

DETECTING ROMAN BRITAIN: THE PORTABLE ANTIQUITIES SCHEME AND THE STUDY OF PROVINCIAL MATERIAL CULTURE

DETECTANDO LA GRAN BRETAÑA ROMANA: EL PROGRAMA DE ANTIGÜEDADES MUEBLES Y EL ESTUDIO DE LA CULTURA MATERIAL PROVINCIAL

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ABSTRACT

This article examines the significance of a major new source of archaeological data from Roman Britannia, the Portable Antiquities Scheme (PAS), a department within the British Museum responsible for documenting archaeological objects found in England and Wales by members of the public, mainly metal detectorists. Of the more than one million objects now recorded, more than a quarter are Roman in date, documented mainly from what were, in the Roman-period, rural landscapes in eastern England. After outlining their broad character and distribution the article uses two case studies to explore the contribution of this new dataset to understanding rural Britannia, one on brooch types in relation to the study of provincial costume, the other on the new iconographic evidence for the visual culture of the province.

Keywords: Roman Britain, metal-detecting, iconography, brooch, figurine, enamel, vessel, knife-handle, hunting, erotica

RESUMEN

Este artículo examina la importancia de una nueva fuente de datos arqueológicos sobre la Britania romana, la denominada *Portable Antiquities Scheme* (PAS), un servicio del Museo Británico responsable de documentar aquellos objetos arqueológicos encontrados en Inglaterra y Gales

por el público en general, principalmente por aficionados a la detección de metales. De los más de un millón de piezas ya inventariadas, más de una cuarta parte han sido datadas en época romana, procedentes en su mayoría de lo que, en dicho periodo histórico, fueron zonas rurales en el este de Inglaterra. Tras esbozar su amplio carácter y su funcionamiento, el artículo expone dos casos de estudio que permiten explorar las repercusiones de esta nueva base de información a la hora de comprender la Britania rural: el primero, sobre los tipos de broches, en relación con la investigación del vestuario provincial; y el segundo, sobre las nuevas evidencias iconográficas de cara a la cultura visual de la provincia.

Palabras claves: Gran Bretaña romana, detección de metales, iconografía, broche, figurilla, esmalte, vasija, navaja, caza, arte erótico

INTRODUCTION

In 2014 the millionth object was recorded by the Portable Antiquities Scheme, a department of the British Museum dedicated to the documentation of archaeological finds made by members of the public in England and Wales. This was one of more than 100,000 objects documented in 2014. The object in question, a *nummus*, struck in AD 332, was one of a hoard of over 22,000 Roman coins discovered at Seaton, Devon by a metal-detectorist. More objects of Roman date have been documented by the Portable Antiquities Scheme (hereafter the 'PAS') from England and Wales since 1997 than those of any other period and account for approximately a quarter of all finds; coins, most of later third and fourth century date, comprise c. 80% of the Roman period objects documented by the PAS. Other than coins, the objects encompass an extraordinarily varied group, mainly metal small finds but also including ceramics, glass and stone objects and building material. Some exceptional pieces have attracted widespread attention, for example the cavalry parade helmet from Crosby Garrett, Cumbria, or the hoard from Frome, Somerset, one of the largest ever found in Britain and comprising more than

52,000 coins, most dating to the reign of the emperor Carausius (MOORHEAD *et al.*, 2010; BREEZE, BISHOP, 2013). Less appreciated, perhaps, is the scale of the new research resource now disseminated by the PAS in the form of geo-referenced object records in a publically accessible online database. The focus of this paper lies on the research insights which may be derived from objects *en masse*. Recent large-scale studies have explored the potential of such data for the study of settlement and landscape history and coin circulation (BRINDLE, 2014; WALTON, 2012). Our emphasis instead lies on illustrating the contribution of the new data to the understanding of artefact form (in terms of typological range), circulation, context of use and decoration. We first outline the Scheme itself, its genesis and development and set out the general characteristics of the Roman period data, its composition, scale and distribution before exploring some objects and their decoration in greater detail. Our principal examples comprise an artefact type, the bow brooch, a key element of provincial costume in Roman north-west Europe, and visual culture as expressed in the form of figurines created (primarily) as votives and in the iconography of other objects bearing figural and polychrome enamel decoration.

Rejecting the homogenising tendencies of the 'Romanisation' model, scholars in recent decades have attempted better to characterise the rural societies of the province, exploring both the nature of their engagement with the wider Roman world and their diverse regional trajectories (BREEZE, 2014; MATTINGLY, 2006). The new data considered here are, we argue, indispensable to any such recharacterisation.¹

THE PORTABLE ANTIQUITIES SCHEME: ORIGINS, DEVELOPMENT AND ROMAN DATA

Prospection for ancient artefacts and coins by private individuals using metal detectors is a practice well established in Britain (and beyond) from the 1970s onwards. The legal basis for this activity varies between the countries making up the United Kingdom, but in England and Wales, where the PAS operates, it is not illegal, providing the landowner's permission has been acquired and providing that the area detected upon does not have the legal protection afforded by scheduling as an ancient monument. Whatever its legal status, metal-detecting has caused a substantial loss of information through disturbance of archaeological context and the lack of reporting and documenting of objects which have been found. In certain notorious cases major episodes of criminal damage took place, with a concomitant loss of archaeological context information on a large scale (THOMAS, 2013, 3). Where objects were reported, especially major finds of gold and silver, the archaic law of Treasure Trove was not easy to apply. The PAS was es-

tablished in 1997 as a response to this loss of archaeological information. It was inspired by individual initiatives which had shown the positive results for archaeological research which could be achieved when greater effort was made to engage with hobbyist detectorists. Initially based in a sample of counties in a pilot phase, it was expanded to national coverage (England and Wales) in 2003 and has continued to apply as a national scheme (BLAND, 2008; 2013). The PAS comprises a department of the British Museum, national period specialist Finds Advisors and 38 Finds Liaison Officers distributed across England and Wales. The Liaison Officers solicit and encourage the reporting of objects found by detectorists and other members of the public. They document objects (with a usual cut-off date of 1700) and the records which are created, comprising images and descriptions, are disseminated online in a publically available database. Selected highlights are also published annually by the UK government Department of Culture, Media and Sport.² Objects are given unique identifier numbers within the database.³ The recording of the object findspot to the highest possible reso-

¹ Worrell is National Finds Advisor for the Scheme on later prehistoric and Roman objects. She and Pearce have collaborated in recent years in joint publication of selected objects of Roman date documented by the Scheme in the annual summary of fieldwork and finds related to the study of Roman Britain in the periodical *Britannia* (WORRELL, PEARCE, 2014).

² <http://finds.org.uk/>. The annual reports, formerly published separately and for the PAS and for Treasure finds and now combined and may also be downloaded from the PAS website: <http://finds.org.uk/treasure/reports/2010-2011>; <http://finds.org.uk/news/reports/2010-2011>

³ Our paper uses these numbers to refer to individual finds, as well as making references to other relevant publications, especially to the surveys of Roman objects published annually since 2004 by the authors in the journal *Britannia*.

lution is also encouraged, especially through the use of GPS devices. In many cases now findspots can therefore be located to within ten square metres. Any individual with legitimate research interests can apply to have access to findspots at the highest recorded resolution.

Objects are normally returned to their finders after being recorded. The main exception to this comprises those which are classed as 'treasure' under the provisions of the Treasure Act of 1996, which the PAS also administers. This classification depends on metal content and the number of objects found, applying generally to items of gold and silver over 300 years old and, for prehistoric periods, copper alloy and other metallic objects where more than two come from the same find.⁴ Separate legal frameworks and documentation systems continue to govern the reporting and ownership of archaeological finds in Scotland and Northern Ireland. With some exceptions, for example in the Netherlands, the PAS and the legislative and practical basis on which it operates are unusual in a wider European setting.⁵ We do

⁴ The code of practice provides the full legal specification (DEPARTMENT FOR CULTURE, MEDIA AND SPORT, 2007).

