

# lucerna

Roman Finds Group  
Newsletter 48

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## 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@reading.ac.uk

## A plea from the membership secretary

Many thanks to everyone who has paid the subscription for 2014/15 – we now have a record number of paid-up members. For the very few members who have not replied positively to my emails or letters, or who have not followed up their promise of payment, please send me your cheque or ask me for bank details if you would like to make a direct payment. If I do not hear from you after two reminders, I shall have to assume that you no longer wish to belong to the group – and we would be very sorry to lose you!

If you have sent me your email address but are not receiving RFG emails, this means that the email address has failed, either because it has changed or I cannot read it. If you would like to receive RFG emails and are not receiving them, please email me at awardle@waitrose.com and I will update my records.

Also, please, please, let me know if you change your address .....

## Roman Finds Group is now on Twitter!

We regularly post information that may interest people with a passion for Roman objects, as well as sharing up-to-date information on the group, and links to our website. We also interact with other people of interest on Twitter. You can follow live-tweets of our conferences under the hashtags #rfg2014 #rfg2013 #rfg2012. We recently welcomed our 100th follower! Do join us! @RomanFindsGrp

## 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 can be as short or as long as you like but 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 interested in writing a datasheet.

e-mail: gill.dunn@cheshirewestandchester.gov.uk

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## DONALD FREDERICK MACKRETH BA FSA (1934-2014): AN APPRECIATION

John Peter Wild

With much help from Christine Mackreth and  
Geoffrey Dannell



Donald Mackreth will be long remembered and respected throughout the western Roman provinces for his lifelong study of Roman brooches, on which he was the leading authority. His magisterial *Brooches in Late Iron Age and Roman Britain*, published in two volumes by Oxbow Books in 2011, comprises some 280 pages of text, and 155 pages of Don's own meticulous drawings of individual specimens. When I first set eyes on his immense card index of brooches (now in the British Museum), it took my breath away, but he assured me that he had no interest in publishing a brooch corpus: fortunately he changed his mind. For years excavators had relied on Don to write reports on their brooch finds. His characteristic detailed descriptions were usually married with his own drawings, the more reliable because he understood every aspect of each object and why it was significant.

Born in Lichfield, Don trained initially as a draughtsman for the Coal Board, but in the 1960s joined the excavations of Graham Webster at Wroxeter, and became a committed archaeologist.

An arts degree as a mature student at Leicester University followed, and on graduating in 1969 his practical experience (and draughtsman's skills) made him the strongest candidate when Martin Biddle was seeking an Assistant Director of the Winchester Research Unit. While Don counted himself as a Romanist, Winchester broadened his horizons and interests and made him a leading figure in medieval archaeology, too. From Graham Webster he had imbibed an interest in pottery, which became another string to his bow. And it was at Wroxeter that his interest in brooches was awakened.

The vast urban expansion of Peterborough in the late 1960s as a solution to London's perceived over-population brought immediate threats to the rich archaeology of town and country, and when external funding came on stream in 1972, the then Nene Valley Research Committee appointed Don as its Director of Excavations with headquarters and project staff and a well-equipped field centre (designed essentially by Donald). When development slowed and funding dried up in 1988, however, the Research Committee was obliged to close down its excavation unit. Publication of the rescue excavations was at that time far from complete, and Don – to his eternal credit – continued to work on the backlog. *Hall Farm, Orton Longueville*, a report on an important Late Roman farm with early Saxon occupation, appeared in 1996, and his account of the Iron Age and Early Roman site of *Monument 97* in 2001. *Orton Meadows Long Barrow* is at present awaiting publication by *East Anglian Archaeology*.

It is perhaps no surprise that Don was an expert in real ale before it was so called, and wherever he lived, he became a regular of the local pub, with a wide circle of scrabble-playing drinking companions. Through to the end, when declining health compelled him to use a mobility scooter, nothing kept him away from his regular pub rendezvous. His expertise extended to *haute cuisine*: his privileged friends will not forget their dining experiences chez Mackreth. But his family was his mainstay. Don met his wife Christine in Leicester, and they have two daughters, Miriam and Sophie. Summer holidays in France, prompted by friendships forged in Winchester and continued in the Nene Valley, were a regular feature of the Mackreth calendar.

'Don's Big Book of Brooches', as he called it, will be no substitute for the on-the-spot thoughts of the master, and he will be widely missed by the archaeological community, by a wide circle of friends and above all by his family, on whose support he depended so much.

## MYSTERY OBJECT: A LEAD SHELL FROM SITE VII, NORTH-WEST CAMBRIDGE

Grahame Appleby and Simon Timberlake

This is a well-made lead cast of a freshwater mussel or similar. The outer surface of the shell is of note as growth rings are apparent as well as probable traces of worm casts that are commonly found on shells. This item most likely fashioned by pressing a shell into wet clay to form the one half of a mould. The inner aspect of the lead casting is hollow with flat edges and the bivalve hinge clearly represented. Interestingly, the flange, or apparent cut on the inner and outer surfaces, suggest that after pressing the original shell into wet clay, the other half of the mould was created by pressing more wet clay into the shell's body whilst still in situ. The two halves of the mould were then prised apart with a tool, damaging the moulds inner surface, and the shell also removed from the clay with a tool, such as a knife, causing a similar 'cut' on the outer surface. The two mould halves were then allowed to dry, in the process shrinking, and thus resulting in the final lead cast shell having very thick walls. It is a matter of curiosity why the damage to the mould was not rectified prior to casting. It is, however, important to highlight the technical competency of the person who crafted this item and the current lack of a parallel for this object. Dimensions: Length 56.57 mm, weight 43g.

