

## SOME EXOTIC DISCOVERIES AT SILKSTEAD SANDPIT, OTTERBOURNE, AND THE POSSIBLE SITE OF AN ANCIENT TEMPLE

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Illustrations by NICK GRIFFITHS

### ABSTRACT

*The stray finds from the Silkstead Sandpit, Otterbourne, are described and the history of each, as far as is known, is discussed. A number of the items are 'exotics' from the Mediterranean world and are unlikely to have been imported in antiquity. There is the possibility that the site was 'salted' in the 18th century. The majority of the finds, however, are not inconsistent with a Hampshire context. The suggestion is made that workings at the sandpit destroyed an archaeological site, perhaps that of an Iron Age and Romano-British temple.*

### INTRODUCTION

The collections of the Winchester Museums Service contain a number of items recorded as having been found in or close by the Silkstead Sandpit, Otterbourne. The site is at SU 456237 situated to the south of Poles Lane which connects the village of Silkstead to the Winchester-Southampton road at Otterbourne and which forms the boundary between the parishes of Compton and Otterbourne (Fig 1). Silkstead itself lies in the parish of Compton. The site has also been referred to as the Otterbourne Sandpit, Poles Lane Sandpit, Undy's Pit and the Silkstead Lane Sandpit.

Publication of the group has so far been in a piecemeal fashion and the opportunity is here taken of listing the finds, along with any published references, in order that its significance as a whole may be appreciated.

The history of the discoveries appears to go back to 1742 or thereabouts with the finding of

a portrait medallion of Julius Caesar (ARCH 176). The circumstances of the find are given by Milner (1798, 15) who it is worth quoting in full: 'About 56 years ago, some labourers digging for sand near the entrance of Otterburn, which is a village four miles distant from Winchester, found, at a depth of 12 ft, a plate of mixed white metal (such as those which were fixed to the eagles, or other ensigns of the Roman generals) with the head and inscription of Julius Caesar upon it, in as high preservation as if it had but just been stamped. This circumstance, together with the depth and nature of the soil, creates a suspicion that it had been purposely buried. The medal has been in the possession of one of the labourers (still living in the village) from the time of the discovery, until within these three months, when it fell into the hands of an ingenious medical gentleman of this city, by whose favour it is engraved in our Miscellaneous Plate.' It was exhibited during the annual meeting at Winchester, in 1845, of the Archaeological Institute of Great Britain and Ireland (Proceedings, 1845, xl) but thereafter was lost sight of and, certainly by the end of the century, is recorded as having been 'apparently lost' (VCH, 1, 346). The medallion was given to Winchester City Museum in 1937 by Miss Priestley Fitt of Bar End, Winchester, and its subsequent reappearance is detailed in a note by E E Hooley in the Hampshire Observer (Saturday, May 8th 1937). She accepts implicitly that the Otterbourne, or Silkstead, Sandpit was the provenance alluded to by Milner. The Ordnance Survey for long

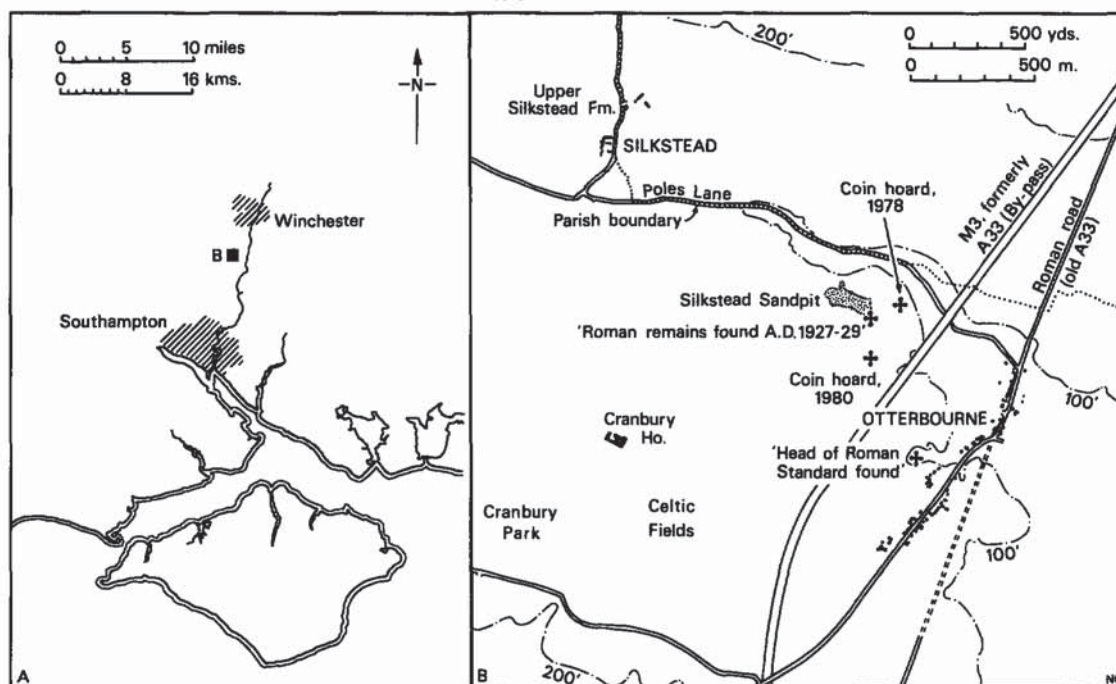


Fig 1. Location map.

recorded the find as having been made at SU 45812320 ('Head of Roman Standard found') six hundred metres to the south-east of the sandpit. Unfortunately, the records relating to the find were destroyed during the last war so the siting cannot be substantiated. The National Archaeological Record, however, notes that with such an early find the siting is unlikely to have been more than approximate.

In 1908 William Dale, the local antiquary, published a note describing a 'gourd-shaped vessel of red ware which was found in digging at a sand-pit at Otterbourne, near Winchester' (1908, 250). He went on to say that the vessel had been assigned a date of about the 7th century BC and a Mediterranean origin adding '... although I did not find it myself I believe the story of the man who did, and that it was found as described.' Dale's own collection of antiquities was purchased by public subscription and passed to the City Museum in 1919. The vessel was listed as item number 922 in the accession register.

The majority of the known finds were made during the 1920's and it seems that the sandpit was closed down towards the end of that decade. The four glass vessels (ARCH 263.1-4) were acquired in July 1922. They were purchased from a Miss Spranger and recorded in the accession register as 'Roman glass found at Silkstead near Winchester'. Drew (1939, 14) mentions the vessels and the confusion as to their exact provenance which arose from the discovery of another site in Silkstead, at Upper Silkstead. He thought it possible, however, that the vessels were from the sandpit. Unfortunately, by the time he wrote, Miss Spranger was dead so it was not possible to settle the matter.

The sandpit came to the attention of O G S Crawford who gave pottery, tile and flint from the site (ARCH 263.00.1) to Winchester City Museum in May 1927. A damaged label with the specimens reads '... from Silkstead Lane sandpit 1000 yards n. of Otterbourne 1927, Romano-British, an urn was also found ...'. In

May and June 1928 E T Judd (the owner of the site) gave three Roman coins and 'fragments of very early pottery, daub, etc' from the sandpit and in August Judd and a Miss Keyser gave more pottery (ARCH 263.00.3) accompanied by a pencil sketch of what appear to be two pits. Further discoveries were made in 1929. Three iron nails (ARCH 263.5) and the quern fragment (ARCH 263.17) were found together 'in Silkstead sandpit' and given to the museum by Judd in May 1929. The bronze and iron 'wagon' fragments (ARCH 263.6) were given to the museum by Mrs Judd in October of that year with the record that they were 'found in sandpit, Silkstead, Compton'.

The discoveries of 1927-1929 (with the exception of ARCH 263.00.3) were recorded by Crawford as coming from the south-east corner of the sandpit and their position is marked on the large scale Ordnance Survey maps as 'Roman Remains AD 1927-29'. The Early Bronze Age beakers (ARCH 263.00.7) were found 100 feet north of this point in 1935 and donated to the museum in August 1952.

The best known of the finds recorded as coming from the sandpit is the bronze head of a girl (ARCH 263.16). The head was purchased by the museum in March 1938 from a Mr Richard Ford of Chandler's Ford. A note in the accession register records that it was 'found by Perron at Silkstead Sandpit circa 1927'. It was first mentioned in print by Taylor (1938, 196) along with other finds from the sandpit. The City Museum's honorary curator, E E Hooley, evidently attempted to gather information concerning the discovery. A reply from E T Judd states that the head was 'probably found in the sandpit to the south of Poles Lane'. A reply from J S Drew states that he had visited Richard Ford who had admitted that he did not really know where the head had been found as he himself had never worked in the sandpit and that by then, 1938, the actual discoverer (presumably meaning Perron) was dead.

The rest of the objects attributed to the Silkstead Sandpit came to the museum through W J Andrew. Andrew was first and foremost a numismatist (founder member and

sometime honorary secretary, vice president and president of the British Numismatic Society), but also a collector. At the instigation of C F C Hawkes he produced a list of all the objects in his collection that came from the sandpit which was sent to Hawkes at the British Museum in June 1933. In a copy of the list, on Winchester Museums Service files, each object is described with an accompanying sketch. With one exception no details are given of the circumstances of each find or of how they came into his possession. The exception concerns the two iron spearheads. They were given to Andrew by E T Judd who was able to provide written certification to the effect that they were found in the sandpit together at the same time. The list mentions the following items:

- the Middle Bronze Age palstave
- the Middle Bronze Age spearhead
- the Iron Age bridle-bit
- the iron spearhead
- the second iron spearhead
- six complete Roman pottery vessels
- the 'dolphin' buckle
- the bronze cylinder and rods
- the Iron Age brooch
- forty Roman coins

Two other vessels from the sandpit are referred to as still being in Judd's possession. These two vessels eventually passed to Judd's son, G R Judd, who donated them to Chelmsford Museums Service in 1972 from whence they were transferred to Winchester in July 1990 (ARCH 263.00.8/1 and ARCH 263.00.8/2). A third vessel, 'a very interesting urn' was reputedly sold to a Winchester dealer and cannot now be traced.

