Some Recent Finds of Celtic-Type Vehicle Fittings from Lincolnshire

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This note has been prepared in order to discuss a number of items of Celtic-type vehicle and harness fittings from Lincolnshire. None of the items described comes from a stratified context although some were found on known Iron Age/Romano-British sites and thus have loose associations. In spite of the clear 'celtic' nature of this material the parallels all point to post-Conquest datings suggesting the continued use of this type of metalwork into the Roman period. None of the objects described here has been analysed and all must be simply described as 'copper alloy'.

1. Lipped terret from Appleby, South Humberside (Fig. 1.1).

This object was found by an agricultural worker before 1986. It now exhibits a high polish having, for some months, encircled the gear stick of the finder's van before being reported at Scunthorpe Museum.

The terret is oval and has the overall outside dimensions of 69mm by 54mm. The main part of the ring has an elliptical section which expands either side of the flat-sectioned mounting bar. Around the ring are three double lip-like projections, each pair of which is separated by a band of transverse milling. The large size of this terret suggests that it formed the central part of a pair of terret set.

The Appleby terret belongs to a well known group of Iron Age lipped terrets of which other examples have been found in Lincolnshire at Owlsby and Kirmington. The wider distribution shows these terrets to have been a southern type with the fifteen examples in the Stanwick, Yorks, hoard being explained by the movement north of refugees during the Roman Conquest. Finds from dated contexts suggest a date in the second half of the first century AD. The Appleby terret closely resembles a example from Neusthead which was found in a Flavian context. Further parallels occur in the Stanwick hoard, deposited in the second half of the first century AD.

2. Lipped terret from Barrow-on-Humber, South Humberside (Fig. 1.2).

This fine object was found by Mr John Barnes while he was metal detecting. He generously gave his find to Scunthorpe Museum, site code BRXx.

The terret is oval and measures 52mm by 42mm. Its ring has a 'D' shaped cross-section on which are three bosses. The mounting bar is 4.8mm thick and is separated from the ring by two 5mm thick plates. These are angled to give the slot a slight taper of from 16mm to 18mm. The striking feature of this terret is the profuse use of red enamel, little of which now survives. Each of the bosses has 2mm wide slots cut into its central section, five around the central boss, seven around each of the two lateral bosses. Two slots retain traces of their enamel, the others bear the coarse file marks which were intended to provide a key for the inlay. Around the outer edge of the ring are a series of rectangular bosses which were separated by bars of enamal, traces of which remain.

This terret is of higher quality than the preceding example. Enamel occurs on other pieces of Iron Age metalwork from Lincolnshire, in particular the flattened, crescentic terrets from Owlsby and Whaplode and the example from Roxby described below (Fig. 1a.9). The foot of a 'Yorkshire type' lynch-pin from Kirmington is inlaid with red and yellow enamel. This need not rule out a pre-Conquest date for the pin as there is now evidence for the use of yellow enamel in Britain during the first century BC. Elsewhere in Britain enamal occurs on terrets in the Polden Hill, Somerset, hoard. While the group of objects said to come from this hoard does include later, intrusive material the bulk of the hoard must have been deposited during the second half of the first century AD, a dating that would seem appropriate for the Barrow terret.

3. Massive terret from Kirmington, South Humberside (Fig. 1.3).

This terret was found with the aid of a metal detector by the late Miss Illida Sands who thoughtfully bequeathed it to Scunthorpe Museum, site code KMAA790. Kirmington is a major site set in a gap in the Lincolnshire Wolds between Scunthorpe and Grimsby. There is evidence for Iron Age activity on the site followed, successively, by a first century Roman fort and intensive Romano-British civil occupation.

The terret is oval and measures 54mm by 55mm. Its ring has a 4mm thick flat section with square corners. In the centre of the ring is a bifurcated projection with the same flat section as the ring. This projection necessitates a different method of attaching the terret to that employed on the other examples described here. On the base of the ring is an oval boss from which projects a tongue. This would have been inserted into the carriagework and secured with a transverse wedge engaging into a slot in the tongue.

