

THE NEWARK IRON AGE TORC

by

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SUMMARY The Newark torc, found in 2005, is one of the most significant Iron Age finds discovered in the UK in the last fifty years, and is directly comparable with the Great Torc from Snettisham. An exploratory excavation of the findspot was carried out shortly after the discovery and the results are discussed here and considered in relation to finds of other gold torcs from Britain. The article also provides a brief overview of contemporary European depictions of torcs, mentions of torcs in Classical literature and considers their function and role in Iron Age societies.

INTRODUCTION – THE DISCOVERY AND EXCAVATION OF THE NEWARK TORC

The Newark torc (Portable Antiquities Scheme database reference DENO-4B33B7) is arguably one of the most important Iron Age finds found in the UK in the last fifty years and one of the most significant finds recorded through the Portable Antiquities Scheme (PAS). This impressive gold torc dates to about 200–50 BC.

The torc was discovered in February 2005 by tree surgeon Maurice Richardson while he was metal detecting one weekend at a ploughed field in the Trent Valley in the Newark area; the exact location of the find is being kept confidential. Mr Richardson had detected in the field previously but had only found post-medieval and modern objects. According to Mr Richardson he found the torc about 3 inches below the plough soil, which was about 2ft deep. It was laid flat so that the tops of the terminals were revealed first. After retrieving the torc, Mr Richardson detected further around the area but found nothing else (Richardson pers comm 2005). Rachel Atherton, the then Derbyshire and Nottinghamshire Finds Liaison Officer for the PAS, went to view the site with Mr Richardson, where he had marked the findspot with a mound of earth. She arranged for an excavation of the site with Nottinghamshire County Council Community Archaeologists, and fluxgate gradiometer and

resistivity surveys of the field by Pre-Construct Geophysics.

Frustratingly, the tenant farmer ploughed the field shortly before the excavation began, removing the findspot mound. Mr Richardson re-identified the rough location of the findspot and an area was opened up around it. The excavation revealed what was believed to be the findspot hole, just below the ploughsoil; it was uncertain whether this was a pit or the hole that Mr Richardson had dug to retrieve the torc. This was in close association with a number of archaeological anomalies including a square-cornered feature, part of an ill-defined ring ditch estimated to be between 3m and 5m in diameter and several possible post holes. The presumed findspot was located just outside the north of the ring ditch, and just west of the south-western corner of the square-cornered feature. No artefacts were recovered during the excavation and the features were undated (excavator James Wright pers comm 2005).

Crop marks in the fields around the findspot indicate that the area was extensively settled and farmed during the later prehistoric and Roman periods, concentrating on the gravels of the River Trent floodplain. There are no crop marks in the immediate vicinity of the findspot, however two roughly parallel broken lengths of pit alignments running north-south flank the field in which the

torc was found; these are undated. The geophysical survey was inconclusive and did not identify prehistoric or Romano-British remains within the survey area. The resolution of many potential features was compromised by a poor magnetic contrast with the surrounding geology. A number of pit-like anomalies were detected in the vicinity of the findspot, although none related to the findspot (Masters 2005 unpublished).

DESCRIPTION OF THE NEWARK TORC

The Newark torc (Plate 1) is of a well-known type, a multi-twisted strand torc with hollow ring-shaped terminals with raised Snettisham-type decoration, typified by the so-called 'Great Torc' from Snettisham, Norfolk. It is made from electrum, an alloy of gold and silver, and is a superb example of Celtic goldsmiths' workmanship. The hoop is made up of eight twisted gold wire 'ropes', each made from (probably) four wires. The wires in

each of the eight ropes are twisted in a clockwise direction, forming a cylinder, and are fixed to the hollow terminals. The 'doughnut-shaped' terminals were cast using the lost wax technique, and have raised decoration of La Tène style (so-called Early Celtic Art) motifs of curving ovals, trumpets, peltas, wave-shaped triangles, basket-weave hatching and pellets. Each of the pellets has three indentations. X-Ray fluorescence analysis of the surface indicated that the approximate metal content is 67% gold, 32% silver and 1% copper. It weighs 699g.

There is considerable evidence of wear on the torc. Some areas of raised decoration on the terminals are worn flat. Black deposits of silver oxides have formed at areas of ancient damage or wear, on the worn raised decoration on the terminals, over a large gash on the inside of one of the terminals, and over small parts of the coiled strands at the rear of the torc hoop; this latter is evidence of stress fractures caused by opening and closing the torc when it was put on and taken off



PLATE 1: The Newark torc (©The Trustees of the British Museum).