The two-handled flask (ARCH 263.00.4) was given to the City Museum by Andrew in 1929 and a further three vessels (ARCH 263.00.5/1, ARCH 263.00.5/2 and ARCH 263.00.5/3) were donated by Mrs Andrew in 1934. A note in the accession register refers to one of them (ARCH 263.00.5/2) as having been 'given by Mrs Judd to Mr W J Andrew'. The remainder of the Andrew collection, including the bronze stud (ARCH 263.15) not

mentioned in the 1933 list, was eventually acquired by the museum on the death of Andrew's widow – by then Mrs Tilling – in 1955. How W J Andrew acquired the majority of his material from the Silkstead Sandpit and the basis of their attribution must remain a mystery.

In recent years further items have been recovered from the area of the sandpit with the discovery, in 1978 and 1980, of the two late Roman hoards of silver coins.

#### CATALOGUE OF FINDS

*Portrait medallion of Julius Caesar*  
ARCH 176 (Fig 2)

The bronze medallion was first correctly identified by Eric Maclagan, of the Victoria and Albert Museum, in 1937, who wrote 'In the opinion of the Officers of the Department concerned it is probably a 17th or early 18th century copy of a late 15th or early 16th



Fig 2. Portrait medallion.

century Italian medallion – in its turn a free copy of a classical cameo.' He went on to draw parallels with examples in Brescia and Vienna. This identification has been confirmed recently by J G Pollard, late of the Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge, to whom I am grateful for providing me with published references to the Vienna (Planiscig 1919, pl 5, no 328) and Brescia (Rossi 1974, fig 45, no 128) examples (pers comm). Referring to the Otterbourne example, Pollard writes: 'Iconographically the effigy is interesting because it is not a slavish copy of an antique coin or gem portrait, but a renaissance variant. The deep curl to the bottom of the ribbon that ties the wreath has no classical precedent, I believe. Your plaquette differs from the Vienna and Brescia examples in having a rather coarse inscription – the lettering style appears in a series of portraits of worthies by Claude Warin, some of

which are illustrated in Mark Jones, *French Medals 1600–1672, A Catalogue of the French Medals in the British Museum*, vol 2, London 1988, nos 315–320. These all have heavy pearl borders so that I do not think the Julius Caesar to be French. The edge of your example ... is similar to the edges of Italian cast medals of that period.'

*Red ware vessel*  
(Fig 3)

Sadly, this item can no longer be located in the museum's collections. Fortunately, however, Dale included an illustration of the vessel in his report (1908, 249–250) which is reproduced here. I am grateful to J Lesley Fitton of the Department of Greek and Roman Antiquities at the British Museum for making an identification based on this illustration. She writes:

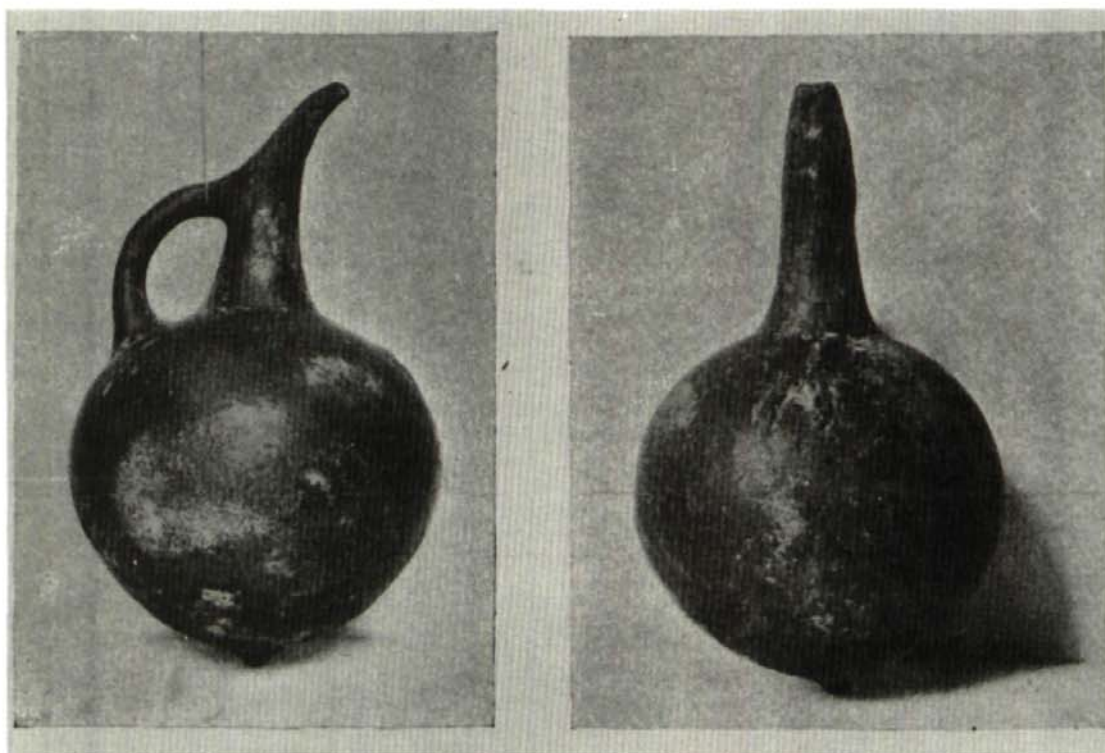


Fig 3. Red ware vessel.

'The vessel looks to me as if it might well be of Cypriot red-polished ware and date from the Early Bronze Age on the island, (about 2300–1800BC) ... the pointed base and cutaway spout are characteristic. Similar vessels also occur in Anatolia, but I think your example may well be from Cyprus ...'. She goes on to refer the reader to a parallel example (Morris 1985, pl 76).

*Glass vessels by Denise Allen*  
ARCH 263.1–4 (Fig 4)

(1) Small jar, complete but broken and mended, of pale green glass. It is irregular and roughly made, with impurities within the metal. The neck is flaring, with an irregular, fire-rounded rim. The body is bulbous, with six shallow indents and a slightly concave base. The surfaces are pitted and iridescent, with patches of thicker whitish iridescence. This latter weathering may originally have

been more widespread, as it appears to have been rubbed off other parts of the body. Height c 55 mm; diameter of rim 38 mm; max body diameter 43 mm

(2) Complete unguent bottle of pale green glass, roughly made. The rim is irregular, outflared and fire-rounded. The long cylindrical neck bends to one side, probably due to lack of care when manufactured, and expands slightly above the small, flattened-conical body with flat base. The surfaces are pitted, with a patchy thick layer of whitish iridescence.

Max height 99 mm; diameter of rim 21 mm; max body diameter 29 mm

(3) Complete unguent bottle of bubbly pale green glass, very roughly and irregularly made, so that the vessel does not stand vertically. The rim is flaring and is folded outward, upward and inward. The cylindrical neck cur-

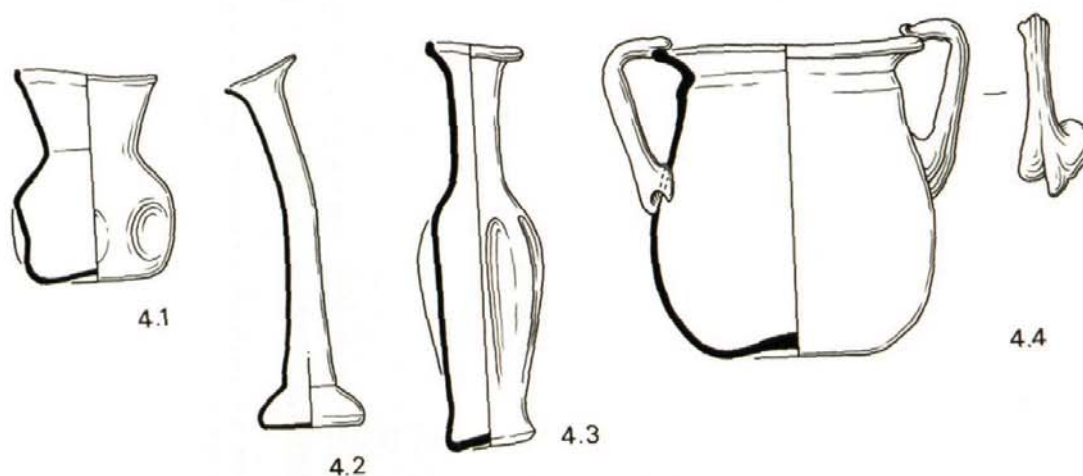


Fig 4. 1–4 Glass vessels.



Fig 5. Iron Age or Roman quernstone.

