FINDS REPORTED TO THE PORTABLE ANTIQUITIES SCHEME IN 2007

NAOMI PAYNE

INTRODUCTION

A total of 1621 Somerset finds were recorded on the Portable Antiquities Scheme database during 2007. The author (the Somerset Finds Liaison Officer) also examined and identified many more objects which were found to be more recent in date than *c*. 1700 and were therefore not recorded on the database – although occasionally objects which postdate 1700 are recorded when they are thought to be of special interest. The artefacts described below are considered to be particularly interesting examples reported to the Scheme during 2007. The PAS database reference number is included in each description. The online database contains more detailed information about each object and colour photographs (http://www.findsdatabase.org.uk).

PRINCIPAL FINDS

Miniature socketed axehead from Chewton Mendip (GLO-095477)

A cast copper-alloy miniature socketed axehead of late Bronze Age to Roman date (Fig. 1). The axehead measures 18mm by 13mm by 7mm and weighs 3.1g. It has parallel vertical sides and therefore falls into Robinson's type IV. The socket is shallow with an oval mouth and the reasonably large side loop projects from the mouth. The majority of miniature socketed axeheads has come from south-west England and the largest concentration is in Wiltshire (Robinson 1995, 60). They are much too small to

Fig. 1 Miniature socketed axehead from Chewton Mendip

have been functional so they are thought to have had a votive or amuletic role. Few of the known examples come from datable contexts, but they appear to range in date from the late Bronze Age, through the early Iron Age, the late Iron Age and into the Roman period. The majority which can be dated are Roman and were presumably copied from chance discoveries of Bronze Age artefacts (Robinson 1995, 61). Two or possibly three examples are said to have been found on the site of the Romano-British temple at Lamyatt Beacon near Bruton (Robinson 1995, 64, 68).
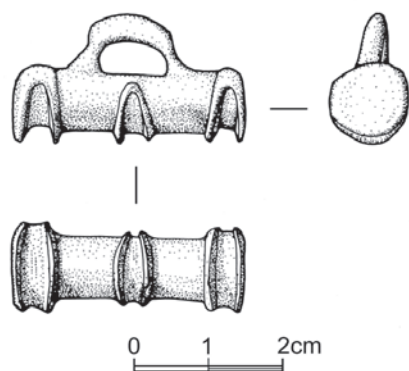
Fig. 2 Late Iron Age or early Roman toggle from Charlton Mackrell

Late Iron Age or early Roman toggle from Charlton Mackrell (SOM-946D43)

A cast copper-alloy toggle of late Iron Age or early Roman date (Fig. 2). The toggle measures 30.4mm by 16.6mm by 10.5mm and weighs 14.9g. It is cylindrical with a loop on one side, which would have been used for attachment to clothing or horse harness. The loop has a broader curving central section which narrows slightly on each side before flaring out again at the point where it meets the cylindrical section. At each end of the cylinder is a slightly expanded terminal, *c.* 5.5mm in length, which contains a deep and wide groove on the side opposite the loop. There is a further similar feature in the centre of the bar. Lipped decoration such as this is more commonly seen on late Iron Age terret (rein) rings.

Late Iron Age or Roman ox-head bucket escutcheon from Tatworth and Forton (SOM-5A8447)

A probable cast copper-alloy ox-head bucket handle escutcheon of late Iron Age or Roman date (Fig. 3). The escutcheon is in the form of the upper part of the head of an ox and measures 27.8mm front to back, 26.9mm side to side and 23.6mm top to bottom. It weighs 21.3g. It has two slightly curving horns, a forward-pointing snout, the end of which is broken, and almond-shaped eyes. The base is concave and at the back there are two rectangular lugs, one horizontal and the other vertical. It is not clear whether these are complete and how they would have enabled attachment. It may have worked in a similar
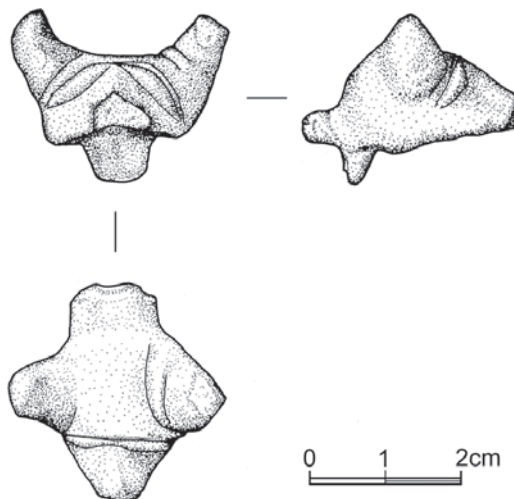

Fig. 3 Late Iron Age or Roman ox-head bucket escutcheon from Tatworth and Forton

way to HESH-178702, another bovine escutcheon from near Cannock, Staffordshire, which has lugs in the same position. That closest to the horns is more complete and was formerly looped; this would have held a handle. The other is longer and starts off perpendicular to the rest of the escutcheon, then curves downwards towards the animal's muzzle. The general shape of the ox's head is quite different on the Staffordshire example, being much more elongated.