(Hill 2005; 2008). Torcs are flexible and were put on by twisting them out of shape and slipping them around the neck either from the front or back.

WHAT ARE TORCS?

Torcs are neck rings, found across much of Iron Age Europe and parts of western Asia. They vary widely in style, from simple twisted rods to highly elaborate examples, and could be made of gold, silver, electrum, copper alloy, iron or lead. The name derives from the Latin word *torqueo*, 'to twist', and refers to a feature common to many of them, the twisted metal hoop. They are depicted in Iron Age representations of gods and warriors, mentioned in contemporary literature, and found in graves and hoards. They were symbols of wealth, status and political power, and also had deep religious significance.

The wearing of torcs during the Middle to Late Iron Age may relate to a much earlier tradition stretching back into the Bronze Age; neck rings of gold, silver and copper alloy have been produced across Europe since the beginning of the Bronze Age, about 2,000 BC.

Contemporary depictions of torcs

Some of the earliest depictions of figures wearing torcs are the so-called 'Warrior of Hirschlanden' and 'Prince of Glauberg', both from Germany. These are life-sized stone statues of males, which are presumed to have been *stelai* (funerary monuments). The Hirschlanden statue (Plate 2) was found in association with a burial mound at Hirschlanden (now Ditzingen), and is dated to the 6th century BC. He is naked except for a pointed hat, sword belt and torc (Zürn 1964). The Glauberg statue again wears a torc but is clothed in trousers and a tunic and carries a sword and shield. His distinctive headdress has been described as being in the shape of mistletoe leaves, perhaps suggesting that he represents a priest. It was again discovered in association with a burial mound, this time at the Glauberg oppidum, and dates from the 5th century BC (Herrmann and Frey 1996).



PLATE 2: The Hirschlanden warrior statue, 6th century BC
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Similar, but apparently unrelated, life-sized or over-sized granite sculptures of warriors wearing torcs have been found in central and northern Portugal, and are dated to the 2nd and 1st centuries

BC. Examples include those from the Lezenho hillfort, and one from the Sanfins oppidum (González-Ruibal 2004). Stone heads wearing torcs have also been found in Portugal, for example at Anllo, and again these may depict warriors (*ibid.*).

One of the most famous depictions of a torc-wearing warrior is the ‘Dying Gaul’ marble statue, generally considered to be a Roman copy of an original which adorned the monument erected in Pergamum (Pergamon in modern Turkey) by Attalus I, sometime around 225 BC, to celebrate his victory over the Galatians (Plate 3). Here the warrior is naked except for his torc, with his shield and sword close by. Depictions of naked warriors may corroborate classical writers accounts of Gauls fighting naked (see below).

Torc were strongly associated with deities and they are often shown wearing torcs. The famous 2nd- or 1st-century BC silver Gunderstrup cauldron, found in a bog at Aars, Himmerland, Denmark in 1891, depicts a number of male and female Celtic deities wearing torcs (Müller 1892). The 2nd- or 1st-century BC Mšecké Žehrovice head, with its torc and distinctive drooping moustache, is thought to depict a Celtic deity and was found close to a rectangular ditched sanctuary at Mšecké Žehrovice in Bohemia, Czech Republic (Megaw & Megaw 1988). A 50cm high stone statue of a female wearing a torc, from the oppidum of Briteiros in northern Portugal has been identified as a deity and was found in an area of the fort that appears to have



PLATE 3: The Dying Gaul, 3rd century BC (Capitoline Museum, Rome).

been set aside for ritual activity. She is apparently naked except for a torc (González-Ruibal 2004). It has also been suggested that the rope ‘nooses’ that have been found on several preserved bog bodies may be replica torcs, intended to link them to the deities they were sacrificed to (Glob 1977, 163–6).

Torc in classical literature

Numerous classical authors mentioned torcs, allowing us insights into their cultural and religious significance. For example, Strabo (64 BC–AD 21) and Diodorus Siculus (1st century BC) wrote of the Gauls’ passion for gold and personal ornamentation, and wearing massive gold collars and bracelets (Strabo IV.4.2; Diodorus Siculus V.27).

