

Report of the Portable Antiquities Scheme 2008

By GEOFF EGAN

The Portable Antiquities Scheme (PAS) has been in operation since 1997. Its purpose is to encourage members of the public to report objects of historic interest retrieved in circumstances other than formal archaeological investigation, for recording on a publicly available database. The Scheme is funded by the Heritage Lottery Fund, the Department for Culture, Media and Sport, and the Museums, Libraries and Archives Council through the latter. It has a staff of 36 Finds Liaison Officers (FLOs) across England and Wales, some with assistants, six specialist National Finds Advisors and central management and support staff based at the British Museum.¹ The following brief selection of some highlights of post-medieval date acts as a summary of the objects from this period which were added to the Database in 2008.

The year 2008 saw a wide range of finds recorded by the FLOs. These objects include several of categories familiar from items noted in previous years, as well as some entirely new ones. Once again dress accessories are prominent. These include several notable items: a lead/tin brooch with the head presumably of an aristocrat (No. 14), adding to a number of these early 16th-century accessories recovered by detecting; a fine button (No. 8), probably also from the early 16th century; two notable finger rings, one (No. 1) with a legend suggesting it was a royalist favour from the mid-17th century and the other (No. 11) enamelled, with a running frieze of stylized motifs; and an enamelled clasp from the mid- to late 1600s. The last may be from the same factory as a contemporaneous enamelled mount (No. 2) for a horse harness (the location of the factory producing these enamels has recently been recognized as being in north London, rather than its earlier attribution to Surrey). A lead roundel for producing counterfeit late 16th-century French silver coins by the cliché method is an unusual find (No. 15). Identification of the decorated top of a copper-alloy spoon handle (No. 16), probably of late



FIG. 1

No. 1: Copper-alloy finger ring with legend, mid-17th century, from Gussage All Saints, Dorset.



FIG. 2

No. 2: Enamelled copper-alloy harness mount(?), mid-/late 17th century, from Southwark, Greater London.

16th- to early 17th-century date, ties down several previous finds of comparable fragments initially thought to be Roman. A copper-alloy coin weight, made in Antwerp for checking the weight of gold angel coins of James I (No. 17), has the stamped devices double-struck, registering the same half of each side twice to fill the usual area. An unusual pewter holder (No. 9), perhaps for hot drink in a glass, has the bust of Charles I in a position where it would not be evident, except to the drinker — this may well have been used discretely to toast the royalist cause during the troubled mid-17th century. A lead cloth seal from Turnhout with the town's patron, St Peter, on the stamp (No. 5) has an exceptionally detailed impression from a striped linen textile on the back.

Weaponry includes a nearly complete dagger (No. 13) and a sheet copper-alloy chape found retaining the tip of the blade of the weapon (No. 10), while an ornate copper-alloy buckle with its clasp and iron-wire loops (No. 4) is an unusual combination or adaptation, probably for a sword belt. Playthings again feature, including the miniature front of a building with an ornate window in pewter, probably of 17th-century date (No. 12). A silver spur with hallmarks of 1763 is an unusual version with the rowel at a right angle to the usual arrangement, to give a severe, sharp stimulus to the mount (No. 18). From the later post-medieval period there are four splayed-legged pornographic items, probably pipe cleaners. One features both male and female genitals (No. 6) and the others just the latter — these add to a growing series of comparably risqué items of various base metals

from the late 18th to early 19th century, which presumably circulated widely in taverns and similar establishments, judging from the numbers now emerging among detected finds.



FIG. 3

No. 3: Enamelled copper-alloy clasp, mid-17th century, from Andover, Hampshire.



FIG. 4

No. 4: Adapted copper-alloy buckle and clasp, probably for a sword belt, 16th/17th century(?), from Hurstbourne Tarrant, Hampshire.



FIG. 5

No. 5: Lead cloth seal for a Turnhout twill, 16th century(?), from Wonston, Hampshire.

