FINDS REPORTED TO THE PORTABLE ANTIQUITIES SCHEME IN 2014

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INTRODUCTION

In 2014 a total of 2,054 finds from Somerset[1] were recorded by the Portable Antiquities Scheme (PAS) in 1,504 records.

- The recorded finds were of all periods from the Palaeolithic to c. AD 1900, with the following breakdown, based on number of records rather than objects.[2]
- Palaeolithic: <1%, Mesolithic: 1%, Neolithic: 8%, Bronze Age: 2%, Iron Age: 1%, Roman: 41%, Early-Medieval: 1%, Medieval: 17%, Post-Medieval: 27%, and Modern: <1%. 1% were of unknown period.[3]
- They were made from a range of materials: metal: 86% (of which copper alloys 75%), pottery: 3%, and worked stone: 11%.
- Most finds were discovered whilst metal detecting (87%), some 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 1700. Those described below are a selection that are significant, either nationally or locally. Complete records of all finds recorded, with colour photographs, can be viewed on the PAS online database: finds.org.uk/database.

PRINCIPAL FINDS

Lower Palaeolithic chert handaxe from Priston (GLO-0DB7BB)

A 'ficron' type handaxe of the Middle Acheulian tradition (Fig. 1). The axe is sub-triangular in plan, with slightly concave sides and a rounded butt; the point is lost to a break. There are flaking scars on both faces. The centre of one face is unworked and covered in cortex. The whole artefact has a mid-

brown colour, with a lighter grey patina on both sides and over the broken tip. The piece is now 87mm long, 67mm wide, 38mm thick and weighs 212 grams.

The Acheulian period spans from c.600,000 to 245,000 years ago in Britain; finds date to phases within this period when the climate was warmer and were produced by the hominid species Homo heidelbergensis. Coarser grained chert, which forms locally in limestone, was used as a substitute for flint.
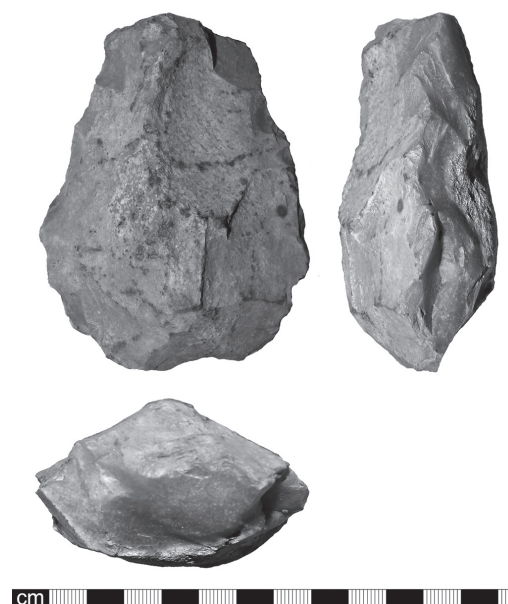

Fig. 1 Handaxe from Priston

Middle Bronze Age spearhead from Weston in Gordano (GLO-F69302)

An almost complete copper-alloy socket-looped spearhead dating to c.1600-1400 BC (Fig. 2). The blade is leaf shape with a prominent central spine of rounded lozenge-shaped cross-section. At the tip of

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the spear the spine is slightly flattened with visible striations where it has been filed down to form the point, now missing to an old break. The socket is circular in cross-section and expands to the basal opening which is 16mm across. On both sides of the socket (25mm above the base) expanded pierced lugs form integral loops for attaching the head to the shaft or suspending decorative attachments. The entire piece is 104mm long, 25mm wide, 16mm thick and weighs 47.45 grams.

The spearhead is of Ehrenberg (1977) Class IV dating to the Acton Park phase (c. 1600 - 1400BC), corresponding to Needham's (1996) Period 5. The large socket and small blade places it in Rowlands' (1976) British side-looped Group I with ivy/leaf shaped blade. GLO–FF6DB7 and DOR-30E216 on the PAS database, from Chilcompton (Somerset) and Cheselbourne (Dorset), are similar local examples.

Fig. 2 Spearhead from Weston in Gordano

Late Iron Age or early Roman glass bead from Otterhampton (SOM-FCF621)

A translucent blue-green bead with opaque trail (Fig. 3) of Guido (1978) Class 11. The bead is barrel shaped with flat ends. The square hole through the centre is larger at one end. White-yellow glass has been laid on the outside in broad U-shaped loops and then combed with a line drawn around the centre of the bead creating Lombardic M shapes linked by a central line. The trail has been flattened but in places the opaque glass has not adhered well and is coming away. The bead is 14.5mm by 13.5mm externally and 7.7mm thick; it weighs 1.90 grams.

