Recent Donations and Enquiries to Bedford Museum, 1985-87

CAROLYN WINGFIELD

INTRODUCTION

The intention of this article is to make available information on the most noteworthy archaeological finds brought to Bedford Museum, either as donations or for identification, during the past two years. All the objects described below are casual finds; archaeological material acquired from excavations, watching briefs and other field-work has been omitted since it will be fully published in reports elsewhere.

Objects are grouped in chronological order under general period headings and within each group have been arranged according to material. Provenances are given as the parish, followed by further detail and the grid reference, where the finder has been able to give one. Grid references in brackets ( ) have been inferred from the description of the find-spot.

The author is grateful to a number of individuals, acknowledged in the text for advice on identifications, but takes sole responsibility for the contents of this paper and the opinions expressed in it.

NEOLITHIC

STONE AXE	Fig 1.1
Carlton and Chellington	**SP 95 55**

Polished stone axe, measuring 97 mm in length and a maximum 55 mm in width. It is made of olive-green stone, which superficial examination suggests may be from Langdale, Cumbria, but this has yet to be confirmed by petrological analysis. In size and in its general proportions, the axe is closely comparable to a greenstone axe found at Streatley in 1976.[1]

BEDFM 1985/3 donated by Mr Wykes of Chellington.
The axe was originally found in topsoil on allotments some years ago[2] and was donated to the Museum in 1985.

BRONZE AGE

PALSTAVE	Fig 1.2
Arlesey	**(vicinity of TL 20 38)**

Bronze palstave of 'developed shield-pattern' type measuring 162 mm in length and 70 mm across the tips of the blade. Typologically, it belongs to the Acton Park phase (c 1400-1200 BC) and exhibits several features of early palstaves in its general proportions, lack of a side-loop or knobs and wide blade with upturned ends. However, unlike the earliest palstaves (such as that from Dunton, BEDFM 1973/4/1[3]) the stop-ridge and flanges of the Arlesey palstave are fused. The Arlesey palstave appears to be the first palstave of this type recorded in Bedfordshire[4] and may be best seen on an outlier of the East Anglian 'shield-pattern' group.

BEDFM enquiry 177 found by Mr Warboys of Arlesey and reported by Mr Wildesmith of St Neots. The palstave was found during ploughing in about 1977 at Waterloo Farm.

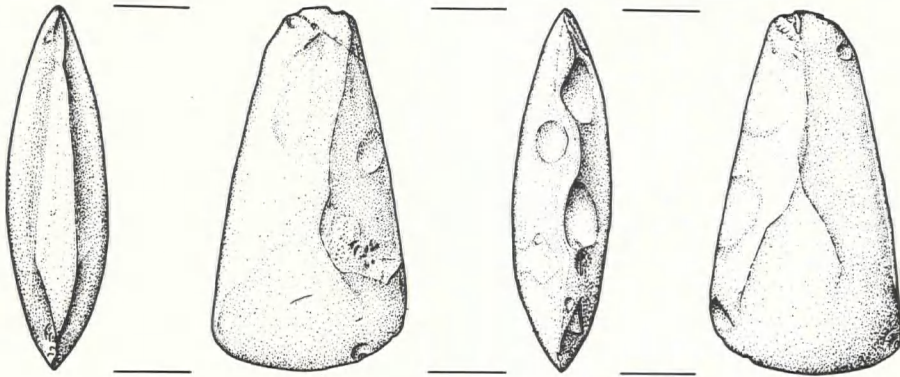| SOCKETED AXE	Fig 1.3
Meppershall	**(vicinity of TL 14 35)**
(Upper Stondon)	

Bronze socketed axe 104 mm long and 54 mm across the widest part of the blade, which is moderately splayed. The mouth measures a maximum of 29 mm by 29 mm internally. Both faces are decorated with two pairs of ribs which curve to run parallel with the slightly faceted sides. The inner ribs of each pair curve inwards at the top to define a plan, central field of inverted U-shape. There are no other socketed axes in the collections of Bedford Museum, nor recorded in the Wymington Hoard,[5] that correspond closely with this axe from Meppershall. In form and decoration, it seems to be a near relative of the Late Bronze Age faceted axes of East Anglia and the Middle Fen region, c 900-600 BC.