Anyone with parallels or ideas, please contact Chris Evans (cje30@hermes.cam.ac.uk).



## FINDS FROM MANCHESTER AND THE NORTH-WEST: RFG Autumn Meeting

Manchester Museum, 8th October 2014

Jenny Hall

### Recent finds of Roman Military Diplomas from Britain

Paul Hodder, University of Manchester

There are 1100 diplomas recorded, dating from AD 52– 300. Up until 2014, only 17 of these have been found in Roman Britain and 25 diplomas from elsewhere mention Britain. The diploma names the soldier retiring and any named children on the diploma were granted citizenship but the wife was not. For example, one diploma from Britain names Longinus of the *Hamiarum* and his three children. Each diploma recorded the emperor's name and titles, the list of units, the emperor and governor's name (making it possible to date the diploma) and the soldier's name. It also stated that it is a certified copy from the original at Rome. On the outside was a list of witnesses who were certifying that it was indeed a copy. The two copper alloy tablets were wired together through holes along the central margin. Seals were placed over the wire with a box affixed over the seals to prevent them being broken open. Each year, about eight soldiers in a unit were eligible for release. Sometimes the tablets had the information written in ink prior to engraving and as the engraver was not always versed in Latin, the lettering could go awry.

New finds come from Ravenglass – two fragments show the soldier came from Heliopolis in the Lebanon; another from Catterick was a re-used fragment dated to the reign of Antoninus Pius; a third fragmentary example gives the date of 20th February AD 98.

Questions to consider: Did soldiers take their diplomas home with them when they retired? Are so few surviving because of the scrap metal value? The two tablets of copper alloy weighed 1kg but this gradually lessened on later examples. A tablet from Wroxeter was actually found with scrap metal.

Paul hopes to produce a RFG datasheet on diplomas in the future.

## **Finds from Castleshaw Roman Fort**

Norman Redhead, County Archaeologist and Director of Greater Manchester Archaeology Advisory Service

Norman Redhead talked about recent work at Castleshaw Roman forts. The forts were sited on the highway between York and Chester. An Agricola fort was established in about AD 79 and was abandoned in the mid-90s. It was then replaced by a small fortlet, in use between 105 and the early 120s. Both forts were of timber and turf construction.

The site was first discovered in 1752 when the two forts were recorded. The site was re-investigated over two seasons in 1907–8 when they found a large part of the site included ditches and defensive systems. In 1957–9 the Manchester Museum Archaeology Dept focused on the defensive systems and in the 1960s a more detailed archaeological plan helped to clarify the relationship between the earlier larger fort used as an auxiliary cohort and the smaller later fortlet which was a garrison for as few as 50 men. In the mid-1980s, a community programme of excavation on the site, under the care of the Greater Manchester Archaeology Unit, focused on the fortlet area which was found to have a small barrack block with a large granary. In the 1990s, excavations looked at the hinterland and found civilian buildings with a pottery dating from the late 1st century to about AD 120.

Unfortunately, the very acidic soil conditions affected the condition of the finds, even samian. There were no animal bones but objects such as lava querns, mortaria, glass and faience melon beads, local coarsewares and greywares, gaming counters and flue tiles did survive and there was also an onyx intaglio that depicted Minerva. A broken stamped tile may have been made at the tileworks at Slack.

A working party has been set up with interested parties to develop a central catalogue as the material is spread through various museums at Manchester, Oldham and Saddleworth. A project, funded by a £70,000 HLF grant, to engage local communities is partway through – for example, an excavation in July 2014, focusing on the fort area, involved 120 adult volunteers. This is being followed up by local team projects. There have been training workshops with specialists to train up the local finds group and there will be smaller-scale projects in the future.

## **Finds beneath our Fields: The Knutsford Hoard**

Vanessa Oakden, Finds Liaison Officer, PAS

As of October 2014, 1,020,000 objects have been recorded on the PAS database. The Knutsford Hoard (PAS database: LVPL -B44185/2012 T406) was found in a field in 2012 by a metal-detectorist. The finder marked the spot and contacted Vanessa. The hoard included 103 coins, three trumpet brooches, two finger rings and 21 sherds of an orangeware vessel. The findspot had been ploughed out and the hoard dispersed, scattered over an area of some 20 x 10 m. Some of the coins were still stuck together and the coins included denarii struck as early as Mark Antony and as late as Crispina in the late 2nd century. The denarius of Mark Antony (32–31 BC) is the most common Republican coin found in Roman Britain (galley and military standard type) but, as it had a silver content inferior to other Republican denarii, it did not tend to be melted down.

