

# LUCERNA



THE ROMAN FINDS GROUP  
NEWSLETTER

Newsletter 49, July 2015

# Lucerna

Roman Finds Group  
Newsletter 49

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## Editorial

Hello, and welcome to *Lucerna* 49. I'd just like to start this edition by giving a special mention to Emma Durham who, having held the post since 2008, recently stepped down as newsletter editor. Under her guidance *Lucerna* grew as a key source for all the latest news and research within the RFG and the wider field of Roman finds. I'm sure you'll all join me in thanking Emma for her efforts.

My name is Matt and I took over editor duties from Emma at this year's RFG AGM in Newcastle. I am currently a PhD student at the University of Reading where my research examines the pipeclay figurines recovered from Britain. As your new editor I very much look forward to continuing the excellent work of my predecessors and maintaining *Lucerna*'s position as the first stop for all those interested in Roman finds. With this in mind, and to celebrate our 50<sup>th</sup> edition, you will see some changes to the next *Lucerna*, but please keep sending in your notes, mystery objects and articles!

After a few important notices (please pay particular attention to the new date of Friday 1<sup>st</sup> and Saturday 2<sup>nd</sup> April 2016 for the RFG Spring Meeting), this edition gets underway with an interesting piece on *Bügelzangen* and related objects courtesy of Owen Humphreys and Michael Marshall before a look at two newly discovered fish objects from Malton. We also have summaries of the excellent array of papers given at this year's RFG Spring Conference held with the Centre for Interdisciplinary Artefact Studies at Newcastle University in March and a look at some new finds provided by the PAS. You may also have seen that this issue is accompanied by a brand new RFG Datasheet (no. 5) kindly provided by Frances McIntosh who examines Wirral brooches in Britain.

A great many thanks to all those who contributed to this edition – *Lucerna* could not happen without you. I look forward to working with many more of you in the future and hope you enjoy the read.

## The Roman Finds Group Committee

Following the constitution agreed on 17 March 2015, the Roman Finds Group committee until the next AGM in March 2016 are:

**Chairman:** Justine Bayley  
mail@justine-bayley.co.uk

**Treasurer:** Jenny Hall  
jenny.m.hall@hotmail.com

**Minutes Secretary:** Evan Chapman  
Evan.Chapman@museumwales.ac.uk

**Membership Secretary:** Angela Wardle  
awardle@waitrose.com

**Communications Secretary (and Website Manager):** Nicola Hembrey  
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**Meetings Co-ordinator:** Stephen Greep  
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**Lucerna Editor:** Matt Fittock  
m.g.fittock@pgr.reading.ac.uk

**Datasheet Editor:** Gill Dunn  
gill.dunn@cheshirewestandchester.gov.uk

### Committee Members:

Ellen Swift - E.V.Swift@kent.ac.uk

Jörn Schuster - j.schuster@smallfinds.org.uk

Sally Worrell - s.worrell@ucl.ac.uk

**Co-opted Member:** Roy Friendship-Taylor  
roy@friendship-taylor.freeserve.co.uk

## Increase in Membership Subscriptions

In order to achieve the various projects that the RFG committee have proposed (the RFG Constitution was passed at the Newcastle AGM), members voted to increase the subs from £8 (£11 joint) to £12 (£15 joint). It was also agreed that the subscription year should start in January of each year. October has proved a problem for some members remembering that subscriptions are due! This means that the next

subs are due on January 1st 2016, giving members 3 months free for the end of this year!

Standing orders currently run from October and I am happy to leave this arrangement if members prefer to pay then. Over the summer, I will be writing to members (who pay by standing order) to ask them about their preference as they will need to notify their bank both of the increase and if they wish to change payment to January. However, Angela & I would be happy to receive subs from members from October onwards if some members prefer to remain paying in the autumn rather than paying out at the painful post-Christmas time of year!

Jenny Hall  
RFG Treasurer

## 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](mailto:awardle@waitrose.com) and I will update my records.

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

## 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 #rfg2015 #rfg2014 etc, so that people from across the world can attend ‘virtually’. We recently welcomed our 736th follower! Do join us! @RomanFindsGrp

### New 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 recently-revamped website [www.romanfindsgroup.org.uk](http://www.romanfindsgroup.org.uk), which contains more information, as well as some beautiful images. Our members’ area will shortly be added, allowing members digital access to *Lucerna* and Datasheets. 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 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.

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Publications Co-ordinator  
Historic Environment Service, 27 Grosvenor Street,  
Chester, Cheshire CH1 2DD

e-mail: [gill.dunn@cheshirewestandchester.gov.uk](mailto:gill.dunn@cheshirewestandchester.gov.uk)

## Notes for Contributors

Contributions to *Lucerna* are always welcome. Whether you’re a student, academic, curator or hobbyist, the Roman Finds Group is keen to attract, encourage and publish new and existing research on Roman finds to spread the word about current work

and help forge valuable links with fellow members with similar skills, knowledge and expertise. As well as full research articles and shorter notes, we are 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 studies? Whatever the case, please don't hesitate about contributing - we would be delighted to hear from you!

If you wish to contribute, all submissions should be sent as an attachment by e-mail to Matthew Fittock (*Lucerna* Editor) at [m.g.fittock@pgr.reading.ac.uk](mailto:m.g.fittock@pgr.reading.ac.uk).

Submissions must be word-processed on Microsoft Word or compatible software, with the author's name and email address at the beginning and a full bibliography at the end. Images should be provided as separate files (JPEG or TIFF) and captions in a separate document. Images in colour will appear as black and white in print and colour online. There is no strict word limit but contributors should contact the editor to discuss longer articles. Submissions can be made at any time during the year in anticipation of a January or July release, but please contact the editor in advance if you wish to discuss scheduling further.

Submissions can be made by post to: Matthew Fittock, Department of Archaeology, University of Reading, Whiteknights Box 227, Reading, Berkshire, RG6 6AB. Articles and images by post should be provided on CD-ROM but please contact the editor prior to submission if this is a problem.

## Upcoming RFG Meetings

### Advance Notice: Celts Conference

The British Museum  
Friday 6th November 2015

A joint RFG & Later Prehistoric Finds Group (LPFG) conference, to coincide with the Celts exhibition at the British Museum, will be held on November 6th, 2015 in the Stevenson Theatre from 10am – 4.30pm.

The exhibition is a BM/NMS partnership and will be running at the British Museum from September 2015 – January 2016. It then moves to Edinburgh for March – September 2016.

Speakers will consider the main periods covered by the exhibition in relation to Celtic art and identity and we hope that there will be tours of the exhibition included in the ticket fee.

The speakers will be:

**Dr Jody Joy**, Senior Curator (Archaeology), Museum of Archaeology & Anthropology, University of Cambridge;

**Dr Julia Farley**, Curator of the European Iron Age Collections, British Museum & lead Curator, the Celts exhibition (BM);

**Professor Colin Haselgrove**, Professor of Archaeology, University of Leicester;

**Dr Fraser Hunter**, Principal Curator, Iron Age & Roman Collections, National Museum of Scotland & Curator, the Celts exhibition (NMS);

**Professor Miranda Aldhouse-Green**, Professor of Archaeology, Cardiff University;

**Dr Martin Goldberg**, Senior Curator, Early Historic & Viking Collections, National Museum of Scotland & Curator, the Celts exhibition (NMS);

**Dr Melanie Giles**, Senior Lecturer in Archaeology, Archaeology: School of Arts, Languages and Cultures, University of Manchester.

Please see the accompanying insert for full details and a booking form.

Jenny Hall  
RFG Treasurer

## Spring Meeting 2016

So as not to coincide with RAC/TRAC 2016 in Rome, the date for the Roman Finds Group Spring Meeting next year has changed and the event will now take place on **Friday 1<sup>st</sup> and Saturday 2<sup>nd</sup> April 2016.**

The location for the meeting has *not* changed and will be jointly hosted with the Department of Archaeology, University of York in the Philip Rahtz Lecture Theatre, Kings Manor, York. However, please make a note of the new dates so as not to miss out. Further details will follow in the next edition of *Lucerna*.

## “The same, but different”: a miscellany of ‘*Bügelzangen*’ and related objects from Roman London

By Owen Humphreys and Michael Marshall

### Introduction

A few years ago Kordula Gostenčnik (2008) published a paper bringing together a group of unusual copper-alloy objects which were identified as *Bügelzangen*, a curious form of three-piece tongs of uncertain function. These comprise a pair of long arms with in-turned jaws at one end and tangs at the other by which they were attached to a bow spring (Figure 1). Recently, as part of our work on the finds from MOLA’s (Museum of London Archaeology) excavations at Bloomberg London and a PhD project on tools from Roman London, the authors have identified at least seven similar objects made of iron which could be arms from tongs of this sort, as well as a number of objects in iron or copper-alloy which seem to be stylistically or functionally related (Figures 2 – 4).

Both projects are on-going but we present some details of these mysterious objects and some of our initial thoughts on them here. To our knowledge these objects have not previously been reported in the British literature and by publishing them we hope to raise awareness of their existence and to share our fascination and frustration! We would also very much appreciate thoughts from other specialists and feedback before our soft fuzzy speculation is nailed down to hard paper in the final publications.

### Previous Literature

The function of these objects has yet to be satisfactorily defined, but a number of proposals have been made over the years based on individual or incomplete examples. These have included probes, pins, rulers, compasses, medical forceps, and household tongs (Gostenčnik 2008, 231). Early discussion (Feugère 1995a) focused on their metrics and on graduations marked by transverse lines along their length, interpreting them as half foot rulers with subdivisions. This argument was picked up by Gostenčnik (1998) in a short note in *Instrumentum* that expanded the corpus of known finds to encompass discoveries from France, Germany, Austria, Italy and Greece. On the basis of more complete composite finds from Pompeii and Mainz (see Bliquez 1988), she argued that these objects were parts of composite tongs (*Zangen*) with a

rounded spring (*Bügel*), the bent ends becoming gripping surfaces / jaws.

The more recent publication of another French find with transverse lines marked on the surface (Barthélemy et Dubois 2007) continued to link these objects closely with measurement and saw them as half foot rulers. However, they also accepted the possibility that they may have functioned as part of tongs or may have been multi-functional objects that could be disassembled and put to use without the spring. Most recently Gostenčnik (2008) brought together a total of 16 objects from continental Europe, introducing the term *Bügelzangen* and discussing their form, decoration, dating, distribution, and possible functions. It is these threads of discussion that will be pursued further in this note.

### The finds from Roman London

Seven iron objects from London seem to meet all the criteria to be arms from *Bügelzangen* (Cat. nos. 1 – 7; Figure 2). These are identifiable / defined by three key features which they share with the copper-alloy continental finds:

1. **Rectangular-sectioned shafts**, which taper and get thinner along their lengths. The degree of taper varies as does the total length of the shafts, but their widest dimensions are mostly within 1mm of each other.
2. **Flat tips / jaws which are bent inwards at an approximate right angle**. Whilst the width of the tip varies between the objects, the length of the bent end is remarkably consistent, fluctuating between 4.5 and 5mm on most of the recorded objects.
3. **Carefully formed tangs**, which step in sharply at the shoulder and taper to a point. On the objects observed in detail the step varied from 0.5-1.5mm. Like the shafts, the tangs display some degree of conformity, being within 1mm of each other in width and thickness.

In addition to these finds we know of a further five objects from the city which seem to be closely related. Two (Cat. nos. 8 & 9; Figure 3) may be incomplete *Bügelzange* arms. Both have similar tangs and shafts, but they are broken before the diagnostic turned in tip / jaw. They both have a wavy decorative line on the shaft. One of these (Cat. no. 9) is made of copper-

alloy and has previously been published as a toilet / medical instrument of uncertain function (Milne and Wardle 1996, 80 – 81, no. 60).

Another iron object (Cat. no. 10; Figure 3) is also very similar in terms of dimensions, especially those of the tang. However, it differs in that the shaft does not taper, and instead terminates in a break which may be a corrosion-filled square socket. Two copper-alloy objects from Magdalensburg, Austria, listed by Gostenčnik as *Bügelzangen* also have this untapering socketed form (2008, nos. 2 and 3). Cat. no. 10 was also examined by Obrecht (2012, 774 – 5, taf 208, no. MoL 97) who identified it as a handle extender (*Verlängerungsstücke*) for long handled spatulas (as Feugère 1995b, type C1; Manning 1985, 31 – 32, type 1) some of which have socketed ends which could fit onto the tangs of these extenders. Obrecht identified other possible ‘extenders’ found with spatulas and styli as part of the Titelberg hoard, but these are slightly different, having the tang but with either broken ends or a short peg at the other end (2012, Taf 206, nos Tb 11 – 13). The purpose of extending spatula handles has not yet been adequately explained, however, and the shared tang shape raises the possibility that they could also function as *tong* arm extenders or as tong arms where interchangeable terminals / jaws could be placed into the sockets.