BEDFM 1985/4 purchased (proceeds to charity) from Mr Parrish of Upper Stondon.
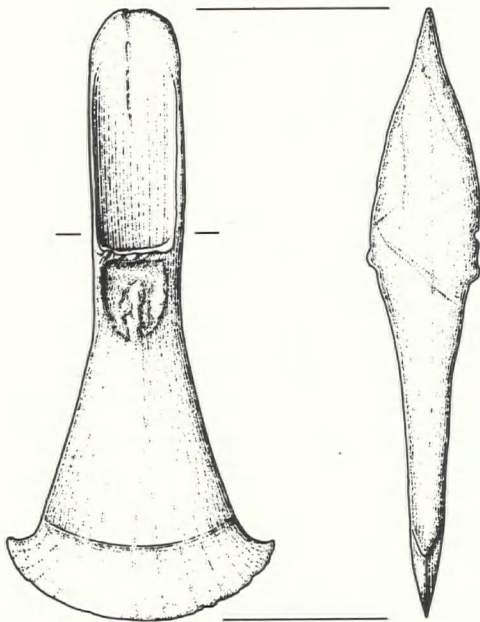
BELGIC IRON AGE

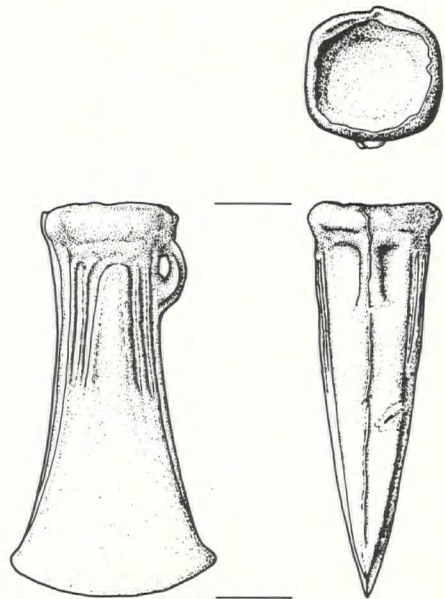| BOW BROOCH	Fig 2.1
Biggleswade	**TL 19 47**

Copper alloy bow brooch of Hawkes and Hull type XV[6], 60 mm in length overall. The bow is curved in a
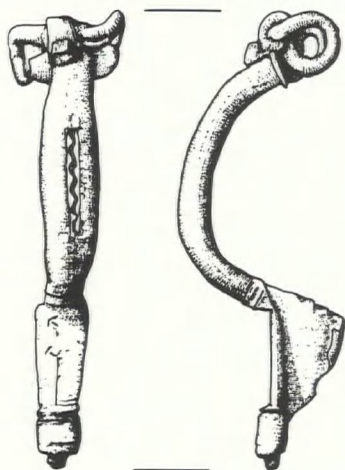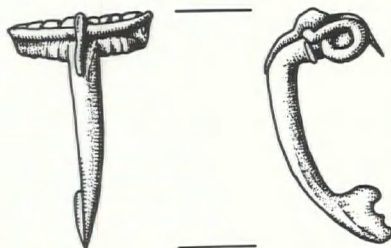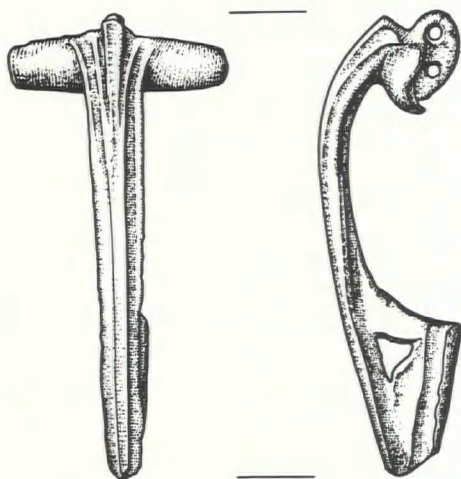
1.1

1.2

1.3

Fig 1   1.1 stone axe, Chellington; 1.2 palstave, Arlesey; 1.3 socketed axe, Upper Stondon (all x ½)
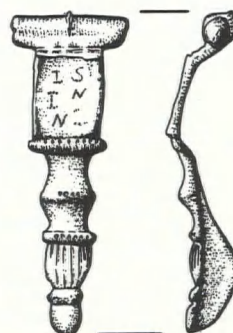
Fig 2   copper alloy brooches 2.1 Biggleswade Common; 2.2 Chellington; 2.3 Biggleswade (Langford
         Road); 2.4 (a) inscribed brooch Ravensden (all actual size) 2.4 (b) inscription (x 4)

slightly flattened semi-circle, with a median band of counter-sunk wavy-line decoration. The spring has four turns and the external chord is held by a hook on the head of the brooch. The coil is partly covered by a short side-wings. The foot terminates in a knob, with traces of grooving on the front and a small projection below. The pin and part of the catchplate are missing. The date-range for this type is c 50 BC to AD 50.

