Later Prehistoric Finds Group

Issue 9 Summer 2017

Contents

Welcome to the latest edition of the LPFG newsletter. In this issue we look at an assemblage of mysterious moulds from Gussage All Saints, and a rare Late Iron Age spindle whorl from Calleva Atrebatum, the Iron Age oppidum which preceded the Roman town at Silchester.

The issue also contains an exclusive conversation between Helen Chittock and Elizabeth Foulds—LPFG treasurer—about Elizabeth's new monograph, *Dress and Identity in Iron Age Britain*. Congratulations Elizabeth!

Half a biconical spindle wheel from the Iron Age oppidum of Calleva Atrebatum (Silchester). Read more on page 12.

Welcome

The Later Prehistoric Finds Group was established in 2013, and welcomes anyone with an interest in prehistoric artefacts, especially small finds from the Bronze and Iron Ages. We hold an annual conference and produce two newsletters a year. Membership is currently free; if you would like to join the group, please e-mail LaterPrehistoricFindsGroup@gmail.com.

We are a new group, and we are hoping that more researchers interested in prehistoric artefacts will want to join us. The group has opted for a loose committee structure that is not binding, and a list of those on the steering committee, along with contact details, can be found on our website: https://sites.google.com/site/laterprehistoricfindsgroup/home. Anna Booth is the current Chair, and Dot Boughton is Deputy. Elizabeth Foulds is Treasurer.

If you would be interested in helping to run the group, we would love to have you on the steering committee. It is open to anyone who would like to be involved. If you are interested, please e-mail us at the address given above.

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If you enjoy reading the LPFG newsletter, please consider contributing.

Short articles and notes are welcome on any topic of interest to the group's membership, such as finds reports, book reviews, and introductions to new research. Please see the website for full submission guidelines (https://sites.google.com/site/laterprehistoricfindsgroup/home/newsletter). Articles can be academic or informal in style – both are very welcome.

The editor is also seeking to start a "letters page", to encourage discussion and debate. If you'd like to comment on anything in the newsletter, alert the membership to upcoming books or events, or indeed would like to raise anything of potential interest to the group, please write to Anna Lewis at lpfgnews@outlook.com. Please also feel free to e-mail with any questions.

Curious mould matrices from Gussage All Saints

Sophia Adams

A small collection of fired clay objects of previously unrecognised form have been identified in the collection of slag from Gussage All Saints (**Figs. 1-4**). They appear to be clay moulds with matrices for casting ridged objects, possibly parallel twisted bars but this is not certain. Although 7174 mould fragments from the site have been studied in detail by Mansel Spratling and Jennifer Foster, resources were never made available to investigate the slag and associated debris to the same extent. Recent brief macroscopic investigation of the assemblage has brought to light these curious mould fragments and raises important questions about the type of artefacts being cast at Gussage during the second century BC. I am keen to hear from anyone who is aware of parallels for these moulds or knows what they may have cast.

For our Leverhulme funded research project *The Social Context of Technology* at the University of Bristol, we – Jo Brück, Leo Webley and Sophia Adams – have been exploring the excavated evidence for later prehistoric non-ferrous metalworking in Britain and Ireland. This has included some investigation into the physical archive of the material excavated from pit 209 at Gussage All Saints, Dorset in 1972 (Wainwright 1979; Spratling 1979; Foster 1980; Spratling et al 1980). Dorset Museum kindly granted permission for a small-scale investigation of the moulds and crucibles including analysis by portable XRF. This work was carried out by the author in collaboration with Professor Marcos Martinon Torres and student Owen Kearn (UCL), Dr Julia Farley (British Museum) and Dr Jennifer Foster (University of Reading). The metallurgical results will form part of the dataset for our research and Owen Kearn's undergraduate dissertation and will be commented upon in due course.

