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Ancient Monuments Laboratory
Report 110/87

IDENTIFICATION OF ORGANIC KNIFE
HANDLES FROM BACONSTHORPE CASTLE,
NORFOLK.

Jacqui Watson

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Summary

Identification report on 9 medieval knives selected by Ian Goodall. The organic handles included wood, bone, antler and ivory. Identification of antler were confirmed by Pat Stevens.

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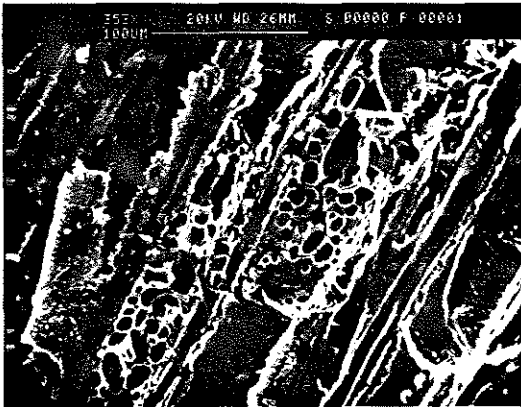
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Identification of organic knife handles from Baconsthorpe Castle, Norfolk.

546006

Scale tang knife with wooden scales, which are probably Acer sp. (maple). On examination with the SEM, one could see that many of the pores were blocked with a resinlike material, probably the remains of a protective coating or varnish applied to the handle when in use. This closely resembles a knife from Hinton Hall, Haddenham, (AML 692017) both in wood species and the wood having been 'varnished'.

SEM No.B131



142:4 Resin or wax in wood vessels.

728204

Whittle tang knife with wooden handle, Buxus sp. (box) with curly grain.

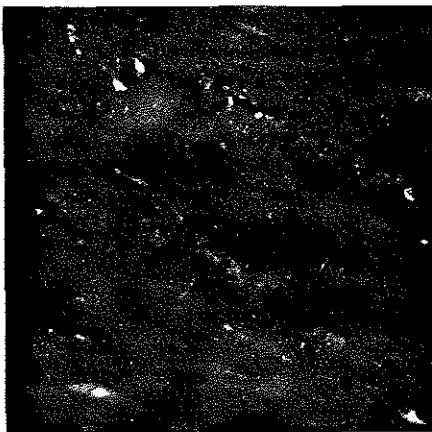
BC`72 DD

SEM No.B133

728206

Scale tang knife with antler or bone scales, but some features suggest that antler is more likely.

BC`72 DD



W34:5. Speckling in surface layers, which is possibly indicative of antler rather than bone. c.16x.

728207 BC'72 DG
Scale tang knife with antler scales.

728208 BC'72 CE
Scale tang knife with antler scales.

728939 BC'72 EG C
Scale tang knife with bone scales.

733704 BC'72 ET A
Whittle tang knife with elephant ivory handle. Radial section has dentinal tubules arranged in a wave pattern, which is indicative of elephant rather than walrus ivory.

733705 BC'72 ET B
Whittle tang knife with elephant ivory handle, same as 733704.



W34:2. Radial section with dentinal tubules in wave pattern. c.16x.

733709 BC'72 ET F
Whittle tang knife with wooden handle, but not well enough preserved to identify the species.

SEM No.B132