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The girl with the chariot medallion: a well-furnished, Late Iron Age Durotrigian burial from Langton Herring, Dorset

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ABSTRACT

A well-furnished, Late Iron Age Durotrigian burial was found in 2010 by a metal-detectorist at Langton Herring in Dorset. This report examines all aspects of the discovery, paying particular attention to the skeletal remains, a female aged 19–24, providing the most complete, osteobiographical study of an individual buried with a mirror assemblage from the European Iron Age. A combination of artefacts and radiocarbon dating gives a range for the burial of c. AD 25 – cal AD 53. The grave goods themselves are of exceptional interest, representing an accumulation of artefacts acquired from diverse sources, deposited at a time of major cultural and societal change in southern Britain. The results of a geophysical survey are also presented, together with a discussion of additional well-furnished burials in the Durotrigian tribal tradition, which place the burial deposit within a wider social and landscape framework.

Introduction

In April 2010, a Late Iron Age copper alloy mirror was discovered by Carl Walmsley, who was metal-detecting, with permission of the landowner, a newly ploughed field in the civil parish of Langton Herring, Dorset (Figure 1). The precise details of the findspot, located at 50m above sea level on the southern side of Rodden Ridge, have been withheld from this report as requested, but have been recorded by the Dorset Heritage Environment Record (HER). Identifying human bone, Mr Walmsley contacted Dorset Police, who carried out a preliminary investigation of the remains. The examination, which also recovered a number of glass and stone beads as well as part of a copper alloy armring, concluded that there was no reason to suspect a criminal element to the burial. Concerned that the site required immediate archaeological attention, Walmsley then contacted Dorset County Council and Bournemouth University who both dispatched teams to investigate.

The excavation that followed cleared a 1.5 m square area of ploughsoil to the geological natural, an olive-grey mudstone, exposing an oval-shaped grave, measuring 1.3m × 0.9 m. An inhumation, positioned on its left side, spine following the northern edge of the cut was

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With Contributions by Elizabeth Foulds, Astrid Hoogmoed and Jody Joy.

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Figure 1. The first stages of investigation at Langton Herring, looking south west, following the discovery of the mirror in April 2010. Photograph: Miles Russell.

discovered on the base of the feature at a depth of 0.2 m (Figure 2). The skull, at the eastern end of the grave, faced south-west, in the direction of Chesil beach. The legs were flexed, heels placed directly below the pelvis. The right arm was extended, presumably over the bulk of the artefact assemblage, whilst the left arm was folded, hand resting directly beneath the chin. Eight beads, five of glass and three of stone, a silvered Roman coin, a copper alloy spiral bracelet or armlet/armring and the top half of a decorated copper alloy mirror had been removed during the initial stages of investigation. During the course of the archaeological excavation, the lower half of the copper alloy mirror plate was identified from the area of the right forearm, together with a set of copper alloy tweezers by the left eye socket.

Although the burial had been disturbed by a plough strike before the primary excavation, the original location of the armring/bracelet could be determined from patterns of green staining visible on the upper half of the right humerus, wider green staining evident on the left arm apparently having resulted from the former position of the mirror plate. This suggests that the bracelet was, at least at the point of burial, worn prominently on the right upper arm, above the elbow. From what could be established, the mirror had originally been placed across the chest, the decorated back plate upwards, the handle pointing towards the individual's head. During the examination of the skeletal remains, a single copper alloy Thistle brooch was found over the right clavicle, whilst a second of copper alloy brooch of Langton Down type was located from behind the skull.

Given the fragility of the freshly exposed finds, the decision was made to immediately record and lift the inhumation and what remained of the associated artefacts.

