Finds reported to the Portable Antiquities Recording Scheme in 2019

Laura Burnett, Somerset and Devon Finds Liaison Officer

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INTRODUCTION

In 2019 a total of 4,729 finds from Somerset[1] were recorded by the Portable Antiquities Scheme (PAS) in 1,775 records.

- The recorded finds were of all periods from the Mesolithic to the present day, with the following breakdown, based on number of objects[2]: Palaeolithic: none, Mesolithic: 1%, Neolithic: 3%, Bronze Age: 1%, Iron Age: 1%, Roman: 50%, Early-Medieval: 1%, Medieval: 16%, Post-Medieval: 26%, and Modern:<1%; 1% were of unknown period.
- were made from a range of materials including metal: 89% (75% of which were copper alloys), pottery: 6% and worked stone: 5%.
- Most finds were discovered whilst metal detecting (92%), including 3% as 'eyes only' surface finds; others were discovered by people out walking, gardening or as other chance finds.

The most significant find of the year was the Chew Valley Hoard, a large coin hoard dating to soon after the Norman Conquest, and currently still under investigation. Many other finds examined by the Somerset Finds Liaison Officer and colleagues were not recorded – generally finds that post-date AD 1540. Those described below are a selection that are significant, either nationally or locally. Complete records of all finds recorded can be viewed on the PAS online database: finds.org.uk/database.

Mesolithic to Neolithic pebble hammer from Misterton (SOM-AFA1D3)

An incomplete perforated cobble 'mace head' or pebble hammer (Fig. 1). It may have been a beach pebble that had a natural hole which was then exploited to create the mace. The mace head is a well rounded oblong, oval in cross-section with three sides that have a rounded central ridge and rounded corners. The majority of the object is covered in thick, perhaps original, cortex but it has been broken and worked on two adjoining sides, exposing the flint. This working is partly battering to round the edges of the breaks

Fig. 1 Pebble hammer from Misterton

Fig. 2 Socketed axe from Middlezoy

but appears to include some deliberate long removals.

The hole for a wooden handle is oval with an hourglass-shaped cross-section, i.e. wider on each face where it would have been bored from each side using sand and a drill. The centre of the hole is irregular with natural looking pitting, suggesting the maker exploited a natural hole in the flint which was improved by drilling. On the faces, the hole is c. 25mm by 20mm, while at its narrowest it is c. 14mm by 10mm. The entire piece is 55.3mm by 51.9mm and 30.4mm thick; it weighs 120.95g.

Its only partly modified shape and hourglass perforation puts this object in the group referred to as 'pebble hammers' by Roe (1979, 36). He suggests (*ibid*, 39) they can be hard to date out of context, being used from the Mesolithic onwards with some deposited in Bronze Age sites, although possibly retained as antiquities. Those with hourglass-shaped perforations are thought to be Neolithic or earlier (Dalton 1926, 107).

Bronze Age socketed axe from Middlezoy (SOM-7B35AD)

A complete copper-alloy Late Bronze Age socketed axehead dating to c. 950-750 BC (Fig. 2). The axe is an elongated rectangle in plan, narrowing slightly from the socket to the centre before expanding gradually to a flared convex cutting edge. It is triangular in profile tapering from the sub-square socket to the sharpened edge. There is a single integral side loop. The outer surfaces of the axe are decorated with a raised rectangle running along half the length; the rectangle is encircled by an outer, raised line border. There are small amounts of post-deposition damage and slight remains of tidied casting lines on the sides. There are some concreted iron pan deposits on one face suggesting it was, at some point, in a waterlogged environment. The axe is 106mm long, 46.7mm wide and weighs 190.41g.

Socketed axes with sub-square collars and crescentic

blades can be found during the Late Bronze Age Ewart Park phase (c. 950-850 BC) and the Llyn Fawr phase (c. 800-600 BC) of the Earliest Iron Age. While decoration on the faces of such axes is common, Dr Dot Boughton has kindly commented on this axe, confirming the date, and that the rectangular raised decoration is very unusual. This is another find from the wetland margins (see Burnett 2019), and contributes to our emerging understanding of the significance of this landscape for ritual activity through a long period in the Bronze Age, as well as earlier.

Roman buckle from Lopen (SOM-431B66)

An almost complete copper-alloy military buckle dating to AD 100 to 250 (Fig. 3). The buckle consists of an oval loop, with scrolled ends which would have flanked the pin, and a small integral trapezoidal plate with a T-shaped slot for the pin and decorative knops. The pin is missing. The frame is 25.1mm wide, the entire piece 24.9mm long and 3.4mm thick, and it weighs 6.78g.

