

# LUCERNA

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THE NEWSLETTER OF  
THE ROMAN FINDS GROUP



# LUCERNA: THE NEWSLETTER OF THE ROMAN FINDS GROUP

## ISSUE 55, JULY 2018

### Editorial

Hello and welcome to the 55th issue of *Lucerna*.

In this edition we get underway with Michael Marshall's look at an anthropomorphic clasp-knife handle from London before Jörn Schuster asks the intriguing question of whether Roman styli actually exist at all! In normal fashion we also have tantalising summaries of all the papers that were given at the most recent Roman Finds Group Spring Conference that took place in Canterbury. Following this are a bumper three book reviews on Roman querns in the Tongeren region of Belgium, the much anticipated results of the excavations at Ashwell, and an analysis of a Roman military diploma from Rivelin, Stannington, as well as a list of upcoming conferences and events.

As always, we would just like to thank all of the contributors to this issue and acknowledge the work that goes into doing so. If you, or anyone you know, has something that they would like to publish, feel free to get in touch and we will consider anything proposed.

Finally, an apology is due to Owen Humphreys who kindly provided reviews of papers from the RFG conference in Canterbury for *Lucerna* 54 but whose name was unfortunately mis-spelt in the process. We hope he will forgive us.

We hope you enjoy this issue and look forward to the upcoming conference this autumn in London which you can find further details about on page 3.

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### The Roman Finds Group Committee

The Roman Finds Group Annual General Meeting was held on the 25th March 2018 at the Spring Conference in Canterbury where the existing Committee was re-elected for the following year. In addition, we also warmly welcome Edwin Wood who has recently been co-opted as a new Committee member. A list of the updated Roman Finds Group Committee is provided below and will also soon be available on the Roman Finds Group website (<http://www.romanfindsgroup.org.uk/roman+finds+group+committee>).

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*Front cover image: A weight, possibly of Silenus, from the Richborough collection. Copyright English Heritage. See p. 9.*

## Membership Benefits

The objectives of the RFG are to promote the study, research, publication, teaching and conservation of the material culture of Roman Britain. Membership of the RFG will entitle individuals to:

- Two copies of our Newsletter, *Lucerna*, each year.
- Access to our Roman finds datasheets.
- Full access to the website ([www.romanfindsgroup.org.uk](http://www.romanfindsgroup.org.uk)) and twitter feeds, including the members only section which includes access to recent copies of *Lucerna*. The website has been developed to include access to *Lucerna* and Datasheets and to include finds catalogues and other finds-related works which are currently out-of-print as pdfs.
- Reduced fees to our twice-yearly meetings, held in the spring (typically a two day meeting) and autumn of each year.
- Free/reduced entrance to major finds-related exhibitions, where this can be negotiated.
- Discounts on finds-related books, or pre-publication offers, where these can be negotiated.
- Access to small grants to help with small finds research. These grants are available to individual, fully paid-up, members and will be awarded for applications seeking to support our objectives e.g. publication drawings and maps or travel to museums for object research. Special consideration is given to articles offered to *Lucerna*. £1,000 is available each year (reviewable). Details on how to apply are on our website ([www.romanfindsgroup.org.uk](http://www.romanfindsgroup.org.uk)).
- Access, through the website, to educational films promoting the importance of finds research. Specialists talk about identifying different materials and objects in a series of films that might ultimately be themed around the chapters of Artefacts in Roman Britain or Nina Crummy's object categories.
- Group payment for individual RFG members to Instrumentum, the European bi-annual magazine. Join through RFG to receive four years' worth of Instrumentum membership for three years payment. In addition the RFG will absorb the conversion fee in a bulk payment on your behalf. The cost for Instrumentum membership is currently 90 Euros for 4 years. Members will be notified by email, in *Lucerna* and on the website when the next renewal is due.
- Help us increase the Romano-British presence amongst a wider European small finds community e.g. by the provision of extra entries and links to objects in the Instrumentum/Artefacts website.

## Follow the Roman Finds Group Online

**Twitter** (<https://twitter.com/romanfindsgrp>)

Our Roman Finds Group Twitter feed continues to go from strength to strength. We regularly post photographs, news items and links that may interest people with a passion for Roman objects, as well as

sharing up-to-date information on the group. We post live-tweets from our conferences under the hashtags #rfg2018 #rfg2017 #rfg2016 etc., so that people from across the world can attend 'virtually'. We recently welcomed our 2294th follower! Do join us! @RomanFindsGrp.

## Website ([www.romanfindsgroup.org.uk](http://www.romanfindsgroup.org.uk))

All of our tweets also appear in a scrolling feed on every page of our website [www.romanfindsgroup.org.uk](http://www.romanfindsgroup.org.uk), which contains more information, as well as some beautiful images. Our new website is now fully operational and has been designed to work well on mobile phones, tablets and on desktop browsers. All Members of the Roman Finds Group may log into the new website and view extra resources that are exclusive to Members of RFG. These include the latest four editions of *Lucerna*, the collection of Roman Finds Group Datasheets, and a link to allow Members to download a facsimile of Manning's 1985 *Catalogue of the Romano-British Iron Tools, Fittings and Weapons in the British Museum*, a cornerstone of Roman small finds study, and now out of print. As Jenny Hall wrote in *Lucerna* 48, we have ambitions for this to become the central source for Roman finds; we are working to scan and host out-of-print finds catalogues, and to compile and maintain a detailed bibliography. Watch this space too for news on our forthcoming programme of short films on Roman finds!

*Nicola Hembrey, RFG Communications Secretary*

## RFG Grants

A series of small grants are available from the Roman Finds Group to all fully paid-up members. The annual grant cycle will run from January 1st. Applications may be made at any time, but they will be reviewed and assessed on 1st April, 1st September and 1st December. The RFG has a target annual grant fund of £1,000, although this will be reviewed each year in light of available funds and demand.

Grants will be awarded against any area of the Group's objectives (to promote the study, research, publication, teaching and conservation of the material culture of Roman Britain) but applications must be very clear as to which of these objectives are being applied.

There is no specific application form, but the following details are essential:

- Name, address and institution (where applicable) including email address.
- Date of application – we will normally provide assessments and awards of applications within a six week period.
- Amount requested, other grants applied for and total amount of project. It will not be normal for RFG to fund an individual project to 100%.
- Details of the project and how it will meet the objectives of the Roman Finds Group.
- If it is a project leading to a publication, where is the intended publication? Priority will be given to contributions for *Lucerna*.



- Confirmation of RFG membership and year of joining (will be checked!).
- A short citation from at least one referee (who does not need to be a member of RFG).

All applications will be evaluated by a sub-group of three members of the RFG Committee. The committee reserves the right to seek further referee opinion and further information where it feels appropriate. The decision of the grant application 'subcommittee' (Stephen Greep, Nicola Hembrey and Sally Worrell) will be final.

Applications should be sent to the chairman of the grants sub-group, Stephen Greep (sjgreep@gmail.com).

## RFG Datasheets

A plea to all members to share their expertise and knowledge and contribute a datasheet (or two)! It could be on a particular find type, an industry or an update for ongoing research. They are a valuable resource to students, people just starting off in their finds careers and curators alike.

Gill Dunn is co-ordinating this so please contact her at the address below if you are interested in writing a datasheet.

*Gill Dunn, Publications Co-ordinator*  
gill.c.dunn@outlook.com

## Notes for Contributors

Contributions to *Lucerna* from members and non-members are always welcome. Whether you're an undergraduate or graduate student, seasoned academic or hobbyist, the Roman Finds Group is keen to publish new and continuing research on Roman material culture to help inform others of ongoing work and forge valuable links between fellow members with skills, knowledge and expertise in the same field. As well as fuller research articles, we would be particularly interested to hear about any old or new discoveries anyone is happy to share, as well as any mystery objects that need identifying. On the other hand, perhaps you're part way through your research and looking for a way to present some preliminary results or a short summary outlining your ongoing studies? Whatever the case, please don't hesitate - we would be delighted to hear from you!

