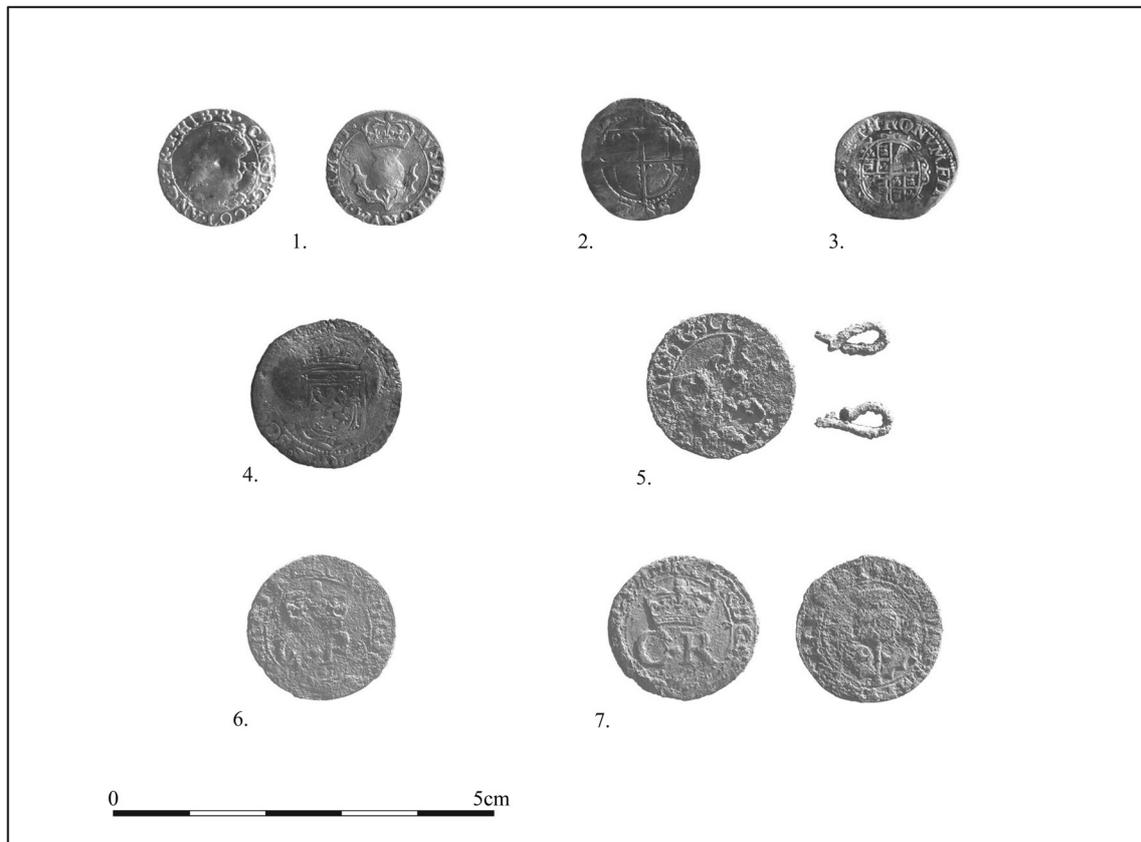


9. THE ARTEFACTS

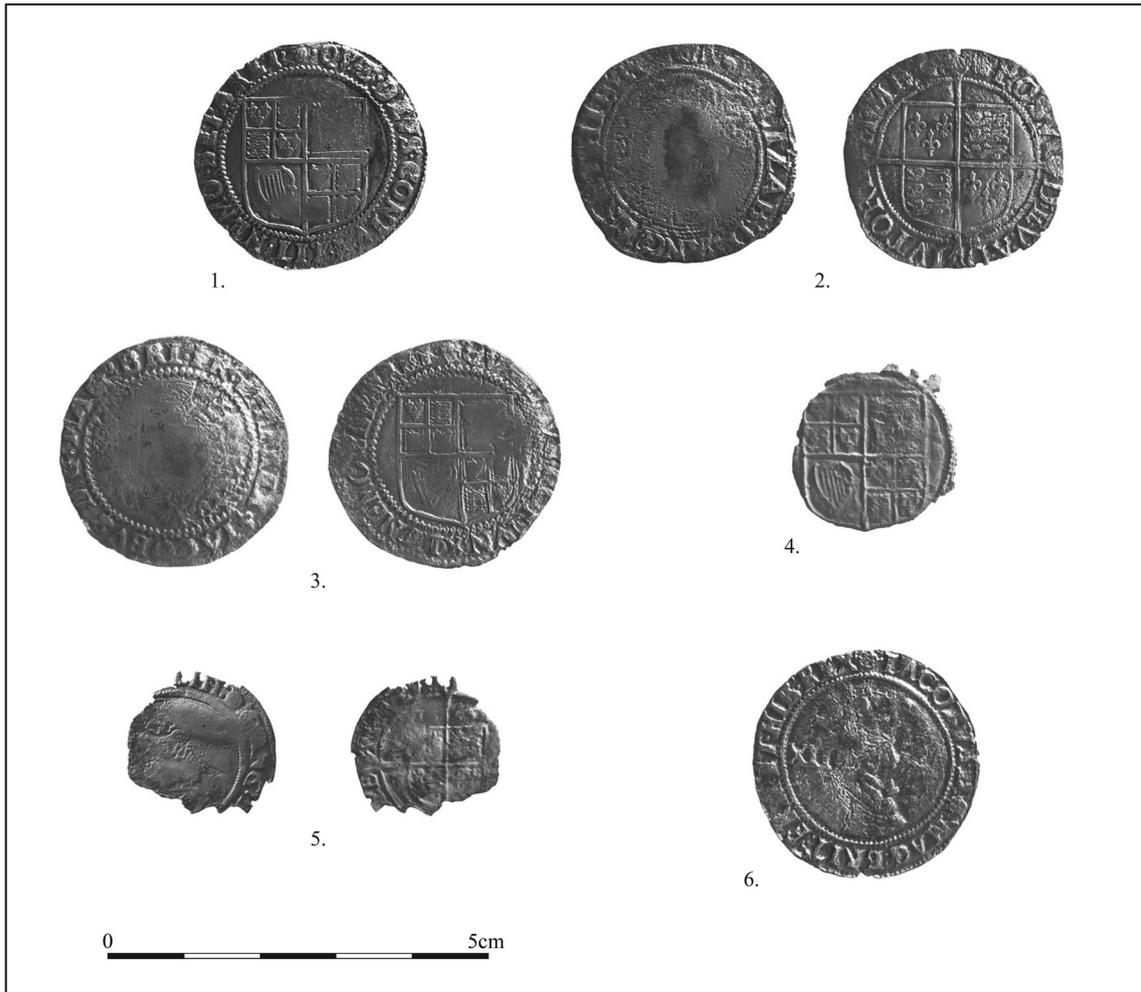
Megan Stoakley & Anne Crone

A small but significant assemblage of artefacts was recovered with some of the human skeletons (Table 8). The presence of possessions on these individuals provides interesting interpretations of the social context of the burials. Of high significance was the recovery of two sets of coins; Young Adult Sk506 was buried with 25 coins dating to the reigns of Charles I (1625–49) (Nos 1, 3, 6 and 7, Illus 9), James VI (1566–1625) (Nos 4 and 5, Illus 9) and potentially Elizabeth I (1558–1603) (No. 2, a shilling dated to 1578–82, Illus 9) which were contained within a purse, which also had a length of cord with a highly degraded large wooden bead attached to it (SFs15–40). This may have acted as a purse toggle-clasp or it may have been a spacer-bead/end-bead from a rosary or paternoster. Male Adult Sk512 was buried with coins (including florins) dating to the reign of James VI contained within a leather-corded purse (SFs

