

Ancient Monuments Laboratory  
Report 6/88

TEXTILES: WASPERTON, WARWICKSHIRE.

Elisabeth Crowfoot  
(fibre identifications by  
H M Appleyard)

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Summary

Textile fragments were recorded on metal grave-goods from twenty-seven graves. In all but two cases the fibres were mineralised, and some surfaces confused by ?skin. The material, from garments, was originally of good quality, including tabby weaves, three-shed and four-shed twills, with details including tubular selvages and traces of tablet-weave borders.

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WASPERTON, WARWICKSHIRE  
ANGLO-SAXON CEMETERY

Appendix: Textiles

Elisabeth Crowfoot.

(Fibre identification: H.M.Appleyard, F.T.I.)

With the exception of two fragments recognisable as wool, textile remains in this cemetery were preserved by the oxides of the grave goods against which they lay, and the fibres completely mineralised. Study was complicated by a feature previously occasionally noted (Crowfoot 1985a.51) but here very widely present, a flat layer which from its reticulated surface appears to be skin, mineralised in the same manner as the textile fibres below; this is almost impossible to remove, and though from a distance weave structures can often be seen, under magnification this is obscured by the enlarged fibres. It is however clear from what remains that textiles here were originally of good quality.

The spinning throughout is Z, apart from possible Z and S-spun threads in one fine weave whose structure is uncertain (Grave 114.3305/7). The weaves present include tabby (plain weave) and twills, three-shed (one possibly ribbed), four-shed (two with broken diamond or chevron patterns) and tablet-weaves.

The four identifiable tabby weaves are all fine. In two (Graves 15, 80) the style of the very even rounded threads suggests worsted, i.e. combed long staple wool, rather than a linen fabric. In one of these (Grave 80, 2410/b) the weave appears to have stripes of thicker threads, which in a fabric of this quality is likely to be intentional. The striping suggests the use of two wefts, one coarse, returning in the next shed, the other finer, in single throws between the two-pick stripes, a weave that would have been more effective if the two wefts had been of different colours as well as different weights. Unfortunately the many folds or layers of this weave all show broken edges, and no selvage survives to show if the striping was in the warp or weft.

The only certain example of three-shed twill (Grave 161, 3542/8) has also a striped effect, with some noticeably thicker wefts, though here rather irregular. In two places the weave is reversed, i.e. on the face visible (weft-face, 1/2) giving one throw in 2/1 (fig.1). If this occurred throughout the weave, it might indicate something approaching a weave so far not found in England, the ribbed twill identified by Professor H.-J.Hundt from numerous continental cemeteries of this date (Hundt 1969.75; 1980.154; 1982.distribution, Abb.4; 1985.331). The ribs are most commonly of three throws 1/2, three 2/1,

though there are variations, and on one site, Niederstotzingen, single reversed throws occur; these however are placed to emphasise the changes of diagonal at the centre of areas of diamond twill (Hundt 1967. 8,16-17,Pl.6). There are no diamonds, or general reverses, in the Grave 161 pieces; and perhaps the lines, which are separated by twenty throws of regular weft, are merely accidental, a broken thread or a weaving mistake.

The commonest weave at Wasperdon is the four-shed twill, of which there are sixteen examples. Most are medium to fine grade weaves with fairly regular spinning and near-even thread counts, only occasionally warp-preponderant; only one (Grave 111, 3247/22.a) is of the coarser quality suitable only for cloaks and blankets. In two graves (Graves 86.3125/21.a, 111.3247/23.c) reversal of the diagonals indicates a broken diamond or chevron weave, though too little survives for the pattern to be drawn; with such small fragments, and the extension of diamonds with areas of chevron diagonals seen in some examples where large areas have survived (Crowfoot & Jones 1984.18,20; Kempston, Ganton Wold, both British Museum) it is possible that many of the scraps of simple diagonal twill come from patterned weaves.

A length of 2.8 cm of a mineralised weave border, preserved in the earth with fragments of gilded saucer brooches from Grave 77, is "skinned" over, but seems to be a tubular selvedge of the type popular in Anglo-Saxon textiles (Crowfoot 1978.104,106; 1981.96-98; 1983.473-474; 1985a. 52-53); the closely-packed warp threads in this tabby-weave construction are finer and more even than the rather untidy threads of the twill on which it seems to be the selvedge (fig.2). A detached fragment of another such border comes from Grave 39, and possible remains of a similar construction from Grave 88.