If you wish to participate, all contributions should be sent as attachments via e-mail to Matthew Fittock (*Lucerna* Editor) at [matthewfittock@googlemail.com](mailto:matthewfittock@googlemail.com). Submissions must be word-processed on Microsoft Word or an equivalent. The main article should include text only, with the paper title and author's name at the beginning and a full bibliography followed by contact details at the end, with no images but full reference to figures. The document should be single spaced with a full return in between each paragraph. All images should be provided as individual TIFF files at a minimum of 300 dpi, and all line-art as individual TIFF files at 1200 dpi, with captions in a separate document. Images in colour will appear in black and white in print and colour online. Tables must also be provided in a separate Microsoft

Excel file with appropriate captions. There is no strict word limit but longer articles should be no more than 5000 words, excluding the bibliography. Submissions can be made at any time during the year: no later than the end of November for a January release and the end of June for the July edition, but please contact the editor in advance if you wish to discuss scheduling.

*Matthew Fittock, Lucerna Editor*

## The RFG Autumn Conference 2018

**Finds for the Dead in Roman London and Beyond in association with the Museum of London/MOLA**  
Monday October 15th 2018  
Museum of London Docklands

The 2018 RFG Autumn Meeting is based at Museum of London Docklands and will be a one-day conference on Monday 15th October. It is being organised jointly with the Museum of London and MOLA. It will take place in the Wilberforce Theatre, Museum of London Docklands, No.1 Warehouse, West India Quay, London E14 4AL. We would like to thank, in particular, Jackie Keily of the Museum of London and Mike Marshall of MOLA for all their hard work in organising the event; thanks to the Museum of London for free provision of the room, MOLA (Museum of London Archaeology) for a grant towards running the event and Aaron Stennett, Marketing and PR officer from the Museum of London for his assistance in advertising the meeting.

The conference comprises three sessions of papers with twelve talks covering various aspects of Roman funerary archaeology and finds, primarily in London. We are getting more and more people to our meetings and this meeting will also be widely advertised by the Museum of London and MOLA marketing teams so early booking is strongly advised. The cost of the meeting is £18 for fully paid up RFG members, £15 for students and £22 for non-members. Attendance applications can be made by filling out the form below and returning it with the required payment to the address stated.

### *What's included?*

- All conference sessions and poster viewings.
- Tea, coffee, and biscuits per the programme.
- Visit to the 'The Roman Dead' Exhibition during the lunch break.

### *Book Sales/Poster Displays*

There will be space for posters, and discussion during all breaks. There will also be space for the sale of books should anyone wish to do so. If so, please contact Stephen Greep at [sjgreep@romanfinds.org.uk](mailto:sjgreep@romanfinds.org.uk) in advance. MOLA will be offering Roman cemetery excavation reports for sale at a discount and PCA (Pre-construct Archaeology) will be selling discounted copies of their Roman Burials in Southwark and other reports

### *Getting to the Museum of The London Docklands*

The closest tube station is West India Quay - the museum entrance is two minutes' walk. To find more information about getting to the museum please visit their website:  
[www.museumoflondon.org.uk/museum-london-docklands/plan-your-visit](http://www.museumoflondon.org.uk/museum-london-docklands/plan-your-visit) and



[www.museumoflondon.org.uk/museum-london-docklands/plan-your-visit/museum-accessibility](http://www.museumoflondon.org.uk/museum-london-docklands/plan-your-visit/museum-accessibility)

### *Questions and Further Information*

More details about the exhibition Museum of London Docklands Roman Dead are available at [https://www.museumoflondon.org.uk/museum-london-docklands/whats-on/exhibitions/roman-dead?gclid=EAIaIQobChMI9P\\_thPf\\_2AIVxbztChljs\\_gfDEAAYASAAEgIyP\\_D\\_BwE](https://www.museumoflondon.org.uk/museum-london-docklands/whats-on/exhibitions/roman-dead?gclid=EAIaIQobChMI9P_thPf_2AIVxbztChljs_gfDEAAYASAAEgIyP_D_BwE). Questions about the RFG meeting should be emailed to Stephen Greep at: [sgreep@romanfinds.org.uk](mailto:sgreep@romanfinds.org.uk)

We look forward to seeing you.

### **Conference Schedule**

- 10.00 Registration (with tea, coffee and biscuits)
- 10.30 Welcome, Jackie Keily, Senior Curator, Prehistory and Roman, MoL

#### **Session One**

- 10.40 Alison Telfer, MOLA  
A watery grave: funerary activity in the upper Walbrook valley
- 11.05 Angela Wardle, RFG  
Grave goods from high status Roman burials at Spitalfields
- 11.30 Victoria Ridgeway, PCA  
Something fishy going on in Southwark: diet, mobility and burial practices in Londinium's Southern Cemetery
- 11.55 Jackie Keily and Meriel Jeater, MoL  
Designing the 'Roman Dead'

- 12.20 Lunch and The Roman Dead Exhibition Viewing

#### **Session Two**

- 13.50 Julian Bowsher, MOLA  
Roman coins from cemeteries in London
- 14.15 Rebecca Redfern, MoL  
Jane/John Doe: identifying Roman mobility using bioarchaeology
- 14.40 Kevin Hayward, PCA  
Commemoration and Internment of the Roman dead in London: The use of stone
- 15.05 John Pearce, Kings College London  
Marking the dead in Roman London: text, sculpture, monument
- 15.30 Coffee, tea and biscuits – viewing of posters

#### **Session Three**

- 16.00 Stephen Greep, RFG  
Scroll Holders and the Funerary Pyre: an example from Roman London
- 16.15 Owen Humphreys, University of Reading  
Tombs of the unknown craftsmen? Carpenter burials in Roman Britain and Europe
- 16.30 Adam Parker, York Museum Trust  
Mystery Solved: A Gold Plaque in the Collections of the Yorkshire Museum
- 16.45 Glynn Davis, Colchester Museums  
Colchester's Roman Dead: Collections, Cremations and Coffins
- 17.00 Closing remarks: Jenny Hall, RFG

# An Anthropomorphic Clasp-Knife Handle from the Thames Foreshore at London

Michael Marshall

Thousands of exceptionally well-preserved archaeological finds have been recovered from the channel and banks of the River Thames over the years. This note relates to one such discovery, a Roman bone figurative clasp-knife handle found close to the Roman city on the northern foreshore of the Thames adjacent to the chalk beds between Billingsgate and Customs House, City of London. It was found by mudlark Pat Connolly in 2016. He was kind enough to allow me to examine it and to let Richard Ward draw it (Fig. 1). The object is now in a private collection. I publish it here to place it on record and to seek ideas from members of the finds group as to the correct identification of the subject.

## Clasp knife handles

Figurative Roman clasp-knife handles have attracted a fair amount of scholarly interest. There is no truly comprehensive treatment but there have been two major surveys (von Mercklin 1940; Bartus 2007) and the bone British examples found up to 1983 were discussed by Stephen Greep as part of his PhD research (1983). Many individual examples have been published, including a number that have appeared in the pages of *Lucerna* (Clay 1989; Eckardt & Crummy 2002; McSloy 2003; Jackson & Friendship-Taylor 2003). They are not very common in central London and I am only aware of one other figurative clasp-knife handle in skeletal materials from the city. This is a finely carved ivory handle in the shape of a leopard that was found in a late Roman female inhumation burial at Lant Street, Southwark (see Ridgeway *et al.* 2013; Redfern *et al.* 2017).

The exact function of these knives is a matter of some debate, but the hinged clasp blade would allow them to be carried safely (like a modern pocket knife) and they lack the suspension loop for hanging on a peg or hook that is found on several other types of Roman knives (see Manning 1985, 109, fig. 28, type 1–7). It is likely that they were carried on the person and their

highly-individualised character might reflect the tastes of their individual owners. For these reasons, and due to their relatively fragile construction, clasp knives are often suggested to have functioned as toilet knives, for trimming nails (Boon 1991, 22–3) or as razors (Riha 1986, 30–1, abb. 11 and taf. 11), rather than as tools for craft work, butchery or other heavy-duty purposes. However, it is also possible that they served as more general-purpose personal knives for other functions such as cutting food, sharpening organic pens etc.