This terret belongs to a group which MacGregor called her 'massive type'. As well as their size the terrets in this group share lip-shaped projections within their rings. On the Kirmington example the flat section of the ring has led to the tip motif being simplified and rendered two dimensionally. MacGregor listed twenty-six 'massive' terrets although, on her examples, a method of attachment was employed which apparently consisted of a strap engaging a bar set in a recess on the underside of the ring.

The best parallel for the Kirmington 'massive' terret is the example from Skelfy Park, Shiptononthorpe, East Yorkshire, which, interestingly, is mis-cast and unfinished. Similar tongue-like elements occur on the terrets from Polden Burn, Cumbria and Templeborough, South Yorkshire. Both of these were found in Roman military contexts with probable second or third century dates which agree with the dating suggested by MacGregor for her 'massive' group as a whole. The method of attachment employed on the Kirmington terret resembles that found on Roman 'bearing rein attachments'. As these attachments seem to have fulfilled the same function as terrets some degree of hybridization should not be surprising.

4. Simple terret from Kirmington, South Humberside (Fig. 1.4).

This terret was found by Mr Alan Harrison who generously gave it to Scunthorpe Museum as part of a major donation, site code KMAA809.

The terret is oval and has the overall outside dimensions of 37mm by 30mm. Its ring is plain with a round cross-section tapering from either side of the mounting bar up to the apex of the ring. Either side of the flat sectioned mounting bar is a 3.6mm thick plate.

MacGregor saw these 'simple' terrets as being particularly difficult to date as they appeared to have remained in use for more than 200 years with examples dating from the second century BC at Humberside, East Yorkshire and other finds coming from second century AD military sites in the north. Some doubt, however, now exists over the earlier parallels. The
Yorkshire finds are examples of what have been described as 'miniature terrets' which, although they resemble the 'simple' terrets, differ in detail. They are circular where true terrets are oval, they have parallel as opposed to tapering sections, some examples have a 'D' shaped cross-section and, in other cases, the mounting bar has a round section. The discovery of two of these 'miniature terrets' (each with a semi-circular cross-section) in a vehicle grave at Kirkburn, East Yorkshire, shows their true function. At Kirkburn the miniature terrets were found associated, not with the yoke, but with the vase-shaped lineh-pins where they appear to have played some part in securing the pin through the axle. The Asby, Cumbria, sword was associated with miniature terrets where they may have formed part of the baldric fitting. In view of these differences it has been proposed that the 'miniature terrets' be re-designated as 'strap rings', a term reflecting their less specific function. If these early miniature terrets are removed from consideration we are left with a post-Conquest dating for simple terrets.

Two other simple terrets are known from Lincolnshire with an earlier find from Kirmington, and from Owthby. The broader distribution of simple terrets has two foci, in the southwest of England and in the counties either side of the Scottish border although there is a thin scatter over the rest of Britain.

5. Central link from a straight-bar snaffle bit from near Caistor, Lincolnshire (Fig. 1.5).

This object was found with a metal detector by Mr Peter Marshall who kindly gave it to Scunthorpe Museum, site code

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Fig. 1 Celtic-type vehicle fittings from Lincolnshire: 1, Appleby; 2, Barrow-on-Humber; 3-4, Kirmington; 5, Caistor; 6, Keeby. (Kevin Leahy).
CAA 5. The findspot is near to the Roman walled ‘town’ of Caistor, an area which has produced large amounts of Romano-British material.

The fragment has a surviving length of 77mm but has been broken at both of its ends, presumably as a result of wear. The central bar of the link has a rounded-lozenge cross-section from which the two terminal rings were gracefully developed. In the centre of the bar is a round-sectioned triple moulding. Although only a fragment of this bit survives its length leaves no doubt that it came from a straight-bar snaffle bit and not from a double jointed snaffle bit, (formally known as the ‘iron Age three link bit’). In the latter the use of the two extended lateral links allowed a reduction in the length of the central link. The Caistor bit can best be dated by finds in the Stanwick hoard which was deposited in the mid-first century AD.

