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# **Roman Small finds from Saltwood Tunnel, Kent**

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## 1 INTRODUCTION

The western part of the Saltwood landscape included a small roadside settlement and a cremation cemetery, set within a rectangular enclosure. A small quantity of objects of Romano-British date came from these features (Fig. 246). The small finds are typical of rural sites of this period within east Kent, although most of these sites appear to decline by the 3rd century and that is not the case here where – unusually perhaps – late Romano-British material is quite well represented. The text has been written by Ian Riddler with the exception of the discussion of the late Romano-British strap-end (*ON 590*) by Barry Ager.

Dress accessories including brooches, bracelets, pins and strap ends form the largest object category, as often occurs with assemblages of this period. The brooches are confined to 1st century types and most of them stem from the cremation cemetery. Early Romano-British material also includes the mirror fragments and the tweezers, which are the only personal items to be recovered. In contrast, the silver pin, bracelets of copper alloy and shale, and the amphora-shaped strap-end can all be placed in the late Romano-British period. All of these objects fall within the category of dress accessories.

*Table 1: Objects from East Kent Roman Rural Sites*

	<i>Saltwood</i>	<i>Cheriton</i>	<i>Great Hougham Court Farm</i>
Brooches	■	■	■
Bracelets	■	■	
Pins	■	■	
Strap Ends	■	■	
Mirrors	■		
Tweezers	■		
Palettes	■		
Glass Vessels		■	
Shale Vessels		■	
Iron Vessels		■	
Knives		■	
Hones		■	■

	<i>Saltwood</i>	<i>Cheriton</i>	<i>Great Hougham Court Farm</i>
Spindle Whorls		■	■
Gaming Pieces			
Lower Greensand Querns		■	
Lava Querns	■		■
Lead Weight	■		■
Bucket Handle Mount	■		
Fishing Equipment	■		
Rods, Bars and Strips	■	■	

The majority of items are of familiar and common types for this period and they can be readily compared with examples from east Kent and further afield. Rural sites produce only small quantities of objects, most of which are brooches or household items, occurring alongside small quantities of ironwork for smithing, and metallurgical residues (Table 1). With that in mind, the mirror fragments are unusual finds for a rural location, as is the silver pin, which is a rare discovery.

## 2 BROOCHES

Nine of the ten brooches came from contexts at the western margin of the site. A further brooch was found in the fill of the ditch 10045 surrounding grave C1081 within the Central Anglo-Saxon cemetery. Seven of the brooches were discovered within five cremation burials from the western burial group (Table 2). Of the remainder, one brooch (*ON 1851*) came from the fill of ditch 2741 and another (*ON 272*) was found in a deposit associated with the trackway in this western area.

*Table 2: Roman Brooches*

<i>Code</i>	<i>Context</i>	<i>ON</i>	<i>Cremation</i>	<i>Material</i>	<i>Type</i>
SLT98	49	4	C15	Copper Alloy	Colchester
SLT98	49	71	C15	Copper Alloy	Indeterminate fragment
SLT98	56	979	C20	Copper Alloy	Colchester Derivative
SLT98	59	72	C14	Copper Alloy	Langton Downs
SLT98	59	73 and 1700	C14	Copper Alloy	Langton Downs
SLT98	67	166 and 982	C12	Copper Alloy	Indeterminate fragment

<i>Code</i>	<i>Context</i>	<i>ON</i>	<i>Cremation</i>	<i>Material</i>	<i>Type</i>
SLT98	85	74 and 983	C16	Copper Alloy	Colchester
SLT98	238/243	272		Copper Alloy	Colchester
SLT99	2710	1851		Copper Alloy	Harlow
SLT98C	1076. 735/929	894		Copper Alloy	Harlow

All of the brooches are first century AD types. They include three Colchester brooches, all of which can be defined as Kentish variants, as well as three Colchester derivatives, two of which are Harlow types (as defined by Mackreth 1995, 959), and two Langton Downs brooches (Table 2). All of these are common brooch types for this part of Kent, which are echoed in the local discoveries from Cheriton, Dollands Moor and Church Hougham (Table 3).

