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From bracelets to battle-honours: military *armillae* from the Roman conquest of Britain

by Nina Crummy¹

Small finds in Roman Britain are so diverse that, like Cleopatra, custom cannot stave their infinite variety. Their diversity also offers a serious challenge, that of presenting excavated small finds assemblages in such a way that they feed information back into the interpretation of the land-use and economy of archaeological sites, as do pottery and environmental remains. In recent years attempts to do this have centred on quantifying the objects by function, thus allowing assemblages to be characterised and compared (e.g. Cooper 1999; Cool 2002; Major 2004), but function is just one narrow view of an object, and some small personalia can also be shown to have had religious, social and economic aspects (e.g. Henig 1977; Bagnall Smith 1995; 1998; 1999; Johns 1996a; Hill 1997; 2001; Simpson & Blance 1998). Quantification by function, while broadly useful, can therefore obscure a great deal of complex embedded information. Indeed, a small finds assemblage is not a static, well-ordered, thoroughly-understood and intensively-documented batch of material. Many, or perhaps more accurately most, ordinary Romano-British small finds are under-researched, and their identification is often based on preconceptions or 'best guesses', which, when wrong, will erode the accuracy of functional analyses. The bracelets studied below demonstrate how even a slight shift in identification can send an object from one functional category to another, and from one gender-association to another, and en route introduce a new slant on the interpretation of some sites.

I offer this gender-jumping paper to Catherine and Don not only to entertain them in their busy retirement but also as an expression of my thanks for the beacon of their scholarship over the past decades. I hope that Catherine will note that in deference to her I have here used the term 'bracelet' instead of my usual 'armlet' (Johns 1996b, 108-9).

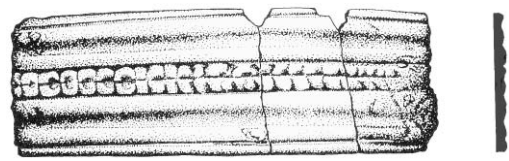


Fig. 1 —. Wide strip bracelet from Colchester (n° 3). Scale 1:1. Reproduced by permission of Colchester Archaeological Trust Ltd.

The bracelets

There are a number of copper-alloy decorated penannular bracelets that have a fairly limited distribution in southern Britain. A total of 52 are catalogued here, 38 from archaeological excavations or museum collections, and fourteen from the online Portable Antiquities Scheme database². My principal sources for the former group have been published excavation reports and recently-excavated assemblages, but Hilary Cool has also generously provided me with examples from her unpublished PhD thesis.

In form each bracelet is a broad strip at least 11 mm wide, bent into a circle or an oval, with linear decoration along most of its length, and transverse decoration at the terminals. On oval bracelets the opening lies at the centre of a long side. A very few have linear decoration along the whole length, and traces of tinning remain on the surface of some examples (Fig. 1).

Several of the excavated pieces are stratified in 1st-century contexts, and some from Colchester, Baldock and London are very closely dated to post-conquest but pre-Boudican/pre-Flavian levels. Most come from the territory of the Catuvellauni and Trinovantes, that is, Hert-

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² The PAS database is accessible to the general public online at www.finds.org.uk, and access to more detailed information can be arranged for academic researchers.

County	Excavated site finds/Museum collections	PAS
Essex	14	1
Hertfordshire	8	-
London	2	-
Cambridgeshire	4	-
Suffolk	1	9
Norfolk	2	-
Northamptonshire	1	2
Leicestershire	1	-
Warwickshire	-	1
Yorkshire	-	1
Kent	1	-
Hampshire	2	-
Gloucestershire	1	-
Somerset	1	-
Totals	38	14

Table 1 — Occurrence of early wide strip bracelets by county. PAS...Portable Antiquities Scheme.

fordshire, Essex, southern Suffolk and southern Cambridgeshire, and there are scattered examples in the Midlands as far north as Leicestershire, and across the south from Richborough in the east to Gloucestershire and Somerset in the west (Fig. 2). There is a cluster of five at Colchester, one of four at Heybridge, and another of four at Baldock. Those recorded on the Portable Antiquities Scheme database, found using the keywords 'bracelet' and 'armlet', confirm this pattern, but extend the range as far north as Yorkshire. Two-thirds of the PAS bracelets come from Suffolk, with a cluster at Freckenham (Table 1)³.

First impressions, based on the pre-Flavian date and southern and mainly eastern distribution of these broad strip bracelets, suggest that they could be an introduced Gallo-Roman style of female personal ornament, a parallel to the frit melon beads which first appear in pre-Flavian levels. Alternatively, their 1st-century date may mean that they are British survivals from the La Tène period, and so they could belong to the same indigenous tradition as high-status Iron Age strip bracelets, for example those from Eastburn, Yorkshire, and Borough Green, Kent (Stead 1979, 75, 77, fig. 28, 8; Warhurst 1953, 160, fig. 5, n° 2; Fox 1958, pl. 26, d). This suggestion also introduces the possibility that they might have been worn by men, as Iron Age bracelets can be found in male as well as female graves (e.g. Lethbridge 1954; Maxfield 1981, 90; Stead & Rigby 1989, 102). The



Fig. 2 — Distribution of wide strip bracelets.

Eastburn bracelet is ascribed to the Arras Culture, though it differs from most of the other Yorkshire bracelets of that period in having two linear bands of raised zigzag decoration. The Borough Green bracelet is ornamented with three rows of punched dots and has slightly narrowed terminals; it was found in a burial with several others of light bangle type and a boss-on-bow brooch, which places it in the 1st century BC. A bracelet rather closer in date to our group comes from the Phase 1 ?male Grave 296 at King Harry Lane, Verulamium (Stead & Rigby 1989, fig. 148, 296/6). It is superficially very similar in form to the group under consideration here, having linear mouldings and incised decoration along most of its length and transverse mouldings at the terminals, but it is altogether thicker and heavier and the decoration consists of zigzag lines made with a walked (rocked) engraving tool. The grave is phased to either AD 1-40 or to 15 BC-AD 30 (Stead & Rigby 1989, 204; Mackreth 1994, 288). In the light of these Iron Age examples, a sudden post-conquest increase in broad strip bracelets in Britain could therefore be compared to that of bifid nail-cleaners, which were generally only found in high-status graves before AD 43 but after that date were produced in large numbers and became available to more than just the élite level of society (Crummy & Eckardt 2004, 61).

Which of these possibilities is correct? Are the bracelets female or male accessories? Are they a British La Tène survival, or a Gallo-Roman introduction? The

³ There is little overlap between counties producing excavated examples and those producing chance finds reported through the Scheme, and several factors must be affecting the data, among them the largely rural nature of Suffolk, and the appointment of a PAS Finds Liaison Officer for Suffolk some years before one for Essex. Variations in the intensity of deposition, as opposed to the general spread, are therefore presumed to be chiefly the result of modern factors. It is to be hoped that the provenances of the PAS outliers to the general distribution are genuine.