These previously unpublished moulds were noticed in the boxes of slag while assessing the material held at the British Museum on behalf of

Figure 1 (top): Interior matrices of mould fragments showing chevron layout of ridges

Figure 2 (bottom): Exterior of moulds fragments from Fig.1

(Images courtesy of Dorset County Museum)

Dorset Museum. The majority are vitrified on at least one side but some pieces are vitrified on both the exterior and interior of the mould. Mansel Spratling has previously mentioned the presence of over-fired moulds in the assemblage and noted that these could greatly increase the overall quantity of mould fragments from the pit (Spratling 1979, 127). Jennifer Foster also studied some of the over-fired pieces but none that matched those currently stored in the boxes of slag (Foster 1980, 24). The fragments presented here were also unfamiliar to Mansel Spratling (pers.comm.). The boxes of slag contain a range of material that warrants further study, including iron-related debris which received little analysis in the original post-excavation programme (Clough 1985, 184).

The mould fragments in question have a distinctive matrix. They consist of parallel, diagonal, rounded ridges and grooves curving around one side of a rod-like object c.9–12mm wide and over 60mm long. Most of the fragments appear to represent two such forms laid side by side with the ridges at a diametrically opposing angle creating an overall chevron-like pattern (**Figs.1 and 3**). On a few examples the ridges on the two 'rods' are on the same alignment, sometimes offset (**Fig.4**). Our brief examination was not able to establish whether any of the pieces joined but the overall form suggests the 'rods' were decorated in the same fashion all round, rather than being flat or plain on one side. The series of rounded ridges and grooves in the matrix would form positive objects decorated with a series of parallel pointed ridges that wrap around the circumference, interspersed by rounded grooves. This is very similar to the relief effect of Bronze Age twisted torcs. As mentioned, the remains date to the second century BC, so would have produced Iron Age objects not Bronze Age torcs.

Figure 3: Four views of one single mould fragment. Left to right: interior matrix, end-on view (below), side view, exterior. Image courtesy of Dorset County Museum

Figure 4: Interior matrices showing aligned ridges. Image courtesy of Dorset County Museum

The question is what objects? Perhaps they cast straight ridged items or objects that were bent after casting. The outer surface of the moulds has asimilar character to the previously studied lost-wax mould fragments from the pit (albeit over-heated) but some pieces appear to have been more rapidly finished. Small areas where the clay has been squashed around the pattern are visible, whereas the other moulds are more carefully finished on the outside (J.Foster pers. comm.) (**Fig.2**). Where the mould matrix could be identified on 4677 of the mould fragments from Gussage All Saints pit 209, they are all for casting equine equipment: parts of horse bridle-bits, strap fittings, terrets and the ends of lynch pins (Foster 1980, 25). Is there a part of the horse and vehicle fittings that would have necessitated this ridged-rod form of cast object?

Or do we have evidence for the casting of non-equine related objects? If the latter is the case, this opens up the question of what was being manufactured in this intense episode (of unspecific duration) at Gussage, for whom and by whom.

If any readers know of similar moulds or objects that could have been cast in these moulds please do contact Sophia Adams: sophia.adams@bristol.ac.uk.

A copy of this note also appears in *The Crucible*, Historical Metallurgy Society Newsletter Vol.94 (Spring 2017).

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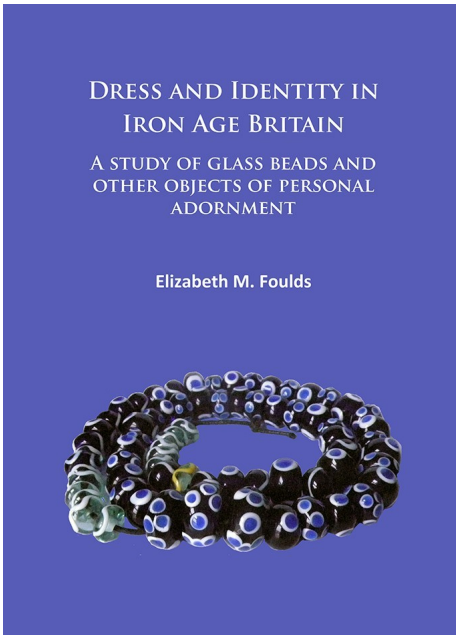
Sophia Adams *is currently a Senior Research Associate at the University of Bristol where she is busy writing up research on the social context of later pre-historic non-ferrous metalworking. She is datasheet editor for the Later Prehistoric Finds Group and is always keen to hear from anyone who would like to prepare a finds datasheet. Sophia was also recently elected to the Council of the Historical Metallurgy Society.*

