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Darenth, Kent. Anglo-Saxon Cemetery

Textiles

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Catalogue

Burial 127

Alloy applied brooch. 12032.

On back, along and under pin, area ?leather or skin; under this, on pin, deteriorated textile, area 2.5 X 0.8 cm, spinning Z/Z, surface flattened, probably tabby weave, fine. Coarser Z threads, ?bead thread, by pinhead.

Pair to above. 12031.

On pin and attachment, deteriorated Z spun fragments, as on 12032. One coarse Z, one S, threads, perhaps from coarser weave in contact.

Burial 185

Disc brooch. 12026.

Pin attachment, replaced coarse Z threads, ?bead string.

Detached, (a) 0.8 X 0.6 cm, replaced fragment, spinning Z/Z, yarns fairly lightly spun, appearance round and soft, weave tabby, count estimated c.8/7 threads on 5 mm, close.

(b) Lump, replaced, 0.7 X 0.8 cm, folding round corner, very similar to (a) but one thread system mixed Z and S spinning, the other S; threads broken and missing, ? stripe or check in weave (a).

Disc brooch. 12053.

From front (c) two small areas textile, c.0.65 X 0.6, 1.0 X 0.5 cm, flax, undyed, Z/Z, tabby, count c.18/16(8 on 5 mm) threads per cm, medium even spinning, weave now slightly open.

(b) Detached fragment, replaced, 1.0 X 0.5, damaged, rounded threads, some Z, some S, ?tabby weave. Round pin, back, coarse Z threads.

(d) On bone fragment, replaced, from back of brooch, 1.5 X 0.9 cm, and another scrap, Z/Z, coarse threads, ?tabby weave (cf. 12036).

Pin fragments

12035. (e) All along one side, deteriorated replaced textile; other side, Z/Z, tabby weave, count estimated c.16/16 threads per cm, area preserved c.2.5 X 1.0 cm overall, of which part is border, 1.2.0 cm, width c.0.7 (incomplete), tablet-weave, two coarse 4-hole twists, one lying S, one Z, followed by diagonal-patterned 4-hole centre. The tabby weave is not (a,b), spinning harder, ?worsted, weave slightly open.

12036. (e) Fragment all over length of pin, same tabby weave, count est. c.14/14 per cm, part of tablet weave well preserved, c.8 twists on 5 mm, diagonal pattern, edge hidden by fold-back of tabby weave, overall 4.0 X c.1.2 cm.

(d) underneath one end, fragments coarse Z/Z or Zply, tabby weave, count 6-7/6(3 on 5 mm) per cm, area c.1.0 X 0.5 cm., very similar to (d) above.

Note: The abbreviation "replaced" is used for "fibres replaced by metal oxides". Spinning direction of yarns is indicated by the letters Z and S, probable warp thread being placed first. Overall measurements of best fragments are given in cms., and weave counts in threads per 1 cm, except where otherwise stated.

Grave Number	Object	Position textile	Fibre	Spin	Weave	Count	Measurement	Comments	
127	12032	Applied brooch	back, on pin	replaced	Z/Z	?tabby	-	2.5 X 0.8	flattened surface, no count possible
			pinhead	replaced	Z	-	-	-	coarse threads, ?bead string
	12033	Applied brooch	pin, attachment	replaced	Z, S	-	-	-	threads ?from coarser weave
185	12026	Disc brooch	pin attachment	replaced	Z	-	-	-	coarse thread, ?bead string
			detached	(a)replaced	Z/Z	tabby	c.8/7 per 5 mm	0.7 X 0.8	light spin, soft round thread, close weave
			detached lump	(b)replaced	S/Z, S	tabby	-	-	very similar to (a)
	12053	Disc brooch	detached ?(a,b)	replaced	Z/Z, S	tabby	-	1.0 X 0.5	similar to (a,b) above
			on front	(c) flax	Z/Z	tabby	18/16(8 on 5mm)	1.0 X 0.5,	light spin, even, weave now open
			bone, ?back	(d)replaced	Z/Z	tabby	-	1.5 X 0.9	coarse, broken threads
	12035	Pin fragment	one side	(e)replaced	Z/Z	tabby	16(8 on 5 mm)/16	1.0 X 2.5	hard spin, ?worsted, open weav
					Z/Z	tablet weave, 4-hole	-	L.2.0, width 0.7	?attached to edge of tabby wea diagonal-pattern braid
	12036	Pin fragment	one side, curved round	(e)replaced	Z/Z	tabby	14/14	c.1.0 X 4.0	fold across fabric, lying over ?sewn edge braid
					Z/Z	tablet weave, 4-hole	8 twists, on 5 mm		
			under end	(d)replaced	Z/Z, or Zply	tabby	6-7/6(3 on 5 mm)	1.0 X 0.5	coarse threads