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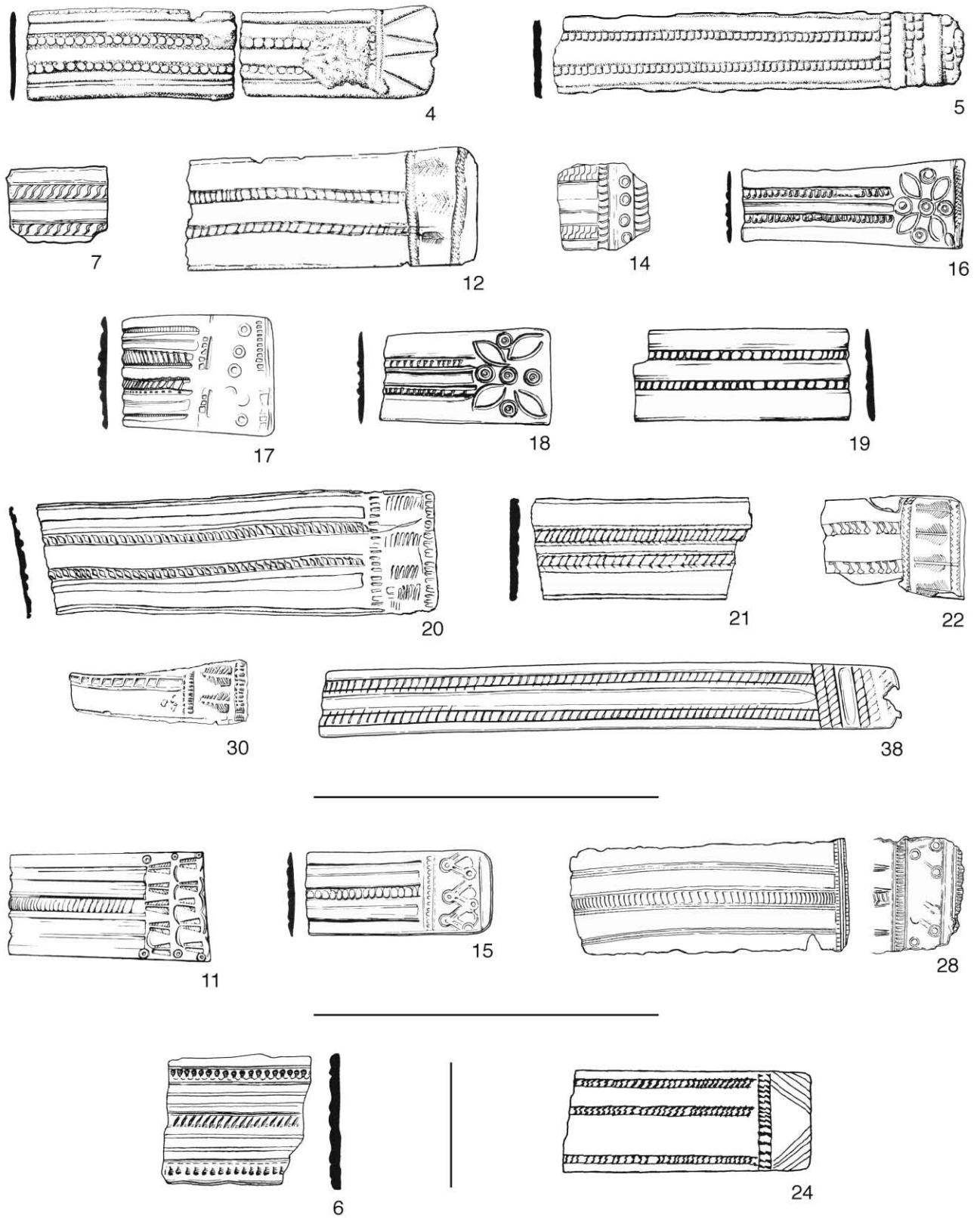


Fig. 3 — Wide strip bracelets, numbered as in the catalogue. Group A...4-5, 7, 12, 14, 16-22, 30, 38. Group B...11, 15, 28. Group C...6; Group D...24. Scale 1:1.

answers to these questions can be found in the designs on some of the bracelets.

The designs

In terms of both style and stratigraphy, the classic example of the bracelets defined above is one found in Colchester in the mid 1970s (Fig. 1; n° 34; Crummy 1983, fig. 40, 1586). It has a central wreath motif flanked by pairs of rounded ridges and narrow marginal mouldings and it came from the fill of the legionary fortress ditch, most of which consisted of material from the demolished rampart. The defences were constructed c. AD 44, but were levelled by the early colonists, c. AD 50-5. A foolish decision on their part, for it left the town wide open to attack during the Boudican revolt of 60/1, but it also conveniently provided a neat and narrow date-range for the material in the backfill. As I catalogued it for publication along with the large collection of late Roman bracelets from the town, instinct told me that this bracelet was different in more than its early date. The close-set leaves on its wreath are those of laurel, a symbol of victory and imperial power, and so, coupled with its context, it begged to be identified both as a male accessory and as military equipment. Instinct is not enough, and a single bracelet, however well-stratified and dated, could not provide sufficient proof of such an attribution, but my suspicions grew when two more were found during the excavations of the early 1980s in the town, one in a pre-Boudican colonial context, and the other in redeposited Boudican destruction debris. Unfortunately, time for research is a precious commodity and only in the last few years have I gathered in the evidence to support my suspicions, spurred on by a fragment from Haddon, Cambridgeshire (Crummy 2003, 109-111).

The wreath on the Colchester bracelet is the theme, the *leitmotif*, that underlies the linear decoration on all the others; it can also be seen in well-defined form on a fragment reported under the Portable Antiquities Scheme from Woodford, Northamptonshire (n° 50), which has three wreaths, one in the centre and one on each edge, and also on another PAS fragment from Withersfield, Suffolk (n° 48), which has two wreaths in the centre, though in this case they consist of widely-spaced serrated leaves like those seen on military belt-plates (cf. Fig. 4, e; Grew & Griffiths 1991, fig. 4, 9-10, fig. 8, 37-42). On most of the bracelets the wreath is shown in debased form, represented by knurled or cabled bands.

Using as the defining feature only the number of wreaths (or 'textured' bands) and leaving aside any plain mouldings and flutings, the bracelets can be divided into four groups.

Group A is by far the best represented; it has two bands, usually set towards the centre (Fig. 3, 4-5, 7, 12,

14, 16-22, 38). The placing and the style of the decoration call to mind some Hod Hill and Aucissa brooches, both types used by the Roman military, and the ornamentation on 1st-century scabbard mounts (Fig. 4, g; Webster 1958, fig. 3, 7; Crummy 1992, 374; Simpson 2000, pl. 22, 9-11). An example of Group A with the leaves of the wreaths clearly defined is the PAS bracelet n° 48 mentioned above. Apart from the illustrated examples others in this group are n°s 2, 8, 10, 13, 25-27, 31-2, 39-41, 43-4, 46, 48 and 52; the worn fragments n°s 9 and 30 are probably also Group As. Three examples appear to have four horizontal grooves with punch-marks in the base (n°s 29, 33 and 35). Rather than being a separate group, they are probably very worn examples of Group A; the reason for this interpretation is given in the description of the method of manufacture below.

