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THE ROMAN FINDS GROUP
NEWSLETTER

Newsletter 28, January 2004

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Roman Finds Group Newsletter **28**

Contents

SUBSCRIPTIONS FOR 2005

The subscription rate has remained the same for nearly 15 years, but to allow the RFG to keep the cost of meetings down and to meet the rising costs of printing and posting the Newsletter, the subscription will rise from October 2004 to £8 for individual membership and £11 for a two-person:single-household membership.

SUBSCRIPTIONS FOR 2004

RFG subscriptions fall due in October of each year
Please remember to send your 2004 subscription, £5 for one person, £8 for 2 people:single household, to
Angela Wardle, 1 Stebbing Farm, Fishers Green, Stevenage, Herts SG1 2JB

Notes for contributors

Emailed text should be sent as either a .doc, .text, or .rtf file. Please use only sufficient formatting to make the hierarchy of any headings clear, and **do not** embed either illustrations or graphs in the text but send them as separate files. Emailed illustrations should perferably be simple line drawings or uncluttered b/w photos and sent as .tif or .jpg files. *No textured backgrounds, please.*

The address for emailed contributions is: nina.crummy@ntlworld.com. Contributions by post should be sent to: Nina Crummy, 2 Hall Road, Copford, Colchester, Essex CO6 1BN.

Editorial

Thank you to all the contributors to this issue; they range from experienced curators to undergraduates. Digger's crossword is particularly amusing this time – look out for 1 across, for example.

In this last issue I highlighted the AHRB ring-fenced awards for research into the area of 'small finds and materials'. It has been pointed out to me that the general shortage of funding in all areas of archaeology (units, museums and universities), together with large-scale redundancies and even wholesale closures, means that there is a general shortage of posts for people already highly qualified in these fields. On top of this the tight budgeting for commercial archaeological projects usually precludes any research on objects from newly excavated assemblages. Moreover, funding is not the only area for concern. Equally worrying is the number of years it takes to qualify as a PhD in Britain, which means that many university posts (in all subjects) go to Americans, who reach this academic level much more rapidly. The 'Americanising' phenomenon is well-established in some university departments, and bodes ill for the study of Roman Britain, let alone Roman small finds.

Enclosed is a questionnaire on the Portable Antiquities Scheme. This forms part of a new review of the Scheme. Could readers with any type of experience of the PAS please fill in the form and return it promptly. You can also fill it in online at www.finds.org.uk.

An unusual weapon find from Roman Britain

The British Museum has recently purchased a fine Roman sword, together with its chape, said to have been found at Pevensey during the Second World War. Complete identifiable Roman swords are not common in Britain and this is a very notable addition to the National Collections. Although in good condition the sword is in need of conservation and also requires scientific investigation. Once that work is complete the find will be displayed in the Weston Gallery of Roman Britain (Gallery 49) alongside other swords from the province.

The sword (2004, 3-1, 1-2) is a complete example of the type known as a ring-pommel sword (*Ringknaufschwert*) on account of the distinctively-shaped ring at the end of the grip. Characteristically, the sword is of iron, 69.3 cm in length, with a relatively short and broad parallel-sided double-edged blade, which ends in a short tapered tip. The integral iron hilt (handle-grip), which terminates in the ring-pommel, has the usual distinctive bow-tie-shaped iron hilt guard. Although the scabbard (of wood or leather) and the hilt fittings (of wood or bone) have perished the copper-alloy chape, which protected and decorated the end of the scabbard, survives. It is a large circular box-chape with decorative incised ring-mouldings and a tinned surface.

This type of sword originated around the middle of the 2nd century AD but appears not to have become widely used until later in the century and remained current throughout much of the 3rd century. Although concentrated in Romanised Germany and in free Germany (beyond the frontier) these swords have a distribution throughout Europe, with the exception of the Mediterranean region. Several examples of broken handles and detached hilt guards are known from Roman Britain, including a handle from the town of Silchester (*Calleva Atrebatum*), but broken blades are virtually impossible to identify and this is the first complete sword from the province.

The sword has been in the hands of at least five successive owners. Accompanying documentation describes the finding of the sword and chape in 1940, during some drainage works just outside the castle in the village of Pevensey, East Sussex. The whereabouts of some silver coins of the Emperor Commodus (AD 176-192), said to have accompanied the find, is no longer known. The details of the context are irretrievable, but the survival of the complete iron sword together with the chape, which implies that the sword had been deposited intact in its scabbard, might be taken to suggest that the sword and coins were part of a soldier's burial, and the form of the chape points to a date of deposition in the 3rd century.

This was the period, of course, when the Saxon Shore forts were being constructed around the East Anglian and southern coasts of Britain. Pevensey was part of this coastal network, and its substantial stone fort appears to have been built late in the 3rd century. But Pevensey may already have seen military activity related to operations in the 2nd and early 3rd century of the *classis Britannica*, the British Fleet, whose stamped tiles have been found at Pevensey and other coastal sites in south-east England.

Whether directly connected to the Saxon Shore fort or to earlier military deployments, the sword (and its owner) may be placed in the context of the defence of the province during the 3rd century AD and, as such, is precious testimony of a critical period in the history of Roman Britain.

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The Pevensey sword.

(Portable) pine-cone symbolism in Roman Britain

This note arises from work of mine in progress on *Cones of the Mediterranean Stone Pine in Roman Britain: changing contexts and connotations for an object of dedication*. In it, I aim to present as much as possible of the evidence for the pine-cone as introduction, ingredient and icon over the 400 or so years of Roman occupation.

Fig 1. Typical outline of the Stone Pine tree. The cone is globose and large, about 100 x 100 mm, with a flat base (Mitchell 1974, 170-1).

Pine-cones tend to be seen as ritual objects, whether actual cones - from both cult sites and 'profane' contexts - or representations in stone, linked to particular deities and beliefs. The Romano-British contexts of use and disposal of cones of *Pinus pinea* (fig 1) certainly reinforce an interpretation of the consumption of them as low-key exotic items. From early Roman contexts, we have information on the use of Stone Pine cones as food and fuel in one well fill, six 'ritual' deposits and five dump deposits. The late Roman evidence – material used and thrown away from high-status sites, as food and fuel, in five wells, two *mithraea*, one hearth and six dump deposits - shows continuity with early Roman finds which mostly date prior to the possible Romano-British cultivation of the tree.

I know of pine-cones represented on tombstones and altars from Bar Hill, Brougham, Burrow-in-Lonsdale, Carlisle (fig 2), Catterick, Cirencester, Haltonchesters, Housesteads, Kirkby Thore, Maryport, Risingham, Wroxeter and York (perhaps also on a tomb at High Rochester) and of pine-cone sculptures from Benwell, Birrens,

Provenance	Description and context	References
CIRENCESTER	Copper-alloy steelyard weight, in the shape of a pine cone, unprovenanced	Corinium Museum B762/2 (*pers inf* Paula Gentil); Green 1976, 173
DINORBEN, N Wales	Copper-alloy shaft, head shaped like a pine-cone, from C4 shrine within the hillfort	Gardner & Savory 1964, 69 & 138-40, fig 19.8 & pl XXXIVb(1)
GREAT WITCOMBE, Gloucs	Ceramic cone, in a late Roman context	Smith 1939; Clifford 1955, 28/68
LONDON (Lothbury, *ie* middle Walbrook valley)	Copper-alloy pine-branch, with cones, possibly originally fixed into a stand (BM acc. no. 1856 7-1 30)	Roach Smith 1854, 11 no. 27; Green 1976, 57/222 & pl XXIIIb
LONDON (15-23 Southwark St)	Fragment of the pine-cone support from a Cnidian Relief Ware lampstand (an early Roman type), from a late Roman context	Bailey 1983; Wardle, in Cowan 1995, 117
RAPSLEY, Surrey	Fragments of five approximately life-size ceramic cones, from mid Roman contexts	Hanworth 1968, 36 & fig 15.1-5; Bird 2002, fig 11
SAWBENCH, Hockwold, Norfolk	Copper-alloy hand, clasping branch with pine-cones, from rural shrine-site (?late Roman)	Wilson 1963, 138 & pl XVI.4; Green 1976, 57/212 & pl XXIVb

Caerwent, Carlisle, Chester-le-Street, Holcombe, Housesteads, Inveresk, Kirkby Thore, London, Maryport, Old Carlisle, Papcastle, Ribchester, South Shields, Vindolanda and York.

There is a third class of material of interest to me: more portable, clay and metal objects. The table on p4 shows those that I am aware of; I would be grateful for others being brought to my attention and will acknowledge any help in my publication.

I am also working my way through small finds catalogues to get a better appreciation of the occurrence of examples of one of the less-common shapes of late Romano-British bone hairpin, Crummy Type 5. Some of the conical heads of this type have incised decoration, that lends them the appearance of pine cones in a similar fashion to the way in which the large free-standing pine cones in stone were produced (fig 3). The depictions vary from the very naturalistic (*eg* Ivy Chimneys or Cirencester) to cross-hatched cone shapes (*eg* Gestingthorpe), with most examples being somewhere in between (*eg* Caerleon; London).

Fig 3. Bone hairpin with pine-cone head from Ivy Chimneys, Essex. After Turner 1999, fig 128, 18.

Whether or not this is anything more than co-incidental elaboration is unclear; the other examples of 'portable pine-cone art' are mostly somewhat larger than these pin-heads of around 10 mm long. Perhaps the overt symbolism was as diffused as on the snake jewellery recently discussed by Hilary Cool, where instead the entire content of

Fig 2. Tombstone of Aurelia Aureliana from Gallows Hill, near Carlisle.

each hoard is the key to significance (Cool 2000). However, some accept the pine-cone hairpins as direct symbols. To Martin Henig (1977, 361), they might represent the *thyrsos* of Bacchus. In this light, it is worth remembering the object from Late Roman Dinorben noted in the table, perhaps intended as a miniature *thyrsos*.

I have taken a reasonably generous attitude to what, in the art of Roman Britain, might be viewed as depicting a pine-cone. To others, for example, the detail of the foliage on the branch from London (Lothbury) might suggest another tree, the spruce perhaps (*pers comm* Richard Hobbs). However, the appearance of this branch can be compared with the pine tree shown as part of a Bacchic initiation scene on a glass vessel from Northern Italy (Cumont 1929, 202, fig 13), and may even be part of a model of such as scene, as it seems to have been originally fixed into a stand.

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A new pair of Agathangelus type tweezers from Piddington Roman villa
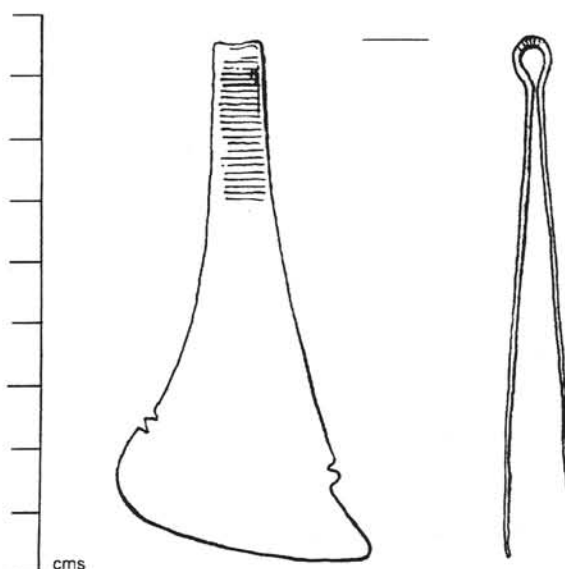
A pair of Agathangelus type tweezers were found during the cleaning of a new area within the courtyard area of the Piddington villa, Northamptonshire. Although these tweezers are unstamped, they conform to Gostenčnik's 'Magdalensberg-type' of tweezers in every respect, shape, size and the distinctive notches above the jaws. This find is now the ninth from Britain (Gostenčnik, 2002) of which at least four come from military sites, but may also be associated with high status civilian sites.

