THE PORTABLE ANTIQUITIES SCHEME IN DERBYSHIRE, 2017

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The author introduced the work of the Portable Antiquities Scheme (PAS) in *DAJ* 137 (Willis 2017). The current paper is intended as roundup of PAS finds from Derbyshire, providing numbers of finds recorded from each period and highlighting some of the more important or interesting finds recorded during the year.

During 2017, 437 objects were recorded in 394 records. Also in 2017, the PAS celebrated 20 years since the implementation of the Treasure Act 1996 in September 1997 and the founding of the PAS (as a pilot project). To celebrate, museums across the country put on special displays of Treasure finds. At Derby Museum and Art Gallery, various artefacts and coins from the museum's collection or borrowed from the public were displayed in the two part exhibition, "Derbyshire Unearthed". Among the exhibits were the two gold coins from the Ashbourne Hoard (Willis 2017, 103) reunited for the first time since they were separately acquired by Derby Museums and the British Museum.

Period	*Number of records*
Neolithic	2
Bronze Age	3
Roman	55
Early Medieval	16
Medieval	150
Post Medieval	147
Modern	4
Unknown	17

Table 1: Derbyshire finds recorded on the PAS database in 2017

SIGNIFICANT FINDS OF 2017

Prehistoric

Four flint objects were recorded from the county in 2017, including an end scraper, found in Wormhill (DENO-9A3645; Plate 1). This instrument would have been used to work hide into clothing or temporary shelter. The end scraper demonstrates short, sub parallel and semi abrupt retouching on the dorsal end to produce a scraper at the distal end. Without secure

archaeological contexts, prehistoric flaked flint tools are sometimes difficult to date precisely. This type of end scraper is characteristic of the Mesolithic period through to the Bronze Age (*c.* 9000 – 1000 BC).

Plate 1: Mesolithic to Bronze Age end scraper (DENO-9A3645)

One of the most spectacular finds was a Neolithic polished or ground flint axe head (*c.* 4000 – 2200 BC), a surface find discovered in Morton (DENO-60CCE4; Plate 2). This is only the fifth polished axe head to have been recorded on the PAS database from Derbyshire. Grinding or polishing could take between 5 and 40 hours depending on the size (Olausson 1982; Harding 1989), and had both a practical and symbolic or ritual purpose. Polishing the cutting edges reduced the likelihood of the axe breaking on impact (Olausson 1982). Polished axe heads appear to have been prestige items, and while the colour of this axe will have changed over time, it is likely that the patterns in the flint added to its value. Axes like this are often discovered in pits, burials and water features, where they appear to have been ritually deposited (Butler 2005, 151). This axe head lacks any visible damage to its cutting edge, possibly indicating that it was never used. Flint is not locally sourced, so it is likely the axe was quarried further afield, perhaps in Lincolnshire.

Roman
A circular plate brooch of the Roman period was discovered near Shirebrook (DENO-B64987; Plate 3). The object retains its hinged pin on the back and most of the catch plate is intact. The brooch is decorated with blue enamel and four voided kidney shaped designs set around a central protruding annulus. Plate brooches consist of a flat piece of metal and usually demonstrate enamelled decoration, as seen in this example. They are typically dated to the 2nd century AD and can exhibit a wide variety of shapes including circular and lozenge shapes as well as a diverse range of motifs including geometric forms, or zoomorphic and

Plate 2: Neolithic polished axe head (DENO-60CCE4).

Plate 3: Roman disc brooch (DENO-B64987).

Plate 4: Roman phallic pendant (DENO-92FF45).

skeuomorphic designs (Swift 2003, 17-18). Though not as widespread as the ubiquitous bow brooch types, plate brooches are a common find in the archaeological record of Britain, and are distinguished from continental examples by the prevalence of sprung-pins over hinged pins (Mackreth 2011, 154).

A copper alloy phallic-shaped pendant was reported to the scheme having been found near Bolsover (DENO-92FF45; Plate 4). Phallic imagery was commonplace throughout the Roman world (Johns 1982). Often thought to be tokens of protection, prosperity and good luck (Plouviez 2005) phallic pendants have been recovered across a range of different sites including small towns and in a variety of contexts including with infant burials in North Yorkshire (Parker 2015). A total of 48 Roman period phallic objects have been recorded on the PAS database with the highest number having been unearthed in Suffolk. However, six examples have been found in nearby Lincolnshire. This is the second such example to have been recovered from Derbyshire, after DENO-C16166.

A zoomorphic penannular bracelet was found near Wormhill in 2016 and recorded on the database in 2017 (DENO-118189; Plate 5). The object's outer surface is decorated with two moulded ridges. The two terminals of the bracelet are representative of snake heads, consisting of two raised lozenge-shaped eyes with a central nasal ridge running between them, which flares out to form a lozenge-shaped nose. Snakeshead bracelets were worn widely throughout the Empire, particularly during the early Roman imperial period c. AD 43-250, though they were far more prevalent in the provinces of Raetia, Noricum and Pannonia than Britain (Swift

Plate 5: Roman bracelet (DENO-118189).

2003, 24-26). Bracelets that have been recovered from inhumation contexts are often found in pairs worn around the wrists (Allason-Jones 1989: 24). Bracelets became more common and diverse later in the Roman period, with bangles made from bone, jet, shale, glass and especially copper alloy becoming associated with women's dress.