⁵ The varying frameworks in the different parts of the United Kingdom (and beyond) are discussed by Saville (2006) and in issue 33 of *Internet Archaeology* (2013) <http://dx.doi.org/10.11141/ia.33.8>

⁶ Evaluations of the PAS operation and impact have been published by Chitty and Edwards (2004) and Clark (2008). Two recent journal volumes have been dedicated to discussion of the PAS, in both cases with key commentaries by Roger Bland, director of the PAS: *Papers of the Institute of Archaeology* (20, 2010) (<http://pia-journal.co.uk/issue/view/pia.331>); *Internet Archaeology* 33 <http://dx.doi.org/10.11141/ia.33.8>. Polemic from a long-standing critic illustrates a more hostile view: *Portable Antiquity Collecting and Heritage Issues*: <http://paul-barford.blogspot.com/>.

not seek in this paper to debate its legal or ethical dimensions, although we would argue that since its establishment it has generally commanded wide, though not universal, support among archaeologists working in England and Wales as a pragmatic means of mitigating a significant loss of information and as enhancing engagement between archaeologists and the public. Debate continues over the nature and scope of its role. Individual finds, for example the Crosby Garrett helmet, highlight the difficulties of drawing up legally workable frameworks to protect non-precious metal objects.⁶

The impressive quantity of Roman objects, especially coins, reported to the PAS has already been emphasised. Even if other object types are represented in much smaller numbers, these are much greater than those of equivalent objects of Iron Age or medieval date and their numbers are not again paralleled until the early modern period. Occasionally finders have reported non-metallic finds, for example ceramics and building materials, brick, tile and occasionally fragments of worked stone and inscriptions (e.g. LANCUM-273C82 and LANCUM-277A53, two epitaphs from Old Carlisle, Cumbria). However they are principally discovered during the process of metal detecting and comprise non-ferrous objects, mainly copper alloy. These are distributed across the typical categories of 'small finds' documented in the province, comprising, in the categories conventionally used for their classification, personal ornaments, objects related to transport, communication, votives, tools and the household, militaria and so on. Their dates range from the Late Iron Age / Roman transition period (mid -1st century BC to mid-1st century AD) to the early 5th century AD. The tables published annually in



FIG. 1 *An example of a silver 'TOT' (Toutatis) ring, Hayton, E. Riding of Yorkshire (DAUBNEY 2010, no. 45, 2013 T794).*

Britannia up to 2011 reveal their typical proportions in a year's records (e.g. WORRELL *et al.*, 2011). The c. 23,600 brooches predominate, especially the bow brooches which are the key surviving elements of north-west provincial costume from the first century AD. While other objects are documented in smaller numbers, they nonetheless represent substantial additions to corpora of individual object types, often comparable in order of magnitude to those documented from several centuries of artefact collection and archaeological fieldwork in the rural parts of the Roman province from which most finds derive. This can be illustrated by examples drawn from objects related to religion. Among the 1100 bronze figurines from Britain representing mainly gods of the Greco-Roman pantheon and their attributes, the PAS examples comprise more than one fifth (DURHAM,

2012). So-called 'TOT' rings, inscribed with these letters on the bezel of silver or copper-alloy pieces, are now known in more than 60 examples from the counties of the English East Midlands (**Fig. 1**); of these, more than two thirds are metal-detected finds reported via the PAS. Occasional variant forms of the 'TOT' legend, such as *D(eo) M(arti) T(outati)* or *Deo Tota* reveal the god's identity as Mars Toutatis, epigraphically attested in Britain and beyond and a likely major regional tutelary deity (DAUBNEY, 2010; TOMLIN, 2010, 453-56).

The objects reported to the PAS are however unevenly distributed across England and Wales. Mapping findspots of objects other than coins reveals much higher numbers of finds in the counties of eastern England from Essex to North Yorkshire as well as in the

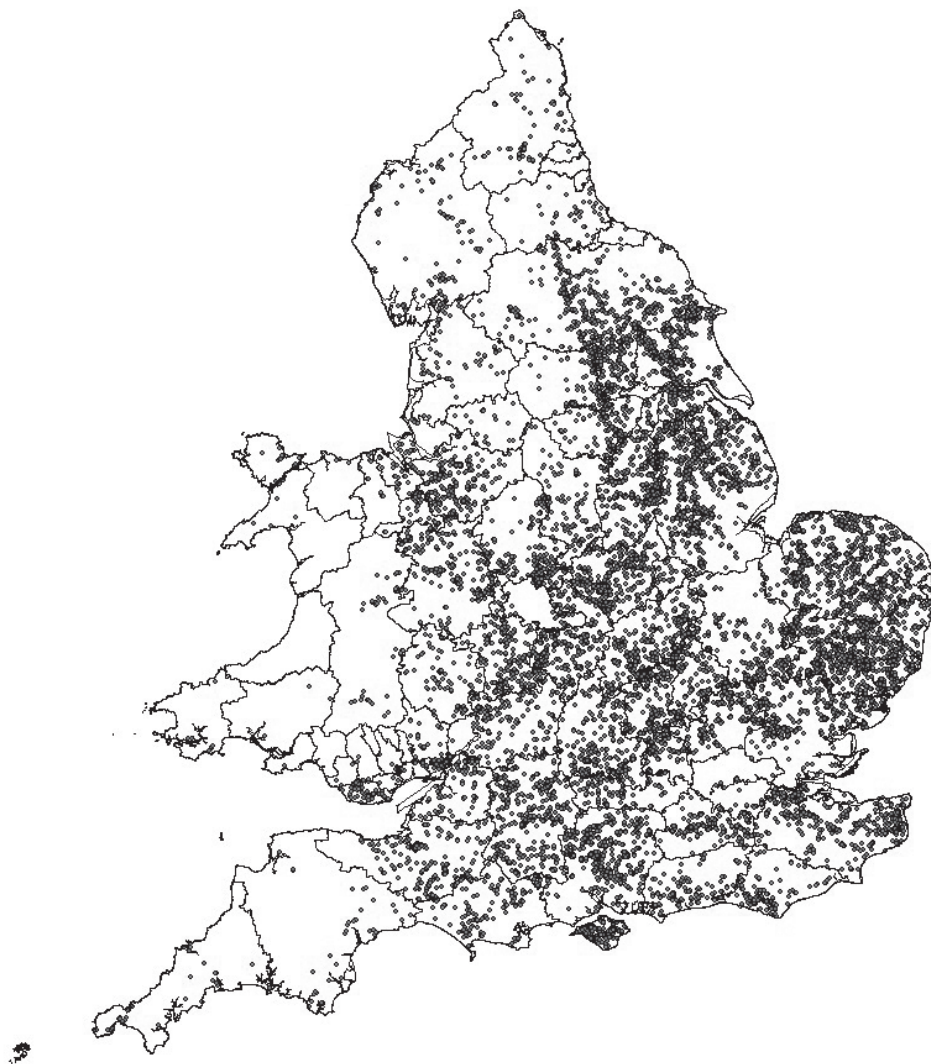


FIG. 2 Findspots of Roman period non-coin objects (PAS 1997-2013) (figure plotted by Katie Robbins, British Museum).

English midlands and central south (**Fig. 2**). These are not areas which, in general, have seen archaeological activity on as intensive a scale as cities and the key infrastructure corridors of southern England through development-led fieldwork or as the Hadrianic and

Antonine frontiers through research excavation and prospection. Within these regions the main exceptions are very low-lying, for example the Fenland on the north-western edge of East Anglia, or upland areas, for instance the hills of Kent, Surrey and Sussex, as well



FIG. 3 A 4th century openwork belt buckle of possible military type, with the plate in the form of a horse and rider, similar to 'Pseudo-Hispanic' examples. Chepstow, Monmouthshire (NMGW-1ED1A1) (© Portable Antiquities Scheme).

as urban areas. To some extent the map under-represents the dominance of eastern and central England as some substantial individual collections are not yet documented in full within the PAS; hundreds of further objects have, for example, been documented during detecting at the site of Hayton, E. Yorks, on the road between York and the Humber river (MILLETT, 2014; WORRELL forthcoming). By contrast the number of finds reported from England's northern and western counties and Wales is much lower, especially in upland areas. While coins are more widely distributed, their relative density is similar to that of non-coin finds (WALTON, 2012). Individual artefact types also show a similar bias

in their distribution, for example figurines or dress and harness fittings associated (arguably) with the Roman army (**Fig. 3**) (DURHAM, 2012, 4.2; WORRELL, PEARCE, 2012).