Two fragments of tablet-weave are in the simple 4-hole construction used for starting and closing borders as well as selvedges. The position of two twists in Grave 24 suggest these were part of a border, but perhaps on a coarser weave than the four-shed twill that survives below; in Grave 39 no possible main weave survives, but the coarse 2-plyed wefts clearly protruding from the three twists that remain appear to be cut off, as when threaded back through the twists of an end-border (cf. Crowfoot 1967.37-38; 1983.468-9; Crowfoot and Jones 1984. 18,20); the fragment of tubular selvedge could be the side-border on the same weave. In Grave 114 the lie of a patch of finer twists, and the holes left by missing wefts, suggest a braid in one of the patterned weaves preserved in earlier Scandinavian finds (Hougen 1935.Pls.XIII,AVII)

and since found in English cemeteries (Morning Thorpe, Norfolk, Graves 358,360) - a type of braid that would have been woven separately, and sewn to the edge of the garment pinned here by the saucer brooches (Hougen 1935.Pls.XVI-XVIII; Mucking, Essex, Grave 614/2).

In three graves textile underneath is confused by the presence of coarse threads which do not belong to a weave. No beads are mentioned in Graves 17 and 145, and the passage of threads on the brooches, particularly those wound round the rivet and knotted in Grave 17, perhaps mean that the brooches were sewn on, rather than pinning the shoulders of the woman's overgown. A twist, or perhaps a loose plait of Z and Z-ply threads on a cruciform brooch in Grave 111 may have been bead-thread, but this, or other similar threads, also pass round the arms of the cross; it is possible other objects were attached - the surface of an iron ring with the brooch is covered with fine twill; clearly visible sewing stitches suggest this was perhaps in a small bag, some form of amulet attached to the necklace.

#### Appendix. Fibre identifications

H.M.Appleyard, F.T.I.

Wasperton, samples 240 (Grave 8,1303/2), 302 (Grave 24,1230/4).

These samples are both alike; there are a lot of deposits, they are very friable, and have little surface structure, but their general appearance is that of wool.

Was, erton: Bibliography

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## Wasperton

## Textile Catalogue

Note: The abbreviation "replaced" is used for "fibres replaced by metal oxides". Spinning direction of yarns is indicated by the letters S and Z, the 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. Letters (a,b,c) indicate probable different weaves present in a grave.

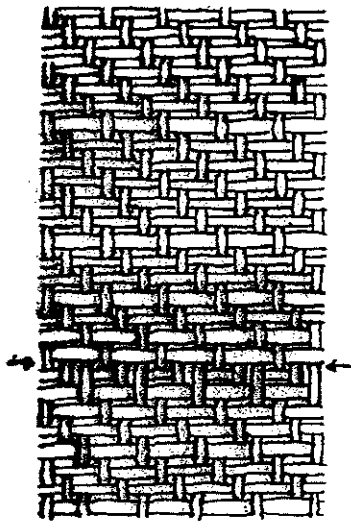
Grave	Sex	S.F.no.	Object	Position on object	Measurement	Fibre	Spin	Weave	Count	Comments
8 (240)	F(I)	1303/2	Ae disc brooch	back, across pin	c.3.5 X 2.5	wool	Z/Z	2/2 twill	12-14/12, (6-7/6 on 5 mm)	even spin and weave, ?skin replaced above textile
11 (250)	F	1304/6	Fe buckle and fitting	allover top area on ?horn underneath	L.c.18.0 cm, (clear 5 X 5 mm) c.2 X 2	replaced replaced	Z/Z -	2/2 twill -	est.6/6 on 5 mm -	-and traces top of buckle ?strap, leather
15 (270)	F	1257/26 1257/27	Fe buckle buckle plate	back, and on ring top, and detached	1.2 X 1.2 2.5 X 2.0	replaced replaced	Z/Z Z/Z	tabby tabby	- c.18-20/14 (9-10/7 5 mm)	and scrap leather belt folded round ?missing pin very, even rounded yarns; traces coarser threads
17 (272)	?F	1441/1	Small-long brooch	back of pin attachment	c.2.0 X 1.8	replaced	Z	threads	L.c.2.5 cm	deteriorated textile, hidden by coarse loosely spun threads round rivet ?sawn on
22 (289)	M	1223/10, 11	Fe buckle, Ae plate	under ring, tongue on top	2.0 X 2.5, 2.5 X 1.2 c.1.3 X 1.0	replaced	Z/Z	2/2 twill	c.12/12 (6/6 5 mm)	even spin, regular weave, folding over, i.e., garment; pupae replaced
23 (294-2)	M	1221/7	Fe buckle with plate, wood	over surface on plate, stud	- -	replaced replaced	Z/? -	- twill	- -	textile damaged surface tiny area; scrap leather belt
24 (302)	A?F	1230/4	Great square-head brooch	back, pin-catch above (a)	6.6 X 5.0 L.3.5 cm	(a) wool, and semi-replaced (b) replaced	Z/Z Z/?	2/2 twill tablet, 2 twists 4-hole wefts	c.12-14/ 12-14 1.5 mm 4 5 mm	even spin, regular weave rather coarse twists S clear, wider area damaged
39 (365)	I?F	1267/7	Small-long cruciform brooch	round pin attachment detached lump	L.5 mm L.9 mm width 3-3.5 mm	(a) replaced (b) replaced	Z/Sply Z/Z	tablet, 3 twists 4-hole wefts tubular selvedge	2.5mm twists 1S, 1Z, 1S; 5 5 mm 6 wefts (9mm) no main weave; tube 9-11 warps	coarse ends cut? no main weave; tube 9-11 warps

