

Report of the Portable Antiquities Scheme 2004

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The Portable Antiquities Scheme (PAS) was established in 1997 to provide a means whereby members of the public would voluntarily make available objects of archaeological interest they had found in order to allow a detailed, permanent record to be made, which would be accessible to all. The Scheme, with financial support from the Heritage Lottery Fund, the Museums, Libraries and Archives Council and the Department for Culture, Media and Sport, now employs a network of 36 Finds Liaison Officers (FLOs) and six Finds Advisers, as well as management and support staff. The year 2004 was the first in which the organization's remit extended nationwide across all of England and Wales.¹ The report that follows is an indication of the scope of the PAS for post-medieval archaeology and a brief summary of some finds from this period recorded under the Scheme during 2004.

Annual reports by the PAS covering all periods have, in previous years, featured a varied series of Tudor dress hooks (cf. no. 1 below), which have only rarely turned up on formal excavations,² as well as other dress accessories, to add to the cumulative picture of complex patterns of consumption across the country.³ Other finds included an early 19th-century French cannon found in Cardiff (possibly spoil from campaigns in Egypt against Napoleonic forces) and the carved front of a wooden chest of the 1620s (which had been used in a barn in Somerset to sort potatoes),⁴ while the discovery of a remarkable series of children's toys has been noted elsewhere.⁵

It can sometimes be difficult with the relatively recent material of the latest period to appreciate immediately the significance of the contribution new finds can make. In contrast with earlier eras, the location of settlements, for example, is hardly an issue. Instead, the challenge is to fit evidence from finds to often incomplete documentary

sources, and to trace industrial and commercial developments against the expansion of trade links beyond Europe. The PAS is gradually allowing a national picture of some elusive aspects of post-medieval material culture to be built up, filling significant gaps, particularly in rural areas. It should prove possible in due course to see which dress accessories were nationwide fashions, and which were regional, for example. This is currently unclear from the surprisingly patchy coverage given largely from formal excavations, which are concentrated in urban centres; the 16th century is especially poorly understood at this level, despite the popular prominence of the period in historical terms.

Product marking, particularly widespread in the 16th and 17th centuries, is a theme that lends itself particularly to elucidation from objects found in the ground which sometimes provide documentary levels of detail. A surprising number of details of industrial development that are currently unclear or are presented over-simplistically from historical narratives are capable of elucidation from such finds, which themselves often raise new questions, leading in turn to fresh insights. A number of lead seals put on traded textiles to indicate their origin and quality have been recorded by the PAS (see no. 6 below). It is hoped that this will eventually lead to a new understanding of the complexities of patterns of consumption for each county or region in an industry that was characterized by a wide range of specialized local products.⁶ Several further categories of lead seals have also been recorded by the Scheme. These include large numbers from a distinct 18th-century series from Russia for labelling exported flax and associated goods,⁷ and others for as yet unknown 17th-century Portuguese goods, and Dutch customs and excise issues (a variety of which labelled exported cattle, attached to the ears). Lead weights



FIG. 1

No. 1a. Silver early Tudor dress hook from Hayle, Cornwall. Height: 31.5mm.



FIG. 2

No. 2. 17th/18th-century copper alloy decade finger ring from Dorset. Height: 22.7mm.

(the regional differences and the chronological developments of which, again, are not yet fully understood),⁸ brass thimbles imported from Germany and even window lead⁹ had makers' and other trade marks; the records made by the Scheme should lead to a deeper understanding of all of these.

Early children's playthings are occasionally recovered from the soil, although they are known from London throughout the post-medieval period.¹⁰ Here, the PAS is making a significant contribution by beginning to map a much wider distribution for the 16th and 17th centuries, including several finds in rural areas (see no. 4 below). Like much from the lower end of the social spectrum from these centuries, playthings simply have not survived above ground.

Among the great variety of dress accessories recorded by the PAS, buttons are of particular current interest, with those from the early post-medieval period recently given a new framework, based on a study mainly in the West Country and London.¹¹ Even very late finds have a contribution to make here (see no. 8 below), with 18th- and 19th-century military uniform buttons providing previously unknown details of the stationing of troops and others across the country.¹²

SOME FINDS RECORDED DURING 2004

1. *Cornwall*: (a) *Hayle* and (b) *Gwithian* (PAS database CORN-3A0B97 and CORN-3A8BE5; finders J. Heath and S. Rogers; FLO A. Tyacke).



FIG. 3

No. 1b. Early Tudor silver dress hook from Gwithian Cornwall. Height: 29mm.



FIG. 4

No. 4. Front (above) and back (below) of late 17th-century 'horn' book of lead from Lincolnshire. Height: 42mm.



FIG. 5

No. 5. Tudor silver verrel, a hawk's identification tag, from Hertfordshire. Height: 25.2mm.

Two silver dress hooks found in Cornwall are of the kind currently being elucidated by a range of finds from several different parts of England (Fig. 1).¹³ These were fashionable for perhaps a couple of generations in the late 15th and early 16th centuries. Their function has been much debated in the past five years, stimulated by finds reported under the PAS and the Treasure Act.

It is beginning to look as if the hooks served more than one function and they may be a rare instance of a personal accessory that was used only by women. Like a handful of others that have come to light in recent years, these two are of silver, while base metal versions in copper alloys are common and lead/tin ones (and on the Continent at least versions in iron) are also known.

