

Roman objects from Wanborough: a supplementary note

The report on the finds from the Roman temple at Wanborough (Bird 1994) attempted to include all the objects known to have been found at the site. Some of these finds had been made by metal-detector users and the only information available consisted of photographs and evidence given in court, neither satisfactory for a proper archaeological record. Since the report was completed, four such items, all sceptre fittings, have been sold on the antiquities market, and have become available for study. In view of the unusual nature of the Wanborough assemblage, this short note has been prepared to give a fuller description of these fittings, accompanied by accurate drawings and photographs. The opportunity is also taken to add further information on one of the brooches from the site. The numbering of the main Wanborough catalogue has been retained throughout.

Sceptre fittings (figs 1-4)

All four fittings are of copper alloy.

- 13 Sceptre handle (figs 1, 2), cast; complete except for chips, especially on the open upper end. It is a hollow tube, closed at the lower end, and measures 70mm in length; the maximum diameter is 18mm externally, 14mm internally. The lower end is rounded, and there are six narrow cordons, five of them ornamented with a row of near-vertical incisions; the sixth, at the upper end, is too damaged for any decoration to be identified. There are two opposed tack holes near the upper end, and possibly a third in a damaged patch between the lowest two cordons. A fragment of the spiral binding is present inside, with a tack hole slightly below the two at the upper end of the handle.
- 14 Sceptre handle (figs 1, 3), cast; a strip is missing from one side, the open upper end is damaged, and a possible terminal has been lost. It is a hollow tube, closed at the lower end, and survives to a length of 108mm; the maximum diameter is 20mm externally, 16mm internally. The onion-shaped lower end is solid, and bears a narrow finial which is abraded and may have carried a terminal ornament. As noted in the earlier report, this is the only sceptre so far examined from Wanborough which may have had such a terminal; similar sceptres from Willingham Fen had bird terminals (Henig 1984, pl 62), while a small wheel similar to those on the Wanborough head-dresses is also a possibility. The body of the sceptre has a single narrow cordon at the lip, then five double cordons and a final single one; all are very unevenly worked. There are traces of wood on the interior, with some iron staining.
- 19 Sceptre handle (figs 1, 4), cast; complete except for chips, especially on the upper end, and a large hole in one side. It is a hollow tube, closed

at the lower end, and measures 61mm in length; the maximum diameter is 20mm externally, 15mm internally. There are eight angular cordons on the body and a further one below the rim; the flat lower end is slightly offset, with a central dimple 4mm across. There are two opposed tack-holes just below the upper end; the interior has possible traces of wood.

- 28 Sceptre fitting (figs 1, 3), cast; complete except for pieces broken from the ends. It is a hollow tube, open at both ends, with a disc-shaped flange, and measures 70mm in length; the maximum diameter of the flange is 35mm externally, of the shaft 21mm externally and 17mm internally. The shorter length has double cordons at the lip and above the flange; the longer piece has a single cordon above the flange, then a triple cordon and two double ones. As with no 14, the cordons are very unevenly worked. On the original photo the fitting had been tied with string to a narrow collar, no 32; this is now missing. As noted in the earlier report, it is probable that nos 14, 28 and 32 were found together.

Brooch

- 48 Axe brooch; for illustration and full description, see Bird 1994, 123 and fig 33, no 48. Dr Grace Simpson has kindly commented that this precise type of enamelled axe brooch is a British version, not a probable import (cf Allason-Jones & Milet 1984, no 3.129; cited in Bird 1994), and has only been found in Britain. Four other examples are recorded, from South Shields, Camerton, Nettleton and East Anglia (Hattatt 1987, 220-2 and fig 69, c; 1989, 167-8 and fig 77, no 1629; Wedlake 1982, fig 54, no 71). Hattatt suggests a probable date in the 2nd century AD (rather than the 3rd), which would fit better with the other brooches from the site.