Dress and Identity in Iron Age Britain: A conversation with Dr Elizabeth Foulds

Helen Chittock



Silica, soda and lime: these are the three key ingredients needed to make glass, the primary subject of Elizabeth Foulds's new volume, *Dress and Identity in Iron Age Britain: A study of glass beads and other objects of personal adornment.* Foulds addresses several important issues in this volume: the neglect of glass beads by archaeologists, the need for archaeological study of Iron Age appearance and the importance of interrogating generalised trends by recognising the complexity within them.

At the heart of the volume is a thorough and comprehensive analysis of glass beads from four study regions across the UK (Southwest England, Northeast Scotland, East Yorkshire and East Anglia). Foulds presents a new typology of British Iron Age glass beads and provides a much-needed update on this enigmatic group of objects. This detailed study is then situated within a broader analysis of other types of dress accessory, which challenges long-standing ideas about the spatial and temporal distribution of these types of objects in Iron Age Britain.

I've been given the chance to review this exciting new volume (see the Prehistoric Society for my full review), and to have a conversation with the author about the thoughts that lie behind this work:

HC: Hi Elizabeth. Congratulations on producing such an interesting and thorough piece of work. You've really succeeded in foregrounding glass beads as important Iron Age objects and I have to start off by asking why you think they've been so neglected by archaeologists in the past in comparison to other types of dress accessory?

EF: Hi Helen, thank you so much for the opportunity to discuss my book. I find it really strange, in a way, that these beads have been neglected for such a long time, given that many of them would still be considered to be beautiful by modern standards. I think their neglect is related to the history of archaeology as a discipline in Britain, the development of our understanding of prehistoric material culture, as well as the types of questions that

archaeology was trying to answer. However, the nature of Iron Age evidence in Britain probably also influenced this. Archaeologists latched on to specific types of artefacts that showed change over very long periods of time, such as pottery, as well as the spectacular artefacts of the period, like torcs. The beads that I studied were made of glass, which is a fairly mundane material by our standards, and they were rarely found in large numbers. The sparse burial record also makes it difficult to understand how they were used. I think that this resulted in their neglect to some extent.

HC: In the book, you define Iron Age dress as encompassing objects like brooches, pins, rings, bracelets and torcs. I wonder if there's a definitive point at which you draw a line around 'dress', and whether you might consider including other objects as part of a wider dress assemblage – like weapons or tools worn on the body.

EF: Yes, although it's not how dress is traditionally defined, I would absolutely include weapons and/or tools that were worn on the body with the usual articles of clothing and adornment. However, I would personally draw the line between those objects that actually attach to the body for use or safe-keeping, and those objects that are hand-held for use (and not attached/worn). Of course hand-held objects may still be imbued with a sense of ownership and identity by the user, but they are not a part of dress.

HC: I think one of my favourite aspects of the book is the holistic approach to Iron Age dress that you pursue during Chapter 8. What would you say the main advantages and challenges are of looking at archaeological material culture in this way, as opposed to studies of single type of objects that have been popular in the past?

EF: Yes, there are many advantages and disadvantages to this type of approach, but both approaches are needed! One of the main disadvantages I found to trying to understand glass beads within a wider approach to dress was that some types of artefacts have been more intensively studied than others. Brooches, for instance, have figured very prominently in Iron Age research in Britain, while finger-rings and bracelets have never been studied as a group. It became challenging to put together a coherent understanding of dress given the time constraints of the project. I think I would still be working on it if I could have studied everything I wanted to look at!

HC: In the book, you present a new typology of glass beads. As you highlight, archaeologists are becoming quite wary of overly rigid typologies, and I wonder what your thoughts were when producing this new one. How do you think archaeologists could develop approaches that use typologies in more sensitive and flexible ways?