Group B has one central band (Fig. 1 (n° 3); Fig. 3, n°s 11, 15, 28). Again this decoration can be seen on some Aucissa and Hod Hill brooches (Fig. 4, f, i). Unillustrated examples are n°s 1, 36, 42, 45, 51 and probably also n°s 47 and 49.

Group C has three bands set symmetrically (Fig. 3, 6), and again three knurled or cabled bands may be seen on some Aucissa and Hod Hill brooches. On the PAS bracelet n° 50 the leaves of the wreaths are clearly defined; other examples are n°s 34 and 37.

Group D (Fig. 3, 24) has three bands set asymmetrically. There are only two examples, n°s 23-4, and there is a strong likelihood that both are very worn examples of Group C, but they share the same provenance, London, and so have been taken here to be a genuine variety.

The texturing is variously described in published descriptions as knurled, cabled, punched or beaded, but for clarity it is here simply called cabled. In some cases, especially where the section of the bracelet has crisp complex moulding, the decoration was part of the original casting, but on others it has been applied cold, hence the variable descriptions in site reports. It was often produced by punching angled straight or S-shaped lines along a rounded ridge flanked by grooves, or sometimes between incised guidelines. The link to military belt-plates noted above for the Group A fragment n° 47 can also be seen here in the use of a thin S-punch (Fig. 4, c-d; Ritterling 1913, Taf. XII, 1; Grew & Griffiths 1991, fig. 7, 25-26, 28). Deep crisp punching, viewing the positive result of the reserved metal between the punch-marks rather than the negative impressions of the marks themselves, can give the appearance of a row of small raised parallelograms and sometimes drawings of these bracelets have emphasised this impression (e.g. Fig. 3, 19). Many Aucissa brooches, introduced into Britain at the invasion of AD 43, have precisely the same decoration; the recessed lines of their cabling, whether set transversely or at an angle, create the same raised parallelogram effect as

⁴ Numbers are those used in the catalogue.

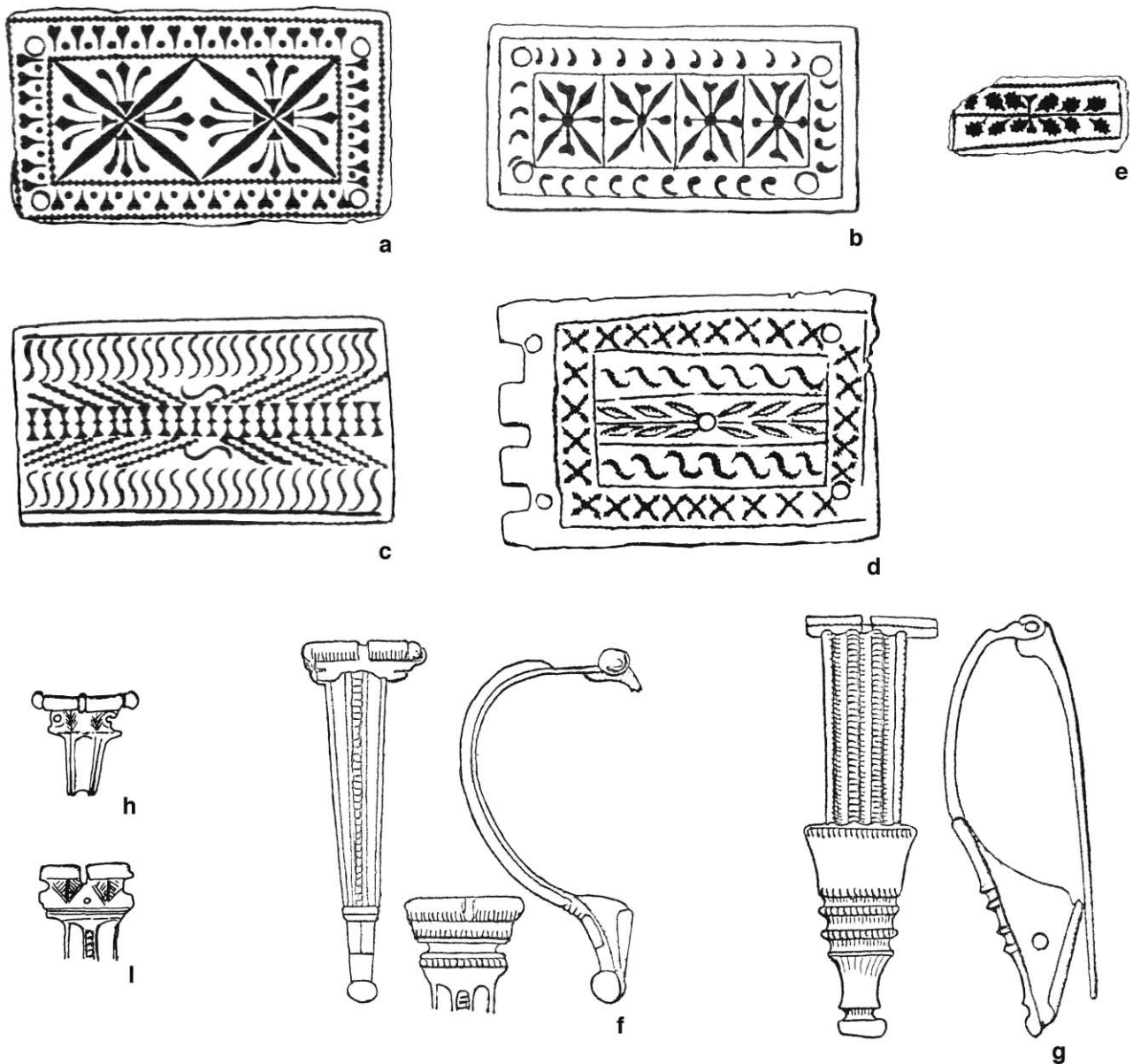


Fig. 4 — Comparanda: a-e...military belt-plates: a, c and e from Colchester (after Hawkes & Hull 1947, pl. 102, 16-17; Crummy 1992, fig. 5.52, 1668), b from Leicester and d from Verulamium (after Grew & Griffiths 1991, figs 5, 4 and 7, 29); f, h-i...Aucissa brooches: f from Colchester (Colchester Museum, A.202), h-i from Le Pègue, Drôme, and St-Bertrand-des-Comminges, Haute-Garonne (after Feugère 1985, pls 117, 1505 and 135, 1684); g...Hod Hill brooch from Colchester (Colchester Museum, Joslin Collection 508C). Scale 1:1.

that seen on several of the bracelets (e.g. Riha 1994, Tafn 18-20, esp. 2245, 2262, 2268-2269). Similar cabled decoration, but smaller, was often used for the transverse lines of the bracelet terminals, and at that scale is to the naked eye much closer to beading or knurling than to cabling; it matches the transverse bead-rows often found on the head of Aucissa brooches (Simpson 2000, 30). The overall appearance of the decoration is not only similar to that on Aucissas but also to that on some Hod Hills, another brooch introduced in AD 43 (Riha 1994, Tafn 28-29, Group 5, Type 12, especially variants 1-2). Traces of tinning on some of the bracelet fragments suggests that all may once have been plated with white metal, which is

also a characteristic of Hod Hills and Aucissas (Crummy 1992, 208).