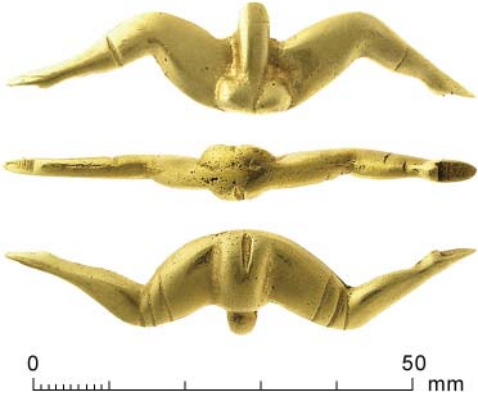


FIG. 6

Fig. 6: Copper-alloy pornographic object, probably a pipe cleaner, late 18th/early 19th century(?), from Ryde, Isle of Wight.

A SELECTION OF FINDS RECORDED
DURING 2008

1. Dorset, *Gussage All Saints* (PAS database DOR-9B2121; finder C. Bullock; FLO C. Hayward Trevarthen).

A copper-alloy finger ring (Fig. 1) in the form of a buckled strap (this lacks the pin) with a French inscription: VNO DIEV: VNO ROY: VNE FOY

(‘One God, one king, one faith’). Rings in the form of buckled straps began in the medieval period and continue today. In this instance the pious and loyal



FIG. 7

No. 7: Copper-alloy clasp element, 16th/17th century, from Cooling, Kent.



FIG. 8

No. 8: Gilded copper-alloy button(?), early 16th century(?), from the City of London, London.

legend points to its being a royalist accessory from the mid-17th century.

2. *Greater London, Southwark* (PAS database LON-0985F7; finder B. Wale; FLO K. Sumnall).

A copper-alloy square/quatrefoil mount is enamelled in light blue and white (Fig. 2). It originally



FIG. 9

No. 9: Openwork pewter holder with bust of Charles I in the base, probably for hot drinks, from the City of London, London.

had a pair of opposed prongs on the back for attachment, but one is broken off. This is another category of a growing repertoire of mid- to late 17th-century accessories that are being revealed by detector finds, in this instance probably for horse harness, and which were produced by a factory in north London (the larger products that used to characterize the industry were erroneously known as 'Surrey enamels').² See following item and No. 11.

3. *Hampshire, Andover* (PAS database HAMP-8CC7D6; finder M. Reed; FLO R. Webley).

A copper-alloy clasp (Fig. 3) from which the broad hook has broken off retains dark blue and white enamel in alternate ovoids with pellets within the main, slightly domed oval field. There are three perimeter loops for attachment. This is another new category of enamelled accessories made in London in the mid-17th century.³ At least eight others with different *champlevé*-enamel designs have been published in the past year, indicating a prolific output as well as an extensive variety for these colourful clasps.⁴ See preceding item and No. 11.



FIG. 10

No. 10: Sheet copper-alloy sword chape with remains of wood from sheath, 16th century(?), from the City of London, London.

4. *Hampshire, Hurstbourne Tarrant* (PAS database HAMP-C08650; finder D. Robinson; FLO R. Webley).

A copper-alloy buckle with its ornate plate attached to a hooked clasp is of 16th- or 17th-century date (Fig. 4). The oval buckle frame has a pair of angled prongs protruding from the bar (possibly the remains of a second frame loop); of the iron-wire pin only the loop survives; the folded plate is moulded and waisted, and has an integral lateral loop at a right angle. The hook of the moulded, asymmetrical clasp is inserted through the lateral loop and has a further, central hole. Two makeshift iron-wire loops have been inserted through the attachment holes (judging from rust, presumably originally for iron rivets) as a (replacement?) means of fixture. This curious combination, if it really represents original usage, is an unusual survivor, probably from a sword belt.⁵

5. *Hampshire, Wonston* (PAS database HAMP-19B0F2; finder M. Duell; FLO R. Webley).

An incomplete lead two-disc cloth seal for a textile manufactured in Turnhout (in modern Belgium) has a stamp of the town patron, St Peter, standing and holding two keys, with the legend S(A)... (P)EETER (Fig. 5). The textile imprint on the back of the surviving disc gives a particularly clear indication of the striped fabric to which it was originally attached, probably of plain-weave alternating with twill. Turnhout was noted in mid-16th century lists of rates of customs duty on various goods imported to England as the source of ticks/tickings, used for bed-linen.⁶

6. *Isle of Wight: Ryde* (PAS database IOW-736146; finder Ms J. Clark; FLO F. Basford).