Herodotus (c.484–425 BC), Polybius (c.200–118 BC), Strabo, Diodorus Siculus, Virgil (70–19 BC), Livy (c.60 BC–AD 17) and Florus (AD 74–130) all wrote of the Celts going into battle wearing gold torcs (Daremberg and Saglio 1909, 375–8). Polybius, in his account of the battle of Telemon (225 BC), wrote of the terrifying appearance of the *Gaesatae*, lined up for battle and naked except for their gold torcs and armllets (Polybius *Histories* 2:29). Cassius Dio’s (155–235 AD) evocative description of Boudicca suggests that torcs were still being worn in battle as late as AD 60, at least in Britain; ‘in stature she was very tall, in appearance most terrifying, in the glance of her eye most fierce, and her voice was harsh; a great mass of the tawniest hair fell to her hips; around her neck was a large golden necklace; and she wore a tunic of divers colours over which a thick mantle was fastened with a brooch’ (Dio Cassius LXII.2).

There are references to torcs being taken by the Romans as spoils of war, either from the dead or from captured prisoners. When the Romans defeated the Boian Gauls at Bologna in 191 BC, spoils were paraded in triumph before the Boii, including 1,471 gold torcs, high-ranking prisoners, horses and large quantities of gold and silver (Livy 36.40.10–12). Livy also writes of the Roman consul and dictator, Titus Manlius, who fought a Gaul in single combat in 361 BC. Manlius killed the Gaul, took his torc and wore it himself, for which he got

the nickname *Torquatus*, a name that passed down to his descendents (Livy 7.10).

Sacred treasures mentioned in the literature give us a glimpse of the sites where valuable votive offerings would be deposited. While these are written about places on the Continent they are likely to be applicable to Britain; Tacitus observes '[in] both countries (Britain and Gaul) you will find the same ritual, the same religious beliefs' (Tacitus *Agricola* 11). Caesar wrote of piles of sacrificed and valuable objects on consecrated ground, left untouched through religious taboos and fear of punishment by death (Caesar 6.18). Strabo describes the great treasure at Tolouse stacked up in temple enclosures and thrown into sacred lakes and similarly left untouched (Strabo IV.1.13). Diodorus Sicullus states that 'a peculiar and striking practice is found among the upper Celts, in connection with the sacred precincts of the gods; as for in the temples and precincts made consecrate in their land, a great amount of gold has been deposited as a dedication to the gods, and not a native of the country ever touches it because of religious scruple, although the Celts are an exceedingly covetous people' (Diodorus Sicullus V.27). Hoards of gold and silver objects including torcs, arm rings and coins have been found across central and western Europe, including Britain, mainly dating from the 3rd to the 1st centuries BC (Fitzpatrick 2005).

TORCS IN BRITAIN

On the Continent torcs are commonly found in graves, particularly female burials dating from the 5th to 4th centuries BC, where the torcs are usually made of bronze or iron, rarely gold. After about 350 BC torcs seem to become warriors' or males' attributes and are no longer found in female graves (Eluère 1987). In Britain, in contrast, torcs are absent from graves, with two exceptions. The first is a burial discovered at Mildenhall, Suffolk, in 1812 and known only from a mention in *Archaeologia* (Bunbury 1834). This describes a human skeleton 'of large proportions' found between two horse skeletons and with an iron sword, celt (an axe) and a gold torc which was sold to a silversmith in Bury St Edmunds and 'immediately melted down'.

Obviously this is a dubious find which cannot be verified. The second is a burial of an elderly female found during excavations at Great Houghton, Northamptonshire, in 1996. She was buried face down in a pit within a sub-rectangular ditched enclosure, with a lead alloy torc around her neck. The skeleton was radiocarbon dated to the early 4th century BC (Chapman *et al.* 2001). This may be related to the Continental female inhumations with base metal torcs.

In Britain, as on the Continent, hundreds of gold, silver and bronze torcs have been found in hoards and as single finds. Here we will concentrate on British gold (including electrum) torcs. There are three different types of gold torc found in Britain; 1) the Scottish and Irish ribbon torcs; 2) tubular torcs which are very rare in Britain (known only from Snettisham and Essendon) and are thought to originate on the Continent; and 3) the twisted wire types which appear to be distinctively British. There are two distinct groups of twisted wire torcs; the East Anglian types which are also found further afield (like the Newark torc) and a small group of torcs centred on the Staffordshire area that have stylistically distinct 'cushion' terminals. The manufacture of torcs in Britain dates from the 3rd century BC to about 50 BC. Analyses of the metal alloys in torcs suggests that the gold source was recycled Gallo-Belgic coinage and objects, rather than locally extracted gold (La Niece *et al.* forthcoming).