Finally, two other copper-alloy finds from Bloomberg London (Cat. nos. 11 and 12; Figure 4) have similar tapering rectangular sectioned shafts with bent over tips as on *Bügelzangen*. However, the shafts are noticeably thinner and more ribbon like and Cat. no. 11, the more complete example, does not have the stepped in tang but instead has a stepped in neck with a small scoop / ligula head. Cat. no. 12 is missing this end but the overall form and decoration is so similar that we feel it was also probably a ligula with a scoop head. Medical instruments with scoop heads and (?) sharper bent over ends from Augst, Switzerland have been published as scoop - retractors (Riha 1986, 84 – 6, taf 58, no. 648 and taf 59 no. 658) and a very close parallel for the London finds is published by Milne (1907, Pl.XVIII.4).

## Catalogue

### Tong arms: tangs and bent in ends

*Bloomberg London, EC4*

*(Bryan et al in prep; Marshall and Wardle in prep)*

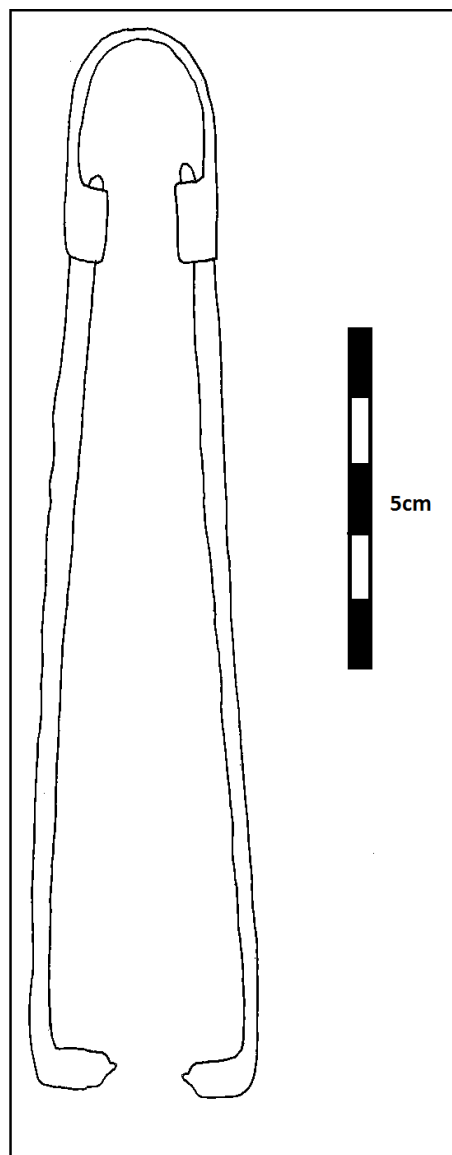


Figure 1. Complete pair of three piece tongs. Schematic diagram based on examples thought to be from Pompeii. Drawn after Bliquez 1988 and Gostenčnik 1998.

1. Iron; (?) complete narrowed tang with cut or squared off end; rectangular sectioned tapering shaft, continuous wavy line of zig zag rocker decoration on outer face with sharp transverse line and notched edge on the slightly turned in tip; L 151mm; L tang 19mm; max W tang 4.5mm; max Th tang 2.3mm; W shaft 6mm; Th shaft 3.5mm; W tip 3.8mm. BZY10 <6759>, period 3.1 (early); c AD 65 / 70 – 80.
2. Iron; narrowed tang, rectangular sectioned tapering shaft, traces of wavy line of zig zag rocker decoration on outer face, now bent in two places, tip turned in; L 168mm (if



Figure 2. Tong arms from Roman London (Cat. nos. 4 – 7).

straight); L tang 23.5mm, W tang 5.3mm;  
Th tang 3mm; max W 7.4mm, max Th  
3.8mm; L tip 6.5mm; W tip 4mm  
BZY10 <6756>, period 3.1 (late); c AD 80  
– 90 / 95.

3. Iron; narrowed tang, rectangular sectioned  
tapering shaft, traces of transverse lines and  
opposing pairs of notches towards the tip,  
tip bent in, possibly slightly damaged.; L

202mm; L tang 31mm; max W tang 6.5mm;  
max Th tang 3.8mm; max W 8mm; max Th  
5mm.  
BZY10 <2367>, period 5.1; c AD 125 – 170.

4. Iron; narrowed tang, rectangular sectioned  
tapering shaft, transverse lines and notched  
edge decoration on outer face; turned in tip. L  
189.5mm; L if straight 195mm; max W  
7mm; max Th 5mm; W of tip 3.5mm; L of

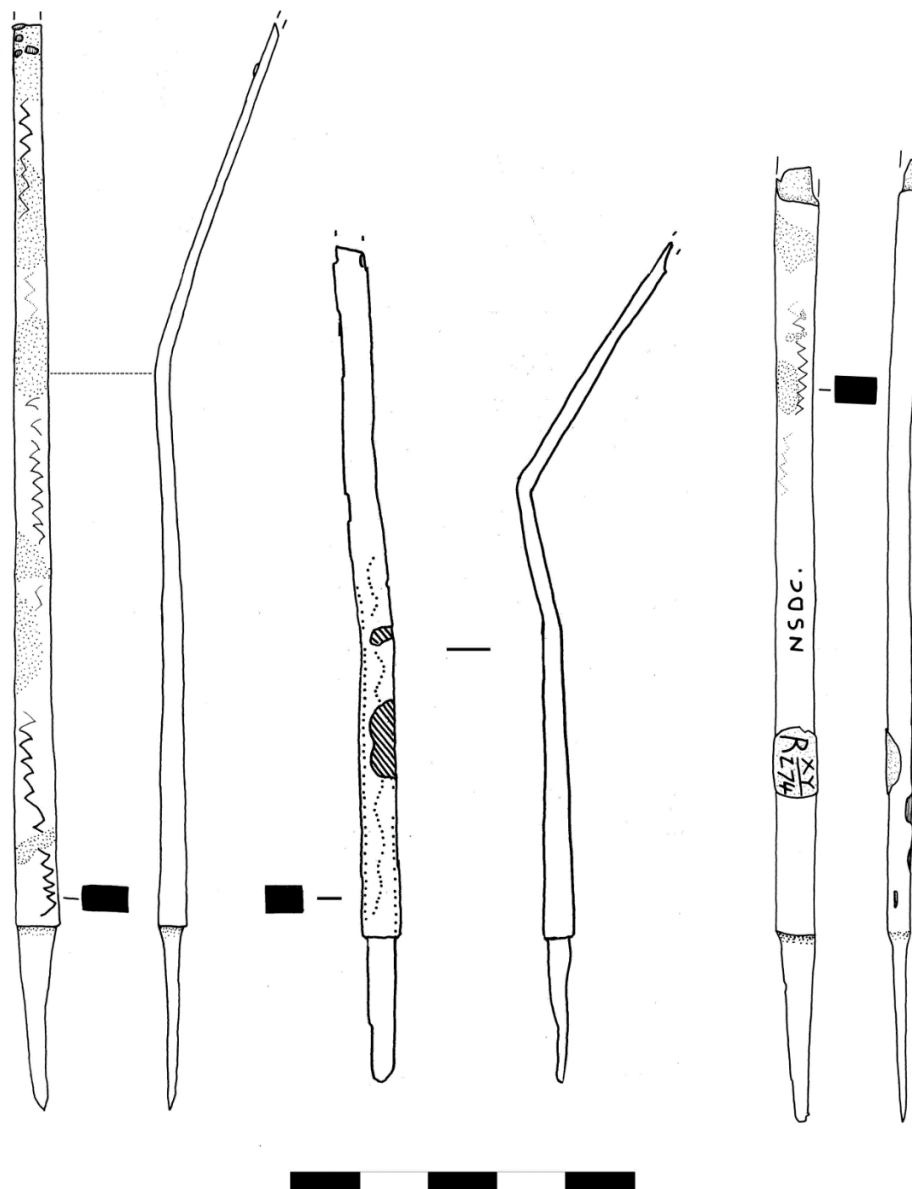


Figure 3. Possible tong arms and socketed 'extenders' from Roman London (Cat. nos. 8 – 10).

tang 18.4mm; W of tang 5.5mm; Th of tang 3.5mm.

BZY10 <364>, not well stratified; but probably mid-1st – 2nd C AD based on other dates from trench.

*Midland Bank, 3-5 Princes Street, Poultry, Bank, London, EC2*

5. Iron; narrowed tang, rectangular sectioned tapering shaft, faint lines and notches on outer face, tip bent in at 90 degrees; L 160mm; L shaft 139mm; W shaft 6mm; Th shaft 4mm; L tang 21mm; W tang 4.5mm; Th tang 3mm.  
MoL Acc. 13401, unstratified.

*Moorgate Street, Moorgate, London, EC2*

6. Iron; narrowed tang, rectangular sectioned tapering shaft, decorated with incised lines and notched edges, tip bent inwards at 90 degrees; L 174mm; L shaft 146mm; W shaft 6.5mm; Th shaft 4.5mm; L tang 28mm; W tang 6mm; Th tang 4mm.  
MoL Acc. A1911, unstratified.

*National Safe Deposit Company site, 1 Queen Victoria Street, Mansion House, London, EC4 (Puleston and Price 1873)*

7. Iron; narrowed tang, rectangular sectioned shaft tapering to tip, with faint zig-zag decoration on outer face, tip bent in at 90



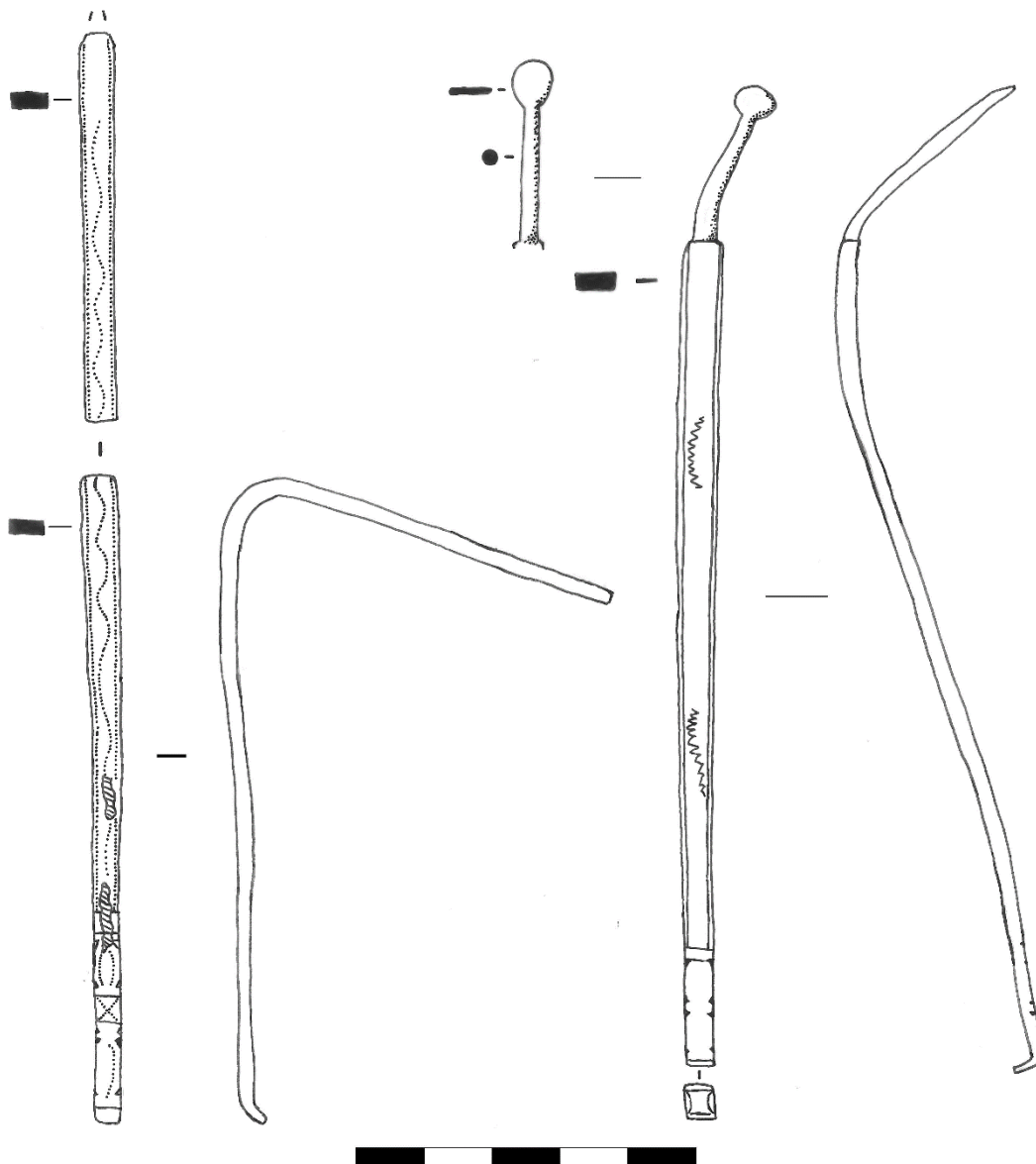


Figure 4: Toilet or medical instruments with scoop heads and bent in ends from Roman London (Cat. nos. 12 and 11).

degrees; L 187 mm; L shaft 160mm; W shaft 6.5mm; Th shaft 3.5mm; L tang 26mm; W tang 4mm; Th tang 2mm. MoL Acc.20298, unstratified.