EF: Margaret Guido first published a typology for Iron Age and Roman period glass beads in 1978 and I was extremely reluctant to propose a new typology when I started the research. However, it became increasingly clear that her typology just didn't help me answer the questions I was asking. I also became frustrated with the associations that some of her types carried and found that they were counterproductive and not conducive to building our knowledge and understanding. Therefore, I thought it would be best to start afresh and build a typology that would be flexible to allow different levels of analysis and that would help me answer my specific research questions. I hope that more archaeologists will take this same approach and use typology as a tool to **aid** interpretation, rather than to **create** the interpretation. In the future, I may change my research questions, and I will have no problem with developing a different typology to suit.

Figure 1: Example of an Iron Age glass bead (courtesy of the Bristol City Museum & Art Gallery F710)

HC: Your study shows us that glass beads challenge traditional ideas about spatial and temporal trends seen in portable material culture during the British Iron Age: the concentration of objects in the south east and the increase in objects frequency over time. Would you say this is because beads are, in some way, different from other types of objects, or because we've misread the evidence and allowed general trends to obscure complexity?

EF: I don't think glass beads are any more different from other types of artefacts than torcs are from swords. As archaeologists, we have to contend not only with differences in access and use of objects in the past, but also with difference in practice. This has resulted in highly regionalised patterns of settlement, treatment of the dead, and deposition of material culture. Broad patterns through artefact distribution maps can only show part of the story, but it is obscured by the way in which the material actually enters the archaeological record.

HC: During the book, you make use of data from publications, grey literature, museums and the PAS. What have the challenges and advantages been of integrating these different sources of data, and what advice would you give to those of us carrying out similar studies?

EF: One of the wonderful things about archaeology in the 21st century is the amount of data out there. Open access publishing, the digitisation of collections, resources held by the Archaeology Data Service, and Portable Antiquities Scheme data have resulted in a vast, but under utilised, resource. Even museums are making their collections available online, which is not a replacement for seeing artefacts in person, but is a huge time saver! But yes, these sources are not without their challenges. Integrating museum, PAS, and excavation data is

always going to introduce some amount of bias, but I think these biases are perhaps exaggerated by the sheer quantity of data out there. I don't think there is any way to avoid this and it would be better to use every available source than to exclude something. It is far better to acknowledge how your data is generated and look for the patterns that are consistent across the different data sources.

HC: And finally, your study has opened up a whole series of new questions about dress in Iron Age Britain. Where do you see the study of Iron Age dress going in the future, and what's next on your research agenda?

EF: I would love to see the continued development of Iron Age artefact studies in general and for others to continue to explore objects that have seen little or no study. I was only able to take a cursory look at pins, bracelets, and finger-rings and there is so much more potential. It would also be fantastic to see the evidence for textile production incorporated into our understanding of dress during this period. For myself, I add to my database when I can and stay on the lookout for any new and interesting finds. I've also side-tracked into Roman period dress in Britain.

HC: Thank you very much Elizabeth!

Dress and Identity in Iron Age Britain: A study of glass beads and other objects of personal adornment is published by Archaeopress, and is available from the Archaeopress website. Readers can visit Elizabeth's website (see below) for further information.

Dr Helen Chittock *(Helen.chittock@arch.ox.ac.uk) is an archaeologist who specialises in the study of Iron Age material culture. She recently completed a PhD on Iron Age decorative practices in East Yorkshire at the University of Southampton and the British Museum, and is currently working for the European Celtic Art in Context project at the University of Oxford.*

Dr Elizabeth Foulds *(ef@naaeritage.com) maintains a personal research oriented website (https://prehistoricglass.wordpress.com) where you can read about glass beads, and you can find the raw data used in* Dress and Identity in Iron Age Britain *on the resources page. She is currently employed by Northern Archaeological Associates based in Barnard Castle, Co. Durham as a Finds & Archives Project Officer and Small Finds Specialist.*

Meet the Committee

Following the profiles of Matt Knight (social media secretary) and Dot Boughton (deputy chair) in the last edition of the LPFG Newsletter, in this issue we introduce treasurer Elizabeth Foulds—who is interviewed elsewhere in these pages by Helen Chittock, about her new publication on Iron Age dress and identity— and newsletter editor Anna Lewis.