Unpublished coin of Carausius from Chedzoy (SOM-DF0782)

A copper-alloy radiate coin of the emperor Carausius (286–93) with Pax on the reverse, which was minted in London (Fig. 4). The coin is possibly an overstrike or is double-struck. The variety is apparently unpublished (pers. comm., Sam Moorhead, PAS Advisor on Roman coins). The F O field letters confirm that the RSR coins were minted at London. There is a PAX AVG type (Pax holding branch and rudder) from the RSR issue in the British Museum (2000 8 33), but previously no example of this type. The coin has been acquired by the Department of Coins and Medals at the British Museum.

Early-medieval penannular brooch terminal from Bishops Hull (SOM-0B1693)

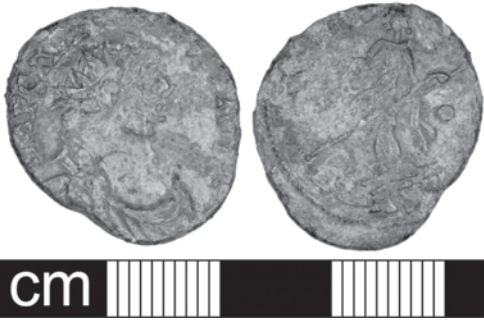The terminal and a short length of the arm of a cast

*Fig. 4 Roman radiate coin of Carausius from
Chedzoy*

copper-alloy penannular brooch of early-medieval
date (Fig. 5). Less than half of the brooch survives
and the pin is missing. The surviving fragment
measures 17.1mm in length and weighs 4.6g. The
polyhedral terminal measures 10.3mm by 9.1mm by
6.7mm. It has 13 sides, which comprise five lozenges
interspersed with smaller triangles. There is no trace
of any decoration. The arm's cross-section is oval.
The polyhedral terminal fits into Fowler's Type G,
although this example does not have a ribbed hoop.
The dating of this type of brooch is problematic, but
this example is probably 5th to 6th century AD
(Fowler 1963, 107). A similar although more
complete example from Llanfihangel Cwmdu with
Bwlch and Cathedine, Powys has been recorded on
the Portable Antiquities Scheme database (NMGW-
FF0EE5).

*Fig. 5 Early-medieval penannular brooch
terminal from Bishops Hull*

Inscribed late Anglo-Saxon strap-end from Misterton (SOMDOR-0DB481)

A cast lead strap end with incised inscription of 10th
or 11th-century AD date (Fig. 6). The tongue-shaped
strap end measures 42mm by 19.1mm by 3.3mm and
weighs 20.2g. It is of Thomas's type E (Thomas
2004, 1–4) and its width to length ratio is 1:2.2. At
the wider end there is a narrowed tranverse section
through which there are three equally spaced round
holes. The strap end is decorated with simple incised
decoration on both sides, comprising four concentric
borders which follow the outside edge. This
decoration extends over the thinner section on one
side only. Within the border is the inscription. The
text starts from the end with the attachment holes on
both sides. According to Elisabeth Okasha, with
word-division added the text reads w[v]lfstan m[e]c
ah a, that is, 'W[u]lfstan owns me -', with an
extraneous letter A at the end. The name Wulfstan is
a relatively common name, especially in the later
Anglo-Saxon period. The word mec is an old and/or
poetic variant of the usual Old English word me,
'me'. This form is quite common in comparable
inscribed texts. The word ah is the third person
present singular of the verb again 'to own'. The final
letter A is not part of the text as such and may be
considered as a space-filler.

This is currently the only certain strap-end of
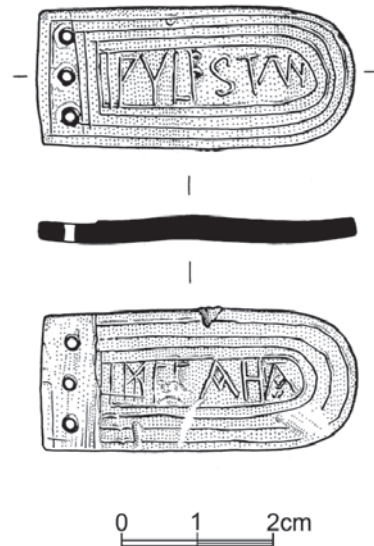Anglo-Saxon date with an inscription to have been

Fig. 6 Late Anglo-Saxon strap-end from Misterton

Fig. 7 Medieval seal matrix from Pawlett (front, back and impression)

found in Britain. There are about 100 known early-medieval portable objects with non-runic inscriptions, excluding coin brooches (Okasha 1971; 1983; 1992; 2004). Nine of these employ the 'owns me' formula, including six items of jewellery (four gold finder rings, two silver brooches), two knives (one iron, silver and bronze and one iron and horn) and a whale bone weaving tool. Other formulae which refer to the object itself, usually in the first person, include 'made me', 'had me made' and 'ordered me to be made'. The strap-end has been acquired by the Somerset County Museum (accession no. TTNCM 83/2007).