The only other Iron Age bits known from Lincolnshire are the three double-jointed snaffles from Ulceby (presumably Ulceby-on-Wolds)." There is also a fragment of a straight-bar snaffle bit from just across the River Trent at Brough, Nottinghamshire. Nationally the distribution of straight-bar snaffle bits is widespread and sparse, distorted somewhat by the seven examples from the Stanwick, Yorkshire, hoard. There is, however, a scatter of five findspots to the north-west of Hadrian’s Wall.

6. ‘Figure of eight’ strap-union from Keelby, South Humberside (Fig. 1.6).

This object was found by Mr John Barnes who kindly allowed a record to be made of it. Little other Iron Age material is known from the Keelby area although there is evidence of activity during this period throughout North Lincolnshire.

The strap-union is complete and measures 33mm by 28mm. In form it consists of two conjoined rings each with a trapezoid cross-section. On either side of the rings are bars wide enough to accommodate a 14mm wide strap. Strap-unions have been classified by Taylor and Brailsford and the Keelby find should be placed in their Type I. The dating of Type I strap-unions presents some problems as they appear to have been current between 200 BC and 200 AD.

The evidence suggests that these unions formed, along with a set of five terrets, the fittings of the yoke from a celtic-type vehicle. Stead correlated the finds from a number of Yorkshire vehicle burials and showed that the strap-unions occurred at the ends of the yoke where they may have been used to tension part of the harness or rein fittings.

Finds of Type I unions are concentrated in Wessex although there is a sparse distribution over the rest of England. Only two other examples are known from Lincolnshire: a Type I strap-union from the Roman Villa site at Greetwell and a more

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Fig. 1a Celtic-type vehicle fittings from Lincolnshire: 7, Kirmington; 8, Hibaldstow; 9a, Rosby; 9b-c, alternative reconstructions of 9a. (Kevin Leahy).
elaborate Type 4 union from Caythorpe which Taylor and
Brailsford dated to the first century BC/AD.

7. Knobbed/platform terret from Kirmington, South
Humbshires (Fig. 1a.7).
This object was found by the late Mr Henry Mossop during the
mid-1960s and was subsequently donated to Scunthorpe
Museum Site Code KMAA51.
The terret measures 70mm by 60mm and has a lenticid cross-
section expanding towards a flat-sectioned mounting bar which
completes the ring. Around the ring are three hemi-spherical
decorative knobs each located on the top of a rectangular
platform.
The decorative elements used on this terret are both easily
paralleled as they appear separately on what MacGregor called
her "knobbed" and "platform" terrets. However the
combination of the two elements is unusual and can be
paralleled only on the terret from Hibaldstow, 16km to the west
(described here, Fig. 1a.8). The distribution of both knobbed
and platform terrets is focussed in northern England but with
outliers scattered through England and, in the case of knobbed
terrets, Wales.

8. Knobbed/ Platform terret from Hibaldstow, South
Humbshires (Fig. 1a.8).
This terret was found in 1977 during the excavation of the
Roman-British roadside settlement at Stanwells Farm, Hibaldstow,
site code Hib 77, SP 2420. The find is currently on loan to Scunthorpe
Museum, site code HBBC (l.).
This terret measures 68mm by 49mm and, in most respects,
resembles the terret from Kirmington (Fig. 1a.7). There are
some minor differences, on the Kirmington terret the knobs are
mounted on rectangular platforms while on the Hibaldstow find
the knobs are on platforms resembling four-petalled flowers.
Irregularities in the area of the mounting bar and in the angles
of the two plates which separate the bar from the ring may be
the result of casting faults. The discovery of two unusual, but
clearly related terrets within the same area suggests that they
may be products of the same workshop.