Prior to the acknowledged high status villa emerging at Piddington in the later first century, there had been a strong military presence in the Claudian or Claudian/Neronian periods.

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Reference

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Presenting the body - toilet instruments in Roman Britain

Building on some recent work on nail-cleaners (Crummy 2001; Crummy & Eckardt 2004), we have now begun to work on a broader study of Romano-British toilet instruments, a definition that also includes tweezers, ear-scoops, files and toothpicks. Cosmetic grinders (Jackson 1985; 1993) are excluded, as Ralph Jackson is about to publish a definitive discussion of them.

All toilet instruments relate to the care and grooming of the body and would have been used to remove unwanted hair, apply cosmetics, perform minor 'medical' procedures and attend to oral hygiene. Because of the intimate relationship between these objects and physical appearance and presentation, it can be postulated that toilet instruments reflect and form a wide range of identities (cultural, regional, gender etc). For example, it appears from both the literary sources and the burial evidence that certain toilet instruments would have been used by both men and women. The initial work on nail-cleaners has also clearly shown regional groupings as well as some distinctively Romano-British (as opposed to continental) trends.

The current project aims to systematically record toilet instruments from Britain. Building on a detailed corpus and the necessary typological-chronological work, we hope to also record the contexts in which these toilet instruments have been found. Context is here understood quite broadly in terms of 'site type', as we believe that even such general context information as distinguishing between military, rural and urban sites can add greatly to our understanding of the social use of Roman artefacts in Britain. For nail-cleaners we have shown that these objects were predominantly associated with smaller towns and rural sites rather than military and highly 'Romanised' ones but a different pattern may emerge for some of the other toilet instruments.
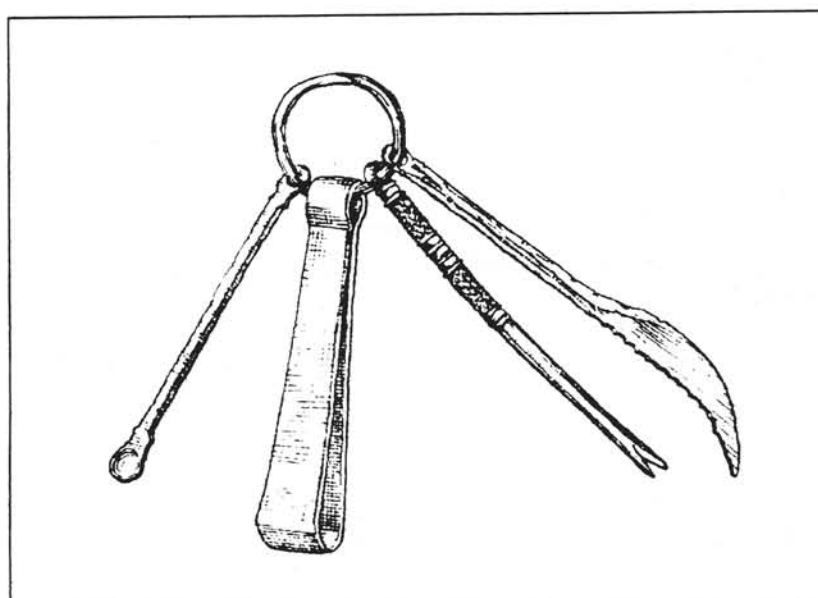
If you know of any unpublished toilet instruments please contact Hella Eckardt at H.Eckardt@reading.ac.uk or Department of Archaeology, University of Reading, Whiteknights, Reading RG6 6AB

Hella Eckardt & Nina Crummy

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Late Roman toilet set from Silchester. After Boon 1974, fig 16, 11. Scale approximately 1:1.

Purbeck Marble inscriptions at Silchester

Purbeck marble was a widely used material in the Roman period for architecture and inscriptions (Beavis 1970). It is a limestone that has undergone physical and chemical changes from its original form; however, since it still contains fossilized shells of gastropods and is therefore only partially metamorphosed, it is not a 'true' marble.

The Isle of Purbeck has been cited as the most probable source for this stone in the Roman period, however, there are other quarries such as in Sussex and the Isle of Wight (Beavis 1970). Its attractive bluish grey colour, hardness, ability to take a good polish, and ease to work with made it a good choice to be used as a 'replacement' for imported 'true' marbles.

Williams (2002) compares Purbeck marble and 'true' imported marbles on a variety of sites. It is evident that only in Colchester is its presence equal to that of imported marbles while at sites such as Fishbourne and London Purbeck marble is the major 'marble' stone.

While it is possible that the quarrying of this stone was under military and imperial control (just as most true marble was), in Britain few Purbeck marble inscriptions have been found on military sites with the majority coming from urban civilian sites.

Dating can be contentious, as Purbeck marble may have been used in the 4th century AD. The Claudian temple in Colchester may have undergone alterations in the 4th century AD with Purbeck marble in its large hall and in a large quantity (Williams 2002; Drury 1984). This could, however, suggest reuse rather than further exploitation. Frere and Fulford (2002) point out that it is a difficult exercise to date unstratified inscriptions. The peak in Purbeck marble occurs from the Claudian period into the 2nd century AD, after this period its absence in stratified layers suggest a decline in use (Dunning 1949).

Previous studies concentrated upon the distribution of Purbeck marble in geographical terms with very little discussion of the inscriptions in context within a particular site. I have studied the Purbeck marble inscriptions from one particular site, Silchester, to begin to address this situation.

Silchester has a collection of fifteen inscription fragments, three of which consist of several smaller fragments cemented together. These three are the most complete out of the collection and were found in the 'Romano-Celtic' temple in *Insula* XXXV. The remaining inscription fragments were found in *Insula* IV (the forum-basilica; fig 1), and *Insulae* IX and III (domestic and industrial areas).

After an initial observation of the inscriptions, I discovered that there was a range of letter heights, from a complete letter of 30 mm to an incomplete letter of
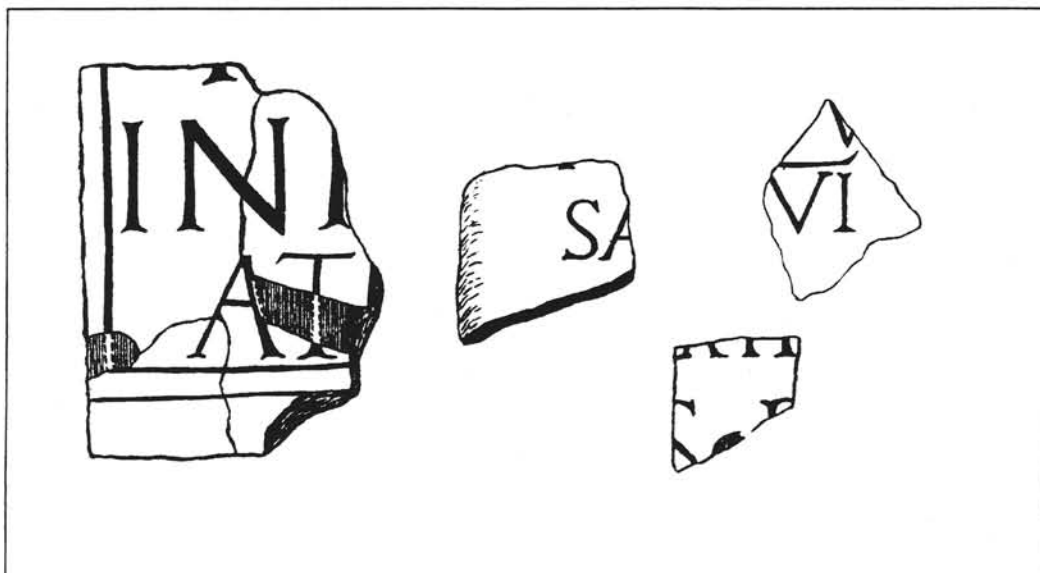

Fig 1. Some of the Purbeck marble inscriptions from the area of the forum-basilica at Silchester.

150 mm. It was this range of letter heights that I have used to distinguish between possible public and private inscriptions. In brief, the shorter lettering was taken to indicate a private inscription and the taller lettering to indicate a public inscription, with perhaps a 'cut-off point' (of approximately 50-60 mm) between the two. Beavis (1970) originally quoted a 4:3 (public:private) ratio for the Purbeck marble inscriptions, however, using this methodology to re-evaluate the Silchester fragments, the ratio for the inscriptions has now changed to 7:8 (public:private).

Public inscriptions would have attracted a wide audience to express and impress their ideology and message, however, there is a duality about the private inscriptions. They were privately commissioned but would still attract an audience, so that all inscriptions were in a sense public (fig 2). Further studies on inscriptions from other towns would be beneficial to determine whether these letter heights were universal as well as narrowing the 'cut-off' point between private and public inscriptions.

Fig 2. Public or private? Tombstone (not Purbeck marble) of Flavia Victorina at Silchester. Found in the 16th century and now in Cambridge.

For Silchester, all marble inscriptions were found within the walled area, with none recorded elsewhere, such as for reuse in the town's walls. The forum-basilica (*Insula* IV),

the heart of the town, contained the majority of fragments, a total of nine. The letter heights of these fragments covered the full range defined above, 30-150 mm, suggesting that both private and public inscriptions adorned a building (or buildings) within that *insula*. The letter heights of the inscriptions from the area of the Romano-Celtic temple ranged between 35 to 45 mm and are suggestive of privately-commissioned inscriptions.

However, there is also evidence for possible public inscriptions being found in *insulae* that do not appear to have had major public buildings. Thus two inscriptions from *Insula* IX and one from *Insula* III could be described as public inscriptions but all three came from *insulae* that contained 'average' domestic and industrial houses. It seems most likely that they reached their final resting place after the original inscription had been broken up.

Fig 3. Two recent inscription finds from the University of Reading's excavations. Scale approximately 1:3.

There is little evidence from the antiquarian excavations for the use of Purbeck marble for other purposes in Silchester but the current excavations in *Insula* IX have uncovered a Purbeck marble bowl fragment (Context 3396, SF 3131).

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Purbeck marble online

A useful bibliography for the Purbeck marble industry can be found at

www.palmyra.uklinux.net/purbib.html

Silchester excavations 2004

This year's excavation season by the University of Reading in *Insula* IX at Silchester runs from July 5th to August 15th.

The site is also open to visitors **EVERY** day between 9 am to 5 pm, *except for Fridays*, when the site is closed. Site tours and a look at the finds from the 2004 season are available.

Silchester Open Days (with dressing up!) are Saturday July 24th and Saturday August 7th.

See www.silchester.rdg.ac.uk for directions to the site and notes about disabled access.

Don't be shy – renewed appeal for Datasheets

Last issue's appeal for members to volunteer their expertise and write datasheets produced only one new author.

Concentrating on a particular find type, an industry, or presenting ongoing research, datasheets would be a valuable resource for all our members, from students through to curators.

Gill Dunn is co-ordinating this RFG project so please contact her at the address below if you would like (or even feel morally obliged) to write a datasheet. She is preparing a style sheet for potential authors.

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Treasures from Tuscany

Having previously been to California, Shanghai and Moscow, an exhibition entitled *Treasures from Tuscany*, shown for the first time in the UK, opens from 16th July 2004 to 31st October at the Royal Museum, Chambers Street, Edinburgh.

The Etruscans were contemporaries of the ancient Greeks and had a pivotal role in the development of European civilisation as well as a cultural influence on modern Italy.