Fig. 3 Buckle from Lopen

Appels and Laycock (2007, 103) suggest that buckles of this distinctive form were utilised by the cavalry and date them to the 2nd into 3rd century AD. Research by Marie Gagnol, Michel Feugère and Yahya Zaaraoui (in prep.) on this very standardised type, which is found across western Europe, shows a clear connection to the Rhine Frontier and Pannonia, areas of military engagement in this period. In Britain, most examples are from the area of Hadrian's Wall or Caerleon. The Lopen example is therefore an outlier that may have been lost in transit on the nearby Fosse Way or by someone on leave or retired.

Roman gold coin from Wanstrow (SOM-A557C8)

Roman gold *solidus* of Constantine I (AD 306-337), dating to the period c. AD 313-315 (Fig. 4). It has a bust of the emperor on the obverse and the reverse depicts the emperor galloping right, spearing an enemy; a second enemy with shield is shown below the horse. The coin was minted in Trier and is of RIC VII, type 36 (p. 167). The coin is 19.2mm in diameter, 1.5mm thick and weighs 4.45g.

Fig. 4 Solidus *from Wanstrow*

Single finds of Roman gold coins are rare nationally with only a few known from Somerset. This coin type is not listed in Bland and Loriot's (2010) corpus of Roman gold coins found in Britain, and is only the fourth gold coin dating to the Tetrarchic period recorded by the PAS.

Roman key from Ashcott (SOM-B0C429)

A copper alloy handle from a key of 2nd- to 4th-century date with a complete bear's head at the terminal (Fig. 5). The iron shaft and bit of the key have mostly rusted away. The handle is square in cross-section with a plain central part and a wide double collar at the end next to the shaft. The terminal is moulded, the head having a projecting, narrowed snout, ears and ruff around the lower part of the face. Details around the mouth, nostrils and eyes, for example, are further emphasised through engraved lines and overlapping semi-circular lines cover the sides of the face, suggesting fur. The handle is 51.1mm in length including the projecting shaft, 18.6mm wide and 17.4mm thick. It weighs 53.26g.

Zoomorphic key handles have been found on a number of sites in Britain, for example Fishbourne, dating to the early- to mid-3rd century (Cunliffe 1971, 118; no. 144), Verulamium, unstratified (Frere 1984, 47; no. 18) and Baldock (Stead and Rigby 1986, 136; no. 137), from a 3rd- or 4th-century context. Numerous examples have also been recorded by the Portable Antiquities Scheme: crouching lions, like those from Verulamium and Baldock are most common, with crouching dogs or wolves also known (e.g. Tyrrell 2013). Lion and leopard heads on a plain shaft, similar to this example, are more common on circular or flat cross-sectioned vessel or knife handles (e.g. Foreman 2012; Geake 2000). This is the only key handle formed like a bear recorded by the Portable Antiquities Scheme.

Fig. 5 Key handle from Ashcott

Roman or early-medieval francisca from near Frome (SOM-C39446)

An iron axehead, probably a throwing or mixed purpose axe of 3rd- to 6th-century date (Fig. 6). The butt of the axe is flat and sub-rectangular. The socket sides meet the butt at a c. 45-degree angle, with a rounded joint at the top and a pronounced ridge at the base. The sides expand slightly with a convex curve to accommodate an oval socket which is parallel to the butt. Flanking the socket on the lower face are triangular flanges (lugs); now corroded, they are around 6.6mm tall. A neck of solid metal between the socket and blade continues the angle of socket. The fan-shaped blade angles downwards as it widens and thins away from the neck. This results in the top corner of the blade being level with the top surface of the neck zone while the lower corner is almost level with the butt. The tip of the blade has a width of 78mm and any evidence of sharpening is lost to the rust. The axe is c. 146mm long, 37mm thick and a maximum of 85mm high. It weighs c. 600g.

The axe is similar to Roman examples such as the *dolabra,* Manning's Type 4 (Manning 1985, 15-16; fig. 3.4, pl. 7, nos B5-B6) which probably had a military origin and fulfilled a range of functions for the soldier (Manning 1976, 24). These are also similar to early-medieval francisca axes, primarily used as weapons, and in this case the much more pronounced angle between the socket and blade might suggest an early-medieval date and a use primarily as a throwing axe. Such axes faded out of use as the seax (long knife) became more popular (Pollington 2006, 127). The lugs flanking the socket are difficult to parallel in either period although Edwin Wood (pers. comm.) suggests an early-medieval example from Morning Thorpe (Grave 362) may show similar lugs (Green *et al.* 1987, 326). The finder is working with local archaeologists to understand more about the site where this axehead was found (see below, Webster ed., pp. 255-6).

