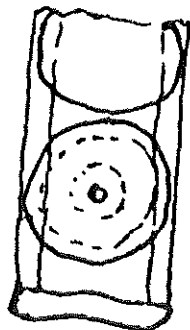
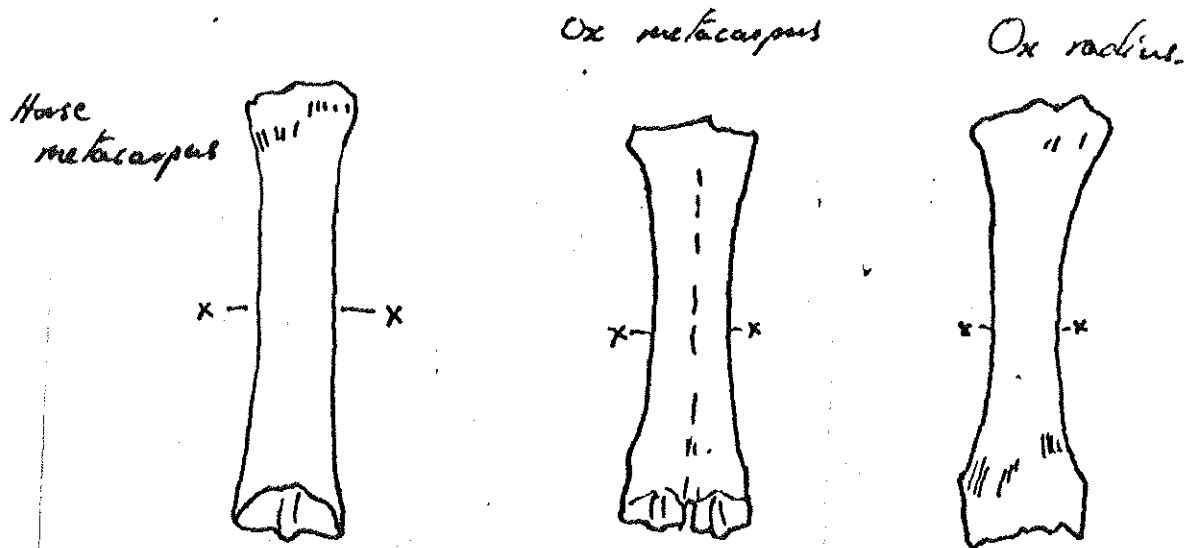
Although identification of many of the bones used in the manufacture of these objects has not been possible, nevertheless it can be shown by reference to those bones most likely to have been used, the method and which part of the bones is used.

The most common objects in this collection are counters, needles and pins. Counters are generally manufactured from the shafts of long bones, particularly metacarpals, metatarsals and radii, presumably of ox, although horse and deer bones may have been used and for the smaller counters sheep and goat bones. Fig. 1 illustrates the way in which these parts of the bone can be used. In this collection one counter, and possibly a second, has been made from the dense cortex of antler. These have been made or turned from a plate of antler worked from the beam of a red deer antler, probably in the manner illustrated in Fig. 2.

All the needles and pins in this collection have been made from the long bones of various sized animals.

Again the metacarpals and metatarsals of ox are the most likely elements because they possess long straight shafts,

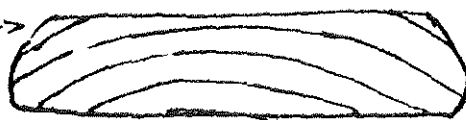
Parts of bone that can be utilized for
Fig. 1 the manufacture of counters.



Sections showing posterior
(and anterior in radius) plates
of bone in shaft.

The lamina pattern of the
bone can be seen on the
section of the counters.

edges often lost
through flaking
off of laminae.



Method of utilising the antler cortex
 Fig. 2 to make a plate of bone from which
 a counter can be made or turned.