There are no early forms from Saltwood like the late La Tène brooches, which have been found nearby at Church Hougham, Dolland's Moor and Folkestone (Riddler 2001; Winbolt 1925, 65 and fig 3ab). Indeed, the Saltwood assemblage of brooches includes no types earlier than the 1st century AD and they can all be placed between AD 35 and 70, with the majority probably of pre-Conquest date. The two Langton Downs brooches are typical forms of this period. Similarly, the Colchester types are comparable with a number of brooches from Canterbury and Ickham, and are likely to be of a similar date (Mackreth 1995, 957-9; forthcoming). Colchester Derivatives are widespread in Kent, encompassing both the Harlow form – which is separately identified here – and other variants (Mackreth 1995, 959). In terms of the phasing of the cremation burials, therefore, the brooches suggest that the burials are of 1st century date and are contemporary with a number of those from nearby Cheriton and Wilton Road at Folkestone (Tester and Bing 1949; Bushe-Fox 1925, 20 and pl XIV). At the same time, the Cheriton cemetery was larger in size and incorporates material of late 1st to early 2nd century date. The Saltwood burials, in contrast, may all be pre-Conquest or immediate post-Conquest. Both the quantity of burials and their layout are typical of the situation seen in late Iron Age and early Romano-British Kent (Lawson and Killingray 2004, 16).

*Table 3: Roman Brooches from Rural Sites in South East Kent*

	<i>Church Hougham</i>	<i>Dollands Moor</i>	<i>Saltwood</i>	<i>Cheriton</i>
Late La Tène	■	■		
Norican	■			
Nauheim Derivative		■		
Drahtfibel Derivative		■		
Kent Colchester		■	■	■
Colchester Derivative			■	■

	<i>Church Hougham</i>	<i>Dollands Moor</i>	<i>Saltwood</i>	<i>Cheriton</i>
Harlow			■	
Langton Down		■	■	
Hod Hill		■		
Bead Row Border				■
Dragonesque		■		

### 3 BRACELETS

Two fragments of simple copper alloy bracelets include one example (*ON 986*) of a strip form, rectangular in section, decorated with lateral lines. It conforms with Swift's type A14 and with Mould's type 12 from Ickham, which is of late 3rd to 4th century date (Swift 2000, 183; Mould forthcoming). The form is common within Kent (Swift 2000, figs 156 and 172). The second piece (*ON 404*) is more substantial wire bracelet with a circular section that flattens towards one end. It is undecorated and belonged originally to a single strand slip-knot bracelet of a type seen at Canterbury and Ickham (Blockley *et al* 1995, fig 436.402-5; Mould forthcoming). The type occurs through most of the Romano-British period, but is concentrated in late deposits.

Two fragments of shale bracelets (*201* and *208*) are also of late Romano-British date. Both have oval sections and are undecorated. They are similar in shape and size and may stem from a single bracelet with an internal diameter of 65 – 67 mm, which would probably have been worn by an adult rather than a child (Leveson Gower 1995, 1190). Undecorated shale bracelets occur in Kent contexts from the later 2nd or early 3rd century onwards and are particularly common in 4th century deposits (Riddler 1999, 109).

### 4 PIN

A single example of a silver pin (*993*) has a plain, rounded discoidal head, which allows it to be placed within Cool's Group 4 (Cool 1990, 156 and fig 3.6). The type is not common in Roman Britain and is rare in Kent, as are silver pins in general, which increase in frequency in the late period (Cool 1990, 149).

## 5 STRAP-ENDS

*By Barry Ager*

Two fragments of copper-alloy sheet (*ON 590*) represent most of one of the two leaves of a late Roman, dart-shaped strap-end, with a pair of small lobes at the waisted junction with the sub-rectangular attachment tab; length, 37 mm; width, 20 mm. As it is undecorated it is uncertain whether it is the front or back leaf. There is a single crude rivet in the centre of the tab.

