

From the *Transactions* of the
Bristol and Gloucestershire Archaeological Society

A Medieval Lamp from Peter Street, Bristol

by E. J. Boore
2001, Vol. 119, 179-182

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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.

JULIE REYNOLDS

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



Fig. 1. A medieval lamp from Peter Street, Bristol (photograph by A. Cotton: courtesy of City of Bristol Museums and Art Gallery).

4, pl. XII(b)). The lamp is suspended by three arms that taper slightly inwards towards a flat, triangular-shaped top, which is pierced centrally with a suspension hole. The suspending arms, decorated with two evenly spaced, raised ridges, are slightly splayed where they join the central bowl above the base of each nozzle. The trapezoidal voids between the suspension arms would have facilitated the ability to maintain the level of oil within the lamp.

The Bristol lamp is similar in form to a lamp recorded from Lincoln although that example contains 4 nozzles for wicks. The Lincoln lamp is one of several lamps described by the late Sir Ian Richmond (Richmond 1950, 25, pl. XII(a)). His important article describes in detail a lamp from St. Leonard's Hill near Windsor which was presented to the Society of Antiquaries by Sir William Stukeley in 1717. The Stukeley Lamp 'forms this Society's seal and adorns, in brass inlay, the marble pavement of its entrance hall' (Richmond 1950, 22). It is also depicted on the cover of the *Journal of the Society of Antiquaries of London* (Richmond 1950, 23 and 24, figs. 1 and 2 and pl. XI). The base shown in the emblem is not 'part of the lamp, but is a broken

fragment from some other object, adapted by Stukeley in order to convert the lamp from a hanging-lamp to a table-lamp' (Richmond 1950, 25).

The use of copper-alloy lamps on the Jewish Sabbath was part of the ritual associated with that day. The lamp would contain oil or fat, with long, slow burning wicks. They would continue to burn without the need for relighting, as long as the oil levels were maintained and provide light, without transgressing the convention applied to the Sabbath, as a 'day of rest and abstinence from work' (Meyer 1982, 140). Sabbath lamps in use are depicted in manuscripts particularly in the post-medieval period (Meyer 1982, 5 and 10; Siehe der Stein 1989, 297 and 305). Although these lamps are more elaborate in decoration they do ostensibly conform to the same basic form, with variations on the number of nozzles, and often with more or less ornate central bodies for suspension (Siehe der Stein 1989, 57 and 79). There are many recorded lamps associated with Jewish ceremony which survive in museum collections in Europe, Israel and in the United States of America (D.M. Goldman pers. comm.). The known medieval lamps in England and Europe tend to be plainer in design and were perhaps more concerned with function than with elaborate decoration (Richmond 1950, pl. XII, 25; Piggott 1951, 74). All the lamps found in England are from areas with known medieval Jewish occupation.

There is, at this time, no positive evidence for the Peter Street or the other copper-alloy lamps mentioned above, being either of Jewish origin or having been used as Sabbath lamps. However the associations of the Bristol lamp support this attribution. Its similarity and form to the other lamps found in medieval urban centres with extensive Jewish occupation, and to identified post-medieval Jewish lamps, offer compelling evidence for the identification of the medieval lamps as Sabbath lamps. The Peter Street copper-alloy lamp is more than an ordinary oil lamp for everyday use. These would usually have been ceramic and easily replaceable (Barclay and Biddle 1990, 985). The re-used stone cresset lamp may originally have been used in a non-secular building, perhaps a synagogue? The Bristol copper-alloy lamp does not exhibit evidence of extensive use. It was carefully maintained and, significantly perhaps, it was not modified. It is a lamp of special significance and was only used on particular occasions or days. The form and construction of the medieval lamp is identical to the post-medieval lamps depicted in manuscript illustrations in use by the Jewish faithful, as part of the recognised ritual of the Sabbath. The Peter Street lamp like its contemporaries from Lincoln and London would have served the same function and identity and is perhaps an enigmatic and fortunate survival from the Jewish occupation in medieval Bristol.

Acknowledgements

I am most grateful to Dr. R.H. Price for his helpful comments on the text and to Ms S. Giles and Mr. G.L. Good of Bristol Museum and Art Gallery for providing the dimensions of the lamp and for permission to reproduce the photograph which was taken by Mr. A. Cotton; also to Ms Daniella M. Goldman for information about Jewish bronzes in the U.S.A., Mr. R.R. Emanuel for further references to lamps in Europe and to Ms I. Pawlowski for help with translation of German. I am indebted to Ms G. Heavens for her continuing encouragement and for providing the finished text.

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ERIC BOORE

THE QUESTION OF HANNAH MORE'S MEMBERSHIP OF THE FRENCH ACADEMY RESOLVED

The most important source of material for a life of Hannah More (1745–1833) is the four volume *Memoirs of The Life and Correspondence of Mrs Hannah More*, edited and published by William Roberts in 1834 within a year of Hannah More's death. The task of editing her correspondence, which spanned sixty years, was immense, and Roberts must have dedicated many hours to it. Roberts's work remains the pre-eminent source material for historians. The originals of few of the letters he edited are known to scholars, but the authors recently heard from Dr. Nicholas Bell of an Edinburgh bookseller who acquired a large number of them from a cabinet maker in the Orkneys. These have now left the country for an unnamed institution, where it is hoped that they will become available for study. There are many defects in the edition of Hannah More's letters by Roberts. These were clearly exposed in *The Quarterly Review* in 1834 (LII, August and November).¹ For our purposes, the most important observation of the reviewer is the statement:

His [Roberts's] method of compiling and arranging is so clumsy, that if anyone can extract from this book a distinct notion even of the principal events and dates in her life, he must have bestowed more attention on the materials of which it is composed than the editor himself has thought fit to do. If year and month be not written at the top of the sheet, Mr. Roberts never seems to think of trying to make out the date from the contents.

The reviewer goes on to point out that the work is 'filled with blunders of this class'.

According to Roberts in a footnote to an undated letter, included with letters dated 1782, Hannah More was elected a member of the Academy of Arts, Sciences, and Belles Lettres at Rouen.² The *Memoirs* include a letter to Hannah More from Mrs. Boscawen dated 1784, in which she is congratulated 'on your being elected member of the French Academy . . . I was much pleased with this distinguished honour conferred on merit and my dear friend . . . I have kept the secret inviolable because you bid me . . .'³ A letter from Hannah More to Mrs. Boscawen, dated Bristol 1784, talks about receiving 'mes pancartes academiciennes', and subsequently mentions, without