The two finger-rings were oval with an expanded bezel (Henig Type II), both had carnelian intaglios and dated to the mid-1st to mid-2nd century. The brooches were made of copper alloy with silver gilt. One brooch was a large trumpet brooch (L89 mm) with four perforations on the catchplate and ornate decoration while the second brooch was similar but smaller. A separate petal rosette mount with the chain ring would have fitted onto the head of the larger brooch. The contents of the Knutsford was compared with a similar hoard found at Church Minshull, which had 58 denarii and trumpet brooches. The more complete Church Minshull brooches helped explain the rosette mount found loose in the Knutsford hoard.

In conclusion, the Knutsford hoard was deposited in the AD 190s, at a time of uncertainty. It may represent the private wealth of a soldier, landowner or merchant and is perhaps indicative of the importance of the salt trade on the economy of the area.

## **Manchester Museum collections**

Bryan Stith, Deputy Head of Collections. Manchester Museum

The collections of the Manchester Museum were compiled initially by John Leigh Philips (1761–1814), a manufacturer and collector. His collection was then bought by a wealthy friend and formed part of the local Natural History Society. By the 1860s, due to lack of funds, the collections were transferred to Owens College, the forerunner of Manchester

University. The University collection now forms 6 million items of which 70,000 are archaeological. From the 1960s onwards, curators were tasked with seeking out Manchester material, as much had been dispersed to other museums in the 19th century. Objects and collections have also been donated by visitors or have come from archaeological works in Manchester and the north-west. Some of the material was collected from the construction of the Manchester ship canal and other industrial projects by Barri Jones, then Professor of Archaeology. Other objects came from the Roman fort and vicus in Castlefield, Manchester where large amounts of pottery, game pieces and melon beads helped identify one building as a hostelry for soldiers sited just outside the fort.

Interesting finds include a Roman altar from Manchester that was dedicated to the Mother Goddesses of the *Hanenfates* (a German tribe from near the mouth of the Rhine). It was dedicated by Aelius Victor, possibly a German with military experience. Another object is the Manchester word square. The fragment of the palindrome was found on a pot sherd in the vicus of the Roman fort; it is dated to the early AD 180s.

Bryan then went on to describe a sizeable collection of Romano-British pottery excavated by Prof. Donald Atkinson from a mystery excavation. They had the material but there was no paper archive to identify where it came from. However, one mortarium had an East Anglian origin and they discovered that the material came from Norfolk when they came across a note published in a Norfolk journal in 1921. The pottery came from Gayton Thorpe Roman villa in Norfolk. Another mystery was also a Romano-British pot from Longendale with two small black and white photographs showing the place of discovery and a cryptic note saying it had been collected 'by a gentleman'. An issue of the Transactions of the Lancashire and Cheshire Antiquarian Society showed the gentleman to be Christopher Hawkes.

There followed a visit to the Museum archaeology store where material, including small finds from the Castleshaw excavations, late Iron Age metalwork from Bigbury and a complete set of decorative zoomorphic feet, for a box or casket, were on show.

## **Keeping up appearances: the wooden hair combs from Vindolanda**

Barbara Birley, Vindolanda Trust

Over the past 43 years, 140 wooden combs have been found at Vindolanda due to the wet anaerobic conditions. In 2003 Paola Pugsley reported on 60 combs but another 80 were found in the 2001–3 excavations. The combs date to AD 85–160. It is the largest single collection to date (London has 40 and Tullie house, seven). It has therefore been possible to produce a typology (Barbara hopes to produce a RFG datasheet) and to describe different parts of a comb.

The 'H' comb has terminals and a central bar that has guidelines marked to enable the saw-cuts to be aligned. One side of the comb has fine teeth, the other coarse. The terminals are based on semi-circular shapes with additional decoration. The central bar has a variety of decorative features, although over a half of the combs have a plain central bar. Those that were decorated show great craftsmanship. A few of the combs have suspension holes in the terminal for attachment to a belt. A few have graffiti. For example, one had CARANTVS APICTINVS scratched in cursive. Seven of the combs are stamped, ten were possibly stamped but are worn. One early 2nd-century example has a copper-alloy moulded mount applied to the central bar. It depicts a standing figure with shield and spear. Some may perhaps have been used by professional hairdressers.

In 2013, in an excavation outside the fort in the vicus, 80 shoes, brooches, hairpins, beads, styli, writing tablets (for both ink and stylus), nuts and animal bone were found. Seven wooden combs were also found – two came from inside a roundhouse, two from inside rectangular buildings and three from ditches, making it difficult to identify their use as being either native or Roman. One extraordinary find was a wooden comb complete with its leather carrying case.

## **Recent finds from Chester focusing on finds from the amphitheatre**

Gill Dunn, Senior Archaeologist, Historic Environment Service, Cheshire West and Chester Council

Chester's Roman fortress was founded in the mid-70s AD as the base for *Legio II Adiutrix*, later replaced by *Legio XX Valeria Victrix*. Although there have been several excavations on the site of the amphitheatre my paper concentrates on the latest of these – a joint project in 2004–2006 between English Heritage and

Chester City Council (now Cheshire West and Chester Council).

