

# FINDS REPORTED TO THE PORTABLE ANTIQUITIES SCHEME IN 2018

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## INTRODUCTION

In 2018 a total of 2,105 finds from Somerset<sup>1</sup> were recorded by the Portable Antiquities Scheme (PAS) in 1,114 records.

- The recorded finds were of all periods from the Mesolithic to the present day, with the following breakdown, based on number of records rather than objects<sup>2</sup>: Palaeolithic: none, Mesolithic: 1%, Neolithic: 2%, Bronze Age: 2%, Iron Age: 1%, Roman: 43%, Early-Medieval: 1%, Medieval: 19%, Post-Medieval: 29%, and Modern: 1%. 2% were of unknown period<sup>3</sup>.
- They were made from a range of materials including metal: 88% (73% of which were copper alloys), pottery: 5% and worked stone: 6%.
- Most finds were discovered whilst metal detecting (88%), including 2% as 'eyes only' surface finds; others were discovered by people out walking, gardening or as other chance finds.

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](https://finds.org.uk/database).

### Neolithic stone axehead from Rode (WILT-BD2979)

This axehead, probably dating to c. 4000 – c. 2000 cal. BC, was found by chance during gardening (Fig. 1). The axehead is sub-rectangular in plan and a pointed oval in cross-section, tapering from a crescentic cutting edge to a sub-trapezoidal butt. Both the butt and cutting edge are damaged, the latter probably recently. The axehead has been pecked from a dark grey-green stone, with the apex of both faces smoothed although with no clear evidence of deliberate polishing. It is 170mm long, 66.5mm wide at the blade, has a maximum thickness of 37.7mm and weighs >200g.

The axehead is probably made of a Cornish Greenstone, although this has not been confirmed by a geologist. Although polished axeheads made in flint are much more common in Somerset, a few hardstone examples, such as this, are known.



*Fig. 1 Axehead from Rode*

### Bronze Age dagger from Middlezoy (SOM-AC79FD)

An incomplete cast copper-alloy dagger dating from the Early Bronze Age, c. 2150 - c. 1600 cal. BC (Fig. 2). It is flat and broadly triangular with a rounded and worn point. There is a shallow central rib on both faces running from the hilt towards the point with a defined, sharpened, edge. The hilt end is damaged with an old break going across the tang and corners; it has broken across three rivet holes and only one rivet remains with it. On both faces are

skeuomorphs, formed where copper corrosion has leached into and taken the form of organic material, probably the wooden hilt and grass or bracken sat against the blade during deposition. The dagger is now 111.05mm long, 58.7mm wide and has a maximum thickness of 3.5mm (at the central rib near the hilt). It weighs 49.98g.

The findspot is now drained ground but would previously have been part of the wetlands and possibly part of the river channel of the Sowey adjacent to the dry island. Other finds in the area suggest this wetland margin was important and marked by ritual depositions over a very long period. No similar daggers are listed by Knight *et al.* (2015) from Somerset and in general they are rare finds in the South West. Mostly they are found associated with high status burials so the suggestion of a ritual deposition into a wet environment is noteworthy. It is hoped that this interesting area can be investigated further in the future.

#### Early Roman terret from Broadway (DEV-5DA536)

A Roman copper-alloy terret, probably dating to c. AD 50 to 100 (Fig. 3). The terret is D-shaped. It has a narrower bar at the base with collars at each end and a semi-circular hoop with three large integrally cast double winged projections. The side projections are parallel to the hoop, with that at the top set transversely. The terret measures 42mm in length, and 60.6mm in width, with the thickness of the top projection measuring 18.8mm. It weighs 74.71g.

