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**FOUR ROMAN MULTIPLE BOW BROOCHES FROM NORFOLK**

*by David Gurney*

The existence of Roman brooches with multiple bows first came to the attention of the present writer when, in 1989, a photograph of a brooch with a double bow conjoined at the foot from Saham Toney was received (Fig.1, No.3). Since then two further examples of the double-bowed variety have come to light, both made in if not subsequently found in Icenian territory (Fig.1, Nos 1-2), and a triple-bowed brooch, also said to have come from Norfolk, is known from another photograph (Fig. 1, No. 4). These appear to represent a small and highly distinctive group of Icenian brooches, variants of types being produced between *c.* AD 40 and AD 75/85.

It is not possible to offer any practical reason why such brooches should exist, except as elaborations and decorative variants of the more commonplace single-bowed varieties. Although they bear a superficial resemblance to other forms of brooch with divided or double bows they are, of course, quite unrelated to such types as divided bow Knee brooches of later, mainly 2nd-century, date (see, for example, *Nor'nour*, in the Isles of Scilly; Hull 1967, fig.18, nos 113-115), or 3rd-century P-shaped brooches with double or triple bows, from this country or from Pannonia (see, for examples, Hattatt 1987, fig.86b, fig.87, nos 1249-51, fig. 88, nos 1256-8).

No. 1, from Holme Hale, Norfolk (SMR Site 25783), is a metal-detector find of January 1994 by Mr Murray Howard. It is hinged, with the pin and most of the catchplate missing. The seam across the back of the wings - for the insertion of the axis bar after casting - is a feature which is characteristic of the East Midlands and the Fens. The end of each wing is decorated with a pair of beaded ridges, and the upper part of each bow bears a prominent crest. This form of moulded decoration is more frequently seen in Norfolk and its immediate environs than elsewhere. It may fall within the date range *c.* AD 45 to 75/85.

No. 2 was found by metal-detector in the Scunthorpe area, probably in the 1980s, and is now in the collection of Mr Alan Harrison. The spring and pin are missing. The brooch is relatively plain, with only faint grooves around the catchplate perforation, faint grooves on the wings, and a small crest running from the rear-hook over the front of the wings between the junction of the wings with the divided bow. This is the only brooch of the four which is certainly sprung. The characteristic rear-hook identifies it as a specifically Icenian brooch type, the distribution of which is concentrated in northern East Anglia. This was therefore made in or very near to Norfolk and, if it was traded into Lincolnshire, this was probably in the period *c.* AD 40 to 60/65 or a little later.

No. 3 is said to come from Saham Toney, Norfolk (SMR Site 4697), being found by metal-detector in April 1989. Its present whereabouts are unknown, and the illustration is based on a photograph provided by an anonymous source. The mouldings on the wings are similar to those on No. 1, while each bow is decorated with longitudinal grooves and a ?knurled rib. The pin was presumably hinged, but whether the two sets of wings were ever conjoined like No. 1 is unclear.

