

LUCERNA



THE ROMAN FINDS GROUP
NEWSLETTER

Newsletter 41, July 2011

lucerna

Roman Finds Group
Newsletter **41**

questionnaire that was handed out at the Spring Meeting in London. If you have not had the chance to complete one yet, please fill it in and return to Nicola Hembry at Fort Cumberland. Alternatively, an electronic copy can be found on the RFG website at <http://www.romanfinds.org.uk/news.php>.

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Emma Durham

Notes for contributors

Contributions are always welcome – particularly on new finds –so please send them to us, and share them with the rest of the Roman Finds Group!

The address for e-mailed contributions is:

emma.durham@arch.ox.ac.uk

Contributions by post should be sent to:

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Editorial

Welcome to the 41stth edition of Lucerna. In this edition we have an article on a razor from Bishop's Cleeve and a request for information on images of disabled and African/black people in Roman Britain from Iain Ferris on page 7. Details of the autumn meeting in York can be found on page 5. As it is being held jointly with the Finds Research Group and the Historical Metallurgy Society, this will be an excellent opportunity to meet specialists in slightly different fields and expand our knowledge beyond the Roman.

The Committee is always striving to improve the Group, thus we have enclosed a copy of the

Roman razor from Bishop's Cleeve, Cheltenham.

The subject of this note is a small copper alloy Roman razor (*culter tensorius* or *novacula*) recovered during an archaeological evaluation at Bishop's Cleeve, Cheltenham in Gloucestershire, carried out by Cotswold Archaeology between January and February 2010.

The razor was recovered from deposit 4016 (fill of ditch 4017 in trench 40), along with small quantities of Roman pottery dated to the 2nd to 3rd centuries AD. Other material from the site provided evidence for activities continuing into the late 4th century. The razor was in a moderately good state of preservation with only a small amount of waxy green corrosion, which was cleaned and stabilized by a conservator. The object is almost complete apart from slight damage to the tip of the blade and handle loop and a slight crack on the blade.

Roman razors differ in form and are found in both copper alloy and iron, and there appears to be some chronological evolution. There are several major studies and typologies published on European material (notably Mariën 1971 and 1973 and Garbsch 1975). The numbers of published razors from Britain is low, and this study was carried out mainly considering published examples and artefacts described on-line on the Portable Antiquities Scheme database (<http://finds.org.uk/database/>).

The Bishops Cleeve find is of cast copper alloy, with a short handle which terminates in a circular suspension loop. The object is 89mm long, (the handle measures 34mm and the blade 55mm), 20mm wide and weighs 4.5g. The blade is flat and developed from the handle, runs parallel to the handle for 26mm and tapers to a triangular point (now damaged). The handle is solid, circular in section and measures 3mm in diameter. Decoration was evident on both the handle, in the form of elaborate segmented mouldings and incised ring grooves, and on the blade, which has cup and ring decoration on both sides. This is 6mm in diameter, and is located in

the same approximate position, close to the handle. Additionally the junction between the handle and blade exhibits, on the upper surface, decorative incised oblique lines. The back of the blade is perpendicular to the handle and decorated with half-rounded and v-shape notches.

Not many published parallels of Roman razors in copper alloy from Britain are similar in form to our artefact. Well known is the example from Silchester (Boon 1974, fig. 6, no. 6) and the other already mentioned here from South Shield Roman fort. Several objects in iron or iron and bronze are held by the British Museum and described as knife or razor (Manning 1985, pl. 3). A number of examples exhibit similar dimensions, blade form and feature a terminal loop. A razor from London represents a close match to our object in respect of its solid, circular-sectioned handle with complex mouldings blade back with a series of vertical and diagonal grooves (Manning 1985, pl. 55, Q.59 and Q40 type 11b).

The small size of the handle compared to the blade and the circular terminal loop suggest that it possibly formed part of a toilet set, or was a miniature object. A number of objects in copper alloy can be given as parallels, differing in the exact forms of the blade and the terminal loop, such as a miniature razor or knife from Worcestershire (PAS WAW-74B532), one knife from Suffolk (PAS SF9434), one razor from Winchester in Hampshire (PAS HAMP3381) and one other miniature razor or knife recorded as of Iron Age date from Lincolnshire (PAS LIN-535BB3) although the example from Bishop's Cleeve appears to be highly decorated and no published parallel could be found.