One of the pieces from Hamperden End, Essex (Fig. 3, 12), clearly shows that the incised guidelines for the rows were cut freehand, as those for one cable row are set closer together than those for the other, and they also draw closer together at the terminal. The same row also demonstrates the sequence of applying the decoration: the cable row guidelines are crossed by those for the transverse mini-cabled rows of the terminal, and the stamps on the terminal were applied last, as one lies over the inner mini-cable row line. One of the PAS examples (n° 40) shows that the cutting of the decoration can leave dot- or

crescent-like impressions in the grooves flanking the cut ridge, and on n° 31 it looks as if the ridge has been worn smooth leaving only the terminal dots. For this reason n°s 29, 33 and 35 have been placed here in Group A.

If the linear decoration on these bracelets suggests strong links to militaria, then the motifs used on some of the terminals make the connection incontrovertible.

Group A bracelets n°s 12, 22, 30 and 46, from Hamperden End, Verulamium, Hockwold cum Wilton and Freckenham respectively, all have palmette stamps between mini-cable rows on the surviving terminal (Fig. 3, 12, 22 and 30), and worn palmettes are probably also present on Fig. 3, 20 from Verulamium. The Group B bracelet from Harlow has a complex design of tiny palmettes linked by crescents and with a line of three annulets on each edge (Fig. 3, 11). The heads of some Aucissa brooches are also stamped with palmettes (Fig. 4, h-i), that are also often set between mini-cable rows, for example, Behrens 1954, Abb. 7, 2; Feugère 1985, Type 22, nos 1505, 1517, 1684; Simpson 2000, pl. 9, 8/8b.

Two Group A bracelets from Baldock bear on the surviving terminal a four-petalled floret with a ring-and-dot motif between each petal and in the centre (Fig. 3, 16, 18). This design is related to the candelabra-and-leaves motif and/or the crossed thunderbolts-and-spears motif also seen on military belt-plates (Fig. 4, a-b; Ritterling 1913, Taf. XII, 4, 7; Grew & Griffiths 1991, 57; Deschler-Erb *et al.* 1991, Abb. 41, 35; Deschler-Erb 1999, Taf. 17, 353, Taf. 19). The progressively simplified forms of the candelabra-and-leaves motif have been traced by Grew and Griffiths (1991, fig. 4, 1-7) and are shown here 'in summary' on Fig. 4, a-b.

A broad zigzag with an annulet or ring-and-dot at each point occurs on two Group B bracelets, one from Baldock and one from Stonea Camp (Fig. 3, 15 and 28), and is in each case set between mini-cable rows. Two Group A bracelets, from Stansted and from Baldock, only have annulets between cable rows (Fig. 3, 14 and 17; see also the PAS bracelet n° 39), and one from Colchester has only two incised Vs (Fig. 3, 4). One of the Group D bracelets from London, n° 23, has a mini-cable zigzag. Both annulets and ring-and-dot motifs also occur on Aucissa brooches, the annulets often set around a piercing and so usually described as 'eyes', and a very few Aucissas have incised arrows or Vs on the head (e.g. Feugère 1985, nos 1505, 1526, 1536, 1568, etc.; Simpson 2000, pl. 8, 10). An intriguing possibility is that the zigzag-with-annulets may ultimately derive, via an illiterate version, from a maker's name on the head of an Aucissa (cf. that on Feugère 1985, pl. 131, 1642).

There are other terminal designs: bracelet n° 50 from Woodford has at least one transverse wreath; n° 5 from Colchester and n° 38 from Hacheston have transverse double and single bead-rows the same size as those on the

main part of the bracelet and n° 52 from Yorkshire is probably the same; n° 20 from Verulamium appears to have short parallel rows of grooves; and n° 24 from London has bands of incised lines angled across each corner. Several terminals are plain, or, at least, have no surviving decoration, and on a few bracelets the linear decoration on the body runs up to the terminals, notably on n° 37 from Ham Hill and n° 44 from Freckenham. There are other minor variations among the PAS bracelets.

Military *armillae*

The consistent parallels between the designs on the bracelets and those on military belt-fittings and on brooches favoured by army personnel allow the bracelets to be defined as products in the same tradition and from the same workshop(s) as the militaria. The bracelets can therefore be identified as *armillae*, the military award granted to ranks below centurion for force of arms in battle (Watson 1970, 115; Maxfield 1981, 89-91). No bracelets of precisely the same design, or even one that is reasonably similar, have so far been found in the continental small finds literature. Riha compared two convex-section penannular bracelets from Augst to the British group, but the similarity is only superficial; one is complete and tapers to plain blunt-ended terminals, the other is a repoussé-decorated fragment in a different decorative tradition entirely (1990, 59, Taf. 20, 552, Taf. 79, 3000). Given this lack of continental parallels the inevitable conclusion is that the bracelets found in southern, and particularly eastern, England were awarded following engagements that took place in the early years of the Roman conquest of Britain and are specific to that campaign.

It is fortunate that the form and decoration of the group from Britain are so distinctive⁵. To date military *armillae* have chiefly been known only from contemporary historical sources and surviving continental reliefs, mainly tombstones. The range of forms they take on the reliefs have been identified by Maxfield as plain penannular, snake, plain knob-ended (torc-like), cable, and wide hinged (1981, fig. 9). In an ordinary excavation assemblage it would therefore be impossible to distinguish such bracelets from the general run of 'female' dress accessories, and only clear stratigraphic associations would allow their true nature to be recognised. Thus, the only *armilla* from the continent that has been identified 'in the flesh', as opposed to from an image, appears to be a fragment of a silver cable bracelet from the Augusto-Tiberian military camp at Aulnay-de-Saintonge, Charente-Maritime (Feugère 2002, fig. 30, 1).

Table 2 shows that the British *armillae* derive from a wide range of site types. Some, like the fortress/*colonia* at

⁵ Intriguingly, the *armillae* on the Tunshill silver arm (Potter & Johns 1992, fig. 43; and see Painter in this volume) are of similar general form, though they lack any detailed decoration and the evidence suggests that they are of later date.