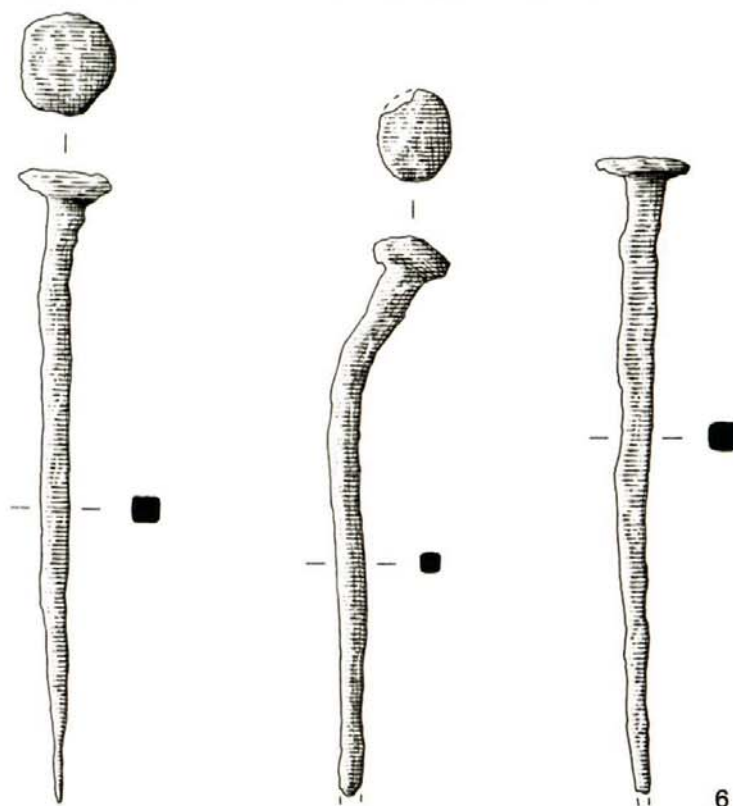


Fig 6. Iron nails.

ves smoothly into a slightly bulbous body with seven shallow, oval indents. The base is slightly concave with a central pontil mark on the underside. A thick layer of whitish iridescence survives in patches, the edges of which are smooth, suggesting that it has been partially rubbed off, rather than that it has flaked off naturally.

Height 107 mm; diameter of rim 26 mm; max body diameter 33 mm

(4) Complete small jar of blue-green glass. It is of poor quality, roughly and irregularly made, with many pinhead bubbles and other impurities within the metal. The rim is flaring and is folded outward and inward. The body is rounded-conical and the base is slightly concave with a central pontil mark on the underside. There are two thin, round-sectioned,

angular handles, attached at the shoulder and at the rim, on opposite sides of the vessel. The vessel surfaces are pitted and iridescent in patches, with dulled blowing swirls and some lime accretion around handle attachments. A contents stain up one side within indicates that the vessel has at some time lain on its side.

Height 83 mm; diameter of rim 73 mm; max body diameter 77 mm

It is most unlikely that these four vessels represent a group excavated in Britain. The forms can be best paralleled by glass finds from other parts of the empire and the manner of their weathering, too, is far more typical of Mediterranean provinces. Indeed, at least two of the vessels (ARCH 263.1 and 3) show evidence of attempts made at some stage to

remove some of the thicker layers of iridescence, perhaps by a dealer in such antiquities.

Assuming, therefore, that the vessels have been obtained elsewhere and brought to this country in relatively recent times, it remains to try to identify their origins and date, and to ask whether they were ever part of a single group.

All four vessels are poorly made, to be used as containers rather than to be valued in their own right. Nos 1-2 can be best paralleled amongst the Roman glass from the eastern Mediterranean. Small indented jars similar to no 1 occur quite often in Cyprus (Vessberg 1952, 122, pl III:34-35) and turn up in collections with an 'Eastern Mediterranean' label (von Saldern et al 1974, 217, no 632). Unguent bottles shaped like no 2 have also been found in Cyprus, more often without the indents (Vessberg 1952, 138-9, type VI, pl IX: 9-12). The dating of both these forms is very uncertain, although there seems to be a tendency to assign them to the 3rd-4th centuries.

'Candlestick' unguents bottles like no 3 with long cylindrical neck and small conical body, occur commonly all over the Roman world, but particularly, and in very large numbers, in the eastern Mediterranean. Close parallels can again be found amongst Cypriot glass (Vessberg 1952, 136-8, type II, pl IX:3), dated to the 2nd century AD, but they are by no means exclusive to that island.

The best parallels for no 4 can be found in Spain and Portugal, where small two-handled jars are not uncommon (Price 1987, 34-5, fig 3, map C). The Iberian form is not exactly the same as that represented here, since it usually has an open base ring and the neck is longer and better defined, but there is marked overall similarity. The few dated examples belong to the first century AD.

It seems unlikely, on the basis of this scant evidence, that the vessels ever formed a single burial group. They probably represent part of a collection made piecemeal from various corners of the Mediterranean, their main interest lying in their antiquity rather than their craftsmanship or original value.

*Iron Age or Roman quernstone* by D F Williams  
ARCH 263.17 (Fig 5)

A large portion of the upper stone of a rotary quernstone in a hard, dark grey, medium-grained silicified quartz sandstone. A small piece was detached and studied in thin section under the petrological microscope. This shows fairly well-sorted subangular and angular grains of quartz, together with some quartzite, cherty material and one or two small grains of glauconite, all set in a cement of cryptocrystalline silica. This stone can most probably be regarded as a greensand from the Lower Greensand formation. The slightly larger-sized quartz and the infrequent glauconite grains preclude an origin from the known Iron Age and Roman quern quarry site at Lodsworth, situated on the Lower Greensand Hythe Beds of West Sussex, whose products seem to be well distributed in the Hampshire region (Peacock 1987). However, it is still possible that the Silkstead quern may also have derived from the Hythe Beds of Sussex, although at a different location to Lodsworth.

*Iron nails*  
ARCH 263.5 (Fig 6)

Each of these three nails has been hand forged and each has a square-sectioned, tapering stem with a rounded or sub-rectangular head. In appearance they compare with the iron wrought nails found on a number of Roman sites. Manning, in his catalogue of the Romano-British ironwork in the British Museum, refers to nails of this kind as his Type 1 (1985, 134-137, pl 63 R84-R92) and describes a number of examples.

*Bronze decorative plaques and associated ironwork* by John Collis  
ARCH 263.6 (Fig 7)

The group of items normally referred to in the literature as the Silkstead 'bucket' consists of five fragments of decorated bronze sheet and nine fragments of iron. There is no evidence that they were found together other than that

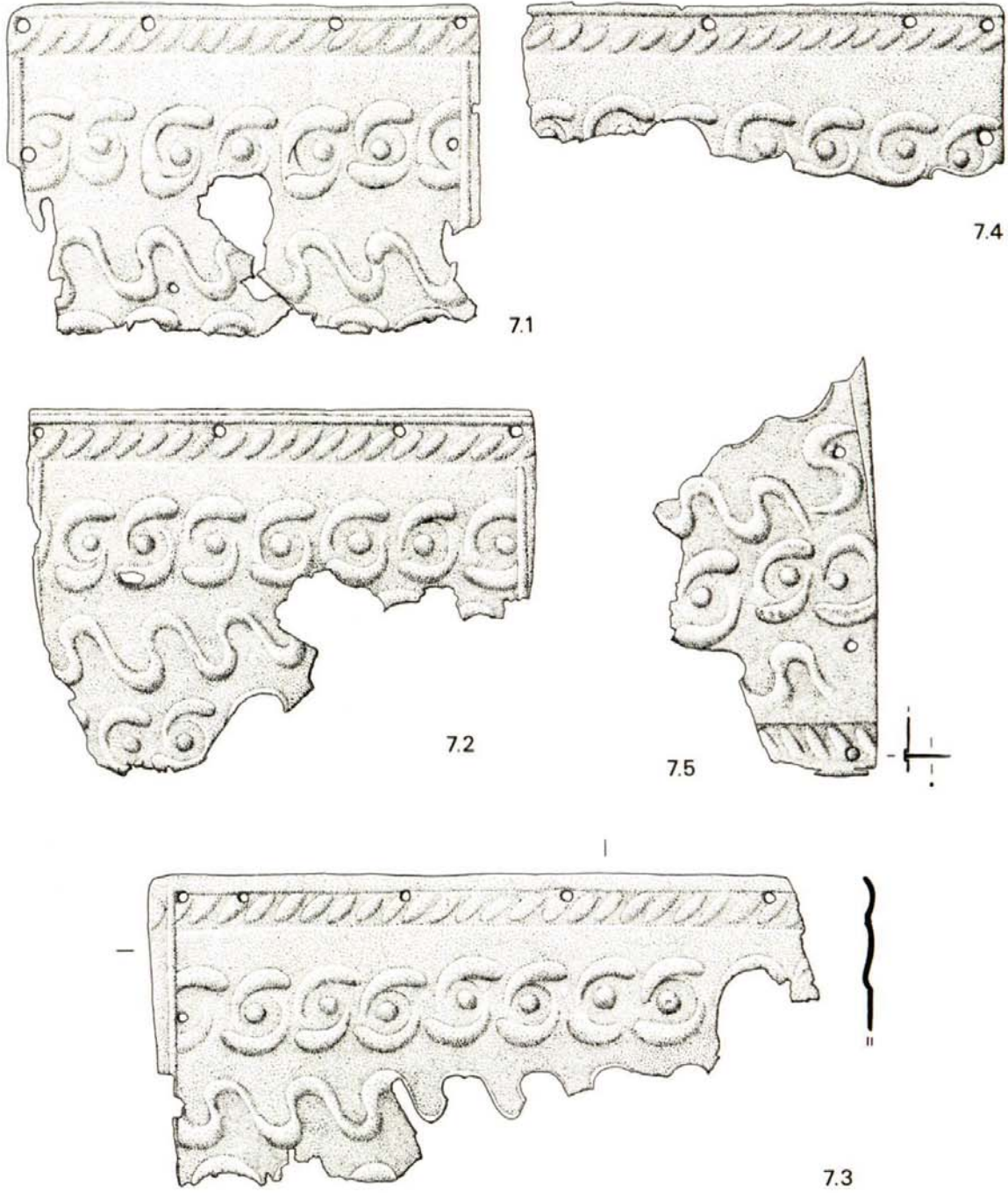


Fig 7. 1-5 Bronze decorative plaques.

they were all handed into the museum by Mrs Judd at the same time in 1929. Photographs of the bronze fragments were published by Hawkes and Dunning in 1930 as part of the appendix to their article on the Belgae and compared with the bucket fittings from the Late Iron Age burial from Hurstbourne Tarrant. It is on this note that the myth of the 'Silkstead bucket burial' has been built (eg Cunliffe 1978, 79, fig 4-6). There is no evidence that any bones were found with the objects – all other burials with buckets of this period are cremations and cremated bone might be expected to survive even in sand. Nor do the surviving fragments seem to belong to a bucket.