The amphitheatre was discovered in 1929, just outside the south-east corner of the fortress. There were two main phases of construction, both in stone, contrary to the belief that the stone amphitheatre had replaced an earlier timber construction.

In order to answer some of our research questions, one of the key groups of deposits to be examined were those outside the first amphitheatre which accumulated when it was in use – deposits which are rare, if not unique, in the Roman Empire including postholes which may represent temporary booths or stalls. A good assemblage of faunal remains – domesticates and a high percentage of birds and fish gives us some evidence for what the spectators were consuming and suggests a very ‘Roman’ diet. Several fragments of portable ovens are also potentially associated with the stalls outside the amphitheatre or on the roads leading to it. Samian with gladiatorial scenes may have a votive function or represent souvenirs; and a group of high quality polychrome and facet-cut glass vessels may suggest a pre-spectacle banquet.

The deposits used to create the primary seating bank turned out to be rich in artefacts – pottery, glass (including a set of 47 glass gaming counters), animal bone, charcoal, metalwork and metalworking waste. Although a wide range of building materials was found there is no direct evidence that they were used in the construction of the amphitheatre and most would have come from the demolition of buildings in the fortress. Other finds include complete intaglios, and from the arena itself, a large stone block with an iron fitting fastened into its upper surface with a lead plug, possibly used to secure animals.

Military metalwork includes very small iron chain mail links, *lorica segmentata*, buckles, mounts and strap fittings, as well as a large assemblage of hobnails. Tools are rare but include a hand saw, ox goad and leatherworker’s awl. Little structural iron work apart from nails and these appear to be medium in size – no large timber nails, even the ones identified as holding the timber framing together. Small quantity of iron-working debris suggests very small scale smithing industry.

A good range of copper alloy finds including studs, tacks, pins and rivets, toilet spoon, tweezers and a seal box. Several brooches including headstud, disc

and trumpet brooches, bow and fantail and Colchester derivatives.

In addition to the high quality glass there are also several cylindrical and prismatic bottles, beakers and bowls, as well as window glass, which has presumably come from the demolition of the fortress buildings.

Work is ongoing with a view to publication this year.

#### *Recent finds from Chester*

The nature of the archaeological work in the city over the last few years consists of small scale evaluations and watching briefs so we have few substantial assemblages of Roman finds. However, an ongoing student training excavation in Grosvenor Park in conjunction with Chester University has produced a good 1st-/2nd-century assemblage, including a number of brooches, miniature lead axe and the base of a Venus figurine from the road leading to the east entrance of the amphitheatre and from the military ditches, suggesting that the extra-mural settlement extended further south than previously thought

#### **Enamelled Roman objects**

Justine Bayley

Enamel is powdered glass fused to a metal substrate. In the Roman period the metal was copper alloy and the enamel was always opaque. Champlevé enamel is set into fields cut or cast into the metal blank. Enamel adds extra decoration and tends to be used from the mid-/late 1st to the 2nd century.

It tended to be used on small decorative objects – brooches, belt plates, seal boxes, studs, fasteners and fittings and votive stands. Larger objects, like vessels, were made in separate pieces, enameled and then soldered together – for example, the Staffordshire Moorlands pan. Some were clearly made as souvenirs for people to take away with them after a posting in the province.

Styles varied:

1. simple decoration with each colour held in a separate field;
2. juxtaposed blocks with several colours in a single field;
3. inset spots or concentric circles (for example, on shoe brooches) which were sometimes ground flat;



4. millefiore where large-size multiple rods, placed in patterns, were stretched out while hot;
5. mixed enamel where random multi-coloured end pieces of millefiore rods were fused together.

Colours used were red, orange, yellow, green, turquoise, blue, black and white but decayed enamels can be difficult to identify, especially red, blue, orange and green. Red, blue and turquoise were the most popular colours (as shown on brooches). Opaque glass needed a colourant to be added to the base glass – this is called an ‘opacifier’. Reconstructions of enameled metalwork show just how gaudy enameled objects could be.

When making enameled objects the pattern was first produced, then the object was cast and cleaned up and the enamel was added and fused. The surface was then polished and then decorative features, such as silver wire, were applied.

### Recent analysis of Roman coins

Matt Ponting, University of Liverpool

Following David Walker’s XRF analysis of coins which looked at the surface of coins, Matt, in a long-term collaborative venture with Kevin Butcher (Warwick University), has been looking at the core of silver denarii using AAS analysis. Over time, denarii were no longer made of pure silver but before striking, the surfaces of the blanks were made to look bright and shiny. Denarii under the Julio-Claudians were made of fine silver (93%) but there was a debasement under Nero in AD 64 when the silver content went down to 80% (not the 90% stated by Nero).

Matt has also been able to demonstrate that:

1. the metal content was then micro-managed during the civil war period as the metal content varied;
2. there was no debasement under Vespasian but Domitian began his reign with coins at 80%, increased it to fine silver for about five years and then restored it back to 90%. During the 2nd century, the silver content remained at a consistent level of 80%.