Terrets were fixed on the yoke of Iron Age and Roman chariots and wagons to guide the reins and prevent them becoming tangled. D-shaped terrets are a 'uniquely British phenomenon' and were present from around the 3rd century BC until the end of the 1st century AD (Lewis 2015, 1). Terrets are relatively rare in Somerset but those that are found often have winged projections; triple projections are a

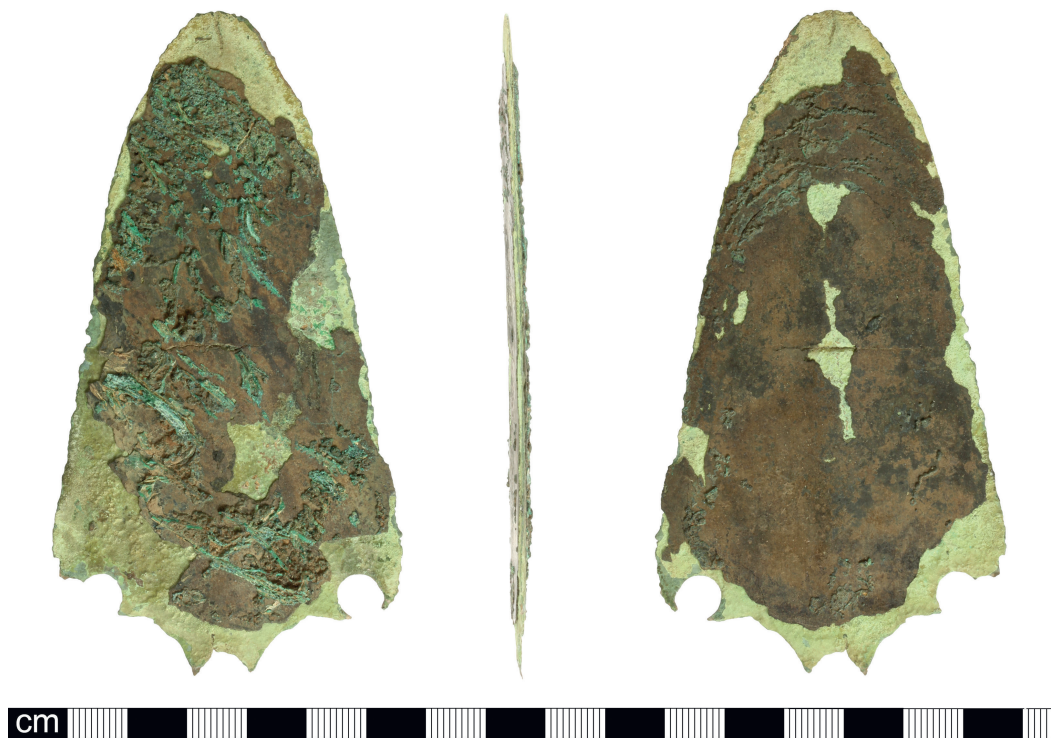


Fig. 2 Dagger from Middlezoy



*Fig. 3 Terret from Broadway*



*Fig. 4 Figurine from Brompton Regis*

decorative feature of many later terrets (Lewis 2015, 154, 282). Lewis' estimated chronology of terret forms suggests that parallel wings are limited to the later 1st century AD; whilst transverse wings were possibly longer lived, they overlap in the period AD 50-100 (Lewis 2015, 121).

**Roman figurine from Brompton Regis (SOM-B5638E)**

An incomplete and unfinished Roman copper-alloy figurine of Jupiter (Fig. 4). The figure is standing and missing his lower legs, feet and left hand to old breaks. He is bearded with short, curly hair and shown naked with a long cloak or stole draped over his left arm. In his right hand is a thunderbolt (*fulmen*) which has a central constriction flanked by rounded conical end caps. Extensive casting flashes remain between the arms and body and down the left side with smaller flashes down a seam on the right side.

The entire figurine is 92.6mm tall, 53.3mm wide and 19.8mm thick. It weighs 133.1g.

The portrayal of Jupiter naked, with beard, draped arm and thunderbolt, is the standard imagery seen for figurines (Durham 2012, section 3.13). This example is unusual in that his left hand is also held out rather than raised to hold a sceptre, however a similar example is known from Peebles in Scotland. The unfinished nature of the figurine, with large casting flashes left on, is unusual and suggests it was made locally, and either discarded unfinished or made specifically to be deposited. Such statuettes may have been used in temples but also in personal shrines. Jupiter was not the most popular god for depiction in Roman Britain representing only 3% of Durham's sample of Romano-British male figurines (Durham 2012, section 4.4.1). She suggested a clear although not exclusive relationship between Jupiter figurines and military sites and the proximity of Rainsbury Fort to the findspot of this example is noteworthy.