Except where there are exceptional conditions for preservation, textile remains from Anglo-Saxon cemeteries come from small areas that have been protected by metal grave goods, the fibres in most cases being replaced by metal oxides. Fortunately these "replacements" are sometimes very clear, and spinning and weaves can be identified, though the threads of the cast are immovable.

The textile remains from Burial 185 at Darenth form an interesting group. On the front of one of the disc brooches small areas of flax tabby (plain) weave have survived (c), the sort of fine fabric that could have been used for the woman's headveil, falling forward onto her chest to lie on the brooch. Two other tabby weaves, with replaced fibres, differ from each other in style but would both have been of wool. In one (a,b) on both brooches, with rounded lightly spun thread and a close weave, the spin direction varies, mostly Z, but in the (b) fragments some S-spun threads in both systems, which perhaps indicate a checked pattern, as shown by groups of S and Z threads in warp and weft in tabby weaves from other southern cemeteries, Finglesham, Updown, Worthy Park, from Alveston Manor (Warwickshire) and Mucking and Orsett (Essex).

Remains of another replaced tabby (e) on pin fragments suggest a hardspun worsted thread and slightly open weave, with a tablet-woven braid border. Where these braids are patterned, as here, they seem to have been woven separately and sewn where needed to decorate a garment - to the side-selvages and starting and ending borders of cloaks, or the cuff, neck-line and hem of tunics and gowns; the stitching holding the braid to the main fabric can be seen even in replaced examples (Finglesham, Grave 203, Mucking, Grave 814), and on many contemporary Scandinavian garment fragments (1). The fabric on the Darenth pin is not so clear; on the best piece a fold of the main weave lies diagonally across its junction with the braid. Unfortunately the pattern is too damaged and confused to be worked out, but it is of the 4-hole diagonal type of the Scandinavian braids, found later in the St. Cuthbert relics at Durham, (2) weaves where colour is important as well as texture.

The number of different fabrics in this grave must indicate that the woman was buried fully clothed - her overdress of soft woollen, possibly checked, fastened by brooches at the shoulders (a,b); her fine linen headveil (c); perhaps a cloak with a coloured braid border (e). The small coarse fragments (d), on a bone beneath the left brooch and the nearby end of the broken pin, do not seem to fit with any known aspect of her dress, and perhaps indicate that the pin was wrapped, or in a small bag of coarse woollen.

Notes.

- (1) Hougén, E. Snartemofunnene. Norske Oldfunn.VII. 1935.
Pl.X.6 (Setrang), XII.2 (Blindheim), XVI.2,3 (Snartemo),
XVIII (Øvre Berge i Lyngdal).
Dedekam, H. "To tekstilfund fra folkevandringstiden", Bergens Museums
Aarbok.1924-25. fig.23 (Thorsberg), Pls.I-III (Evebo).
- (2) Crowfoot, G.M. "The tablet-woven braids" in Relics of Saint Cuthbert.
1956. 436, Pl.XLI.