The research here presented some difficulties in classification and in distinguishing between a razor and small toilet knives. The artefacts offering a closer parallel to our object from Bishop's Cleeve are noted as maybe votive or miniature objects and described as knives.

The possibility that this object was part of a late Roman toilet set is suggested by its compact

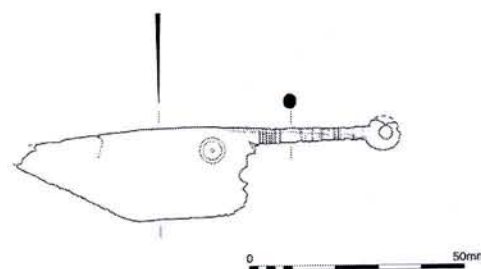
dimension and the loop terminal. This loop is flat and on the same plane as the handle and differs from other knives/razors loops where the end of the tang is curled-over onto the back to form a suspension loop, noted on other knives or razors (Manning 1985). The size of the object is similar to some common toilet instrument, such as tweezers, ear scoops and nail cleaners. A recent study conducted by Hella Eckardt and Nina Crummy (2008) considers the corpus of toilet instrument from Britain with an emphasis on the social use of these Roman artefacts, but does not mention any small knives or razors associated directly with toilet sets. A previous study undertaken by George Boon (1991, 21-2) considered the close relationship between small knives, *cultellus tonsorius*, and razors with the aim of defining differences in their use and forms, and underlines the difficulties in identifying and distinguishing between these objects when they are so similar.

The decoration on the back of the blade, consisting of notches cut into it, is of particular interest. Similar motifs can be seen on two other artefacts, both razors and small knives. The closest match is recorded on the Portable Antiquities Scheme database (PAS SF-2F7DA2), and another example was recovered from the excavations at South Shields Roman fort (Allason-Jones and Milet 1984, 214-5, fig. 3.729). This combination of notches, and the ring and dot decoration, seen uniquely on the Bishop's Cleeve object, finds parallels on Roman double-sided composite combs. Decorative profiles on the end plates, sometimes with zoomorphic designs (such as an example recovered from Beadlam, Yorkshire in Stead 1971) were common on these combs, which are dated from the second half of the 4th century AD (Keller 1971). According to Eckardt and Crummy (2008, 32-4) the profile design and the use of ring and dot may have a symbolic significance. In the toilet instrument, this particular design, especially when combined with side notches or chip carving, is typical of the late Roman period. So potentially we can extend this to our razor and suggest a date for the object in the mid to late 4th century AD.

In summary it is evident that the exact purpose of these small knives/razors is not yet clear. Although, this subject does suggest further investigation regarding the possibility that the artefacts, were part of toilet sets. The razor/small knife of the kind described are clearly unlikely the classical form, which has been the subject of previous studies, and their small size could suggest in somewhat different use. It is possible to suggest that these objects were not razors for shaving but more for cutting, grooming or trimming either small facial hair or perhaps for nails and skin around the nails, or even to cut-off foot corns and calluses. This been the case it is correct to call our artefact from Bishops Cleeve a toilet-knife or *cultellus tonsorius* 'barber's small knife' as suggested by Boon (1991, 22-4).

Whether these objects were kept with toilet sets, comprising in addition to instruments such ear scoops, nail cleaners and tweezers, is open to debate. It is also possible that they were held together with other instruments, as surgical sets, or even that they were not part of any set but kept separately as they are usually found singly, rather than alongside other toilet instruments.

Angela Aggujaro
Assistant Finds Officer
Cotswold Archaeology



I would like to thanks Ed McSloy for his support and coaching me during this research, Sylvia Warman and Gwladys Monteil for helping me to reach some references, Lorna Gray for her help on drawing the artefact and Jörn Schuster for his suggestions and support.

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RFG AUTUMN MEETING

In collaboration with the Finds Research Group, the Historical Metallurgy Society and York Archaeological Trust

Metal Objects: how they are made and decorated

Monday 17th October

Merchant Venturers' Hall, York

The meeting will focus on non-ferrous metals and will cover topics of all periods from pre-Roman to post-medieval. Many of the techniques discussed were used over long periods, so the post-Roman topics also have a relevance to the production of Roman finds.