Colourless beads with opaque yellow decoration dating to the late Iron Age (300-1 BC) were found, and produced, at the lake villages of Meare (Coles 1987) and Glastonbury. The blue-green base and the specific design of this bead are not paralleled, the closest is a 'herringbone' design lacking the central line on clear glass and plain blue-green beads,

both from Meare West (Gray 1966, 289-290; nos. G14 and G11). The square hole suggests a different production technique to that used at Meare, where beads had circular holes. This example therefore probably comes from a different source, although its similarity to the Meare finds suggests it is of the same date and tradition.

Fig. 3 Bead from Otterhampton

Roman *sestertius* of Antoninus Pius from Huish Episcopi (SOM-24B372)

A copper-alloy *sestertius* of Antoninus Pius (Fig. 4) dating to c. AD 140-144 (Reece period 7). TR POT COS III SC reverse type depicting a she-wolf suckling the twins Romulus and Remus. Minted in Rome. RIC vol. III, 113, no. 649. It measures 33mm in diameter and weighs 23.39 grams.

Sestertii of the Antonine emperors are not uncommon in Somerset: 41 have been recorded out of 105 *sestertii* in total, many of which could not be dated closely as coins of this date are often very worn. This coin is in usually good condition and is one of only four of this type recorded nationally by the PAS.

Fig. 4 Sestertius *of Antoninus Pius from Huish Episcopi*

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Roman surgical instrument from Somerton (SOM-6EA483)

A copper-alloy handle, probably from a pair of Roman forceps (Fig. 5). The rod-shaped handle is circular in cross-section with a complete terminal at one end and an old break at the other. The remaining handle is 75.8mm long, 5.8mm in diameter and weighs 12.69 grams.

Dr Ralph Jackson has identified it as one of the two handles of a pair of uvula forceps, probably a *staphylagra* (toothed jaw type), used for uvulectomy and haemorrhoidectomy, dated to the 1st-4th century AD. In 1992 only 26 examples of this tool were known across the Empire (Jackson 1992, 167-185); more have been discovered but they remain rare. A complete example was found in Dorchester (Sparey-Green 1994, 135-136). The handle has been donated by the finder to the Museum of Somerset.

Fig. 5 Surgical instrument from Somerton

Early Medieval button brooch from Pawlett (SOM-A3C7D6)

A copper-alloy circular button brooch of Avent and Evison Class C dating to the 5th or 6th centuries AD (Fig. 6). This example is complete, apart from the rusted iron pin. The upturned rim is slightly flared. Its front is decorated with a moulded anthropomorphic face-mask viewed straight on, within a line border. The face has a peltaic helmet, prominent eyebrows, eyes, cheeks and nose. There is no discernible mouth. No gilding survives on the front. It is 18.7mm in diameter, 6.7mm thick and weighs 3.59 grams.

Professor Seiichi Suzuki (pers. comm.) confirmed this classification and offered parallels from Bisham (Berkshire), Keymer (West Sussex), and Upham (Hampshire). The absence of a mouth on this example suggests it is a degenerate variant. Class C brooches are found across southern England as far west as Wiltshire. This is the first button brooch recorded by the PAS in Somerset and probably the most westerly example known. In the last major study (Suzuki 2008, 107) only one other was known from the county, from South Cadbury, and none from Devon or Cornwall.

Fig. 6 Brooch from Pawlett

Two Early Medieval pendants from Cannington and Kilve (SOM-977D0B and SOM-07C798)

Seventeen cast copper-alloy pendants (excluding scutiform examples) have been recorded nationally by the PAS. Two recorded from Somerset in 2014 are unusual, in their style and findspots. Both are gilded copper alloy with cast Style I designs and date to c.AD 530 to 600.

SOM-07C798 (Fig. 7)[4] is a fragment which includes the broken transverse suspension loop. A triangular cell runs between what is interpreted as the pendant's centre to the outer edge, adjacent to the loop. This cell and the central circle contain traces of red enamel. In the sections flanking the triangular cell are Style I animal's. Too little remains to interpret the animals form, but they appear to be in profile and broadly symmetrical. The piece is 27.5mm long including the loop, 19.3mm wide, 2.8mm thick excluding the loop, and weighs 4.98 grams.

The design echoes 'keystone' ('Kentish') brooches dating to c.AD 530-560, but is slightly larger, simpler, and enamel replaces garnet or red glass. The flat front of the loop is unlike most Early Anglo-Saxon jewellery pendants, which tend to have tubular loops projecting forward as well as back. The pendant's robustness and comparative simplicity also supports identification as a harness pendant.