Grave	Sex	S.F.No.	Object	Position on object	Measurement	Fibre	Spin	Weave	Count	Comments
43 (377)	F	1324/1	Great square-head brooch	on Ae, lower back, and back, larger areas	1.5 X 1.1 4.0 X 3.0, 5.0 X 3.0	?(a)replaced (b)replaced	Z/Z Z/Z	?tabby 2/2 twill, reverses	- 10-11/ 9-10	fine, broken threads on top skinned over, probably broken diamond; fragments
		1324/2	Small long brooch	back, pin attachment underneath (b) back	1.0 X 0.7 1.0 X 1.5	(b)replaced (a)replaced	Z/Z Z/Z	2/2 twill, ?tabby	12/10-11 c.19/18 (6 on 5mm)	as above surface not clear enough
		U.S.	Small long brooch	back, end of pin	-	?(b)replaced	Z/Z	?twill	-	damaged
47 (384)	F	1343/3	Fe buckle	all over broken pieces	c.1.2 X 1.2, 1.4 X 1.5	replaced	Z/Z	2/2 twill	c.12/10 (6/5 on 5 mm)	deteriorated
50 (387)	A F	1268/1	Great square head brooch	on Fe rivet, pin attachment	-	replaced	Z/?	-	-	skinned over, weave fine threads, not clear
55 (419)	A M	1421/17	Ae belt buckle	underneath, on plate and loose scraps	c.1.0 X 0.9	replaced	Z/Z	2/2 twill	-	medium grade, damaged surface
59 (4004)	F	2303/1	Disc brooch	pin attachment	-	replaced	Z/Z	twill	-	small area, deteriorated
77 (1081)	F	2406/11, 16	Ae scraps, two gilded saucer brooches	in earth round fragments	L.2.8 cm, width 1.5	replaced	Z/Z	2/2 twill tubular selvedge	c.6/6 on 5 mm	uneven spinning selvedge, fine even warps, 9-10, i.e.c.19 in tube, 4-5 mm wide folds
80 (1085)	F	2410/8	Fe buckle fragment	?underneath	c.3.0 X 2.5	replaced	Z/Z	tabby, 24-26/11-12 ?striped	skinned one side; very round even thread, ? worsted, folds or layers ?stripes of 2 thicker, 1 finer thread	
88 (1531)	F	3125/21	Ae disc brooch	underneath, with grass under (a) on metal	c.2.5 X 2.5 c.1.4 X 1.0	(a)replaced (b)replaced	Z/Z Z/Z	2/2 twill, broken diamond or chevron ?tabby	c.14/12-14 (7/6-7 on 5 mm) est.10/10	in four folds, curling pinned, damaged damaged surface, curled round, possibly tubular selvedge
89 (1533)	F	3127/20	Ag disc brooch	on back	-	replaced	Z/?	-	-	deteriorated, small area, fine
102 (1556)	F	3211/7	Fe buckle	all over underside, detached scrap	1.0 X 0.7, 1.1 X 1.1	replaced	Z/Z	2/2 twill	c.12/11 (6/5-6 on 5 mm)	only clear on scrap