Caesar had produced a bi-metallic system of the aureus: denarius at a ratio of 1:12. However, the system failed to cope with the rising price of silver and increasing production costs. Nero’s reform

acknowledged the problem. He changed the gold standard and made the silver content of the denarius adjustable. The weight of the new denarius at 3.45g was now the same as the eastern drachm, thus resolving the problem of tax collection throughout the empire.

Matt’s results have proved to be more consistent than the earlier surface analyses. He has also demonstrated that isotope analysis is starting to indicate the sources of the silver. It is known that during the civil war, for example, coins were produced at Rome and the western mints and lead isotopes show the location of the lead-silver mines. A cluster of the coins contain silver from the Massif Central but others contained Spanish silver. Matt also suggested that silver was being recycled and that it is the trace elements that will give evidence for the complex picture of minting.

The raw data will be hosted by the ADS and will be free to download –

<http://www.liv.ac.uk/archaeology-classics-and-egyptology/research/projects/roman/>

Useful references:

Butcher, K. and Ponting, M. 2015. *The Metallurgy of Roman Silver Coinage. From the Reform of Nero to the Reform of Trajan*, Cambridge

### Roman finds from Meols on the North Wirral shore

Rob Philpott, Liverpool Museum

In the 19th century, the antiquarian Revd Hume wrote a pamphlet about the nature of the site at Meols. Roman and later finds have been found along this stretch of the Wirral coastline and it seems that there was a series of settlements that moved along the coast depending on land erosion and variable sea levels. Research has turned up about 5000 finds spread through various local museums. Liverpool Museum, for example, had a collection that was destroyed in WW2 bombing.

The site lay on the margins of three tribal areas (including the *Cornovii* and *Brigantes*) with good inland river access with the Rivers Dee and Mersey on either side of the site. The coastline provided a harbour with safe anchorage and Meols became a trading centre. The antiquarian pamphlet provided good drawings that enabled the identification of the surviving objects. Iron Age objects included a 1st-century Syrian tetradrachm. Surviving evidence from containers showed that salt was being produced during

the Iron Age. There were some Augustan asses, generally scarce in Roman Britain, which hinted at Roman activity prior to the building of the forts and the re-use, early in the Roman period, of a pre-existing Iron Age port, which was used as a springboard for military activity. Object evidence of a pre-Flavian belt buckle and Hod Hill, Birdlip and Aucissa brooches show activity dating to the AD 50s and 60s. There is, however, no structural evidence surviving as this may have been washed away. Finds date as late as the early 5th century. Both modern and antiquarian collectors have also collected brooches (80), coins (120), earrings (30) and sherds of pottery (16).

Of the finds, one was a 'Wirral' brooch with chequerboard enamel – this is a type concentrated in the Wirral. Information is about to be published by Francis McIntosh in the *Archaeological Journal* and may indicate clan identity and regional patterns. The PAS has recorded four other brooches that were of Danubian/Balkan style and 24 Pannonian brooches that may hint at the Sarmatians who originally came to Britain in AD 175 and are recorded as being at Ribchester in the 3rd century. There were also hints of the very end of the Roman period when, in the 360s and 370s, there were tribal attacks from the Irish Sea and coastline sites were reinforced. A late Roman belt mount shows a military presence at Meols while some Byzantine coins perhaps show a continuation into the 6th century. Material is still being found and recorded by the PAS.

## EXPLORING SECONDARY USE AND MEANING IN ROMAN COINS WITH REFERENCE TO A *NUMMUS* OF DIOCLETIAN

Nicholas Ford

This paper is an exploration of a Roman coin or *nummus* with an unusual form found at Temple Sowerby, Cumbria. In particular it will explore possible reasons for its deformation and potential secondary function.

The coin (Fig. 1) was located by metal detector in the spoil of the A66 bypass, between the centre of the village of Temple Sowerby and close to the new highway completed in 2007 to its south. It has an unusual lozenge shape and is formed from a base-metal *nummus* of Diocletian (285–305 CE). The lips of metal appear to show that force has been applied

to change its shape across its south-west/north-east axis. It may also have been cut to a rectangle and hammered over – the raised edges show compression pinching to form concave obverse and reverses. It weighs 8.1g, is 3.10 mm thick, and measures 25.91 mm along its long axis and 19.62 mm along its shortest axis.

