

A Basic Bibliography for Studying Romano-British Small Finds

H.E.M. Cool

Getting started

The following bibliography makes no claim to be complete, or even to mention all important publications on Roman finds. It has been compiled with a view to helping a researcher start to investigate the literature. The publications cited normally themselves have copious bibliographies and by following these references a good working knowledge can be built up.

The first thing to do is to acquaint yourself with the types of finds you might come across. Browsing through any finds reports that come to hand, looking at the pictures, getting to grips with the scale of the objects, seeing what occurs again and again, is never time wasted. For this old reports are often as useful as new ones, in some cases even more so.

Good places to start are the Richborough reports (Bushe-Fox 1926, 1928, 1932, 1949; Cunliffe 1968 - the last two especially are very good) and the catalogues of the collections in the old London Museum (Wheeler 1930) and the British Museum (Brailsford 1958).

Amongst more modern publications the catalogues of the South Shields and Aldborough collections provide useful crash courses for the eye (Allason-Jones and Milet 1984; Bishop 1996). Virtually any large monograph on Roman excavations can also be looked at with the profit. I would recommend especially the reports on the excavations at Baldock (Stead and Rigby 1986), Castleford (Cool and Philo 1998), Catterick (Wilson 2002), Chesterholm (Bidwell 1985), Colchester (Crummy 1983), Corbridge (Bishop and Dore 1988), Gorhambury (Neal et al 1990), Verulamium (Frere 1972, 1984) and Wanborough (Anderson et al 2001) as good places to start. On this site you will find all the small find reports from the Piercebridge excavations which provide an interesting large late Roman assemblage from a northern site.

The newsletter of the Roman Finds Group, *Lucerna*, often has useful introductory notes. A membership of the organisation is well worth the very reasonable £8 p.a. subscription.

Finally you should note that though this introduction is based on the literature relating to Roman Britain, the province was part of a wider empire. Eventually you will find yourself needing to follow references into the continental literature. Time to start brushing up those foreign languages you learnt at school.

Function versus Material

The first book many people would use in preparing a finds report is Nina Crummy's monograph on the small finds from the excavations at Colchester (Crummy 1983). This not only has a wealth of finds beautifully illustrated and frequently from closely stratified contexts, but also has useful typologies based on the Colchester material for many types of objects that have not been the subject of synthetic study. An addendum to it will be found in her reports on two other Colchester sites (Crummy, P., 1992, 140-250)

This is a book that needs to be on the book shelf of every Roman finds specialist (or aspiring finds specialist) as it is the bible of the Roman finds world in Britain. It was the first major work on Roman finds to do away with the ghetto of material-based reports, and instead consider the objects according to their likely function irrespective of the material they were made from. This may seem an obvious path to take, after all it is the way the objects would have been used and thus is more likely to cast light on the way people lived in the past.

There is declining resistance to the idea, though you will still see some new publications with material-based specialist reports; and not all of these have the excuse of being reports that have been long in the publication process with the individual reports having been written one or two decades previously. Material-based reports should be resisted. Specialists with different expertise may often have to collaborate but that is far better than having the bone specialist waxing lyrical about the unusual composition of a set of gaming counters in one part of the report when all along the missing ones are residing in the glass report (Cool and Philo 1998, 362). It is, therefore, very important to have a good general knowledge of all small finds even if you decide to be a specialist in a particular class or material. You will at least be aware of the possibilities of allied material that may reside in other groups of material from the same site.

Having stressed the importance of being function orientated, it has to be admitted that for a novice the only thing that they can be certain of is the material. (Providing, of course, they have a magnet to hand. If the object responds to the magnet, then you can be fairly sure it's iron). As these are introductory notes, it has seemed best to provide a way into identifying finds via the material they are made of.

Non-ferrous metals

The commonest recognisable artefacts in these metals that you will encounter are personal ornaments, toilet and medical equipment, studs tacks etc. and, if it is a military site, military equipment Less numerous but still common are writing equipment, table utensils, harness fittings, locks and keys.

Personal ornaments

This category generally dominates non-ferrous assemblages and, during the 1st and 2nd centuries, is in turn dominated by brooches. The first books that most people reach for when faced with a brooch are the ones by Richard Hattatt (1982, 1985, 1987, 1989.); and increasingly that on the brooches from Richborough will become the standard reference (Bayley and Butcher 2004). These are discussed below, but first it is necessary to explain a little about the history of how these items have been studied, as it will explain some of the references you will read in brooch reports.