9. Lipped terret fragment from Roxby-cum-Rishby, South
Humbshires (Fig. 1a.9).
This fragment was found by Mr Michael Bott on arable land
near to the Iron Age and Romano-British site at Dragonby
which has been extensively excavated by Mr Jeffrey May of the
University of Nottingham.
Only a fragment survives of what must have been a
magnificent terret. This consists of one side of the round-
sectioned ring and a 2mm long length of the rectangular-
sectioned mounting bar. Between the bar and the ring is a
carefully formed bell-like moulding and on the ring is a double
lip-projection. These elements are separated by beaded rings.
The chief interest lies in the terret's decoration. Either side of
the lip-projection are a pair of circular panels of what was
originally red enamel. The two smaller panels have been
damaged by the break in the ring, revealing that the enamel is
set in 2.5mm deep, round bottoned, recesses. The decoration is
further enhanced by the use of curvi-linear decoration. This
consists of asymmetric fields defined by incised lines and filled
with small punched dots.
A problem exists in attempting to reconstruct this terret.
There is no doubt that it originally had three lip projections as
seen on the terret from Appleby (Fig. 1.1). The problem
revolves around the difficulty in determining the angle formed
by the two bell-like mouldings set either side of the mounting-
bar. These could have been set at an angle (Fig. 1a.9b), a setting
suggested by the terret from Kirmington (Fig. 1a.7). On the
other hand the two plates could have been almost parallel
(Fig. 1a.9c) as on the terret from Barrow (Fig. 1.2). The terret
from Hibaldstow. (Fig. 1a.8) does little to help as it has one
paralleled and one angled plate. The angle of the plates greatly
affects the size of the terret which could vary in width between
50mm and 70mm. It is unlikely that the angle of these plates
had any cultural significance as the two forms occurred together
in the Polden Hill hoard although the angles must reflect the
profile of the vehicle's yoke and shaft.
The features of this terret can be paralleled on objects from the
Stannick hoard with circular enamel settings occurring on
lipped terrets and punch-mark filled curvi-linear decoration
occurring on a strap terminal. Both enamed inlay and punch-
marked decoration occur in the Polden Hill hoard.
Both of these hoards date from the first century AD, a dating which seems
probable for the Dragonby fragment.

Discussion
Almost all of the parallels for the vehicle fittings described here
come from post Roman Conquest contexts or hoards which, in
view of the 'Celtic' nature of the material, is interesting and
worthy of further discussion. These late dates cannot, however,
be accepted uncritically. Iron Age material is notoriously
difficult to date and the Conquest often provides our only well
dated archaological contexts. Roman military sites do provide
absolute dates for the metalwork described here but these are
only termini auste quem and provide no indication of how long
a particular type had been in use. In a conservative pre-Roman
tribal society some types of object could have had a long
currency.
Some measure of the date range of these fittings can be
gained by reference to the finds from the Arras culture vehicle
burials just over the Humber Estuary in East Yorkshire. Most of
the types of object described here can be paralleled, in a general
sense, by finds from the Arras graves, terrets, bridle bits and
strap-unions are common to both regions. Direct parallels are,
however, difficult to find and there are clear differences
between the two groups of material. Straight-bar snaffle bits
are absent from the Arras graves where the double-jointed snaffle is used.
Lipped terrets occur both in Lincolnshire and the Arras graves but the Yorkshire
founds are decorated with close packed multiple lipping and not
the three discrete lips seen on the Lincolnshire terrets.
The other objects described in this paper are either long lived types
(the strap-unions) or, as in the case of some of the terret forms,
are absent from the Arras graves. There, then, important
differences between the Lincolnshire finds and these two
differences due to chronological or cultural considerations?
Lincolnshire and East Yorkshire do, after all, lie in two different tribal areas, those of the
Corieltauvii and the Parisi respectively, and the differences could be due to
cultural considerations. It is felt unlikely that the differences
between the metalwork of the two regions is due to culture. The
metalwork of Iron Age Britain exhibits a general uniformity.
There are regional differences but it is not possible to assign
them to tribal groupings with any confidence. There is material
from Lincolnshire which belongs to the same tradition as the
Arras finds, this includes the Uleby bits and the Tattershall
Thorpe linch-pins which serve to show that the two traditions
are not geographically exclusive. It would, however, be wrong
to see this material as coming from Yorkshire as parallels can
also be found to the south. Excavations carried out on an
enclosed farmstead at Wheelby Avenue, Grimsby, produced
evidence for the large scale manufacture of bronze harness
fittings during the first century BC and the nature of this
material will be of great interest. It is difficult to believe that any
which flourished, in the main, during the third to first centuries
BC.
The absence of direct parallels for the Lincolnshire material described here in the
Arras graves supports the first and second century A.D. dating suggested by the parallels.
If we accept this late dating we must attempt to explain why so
many of our 'Celtic' fittings are post Conquest.
There are a number of possible explanations for this apparent
increase in the use of ‘chariots’. The most appealing is the pseudo-historical interpretation that they were produced by the Corieltauvi in the face of the Roman Conquest or that they represent the Roman de-militarisation of the region. The Corieltauvi, however, appear to have been quiescent to the Conquest and to have been amongst the tribes who submitted to Claudius in AD 43. It is possible that with the *pax Romana* making real warfare impossible the actuality of battle was replaced by an emphasis on its panoply and peace brought an increasing need for display by the ruling class. A less emotive but perhaps more likely explanation is that this large number of fittings is a product of the rapid development of the economy which occurred in the years around the Roman Conquest. This period saw, in Lincolnshire, what could be described as consumerism with, initially, large numbers of La Tène III brooches becoming available followed by the very common early forms of Roman brooches. This increase in availability need not have been restricted to brooches and domestic vehicles may have received elaborate metal fittings. This would have been encouraged by a more widespread use of carts and wagons brought about by the provision of roads and improved security.