Medieval plaque from Chiselborough (SOM-862DDC)

A rectangular copper-alloy mount with enamel and gilded decoration and religious inscription (Fig. 7). The plaque is now slightly distorted but would have been flat with a small attachment hole at each corner. The front is decorated with a narrow double border, plain outer and dark blue enamel inner, surrounding alternating horizontal bands. Five of the bands are recessed, some retaining their bright blue (turquoise) enamel, others showing the keying, while the six unrecessed, gilded, bands bear the inscription.

Fig. 6 Francisca from near Frome

Fig. 7 Plaque from Chiselborough

The inscription is in engraved, seriffed, Roman capitals, many of the strokes of which are double lines and hold traces of dark blue enamel. The inscription reads IhS / NAZA/RENV/S : REX / IVDE/ORVM (Jesus of Nazareth, King of the Jews). The plaque is 52.6mm long, 22.6mm wide and 2.2mm thick. It weighs 17.78g.

The well-executed design and elaborate enamelling is typical of Limoges and Mosan enamel work. A plaque with the same inscription fits at the top of a crucifix thought to be of Rhenish or Mosan work dated to the mid-12th century (Distelberger *et al.* 1993, 13-18/pl. 14). That example has gilded letters surrounded by enamelling and square backed Es, letters which appear to be a consistent feature of the Germanic pieces. The same inscription is also given above a crucifix on a book plate made in Limoges and dated to c. 1170 (Simon 1993, 280). That example has recessed letters holding enamel, similar to those on the Chiselborough mount, a mix of round and square-backed Es and an early form of contraction at the end of the inscription.

Similar plaques with longer inscriptions are known from later in the period of enamelwork production at Limoges, with similar round-backed Es but often Lombardic or reverse-barred Roman Ns (Taburet-Delahaye 1996, 313, 387, 421). This suggests the Chiselborough mount was probably made in Limoges in the later 12th or early 13th century.

Medieval coin from West Bagborough (SOM-0C7D00)
A medieval base silver (billon) *denier* of Henry II of the Kingdom of Cyprus (1285-1324), King of Jerusalem, of the 'lion' type, probably dating to the period after 1296 (Fig. 8). Mint uncertain. Metcalf's second main variety with pellets in the quarters (Metcalf 1995, 196/pl. 29) nos 727-8.

Fig. 8 Denier *from West Bagborough*

This appears to be only the third billon *denier* of Cyprus recorded by the PAS and the first of this type; it may have been brought back by a pilgrim or merchant.

Medieval mount from Wellow (SOM-AF94EE)
A large circular copper-alloy mount with integral rivet and separate sheet rove dating to the later 14th to 15th century (Fig. 9). The mount has a moulded, decorated front with an interlaced, six-pointed, star (Seal of Solomon) filling most of the field. In the centre is an en face lion's head. Within the points of the star are trefoils with pointed oval leaves, and in the spandrels between the points of the star and the outer edge are three-leaved plants with long oval leaves with very jagged edges. There is red enamel around the lion face and trefoils. The three-leaved plants in the spandrels are surrounded by remains of blue enamel. The mount is 53.2mm in diameter, 10.5mm including the rivet and weighs 48.79g.

The mount is part of a group recorded on the PAS database, found all across England, all of which are highly similar with only minor variation in the enamelling. The

Fig. 9 Mount from Wellow

fashion for large circular mounts on low slung belts worn over armour or martingales is found in the later 14th to 15th century. The six pointed 'seal of Solomon' was a widely used apotropaic or magical motif in the medieval period (Egan and Pritchard 1991, 203). The en face lion with sticking out tongue is also a popular later medieval motif and can be seen on a similar circular mount on the effigy of the Black Prince (d. 1376) in Canterbury Cathedral (Egan and Pritchard 1991, 183-4).

Post-medieval dress hook from Chilthorne Domer (SOM-068DE2, Treasure case 2019 T382)
A 16th-century composite silver-gilt dress hook with central element, attached hook and scars from a missing sewing loop (Fig. 10). The central element has been formed of three layers to represent a six-petalled flower. The bottom plate is flat and has a frame soldered on it forming a raised border. Within this border there is an openwork flower. At the centre-front of the dress hook can be seen the head of a split pin. This would have been covered by a further piece to represent the centre of the flower. The hook is formed of a separate piece of silver wire, soldered onto the back of the plate. The dress hook measures 27.7mm in overall length and the plate is 23.9mm in diameter and 5.3mm thick. From the positions of the scars, the loop would have been 20mm in length. The object weighs 7.10g.