Tong arms or 'extenders': tangs and broken ends

*Bank of England, Threadneedle Street, EC2*

8. Iron; narrowed tang, rectangular sectioned tapering shaft, now bent, with several traces of zig-zag scoll on outer face, missing tip; L (159)mm; L shaft (133)mm; W shaft 6.5mm; Th shaft 4mm; L tang 26mm; W tang 5.5mm; Th tang 3mm. MoL Acc. 16377, unstratified.

*Leadenhall Court, London, EC3*  
(Milne and Wardle 1996)

9. Copper-alloy; missing the tip, narrowed tang, rectangular sectioned shaft, now bent, with punched dot borders and scroll on exterior face; surviving L (126)mm; max W 5.3mm; max Th 4.4mm; L tang 21mm; W tang 4mm; Th tang 3mm. LCT84 <2225>, period 2; c AD 65 – 75.

Socketed 'extender': tang and (?) socketed end

*National Safe Deposit Company site, 1 Queen Victoria Street, Mansion House, London, EC4*  
(Puleston and Price 1873)

10. Iron; narrowed tang, rectangular sectioned shaft, traces of scroll or zig-zag decoration, expanding slightly along length, broken end, perhaps corroded socket; surviving L (139)mm; surviving L shaft (112)mm; W shaft 6mm; Th shaft 3.5mm; L tang 27mm; W tang 5mm; Th tang 2.3mm.  
MoL Acc. 3691, unstratified.

#### Toilet / medical instruments: scoop head and bent in ends

*Bloomberg London, EC4*

*(Watson et al in prep; Marshall and Wardle in prep)*

11. Copper-alloy; scoop head, narrow neck, sharp shoulder before rectangular sectioned tapering shaft, the tip bent over at 90 degrees, decorated with sinuous wave of zig-zag rocker decoration, transverse grooves and notched edges at tip; L (as straight) 157mm; L as bent 142mm; Diam head 6mm; max W handle 6mm; max Th handle 2.5mm; L neck and head 34mm.  
BZY10 <4028>, period 3.1 (early) c AD 65 / 70 – 80
12. Copper-alloy; broken off head but probably as Cat. no. 11, rectangular sectioned tapering shaft, the tip bent over at 90 degrees, decorated with sinuous wave of punched dot decoration; transverse grooves and edge notches near tip and punched oval and X motifs; surviving L (152)mm; max surviving W (5)mm; max surviving Th 1.7mm.  
BZY10 <8914> period 2.3 (late), c AD 60 – 65 / 70.

#### **Decoration and Design**

It is clear that there are several types of decoration, but this is not always easy to see on the iron finds, some of which are worn or corroded and not all of which have been conserved yet. This may have some significance in terms of chronology, workshop groups or their relationship to other types of objects. None of the London finds have the elaborate zoomorphic terminals seen on some continental examples (Gostenčnik 2008) but all or almost all seemingly exhibit surface decoration of some kind on one face of the shaft. Together with the bent tips these imply that these objects have a specific

orientation and, if incorporated within composite *Bügelzangen*, would face outwards.

Transverse incised lines and pairs of large edge notches appear on many of the finds (e.g. Cat. nos. 1 and 3 – 6). This combination is not closely paralleled amongst the continental finds, but similar decoration also appears on the necks / shafts of some iron spatulas with long socketed handles from London (as described above; see Obrecht 2012, Taf 208). The decoration at the tips of the copper-alloy ligulae (Cat. nos. 11 and 12) are somewhat comparable but the notches create more formal lozenge shapes, some infilled with punched dot motifs. There is little clear evidence that the transverse lines relate to standard measurements like those on some bronze continental finds (see below). A combination of closely spaced fine edge notches and transverse lines appears on some continental objects, including finds with both socketed (Gostenčnik 2008, nos. 2 and 3) and turned in ends (Barthélemy et Dubois 2007). These seem rather different to the broad notches found in London, although Obrecht (2012, 774) saw a few very fine notches cut into the edges of the spatula extender (Cat. no. 10.) and these also appear on the socketed spatulas and extenders from the Titelberg hoard (Obrecht 2012, Taf 206).

Wavy lines / scrolls appear on several finds being executed with zig-zags (Cat. nos. 1, 2, 7, 8, 10 and 11) or punched dots (Cat. nos. 9 and 12). The zig zag lines were created with a hand-held engraving tool using a 'rocked', 'rolled' or 'walked' motion (Lowery et al. 1971). This type of decoration does not commonly survive on ironwork but is well known on a wide range of copper-alloy objects both in Britain and on the continent. Punched dot decoration is again common on both sides of the channel, and though less frequently identified on ironwork, again appears on spatulas and other related finds.

#### **Chronology and Context**

Gostenčnik dates *Bügelzangen* to the late Republican / early Imperial period (Gostenčnik 2008, 238 – 239). The continental dating evidence is sparse but fairly consistent. These include 1st century BC / AD finds from Magdalensberg and Besançon as well as the more complete finds thought to be from Pompeii and thus presumably deposited by AD 79 (ibid). To this we can add one thought to date to the 1st century BC from Mâcon (Barthélemy et Dubois 2007), not in her corpus. Of course if it is accepted that more than one form of object (tongs, extenders etc) may be

represented, then it is not certain if all the types need be precisely contemporary.

The iron finds described here are slightly different but seem to be functionally comparable, extending the distribution of these tongs to Britain, and supporting the continued use of the type after AD 43. The number known from London suggests that they remained relatively popular after the foundation of the city in c. AD 47/8 – 52 (Hill and Rowsome 2011, 22-26; Wallace 2014, 20-22) and this is borne out by the stratified examples. Two (Cat. nos. 1 and 2) were deposited in late Neronian or Flavian contexts. The latest known example (Cat. no. 4) comes from a fluvial deposit in a mid-2nd century Walbrook channel, but it is similar to the earlier dated pieces and this context also produced some residual / redeposited finds. These include a simple one-piece brooch and early coins, including some Claudian copies which, in London at least, seem to have largely passed out of circulation before the end of the 1st century AD (J Bowsher pers. comm.). As such, while the use of the type from at least the mid-1st century BC through into the late 1st century AD seems sure, their survival into the 2nd century is less

certain. The three related London copper-alloy finds (Cat. nos. 9, 11 and 12) are again early, coming from Neronian or Flavian contexts.

The distribution of the London finds is concentrated on the Walbrook valley, supporting this early dating (Figure 5). Whilst uncritically ascribing a mid-1st – 2nd century AD date to individual unstratified ‘Walbrook finds’, as was sometimes done in the past, should be avoided, assemblages from the area have a strong early emphasis and objects found in some quantity can normally be associated with the concentration of waterlogged early Roman deposits in the Middle Walbrook area, which favour the preservation of metalwork. However, corroded and fragmentary components found elsewhere in the city would be much harder to identify.

The lack of finds from elsewhere in Britain is striking and, if real, may reflect either the early dating of these objects, some highly specialist / restricted function, or London’s particularly close links with continental Europe. The continental distribution may not be comprehensive but Gostenčnik’s corpus as it stands has an interestingly central / southern European

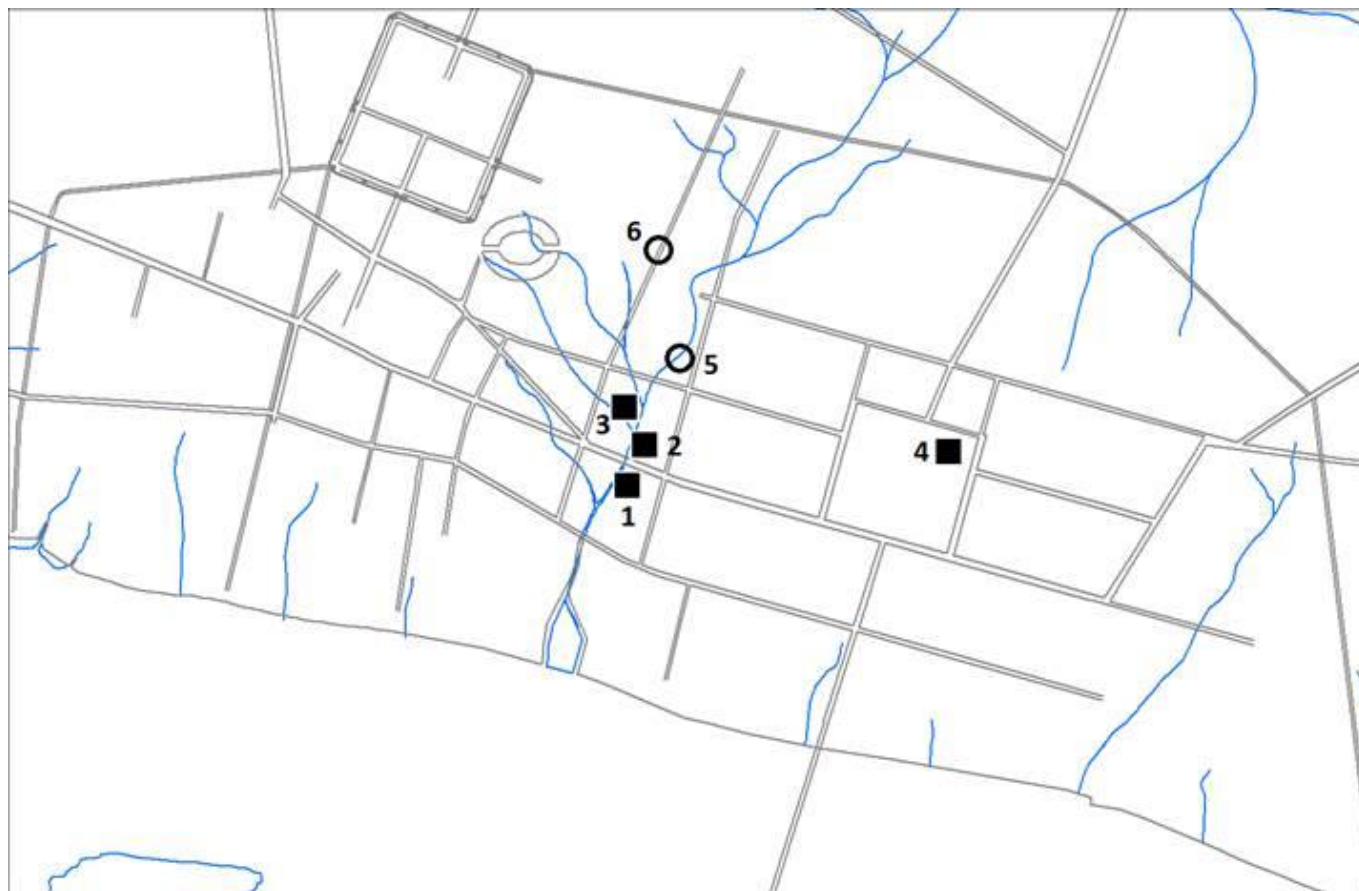


Figure 5: Site locations within Roman London. Key: solid squares = site locations; hollow circles = approximate find spots. 1. Bloomberg London; 2. National Safe Deposit Company site; 3. Midlands Bank; 4. Leadenhall Court; 5. Bank of England; 6. Moorgate.

emphasis, which could reflect a chronological disjuncture between these finds and the British examples, or, if they were used on the continent until the late 1st or 2nd century AD then this distribution, particularly their sparsity on the *limes*, may perhaps indicate that the continental links of the London finds are civilian rather than military in character.