*Fig. 5 Furniture fitting from Trudoxhill*



While Roman economic activity on Exmoor is well known, particularly ironworking, evidence for adoption of the Roman way of life or religion, *Romanitas*, is rarer. This piece is therefore of particular significance as it suggests the possible local production and use of figurines representing a specifically Roman god. The piece has been donated to Somerset Museum Service (TTNCM: 72/2019), and it is hoped it will be displayed on Exmoor.

**Roman furniture fitting from Trudoxhill  
(SOM-762B9F)**

A Roman cast copper-alloy mount depicting the head and shoulders of a female, probably Diana (Fig. 5). The figure has an elaborate hairstyle, is facing forwards and wears a draped dress with uncovered shoulders. Her hair is held by a diademed cap. The facial features are detailed and naturalistic. The reverse is cast at a 45-degree angle and ends just below the shoulders. It is hollow with a massive sub-rectangular stud projecting into the hollow which would have formed the point of attachment and has the corroded remains of an iron rivet. The entire figure measures 68.5mm in length, 43.7mm in width across the shoulders, 26.0mm in thickness and weighs 157.14g.

Figurative mounts with a similar point of attachment, but representing a range of deities, are not uncommon in Britain but as they are almost always stray finds it is not clear what they were attached to. The probable identification of Diana is suggested by the idealised facial features and mostly by hairstyle, although with a lack of obvious attributes the identification cannot be certain. Depictions of Diana are not very common finds in Britain, Durham (2012, section 3.22) listing only nine examples in her corpus compared to 33 of Minerva, the most popular female deity.

**Late early-medieval buckle from Saltford  
(GLO-2D61D8)**

A copper-alloy D-shaped buckle frame with zoomorphic moulding (Fig. 6). The front of the buckle is expanded to form a sub-triangular panel with an en-face moulded animal head on the top with hollowed circular ears, lentoid eyes below and a triangular snout forming the forward edge. Flanking this is an arching beast on each side, forming the curving sides of the buckle. The beasts face the bar, which is gripped in their mouths at either end. These beasts have curling crests on the tops of their heads, large lentoid eyes, a line below for the mouth and long snout with a recessed bulbous terminal for the nostril.

This buckle is in the Ringerike style; a similar



*Fig. 6 Buckle from Saltford*

example, found in London from the Thames was dated to the 11th century (Wilson 1964, 143-144). While reflecting the influence of Scandinavian art styles they are almost certainly indigenous productions dating to the first half of the 11th century and found across England (Kershaw 2010, 4). This example is unusually well preserved.

**Medieval seal matrix from Bratton Seymour  
(SUR-36D8C9, Treasure case 2018 T397)**

A silver seal matrix with inset intaglio dating to the 13th-14th century (Fig. 7). The die is rounded oval with an inscription reading + S' IOHANNIS . DE . Wike, Sigillum (Seal of) John of Wyke. The intaglio is pale blue and translucent, and engraved with a bust of a young male wearing a cap and facing left. It may be a reused Roman intaglio although Roman designs were also copied in the medieval period. The cap in particular may be a later, medieval addition to a Roman intaglio.

The handle is conical, without facets and has a perforated quatrefoil terminal. The back of the die has an orientation mark in the form of a small cross about 1mm across indicating the start of the legend on the face. The die face measures 21.5mm by 18.8mm and has an overall height of 21.5mm; it weighs 9.2g.

The use of an intaglio on seals was most popular in the 13th and early 14th century (Harvey and McGuiness 1996, 15). A John De Wike (or De Wyke) is listed as a Knight of Somerset in the parliament roll for Spring 1305 (Maitland 2012). A John de Wyke, born 1300, owned the manor of Court de Wyke in Claverham, Somerset, dying in 1346 at the Siege of Calais. His son, also called John de Wyke, was born in 1325 and is listed as a member of parliament for Shaftesbury in 1347 (Willis 1716, 479). It is probable this seal belonged to one of these individuals or an earlier member of the family. Somerset Museum Service hopes to acquire.