Firstly there is the evidence of the bronze sheets themselves. None show any curvature or of having been attached to anything curved like a bucket. They are all more or less flat. Some Late Iron Age-Gallo-Roman buckets had tripod feet, for instance the two buckets from the burial from Goebingen-Nospelt in Luxembourg, and Stead (1971) had argued the same for those from Baldock and Aylesford before he was aware of the Goebingen finds. These feet were commonly decorated with bronze plaques, and fragments 1 and 2 from Silkstead could have performed this function, but in the find there are four, possibly five separate flat pieces, and no 3 especially would have been curved had it been a binding from a bucket. Secondly there is the pattern of erosion and/or wear. As Stead noted on the Aylesford bucket, damage tended to occur on the lower part of the plaques decorating the feet, and, if a bucket had been placed upright in a grave, the greatest contrast in corrosion might be expected between the top and bottom of the plaque. All five fragments from Silkstead show the opposite pattern – it is one edge which is well preserved, while the other shows corrosion, and in none of the five fragments is the other original edge preserved. Thirdly the iron objects are not likely to come from a prestigious item such as a bucket. None of the fittings form pairs; the two rings have different diameters; the two 'hooks' are of different sizes, form, and presumably function; and the iron tubes are of different size and

heaviness. None are items which can easily be fitted into any reconstruction of a bucket, and in the case of the 'hooks', they are of too heavy a construction. It is possible that items 12 and 13 could come from tyres (12 is curved and would have a diameter of around a metre). Assuming that the iron and bronze items were indeed found together and all belong to the same object, it cannot have been a bucket.

It is true that the best parallels for the bronze objects come from buckets, either in a more elaborate form on the vessels from Goebingen, Aylesford, or Vielle-Toulouse (Labrousse, 1974, 475), or the more simple examples from Baldock, Great Chesterford, or the smaller bucket from Goebingen. However, there is bronze sheet decoration which comes from other types of vessel, such as the 'vat' from Marlborough (Fox 1958, pls 34-36), or the bronze plaque from Levroux (Megaw 1969). Fox noted a number of flat pieces of bronze sheet which he suggested could come from caskets – Rodborough, Santon Downham, Llyn Cerrig Bach, Stanfordsbury, etc., and he included the Silkstead fragments among this group – 'the flat-sided casket from Otterbourne' (Fox 1958, 105). He added however (p 120) that some of these could have decorated chariots. More relevant in this context are the bronze fittings from the vehicle from Fredbjerg, Farsø in northern Jutland (Aarup Jensen 1969, 1970). These allow us to favour the possibility that the fragments form part of a vehicle or 'wagon'.

#### *The bronze strips*

The sheets consist of strips of copper alloy of unknown width. The sequence of manufacture seems to have been as follows:

- 1) Long strips of bronze sheet were prepared. The general outline for the decoration may have been sketched with chased lines, of which one survives on fragment 5.
- 2) From the upper surface a broad channel was sunk, presumably using a blunt chisel. The channel is broad, about 6 mm across, and less than 1 mm deep, with a rounded profile on the inner side.

3) Between the channel and the edge of the strips a narrow bead was raised from the back of the sheet. This was subsequently sharpened by chiseling from the front side. On fragments 1 and 2 the beading is more marked than on 3 and 4 suggesting they come from at least two different strips. The beading does not survive on fragment 5.

4) The ornament was then punched from the back side. Four punches were used. In the channels a line of grain-shaped bosses was punched. In the centre a punch with an S shape was used to form a continuous scroll or running dog motif. The third punch was lobe or leaf shaped which formed two bands on either side of the scroll, and, within each pair of lobes, a circular dot. The result is a sort of guilloche pattern. None of this punched decoration was sharpened up by chiseling. On fragment 5 the layout is different, with running scrolls on either side of the guilloche pattern, and there are traces of a second row of guilloche. This piece also preserves an end with an original traced line to mark the end of the decoration and one S motif is turned on its side to respect this line and to fill in a gap which was not sufficiently large for it to be fitted in with the proper orientation.

5) The strips were then cut into the required lengths and the sharp corners rounded off. In fragments 1 and 2 beading was then punched from the rear parallel with the cut ends. This obliterates part of the embossed lobe and scroll decoration. In both these cases the beading stops at the edge of the original groove. Fragment 3 also has beading, but it over-rides both the decoration and the groove and beading. Fragments 4 and 5 have no beading on the surviving ends.

6) The sheets were then nailed to something organic, presumably wood. There are several nail holes, but only one copper-alloy nail survives, on fragment 5. It is 7 mm long, with a head 2 mm in diameter.

Assuming that more than half of the widths of the sheets has survived, and the decoration was symmetrical, they would have had the following widths: 1, 76 mm; 2, 80 mm; 3, 72 mm; 5, 82 mm.

#### *The iron objects*

6. Iron hook with two iron nails 20 mm+ long – they have both rusted and broken off.

7. Iron hook with two nail holes which have been hammered through from the side away from the hook.

8. Iron tube with an iron point protruding from it.

9. Iron hook or tube of iron sheet.

10. Complete iron ring with an external diameter of 86 mm. It has a sub-rectangular cross-section, 6 mm thick.

11. Part of an iron ring, external diameter 50 mm with sub-rectangular cross-section 4 mm thick.

12. Gently curved iron strip or band. The two edges are original giving a width of 38 mm. The curvature would suggest a diameter of around a metre, and it may be part of an iron tyre.

13. Small fragment of iron similar to 12.

14. Fragment of an unidentifiable piece of iron.

#### *Early Bronze Age beakers*

ARCH 263.00.7 (Fig 8)

A number of sherds of beaker pottery were 'dug out of the side of the sandpit' in 1935. They were examined by Clarke and seen to represent at least two vessels (one sherd has a cordoned rim, other rim sherds lack this feature). Clarke included them in his 'Wessex/Middle Rhine' beaker group (1970, Corpus nos 336 and 337; figs 208 and 209). The illustrations published here differ in detail from those drawn and published by Clarke. In particular the form of no 337 is rather less slender. The fragmentary nature of the vessels should be emphasised. Clarke saw the establishment of the Wessex/Middle Rhine group in southern Britain as occurring around 1750 BC (1970, 106).

#### *Bronze head of a girl*

ARCH 263.16 (Fig 9)

The bronze, hollow-cast head, 123 mm in height and made in the first or early second century AD, is undoubtedly of British work-

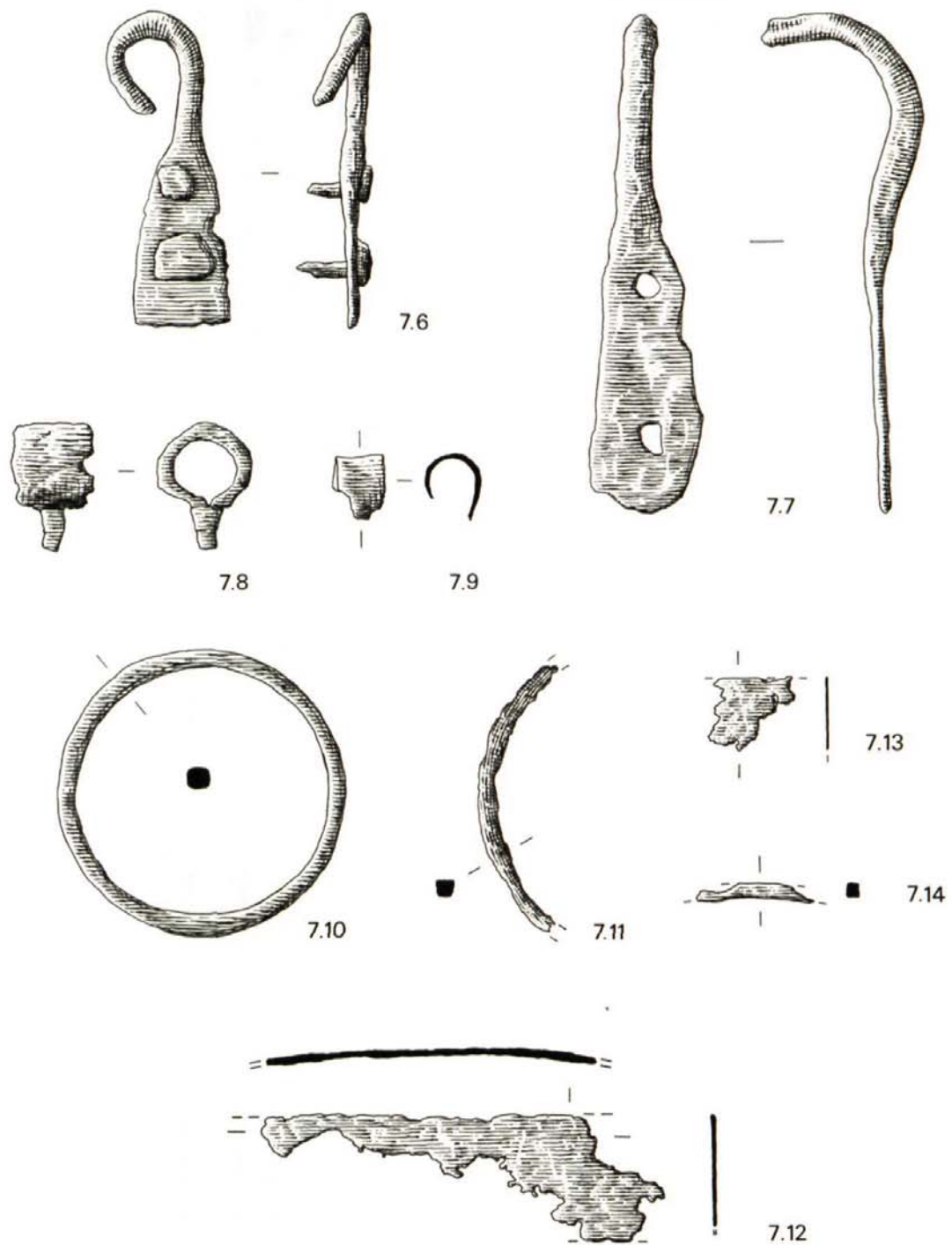


Fig 7. 6-14 Iron Objects.