A copper-alloy object in the form of a pair of human legs splayed in a 'W'-shape (Fig. 6) has



FIG. 11

No. 11: Enamelled copper-alloy finger ring, perhaps of mid-/late 17th-century date, from the City of London, London.

male and female genitalia on the two respective sides, the former having a single groove around the calf (presumably to suggest socks) and the latter having three grooves around the knee and thigh (presumably to suggest stockings). The pointed ends of the feet imply that this risqué object may have been a tool to clean out a pipe after smoking. It is presumably another of the growing range of late 18th- to early 19th-century pornographic objects for use at inns, etc., to divert primarily male company by shocking or amusing.⁷

Three similar items in lead, one-sided and with only female genitalia (lacking stockings, with the backs plain) have been recorded in Northern England during 2008, two in Durham and one in Hebron, Northumberland, indicating widespread use of such objects.⁸

7. *Kent, Cooling* (PAS database DOR-10B466; finder C. Bullock; FLO C. Hayward Trevanthen).

An incomplete copper-alloy mount of double square/quatrefoil outline and with similar interlaced motifs and pellets around central holes for

attachment lacks its original hook (Fig. 7). A parallel from the Isle of Wight, while lacking half of the plate, retains the knop-ended hook, which is still attached to a single motif of this design with a loop, suggesting that one may be incomplete. The precise date of these complex clasps still has to be established and their exact function remains uncertain — whether from everyday dress, sword belts or perhaps horse harness. Further comparable items are known, but none is complete.⁹

8. *London, City of London* (PAS database LON-016786; finder M. Hyman; FLO K. Sumnall).

An incomplete, relief-decorated, sheet-spheroid copper-alloy button(?), with traces of gilding (Fig. 8), is probably of early 16th-century date. The incomplete loop for attachment is consistent with interpretation as a dress accessory. It could alternatively be a baby's bauble, such as a rattle, but apparently lacks any contents that might have produced a sound when shaken.

9. *London, City of London* (PAS database LON-98D9E2; finders A. Pilson and I. Smith; FLO K. Sumnall).

An openwork pewter holder, presumably for a drinking glass, was found in the Thames foreshore. The base roundel is cast with the bust of Charles I on the inside, and the walls have several rows of rectangular cut-out holes, apart from in one area, which may have been where a handle was once attached (Fig. 9). This holder would have been suitable for hot drinks, perhaps held in a glass beaker. The figure of the king might have been deliberately kept inconspicuous, allowing a royalist drinker to toast that cause discretely. There is a similar holder in the Museum of London, lacking the royal bust.

10. *London, City of London* (PAS database 992504; finders A. Pilson and I. Smith; FLO K. Sumnall).

A copper-alloy bent-sheet chape found, unusually, with the tip of a sword or dagger still inside (Fig. 10) comes from the Thames foreshore and probably dates to the 16th century. The only decoration on the chape are two paired, parallel incised lines running around the top and bottom horizontally. The advanced wear of the tip of the chape and blade suggests that this part of the weapon was allowed to drag along the ground, or repeatedly strike it over a lengthy period before the accident which resulted in the loss of the part discovered. No trace of the scabbard was found.



FIG. 12

No. 12: Lead/tin miniature building-frontage plaything, probably of 17th-century date, from the City of London, London.

11. *London, City of London* (PAS database LON-22E432; finder A. Schlachter; FLO K. Sumnall).

An enamelled copper-alloy finger ring dates perhaps from the mid- to late 17th century (Fig. 11). The design is a running frieze of renaissance-style motifs. It is possible that this accessory is another enamelled product of the London factory (see Nos 2 and 3).

12. *London, City of London* (PAS database LON-D90BC7; finders A. Johannesen and S. Brooker; FLO K. Sumnall).

A panel that may be a component of a miniature lead/tin building, found on the Thames foreshore, is probably of 17th-century date (Fig. 12). The gable end and a circular opening in the style of a rose window at the top might suggest a major ecclesiastical structure, but the two round-headed windows below are difficult to reconcile with this

stylistically. It is questionable just how much of the architectural detail here consists of conventional motifs from an inventive pewterer's repertoire, with quatrefoils/rosettes all over the frontage alongside the curious series of round openings, and how much was intended to represent any one particular style or single structure accurately.¹⁰ It is just possible that this may have been part of a toy windmill with a rod for the sails set through the hole at the centre of the rose window, but there is no obvious wear here from turning.

