Portable Antiquities Scheme

NEWSLETTER NORTH - INTRODUCTION:

Hello!

For our first 'new' Northern Newsletter we would like to offer you a special feature on Roman brooches. Even if they are not the most frequently found objects in the North, Roman brooches are certainly fascinating finds as you'll see from the articles prepared by your Finds Liaison Officers (FLOs)!

Setting the scene, Kevin Leahy (Finds Adviser) and Rob Collins (FLO North East) give you a short introduction to Early and Late Roman brooches; whilst Frances McIntosh (FLO Greater Manchester, Cheshire and Merseyside) and Lisa Staves (FLO North Lincolnshire) take a closer look at two specific brooch types: plate brooches and Wirral type brooches.

Langton Down Brooches
(See *Early Roman Brooches*).

A very nice example of plate brooch from North Lincolnshire is then discussed further by Amy Cooper (FLO South and West Yorkshire). Amy's article also features an unusually well preserved trumpet brooch from Barnsley that she was recently asked to record.

Liz Wilson-Andrews and Beth Echtenacher (FLOs North and East Yorkshire) probably dealt with one of the most exciting finds of a Roman brooch in recent months: an early Roman Aucissa type brooch that actually carries the personal name 'AVCISSA' on its head.

Roman brooch finds from the North West are very scarce, but three recent finds of a Dragonesque, trumpet and divided bow brooch are featured in Dot Brun's (FLO Lancashire & Cumbria) write-up of brooch finds from her area.

And last but by no means least a plea: if you have found a Roman brooch or think you may have found one (even if it's just a small fragment) please get them recorded with your local Finds Liaison Officer! Even if they are not in brilliant condition, large numbers being recorded allows specialists to study the distribution and styles of different types of brooch.

This, of course, is also true for any other group of small finds, e.g. coins, buckles, mounts, pottery and stone artefacts – if you are uncertain as to what you have found, your local FLO will be able to identify and date it for you and/or have it looked at by an expert.

A list of up-to-date contact details for each individual Finds Liaison Officer can be found in this newsletter – don't be shy; get in touch!

EARLY ROMAN BROOCHES:

Brooches are common finds on Roman sites and important as they can be dated (fashion is no new thing). This is particularly important for the conquest period as the changing types of brooch allow us to trace the spread of the Roman army and culture, across Britain after the invasion in AD 43.

Brooches of the pre-Roman 'Colchester type' continued to be used. These were made, with some skill, in one piece, the bow, spring and pin all being fashioned from a single copper alloy casting.

New brooch types were introduced by the Romans; while these still used the 'safety pin' principle seen on the Colchester type the bow and the pin mechanism were cast separately, making them easier to produce. This feature was adopted by local makers leading to brooches like the 'dolphin type' which was clearly based on the earlier Colchester brooches (See figure on last page).

The 'Aucissa' brooch represents one of the types introduced into Britain by the Romans.

Common brooches of the conquest period were the 'Langton Down'and 'Hod Hill' types which originated on the continent and were brought over by the Roman army. Like the Colchester brooches, these types received their names from the sites where they were first recognised, not where they were being made. The 'Aucissa' brooch on the other hand is called after its maker, many of which bear the name 'Aucissa' cast across their heads. It is likely that he was working in what is now part of France.

The number of brooches being found may tell us something about the effect of the Roman conquest on the people of Britain. While pre-Roman brooches are rare, they become very common after the conquest. It appears that people suddenly had access to lots of small metal objects, the Romans were stimulating rather than depressing the economy.

Dr Kevin Leahy, Finds Adviser

The 'Colchester' type brooch. These brooches were made from a single piece of metal and developed in the centuries before the arrival of the Romans.

ROMAN BROOCHES IN THE 4TH CENTURY AND AFTER:

There are two primary brooch types that are predominant in the 4th–5th centuries: the penannular brooch (Figure 1) and the crossbow brooch (Figure 2).