Despite, or perhaps because, there are vast numbers of them there is no single overarching typology. The late Rex Hull embarked on a massive corpus that still resides unpublished in the Colchester Museum, though Nina Crummy and the late Grace Simpson have been working towards its publication for many years. His report on the brooches from the excavations at Sheepen in the 1930s is the foundation of all brooch studies in this country (Hawkes and Hull 1949, 308-327). Though dominated by early to mid 1st century types, you need to be familiar with the report as it is the foundation of the Colchester type numbers you will come across in other reports. Other much quoted Hull reports are those on the brooches from Richborough (Cunliffe 1968, 79-93) and Nor Nour in the Scilly Isles (Dudley 1967, 28-63).

Another typology you may meet is that of Collingwood where the types are identified by letters of the alphabet (Collingwood and Richmond 1969, 286-303). You need to know it exists and where to find it, but personally I would not recommend it as a pattern to follow.

A more friendly way of naming the types is a mixture of place names of the type specimens and diagnostic physical features of the type. This is how Don Mackreth discusses them and any of his reports can be read with profit. He has long promised us his big book of brooches, but until this appears the best places to start identifying the types that belong to this style of nomenclature are the publications of Mr Hattatt's collections (Hattatt 1982, 1985, 1987, 1989). Though these brooches are often without precise provenance, the range illustrated and the collection of information about the types is excellent. The last report is especially useful as it contains a visual catalogue of the whole collection arranged type by type, variant by variant (Hattatt 1989, 288-371), invaluable for helping to identify variants you are unfamiliar with.

Hattatt had access to the Hull corpus whilst writing his books and makes frequent reference to the Hull Type numbers. The full listing of this is now available in Bayley and Butcher 2004. I have found using the Hull numbers quite useful when faced with the need to discuss large brooch assemblages such as those recovered as part of the Cotswold Water Park project.

Bayley and Butcher's (2004) book on the brooches from Richborough is particularly useful as it will not only give you the basic typology but also considers how the brooches were made, the alloy used and has many excellent photographs showing decorative techniques.

Other very useful brooch reports are Margaret Snape's study of the brooches on the Stanegate (Snape 1993), Adrian Olivier's report on the brooches from Braughing (Potter and Trow 1988, 35-53) and, for late cross-bow brooches, the report on the brooches from the Lankhills School Cemetery (Clarke 1979, 257-63). Ellen Swift's study of regionality in dress accessories includes a useful chapter on cross bows (Swift 2000, 13-88). For penannular brooches the starting point is Fowler 1960 and 1964.

Catherine John's book on jewellery (Johns 1996) provides a useful introduction to other sorts of personal ornaments but is undoubtedly biased towards the precious metals. For the tedious typology you will have to go to less pretty books. For ear-rings Allason-Jones 1989, for finger rings (though only those with intaglios) Henig 1978, for hair pins Cool 1991. Bracelets are primarily a late Roman phenomenon so start with the bracelets from the late Roman cemeteries at Colchester (Crummy 1983, Crummy et al 1993), Poundbury (Farwell and Molleson 1993) and Winchester (Clarke 1979), and the chapter on bracelets in Swift 2000 (117-84). I have also written a more detailed introduction to bracelets which is available [here](#).

Toilet and medical equipment

A recent and very welcome addition to the literature is Hella Eckardt's and Nina Crummy's 2008 monograph on toilet equipment such as nail cleaners, tweezers etc. This goes far beyond mere typology but is a very useful synthesis of the known types. This is the culmination of their work that started with explorations of nail cleaners (2004).

The definitive work on the mirrors you are likely to encounter is Lloyd-Morgan 1981, though a gentler introduction can be gained from Lloyd-Morgan 1977. Small boat-shaped pestle and mortars are not uncommon in the south, (and increasingly in the north-east) though it is only relatively recently Jackson's 1985 survey alerted us to what they might be.

The best place to start to get an understanding of the medical implements you might come across is Jackson 1986, though be warned that you may well need a strong stomach for some of the descriptions of what they were intended to do. You can see one of the sets found at Pompeii [here](#).

Studs, tacks etc.

To be honest most specialist's hearts sink when faced with these. You will find large well stratified groups at Castleford (Cool and Philo 1998, 102-7) and Colchester (Crummy 1983, 115-9).

Military equipment

Bishop and Coulston's excellent synthesis should be your starting point but you will need to follow the references in it to get a full picture (1993 now available in a revised edition 2006). Do not avoid the continental ones. For many classes of portable material culture found in Roman Britain, it is often necessary to have a familiarity with the similar items found in the other provinces so that the British material can be put in context. This is especially true of military equipment. If you have 2nd or 3rd century equipment, for example, there can be no substitute for consulting Oldenstein's magisterial work (Oldenstein 1977). Dura-Europos was at the other end of the Empire to Britain but Simon James's publication of the arms and armour (2004) can equally be consulted with great benefit for that period.