BEDFM enquiry 084 found and reported by Mr B. Walker of Kempston. Metal-detector find, area of Biggleswade Common.

| BOW BROOCH | Fig 2.2 |
| Carlton and Chellington | (vicinity of SP 96 56) |

Copper alloy brooch of the 'Colchester' type, Hawkes and Hull type III[7], length 31 mm; pin missing. The spring has eight turns and is protected by side-wings with corresponding corrugations. The external chord is held by a hook. The small, triangular catchplate is incomplete but shows signs of originally having been pierced. Type III brooches date from the first half of the first century AD, continuing for at least a couple of decades after the Roman Conquest.

BEDFM 1986/9 donated by Mr. J Hinds of Bedford. Metal-detector find, from Hill Farm, Chellington.

ROMANO-BRITISH

BOW BROOCH	Fig 2.3
Biggleswade	(vicinity of TL 18 42)
(near Langford Road)	

Copper alloy 'Dolphin' type bow brooch (Hawkes and Hull type V[8]/Collingwood and Richmond group H)[9] with typical 'humped' profile of the bow at the head, length 62 mm. The spring and pin are missing but the flat lug with two holes shows that on this brooch the newly-developed axis-bar was used to help keep the spring in place.[10] The coils were partially enclosed by semi-cylindrical side-wings. The catchplate is triangular and pierced with a single hole. 'Dolphins' are generally dated to the second half of the first century AD, but the use of an axis-bar may suggest a date later rather than earlier, within that period for this specimen.

BEDFM 1986/6 donated by Mr J. Hinds of Bedford. Metal-detector find, from field known as Sheepwalks.

| INSCRIBED BROOCH | Fig 2.4 |
| Ravensden | TL 06 55 |

Copper alloy hinged brooch (pin missing), a variant of the 'Hod Hill' type, length 43 mm. The head is flat and rectangular and the foot is vertically grooved and terminates in a knob. Single lines of impressed dots decorate three transverse ridges separating the head from the bow, across the middle of the bow and separating the bow from the foot respectively. The brooch is a little corroded and shows no sign of the silvered or tinned finish commonly found on 'Hod Hills'. The type is dated to the middle decades of the first century AD. The chief interest of this brooch lies in the inscription on the head. The letters are formed by singe rows on tiny impressed dots and are partly obscured by wear, but may read:
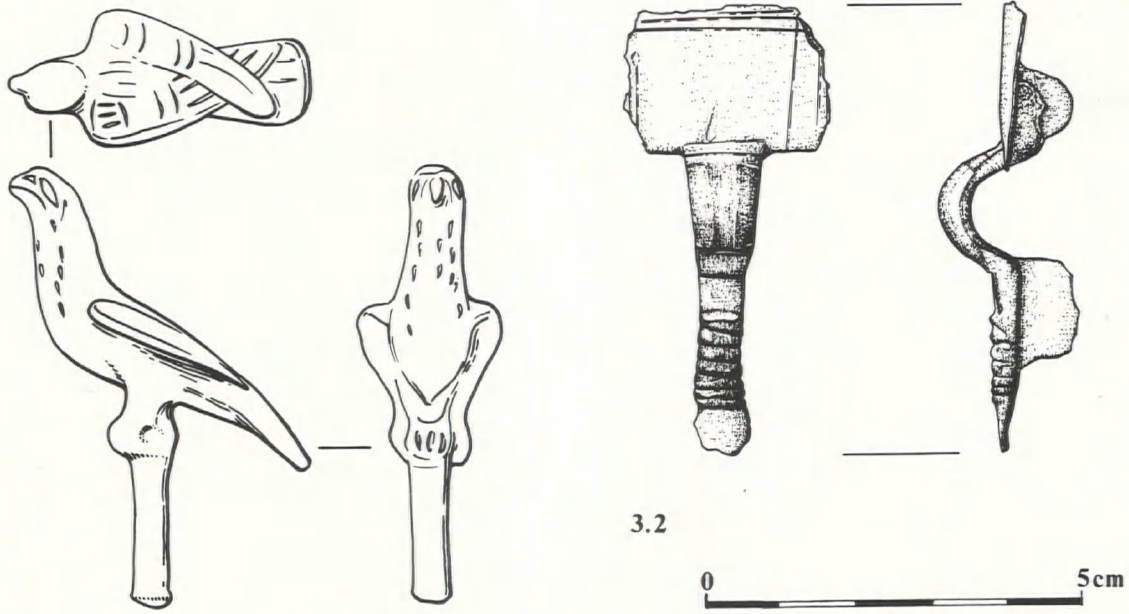
I S