48–55, Illus 10). Two small copper alloy Charles Turner coins dating to between 1632 and 1639 were recovered from the body of Adult Female Sk482 as well as leather footwear. Adult Sk440 was also wearing a pair of large leather shoes when interred (SFs43 and 44, Illus 11). The interment of artefacts on an individual is not standard practice with Christian burials and the artefacts should not be regarded as grave goods but rather the personal accoutrements of daily life that accompany a fully clothed individual. The sizeable sums in the purses of two individuals, Sk506 and Sk512, suggests that the bodies were not rifled, indicating either an unusual level of honesty and respect on behalf of those doing the burying or fear of the diseased corpse. That money was present on the corpse and that some of the corpses appear to have been fully clothed may suggest that some of the victims died suddenly and not in their sick beds. Such a death may be consistent with some victims dying from plague that had become septicaemic or be characteristic of another disease altogether.



Illus 9 A selection of silver coins recovered with Sk506. Ag: 1) SF15, front and rear; 2) SF16 rear; 3) SF17, rear; 4) SF21, rear. Cu alloy: 5) SFs22–24, rear and two small clasps; 6) SFs25–28, front; 7) SFs30–39, front and rear © Wardell Armstrong LLP



Illus 10 A selection of coins recovered with Sk512. Ag: 1) SF50, rear; 2) SF51, front and rear; 3) SF52, front and rear; 4) SF56a, rear; 5) SF56b, front and rear; 6) SF59, rear © Wardell Armstrong LLP

Other items recovered from the bodies included two wooden lice combs (SF64 and SF63) found on Sk512 and Adult Female Sk483 (Illus 12.1 & 12.2). Small Find 63 is a well-preserved fragment of a double-sided simple comb, fashioned from boxwood (*Buxus sempervirens*) (Crone 2017: 2). A complete end survives; the width is complete at 51mm wide but only 40mm of the original length of the comb survives. The squared end is 4mm wide and the comb has a solid central zone 10mm wide (Egan & Pritchard 1991: figure 243). It is an elongated lozenge-shape in cross-section, tapering from 6mm at mid-point on the central ridge to 1mm at the end of the teeth. The teeth are similar in size on both sides of the comb.

SF64 is a more poorly preserved fragment of a double-sided comb and survives in two fragments.

It too has been fashioned from boxwood. Some 80mm of its original length survives, as does 47mm of the original width. The squared end is 6mm wide and the solid central zone is 10mm wide. This example has fine teeth *c* 1mm wide on one side and coarse teeth *c* 2mm wide on the other. The fine teeth are complete and these are 20mm long, suggesting that the original width of the comb would have been *c* 50mm. It is an elongated lozenge-shape in cross-section, tapering from 6mm at mid-point on the central ridge to 1mm at the end of the teeth. The surviving original dimensions of both combs suggest that they were virtually identical in size, presumably the result of standardised manufacture, although they differ in that SF64 has both fine and coarse teeth while SF63 does not (Crone 2017: 2).



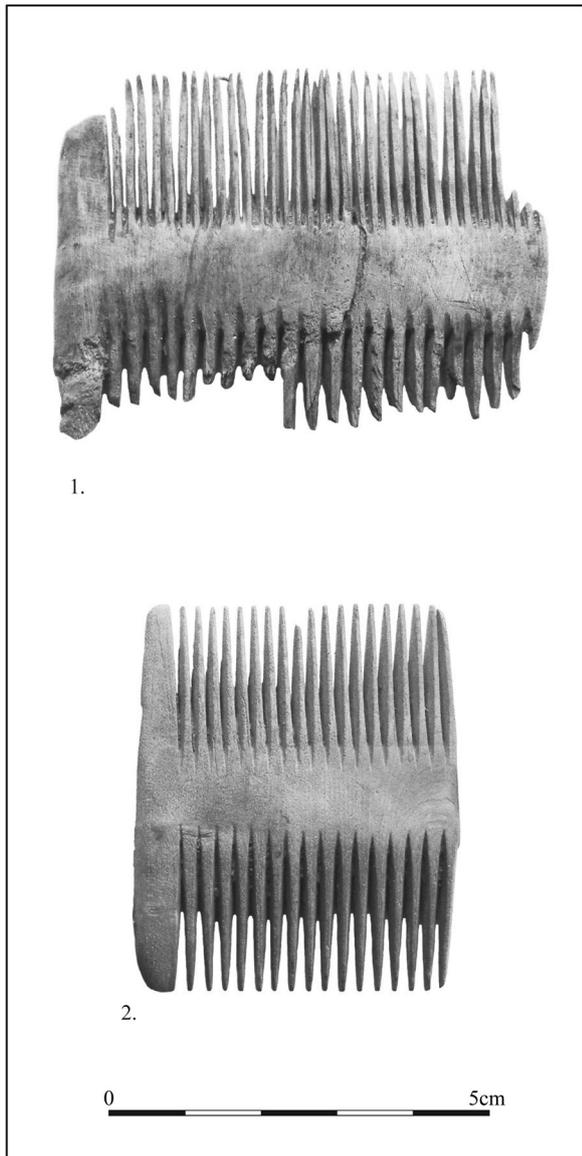
Illus 11 Leather shoe recovered with Sk440: 1) Left upper; 2) Right upper and inner sole; 3) Right outer sole; 4) Left outer sole © Wardell Armstrong LLP