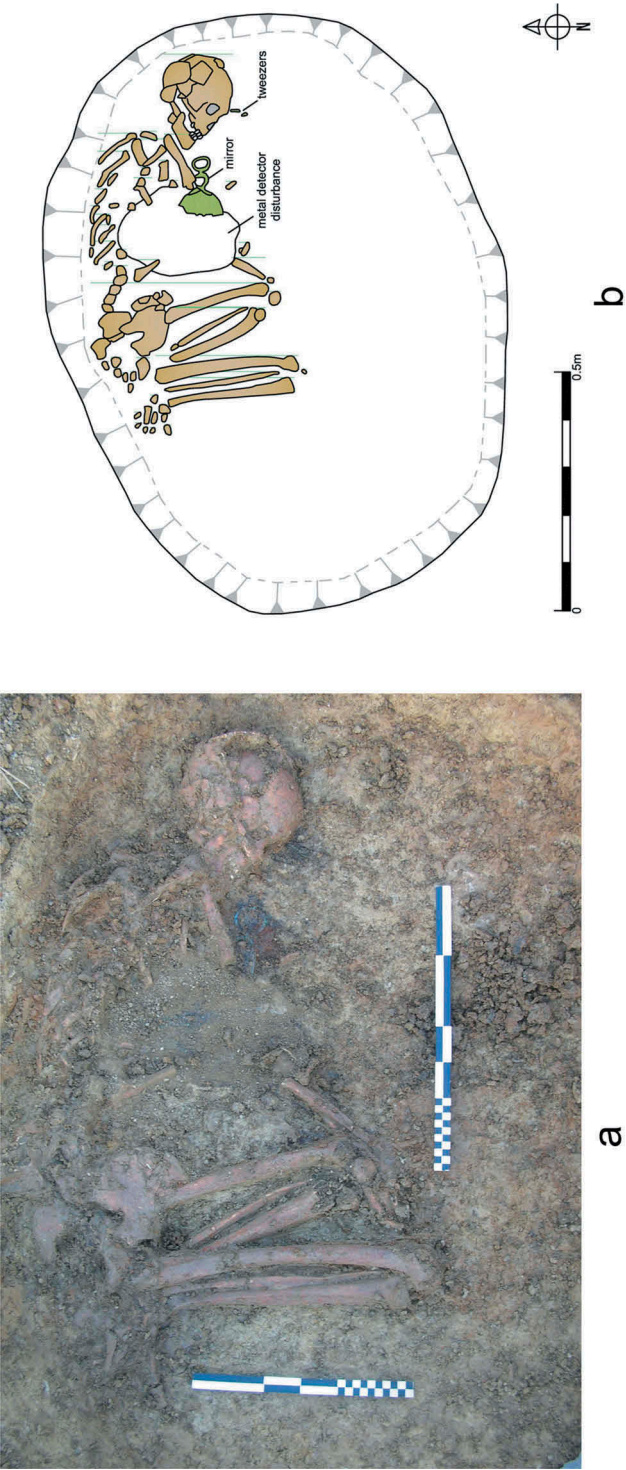


Figure 2. The Langton Herring burial showing the location of the remaining grave goods. (a): Photograph: Miles Russell; (b): Plan: Miles Russell and Jon Milward.

Although two interim statements were made shortly after the discovery (Craig-Atkins et al. 2013; Murden 2014), this is the first full report to be published on the Langton Herring burial and grave group. It is also the first time that a detailed osteobiographical study of an individual buried with a mirror assemblage from European prehistory has been conducted, providing a crucial insight into the personality behind a well-furnished Iron Age ‘terminal’ assemblage.

Human remains

By Martin Smith

The skeletal material recovered comprised the entire skeleton with the exception of a small number of hand and foot bones. Cortical surfaces were generally well preserved with no cracking or flaking and minimal root etching. The burial appears to have lain undisturbed until the recent plough damage, although the majority of bones had fractured in the burial environment and so the material as excavated is highly fragmented with all of the larger and many of the smaller elements recovered as multiple conjoining fragments. There were no signs of vertebrate scavenging or subaerial weathering and the overall condition of the remains combined with the normal anatomical relationships of bones in the grave were consistent with a straightforward burial relatively soon after death.