The vast majority of gold torcs from Britain have been found in one field at Ken Hill, Snettisham, Norfolk. Since 1948, when the first torcs were brought to the surface by deep ploughing, at least 12 and perhaps 14 hoards of gold, silver and bronze torcs and other objects, including coins, have been found in what has been dubbed the 'gold field'. The total weight of the finds is over 40kg; this is the largest deposit of Iron Age gold, silver and bronze objects found in Europe. About 200 torcs or torc fragments have been found there. They are thought to have been made between about 250 and 50 BC and probably deposited between the late 2nd and the mid-1st century BC. The 234 coins found at Snettisham date to between 125 BC and 60 BC (Stead 1991, 144–5; Meeks *et al.* 2014, 136–7).

Smaller hoards containing gold torcs have been found at Bawsey, Norfolk (1 complete torc discovered in 1941; over 100 torc fragments discovered between 1944 and 1987–2005); Ipswich, Suffolk (6 torcs discovered between 1968 and 1970); Ulceby, Lincs. (3 torcs discovered in 1847); Alrewas, Staffs. (3 torcs discovered in 1996); Winchester, Hants. (2 torcs discovered in 2000); Blair Drummond, Stirling (4 torcs discovered in 2009); and Cairnmuir, Netherurd, Peebleshire (4 torcs discovered in 1806).

Single gold torc finds have come from Sedgeford, Norfolk (discovered in two fragments in 1965 and 2004); North Creake, Norfolk (discovered in 1947); Blackborough End, Norfolk (discovered in 1984); Essendon, Herts. (discovered in 1992); Clevedon, Somerset (discovered in the 19th century); Hengistbury Head, Hants. (discovered in 1912); Telford, West Midlands (discovered in 2008); South Worcestershire (discovered in 1993); Glascoate, Staffs. (discovered in 1943); Needwood Forest, Staffs. (discovered in 1848); and of course, Newark. They are all likely to have been deliberately buried.

While weapons, tools and cauldrons are often found in rivers and other wet places, the vast majority of Iron Age torcs have been found on dry land (Hill *et al.* 2004) and most are not associated with built structures such as shrines.

Parallels with the Newark torc

The Newark torc has three close parallels; the Sedgeford torc, the Snettisham Great Torc and one torc terminal from the Cairnmuir hoard. All four of these torcs are of the same form, multi-strand ring terminals torcs with raised ‘Snettisham’ style decoration, with curved ridges and filling in the style of matting (hatching), and all include a particular distinctive detail that pulls them firmly together – they are all decorated with raised pellets which each have three indentations on them. Recent analysis has shown that they even have similarities in tool shape and punching technique used for the decorative chased patterns (Meeks *et al.* 2014, 151). They are presumed to have been made in

East Anglia, perhaps around the Snettisham area, between about 200–50 BC.

The Sedgeford torc (Brailsford 1971; PAS database reference PAS-F070D5) is the closest to the Newark torc; they are almost, though not quite, identical. They have such similarity of detail that it is almost certain that they were made by the same person or group of people. As well as the similarities mentioned above, they both have two collars at the point where the wire hoop joins the terminals, one decorated with indented pellets against a background stippled with ‘basket weave’ type impressions. Their terminals have the same design scheme with an asymmetrical tripartite void at the centre and each have the same details, in roughly the same place, of circles containing two raised indented pellets set against a basket weave background (Plate 4). Differences include the construction of the hoop; the Newark hoop has (probably) four wires forming each of the eight ropes, while the Sedgeford hoop has three wires



PLATE 4: The Sedgeford torc terminal (©The Trustees of the British Museum).

forming each of the eight ropes. They are different weights; the Newark torc is heavier, at 699g, the Sedgeford torc (including the detached terminal) weighs 573g; the difference in hoop construction may account for much of the discrepancy. The Newark terminals have lines of dots outlining the areas of decoration while the Sedgeford torc does not. Interestingly the Cairnmuir torc terminal has a line of dots outlining the central hole, but in other ways the Cairnmuir terminal is more like the Snettisham Great Torc. In terms of metal content, the Newark torc is most similar to the Snettisham Great Torc and Cairnmuir torc, all having a high gold content compared to the Sedgeford torc which has a higher silver content (Farley pers comm).

The Cairnmuir torc terminal was found in a hoard which included more than forty Gallo-Belgic coins, just two of which survive today. They are a distinctive bullet-shaped type from Northern France, Gallo Belgic XB coins, dated to the first half of the 1st century BC (Feachem 1957; Hunter 1997). Two loop-terminal torcs and one flat terminal torc from the same hoard have been lost, along with the other coins, presumed melted down in the 19th century. A Gallo-Belgic DC quarter stater was found caught in the Snettisham Great Torc (Brailsford 1975, 58). These are thought to have been made on the Continent in north west France between about 100 BC and 60 BC. The Sedgeford torc does not have any independent dating material associated with it; the main part of the torc was found through ploughing in 1965 and the second part during a controlled metal detecting survey in 2004.

