

# XIII

## NOTES

### 1. A ROMAN FINGER RING FROM DURHAM (Plate VII)

A SILVER finger ring from Durham City in private possession has recently been brought to the author's attention. The hoop of the ring (D:23 mm) expands towards the shoulder and has a simple double-lobed ornamentation on either side of the raised bezel which contains a cornelian intaglio. The form of the ring, which is typologically early in a series whereby the shoulder becomes ever more accentuated and the decoration more complex ending with the typical third century ring with carinated loop, should allow a dating in the early decades of the third century A.D. It may be compared with a gold ring from Trier<sup>1</sup> whilst a silver ring from Wiesbaden shows a similar relationship of bezel to hoop but is much less substantial.<sup>2</sup> A bronze ring in the Hague has the same sturdy dimensions as the Durham ring and has been dated with confidence to the third century by Dr. Maaskant.<sup>3</sup>

The oval cornelian intaglio measures 12 × 8 mm and rises to 2 mm above the surface of the ring. The device shown is a cock standing in profile with a branch or an ear of corn before it. The cutting is extremely schematic and may be compared with the untidy "incoherent grooves style" used for the chickens on a cornelian intaglio in the Hague.<sup>4</sup> Another cornelian with the same motif, also set in a silver ring but of a slightly earlier form was found during Clayton's 1843 excavations of Chesters bath-house.<sup>5</sup> A second earlier example, again cornelian set in silver, is known from Slay Hill Saltings, Kent.<sup>6</sup>

Cocks were propitious birds connected with the god Mercury, and the gem type invokes, in particular, rural plenty and prosperity.

Martin Henig

## NOTES

<sup>1</sup> Henkel, F., *Die Römischen Fingerringe der Rheinlande*, Berlin 1913, No. 220.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.* No. 431.

<sup>3</sup> Maaskant-Kleibrink, M., *Catalogue of the Engraved Gems in the Royal Coin Cabinet in the Hague*, The Hague, 1978, No. 1096.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.* No 1069.

<sup>5</sup> Henig, M., *A Corpus of Roman Engraved Gemstones from British Sites*, BAR 8, Oxford, 2nd ed. 1978, No. 678. Illustrated in *Archaeologia Aeliana*<sup>1</sup> III, 1844, pp. 144-5, fig. 3. Present location unknown.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.* No. 679. British Museum 94.8-3.57.



A Roman Finger Ring from Durham. *Photograph: University Library, Newcastle upon Tyne.*

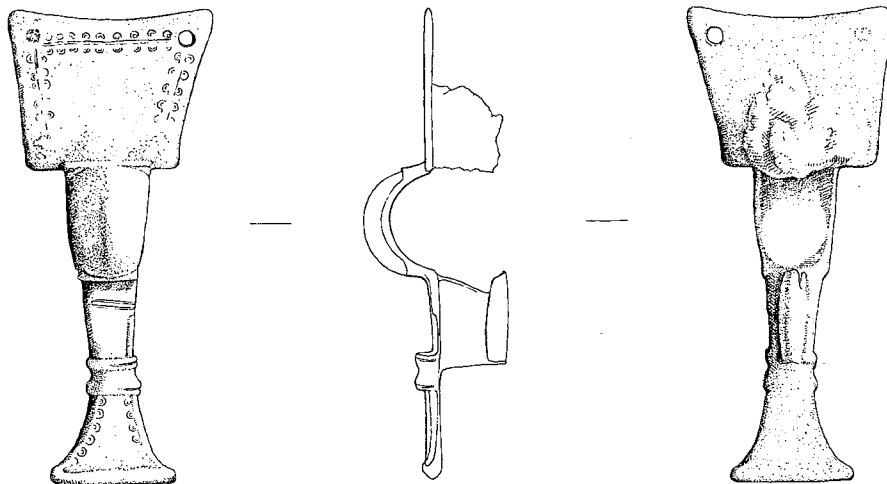


Fig. 1. Brooch from Hylton, Sunderland (†).

## 2. AN ANGLO-SAXON SMALL-LONG BROOCH FROM HYLTON

The brooch illustrated in fig. 1 was discovered by Mr. D. Taylor by the River Wear near Hylton, Sunderland, Tyne and Wear (NZ 343567) and is now on loan to Sunderland Museum and Art Gallery.

### *Description*

Bronze small-long brooch (length 61 mm.), complete apart from the iron pin which is indicated from corrosion. The headplate is trapezoidal with rounded corners and concave sides. Upon its face incised lines create a false panel effect, bordered to either side by a punched circle and dot motif. Beneath the pronouncedly ridged bow a combination of facets and ribbed decoration leads to a triangular foot, the edges of which carry further circle and dot decoration.

### *Discussion*

This is a remarkably welcome addition to the small corpus of material from the pagan Anglo-Saxon period which has been found to the north of the River Tees [Miket, R. 1980]. Before the discovery of the Hylton brooch, the most northerly representatives of the small-long class were the two trefoil brooches from the Darlington cemetery (Pococke, M. and Miket, R. 1976); an earlier attribution of one such brooch to Birdoswald has been shown to be mistaken. The position and quality of grave-goods at Darlington argued that it belonged to a Deiran rather than Bernician milieu and thus the only kinds of brooches known from the northern sub-kingdom were of the great square-headed and cruciform varieties. The Hylton example redresses the Northumbrian balance and opens once again the possibility of additional discoveries of this type of brooch in Bernicia.