## Function

The London objects lack the standardised dimensions of Feugère's (1995a) examples, and could only be related to these if measurements in semi-*digiti* and semi-*unciae* were accepted, and a tolerance of 2mm applied. However, this system allows so much flexibility that almost any random measurement could fit into the system. Looking at whole measurements, only the total length of Cat. no. 7 (187mm, 10 *digiti*) and the length of the shaft of Cat. no. 6 (146mm, half a foot) obviously fit this scheme, and then only when the tolerance is applied. Looking at the decoration, only one line on Cat. no. 6, which sits one *uncia* from the bent tip, obviously fits this scheme.

Whilst it is possible that some examples were laid out with standardised measuring tools, this is not obviously the case and they cannot all have functioned as measuring tools. The differences between the London finds and scaled examples elsewhere (Figure 6) may in part relate to the (?mostly freehand) manufacture of wrought iron objects, as opposed to the casting of copper-alloy objects based on carefully measured models / moulds. If the London iron finds are accepted as belonging to the same class of object as the non-ferrous examples then they demonstrate that precisely scaled arms were not a defining feature of *Bügelzangen* and that measuring was at best a secondary function.

An example with straight (broken?) tips from Mainz was interpreted as a pair of compasses (Gostenčnik 2008: 237), but this explanation does not fit the more numerous examples with surviving bent ends which are seen on the complete Pompeii finds, which are fairly convincingly seen as tongs. We would also very much like to examine one of the surviving composite examples in person as the method of manufacture seems unnecessarily complex, and these are superficially rather unwieldy compared to one piece

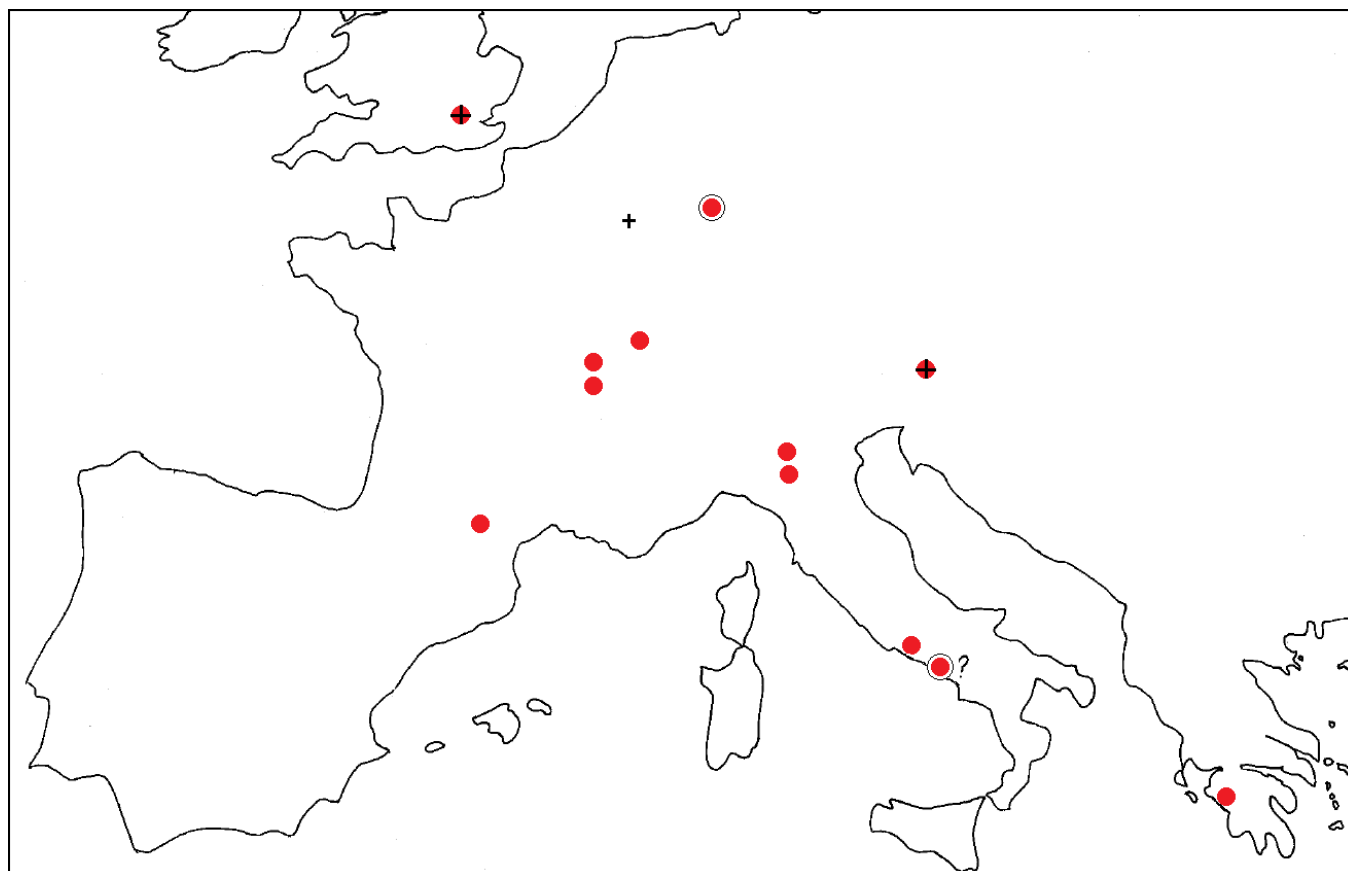


Figure 6. Preliminary sketch distribution map of Bugelzangen and related finds (as known to the authors in spring 2015; after Gostenčnik 2008 with additions). Circles: tong arms; Circles with border: tongs with surviving springs; Black crosses: socketed arms and other 'extenders'.

tweezers and medical tongs / forceps / retractors on one hand, or two piece pivoted tongs on the other.

The finds vary quite significantly in length and we need not assume a single fixed purpose. Their relatively light weight character and small jaws seem to rule out any heavy duty function for gripping objects in craft working. Relatively few craft tools are decorated and the consistent presence of decoration may hint at something in the domestic or toilet / medical sphere. The arms seem wide and very unwieldy compared to medical forceps, however (e.g. Jackson 2011, 254 – 255, fig 18). Writing equipment is one of the few other areas of material culture where ironwork is quite regularly decorated, but the decorative repertoire of styli, and most of the objects accepted as wax spatulas, is subtly different. If a measuring / ruler function is rejected then it is hard to think of a role amongst writing paraphernalia for these objects, individually or as tongs.

Some kind of link with long handled spatulas seems possible in terms of both decoration and the interlocking tongs and sockets. In addition to the Titelberg hoard association, the British spatula distribution, heavily concentrated in London and particularly the Walbrook valley, may support this. Sadly, the function of these objects, regarded by Feugère (1995) as wax spatulas and by Manning (1985) as modelling tools is also uncertain. If their handles really could be extended one or more times they become stranger yet. Superficially, a long handled spatula with extender might begin to resemble the equally mysterious ‘divining rods’ with spatulate ends from the Stanway, Essex doctor’s grave (Crummy 2007) but they are less substantial and have not been found in similar sets. Here we are beginning to grasp at straws!

Whilst Gostenčnik (2008) considers it likely that the tongs of *Bügelzangen* were soldered in place for stability, their careful shaping could imply that the arms were designed to be removed from the spring and no example examined by us shows signs of solder. If so they could have been used separately as measuring implements, toilet / medical instruments, ‘spatula handle extenders’ etc. In the case of the socketed ‘extender’ arms, perhaps interchangeable terminals could be attached to customise them further. Our problems are therefore multiplied, with whatever multifarious and arcane functions these components had individually (or in combination), added to the perhaps more limited but equally

arcane way in which *Bügelzangen* functioned as tongs!

## Conclusions

By introducing these finds from London we have extended the distribution of ‘*Bügelzangen*’ to Britain and firmly into the 2<sup>nd</sup> half of the 1<sup>st</sup> century AD. We have significantly increased the corpus of known examples and expanded the repertoire to include iron and new variants of form and decoration. We have introduced some new evidence, tried to better situate these objects in the context of Roman material culture and flagged up some new connections / ideas. We have tentatively delineated at least three classes of related object which may have had various different functions in their own right, but some of which probably also served as elements of composite tongs. Unfortunately, in doing so we suspect we have further muddied waters which were already somewhat on the opaque and uninviting side.

We hope that with exposure to a wider audience the distribution of these overlapping and tightly inter-related classes of finds will become clearer. At present the London assemblage appears isolated within Britannia and, while there may be several biasing factors, there can be no doubt that this is a significant concentration; currently the biggest assemblage in the Empire. Early London has been characterised as heavily ‘Romanised’ and initially dependant on material culture imported from the continent (Hill and Rowsome 2011, 439). These unusual, specialised objects may further reinforce these continental connections although some of the London *Bügelzangen* are distinct enough, especially in terms of material and decoration, that they may well have been made locally albeit for some imported practice.

Detailed comparative study in terms of decoration as well as chronological / spatial and social distribution may help us to better understand these objects and to more closely weave them into our picture of Roman material culture. A more detailed consideration of the functional aspects of these links will be aided by more detailed metric work which may allow distinct groups to emerge. In particular the depth of spatula and extender sockets should be compared to the lengths of various tongs to determine compatibility. More finds from stratified contexts would be welcomed and the examples from Bloomberg London fall into this category, but a preliminary check suggests that they come from mixed assemblages of domestic and industrial waste rather than from hoards, graves or other deliberately selected closed groups where



associations might be presumed to be more meaningful.

Our continuing work on the London finds may provide some answers. In the meantime we would be grateful for any extra information or perspectives that the Roman Finds Group may be able to provide.

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## Two Small Fish from Malton

By Sandra Garside-Neville

Two small fish, possibly decorative plaques or pendants, have been found in an enclosure in Malton, North Yorkshire and may have a military association (Figure 7). Found in the same context and dating from 2nd-3rd century, they are stylistically similar but slightly different in size. There is no sign of wear around the holes or any staining to suggest a metallic method of pinning or hanging.



Figure 7. Two small fish, possibly decorative plaques or pendants from an enclosure in Malton, North Yorkshire.

One piece is 43mm long, 16mm wide and 3mm thick. The hole which is 7mm from the top edge, has been drilled straight through, front to back. The fish has a long nose, which might be imitating that of a dolphin.

The other piece is 38mm long, 15mm wide (though damaged along one edge) and 4mm thick. As with the first piece, the hole is 7mm from the top and has been drilled front to back.

These objects have broad parallels as detailed by Greep (*Lucerna* 2012, 8-11 & 2013, 13), but those have holes drilled vertically through the body of the fish. The closest fit in style is from Verulamium (St Albans) where there is a lot more detail compared to the rest, particularly around the head. However, that piece is larger than those from Malton.

## **The Roman Finds Group Conference 2015: Finds from the Roman North and Beyond**

University of Newcastle  
16-17<sup>th</sup> March 2015

This year the Roman Finds Group Spring Meeting was jointly hosted by the RFG and the Centre for Interdisciplinary Artefact Studies at Newcastle University: [ncl.ac.uk/historical/about/facilities/cias.htm](http://ncl.ac.uk/historical/about/facilities/cias.htm). The two day event included four sessions of papers, with fourteen illustrated talks on various aspects of finds from sites throughout the north and a visit to Segedunum Roman Fort, Baths and Museum.

The conference was a great success and the RFG would like to thank all those who presented and attended. The wide range of interesting topics and a full house provided stimulating discussion and show-cased the excellent work on Roman finds being conducted in the north of England. The RFG AGM was also held on the 17<sup>th</sup> March when our new constitution and changes to the committee were formally voted upon and accepted (see pp. 1-2).

A full summary of the papers are presented below. We hope that they demonstrate the breath and depth of what was on offer and encourage more of our members to attend conferences in the future (see p. 3). A special thanks goes to Nicola Hembrey who detailed the entire conference via social media. The full Storify is now available on our Twitter page at: <https://storify.com/RomanFindsGrp/roman-finds-group-spring-meeting-2015>.