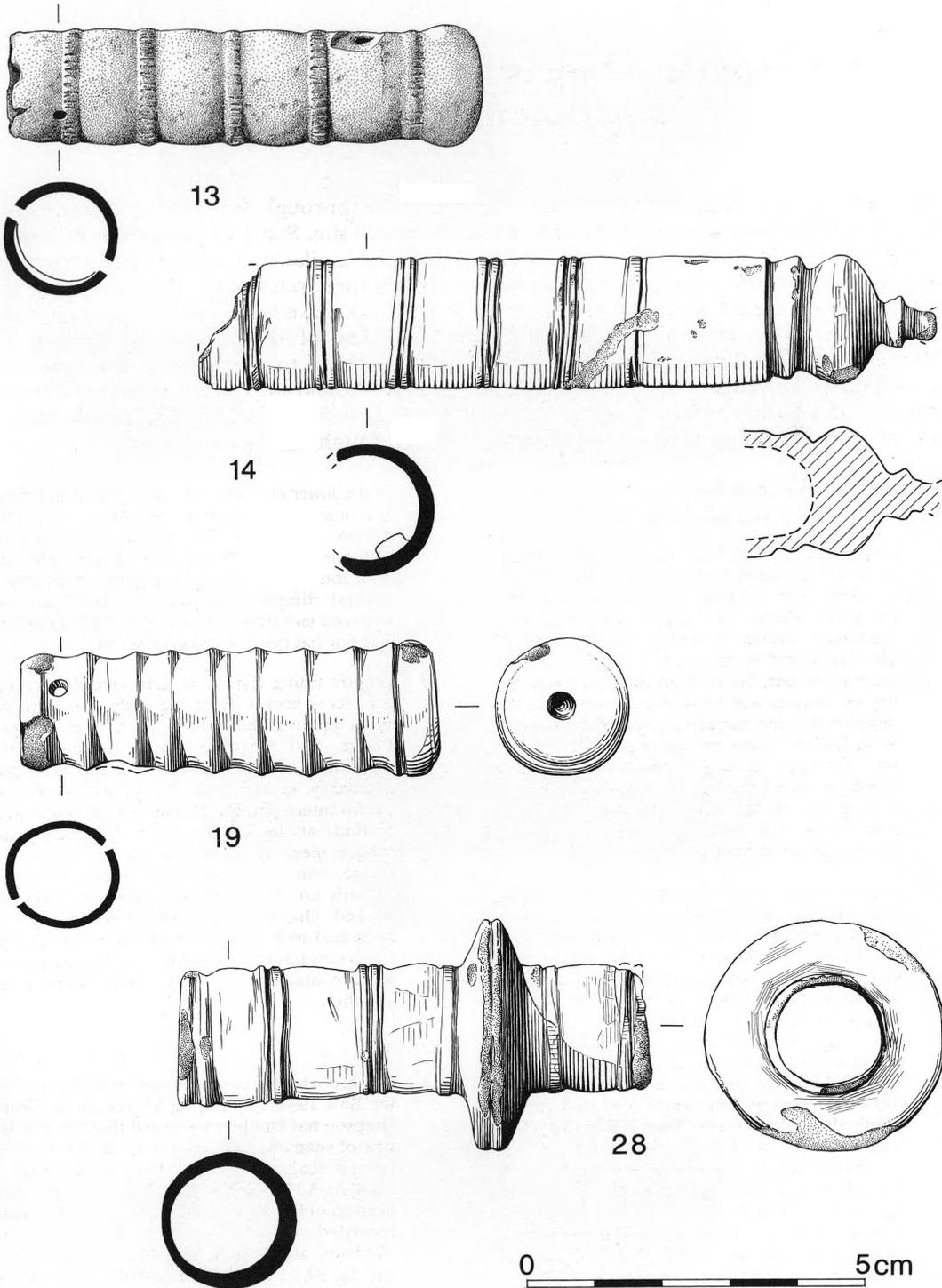


Fig 1 Wanborough. Sceptre fittings nos 13, 14, 19 and 28 (1:1). *Drawn by David Williams*

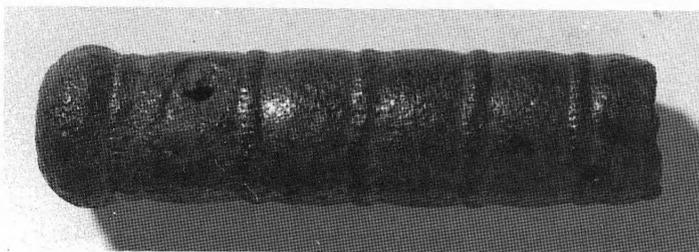


Fig 2 Wanborough. Sceptre handle no 13 (length 70mm). *Photograph by Eric Hunter, courtesy of Guildford Museum*