Biological profile

Sex

The individual had a relatively small, light build with slender gracile bones lacking large or rugged muscle attachments. The innominate (pelvic) bones were heavily fragmented and the most diagnostic portions for determining biological sex were absent. The greater sciatic notches (GSN) of the left and right ilia were relatively narrow and were given scores of 4 and 3 respectively (Walker 2005). The score for the left side prompted initial suggestions that the individual might be male. This interpretation is lent support by the overall form of the GSN's which were also scored as male according to Bruzek's criteria (form:m-m-i: Bruzek 2002). However various other indicators contradicted this. The shape of the composite arches of the auricular surface followed the female form. Observable indicators on the cranium produced scores that were either female or indeterminate. The mandible was relatively robust, with slight gonial flaring and left and right gonial angles of 106° and 108° respectively. In modern populations these observations might indicate a male, although a female could certainly have these attributes. By contrast metric observations were more consistent, all of the features where measurements were possible returning results that were firmly within the female ranges.

With regard to the two features that appear to contradict the rest (the greater sciatic notch and the mandible), both have been noted to be problematic for determining biological sex in past populations. Walker's re-assessment of the GSN found this feature to be a tentative indicator at best (Walker 2005), with only the extreme scores providing relative certainty, whilst even individuals with a hyper-male score of 5 still having a 10% probability of being female. As the pelvic bones were so fragmented it was not possible

to assess the overall form of the innominates, but a possibility suggested by the ambiguous results obtained from this element is that this individual was a woman with narrow android hips (Mitteroecker et al. 2016). Returning to the mandible, past populations eating tougher diets than those available today are likely to have had more robust jaws regardless of sex, as illustrated by a study of Medieval mandibles (Rando, Hillson, and Antoine 2014). It has also been noted that the gonial angle tends to relax in later life with younger individuals of both sexes exhibiting tighter angles (i.e. closer to 90°) during early adulthood (Acharya 2017) and so the individual's age-at-death must be taken into consideration. Given the overall strength and consistency of the majority of indicators present and the relative ambiguity of the latter two features, the individual was therefore assessed to have been female.

Age-at-death

All the early fusing epiphyses that were observable were completely closed, meaning the individual had likely reached at least her late teens to early 20s, although the lines of fusion were still visible on the humeral and femoral heads, indicating that she had not lived on beyond young adulthood. The later fusing epiphyses that were observable supported this interpretation. The medial clavicles were in the process of fusing consistent with Kreitner's Stage 3 (Kreitner et al. 1998). This latter study produced an overall range from 16 to 26 for this stage, although 75% of individuals with this score were aged between 19 and 23. The vertebral annular epiphyses were in the mid -later stages of fusion, scored as Stages 2–3, giving an age range from the late teens to early 20s (Albert and Maples 1995). With specific reference to the cervical vertebrae, development was assessed using the method published by Shapland and Lewis (2014). This involves assessment of the shape of the vertebral bodies of C3 and C4. In the Langton Herring individual C3 was sufficiently intact for assessment and was scored as Stage 5. The iliac crests were also in a state of partial fusion consistent with a range between 15 and 20 years (Wittschieber et al 2013). The pubic symphyses were absent and there were no sternal rib ends available for observation. However, the left and right auricular surfaces produced composite scores of 7 and 8 respectively, placing the individual in Buckberry and Chamberlain's Stage II: (age range 21–28 -mean age 29–33: Buckberry and Chamberlain 2002). The cranial sutures were all open with a large number of cranial fragments having separated along the sutural margins. Sutural fusion is generally recognised as a relatively imprecise age indicator, although this degree of fusion is again consistent with a younger adult. The permanent teeth were all fully erupted (with two exceptions) consistent with an attained age of 18 years or older.

The teeth exhibited relatively little wear with only the first molars being worn to any substantive degree, with a few small points where dentine was visible. This degree of wear was scored in the stage attributed by Brothwell to individuals aged between 17 and 25 (Brothwell 1981), although this system is long overdue for revision. Taking all of the above into consideration, and also considering the general caveat that many of the methods used have been developed on modern populations and so are more likely to produce underestimates than overestimates in archaeological remains, it is most likely that the individual was aged between 19 and 24 years at the time of death.