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No	Group	Site	Site type	Militaria or early coins present	Context date
1	B	Sheepen, Colchester, Essex	industrial area outside fortress/ <i>colonia</i>	y	Claudian(-Neronian)
2	A	Sheepen, Colchester, Essex	industrial area outside fortress/ <i>colonia</i>	y	-
3	B	Colchester, Essex	fortress/ <i>colonia</i>	y	c. (44)/50-255
4	A	Colchester, Essex	fortress/ <i>colonia</i>	y	60/1-c. ?100/150 (with material from AD 49-60/1)
5	A	Colchester, Essex	fortress/ <i>colonia</i>	y	49-60/1
6	C	Chelmsford, Essex	small town	y	c. 65/70-80
7	A	Heybridge, Essex	small town	y	unstratified
8	A	Heybridge, Essex	small town	y	unstratified
9	A?	Heybridge, Essex	small town	y	unstratified
10	A	Heybridge, Essex	small town	y	unstratified
11	B	Harlow, Essex	sanctuary	y	-
12	A	Hamperden End	rural	-	Per 8
13	A	Hamperden End	rural	-	Per 8
14	A	Stansted	rural	y	40-75
15	B	Baldock	small town	y	180-220
16	A	Baldock	small town	y	50-70
17	A	Baldock	small town	y	mid 4th century
18	A	Baldock	small town	y	3rd century
19	A	Skeleton Green	rural	y	c. 44-75
20	A	Verulamium	<i>municipum</i>	y	75-85
21	A	Verulamium	<i>municipum</i>	y	85-105
22	A	Verulamium	<i>municipum</i>	y	270-310
23	D	London	large town	y	-
24	D	London	large town	y	Claudian-Neronian
25	A	Haddon	rural	-	-
26	A	Hinchingbrooke	rural	y	Claudian-Neronian
27	A	Hinchingbrooke	rural	y	-
28	B	Stonea Camp, Cambs	fenland hillfort	y	surface collection
29	A?	Hockwold cum Wilton, Norfolk	rural/sanctuary	-	metal detector find
30	A	Hockwold cum Wilton, Norfolk	rural/sanctuary	-	residual
31	A	Ringstead, Northants	rural	-	2nd century-4th century
32	A	High Cross, Leics	small town	-	early 2nd century
33	A?	Richborough, Kent	military	y	-
34	C	Ashley Camp, Hants	earthwork	-	-
35	A?	Tidpit Down, Hants	earthwork?	-	-
36	B	Somerford Keynes, Glos	rural	-	-
37	C	Ham Hill, Somerset	hillfort	y	-
38	A	Hacheston, Suffolk	small town	y	-
39	A	Bradfield, Essex	-	y	-(PAS)
40	A	Bradfield Combust, Suffolk	-	y	-(PAS)
41	A	Braiseworth, Suffolk	-	y	-(PAS)
42	B	Combs, Suffolk	-	-	-(PAS)
43	A	Combs, Suffolk	-	-	-(PAS)
44	A	Freckenham, Suffolk	-	y	-(PAS)
45	B	Freckenham, Suffolk	-	y	-(PAS)
46	A	Freckenham, Suffolk	-	y	-(PAS)
47	B (?C)	Little Thurlow, Suffolk	-	-	-(PAS)
48	A	Withersfield, Suffolk	-	-	-(PAS)
49	B?	Farthinghoe, Northamptonshire	-	-	-(PAS)
50	C	Woodford, Northamptonshire	-	y	-(PAS)
51	B	Honington, Warwickshire	-	-	-(PAS)
52	A	North Cave, Humberside	-	-	-(PAS)

Table 2 — Summary of context dates and characteristics of sites producing early wide strip bracelets. Militaria (column 5) includes Aucissa and Hod Hill brooches; a dash in this column does not necessarily imply absence, especially for PAS finds, simply that no such finds were noted during a brief search. PAS...Portable Antiquities Scheme.

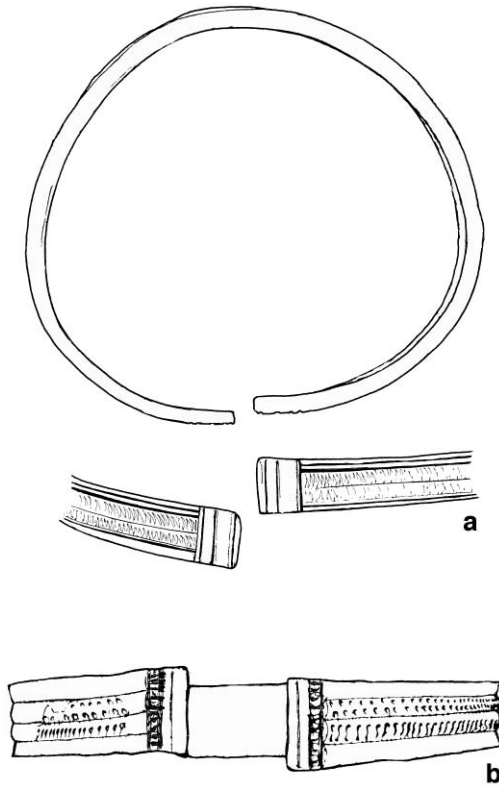


Fig. 5 — a...Bracelet from King Harry Lane, Verulamium (after Stead & Rigby 1989, fig. fig. 148, 296/6; b...bracelet from Cadbury Castle 'massacre' site (after Foster 2000, fig. 70, 10). Scale 1:1.

Colchester, have direct associations with the Roman army and its veterans, but others are simply small rural settlements. However, nearly all the sites have also produced a scatter of fragments of arms or armour, brooches such as Aucissas and Hod Hills, and/or early Roman coins and samian, and it is telling that at Hinchingsbrooke, Cambridgeshire, the *armillae* fragments come from the same early Roman stratigraphic phase as the few pieces of militaria from the site (M. Hinman, pers. comm.).

These awards would have been treasured possessions, and worn with pride. During the Republic and early Imperial period they were made of gold or silver, but their value lay not in the economic worth of the metal but in the enhanced status that they gave to the wearer. That status was the prime consideration is demonstrated by an incident when, in 47 BC, Metellus Scipio baulked at presenting gold *armillae* to a cavalryman because he was a former slave. The soldier refused to be compensated by his commander with the equivalent economic value in gold coin, and, touched by this refusal, Scipio relented and stressed the point by awarding him silver *armillae*, supposedly to the man's complete satisfaction (Valerius Maximus 8.14.5).

Pliny noted that *armillae* were only granted to citizen

soldiers, *armillas civibus dedere, quas non dabant externis* (*Hist. Nat.* XXXIII, 37), and this is borne out by the attitude of Metellus Scipio in the story related above. They were usually awarded in pairs and a soldier could win more than one pair. Three pairs of snake-headed *armillae* are shown on a stone set up to commemorate C. Vibius Macer at Villa Vallelunga in central Italy, and two pairs are shown on a memorial to C. Voconius from Spain that is probably of Augustan or slightly later date (Keppie 2000, figs 4-5; for further examples see, e.g., Maxfield 1981, 90; pls 2, 6-14).

Even the copper-alloy *armillae* awarded during the conquest of Britain (and tinning to imitate silver would therefore have fooled no one) would therefore have been treasured by soldiers both during active service and on their retirement into civilian life, and they probably even became family heirlooms. They are unlikely to have been lightly discarded or handed over for recycling and this may in part account for several being found in contexts later than the Claudio-Neronian period. The mechanisms whereby they reached rural settlements are unlikely ever to be proven for individual cases, but, while the recipient remained in active service, they could have been lost on the march, or during battles or skirmishes, or during the requisitioning of supplies and the gathering of taxes; they may also have been offered in times of personal and family crisis as votives at shrines and sanctuaries. The latter may also pertain for retired soldiers, but one of the most likely for retirees is the acquisition of land by either grant or purchase, and Mark Hinman (pers. comm.) has suggested that *armillae* found on rural sites may be an indication of the deliberate settling of veterans close to Roman roads in order to provide some measure of protection for the new infrastructure.