Table 8 Small finds

SF no.	Context	Material	Qty	Date	Comments
1	126	Fe	1	17th C	Coffin nail
2	126	Fe	1	17th C	Coffin nail
3	123	Fe	1	17th C	Coffin nail
4	123	Fe	1	17th C	Coffin nail
5	123	Fe	1	17th C	Coffin nail
6	123	Fe	1	17th C	Coffin nail
7	123	Fe	1	17th C	Coffin nail
8	121	Fe	1	17th C	Coffin nail
9	197	Fe	1	17th C	Coffin nail
10	362	Fe	1	17th C	Coffin nail
11	362	Fe	1	17th C	Coffin nail
12	429	Fe	1	17th C	Key
13	429	CuA	3	17th C	Coins
14	451	Fe	1	17th C	Coffin nail
15	507	Ag	1	17th C	Charles I coin, 1637–42, Sk506
16	507	Ag	1	17th C	Coin Sk506
17	507	Ag	1	17th C	Coin Sk506
18 & 19	507	Ag	2	17th C	Coins stuck together Sk506
20	507	Ag	1	17th C	Coin Sk506
21	507	Ag	1	17th C	Coin Sk506
22–24	507	Ag	4	17th C	3 × coins & purse clasp
25–28	507	Ag	4	17th C	Coins stuck together Sk506
29	507	Ag	1	17th C	Coin – thistle Sk506
30–39	507	Ag	10	17th C	Coins stuck together Sk506
40	507	Leather	5+	17th C	Purse fragments, with toggle (or rosary/paternoster bead?)
41	513	Leather	1	17th C	Boot/shoe fragments Sk482
42	513	CuA	1	17th C	Pin from R scap Sk483
43	513	Leather & wood	1	17th C	Shoe Sk440
44	513	Leather & wood	1	17th C	Shoe Sk440
45	534	Fe & bone	1	17th C	Fe attached to bone
46	539	Fe	1	17th C	Coffin nail
47	539	Fe	1	17th C	Coffin nail
48	555	Fe & Ag	4	16th–17th C	Fe key and coins Sk558
49	555	Leather	1	17th C	From purse
50	555	Ag	1	16th–17thC	Coin Sk512
51	555	Ag	1	16th–17thC	Coin Sk512