SOM-977D0B (Fig. 8)[4] has a design of two large

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beasts whose bodies form the curved top of the pendant and whose confronting heads with gaping jaws form the lower part, with eyes in the outer corners. Within their bodies are further smaller interlaced beasts in Style I. The curved bodies and jaws of the larger beasts give a similar arrangement to designs of helmeted and moustachioed faces typical on button brooches of the period. The back is plain apart from an integrally cast raised area adjacent to the transverse suspension loop at the centre of the upper edge. The pendant is 33.0mm long including the loop, 38.1mm wide, 1.9mm thick at the upper edge including the raised section and weighs 10.41 grams.

The design is similar to contemporary bell-shaped pendants such as SOMDOR-A8DD87 on the PAS database from Weymouth (Dorset). On the Cannington example rather than the jaws of the larger animals flanking a triangular base they simply meet. The large beasts are clearer with the loop at the bottom (the wearer's perspective) while the smaller beasts and face are clearer with the loop at the top (the viewer's perspective). Such multi-layered and ambiguous designs are typical of Style I.

The pendants date to a period when this area, west of the Parrett, was outside Anglo-Saxon political control, yet employ Anglo-Saxon art styles in a sophisticated way. They are both variations on the normal designs, perhaps a reflection of the tastes of the owners who were outside normal Anglo-Saxon society, in an area where material utilising such art styles is very rare.

Early Medieval penny from Milverton (SOM-3D9955)

A silver penny (*sceat*) of Secondary Phase Series E (SEDE; type 89), (Fig. 9). It measures 12.1mm in diameter and weighs 1.14 grams. The obverse has the inscription SEDE or AESE around a central saltire with saltires between, all within a pellet border with a wavy line around the outer side rather than a pseudo legend. On the reverse is a snake coiled around a cross with its open mouth biting a pellet. A line of pellets follows the line of the snake's body from the jaw to the tail with radiating lines from each pellet to the edge. The pellet in the snake's mouth has been interpreted as representing the host (Gannon 2003, 141-142).

The SEDE type is a variant of Continental types and was probably minted somewhere in England in c. AD 710-730 (Abramson 2006, 109; ref. E700).
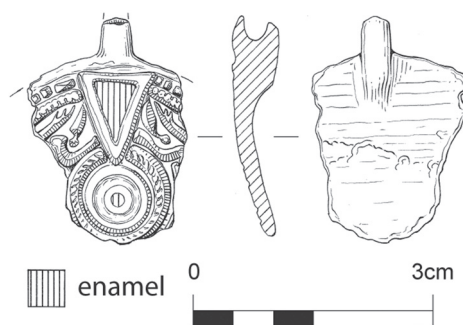

enamel   0   3cm

Fig. 7 Pendant from Kilve

0   3cm

Fig. 8 Pendant from Cannington

cm

Fig. 9 Penny from Milverton

This is currently the only example recorded by the PAS. *Sceattas* or early pennies are relatively rare this far west; we have recorded only 11 from Somerset and none from Devon or Cornwall.

Medieval seal matrix from St Cuthbert Out (SOM-DC0168)

A flat circular lead-alloy seal matrix (Fig. 10). The face has an elaborate flower in the centre within a plain line border. The inscription encircles the design within an outer border and reads + SIGILL'

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I[O]'HIS DE HORNTOV', Seal of John of Horntou' (contracted). There is a small projecting lug on the rim above the start of the legend. The back is plain. The seal is slightly bent from damage and is 35.9mm in diameter, 39.5mm long by 5.1mm thick including the lug; it weighs 24.64 grams.

The large size, simple central design and use of a personal inscription all suggests a mid to late 12th century date (Harvey and McGuiness 1996, 79). Given the findspot the contracted place name Horntou' may refer to Horrington. Research by M. Siraut suggests Reginald of Horrington sold the knights' fee of Horrington in 1226-1227; any John of Horrington would precede this date.

Fig. 11 Soldino *from West Crewkerne*

Fig 10 Seal matrix from St Cuthbert Out

Medieval Venetian *soldino* of Doge Lorenzo Celsi from West Crewkerne (SOM-FA3045)

An incomplete silver *soldino* of Doge Lorenzo Celsi (1361-1365), moneyer's initial N, mint of Venice, AD 1361-1365 (Fig. 11). This coin has suffered significant losses around the edge, to the inner circle in places. It is now a maximum of 14.4mm in diameter and weighs 0.38 grams.

The *soldino* was known as the galyhalpens (galley-halfpence) as it was brought by the annual Venetian trading fleets. They are about the size of an English halfpenny and were popular due to the contemporary shortage of small change: *soldini* in fact occur as English finds more often than proper halfpennies of the period. This appears to be the first *soldino* of this doge recorded on the PAS database.

