

UNCORRECTED ARCHIVE REPORT**APPENDIX 12 – AN ANGLO-SAXON TUB****by George Lambrick****Descriptive interpretation**

The remains of a Saxon tub or barrel reused as a lining for a well came from a waterhole F43 (see main report Figure 43). The parts that survived (see main report Figure 77 A-H) were two wooden bands (A-F) and two fragmentary staves, one with a rebate for the base (G-H).

The bands were 5 to 7cm wide and mostly about 0.5 to 0.7cm thick. The overlapping ends of one of the bands were joined by wooden dowels (A), the outer overlap significantly thicker and chamfered over the much thinner inside piece. Two other chamfered ends with dowel holes were noted (B and E) suggesting that the bands were joined in more than one place. Dowels or dowel holes were also present at other points along the binding rings (C and D), perhaps indicating a secondary repair to stop them slipping.

The two staves (G and H) were 8-10cm wide, straight and parallel-sided with slightly bevelled edges and a flat inner surface and slightly curved outer face matching the diameter the bands. They were about 1.4cm thick but one of them (H) thickened towards the base above which there was a rebate to hold the base of the vessel (which was missing but would have been of similar thickness).

Despite the incompleteness of the vessel, it can probably be safely interpreted as having straight, vertical sides. It was certainly a tub or barrel rather than a bucket which can be dismissed on grounds of size: the approximate diameters of the bands, which survived more or less in tact in the ground, were both 80 cms, and the curvature of the outer faces of the two staves and the chamfering of their edges are consistent with this dimension. The upper band lay immediately on top of the lower, a position which suggest that it had worked loose and slid down to rest on the lower band either before the tub or barrel was inserted into the waterhole and surrounded by soil to form the well lining. The staves were not longitudinally curved or tapered, and as the upper band had the same diameter as the lower one it is reasonable to suggest a straight, near vertical sided vessel.

The constructional details do not establish whether the vessel had once been a tall, closed barrel (perhaps cut down when it was reused) or a more squat, open tub; however the latter seems more likely for a straight-sided vessel and, the stratification of the waterhole after it fell into disuse as a well is more consistent with its not having been very deep.

Discussion

The chamfered staves with curved external faces and flat internal ones, the rebate for the base, and the partly lapped pegged joint in the binding (Fig 77) suggest the carpentering skills that would be expected of a cooper. A straight sided stave-built vessel is technically rather less sophisticated than a tapered or, more particularly, a curved one, but nevertheless would have required a high degree of craftsmanship and specialist experience if the result was to be watertight. Part of the technique for achieving this may have been to assemble the vessel with the staves dry and the bands wet. The shrinking of the bands combined with the swelling of the staves when the vessel was filled would have tightened all the joints. This may have been less effective than the wedge effect achieved when bands are put on a tapered or curved sided vessel, but probably served adequately as long as the vessel was used for liquids. Once dried out the bands would have been prone to slip, with no means of tightening them. This appears to have happened here.