The strap-end belongs to the same military/civil official type as a ring-and-dot decorated example from Wizernes, Pas-de-Calais, France, which is probably from an inhumation burial containing a buckle of Böhme's phase I, now dated to the late 4th – first third of the 5th century (Böhme 1974, 337-8, Taf. 147, 8; Böhme 1987). A rather smaller example was found in the 'dark earth' layer at the Marlowe IV site, Canterbury (Ager 1987, fig. 1b).

The Saltwood find would have formed part of a set of belt-fittings of "military" type, including a buckle and possibly a belt-end. But in the late Roman period belts were worn by both military and civil officials as part of a uniform and a sign of rank, while pictorial evidence shows that they were also worn by women. So there is a continuing debate about which types of buckle could have been military/official and which civilian (Swift 2000, 201).

Several small fragments of copper alloy sheet (*ON 198*) were found in the fill lying above the Iron Age grave C24 and may represent a small part of a second strap end of indeterminate form.

## 6 MIRROR

Three fragments of mirrors came from separate contexts. A small fragment of a copper alloy disc (*ON 569*) includes inscribed concentric circle decoration. It may possibly belong to Lloyd-Morgan's Group X. Fragments of a more substantial disc (*ON 1*) include single ring-and-dot patterns surrounding an inscribed marigold pattern. This disc belongs to Lloyd-Morgan's Group Xc, a type of mirror that has been found also at Canterbury (Lloyd-Morgan 1981a, 95-103; 1983, 233-5; Blockley *et al* 1995, 1010 and fig 423.265). The mirror group is mainly of 2nd to 3rd century date (Lloyd-Morgan 1981a, 95; 1981b, 152; Blockley *et al* 1995, 1010).

The small quantity of Roman mirrors from Kent were listed and described some years ago and several fragments from Canterbury form the principal addition since that date, alongside an unpublished fragment from Monkton on the Isle of Thanet (Gaunt and Parfitt 1979, 167; Lloyd-Morgan 1980; 1983; Blockley *et al* 1995, 1010). The Saltwood examples extend their distribution into south-east Kent for the first time (Lloyd-Morgan 1980, 207).

## 7 TWEEZERS

The copper alloy tweezers (*ON 210*) are lightly splayed along the arms, which include single bounding lines. They represent a variation on the simple, undecorated form with rectangular sheet metal arms, which is commonly found across the Romano-British period (Riha 1986, 37). Copper alloy tweezers with lightly splayed arms and incised framing lines occur also at Canterbury, Colchester, Gorhambury, London and Verulamium (Blockley *et al* 1995, fig 426.314; Crummy 1983, fig 63.1883; Wardle 1990, 124 and fig 124.114-6; Frere 1984, fig 14.109). Most examples come from contexts of 1st to 3rd century date.

## 8 STONE PALETTE

Approximately half of a stone palette (*ON 758*) survives. It has been cut from a section of Kentish ragstone and trimmed to a near-rectangular shape with a lentoid section. Traces of red/brown stain or colourant, probably derived from ironstone located nearby, are present on both flat surfaces, which have been smoothed. The palette is fairly crude in comparison with the sequences of stone examples from Augst and Trier, and it lacks the bevelled edges characteristic of many of these objects (Riha 1986, 43-55 and tafn 00-00; Künzl 1984, 169-70 and tafn. 16-17). In effect, it represents a local variation of the object type and it is comparable in that respect with an example of sandstone from Canterbury (Blockley *et al* 1995, 1216 and fig 537.1433).