I N (or N E, when inverted?)

N O

Mr Mark Hassall, of the Institute of Archaeology, has examined this brooch and has suggested two alternative readings IS/IN/NO or ON/NE/SI, depending on which way up the brooch was intended to be read,[11] but the significance of the inscription is now lost.

BEDFM enquiry 096 reported by Mr B. King of Bedford. The brooch was found c 1983-84 in a river bank.
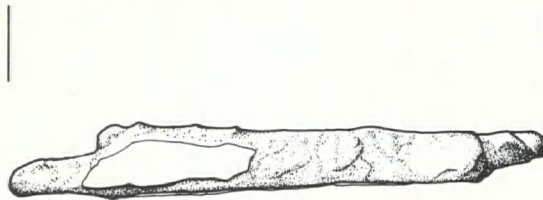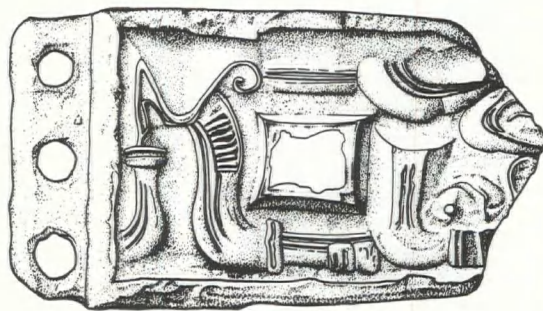
| FIGURINE OF BIRD | Fig 3.1 |
| Campton | TL 12 38 |

Solid copper alloy figure of a bird, 55 mm from beak (tip missing) to tail. The feet form a rounded base from which a rod 21 mm long and 4-5 mm in diameter extends as if to form a peg for attachment. Details of feathers are incised on the throat, wings and tail. Bird and animal figurines of many types occur throughout SE Britain. Lynn Pitts[12] has observed that in the tribal areas of the Catuvellauni and Trinovantes, many of these figurines are of very small size and could serve a variety of purposes, including furniture-, box- and vessel-mounts, votive offerings (in either temples or domestic shrines) and amulets. Certainly many bird figurines have been found in indisputably religious contexts, such as temple sites, but it is seldom clear whether they were intended to accompany, let alone represent, a particular deity,[13] or whether they were simply offerings purchased and dedicated by visitors to the

3.2

0   5cm

3.1

3.3

0   2 cm

Fig 3   Copper alloy bird figurine, Campton; 3.2 small long brooch, Biddenham (both actual size); 3.3 gilt-bronze belt fitting, Wilden (x 2)

shrine. Identifiable species represented by such figurines include crows/ravens and eagles (or similar birds of prey) with which the Campton bird compares most closely.[14] Amongst those figurines for which a ritual use can be postulated, there are examples from East Anglia of a bird adorning a priest's crown and others topping maces or sceptres.[15] However, the purely decorative or non-religious functions of figurines should not be dismissed when the nature of the place of origin or context is unknown. Evidence of Romano-British occupation, including a wealthy cemetery and domestic building with hypocaust, are known from Shefford nearby,[16] but until more is known of Campton itself in that period, the significance of the bird figurine must remain open to speculation, as must its precise date.[17]

Letchworth Museum enquiry 1276 found and reported by Mr H. Cross of Shefford.
Metal-detector find from Campton recreation ground. I am grateful to Gilbert Burleigh of North Hertfordshire Museums Service for recording and making available information on this find; drawing by Garth Denning.

POTSHERDS

Biddenham (Church End)   **(vicinity of TL 01 50)**
Biddenham   **(vicinity of TL 02 48)**
(Biddenham loop)

Two groups of potsherds, pieces of tile and brick, mostly Romano-British.