Late penannular brooches are very similar to late Iron Age and early Roman examples. The best way to identify which specific type

Figure 1: Two penannular brooches from 4th century archaeological contexts. Between the brooches are further examples of terminal variants.

of penannular brooch you have found, and therefore to also date the brooch is to examine the terminals. In many cases, terminals survive because they tend to be thicker than the rest of the brooch frame. The 4th century saw a return to fashion of the penannular brooch, with more stylised terminals than seen in previous centuries. For example, one type has terminals to appear to be crenellated like the walls of a Medieval castle when viewed from the side. Another type has zoomorphic terminals, with stylised animal heads. Penannular brooches continued to be popular into the Early Medieval period.
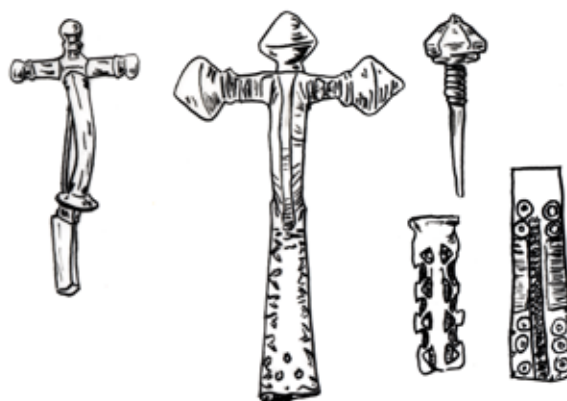
Figure 2: A. 'Light' crossbow example. B. A typical mid–late 4th century crossbow brooch. C. Different components of a crossbow brooch, a screw-in knob, and two variants of foot.

Crossbow brooches first appeared in the 3rd century, under a sub-type known as the 'light crossbow'. However, by the mid 4th century, crossbow brooches developed into more complex objects, often with heavy round or onion-shape terminals on the head, a thick bow, and a decorated foot. In some cases, the head knobs would screw into the headplate. The foot can also vary in decoration. Circle and dot motifs are common, but other forms of decoration have been found.

These 4th century forms of crossbow brooch seem to have been made in an imperial factory in the Danube frontier, and it has been argued that crossbow brooches were part of the uniform of a late Roman soldier and a high-level civil servant. Thus, when a crossbow brooch is found, it can be taken to indicate the presence of an imperial official.

Rob Collins, North East FLO

PLATE BROOCHES:

Plate brooches are a variety of new brooch types that arose in the first century and peaked during the second and third century. They differ from bow brooches in having a much more decorative purpose rather than a functional one and resemble modern badges rather than safety pins. The pin is concealed between two lugs on the back of the brooch and the space between the plate and the pin is much too small to hold thick layers of cloth. It is believed that plate brooches would have been worn by the wealthier ranks of society who wore more expensive and finer clothes.

The early types were a simple plate of metal decorated on the front and called disc brooches. However, they developed in the second century into a variety of shapes including ones that mimic animals and objects. They were decorated with a multitude of forms including enamelling, glass settings and repoussé decoration. The zoomorphic brooches often have a Celtic style to them and depict animals that would have had a strong religious significance. This hare brooch from Hemingby in Lincolnshire (NLM-296452) would have been highly decorated with enamel though only the pierced blue enamel in the eye survives. The significance of the hare in Celtic mythology is attested to by Boudicca, Queen of the Iceni who released a hare before the start of her military campaign against the rule of the emperor Nero.

Hare brooch from Hemingby, Lincolnshire (NLM-296452)

In the third century brooches started to go out of fashion, though we still get very stunning examples of brooches worn by higher society. This Glass Centre-boss Brooch was found at Holme in North Lincolnshire and donated to North Lincolnshire Museum (NLM-F574D3). As we don't often find polychrome glass centres in these brooch types it is possible that this is either a Germanic import or a Roman brooch re-used by the Anglo Saxons.

Lisa Staves, North Lincolnshire FLO

TRUMPET AND DISC BROOCHES:

Visiting the South Yorkshire MDC recently, I had the pleasant surprise of recording two Roman brooches that were in top notch condition. The brooches are from different places, but both are especially nice finds.

Firstly, a trumpet brooch from Barnsley from the first or second century (SWYOR-90F9E6). These are fairly common, but this example is complete except for the tip of the pin and is in excellent condition. It has a typical acanthus button, side grooves and a tiered foot. There is no extravagant enamel decoration, but it was probably silvered, and there is a nice detail of oval "eyes" on the mouth of the trumpet. Unusually the delicate wire pin spring and head loop have survived without damage. A high quality find!