## **Session 1: Current Finds Research at The University of Newcastle**

### **The Irchester Bowl, again**

James Gerrard, University of Newcastle

The Irchester Bowl is a relatively well known late Roman and early medieval bronze vessel form. Irchester bowls are usually hemispherical with an in-turned rim and an omphalos base and have typological links to the famous early medieval series of hanging bowls. The paper reviewed the typology, distribution and date of these vessels drawing on new discoveries and forgotten information to present an up-to-date review of this interesting vessel.

The research stemmed from the discovery of a single hanging bowl in the Draper's Garden hoard. The initial identification of the type stemmed from the discovery of a hoard near Irchester in 1874 and it may be a forerunner of an early hanging bowl. The distribution in Britain is traditionally eastern, but extends to the West Country and north Wales. The dating evidence is poor, and mostly by association with other finds. Most examples occur in hoards or as single vessels. Bowls from Bishops Cannery, Devizes, Lincoln and Gloucester (a 1934 discovery) are associated with finds of late 4<sup>th</sup> and very early 5<sup>th</sup> century date.

In summary the new study suggests that the bowls have a wider distribution than previously thought. The dating remains poor but they appear to be late Roman, by association. The links between Irchester bowls and hanging bowls has not yet been fully explored, but early medieval hanging bowls are generally larger than the largest Irchester examples.

### **Clayton; collection, conservator and curator**

Frances McIntosh, University of Newcastle

John Clayton (1792- 1890) was a wealthy lawyer and businessman in Newcastle who used much of his money to purchase stretches of Hadrian's Wall (Figure 8). Once in his possession they were protected from stone robbing and quarrying, were often restored (rebuilt) and many parts were excavated. Through his excavations he accumulated a large collection of Roman material from the Central Sector of Hadrian's Wall. This collection is now cared for by English Heritage and displayed at Chesters Museum (built by Clayton's heir in 1895). Frances' PhD examines the history of the collection, as well as to investigate



Figure 8. John Clayton sat in front of some finds and altars.

specific aspects of the collection to see what can be gained from studying an antiquarian collection.

This paper focussed on the coins within the Clayton Collection as a case study for the challenges involved in working with antiquarian collections. Although the low number of coins has meant that numismatic analysis has been limited, research into the reason for the low number has helped to illuminate differing collections practices, as well as the antiquarian networks in existence in the 19th and early 20th century. In order to analyse material collected in the 19th century, and understand why certain finds were collected or not, the processes at work have to be considered, and the coins offer an example of this methodology. The coins had a long history, passing from Clayton's grandmother, Bridget Atkinson, to his sister, Sarah-Anne and eventually to John.

Items from the Clayton archive have been used to gain an insight into Clayton's interests and expertise, as well as the specialists with whom he corresponded, including Charles Roach-Smith. Correlation of the coin lists in the notebooks with those in the collection proved challenging, particularly as the records showed that many were sold or, as in the case of the collection from Coventina's well, melted down. The research has helped to put John Clayton into the context of his

time, showing just how many people have been linked to this collection.

### **The use and abuse of late Roman artefacts in Transylvania**

Evan Scherer, University of Newcastle

The presence of early Christianity in Transylvania has been a hotly-debated topic over the last two centuries. The evidence has been displayed mainly through a Late Roman numismatic presence in the region, as well as a disparate assemblage of finds ranging from hand-made objects to so called "high-status" finds imported from the far reaches of the Empire.

This paper examined "high-status" finds through a case study of ceramic pilgrim flasks from the monastery of Abu-Mina in modern-day Egypt. By deconstructing the historiography surrounding these artefacts, as well as placing them in their larger context, an attempt has been made to re-address aspects of the material evidence of early Christianity in Transylvania.

The ceramic flasks, which may have been used as ampulla, containing holy water or oil, were made in three phases of production, AD 480–560; 560–610; 610–630 and there are typological differences in these phases. The research has looked at the distribution of the flasks, which have been found mostly in Dacia (Romania), some from sites on the Black Sea, with isolated examples from Hungary, France and Britain (Meols), and also small assemblages of other overtly Christian finds in 7<sup>th</sup> century Romania.

### **Session 2: Finds from South Shields**

#### **A very late Roman furniture-maker's workshop from Arbeia**

Stephen Greep

During excavations of the Commanding Officer's house in the south-east corner of the Roman fort at South Shields (1986-91) a considerable quantity of waste and worked red deer antler was recovered - the largest quantity (at least 22 antlers; around 12kg of material) so far recorded from Roman Britain.

The finds, dated by coins to post AD388, came from a very late context. A large proportion of the antler waste (10 ½ kilos) came from one context and showed the whole range of waste processes. Of the antler, 17 were shed while 5, more unusually, were post-mortem.



The use of bone, antler and ivory as decorative features can be broken down into 5 categories:

1. Veneers stuck onto things like decorative couches, probably imported in the 1st century BC/AD. For example, small fragments of ivory survived from a child's burial at Colchester and from the pre-Flavian Folly Lane burial at St Albans.
2. A thick antler veneer/inlay, primarily used in the 3rd century as shown by cremation burials at Birdoswald and Brougham.
3. Inlaid thin narrow strips and shapes, used in the 4th century.
4. Wider strips and shaped veneers, used from the 4th century onwards. Examples at Winchester and at Richborough, where the veneer was secured by small pegs, are dated to the late 4th/early 5th century.
5. Miscellaneous uses, for example the Richborough dice tower.

The waste products at South Shields showed examples of strips divided into two grooves and others with ring-and-dot decoration. The strips were 1cm wide and ½ cm thick.

Hilary Cool in her book, *Eating & Drinking in Roman Britain* (2006), comments that there was an increase in the consumption of venison which would presumably provide more red deer antler for use. Stephen suggested that, from the waste evidence, this was presumably a carpenter or furniture-maker using antler as a veneer. A workshop in Colchester was dated to post AD375 while at Great Casterton, unfinished examples dated to post AD367. At Gloucester, 2000 examples of finished inlay dated to the early 5th century.

Small pieces of inlay date to from AD350 to the 5th century. For example, a cupboard door from Hayton was made of wood with an antler inlay. Some wooden cupboards have alternate wood and bone hinges. Bone and antler was polished, waxed and inlaid with colour – black (a charcoal and wax substance) and red was used to pick out the dots on dice. Abroad, in the 4th century, boxes were decorated with larger strips while many more thin strips were used in Roman Britain. Great Casterton is the most northerly site to have two-groove strip examples.

In conclusion, although the deposits were disturbed and the waste occurred over a fairly wide area of the site, it clearly represents waste products from the manufacture of wooden furniture. All stages of production are represented, although the major (but not only) final product was small, two-grooved strips well represented from sites elsewhere in Britain. There were no associated working tools. The workshop is dated on coin evidence to post AD388 and represents the latest evidence of furniture manufacture yet recorded from Roman Britain. The furniture-maker, primarily a woodworker, was able to source antler in season and dumped what he did not need. He was working in a Romano-British tradition which is not reflected in finds on the continent.

### **The pipeclay figurines from South Shields in their wider setting**

Matthew Fittock, University of Reading

Pipeclay figurines are an important yet under-examined category of artefacts that provide a valuable insight into the religious lives of those who inhabited Roman Britain. They were first studied in the 19th century by Tudot in 1860, Charles Roach-Smith in 1880 and later by Frank Jenkins in 1977. The animal and human figurines were produced in terracotta workshops located in the Allier Valley and the region around Cologne during the 1st and 2nd centuries AD. The figurines were made in two moulds (the front and back) and coated internally with a liquid slip before the clay was added. Ventilation holes were inserted to prevent the figurines deforming in the kiln and the 'leather-hard' casts were fired at 900-1000°C (cf. Rouvier-Jeanlin 1972; Boekel 1987; Gonzenbach 1995).

There are two types of Venus figurine – Type 1 has drapery flowing over her wrist; Type 2 holds the drapery in her hand. Similarly there are two types of nursing Mother Goddess (Dea Nutrix) figurines – Type 1 holds two babies and Type 2 holds a single infant. Minerva figurines are depicted with a gorgon breastplate and up-ended oblong shield to the goddess' left side but are generally less common than Venus or Dea Nutrix figurines in Britain and Europe.

The figurines from South Shields comprise an important part of the finds recovered from the north of the province. The range of figurine types from the site is limited - there are seven examples including common depictions of Venus x 2, Dea Nutrix x 2 and Minerva x1, with 2 unidentified figures (Figures 9 and 10). One Dea Nutrix figurine had an interesting plinth base inscribed with **SERVAN DVS C(oloniae)**

**C(laudiae) A(rae) A(grippinensis) FECIT** by the craftsman Servandus who operated from a workshop located at the barley market in Cologne during the mid-2nd century. This is a particularly rare find amongst the wider material now available from Roman Britain.

Matt went on to compare the South Shields examples alongside a wider corpus of discoveries from nearby sites, like Benwell (1 Venus and 2 Dea Nutrix) and Wallsend (2 Venus, 4 Dea Nutrix and 4 unknown types). Wallsend is particularly unusual in terms of the number of Dea Nutrix figurines present that could suggest a local preference for this deity in this part of the country but a more complete corpus from this area is needed to verify the pattern.

At South Shields, 4 figurines came from the vicus, 2 from a ditch and 2 from post-Roman contexts, while at Wallsend, 4 came from the fort and 5 from the vicus. By comparison, Caerleon had 17 figurines from the vicus – a similar mixed civilian/military environment – but these Welsh finds come from a range of contexts such as occupation and construction layers, pits, ditches and refuse dumps that suggests a more varied use.



Figure 9. ?Minerva figurine from South Shields. Courtesy Alex Croom.

As part of his ongoing PhD 700 examples have been recorded from Roman Britain, with many more to follow. The majority of these 508 (73%) are deities while 85 are animals and 50 are human forms, highlighting a high level of deity consumption in the province. Of the deities, there are 328 Venus, 103 Dea Nutrix figurines and only 21 Minerva. Rarer depictions include Hercules, Apollo, Mercury, Bacchus, Epona, Juno, Luna and Mars. In addition to the deities there is a wider selection of types. Animals include hens, cockerels, dogs, horses and a

rare lizard, while the human forms encompass men, woman and children, such as a rare gladiator from London and a set of comic figures found in the Colchester child's burial. These rarer figurines are mainly found on the larger urban centres.



Figure 10. Dea Nutrix figurine from South Shields. Courtesy Alex Croom.

Matt's earlier work on the figurines from Roman London showed that 49 came from habitation sites, 28 from the quayside and associated buildings (the trade aspect), 7 from burial contexts and 2 from ritual deposits. He also considered how and where the Venus figurines were broken to see if there were any common practices in the ritual breaking of these figurines. Were they complete or missing the head, torso, body, legs, feet or base? The most common surviving parts of the figurines seem to be the torso, body and legs (i.e. mid-lower body fragments) while upper-body and more complete examples are much less common. These pieces could be ex-votos associated with fertility and ritual healing practices (Fittock 2015).

In conclusion pipeclay figurines were used in a mixed civilian/military setting with a function that was both religious and ritual. A small number were also used as grave goods, some even as heirlooms. The types of figurines from South Shields, Benwell and Wallsend vary only slightly from the Romano-British norm but further work is needed to clarify this.

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### **Finds from the recent excavations in the vicus at South Shields Roman Fort**

Alex Croom, Tyne and Wear Museums Service

The area currently under excavation at the site was placed just outside the south-west corner of the extended fort, with the aim of looking at the defences of the supply base, to see how close the vicus came to the defences, and to find out if the area had been in use before the supply base was constructed.

In the larger area of excavation, the earliest layers, so far, date to the first stone fort (late 2nd century), although activity in the area continued from the late 2nd until the 4th century. Most of the small finds, however, came from 3rd-century deposits. A stone head of a goddess wearing a mural crown with traces of pink on the face and red paint on the lips is one of the notable finds.

In the smaller area, a Colchester brooch was found – these brooches are rare in the north as they date to the first half of the 1st century. Two other examples are also known from the fort. There were two



Figure 11. Fossil from South Shields. Courtesy Alex Croom.



Figure 12. Brooch from South Shields. Courtesy Alex Croom.

different earlier periods below the stone fort which were perhaps from the extra-mural settlement for an earlier fort, the site of which is unknown.

There was an interesting assemblage from the first extension of the fort ditch – leather shoe soles with hobnails, cat and dog skeletons and a defleshed horse skull placed, perhaps ritually, at right-angles to the line of the ditch. There were also 3 fossils, usually used as amulets or consumed as medical powders, and a fragment of whalebone (Figure 13).