Ancestry

The degree of fragmentation throughout the skeleton and in the cranium in particular prevented detailed assessment of ancestry or biological affinity. In light of the date and southern British context of the burial it has been assumed for the current analysis that this individual was most likely of Caucasoid ancestry, however, it should be stressed that this attribution is based on the absence of evidence to the contrary rather than any positive evidence beyond the circumstantial.

Stature

The long bones present which were sufficiently intact to permit accurate measurement for stature estimation were the left humerus, right femur and right tibia. Of these, the estimate offering the lowest standard error was the equation combining the measurements of the femur and tibia. This gave a result of 160.37 ± 3.55 cm, producing a range of 156.82–163.92 cm.

Pathology

The interior of the maxillary sinuses was visible due to taphonomic damage revealing areas of fibrous woven bone formation. Such changes are indicative of chronic maxillary sinusitis which is commonly seen amongst archaeological populations. The formation of new bone in this location is indicative of inflammation, for which the most likely causes are either upper respiratory tract infection or irritation by airborne pollutants such as smoke, or a combination of the two. Based on ethnographic observations of pre-industrial societies it is generally thought that the nature of premodern houses would have exposed the occupants to large amounts of irritant smoke from cooking fires (Roberts 2007). Another possible cause is secondary infection from dental disease (Digangi and Sirianni 2017), although in this case such a cause could be excluded as oral health was generally good. Given the condensed nature of these woven bone deposits it seems likely that the individual from Langton Herring had suffered repeated episodes of chronic inflammation which were in a period of recovery at the time of death.

Small deposits of woven bone (<5 mm max dimension) were also observed on 11 rib fragments, these came from both the left and right sides of the chest. Unlike the new bone in the sinuses which had coalesced into developed spicules, the patches of new bone on the ribs were fine and disorganised, consistent with having formed very recently and therefore indicate a condition that was active at the time of death. Such lesions are consistent with inflammation caused by repeated coughing and so are generally indicative of respiratory diseases, although they are otherwise a very non-specific sign and could stem from a range of conditions including common acute chest infections such as those caused by streptococcal bacteria, an infection with potential to become chronic such as tuberculosis, or a longstanding condition without an infective element such as chronic bronchitis. Some studies have found a high proportion of rib lesions to be associated with tuberculosis in early twentieth century urban populations (Roberts, Lucy, and Manchester 2002). However, similar patterns have not been seen amongst earlier populations and the likelihood of rib lesions being caused by tuberculosis will depend on the overall variety of respiratory infections to which a population has been exposed and their relative resistance to particular pathogens (Mays, Fysh, and Taylor 2002).

Patches of woven bone were observed on both tibiae and fibulae. Both tibial shafts displayed areas of woven bone which were in the process of coalescing into more organised lamellar bone and therefore constituted older lesions that were in the process of healing. Further patches of new bone that were less organised and therefore much more recent, were present at the distal ends of both tibiae and fibulae, consistent with a condition that was active at the time of death. Additional areas of woven bone were apparent on several bones of both feet (the left calcaneus and metatarsal shafts of both feet). Again, subperiosteal new bone is a very non-specific pathological sign that can be taken to indicate the presence of localised inflammation but not its cause. Such inflammation (periostitis) in the tibia in particular is common amongst archaeological samples and is generally held to most frequently have been the result of localised injuries to the shins, with bleeding under the skin leading to ossified haematomas, potentially combined with infection reaching the outer bone surface as there is relatively little soft tissue between the anterior part of the tibia and the skin.

In the case of the Langton Herring woman it is possible that she had been unlucky enough to sustain separate injuries to both lower legs at around the same time and that each had independently become locally infected so that both tibiae and fibulae and bones of the feet were involved. However, given the symmetrical nature of these lesions it is more plausible that a systemic condition was in operation. A possible candidate for such a condition is scurvy (Vitamin C deficiency) which has been documented to cause symmetrical haematomas in the lower limbs in adults and particularly at the distal diaphyses of the tibiae and fibulae. Bleeding can occur at these points among various others due to the rupture of blood vessels, as Vitamin C is required for collagen synthesis in order to build connective tissue. Such haematomas have been observed both medically in pre-twentieth century groups documented as having scurvy (Van de Merwe, Steyn, and Maat 2010) and osteologically in archaeological samples such as the mass burials from Kilkenny Workhouse, Ireland dating from the time of the Irish famine (Geber and Murphy 2012). As a disease of malnutrition, scurvy is popularly associated with catastrophic events such as wars and famines and with poorer socioeconomic groups such as prisoners.