In conclusion all that can be said is that we cannot assume that Celtic-style metalwork ceased to be made with the Roman Conquest or, that these fitting came from chariots. However it might not be coincidental that the two best known depictions of chariots from Roman Britain, the circus scene from Horrastow mosaic and the sculpture of the boy charioteer from Lincoln both come from Lincolnshire.

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**NOTES**

1. Jeffrey May, *Prehistoric Lincolnshire*, History of Lincolnshire, I (Lincoln 1976), p.163, Fig. 79.3.
4. *ibid.*, No. 63.
6. May, *Prehistoric Lincolnshire*, p.163, Fig. 79.1-2.
8. Dr Ian Stead informs me that yellow enamel was used on the first century BC Grimthorpe scabbard.
10. While the ‘bridle-spart’ (Brailsford, ‘Polder Hill’, p.232, Fig. 7c) is of eleventh century AD date and is closely intrusive there is no reason to doubt the integrity of the rest of the hoard.
17. I. M. Stead, *The Arrows Culture* (York, 1979), p.51, Fig. 17.5-7.
20. *Archaeological Notes*, 1964-5, *L.H.A.*, 1 (1966), Fig. 3, 19; Fig. 4b, No. 17.
26. *ibid.*, pp.62-65, Fig. 10.
28. Stead, *Iron Age Cemeteries*, Fig. 42.
29. C. N. Moore, ‘An Iron Age strap-union from Greatney Villa, Lincoln, L.H.A.,’ 10 (1975), p.57, Fig. 1.
30. Taylor and Brailsford, ‘Iron Age strap-unions’, pp.265, 271, Fig. 12.46.
32. *ibid.*, Map 9 (platform terraces), Map 10 (knobbed terraces).
33. I am indebted to Dr Roger Smith who directed these excavations for his permission to publish this important terret.
37. *ibid.*, Fig. 7.24.
38. Brailsford, ‘Polder Hill’.
40. *ibid.*, 50-52, Fig. 17; Stead, *Iron Age Cemeteries*, pp.47-52, Fig. 40.
43. I am indebted to Mr John Sills for discussing his work with me.
44. Stead, *Iron Age Cemeteries*, pp.179-84.
45. J. C. M. Toyabee, *Art in Roman Britain* (1962), Cat. Nos 198 (Horkstow) and 86 (the Lincoln charioteer).