10.15 Anglo-Saxon jewellery, Susan La Niece

10.45 The art and mystery of the Cheapside Hoard, Hazel Forsyth

11.15-11.45 Coffee

11.45 Understanding iron mail, Sonia O'Connor

12.15 Brazing: Using copper alloys for joining and finishing iron objects, Tim Young

12.45-14.15 Lunch

14.15 Finds Research Group AGM

14.30 Further research on the late Roman vessel hoard from Drapers Gardens, London, James Gerrard

15.00 How many ways are there of making money?, Peter Northover

15.30-16.00 Tea

16.00 Technology or design? 'Enamel' in the 1st century AD, Mary Davies

16.30 Casting metals in Roman and Post-Roman Britain: continuity and innovation in mould technology, Justine Bayley

Optional visits on Sunday (free to those attending the conference) are:

11.30-12.30 Site visit and talk about the excavation of the Roman fortress at St. Leonards Hospital, York by Kurt Hunter-Mann

14.00-15.00 Tour of the Hungate excavations, York by Peter Connolly

The meeting fee is £10 (£5 for students). To book contact Quita Mould (Eastmoor Manor, Eastmoor, Kings Lynn PE33 9PZ or quita@onetel.com)

Meet the Committee

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Membership

Please remember that membership is due in October. Membership is still only £8 (for individuals) and £11 for two people at the same address. Standing order is also available, please ask Angela for a form or print one from the website.

In order to reduce costs and keep members better informed, we would be grateful if members could provide an email address. This will only be used to relay up and coming information on events such as the study days and the newsletter will continue to be printed.

It has been suggested that in order to facilitate communication between members, the RFG could produce a database of all members. This would include contact details (such as a postal address and/or email and areas of interest or specialist interest. The list would be circulated to members only and you have the option to opt out if you do not wish to be included.

If you are happy to have your details circulated, please contact Angela with your name, specialist interest and contact details (postal or email address)

Images of the Disabled and Africans/Black People

I have recently been conducting a literature search for examples of depictions of the disabled and of Africans/Black people in Roman Britain in any media. I would be grateful to hear from any RFG members with details of any such depictions they are aware of.

iainmferris@yahoo.co.uk

RFG Spring Meeting

A very successful spring meeting was held in collaboration with the Museum of London in March. The meeting was well attended by RFG members, and our numbers were swelled by the presence of many archaeologists local to Greater London.

The theme of the meeting 'Life in Roman Britain – every object tells a story' was linked to the publication of *Artefacts in Roman Britain*, a volume edited by Lindsay Allason-Jones which contains chapters on various topics (such as travel and transport, industry, agriculture, domestic life and recreation), many of which were written by RFG members. Each chapter uses artefacts to illustrate how life in Roman Britain was lived.

The day was finished by Jenny Hall considering the future of Roman London at the Museum and the role of online databases which make the collections more accessible to the public.

RFG DATASHEETS

We have got off to a slow start with the production of datasheets so this is 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 present ongoing research – all will be 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 willing to write a datasheet.

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Publications

Roman glassworking waste from St Algar's Farm, Somerset

Excavations in 2010 at a Roman villa site at St Algar's Farm, near Frome in Somerset, led by Ceri Lambdin and Robin Holley with the Bath and Camerton Archaeological Society, uncovered over 400 fragments of Roman glass. This included typical glassworking waste and fragments of 4th-century vessels, as well as 22 ceramic glass crucible fragments. This is the first Roman glassworking site known in the south-west, and the first rural Roman glassworking site from Britain. The AHG has generously given a grant for research on the glass finds, and a report will appear in the next issue of Glass News.

Further excavations will be carried out between July 25th and August 7th 2011. It is hoped that more evidence of the glassworking will be

found, and visitors are welcome, preferably in small groups (if there are going to be lots interested); please contact Ceri Lambdin in advance at: cerilambdin@hotmail.co.uk or 01225 761026.

***Archaeological Evidence for Glassworking. Guidelines for Best Practice* by Sarah Paynter and David Dungworth**

2011. English Heritage.

This latest edition in the English Heritage Guidelines series focuses on the identification, investigation and interpretation of glassworking evidence at sites in England from the Bronze Age until the 20th century. Comprising 12 chapters, with numerous photographs and illustrations, this guidance draws on contributions and case studies from experts in the field, including archaeologists, glass specialists, glassworkers and archaeological scientists.