13. *London, City of London* (PAS database LON-BF6593; finder M. Chesterman; FLO K. Sumnall).

A cheap, fairly plain, single-bladed iron dagger of 16th- to 17th-century date (Fig. 13) comes from the Thames foreshore. The hemispherical, copper-alloy pommel with simple engraved ornament survives, but the organic handle is missing completely.

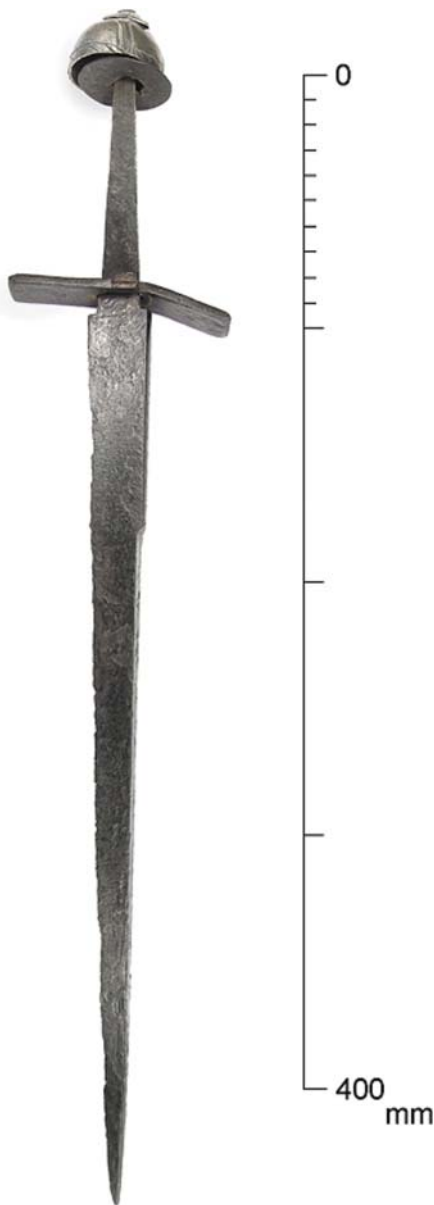


FIG. 13

No. 13: Iron dagger, 16th/17th century, from the City of London, London.

14. *Nottinghamshire, South Muskham* (PAS database DENO-A47497; finder P. Banks; FLO R. Atherton).

An incomplete lead/tin roundel brooch has the rough three-quarter-view bust of a bearded nobleman(?) wearing a fashionable flat cap and probably



FIG. 14

No. 14: Lead/tin brooch, early 16th century, from South Muskham, Nottinghamshire.

a collar of office (Fig. 14). Typical of a series of ill understood early 16th-century mass-produced badges of copper-alloy and lead/tin, which probably show specific personages from public life (rather than, say, generalized noblemen),¹¹ these are probably immediate secular successors at the Reformation to the pilgrim-badge/cult-of-the-saints tradition of accessories. It remains to be demonstrated whether they were issued in connection with specific events or causes, or whether they may have been a way of paying homage to prominent leaders of the time.

15. *Somerset, Ashill* (PAS database SOM-105780; finder G. Stevens; FLO N. Payne).

A flat, sub-circular piece of lead, greatest diameter 75mm, and with a pair of holes near opposite sides is one of two parts needed for counterfeiting coins by the cliché method (Fig. 15). One face has an imprint from a (worn?) French silver quarter *écu* coin of Henri III, which was minted between 1578 and 1589,¹² and the other has series of random scratches. The method used¹³ involved placing a thin sheet of silver over the coin impression, with a soft, base-metal core placed over that. In turn, a



FIG. 15

No. 15: Lead roundel for counterfeiting a late 16th-century French silver coin, from Ashill, Somerset.



FIG. 16

No. 16: Copper-alloy spoon handle, late 16th/early 17th century(?), from Clapham, West Sussex.