This uneven distribution is a product of multiple factors (ROBBINS, 2012). The most significant may be contemporary land use as the distribution of metal detecting is closely associated with that of intensive arable agriculture in eastern England. With occasional exceptions (for example the foreshore of the river Thames in London), findspots are few from modern urban areas. The legal prohibition on detecting scheduled ancient monuments also explains the absences

of documented finds from some regions, for example the Hadrianic frontier between Newcastle and Carlisle in northern England. Other localised factors also apply; for example its use as perhaps the largest military training area in western Europe means that few finds are recorded from Salisbury plain, north and west of the cathedral city of the same name. To a lesser extent the history of public engagement by archaeologists also conditions this picture; the long-established practice of documenting metal-detected finds in Norfolk, in northern East Anglia, in part explains the exceptionally high numbers of finds documented in this county. The patterns of metal-detecting by clubs or individuals, and the occurrence of metal-detector rallies also has a significant effect on regional and local distributions, as does the willingness of landowners to permit detecting; national agencies and local authorities vary in whether they allow it (BRINDLE, 2014). The distribution is not only the product of contemporary factors. The variable character of ancient societies, their population densities, wealth, the availability and circulation of objects and the manner of their deposition are also influential, even if this is difficult to differentiate from more recent factors. Even allowing for regional variability, the sheer abundance of objects, not paralleled again until the post-medieval period, is significant testimony to the capacity to extract and exploit metal resources which largely derive from the province itself, mostly concentrated in Wales and western and northern England (JONES, MATTINGLY, 1990, 179-80).

The great majority of objects come from a rural or semi-rural setting. The distribution evidence allows some differentiation, calibrated by background density, between

isolated finds and clusters of objects which may relate more directly to a concentration of activity. In general the clusters comprise many coins, especially of late Roman date, which can sometimes be identified to hoards (BRINDLE, 2014; WALTON 2012). In occasional cases excavation of findspots has improved understanding of assemblage formation, for example in hoards such as the deposit of Carausian coins at Frome, referenced above, or votive deposits, for example metal vessels comprising three handled pans and two strainer bowls from the hilltop site at Cold Kitchen Hill, Wiltshire or the priestly regalia found near Bury St Edmunds (Suffolk), including a head dress and staff terminals (WORRELL 2006, 458-62, nos 27-31; WORRELL *et al.*, 2011, 422-25, no. 19). Burials have also occasionally been recognised and subsequently excavated: late Iron Age and early Roman cremations from Kent provide examples, identified respectively through the presence of a Coolus-type helmet and copper alloy vessels (FARLEY *et al.*, 2014; WORRELL, 2004, 334, no. 22).

Where extensive detecting combined with high-resolution findspot recording has been practised in a specific locality, a detailed understanding of historic landscapes can be developed exploiting metal-detected and other data. In the environs of Bidford on Avon, a Roman period secondary centre in the West Midlands, for example, this reveals a very high density of occupation and activity in the late Roman period in a landscape where extensive fieldwork is unlikely to be undertaken (BRINDLE, 2014). The detailed diachronic understanding which can be achieved through a combination of excavation allied to very extensive prospection and metal detecting is also well illustrated by the

forthcoming study of the landscape around Hayton in East Yorkshire, north and south of the road which linked the fortress and *colonia* at York to Brough-on-Humber (MILLET, 2014). The generally small numbers of non-coin objects make it difficult however to apply quantitative methods used to differentiate between excavated assemblages of small finds in order to analyse the character the functional or status characteristics of a site. The major exception from the PAS data is the very large assemblage from the river Tees at Piercebridge. The finds, comprising many hundreds of coins as well as many other metal objects, including figurines and possible curse tablets, as well as the treatment of some objects, for example deliberate defacement of coins suggests the existence of a major assemblage of votive material from the river, analogous to those from other riverine sites in north-west Europe (NICOLAY 2007: 124-8; WALTON, 2008; WORRELL, PEARCE, 2013, 349-50).⁷

BROOCHES, REGIONALITY AND IDENTITY

The first example considered is the bow brooch, which, as noted above, is the most numerous of non-coin artefacts to be reported to the PAS. Excavated assemblages show that these became much more common as dress accessories from the first century BC, in J.D. Hill's terminology, borrowed from the author Douglas Adams, the 'Fibula Event Horizon' (JUNDI, HILL, 1998). From this point there was a major increase in brooch numbers in Britain and the types proliferated, spawning the complex (and bewildering) typologies used by brooch specialists. They played a key functional role in dress (for men

and women, as grave finds reveal) but their size, colour and variety means they were also a highly visible element of costume.

Excavated assemblages show that no single type is dominant in any one area, but there is some regional variation. Among the 1st-2nd century types, for example, the Colchester brooch and its derivatives are the best attested in East Anglia, Polden Hill brooches in the West Midlands, trumpet brooches in the Midlands and north, T-shaped in the South-West and so on (BAYLEY, BUTCHER, 2004; MACKRETH, 2011). However this understanding of the regional dimension to brooch distribution is only fuzzily established. The PAS data thus have a key role to play in further developing the understanding of brooch distribution in a rural setting, and thus to understanding the regional variability in society and culture which is increasingly emphasised in scholarship on the province.⁸ The overall distribution of brooches documented by the PAS is subject to the same biases as the dataset in general, i.e. finds are much more numerous from eastern counties. For example the total number of brooches recorded by the PAS from the county of Cheshire (301) is much lower than for that for East Yorkshire (879), an area of similar size. Despite this variability the high numbers recorded across much of the province make this a meaningful exercise in most areas. The following discussion takes two examples of brooches, the headstud and Wirral types to explore how far these regional distributions may be refined. Both examples are from midland and north-

⁷ A study of the assemblage is in preparation for publication by Philippa Walton and others.

⁸ A doctoral thesis currently underway at UCL is exploring brooch distribution on this basis (STATTON, in prep.)



FIG. 4 *An example of a headstud brooch; Barmby Moor, East Riding of Yorkshire (LVPL-175114). (75 mm long) (© Portable Antiquities Scheme).*

ern England, and both have in common the carrying of enamel decoration, a trend seen increasingly on 2nd century metalwork of all kinds.

The so-called headstud brooch is named after the raised stud near the top of the bow (**Fig. 4**). The decoration on the bow is otherwise quite diverse, frequently including enamelling, and there are several subtypes within the group, including two new types recorded by PAS with an unusual (figure of 8) loop and a double circular setting on the bow (WORRELL, PEARCE, 2014, 407, no. 7). A pair of headstud brooches from Market Weighton (E. Yorks) with fluted bows (and lacking enamel or glass decoration other than

in the stud at the top of the bow) is exceptional in that the chain which links them has survived, indicating a likely derivation from a burial or votive deposit (YORYM-5589D6; WORRELL, PEARCE, 2013, 351-3, no. 5). By the end of 2013 more than 1100 examples of headstud brooches had been documented, over 5% of all the brooches recorded by the PAS.