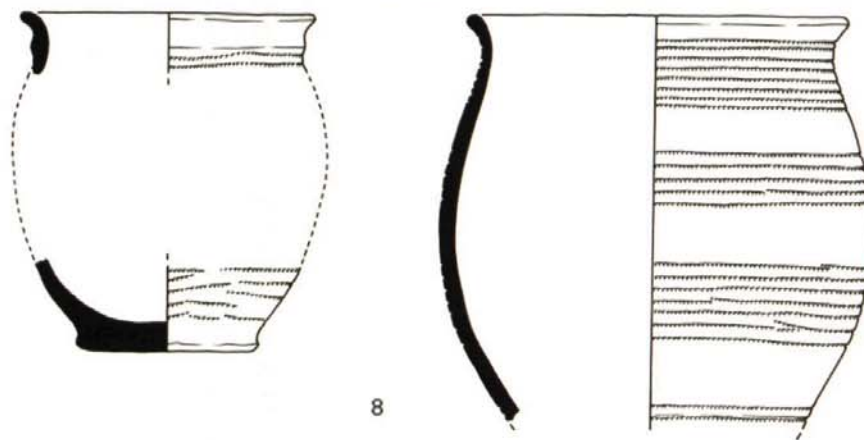


Fig 8. Early Bronze Age beakers, nos 336 and 337.

manship, the eyes in particular having an insular feel. The head exhibits a fusion of classical and Celtic traits. It has been discussed by Toynbee (1962, 126, no 8, pl 9; 1964, 57, pl VIIIb). A parallel can be found in the head of Minerva from Felmingham Hall, Norfolk (Henig 1984, 142, pl 64).

*Middle Bronze Age palstave*  
ARCH 263.9 (Fig 10)

This item has been categorised by Rowlands as a Class 1 group 5a palstave (1976, 307, no 547). He remarks that at the time of writing the object was untraced; consequently it is not illustrated in his catalogue and its dimensions appear accompanied by question marks. The palstave is located in the museum's stores and the dimensions quoted can be confirmed. Rowlands writes that group 5a palstaves represent a Hampshire adoption of the East Anglian form of developed shield pattern palstave and are characteristic of hoards in this region during the late Middle Bronze Age.

*Middle Bronze Age spearhead*  
ARCH 263.12 (Fig 11)

This example was recorded by Rowlands as belonging to group 2 of the side-looped spearhead class (Rowlands 1976, 365, no 1260).

There is some evidence that such spearheads may be dated to the late Middle Bronze Age and that they may have some relationship with the 'Deverel-Rimbury Culture' in southern Britain (Rowlands, 1976, 55).

*Iron Age bridle-bit*  
ARCH 263.13 (Fig 12)

This item is a bronze central-link from a double-jointed snaffle. It was first mentioned by Ward-Perkins who described it as a three-link bit (1939, 180) and more recently has been examined by Palk and published in her work on Iron Age bridle-bits (1984, fig 3, fig C21.2/DJ34, pp 38, 61, 90). Palk places it in her Category A, a sub-group characterized by having a mouthpiece of cast bronze with a rein-ring type consisting of an iron core with sheet bronze casing. In this example the reins-rings and side-links are missing and so the attribution to Category A relies on morphology (1984, 5).

The object shows a high degree of wear, the link-heads having been completely worn through. Such bridle-bits functioned primarily as harness fittings for the control of ponies, the majority of which pulled vehicles. As Palk notes (1984, 92) the evidence that the bits were made for pairs of ponies to pull in chariots is strong with over half of the bits in her corpus



Fig 9. Bronze head of a girl.

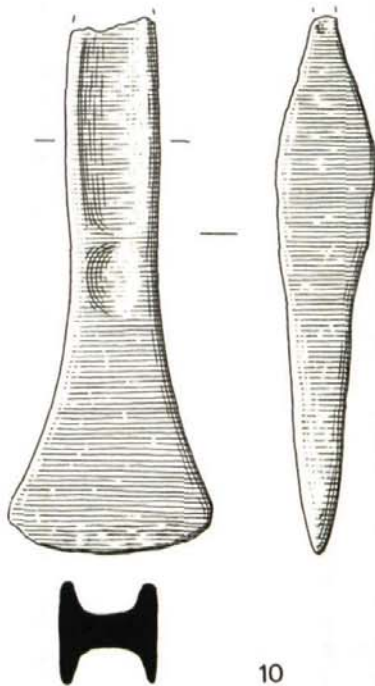


Fig 10. Middle Bronze Age palstave.

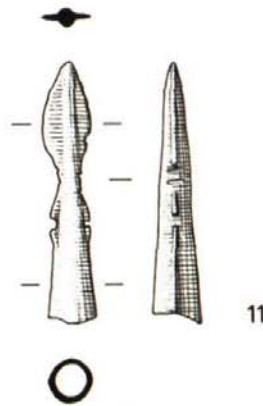


Fig 11. Middle Bronze Age spearhead.

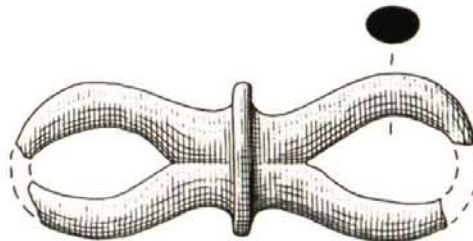


Fig 12. Iron Age bridle-bit.

having been found in pairs. She also notes that the high degree of craftsmanship employed in their manufacture attests to the fact that they were prestige items (1984, 92). In her report on an analogous example from excavations on nearby Hayling Island she observes (Palk forthcoming) that Category A bits have been dated to the period 200–1BC.

#### *Iron spearhead* ARCH 263.7 (Fig 13)

In the absence of any contextual evidence an element of doubt must remain concerning the date of this item. It perhaps bears a resemblance to the Roman types described in Manning (1985, 160–170). The length (185 mm) and width (56 mm) of the blade, together with its laurel-leaf outline, place it in Manning's Group IV A (1985, 167). A midrib is present. The socket is closed with a short split at the mouth. The external diameter of the socket at the mouth is 23 mm.

#### *Iron spearhead* ARCH 263.8 (Fig 14)

This very large and elaborate spearhead was found with ARCH 263.7 and the same doubts must be expressed concerning its age. The length of the blade is 295 mm, the maximum width 75 mm. No midrib is present and the closed socket has an external diameter of 26 mm at its mouth. The most noteworthy feature is the form of the blade. It is likely that the spearhead was originally furnished with barbs or, perhaps, perforations which have since disappeared. A possible parallel has been suggested (A C King, pers comm) in the staves of office carried by the *beneficarii*. Alföldi (1959, 7–12, Abb 1) provides a summary of their types, a notable feature of many being the perforations, some of which carry rings. The role of the *beneficiarius* in the Roman army was varied, the individual taking his rank from the

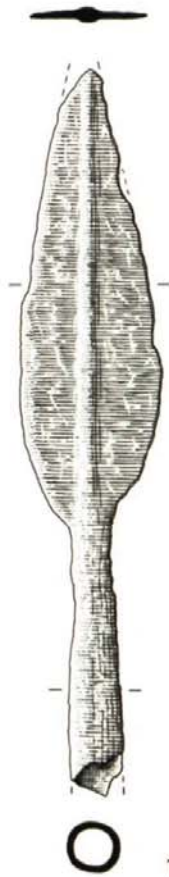


Fig 13. Iron spearhead.

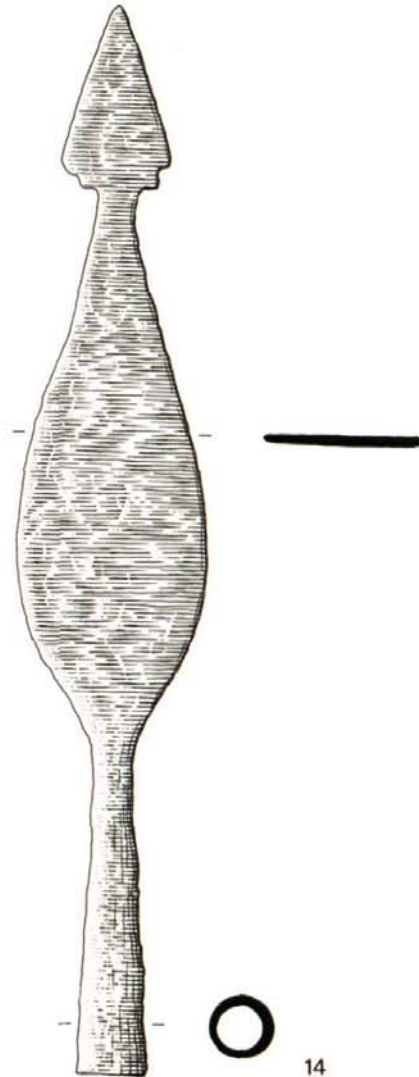


Fig 14. Iron spearhead.

officer he served. Interestingly, the presence of a *beneficiarius consularis*, presumably detached from the governor's staff, is recorded at Winchester on an altar dedicated to the Italian, German and Gallic Mother Goddesses (Collingwood and Wright 1965, no 88).