The Stonea Camp bracelet (Fig 3, n° 28) offers yet another mechanism – hoarding. The site has often been visited by unauthorised metal-detectorists and there have been rumours of the recovery of three coin hoards, including one of Claudian aes (Philpot & Potter 1996, 35). The Stonea *armilla* would not be out of place in such a hoard, which may have been deposited at the time of the Boudican uprising.

Proposing a Boudica-inspired hoard context for the Stonea bracelet is, of course, simply speculation, but both the uprising of AD 47, when attempts were made to disarm the Iceni even though they were a client kingdom rather than part of the new province, and the revolt led by Boudica in AD 60/1 provide ideal historical backdrops against which to set the idea that military *armillae* might be placed in hoards for safekeeping, or lost in battle by defeated garrisons or veteran settlers. Indeed, these two dates are probably rather too neat, and it is worth remembering that the defeat of Boudica did not secure immediate peace in the east, but that the resistance of the British rumbled on (Tacitus, *Annales* XIV, 38-9).

More military awards from Britain ?

While refraining from a major reassessment of all the bracelets from Late Iron Age and Roman Britain, I would like to draw attention to three other pieces that can also be considered, with varying success, as potential candidates for interpretation as military awards.

One is the King Harry Lane, Verulamium, bracelet from a ?male grave mentioned above (Fig 5, a). It is fairly close in general style to the early Roman group, but the evidence for its re-identification as a military *armilla* is not convincing. If it were an *armilla* its pre-conquest date would mean that it must have been won in an earlier campaign and only continental bracelets of similar form, either on reliefs depicting military awards or as site finds, would support its re-identification as a Roman import rather than a native British artefact. As it is most likely to be British, then perhaps it is reasonable to suggest that a bracelet of the same or similar style could have been the model for the design of the military *armillae*, which may have been deliberately based on those taken as booty from the conquered peoples.

A far stronger candidate for interpretation as a military *armilla* is a bracelet from Cadbury Castle. It came from the so-called 'massacre' site, where it lay outside the threshold of the south-west gate, part of Context Group 1. Group 1 also produced two iron spearheads, a fragment of a copper-alloy fitting from *lorica segmentata*, and six copper-alloy brooches, four of them penannular, one a simple hinged type, and one an Aucissa derivative. The bracelet is brass, 4 mm thick, and round in shape. The linear decoration consists of two outer V-shaped grooves forming angular edges, with two central rounded ridges, decorated with sloping Ss, each ending in a small dot. The terminals have transverse beaded mouldings (Fig 5, b; Foster 2000, 146, fig. 70, 10). In this context, associated with both Roman military equipment and British-made items, it could have come from the arm of either a Briton or a Roman. The use of brass may indicate a Roman military product but this cannot taken as a definitive rule because British-made pre-conquest Colchester brooches were also made of brass. However, the use of angled S-shaped punch-marks marks this bracelet out as an *armilla* from the hand of a smith accustomed to making small militaria, though it differs in several details to the group studied here and cannot unequivocally be classed as one of them. Perhaps the south-eastern bracelets were made for battles relating to the early stages of the invasion, such as that for the Medway crossing, but the Cadbury bracelet was made for an incident during the push westward?

Finally, there may be a fragment of a different type of Roman award from Britain. Graham Webster considered that a copper-alloy oak leaf from the Fison Way excavation at Thetford, Norfolk, may have come from a *corona*

civica, the oak-leaf crown only given in exceptional circumstances to a Roman who had saved the life of a fellow citizen (G. Webster, note in Gregory 1992, 132, fig. 117, 21; Pliny, *Hist. Nat.* XXII, 8). Intriguingly, Marcus Ostorius Scapula, the son of the governor of Britain, Publius Ostorius Scapula, earned a *corona civica* during the Icenian revolt of AD 47 (Tacitus, *Annales*, XII, 31; XVI, 15). Would it not be a remarkable coincidence if the Thetford leaf had fallen from that very crown?

Conclusion

Far from being introduced female dress accessories or a post-conquest flourishing of a pre-conquest La Tène tradition, wide strip bracelets of the early Roman period are battle-honours, military awards made by the same smiths who supplied legionary belt-fittings and brooches. In any quantified analysis of site assemblages they should therefore jump functional category from personal ornament to military equipment. In the light of this re-interpretation, any preconception that Roman-period bracelets should automatically be regarded as female objects, particularly when they derive from contexts associated with the active military phases of the occupation of Britain, should be treated with suspicion⁶.

In terms of provenance, where an *armilla* comes not from a recognised military establishment but from a rural site, that site could well have been the location of a veteran's farmstead, on land appropriated from native Britons, a reason given by Tacitus for the Trinovantes joining the Icenian uprising of AD 60/1: *exturbabant agris, captivos, servos appellando* (Tacitus, *Annales*, XIV, 31).

Catalogue

D... diameter; L... length; W... width.

a) excavated and museum finds

1. Colchester, Essex. Sheepen, pit B1; Period IV, Claudian (or Claudio-Neronian). Hawkes & Hull 1947, pl 100, 29. Complete apart from one terminal; central line of cable decoration flanked by grooves, marginal mouldings; terminal has transverse beaded line. D. 40 by 55 mm, W. 15.5 mm.

2. Colchester, Essex. Sheepen, over site A3, topsoil/unstratified. Hawkes & Hull 1947, pl 100, 30. Fragment; two lines of cable decoration, marginal mouldings; single stamped annulet between the cabling. L. 50 mm, W. 12 mm.

⁶ See also Cool 2002, 41-2, though note that the London armllet cited there was found beneath, not on, the man's arm (Barber & Bowsher 2000, 221-2, B673.4).