Whilst these views might hold for more recent periods they are not necessarily correct in relation to earlier populations as Vitamin C is a micronutrient and thus has no bearing on the overall number of calories consumed – essentially an individual who enjoyed a good or at least adequate diet in terms of receiving sufficient numbers of calories, could still be deficient in relation to particular vitamins. The possibility of scurvy does not preclude the Langton Herring woman from being a higher status individual for deficiency of Vitamin C need not imply that sources of this micronutrient were unavailable (such as fruits and leafy vegetables) but rather that they were simply not a sufficient part of this person's chosen diet. Given the high levels of animal protein suggested by the Langton Herring woman's isotope results, her diet may instead reflect relative cultural values attached to different classes of food, with meat prized more highly than vegetable food sources and regarded as commensurate with higher socio-economic status. Ironically, a diet that might have been perceived to be 'good' for this apparently well-cared for young woman may therefore have actually served to weaken her ability to resist infection. This latter point may have further relevance concerning the evidence of active pulmonary infection at the time of death.

The individual's dental health was relatively good, with just two teeth, both mandibular second molars, displaying small carious lesions (approx. 1mm diameter) and

one deposit of calculus present at the base of the right maxillary first molar. Linear enamel hypoplasia were present on all four maxillary premolars indicating multiple periods of ill-health or malnutrition during childhood. Incremental analysis of stable isotopes sampled from the woman's mandibular right canine have produced results consistent with her having been adequately fed as a child (Redfern 2016) and so the hypoplastic lines in her teeth are more likely related to illness. Developmental anomalies were present firstly in the form of the right maxillary canine having formed ectopically within the maxilla. This tooth had therefore never erupted and so the corresponding deciduous tooth appears not to have been lost, on the basis that the socket was open and unhealed; although the tooth was not present when the remains were analysed, perhaps having fallen out when the skeleton was excavated. Secondly, the left third maxillary molar was absent, apparently having never formed (molar agenesis).

Other observations

Entheseal changes consistent with musculoskeletal stress were conspicuous by their absence. There were no particularly developed muscle markers that might indicate rigorous physical activity, other than a costoclavicular sulcus on the right clavicle. This latter feature is consistent with repeated adduction of the arm, but otherwise there were no indicators of manual labour. Coupled with the light, gracile build of this individual these observations are suggestive of her having lived a relatively sedentary life, which may have relevance in relation to the well-furnished nature of her burial and the question of whether she might have enjoyed relatively high status. Non-metric traits were observed in the form of an unfused metopic suture and squatting facets on the tibiae and tali.

Stable isotope values derived from bone and dental samples were measured as part of the High-status Durotrigian Burials Project (Redfern 2016), in order to obtain information on the Langton Herring woman's diet and place of origin. Dietary information was inferred from the relative carbon and nitrogen isotope values obtained from the bone sample sent for radiocarbon dating and also an extracted tooth (the left upper canine). Although the full dataset generated from this project will ultimately be published elsewhere, a few key observations should be noted here.

The results complement each other with the tooth offering information on diet during childhood (Clark 2015), whilst the values from the bone sample give indications of aspects of diet during the last seven to ten years of life. The sectioned tooth was also sampled for strontium and oxygen values (Scollan 2015) with these latter 'geochemical' isotopes corresponding to the region where the individual spent her early years as her teeth were forming in the jaw. Nitrogen isotope values indicate the relative extent to which an individual's dietary protein was derived from animal or vegetable sources. The Langton Herring woman's childhood values are interesting in this respect as they indicate that, after weaning, she ate a diet that was considerably high in animal derived protein, although it is not possible to tell the extent to which this was comprised of meat as opposed to other animal products (such as milk, cheese and blood). The value obtained from bone ($\delta^{15}\text{N}$: 10.31‰) tells a similar story, indicating the woman's diet contained similarly high levels of animal protein during adulthood, whilst her carbon value ($\delta^{13}\text{C}$: -19.93‰) is consistent with a terrestrially based diet, meaning the elevated nitrogen cannot be explained as a product of eating marine fish. These results are interesting in light of the perceived wealthy nature of the recorded grave goods and, taken together with the fact that many

