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A Romano-British Brooch from Pope's Hill, Gloucestershire

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Notes

A ROMANO-BRITISH BROOCH FROM POPE'S HILL, GLOUCESTERSHIRE

A Roman brooch of unusual type was found by Mr. W. Williams, a metal detectorist, in the Forest of Dean, near Pope's Hill, Gloucestershire (O.S. Nat. Grid SO 6814). The Forest of Dean was an important area for iron production in Roman Britain and an iron-smelting site is known on Pope's Hill.[1] Mr. Williams reported the brooch to the Roman Legionary Museum, Caerleon, under the Portable Antiquities pilot scheme for the recording of archaeological finds.

The brooch (Fig. 1) is cast from copper alloy and is highly decorative. The bow is wide, with straight sides, and curves outwards slightly. It is decorated with a median rib, finely knurled, with grooves along each outside edge. A curled wing protrudes from the bow and the marginal grooves continue along its underside edges. Above the wing, the bow widens slightly and splits into two opposing halves, creating a 'button' like decoration. Each half is semi-circular in shape and decorated with recessed, misshapen triangles, accentuated by grooves, which are possibly designed to receive enamel. Two moulded ribs bisect the button. Behind the button the head curves away, with concave sides, at a sharp angle to the body. The head widens to a semi-cylindrical plate integrally cast with the tubular wings, which are moulded with grooves near their tips and additional grooves running inwards towards the pin housing. The axis bar is still in place. The foot, catch plate and pin are missing. The recorded dimensions of the brooch are length 37.5 mm, maximum width 20 mm and maximum depth 25 mm.

No single parallel has been found for all the stylistic features of the brooch from Pope's Hill. Its most striking feature is the three-dimensional central moulding which can be paralleled with a lion-bow Rosette brooch from Bury St. Edmunds, Suffolk.[2] In that case the moulding is the vestigial representation of a single forward-facing lion derived from more realistic and well-carved examples which originated in Gaul. Unlike the brooch from Bury St. Edmunds, however, the two halves of the central moulding on the Pope's Hill brooch are of equal size. This feature is also paralleled on another type of lion-bow derivative, of which there is a very degraded example from Fishbourne, West Sussex.[3] The moulding on brooches of that particular type is

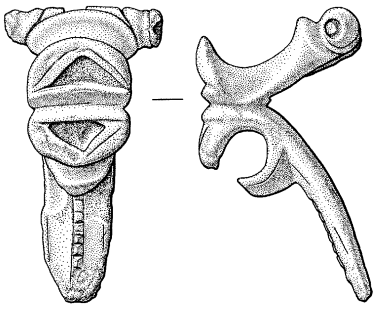

Fig. 1. A Romano-British brooch from Pope's Hill, Gloucestershire (2:1).

shaped in such a way, with two equal parts, so as to represent two lions opposing each other, rather than a single forward-facing lion.[4] Lion-bow and lion-bow derivative brooches date from the first century B.C. through to the first century A.D.[5] Apart from the moulding, however, there is little other similarity between the Pope's Hill brooch and 'lion' brooches.

Another noticeable feature of the brooch is the forward curled wing on the bow which, in addition to the straight-sided leg, can be recognised as a characteristic feature of Birdlip brooches. An unprovenanced example is illustrated by Hattatt.[6] Birdlip brooches date from the middle of the first century B.C. and continue through to the first half of the first century A.D.[7] The Pope's Hill brooch also appears to bear some similarity to the continental forerunners of the Birdlip type, namely the Flügenfibel and Fibule à ailettes. They display characteristic curved wings, both above and below a central flange,[8] although those are forward facing, rather than opposing as on the Pope's Hill brooch. It is among that class of winged brooch, both native and continental, that we also see the sharp angle in the profile of the Pope's Hill example paralleled.[9] Despite these parallels, the design of the three-dimensional moulding above the small wing on the Pope's Hill brooch is not repeated on any known example of a winged brooch. However, a report on the beaked brooches from Dragonby, South Humberside, highlighted the diversity of the decoration applied to that type (Hattatt's Birdlip class) and the subsequent difficulty in classifying them according to specific features.[10]

In addition to the above parallels the Pope's Hill brooch also shares certain characteristics with other brooch classes. The double triangle decoration in the centre of the bow bears a similarity to a distinctive group of 'T'-shaped brooches, which likewise have tubular wings and hinged pins.[11] The production of these 'T'-shaped brooches began towards the end of the first century A.D. and continued until *c.* A.D. 150.[12] It is also possible to see the Pope's Hill brooch as an unusual variant of a trumpet brooch.[13] The head design is certainly similar to such brooches, although somewhat reduced, and other trumpet variants also exhibit an ornate three-dimensional moulding on the bow, such as an example from near Faringdon, Oxfordshire,[14] and a more simple type from Sea Mills, South Gloucestershire.[15] Trumpet-headed variants generally date to the middle of the second century A.D. but other derivatives can have a wider date range.[16]

The purpose of the Pope's Hill brooch was a decorative dress fixing, and trends in fashion clearly influenced its design. Rather than conforming to one particular class, it appears, from the above parallels, to draw inspiration from a number of types. Clearly the maker was willing to use different decorative techniques from a wide repertoire, across different brooch classes, and almost at random, to create a brooch to his own or his customer's taste. The numerous stylistic parallels, which have been cited above, make the brooch difficult to date with any certainty. It would seem reasonable to suggest that the Pope's Hill brooch was manufactured when the majority of the designs were in general circulation, and thus in vogue. A production date, therefore, at some point between the end of the first and the middle of the second century A.D. would seem probable.