Fig. 10 Dress hook from Chilthorne Domer

This dress hook is part of a widely found type, all with sewing loops and sharp pointed hooks but with a huge range of central plates, amongst which are other flowers, single or composite, dated to the 16th century (Gaimster *et al.* 2002, 160, 184). This example, of Read Class D, Type 10 or 11 (Read 2008, 84-5) is unusually elaborate, particularly in the number of elements. Over 55 dress hooks of the period have been recorded in Somerset by PAS, in all materials from cheap lead-tin to elaborate silver gilt, suggesting they were owned and used by many groups within contemporary society.

Two pairs of dress hooks acquired by the British Museum (2003,0301.1-2 and 2002,0403.1), as well as mentions of pairs as bequests and in inventories (Gaimster *et al.* 2002, 158, 183) suggest these types of objects were originally worn as sets. The current best interpretation, based on a drawing by Holbein (Read 2008, 47; Gaimster *et al.* 2002, 158-9; fig. 17), is that they were worn on the ends of straps that hung from the waist and were used to lift the front of voluminous skirts while walking outdoors or working. They are not shown in formal, posed, elite portraits and thus, prior to recording through the Portable Antiquities Scheme, were often overlooked as an element of dress. Documentary evidence suggests silver-gilt examples were mainly owned, and used, by middle class women (Gaimster *et al.* 2002, 186).

Post-medieval toy soldier from Cheddon Fitzpaine (SOM-CA72E2)

An incomplete, cast lead-alloy soldier figurine with a flat back and moulded front (Fig. 11). The male wears baggy breeches and a fitted, sleeveless jerkin over a jacket or chemise with baggier sleeves and a plain cuff. The jerkin has buttons with braid frogging. The legs are missing below knee level. The face is also missing but the remnants of a high collar or ruff are suggested. The trousers and sleeves are depicted with horizontal and vertical ridges which make a criss-cross pattern. His left arm is shown holding a short baton, while, though his right arm is missing, his right hand can be seen grasping a larger weapon, perhaps a long musket or pike. A belt can be seen decorated with vertical lines and with a rounded bag at the side, possibly for musket balls. The figure is 49.3mm high, 23.1mm wide, 1.8mm thick and weighs 13.04g.

Fig. 11 Toy soldier from Cheddon Fitzpaine

The clothing is very similar to Dutch early 17th-century military dress, as seen for example in prints by Jacob de Gheyn II, first published in 1608. Forsyth with Egan (2005, 169; fig. 40) depict a similarly dressed hollow figure which they date to the 1640s. They suggest 'soldier flats' (their Type 3 figurines *ibid.*, 170-172) began to be made in the 1680s in Britain (*ibid.*, 143), by which point military costume had changed. This new find suggests either that the date for soldier flats should be revised earlier, or that examples were made in historicised dress, or that this form of toy was imported from the Low Counties in the earlier 17th century, before domestic production began.

Modern medal and cap badge from Brympton (SOM-7EDC5E)

A military cap badge and football medal were found together, the medal tucked behind the badge (Fig. 12). The badge has a central rose and inscribed garter belt, surrounded by a laurel wreath leading up to a crown at the top and is inscribed with the words 'Duke of Connaught's Own'. A strip-like clip is on the back with the words 'MIN LONDON' printed in small lettering, the end lost to a break. It was probably manufactured by Firmin of London, a major producer of military buttons and other goods, still in existence today. The badge is 38.5mm by 34.2mm, 2mm thick and weighs 8.34g.

The football medal has a central shield, in a border with a loop at the top. The shield has recessed lettering, 'LSFA', filled with blue enamel and the border has the legend 'League Champions' surrounded by blue enamel. The name C. Brown is inscribed on the back. The medal is 34.5mm by 29.5mm, 2.16mm thick and weighs 9.66g.

A 'C. Brown' served in the 6th Battalion, Hampshire Regiment; this regiment was created from several volunteer groups in 1880, and given the designation 'Duke of Connaught's Own' in 1893. It was reorganised several times; a helicopter support squadron called 'No. 679 Squadron AAC' now owns the designation. This badge style was in use between 1938 and 1952[4]. C. Brown was almost certainly stationed in Yeovil during World War Two. The find was made in a back garden on a modern housing estate now covering part of the old military camp. There are several school football associations that share these initials, examples being London and Lancashire: both of these groups were in existence before WW2. It is likely he brought the medal with him and kept it as a good luck talisman or happy memento behind his badge.

Fig. 12 Cap badge and medal from Brympton

Endnotes

1. The figures given are for the historic county of Somerset including North Somerset, and Bath and North East Somerset.
2. This underrepresents flint and pottery and periods when these are heavily represented.
3. Mostly material such as lead weights or metal-working debris that are inherently hard to date out of context.
4. Based on the different style of Imperial War Museum catalogue number INS 15134 (in use until 1938) and different material of their catalogue number INS 2032 (in use from 1952) and the general shift to anodised aluminium for cap badges from c. 1950 onwards.

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