

- 4 The pottery was examined and reported on by Sarah Percival (NAU Report 315).
 5 Harford Farm, structure 5213 (Ashwin and Bates forthcoming).
 6 Reynolds, P.J., 1995, 'The life and death of a post-hole', *Interpreting Stratigraphy* 5, 21-25.

A ROMAN VESSEL FOOT FROM OLD BUCKENHAM

by John A. Davies and Heather Wallis

An unusual find from a site in the parish of Old Buckenham (SMR Site 30864) has recently been recorded at Norwich Castle Museum. This was a vessel foot, of Roman date, which was found by a local metal detectorist who brought the find to the notice of the staff of the Norfolk Museums Service.

The vessel foot would originally have been one of a set of three that were attached to the base of a bucket or cauldron. It resembles an example from Mehrum, Germany (Menzel 1986: tafel 4, 24 and tafel 160). It is made from a single casting of leaded bronze, which curves to fit the shape of the main vessel. It has flat inner and outer faces, which are separated by two elaborate D-shaped openwork voids. The tips of one end of the foot are missing. Traces of silver-grey solder are visible on the concave face. The outer (convex) face is elaborately decorated with an interlace pattern, bounded by double rope-style solid borders. It has not been possible to date the vessel foot precisely within the Roman period, or to discern its place of manufacture.

Other important finds have previously been made in the same field. They included copper-alloy brooches and brooch moulds dating to the early Romano-British period, which are to be reported on elsewhere (Bayley, Mackreth and Wallis forthcoming). A small coin hoard, comprising fourteen silver *denarii* dating to the years between 124 BC and AD 41-45, was found in 1994 (Davies 1997). It is interesting that such a quantity of rare metal objects has been found in one small area.

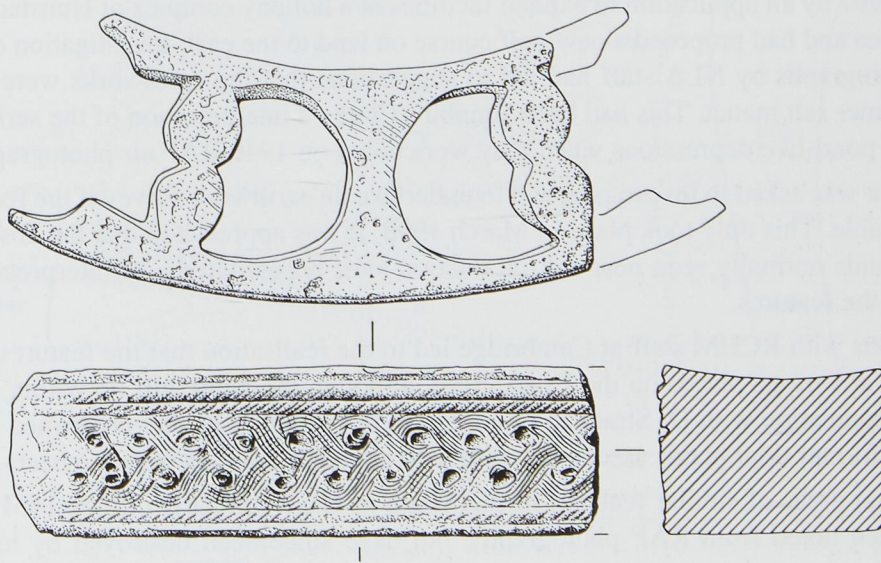


Fig. 1. Bronze vessel foot from Old Buckenham. Scale 1:1

Following the finding of the brooches and moulds the area was subject to a geophysical survey and partial excavation. No archaeological features were located. It was also notable that the topsoil was devoid of any pottery or other associated finds which would indicate settlement here during the Roman period. The apparent isolation of these metal finds, including the vessel foot, brings into question the circumstances of these objects' deposition in this area. It seems probable that these are merely accidental losses. The brooch moulds and brooches suggest that the items almost certainly belonged to a metalworker: the cauldron foot, being broken, may have been carried ready for re-smelting and re-use when necessary.

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Thanks are due to Mr. D. Harty, the finder of this object, for bringing it to our attention. Ralph Jackson of the British Museum undertook initial identification. The illustration is by Steven Ashley.

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HEACHAM: EARTHWORK VESTIGES OF NORFOLK'S OYSTER INDUSTRY?

by Brian Cushion

Introduction

The features (SMR Site 1460) were brought to the attention of Norfolk Landscape Archaeology (NLA) in 1997 by an application to expand facilities at a holiday complex at Hunstanton, which owns the area and had proposed a new golf course on land to the east. Investigation of the SMR and air photographs by NLA staff had led to suggestions that the earthworks were extant salt pans on former salt marsh. This had been Rainbird Clarke's interpretation of the series of small rectangular pond-like depressions when they were noted on 1946 RAF air photographs.

The author was asked to investigate, and to undertake an earthwork survey if the features were still identifiable. This duly took place in March 1998. It was appreciated that the absence of the saltern mounds normally seen near salt-production sites necessitated a re-interpretation of the function of the features.

Discussions with RCHM staff at Cambridge led to the realisation that the features resembled oyster beds at various places on the Essex coast, although the latter still lie within salt marsh. Later communication with D. Strachan of Essex County Council further confirmed their likely function as former tidal ponds associated with fish, although not necessarily oysters.

Two further areas of similar features further south in Heacham parish (Sites 1461 and 1462) had also been noted from RAF photography, but have since been destroyed by levelling for caravan parks.