## 9 FISHING IMPLEMENTS

A hollow, rolled lead cylinder (*ON 583*), which weighs 18g, can be regarded as a spacer used to hold down the underside of a net, on the basis of both Roman and medieval parallels (Devenish 1979, 129). Cylindrical lead weights of this type are first found in Iron Age contexts and occur also in Romano-British deposits, as at Caerleon, for example (Steane and Foreman 1991, 97; Zienkiewicz 1986, fig 65.11). Within Kent, a group of eighteen late Roman weights of this type were found in a ditch at Ickham, and further examples have come from Worth (Mould forthcoming; Parfitt 2000). The largest assemblage of rolled cylindrical lead weights from England was recovered, however, from a medieval ship sunk in the River Thames. 1,109 weights were retrieved from the vessel and others were observed during the rescue excavation. Marsden felt that they were probably used with a seine net, which lay in the vessel (Marsden 1996, 103).



A long iron implement (*ON 591*) with a forked terminal is similar to an object from Ickham, which has been regarded as a netting needle (Mould forthcoming). It recalls delicate copper alloy examples of a later date, used to create knotted silk hairnets (Walton Rogers 1997, 1790) but its larger, more robust form suggests that it was used to prepare broad mesh nets. A thinner, double-ended version of iron came from Caister-on-Sea (Darling and Gurney 1993, fig 91.599).

## 10 QUERNS

45 fragments of basalt lava querns (*ON 405*) were recovered from a single context. All of the pieces are small, with the largest piece weighing just 94 g, and few original dimensions can be established from them, other than a thickness of 36-8 mm for several fragments. Basalt lava forms the most common material adopted for querns in Kent and south-eastern England during the Romano-British period. In the Folkestone area querns of lower greensand were produced in the late Iron Age and early Romano-British period (Keller 1989) but rural sites nearby, including Great Hougham and Saltwood, still include examples made from basalt lava (Table One). Examples from Canterbury and Ickham indicate that basalt lava querns remained in use during the late Romano-British period throughout east Kent, and were not restricted to early Roman contexts (Bennett *et al* 1982, fig 98.117; Blockley *et al* 1995, 1206).

## 11 LEAD WEIGHT

A near-complete lead weight (*ON 570*) is biconical in profile, with a fragment of an iron suspension loop at the apex. The biconical form is a common one and it occurs at Great Hougham and Ickham in Kent, as well as further afield at Gorhambury and Long Bennington, amongst other sites (Mould forthcoming; Wardle 1990, 155 and fig 129.920; Leary 1994, fig 223). Weights of this type were used with steelyards, as seen with examples from Segontium, Trier and Verulamium (Casey, Davies and Evans 1993, 173-4 and fig 10.6; Frere 1984, 57 and fig 23.210; Garbsch 1994, abbn 1-2). With a weight of 110 g, this example is equivalent to four *unciae* (109.2g).

## 12 BUCKET HANDLE MOUNT

A fragmentary iron mount from a bucket handle (*ON 589*) includes a rounded hooked ring terminal and a square perforation. It is a common type, similar to examples from Ickham, and

Monkton in Kent (Mould forthcoming; Manning 1985, 102; Manning, Price and Webster 1995, 202).

### 13 FERROUS METALWORKING

A small quantity of iron bars, rods and strips was dispersed across the western settlement. The assemblage includes curved rods of square and circular section (*ONs* 759 and 892), several straight rods of square, rectangular and circular section (*ONs* 567, 588 and 592), and a number of strips of rectangular section (*ONs* 395, 623), as well as heavier bars (*ONs* 425, 620 and 755).

Two iron punches (*ONs* 5 and 975) may also be related to ferrous metalworking. One of these (*ON* 5) is fragmentary, with a burred end, and it recalls examples noted by Manning (1985, 10 and pl 5.A25). The other punch (*ON* 975) is much smaller, and is similar in size to an early medieval example from Mersham (Riddler 2005).

### 14 STRUCTURAL IRONWORK

Structural ironwork is limited to two iron cleats (*ON* 200 and 212), both of which are pierced by nails towards their rounded, circular ends. They are thin strips of metal and both are quite insubstantial; they may possibly have been used as fittings for a box. In addition, 105 iron nails were retrieved from stratified deposits of Roman date. Several of these (*ON* 199 and 632) were found in cremation burial deposits.

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