As they are highly decorated and many were deposited complete, sometime in burials (e.g. Ridgeway *et al.* 2013) or votive deposits (e.g. Eckardt & Crummy 2002; Cotton *et al.* 2016), it has also been suggested that clasp knives may have served some religious/cultic purposes (e.g. Biro 1994). However, even if their decoration encouraged inclusion in the kinds of significant deposition noted above, we need not assume a solely religious function for the objects based on this feature; mythic and religious art permeated many aspects of Roman material culture.

There is strong evidence for the deliberate votive deposition of several classes of objects into the Thames (e.g. coins (Rhodes 1991) and metal figurines (Durham 2016)) and so the possibility that this was a deliberate offering should be considered, but it is also true that much rubbish was dumped along the line of the Thames, and this broken example could have been thrown away. Its precise findspot on the modern foreshore is some distance south of the Roman waterfront to the north (see Jones 1980; Tatton-Brown 1974) and far away from London Bridge but it might have been dropped from a boat, redeposited by medieval or later building work along the foreshore or disturbed by the river itself.

## The Thames foreshore handle

The Thames foreshore clasp-knife handle survives to 59mm in length but will have been a little longer as it is broken at the pivot end and this portion and the iron blade are missing. It takes the form of a stylised male figure, missing the lower leg. The pose is closely comparable to that of a series of clasp-knife handles of 2nd/3rd century date which depict various types of gladiator (Bartus 2010). These are represented in Britain by a bone *murmillo* from Minster in Thanet, Kent (Cotton *et al.* 2016; see Fig. 2 below), an ivory gladiator of ambiguous class (perhaps a *secutor* or *murmillo*) from South Shields, Tyneside (Allason-Jones & Milet 1984, 300, no 6.2), the bone *secutor* and *retiarius* pairing from Caerwent, Monmouthshire (Bartus & Grimm 2010) and the copper-alloy *secutor* handles from Piddington, Northamptonshire and Corbridge, Northumberland (Jackson & Friendship-Taylor 2003; Worrell 2004). The continental European material has been surveyed by Bartus (2010). At first glance it would seem that the Thames foreshore handle should probably be considered as a Gladiator alongside this group but

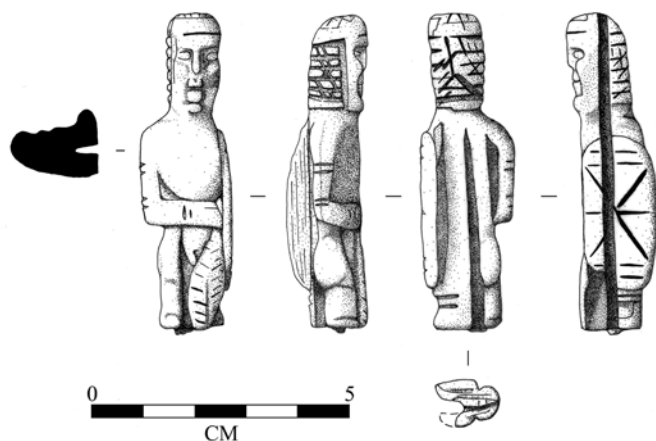


Fig. 1. Bone clasp knife handle from the Thames foreshore between Billingsgate and Customs House. Drawing by Richard Ward.



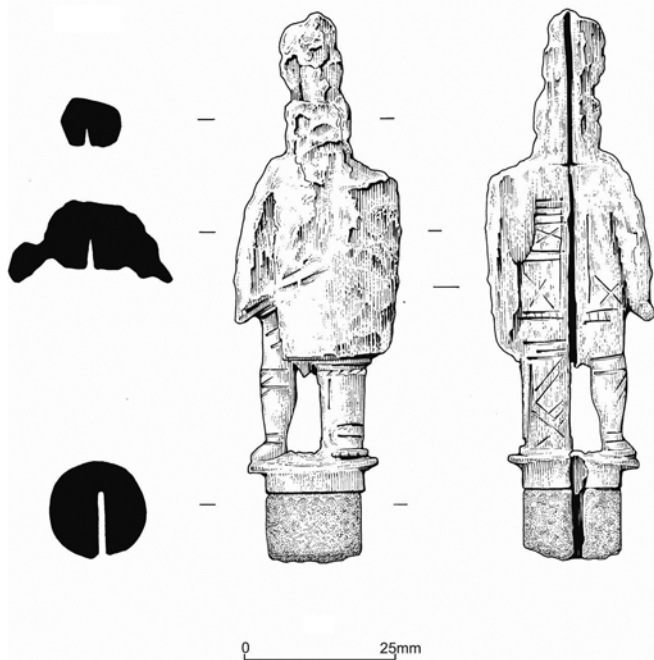


Fig. 2. Figure 2: A bone murmillio clasp knife handle from Minster in Thanet, Kent (after Cotton et al 2016 © MOLA). The poor surface detail in places is due to the acidic soil conditions.

there are a series of ambiguities and disparities that complicate this interpretation.

The Thames figure's pose is closely comparable to the gladiator clasp knives but his equipment differs and does not obviously match that of any particular class of gladiator (see Junkelmann 2000 for an overview). He holds an oval shield in his left hand with incised decoration forming transverse bands at top and bottom and a six-pointed cross in the centre. The decoration is very similar to that found on the shields of the clasp-knife gladiators (see Bartus 2010, nos. 5, 13 and 17) but the shape of the shield is seemingly unique in the group. Oval shields were used by gladiators at times (e.g. Ferris 2007, 120, fig. 12.4) but do not seem to have been typical of the classes of gladiator popular during the period (when figurative clasp knives were being produced and used) who were normally depicted with square or rectangular curved shields. His right arm is bent at the elbow with his forearm running across his belly as on most of the gladiator knives, but there is no sign of a sword. He has no helmet and has very stylised hair, possibly with a head band running around his forehead. The closest gladiatorial parallel is perhaps the short hair on the South Shields handle which wears no helmet (Allason-Jones & Milet 1984, 300, no 6.2) although this is executed much more carefully. The odd 'double-chin' could be meant to represent a beard but, if so, this is not very clearly executed. It seems more likely that the figure is meant to be clean shaven, and that the mouth, like the eyes, is just executed in a highly-stylised 'sunken' fashion.

Most clasp knife gladiators have naked torsos, loin cloths, thick padded limb wrappings (*manicae* on their sword arms and fasciae on their leading legs) and often metal greaves. The evidence for dress on the Thames handle is surprisingly ambiguous, however. It is possible that he is meant to be understood as almost entirely nude, as suggested by the depiction of his right buttock and what may be his penis. However, pairs of transverse

incised lines on his right arm and the back of his left leg, and the bulkiness of his left leg, could be intended to represent straps that are binding limb padding; the position corresponds with the padded limbs seen on the better executed gladiator handles. More ambiguous still is the element depicted in front of the left leg. This appears to be something held in his right hand such as a bag, piece of cloth, fleece, club or sling and hanging down over his leg. It could also conceivably be a poor or misunderstood attempt to depict a greave or bulky padded leg.

One last noteworthy feature is the position of the groove for seating the folded blade. This is cut longitudinally down through the side of the head and the face of the shield. This is an unusual position and the groove on gladiator knives more usually runs down the back (See Fig. 2). It is possible that the marked step/longitudinal groove running along the line of the spine (see Fig. 1) is an aborted attempt to mark out a groove for seating the blade in this position before this was abandoned and the location shifted. Alternatively it is possible that some secondary folding implement was seated in this groove. This would be unparalleled amongst comparable bone clasp knife handles but various other forms of Roman folding utensils of similar date are known, some with multiple elements (Sherlock 1975; Sherlock 1988).

#### *The significance of the find and the identification of the subject*

The description above has highlighted several ambiguities that I am not fully able to resolve and I would be grateful to readers of *Lucerna* for their thoughts. The Thames knife is made of bone, a relatively cheap material and the most common amongst the figurative clasp knives (von Mercklin 1940, 340). While the complex figurative decoration distinguishes this example from simpler Roman clasp knife handles in this material (e.g. Greep 1983, 415–22 types C1 and C2), the standard of execution is nowhere near as technically proficient or naturalistic as the finest members of its group, some of which are argued to be made in major Continental workshops. This situation is perhaps analogous to the differences in style/proficiency observable in other classes of decorative bone objects which might reflect people at differing levels of skill/specialisation working this cheap and easily accessible material (e.g. Marshall 2017, 8, figure 3).