Early Medieval

A difficult object to pin down to a particular period is an iron spearhead from Hopton (DENO-6BE71D; Plate 6). A similarly shaped spearhead at the British Museum (BM 1856,0719.2) is dated to either the Iron Age or the early medieval period. Mid-ribbed spears like this have been found in Anglo-Saxon contexts and have been classed as Type B2 in Swanton's typology (1973; 1973, 6-8). Swanton wrote that mid-ribbed spearheads found in Anglo-Saxon graves containing late Roman artefacts stopped being used after the beginning of the 6th century (Swanton 1973, 8); but this typology is now out of date and Dr Sue Brunning (Curator, European Early Medieval & Sutton Hoo Collections at the British Museum) suggests this example most likely dates to the transitional period of the 4th to 5th century AD (pers. comm. 6.6.2017).

Two pieces from early medieval swords were discovered in Wormhill (DENO-D7D52E; Plate 7) and Church Broughton (DENO-87124F; Plate 8). The Wormhill object is the pommel of a "Viking style" sword or seax from the 10th or 11th century. Although described by Oakeshott (1991, 78) as being "of late Viking style", these pommels are generally considered to be of English origin (Davidson 1962, 55-6). Pommels were last comprehensively studied by Petersen in 1919 and this example fits into Petersen L Type VI. The artefact from Church Broughton is the top guard from the hilt of a possibly Viking sword or seax, also dating to the

Plate 6: Early medieval spear head (DENO-6BE71D).

Plate 7: Early medieval sword pommel (DENO-D7D52E).

Plate 8: Early medieval sword top guard (DENO-87124F).

10th or 11th century. The object is boat-shaped and has a roughly rectangular hole through the centre. The blade would have projected from the hollow side of the object and the hilt would have passed through the hole. This sword is an important piece of evidence for Viking presence in the area around Repton. Over the last few years several Viking objects have been discovered by metal detectorists in South Derbyshire, including several gaming pieces from Hnefatafl (a Viking board game played on a chequered board), an Arabic Dirham (Willis 2017, 116) and a silver ingot, all found near Catton, as well as another ingot from Longford.

Plate 9: Medieval harness pendant (DENO-7C5E16).

Medieval

A Medieval armorial harness pendant was recently discovered near Aldercar and Langley Mill (DENO-7C5E16; Plate 9). The pendant is shield shaped and displays significant traces of white enamelled finishing together with some small areas of green and red enamel, and a small zone of gilding. The pendant depicts a two-headed eagle with outstretched wings and a tail with three tail feathers. This anthropomorphic representation is a common form of heraldic symbolism on the Continent during the 14th century (Griffiths 2004). A very similar object was found in Devon in 2013 and recorded on the database (DEV-C01A37).

A copper alloy key dating to *circa* the 15th century was recently found near Alderwasley (DENO-E54984; Plate 10). It would have been used to open and lock a door or a chest. The object consists of a bow in the form of a lobed lozenge containing four circular perforations. At one end of the bow is a short circular suspension loop. The key's bit comprises a double set of wards and a cleft. The addition of the suspension loop is characteristic of medieval keys from the 1400s. Typologically, the object fits within the Ward-Perkins Type VI scheme (London Museum Medieval Catalogue 1940, 140).

Plate 10: Medieval key (DENO-E54984).

A papal bulla was discovered by a metal detectorist in Offcote and Underwood (DENO-693815; Plate 11). Papal bullae were lead seals attached to important documents (known as bulls) sent from the Roman Curia (the Pope's administrative court), such as Mandamenta or "Letters of Justice" (papal orders, prohibitions and injunctions) and *Tituli* "Letters of Grace" (granting or confirming rights, conferring benefices or promulgating statutes). Bullae are stamped with the name of the pope on one side and images of St Peter and St Paul. This example is stamped in the name of Innocent III, who was Pope between 1198 and 1216. Innocent III's bulls included calls for the fourth and fifth crusades, decrees against the

Plate 11: Medieval papal bulla (DENO-693815).

Plate 12a: Medieval sculpture (DENO-78C9B4) (cm scale);

Plate 12b: detailed view of figure (slab 25.8cm wide).

mistreatment of Jews and a ruling ending sanctions against King John.

An unusual stone sculpture of a rotund man was brought into Derby Museum from Repton (DENO-78C9B4; Plate 12). It had been sitting on the windowsill of the vestry of St Wystan's church for several years and was apparently originally unearthed next to the wall of St Wystan's Church. It depicts a crude and quite stylised man with a broad grin on his face. His head is angled upwards, indicating that this may have fitted into the ceiling of the church. No direct parallels for the sculpture have yet been identified, but there are a few features that probably indicate a medieval date. The man wears a striped cassock or doublet and a pendant around his neck. The pendant is a pointed oval or vesica, the same shape as seal matrices used in the 13th and 14th centuries to seal documents (Cherry 1991: 29).

Post Medieval

Most metal detecting finds are casual losses – objects that fell out of pockets or broke off clothing – and usually were not considered valuable enough for the owner to go back and look for them. The loss of a gold coin would be keenly felt by the owner, so the discovery of a gold half-guinea of James II by a detectorist in early 2017 near Kirk Ireton was unusual (WAW-92A643; Plate 13). The gold guinea fluctuated in value during the late 17th century from about 20 to 30 silver shillings.

Plate 13: Post-medieval half guinea of James II (WAW-92A643).

ENDNOTE

All images are courtesy of the Portable Antiquities Scheme.

The FLO is normally available to take in finds at Derby Museums but also regularly holds finds surgeries in Nottingham, attends metal detecting club meetings and holds finds days in local museums, enabling finders to have their objects recorded.

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