

## Three Roman bells from Newstead

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The fields on the site of the Roman camp at Newstead have been extensively hunted over for more than 60 years. During this time many artefacts have been recovered from the plough-disturbed soil. This type of rural rescue archaeology is important for the recovered object itself but also, by keeping records of concentrations of finds and noting certain field conditions, the field-hunter can build up a comprehensive, if unproven, picture of sites of structures, dumps, etc which

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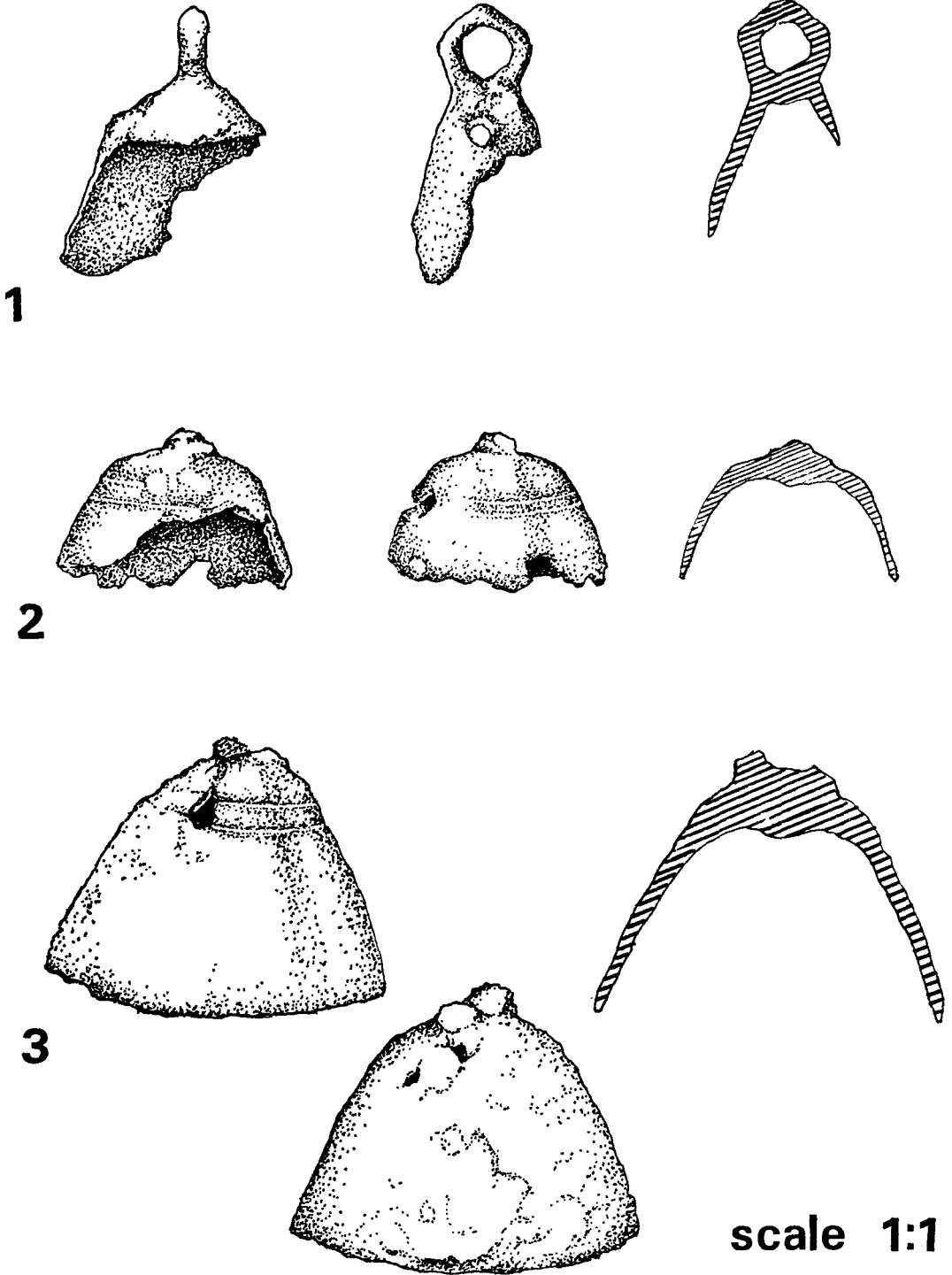


FIG 1

could be useful in the event of excavation. This note is simply to put on record three bronze bells which have been picked up within the Roman camp or its annexes.

### CATALOGUE

- Fig 1, no 1 Found in Main Camp by J B Mason, 1934  
This is a fragment of a shouldered quadrangular bell with a hole bored in both of the broader shoulders. No trace of iron clapper. Remaining height 42 mm.
- Fig 1, no 2 Found in East Annexe by Mrs Caroline Cruickshank, 1980.  
Upper fragment of hemispherical bell. Suspension loop has been broken off in antiquity. It has two faint incised lines near top. It is impossible to tell the original height since no part of the rim survives. Traces of iron clapper. Remaining height 24 mm.
- Fig 1, no 3 Found in Main Camp, near East Gate by J W Elliot, 1981.  
Conical bell, slightly off-centred with suspension loop broken in antiquity. One large hole seems to have been punched near top of bell and two smaller holes drilled on the opposite side. Two incised lines near top. Height 40 mm.

### DISCUSSION

Newstead was occupied from 80 AD to the early 180s AD. It was not a continuous occupation but the site does not seem to have been used during the Severan period since no recognizable artefacts or remains have been noted. No later buildings complicate the site. Thus it would seem safe to assume that the three bells were in use between 80 and 180 AD.

It has been considered that the quadrangular bells were for attachment to horse harness or wagons (Clarke 1971). Therefore it is somewhat peculiar that two of the above bells, as well as the two from the Curle excavations (1910), come from the barracks blocks in the main camp.

There were other uses for bells, basically as warning: 'Those who guarded adjoining houses in the night-time, carried each of them a bell, to give alarm to one another when any thing happened' (Adam 1840, 125). They were also in use as door bells 'Knockers were fixed to the doors or bells (tintinnabula) hung up as among us' (*ibid.*, 451).

### ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

My thanks to Mrs Caroline Cruickshank and Mr Walter Mason for permission to publish their respective bells and to Mrs Cath Rutherford for the drawings.

### REFERENCES

- Adam, A 1840 *Roman Antiquities*, London.  
Clarke, D V 'Four Roman bells from Scotland', *Proc Soc Antiq Scot*, 103 (1970-1), 228-31.  
Curle, J 1910 *A Roman Frontier Post and its People*. Glasgow.