In the early 4th century the fort was extended and became a supply base. One area was used for metalworking with the discovery of a small crucible for precious metals, an unfinished silver ring and a fragment of gold. This indicated a possible workshop for gold- and silver-working close to the fort defences that were in use until the mid-3rd century.



Figure 13. Whale bone from South Shields. Courtesy Alex Croom.



There followed an very entertaining keynote speech ‘**Working with Roman Finds**’ by Lindsay Allason-Jones.

Lindsay spoke about how everyone expects to see a write-up of the finds from an excavation in its final report and that many people regard the production and publication of a catalogue as the end of the process. She, for example, is currently working on sculptures for the *Corpus Signorum Imperii Romani* for Hadrian’s Wall. To many finds specialists, however, this is merely the end of Stage One. In recent years much synthetic work has been done on finds and this work is shedding considerable light on the way people lived in the past but it also occasionally offers insights on life in the present.

She explained that Newcastle University has a long track record of working with artefacts and in 2008 it set up the Centre for Interdisciplinary Artefact Studies (CIAS) to take this work further. Much of this activity has involved contributions by scholars from different backgrounds; some, such as conservators and metallurgists, have traditionally worked with archaeologists; some, such as psychiatrists and musicians, have not. Over the years, she has worked with sufferers of depression, musicians and artists and found it a very rewarding experience.

Lindsay then went on to regale the delegates with stories of her work as an historical adviser to film

companies. She used as one example the re-creation of the look of the Roman woman whose skeleton was found in the northern cemetery of Roman London at Spitalfields (Figure 14). She described visiting the make-up artist whose flat held an array of modelled heads awaiting completion. The head had been produced for one of the BBC *Meet the Ancestors* programmes and is now on display at the Museum of London, making a connection for the visitors of today with life and Londoners of 2000 years ago.



Figure 15. Film poster for *The Eagle*.

One film, in particular, *The Eagle* (2011; Figure 15), based on Rosemary Sutcliffe’s *Eagle of the Ninth* and starring Channing Tatum, tested her patience! The book had been inspired by the find of the Silchester eagle in the 1950’s and was much loved by children in the 1960s and 70s. She had various battles with the film researchers about the suitability of armour - much of which was about their desire to re-use costume from such films as *Gladiator* and the *Carry On* series of films - watch the film and check out the leather breastplates (!) and the fact that most shots of him on horseback are only from the knee up as he was wearing spurs. One can just imagine the sort of conversations and discussions that went on!

Understandably, Lindsay’s view is that as archaeology is paid for by the public it is good to present something for those members of the public who might never visit a museum and her work over her years of service in the north have ably demonstrated this.



Figure 14. The Spitalfields Roman woman – reconstructed head (Museum of London).

### **Session 3: Finds from the North**

#### **Cataloguing and analysis of the Roman 'votive' assemblage from Piercebridge, County Durham: an update**

Philippa Walton, University of Oxford

Located between York and the northern frontier, exploration of the River Tees at Piercebridge, County Durham has so far provided approximately 4,000 Roman objects. The site, a small 5x5m<sup>2</sup> section of the river, sits on the line of a Roman bridge structure situated close to a nearby settlement and has been explored by divers over the past few years. The assemblage includes a diverse range of material from jewellery to military artefacts, coinage and medical instruments, and appears to represent a large 'votive' deposit dating predominantly to the mid-Roman period.

The earliest objects include a cosmetic grinder and iron mirror handle that date to the late Iron Age and the early Roman transition, but most of the other finds date to the Roman period (late second to early third centuries AD). Coins (1313 finds) are particularly numerous and provide a good chronology of site use. These are mainly silver rather than bronze and could be reflective of more high-status activity. A number of coins are cut or mutilated in some way. These might have been ritually killed but it's equally possible that people were just offering part of an object to the gods, while pierced coins might have been displayed in some way. Copies and blanks indicate that coins were minted on or near the site, while imported exotic examples include a bronze coin of Juba II of Numidia (25-24 BC).

A number of further finds suggests military activity of some kind on the site. This assemblage includes 57 military belt fittings, 23 pieces of scaled armour and helmet handles, 20 sword fittings – though no actual blades, 10+ parts of shields or spears, four parts of broken bows, arrows and ballistas, 28 pieces of horse harness and a large section of leather tent. 57 seals were also found - the impression from one intaglio suggesting the site was used by the Sixth Legion.

Items of personal adornment include hairpins (105 examples), brooches (129), including knee and zoomorphic types, and finger-rings (51), including intaglios and finger key-rings. Over 100 items of jewellery were also found, many of these being broken or cut up, but it is difficult to know whether

they were deposited as jewellery or pieces of gold. Cosmetic instruments such as nail-cleaners and tweezers, and medical equipment like forceps and spatulas were also found.

Eating and drinking utensils include knives, spoons and an enamelled knife handle, drinking apparatus such as handles, strainers, and vessel mounts, and a collection of Samian and grey pottery wares. Other notable finds include one of the largest collections of lead seals, weights and steel-yards from Britain, a collection of keys and locks, and lighting equipment like a Roman lamp hanger. Furthermore, a miniature spear, figurines (of cupid and a pipeclay Dea Nutrix), curse tablets and various pewter objects form a small group of religious objects.

To conclude, it is difficult to determine whether these objects are votive in nature or merely rubbish disposed of in the river, but the majority look to be ritual. At present the assemblage is being processed as potential treasure before possible museum acquisition. In addition to continued efforts to package, photograph, catalogue and analyse its contents, 2014 saw specialist reports completed on the pottery and leatherwork. This paper therefore provides an update on current work and outlines some exciting new discoveries.

You can follow the progress of the project on Facebook. You do not need a Facebook account to access the page:

[www.facebook.com/RomanPiercebridge](http://www.facebook.com/RomanPiercebridge)

#### **Great Whittington: new finds identifying a new site in the Wall corridor**

Rob Collins, FREDHI

Roman artefacts are a staple of the Portable Antiquities Scheme's Finds Liaison Officer's diet through which new Roman sites can be documented by recording objects. However, these sites tend to be more common south and east of the Fosse Way, with fewer new sites identified in the north and west of Britannia, let alone north of Hadrian's Wall. Yet, intriguing discoveries around the village of Great Whittington in Northumberland point to an interesting and important new site in the Wall corridor, about which an overview is offered with a tentative interpretation of the site.

Located approximately one mile north of the Wall, the modern village of Great Whittington is situated just south of the Devil's Causeway Roman road and approximately 1 mile east of Dere Street where it crosses through the Wall at the Portgate. The site has

provided finds from the Mesolithic, Neolithic, Bronze Age, Roman, Medieval and post-medieval periods, and is particularly significant for Northumberland as the north-east has comparably much lower levels of materiality. However, the Roman assemblage is perhaps the most important of these to date.

The Roman finds from the site include a vessel hoard, a small purse hoard of 5th century date, and a rather diverse array (for Northumberland) of small finds and coins. This hoard comprises a pair of patera found inside one another and a small group of eight coins, including an issue of Gloria Romanorum (AD 406-8) which were interestingly minted near the end of the Roman occupation of Britain. Other finds include a mini-socketed axe, a lynch pin and 10 brooches including a knee-brooch, a rare bow brooch, a pennanular brooch, a plate brooch and one unidentified fitting or brooch that is currently unparalleled in Britain. An unusual type of cosmetic grinder, finger-ring and torque uncommon for this area of the north were also found alongside harness fittings, pins, a Minerva vessel and an unfinished leg of a figurine. These were accompanied by 27 coins dated mainly to the mid first to late second century, although there are more coins to be identified.

In general there is not a massive wealth of material and most of the finds from Great Whittington are metal with little glass or ceramics. However there is more material available from the local area that can help tell us more about the site. For example, beyond Hadrian's Wall there is much Roman material in the first to second centuries compared with the larger mass of finds from the third to fourth centuries elsewhere in Europe. This represents the Wall as somewhat of a barrier, in and around Great Whittington at least, that might reflect trade or something of ritual interest, but one that remains open to interpretation.

### **Dress and regionality in the Roman north**

Sally Worrell, PAS National Finds Adviser

In 2014 the millionth object was recorded by the Portable Antiquities Scheme (PAS); a department of the British Museum established to document finds recovered by members of the public, such as metal-detectorists. Metal-detecting is a legal activity but comes with qualifications and is often permitted as long as landowners have been contacted and granted permission. However, while the practice has undoubtedly provided a wealth of finds it has equally

caused a great loss of information through destruction and a lack of reporting. The formation of the PAS in 1997 aimed to address some of these issues by engaging directly with the community and recording these finds.

The PAS had only a limited reach when it began but covered all counties by 2003 with find specialists and 38 finds liaison officers located throughout England and Wales to document objects and create records for the publically accessible database ([www.finds.org.uk](http://www.finds.org.uk)). Most of the finds come from rural or semi-rural settings. These clusters include many coins (mainly late Roman in date) that have been used to better understand archaeological processes like assemblage formation.

Brooches are the most numerous of the non-coin objects reported to the PAS. These played a key functional role in dress for men and women and were an important element in costume. By September 2013 17,890 brooches had been recorded by the PAS that can be used to help further understand their distribution in rural settings. In general, although no single style dominates a particular area, there appears to be some regional variation. For example, Holden Hill brooches are more numerous in the west-midlands and T-shaped brooches are more common in the south-west of England.

Head-stud brooches, so-called due to the position of the stud above the bow and often decorated with enamel, are also quite common (1150 examples) and come in many different sub-types. Two of these are recorded by the PAS, with one featuring a distinctive figure-of-eight loop on its head. In general this type of brooch is mostly distributed in the north-east on the eastern side of the Pennines with a third of finds in Yorkshire and a less significant cluster in East Anglia. Their distribution elsewhere is much broader but with somewhat of an association with Roman roads. There has been no study of head-stud brooches from site reports but the finds from Castleford indicate that there are at least six different types.

Other interesting finds recorded by the PAS include a bronze bull from Sorratt, Harts; a bronze naked boy holding a goose from Winterborne Stoke, West Berkshire which is the first example ever found in Britain; an enamelled bird-lip brooch from Adlin, Wakefield; a face padlock from Sleaford, North Yorkshire; a second to third century military buckle plate from Nothorpe, Lincolnshire and two phallic figurines from Cawood and Littlethorpe, North Yorkshire.

## **Roman querns & millstones with double, opposed perforations**

John Cruse, York Arch. Society Quern Co-ordinator

This paper investigates two groups of Roman querns and millstones which, in addition to the customary central perforation, also have two opposed, often D-shaped, openings. These objects have been known about since the 1890s, with several known in Castleford for example, and may be linked with the military. Yet there is currently no detailed corpus available and thus they are generally not well understood.

The first group of objects are hand querns with their key features including diameters between 50-55cm and opposed openings set within D-shaped hoppers. They were first noted in 1892 and have been discussed as a 'distinctive group' by David Buckley & Hilary Major in 1998. As more examples have been recorded (50 are now known) a clearer picture is emerging of their chronological development, the restricted regional distribution in northern England of their two variant types and their likely mode of manufacture.

The second group are examples with a larger diameter that lack the distinguishing D-shaped hoppers yet have a range of individual features which identify them as upper stones of powered millstones. In the absence of intact published examples, the presence of an off-centre perforation on a fragmented millstone often goes un-remarked. With over 20 examples now known, including the first complete stone, it can now be shown that this previously unrecognised millstone design is largely a Later Roman phenomenon, with a far wider distribution than hand querns.

In the north the distribution of querns and millstones is focussed to either side of the North Pennines on early Roman military sites like Ribchester and there appears to be some association with auxiliary troops rather than legionaries. There is little production evidence and it is often hard to determine whether the two designs are successive or overlapping chronologically. For example, hand querns feature from c.AD 100 with a tail in their use up until c. AD. 400 while millstone enter the market c.AD 150 and are predominantly used from AD 250-400. There is some evidence that continental designs were adopted for local markets and that specific designs may have been made by contractors supplying the military system, but local people did not necessarily adopt the Roman technology

immediately as most millstones found across the north are late Roman in date. However, the general shift from the use of hand querns to a larger industrialised process using millstones was probably based on the economic and social changes requiring a significantly higher and more efficient level of output.

Future work will extend the current database and develop a concise typology incorporating new types that will identify clearer regional and chronological traits and develop the ideas and discussions regarding drive capacity, output and social change.

Buckley DG & Major H (1998), *The Quernstones*, in Cool HEM & Philo C, *Roman Castleford: Excavations 1974-85: Volume 1: The Small Finds*, p. 244-7.