The exhibition gathers together from the finest collections in Tuscany almost 500 objects depicting Etruscan life and death. They include both imported and locally-made ceramics, sarcophagi and cinerary urns, exotic tomb finds of bronze, amber, gold, silver and ivory, and objects from temples and sanctuaries, including architectural reliefs and bronze figures.

The book of the exhibition, *Treasures from Tuscany, the Etruscan Legacy*, edited by Elizabeth Goring, curator of the modern jewellery collection at the National Museums of Scotland, does full justice to this account of a sophisticated civilsation.

Priced at £25.00, the book has 200 colour and monochrome illustrations. ISBN 1 901663 90 6.

For an online introduction to the Etruscans visit the National Museums of Scotland website, www.nms.ac.uk.

Iron-working in Auvergne

Forges et forgerons dans les habitats laténiens de la Grande Limagne d'Auvergne, by Lionel Orengo, Instrumentum Monograph 26, 325 pp, 60 figures, 63 plates, 15 tables. Price 40 euros.

How was iron worked, used and cared for by the Central Gauls? What are the links betweent he sites that produced the raw material and the settlements where fragments of finished objects are found? It is this production activity and trade in iron in pre-Roman and Roman societies that Lionel Orengo attempts to define, using a method based on the interaction between multidisciplinary approaches — both quantitative and physico-chemical analyses of the waste debris from production and the rough forgings from workshops, together with a particularly detailed examination of the objects and miscellaneous fragments found on occupation sites.

An important aspect of this study is the attention given to the scrap metal fragments, their significance, their taphonomy, and sometimes even their disappearance from the archaeological record. For the first time, the material generated by this detailed analysis provides a group of comparable data-sets from several Iron Age sites.

The picture that emerges from these various approaches is completely original. The volume not only defines, in detail and with many applied examples, a methodology that will enable future comparative studies between the ferrous finds from workshops and other types of site, but it also paints a totally new picture of the history of iron in Gaul in the 1st millennium BC, putting forward a model on which future studies of the subject may be based.

Volumes in the series
*Monographies Instrumentum,
Archéologie et Histoire Romaine,
Préhistoires,*
&
Protohistoire Européene
produced by Éditions Monique Mergoil
are available from Oxbow Books

Strap fasteners from Suffolk

Over the last few years a small group of similar strap fasteners has come to light in Suffolk through the work of the Portable Antiquities Scheme (Fig 1). Other published examples, which seem to fit into this group of artefacts include one from the Roman small town of Wanborough (Hooley 2001, 95-96, fig 37, no 120) and another from Camerton (Jackson 1990, 38, pl 8, no 81).

The strap fasteners are all made of cast copper alloy, of a similar size, and characterised by having a circular hoop with a stud fixed to one side via a neck, which projects at about 90º from the hoop. The cross-sections of the hoops are usually roughly circular and the projecting necks normally concave-sided. The studs are generally flat and circular in shape, although one example (Fig 1, C) has a rectangular bar. The decoration of the studs varies, some are completely plain and others are inlaid with enamel.

The function of these artefacts is intriguing. Although the general consensus is that they are strap fasteners of some kind a precise definition of purpose is difficult. As R Jackson highlights (1990, 38) these rings would be ideal to enable simple fastening of two ends of a leather strap, perhaps a waist or harness strap. With one end of the strap permanently secured to the hoop opposite the stud, the other end of the strap could then be secured by pushing the stud through a slit in the leather.

In the Suffolk examples the half of the ring opposite the stud is sometimes narrowed (Fig 1, E) suggesting wear in this area, which would be consistent with a use of this kind. A similar idea was also suggested by N Fuentes, who proposed that they could have been junction rings for straps reinforcing bags (Fuentes cited by Hooley 2001, 96), the stud providing the fastener to secure the top flap when closed. Indeed, the fasteners would allow straps to be undone and refastened quickly and easily, as would be needed in this case.

There are similarities in form between the Suffolk strap fasteners and Wild's (1970) Group 1 button-and-loop fasteners, which may give us a clue to their function. Group 1 button-and-loop fasteners have a solid double-boss head and a heavy ring-loop, variations within this group include examples

with a single boss and with inset enamel, which is also seen on some of the strap fasteners (Fig 1, E). Wild believes that group 1 button-and-loop fasteners are most likely to have been used as fasteners on harness fittings, perhaps with the frailer examples being used to fasten woven cloth. He also states that Group 1 are similar to La Tène baldric hooks found in South Germany.

That our strap fasteners possibly functioned specifically as part of the attachment of a sword to its harness or belt has also been suggested. Jackson (1990, 38-9) believes that they could be baldric hooks or even have been used in pairs to attach a sword scabbard to its belt and Hooley also states that they could be baldric hooks due to parallels from military sites (2001, 96). The similarity of form of the Suffolk strap fastenings with baldric rings is striking when compared to a recent example from east Suffolk (Fig 1, F). This baldric ring also has a circular hoop and a circular enamelled stud fixed to one side via a concave-sided neck projecting from the hoop at c90 degrees. Again slight wear can also be seen on the hoop opposite the stud. Due to these similarities it perhaps most likely that this group of smaller fasteners did indeed have a similar function to the larger and more elaborate baldric rings.

The dating and context of strap fasteners seems to be consistent. The published examples I have come across often come from military mid-1st century contexts. Camerton (Jackson 1990) is a site with a military origin and Jackson argues that it was the site of a Roman fort in its early period. The example from Wanborough is believed to be 1st century in date and although Wanborough is a small town some pieces of military equipment were also found which hint at a military presence (Hooley 2001, 95). Wild (1970, 138) also dates the similar Group I button-and-loop fasteners to the pre- and early Roman period and puts them in the context of military sites, and J D Hill has dated the Suffolk baldric ring (Fig 1, F) to the mid-1st century after the Roman conquest (J D Hill *pers comm* 2002).

The Suffolk metal-detected examples could also be of mid 1st century date as they are all from known Iron Age or Roman sites located in east and central Suffolk. Example
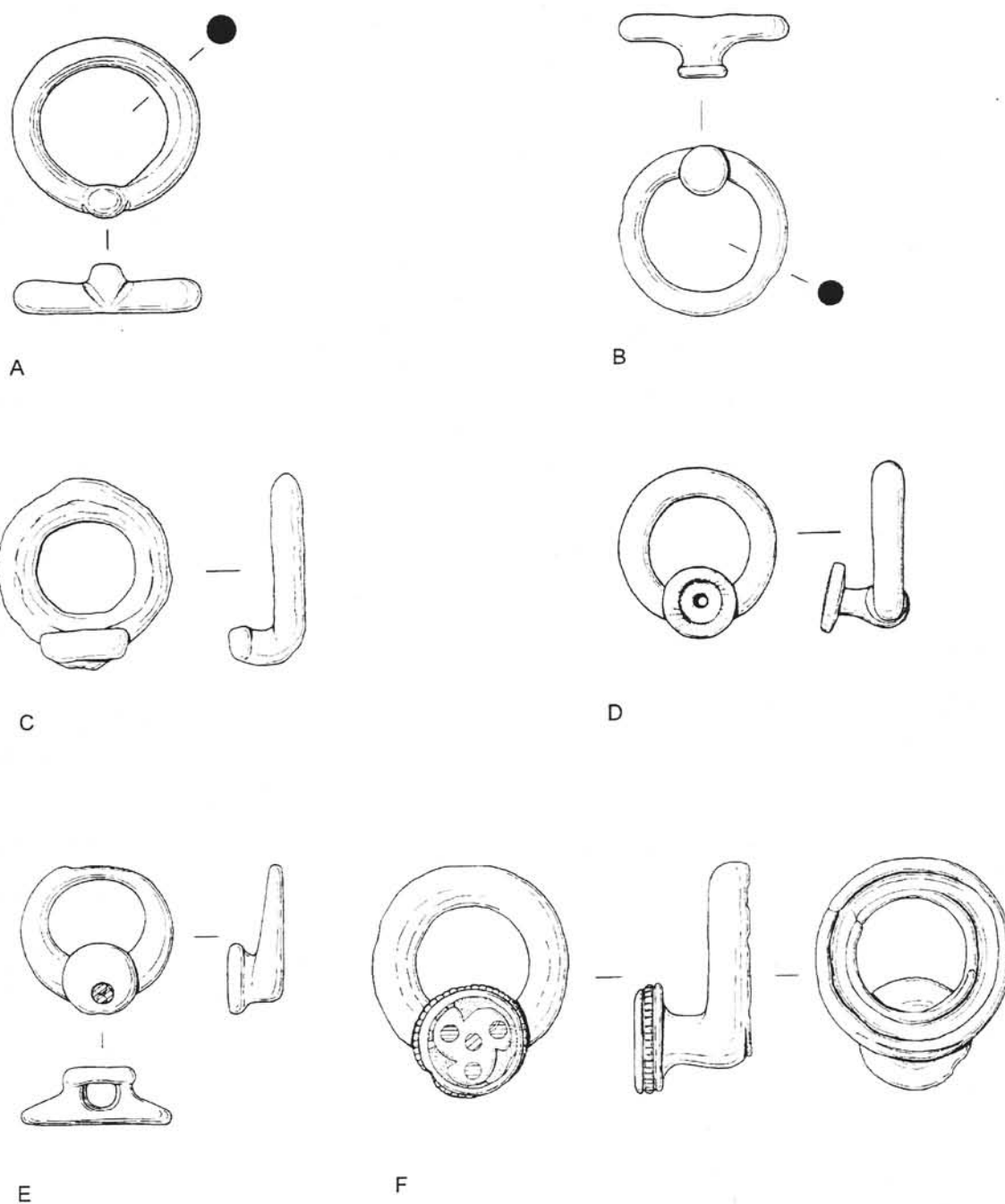
Fig 1. Strap fasteners from Suffolk. Drawn by Donna Wreathall. Copyright Suffolk County Council Archaeology Section.

A, from Shimpling, Example B from Kenton, Example C from Monk Soham, and Example E from Witnesham were all found within a scatter of finds spanning the late Iron Age and Roman periods. Example D from St Mary South Elmham, otherwise Homersfield, was found within the area of a more substantial high status Iron Age settlement, which has produced Iron Age pottery, coins and later Roman finds.

It therefore seems that this group of strap fasteners represents a distinct mid 1st century artefact type functioning as a fastening, perhaps forming part of the attachment of a sword to its harness or belt. How common these fasteners are and their context remains elusive, although an early Roman military context seems likely. If anyone knows of any more examples of these strap fasteners I would be interested to hear from them.

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Chester amphitheatre project

A major project run jointly by Chester City Council and English Heritage is now underway at the military amphitheatre in Chester, the largest uncovered example in the UK.

The amphitheatre lies outside the south-east angle of the legionary fortress and was originally built in timber before being rebuilt and enlarged, in stone. One of the well-known finds from earlier work on the site is a stone altar to Nemesis set up in a small room near the entrance into the area by the centurion Sextius Marcianus.

Scheduled to run over the next three years, the project includes aerial surveys and other non-intrusive surveying, as well as excavation.

A website for the project has been set up at www.chestercc.gov.uk/heritage/archaeology/amphitheatre, which includes a Live Webcam and a 'blog' (or weB LOG), on which the excavators aim to present their thoughts on the site as work progresses and visitors to the website will be able to add their comments. A look at this page shows that inevitably the blog was slow to start up for on-site technical reasons, but it appears to be up and running now.

There are pages for finds, 'work in pictures', the history of the site, the team members, how to get involved. The website is certainly worth a visit, and 'how to get here' may spur many people to visit the real site in real time, in the flesh.

Roman Finds Group Meeting
National Museums & Galleries of Wales, Cardiff
18th May 2004

There was a good turnout for this meeting which coincided with the opening of the exhibition 'Buried treasure: finding our past', on the first leg of its tour after its showing at the British Museum. Many thanks to Richard Brewer for organising the day.