individuals do not appear to have been buried at all during this period, it is perhaps reasonable to suggest that these three lines of evidence are mutually consistent with a degree of high status in life, relative to other members of later Iron Age society.

The geochemical isotope values derived from the sampled tooth, as indicated by the strontium result ($^{87}\text{Sr}/^{86}\text{Sr}$: 0.709004), are consistent with the individual having spent her early years on the margin of an area of chalkland. The oxygen isotope values ($\delta_{18}\text{O}_\text{p}$ 17.8‰, $\delta_{18}\text{O}_\text{DW}$ -6.2‰) have potential to refine this view and are on one hand consistent with the general region of southern Britain corresponding to the general distribution of Durotrigian material culture. It is worth noting, however, that these values are equally consistent with other regions of continental Europe including parts of northern and western France, so it is not possible to entirely rule these areas out as a place of origin.

Copper staining

By Astrid Hoogmoed, Martin Smith and Paul Cheetham

Areas of bright green patination with a bluish tinge in places were present on various bones of the upper body (Figure 3a and Figure 3b). Such staining is generally held to result from contact with copper or copper alloy objects in the burial environment, as confirmed chemically by several studies (Hopkinson, Yeates, and Scott 2008; Ferrand et al. 2014). Green staining on bone can also be caused by the growth of algae or moss (Dupras and Schultz 2013), although such organic causes are less likely in buried environments where the bone is not exposed to light. The areas of green staining present on various bones of the upper body of the Langton Herring woman are therefore presumed to have resulted from contact with the copper alloy objects furnishing the grave. This hypothesis was evaluated using a portable X-ray fluorescence spectrometer (pXRF), a Niton X3L GOLDD instrument using the mining Cu/Zn calibration with 20 seconds on each filter (80 seconds in total).

The left fibula, right fibula, left tibia and right cuboid were used as control samples, as the bones of the lower limbs did not show any metal discoloration, with a right rib displaying no staining used as an additional control sample. These were also used as references to compare the concentrations of other metallic elements across the skeleton. All the bones had concentrations below the limit of detection for most metal elements considered in this analysis, although copper was detected at various points matching the areas of visible staining. Among these positive results the lowest concentrations were recorded on the sternum, frontal bone and the right clavicle, while the highest concentrations were recorded on the left radius and ulna. Variations in concentration of the copper corresponded with differences in the intensity of green/blue colour on the bone, with a vibrant green/blue hue associated with the higher concentrations. Copper was detected on the right 'reference' rib, however the concentration (264.11 ppm) was considerably lower than on the stained bones. All the other reference bones produced results that were below the limits of detection. Other metals detected in small quantities throughout the skeleton including iron and aluminium did not covary with the copper results and were interpreted as diagenetic signals from the background soil matrix. The results for areas of bone with copper stains were also compared to non-stained areas on the same bone. The first run targeted the part of bone with copper staining on it. Subsequent runs focused on different points on the same bone where no staining was visible. In these non-stained regions, the XRF still detected the presence of copper, generally in lower concentrations with the exception of the humerus.