It is not inconceivable then that some of its eccentricities (such as the strange equipment and misplaced groove) are the result of a poor standard of copying by a maker who did not understand all the design rules of these knives or fully appreciate the significance of the features being conveyed. Such an argument, however, risks ignoring the possibility that some of these differences were deliberate. There were multiple traditions of representation present in Roman Britain and some of the features such as the execution of the face can be compared to other Romano-British products which are better regarded as stylised rather than poorly made (e.g. Durham 2014 on provincial style and metal figurines).

With these different possibilities in mind we might return to some of the more perplexing features of the knife. Is the deviation from the normal position of the blade groove a reflection of the fact that this was a one-off, perhaps 'amateur', work, rather than the standardised output of a professional workshop or is it evidence of experimentation? Similarly we might

wonder whether the differences in attributes between the Thames knife and the gladiator series noted above result from imprecise copying by someone lacking personal familiarity with gladiatorial equipment or whether this represents a transformation of this model to depict a different subject. Is the nudity an attempt to evoke a barbarian warrior rather than a gladiator (thus the oval shield and nudity)? Is this deliberately archaic equipment for a Classical heroic or mythological figure instead? Much of this discussion hinges on the interpretation of the ambiguous object beneath the right hand. Is this drapery or some kind of a weapon? I lack answers to these questions but would very much appreciate the thoughts of colleagues either via email or in the pages of *Lucerna*.

#### Acknowledgements

I am grateful to Pat Connolly the finder for permission to publish details of the object here, for providing details of the findspot. Thanks are also due to Ian Blair at MOLA for assistance in the preparation of this note and to Julian Hill for permission to reproduce the Minster gladiator knife handle from the original publication. Richard Ward drew the object at short notice for which thank you! Several RFG members and other colleagues were kind enough to look at a photo of the object via email or at the RFG meeting in Reading a few years ago and made several helpful comments. These included Ralph Jackson, Stephen Greep, Angela Wardle, Martin Henig, Sally Worrell and Philippa Walton. However, none of these people are responsible for any mistakes above or for my failure to settle on an identification.

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# Is there such a thing as a Roman Slate Stylus?

Jörn Schuster

A small slate rod or stick (Fig. 3.1) was found during the English Heritage Beacon-Project excavation of the Roman villa at Groundwell Ridge, Swindon, in 2003. Unfortunately, it was collected from the surface, and as the site also produced limited evidence for medieval occupation (see e.g. Schuster 2011), the chronological attribution of the find had to remain open. However, other evidence for writing was found in well-stratified Roman layers at the site, including several fragments of wax- and possibly ink writing tablets made of continental larch wood (Fell *et al.* 2008, 1-7).

A similar slate stick (Fig. 3.2) was found in 2011 in the course of excavations by Context One Archaeological Services at Bathwick Street and Henrietta Road in Bath. Luckily, this object was found in a well-stratified context: the fill of a beam slot dated to AD 80-90. Its 35 mm-long shaft with a diameter of 4.4–5.4 mm has seven unequal facets and tapers slightly before the used tip.

The use of slate for the production of writing tablets and styli appears at present to go back no further than the late medieval period, their widespread use significantly expanding from the Reformation onwards, promoted by efforts to improve education of wider segments of the general population. The use of slate tablets and styli in education persisted well into the 1960s (H. Schuster and M. Feugère, pers. comm.; cf. Schaltenbrand Obrecht 2012, 22, 90 with notes 374–7; Berthon 2016).

Unless the writer is rather heavy-handed or the stylus very coarse, a slate stylus will not leave much more than a faint grey-whitish line on a slate tablet, easily wiped off with a wet sponge. It is doubtful whether such writing would survive prolonged deposition in the soil, but I would be interested to hear if anyone has come across such objects from Roman contexts. Who knows, maybe their use in this country could be traced back much further than is currently suggested by the Continental evidence.

Please reply to [slatestylus@smallfinds.org.uk](mailto:slatestylus@smallfinds.org.uk).

## Acknowledgements

I am grateful to Nicolay Hembrey, Brian Kerr and Pete Wilson for permission to publish the Groundwell Ridge stylus and to Claire Tsang for providing the photo at short notice. Cheryl Green and Richard McConnell kindly allowed me to publish the Bath stylus ahead of the publication of the monograph.

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Fig. 3. Slate styli. 1 Groundwell Ridge (SF 200303036, Context 1000 = topsoil). Photo: Claire Tsang, HE. 2 Bathwick Street and Henrietta Road, Bathwick, Bath (SF 110, Context 1210, Period 3.2). Illustration: Liz Gardner.

# The Roman Finds Group Spring Conference 2018 - Richborough and Beyond

## *Kent University, Canterbury*

The RFG's 2018 spring meeting this year took place at Kent University in Canterbury and was based on the ongoing research on Richborough's rich collections of Roman material. As ever, the conference attracted a large audience of students, professionals, academics and the public, and proved to be a fascinating day that left us all far wiser about life in this Roman settlement and the modern-day research on the objects this left us. Read on for a full account of all the day's sessions and papers. The RFG gives our thanks to Kent University and Phil Smither for arranging the conference and hosting us, and we look forward to seeing you all again in London for our next conference on the 18th October.

### Session 1

#### Richborough: Accessus Britannia

#### Richborough Finds: Introducing the Collection

Kathryn Bedford

Kathryn summarised the history of the site, from its origins as a fort, to a commercial port in the 2nd century and then as a fort from the 3rd century. Excavations from the 1920s and 1930s produced a huge collection of finds, with 56,000 coins, over 9000 'small finds' and 1000 fragments of glass, some of them now in scattered locations such as the BM, Cambridge and local museums (Figs. 4-5).



*Fig. 4. The Richborough small finds in store.  
Copyright English Heritage*



*Fig. 5. A weight from the Richborough collection  
in the form of a bust of a satyr, possibly Silenus.  
Copyright English Heritage.*

Richborough produced the largest number of bone objects from a single Romano-British site, the largest fragment of amber, and the only Harpocrates weight. The collection covers a wide range of the standard functional categories, for example objects connected with trade, with medicine, with textile production and working and the importance of the military assemblage is well known. The variety and number of objects will allow considerable inter-site analysis.

The Richborough project will afford a chance for re-evaluating and redisplaying the present conventional site exhibition. The team have two years to catalogue and curate the collection. This involves a massive exercise in repacking, undertaken by an army of volunteers, as the original packaging was inadequate by modern standards. Pottery, some stored in mouldy drawers over the years, has been repacked and fragile objects are now stored in customised plastizote containers and properly organised. Coins have had to be repacked in plastic, as the original paper envelopes, with hand written identifications, has degraded, emitting gas, harmful to the metal.

The outcome of this massive exercise will be an organised and accessible collection, available for research, although there are no plans for online access - yet.

### Richborough Past and Present:

#### What do we Know so Far?

Philip Smither

Philip's funded PhD originally concerned the military assemblage. The curating and repacking project from





2016, described by Kathryn will lead eventually to a researchable catalogue. There appear to be some 1800 military artefacts and tools from the Claudian supply base and shore fort. There is a particularly wide variety of belts and belt fittings.

Phil's research has highlighted some discrepancies between the original work books and subsequent publications and he has undertaken mapping of the various sites and areas, examining the pits and features detailed in the archive site reports, the most useful data coming from pits and buildings. Some pits have been reinterpreted as wells, for example Pit 20 and the pits in general are the key to dating.

A concentration of armour and blacksmith's tools suggests repair and recycling of military material and in another area is a concentration of lamps. Features are gradually being added to the Richbrough plan and work continues on identifying the function of various buildings based on their associated objects.