From Church End: thirty-one Romano-British sherds, including one sherd from a flanged Samian bowl, three colour-coated sherds (one beaker-base, with drilled hole; a body-sherd and beaker rim) and the neck of a flagon in coarse, cream-coloured ware.

From Biddenham loop: three rim-sherds from large storage vessels and ten fragments of roof- and flue-tiles, of which three were decorated.

BEDFM 1986/19 (Church End) and 1986/20 (Biddenham loop) donated by Mr B. King of Bedford.

POTTERY/CREMATIONS

Potton (Deepdale)   **TL 20 47**

A series of Romano-British cremations, including urns and accessory vessels, plus scatters of potsherds, found in 1985-87. A watching brief on the site was undertaken by the County Council Archaeological Field Team and is published separately in this volume.

BEDFM 1987/11 donated by Mr R. Pitts of Potton.

ANGLO-SAXON

BROOCH   Fig 3.2
Biddenham (Honey Hill)   **(vicinity of TL 02 49)**

Copper-alloy small-long brooch with square head, 60 mm long but with parts of the foot, catchplate, head and iron pin missing. The head is simply decorated with pairs of parallel, incised lines around three sides; there are traces of further incised lines at either end of the hump of the bow, and the end of the foot is flattened and may have originally been splayed. This type of brooch is widespread and can be dated to around the sixth century AD.[18]

BEDFM 1986/5 donated by Mr B. King of Bedford.
Metal-detector find.

BELT-FITTING   Fig 3.3
Wilden   **TL 09 55**

The greater part of a copper-alloy, rectangular belt-fitting, maximum dimensions 35 mm long by 20 mm wide and 5 mm thick. The central raised cell contains a purple stone, which may be a garnet or (unusually) an amethyst. Mrs Leslie Webster of the British Museum has suggested that this is probably a buckle counter-plate of mid-sixth-century date, with dismembered animal ornament characteristic of Style I. One foot of the animal runs down the left-hand edge of the border, with leg flexed, and a main strand of the body, partially pelleted, passes below the setting for the stone. The ornament towards the broken end of the plate is partially obscured by wear and corrosion. Traces of gilding survive which suggest that the counter-plate was originally covered in a thick layer of gilt (including a patch on one side, shown in the illustration). There are three holes in the complete end of the plate, providing for attachment to a strap by rivets, and there are also traces of lead solder with vestiges of more copper alloy adhering to it on the reverse. This suggests a secondary use in which the strap-end was adapted as a mount for an object of copper alloy.
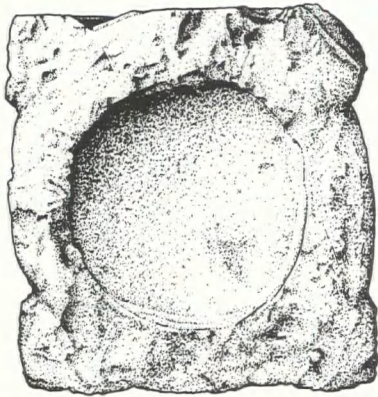
Similar belt-fittings of copper alloy or silver, with or without gilding, are associated particularly with Kent but are also found elsewhere in southern England.

BEDFM enquiry 218 found during archaeological survey of a gas pipe-line and reported to Mr P. Catherall, archaeologist for British Gas. I am grateful to the staff of the Conservation Laboratory, Verulamium Museum, for making a preliminary examination of the strap-end and for their comments on the solder and gilding.
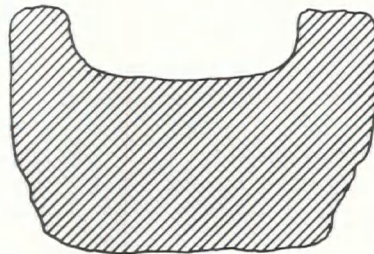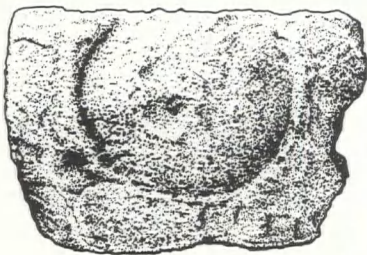
4.1

0   5 cm

0   20 cm

4.2

Fig 4   4.1 fragment of tile, Aspley Guise (x ½);
        4.2 stone mortar, Melchbourne (x ¼)