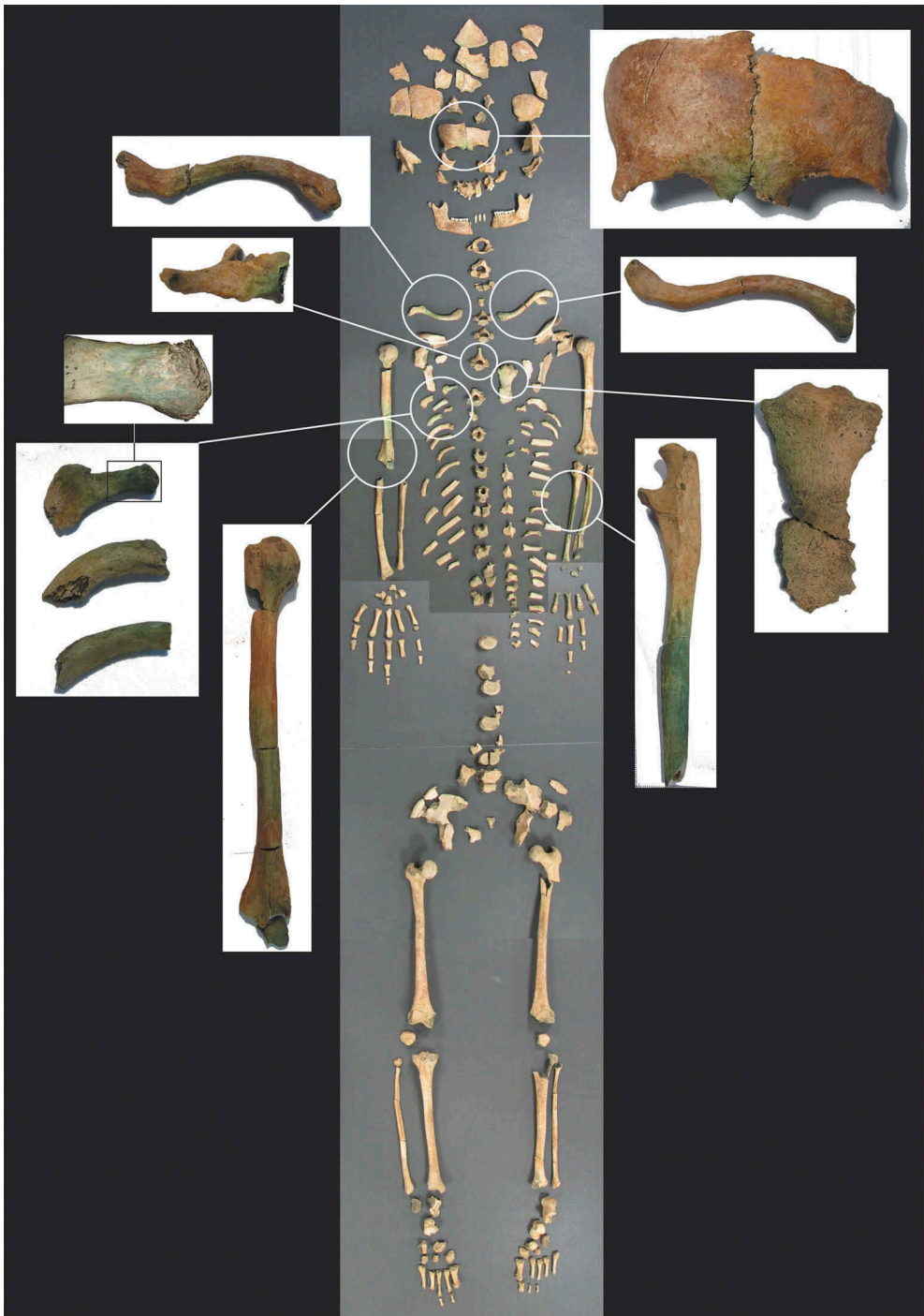


Figure 3a. Composite image of the human remains in anatomical position. Photographs: Martin Smith.

