

## APPENDIX 8 TEXTILES AND YARN

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Several small pieces of wool textile were recovered from the graveyard, along with short lengths of yarn that probably originated in similar fabrics. Two of the finds came from grave fills, Tr 2E, Context 210, associated with Skeleton 30 and Tr 2F, Context 343, associated with Skeleton 71, and the others from associated deposits. A full report on this material can be found in the site archive.

### A.8.1 Catalogue

#### *Tr 1 Context 349*

- ▶ (i) Fragment of red wool textile, 5 × 4mm, woven in tabby, 14/Z/0.7 × 14/S/0.7 per cm; dyed with madder (alizarin and purpurin detected).
- ▶ (ii) Several lengths of dark brown wool yarn, longest 28mm, S-spun, 1.5mm diameter. Possibly unravelled from a textile.

#### *Tr 1 Context 366*

- ▶ Two lengths of dark brown wool yarn, 25mm and 10mm, S-spun, 1.0mm diameter.

#### *Tr 2E Context 210 (associated with Skeleton 30)*

- ▶ Fragments of mid-brown wool textile, largest 17 × 12mm, woven in tabby, 10/S/1.0 × 8/S/1.0 per cm; slightly felted and probably fulled. Fleece types, Semi-Fine × Semi-Fine. No dye detected.

#### *Tr 2F Context 343 (associated with Skeleton 71)*

- ▶ (i) Several short lengths of mid-brown wool yarn, longest 11mm, Z-spun, 1.0mm diameter.
- ▶ (ii) Several short lengths of dark brown wool yarn, longest 12mm, Z-spun, 0.8mm diameter.

#### *Tr 2 Context 432*

- ▶ Fragments of mid–dark brown wool textile, largest 20 × 20mm, woven in 2/1 twill, 6/S/1.5 × 6/S/1.0 per cm. Fleece types, Semi-Fine × Semi-Fine. No dye detected.

#### *Tr 2F Context 435*

- ▶ Fragment of dark brown wool textile, 10 × 7mm, woven in tabby, 4/S/2.0 × 4/S/2.0 per cm.

### A.8.2 Discussion

The textiles were typical of the middle and lower range of fabric in use in urban centres in England and Scotland in the 14th to 17th centuries. They were soft ‘woollens’ made from carded wool, as opposed to ‘worsted’ made from combed wool, and in one case, Tr 2E, Context 210, the textile had a felted appearance, which suggested that it had been fulled (probably by the mechanical beating of the fabric in a fulling mill). There were no examples of the teaselled and sheared textiles which represent the better-quality wool clothing fabric of the period.

The weave structure of the textiles was 2/1 twill in one case and tabby in the others. In England 2/1 twill was mostly displaced by tabby during the course of the 14th century (Walton 1981: 194–5), but evidence from sites such as 16–18 Netherkirkgate, Aberdeen (Gabra-Sanders 2001: 227–32) indicates that the changeover was somewhat later in Scotland, as it was in Norway (Walton Rogers 1999: 197), although tabby weave was certainly established by the later 15th century (Ryder & Gabra-Sanders 1992: 5–7). The spin direction of the Parliament House examples followed the usual pattern of S × S in the coarser fabrics and Z × S in the middle range (Walton 1981: 193), and the loose yarns appeared to belong to textiles of a similar character. The red dye, madder, represented by the chemical constituents alizarin and purpurin, was detected in the finest piece, from Tr 1, Context 349. This dye is derived from the roots of the plant *Rubia tinctorum* L and is likely to have been imported from the Low Countries (Walton Rogers 2001: 239).

Two textiles, from Tr 2E, Context 210 and Tr 2F, Context 432, were selected for analysis of the wool quality, a procedure which is based on the measurement of the diameters of 100 fibres (Ryder 1969; Walton Rogers 1995). This showed that the fleece type of warp and weft was Semi-Fine, which corresponded with the wool of the shortwool breeds, such as the Ryeland and the Southdown. This type of wool came to the fore in English and Flemish textiles in the 15th and 16th centuries (Walton 1981: 191–3 and author’s unpublished data), and in Scotland it is prominent in collections from late 14th- to 15th-century Netherkirkgate, Aberdeen (Ryder 2001), and later 15th-century Fast Castle, Berwickshire (Ryder & Gabra-Sanders 1992:

10–17). Ryder equates these examples to the Old Scottish Shortwool, which has since died out, but which was probably the Scottish stock described in the early 16th century as having ‘white, fine and excellent wool’ (Ryder 2001: 237).

Although these were not the best wool fabrics of the period, they were competently made from good-quality wool. The three finer pieces were comparable with the tailors’ offcuts found in 15th- and 16th-

century levels of the Castle ditch, Newcastle-upon-Tyne (Walton 1981) and probably represented clothing fabrics, while the coarsest piece, from Tr 2F, Context 435 was more likely to be from a blanket or some other soft furnishing. Burial in a linen shroud was standard for lay members of society at this period and it is perhaps more likely that these wool textiles have been redeposited from the midden deposits immediately below the grave soil.