

Wilsford ShaftCatalogue

sf.23, lab.620369

Several strands, three 6.5cm long, the remainder 2.5-3.5cm long, of vegetable fibre, twisted in the S-direction (clockwise); all are 0.6-0.8cm wide. The longer three pieces may have been originally twisted together in the Z-direction (anti-clockwise) in the manner of sf.175.

sf.24, lab.620832

Fragments of vegetable matter, described on excavation as "rope". Possibly originally as sf.23.

sf.71a, lab.620830

Two pieces, one 6.5cm and one 5.5cm long, both with maximum width 1.5cm, of S-twisted woody material; bark still present; two pieces probably originally twisted together. Wood identified by Dr A.R.Hall of the Environmental Archaeology Unit, York University, as hazel (Corylus).

sf.71b, lab.620831

As sf.24

sf.100, lab.620833

As sf.24

sf.142, lab.620835

As sf.24

sf.160, lab.620839

Described on excavation as "rope fragments" but now distintegrated.

sf.175, lab.620829

A flattened cord, 8.0cm long and 1.3cm wide; 3-ply, Z-twisted from three S-twisted strands; identified by A.R.Hall as plant, probaly plant stem fibre.

sf.322, lab.620837

Described on excavation as a "plait" but now distintegrated.

Comments

Sf.71a would appear to be a 'withy', that is, a flexible piece of wood, twisted, and used for binding. Sf.175 is a 3-ply cord of vegetable fibre. The other finds are poorly preserved, but sfs 23, 24, 71b, 100 and 142 resemble 175 in fibre and may originally have been from similar cords.

Thick plied cords were used as belts in the costume of Bronze Age Denmark, but they were made exclusively of wool or hair (1). Cords of vegetable fibre are not a common find, possibly because vegetable fibres decay more rapidly than animal. One fine plied thread of vegetable fibre was found under the skull of a female burial at Garton Slack in Yorkshire and a 2-ply piece of string, possibly grass, was excavated at Silbury Hill, Wiltshire (2). However, the association of the cord finds from Wilsford Shaft with the withy may indicate that they too were used as bindings.

References

1. H.C.Broholm and M.Hald Costumes of the Bronze Age in Denmark (Copenhagen 1940).
2. A.S.Henshall 'Textiles and Weaving appliances in Prehistoric Britain' P.P.S. 10 (1950) p155.

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