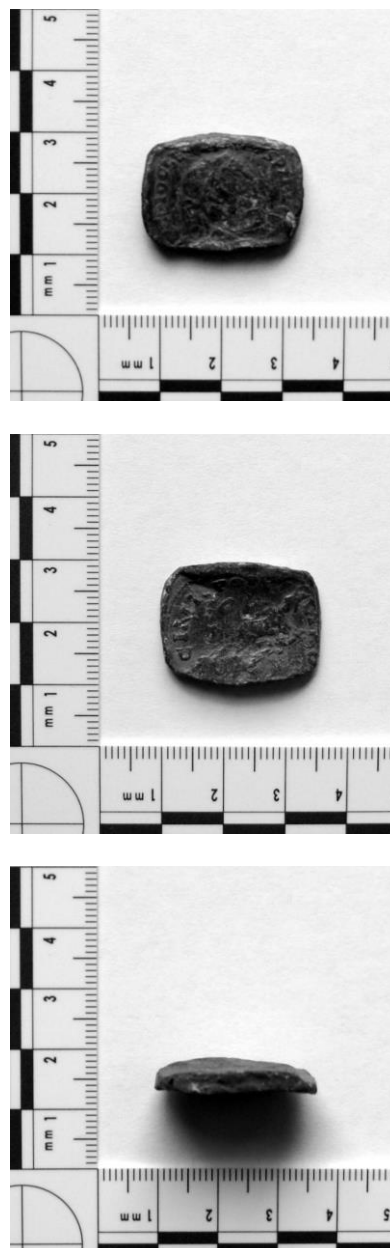


Fig. 1. a) Obverse: Laureate head facing right, shoulder and drapery. Legend blundered by pinching – [IM]P C DIOCLE[TIANV]S PFAVG; b) Reverse (6h to obverse): Genius standing left holding patera in right hand and cornucopia in left hand, chlamys (short military coat) over left shoulder – GENI[O] PO[V]LI RO[MANI]: 'To the genius/spirit of the Roman People'; c) Edge profile



### Numismatic context

The coin is unremarkable in so far as it displays the GENIO POPVLI ROMANI reverse type – the most common for *nummi* of the Tetrachic period – which was struck by mints across the entire Roman Empire (Moorhead 2014, 159). It is not particularly noteworthy to the numismatic community as a coin in the currency pool that might merit special attention (the type is historically generic).

Walton pointed out that deliberate damage can result from keeping coins in circulation or test cutting (cited in Dobson 2014, 4), but this seems unlikely here given the base-metal composition. The effort expended in hammering over its edges would seem to argue against suggesting the damage was currency related. We can also discount recent interference. It is unlikely that the coin was re-shaped by modern hands or agricultural machinery since it exhibits an even patina to its faces consistent with base-metal corrosion.

### Secondary functions

Secondary functions applied to Roman coins were many and varied. They could be re-used in jewellery or ornaments, mounted in brooches or drilled with holes to form brooches (Brickstock 2011, 45). Ritual practice may be also considered, such as the coins recovered from the riverbed at Piercebridge, Co. Durham which exhibited cuts, fragmentation, folding, perforation or serration – so such offerings can no longer be used for their primary function (Walton 2008, 38). However, the Temple Sowerby coin came from an unstratified context and thus archaeologically unknown source.

Modification and recycling of material in the late Roman period was common (Swift 2012, 204) and early medieval settlements provide evidence of coin alteration. Roman coins from Anglo-Saxon cemeteries demonstrate alteration through craft working for display purposes. They were pierced for mounting in jewellery and ground down to make weights for balances (Rigold 1988, 219). Roman bronze coins were especially used in personal ornaments, as pendants and in bracelets reflecting a taste for Roman items (King 1988, 225). Various pierced examples are recorded on the Portable Antiquities Scheme database, described as pendants or belt mounts. At Anglo-Saxon West Stow in Suffolk, many coins underwent some form of ‘post Roman damage’, including piercing, hammering, cutting, chipping and abrading (Swift 2012, 227). Some battered and scratched base-metal examples excavated from an Anglo-Saxon grave in Dover

were evidently used to weigh out pieces of bullion, being incised with weight markings and found in conjunction with a balance (Abdy 2002, 66). However, no markings are apparent, uniform or otherwise, on the Temple Sowerby coin.

Perhaps it was cut down to fit the bezel of a ring from which it has since separated, an inadvertent loss after becoming loosened from groove and flange. However, the large diameter of the coin would have been of substantial size for a Roman ring, and there is no evidence for soldering.

A potential parallel is a *sestertius* (LEIC-AFC531) from Nottinghamshire recorded by the PAS (Fig. 2). This may have been modified to fit inside another object (PAS 2004), having been re-shaped into a lozenge with flanges along its length, while the obverse bust and reverse personification (or deity) remain visible.



Fig. 2 Modified *sestertius* from the Parish of Ollerton and Boughton, Nottinghamshire (LEIC-AFC531) (© Portable Antiquities Scheme/British Museum)

Both the portrait and personification of Genius on the Temple Sowerby coin are more prominent than the legend, which may support an intention to display. If it were intended for personal adornment, and became no longer functional or recyclable, it may have been discarded as rubbish (Brickstock 2011, 35). This is perhaps one way in which it may have become disassociated from a ring, if the shank witnessed excessive wear, or its shoulders were constructed too thinly to support its weight. Chance deposition through accidental loss cannot be discounted.

### Summary

Without archaeological context, the coin may be residual – eroded and re-deposited from Anglian, Anglo-Saxon or Anglo-Scandinavian settlement or grave contexts. Clearly, a deposition date cannot be established without any stratigraphical relationships,

an obstacle symptomatic of the means of recovery. Potential residuality is a distinct disadvantage for attributing function. Its transformed appearance may be attributed to secondary use, but the coin might equally have been treated as a curiosity or even scrap.