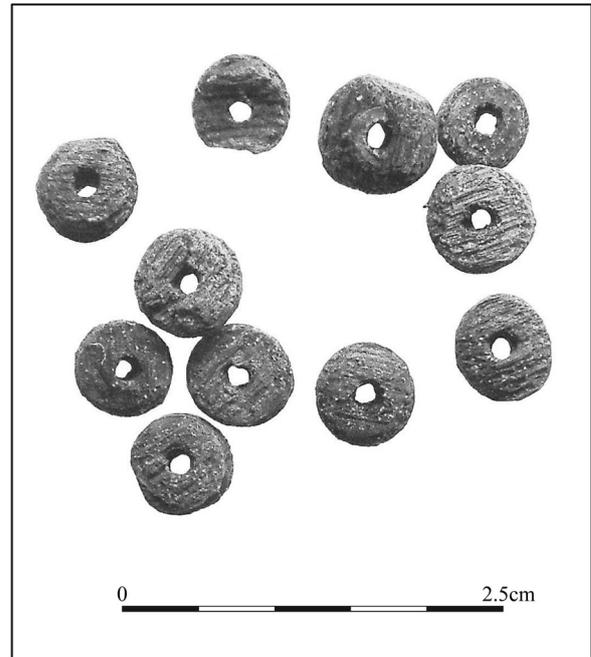
Table 8 *cont*

SF no.	Context	Material	Qty	Date	Comments
52	555	Ag	1	16th–17thC	Coin Sk512
53	555	Ag	1	16th–17thC	Coin Sk512
54	555	Ag	1	16th–17thC	Coin Sk512
55	555	Leather	1	17th C	Purse fragments
56a & b	556	Ag & Textile	3	17th C	2 partial silver coins with a tiny fragment of textile
57	555	Ag	1	17th C	Coin <49>
58	506	Fe	1	17th C	Hobnail/tack Sk506
59	Sk201	Fe	1	17th C	Coffin nail
60	441	Wood	1	17th C	Bead <161>
61	Sk483	Wood	11	17th C	Beads <265>
62	388	Wood	6	17th C	Beads <117>
63	Sk483	Wood	1	17th C	Comb
64	Sk512	Wood	1	17th C	Comb
65	523 Sk525	Wood	4	17th C	Bead <294> × 1 Beads <292> × 3
66	481	Wood	1	17th C	Object <248>, cap or lid for small needle-case – worn around neck
67	148	Fe	1	17th C	Nail <24>
68	147	Fe	2+	17th C	Nails
69	126	Fe	2+	17th C	Nails <5>
70	Sk481	Leather/wood	1	17th C	Sewing bundle
71	494	CuA	1	17th C	Brooch
72	273	Fe	1	17th C	Nail
73	147	Fe	1	17th C	Nail



Illus 12 Wooden combs: 1) SF64 from Sk512; 2) SF63 from Sk483 © Wardell Armstrong LLP

Boxwood is a very hard, dense, fine-grained wood, highly prized where detailed carving was required and it has been used to make combs since at least the Roman period (Pugsley 2003: 15). In his *Sylva; or a Discourse of Forest Trees* (1664), John Evelyn listed its uses for the engraver, the carver, the mathematical instrument-maker, the pipe-maker, the cabinet-maker and, above all, the comb-maker. The boxwood double-sided combs found in late medieval contexts in London differ little in size and design from those found at St Mary's (Leith), so the combs could have been manufactured in England and sold in Scotland (Egan & Pritchard 1991: 370–6). 'Keames of box



Illus 13 Example of beads recovered from burials: SF62 from Sk388 © Wardell Armstrong LLP

trie' are recorded in the 17th-century document 'Table of the Valuation and prices of merchandise bought within the Realm' (Craigie & Aitken 1963b: 325). Equally, it may also have been manufactured in Scotland. 'Box peces for making of keames' are mentioned in the Ledger of Andrew Halyburton (1492–1503), Conservator of the Privileges of the Scotch Nation in the Netherlands (Authority of the Lords of the Treasury (1867); Craigie & Aitken 1963a: 385), suggesting that boxwood may have been imported into Scotland via the Netherlands. In 1662, two comb-makers were admitted as burgesses of the city of Edinburgh; it is clear from the record that this was a new trade in the city but it is not stated what material they were using (Marwick 1871: 283). The only other example of a boxwood comb of similar date comes from Carrick Castle, Argyll (Crone 1998).