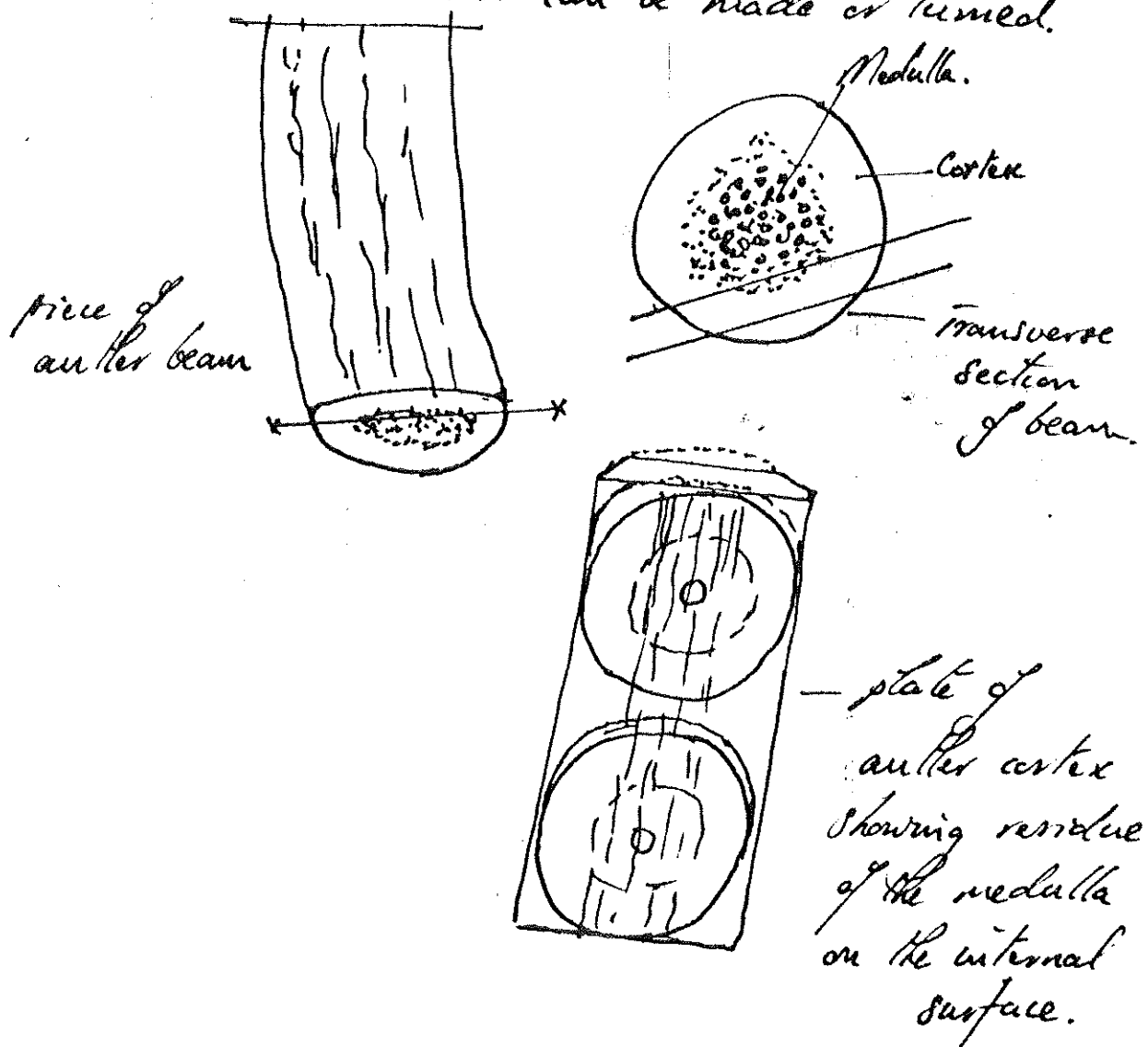


Fig 3. Splitting of the shaft of long bones
for the manufacture
of pins.

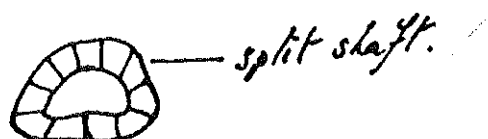
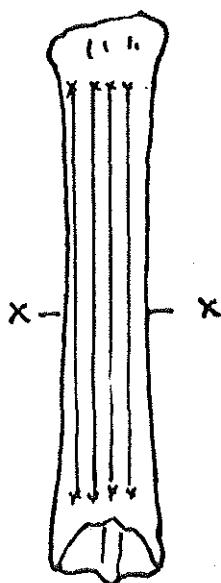
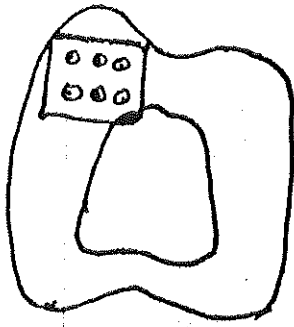
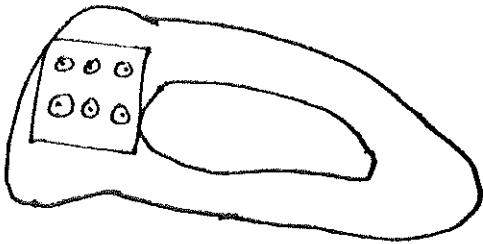


Fig. 4.

Two possible locations for the bone used to
make olive.



Proximal
midshaft
section
of metatarsus.
(Ox).



Proximal midshaft
section of ox radius.

Discussion (cont')

but other bones of the skeleton can be used and the smaller specimens may be manufactured from the bones of sheep or goats. The shaft of the metacarpals and metatarsals are split (Fig. 3) and then whittled and smoothed to the required shape.

Objects like the two dice require a great thickness of bone and this is generally only available^d on the shafts of ox radii and metatarsals, and then only on large adult animals (see Fig. 4).