Elizabeth Foulds—Treasurer

Like a lot of people, while I was a child I was fascinated by the ancient Egyptians and loved archaeology! I have fond memories of visiting Walters Art Gallery (now The Walters Art Museum) with my parents in Baltimore, Maryland. However, my interests shifted as I grew up and I became fascinated with Northern European history and my undergraduate degree even focussed on the medieval period! Although I was really interested in learning about the past, I was interested in studying people that didn't leave a written record. This led me to Durham University where I studied European prehistory and I became fascinated with the material culture and practices from Iron Age Britain. I was intrigued when my supervisor mentioned glass beads because they were so different from pottery and metalwork! Studying them gave me the opportunity to explore how people construct their identity through the items they wore or the way in which they styled their body, which is something I am fascinated by. I completed my MA (2008) and PhD (2014) on this topic. Since then, I've continued to explore the use of glass beads on my personal blog: https://prehistoricglass.wordpress.com. I have been employed by Northern Archaeological Associates based in Barnard Castle since 2015, which has given me ample opportunity to continue to develop my interests in the Iron Age and other periods.

I have been involved with the Later Prehistoric Finds Group since it was founded and was very happy to take on the role of Treasurer. Essentially, I look after all incoming and outgoing funds. I'm keen to help the group continue to grow and develop into a sustainable organisation.

Anna Lewis—Newsletter Editor

My interest in archaeology and history has always gone hand in hand with a love for ancient literature and myth: I see both as routes to help us understand how people in the past lived and thought. In 2006 I graduated from the University of Manchester with a BA in Archaeology, and went on to take an MA in Early Celtic Studies at the University of Cardiff, a course which allowed me to study Bronze and Iron Age archaeology alongside the mythology and early medieval literature of Wales and Ireland.

In 2011 I started a PhD at the University of Leicester, in collaboration with National Museum Wales, looking at Iron Age and early Roman chariot terrets. It was at Leicester that I became involved in setting up the Later Prehistoric Finds Group, something I am lucky still to be involved with. After finishing my PhD I decided to move away from the academic world, but the LPFG is the main means through which I remain

in touch with the community of Bronze and Iron Age archaeologists in the UK. I greatly enjoy my role as newsletter editor, which gives me a privileged window into new research and debates. I hope to develop the newsletter into a more interactive publication, with interviews, letters and conversations alongside more traditional articles and reviews, and would like to encourage everyone who reads the newsletter to think about contributing. I envisage it becoming a space in which anyone with an enthusiasm for later prehistoric material culture can speak and share ideas.

I also write poetry, and have published three collections. The latest of these is a pamphlet called 'A White Year', a cycle of poems set over the course of a year at the Glastonbury Lake Village. Writing poetry, for me, has always been a form of learning; I started reading about the lake village while researching my PhD, and found that there was a great deal more I wanted to know. www.annalewis.org.uk

A spindle whorl from Silchester

Emma Durham

Excavations were undertaken in Insula IX of Silchester from 1997 to 2014. Well known as the site of the Roman town, relatively little was known of its Iron Age precursor, the oppidum Calleva Atrebatum. A primary object of the Insula IX project was to excavate down to the Iron Age levels to explore what was happening on the site before the Roman town was built. A small number of prehistoric finds predating the late Iron Age were recovered, primarily struck flint, including a Neolithic polished axe (SF 4022) which was found deposited in the floor of an early Roman building, and a fine barbed and tanged arrowhead which dates from the Copper Age / early Bronze Age (SF 7728).

In 2010 roughly one half of a biconical fired clay spindle whorl was recovered from a large silty gravel spread in the south-west corner of the site. The context is of Period 1 (c. AD 43/4 – AD 80) date. The spindle whorl is composed of fine fabric with sparse inclusions, and fired to a pale brown/orange-brown with a grey core. The entire surface is decorated. There is a line of impressed dots around the shoulder. The upper surface has vertical combed lines radiating from the perforation down to the shoulder, while below the shoulder the lines are diagonal, forming a rough diamond pattern.