Grave	Sex	S.F.No.	Object	Position on object	Measurement	Fibre	Spin	Weave	Count	Comments
111 (1575)	F	3247/22	Cruciform brooch	back of head	c.3.0 X 2.0	(a)replaced	Z/Z	2/2 twill	c.9/5-6	coarse, loose weave pulled on bias
				across (a) round front of arms	-	(b)replaced	Z,Zply	threads, ?plait	-	possibly tying or sewing brooch on
		3247/23	Small long brooch	on pinhead	-	?(a)replaced	Z/Z	2/2 twill	-	lump, coarse threads
			?Fe ring (with 23)	all over	1.4 X 1.0	(c)replaced	Z/Z	2/2 twill, 12/12, ?broken diamond	(6/6 on 5mm)	even spin and weave, S threads ?sewing; wound round ring, double fold
114 (1579)	F	3305/7	Fe buckle	back and front	-	(a)replaced	Z,S	-	-	in folds, surface damaged
		3305/18	Saucer brooch, gilt	back, over and under pin attachment	1.7 X 1.5	(b)replaced	Z/Z	tabby	11-12/9-10 on 5 mm	fine threads, in folds
		3305/19	Saucer brooch, pair	across pin, and all over; one clear area beneath pin	2.5 X 1.2	(b)replaced	Z/Z	tabby	24-26/18-19 (12-13 on 5mm)	fine variable yarn(?flax)
					1.3 X 0.4	(c)replaced	Z/?	?tablet, patterned	wefts 5 5mm	fine threads, lie of twists suggests ?broken twill pattern
115 (1582)	F	3266/7	Fe buckle, wood and bone	underneath, on plate	2.0 X 2.0	replaced	Z/Z	?2/2 twill	c.10-11/10	surface not clear; scraps leather on plate
116 (1588)	F	3276/22	Cruciform small long brooch	pin-head, along back, and detached	c.2.0 X 1.5	replaced	Z/Z	2/2 twill	-	count impossible; some coarse threads from another weave?
126	I?F	3317/3	Ae and Fe strap end	on Fe area, scraps	0.6 X 0.5, 1.0 X 0.4	replaced	Z/Z	2/2 twill	c.12/12 (6/6 on 5mm)	damaged surface, some coarse threads; leather between Ae fragments
145 (3062)	F	3431/17b	Ae square head brooch (small)	underneath, near Fe pin	2.1 X 1.5	replaced	Z/Z	?2/2 twill	-	surface skin covering; coarse threads pin-head
155	F	3484/18	(Ae saucer brooch)	on Fe and wood detached	-	replaced	-	-	-	leather; ?bone; no clear textile
161 (3098)	M	3542/8	Fe buckle, Ae plate	back of plate and loose	3.2 X 4.0	(a)replaced	Z/Z	2/1 twill (?ribbed)	c.22-24/18-20	(fig. ) fine weave, yarns uneven ?stripes, colour or texture; lines reverse, rib or mistake. ?sewing threads near edge
				other side of plate	1.4 X 1.4, 0.5 X 0.5	(b)replaced	Z/Z	2/2 twill	c.12/12 (6/6 on 5 mm)	even spin and weave

<u>Grave</u>	<u>Sex</u>	<u>S.F.No.</u>	<u>Object</u>	<u>Position on object</u>	<u>Measurement</u>	<u>Fibre</u>	<u>Spin</u>	<u>Weave</u>	<u>Count</u>	<u>Comments</u>
167 (3107)	F	3616/23	Small long brooch	back of pin-head	c.3.0 X 1.5	replaced	Z/Z	2/2 twill	c.14/14, (7/7 on 5 mm)	deteriorated surface
		3616/22	Small long brooch	lump, on head of brooch	2.5 X 2.4	replaced	Z/Z	2/2 twill	-	curved folds from pin; probably same as on /23
		3616/10	Clasp ends, Fe buckle plate	area on clasp,	c.2.0 X 2.7	replaced	Z/Z	?2/2 twill	-	surface damaged; leather on Fe



Wasperton: Fig 1. Three-shed twill, with one throw reverse (arrowed)  
a second similar reverse occurs 12 throws below  
(Grave 161, 3542/8)

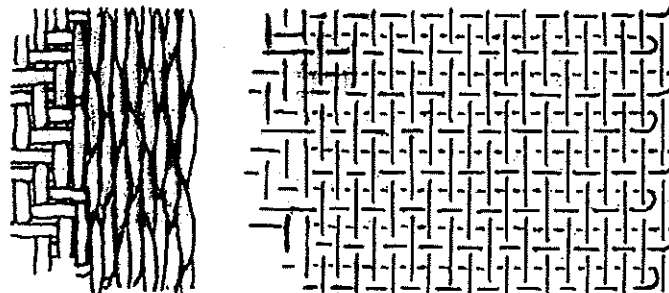


Fig.2. Tubular selvedge on twill (Grave 77);  
the diagram shows the passage of the weft  
before pulled into the tube