Richard Reece: Treasure to us or them? (RH)

Richard asked the question: we consider these objects as treasure, but what about those who owned them? He looked at a number of literary sources to try and answer this question. From the Old Testament come a number of references to silver being eaten away; Ecclesiastes 29 warns not to 'leave silver under a stone', but silver vessels rarely get mentioned.

Another source is Petronius' The Satyricon. One section says that silver is so valueless that it is simply swept up with all the other rubbish when accidentally dropped; in contrast, Fortunata (Trimalchio's wife) is seemingly much more careful, ensuring that silver is locked away safely before she will eat. And it is suggested she wore 6½ lbs of gold, which must be a huge exaggeration – it would equate to about 30 gold bracelets of the size of those from Hoxne. Gold seems to have been used exclusively for coin and jewellery - there is no reference to it being used for plate.

So both the Old Testament and Petronius give the impression that silver plate is irrelevant. In the Epigrams of Martial, he complains about paltry amounts of silver being sent to him as presents year on year. He is clearly not interested in what the silver looks like either; he is only interested in the weight. There is a reference to a townhouse with a sideboard groaning with gold and silver plate – possibly the only reference from the literature of silver being used for display?

In the late Empire as well, references to precious metals rarely seem grounded in reality. The Life of Elagabalus, written 200 years after the emperor's reign, suggested that he would present all his silver to his guests. Spurious letters say that each year, 50 lbs of silver was sent to provincial governors, which is not a huge amount – it equates to a couple of Sevso plates.

So Richard's conclusion was treasure to us, not them.

Peter Guest: Treasure Island: hoarding in Roman Britain (RH)

Peter started his talk by looking at different attitudes towards coin hoards in European studies over the years. For instance, Kelner writing in the 1950s and 60s in Germany, in relation to the large number of 3d century hoards from eg Kempten, describes them in very personal terms. He envisages the owners fleeing to the forest and living in shacks as the barbarians descended; this was obviously influenced by his own experiences of wartime upheavals. British writers, although coming to similar conclusions behind burial, have never personalised things in this way.

Peter questioned what we mean by 'value' and 'wealth'. Those studying hoards should remember that other categories of hoards – not just precious metal objects and coins – should be considered. For example, hoards of arms, armour, and even nails. He wondered if even pottery was hoarded, but knew of no examples where this has been suggested.

Peter showed us Anne Robertson's classic histogram of coin hoarding in Roman Britain. As this is purely related to numbers of hoards, there are a number of problems with it. We are naturally drawn to its peaks and troughs, but these are misleading. First, coins could circulate long after they were minted, so the diagram does not necessarily show date of burial. Second, the diagram takes no account of numbers of coins in the hoards or the precious metal contents due to debasements. This is something he suggested would be a fertile area for future research. Does increased access to more

coins in the 3rd century underpin greater numbers of hoards?

Supply is also an area which can cloud the picture. For instance, Republican hoards in Italy show peaks and troughs, which seem to equate with times of upheaval (*eg* the Punic Wars). But is it rather a factor of greater mint output at these times when more money needs to be spent on raising troops? Which simply meant more hoards?

Circulation: we only know about this at certain times, *eg* the Madrid *missorium* shows a ceremony of gift exchange, with the various offices such as the *Comes Sacrorum Largitionum* being established to distribute imperial donatives. We know much less about other times.

Why in Britain is there a high level of hoarding in the South and East and virtually nothing in the North and West? Did it mean that the latter were actually being more 'Roman' – with gold and silver in active circulation – rather than 'un-Roman' and burying things in the ground?

He concluded by suggesting hoarding needed to be addressed in much broader terms than it has been in the past.

Edward Besly: Traitors and tetrarchs: two recent coin hoards from Wales
(RH)

Edward presented two important new coin hoards from Wales, buried about 15 years apart.

The Bridgend hoard, Vale of Glamorgan, was discovered in April 1994; the site was well excavated after reporting. In all 1,424 *nummi* of the early 4th century AD were found, all of the reformed coinage of Diocletian, particularly the well-known 'GENIO POPVLI ROMANI' reverse type with a silver wash. The first and second Tetrarchy were both well represented, and the hoard included a new consular issue of Galerius. The closing date was around AD 310, with the very latest coin being from the remote mint of Heraclea on the Bosphorus.

The Rogiet hoard, near Newport, discovered in 1998, consisted of about 2,000 coins. It included many poor-quality coins dating to the 260s/'270s (though curiously no Tetricus I), and lots of '*aureliani*' of the 270s and later, which are otherwise very rare in Britain. The hoard also included coins of the British emperors Carausius and Allectus, including a large number of the 'Q' type of

Allectus, and a very rare coin of Nigrinianus (the infant son of Carinus). Only one other of these is known, from the unpublished Gloucester hoard. The latest coin in the hoard is of Diocletian and Maximian, dated to AD 293.

The Allectus 'Q' coins are a very important group – there are 757 in all in the hoard. The reverses show hide-covered vessels, and some vessels which would seem be more at home on the Nile than the Thames. Edward's die study threw up 900 obverse dies for one of the sub-types – so the output of these must have been considerable.

Rogiet seems to have been carefully selected – but by whom? Where was the hoard assembled? Bridgend is published in the Numismatic Chronicle (2002). Edward hopes to publish Rogiet in due course.

Ralph Jackson: The treasure that gave us Senua
(RH)

Ralph talked about the new find from near Baldock which the BM has recently acquired (already outlined in *Lucerna* 26, July 2003). I will not repeat what is in Ralph's article, but add some additional details gleaned from his talk. New X-rays have shown some excellent details of the votive leaves; one has a very attractive depiction of Sol, with his whip, in the upper register, with a crescent moon above; below is a well rendered Roma holding a Victory and a supplicating defeated enemy.

The tabs on the leaves seems to suggest that they would have stood freely in some kind of wooden block. The thinness of the metal would have meant that they would thus have shivered at the slightest movement.

There are at least six different votaries on the leaves, including two female. One, Flavia, has an inscription 'FLAVIA CVN[O?] [VSML]' – the latter part of the name we might speculate as being 'Celtic' in origin.

There are good parallels with the temple treasure from Barkway, only a few miles away from the site. Also worth mentioning in regard to Senua – in addition to the notes Ralph has already provided – is that there is an island off Brittany which supposedly had an oracle with 'Senones'; and the meaning of Senua is 'old woman'. It is interesting however that none of the leaves depict Senua as an old woman, but rather show her as Minerva.

The context is interesting and further work will be carried out in the future. There is an octagonal enclosure, and it may well be associated with the spring site of the River Cam. So perhaps it has similarities with Bath – Martin Henig has speculated that the Capheaton *patera* handle fragment depicts Bath, with the specially constructed temple complex. There is a street near the Baldock site, and suggestions of occupied buildings; so it may well be another temple complex.

Richard Brewer and Mary Davis: A treasured object: how the leopard got its spots (RH)

Richard and Mary reported the important discovery of the Abergavenny leopard cup, originally taken in to Newport Museum and now acquired. The Glamorgan Gwent Archaeological Trust investigated the findspot; it had been buried about 40 cm down under a layer of Roman pottery. This evidence, alongside other finds, suggested
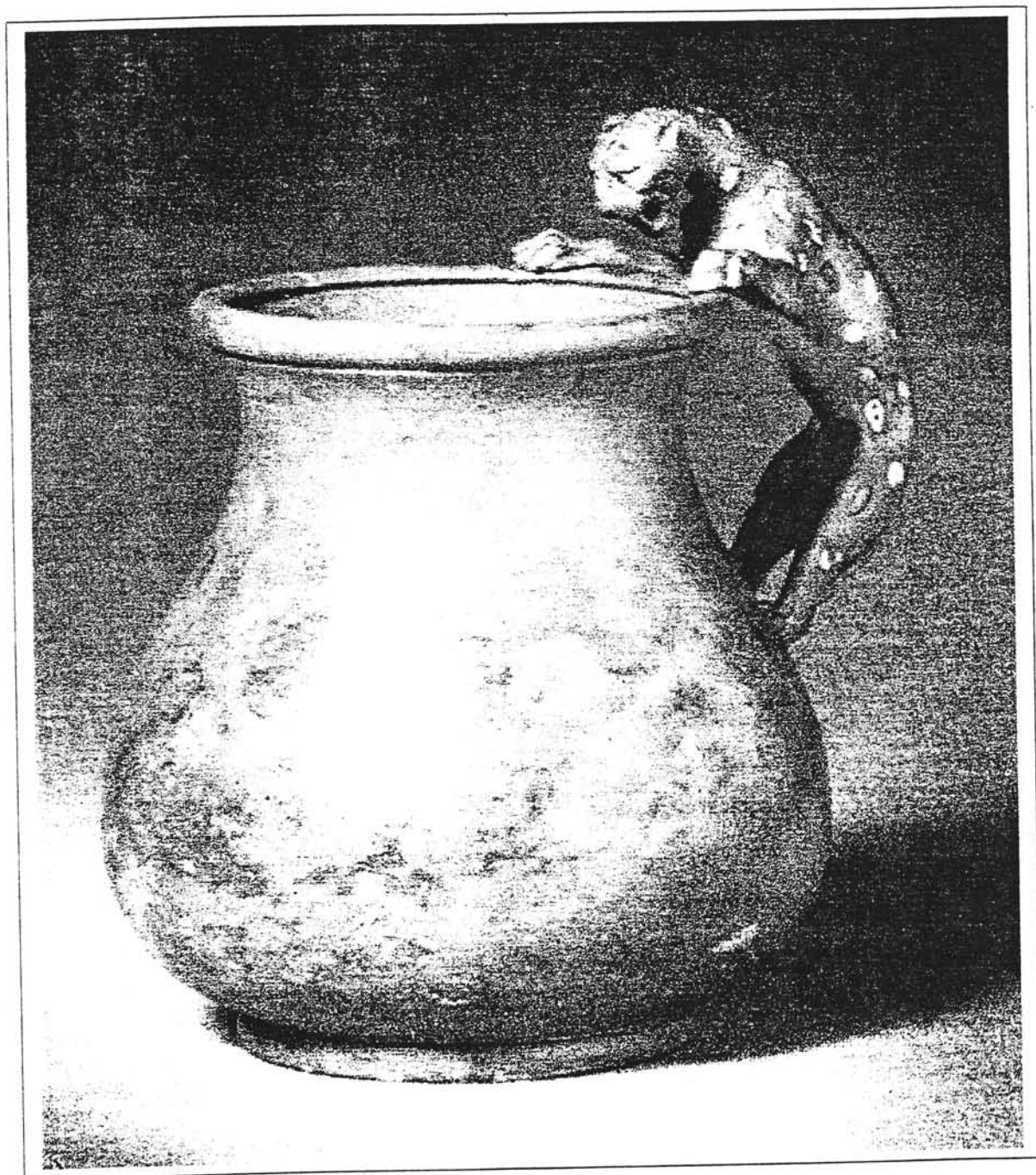

Fig 1. The Abergavenny Leopard Cup. Photograph copyright National Museum & Gallery of Wales.

the presence of a settlement nearby. Burnt pockets of cremated bone suggested a cemetery, and that the cup is likely to have been a cremation vessel. It was upside down with the handle detached and underneath.

Examination revealed that the cup had been formed on a lathe. It is made of leaded bronze with solder used to attach the handle; X-rays showed it was highly unlikely to have had two handles originally. Lead solder on the bottom of the cup suggested it may have been placed on a tripod or foot.

Examination of the handle revealed casting flaws especially around the flank area. An attempt was made to cover these up with more spots. The leopard's spots were made of pure silver. The eyes are made of amber (confirmed by analysis), with neatly cut lozenge-shaped sockets.