2. *Dorset: East Chelborough* (PAS database SOMDOR-7E6495; finder H. E. Weller; FLO C. Hayward Trevarthen). A 17th/18th-century decade finger ring of copper alloy has the usual ten knobs around the band, which would have been used by a Catholic as a discreet aid to prayer (Fig. 2). These are relatively unusual items from a time when the faith was tolerated but not encouraged.

3. *London: City* (PAS database LON-81BA40; finder P. Olivant; FLO F. Simpson). An unusual discovery from London is a group of three bone apple corers or cheese scoops with simple incised

decoration. They probably date to the early 18th century.

4. *Lincolnshire: Riseholme*, a reading aid of lead for a child (PAS database LIN-5FB027; finder M. Bellamy; FLO A. Daubney; Fig. 4). This is an unusual find in that it is definitely for a child. It dates from the late 17th century and, like the others recorded, is a fairly rough object cast in the cheapest of metals — lead. It is dated 1682, with the initials (?)WLO, presumably for the maker. A few errors (like a reversed letter B) and omissions in the alphabet (there appear to be no letters E, Y or Z) limited its effectiveness as an educational plaything. Crude base metal versions like this one seem so far to be found only in rural areas. Their distribution suggests that the main market for these cheap items, at a time when increasing emphasis was being put on reading skills, was among country parents who may not themselves have been able to read, but who aspired to improve their children's chances in life.

5. *Hertfordshire: Little Gaddesden* (PAS database BH-9487C5; finder V. Latham; FLO J. Watters). An unusual find (unearthed some 20 years ago, but reported to the PAS in 2004) is a silver verrel, a metal foot ring to identify the ownership of a hunting hawk (Fig. 5). These usually give the name of the owner, frequently a member of the aristocracy, but this one has a tab with the Tudor arms and a rose.



FIG. 6

No. 6. Lead seal for a textile traded from Turnhout in the 16th/17th century, found in the Isle of Wight. Width: 22mm. Drawn by F. Basford.



FIG. 7

No. 7. Copper alloy Civil War medallion found in Leicestershire. Diameter: 15mm.

It is possible that it was lost when, reputedly, Elizabeth I stayed in the area.

6. *Isle of Wight: Brighstone* (PAS database IOW-D8A441; finder M. O'Brien; FLO F. Basford). A lead seal for labelling an imported textile from Turnhout in modern Belgium (Fig. 6). 'Turnhout ticks,' probably linen or mixed fabrics, are listed in

customs Books of Rates detailing the dues on incoming foreign wares in the 16th and early 17th centuries.¹⁴ The present find adds to the distribution of seals recorded for these particular textiles, which is being studied as part of an ongoing investigation into the archaeological evidence for textile trades between England and Belgium.



FIG. 8

No. 8. Copper alloy button, East Sussex, Lewes. Width: 24.7mm.

7. *Leicestershire: Stathern* (PAS database LEIC-8F6622; finder J. Brown; FLO W. Scott). A copper-alloy medallion from the Civil War has a sword with 'Victory and honour' on one side and a rock with 'Fixt on a rock' on the other (Fig. 7). It is thought to relate to the raising of the royal standard at Nottingham on 22 August 1642 as one of the first acts of the war. It was found on the estate formerly in the hands of the Hacker family, whose loyalties were divided during the troubles of the mid-17th century between King and Parliament.

8. *East Sussex: Lewes* (PAS database SUSS-AC87E7; finder P. Carrington; assistant FLO D. Andrews). A gilt copper-alloy button datable to the period 1850–1950 has a crowned anchor and the legend 'Naval Prison. Lewes.' (Fig. 8). This is one of a series of very late finds from a variety of military sites, which reveal details of different

uniforms at a time from which relevant service records do not always survive. The button has been donated to the Barbican House Museum, Lewes.

9. *Berkshire: Ascot* (not yet on PAS database; finder P. Bloomfield; FLO K. Sutton). A hoard of 610 copper-alloy Omani quarter-rupee coins, most from c. 1897, found 25 years ago during house construction, was reported under the PAS. Minted in Birmingham, most of the coins are worn, indicating a period of circulation. There is one issue from the reign of George V dated 1930. This enigmatic hoard could perhaps be from someone in the retinue of the many high-ranking foreign dignitaries who visited Ascot for the horse racing and other pursuits in the inter-war years.

NOTES

¹ See e.g. PAS Report 2004. During 2004 for the post-medieval period Dr Julian Baker at the Ashmolean Museum, Oxford/Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge, and Dr Helen Geake at the Department of Archaeology of the University of Cambridge, were Finds Advisers, respectively, for coins, other numismatic items and for all other objects. For the purposes of the Scheme the post-medieval period runs from c. 1500 onwards, normally to c. 1700, although there are exceptions for later material of particular interest.

² PAS Report 1999, 22.

³ PAS Report 2000, 32.

⁴ PAS Report 2003, 32.

⁵ Hobbs 2003, 118–23; see also Note 10.

⁶ See Egan 1995.

⁷ See Sullivan 2000; cf. PAS Report 2001, 85.

⁸ E.g. Biggs & Withers 2003.

⁹ Egan *et al.* 1986.

¹⁰ Forsyth with Egan 2005; see also Note 5.

¹¹ Read 2005.

¹² E.g. Armitage & Rouse 2003.

¹³ See note 2; Gaimster *et al.* 2002; Hobbs 2003, 123–7; Thornton & Mitchell 2003.

¹⁴ Egan 2001, 72–3, nos 161–62.

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