

Ancient Monuments Laboratory  
Report 123/89

TEXTILE: HAUGHMOND ABBEY,  
SHROPSHIRE.

Elisabeth Crowfoot

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Summary

Textile preserved on a bronze buckle, good quality  
worsted from a garment, from a man's grave in the Abbey  
cloister, probably a benefactor, a member of the local  
gentry. Date: medieval, ?3rd quarter of 12th century.

Author's address :-

Elisabeth Crowfoot

Riverview  
Big Row  
Geldeston Beccles  
Suffolk  
NR34 OLB

Fibre Identification

H.M.Appleyard, FTI

- 4209/1 (a) These are badly degraded animal fibres with many transverse cracks; impossible to say what type of animal.
- 4209/1 (b) Extremely friable sample, breaking up into very small fragments of fibres; some evidence to be able to say animal.

Tests for dye

Penelope Walton

A small sample of orange-red textile from a buckle plate from Haughmond Abbey was provided for analysis. AS the sample was necessarily small, it was only exposed to our tests for red mordant dyes.

The sample was extracted into solvents and the absorption of visible light measured with a UV/Visible spectrophotometer. This showed no trace of dyestuff.

The present colour is that to be expected from iron oxide, and may derive from the rivets of the buckle-plate.

Haughmond Abbey, Shropshire. 3rd quarter 12th century

Appendix: Textile

Elisabeth Crowfoot

Fibre identification: H.M.Appleyard, FTI. Dye testing: Penelope Walton  
HDA.79. 695 4209/1. A.M.Lab.891473

On the plate of the buckle, an area, c.2.3 X 1.6 cm, of textile is preserved, lying in two layers or folds.

Fibre: degraded animal (H.M.Appleyard, below (a)), i.e. in this context probably sheep's wool. Spinning: Z both systems, slightly uneven, no selvedge preserved; one system, ?warp, finer than the other. Weave: tabby, very even and close, thread count 20-22/19-20 per 1 cm. The textile is reddish-brown, but when tested no dye could be detected, and the colour is probably due to contact with the iron rivets on the plate.

Inside the buckle, small fragments of animal fibre, remains probably of a leather belt or strap (H.M.Appleyard, below (b)),

At this period shrouds are usually of flax, but, as the belt suggests, the man was probably buried fully clothed, and the textile probably comes from an upper garment, a tunic or gown. The fabric is fine wool, of respectable quality, from the smooth clear appearance of the threads of combed (worsted) yarn, with no sign of fulling or napping.

Though there are Anglo-Saxon and Viking examples, few wool tabby weaves of this period have so far been preserved, apart from very coarse remains from monks' robes. The emphasis in the north in fine wool weaves has always been on twills, until the 13th to 14th centuries, when the general introduction of finishing techniques, fulling and napping, obscured the weave patterns, and the easiest weave, tabby, became more common. The nearest published fragments to this, in date, spin and weave, are one from a group of 11th-12th century tabbies from the City of London (Pritchard 1984.51, cat.no.9), a worsted fragment from Winchester (Crowfoot, 199 .no.1056) and an unpublished fragment from Castle Acre Priory, T.6.

Pritchard F. 1984 'Late Saxon Textiles from the City of London',  
Medieval Archaeology XXVIII. 46-76.

Crowfoot E. 199 'Textiles' in Biddle, M. Winchester Studies  
7.ii.