MEDIEVAL

FLOOR TILE   Fig 4.1
Aspley Guise (Berry Lane)   (vicinity of SP 94 36)

A fragment of a worn two-colour lead-glazed tile, measuring 60 mm x 40 mm maximum, and depicting part of a four-tile foliate design forming a circular motif. The pink-red fabric and grey core have affinities with the stabbed Wessex series known in Bedfordshire but the design more closely resembles those from Halesowen Abbey such as design no. 2616 (catalogue no. 3997) in Eames' Catalogue.[20] The tile is probably of thirteenth-century date. Information from Evelyn Baker, Senior Archaeological Field Officer (Bedfordshire County Council Archaeological Field Team).

BEDFM enquiry 111 found and reported by Mr Hall of Aspley Guise. Drawing by Pat Walsh.

POTSHERDS AND SPEARHEAD
Kempston (Box End)   (vicinity of TL 00 49)

Forty-seven coarseware potsherds mostly identifiable as Saxo-Norman or medieval, two pieces of tile and one medieval limestone roof-slate. There is also a very corroded iron socketed spearhead which may be of early medieval type.

BEDFM 1986/22 originally collected some years ago by the late Mr Hubert Felce of Box End, Kempston, from Box End Road near Melrose Nurseries. Donated by Miss G. Cole of Kempston.

MORTAR   Fig 4.2
Melchbourne (Park Farm)   (vicinity of TL 03 65)

A mortar of light grey stone (not formally identified, but probably limestone) maximum dimensions 204 mm by 192 mm and 130 mm high; the bowl has a maximum depth of about 40 mm. The bowl has been partially rounded out of the square block of stone, leaving the corners of the block projecting to form lugs. On the underside, the corners had been roughly champfered towards the base. The mortar is roughly dressed and — especially considering the shallowness of the bowl — appears to be only partly finished, although it is much battered. Its size and general form are consistent with medieval domestic stone mortars of thirteenth- and fourteenth-century date, but in finished examples the roundness of the bowl is more emphasised and the corners correspondingly reduced to form projecting lugs. Mortars with and without pouring-lips are known, so the lack

of a groove on any lugs of the Melchbourne mortar is not necessarily due to its incomplete state.

If the identification of this unfinished mortar is correct, it is worth considering the implications for our knowledge of local medieval trade and industry. The principal mortar industry in medieval England was based on the S coast, from where large numbers of mortars were exported widely over S and SE England. Examples of Purbeck limestone mortars have been found in excavations at Bedford[21] and Northampton.[22] A complementary N-S trade in mortars in Millstone Grit has also been identified by the late G.C. Dunning[23] (no examples from Bedfordshire have been identified as yet). Mortars are likely to have been made, or at least roughed-out, near to the source of the stone, before being traded further afield. Melchbourne lies a few kms from the band of Oolite Limestone covering part of NW Bedfordshire and S Northamptonshire and further outcrops of this limestone occur in N Bedfordshire where it is mostly overlain by gault clay. More research into mortars and other stone objects and identification of stone-sources is needed to establish whether there was a localised stone-working industry in or near N Bedfordshire.

BEDFM enquiry 078 found and reported by Mrs S.M. Brodie of Melchbourne, who has since reported finding pieces of a larger mortar, broken by the plough. A large piece of slag, fired flint and a piece of stone (part of a mould?) were also found in the same area.

SEAL DIE   Fig 5.1
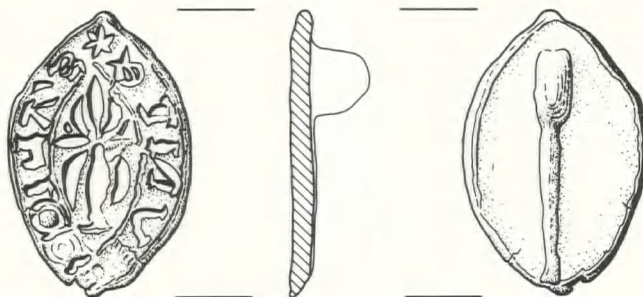## Riseley   (vicinity of TL 03 62)

Lead seal die, vesica-shaped, maximum measurements 38 mm x 22 mm, average thickness approximately 3 mm. A small projection on the back of the die forms a handle.