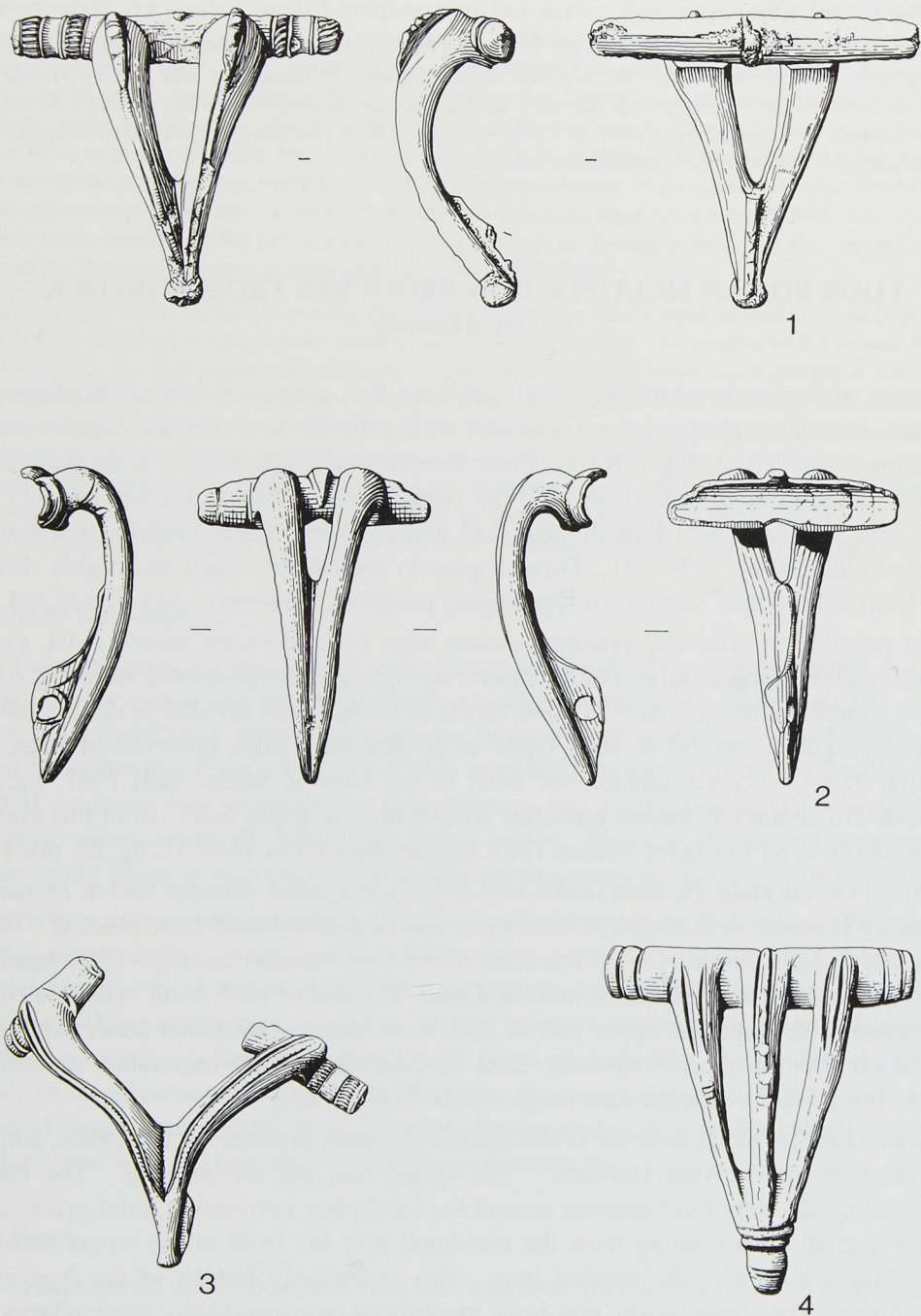


Fig.1

Roman multiple bow brooches from Holme Hale (1); nr Scunthorpe, Lincs. (2); Saham Toney (3); unknown Norfolk site (4). Scale 1:2.

No. 4 is said to come from Norfolk, being found by metal-detector around 1980. Its present whereabouts are unknown, and the illustration is based on a published photograph (Mills 1995, 29, M51). This is the only triple-bowed example known to date. It is presumably hinged, and has slight mouldings on the wings, on the upper parts of the three bows, and on the foot.

It may be significant that two of the four known examples were found in adjoining parishes, No. 1 from Holme Hale and No. 3 from Saham Toney. This has long been known as an area where evidence of early Roman occupation is relatively abundant, with linear earthworks, early enclosures, and the recovery in certain areas of large numbers of Icenian coins, metalwork and brooches. This has led Davies (1996) to suggest that such concentrations of material might indicate large Late Iron Age sites akin to *oppida*. Recent excavation (Bates 1995) has revealed evidence of metalworking and probably the manufacture of terrets. It would not be surprising to find that brooches were also being produced in this area.

These brooches, although unusual and presumably fairly uncommon, cannot be the only examples of the type. The author would be grateful for details of any further examples which come to light.

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