### Recent work at Richborough

Tony Wilmott, presented by Nicola Hembrey

Recent work since 2001 by English Heritage/Historic England has attempted to elucidate a number of aspects of the site (Fig. 6). Richborough has long been regarded as a military site, from the obvious prominence of the walls of the 4th century Saxon Shore fort and the discovery of the Claudian ditches, but between these two phases was a long period of development around the quadrifons monument, lasting from the later Flavian period to the early 3rd century. Earlier reports showed crop marks and the amphitheatre but the full scale of the settlement remained unrecognised until 2001 when a geophysical survey showed that it extended over at least 21 hectares. An aerial photograph transcription by Fiona Small showed that the area was covered in the roads, buildings and enclosures of an extensive unwall town.

Much of the recent work addressed the question of the relationship of the site of Richborough with the Wantsum Channel and the changing history of the coastline. Excavations revealed that the profile of the land had changed considerably since Roman times and also confirmed the 2nd-century date of two temples, originally thought to be 4th century. The 309 finds from the excavations included items of personal adornment, none of particular note, and a balance fragment, coins and fragments of structural ironwork.

In 2008 further work continued the investigation of the east flank of Richborough island and the relationship between the site and the coastland. Finds were again scanty. The fallen east wall of the Saxon shore fort was examined in detail which resulted in a correction to the published plan of the fort. A feature known as the 'unfinished foundation' was also examined and it is now clear that there are various issues to be resolved particularly those concerning some of the stratigraphic relationships proposed by Bushe-Fox, looking for example at the plans of the earlier investigators.

This work shows that there is now new thinking about the site and plenty of scope for drawing together the disparate threads of evidence for a fresh interpretation.

Angela Wardle



Fig. 6. Recent work at Richborough by English Heritage/Historic England. Copyright English Heritage

### Session Two: Finds from Richborough

#### The Brooches from Richborough

Justine Bayley

This talk provided a fascinating glimpse into the background of the most in-depth analysis yet of Roman brooches in Britain. To start with, Justine asked three questions: How did she become involved with the collection of Richborough brooches? Where were the brooches made? And how were they made?

Justine first carried out scientific analyses on the brooches in 1973-4, triggered by the 1973 re-conservation of the assemblage, when it was found that some of the objects had in the past been repaired with plastic wood and painted green. During the course of the work, all recognisable brooches and most objects were re-conserved, and new numbers were issued by the Ancient Monuments Laboratory (AML) for those that had previously not been issued with one.

Justine made use of the Atomic Absorption Spectrometer and the new XRF machine, which filled almost an entire room at Fortress House, to check whether the brooches were really all made of bronze – as they were commonly referred to. The results showed that not all Roman brooches were made of bronze and furthermore, Justine could show that the alloy composition was type specific: of the mid-1st-century types, indigenous forms like the Hull type 88 (Birdlip) brooches were made of bronze, whereas all the Continental ones, like the Aucissa and Bagendon, were brass. This led her to speculate that there might have been centralised manufacturing, possibly by the military. Some types, like the strip-bow brooches, evolved by copying Continental forms – in this case Aucissas – in a British fashion. Hod Hill-type brooches (Fig. 7) were predominantly made of brass, but there is also a scatter of examples made of bronze and gunmetal. Bi- or trichrome effects, sometimes involving twisted wire combining copper and iron inlaid into grooves of Hod Hill brooches, have mainly been reported from Switzerland and Richborough.

In the mid-1st century brass was beginning to be used for British brooches, but even on the Continent there was a move away from brass over time, attributable to a disruption in supply. Regional variation is observable in the distribution of two-piece Colchesters and Polden Hills, both predominantly made of leaded brass, but the former are distributed mostly in the East of England, the





*Fig. 7. Brass Hod Hill brooch, partly tinned with a copper strip down the centre of the bow (Hull type 60).  
Courtesy of Justine Bayley.*

latter in the West Midlands. Among the later types the distribution of the late-2nd/3rd-century knee brooches at Richborough might indicate the occupation of the civilian settlement or a renewed military or official role for the site. Interestingly, evidence for the crossbow types with screwed axis was only found in the form of the screwed fittings; the substantial brooches had apparently been large enough to have been found again when lost.

Answering a question about the composition of the enamel used on brooches, Justine pointed out that it was largely standardised, apart from red for which there were three or four different compositions in use.

#### **The Richborough Worked Bone and Antler Assemblage and its Place in the Study of Similar Finds from Roman Britain** Stephen Greep

When Stephen began his study of bone objects in 1978-9, the assemblage of bone objects from Richborough contributed 699 hairpins, which was then 7% of the national total, now standing at c. 15,000. The length of the Richborough pins was found to be much greater than the average from sieved sites, which means that much material is still left to be retrieved at the site, and even of the material collected during the various campaigns of excavation, only 3-4% of all bone, antler and ivory has ever been published. Likewise, there is hardly any waste material, which might indicate that it had not been kept.

Stephen explained that his hairpin typology is function-based. Type A pins are longer, with straight shafts and more decorative. Later types have swollen shafts to hold hair together and are generally less showy. The overlap between the types occurred during the late 2nd and 3rd centuries, after which time there were no more type A pins. Of the late Roman pins with anthropomorphic heads, there are only 10 from Britain but they are much

more common in Northeast Gaul and the Rhineland, with manufacturing expected at Paris and Trier. Based on the herringbone patterns of two-piece razor handles, four of which have been found at Richborough, Stephen could distinguish between British and Continental types. Turning to ring-and-dot decorated sheep metapodials of the 4th/5th century, Stephen explained that an example from Richborough doesn't have signs of iron staining, but like most of these objects it is likely to have been a needle case rather than a handle.

With its many late 4th-century veneer strips, Richborough yielded a form of box fitting associated more with Saxon influence rather than Roman. Based on the many unfinished combs from late 4th-century context, he assumes that there must have been local workshop manufacture; there is generally a large number of combs from Flavian-Trajanic/Hadrianic- as well as late 4th-century contexts from the site, which also yielded the largest assemblage of bone-bracelets from non-funerary contexts. Stephen concluded his interesting presentation by highlighting that there is ample material for further study, especially the pit groups.

#### **Keynote Presentation: From Lindenschmit to Fischer: the Long March of Roman Military Equipment** Mike Bishop

In his wide-ranging talk, Mike traced the development of Roman military studies, dividing it into the period before and after Ludwig Lindenschmit, whom he called the "Father of Roman military equipment studies" and founding director of the Roman-Germanic Central Museum in Mainz. Before Lindenschmit, it was essentially a study of Trajan's column, exemplified by the major work "De militia romana" by Justus Lipsius, published in Antwerp in 1594, a description of the Republican army, curiously based on what he knew from Trajan's column.

When Lindenschmit published the four volumes of his "Die Alterthümer unserer heidnischen Vorzeit" in Mainz between 1858 and 1889, he compared artefacts with the evidence from monuments. In Britain, Curle and other scholars, including Bushe-Fox, could trace their influence to Mommsen and Lindenschmit. In Austria, Max von Groller was able to improve the understanding of lorica segmentata based on finds from the legionary base at Carnuntum, whereas in France, Paul Couissin let his classicist training influence his interpretations by basing them firmly on the sculptural evidence even though he was aware of the Carnuntum finds.

Significant advances in the understanding of military equipment were achieved through the work of Henry Russell Robinson, who was an armourer at the Tower of London. Even though Mike considers his helmet typology to be flawed, the legacy of his 1975 "The armour of Imperial Rome" created what Mike called the "Robinson Effect", inspiring new interest in this field of study and, amongst others, also lead to the formation of the Ermine Street Guard. Even before Robinson, Günter Ulbert took military equipment seriously, furthering our understanding on the basis of his studies of the material from Aislingen and Burghöfe, and later Rheingönnheim. Ulbert was also the teacher of Thomas Fischer, whose "Die Armee der Caesaren" in 2012 controversially included material from metal detectorists and the art market. It introduced a typology

which is at odds with Robinson's but, according to Mike, a very readable account of the development of military equipment. Amongst all those eminent scholars, one name should not be forgotten, and that is that of Mike Bishop himself and his many significant contributions to this field of study.