The face of the die shows a variation of the fleur-de-lys, one of the most common devices found on seal dies. The inscription reads:
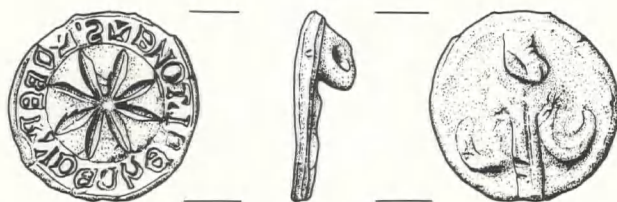
* S'ALICE VNTE
'the seal *(sigillum)* of Alice (H)unte(r)'

Both this die, and the die from Upper Caldecote described below, are typical of thirteenth-century lead seal dies which generally bore a popular motif and the owner's name, both male and female ones being recorded.[24]

BEDFM enquiry 206 reported by Mr P. Surridge of Ringstead, Northants. Found by Mr Surridge's father during levelling of footpath near Rotton Row, Riseley.

5.1

5.2

0   5 cm

Fig 5   lead seal-dies 5.1 Riseley; 5.2 Upper Caldecote (both actual size)

SEAL DIE   Fig 5.2
Northill (Upper Caldecote)   TL 17 45

Circular lead seal die, maximum diameter 26 mm and thickness at rim varying between 2 and 3 mm. The reverse bears a fleur-de-lys moulded in low relief and a small projection now squashed but originally pierced for suspension. Dies of this type are generally dated to the thirteenth century.

The face is incised with a symmetrical eight-point star and the inscription around the edge reads:

S'ROBERTI DE CHERLTONE
'the seal of Robert of Chalton'

'Cherltone' is probably to be identified with the hamlet of Chalton (between Blunham and Moggerhanger) which is only 5 km N of the find-

spot and has recorded medieval spellings comparable with that on the die.[25]

BEDFM enquiry 228 found and reported by Mr R. Lamont of Bedford. Metal-detector find.

PILGRIM'S AMPULLA
Clapham   **TL 04 52**

Lead pilgrim's ampulla of simple pouch-shape, measuring 42 mm in length and 31 mm across its widest point. It has been squashed flat and is rather corroded, but a crowned 'W' is faintly discernible on one face and this suggests that it came from the shrine of Our Lady of Walsingham, Norfolk.[26]

BEDFM 1987/18 donated by Mr J. Hinds of Bedford. Metal-detector find.

Records of all archaeological enquiries and donations brought to Bedford Museum are kept at the Museum and are also sent to the Bedfordshire Sites and Monuments Record (County Planning Department). Bedford Museum operates an identification service, free of charge, and objects may be left for identification at any time during opening hours (11-5 Tuesdays-Saturdays, 2-5 Sundays). Staff are always pleased to consider offers of appropriate specimens from N Bedfordshire for the local archaeology collections. For further information, please contact:

The Archaeological Officer, Bedford Museum, Castle Lane, Bedford. Tel. (0234) 53323.

NOTES

1 Dyer, J., 1983; 'A Polished Stone axe from Streatley', *Beds Arch 16*, 85.

2 Bedfordshire Sites and Monuments Record 9056.

3 Hassall, J., 1973; 'A Middle Bronze Age Palstave from Dunton', *Beds Arch Journal 8*, 131-132.

4 A looped palstave of later type was recorded by C.F. Tebbutt in a private collection at Ickwell Bury, Northill, but was apparently destroyed by fire in 1937.
Tebbutt, C.F., 1954; 'Bronze Age, Iron Age and Saxon objects from Bedfordshire', *Ant J* 34, 232 and pl 26b.

5 Kennett, D.H., 1975; 'The Wymington Hoard and other Hoards and Finds of the Late Bronze Age from the South Midlands', *Beds Arch J* 10, 5-18.

6 Hawkes, C.F.C. and Hull, M.R., 1947; *Camulodunum*, (Soc. of Antiq. of London), 320 and pl XCV.

7 *ibid.*, 308-10 and pl LXXXIX-XC.

8 *ibid.*, 311-12 and pl XCII.

9 Collingwood, R.G. and Richmond, I., 1969; *The Archaeology of Roman Britain* (Methuen), 295 and 287 Fig 102.

10 See Hattatt, R., 1982; *Ancient and Romano-British Brooches* (Dorset Publishing Co.), 46 and 64-66, for discussion of developments in securing springs and in 'Dolphin' brooches.