Plate brooch from North Lincolnshire (SWYOR-A306F6)

The other brooch is a plate brooch from North Lincolnshire and is probably from the second century (SWYOR-A306F6). It is circular and has six of eight projecting lugs surviving. The decoration consists of three concentric circular cells, and unusually almost all the enamel survives. The centre cell, outer cell and roundels are filled with red enamel, and the other cell is blue. The colours are incredibly bright and really give an idea of how garish Roman style could be. Often enamel fades and takes on different colours in the ground, but this fantastic example is almost as good as new.

Amy Cooper, South and West Yorkshire FLO

Trumpet brooch from Barnsley, South Yorkshire (SWYOR-90F9E6)

THREE ROMAN BROOCHES FROM LANCASHIRE AND CUMBRIA:

Three of the brooch types occasionally found complete and unharmed by the acidy Lancashire and Cumbria soils are trumpet brooches, divided bow brooches and Dragonesque brooches.

Dragonesque brooch with moulded decoration from Gisburn, Lancashire (LANCUM-411DE2)

Dating from the late 1st to late 2nd century, trumpet brooches like the one found at Nether Denton, Cumbria, are comparatively common (see picture) while Dragonesque brooches are the rarest of the three types. There are several sub-types of Dragonesque brooches and while Dragonesque brooches with enamelled decoration are more common in Cumbria (especially near

Trumpet brooch from Nether Denton, Cumbria (LANCUM-EA00C1)

Hadrian's Wall), the ones with moulded decoration seem to be more an East Lancashire/Yorkshire type, as seen on one the example pictured, which was found by a metal detectorist in the Gisburn area (Ribble Valley, Lancashire).

Another rare type are divided bow brooches. A very nice example of this type was recently found by a metal detectorist in the Maryport area, Cumbria (see picture). It dates from the late 2nd to early 3rd century AD and this is the second divided bow brooch discovered on that site! Another divided bow brooch (very similar to the ones from Maryport) was recorded on the Portable Antiquities Scheme's website some time ago as having come from Lincolnshire (LVPL248).

Divided bow brooches were manufactured in the German Rhineland and exported as far away as Northern England and Scotland as our brooches from Maryport and a find from the Roman fort at Carpow, Perthshire, show!

Dot Bruns, Lancashire and Cumbria FLO

Divided bow brooch from Maryport, Cumbria (LANCUM-B7D8F5)

AUCISSA BROOCH:

One of the great things about the archaeology of the Roman period is that, every so often, names occur denoting the maker of an object. This is a trait typically seen on pottery, notably Samian ware, but this artefact from the East Riding of Yorkshire is a rare survival of a personal name from first century Britain on a personal ornament.

This Aucissa brooch has the characteristic shape of a wide, flat, tapering bow with a terminal foot knob. What makes the find stunning is the inscription at the head of the brooch: AVCISSA. The inscription is placed for the advantage of the wearer, that is, unless you are wearing it, the maker's name is upside down.
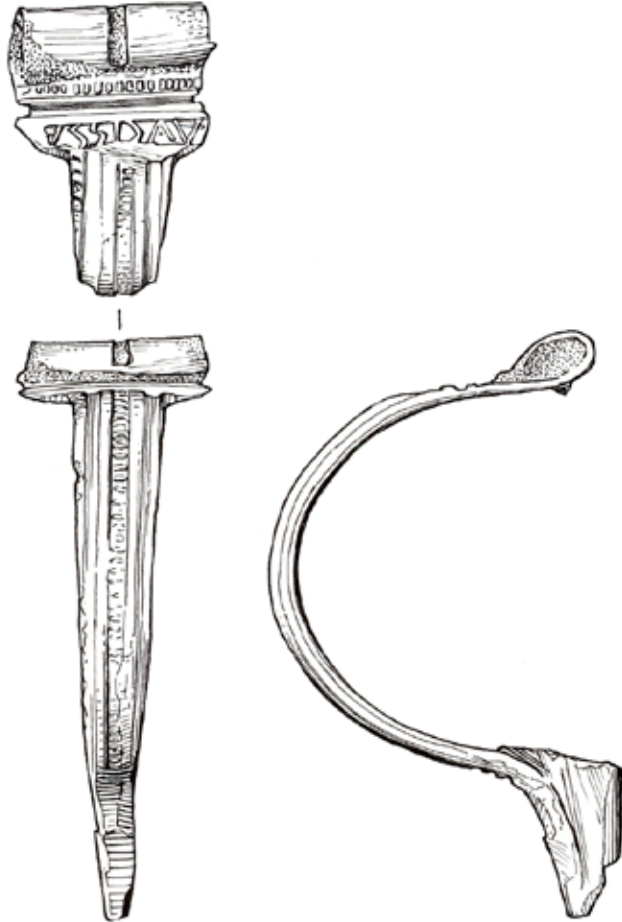
Aucissa brooch from the East Riding of Yorkshire (YORYM-89CDA2)