The cup has a number of parallels, particularly with vessels from Pompeii, which gives it a likely date in the 1st century AD. The vessel seems more likely to be a small jug as opposed to a cup, particularly with its associations with Bacchus (but Richard felt 'Abergavenny cup' sounds better!). The handles have good later parallels like the ones from Sevso, the tigress handle from Hoxne, and particularly examples from Traprain Law.

Janet Webster: All that glisters….. some thoughts on silvered brooches (RH)

Janet originally intended to also cover gilded brooches, but this proved too much to address in one talk so she concentrated on silvered and occasional tinned examples from Wales. There was a clear taste for ostentation as demonstrated by a number of examples; these included an unusual enamelled brooch found in the early 1990s in a fruit bowl at Abergavenny. Other examples Janet showed included a number of Hod Hill types, as well as Polden Hill types with dolphin profiles. Janet suggested that some had a taste for applied silver inlay, rather than complete silvering; some examples have silver beaded bands attached with solder.

A few disc-and-trumpet brooches have been found in Wales, and there are some entirely silvered knee brooches. An unusual brooch from Usk, which Janet believes was imported from the Continent, had beaded silver rings attached to its body. Another unusual brooch

from Caerleon also appears to be an import – the bow has two large openwork sections from a three-strip plate.

A brooch from Brigetio has a casing for a hinged pin which projects much further out than necessary, again suggesting a desire for ostentation. There is also an example which has two springs – as this serves no practical function, the additional spring must have been purely decorative. So all the brooches Janet showed us exhibit unusual characteristics.

Evan Chapman: Curiouser and curiouser – some unusual brooches reported under the Portable Antiquities Scheme (RH)

Evan showcased a number of bow brooches which have been recorded under the PA Scheme in Wales. Not all are necessarily Welsh finds, as detectors have travelled into English counties too.

A summary list of the brooches is provided here. It is suggested that if readers require more information, they should contact the Finds Co-ordinator for Wales, Mark Lodwick: email mark.lodwick@nmgw.ac.uk; telephone no 02920 573226.

Llysworney, Vale of Glamorgan – with enamelling.

Pope's Hill, Gloucestershire – a Birdlip variant (Fig 1) already published in *Trans Bristol & Glos Arch Soc*. Similar to an example reported under the PAS scheme from Dymock, Glos, which has a complete loop.
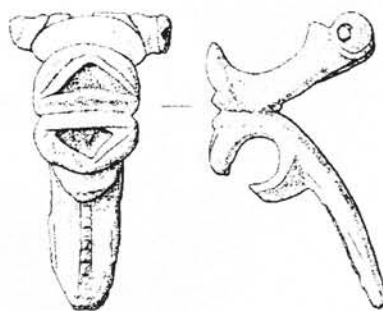

Fig 1. Birdlip variant from Pope's Hill. Copyright National Museum & Gallery of Wales.

Moelfre, Anglesey – with large, flat plate. Comparable to examples from Little Orm & Benllech. A very tight group seemingly restricted to North Wales, which have a loop on the head and a concave disc at the top of

the bow. Two examples from Wroxeter might seem to be parallels, but these are in fact trumpet brooches. Evan pointed out similarities with Iron Age tankard handles.

Penllyn, Vale of Glamorgan - a highly unusual type which Evan has not been able to parallel.

Grittleton, Wilts - a brooch fragment which seems to have a human face when the head is viewed from above. There are parallels on plate brooches, but not on bow types, except for some continental crossbows. Some one-piece brooches from France may have faces on them.

Grittleton, Wilts - an iron brooch. Evan wondered why iron would have been used; lack of other materials? A matter of taste?

Wenvoe, Vale of Glamorgan, and *Dymock*, Glos - Polden Hill derivatives with very thin bows and large pins.

Richard Hobbs: *Buried treasure: the exhibition* (HE)

In the last paper of the day Richard Hobbs provided an introduction to the exhibition, concentrating mainly on the concepts and thoughts behind the display. Three themes can perhaps be identified. The first was the importance of context and of treating treasure as a whole rather than dividing it along modern disciplinary boundaries (such as coins and silver plate, for example). This is illustrated by the display case showing the Hoxne treasure in a see-though box.

The second theme was concerned with the role treasure played in the lives of both the original owners and the modern finders. In contrast to modern obsessions with artistic merit, the Roman literary sources discussed by Richard Reece earlier in the day are concerned only with the weights of silver ware and their actual use. This idea is reflected in the exhibition by using plastic food on many of the famous Mildenhall dishes. There is also an emphasis on how finds of treasure have impacted on the lives of finders, with Mildenhall again providing a splendid example. The finder Sidney Ford used one of the silver spoons to eat his breakfast porridge and, famously, the great silver dish as a fruit bowl at Christmas. In the exhibition special emphasis is also placed on differing ideas of what defined treasure and on the archaeological importance of well-recorded finds as opposed to simple monetary value.

The final theme picked out by Richard Hobbs was that of the long-term continuities in the use of certain objects. Thus the display cabinet showing rings (ranging from Roman snake rings to modern birthstone rings) proved to be extremely popular with an audience that is perhaps otherwise often struggling to relate to ancient objects. Along the same lines, I particularly enjoyed the display cabinets of 17th-century children's toys and miniature objects which provided a vivid insight into post-medieval daily life.

Reviews by Richard Hobbs (RH), British Museum, and Hella Eckardt (HE), University of Reading

Buried treasure exhibition

The *Buried Treasure* exhibition will run at the National Museum & Gallery, Cardiff from 14 May 2004 to 5 September 2004; admission is free. The exhibition will then move on to The Manchester Museum from 7th October 2004 to 15th January 2005, the Hancock Museum, Newcastle-upon-Tyne, from 12th February to 26th June 2005, and finally the Norwich Castle Museum & Art Gallery from 25th July 2005 to 13th January 2006.

A book accompanying the exhibition. *Treasure: finding our past*, by Richard Hobbs, is published by the British Museum Press, 2003, and priced at £9.99 (see review in *Lucerna* 27, 20-1).

Some new late Roman rivet spurs

This note has been prompted by the recording of seven late Roman copper-alloy spurs by the Portable Antiquities Scheme (PAS) in recent years. These examples are all rivet spurs of Jahn's Class III 'provincial Roman' type which date from the 3rd-4th century AD. Roman spurs are very rare and their poor representation in the archaeological record has led to the suggestion that the wearing of spurs was not likely to have been a common habit either by the military or civilians, throughout the Roman period (Cool 2002, 33; Leahy 1996, 240). Thus these new finds constitute a significant addition to the very small dataset of previously known examples of this uncommon Roman artefact.
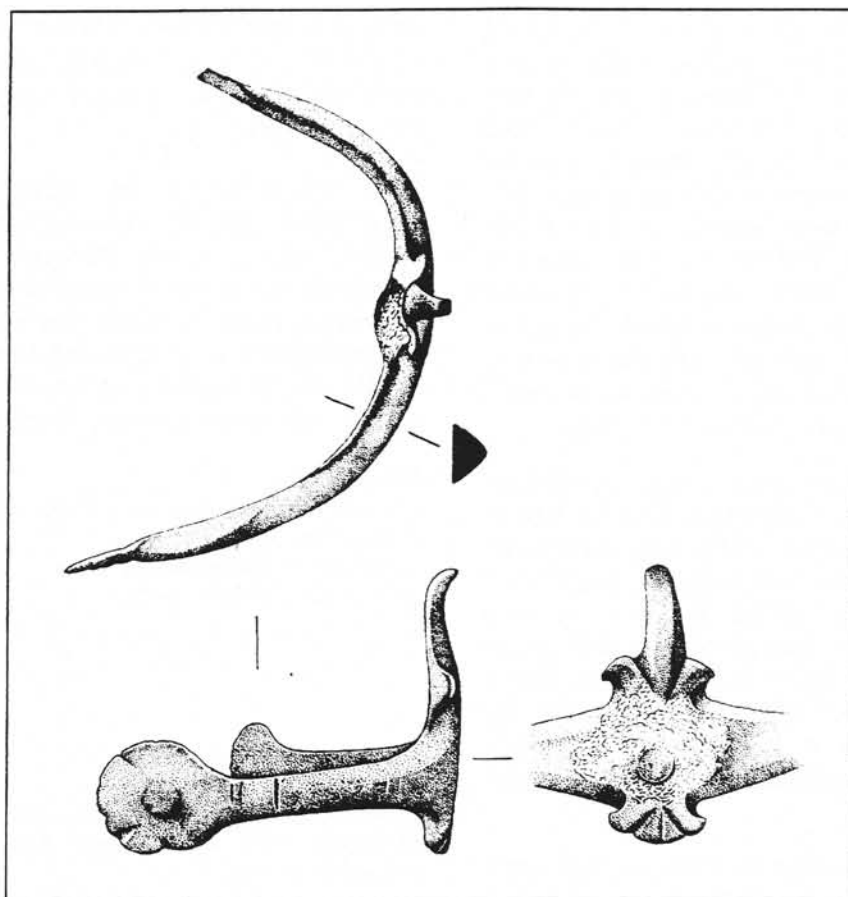
This type of spur was produced in either copper alloy or iron, but more examples in copper alloy have been recorded. It takes the following form (Fig 1), although with slight variations. The arms generally terminate in a flattened disc, with a central perforation for the rivet to secure it to a strap. Above the conical prick, which is frequently missing, is a hook which often terminates in a stylised animal's head. This probably served the function of securing a strap (Leahy 1996, 239). Bifurcated projections commonly occur either above and/or below the prick. The arms are often chamfered and they, along with the terminal discs, may carry incised decoration.
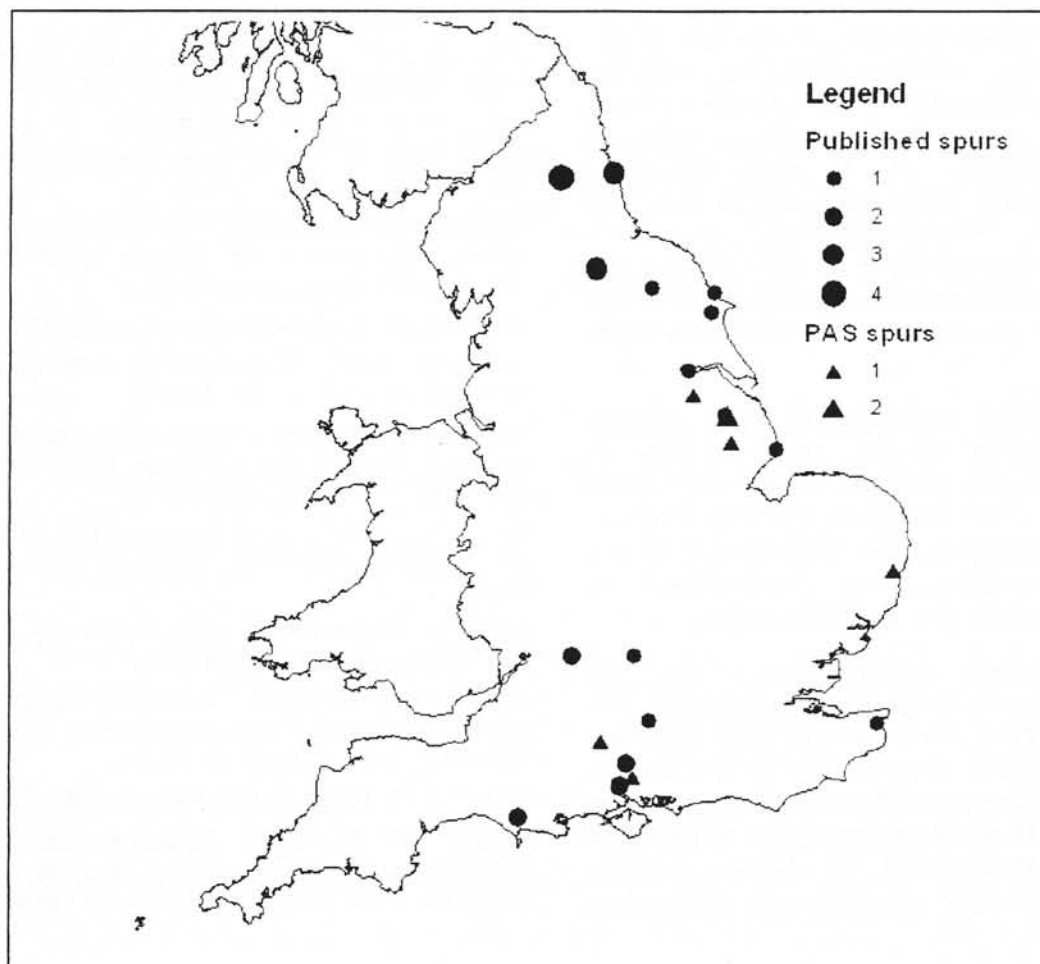
Shortt's survey undertaken in 1959 recorded a total of 28 Roman copper-alloy or iron spurs discovered in England and Scotland. Of these, fourteen are late Roman copper-alloy or iron rivet spurs of the type discussed here. A preliminary literature survey has added fourteen further copper-alloy examples to the corpus. The total number of spurs of this type currently known thus stands at 35, including the finds reported through the PAS. The most recent additions