While the type is documented from excavated assemblages in Roman period sites across Britain, the PAS examples markedly clarify the regional character of its distribution (**Fig. 5**). It is much more frequently represented in the north-east midlands of England than in any other region. Its distribution clearly focuses on the eastern side of the Pennines, especially in the counties on either side of the Humber river; for example one third of all headstud brooches documented by the PAS were found in Yorkshire. There is a less significant cluster in East Anglia, where headstud brooches account for a much smaller percentage of the overall corpus. A small number of brooches of this type are documented elsewhere, especially across the south and centre of the province. Within the core area the distribution is wide but very uneven across Yorkshire, Lincolnshire and Nottinghamshire. Finds are generally absent from low-lying ground and the more thinly populated uplands. To some extent they associate with Roman road lines, especially the routes overland from Lincoln either via Doncaster towards Aldborough and Catterick or across the river Humber to Brough-on-Humber and York. Clusters sometimes occur along these routes, for example between Doncaster (South Yorkshire) and Aldborough (North Yorkshire) and in an especially dense concentration along the road from Brough-on-Humber to York:

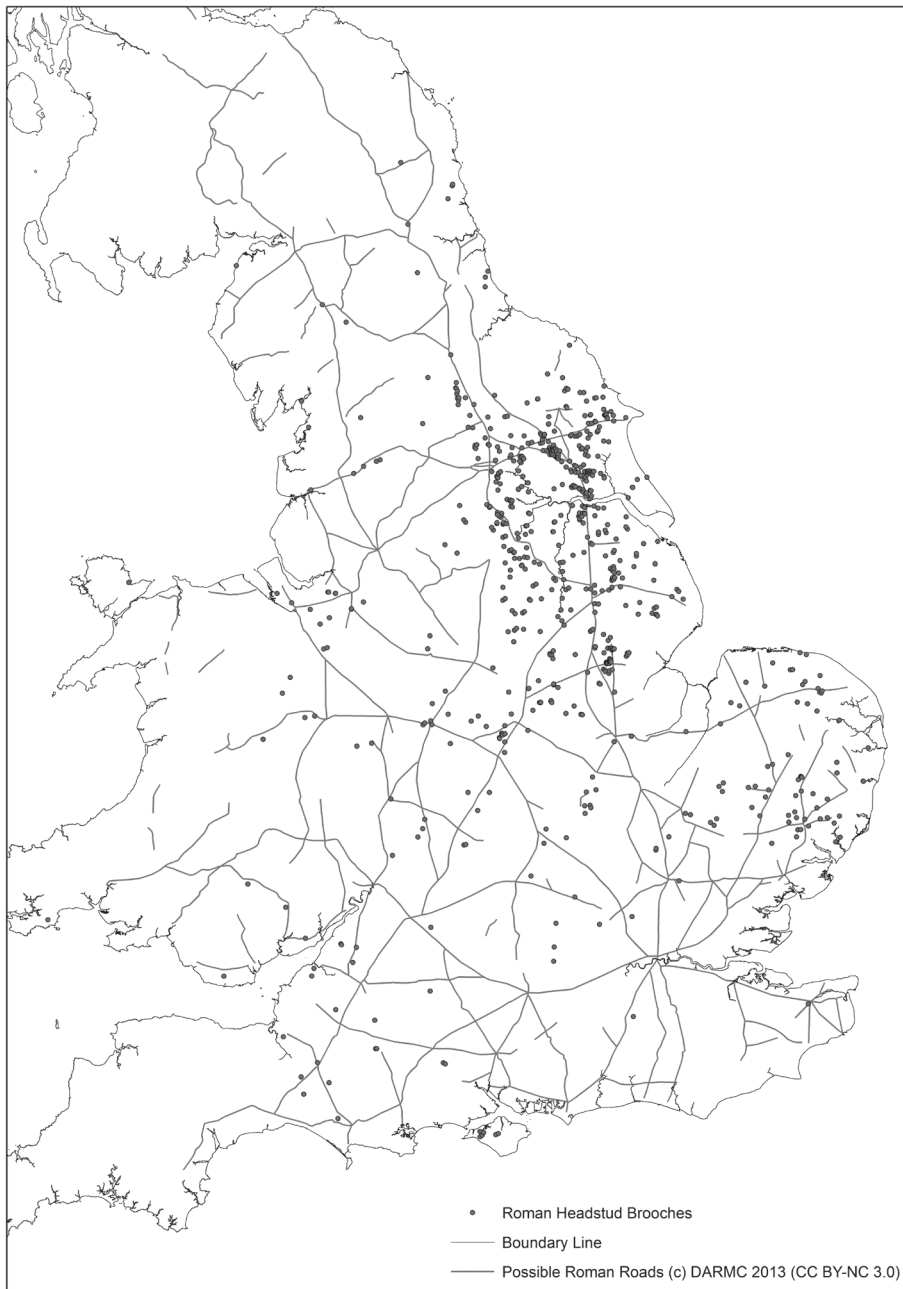


FIG. 5 Findspots of headstud brooches (PAS 1997-2013) (figure plotted by Katie Robbins, British Museum).



FIG. 6. An example of a Wirral brooch with chequerboard decoration on its bow, Aston, Cheshire (LVPL-F2D460) (60.7 mm long) (© Portable Antiquities Scheme).

the map does not include a 30 further examples from Hayton, E. Yorks along this route (WORRELL, forthcoming). As yet there has been no quantified synthetic investigation of brooches from excavated sources in the same region, but individual assemblages reveal the same high frequency of headstud brooches. For example at Castleford (West Yorkshire) there are 22 headstud brooches, sub-divided among six types (COOL, PHILO, 1998). The distribution of brooches extends across the *territoria* of the *coloniae* around Lincoln

and York and the lands of the *civitates* into which the Iron Age societies of this region were divided after the Roman conquest, the Corieltauvi to the south, the Parisi in East Yorkshire and the Brigantes to the west and north (the latter group extending well beyond this area). Although the boundaries between these different territories are largely conjectural and their practical relevance debatable, nonetheless there is no apparent relationship between them and the brooch distribution.

The second example is the Wirral brooch, the name being taken from the concentration in the Wirral peninsula (Cheshire) among the 30 examples known to Philpott (1999) who identified the type. It shares many features with contemporary brooch types, for example the trumpet, Wroxeter type and the T-shaped, but its main distinguishing feature is the use of brightly coloured enamel arranged in a chequerboard pattern on the stepped head. Its other key characteristics are a head-loop, a boss at the midpoint of the brooch, an arched profile and a hinged pin (Fig. 6). Since Philpott defined the type PAS finds (69 in total) and other research have almost quadrupled the known total to 127 brooches (MCINTOSH, PONTING 2013). The focus of its distribution can now be better characterised (Fig. 7). The new data reveal a clear focus on a circumscribed area of north-west England, the Wirral, Cheshire and north-east Wales; much smaller groups occur on the northern frontiers as well as other outliers. The core area spans the likely *territorium* of the fortress at Chester and parts of the *civitas* territories of the Cornovii and the Deceangli. Wirral brooches are not numerous on military or urban sites (only 13 are known from excavation in total). Excavation within the legionary fortress at Chester has produced 96