Aucissa brooches, dated by Hattatt as c. AD 43 – 80, appear to have been of a fairly standardised form. This, paired with metallurgical analyses, indicates that they were probably mass-produced in a single workshop, probably in Northern Gaul. These brooches were widely distributed; some examples found in Israel have been shown to have a similar metallic composition to finds from Britain!

This find, illustrated by David Williams, is a remarkable example of trade and activity across the Roman provinces in the first century.

Beth Echtenacher and Liz Andrews-Wilson
North and East Yorkshire FLA & FLO

WIRRAL BROOCHES:

In 1999 a new type of Roman bow brooch was identified by Dr Philpott and named the Wirral brooch. It is very distinctive in design and it is thought that they could perhaps have originated from the Wirral with only a couple of work-shops making them. Not many are known to have been found and most of these have come from metal detectorists. This is a plea for anyone who has a Wirral type brooch which hasn't been reported to the PAS to do so. I am hoping to make more of an in depth study of these brooches to try and find their origin. It would be nice to prove that the Wirral was a producer of such a nice brooch and show that the North is not always the poor relation of the South in terms of finds.

Wirral Type brooch found in Cheshire (LVPL-F3CA77)

Wirral Type brooch found in Cheshire (LVPL536)

Frances McIntosh, North West FLO

Characteristics to look out for:

Stepped head - often decorated or enamelled

A rectangular panel with 3 strips infilled with enamel in alternate colours

A loop on the head of the brooch

A stud/boss at the waist of the brooch

The foot consists of 3 or 4 disc-like mouldings, possibly decorated

The 'dolphin' brooch was a developed from the Colchester type but, with its pin and spring made separately, it was much easier to make. See *Early Roman Brooches*.

CONTACT DETAILS:

Liz Andrews-Wilson
York Museums Trust, The Yorkshire Museum
Museum Gardens, York, Y01 7FR
T: +44 (0)1904 687 668
F: +44 (0)1904 687 674
E: Liz.Andrews-Wilson@ymt.org.uk

Dot Bruns
Museum of Lancashire, Stanley Street, Preston
Lancashire PR1 4YP
T: +44 (0) 1772 532175
F: +44 (0) 1772 534079
E: Dot.Bruns@mus.lancscc.gov.uk

Robert Collins
Museum of Antiquities University of Newcastle
Newcastle upon Tyne, Tyneside NE1 7RU
T: +44 (0) 191 222 5076
F: +44 (0) 191 222 8561
E: robert.collins@ncl.ac.uk

Amy Cooper
WYAS Advisory Service, Registry of Deeds
Newstead Road
Wakefield, West Yorkshire, WF1 2DE
T: +44 (0)1924 305359/ +44 (0) 1302 734293
F: +44 (0) 1924 306810
E: acooper@wyjs.org.uk

Kevin Leahy
Finds Adviser - Early Medieval Metalwork
C/o FLO at North Lincolnshire Museum
Oswald Road Scunthorpe,
Lincolnshire DN15 7BD
E: leahy.pas@btinternet.com

Frances McIntosh
National Museums Liverpool Dock Traffic Office
Albert Dock, Liverpool,
Merseyside, L3 4AX
T: +44 (0) 151 478 4259 or +44 (0) 7920799448
F: +44 (0) 151 478 4066
E: frances.mcintosh@liverpoolmuseums.org.uk

Lisa Staves
North Lincolnshire Museum
Oswald Road, Scunthorpe,
Lincolnshire, DN15 7BD
T: +44 (0) 1724 843 533
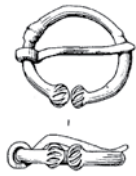F: +44 (0) 1724 270 474
E: lisa.staves@northlincs.gov.uk