FIG. 17

No. 17: Copper-alloy coin weight with defectively stamped devices, 17th century(?), from Lavant, West Sussex.

further silver sheet and another lead piece with the impression of the other, corresponding side of the *écu* were added (orientated by edge holes

corresponding with those in the one recovered). The two pairs of holes were probably fixed together with wire etc., and the false coin would be created by striking the ensemble so as to fix the silver surfaces with their appropriate designs around the base core. The object has been donated to Somerset County Museum.¹⁴

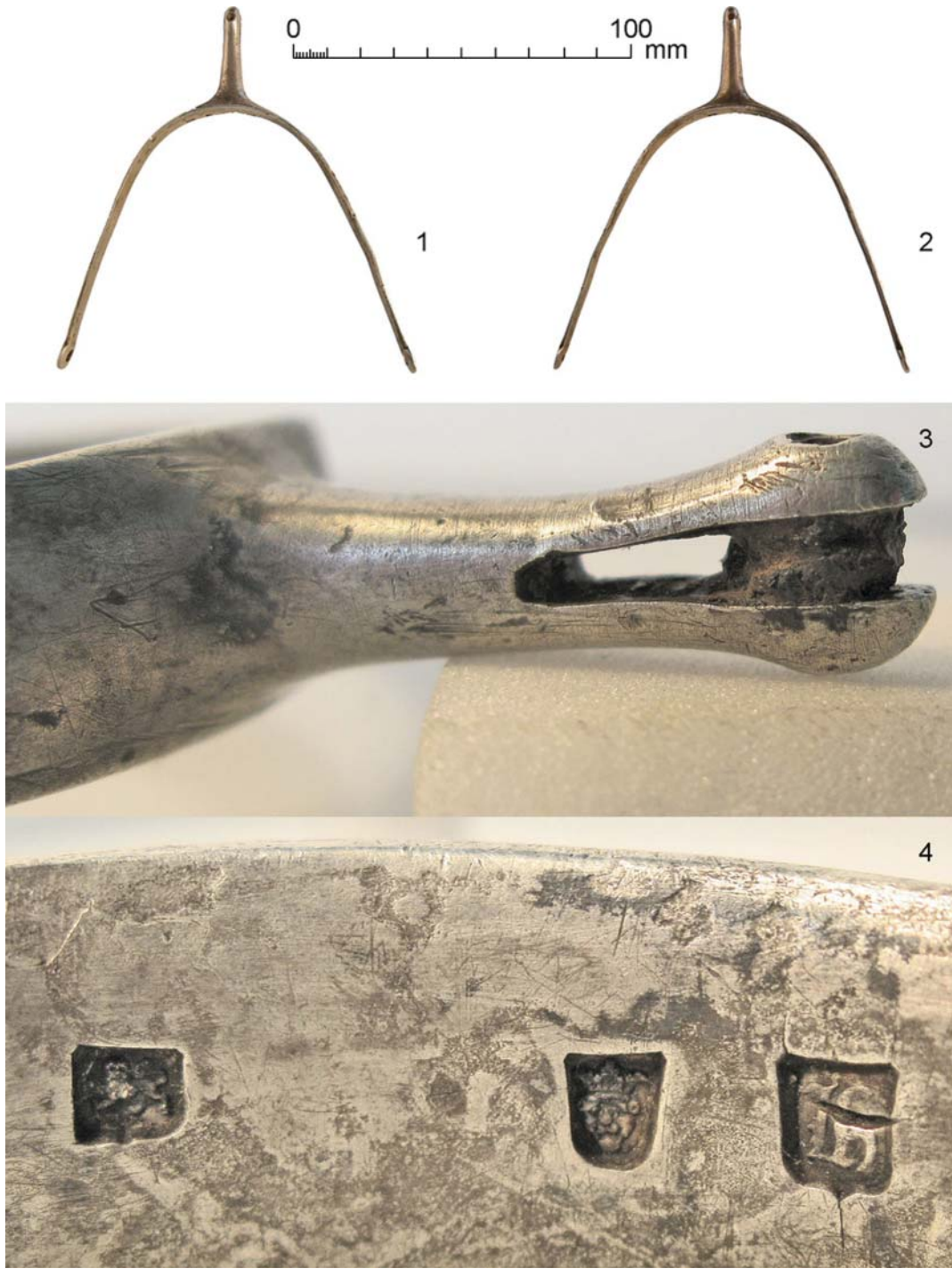


FIG.18

No. 18: Silver spur with horizontal rowel, hallmarked for 1763, from Rossett, Denbigh, Wales.