The brooch remains in private ownership.

Acknowledgement

The illustration was prepared by Jackie Chadwick for the National Museum of Wales.

Notes

1. D.S. McOmish and N.A. Smith, 'Welshbury Hillfort', *Trans. B.G.A.S.* **114** (1996), p. 56.
2. R. Hattatt, *Iron Age and Roman Brooches* (Oxford, 1985), p. 50 and fig. 18, no. 280.

3. B. Cunliffe, *Excavations at Fishbourne*, *Volume II: The Finds* (Leeds, 1971), p. 104 and fig. 38, no. 9.
4. M. Feugère, *Les Fibules en Gaule Méridionale* (Paris, 1985), p. 287, Type 18b3.
5. R. Hattatt, *Brooches of Antiquity* (Oxford, 1987), p. 44.
6. Ibid. p. 38 and fig. 15, no. 767.
7. D. Mackreth in J. Timby *et al.*, *Excavations at Kingscote and Wycomb*, *Gloucestershire* (Cirencester, 1998), p. 131.
8. Feugère, *Les Fibules en Gaule Méridionale*, p. 258, Type 13, plates. 88–9, nos. 1175–83.
9. e.g. L. Lerat, *Les Fibules d'Alesia* (Dijon, 1979), plate vi, nos. 50–52.
10. J. May, *Dragonby* (Oxbow Monograph **61**, Volume 1, 1996), pp. 231–2.
11. Hattatt, *Brooches of Antiquity*, p. 109 and fig. 38, nos. 918–19.
12. Ibid. p. 100.
13. Pers. comm. Dr. A. Olivier.
14. R. Hattatt, *Ancient Brooches and Other Artefacts* (Oxford, 1989), p. 86 and fig. 42, no. 1533.
15. Bristol Museum F2305.
16. R. Hattatt, *Ancient and Romano-British Brooches* (Oxford 1982), p.109.

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A MEDIEVAL LAMP FROM PETER STREET, BRISTOL

A copper-alloy lamp was found in a cess-pit during excavations in Peter Street, Bristol in 1975 and 1976, O.S. Nat. Grid ST 59117313 (Boore 1982, 7–11). It is dated to the late 13th century. The excavations lay in an open area between the Norman town walls of Bristol to the west and Bristol Castle to the east. They revealed the remains of a stone and timber building which included a small stone cellar. A stone cresset lamp dated to the 12th century was re-used in the construction of the cellar. This structure was covered in demolition material with deposits of black ash to the north suggesting evidence of destruction and burning. The building was provisionally associated with one of the documented Jewish houses recorded in the area and may have been a victim of the anti-Semitic riots in 1266 and 1275 (Boore 1982, 8 and fig. 2).

The history of Jewish occupation in medieval Bristol is described in several sources (Adler 1931; Lobel and Carus-Wilson 1975 and Emanuel 1988). Jewish buildings are recorded between Bristol Castle and the medieval town of Bristol. Excavations in 1970 recorded a substantial stone building contemporary with the town wall in an area to the south-west of the 1975 site (Wilson and Moorhouse 1971, 146). That building may be associated with the *Domus Conversorum* (a house for converted Jews) (Emanuel and Ponsford 1994, 78). Other Jewish buildings mentioned in documentary sources were the *Archa*, containing records, and the synagogue or *scholae Judaeorum*, both of which were attacked in anti-Semitic riots in the late 13th century prior to the Expulsion of the Jews in 1290 (F. Neale, pers. comm. and Emanuel and Ponsford 1994, 79). An important survival from the medieval Jewish occupation is the remains of the 12th-century *Mikveh* or Jewish ritual bath. This unique structure, located in the northern area of medieval Bristol, still survives on the north side of Jacob's Wells Road (Emanuel and Ponsford 1994, 73–86).

The Peter Street copper-alloy lamp (Fig. 1) appears to have been cast as one piece and has a smooth plain, external surface (Accession number BRSMG 57/1975, 332). It measures 102 mm in height and 115 mm in width and weighs 245 gm. It possesses three, hollow pointed nozzles, radiating from a central rounded bowl 32 mm in depth. The nozzle wicks are 25–28 mm wide (at widest point), 40–47 mm long, 28 mm deep and 2–3 mm thick in section. An integral hook device extends below the base of the lamp. It would have held a small bucket to retain any surplus oil dripping beneath the lamp from the lighted wicks (Richmond 1950, 27, figs. 3 and