*Bronze 'dolphin' buckle*  
ARCH 263.14 (Fig 15)

Bronze buckle with a D-shaped loop and a straight hinge-bar cast in one piece with the

loop. The curved side is formed by the flattened bodies of a pair of dolphins with the heads confronted at the top of the loop. The animal-heads are fairly naturalistic. Surface decoration takes the form of punched scales. The jaws of the two animals are represented by a series of mouldings, the eyes by circlets. This type conforms to Hawkes and Dunning type IA (Hawkes and Dunning 1961, 41-45). S C

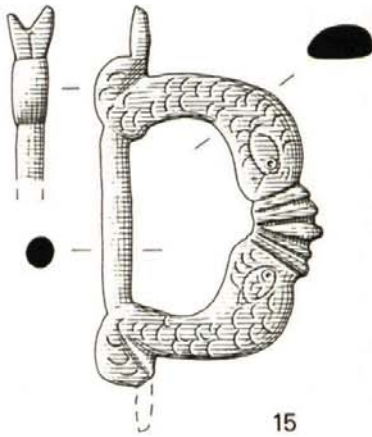


Fig 15. Bronze 'dolphin' buckle.

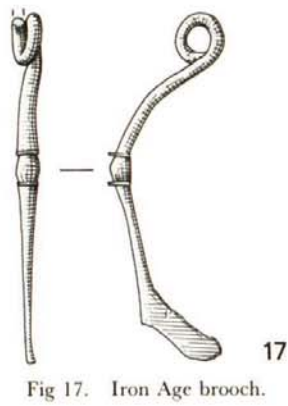


Fig 17. Iron Age brooch.

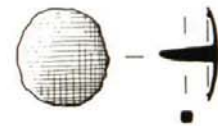


Fig 18. Bronze stud.

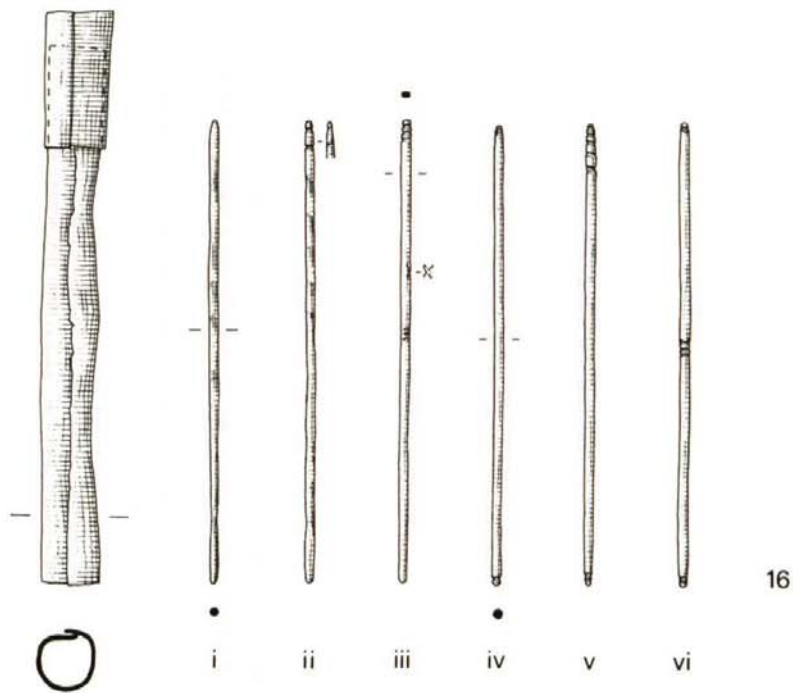


Fig 16. Container with rods.

Hawkes has stressed that the *floruit* of the type IB, the closest relation of the type IA, came within the second half of the fourth century (Hawkes 1971–1973, 148–151).

De responsu sortilego? *The container with rods* by G Lloyd-Morgan  
ARCH 263.10 (Fig 16)

Amongst the finds from Silkstead Sandpit is a simple cylindrical tube container, now lacking both ends, with six bronze rods, each with a variable number of incised rings and markings, or lack of them.

*The container*

length 141 mm diameter 15–16 mm

length of cap 37 mm diameter 15.5–17.8 mm

The container is made of undecorated bronze sheet metal with the longitudinal seam having been originally soldered. The cap fits on neatly and, although the object is a little damaged and misshapen in places and has lost both circular ends, it is in reasonable condition and its function as a container is quite obvious. Cylindrical boxes for medical implements have been found in doctors' graves (Hassel and Künzl 1980, 410, taf IV no 28 length 105 mm, no 29 length 96 mm, both of diameter 14 mm; Jackson, 1986, 130, fig 5 no 36, 37, also pp 158–9). They have been used in a domestic context for needles as, for example, a piece from Meols, Cheshire (Hume 1863, 220–221, pl XXII no 1b), now in the Grosvenor Museum, Chester (ex-collection of Mrs Longueville), or the turned wooden cylindrical case with iron needles from a late first century context at Vindolanda (Frere 1988, 434, pl XXII B). They have also been used to hold writing implements (Hayes 1984, 156–7, no 246). This type of box is not uncommon throughout the Roman Imperial period in Britain and other provinces with only slight variations made in the design according to the type of implement or instrument it was intended to hold.

*The rods*

(i) length 122 mm diameter 2.1 mm

No specific incisions have been cut, but there are approximately eight seemingly random diagonal indentations on the shaft.

(ii) length 121.8 mm diameter 2.3 mm

There are two incised rings at one end and nine diagonal indentations at random intervals on the shaft.

(iii) length 121.8 mm diameter 2.3 mm

With three incised rings at one end, with an incised 'X' part way down the shaft and possible traces of several fine rings or lines lower down. The cross-section of the shaft is a little angular.

(iv) length 121.1 mm diameter 2.6 mm

Incised with a single ring at one end and two at the other. Unlike the other rods this is rather more brassy looking and is also a little thicker and slightly shorter.

(v) length 121.8 mm diameter 2.2 mm

With two rings at one end and five rather irregular ones at the other.

(vi) length 122.2 mm diameter 2.4 mm

Incised with a single ring at one end and two at the other and with three rather irregular ones around the centre. There is a slight taper towards the end with one incised ring.

As these rods have gently rounded ends, one or both of which may be decorated and are not pierced by an eyelet, it seems highly unlikely that they were pins for use in clothing or in the elaborate hairstyles of wealthier women, or that they were needles, awls or implements of the well known types that turn up on sites in Britain and other north-western provinces. Each item is slightly different in its ornamentation and their inclusion within the cylindrical container suggests a common use or function. To modern eyes they might appear similar to the decorated bone or ivory sticks used in the Victorian and early twentieth century game of Spillikins. However, this

game of skill does not appear amongst the games played by children in Greek or Roman times, as witnessed by references in ancient literature, in sculpture, mosaics, wallpaintings or in the actual relics of games found in domestic, military and funerary contexts (Riehe 1984).

One type of Graeco-Roman dice which has been found in Egypt is in the shape of a bone rod of square cross-section with the values marked in dot-and-circle patterns along the sides (Petrie 1927, 57, pl XLIX nos 230–232, lengths range between 52–72 mm. Another piece was in the collections of Dr L H J M Sicking of Dongen, Netherlands, in the autumn of 1975). It seems unlikely that the Silkstead rods were used in this fashion as they would roll if thrown on to a surface rather than falling to display a number as dice of any form are designed to do.

The patterning on the rods and the variation of patterning that could be achieved by permutations of numbers and combinations of incised rings on one or both ends and in the middle, plus any extra designs such as the 'X' on rod (iii), suggests that they are the remnants of a much larger collection. Just as the Romans could see the hands of the Gods, especially Fortuna, in the throw of the dice or in the blind choice of numbered counters (cf the zoomorphic examples in Behrens 1940) it seems not unlikely that the rods may have been used in some form of divination by the casting or drawing of lots. In his introduction to the chapter on divination Georg Luck (1985, 244) notes that the lots, *kleroi*, or *sortes* were a well known method of foretelling the future with the use of, for example, dice, sticks or bones. Amongst the religious sites where it was known to have been practised were Claros (near Colophon in Ionia), Delphi, Antium in Latium and Praeneste/Palestrina in the sanctuary of Fortuna Primigenia. The method used at Praeneste and the origins of the *sortes* that were used were discussed by Cicero (*De Divin.* II, 41, 85) who described them as being the most famous of all such systems.

Even though Cicero suggests that by his day 'no man of any reputation ever consults them'

he clearly indicates that there still existed a tradition of respect for the temple and the authority of the lots 'amongst the common people'. This despite the massive remodelling which the sanctuary had undergone during the time of the dictator Sulla (MacDonald 1965, 7–8; Boëthius 1978, 169–174). It seems highly likely that the tradition of selecting a specified number of *sortes*, which were then read and interpreted, continued for some time after Cicero wrote, even if some of the lots may not have been the original ones. In a mainly illiterate society it would be only the highly educated classes who would have held the priesthoods or acted as temple guardians and have been able to read the archaic words or phrases on the lots, or indeed on any dedicatory inscriptions and other documents.

It would thus seem logical to suppose that in such a society, not only in Italy but in the other less 'civilised' provinces on the fringe of the Roman world, that words or phrases might be replaced on the *sortes* by markings or mnemonics representing different symbols or values which could then be interpreted as an answer to a problem or suggest some future event. As has been mentioned above, this could be done with dice where the numbers thrown with one or more dice had a specific interpretation, as is still practised in some quarters today (Logan and Hodson 1984, 38–42). So it seems highly likely that the Silkstead rods could have been used, within some suitably sanctified context, for some form of divination. It might be suggested that the blank rod represented a negative interpretation whilst the more highly marked ones showed an increasingly favourable aspect. Presumably the rods were plucked by a neutral third party, perhaps an innocent (?prepubertal) child, as mentioned by Cicero for Praeneste, and were then interpreted for the querent. No other similar sets of rods, complete or otherwise, are known at present to the writer though there are two possible candidates which could have come from such a bundle of rods. The first item, from a temple site at Chelmsford, Essex, is a bronze bar. It is 86 mm long with a square cross section and incised grooves circling the bar around the

middle and both ends and with 'X' incisions on some, though not all, faces and incorporated with the groups of incised rings (Wickenden 1986, 348, 350-1, fig 8, pl XXVIIc). The second item, which can be compared with the Chelmsford piece, is of bone, c 82 mm long and was found at Denver, Norfolk, in 1960. It has a similar style of incised markings though in this case the corners of the central section of the bar have been heavily bevelled to produce an octagonal cross-section. The bar also differs in that it has a central perforation though this could be no more than the natural hollow of the leg bone which was utilised (Gurney 1986, 110, Fig 70 no 29).