*Jörn Schuster*

### Session Three: Richborough Finds Viewing

#### The Mystery of Pit 20: A Votive Deposition? Philip Smither

Phil's paper concentrated on a small number of the more important pits at Richborough. In all 327 pits have been recorded, although some of these were probably wells. It is clear that the extensive range of pits at Richborough have interesting stories to tell. In addition to the small finds there are a considerable number of large ceramic assemblages from the pits which have never been adequately studied. Phil concentrated on two pits as examples of the rich variety of finds and work still to be done.

Pit 20 (Fig. 8) had been published in Richborough volume 2. Situated near the present-day cliff edge, it was twenty-eight feet deep and six feet wide – probably a well. It contained a large number of finds, including 16 Claudian coins all in good condition. It was probably one of the earliest pits on the site, although the upper layers contained later material. It was a particularly interesting pit which contained a wide range of finds including a bronze box complete with fittings and a well preserved pair of weaving shears and comb, probably originally wrapped in linen. It looked as if the finds from the pit had been carefully selected and were deposited c. AD50, possibly a votive deposit?

At the other end of the date range for Richborough was Pit 314, possibly dated to the early 5th century. It contained the remains of a man in his 30's, a woman in her 20's and a 12/13 year old child, deposited head first. Finds included remains of two boxes with coins up to the Theodosian period. Unfortunately, the skeletal remains could not now be found. It was a fairly rich burial and included a 1st century helmet plume holder.

Phil Smithers paper was followed by an open session to view and discuss the different groups of objects from the

Richborough Collections. Unsurprisingly this was very popular with people queuing to get into the room. A good selection of finds had been bought by Phil and the team from Historic England responsible for the finds. Delegates had the opportunity to handle and discuss a very wider range of material, re-emphasising that Richborough has produced one of the finest collections of Roman finds from Britain.

*Stephen Greet*

### Session Four: The Landscape of Roman Kent

#### Memory and Landscape in Roman East Kent Lacey Wallace

This paper discussed the power of linking the landscape of Roman Kent with its objects to create memories and identity. Wallace explained her use of phenomenology or the study of the development of human consciousness, self-awareness and memory. By looking at people and places and aligning the objects that they used, a better understanding of their life can be studied.

Wallace examined the 1300 Iron Age ring and burials sites in East Kent during her work with the Canterbury Hinterland Project. This included evidence of Roman removal of iron age sites and objects. These ring and burial sites would have had known meanings to the natives and be markers in the landscape. The sites often were aligned to roads and offerings were left and these sites left a sense of place in the Iron Age landscape.

The Iron Age site at Brittonfield, Kent showed selective treatment of the barrows. Wingham Villa constructed in the 3rd century changed the landscape of the barrow in that area. These are examples of the landscape being changed and the manipulation of memory into a different understanding.

#### Milling and Grain Processing in Roman Kent Ruth Shaffrey and Elizabeth Blanning

Quern stones were used across Kent as well as elsewhere for milling grain. Local materials were used, and it is hard to use the querns for dating but in Kent three types have been identified: 1. the beehive quern which is late in development but are quite similar in fabric and form 2. the conglomerate greensand and 3. the puddingstone.

The current project is looking at the pudding stone querns and is finding that they are not from Hertfordshire but imported from France and are showing a diversity across Kent. The greensand are of local manufacture in East Wear Bay, Kent. Of the 150 querns sampled they are coming from 30 sites in the area. Geochemical analysis has been carried out and they all are of a common material.

#### PAS and Roman Kent Caroline Farquhar

Farquhar and Ahmet introduced the Portable Antiquities Scheme and its relevance to the audience. As with other areas across the UK, coins are the most common Roman artefact to be reported. The highlighted find was the high-status Bridge Helmet but there is also a cluster of finds from a waterlogged site alongside Twitton Brook



*Fig. 8. Objects from the deposit in Pit 20.  
Courtesy of Phil Smither.*



*Fig. 9. Unexpected find (among many) at Twitton Brook, Otford, Kent site; possible lorica hamata Roman armour piece  
Photo: Portable Antiquities Scheme/  
Trustees of the British Museum.*

in Otford, Kent where there were many unexpected finds that included a snake-shaped Roman bracelet and a possible piece of *lorica hamata* Roman armour (Fig. 9). Along with the PAS data they are working with HER data to create a fuller picture of Roman Kent including Reece mapping and in conjunction with other data.

If anyone wants to read the dissertation and Practical Archaeology Report which were the sources of data for the presentation for this paper then they are both available at academia.edu for free under author name Caroline Elizabeth Farquhar.

*Barbara Birley*

## Session Five: Cross Channel Connections

### Cross Channel Connections:

#### Finds from the Shore Fort at Roman Oudenburg Sofie Vanhoutte

Sofie has been looking at the Saxon shore defence system over the Channel in the 4th century. Archaeological excavations in the 1950s found evidence of a Roman fort at Oudenburg in Belgium which lies 8km from today's coastline but which lay on the coast in the Roman period. The site had been used as a stone quarry in the medieval period with a later medieval town which led to the destruction of Roman remains and covered with a build-up of soil.

The fort and surrounds dated to the late 2nd – 4th centuries. The settlement began in the 2nd half of 1st century. The army arrived in the late 2nd century and a vicus grew up to the south of the fort. Cremation burials, excavated in the early 1990s, showed that the area was abandoned in the 260s. Later inhumation graves (218 in total) consisted of men, women and children. They dated to the late 4th-5th centuries and there were many crossbow brooches. There were 5 main periods of the fort – 3 timber and turf and 2 stone versions.

Excavations in 2002-5 of the south-west corner of the fort had a large number of finds similar to those at Richborough. Excavations showed late-2nd century evidence with remains of barracks; AD220-245 – a

timber and turf fort with the remains of a military hospital and wall-painting fragments; during AD250-260 – the remains of freestanding units were excavated, then officers' quarters and more freestanding units; AD260s – 1st stone fort dating to the Postumus period. There were pottery links with Britain. In the south-west corner was an industrial area with workshops including an anvil for bronze and iron production where simple Nauheim derivative brooches were being made. They were of a 1st-century type but were being made there at a later date. They found 46,083 items in the iron assemblage including many tools, chisels, wool combs etc; AD325-330 – the stone fort was renovated and a bath-house added using marble from Greece; AD380+ horse stabling and a double well was added and was used by mixed units of infantry and cavalry.

Jewellery, hairpins and bracelets of Germanic influences showed a fortified community of both soldiers and their families from the late 3rd century onwards.

### Displaying Identity:

#### Object Display in British and Continental Museums Karl Goodwin

Do museum displays give insights into how Romans are presented? Karl, as part of his PhD research, has been questioning who museums are for – children at National Curriculum themes Key Stage 2 & 3? The relevant National Curriculum themes 'Migration & Identity' and 'Romanisation' forces museums to display by themes and narratives. Curators translate archaeology to the public, presenting the products of the archaeologists' research but display boards have limited word counts and there's the cost of production which prevents regular replacement. They also have to be accessible and informative.

Do collections enable? When it comes to ethnicity and identity, curators say they need objects to display. Museums have various means of communication – audio guides, visual aids (films), re-enactors and tour guides which could fill the lack of objects. Outside of the permanent displays, there are guest lectures, open days, workshop, educational events and temporary exhibitions.

There isn't a skills gap but there can be a specialism gap – a way round this could be research projects but small museums don't have the funds to get these underway.

In conclusion – there have been changes through the Netherlands, Belgium and UK where modern research and societal discussions can bring more people in. Any perceived gap between research and display is getting smaller.

### Exploring the Post-Roman to Early Anglo-Saxon Transition in SE Britain: New Perspectives from Quoit Brooch Style Metalwork

*Ellen Swift*

The Mucking belt set is a fine example of the Quoit style (Fig. 10). It appears on belt fittings and strap ends in the early-mid 5th century and transfers to brooches in the mid-late 5th. Although there was a collapse in production of metalwork generally, this style is important in the period of transition. It is derived from





*Fig. 10. D-sectioned tube decorated with Quoit Brooch Style animals, PAS FAKL-2931C4, a new Quoit brooch style artefact recovered through the Portable Antiquities Scheme. Courtesy of the Portable Antiquities Scheme, Creative Commons licence, <https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/4.0/>*

late Roman Continental belt fittings with a distinctive combination of motifs and techniques – shallow chip-carved, punched motifs, silver inlay and cabochon settings.