16. *West Sussex, Clapham* (PAS database SUSS-BC17C4; finder M. Wyatt; FLO L. Burnett).

A flattish copper-alloy fragment with a three-dimensionally moulded, knopped and collared terminal has been identified as the top of a spoon (Fig. 16). It has a simple face tooled in the rounded top of the flat part, which has been adapted to make it narrower, giving a round face and constriction for a neck. Hatching below may be seen as a beard, with oblique opposed strokes further down the tapering stem. This is one of a series of fragments, the function of which was the subject of speculation,¹⁵ which has now been resolved by comparison with complete examples in the Museum of London.¹⁶ Dating within the post-medieval period (*c.* 1550–1750?) remains uncertain, although the tooling on the present item perhaps suggests the earlier half of this span. L. Burnett draws attention to a number of other spoon-handle fragments recorded on the PAS database, broken at about the same point.¹⁷

17. *West Sussex, Lavant* (PAS database HAMP-05DA87; finder D Beckett; FLO R. Webley; primary identification P. Withers).

A square copper-alloy coin weight was double-struck with a rotation of 180°. The same half of each device — a crown with I (S?) to the sides and (the lower part of) St Michael spearing the devil with IR to the side — has registered twice on the respective faces of the flan, combining to make what at first glance looks like a single round design on both sides (Fig. 17). The design indicates that the weight was intended to check gold angel coins of James I, confirmed by its measured weight of 4.1gm. This weight was probably made in Antwerp in the 17th century by a manufacturer with the initials IS.

WALES

18. *Denbigh, Rossett* (PAS database HESH-0DF6B4; finder P. Evans; FLO P. Reaville).

A very plain silver spur (length of straight neck 25mm, span 94mm, weight 37.5gm) with London or Chester hallmarks for 1763, unusually has the rowel set horizontally (Fig. 18), i.e. at a right angle to the usual arrangement. The points of the rowel are missing. Blanche Ellis (formerly of the Royal Armouries, Tower of London) notes that a spur with a horizontal rowel is published in Diderot's *Encyclopédie* as a specifically English form, which Ellis suggests is a very severe riding aid likely to inflict a wound on the horse.¹⁸

NOTES

¹ For previous annual reports, see Egan 2005, 2006, 2007 and 2008.

² Blair 2005; Blair & Patterson 2006; cf. Egan 2008, 323, no. 13, a buckle.

³ See previous note.

⁴ e.g. PAS HAMP-69B246, HAMP-685195 and Read 2008, 165–82, nos 647, 649–50, 652, 676, 680 and 687 (from various counties in the South of England); the present item is no. 632 in Read's catalogue.

⁵ cf. Read 2008, 217–25.

⁶ See Egan 2001, 72–3 and fig. 26:160–2 for Turnhout seals of a different kind.

⁷ cf. Egan 2007, 315, no. 21; 2008, 327, no. 24.

⁸ PAS database NCL-24AEF7, NCL-8FF656 and NCL-DAC295; finders G. & T. Bankhead, and T. Crampton; FLO R. Collins.

⁹ Read 2008, 224, no. 804 (IOW-77DB28, assigned to the 16th or 17th century), possibly to help hold a sword. See also Egan 2007, 312, no. 15.

¹⁰ Forsyth & Egan 2005, 392–7.

¹¹ e.g. Egan 2006, 302, no. 1.

¹² Identified by Richard Kelleher, Dept. of Coins and Medals, British Museum

¹³ This has been clarified by Dr Barrie Cook, of the Dept. of Coins and Medals, British Museum.

¹⁴ Somerset County Museum Acc. No. TTNCM 115/2008

¹⁵ Johnson 2004.

¹⁶ Museum of London Acc. Nos A3934 and A10625.

¹⁷ PAS database DENO-76C2F7; ESS-AD69C2; LIN-0974F5; LIN-CD6075; LIN-E83BD6; WMID-DFA492; and WMID-EO76D4.

¹⁸ Diderot & d'Alembert 1763, pl. 15, fig. 7 ('*éperon Anglais à molettes horizontales*').

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ABBREVIATIONS

- FLO Finds Liaison Officer
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