

Ancient Monuments Laboratory
Report 36/86

IDENTIFICATION OF MINERAL PRESERVED
ORGANIC MATERIAL ASSOCIATED WITH
METALWORK FROM THE ANGLO-SAXON
CEMETERY AT WORTHY PARK, HANTS.

Jacqui Watson

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Summary

Identification report on the mineral preserved organic material associated with selected ironwork, including shields, spears and knives. The report includes a short discussion and a catalogue of the examined material.

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Worthy Park - Mineral Preserved Organic Material

28 objects were examined, including the fittings from 6 shields, 17 spears, and 5 knives. Unfortunately much of the material had been conserved, and the consolidants that were used impeded the identification of the mineral preserved organic material on many of these items.

Only 3 of the 6 shields had identifiable mineral preserved wood and they were of 3 different species - lime or maple, willow or poplar, and birch. The latter is an unexpected choice as this tree doesn't usually produce planks wide enough for a shield diameter, and would probably have to be made from 2-3 small boards joined together - however, there was no definite evidence for this preserved on any of the fittings. All 6 had the remains of mineral preserved leather directly underneath the boss rims, so that originally all must have been leather covered.

Of the spears 11 were originally hafted with ash, mostly from mature timber, while only 2 were hafted with the traditional coppiced woods - alder or hazel, willow or poplar. Although ash was the traditional wood for spear shafts it is unusual to find such a high proportion of them represented.

The knives had little mineral preserved organic material remaining. Only 2 had traces of horn handles and one of these also had the remains of a leather sheath.

WORTHY PARK

868789 GR22

Iron shield fittings, but only the three discs have traces of mineral preserved organic material. All have wood and possibly leather between the head of the disc and wood. The wood species is either Tilia sp.(lime) or Acer sp.(maple), with a minimum depth of 10mm on disc 6109 .

868790 GR24

Shield boss and grip with no mineral preserved organic material remaining, except for the possibility of leather on the inside rim of the boss.

868791 GR33 ①/163

Spearhead with mineral preserved wood in socket:-
Alnus sp.(alder) or Corylus sp.(hazel).

868792 GR44 ①/230

Spearhead with mineral preserved wood in socket:-
Fraxinus sp.(ash), from mature timber.

868793 GR44 ②/232

Iron shield fittings. The discs have mineral preserved wood and leather to a depth of 9mm, with the leather between the head of the disc and the wood. The grip has mineral preserved wood around the rivets, but it is too consolidated to see construction details. Unable to identify the wood species.

868794 GR44 ⑨/239

Iron knife with no mineral preserved organic material remaining.

868795 GR45 ②/197

Iron ferrule with mineral preserved wood in socket:-
Fraxinus sp.(ash), from mature timber.

868796 GR45 (3) 198

Iron knife with no mineral preserved organic material remaining.

868797 GR46 (1) 199

Spearhead with mineral preserved wood in socket:- Fraxinus sp.(ash), from mature timber.

868798 GR46 (2) 200

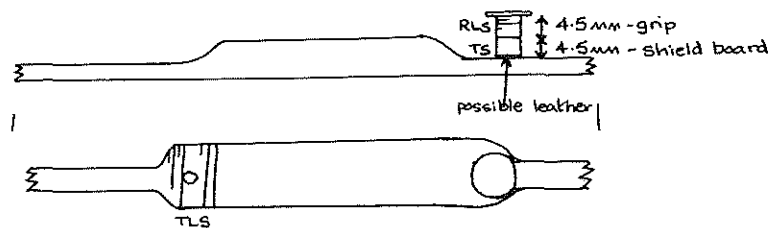
Razor knife with no mineral preserved organic material remaining.

868799 GR49 (2) 221

Iron spearhead with brass inlay on socket and mineral preserved wood inside:- Fraxinus sp.(ash), from mature timber.

868800 GR49 (3) 222

Iron shield fittings. The inside of the shield boss rim has leather preserved between the rim and wood, and a complete rivet gives a depth of 9mm for the original layers of organic material. From the iron grip it can be seen that the shield was made from tangentially cut boards, with the wooden grip inset and held in place along with the iron grip. Wood is possibly Salix sp. (willow) or Populus sp. (poplar).



Detail of grip construction.

868801 GR50 (1) 190

Spearhead with mineral preserved wood in socket:- Fraxinus sp.(ash) from mature timber.

868802 GR79 (1) 316

Spearhead with mineral preserved wood in socket:- probably Fraxinus sp.(ash), from mature timber.

868803 GR81 (1) 318

Spearhead with mineral preserved wood in socket:- possibly Fraxinus sp.(ash).

868804 GR81 (2) 319

Iron knife with mineral preserved horn handle and possible leather sheath.

868805 GR81 (3) 329

Shield fittings. On the inside of the shield boss rim there is possibly leather preserved between the metal and the wood. The wood species is probably Betula sp.(birch). The depth of the original organic material at the boss rim was 8mm, but near the rim of the shield only 6.5mm.

868806 GR83 (1)

Spearhead with brass inlay on socket and mineral preserved wood inside:- Fraxinus sp.(ash), from mature timber.

868807 GR84 (1) 334

Small spearhead with mineral preserved wood in socket:- Fraxinus sp.(ash), from mature timber.

868808 GR87 (1) 343

Spearhead with brass inlay on socket and mineral preserved wood inside:- probably Fraxinus sp.(ash).

868809 GR87 (2)

Shield fittings. On the inside of the shield boss rim leather was possibly preserved between the wood and iron. The original depth of organic material was 8mm. The wood is too degraded to identify the species.

Leather was also preserved between the iron and wood on the grip.

4.

868810 GR87 (5) 374

Iron knife with mineral preserved horn handle.

868811 GR94 (1) 345

Iron spearhead with mineral preserved wood in socket:- too degraded to identify the species, but is a diffuse porous wood rather than a ring porous one (e.g.ash) or a conifer.

868812 GR95 (1) 366

Iron spearhead with mineral preserved wood in the socket:- Fraxinus sp.(ash) from mature timber.

868813 84.9

Iron spearhead with mineral preserved wood in socket:- too degraded to identify the species.

868814 84.20

Iron spearhead with mineral preserved wood in socket: possibly Salix sp. (willow) or Populus sp. (poplar).

868815 84.21

Iron spearhead with mineral preserved wood in socket:- too degraded to identify the species.

868816 84.22

Iron spearhead with mineral preserved wood in the socket:- too degraded to identify the species.