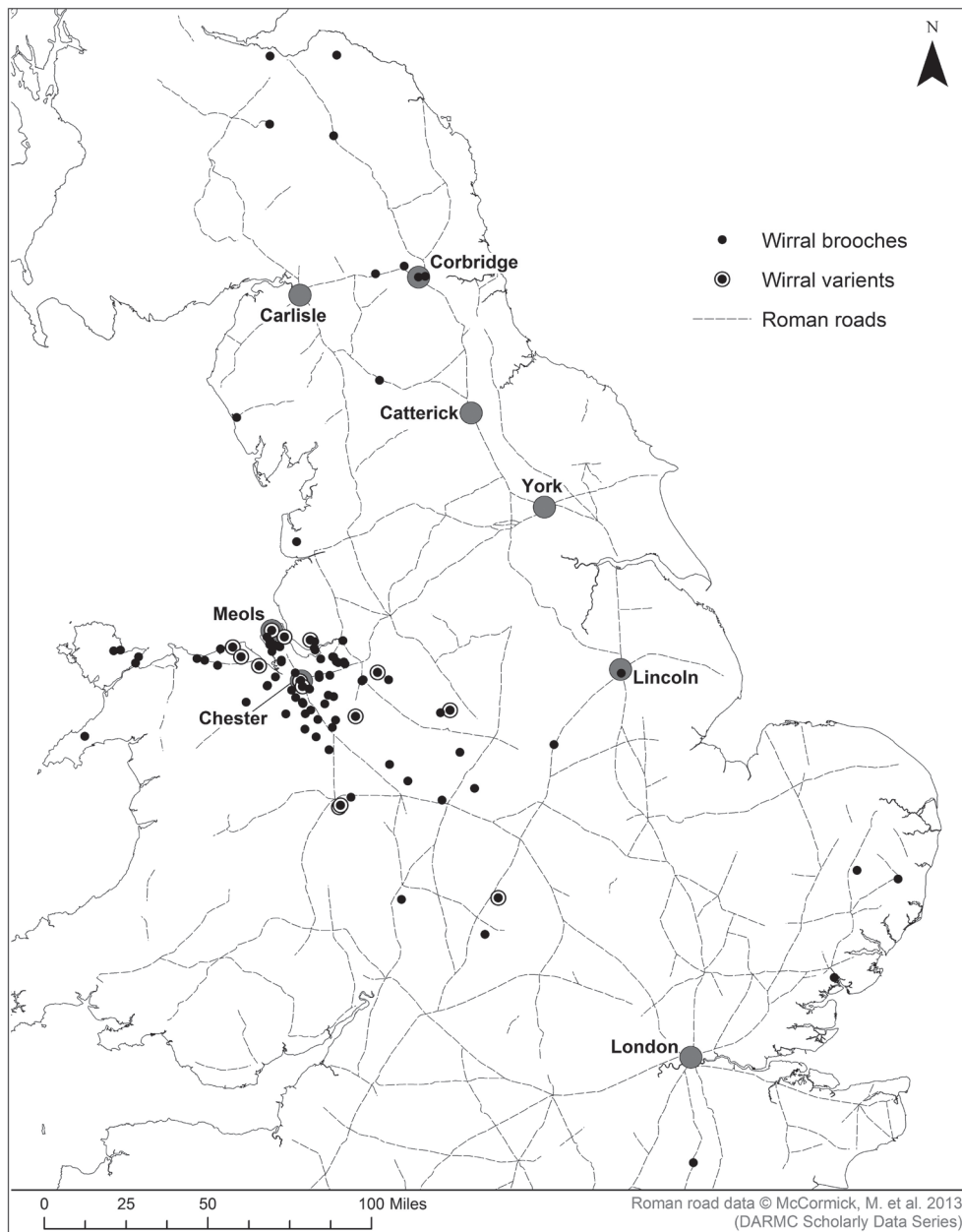


FIG. 7 *The distribution of Wirral brooches in Britain (figure plotted by Katie Robbins, British Museum).*

Roman brooches, but only one Wirral brooch and one variant. The key context of use is rural, a characteristic which only emerges when the PAS and related finds are compiled. The most significant assemblage of brooches of this type is at Meols, a probable beach port on the northern tip of the Wirral peninsula and a key interface between this region and the Irish Sea trade routes. Of 80 brooches seven are Wirral types with one variant form (GRIFFITHS *et al.*, 2007, 390-6; MCINTOSH, PONTING, 2013, 129).

It is important to emphasise the diversity of types in the regions where the finds of headstud and Wirral brooches are clustered on either side of the Pennines. Any traveller through either of these regions would have seen diverse brooches worn in farms and fields and in both study areas a pan-regional type, the trumpet brooch, was the most common. After that regional diversity would be more marked, but the two examples, being in their respective areas the most frequently attested brooch types carrying enamel decoration, illustrate the varying scales and character of that diversity. Although sites of manufacture are rarely identified, both types are likely to have been manufactured by networks of peripatetic craftsmen (BAYLEY, BUTCHER, 2004, 213). Arguably however these networks operated with differing constraints in the two cases. The regions in which headstud and Wirral brooches are frequent finds are both well integrated into long-distance communications, in particular the key overland communication and supply routes running north-south on either side of the Pennine hills between southern Britain and the frontiers. The area around Cheshire

and the Wirral produced commodities which were widely distributed, especially to the northern frontier, including metals and salt, as well as the most archaeologically visible attestation of such movement, the ceramic mortaria produced in Wilderspool, (MCINTOSH, PONTING, 2013, 131-2). However the simple existence of these links does not determine the distribution pattern: to the east the much more geographically extensive distribution of headstud brooches suggest a possible model of artisans making and / or selling the brooches toing and froing between Lincoln and Aldborough (North Yorkshire), working the towns and the fairs and markets in between, their movement facilitated by the road network created to support the process of conquest. By contrast the Wirral brooch is much less widely distributed, comprising a substantial part of the fibula assemblage in a much smaller area and only represented in a very small number of examples beyond the core area.⁹ While a clear correspondence with known social and political entities is lacking in either case, the focused distribution of the Wirral brooches may (intuitively) be argued to express a common group identity in an area small enough for its inhabitants to be linked by close social and economic relationships in the pre-Roman period, supplemented by the obligations related to supplying the legionary fortress at *Deva* (Chester) which probably affected much of the civilian population in this area. The homogeneity of Wirral brooch metal composition may suggest a single place of manufacture and / or very close connections between the artisans responsible for making these brooches (MCINTOSH, PONTING, 2013, 143-44).

Another opportunity afforded by the availability of much greater data on the

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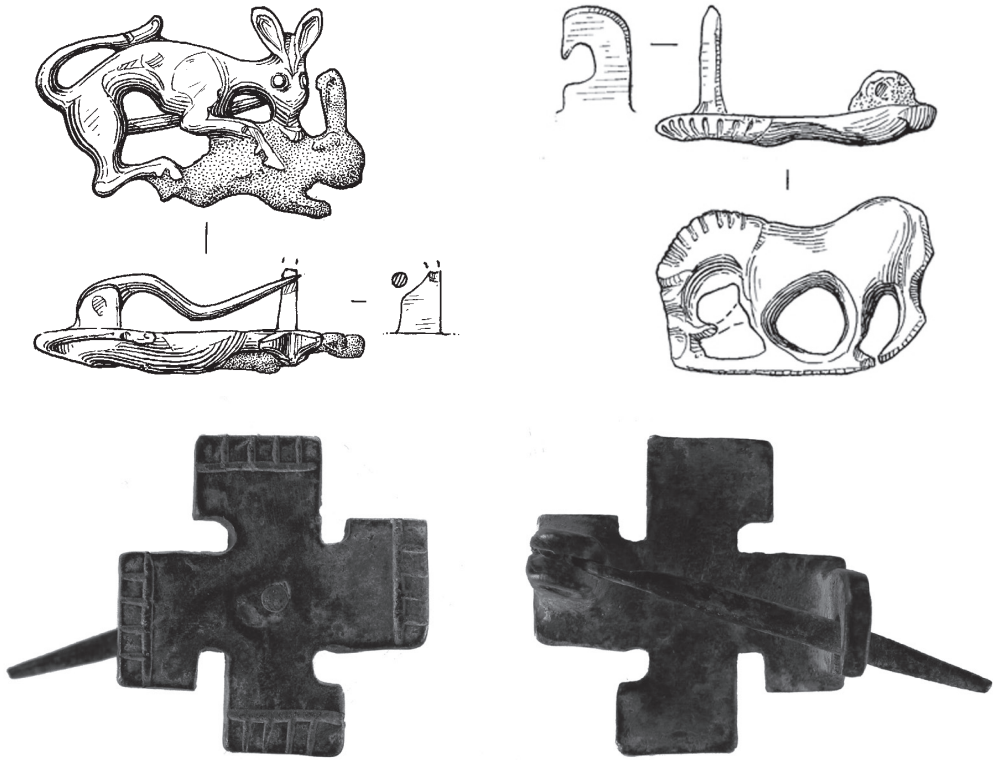


FIG. 8 a-c. Examples of unusual brooches from north-west England. a) Silver brooch showing a hound chasing hare, Halton, Cheshire (LVPL-035186) (36 mm long) (© Portable Antiquities Scheme). (Drawn by D. Williams). b) Zoomorphic brooch in the form of a horse, Dodcott cum Wilkesley, Cheshire (LVPL-2092E5) (33 mm long) (© Portable Antiquities Scheme). (Drawn by D. Williams). c) Swastika brooch, Lach Dennis, Cheshire (LVPL-01AD05) (39.7 mm long) (© Portable Antiquities Scheme).