Parish	County	Publication	No
South Shields	Tyne and Wear	Shortt 1959, 71, no 21, fig 2	1
Corbridge	Northumberland	Shortt 1959, 70, nos 7-10, fig 3	4
Chedworth	Gloucestershire	Shortt 1959, 70, nos 3-4, fig 2	2
Woodeaton	Oxfordshire	Shortt 1959, 71, no 28 fig 2	1
Dorchester	Dorset	Shortt 1959, 70, nos 11-13, fig 2	3
Bitterne	Hampshire	Cotton & Gathercole 1958, 45, nos 6-7, fig 12	2
Richborough	Kent	Bushe-Fox 1932, 79, no 20, pl 10	1
South Shields	Tyne and Wear	Allason-Jones & Miket 1984, 3.685-3.687	3
Filey	North Yorkshire	Ottaway (undated)	1
Catterick	North Yorkshire	Lentowicz 2002, 66, nos 213-14	2
Beadlam	North Yorkshire	Neal 1996, 49, no 21, fig 32	1
Rudston	East Yorkshire	Stead 1980, 103, fig 66, no 47	1
Ludford	Lincolnshire	Leahy 1996, fig 1	1
Skegness	Lincolnshire	Leahy 1996, fig 2	1
Old Winteringham	North Lincolnshire	Leahy 1996, fig 3	1
Caister on Sea	Norfolk	Darling & Gurney 1993, 102, no 430	1
Lankhills, Winchester.	Hampshire	*Pers comm* P. Booth	2
PAS records			
Scawby	North Lincolnshire	NLM 5769	1
Ludford	Lincolnshire	NLM 5354	1
Ludford	Lincolnshire	NLM 5355	1
Thimbleby	Lincolnshire	LIN-0887A7	1
Wenhaston	Suffolk	SF-7585	1
Upham	Hampshire	HAMP 3317	1
Kimpton	Hampshire	HAMP 567	1

Table 1. Finds of late Roman spurs from excavation and metal-detection.

Above: Fig 1. Example of a rivet spur. Scale approximately 1:1. Below: Fig 2. Distribution of published and PAS late Roman spurs in Britain.

are a pair of copper-alloy rivet spurs found with a male inhumation burial in the recent Lankhills cemetery excavation by Oxford Archaeology. This burial was also accompanied by a Crossbow brooch, a silver strap-end and a silver buckle (*pers comm* P. Booth). The spurs were found together at the lower end of the left leg. Their position suggests that they were attached to items of footwear that had been placed together beside the left leg, rather than being worn. This is the first time that spurs have been discovered in a burial context in Britain.

Among the examples documented by Shortt, five were found at Corbridge, one at South Shields and the rest on urban and rural sites in southern England. Subsequent excavated discoveries include three from Tyne and Wear, five from Yorkshire, three from Lincolnshire, one from Norfolk and three from Hampshire. Of the spurs recorded by the PAS, there is a single example from Suffolk, two from Hampshire and four from Lincolnshire.

The general distribution clusters in two main areas; north-east England from the northern frontier to Lincolnshire and central southern England, principally Hampshire. Many of the excavated examples come from sites associated with the late Roman army (Corbridge, South Shields, Catterick, Filey, Caister-on-Sea, Richborough), as well as towns (Silchester, Winchester and Dorchester) and villas (Rudston, Beadlam and Chedworth). It is not easy to characterise the sites from which the PAS and other metal-detected examples originate. However, none as yet fall into the above categories and on current information they appear to derive from non-villa rural sites.

Spurs have been considered to be associated with late Roman cavalry units because of their discovery on military sites (Cool 2002, Leahy 1996). The association of the spurs in the Lankhills grave with belt-fittings and a Crossbow brooch may strengthen a connection to late Roman officialdom.

However, some reservations may be expressed concerning this argument. For example, many forts where late Roman cavalry units are documented in the *Notitia Dignitatum* have not yet produced spurs. The wide range of sites where spurs have been found, as also noted by Leahy (1996), suggests that they are not only associated

with the late Roman military. The connection between many of the finds and major routes through Roman Britain deserves further examination.

The concentration of spurs in two areas (identified above) has not been previously noted, although the dataset is small. It is certainly not a result of excavation or metal-detecting bias. Perhaps it is another instance of regionality in late Roman material culture in Britain, but why it should be manifested in these two areas remains unclear.

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Using the Portable Antiquities Scheme data for research

The analysis of a small find or a dataset of small finds has three stages: 1) identification, 2) description, and 3) discussion, and in moving through these stages it is helpful to ask a series of questions so that the maximum amount of embedded information can be extracted.

The basic questions are:
1) What is it?
2) How was it made?
3) Is it similar to others of its general type, or different?
4) Why was it made? (= What was it used for? = How was it used?)
5) Who made it?
6) Who for?
7) When was it made, and for how long was it in use?
8) Where was it made?
9) Who benefited from its manufacture?
10) Where was it found?

The standard tools of artefact research are typology, date, and distribution. 'Where was it found?' is one of the most important questions that can be asked in archaeology, and the stratigraphic context of an excavated object is what facilitates any exchange of information between the site director and the small finds specialist.

Excavated small finds have a vertical stratigraphy, a horizontal stratigraphy, and are associated with other objects that together help build up a picture of how and why they arrived at their final resting place. Stratified small finds can be studied extrinsically to interpret the context, and intrinsically to interpret the object. They can provide two-way dating evidence, interpretations of land or building-use, and evidence of social, religious, cultural and economic activity. In the setting of a burial they can supply the age, gender, status, occupation, and religious or superstitious beliefs of the deceased.

Objects that were not excavated archaeologically but survive in antiquarian collections, or were found during field-walking, by metal-detecting, or just by lucky happenstance cannot usually do this. At best they have a provenance, but they do not have a stratified context. The difference between provenance and context has been very clearly explained by Dr Ian Stead in his book on the Salisbury Hoard, and very, very few finds reported under the Portable Antiquities Scheme have a context, though many have a reasonably reliable provenance. This is not to say that provenance alone cannot also provide information about land use *etc*, but an object without a context has restricted usefulness; it is just an object.

As RFG members will know, Hella Eckardt and I have been studying bifid nail-cleaners, small objects that have proved to be extremely informative (for references see p7). We have compiled a dataset of about 400 examples gathered from a systematic literature survey which covered all county and national archaeological journals from 1970-2001 as well as major site reports.

One of the things that we cannot do with bifid nail-cleaners is force all of them into a rigid typology, because a very high proportion are of simple form, cut from sheet metal and with little or no decoration, their outline ranging without a break from thin and straight to rounded, providing a continuum that defies typology. However, there are a few distinct types, three of which we have so far examined in depth, and others that we are still working on. Among the latter the late Roman type, with its distinctive ring-and-dot decoration and side notches, is one that will crop up in connection with the Scheme later.

As well as looking at the date and distribution *etc* of definable types of nail-cleaners we have also looked at the site-type (in other words the social context of the provenance) of all the nail-cleaners in the dataset. Originating in the La Tène period, when both here and on the continent they are quite rare 'high-status' items, one of the most intriguing facts about bifid nail-cleaners is that they are common in Roman Britain, but extremely rare on the continent in the same period. From the 1st century AD the bifid nail-

cleaner all but disappears from the archaeological record on the continent, where the single pick was preferred, but in Britain after the Roman conquest there was, to borrow a phrase, a bifid nail-cleaner event horizon. On an inter-provincial scale they can therefore be seen as peculiarly British, but is this reflected in any way in their find-spots, in other words in their provenance?

Richard Reece has for some time divided sites into types and defined the coin-loss patterns characteristic of each, thus allowing him to formulate norms, and deviations from them. Hella Eckardt has used the same basic site-types for lamps and lighting equipment, and by doing the same for bifid nail-cleaners (Fig 1) we have been able to show that their social distribution pattern is in striking contrast to that of very 'Roman' objects such as lighting equipment, most of which comes from large urban and military centres. The 'La Tène-ness', or 'Britishness' of the bifid nail-cleaner could therefore be said to be reflected by its concentration in small settlements rather than in large towns, fortresses and forts, which can be defined as 'Roman'.