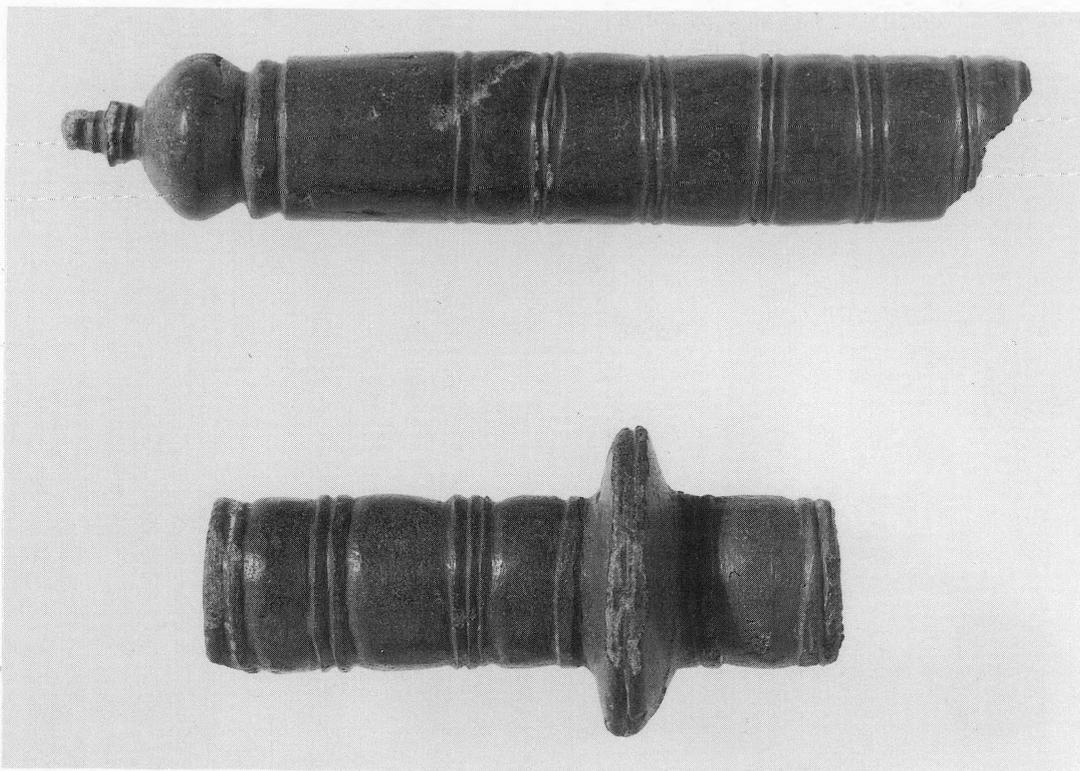


Fig 3 Wanborough. Sceptre fittings nos 14 (top) and 28 (length: no 14, 108mm; no 28, 70mm). *Photograph courtesy of the Trustees of the British Museum*

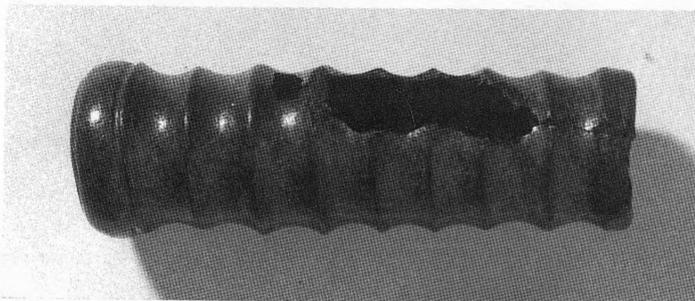


Fig 4 Wanborough. Sceptre handle no 19 (length 61mm). *Photograph by Eric Hunter, courtesy of Guildford Museum*

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to thank Catherine Johns and Val Rigby, of the Department of Prehistoric and Romano-British Antiquities at the British Museum, and the staff of Guildford Museum, who kindly enabled me to record the sceptre fittings when they were in their care, and who have provided photographs. I am also grateful to Dr Grace Simpson for her comments on the brooch, and to David Williams for the drawings. The objects have now generously been left on loan to the Surrey Archaeological Society.

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