A total of 15 wooden beads were recovered from the bodies of five individuals, including Sub-adult Sk441, Adult Males Sk389 and Sk525, Adult Female Sk483 and Young Adult Sk506. Most of the beads were flat and disc-shaped. The largest single assemblage, the beads in SF62 (Illus 13), varied very little in size, from 5 to 7.5mm in diameter and from 2 to 4mm in thickness; some of this variation may

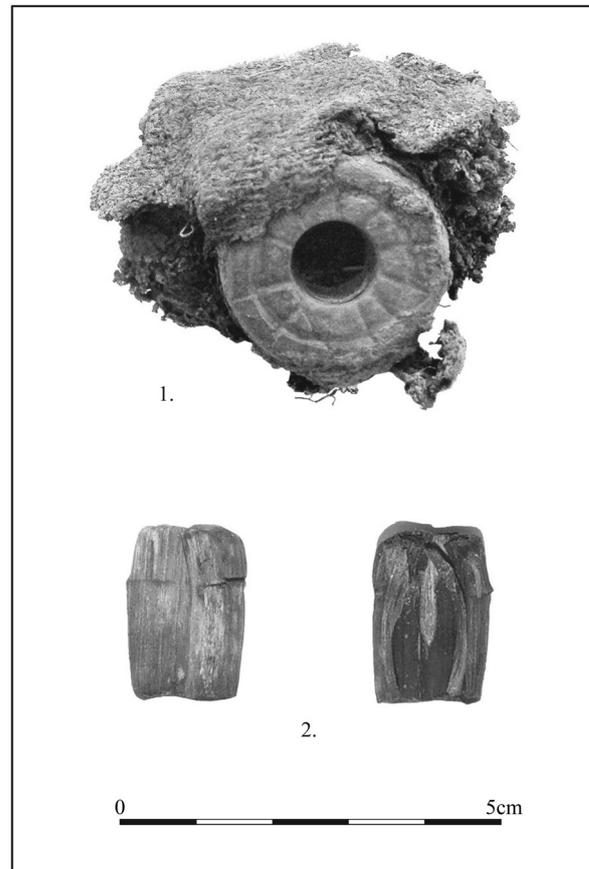
be ascribed to desiccation. The four beads (SF65) recovered from C523 and environmental samples <292> and <294> were of a more spherical shape and again, varied little in size. SF61a was the largest bead present and was quite cylindrical in shape; it may have been covered in textile. All the beads from SF62 had been made from oak (*Quercus* sp.) in such a way that the grain ran across the bead, ie perpendicular to the axis of the perforation. It is highly likely that these beads, particularly the more rounded examples in SF61a and SF65, came from rosaries or paternosters, which consist mostly of beads of similar size with intermittent large beads such as SF61a; 16th-century rosary or paternoster beads of a similar design were recovered from the *Mary Rose* (Cherryson et al 2012: 37). The disc-shaped beads would be more unusual in a rosary or a paternoster although they may have been spacer beads.

The identification of the beads from this assemblage as either rosary or paternoster beads is fairly certain; the rosary, a devotion in honour of the Virgin Mary, is defined as a string of beads used for the recitation of a set number of specific prayers, including the Apostles' Creed (*Credo*), Our Father (*Pater Noster*), Hail Mary (*Ave Maria*) and Glory Be (*Gloria Patri*) (d'Allemtejo 2003: 1). It is usual for a Catholic rosary to have a crucifix attached to it in the later Renaissance period (ibid; Catholic Answers (CA) online 2018). Paternosters are defined as a set of beads threaded on a cord, and are generally divided into smaller groups with larger spacer beads (gauds) (ibid: 1–2). Paternosters generally had either tassels or a large bead in the place of a crucifix; tassels and beads were more common on rosaries before they were codified in 1569, for example: the Langdale Rosary, dated to AD c 1500 (ibid: 2; V&A Museum online 2018). Early rosaries could also have pomanders, scent containers, religious medals and small figures of saints attached to the end of them (Winston-Allen 1997).