The social distribution of the site types is reflected in the geographical pattern of the provenances of the nail-cleaners (Fig 2),
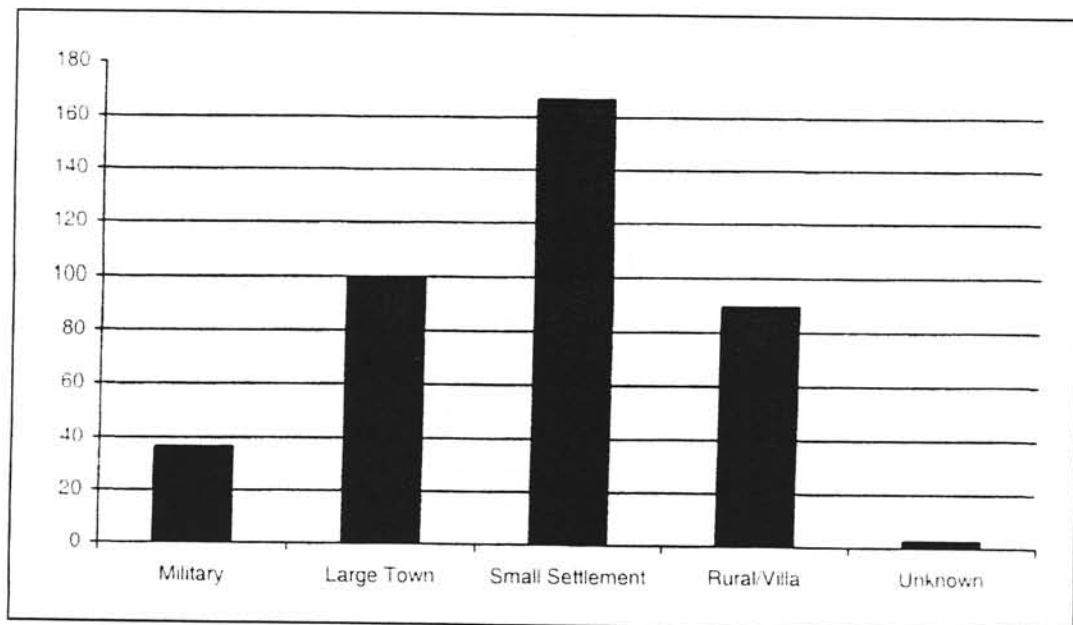
with very few coming from sites on Hadrian's Wall or other military establishments in the north or in Wales, and a lot from the towns, small towns and even smaller settlements in central and southern Britain.
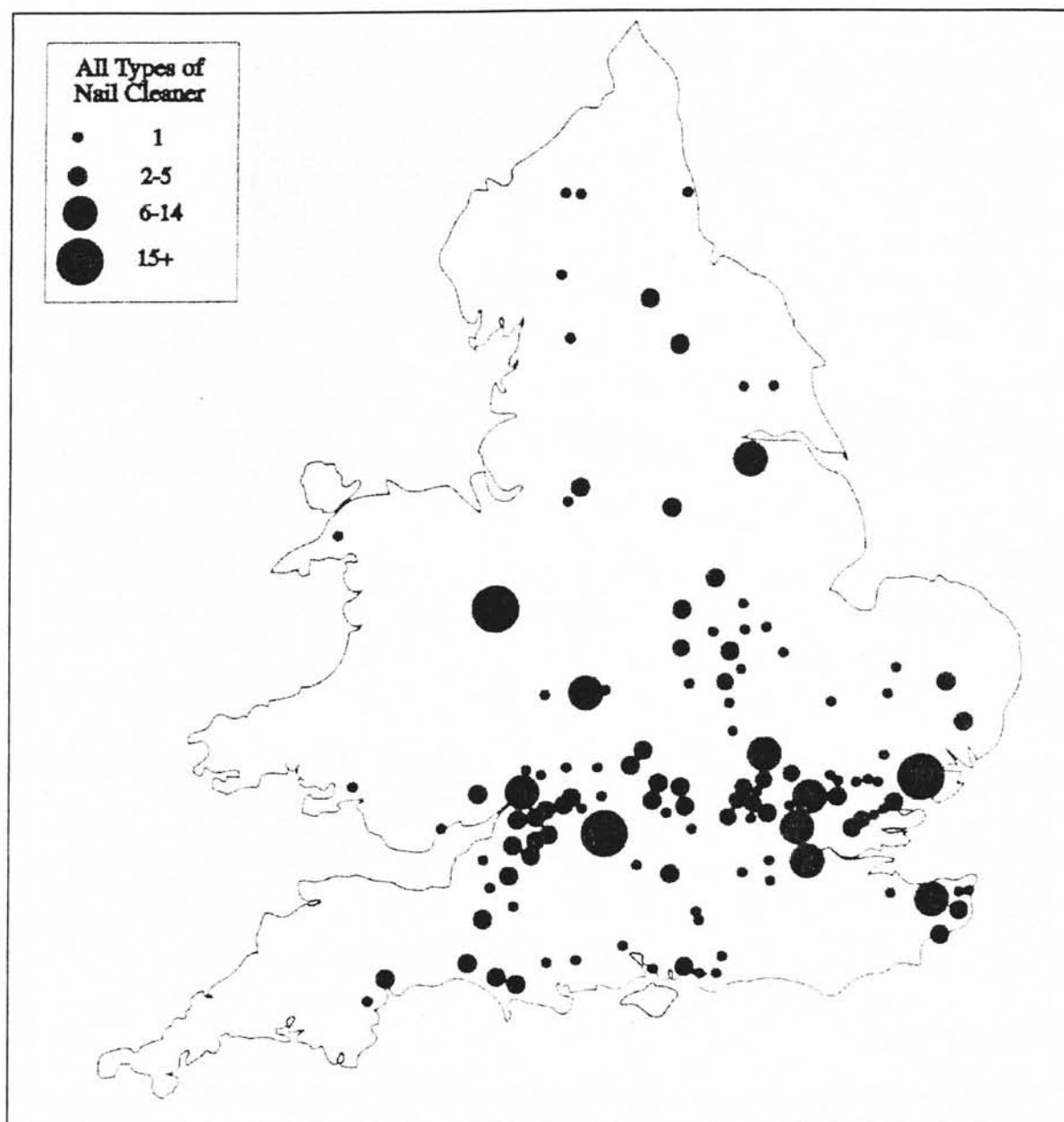
There are some very noticeable gaps on the map where we might expect to see small Romano-British settlements of the type commonly producing nail-cleaners, eg in the agricultural areas of Lincolnshire, Cheshire, Lancashire, and in North Norfolk.

Distribution maps are always open to deconstruction. It could be argued that this general map is weighted to the south because that is where development has been concentrated over the last 30 years, and consequently more rescue excavations in advance of development have taken place and been published to provide our data. As our distribution pattern is based on provenance, and as metal-detecting usually takes place in agricultural areas, it seemed likely that the Portable Antiquities Scheme database might provide us with examples to fill in a few of the gaps?

A search on the PAS database produced only 36 hits for nail-cleaners, not a vast number compared to our existing database, but enough to add a further 9 per cent if usable. Figure 3 presents the results in terms of the quality of the data provided. Of the 36 one was listed twice, and three

Fig 1. The social distribution of bifid nail-cleaners.

Above: Fig 2. Geographical distribution of bifid nail-cleaners.

Below: Fig 3. The usefulness of the PAS data.

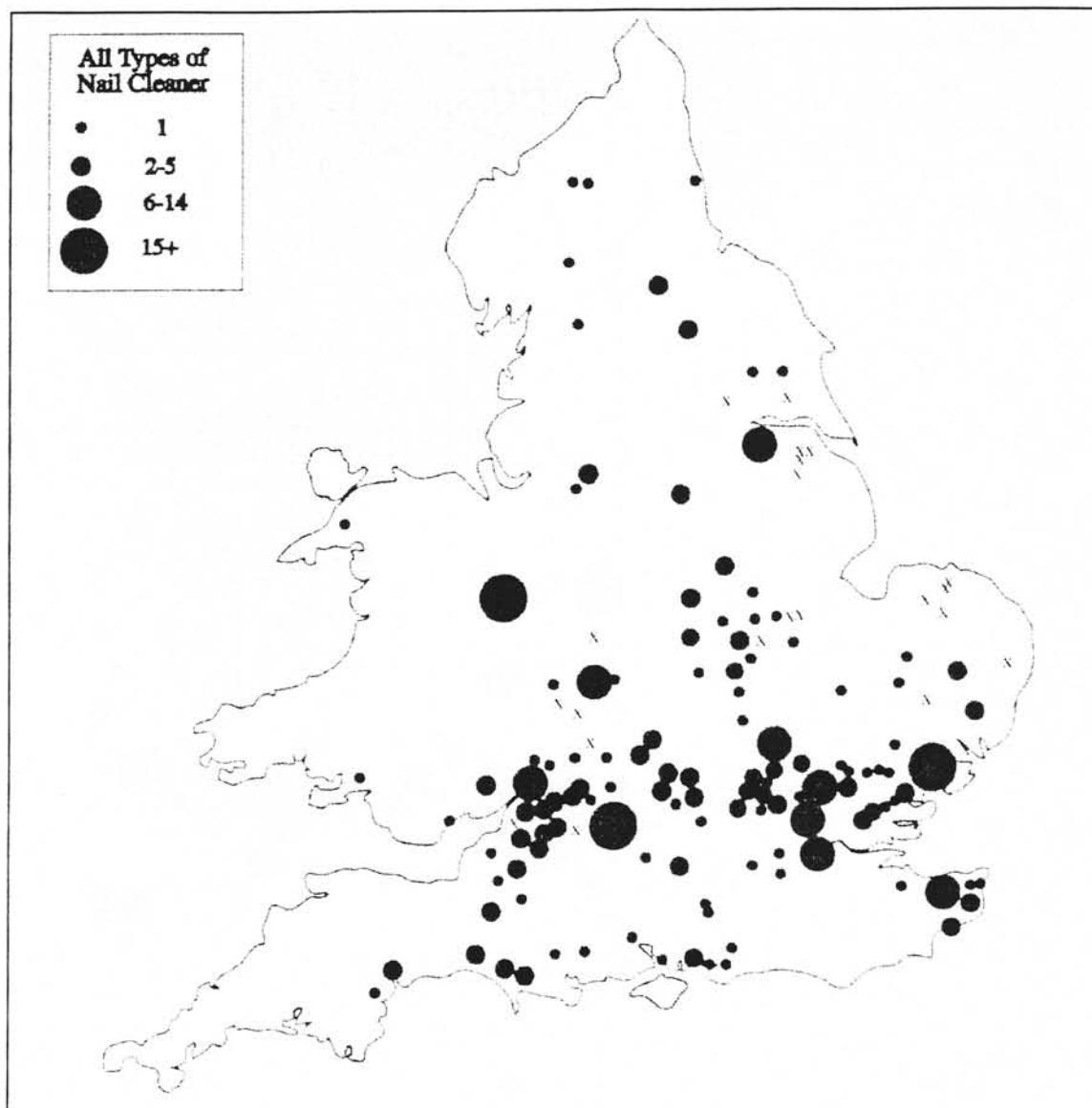|	No	Running total	%
listed	36		100
duplicates	1	35	97
wrongly or tentatively identified	3	32	89
oddities (= suspect identifications)	1	31	86
no image & inadequate description	5	26	72
fragments (= ?suspect identifications)	2	24	67
no parish given	3	21	58
illustrated (of 24)	9	-	38

Fig 4. Geographical distribution of bifid nail-cleaners with PAS data added – X marks the main village in each parish.

more were either definitely not nail-cleaners, or might not be. The description of one unillustrated piece also sounded as if the identification was wrong, and five more had to go because the description was either incredibly terse (and therefore provided no extra information to substantiate the identification), or non-existent, or was not detailed enough to provide confirmation that the identification was correct.

Of the remaining 26 two went because they were small fragments and therefore also somewhat untrustworthy, and three had

either no county or no parish so were useless for geographical distribution, though the description of one unillustrated example was so good that it clearly belonged to the decorated late Roman type mentioned above (*see* p23). This reinforces the importance of detailed description already shown above in the high number of poorly described examples that had to be rejected.

This left only 21 of the original 36 examples (58 per cent) usable for plotting, and the question must be asked whether, for the time spent downloading it all and printing it

off, it is worth consulting the database when it yielded so few additions to the map (Fig 4). However, though several of the 21 were located in areas already known to produce nail-cleaners, others have enabled me to put find-spots in some of those areas that previously had very few. But, deconstructing again, the additions also point neatly to areas where the scheme is in operation and to the areas of activity of a few detectorists or detector clubs. There are still gaps in some regions that we would like to see filled in.

Can they be filled in? In her unpublished review of the Iron Age and Roman non-ferrous metal finds listed on the database, Hilary Cool noticed that shape appeared to be a bias in retrieval and therefore also in reporting. Long thin objects, like nail-cleaners, were under-represented compared to excavated site assemblages. She later compared the stratified non-ferrous metal finds from Ashford, Kent, with those recovered from the site using metal-detectors and found exactly the same bias. This undoubtedly offers an explanation as to why so few nail-cleaners are listed on the database when they are so prolific in the archaeological record.

The data for nail-cleaners available from the Scheme therefore conformed to patterns already established or predicted, and, of course, because it is the crudest of data, the objects do not come loaded with embedded information about stratified context or site-type. The examples finally used on Fig 4 come from modern agricultural areas, but the type of Romano-British site they come from is usually unknown. They could be from small settlements, villas, sanctuaries, roadside shrines, farmsteads, or even military establishments.