11 Hassall, M.W.C. and Tomlin, R.S.O., 1986; 'Roman Britain in 1985: Inscriptions', *Britannia* XVII, 439 no. 22. I am grateful to Mr Hassall for examining and commenting on this brooch.

12 Pitts, L.F., 1979; *Roman Bronze Figurines of the Catuvellauni and Trinovantes* (BAR British Series 60), 36-38.

13 Green, M.J., 1977; 'Thieromorphism and the Role of Divine Animals in Romano-British Cult Art' in Munby, J. and Henig, M., 1977, *Roman Life and Art in Britain* (BAR British Series 41 ii), 297-326.

14 See, for example: a bronze eagle from Verulamium, in Frere, S, 1972; *Verulamium Excavations,* vol I (Soc. of Antiq. of London), 142 Fig 49 and 144, no 158; bronze 'hawks' from Woodeaton, Oxfordshire, Ross, A., 1967; *Pagan Celtic Britain* (Routledge and Kegan Paul), 338 Fig 156, d,h,i,j,k.

15 The foot of a bird figurine surmounting the apex of a crown from Felmingham Hall, Norfolk and instances of small bird figurines occurring on maces or sceptres from the same site and from Willingham Fen, Cambridgeshire. Henig, M., 1984; *Religion in Roman Britain* (Batsford), 137 and 140-1.

16 Simco, A., 2984; *Survey of Bedfordshire — The Roman Period* (Beds. County Council and RCHM), 117 gazetteer entry 223.

17 Of the comparatively few figurines from datable context, Pitts (1979) observes that several belong to the later third or fourth centuries. The eagle referred to above from Verulamium, in Frere (1972), however came from a context dated to c AD150-260. The great variety in style and standard of workmanship exhibited by figurines inhibits dating on stylistic or typological grounds.

18 Other small-long brooches from N Bedfordshire in Bedford Museum are one from Podington/Farndish (BEDFM 1980/6) of the fifth century, and three from the fifth- and sixth-century cemetery at Kempston (BEDFM 3812, 3813 and 3856).

19 Comparable plates with a border of Style 1 animal ornament surrounding a central, rectangular setting, are those from Barn Elms, London and Gilton, Kent, although in both these examples the setting for the stone is larger than that on the Wilden plate. Also, the animal ornament on the Barn Elms and Gilton pieces appears to be more evenly distributed around the setting, thus filling the available space more effectively. Gilton also provides an example of a counter-plate with three rivets at either end, in a similar arrangement to the surviving end of the Wilden plate, although this Gilton counter-plate is decorated with gold filigree ornament and has no setting for a stone.

20 Eames, E.S., 1980; *Catalogue of Medieval Lead-glazed Earthenware Tiles* (British Museum).

21 Baker, D., Baker, E., Hassall, J. and Simco, A., 1979; 'Excavations in Bedford 1967-1977' *Beds. Arch. J. 13;* 267 and 268 Fig 168, catalogue nos. 1151 and 1155.

22 Dunning, G.C., 1979; 'The Purbeck Marble Mortar' in Williams, J.H., *St. Peter's Street, Northampton, Excavations 1973-1976* (Northampton Development Corporation), 284.

23 Dunning, G.C. 1975; 'The Stone Mortar in Little Baddow Church', *Med. Arch. XIX*, 161-63.

24 Two vesica-shaped lead seal dies of thirteenth century date in Bedford Museum record the names of Matilde Fivill (BEDFM 1981/30) and Will Hevel (un-numbered) respectively.

25 Medieval spellings of Chalton include *Cherleton, Cherlton, Charleton* and *Chaltone,* see Mawer, A. and Stenton, F.M., 1926; *The Place-Names of Bedfordshire and Huntingdonshire* (English Place-Name Society vol. III), 92-3.
Chalton near Toddington and Carlton are effectively ruled out by their etymologies (deriving from 'cealf-tun' and 'karla-tun' respectively) and by their relative distance from Upper Caldecote. Charlton, near Hitchin, Hertfordshire, could be considered on etymological grounds, but given that seal dies of this popular type, like their yeoman-farmer or tradesman owners, were unlikely to have travelled much outside their immediate locality, Chalton near Mogerhanger must be preferred.

26 Ampullae from Cirencester and Dunwich bearing the crowned W of Walsingham are cited in London Museum Catalogue no. 2: Medieval Catalogue, 1940, 259.