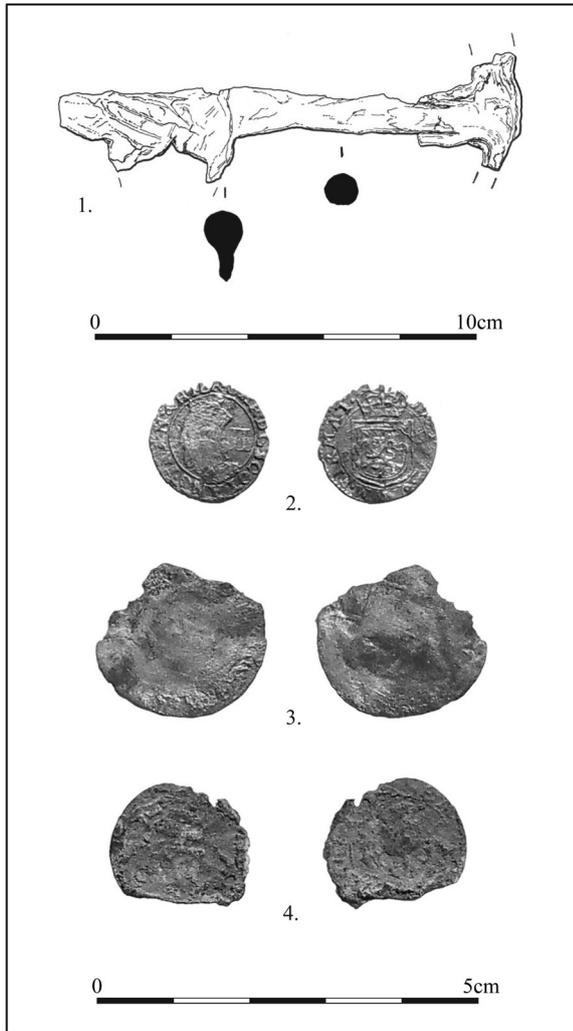
Rosaries and paternosters make frequent appearances in Renaissance art, particularly in elite portraits as well as religious paintings (LL online 2018; St Laurentius Church online 2018; Nemores-Nubium online 2018). The large, ornate rosary worn by Mary, Queen of Scots in the 1578 oil painting by Nicholas Hilliard, has five decades with larger gauds and a final gaud bead before a gold crucifix;

the decades appear fairly uniform in size and design (National Portrait Gallery online 2018). This opulent rosary is in complete contrast to the examples of the beads recovered from St Mary's (Leith), as the rosary belonging to Mary, Queen of Scots would have been a religious personal confessional accessory to match her regal status, wealth and rank in society. Given the descriptive classifications of the rosary and paternoster, a crucifix might be expected to be associated with a rosary. At Leith, as no evidence was found for anything other than beads, it may be that tasselled paternosters, or simple confessional bead sets, are more likely than rosaries. Preservation conditions on site were such that the survival of these items was only fragmentary and it is possible that no wooden crosses were found because they did not survive.

The inclusion of rosary or paternoster beads in graves is unusual but not unknown; their presence has been recorded in a number of cemeteries,



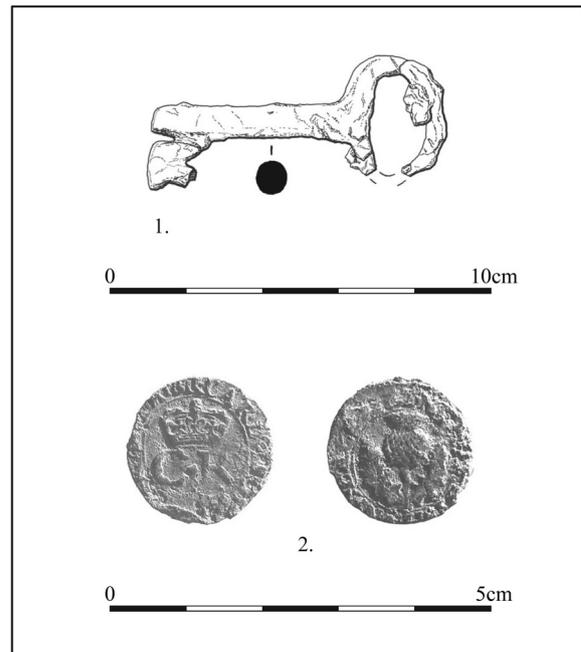
Illus 14 Part of sewing kit recovered with Sk481: 1) SF70, sewing bundle; 2) SF66, cap/lid for needle-case © Wardell Armstrong LLP



