

Antler Comb

Period: Iron Age to Medieval (c. 800 BC - c. 1560 AD)

Material: antler

Complete item

This comb has been made from the antler of a deer. Sections of antler were sawn and filed into flat and curved plates. Holes were drilled and the pieces riveted together. The teeth were then sawn before the comb was shaped and decorated. This process required a number of tools including iron saws and files. It took over a day for an experienced craftsman to make a comb.

It is a 'high backed' style which is considered typically Pictish. Double sided combs are also depicted on Pictish symbol stones.

Bone and antler combs were made and used throughout the Iron Age and Early Historic periods over a wide area. They are often found in Viking burials. Despite being fragile and organic they are relatively common finds where conditions are favourable. The holes in the top of the comb allow a piece of string to be threaded through so that the comb could be tied to a belt. This suggests that these were personal items, and that people took care over their appearance.

How precious to you is your hair brush?



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Reconstruction of a comb and pin buried with a Viking boy at Balnakeil in Sutherland



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Pictish symbol stone from Dunrobin with comb depicted

See also:

When? Early Historic

When? Pictish

CT Bone and Antler Working

The Experimental Archaeology: Learning about Craft and Technology in the Past project was funded by Historic Environment Scotland and the Heritage Lottery Fund (now National Lottery Heritage Fund).

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