Medieval finger-ring from Nynehead (SOM-21BA62, Treasure case 2014 T556)

A gold iconographic ring with octagonal bezel carrying an incised design of St George and dragon (Fig.12). St George wears plate armour and helmet with an open visor. With one hand he spears the dragon. In the other is a triangular shield with a plain cross (of St George) on it. The dragon lies on its back at the saint's feet. The hoop is decorated with lines of pellets and of flowers, interspersed with oval seeds or fruit. Adjacent to the bezel are rayed motifs with areas of white enamel surviving. The hoop is slightly damaged and bent. The ring is 22.1mm long, 17.4mm wide (squashed) and 1.3mm thick; it weighs 3.56 grams.

Such rings, decorated with a range of saints, date to the 15th to early 16th centuries. Scarisbrick and Henig illustrate a parallel (2003, 43; no. 3) but otherwise depictions of St George on such rings seem rare. This period is the high point of the cult of St George as England's patron saint in terms of pilgrim souvenirs, both in precious materials and lead alloys (Spencer 1998, 180). The item was declared Treasure but disclaimed.

Post Medieval coin hoard from Taunton (SOM-6511E2. Treasure case 2014 T735)

Eighteen gold and silver coins found during preparation works for erecting a garden building (Fig.13). All are official issues of James I (VI of Scotland) or Charles I issued in England (13), Scotland (4) and Ireland (1). There are seven gold double crowns, three gold sword and sceptre pieces, and six shillings, one sixpence and a half thistle-merk, all silver. This mix of denominations and of English, Scottish and Irish coins, is typical of Civil War hoards.

No container was found: it is likely it was organic, perhaps a leather or cloth purse. The findspot is on the edge of Taunton, an area which was farmland until recently, but is close to an old trackway and boundary bank. The coins had a contemporary

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Fig. 12 Finger-ring from Nynehead

Fig. 13 Coin hoard from Taunton

value of £5 15s. 3¾d. equivalent to around £450 in modern terms; perhaps five and a half months wages for a soldier. The latest coin dates to 1644-1645; the hoard was probably deposited in or shortly after this period, perhaps relating to fighting around Taunton including the siege of the castle in 1644-1645.

The high proportion of gold to silver issues is unusual in Civil War hoards; the gold coins are also earlier than the majority of the silver coins, at least 25 years old at the time of deposition. They possibly represent a previously collected group that were curated for some time before being deposited with silver coins which were saved later or acquired around the time of deposition.

The hoard was declared Treasure at inquest: the Museum of Somerset hopes to acquire.

Post Medieval cloth seals issued by the firm Weres and Co and successors of Wellington (SOM-FBAE42, SOM-FC748C, SOM-8EA94D and SOM-BFA41A)

In 2014 six lead seals were recorded from fields on the edge of Wellington. All were attached to cloth made by Weres and Co or their successor firm, Weres, Maltravers and Fox. The firm, now known as Fox Brothers & Co Ltd, is still in business in Wellington. Most such seals are found where the cloth was used, but it is possible these seals were discarded for some reason by the manufacturer.

One seal (SOM-BFA41A, Fig. 14) has the inscription SAM[L]. BUR[RI]DGE . TIVERTON on one side with a merchant's mark incorporating

a foot, and [TH]OM[S] . WRIGHTON on the other side. J. Evans has recorded two similar examples from The Netherlands and commented on this example. Burridge died in 1734 but his name with the Foot mark (originally that of his grandfather, Samuel Foote) continued in use to designate a particular grade of serge. The quality was high in the late 17th century but later signified middling quality cloth of a type favoured by the Dutch. After 1754, Thomas Were & Sons of Wellington adopted these respected marks, maybe buying them from Tiverton merchants. Names such as THOM[S] WRIGHTON were added, probably to signify a particular grade of cloth.

Four seals name WERE'S &. Co, WELLINGTON, two with a shield on one side, two

Fig. 14 Cloth seal from Wellington

without: all have numbers on the back, probably relating to the yardages or width (in inches) of the cloth. They probably date to the 18th century.

SOM-FBAE42 (Fig. 15) has a shield design and the inscription WERES MATRAVERS & FOX WELLINGTON. Thomas Fox and Stephen Maltravers were admitted as partners to the company in 1772 and Maltravers died in 1795 suggesting bounding dates for this seal (P. Maunder pers. comm.).

Fig. 15 Cloth seal from Wellington

Endnotes

1 The figures given are for the historic county of Somerset including North Somerset, and Bath and North East Somerset.
2. This under represents 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. Figures 7 and 8 drawn by R. M. A. Trevarthen.

Acknowledgements

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