Excavations of other torc findspots

What do we know about the deposition of gold torcs in Britain? While we know little about the burial circumstances of many of the finds, since the 1990s excavations have revealed information about some of the findspots. Fieldwork at Snettisham from 1990–1992 revealed that the hoards were buried in pits at the centre of an 8-hectare enclosure defined by a ditch (Stead 1991). Although it was not possible to date the construction of the ditch, it had been allowed to silt up by AD 100, about 150 years after the torcs were deposited. The ditch

would not have been defensive, but seems to have been more intended to define an area. There were perhaps 14 hoards, eight of which contained large numbers of complete gold, silver and copper alloy objects, and the other six contained numerous pieces of scrap metals, ingots and coins. Many pieces appeared to have been deliberately damaged. It has been suggested that the site could have been an open-air sanctuary or sacred place like those mentioned by classical writers and that the hoards were buried as offerings to the gods; for example Cunliffe (1997, 196–8) suggests ‘[it] is tempting to see Snettisham as little more than a clearing in a forest protected only by its sanctity and the religious taboos restraining the people’. The excavator Ian Stead suggested that the finds were a hidden tribal treasury ‘assigned to the earth for safe keeping’ with the intention of retrieval (Stead 1991). Fitzpatrick (1992) in response argued that it was not possible to rule out these being votive deposits, in light of the possibly associated enclosure, the prominent position on Ken Hill, and the deliberately damaged objects in the hoards. The interpretation of the site is still debated. Most of the Snettisham hoards are thought to have been buried between the late 2nd century BC and 60 BC (Joy 2015).

The Winchester hoard of Iron Age gold objects, discovered in 2000, consists of two torcs of probable Roman manufacture, two pairs of chained Continental brooches dated to between 80 to 20 BC, and two bracelets. Excavation showed that the hoard was buried on top of a small hill that was unlikely to have been cultivated, away from contemporary settlements, burials and shrines. It is interpreted as a votive deposit ‘in the landscape’ at a carefully chosen site, away from domestic occupation (Hill *et al.* 2004).

The Blair Drummond hoard of four gold torcs dated to between 300 and 50 BC was found in 2009. Two are ribbon torcs of insular manufacture, while the other two are of Continental manufacture or workmanship. Excavations at the findspot revealed that the hoard was buried inside a large circular wooden building. The building was situated in an isolated boggy area on a tongue of land which had a palisade across it, perhaps to restrict access. There were no finds of a domestic nature found in the

building, suggesting that it was not a roundhouse. The building has been tentatively interpreted as a shrine or temple. The hoard is presumed to have been a votive offering (Hunter 2010; Booth and Hunter 2010).

Two torcs, from Essendon, Herts. and South Worcestershire were each found in association with hoards of Iron Age gold coins and weapons, and are the only hoards containing this combination of objects so far found in the UK. At Essendon, in 1992, multiple fragments of a single tubular gold torc were found, along with a hoard of gold Iron Age coins. Part of the torc had coins wrapped inside it. The hoard was thought to have been buried around the mid-1st century BC. The same site produced another hoard of Iron Age coins, apparently from a Roman context, and a deposit of Iron Age bronze weapons fragments. Fieldwork revealed a system of ditches roughly enclosing the site (Stead 1998; British Museum Collection Online 1994, 0401.4). A site in South Worcestershire in the 1990s produced a fragment of gold wire, probably from a torc, in association with two Iron Age coin hoards and a bronze shield fragment. Fieldwork showed that the hoards lay within an Iron Age settlement complex of roundhouses and related enclosures, spread over at least 2.5 hectares (Hurst *et al.* 2000).

DISCUSSION: THE NEWARK TORC IN CONTEXT

The interpretation of British Iron Age finds of gold torcs and other valuable objects has been much debated in recent years. While theories in the past have suggested that such hoards were the stock-in-trade of a metalsmith (e.g. Brailsford 1975, 45) or wealth buried for safekeeping perhaps during times of uncertainty or perceived threat (e.g. Stead 1991), 'recent approaches increasingly argue that deposits of torcs and gold coins were ritual events that specifically had to take place "in the landscape" and away from domestic occupation' (Hill *et al.* 2004).