## **Session 4: Finds from the North and Beyond**

### **From tablets to toilet seats – an update on the recent finds from Vindolanda**

Barbara Birley, Vindolanda Trust

The 2014 excavation season at Vindolanda had been an exceptionally good year for finds, producing a wide range of wonderful, rare and beautifully preserved artefacts. Work had taken place in three areas of the site and all had produced something special.

The excavations in the field to the north of the Stanegate Road had uncovered an impressive Roman military kiln site, with large amounts of brick and tile and evidence for the manufacture of coarse ware having been recovered. Among the other objects

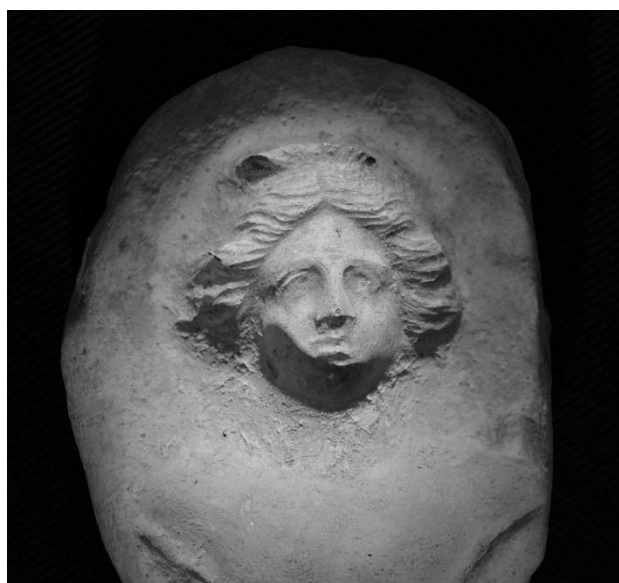


Figure 16. A fine clay face mould from Vindolanda. Courtesy Barbara Birley.

found were a very fine clay mould for a face, possibly of Apollo (Figure 16), a wooden potter's wheel and an enamelled seal box.



Figure 17. Gold *aureus* of Nero from Vindolanda. Courtesy Barbara Birley.

The second year of excavations in the south east quadrant of the 3<sup>rd</sup>-4<sup>th</sup> century fort had revealed the last layers of occupation on the site. In this area the late buildings so far appeared to continue to look more like barrack blocks than the 'chalet like' buildings found elsewhere on the site in the late Roman phases. A host of late Roman and post-Roman artefacts and building levels had been uncovered and a gold *aureus* of Nero (Figure 17) had been found in a fourth century context.

The third area worked on had included some of the pre-Hadrianic anaerobic levels below the later 3<sup>rd</sup> century vicus buildings. These were the places where the organic objects survive and produced some of the best preserved finds. Finds had included a cavalry sword, found in the foundations of a



Figure 18. Silver brooch from Vindolanda. Courtesy Barbara Birley.

building dated c.AD 105-120, more than 130 leather boots and shoes, wooden bowls, part of a wagon wheel, 19 stylus and ink writing tablets, and a toilet seat. The metal objects from these deposits were generally in pristine condition.

### A ditched enclosure and villa at Bedale, North Yorkshire: finds from the Bedale, Aiskew and Leeming Bar bypass excavations

Jenny Proctor, Pre-construct Archaeology

Pre-Construct Archaeology have begun a series of excavations ahead of the construction of the Bedale, Aiskew and Leeming Bar Bypass in North Yorkshire in November 2014. Work was still continuing on two major sites which were impacted by the road scheme but this talk presented some preliminary results.

The earlier of the two sites was represented by a ditched sub-square enclosure measuring c. 50m internally, located towards the southern end of the bypass. Sections across the ditch on its most substantial side had revealed it to be up to 6.80m wide and 1.80m deep, and recut on at least one occasion. The interior of the enclosure had been badly damaged by ploughing with only a few pits and a possible large hearth surviving. Small quantities of handmade Iron Age tradition pottery as well as a few sherds of wheel-thrown Roman-British pottery and samian indicated that the enclosure was in use into the Roman period. A beautifully preserved bone weaving comb, along with fragments of quernstones, were perhaps indicative of the type of activities being undertaken.

The well preserved animal bone assemblage was dominated by cattle and sheep, with bones from very young calves suggesting that the settlement was involved in animal husbandry. Pig and horse were also present along with wild species such as red and roe deer, and also some fish bones. As well as evidence for butchery, the animal bone assemblage included material indicative of craft working, while slag, fragments of hearth lining, hammerscale, copper-alloy waste and crucible fragments indicated working of both iron and copper in the vicinity.

The 3<sup>rd</sup> to late 4<sup>th</sup> century Aiskew Roman villa is located on a ridge of higher land defined by Scurf Beck to the west and Dere Street, just over 1km to the east. Catterick lay c. 10km to the north and Alborough around 25km to the south. Geophysical survey indicated that the villa was of substantial size and set within a landscape of enclosures and field systems. Within the area investigated a range of rooms adjoined



a 4m-wide, north-south aligned, tessellated corridor. In most areas the stone wall foundations had been robbed with only very small areas of coursed stone wall surviving, but an intact concrete floor surface overlain by collapsed painted wall plaster had given an insight into the finish and decoration of the rooms.

A small room, about 4m square, apparently added onto the north-west side of the complex, had been fully excavated. It was well appointed with painted wall plaster in many different colours, and had been heated as demonstrated by the bases of pilae stacks and box-flue tiles amongst the demolition debris. Large quantities of animal bone along with oyster and mussel shell gave an indication of the inhabitants' diet. Personal items included bone pins, copper-alloy brooches, glass beads and jet and shale bracelets. Well-preserved iron tools included knives and a cleaver.

### Writing power: inkwells and identities

Hella Eckardt, University of Reading

Hella has compiled a substantial corpus of about 400 bronze inkwells gathered from dispersed publications in order to address the question of how they were used to express identities across the Roman Empire. This paper discussed these finds that also act as a case study of how contextualised and theoretically-informed finds analysis could be applied even to relatively rare objects that had never been studied as a group.

Today there are significant variations in literacy levels, and this would have been even truer in the Roman period. Much has been written on this and low figures for literacy are generally suggested, with literacy being essentially limited to the elite and the army. Crucially, literacy was seen to relate to power, in terms of 'power over texts and power exercised by means of their use' (Bowman & Woolf 1994: 6). Writing enabled a form of domination to be imposed and sustained even on illiterate individuals (Pearce 2004: 44). Previous research has focused on the most obvious evidence (e.g. stone inscriptions) and overall levels of literacy in the Roman world.

The archaeological evidence for literacy was considered. Much of it, writing tablets and most pens, were made of organic materials so their distribution probably reflected difference in preservation conditions more than levels of literacy. Seal boxes are problematic for studying this in that they could have been used to secure packages other

than writing tablets.

Work on analyzing the collected corpus was still ongoing but it was suggested that various distinct types of inkwell could be identified, and there appeared to be clear early and late types. Study of their distribution was also at an early stage but seemed to be broadly in line with that found for samian inkwells; mainly military sites and towns (Willis 2005), but with more bronze examples coming from burials. There were 38 inkwells from graves, with slightly more from male than female graves, although not an enormous difference, and there was an obvious danger of circular argument where the human remains had not been sexed.

In addition a close study of the depictions of inkwells on wall paintings and tombs gave an insight into their symbolic and cultural meanings: 'literacy as performance'.

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Figure 19. RFG members in the baths building at Wallsend.



Figure 20. Paul Bidwell (right) explaining the fort to RFG visitors.



Figure 21. Paul Bidwell (centre) showing RFG members the remains of Hadrian's Wall next to the Fort at Wallsend. Behind it is a reconstructed replica, the height based on a post-Roman description.

## From Figurines to Fob-Danglers: Recent Iron Age and Roman Objects Documented by the Portable Antiquities Scheme

By K. Adams, D. Boughton, A. Byard, R. Griffiths,  
M. Phelps, D. Williams, J. Pearce and S. Worrell

This short report presents some recent objects of Roman (or Iron Age or Roman date) reported to the Portable Antiquities Scheme (PAS: [www.finds.org.uk](http://www.finds.org.uk)), focused on objects which are uncommon or unusual in their form or iconography. The following descriptions present records created by individual Finds Liaison Officers for the database which have been edited by the two last-named authors for publication in *Lucerna*, sometimes with the addition of further observations on the objects, their significance and context. Especially in the case

of the more unusual artefacts, for instance the Button-and-Loop fastener and the fob-dangler, what follows presents preliminary thoughts where the objects deserve further research and we welcome readers' responses.

### Pan handle, Yealand Redmayne, Lancashire (LANCUM-83C97B)

A fragment of a copper-alloy pan handle dating from the 1st century AD (Figure 22). The fragment is the end of the handle with part of the circular terminal and perforation surviving. The surface shows corrosion products but is otherwise in good condition. The decoration on the top is clear: it consists of two deep grooves that run parallel to the outside of the handle and two circular moulded bands around the hole in the centre of the terminal and around its edge. On the top the handle was also stamped, although part of the stamp is obscured by corrosion. It appears to read ALA.VM.A[...], thus possibly linking the pan to a cavalry squadron, perhaps the 'fifth *ala*...'. The stamp is similar to the text recorded as RIB 2.2415.39, which comes from a pan found at Caerleon, which reads ALA.I.T(H)...., i.e. the first *Ala* of Thracians. Another fragment found nearby from a pan of identical type may have belonged to the same vessel (LANCUM-8D8AC3).

D. Boughton



Figure 22. Pan handle, Yealand Redmayne, Lancashire (LANCUM-83C97B).



### Figurine of Mercury from Selby, North Yorkshire (YORYM-5FFBFB)

This figurine is the 1000<sup>th</sup> object recorded by the FLO for North & East Yorkshire in 2015 (Figure 23). The god stands naked, facing forward with his right leg straight and left bent. Of the extremities only the left hand is preserved, holding an unidentifiable object; the right arm is held close to the side. The neck is short and broad, sloping to the shoulders. Most details from the face and torso are lost to wear, although the musculature of the back is a little clearer. The figure has a marked asymmetry. The deity is recognisable from the winged cap, but lacks the other identifying attributes often associated with the god (Durham 2012, 3.15). More unusually he appears to wear a torc; separate torcs are documented from other examples in Britain and beyond (BERK-F1499B; Worrell and Pearce forthcoming, no. 11) but are not so far as we know recorded as integrally cast with figurines of the god from the province.

R. Griffiths and J. Pearce



Figure 23. Figurine of Mercury from Selby, North Yorkshire (YORYM-5FFBFB).

### Late Iron Age to Roman mount from Langtoft, East Riding of Yorkshire (YORYM-02DF5E)

An openwork copper-alloy mount of unusual form. It is circular in shape with a design centred on a near-square perforation (Figure 24). From each side of the square an arm extends to the outer edge of the object, dividing it into four quadrants. In each quadrant are three voids of varying size, separated by arms of unequal length which radiate from a circular terminal; two are short connectors, one is a much larger comma-shaped element. This terminal

is covered with a disc of metal in a darker alloy. Examination of the reverse shows that this disc has been applied by driving a piece of the darker metal through a hole in the terminal and securing it by flattening on either side. If the viewer's eye moves around the mount then the four comma-shaped elements link to frame a configuration of voids and connecting arms with rotational symmetry, echoing the solar symbolism seen in other Iron Age and Roman art. The reverse of the object is flat and undecorated. This object has some similarities to other examples of Iron Age mounts and dangles documented by the PAS (e.g. DUR-A0CAD1, HESH-D89587, NLM-02F883) although there are no direct parallels for its form and decoration (further references to this object type are given in the report on the Streatley fob-dangler below). It may be of Iron Age or Roman date.



Figure 24. Late Iron Age to Roman mount from Langtoft, East Riding of Yorkshire (YORYM-02DF5E).

The patina of the darker knobs has occasional parallels in Roman artefacts, such as the headstud brooch from Rufforth with Knapton, York (YORYM-4EC333).

Due to the apparently unusual combination of materials featured in this object, further metallurgical study was undertaken through XRF analysis by Matt Phelps, Institute of Archaeology, UCL, who describes the procedure and results as follows: ‘Only analysis of the untouched surface was possible, therefore this analysis is semi-quantitative at best although it is possible to identify the alloying components used. The alloy was a tin bronze without addition of lead; the tin content is likely inflated by the corrosion and the titanium and iron content are contaminants from the soil. No additional of zinc is seen. This could possibly indicate it as earlier and not Roman. Analysis was also performed of the untouched surface of the decorative blobs of metal; results showed no significant difference, but again data should be taken as semi-quantitative. Currently there is no explanation for the difference in colour and weathering between the main body and decorative elements, which despite the findings, would imply small compositional differences. The black colour could be due to a form of patination that induced black copper oxide formation.’