Fig. 7 Seal matrix from Bratton Seymour

#### Medieval bulla from Bruton (SOM-25F3B3)

Just under half of a lead magisterial bulla of the Grand Master of the Order of the Hospital of St John of Jerusalem (Knights Hospitallers) (Fig. 8). It has been deliberately cut in half, with an additional triangle cut from the middle. The cut is old and part of the groove to hold the cord through the centre is visible. When complete, one side showed the Master, kneeling left with a patriarchal (double-barred) cross on the left, flanked by an alpha and omega. The design is encircled the legend reads [...CVST]OS. PAVPERVM (guardian of the poor), the name of the Grand Master missing due to the break. The reverse showed a dead man on a bier with a church or tabernacle above. To the right, above the man's head, a Maltese-style cross can still be seen. This design is often interpreted as the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, or a patient in the Hospital in Jerusalem (Packard 2015). It is encircled by the legend reading [+ h]OSPITALIS. I[h]ERUSALEM].

The fragment is 34.5mm by 16.8mm, 5.3mm thick and weighs 16.87g. It cannot be dated more accurately than 1365-1559, given the lack of the Master's name. The order was suppressed in Britain, firstly by Henry VIII and again by Elizabeth I until it was re-established in the 19th century (Cockburn *et al.* 1969, 193-204).

The Master's seal was attached by a thread to all official documents issued by the Order to authenticate them. The Hospitallers owned estates in Somerset, including at Lower Durston where there was a Commandery and women's Priory (Struckmeyer 2006). Its findspot near Bruton Abbey may relate to official business between the two.

#### Post-medieval 3 polker of Sigismund III Vaza from Portbury (GLO-BB7B2F)

This silver coin was issued by Sigismund III Vaza of Poland in AD 1623 and was worth 3 *polker*, equivalent to 1/24th of a *thaler* (Krause *et al.* 2003, 1142; ref. KM# 41) (Fig. 9). The obverse has the shield of arms of Poland with the number three in a frame below and the legend SIGIS. 3 . D. G. REX. P. M .D. L. (*Sigismundus Tertius Dei gratia rex Poloniae, magnus dux Lithuaniae*). On the reverse is an imperial orb inscribed 24 across the orb and with the date (23) flanking the cross above. The legend is MONE NO REG POLO (Minted in the name of the King of Poland). The coin is 19mm across and 1.03g in weight.



Fig. 8 Medieval bulla from Bruton

Polish coins are not common finds in Britain but the 3 *polker* of Sigismund III appears to be the most common denomination found (10 out of 26 Polish coins recorded on PAS). This perhaps reflects their similarity in size to contemporary English sixpences as well as the highpoint of the economic and political power of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth. Most finds are from areas adjacent to ports suggesting their loss by visiting traders or returning sailors and this find supports that pattern.

#### Modern mount or test piece from Ash Priors (SOM-7DB8A7)

A modified silver 'Gothic' florin of Victoria dating to the period 1891 to 1949 (Fig. 10). The obverse features a crowned bust of Victoria facing left, surrounded by the legend 'Victoria d: g: brit: reg: f: d: mdccclx', indicating the coin itself dates to 1860. The bust and the field are covered with multiple randomly placed and crudely made incisions, sometimes crossing. The reverse of the coin has been polished and the original design obliterated. In its place, three heraldic crests have been finely engraved. The first crest features the head of a griffin rising from flames within a crown, holding a branch in its beak. The crest on the lower left features an owl standing on a torse. On its breast are three stars. The crest on the right depicts a lion's head facing left on a torse with three cross crosslets fitchée on its breast (full heraldic description in the PAS record). The piece is 29.9mm in diameter, 1.2mm thick and weighs 6.60g.

The fine engraving is highly accomplished; however, the back is crudely finished and was presumably hidden in use suggesting the object was mounted onto something. The combination of fine engraving and reuse of a coin suggests either a hobby engraver or an individual with time and skill but not access to objects to engrave other than coins, such as a sailor, soldier or prisoner.

Work by Clive Cheesman, *Richmond Herald*, has identified the arms as those of Charles Alfred Onley Savill-Onley of The Priory, Ash Priors, a property he purchased in 1900; (Fairbairn 1892, 493; Baynham 1908, 69). He died without issue in 1909; his widow lived on at The Priory until her death in 1949 (Burke 1937).

#### 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.



Fig. 9 3 polker of Sigismund III Vasa from Portbury



Fig. 10 Mount or test piece from Ash Priors

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