Can the Newark torc be interpreted likewise as a ritual deposit in a sacred place? Unlike many other torcs, the Newark torc was not found on a hill or other obviously prominent area, but on low-

lying dry land in the Trent Valley flood plain in an area that appears to have been heavily cultivated, within 2km of what would probably have been a major river crossing. While there are presumed-contemporary cropmarks showing field systems and enclosures in the surrounding area, there are none in the immediate vicinity of the findspot, indicating that the torc was deposited within the landscape away from other activity, as might be expected if this is a votive deposit. Perhaps the two parallel north-south pit alignments flanking the field in which the torc was found could have been significant in demarcating the area. Such pit alignments are thought to originate in the early-to-mid-first millennium BC, perhaps defining the boundaries between competing groups; their significance appears to have continued into the Roman period with field systems developing with reference to the earlier pit alignments (Knight and Howard 2004, 102–3, 144).

Tantalisingly, the findspot excavation revealed a possible ring ditch and a square-cornered feature; these were left unexcavated and may or may not be contemporary with the torc. Excavations in Britain have identified two types of mid-to-late-Iron Age built temples or shrines; rectangular wooden buildings with rectangular enclosures dating from about 300 to 100 BC, as at Heathrow (Middlesex), Danebury (Hants.), South Cadbury (Somerset) and Lancing Down (Sussex); and circular wooden buildings within rectangular enclosures dating from the 1st century BC, as at Hayling Island (Hants.) (Cunliffe 1997, 204–5). It is perhaps tempting to consider the possibility that the square-cornered feature at Newark might be such a temple.

It seems most likely that the torc was a votive deposit, as is now being convincingly argued for other torc finds (Hill *et al.* 2004), rather than buried for safe keeping. The nature of the site remains unclear. Was it a 'natural' sacred place where offerings were made, perhaps on the boundary between the land of different groups? Might there have been a rectangular temple enclosure there? Further fieldwork may provide answers.

As outlined above, by the 2nd and 1st centuries BC, torcs were firmly associated with warriors, war,

gods and votive deposits, pointing to their deep cultural and religious significance. They were also objects of personal adornment and as such were obvious symbols of status and power ‘in a society where elites drew social status from controlling the circulation of prestigious goods and materials’, emphasising ‘the power and importance of the individuals who wore these objects, whether they were personal possessions or communally owned symbols of power of office which could be worn by different people at different times’ (La Niece *et al.* forthcoming). Many torcs show considerable wear, with breaks and repairs, suggesting that they were in use over many years, perhaps passed down through generations. Some of the more obviously well-used torcs may have been particularly prized as symbols of a lineage of long-standing power (*ibid.*). The Newark torc shows signs of stress and wear, indicating that it had been repeatedly worn by people and had not been made purely as a votive object.

How did this torc come to be in Newark? It is presumed to have been made between about 200 and 50 BC, probably in the Snettisham area, Norfolk. Where known, the date of deposition of gold torcs in Britain appears to be between about 150 and 50 BC. It is likely that the Newark torc was deposited at this time. Movement of valuable objects such as torcs is presumed to have been through a process of gift exchange forging diplomatic ties between local

elites (La Niece *et al.* forthcoming), and it is likely that the Newark torc traveled the eighty miles from Norfolk through one or more gift-giving events, perhaps over many years. The circumstances which led to the deposition of such a valuable object can only be guessed at. The torc joins a small group of ‘high status’ Middle to Late Iron Age objects from Nottinghamshire, which includes a decorated 3rd-century BC shield boss from the Trent near Ratcliffe-on-Soar (Watkin *et al.* 1996); a 2nd- or 3rd-century BC scabbard plate from the Trent at Sutton Reach (May 1976, 128–9, pl.3); a Continental La Tène-style glass bead from Gamston (Knight 1992); and numerous British and Gallo-Belgic Iron Age coins (for example see the PAS database). These hint at the wealth, culture and tribal alliances of the people living in Nottinghamshire during the Iron Age.

The Newark torc was a hugely unexpected and important find which both sheds some light on, and raises many questions about, the people and landscape of Iron Age Nottinghamshire. The East Midlands Research Agenda calls for research into placed deposits and sites of possible shrines or temples (Knight *et al.* 2012, 67, objective 4H) and further research into and fieldwork in and around the area of the findspot would be desirable, perhaps clarifying questions about the torc’s deposition and its place in the landscape. The torc was acquired through the Treasure process by Newark Museum where it is available for future study.

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