- 3.** Fig. 1. Colchester, Essex. Balkerne Lane, SF 1360; context D417 F50, fill of fortress ditch; end of Period 1, c. AD 50-55. Crummy 1983, fig. 40, 1586. Central line of wreath decoration, flanked by grooves, narrow marginal mouldings. Minimum D. 55 mm, W. 17.5 mm.
- 4.** Fig. 3. Colchester, Essex. Culver Street, SF 749; context A342 L79, redeposited Boudican destruction debris; AD 60/1-c 100/150 (with much material from AD 43-60/1). Crummy 1992, fig. 5.5, 361. Terminal fragment; two lines of cable decoration, flanked by grooves, beaded marginal mouldings; terminal has transverse line of beading and zigzag of incised grooves. L. 72 mm, W. 15.5 mm.
- 5.** Fig. 3. Colchester, Essex. Culver Street, SF 2372; context E1026 L89, Building 89, make-up; Period 2, AD 49-60/1. Crummy 1992, fig. 5.5, 362. Terminal fragment; two lines of cable decoration with flanking mouldings, margins very worn; terminal has three transverse lines of cabling. Minimum D. 32 mm, maximum D. 56 mm, minimum W. 14 mm.
- 6.** Fig. 3. Chelmsford, Essex. Pit K 87, Period IV.2, post-Boudican but pre-AD 80. Cool 1983, Group IX, 5; Wickenden 1992, 77, fig. 39, 15. Fragment with three bands of cabling. L. 24 mm, W. 21 mm. Cool and Wickenden's drawings of this object differ considerably and draw attention to the degree of interpretation imposed by illustrations; Cool's emphasises the metal left in relief, Wickenden's the punch-marks.
- 7.** Fig. 3. Elms Farm, Heybridge, Essex. Essex County Council Field Archaeology Unit, HYEY SF 6941; context A11000, unstratified, machining layer. Fragment with two lines of cabling. L. 18 mm, W. 13.5 mm (incomplete).
- 8.** Elms Farm, Heybridge, Essex. ECC FAU, HYEY SF 6931/5837; context A11000, unstratified, machining layer. Terminal fragment, very worn; two lines of cabling; terminal has a single inner transverse cabled line and two outer ones. L. 21 mm, W. 13 mm (damaged, ?incomplete).
- 9.** Elms Farm, Heybridge, Essex. ECC FAU, HYEY SF 8132; context 3999, unstratified, spoilheap. Terminal fragment, very worn; two lines of ?cabling; no decoration visible on terminal. L. 35 mm, W. 12 mm.
- 10.** Elms Farm, Heybridge, Essex. ECC FAU, HYEY SF 9530; context 3999, unstratified, spoilheap. Terminal fragment, worn; two lines of cable decoration; at least two transverse cable lines on terminal. L. 30 mm, W. 12 mm.
- 11.** Fig. 3. Harlow, Essex. Temple, context 60-D 2/3.5; Period 1, Flavian-c. AD 80. France & Gobel 1985, 85, fig. 43, 39. Terminal fragment; central line of knurled cable decoration, two side flutings; terminal has two rows of stamped palmettes linked by crescents, with a row of three ring-and-dots down each side. Minimum D. 53 mm, W. 19 mm.
- 12.** Fig. 3. Hamperden End, Essex. Network Archaeology (CMG01, 2001.60). Section 14, site 5 (14/74-75), SF 1001; context 14010, pit; Period 8 (mid to late 1st century AD). Terminal fragment; two lines of cable decoration (each block varies from 1-2 mm apart), narrow marginal mouldings; terminal has three palmette stamps set within two transverse finely-cabled lines; guide lines for cable decoration cut free-hand. L. 52.5 mm, W. 19 mm.
- 13.** Hamperden End, Essex. Network Archaeology (CMG01, 2001.60). Section 14, site 5 (14/74-75), SF 1038; context 14335, ditch 14401; Period 8 (mid to late 1st century AD). Fragment; two lines of cabling, narrow marginal mouldings. L. 19 mm, W. 17 mm.
- 14.** Fig. 3. Stansted, Essex. Context 469, ditch 468; Period 2, c. AD 40-75. Major 2004, 132, fig 87, 17. Terminal fragment; two lines of cabling; terminal has a row of annulets between transverse lines of cabling. L. 16 mm, W. (incomplete) 16 mm.
- 15.** Fig. 3. Baldock, Herts. Context A 321, pit (3); AD 180-220. Stead & Rigby 1986, fig. 52, 163. Terminal fragment; central line of cable decoration flanked by flutings; terminal has a worn design, probably a broad zigzag with a ring-and-dot (or annulet) at each point, set between finely beaded transverse lines. L. 33 mm, W. 14.5 mm.
- 16.** Fig. 3. Baldock, Herts. Context A 405, pit(1); AD 50-70. Stead & Rigby 1986, fig. 52, 164. Terminal fragment; central fluting with flanking lines of cable decoration; terminal has four-petalled floret with central ring-and-dot and a ring-and-dot in each angle. L. 39 mm, W. 13 mm.
- 17.** Fig. 3. Baldock, Herts. Context A 100, ditch; 3rd century. Stead & Rigby 1986, fig. 52, 165. Terminal fragment; central ridge flanked by lines of cable decoration and plain mouldings; terminal has irregular line of annulets between finely beaded transverse lines. L. 27 mm, W. 20 mm.
- 18.** Fig. 3. Baldock, Herts. Context C 35, quarry; mid 4th century. Stead & Rigby 1986, fig. 52, 166. Terminal fragment; central fluting with flanking lines of cable decoration. terminal decoration as n° 16. L. 30 mm, W. 16 mm.
- 19.** Fig. 3. Skeleton Green, Herts. Context 13, G40(3), layer; broadly dated to c. AD 44-75. Partridge 1981, fig. 54, 9. Fragment with two lines of cabling, narrow marginal mouldings. L. 37mm, W. 16 mm.
- 20.** Fig. 3. Verulamium, St Albans, Herts. Insula XIV, context BII 36a, Room 21, make-up below primary floor; AD 75-85. Waugh & Goodburn 1972, fig. 32, 30. Terminal fragment; two lines of cabling flanked by grooves and mouldings; terminal has rows of punched lines between transverse beaded lines. L. 70 mm, W. 22 mm.
- 21.** Fig. 3. Verulamium, St Albans, Herts. Insula XIV, context AIV 33, Room 7, secondary floor; AD 85-105, with some pre-Flavian material. Waugh & Goodburn 1972, fig. 32, 31. Fragment; two lines of cabling, marginal mouldings. L. 39 mm, W. 18 mm.