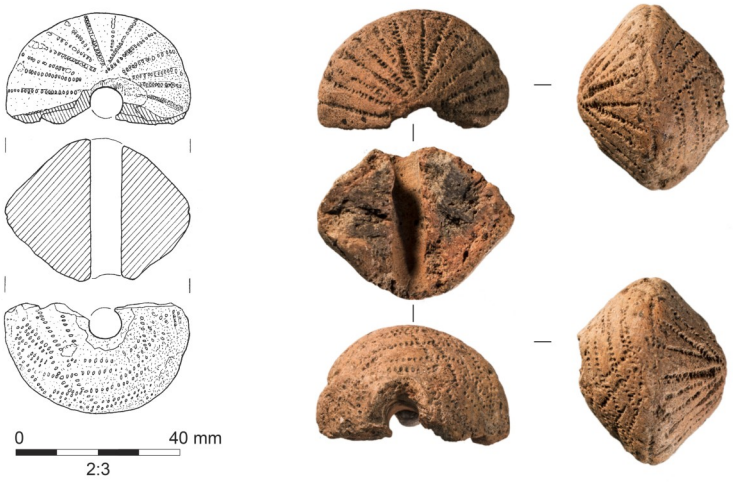


Figure 1: Spindle whorl from Silchester.

Diameter 45 mm
Height 35 mm
Diameter of perforation 8 mm
Weight 30g
Layer 11063 which overlay gravel lane 9015. SF 6044

Prehistoric textiles are not common in Britain, but there is a Neolithic vegetable fibre twine from the causewayed enclosure at Elton Maxey, Cambridgeshire, while Bronze Age examples include both vegetable fibre and woollen fabrics (Jørgensen 1992, 18–19). There are also few spindle whorls of similar date in Britain. Among the earliest are a Neolithic biconical example from Durrington Walls, Wiltshire (Wainwright and Longworth 1971, 188, fig. 82) and a spherical late Neolithic/early Bronze Age example from Maiden Castle, Dorset (Poole 1991, 210, fiche 8: A14). Both are undecorated. Decoration on prehistoric spindle whorls is not common and usually simple, such as the early Iron Age biconical example from Gravelly Guy, Oxfordshire which is decorated with two lines of fingernail impressions, one above and one

below the shoulder (Barclay and Wait 2004, 377, fig. 8.11 no. 159) and a globular late Bronze Age/early Iron Age example from Sark, Channel Islands which is decorated with a single line of fingernail impressions (Durham in prep., sf 565). Comb-impressed decoration like that found on the Silchester spindle whorl is particularly associated with early Bronze Age ceramic beakers in Britain, but it continues to be used on collared urns until *c.* 1500 B.C. (Woodward 2008, 297).

All of the prehistoric finds from Silchester are included in the forthcoming monograph covering the pre-conquest excavation at Insula IX, *Late Iron Age Calleva. The pre-conquest occupation at Silchester Insula IX* by M. Fulford, A. Clarke, E. Durham and N. Pankhurst.

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Emma Durham *(University of Reading) currently works as research assistant to Mike Fulford on the various Silchester projects. She has been a finds specialists for a number of years, having previously worked as a finds officer for commercial units and then as research assistant to Barry Cunliffe at the Institute of Archaeology in Oxford.*

Announcements

New datasheet available

The latest in the series of LPFG datasheets—*A Short Guide to Iron Age Glass Beads from Britain*, by Elizabeth Foulds—is now available to be down-loaded from the website.

Call for papers

The Theoretical Archaeology Group (TAG) Conference 2017 will take place in Cardiff from 18th-20th December. Papers are invited for a session **The Past in the Past: Investigating the significance of the deposition of earlier objects in later contexts**, organised by Matthew G. Knight (University of Exeter), Dot Boughton (University of Central Lancashire) and Rachel Wilkinson (University of Leicester and British Museum).

Please find full details at http://tag2017cardiff.org/2017/06/01/the-past-in-the-past-investigating-the-significance-of-the-deposition-of-earlier-objects-in-later-contexts/?i=2. The call for papers is open until **Friday 25th August**.

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