In Ellen's new study, 165 objects are identified as belonging to the style coming from newly excavated cemetery finds in SE Britain and Northern France and PAS and metal detected finds. The new study is moving beyond stylistic analysis to examine context, composition, repair and re-use. It shows cross-Channel connections and socio-economic and cultural change in southern Britain.

Late Roman belt fittings were worn by the military and/or high-status civilians. They are strongly associated with military cemeteries in the NW Provinces. In Continental Europe, late Roman-style belt fittings

were produced into the 5th century. What were once functional features then become redundant.

The Mucking example is an imitation of the late Roman belt sets but has a silver inlay. The style is possibly seen as symbols of power for military militias but were made to supplement late Roman Continental material still in circulation. Belt fittings are mostly found on coastal sites but they are also found in Normandy and Brittany. They are also found on the Isle of Wight, making the western channel route important in the 5th century.

The belt fittings show an extended use/life continuing into 5th century. Out of 27 examples 9 are worn and another third were repaired. They are found in both male and female graves. They often have minor repairs, are cut down into smaller shapes or are turned into different objects. Belt fittings are made into brooches by having a pin added.

In conclusion, in the aftermath of the collapse of Roman Britain, there were acute shortages of new metal artefacts in the mid-5th century. A lack of access to technology in order to melt them down caused the objects to be modified. It was a period of widespread social economic change with changing values and meanings and with increasing Germanic influence. Were they valued for their past history or as contemporary artefact forms? Buckles also started to be used by women. The objects provide great potential for exploring the 5th century – it was a shared cultural zone with a loss of value associated with late Roman culture.

#### **The Way Forward for the Richborough Collection** *Philip Smither*

Phil hoped that the viewing of aspects of the collections and the various discussions and talks will encourage future research.

*Jenny Hall*

# Book Reviews

## Moudre au Payes Des Tungri

[Milling in the Land of the Tungri]

By Else Hartoch (ed.): ATVATVCA 7: Gallo-Roman Museum, Tongeren, 2014, 411p. ISBN: 9074605729. £various.

This well-illustrated volume (in French, but with a 4 page English summary) provides a comprehensive explanation of Roman quern developments in the region around Tongeren [*Atuatuca Tungrorum*] in the Belgian province of Limburg.

Introductory chapters outline the typological differences between the various querns and millstones, explore the sources of their raw material, explain how they were manufactured, review the different types of grinding faces and discuss the differences between urban and rural assemblages. The bulk of text is devoted to the description of 81 querns and millstones, of which 72 are Roman.

This corpus includes some interesting lava hand quern upper stones, including No 19, 36 & 70, which have twin triangular (assumed) feed-pipes either side of a circular 'eye' and No 65, where the triangular feed-pipes have been joined to a circular central perforation to form a complex 'eye'. Several non-lava millstones (ie with a diameter >50cm), such as No 35 & 40, also have complex 'eyes', but here the triangular feed-pipes are connected to a square central perforation. As these features are all repeated or adapted in British querns and millstones, this volume deserves a place on the book-shelves of any specialist of Roman stone artefacts.

John Cruse

## Dea Senuna:

**Treasure, Cult and Ritual at Ashwell, Hertfordshire**

By Ralph Jackson & Gilbert Burleigh. British Museum Research Publication Volume: 194, British Museum Press. 2018. 285p, H297 x W210 (mm). ISBN: 9780861591947. £40. (Fig. 11).

The 194th British Museum Research Publication consists of the highly anticipated results of Ralph Jackson and Gil Burleigh's investigation of both the 3rd to 4th century Ashwell Hoard and the subsequent archaeological investigations that took place in and around this area from 2003 to 2006. What it offers does not disappoint, with its thorough catalogue and contextual and social evaluations of the material providing an almost indulgent volume that even the 'newest goddess' of Roman Britain (and obvious star of the show here – Dea Senuna) would approve of.

The volume is neatly divided into two separate but obviously inter-related parts, each with several chapters of results and discussion. Part one deals exclusively with the Ashwell Hoard itself, beginning with the story of its discovery back in September 2002 (Chapter 1) and its subsequent conservation and scientific study immediately after and then on (Chapter 2). From here the reader is treated to the details of the hoard itself, with Chapter 3 offering an overview of its composition (an astonishing collection including a silver-gilt figurine, a four-part suite of gold jewellery, seven gold plaques and at least 13 silver ones) and musings about its

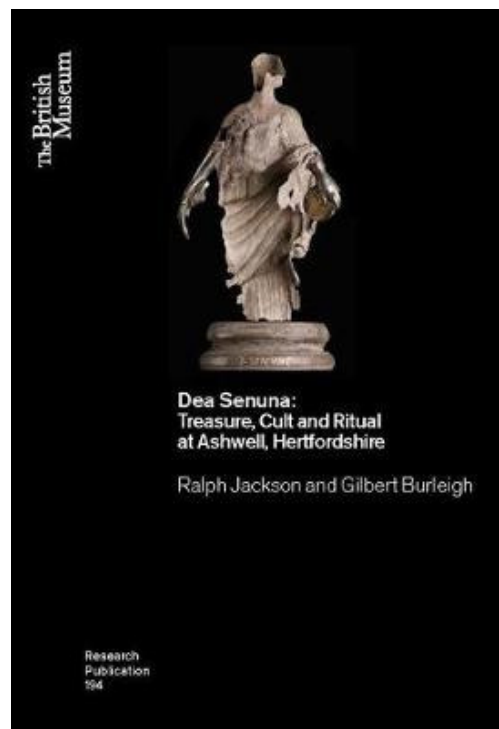


Fig. 11. Front cover of *Dea Senuna: Treasure, Cult and Ritual at Ashwell, Hertfordshire*.

depositional circumstances, and Chapter 4 a welcomed detailed assessment of each object. The following four chapters add yet further contextual substance, not least in the form of two catalogues from comparable, previously unpublished hoards at Barkway (Chapter 5) and Stony Stratford (Chapter 6), but also the numerous inscriptions on a silver pedestal and both the gold and silver plaques through which we glimpse the name of our new goddess (Chapter 7), followed by comparisons with the few comparable hoards from the Roman world (Chapter 8) which highlight the rarity of Ashwell's own.

After a detailed overview of previous work in, and the archaeological character of, the area (Chapter 9), most of Part 2 sets out the results of the subsequent contextualising archaeological surveys and excavations that took place in and around the hoard site after its discovery (Chapter 10). Further treats of the small-finds variety are particularly on hand throughout the catalogue of objects retrieved during these years of fieldwork (Chapter 11) – with standout examples of 'dedications' including a large collection of Iron Age coins, yet more votive plaques and several metal and rare pipeclay figurines – while the discussions in Chapters 12 and 13 neatly draw both Parts 1 and 2 together to reveal Ashwell End's ritual character and the possibility that the hoard itself is probably deliberately deposited temple treasure.

Overall this is another neatly presented British Museum Research Publication amounting to several catalogues and an engaging synthesis, with a full array of colour plates and detailed drawings throughout doing justice to the outstanding nature of the material itself; perhaps the only downside is that some of the maps and graphs are at times not of the same high-quality. Nevertheless, the £40 price tag is no doubt considerable value-for-money for a monograph that offers so much and captivantly leaves the reader wanting to know so much more about this small part of Hertfordshire.

Matthew Fittock

**The Roman Diploma of AD124 - Discovered at Rivelin, Stannington, Sheffield, Yorkshire in 1761. An appraisal of the discovery and subsequent events**  
Michael Dyson, 110pp; 46 figs. Supported by Peak District National Park. £10 inc p&p – available from the author (michael@wharnie.plus.com).

The remains of one of the few military diplomas from Roman Britain was found by a farmer-cutler in Rivelin, Stannington on the outskirts of Sheffield in 1761. Two plates of a copper-alloy diploma were originally found but only one plate now survives in three fragments and this can be seen on display in the British Museum (PRB1857,1127.1), having been donated by the Younge family of Sheffield in 1857. A transcript of the missing plate survives, however, published in Gough's edition of Camden's *Britannia*.