It has long been apparent that the late Roman 'military' fittings were as likely to be worn by civilians officials as by military men, but the starting point for their study in Britain remains Hawkes and Dunning's 1961 article. A more recent consideration will be found in Swift 2000, 185-204.

Writing equipment

This mainly divides itself mainly into stylii and seal boxes. The former are more often found in iron, the latter are sadly neglected. People often start studies of them but until recently nothing ever seemed to come to publication. Happily James Tongue (2004) has now published a basic typology and survey of the literature, but you will have to follow up the references to see what things look like. For the enamelled examples Bateson 1981 remains a good starting point .

One category of writing equipment that has only recently been recognised in Britain is the wax spatulae for smoothing wax on wax writing tablets. These have iron blades and sometimes the handles were made separately of copper alloy. Nina Crummy (2003) has published a useful note using Feugère's typology and providing a list of published examples.

Table utensils, metal vessels and lighting equipment

The table utensils and metal vessels in non-ferrous metals consist mainly of spoons and vessels, though you should note that not all metal vessels were primarily used for eating and drinking. Many were associated specifically with offering sacrifice and some were used in the bathing regime.

The Colchester report is a good starting point for the spoon (Crummy 1983, 69). Other useful starting points are Johns and Potter 1983 for late Roman spoons, Sherlock 1976 for folding spoons, Jones and Sherlock 1996 for lead alloy spoons and Sherlock 2000 for ones with decorated backs (primarily the round bowled form).

Though many metal vessels have been recovered from Roman Britain, anything approaching a full corpus is lacking. For all its idiosyncracies, acquiring a copy of Eggers 1966 is well worth the effort. Though over 40 years old, den Boesterd's 1956 publication on the Nijmegen copper alloy vessels (now augmented by Koster 1997) is invaluable both for dating evidence and for showing how the multi-piece vessels work as you may often get just a handle or foot. A uniquely British product were the enamelled vessels of the late 1st and early 2nd centuries. A useful starting point for these is Moore 1978 and the study of the moulds for them from Castleford (Bayley & Budd in Cool and Philo 1998, 203-22).

Pewter vessels tend in the main to be a late Roman phenomenon. Beagrie's 1989 study includes many references to the publications of hoards which will give you the range of shapes they were made in.

Lamps and candlesticks were made in both copper alloy and lead alloy and for these your first port of call should be Eckardt 2002.

Harness fittings

In part these are often subsumed within military equipment though many fittings are likely to have been as common in civilian contexts as in military ones. In addition to following up specifically military items, it is also useful to check the McGregor 1976 corpus. Button-and-loop fasteners also fall into this border category, the basic reference for them is Wild 1970.

Locks and keys

The typology of copper alloy locks and keys shares much in common with those made of iron so Manning 1985, 88-94 can be studied as gainfully for the copper alloy as for the iron examples. A useful little publication is the fascicule on the locks and keys from Vindolanda (Birley 1997).

Iron

If a specialist was allowed to have only two books on their shelves, then the second would have to be Professor Manning's 1985 catalogue of the Romano-British ironwork in the British Museum. This is usefully laid out by function and should be the starting point of any study of ironwork. His earlier (1976) catalogue

of the collection from Hadrian's wall and his specialist reports in the Verulamium report (Frere 1972, 163-95) and the Gadebridge Park villa report (Neal 1974, 157-87) will also provide you with a good working background to studying Roman iron.

Works that usefully augment the BM catalogue are Rees 1979 on agricultural tools, Crummy (2003) on wax erasers (Mannings' modelling tools), Major (2002) on decorated styli and Eckhardt 2002 on lighting equipment.

Naturally, by now, it should go without saying that iron can only be studied with the aid of good quality X-radiographs. English Heritage have published a very useful set of guidelines about X-radiography and these can be downloaded [here](#).

Glass

The commonest glass small find is the bead. The starting point for their study is Guido 1978. The dating given there tends to be biased towards the later 3rd to 4th centuries, and a useful corrective to this can be gained from Brewers report on the beads found in the legionary baths at Caerleon (Zienkiewicz 1986, 146-2) and the Castleford report (Cool and Philo 1998, 181-9) as both sites have large assemblages securely stratified in early Roman contexts. It is also useful to be aware of Mrs Guido's (1999) corpus of Anglo-Saxon beads.

Glass bangle fragments come in a multitude of varieties. The basic typology is that of Kilbride-Jones (1937-8), a more recent publication that can be consulted with profit is Price 1988. Other glass small finds that you will regularly encounter are counters. Stirring rods and hair pins are less common. For all of these the Colchester monograph (Crummy 1983) is a good starting point, and all three categories are also discussed in the Castleford report (Cool and Philo 1998, 190-4).

