

AN UNUSUAL ROMAN BROOCH FROM BEELEY

By MARTIN J. DEARNE

and JULIEN PARSONS

(City Museum, Weston Park, Sheffield S10 2TP)

The subject of this note was found by Mr J. Rockach using a metal detector in Beeley parish (c. SK28 68) and was reported by him to the Peak National Park in December 1993. The authors are grateful to Mr Rockach for allowing them to publish the brooch and for placing it on temporary loan to Sheffield City Museum, and to Mr Ken Smith of the Peak National Park for drawing it to their attention.

The brooch (Fig. 1) is 7.7cm long, of copper alloy and is now slightly bent, worn in places and heavily corroded, with a dark green patina. The incomplete pin is hinged on an axis bar held in a semi-tubular moulding behind the head. The head is trumpet shaped but flattened centrally on the top, at which point is fastened a flat-topped, circular stud decorated around its side with red, enamel-filled grooves. It is fastened by a separate pin which passes through the stud and head to emerge from a hole at the back, just below the axis bar housing, at which point it has been bent so as not to interfere with the brooch pin. The upper bow is worn but retains a central cast ridge or crest onto which blocks of enamel have been applied. Those remaining suggest an original pattern of alternate rectangular red and pale blue blocks. The swollen base of the upper bow appears to have had three cross mouldings separated by red enamelled 'grooves'. The knob consists of a wide, plain, cast button flanked by deep flutes. The button

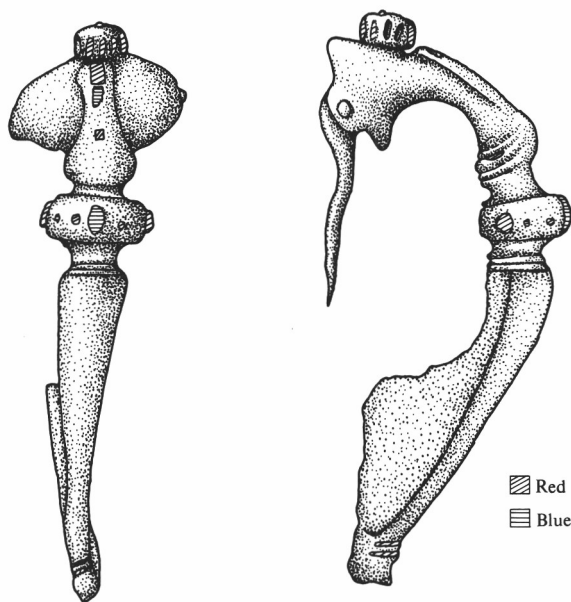


Fig. 1: Roman Brooch from Beeley. Actual size.

retains parts of six out of, probably, seven applied blocks of alternating red and pale blue enamel. The swept-back lower leg is corroded with no trace of decoration, except for a pair of cross mouldings at its top. The foot is rather square and has two red enamelled grooves above it. The badly damaged catch plate rose from the top of the footknob and continues vestigially to the base of the cross mouldings at the top of the lower bow.

In basic form the Beeley brooch seems to be a fusion of Trumpet and Headstud brooch types. The head, general shape and the essentials of the knob are from the Trumpet style, and the mechanism belongs to the range of plain and relief or enamel decorated Trumpets, characteristic of areas east of the Pennines (e.g. Wrathmell and Nicholson 1990, no. 1; Stead 1980, 95, nos. 7 and 8). The stud, the upper bow crest and probably the vestigial continuation of the catch plate are from Headstud brooches. However, here the relative positions of the stud and crest are reversed. It is not certain that the stud is original but its decoration matches the rest of the brooch, even if its fastening is rather untidy. Also the cast-in channel for the stud's pin and the extent of the crest indicate that a stud was always intended to be present.

Over and above the fusion of two brooch types, the technique and pattern of the enamelled decoration on the Beeley brooch is most unusual. Most Romano-British brooch enamelling is champleve in form but here only the stud could be said to have this technique. The enamelling of what are really no more than flutes between the cross mouldings could be thought of as a crude variant of the technique but the enamelling of the knob and crest are entirely different. Here blocks of enamel have been applied to flat metal surfaces so that they stand proud of the brooch surface, a technique which has not been noted on any other Romano-British brooch to one author's knowledge (MJD). The decorative pattern is also very unusual. A few, usually rather plain, Headstud brooches are known with hemispherical, radially grooved, riveted-in headstuds (Victoria Cave — Dawkins 1874, frontpiece, fig. 5; Brough-on-Humber — Wachter 1969, fig. 39, no. 34; South Ferriby — Sheppard 1907, pl. xxvi, no. 1) but none of these are enamelled. No headstud, enamelled or not, is known to MJD of precisely the form represented here. The only relevant parallel is a Trumpet brooch fragment from Chesterfield (Ellis 1989, 86, no. 7) with a knob featuring a central button with vertical grooves filled with red enamel, which is very similar to the stud on the present brooch. Further, if, as seems likely, the enamel blocks on the knob of the Beeley brooch were originally vertical and rectangular it would have resembled the Chesterfield fragment. The enamelled grooves and flutes on the Beeley brooch, however, do not seem to be paralleled at all and the nearest one comes to the decoration of the crest, at least amongst Trumpets and Headstuds, is probably the alternating (usually red and white) enamel blocks set in a line down the lower bow of some Headstuds (e.g. Painter and Sax 1970, 155–61, nos. 1–5 and 8).

Dating, as with any highly aberrant brooch, is problematic. Headstuds and Trumpets co-existed for a long time between *c.* AD 75 and *c.* 150/75, and the Beeley brooch is far from the only example to show borrowing between them, as Headstud brooches with acanthus knobs demonstrate. Several factors though tend to suggest a second-century date for the Beeley brooch. Firstly the prominence of the enamelling (in a colour scheme characteristic of developed rather than early Headstuds) is more likely to imply a second-century date; secondly the disappearance of acanthus/petalled mouldings on Trumpet knobs and experiments with other forms of knob are usually most convincingly attributed to the second century; and thirdly, and most persuasively, the Chesterfield fragment is from a context of the first quarter of the second century. A tentative date range of *c.* AD 100–125/50 can therefore be suggested.

Finally the brooch's findspot (further details of which are available to *bona fide* researchers from the Derbyshire Sites and Monuments Record or from Sheffield City Museum) is in an area generally lacking in Romano–British finds. However, a supposedly Romano–British quern and pottery fragment found fairly close to the Beeley brooch (Derbyshire S.M.R. nos 1416 and 1409) suggest at least a Romano–British presence in the area.

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