Although Cicero mentions that divination was used by the Druids in Gaul (*De Divin.* I, 90) there is little or no information about the methods used in different parts of Britain during the years of occupation when Roman practice in religious and other matters must have gradually coloured, if not changed altogether, all public rituals. The uncertainties of life at all levels will have led many to seek answers to immediate problems along with the desire to know the will of the Gods and to take steps to avert their wrath. The comfort of religious rites, even if teetering on the edge of the unknowable and forbidden through the use of magic and divination, would have been not unknown. If these rods from Silkstead are a simple device for casting the lots to answer basic questions such as 'Will the harvest be good? Should a certain marriage be undertaken? Will a sick child live?' then we have a precious relic which casts further light on the spiritual and emotional life of some of the inhabitants of Roman Britain.

*Iron Age brooch* by D F Mackreth  
ARCH 263.11 (Fig 17)

Only part of the spring survives. The bow, as it survives, has two parts separated from each other by an ornament made of a narrow moulding on either side of a wide one which has a marked arris running round it. The upper bow has an oval section while the lower

is rounded in front, square at the back and tapers to what was probably a pointed foot. Part of the catch-plate is now separate and examination suggests that this is the upper edge with a trace of the return at one end. The finish on the fragment shows that there was at least one large piercing through the catch-plate. The whole brooch is carefully finished and the back reveals traces of filing.

The attenuated form, the piercing in the catch-plate and the moulding on the bow place this brooch clearly in its correct group. The closest parallels have a tendency to have an external chord: Folkestone, Kent (Stead 1976, 406, Fig 2.6); Great Chesterford, Essex (Stead 1976, 406, Fig 3.3); Glastonbury, Somerset (Hull Corpus number: 0886, Taunton Museum, E 239. I am grateful to Dr Grace Simpson for drawing my attention to this brooch in advance of publication); Wrotham, Kent (Warhurst 1953, 159, Fig 5.1) and the present specimen may also have had such a chord. Stead relates a brooch from Deal (1976, 404, Fig 1.3) with this group and an outlier from Leicester may be added (Jewry Wall Museum, A116.1962.1039). Stead, in a recent study of the metalwork to be found with late pre-Roman Iron Age burials in south-east England, places these brooches in his Welwyn phase and notes that they are associated with metal and pottery vessels which pre-date the use of the Rosette, Langton Down and the familiar Colchester brooches. These are found in contexts with Gallo-Belgic pottery (Stead 1976, 411-412) of the first half of the first century AD. The metalwork which occurs with the brooches related to the present specimen belongs to the second half of the first century BC and, at present, this is the apparent *floruit* of the type. The distribution of these brooches is fairly wide, one may note the specimen already quoted from Glastonbury. Another comes from Lynch Farm, Orton Longueville, Cambs. Others occur at Fox Holes Farm, Little Amwell, Herts., and Monument 97, Orton Longueville, Cambs., (Mackreth, forthcoming). These, however, have internal chords, but it is not clear if any chronological significance may be attached to this difference.

*Bronze stud*

ARCH 263.15 (Fig 18)

This stud, with convex head and square-sectioned shaft, would presumably have been used to fasten fabrics or leather to wood, the large diameter of the head providing extra purchase. Similar published examples were found in Colchester (Crummy, 116–118, fig 120) in Roman contexts.

*Roman coins*

The museum's accession register has an entry for May 1928 referring to coins of Marcus Aurelius, Carausius and Constantine found in the sandpit in Silkstead Lane and donated by E T Judd.

The list made in 1933 by W J Andrew for C F C Hawkes refers to forty Roman coins. These coins were certainly in the museum in 1955 when Frank Cottrill, former curator, included them in an inventory of material from the site.

Unfortunately neither of these groups can any longer be found in the museum's collections. The only information we have is contained in Andrew's 1933 list which is reproduced here:

|                                        |        |
|----------------------------------------|--------|
| 'Early Empire, illegible'              | 1      |
| Vespasian                              | 1      |
| Titus                                  | 1      |
| Domitian                               | 2      |
| Trajan                                 | 1      |
| Antoninus Denarius fine condition      | 1      |
| Caracalla                              | 1      |
| Constantine I                          | 2      |
| Constantius                            | } poor |
| Valens                                 |        |
| Gratian                                |        |
| Magnentius                             |        |
| Valentinian                            | 1      |
| Valens                                 | 2      |
| British local copies of Roman coins    |        |
| and some Roman of late issue illegible | 18     |
| total                                  | 40     |

*The coin hoards*

On the 17th January 1978 a hoard of 543 fourth century Roman silver coins together with fragments of a pottery container was discovered by metal detector near a footpath on the south side of Poles Lane, Otterbourne (reported as at SU 45752383). Examination showed that the find was composed of 7 miliarenses and 536 siliquae (Carson and Burnett *et al* 1979). The find was declared Treasure Trove and seven of the coins were acquired by the British Museum and three by Winchester Museums Service (C4665–C4667).

A second hoard of 155 late Roman siliquae was found by members of the Hampshire Detector Club between August and October 1980 at SU 45632362. The coins were declared Treasure Trove, the British Museum subsequently acquiring seventeen of them and Winchester Museums Service acquiring six (C4999–C5004). The hoard was published by Burnett (1984a, 119–124). A further five coins were brought into Winchester Museums Service for identification in October 1989 having been found in the same location by a metal detectorist and obviously forming part of the same hoard. These were Treasure Trove, being treated as covered by the 1980 Treasure Trove Inquest. Neither the British Museum nor Winchester Museums Service wished to acquire any of the coins. They were examined by Dr A M Burnett of the British Museum who supplied the details which are published here. He writes:

'Five silver siliquae were found on 22nd October 1989 at the same spot as the hoard found in 1980 (Burnett, 1984a, 119–124). The new coins are clearly strays from the hoard, since they are of the same period and were all clipped (like most of the scattered coins from the original hoard).

A date in the early fifth century seems likely for hoard (Burnett, 1984b, 163–168).'

|                       |                   | RIC ref. | weight |
|-----------------------|-------------------|----------|--------|
| 1. VRBS ROMA (throne) | Valens<br>[ ]     | 27 (e)   | 0.96   |
| 2. VOT X MVLT XV      | Gratian<br>[TRPS] | 44(b)    | 0.90   |
| 3. VIRTVS ROMANORVM   | Arcadius<br>TRPS  | 106(b)   | 1.12   |
| 4. VIRTVS ROMANORVM   | Honorius<br>MDPS  | cf 32    | 1.06   |
| 5. VIRTVS ROMANORVM   | [ ]               | cf 32    | 1.02   |

*Iron Age and Romano-British pottery*  
by Andrew King

The Iron Age and Romano-British pottery from this site consists of six complete or near complete vessels and a quantity of sherd material. The vast majority of the latter comes from ARCH 263.00.3 and ARCH 263.00.6. Both of these contain pottery ranging in date from Early Iron Age to late Roman, or more precisely Early Iron Age and Late Iron Age to late Roman. As the circumstances of the discovery of the material are little known and both groups appear to contain a number of sub-groups found at different times and, perhaps, different places, the two groups have been treated as one. The small quantity involved and the fact that it is effectively unstratified are severe limiting factors in assessing the significance, if any, of this pottery. Significant sherds of Early Iron Age date have been illustrated simply to add to the growing corpus of such material from this area. The Late Iron Age and Romano-British types are so well-known that it is not considered worth drawing them and reference to specific parallels is made where necessary.

*Early Iron Age* (Fig 19, 1-5):

The pottery of this period may be compared with that from phase 3 at Winnall Down (Hawkes, 1985) and phase 3 at Old Down Farm (Davies 1981). Most of the 35 sherds come from large bipartite and tripartite jars in fabrics tempered with fine sand with varying

proportions of calcined flint and vegetable tempering. The core is dark grey to black while surfaces are mostly mid-brown, some of them having been burnished. One sherd (fig 19, 5) is tempered with abundant calcined flint up to 3 mm and is a light reddish brown. Decoration consists of finger/thumb nail impressions on the rim and around the shoulder and many of the body sherds have been wiped while the clay was still soft. There were also three small sherds from a haematite-coated bowl (cf Cunliffe 1964, fig 12.4).

*Late Iron Age/Early Romano-British:*

This period spanning the first centuries BC/AD is typified by bead-rimmed jars and bowls. Most of these are in predominantly sand-tempered fabrics but some are tempered with varying amounts of crushed calcined flint. Some of the latter are clearly pre-conquest, while some of the former probably date towards the end of the first century AD. Most admit of no close dating.

Also diagnostic of this period are two dishes both of which have an internally lipped rim and a concave upper wall above a carination and convex base (cf Hawkes 1985, figs 58.115 and 125, and Collis 1978, 218 and fig 94.42). One of these is in a reduced sandy fabric. It appears to have originally been burnished all over except for a band on the concave upper wall which bears a burnished wavy line motif. The other has an oxidised fabric with a brownish core and orange/red margins, and it has a cordon around the point of carination.