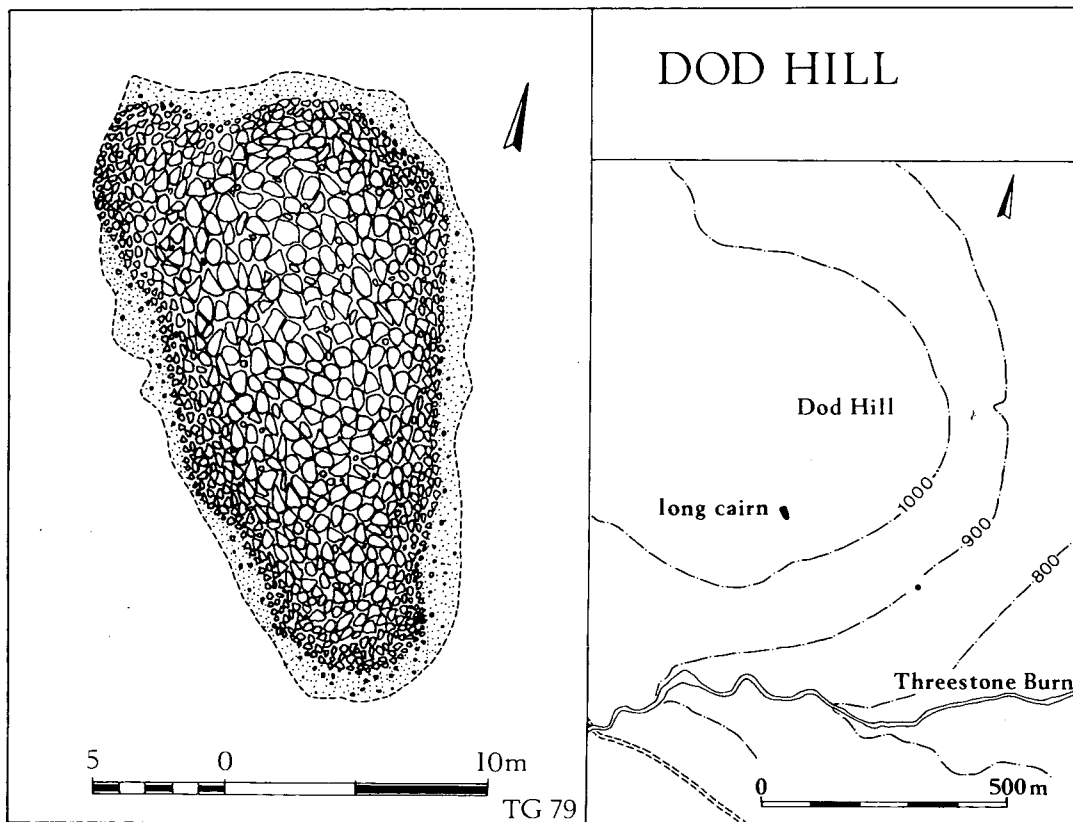


Fig. 2. Long cairn on Dod Hill, Ilderton, Northumberland.

The Hylton brooch fits rather uncomfortably within a classification of small-long brooches made over thirty-five years ago (Leeds, E. T. 1945). Although its general form invites a comparison with the square-panel type (bii), and particularly an example from Barrington, Cambridgeshire, the Hylton decoration combines elements found within both the cross-pattee derivative and square-head (false-panel) groups. A reappraisal of the distribution and chronology of small-long brooches is long overdue; and until then the Hylton example must remain within a rather broad later fifth or sixth century chronology. In this respect it can be placed alongside that small handful of objects from Bernicia which may indicate an early date for Bernician settlement.

Roger Miket

#### REFERENCES

- LEEDS, E. T. 1945. The distribution of the Anglo-Saxons archaeologically considered, *Archaeologia*, XCI, 1945, pp. 1-106.

- MIKET, R. 1980. A Restatement of Evidence from Bernician Anglo-Saxon Burials, *Anglo-Saxon Cemeteries 1979*, B.A.R. 82, 1980, pp. 289–305.
- POCOCKE, M. and MIKET, R. 1976. An Anglo-Saxon Cemetery at Greenbank, Darlington, *Medieval Archaeology*, 20, pp. 62–74.

3. A LONG CAIRN ON DOD HILL, ILDETON, NORTHUMBERLAND (fig. 2)

In 1979 a long cairn was discovered on Dod Hill, Ilderton 7 km south of Wooller and 1.2 km east-north-east of Threestoneburn House, at NT 9870 2065. Situated on the south-east facing slope of the hill at an altitude of 325 m (1050 feet) the cairn commands an extensive view from south-west to south-east across the valley of the Threestone Burn. It is roughly trapezoidal in plan and measures 13.0 m in width towards the northern, uphill end, by 24.0 m long and stands to a height of 1.5 m. The orientation is NNW-SSE in line with the slope. There are no signs of recent disturbance and no visible evidence of a kerb or any internal structure. Although short by comparison with other long cairns in Northumberland, and despite its unusual orientation, there can be little doubt as to its correct identification.

Apart from one or two small and irregular piles of stone, presumably indicative of localized land clearance, the only other monument in the vicinity is a well formed round cairn, 11.0 m in diameter and 1.0 m high, 300 m to the SE at NT 9901 2057.

The Dod Hill cairn is on the eastern edge of the Cheviot massif 30 km NE of its nearest neighbour at Bellshiel Law in Redesdale (NT 813 012). It is a welcome addition to this scarce class of monument and extends the distribution of extant examples into the north Cheviots. Formerly there may have been at least one other comparable cairn in this area for Tate refers to a "long barrow", excavated by the Berwickshire Naturalists Club in 1861, on Ewe Hill in the upper reaches of the Breamish valley no more than 4 km to the south, but its location is not precisely known and his attribution cannot now be checked (Tate, 1861).

Tim Gates

REFERENCE

- TATE, G., 1861, *Hist. Berwickshire Naturalists' Club*, 4 (1856–62), p. 304.