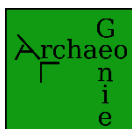


**Post-Excavation Assessment of the Small Finds from The Hagg, Swaledale,
North Yorkshire (HFS17)**

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Introduction

Archaeogenie were commissioned in 2017 to undertake a post-excavation assessment and analysis of seventy one small finds and twenty one pieces of daub from the excavations of The Hagg by the Swaledale and Arkengarthdale Archaeology Group (SWAAG). The range of objects was wide and included a single Roman coin, a Roman brooch in addition to a small assemblage of other metal (mainly iron) and stone objects along with a small group of daub and related material.

Methodology

The finds have been recorded in an *Excel Spreadsheet*. A copy of the spreadsheet is held in the archive and a hardcopy print is provided as a table at the end of this report. All of the metal items were x-rayed for this assessment and the coin was conserved.

The coin has been identified and recorded following received numismatic practice and the English Heritage guidelines (Brickstock 2004). The other finds have been identified using standard catalogues (Crummy 1983, Manning 1985) and functional categories have been assigned to each find using the scheme developed by Crummy (1983, v) (Table 1). This scheme is not without its difficulties (Cool and Baxter 2000, Crummy 2007). However, it is widely used and thus useful for inter-site comparisons of assemblages. The most important objects are discussed below.

The coin

A single Roman coin <8> was recovered from [16] Feature 4. The coin proved to be an unworn silver *denarius* of Caracalla struck in Rome in AD201 (*RICIV* (Caracalla), 54a). Silver *denarii* were high value coins and are relatively rare (when compared with copper-alloy coins) as site finds.

Obverse: ANTONINVS-PIVS AVG

Reverse: PART MA PONT TRP III

It is difficult to determine the wider significance of the coin. It suggests that the inhabitants of the site were connected to money-using elements of the Romano-British economy. However, it may simply have been seen by the inhabitants of The Hagg as a piece of bullion. The lack of wear suggests loss in the early third century. In AD208 Severus and his son Caracalla campaigned in northern Britain and significant quantities of silver entered Britain to support these campaigns. The large hoard from Shapwick in Somerset (Abdy *et al.* 2001) and the Severan hoards from Scotland are all, perhaps, to be associated with Severan interest in Britain. It is tempting (if beyond proof) to associate the loss of this *denarius* at an obscure upland rural site with the social, economic, political and military dislocations that might have accompanied the presence of the imperial court at York and the large numbers of troops needed to subdue Caledonia in the early third century.

Personal Adornments

Brooch [23], SF8: a copper-alloy proto-crossbow brooch missing its sprung pin. The brooch has been silvered and then the front of the bow has been gilded. The head of the brooch has a small knob, four knobs (perhaps missing soldered extensions) divide the bow longitudinally along a raised ridge. The remainder of the bow is divided longitudinally either side of the central ridge by a further

ridge leaving two cells to the left and right of the centreline. Remains of a copper alloy-spring survive.

This is a relatively rare brooch type. Parallels for the form are listed by Bayley and Butcher (2004, Fig 81.247), Hattatt (1989, Fig 226 Nos. 494 and 1252) and Mackreth (2011, 198, Type 3c). An example from Caerleon “described as plated with gold on the upper part and silvered on the foot and under surface” (Bayley and Butcher 2004, 103) provides a good parallel for the decoration on our brooch.

Relatively few of these brooches are known. Mackreth (2011, 198) lists thirteen examples, Bayley and Butcher (2004, 257) a mere five and Hattatt (1989, 367) just two. There are only three listed on the PAS database. Similar brooches are also present at Niederbieber and Zugmantel in Germany (Bayley and Butcher 2004, 257), leading Böhme (1972, 24) to suggest that they might be British imports.

The distribution of these finds is largely military in its focus and certainly the brooch form, which is largely seen as ‘ancestral’ to the late Roman crossbow brooch, would support the identification of this object as a military personal adornment. The dating is probably early to mid-third century and it may not be going too far to associate the presence of this object with the presence of a Roman soldier at the site.

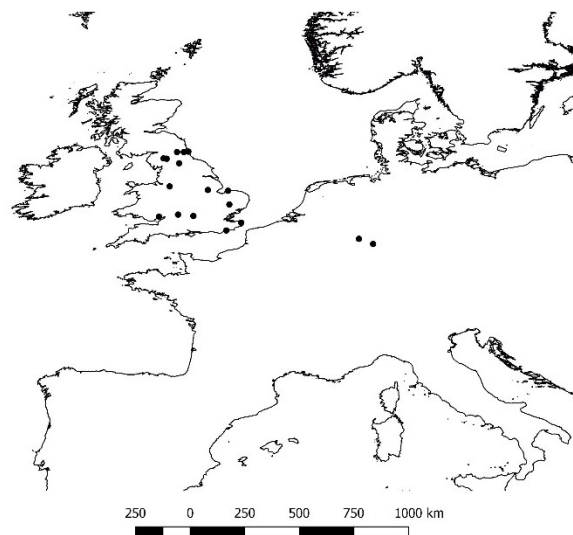


Fig 1 The distribution of proto-crossbow brooches of Mackreth's (2011) Type 3c (after data in Mackreth 2011; Bayley and Butcher 2004; Hattatt 1989 and the PAS).