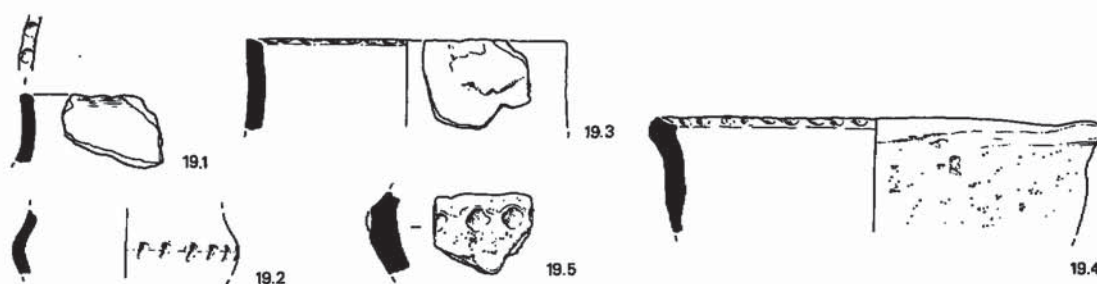


Fig 19. 1-5 Early Iron Age sherds.

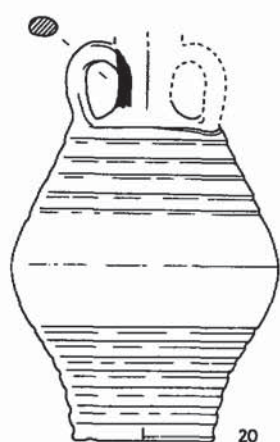


Fig 20. Two-handled flagon, probably an oil container.

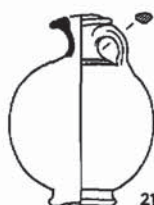


Fig 21. Samian flask.



Fig 23. New Forest beaker.



Fig 22. Small bowl with bead rim and flat base.

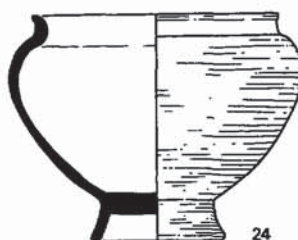


Fig 24. Shouldered bowl.

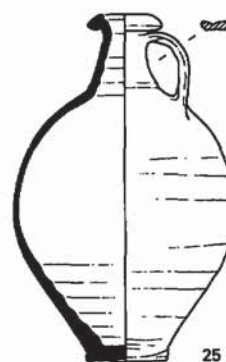


Fig 25. Single-handled flagon.

Other vessels from this period, represented by small sherds, are jars with plain everted rims, two necked jars and a lid, all of which are post conquest.

#### *Mid-Roman:*

One bag (ARCH 263.00.3/3) appears to contain a fairly homogeneous group of late second century pottery. This may however be illusory and pots dating from the late first to early third centuries may in fact be present. Vessels

represented include late forms of bead-rimmed jar, plain rimmed dishes and jars and cooking pots with curved everted rims.

#### *Late Roman:*

Evidence for activity in the late third and fourth centuries comes in the form of New Forest colour-coated beakers of Fulford's type 27 (Fulford 1975a) and late Roman grog-tempered ware (Fulford 1975b, fabric A) including a flanged bowl and cooking pot (Fulford 1975b, types 86 and 123).

*Post-Roman pottery:*

A few sherds of medieval pottery were found amongst the earlier material including two cooking pot rims of 12th/13th century date and two body sherds from a knife-trimmed sand-tempered cooking pot of the 13th/14th centuries. There was one post-medieval sherd, the handle from a red earthenware jug.

ARCH  
263.00.5/3  
(Fig 23)

Small New Forest colour-coated bag-shaped beaker. Fulford suggests a date range of c AD 300–350 for this type 44 beaker in his fabric 1a (Fulford 1975a).

ARCH  
263.00.8/1  
(Fig 24)

Shouldered bowl with short neck, bead rim and foot ring. Burnished all over the exterior and round onto the inside of the neck. The fabric is similar to the Late Iron Age Durotrigian ware and the form would also be at home within this tradition. It is very similar in form to a smaller vessel from Hurstbourne Tarrant (Hawkes and Dunning 1930, Fig 32.11 and p 308) and others from Maiden Castle (Wheeler 1943, Fig 73.209 and p 236) both dating from the first half of the first century AD.

*The complete vessels:*

ARCH  
263.00.4  
(Fig 20)

Two-handled coarse ware flagon. This vessel is not Romano-British but is of a type ubiquitous in the Mediterranean world where they were, and still are, in use as oil containers. It is, perhaps, North African and may, perhaps, be dated to the Roman period. It is highly unlikely that it represents an ancient import. I am grateful to Donald Bailey of the Department of Greek and Roman Antiquities at the British Museum for the foregoing information and also for comments on the samian flask (see below).

ARCH  
263.00.8/2  
(Fig 25)

Single handled flagon in a fine white fabric. The rim type is known from the late first century and changes little into the third. The earlier types however tend to have a more pronounced shoulder and the more elongated body form seen here is perhaps more typical of second and early third centuries (for example May 1916, pl LXIV.122 and p 149, and Gose 1950, type 384).

ARCH  
263.00.5/1  
(Fig 21)

Samian flask. This small vessel of globular form is possibly South Gaulish samian ware of the late first or early second century AD. A similar example, from York, is figured in Oswald and Pryce (1920, pl LXXXIII no 2). Of particular note is the similarity of the domed mouth-piece. The base of the York vessel, however, differs from our example.

ARCH  
263.00.5/2  
(Fig 22)

Small bowl with bead rim and flat base. This would sit happily with Cunliffe's Northern and Southern Atrebatian series (Cunliffe 1978 and 1984). Because the vessel has been restored it is not possible to examine the fabric, but the outside surface has been burnished. First century BC/AD.

The sherd material is very much what one would expect to find on a typical Iron Age and Romano-British agricultural settlement in this part of Hampshire. The longevity of such sites, in this case from perhaps the 7th century BC to the fourth century AD, is well documented, for example at Old Down Farm (Davies 1981), Cowdery's Down (Millett 1983) and South Wonston (A King, in prep). The absence of any recognisably Middle Iron Age pottery of the saucepan tradition is noticeable but hardly remarkable and could easily be accounted for

by the chance nature of the discoveries or by localised settlement drift (Taylor 1983).

In contrast, the complete vessels are more problematical. Firstly, it is by no means unknown for complete vessels to be found on rural settlement sites, particularly if they have been deposited in graves. There is no hint of any burials being found on the site. Secondly, the wide date-range of the vessels (about 350–400 years) would require several contexts of different dates each producing one or two complete vessels. Thirdly, the vessel ARCH 263.00.4 is unlikely to be an ancient import (see above). These factors, together with the fact that the complete vessels come from a different source to the sherd material cast serious doubt on whether they are derived from the same archaeological context – that is, the rural settlement – as the latter. They either represent a truly remarkable coincidence of survival and recovery from the Silkstead site or the result of collection from a different source or sources.

## DISCUSSION

Undoubtedly, the workings of the sandpit uncovered an archaeological site. Writing to Hookey in 1938 Judd assumes the presence of a villa in the south-east corner of the pit citing as evidence 'thick clay burnt tiles . . . and a layer of flints' and also 'a quantity of oyster shells'. Anecdotal evidence relates that flint walling was found when the incineration plant, which currently occupies the site, was constructed in 1971. The two coin hoards help confirm the presence of an archaeological site. Aerial photographs, held by the National Library of Air Photographs, RCHME, have been checked with negative results. The nearest surface indications of prehistoric or Romano-British activity would appear to be the field systems noted by Crawford in Cranbury Park a kilometre to the south-west in 1948 (Anon 1949–52, 301). The sherd material is consistent with a long-lived rural settlement spanning the Iron Age and Romano-British periods.

Some of the items, though of antiquity, are

obviously foreign to Britain and are unlikely to have been imported in antiquity. In this category can be included the red ware vessel, the four glass vessels and the oil container all of which derive from the Mediterranean world. None of these donations to the museum can be attributed unquestionably to the Silkstead Sandpit. However, the fact that each of them came to the museum from different individuals at different times does strengthen their attribution. If these items were found in the sandpit then how did they come to be there? The suggestion has to be made that the site was 'salted' at some period. Milner notes that the portrait medallion was found '... in as high preservation as if it had but just been stamped.' This need occasion no surprise as we now know that it was only made in the 17th or early 18th century. He also refers to a '... suspicion that it had been purposely buried.' It could be that the red ware vessel, the glass vessels and the oil container were deposited on the site along with the portrait medallion in the 18th century. The other complete vessels, though not inconsistent with a British provenance, were presumably also deposited at this time. The reason for the deposition, and from whose collections the items came, cannot be known although one can speculate on the possibility of nearby Cranbury Park. Brushe and Soffe (forthcoming) note that the estate was sold to John (or Jonathan) Conduitt in 1720, a collector of antiquities who was responsible for a work entitled, 'A Discourse tending to show the Situation of the ancient Carteia and some other Roman Towns near it'. This was based on his fieldwork in southern Spain and in it he describes how he '... brought away inscriptions, marbles, coins, pottery and medals'. Were Conduitt's collections the source of the material? This must remain speculation.

It may be argued that if some of the finds from the site were 'salted' then doubt may attach to the rest of the material (with the exception of the two coin hoards: Carson and Burnett *et al* 1979; Burnett 1984a). However, none of this material is inconsistent with a Hampshire context. The main body of it indi-

cates that the major activity on the site took place in the Iron Age and Romano-British periods. The Early Bronze Age beakers and the Middle Bronze Age metalwork demonstrate activity in earlier periods though whether this represents continuity of site occupation is not known. But what sort of site? The nature of some of the finds may clarify the matter. The 'wagon' fragments and the bridle-bit are prestigious and possibly votive items; similarly the coin hoards, the bronze head and, especially, the *sortes*. They suggest that quarrying operations at the Silkstead Sandpit may have destroyed a temple site in use from the Iron Age to the late Roman period. Unfortunately, the small size of the assemblage

makes comparison with assemblages from other temple sites unsound and it is unlikely that it will be possible to draw any firmer conclusion.

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