province-wide and regional characteristics of brooch types is the easier identification of anomalous examples. The Cheshire dataset, for example, includes a handful of brooches which are otherwise uncommon or unknown in Britain (**Figs. 8a-c**). The zoomorphic silver brooch, for instance from Halton, (Cheshire-West) (LVPL-035186), showing a silver hound chasing a hare, is of a form otherwise virtually unknown in Britain although

a brooch showing two pairs is known from Piercebridge, County Durham (WORRELL 2008, 354-5, no. 4). Similar brooches are however documented from Szombathely and Brigetio, Hungary. Other unusual types from Cheshire include two swastika brooches from Northwich and Lach Denis (LVPL-F52FB5: LVPL-01AD05) a *kraftig-profilierter* brooch from Atherton, Wigan (LVPL-1B0623), as well as a horse brooch (Dodcott-cum-Wilksley)

which is better paralleled in Pannonia (LVPL-2092E5; WORRELL, 2009, 293, no. 10). As elsewhere in the north-western provinces fibulae may contribute to the understanding of mobility, especially in the absence of abundant epigraphic evidence, either from funerary inscriptions or diplomas (cf. IVLEVA 2011). In north-west England the presence of exotic brooch types might be linked to the presence of individuals associated with the Chester garrison, of soldiers and their dependents, or alternatively to the retirement to rural Cheshire of veterans returning from a posting in a garrison community on the Danube. Without wider study it would of course be dangerous to emphasise anecdotal or *ad hoc* explanations for the presence of exotic items, which might well have had a complex biography before their deposition, especially where their motifs such as the swastika, hound and hare or horse are familiar in Roman provincial art and possess an apotropaic or other potency (a further example of hunt iconography is discussed below).

ARTEFACTS AND IMAGES

The many objects which bear decoration have the potential significantly to enhance the study of visual culture in the province. They include a small number of bronze statues, represented in the main as fragments, hundreds of figurines representing gods and other beings, and a much larger number again of household objects bearing decoration in manifold forms deriving from north-west European and Greco-Roman traditions, including figural, vegetal and geometric motifs. In the study of Romano-British art decorated bronzes are something of a poor

relation to other media, especially mosaics as well as stone sculpture (HENIG, 1995). However the distribution of objects documented by the PAS, mainly in rural central and eastern Britain, allows access to visual culture in settings where evidence for stone sculpture and mosaic is more limited than in other regions (SCOTT, 2000; STEWART, 2010). In Iron Age art decorated copper alloy objects are restricted to a small group of prestige artefacts, especially weapons and horse gear (GARROW, GOSDEN, 2012). By contrast the occurrence of decoration on commonplace objects in the Roman period enables its study in diverse social contexts, both elite and non-elite. Its richness is an economic indicator in its own right, testifying both to the knowledge and capacities of craftsmen to embellish objects and of their accessibility to consumers in different social contexts. In the following paragraphs we briefly discuss the evidence which has been documented for larger scale bronzes before reviewing the more numerically significant evidence for smaller pieces.

Despite their fragmentary condition, pieces from life-size or greater bronze statues are a significant addition to the known corpus (STEWART, 2003, 174-9). Their findspots, close to urban and military sites in several instances, suggest their possible displacement from the public spaces of towns or garrisons. They include fragments of an equestrian statue, in particular the horse's head, found at North Carlton north of Lincoln, near the junction of two key routes to the north, derived either from a roadside monument or, more likely the forum or other public building in the *colonia* (DAFAS et al., in prep.), and of an eye from a mature human individual and other pieces from Terrington, North Yorkshire, close to the colony and legionary fortress at

York and the auxiliary garrison at Malton (YORYM-F46085; WORRELL, PEARCE, 2014, 404, no. 3). The best preserved of the monumental pieces is a bronze head from Brackley (Northants), found during ploughing in 1976, but only being reported in 2009 (Fig. 9). This rendering of a half-sized male head, best paralleled in imperial portraits of the later 2nd century AD, may represent the emperor Marcus Aurelius. The stylised hair, cork screw curls of the beard and the almond eyes illustrate its distinctive provincial style. The size and aperture at the base of the head indicate the likelihood of its being a portable image, perhaps carried by mounting on a staff for use in a procession (BERK-E24C84; WALKER, 2014).

Figurines of deities and their attributes comprise the largest group of smaller scale objects. More than 250 have so far been recorded by the PAS, a significant proportion of the total recorded from the province from more than three centuries of collection and documentation (DURHAM, 2012). Given that the findspots of non-PAS examples are heavily biased to urban centres, the PAS sample provides many of the rural examples. As in other provinces the figurines were in the main given to gods as part of the *votum*; this is documented occasionally in inscriptions and much more frequently in finds of excavated figurines in metal and in clay from deposits representing the residues of sacrifice on temple sites (DURHAM, 2012: 4.1). They must often also have been accommodated within household shrines, although in Britain unambiguous evidence for *lararia* is not yet known. A small number of figurines have been documented in the votive deposit at Piercebridge on the river Tees, including two representations of Cupid (WORRELL,



FIG. 9 *The 'Brackley Head', an imperial (?) portrait of the later second century AD, Brackley, Northamptonshire (BERK-E24C84) (162 mm high) (© Portable Antiquities Scheme).*

PEARCE, 2013, 349-50, no. 2); as for PAS finds *in toto* the findspots are otherwise in general rural, occurring primarily in eastern and central England.

The gods represented among the PAS finds are consistent with those in the general corpus from the province, being dominated by Mars, Mercury and attributes of the latter, especially small-scale representations of goats which must be an alternative or complement to the sacrifice of the real ani-



FIG. 10 *Figurine of Mars, Wrawby, Lincolnshire (LIN-A14AA2) (© Portable Antiquities Scheme).*

mal (WORRELL, PEARCE, 2013, 350-51; SF-3820E3, with further references). Other gods, whether of the Greco-Roman pantheon or from the so-called 'oriental' cults, are represented in more modest numbers. Representations closely follow a limited number of established types familiar from elsewhere in the empire. Although no two representations of Mars, for example, are the same, each differing in details of hair, dress or equipment, almost all represent the mature god, a bearded and armoured figure, with Corinthian helmet, cloak on left shoulder, cuirass with tunic and kilt beneath, and greaves. The raised right arm and lowered left arm hold

spear and shield respectively, though these are usually missing. In some examples, like those from Stanfield Abbots, Hertfordshire, a contrapposto pose is successfully rendered, the straight right leg taking the weight, the left bent (WORRELL, PEARCE, 2013, 364-5, no. 19). The example from Wrawby, Lincolnshire, illustrates a less common divergence from the canon; the head and body follow the conventions of the 'mature type' but the right arm holds a sword, reversed, with the scabbard strapping and elaborate pommel clearly rendered, following the convention used in the principal alternative representation of Mars as a naked youthful and helmeted figure; however the latter more commonly holds the reversed sword, unsheathed, in the left arm (**Fig. 10**).

The familiar representation of Roman gods may however mask their indigenous origins in many cases, in this instance of a likely re-making of local tutelary deities on the example of Mars. Epigraphic evidence from Britain reveals the multiplicity of identifications with local variants of Mars, distinguished by their paired names which may be theonyms or epithets (HAÜSSLER, 2012). In the case of votive leaves which supply an image of the god with the text this relationship is made clear, for example Mars Alator from Stony Stratford (RIB 218). Among the examples of martial representations the so-called 'rider god' stands out as less obviously dependent on a Greco-Roman prototype. This is a mounted male figure, sometimes with helmet or shield and with a raised right arm, perhaps intended to brandish a spear (DURHAM, 2012, 3.12) (fig. 11). A base from Martlesham, Essex, with an inscription recording a dedication to Mars Corotiacus and with the remnant of a figural group seem-



FIG. 11 *Horse and rider figurine, Stow cum Quy, Cambridgeshire (SF-99E3E4) (94.1mm long) (© Portable Antiquities Scheme).*

ingly including a horse and rider, supports the specific identification of this martial divinity with Mars (DURHAM, 2012, 3.12). This same god also serves to illustrate the stylistic variety among figurines, some having carefully modelled anatomy and attributes, others being much more schematising with exaggerated identifying attributes. The rider from Stow-cum-Quy, Cambridgeshire (SF-99E3E4), combines a rather simplified if generally proportionate anatomy with de-

tailed rendering of clothing, especially tunic and cloak, horse harness and plaited mane (**Fig. 11**). This contrasts with the outsize head and limbs of the bonneted figure from Carlton in Lindrick (DENO-A20E64), lacking any detailing of clothes or features. A long projection between its legs may have attached it to a horse, while a shorter one on its chest perhaps fixed a shield in place (WORRELL, 2007, 328–30, no. 25; WORRELL, PEARCE 2013, 359, no. 12). The most nu-



FIG. 12 *Capricorn Figurine, Burrington, Somerset SWYOR-29B362. (250 mm long) (photograph courtesy of Stephen Minnitt, Somerset County Council).*

merous representations of this figure are the schematized renderings as plate brooches on which cells with coloured enamels differentiate horse and rider. Over 60 have been found from Bosworth, Leicestershire, where geophysical survey indicates the likely existence of a temple (FILLERY-TRAVIS, 2012; WORRELL 2005, 456-7, no. 7). These were created perhaps as votive objects rather than dress items (e.g. LEIC-268813).

