

Finds of Copper Alloy from Ermine Street, Navenby (ESNA03)

Alan Vince

Nineteen copper alloy artefacts recovered from archaeological fieldwork at Ermine Street, Navenby, Lincolnshire, carried out by Pre-Construct Archaeology (Lincoln) Ltd were submitted for identification and assessment (Table 1).

Table 1

Context	SF No	Object	Weight	Completeness	Diameter	L	B	TH	Condition
004	SF01	COIN	2	100%	15	16	14		
002	SF02	COIN	1	100%	10	10	9		
004	SF03	COIN	5	100%	21				
002	SF04	MOUNT	3	BS	20	16	8		BENT
002	SF05	COIN	3	100%	20	20	19		
002	SF06	COIN	1	66%	17				
002	SF07	COIN	3	100%	17				
002	SF08	COIN	4	100%	22				
002	SF10	BUCK	2	100%	0	16	11		
018	SF12	COIN	3	100%	22				
001	SF13	COIN	2	100%	16				
US	SF16	STRIP	11	R?	0	83	18	1	BENT;BLACK DEPO ON ONE SIDE
121	SF18	COIN	1	100%	10	11	9		
121	SF19	COIN	1	33%	16				
121	SF20	OBJECT	11	BS	18	18			
121	SF21	MOUNT	6	100%	0	45	14		BENT IN HALF
121	SF22	RING	0.5	10%	0	5	1.5		BROKEN
121	SF23	BUTT	3	100%	0				

Description

Buckle

SF10. Context 10. A small D-shaped buckle and copper alloy pin. The buckle was cast in a one-piece mould and the pin is formed from a triangle of sheet metal, wrapped around the circular bar. The strap which this buckle came from was approx 14mm wide.

D-shaped buckles of this shape are common late Roman types but this particular example is unusually small.

Button

SF23. Context 121. A small circular button with a semi-circular projection on the back pierced by a circular hole. The button has signs of being drilled from a thick sheet and the attachment was probably soldered on (although there is no visible evidence for this). Rough filing marks on the back indicate the use of a circular cross-sectioned rasp.

The surface of the button is stamped with a flower pattern, made from the use of two stamps, one V-shaped and the other circular. This central design is enclosed by a stamped circle.

Coins

Eleven coins were present, all of copper alloy although one is plated (SF12). Most are illegible through corrosion rather than wear and two were fragmentary, accidentally snapped rather than deliberately broken.

The coins include one late 3rd century piece of Probus (276-282AD) whilst the remainder are datable to the 4th century, ranging from the early 4th century to the house of Theodosius.

The identifications given in Table 2 could be improved by submission of the coins to a numismatist specialising in the Roman period.

Table 2

SF No	Weight (gm)	Description	Part	Diam
SF05	3	AE3-4 O: UNIDENTIFIED. R: FEL TEMP REPARATIO M-L4th C	100%	20
SF01	2	AE4. URBS ROMA. O: HELMETED BUST OF ROME. R: SUCKLING TWINS. POST 330AD	100%	15
SF02	1	AE4. HOUSE OF THEODOSIUS. O: ? R: ? L4th C	100%	10
SF07	3	AE3-4. HOUSE OF VALENTINIAN. O: ? R: VICTORY ADVANCING L. 364-379AD	100%	17

SF08	4	AE ANTONINIANUS.. O: CONSTANTIUS ? R: FIGURE STANDING L. 305-337AD	100%	22
SF12	3	PLATED. AE ANTONINIANUS. PROBUS. O: IMP C PROBUS P P AUG. R: FIGURE HOLDING SPEAR. 276-282AD	100%	22
SF13	2	AE3-4. UNIDENTIFIED. O: ? R: STANDING FIGURE WITH SPEAR. 4 th C	100%	16
SF18	1	AE4. HOUSE OF THEODOSIUS. O: ? R: ? L4th C	100%	10
SF03	5	AE2. CONSTANTINE II. O: D N CONSTANTIUS P F AUG;R: FEL TEMP REPARATIO. SOLDIER SPEARING A FALLEN HORSEMAN. 337-361AD	100%	21
SF19	1	AE3-4. UNID. O: DIADEMED BUST FACING R. R: STANDING FIGURE WITH SHIELD 4 th C	33%	16
SF06	1	AE3-4. UNIDENTIFIED. O: ? R: EMPEROR ON GALLEY? 4 th C	66%	17

Mounts

SF21. Context 121. An undecorated strip of metal, possibly cast, having five rivet holes (one at each corner and one in the centre), two of which retain their copper alloy rivets. At one end are the possible remains of a buckle or hinge. The mount has been folded roughly in half.

SF04. Context 2. A roughly oval piece of undecorated thin sheet metal with a circular rivet applied to the back. The mount probably comes from a piece of leather, such as a harness or saddle since the rivet thickness (8mm) is remarkable for a belt or strap.

Unidentified Object

SF20. Context 121. A cast object, part of a composite whole. The surviving piece consists of an elaborately moulded, partially hollow object with a circular shaft at one end and a groove at the other allowing a spherical sheet metal copper alloy object to be fitted. The object is similar to Victorian door handles.

Ring

SF22. Context 121. A fragment of a finger ring with a triangular cross section. The ring has been broken and folded.

Vessel?

SF16. Unstratified. A possible fragment from a cast vessel rim. If so, the object has a short cylindrical rim and sharp angle at the neck (similar to the flange one might expect on a jar lid). The fragment has been bent.

Discussion

Date and interpretation

All of the datable finds present are of later Roman date but there is a strong suspicion that the button and unidentified objects are of 19th-century date.

The condition of some of the objects (e.g. SFs 4, 16, 21 and 22) suggests that they may have been scrap bent and folded prior to melting and recasting. This might suggest that these four objects were of similar date. However, none are datable by their typology alone.

Retention and storage

All of the objects should be retained for future study. They have been assessed and packaged by the Lincoln County Council Conservation Laboratory and therefore should require no further treatment or packaging.

Further work

If the coins are to be published, then a specialist report by a numismatist specialising in the Roman period should be commissioned.

Several of the remaining finds could be illustrated to make their form clearer (e.g. SFs 4, 10, 16, 20, 21, 22, and 23). The decision to illustrate or not should depend on a consideration of their date and stratigraphic context.