R. Griffiths, M. Phelps & S. Worrell

### **A Fob-dangler found at Streatley, West Berkshire (SUR-8328CA)**

A Late Iron Age or early Roman copper-alloy fob-dangler with four curving arms extending from a pierced central hub to form a swastika-like configuration (Figure 25). On the outer edge of the curving arms are stylised water birds, arranged in a clockwise order. Each bird’s head has a pair of large recessed pits for the eyes, originally accommodating some material now lost. The upper face of the fob-dangler is extensively decorated. At the base of each arm is a group of three ring-and-dot motifs arranged in a triangle. There is a fourth ring-and-dot in the centre of each arm and a fifth at each rounded terminal. The arms are decorated with groups of smaller dots in varying positions; on one arm they surround a ring-and-dot motif in a spiral. In one instance the apex ring-and-dot in the triangle is also circled by punched smaller dots. The combination of birds (not otherwise documented on objects of this type) and the swastika juxtaposes water and solar symbolism. The punched decoration, including ring-and-dot motifs and the groupings of smaller dots are more reminiscent of the ‘fill-in’ ornaments on late Iron Age coins from Britain, pellets, starbursts, dots and so on which John Creighton (1995: 292-4) argues to be translated from trance experiences.

Fobs or danglers remain a poorly understood artefact type, and may have been hung from items of equipment, personal apparel or harness decoration (Jope 2000, 285). When complete most appear to be of triskele form. Jope (*ibid.*) records 17 known examples of danglers and related ‘hangers’ from Britain, while Macgregor (1976a, 37) records nine known examples of triskele-decorated fobs from northern Britain. The Portable Antiquities Scheme has recorded twenty seven further examples, a significant addition to the corpus.

D. Williams and J. Pearce



Figure 25. A Fob-dangler found at Streatley, West Berkshire (SUR-8328CA).

### **Roman terret from Stretton Grandison, Herefordshire (GLO-B172CF)**

A copper-alloy Roman strap-mounted and skirted terret (Figure 26). The terret comprises two main elements, the ‘skirt’ and near-circular loop. The former is perforated on both sides with a pair of holes. It rises at the edge into four upward-curving triangular projections, each ending in a spherical

terminal. Beneath the 'skirt' is an integral hoop. At the junction between 'skirt' and loop is a double row of stamped dots. Above the loop is an integrally cast decorative element with two short angled arms forming a triangular projection. At the base of both arms is a flat round lobe, at the apex is a further spherical terminal. Rows of stamped dots run along the arms of the triangle and around the collar at the base of the terminal.

K. Adams, S. Worrell



Figure 26. Roman terret from Stretton Grandison, Herefordshire (GLO-B172CF)

### Copper-alloy knife, Ardley, Oxfordshire (BERK-5AFDC6)

A complete copper alloy knife or razor, 100.5 mm long and possibly part of a toilet set (Figure 27). The knife has a rolled handle with a suspension loop at one end. The blade is broadly triangular. There are two holes within the blade, one retaining a copper alloy plug, the other empty. This may be a repair but the holes seem to have been made deliberately. A median groove appears to run down the handle. There is also grooved decoration on the top of the knife where the handle meets the blade and on the

blade itself. A small number of similar knives or razors have been recorded on the PAS database, including one other complete example from Emneth, Norfolk (NMS-654254), but it is only half the size of the Ardley knife.

A. Byard



Figure 27. Copper-alloy knife, Ardley, Oxfordshire (BERK-5AFDC6)

### Button-and-Loop fastener Bucknell, Oxon. (BERK-3F53D1)

An elaborate but incomplete Button-and-Loop fastener of Roman date, missing the loop from the end of the shank, which is set at 90 degrees to the main circular body (Figure 28). The circular plate is divided into a central and outer cell and is decorated with an elaborate pattern, inlaid with enamel of uncertain colour, little of which now survives. Within the inner cell is a lozenge-shaped centre with curving sides. From the corners of this lozenge extend four repeated raised motifs, of approximately clover-leaf form. Four circles finish the design, one in each of the quarters created by the leaf-like motifs. In the outer cell short rays with curving sides radiate from the centre, leaving triangular spaces in between each ray and the raised outer edge. Most of the surviving enamel can be seen in these triangular spaces. Although button and loop fasteners of the Late Iron Age and Roman period are not uncommon objects, the elaborate decoration of this example is unusual (cf. Wild 1970; Worrell 2008).

A. Byard and S. Worrell



Figure 28. Bucknell, Oxon. (BERK-3F53D1).



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## TRAC 25, 2015

University of Leicester  
27<sup>th</sup>-29<sup>th</sup> March 2015

Interdisciplinary Approaches to Roman Artefacts,  
*Sponsored by the Roman Finds Group*  
Session chair: Ellen Swift, University of Kent

This year the Roman Finds Group sponsored a session at the 25<sup>th</sup> Theoretical Archaeology Conference with the aim of drawing together our wide membership of field archaeologists, materials scientists, museum curators and educators, experimental archaeologists and academics to promote an interdisciplinary approach to Roman artefact studies and draw on the diverse range of knowledge and expertise that exists in material-base

studies. This session encouraged theoretically-informed contributions that considered Roman artefacts from wider perspectives, such as art and design, museum studies, material science, craft experience and experimental reconstruction.

The wide ranging session included papers on contextualising Roman-related artefacts in China (Krisztina Hoppál, Eötvös Loránd University), the meaning of 'homemade' objects in late antiquity (Jo Stoner, Kent), geology and Roman stone artefacts (Ruth Shaffrey (Oxford Archaeology), assessing Roman artefacts as part of the wider landscape (Nicky Garland, UCL), conceptualizing social perspective and the utility of materials in Roman small finds (Jason Lundock, The Appleton Museum of Art), and touching and moving in Roman banquets; defining gender and class through dining objects (Mira Green, University of Washington).

The session was a great success and the RFG would like to especially thank Ellen Swift for her organisation and role as chair, as well as all of the speakers involved. Once again, special thanks also goes to Nicola Hembrey who posted about the event on Twitter (@RomanFindsGrp). For a full Storify see <https://storify.com/RomanFindsGrp/theoretical-roman-archaeology-conference-25>.

## Books

*Objects and Identities. Roman Britain and the North-Western Provinces* by Hella Eckardt. 2014. Oxford University Press. 296p, 67 b & w illus, 4 colour pl. ISBN 978-0-19-969398-6. £60.

The book begins with an overview of recent publications and methods for publishing finds. In particular it highlights how careful analysis of assemblage composition both within and across sites and of artefact groups can tell us much about life in Roman Britain, including consumption patterns at different site types, the uptake of Romanised practices and how artefacts help people create their identity.

Each chapter then examines a theme, with an initial section establishing recent publications and thoughts on that theme then the use of specific artefact types to illustrate it. The first covers identity and how objects can be used by the wearer to construct their identity and how they can be used by us to identify the movement of peoples within the empire.

The use of complementary forms of evidence, such as inscriptions and human remains (in particular isotopic analysis) are used to expand the evidence provided by material culture and chapter 3 on Africans uses this evidence to explore both the presence of Africans in Britain and their depiction on objects. Chapter 4 expands the consideration of the exotic to the use of materials such as ivory and jet, and how the specific qualities of materials such as colour, translucence and durability might affect their use for particular objects. Chapter 5 examines the regionality of finds and the different reasons for particular, restricted distributions while chapter 6 looks at the Empire-wide significance of the right hand and its depiction on a variety of objects. Finally, chapter 7 examines the evidence for literacy in Roman Britain.

While the case studies contain much information, at times they feel rather rushed; an inevitable result of covering such a wide suite of materials and finds types. However, the thorough bibliography provides the reader with the means to enquire into the details themselves. What the book does admirably is show what a thoughtful and intricate examination of individual suites of finds can tell us about the use of material culture in Roman Britain on a local and regional level, as well as within the larger Empire, and how important it is to think beyond the cataloguing and functionality of objects and instead consider what objects mean to people, the choices that were made in making or acquiring objects and how these factors vary from place to place.

Emma Durham

***Glass of the Roman World*** by Justine Bayley, Ian Freestone and Caroline Jackson (Editors) 2015. Oxbow Books. 272p, b/w and colour illustrations. ISBN: 9781782977742. Special offer: £30 rather than £40 at <http://www.oxbowbooks.com/oxbow/glass-of-the-roman-empire.html>.

*Glass of the Roman Empire* illustrates the arrival of new cultural systems, mechanisms of trade and an expanded economic base in the early 1st millennium AD which, in combination, allowed the further development of the existing glass industry. Glass became something which encompassed more than simply a novel and highly decorative material. Glass production grew and its consumption increased until it was assimilated into all levels of society, used for display and luxury items but equally for utilitarian

containers, windows and even tools.

These 18 papers by renowned international scholars include studies of glass from Europe and the Near East. The authors write on a variety of topics where their work is at the forefront of new approaches to the subject. They both extend and consolidate aspects of our understanding of how glass was produced, traded and used throughout the Empire and the wider world drawing on chronology, typology, patterns of distribution, and other methodologies, including the incorporation of new scientific methods. Though focusing on a single material the papers are firmly based in its archaeological context in the wider economy of the Roman world, and consider glass as part of a complex material culture controlled by the expansion and contraction of the Empire. The volume is presented in honour of Jenny Price, a foremost scholar of Roman glass.

See <http://www.oxbowbooks.com/oxbow/glass-of-the-roman-empire.html> for full bibliographic details and a list of the contributions in it.

Justine Bayley

## Grant to support the study of PAS finds from Cheshire

Chester Archaeological Society wishes to encourage the study and publication of objects (or groups/types of object) reported to the Portable Antiquities Scheme from Cheshire and adjoining areas, to ensure that their potential contribution to the understanding of the archaeology and history of the county is realised. It is therefore offering a grant of GBP 700 every two years to help suitable persons to undertake such research. It is a condition of the grant that the results of the research shall be offered for first publication as an article in the *Journal of the Chester Archaeological Society*.

For more information and an application form see the society's website:

<http://www.chesterarchaeolsoc.org.uk/grants&awards.html>.

## IAMS and UCL Archaeometallurgy Grants 2015

The Institute for Archaeo-Metallurgical Studies (IAMS) and the UCL Institute of Archaeology invite applications for two student bursaries for postgraduate studies in archaeometallurgy leading to an MSc

degree:

- IAMS Bursary in Archaeometallurgy (£5,000)
- Ronald F. Tylecote Bursary in Archaeometallurgy (£5,000)

Any candidates accepted for the MSc in the Technology and Analysis of Archaeological Materials are eligible for either bursary, provided that they express a commitment to write a dissertation on an archaeometallurgical topic. Students are welcome to suggest their own dissertation topics at the time of applying, but this is not a requisite. Be quick though. The deadline is **1<sup>st</sup> August 2015**.

For more information visit:

<http://www.ucl.ac.uk/archaeology/calendar/articles/2014-15-news/20150624>

LAARC. The session will include a miscellany of papers on glass and glassworking of all periods and is being organised by Caroline Jackson. Further details will be available soon on the AHG website <http://www.historyofglass.org.uk/meetings.html>.

## Conferences and Events

As well as the Celts Conference on Friday 6<sup>th</sup> November 2015 and the RFG Spring Meeting on Friday 1<sup>st</sup> and Saturday 2<sup>nd</sup> April 2016 (see p. 3), there are a couple of other upcoming events that may be of interest to our members.

### **RAC 12/TRAC 26**

16<sup>th</sup> – 19<sup>th</sup> March 2016

La Sapienza, University of Rome

Next year the 12th Roman Archaeology Conference and 26<sup>th</sup> Theoretical Roman Archaeology Conference will be held in collaboration with the British School at Rome at La Sapienza, University of Rome. The final session list is currently being decided and a call for papers will follow later this year. Further information about the event can be found on the following websites: <http://trac.org.uk>, <http://www.romansocietyrac.ac.uk/rac-2016> [http://www.antichita.uniroma1.it/rac/trac\\_2016](http://www.antichita.uniroma1.it/rac/trac_2016).

### **The History of Glass Study Day**

Friday 20 November

London Archaeological Archive and Research Centre (LAARC), Mortimer Wheeler House, 46 Eagle Wharf Road, London, N1 7ED.

The Association for the History of Glass will be running a study day on Friday 20 November at the