Other figurines represent finds that are exceptional in the province and beyond. Two examples must suffice. The first is a copper-alloy figurine of Capricorn, found at Burrington in Somerset (SWYOR-29B362), a so far unique representation of the Zodiac figure in this form (**Fig. 12**). Its outstretched forelimbs lack evidence of attachment to the globe on which they rest in other depictions of Capricorn, or for a cornucopia sometimes supported on its back. The flattening of its base allowed the figure to balance when placed upright. In Britain this motif is most

closely associated with the 2nd legion Augusta, the fortress of which was sited at Caerleon in south Wales, across the Bristol Channel from the Somerset findspot; it is also used by other units founded under Augustus and by later emperors, including the 3rd century usurper Carausius (KEPPIE, 2002; WORRELL, PEARCE, 2013, 369-72, no. 24). The motivation for the Burrington figurine's creation was perhaps religious, as a personification of the unit by a serving or former soldier, or as an (unusual) manifestation of the imperial cult by a private individual. The small giant figure (c. 57mm high) from Caenby Corner, Lincs is more likely, perhaps, to have been an element of domestic sculptural display than a votive figure (DENO-075128) (**Fig. 13**). Its anguished upturned face and extended right arm, anticipating annihilation by a divine adversary, suggests the figure might be part of a larger composition such as a gigantomachy. A larger and finer unprovenanced figurine in the Getty collection is one



FIG. 13 *The 'Caenby giant', a branch gripped in its left hand, looks up in likely desperation at a victorious foe (DENO-075128). (57.3mm high) (© Portable Antiquities Scheme).*

of the few other known figures of this type (WORRELL, PEARCE, 2013, 356-8, no. 10).

Objects bearing decoration include all the categories of small find typically met in artefact assemblages, tool or weapon handles, vessels, dress items and so on. The modes of rendering decoration are extraordinarily diverse, including cast or repoussé relief decoration, coating or attaching with metals and other materials (especially enamelling), incision and so on. The finds which have been documented are significant for the study of individual objects, supplying many new examples, as the example of knife handles reported below illustrates. Cumulatively the varied representations reveal classicizing motifs to be a stock part of artisanal repertoires and buyers' desiderata on materials which extend well beyond the precious metal objects which have received most attention (SWIFT 2009). It is impossible to do justice to the repertoire of decoration on other objects, figural and otherwise, in a brief over-

view and some individual examples are used here to illustrate wider trends.

The handles for small fixed-blade and folding knives may serve to illustrate some characteristics of decoration on objects of this type, including commonplace motifs and exceptional representations.¹⁰ The handles recorded by the PAS are made of copper alloy, although excavated examples, found across the north-west provinces are also known in bone, antler, ivory and jet. They are sometimes known as 'toilet knives', i.e. for shaving or other aspects of toilette, but their use may not have been so restricted (DESCHLER-ERB, 1998, 129-131). The more than 200 handles documented by the PAS endow Britain with the largest corpus of these objects from any province; even from

¹⁰ Von Mercklin's 1940 study remains the only overview of figural decoration on handles of this type. Crummy (2011, 110-13), and Deschler Erb (1998, 129-31) reference recent scholarship.

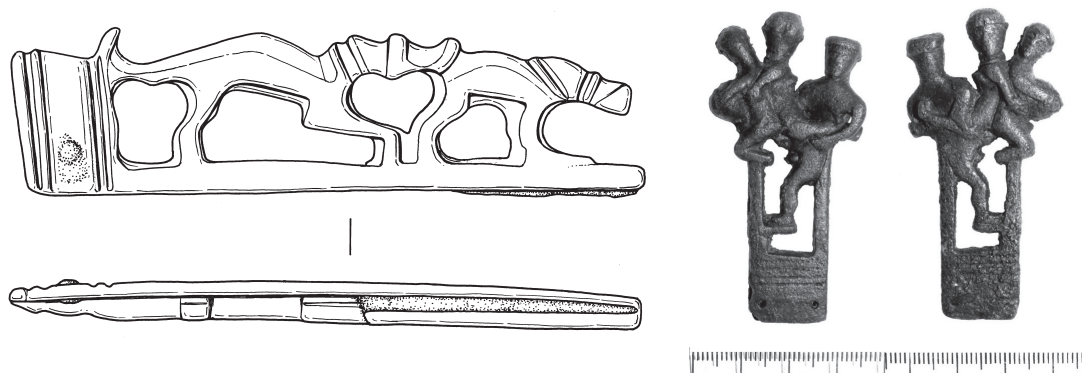


FIG. 14 Examples of knife handles. A: 'hare and hound' knife handle, Burrough Green, Cambridgeshire (SF-9E68A3) (67.6 mm long) (© Portable Antiquities Scheme). (drawn by Rachel Monk); B: An openwork knife handle in the form of an erotic scene with three participants, Syston, Lincolnshire (LIN-536F87) (64 mm long) (© Portable Antiquities Scheme).

an extensively excavated and materially rich site like Augst in Switzerland, for example, fewer than 20 examples have been documented (DESCHLER-ERB, 1998, 129-31; RIHA, 1986: 28-31).

Some handles were modelled in baluster form, or subdivided into zones by linear mouldings or dots, but a large number carry figural decoration. Felines, as heads, protomes or as *trapezophoroi* are frequent motifs (WORRELL, PEARCE, 2014, 418, no. 19). However the commonest zoomorphic form (by far) is the hare and hound, rendered in openwork, with the latter hard on the heels of the former (**Fig. 14a**). The type is known from occasional previous finds but the nearly 70 examples outnumber several

times over those recorded in other circumstances (BLOCKLEY *et al.*, 1995, 1034-6; DESCHLER-ERB, 1998, 130). Anthropomorphic handles include a gladiator, wrestlers (perhaps Hercules and Antaeus), a bathing Venus and several representations of sex.¹¹ The latter illustrate the potential of PAS finds to extend the understanding of a genre of Roman art, in this case erotic, in a provincial setting.¹² In one of the PAS examples, a *mulier equitans* seated to face away from the man, is a recurring motif in Roman erotic art elsewhere. However another scene of a threesome, represented by three PAS examples, is rarely attested and largely absent from Pompeian art. A find from Syston, Lincolnshire, illustrates the type, albeit with some unusual characteristics (**Fig. 14b**). Two naked males, the larger standing, the smaller kneeling, support a naked female figure. She sits on the back of the kneeling male with her legs raised and supported by the arms of the standing male (WORRELL, 2008, 358-9, no. 8). This threesome scene is known in other British finds; a handle from Middle Wallop,

¹¹ The commentary on a handle in the form of *Venus pudica* from Dodderhill, Worcestershire, includes references to the other anthropomorphic examples (WORRELL, PEARCE 2014, 412-14, no. 14).

¹² These have been little considered in the study of Roman erotic art. An article on the iconography of these knife handles is in preparation by Pearce.



FIG. 15A A copper-alloy mount inlaid with enamel and millefiori, Glanton, Northumberland NCL-A38DF3 (40.9 mm diameter) (© Portable Antiquities Scheme).