Glass bracelets are further considered in notes available on this site.

Fired Clay

This is a category of material where you are most likely to have to liaise closely with other members of the project team. The commonest artefact is most likely to be the discs, perforated or otherwise, re-used from broken pottery. This will need to be identified by the pottery specialist. Deciding what the disc were made for can be a problem, the guidelines laid down by Crummy (1983, 93-4) may be helpful here.

Industrial ceramics, both crucibles and moulds, are not uncommon. Although in the main dealing with post-Roman material, Bayley 1992 can be read with profit for the processes and of course many of the distinctive finds such as parting vessels are likely to show the same characteristics in the Roman and post-

Roman periods. Bayley and Budd's study of the moulds from Castleford (Cool and Philo 1998, 195-222) is a useful, well-illustrated introduction to Roman mould material. There is also a good section on the moulds used for brooches in Bayley and Butcher (2004, 26-31)

Fragments from pipe clay statuettes may also be encountered. Colin Wallace (1995) published a very useful introduction to the literature on these and you are referred there.

Stone

It is probably most useful to divide this up into different categories of stone as they were used for different things. The aid of a geologist will be required to identify the stone.

Precious and semi-precious stones and amber

The most frequent use of these is for jewellery and therefore Johns 1996 is a good introduction. Henig 1978 is the main source for the study of intaglios, but Zienkiewicz study of the those from the Caerleon legionary baths is also useful because of the excellent illustrations including a colour frontispiece (Zienkiewicz 1986, 117-41). The same material is also published in a glossy little booklet (Zienkiewicz 1987) which is worth looking at because of the additional colour illustrations.

Black shiny material

This encompasses shale, jet, cannel coals etc and it is worth remembering that visual inspection is not normally sufficient to distinguish between the various types. It was most commonly used for jewellery, but textile equipment and, less frequently, furniture and platters were also made from it. The best starting points are Lawson 1975 and Allason-Jones 1996.

See also Bracelets

The other stones

The two most commonly encountered uses of stone on Romano-British sites are as quernstones and whetstones/hones. For the former Buckley and Major's contribution in the Colchester volume (Crummy 1983, 73-7) and Welfare's report on the stones from Chesterholm (Bidwell 1985, 154-64) are useful starting points. Hones rarely attract attention in finds reports though it is clear that they must have been regularly traded. It is worth looking at the report on those from Usk as they include unfinished examples (Manning et al 1995, 257-62). Stone mortars are also found from time to time (Beavis 1971). It is also useful to look at

Peacock 1998. This is a multi-period review of stone use in Britain but does have a useful bibliography.

You should also be aware that not all worked flint found on Roman sites has to be prehistoric survivals as it is clear that the sharp cutting edges of flint continued to be appreciated in the Romano-British period, though broken fragments of thick vessel glass were often used instead. This is further considered here.

Bone Antler and Ivory

Again this is a category of material that benefits from collaboration with a bone specialist to help identify the material. MacGregor 1985 technically deals with post-Roman material but in fact is full of Roman material as well. It tends to lack close dates as far as the Roman material is concerned and can be usefully augmented by reports from well stratified sites. The most useful are probably Stephen Greep's reports on the bone from the legionary baths at Caerleon (Zienkiewicz 1986, 197-212), from Canterbury (Blockley et al 1995, 1112-52) and Castleford (Cool and Philo 1998, 267-85). These are all large reports which will provide introductions to the various typologies that have been proposed for such very common bone items as counters and hair pins. Naturally Nina Crummy's Colchester report (1983) also includes much of value on bone and antler including a group of antler combs. These are a very late Roman form for which a good starting point is Galloways's reports in Clarke 1979 (p. 246-8) and Farwell and Molleson 1993 (p. 108-10). The use of bone to form bracelets is considered further here.

A very specialist use of bone material was to make or decorate funerary biers. It has very occasionally been noted in 1st century contexts such as the Child's grave at Colchester (Eckardt 1999). It is used again in the form of bone inlays in the 3rd century. Stephen Greep has published a large group of these from the cemetery at Brougham (Cool 2004, 273-82)

Leather, wood and textiles

We are now entering the realms of the seriously specialist and if you encounter this material in any quantity it is advisable to contact an acknowledged expert. It is, however, good to have a working knowledge of this material too so read the reports on these categories of material in the Vindolanda report (van Driel-Murray et al 1993), the Castleford report (Cool and Philo 1998, 285-347), the Castle Street Carlisle report (Padley and Winterbotham 1991) and the Billingsgate, London report (Jones 1980, 99-131). They show the range that can be hoped for in suitable conditions

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