A copy can be downloaded FREE from the English Heritage website at: <http://www.english-heritage.org.uk/> (go to Professional > Publications > Guidelines and standards).

Conferences

Following finds - from site to store: A meeting on aspects of archaeological finds in memory of Penny MacConnoran

**Saturday 10th September
The Weston Theatre, Museum of London**

Museum of London Archaeology and the Museum of London invite colleagues and friends to join in this one-day meeting in honour of the great contribution made to London's archaeology by Penny MacConnoran, who died in July 2010.

The varied programme will address Penny's main interests and areas of expertise: processing, conservation and archiving, and finds research and will appeal to finds specialists, archaeologists, students, volunteers and anyone interested in archaeology. Particular emphasis will be on new research in the study of artefacts in and beyond London.

Session 1 Prehistoric and Roman

Chair: **Fiona Seeley**

Roy Stephenson *Welcome*

Gus Milne *Foreshore Archaeology- Lost & Found or Found & Lost?*

Jon Cotton **Plowonida and beyond: prehistoric problems, progress and potential*

Roberta Tomber *Campanian amphorae from Britain to the Bay of Bengal*

Angela Wardle and Michael Marshall *Roman mysteries – enigmas in finds research*

Sue Winterbottom *The Case of the Missing Diamonds (Roman Leather from Draper's Gardens)*

Session 2 Saxon and medieval

Chair: **Mike Rhodes**

Marit Gaimster *Metalwork and powerful women*
Lynne Keys *Interpreting the new, re-interpreting the old*

Ian Riddler *London, Dublin and the early Viking Comb*

Frances Pritchard *Textiles from the Wood Quay Excavations, Dublin*

Beth Richardson and Jackie Keily *Shoes and Pattens: a missing link*

Session 3 Conservation, archive and beyond
Chair: **Roy Stephenson**

Jacqui Pearce *Clay Pipe Studies at the Museum of London - from processing to the Worldwide Web.*

Liz Goodman and Rose Johnson *Boiling to freezing: 100 years of treating wet leather from London sites*

Francis Grew *The Big Society: volunteers and the progression of processing*

Aidan Walsh *Developments in managing museum collections in Ireland.*

Registration is £10 (inclusive of morning and afternoon tea and coffee).

To register, visit the Museum of London site: <http://www.museumoflondonarchaeology.org.uk/News/FollowingFinds.htm> and follow the instructions. The charge for the event is £10 and you will be requested to pay at the time of booking.

For enquiries regarding the programme please contact lblackmore@museumoflondon.org.uk

Living with the Roman Army

24th September 2011
Cross Street Chapel, Cross Street,
Manchester

The Roman Army in Britain is often seen as a huge reservoir of men, well armed, well trained and well paid, ready to take on any threats to empire. In reality they spent a lot of time at their forts and their presence alone shaped the experience of the civilians and dependants living around these sites. This conference will look at various aspects of this experience to gain a better understanding of what it was like to live with the Roman army.

The picture up close

Life around the fortresses – canabae, vicus and the civilians, *Birgitta Hoffmann*

Life around the fortlets, *Matt Symonds*

Living with a fort – the example of Manchester,
Norman Redhead

The wider picture

Roman and Native in Central Scotland,
David Woolliscroft

Boom and Bust? - The impact of the Roman Army on the rural economy of the North West, *Mike Nevell*

Toil and Trouble: Magic in Roman Britain,
Adam Parker

Cost for the day is £30. Send cheques to:
Birgitta Hoffmann, MANCENT/Hadrianic Society, 55 Broadwalk, Wilmslow, SK9 5PL.
email: latinteacher@btinternet.com

RAC/TRAC 2012 **29th March to 1st April** **Frankfurt am Main, Germany**

RAC 2012 will be hosted by the Römisch-Germanische Kommission des Deutschen Archäologischen Instituts.

Online registration will open in August 2011
Further details can be found at
<http://www.rac2012.org>
Or by contacting: David Wigg-Wolf, Römisch-Germanische Kommission, Palmengartenstrasse 10-12, 60325 Frankfurt am Main, Germany
info@rac2012.org