For general enquiries please contact the Central Unit:
The Department of Portable Antiquities & Treasure
The British Museum
Great Russell Street
London
WC1B 3DG
T: + 44 (0) 20 7323 8611
E: info@finds.org.uk

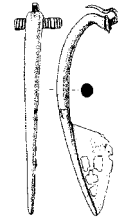# ROMAN BROOCH TIMELINE:
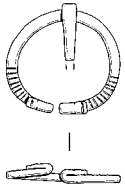
Penannular (Fowler C)
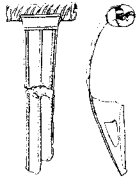100 BC-AD 100

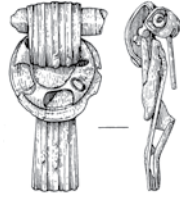**Penannular (Fowler D)**
25 BC-AD 250

Birdlip
50 BC - AD 50
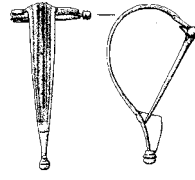
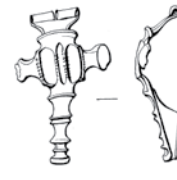**Nauheim derivative**
AD 25-100

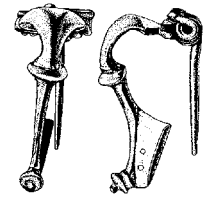**Colchester**
AD 25 - AD 60

Langton Down
AD 25 - AD 60

Rosette/ Thistle
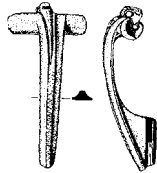AD 25 - AD 60

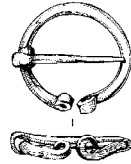**Aucissa**
AD 43 - AD 75

Hod Hill
AD 43 - AD 75

Kräftig Profilierte
AD 43 - AD 100

Dolphin (sprung)
AD 43 - AD 65

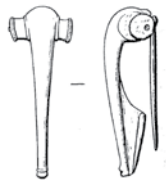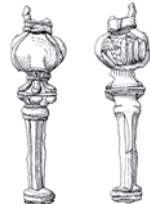**Colchester derivative (double lug)**
AD 43 - AD100

Penannular (Fowler A2)
AD 43 - AD 350

Bow and Fantail
AD 50 - AD150

Dolphin (hinged)
AD 55- AD100

Polden Hill
AD 75 - AD 175

Trumpet
AD 75 - AD 175

Dragonesque
AD 75 - AD 175

Headstud
AD 75- AD 200

Wroxeter
AD 100- AD 150
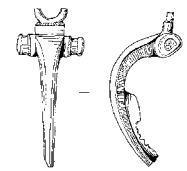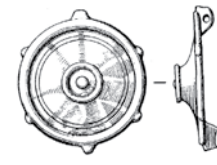
Thealby Mine
AD 100 - AD 200
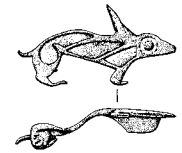
Flat enamelled disc
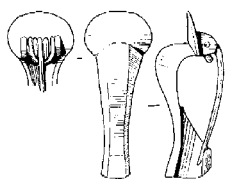AD 80 - AD 250
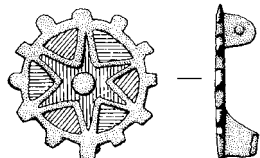
Lugged disc
AD 100 - AD 200
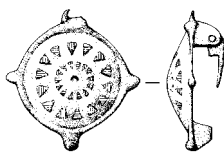
Umbonate
AD 100 - AD 250

Conical disc
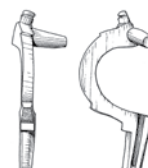AD 100 - AD 250

Zoomorphic (hare)
AD 100 - AD 200
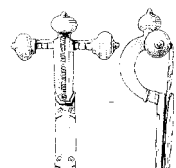
Knee
AD 150 - AD 250

Gilded disc
AD 200 - AD 350

P Shaped (divided bow)
AD 175 - AD 250

Crossbow (light)
AD 175 - AD 250

Crossbow (heavy)
AD 320 - AD 400

Brooch timeline compiled by Sally Worrell, Scheme Finds Adviser