Two other ‘personal adornments’ are of post-medieval date. The first is an iron D-shaped buckle frame of post-medieval date and it is probably from a plough-horse harness or similar (rather than being a belt buckle). The second is an incomplete post-medieval iron boot heel.

Toilet Instruments

A fragment of an incomplete stone cosmetic palette with rounded corners and bevelled edges is an interesting object (F8 [23]). Such palettes are thought to have been used in preparing either

cosmetics or medicines and are relatively common finds, especially in urban contexts. The example from The Hagg is a finely polished and broken example of uncertain geological provenance.

Household objects / recreation

Five stone discs were recovered. The two smallest might be considered as gaming pieces or counters with diameters of 5cm and 6cm respectively. The three bigger are perhaps better considered as 'pot lids', with diameters of 9cm, 14cm and 35cm, although even here the vessel mouths would be much smaller than most Romano-British pottery vessels. It is best to simply consider these as 'discs' and not place impose a function upon them.

Objects associated with weighing and measuring

A biconical steelyard suspension weight (weighing 618g) is made from lead with traces of an iron suspension chain remaining. There are many parallels for this kind of object and the discussion of weights from Augst and Kaiseraugst (Mutz 1983) provides a detailed description of their function. Such steelyard weights are reasonably common finds on Romano-British sites and suggests some interest in weighing commodities at the site. The discs, if used as counters (above), might also be associated with measuring and accounting.

Tools

The only objects that can be assigned to the category of tools are four stone artefacts. Two of these may have been hones and the other two may have served as smoothers or burnishers.

Fittings

A small group of iron fittings present a number of interpretative difficulties. There are two iron rings (M5) with diameters of 43mm and 54mm. Neither is intrinsically dateable but both could be Roman (Manning 1985, Pl 65). The same can be said of what appears to be a piece of figure-of-eight chain link (M7: Manning 1985, Pl. 64, S16).

There are also eleven handmade nails of seemingly Roman form (Manning 1985, Pls. 64 and 65) and six nail shafts. Nails are common on Roman sites and the presence of these examples is not surprising. Fragments of three post-medieval round-sectioned nails suggests modern contamination in the assemblage, as do a post-medieval washer and a fitting.

Objects of Unknown Function

There are nineteen objects of unknown function. The most important of these is a piece of lead folded over itself to form an irregular cylindrical mass. This might be a piece of scrap, a weight or even possibly (but perhaps improbably) a curse tablet. The other significant object is a small cylindrical fragment of jet or shale. This has some similarities with the knife handles illustrated by Allason-Jones (1996) but it appears to be too small to have performed this function.

One other object is deserving of further comment. A sub-rectangular iron object with an off-set square sectioned tang seems to defy sensible interpretation. X-rays show no visible perforations and the 'tang' might suggest that the sub-rectangular end is meant to be a blade, although it lacks a cutting edge. One possibility is that this is the top (handle) of a post-medieval iron spoon.

The Daub

The assemblage was quantified by fragment count, weight and dimension. There were 23 fragments of daub weighing in total 594g, with an average weight of 25.8g, ranging from tiny fragments

weighing 2g to larger pieces weighing over 100g. It was apparent that the majority of the assemblage was either 8mm thick or c.15mm thick. The fabric of this material appeared to be homogenous. Wattle impressions were visible on the interior of two larger fragments; and what appear to be finger marks on the exterior.

These fragments are presumably evidence of structures, but it is not possible to determine what those structures might have been from this assemblage.

Discussion

This is a small but nonetheless interesting group of objects from an upland site. There is evidence for some contact with the wider Romano-British economy and the presence of weighing equipment, coinage and the proto-crossbow brooch all go some way to suggest 'commercial' iteration. There is a possibility (although this would need to be confirmed by other evidence) that activity may have been focussed in the early third century. This in turn might be related to particular historical circumstances (the Severan campaigns) in northern Britain at the time. The evidence for this is slight, however, so this interpretation should not be pushed too far.

The nails, fittings and daub indicate the presence of structures and buildings.

It is interesting to note that there are very few personal adornments and no textile working equipment. These are usually ubiquitous even on Romano-British sites with sparse assemblages.

The small collection of post-medieval objects indicate post-Roman activity of some description.

Recommendations

- A report on the finds should be included in any publication
- A number of objects will need to be illustrated for the final report. At the very least the brooch, weight, shale object and cosmetic palette.
- The folded lead object might be worth unrolling. This would need to be undertaken by a specialist conservator.

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