Several possible interpretations for re-use have been cited here, but I would welcome views on its *chaîne opératoire*, potential uses of this object or other comments. Do any readers know of other similarly worked coins – published or otherwise?  
Correspondence to [fordnicholas@hotmail.com](mailto:fordnicholas@hotmail.com)

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## UPCOMING RFG MEETINGS

### FINDS FROM THE NORTH

Newcastle upon Tyne  
16–17th March 2015

The meeting in Spring 2015 will be over two days at the University of Newcastle upon Tyne with a theme

of 'Finds from the North'. It will be a joint meeting with The Centre for Interdisciplinary Artefact Studies, School of History, Classics and Archaeology at the University  
([www.ncl.ac.uk/historical/about/facilities/cias.htm](http://www.ncl.ac.uk/historical/about/facilities/cias.htm)).

### Monday 16th March

**Session One :** Current Finds Research at The University of Newcastle

**Session Two:** Finds from South Shields

### Tuesday 17th March

**Session Three:** Finds from the North

**Annual General Meeting/** Tea/Coffee – viewing of finds for non RFG Members

**Session Four:** Finds from the North and Beyond

**Session Five:** Visit to Segedunum Roman Fort, Baths and Museum

Cost for the meeting is Student £20/RFG Member £30/Non-Members £35. The day rate is £20 per day (Students £15). The conference meal costs £15 (£12 vegetarian). The visit to Segedunum Roman Fort, Baths and Museum costs £6. For further information contact Stephen Greep ([sjgreep@gmail.com](mailto:sjgreep@gmail.com)).

## AUTUMN MEETING

The British Museum  
Friday 6th November 2015

The British Museum will be staging an exhibition on the Celts in autumn 2015. The RFG, in conjunction with the LPFG (Later Prehistoric Finds Group), will be hosting a 1-day conference in association with the exhibition. It will be held in the Stevenson Theatre of the British Museum on **Friday November 6th 2015**. Speakers will include British Museum curators involved in the exhibition and will include free entry to the exhibition on the day/evening.

Full conference details will appear in the July *Lucerna* but make sure you keep November 6th free in your diary!

## SPRING MEETING 2016

Philip Rahtz lecture theatre, Kings Manor, York  
18th–19th March 2016

Another date for the diary is the 2016 spring meeting which will be jointly hosted with the Department of Archaeology, University of York.

## SMILE PLEASE! RFG TO GO ON FILM

Jenny Hall



The RFG is in the process of embarking on an exciting new project designed to act as an educational aid. This project will consist of a series of short films about how to identify objects and will provide an

introduction to different topics and materials. They will act as 'student' guides but they will also be a useful introduction for either those starting off in finds research, those taking part in various voluntary archaeological community and PAS schemes or simply for those wanting to learn more about life in Roman Britain.

The RFG has set up a working party consisting of Lindsay Allason-Jones, Justine Bayley, Hilary Cool, Nina Crummy, Richard Hobbs, Angela Wardle and myself to devise the content. It is proposed that the project will consist of a brief introductory film looking at the importance of finds research and why we study objects. It will then be followed by a series of short films (each 5 minute max) to ultimately come under six themes (Personal, domestic, working, religious, military and public). Films will have a standardised format and will consist of finds specialists talking about objects for that topic and, where helpful, handling replicas to show how some objects worked or with insets showing replica-makers at work. If you recognise the proposed themes, you'll see that they tie in with the chapters in *Artefacts in Roman Britain* (Lindsay Allason-Jones, ed., 2011, CUP) and the Crummy categories in the Colchester small finds report (CAR 2).

### A collaborative venture

This will be a long-term project with films being added when specialists, objects and film facilities are available. We are already talking to two university departments, Newcastle and Reading, who are interested in collaborating with the RFG in this venture. Indeed, Newcastle has offered filming facilities (our thanks go to Ian Haynes of the University of Newcastle) and we hope to start on the introductory film with them in the near future. Talks are also proceeding with Hella Eckardt about how we can work with the University of Reading. And

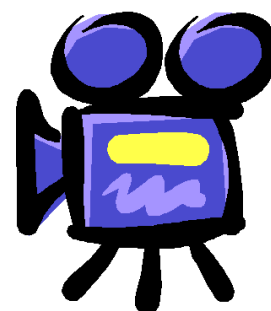
thanks also to Richard Hobbs, the British Museum has also offered use of their Roman collection for filming at one of their stores.

### Why are we doing this?

The group does not have sufficient funds to publish numerous catalogues and our finds specialists are too busy to write them, so we thought that finding academic partners and putting the information on film was an easier way of making the information more accessible. A number of specialists have already agreed to help with different topics.

It is also hoped that the films will be backed up by an extensive bibliography using the RFG website to provide links to other references. We would appreciate members' assistance with useful references and online links that we can include. I have asked for these in earlier copies of *Lucerna* with no response so, **please, please**, help us to make the RFG the place to go for information!

The RFG website will also endeavour to become the central source for links to Roman finds, be it films/videos, pdfs of out-of-print catalogues or published references, enabling students to see the range of resources available. We may be knocking on your door (not literally!) to ask you to participate so please support the RFG in this exciting venture as it should benefit all RFG members. So, lights, camera, ACTION ..... and check the website for progress reports!