Hampshire (HAMP-4D3135), is so similar to one found during excavation of the theatre at St Albans that it seems likely to have been made by the same artisan. There are atypical aspects to the Syston example: the standing figure's erect penis extends towards the other male rather than the female figure (and the kneeling male holds a large spherical object, perhaps a head). This image may reproduce a spectacle scene, perhaps from a mime or similar, and may be a souvenir of it (JOHNS 1984, 58-59). As Clarke notes of a rare parallel to this threesome on a ceramic medallion made in the Rhone valley, one of a class of objects showing sex and spectacle used (perhaps) as Saturnalia gifts, the comic potential of this scene for a Roman audience lies in its risky virtuosity, the exuberance of the male penetrating figure and the humiliation of the two passive participants (CLARKE, 2007, 224-5).

The application of enamel, whether in single cells or as geometric or other arrangements is also widespread. A decorative technique inherited from the Iron Age, it proliferates in the second and third centuries AD across an expanding repertoire of objects and colours on objects found in Britain and other provinces. The most common are brooches, including the bow brooches discussed in the previous section as well as plate brooches (BAYLEY, BUTCHER 2004; MCINTOSH 2009). The latter include zoomorphic brooches, like the horse and rider described above with enamel applied in

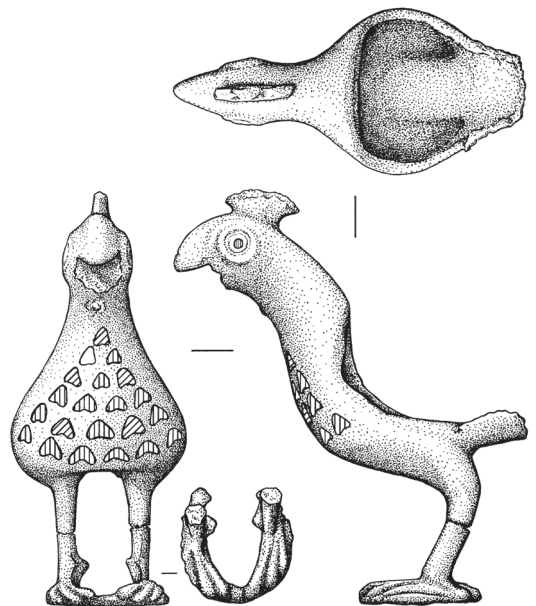


FIG. 15B An enamelled figurine of a chicken from Cople, Bedfordshire (SOM-745EA2) (106.7 mm high).



FIG. 15C The 'Ilam Pan', c. 9 cm in diameter at the rim, Ilam, Staffordshire (WMID-3FE965), The inscription reads: *Rigore Val(l)i Aeli Draconis Mais Coccabata Uxellodunum Cammoglanna*. It may be translated as 'In the line of the Wall, the property of Aelius Draco, Bowness Drumburgh Stanwix Castlesteads' (© S. Laidlaw, Institute of Archaeology and Portable Antiquities Scheme).

small cells, either adapted to the shape of the animal's body or in rows or clusters. Belt fittings and horse harness illustrate the sometimes rich polychrome schemes applied to small objects, for example on the 3rd century AD Kingsclere belt plate (FASW-B52BC2) or the disk from Glanton, Northumberland (WORRELL, PEARCE, 2012, 361-2, no. 4) (**Fig. 15a**). Vessels manifest the most complex schemes in enamel and the PAS examples contribute significantly to the corpus as a whole and as individual pieces (WORRELL, 2012). The forms attested serve a wide range of functions, including handled pans, beakers and flasks related to drinking jugs and pans for hand washing, containers of perfume (?), as well as cockerel figurines,

until recently thought to be possible perfume holders (**Fig. 15b**). The enamel decoration is rendered in varying closely-related styles, vegetal, geometric and 'neo-Celtic'; inkwells and other objects also carry millefiori decoration (HUNTER, 2012). Its preservation, fluid and complex arrangement of its curvilinear decoration and the inscription beneath the rim make the 'Ilam pan' (also known as the 'Staffordshire Moorlands pan') one of the most complex examples, although it lacks its handle and base (**Fig. 15c**). Like a small number of other vessels of the same form, the inscription beneath the rim, engraved after the vessel was made, names four forts at the western end of Hadrian's Wall; exceptionally it also records one of the very rare ancient

textual attestations of Hadrian's Wall, referring to it as the *rigor vali Aelii* (if correctly understood); the pan appears to have been the property of one Draco (TOMLIN, 2004, 344-5, no. 24). The Ilam vessel does not have the crenellated design characteristic of the enamelled decoration on the other analogous vessels, including the 'Hildburgh fragment' found between Zamora and Leon. Instead its body is decorated with eight roundels with hour glass motifs in between. Within each roundel is a composite of a whirligig and triskele centred on a three-petalled motif. Four different colours, red, yellow, blue and turquoise are used (JACKSON, 2012). The reason for its presence at Ilam in the Peak District, on a slope close to a resurgence point of the river Manifold a 'disappearing' watercourse, can only be guessed at. A souvenir of military service for a veteran involved in the exploitation of the rich metal resources of this region represents a plausible conjecture for explaining the genesis of this object and its discovery in this setting.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

This is not the only initiative to engage with metal detectorists and exploit as a research resource the evidence of the objects which they find; work on the Iron Age and Roman period in the Netherlands, for example, has exploited this data source to sophisticated effect (e.g. NICOLAY 2007). Nonetheless such initiatives remain rare and this paper has aimed to provide an illustration, albeit highly selective, of the objects documented in this public archaeology project and of their analytical potential. Individual pieces, such as the Ilam pan or Crosby Garrett helmet may have

attracted most attention, but the examples used here, representing a variety of artefact types, including brooches, figurines, knife handles and enamelled, consistently demonstrate a significant increase in the numbers of objects in a particular category and an extension of their typological and iconographic variety. The case studies of the headstud and Wirral brooches demonstrate the much more precise understanding of object distribution which can be established by exploiting the spatial information in these new data and the potential for new understandings of regional costume and its relationship to economics and identity. The discussion has emphasised that the objects documented by the PAS derive predominantly from a rural setting, where the metal small finds of Roman date are not paralleled in their numbers, diversity or the variety of their decoration until the early modern period. In this respect the data are a further manifestation of the richness of material culture in rural Roman Britain, otherwise expressed in the quantity and variety of portable objects, furniture, the size and complexity of house structures and the diversity of their building materials that excavation reveals. Collectively these indicate the capacity of Romano-British agriculture to generate a surplus to be expended. The Ilam pan, a vessel form of imported type, bearing a Latin inscription celebrating an imperial monument and decorated in a manner developed from indigenous traditions, embodies the hybridity in rural provincial metal objects of forms, techniques, styles and motifs which emerges from the data as a whole.

It is of course essential not to exploit PAS data in isolation. As we have tried to show, the dataset comes with its own biases in which the contribution of divergent wealth

or behaviour in ancient societies is not easily differentiated from the impact of variable land-use and intensity of metal-detectorist activity in the modern period. The great advantage to the PAS data is the instantaneous access to 'big data' documented within a single database, and the examples chosen above focus on the new discoveries. It is however essential to integrate these with data, including objects of the same type, documented by other means, which involves a significantly greater investment of research resources; the limitations of patterns based on PAS finds alone must be recognised. Even for the rural province very significant other sources of data exist, especially from recent developer-led archaeology, which would need to be taken in account in any fuller study (e.g. FULFORD, HOLBROOK, 2014).¹³ Nonetheless the excitement of the present period of archaeological research for the study of the province derives in part from the step-change in the quantity of data available in recent years and from the potential of these 'big data', derived from public engagement projects of this kind or from fieldwork, to transform understanding.

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¹³ These are currently the study of a major project at the University of Reading (<http://www.reading.ac.uk/archaeology/research/roman-rural-settlement/>)

as allowing us to see a pre-publication version of her article on Wirral brooches. The first version of this paper was presented at the Royal Archaeological Institute conference on rural societies in Roman Britain at Chester in October 2013, and we thank also the participants for their comments. Responsibility for any errors is of course our own.

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