Medieval seal matrix from Pawlett (SOMDOR-D8C031)

A cast copper-alloy seal matrix of probable late 13th or 14th-century date (Fig. 7). The seal matrix is vesica-shaped (oval with pointed ends) and measures 38.3mm by 24.9mm by 3.2mm. It weighs 13.8g. The longitudinal rib and suspension loop have been broken off the back. In the centre of the die is the standing figure of St Peter, wearing a long robe. He is holding crossed keys in one hand and a cockerel in the other, and has a bound sinner at his feet. To the left of the figure are the letters P and E and to the right T and R'. The legend starts with an initial cross

and reads CLAVIGERII CEL' NVNCIA FERNOVEL. The first part of this Latin text can be translated as 'the seal of (not stated but implied) St Peter, the keeper of the keys of heaven.' The rest of the legend is not easily translatable. 'Nuncius' can mean angel or messenger (Latham 1980, 316–17). Fernova means a good omen (Latham 1980, 189). Seals bearing images of saints were used by many people, sometimes because they shared a name or because the saint in question was the patron of their occupation or trade.

Late medieval pilgrim badge from Charlton Mackrell (SOMDOR-9E68C2)

A cast copper-alloy pilgrim badge of late medieval date (Fig. 8). The badge, which is moulded to represent St Barbara, measures 26.2mm by 18mm by 1.9mm and weighs 3.98g. It is quite worn but the standing figure of a haloed St Barbara is clear. To her right is the tower where she was imprisoned, and to her left, a palm leaf, a symbol of martyrdom. The tower appears to have a doorway at its base, several storeys, and is topped with a crenellated roof. The figure is possibly holding a chalice, another symbol associated with St Barbara, and an open book, but neither is very clear. On the back of the badge there is an integrally cast loop. There is no

Fig. 8 Late-medieval pilgrim badge from Charlton Mackrell

other trace of the means of attachment. St Barbara became very popular during the late 15th and early 16th century (Spencer 1998, 178).

Early post-medieval knife from Chilton Trinity (SOM-45B8E7)

The carved bone handle and part of the wrought iron blade of a knife of probable early post-medieval date (Fig. 9). The surviving portion measures 106mm by 18.1mm by 11.1mm and weighs 25.3g. A short length of the narrow tapering blade survives. The handle has been made from two matching bone panels, which are riveted onto the tang using three iron rivets. Three sections are defined on each panel. The section adjacent to the blade is in the form of a tapering quadrangle, the central section is tear drop-shaped and the third is curvilinear with a rounded end. At the end of the handle there is a projecting

Fig. 9 Early post-medieval knife from Chilton Trinity

knop. Knives are not usually discovered in such complete condition.

Mid 18th-century mourning ring from Milborne Port (SOM-FA3D08)

A gold and niello mourning ring dating from 1753 (Fig. 10). The ring's outside diameter is 21.6mm, the band's width is 3.3mm, its thickness is 2.1mm and it weighs 4.2g. The band is divided into five curvilinear scrolls, which contain a legend in gold, highlighted using black enamel. The legend reads WM BYSHOP OB:24 JULY.1753 AE:40, i.e. the ring commemorates a William Byshop who died on 24 July 1753, aged 40. The finder, Hugh Vincent, examined the parish registers for Milborne Port and noted that a William Byshop married a Sara Hallet on 23 October 1739. This ring presumably belonged to Sara, who had it made after the death of her husband. On the inside of the band there is a maker's mark: IW set within a simple rectangle. These initials are not uncommon, but could conceivably refer to John Webber of Plymouth, who entered his name and mark at the assay office in 1724 (Jackson 1949, 344). A number of London goldsmiths who were operating at this date had the same initials.

Fig. 10 Mid 18th-century mourning ring from Milborne Port

Acknowledgements

References

Fowler, E., 1963. 'Celtic metalwork of the fifth and sixth centuries AD: a re-appraisal'. *Archaeological Journal*, 120, 98–160.

Jackson, C.J., 1949. *English Goldsmiths and their Marks*, London.

Latham, R.E., 1980. *Revised Medieval Latin Word-List from British and Irish Sources with Supplement,* Oxford.

Okasha, E., 1971. *Hand-List of Anglo-Saxon Non-Runic Inscriptions*, Cambridge.

_____ , 1983. A supplement to Hand-List of Anglo-Saxon Non-Runic Inscriptions, *Anglo-Saxon England*, 11, 83–118.

_____ , 1992. A second supplement to Hand-List of Anglo-Saxon Non-Runic Inscriptions, *Anglo-Saxon England*, 21, 37–85.

_____ , 2004. A third supplement to Hand-List of Anglo-Saxon Non-Runic Inscriptions, *Anglo-Saxon England*, 33, 225–81.

Robinson, P., 1995. 'Miniature socketed bronze axes from Wiltshire', *Wiltshire Archaeological and Natural History Magazine*, 88, 60–8.

Spencer, B., 1998. *Pilgrim Souvenirs and Secular Badges,* Medieval Finds from Excavations in London no. 7, London.

Thomas, G., 2004. *Late Anglo-Saxon and Viking Age Strap-Ends 750-1100: Part 2*, Finds Research Group Datasheet 33.