Aside from the quality of the embedded information for correctly identified items, it is also a matter for concern that so many nail-cleaner 'hits' had to be jettisoned either because they were not nail-cleaners at all (leading, to my mind, to a general 'culture of suspicion' as to the trustworthiness of the identifications in general) or because they were unillustrated and the descriptions were inadequate. Already undergraduates are using the database as a source of material for dissertations, but, however well-honed their critical faculties, if they work with flawed data then their results are likely to be equally flawed.

The accuracy of the data is something that is bound to improve with time as the FLOs become more experienced in both identification and description, and as photographing the objects becomes more common. I would expect a search on nail-cleaners in perhaps two years' time to yield a much higher 'confidence' rating, but resources need also to be directed into tidying up what is already on the database.

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(Article taken from a talk given at a PAS seminar on 'Revolutionising Research' in February 2004. I am grateful to Hilary Cool for a copy of her unpublished review.)
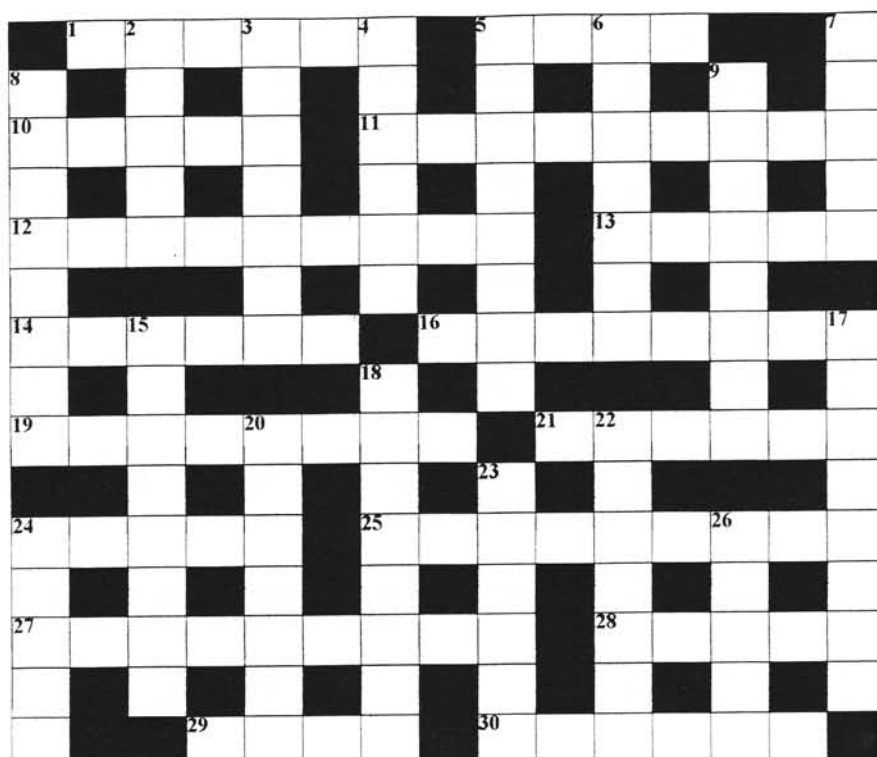
Crossword Answers

Across 1. Stucco 5. Tope 10. Olive 11. Flint mine 12. Cathedral 13. Eagle 14. Nudity 16. Norsemen 19. Conquest 21. Crania 24. Rogue 25. Aborigine 27. Palestine 28. Items 29. Slug 30. Tequila.

Down 2. Twist 3. Clement 4. On fire 5. Trillion 6. Potters 7. Crete 8. Volcanic 9. Liegeman 15. Danegeld 17. Near East 18. Escaping 20. Utensil 22. Railing 23. Moment 24. Ropes 26. Ideal

Crossword
by Digger

Across

1. Sounds like it's glued – oh, it's plastered on the wall (6)
5. To exercise – it's what archaeologists like to do in the pub! (4)
10. Tree not dead, after being given some oxygen (5)
11. Stone tool belongs to me, but it may have come from here (5,4)
12. A large church, of earth-clad construction (9)
13. A bird of standard issue in the legions? (5)
14. Barely hears a new song? (6)
16. Morn seen breaking by the Vikings (8)
19. William's exploit against the hunt (8)
21. US spies smuggled in skulls (6)
24. Rascal – gore is splattered around you, we hear (5)
25. One spirit drunk by a bore, an Australian (9)
27. Whitens rake prong in the country (9)
28. Smite disorderly things (5)
29. A type of bullet that could damage garden plants? (4)
30. Roman roof tile has glue at break (6)

Down

2. Oliver's dance? (5)
3. Gentle Pope (7)
4. An evergreen tree is found in one when it's alight (2,4)
5. Stream I found in a hundred, or a much larger number (8)
6. Wanders about, like ceramicists? (7)
7. The beginnings of civilisation reached even this early Greek island (5)
8. Fiery and liable to erupt? (8)
9. Distort, i.e. mangle, a subject (8)
15. Puzzled gal ended payments to the Vikings (8)
17. A region close to the Orient (4,4)
18. Getting away, if nice gaps can be arranged (8)
20. Lute's in disrepair, get a tool (7)
22. Abusing a fence (8)
23. Second in importance? (6)
24. Pores over strings of pearls (5)
26. I distribute the very best (5)

CONFERENCES

European Meeting of the Paleopathology Association
University of Durham; 11th-15th August 2004

The 15th meeting of the Paleopathology Association will be hosted by the Dept of Archaeology at Durham.

For further information please see website (www.dur.ac.uk/ppa2004.conference) or contact Dr Charlotte Roberts, Dept of Archaeology, University of Durham, Durham DH1 3LE. Tel: 0191 3341154; fax 0191 33441101; email ppa2004.conference@durham.ac.uk

European Association of Archaeologists 10th annual conference
Institut d'Administration des Entreprises, Université Jean Moulin, Lyon, France; 7th-12th September

Meetings and talks, with pre- and post-conference trips to places of Gallo-Roman interest in central and southern France. For details contact Musée Gallo-Romain, 17 rue Cléberg, 69005 Lyon, France. Tel +33 (0)4 72 38 49 37; fax +33 (0)4 72 38 77 42; email: secretariateaa@rhone.fr; web: www.e-a-a-org

The archaeology of the early medieval Celtic churches
University of Wales, Bangor; 9th-12th September 2004

Joint conference of the Society for Medieval Archaeology and the Society for Church Archaeology, hosted by the Dept of Histiry and Welsh History at Bangor. Will highlight new research on early medieval church archaeology *c* AD 400-1100 in Wales, Ireland, Scotland, the Isle of Man, SW Britain and Brittany.

The objectives are to reassess the current state of knowledge, highlight ongoing debates about its interpretation, and to compare and contrast the archaeological evidence for the development fo the church in the different Celtic areas.

For further details visit the conference website, www.britarch.ac.uk/socchurcharchaeol or contact Dr Nancy Edwards, Dept of History &

Welsh History, University of Wales, Bangor, Gwynedd LL57 2DG, his010@bangor.ac.uk

International Congress on beer in prehistory and antiquity
Barcelona, Spain; 4th-6th October 2004

The congress will bring together international experts in the archaeology and history of beer and fermented beverages from around the world.

This event is organised by the Project for the Archaelology of Food at the University of Barcelona and the Spanish Commission of the International Committee for the Anthropology of Food. For more information contact Dr Jordi Juan Tresserras, Projecte Argueologia dels Aliments, Programa de Gestió Cultural, Universitat de Barcelona, Campus Mundet, Pg. Vall d'Hebron, 171 Edif.Llevant Desp.008, E-08035 Barcelona, Spain. Tel: +34 93 424 80 35; email congresocerveza.terra.es

Carlisle Millenium Project Conference

Swallow Hotel, London Road, Carlisle; 15th-17th October 2004-07-13 Conference to present the resulst of the excavations on Castle Green, Carlisle, between 1998 and 2001, which unearthed amazing wooden structures and a fascinating colelction of artefacts from waterlogged deposits.

Contact Dr Carol Allen, Oxford Archaeology North, Storey Institute, Meeting House Lane, Lancaster LA1 1TH. Tel: 01524 541000; fax 01524 848606; email c.allen@oxfordarch.co.uk. Places are limited, so please book early.

6th Roman Archaeology Conference + Theoretical Roman Archaeology Conference
University of Birmngham; 31st March-3rd April 2005

An outline programme and booking form for RAC/TRAC will be available from September 2004.

For further information contact Dr S. E. Cleary, Institute of Archaeology & Antiquity, University of Birmingham, Edgbaston, Birmingham B15 2TT. Tel: 0121 414 5766; fax 0121 414 3595; email: a.s.esmonde_cleary@bham.ac.uk

BOOKS etc

Objets de parure et de soins du corps d'époque romaine dans l'Est picton (Deux-Sèvres, Vienne)
by I Bertrand
Association des Publications Chauvinoises, €30, ISSN 1159 8646; ISBN 2 909165 53 1
An invaluable book for the small finds specialist that is not only a typological presentation of the dress accessories and toilet instruments from the region (over 1,000 catalogued), but also a study of the adoption and assimilation of Roman cultural practices by a Gallic population.

Roman Britain and the Roman Navy
by D J P Mason
Tempus Publications Ltd, £17.99, ISBN 075245412
An examination of the role of the Roman Navy in the conquest and defence of Britain. Recent excavations of ships and harbour works are used to demonstrate the fleet's importance in Roman military planning and tactics.
(See also p 14 for Mason's *Roman Chester*.)

Roman Medicine
by A Cruse
Tempus Publications Ltd, £19.99, ISBN 0752414615
Cruse examines many different aspects of classical medicine, including the religious and the magical, and looks particularly closely at Roman Britain, its doctors and hospitals, the role of temples, and also skeletal evidence and dentistry.

Roman Infantry Equipment
by I P Stephenson
Tempus Publications Ltd, £17.99, ISBN 0752419080
A systematic look at defensive and offensive infantry equipment, and at other militaria such as clothing and tools.

L'établissement rural antique de Soumaltre (Aspiran, Hérault)
by R Thernot, V Bel, S Mauné, & many specialists
Archéologie et Histoire Romaine 13, Éditions Monique Mergoil, €45, ISSN 1285-6371; ISBN 2 907303 81 3
Soumaltre originated as an inn serving a major north-south road, but it developed into a multi-focal settlement through the establishment of a wine warehouse and a pottery factory where the amphorae used to 'bottle-on' the wine were made. Other industries such as olive-oil production wool-processing and stock-rearing have also been identified. The volume also includes a detailed examination of burial practice and cemetery organisation in the area.

The rise and fall of an Imperial shrine: sculpture from the Augusteum at Narona

Exhibition at the Ashmolean Museum of Art & Archaeology, Oxford

7th July-17th October

The temple at the *colonia* of Narona (Croatia) dedicated to the cult of Augustus was excavated in 1995. The Augusteum had been built in about 10 BC and had contained many high-quality sculptures of Augustus, his wife Livia, and later emperors. The statues had been thrown down and their heads broken off and removed from the site, probably in the 4th century AD.

Most of the heads are still missing, but that of Vespasian had already been found during excavations close to the temple in 1978, and that of Livia had been acquired by Sir Arthur Evans in 1878. Both have now been reunited with their bodies, and will soon find a permanent home in a new museum on the site of the temple.

For details of opening times see www.ashmol.ac.uk.

Online catalogue

The Museum of London has produced an online catalogue (not fully illustrated) of ceramics and glass that can be accessed at www.museumoflondon.org.uk.

It is a multi-period catalogue, and perhaps in consequence its search facility has a few teething troubles. Requesting 'Roman' brings up objects of all sorts of dates (Iron Age to 20th century), has at least one duplicate, and also includes a fragment of a rotary quern that is neither ceramic nor glass.

Nevertheless, this is a welcome start to making the collections accessible to an online public.