As can be seen from the dates, the story of its discovery goes back some 250 years and some of the details of the discovery had been lost through time. Michael Dyson, a local historian (or one might say antiquarian if one uses the language of the 18th century!), has delved into its provenance and has produced this scholarly rendering of the circumstances of its discovery.

The diploma has been widely translated and interpreted by Roger Tomlin in *RIB* (2401.6) and more recently by Paul Holder of Manchester University. Originally the two plates would have been wired together, but Paul Holder makes the point that the diploma was not inscribed in the usual way causing the formulaic order of the diploma to deviate from the norm and it is one of the few diplomas where the witness names are placed on the back of the first tablet. The lettering on the inner face is ill-formed, a common feature of 2nd-century diplomas.

However, the book is more related to local history than archaeology and the section on the local families and the site of the discovery is of interest together with his review of other Roman objects found in the area.

*Jenny Hall*

## Recent Publications

Archaeopress are kindly offering RFG members a voucher code on their website ([www.archaeopress.com](http://www.archaeopress.com)) that will offer 20% discount. Users simply need to apply the code LUCERNA to the basket before checkout (once the voucher is applied all prices on the website appear at the discounted price if you don't checkout right away – this has been known to cause a little confusion!)

Those buying print editions get a free eBook download at the end of the transaction (so long as an eBook version is available), and shipping is free for orders over £50 (after discounts have been applied), otherwise it is charged at 10% of the cost of books ordered.

Titles that members might be interested in include:

**Representations of Animals on Greek and Roman Engraved Gems. Meanings and Interpretations**  
By Idit Sagiv. 2018. Paperback; 175x245mm; vi+198 pages; 98 illustrations (51 plates in colour). ISBN 9781784918699. £35.00. (eBook ISBN 9781784918705, from £16 +VAT if applicable).

A comprehensive study of the depictions of animals and their significance on Greek and Roman gems. The work examines the associations between animal depictions and the type of gemstone and its believed qualities. The study also compares the representation of animals on gems to other, larger media, and analyses the differences.

**Wealthy or Not in a Time of Turmoil? The Roman Imperial Hoard from Gruia in Roman Dacia (Romania)**  
By Cristian Gazdac and Marin Neagoe. Archaeopress Roman Archaeology 41, 2018. Paperback; 205x290mm; vi+182 pages; illustrated throughout in colour and black & white. ISBN 9781784918477. £30.00. (eBook ISBN 9781784918484, from £16 +VAT if applicable)

A fully illustrated catalogue of the coins from a Roman imperial hoard found in Gruia, Romania (in the former Roman province of Dacia) along with a comparative analysis of other similar hoards from throughout the Roman Empire, revealing both general and specific hoarding patterns during the period.

**Late Iron Age and Roman Settlement at Bozeat Quarry, Northamptonshire: Excavations 1995-2016**  
By Rob Atkins. 2018. Paperback; 205x290mm; xiv+186 pages; illustrated throughout in colour and black & white (55 colour plates). ISBN 9781784918958. £45.00. (eBook ISBN 9781784918965 from £16 + VAT if applicable)

MOLA (formerly Northamptonshire Archaeology), has undertaken intermittent archaeological work within Bozeat Quarry, Northamptonshire, over a twenty-year period from 1995-2016 covering an area of 59ha. This volume presents excavation findings including evidence of a Late Iron Age and Roman Settlement.

Other titles available at [www.archaeopress.com](http://www.archaeopress.com) or email [info@archaeopress.com](mailto:info@archaeopress.com).

## Conferences and Events

**Roman Road Research & Excavations**  
North East Hants Historical and Archaeological Society Field Archaeology Branch  
Easter - August 2018

Excavations on the new Winchester to Chichester Roman Road will take place on Bank Holiday weekends from Easter through to August 2018. At present, three sites with substantial archaeological remains, including evidence for Roman settlement, have been found, and work will be undertaken on these.

Annual membership £10. Training exercise fee : £70, For further information, please email: Dr Richard Whaley [richard@whaley.me.uk](mailto:richard@whaley.me.uk), or visit: <http://www.nehhas.org.uk/>

**TRACamp 2018**  
Vindolanda Roman Fort  
22nd-23rd October 2018

This two-day TRAC Workshop aims to promote the use of experimental archaeology for the development



of theoretical approaches in the field of Roman archaeology. This event is sponsored by the Council for British Archaeology (Mick Aston Archaeology Fund) and the Vindolanda Trust.

The conference will be held at the Roman fort of Vindolanda on Roman Britain's northern frontier ; delegates will include established academics, early career researchers, PhD students, amateur enthusiasts, skilled professionals, and the general public. Day One will be devoted to the presentation of academic papers (in a single session format), with an emphasis on current uses of archaeological experiments and the evaluation of their impact on theoretical frameworks within Roman studies. Day Two will be devoted to demonstrations and hands-on experiments carried out on the site. Demonstrations will be opened to the public to further promote the significance of experimental archaeology for archaeological research, as well as the role of Vindolanda in this field of investigation.

The delegate fee will be £30 (+VAT) for this two-day workshop. For further information or to register for a place, please visit [trac.org.uk/tracamp-2018/](https://trac.org.uk/tracamp-2018/)

**Some Romano-British Sites  
in East Hampshire: David Graham**  
Surrey Archaeological Society  
6th November 2018 19:30-21:00

David Graham, RSG vice-chairman, will be giving a talk on archaeology in the East Hampshire border area, centred around the Romano-British small town of Neatham. The talk will draw together evidence for Romano-British activity such as villas, a bath house, cemeteries and a pottery industry, as well as considering several Late Iron Age sites which appear to have continued into the Romano-British period. For more information, or to register for this event, please visit <https://www.surreyarchaeology.org.uk/events/all/list>

**Exploring Roman York:  
Looking Back, Looking Forward**  
City of York Council  
17th November 2018

This year's conference, organised by the York Archaeological Forum and hosted by the City of York Council, will focus on Roman York. The talks will cover recent archaeological work on Roman sites in the city and its hinterland, reflecting a diverse range of new and significant discoveries, new survey techniques and analysis of human remains. The final papers of the day will reflect on the vast body of archaeological evidence

now available for Roman York, issues of accessibility, publication and synthesis, as well as research questions and future directions. The conference will close with a broader discussion of these issues.

Programme and tickets (£15) available from: [www.york.gov.uk/archaeologyconference](http://www.york.gov.uk/archaeologyconference). 30 free student places available (tickets must be booked in advance).

**Hoarding and Deposition in Europe from Later  
Prehistory to the Medieval Period – Finds in Context**  
King's College London, Strand  
12th–14th June 2019

The Roman Finds Group and Finds Research Group in collaboration with King's College London and Instrumentum International Meetings.

Theme: The theme of the next Instrumentum Meeting will be hoarding and deposition. Projects on hoards of coins, metalwork and other objects or materials currently being conducted in Britain have looked at both their composition and their locations. Recently excavated hoards also offer the chance to look at little-studied aspects of hoarding as a depositional process, such as the environmental data from pollen and seeds or from materials such as textiles and leather. The conference will also explore other aspects of deposition, including finds in wet contexts and structured deposition, as well as 'stray' or surface finds.

Five multi-period sessions are open:  
\* what is a hoard and what is hoarded?  
\* hoarding as a depositional process  
\* hoards and structured deposits and their setting / topographic context  
\* deposition in wet contexts, sacred or profane?  
\* recent discoveries of hoards

Call for Papers: Papers and posters may be submitted on subjects such as the contents of hoards, analyses of single hoards, where hoards occur, changes in practice over time. While the majority of papers will be 20 minutes long, there will also be the opportunity to present work in progress or notes in 10 minute slots.

Please download the proposal form for papers and posters from <http://www.romanfindsgroup.org.uk/> and return before 31 December 2018 to:  
[Emma.durham@reading.ac.uk](mailto:Emma.durham@reading.ac.uk)

Programme and Registrations: The final programme, the registration form for the conference and all information relating to the running of the event will be published in February 2019.