## BOOKS

### *The Roman Water Pump - Unique evidence for Roman mastery of mechanical engineering*

by Richard Stein

Monographies Instrumentum 48, 2014. 378p, 163 illustrations. ISBN: 978-2-35518-040-8. 74 € + 7 € p&p.

contact@editions-monique-mergoil.com

Roman water pumps were used to raise water from wells, and, very importantly, as portable pumps to fight fires. The earlier examples are of bronze, but the Greek design was cleverly re-engineered to make pumps easier and cheaper to make and maintain by

cutting apertures in a wooden block and plugging their extremities to make internal spaces pressure-proof.

Eighteen wooden pumps are known; they date to the 2nd–4th c. AD. Remains of thirteen survive. This work is based on examination of the remains, the records of all eighteen and ancient texts. It describes their finding, location, use, and dating; and their construction, dimensions, operation and performance. It explains their generic design, the features of each part, the driving mechanism and the operating cycle.

The water pump is the only Roman machine of which we have such substantial remains and provides unique evidence for Roman mastery of mechanical engineering.

**Early Iron in Europe** by Brigitte Cech and Thilo Rehren (eds)  
Monographies Instrumentum 50, 2014, 300p, 20 plates. ISBN: 978-2-35518-041-5. 56 € + 7 € p&p.  
contact@editions-monique-mergoil.com

This volume contains a collection of 22 papers given at a conference of the same name at Hüttenberg, Austria in 2008. They cover a variety of topics on the production and distribution of iron in Europe, including three papers from Britain:

Peter Halkon — Iron and the Parisi – socio-economic and ritual aspects of the iron industry in Roman East Yorkshire, UK

Tim Young — Roman military control on iron-making in South Wales

Jeremy Hodgkinson — Waste heaps as a potential indicator of regional iron production and organisation: An example from south-east Roman Britain

**A Late Roman Town House and its Environs. The excavations of C.D. Drew and K.C. Collingwood Selby in Colliton Park, Dorchester, Dorset 1938–8** by Emma Durham and Michael Fulford  
Britannia Monograph Series No. 26, 2014, p436, 214 figs (some colour), £36. ISBN: 978-0-907764-39-7

This report publishes the 1937–8 excavations in Colliton Park, Dorchester, Dorset, which revealed one of the best preserved late Roman town houses so far discovered in Roman Britain. Extensively decorated with mosaics, the building has recently

been re-displayed in a new cover building by Dorset County Council.

The volume provides a summary of the development of Roman occupation at Colliton Park, but the primary focus is to publish the large and varied finds assemblage from the site. Although it was not possible to examine the coarse pottery, the samian is reported upon, along with the plaster, glass, coins, copper alloy, iron, lead, ceramic, shale, worked bone and stone objects.

## CONFERENCES AND EVENTS

### 25th Theoretical Roman Archaeology Conference

University of Leicester  
27–29 March 2015

Following on from the success of our session at RAC/TRAC last year, the RFG will be sponsoring a session this year at TRAC. The session is titled **Interdisciplinary Approaches to Roman Artefacts** (RFG session) and will be chaired by Ellen Swift. It will be on Saturday afternoon from 2 to 5.30pm (Session 2).

#### Abstract

The Roman Finds Group has an eclectic base comprising field archaeologists, materials scientists, museum curators and educators, experimental archaeologists, academics, and many others. As such we would like to promote an interdisciplinary approach to Roman artefact studies, drawing on the diverse range of knowledge and expertise that exists in material-based studies. The contribution of anthropology is long-standing in the interpretation of archaeological artefacts, however, many other disciplines also have a material focus. This session particularly encourages theoretically-informed contributions that consider the material of Roman artefacts from a wider perspective, e.g. that of art and design, museum studies, materials science, craft experience, or experimental reconstruction.

Other sessions which may be of interest to RFG members include:

### Charmed, I'm sure: Roman magic – old theory, new approaches

Adam Parker, York Museums Trust

**Contextualising coins, assembling contexts and interrogating agency**

Adrian Chadwick & Adam Rogers, University of Leicester & Eleanor Ghey, British Museum

**Socks & sandals: historical fiction as archaeological technique?**

Daan van Helden, University of Leicester & Rob Witcher, University of Durham

**Integrating Environmental and Theoretical Roman Archaeology** *Sponsored by the Association for Environmental Archaeology*

Lisa Lodwick, University of Oxford & James Morris, University of Central Lancashire

Details of the conference can be found at:  
<http://trac.org.uk/conferences/trac2015/>

Members who don't wish to attend the whole conference, but are interested in the RFG session can apply to attend only on Saturday.

**The Rural Settlement of Roman England: from regional perspectives to national synthesis**

University of Reading  
14th April 2015

Over the last three years the Department of Archaeology at the University of Reading and Cotswold Archaeology have been collaborating on a major project examining regional and chronological variation in Roman rural settlement through analysis of farm layouts, domestic architecture, agricultural practice and burial traditions. This will allow us to assess the integration of settlements in different parts of Britain with the Roman provincial economy and provide a new characterisation of the Romano-British countryside.

A free one day conference presenting initial results from the project will be held at Reading. For further information and to book go to  
<http://www.reading.ac.uk/archaeology/research/roman-rural-settlement/>