Illus 15 SF48, Fe key and coins recovered with Sk558 © Wardell Armstrong LLP



Illus 16 SF71, Cu alloy brooch recovered with Sk494 © Wardell Armstrong LLP



Illus 17 1) SF12, Fe key; 2) SF13, Cu alloy coin recovered with Sk430 © Wardell Armstrong LLP

including St Mary and St Michael Mission in London, Portchester Castle, and the site of a 14th–16th-century Dominican friary in Cork (Cherryson et al 2012: 36–8). The presence of rosary or paternoster beads suggests that some of the buried victims were Catholic in their religious affiliation, which is interesting given that South Leith signed the National Covenant petition in early 1638, a mere two months after it had been drawn up (Currie 1999: 4). This suggests that the town in its religious sympathies, or at least its governing elite, was strongly Presbyterian during the 1640s. It is possible that the beads recovered from St Mary’s (Leith) came from simple plain paternoster or confessional bead sets; given the anti-Catholic sentiment in Leith in the 1640s, it may have been far easier for an individual to explain the presence of a set of simple wooden beads on their person, rather than have to reveal their Catholic affiliation.

A sewing bundle (SF70) and a cap/lid (SF66) were recovered from a child aged 11–12 years who was interred in C415 (Illus 14.1 and 14.2). SF66 was lathe-turned from a billet of poplar (*Populus* sp.); faint concentric grooves can be seen on the top of the head and also inside the head. The object is 24mm high and has a distinct head and shaft. It was hollowed out, leaving walls 2mm thick around the

shaft. The grain of the wood, which lies parallel with the shaft, has split on one side and it has collapsed in on itself so it is difficult to determine its original shape, but it was probably oval in cross-section. The head, which is slightly faceted in cross-section, measures 15mm by 29mm across and is 8mm deep. The shaft is 24mm across. On the more complete side, the head projects out from the wall of the shaft by 6mm and is penetrated by a sub-rectangular hole *c* 2mm across. This projection has broken off on the other side and it seems likely that there was a matching hole on that side too. The design of SF66 suggests a cap or lid for an object that was designed to be suspended from the holes penetrating the head, the shaft fitting snugly over a hollow base. It may have been a container designed to be worn around the waist or neck, such as a needle-case for example. A small boxwood barrel containing two teeth was found in an 18th-century grave in Christ Church, Spitalfields (Cox 1996: 117); SF66 may have performed a similar function.

A number of other artefacts were recovered from the interred individuals. Sk558 had an iron key (SF48) and a copper alloy brooch (SF71) was recovered from Female Adult Sk494 (Illus 15 and 16). An iron key and three coins (SF12 and SF13,

Illus 17) were recovered from Male Adult Sk430 and a shroud pin was recovered from Young Adult Female Sk483. A common theme with the burial victims is that many, if not all, appeared to be fully clothed, with a large proportion of the uncoffined individuals wrapped in material; coarse woollen wrapping was recovered from individuals Sk443, Sk481, Sk482, Sk483, Sk484, Sk493, Sk494, Sk495, Sk506, Sk512 and Sk525. One possibility is that, although the woollen material may comprise a crude shroud, it actually comprises clothing; a woollen shawl or cloak was a fundamental item of clothing in the 17th century and it may be that they were buried in their attire.

Some of the objects could have been the property of immigrants, given the town's status as a port. The origins of any Catholics in the town may have been outside Leith and the neighbouring districts of Lothian. In order to answer questions regarding the origins of the individuals, strontium isotope analysis was conducted on a sample of human skeletons by Durham University in 2016 to 2017, with tests specifically targeting individuals interred with artefacts or who exhibited unusual skeletal pathologies.