- 22.** Fig. 3. Verulamium, St Albans, Herts. Insula XXI, 2, Room 1, 60 L 4; destruction layer, AD 270-310. Goodburn 1984, fig. 21, 190. Terminal fragment; two lines of cabling; terminal has four palmettes between beaded lines. L. 25 mm, W. 20 mm.
- 23.** London. 2-12 Gresham Street. Museum of London 21281. Cool 1983, Group IX, 6. Almost complete, with one terminal; two bands of narrow cabling towards one edge, one towards the other; terminal has a narrow cable/beaded zigzag between transverse cable lines, one on the outer edge, two adjacent to the linear decoration. D. 60.5 mm, W. 15 mm.
- 24.** Fig. 3. London. 201-211 Borough High Street, Southwark. Context B11-4 (23), fill of ditch; pre-Flavian, with seven coins of AD 40-60 and late Claudio-Neronian samian. Townend & Hinton 1978, 156, fig. 62, 4; Ferretti & Graham 1978, 63-4, 83. Terminal fragment; two bands of narrow cabling towards one edge, one towards the other; terminal has a single transverse cable line (the same size or larger than the linear bands) with groups of incised lines angled across each corner to produced a central plain triangle. L. 44 mm, W. 18 mm.
- 25.** Haddon, Cambridgeshire. Unstratified. Crummy 2003, fig. 43, 141. Fragment with two lines of cable decoration, flanking mouldings and narrow marginal mouldings. L. 48.5 mm, W. 13.5 mm.
- 26.** Hinchingsbrooke, Cambridgeshire. Cambridgeshire County Council Archaeological Field Unit, STU HIN 03, SF 816 context 6054, and SF 821 context 6133 (both mid 1st century AD). Fragment in two pieces found separately; two lines of cabling, marginal mouldings. L. 58 mm, W. 20 mm.
- 27.** Hinchingsbrooke, Cambridgeshire. CCC AFU, STU HIN 03; from Trench 5 spoil heap. Fragment with central fluting flanked by bands of cabling. L. 19 mm, W. 13 mm.
- 28.** Fig. 3. Stonea Camp, Cambridgeshire. Surface collection, unstratified. Johns 1996c, 338, fig. 107, 15. Terminal fragment; central line of cabling flanked by grooves; terminal has linked annulets between beaded transverse lines. Minimum D. 49 mm, W. 20 mm.
- 29.** Hockwold cum Wilton, Norfolk. Norwich Castle Museum, unnumbered; metal-detector find from the Sawbench site. Cool 1983, Group IX, 10. Fragment with part of terminal; two pairs of narrow cable rows with slight marginal moulding; surviving part of terminal plain. L. 72 mm, W. 16 mm.
- 30.** Fig. 3. Hockwold cum Wilton, Norfolk. Residual in context 111. Gurney 1986, 67, fig. 42, 28. Terminal fragment, width incomplete. One or two central lines of cabling; terminal has two palmettes (originally three or four) between beaded transverse lines. L. 31 mm, W. about 18 mm.
- 31.** Ringstead, Northamptonshire. Pit 1, which also contained 3rd- and 4th-century coins; a Harlow-type Colchester derivative brooch from the site points to activity on site in the second half of the 1st-century. Jackson 1980, fig. 10, 3. Terminal fragment; two very worn bands of cabling; terminal decoration obscured by corrosion. L. 52 mm, W. 16 mm.
- 32.** High Cross, Leicestershire. Top fill of ditch F34, which also contained early 2nd-century pottery. Greenfield & Webster 1964-5, fig. 12, 20. Fragment with two lines of cabling. L. 90 mm, W. 18 mm.
- 33.** Richborough, Kent. English Heritage, unnumbered. Cool 1983, Group IX, 11. Terminal fragment; four grooves with crescentic punch-marks in the base; terminal has transverse groove and grooved cross. L. 35 mm, W. 15 mm.
- 34.** Ashley Camp, Hants. Winchester Museum, WINM:ARCH 2.30. Cool 1983, Group IX, 8. Fragment with three lines of cabling. L. 56 mm, W. 16 mm.
- 35.** Tidpit Down, Hants. Salisbury Museum 63/51. Cool 1983, Group IX, 12. Fragment with two pairs of grooves; one groove has crescentic punch-marks in the base. L. 30 mm, W. 12 mm.
- 36.** Somerford Keynes, Gloucestershire. H. E. M. Cool, pers. comm.; Oxford Archaeology, Cotswold Water Park project, object n° 5142. Fragment; central line of cable decoration flanked by flutings. L. 42 mm, W. 21 mm.
- 37.** Fig. 3. Ham Hill, Somerset. Taunton Museum 1246. Cool 1983, Group IX, 7. fig. 45, 6. Complete; three lines of cable decoration; terminals plain. D. 52 by 58 mm, W. 11 mm.
- 38.** Fig 000, XX. Hacheston, Suffolk. Field collection. Seeley 2004, fig 74, 54. Terminal fragment, two bands of cabling. Terminal has five transverse bands of cabling the same size as the linear bands. L. (flattened) 103 mm, W. 11 mm.
- b) finds listed on the Portable Antiquities Scheme database
- 39.** Bradfield, Essex. PAS SF6783. Terminal fragment; two bands of cabling; terminal has annulets and lines. L. not given, W. 16 mm.
- 40.** Bradfield Combust with Stanningfield, Suffolk. PAS SF6535. Terminal fragment; four bands of dotted (?beaded) lines; terminal has two transverse dotted (?beaded) lines. L. 23 mm, W. 19.5 mm.
- 41.** Braiseworth, Suffolk. PAS SF10065. Fragment with two rows of cabling. L. 28 mm, W. 12 mm (edges damaged).
- 42.** Combs, Suffolk. PAS SF10481. Fragment with central cable row, flutings, and marginal lines of punched dots. L. 31 mm, W. 20 mm.
- 43.** Combs, Suffolk. PAS SF10482. Fragment with two rows of cabling. L. 38 mm, W. 19 mm.
- 44.** Freckenham, Suffolk. PAS SF80F434. Complete, with two bands of cabling; narrower than most and possibly not part of the group. D. 81 mm (distorted), W. 11 mm.

45. Freckenham, Suffolk. PAS SF10846. Fragment with debased central wreath. L. 32 mm, W. 17 mm.

46. Freckenham, Suffolk. PAS SF8705. Terminal fragment; two bands of cabling; two transverse cable rows on terminal, probably with palmettes between, though the details of these features are obscured by dirt and corrosion. L. 28 mm, W. 19.5 mm.

47. Little Thurlow, Suffolk. PAS SF2707. Fragment with central cable row; possibly also marginal cable rows. L. 59mm, W 14 mm.

48. Withersfield, Suffolk. PAS SF5637. Fragment with two wreaths. L. 18 mm, W. 17 mm.

49. Farthinghoe, Northamptonshire. PAS NARC2994. Fragment with one cable row (description a little ambiguous). L. not given, W. 17.1 mm.

50. Woodford, Northamptonshire. PAS NARC172. Terminal fragment; three wreaths, one central and two marginal; terminal has transverse wreath(s). L. 30 mm, W. 23 mm.

51. Honington, Warwickshire. PAS WMID3018. Fragment with central cable row. L. 16.5 mm, W. 13.5 mm.

52. North Cave, Humberside. PAS YORYMB1678. Complete, with two cable rows; terminals have transverse cable rows. L. 178 mm (flattened), W. 14 mm.

Acknowledgements

First and foremost I would like to thank Stephen Crummy, British Museum, who has worked with Catherine on many projects, for kindly preparing the illustrations for this paper, and Dr Paul Sealey, Colchester Museum, whose help with the images was only exceeded by his generosity in drawing the Thetford oak leaf and Marcus Ostorius Scapula to my attention. I would also like to express my gratitude to Mark Hinman of the Archaeological Field Unit, Cambridgeshire County Council, for discussions on the provenances of the Cambridgeshire finds. A number of these bracelets come from recently excavated sites and I am grateful to the following for permission to publish them in advance of the main report: Mark Hinman (Hinchingsbrooke); Mark Atkinson and Joyce Compton, Field Archaeology Unit, Essex County Council on behalf of English Heritage (Elms Farm); and Network Archaeology (via Derek Cater), who permitted publication on behalf of Transco (Hamperden End site). I also owe thanks to Dr Margherita Bolla of the Museo Archeologico in Verona, Dragan

Bozic of the Institut za Arheologijo ZRC-SAZU in Ljubljana, Hilary Cool, Philip Crummy of Colchester Archaeological Trust Ltd, Geoff Denford of Winchester Museum, Michel Feugère of the Centre National de Recherche Scientifique, David Gurney of the Norfolk Museums and Archaeology Service, Professor Lawrence Keppie of the Hunterian Museum and, last alphabetically but by no means least, Hilary Major. Philip Crummy, Hella Eckardt of the University of Reading and Paul Sealey all kindly read drafts of the text at various stages, and I am grateful to all three for their comments.

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