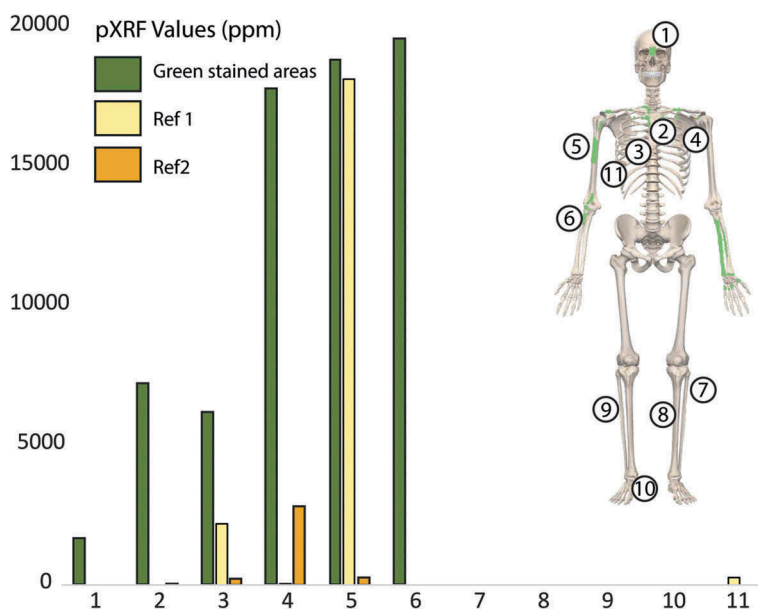


Figure 3b. Principal areas of bone with copper patination.

Radiocarbon date

By Paul Cheetham

AMS radiocarbon age and calibration as reported by the ¹⁴CHRONO Centre, Queens University, Belfast, 42 Fitzwilliam Street, Belfast BT9 6AX, Northern Ireland. Sample dated 21.08.2015. UBA-29849. Radiocarbon Age BP 2028 ± 29. The probabilities for the % area enclosed cal age ranges relative area under probability distribution are:

68.3 (1 sigma) cal BC 54- cal AD 19 1.000

95.4 (2 sigma) cal BC 150–144 0.009

111- cal AD 53 0.991

As the Roman coin found in the burial gives a firm *terminus post quem* for the burial of 83 BC then the first range of the 2 sigma ranges 150–144 BC can be excluded as can also part of the second. Consequently, at 2 sigma significance the date can be narrowed down to 85 BC – cal AD 53. This 2 sigma range may be further refined by the Rosette or Thistle brooch, recovered from the right clavicle (see below), to c.AD 25 – cal AD 53.

Copper alloy small finds

By Damian Evans

With the exception of the handle and lower half of the copper alloy mirror plate and the remains of the copper alloy tweezers, the metal finds associated with the burial had been dislocated from their primary context by the time of the excavation, the plough-strike causing a degree of fragmentation to individual finds.

- (1) Copper-alloy Langton Down brooch ([Figure 4](#)). Dimensions: 62mm x 19mm x 20mm. Weight: 6g. Fragmented, cast, copper-alloy brooch. The spring, which is in pieces, and pin, which is absent, is normally housed in side wings, now missing. The style dates from the last decade of first century BC – AD 50/60 although it is very hard to give a more precise date and trace the evolution of the type (Jackson and Potter 1996, 318; Mackreth 2011, 32–36).
- (2) Copper-alloy Rosette or Thistle brooch ([Figure 4](#)). Dimensions: 47mm x 15mm x 18mm; Weight: 6g. Missing most of its pin, but with the spring largely intact, this style of brooch consisted of a disc plate added to the bow. All the frontal parts of the brooch are decorated using ribbed mouldings and incised detailing (Johns 1996). The reverse, with the curled catchplate, is undecorated. Rosette/Thistle brooches are found in Late, pre-Roman Iron Age and early Roman contexts (e.g. May 1996; Stead and Rigby 1989) and possess a date range of between c.15 BC – AD 50/60 (Stead and Rigby 1989, 101; Mackreth 2011, 26–32). This particular style, representing a departure from more simple earlier forms such as the penannular or La Tène III fibulae, is a continental form that was in limited use during the early to middle part of the first century AD, c.AD 25–60.
- (3) Pair of copper-alloy tweezers ([Figure 5](#)). Length: 60mm; Weight: 4g. Tweezers similar to those discovered at Langton Herring have previously been found in graves of the Late Iron Age (Hill 1997) but are more usually found as part of a cosmetic set, as with the burial with a mirror recovered from Portesham (Fitzpatrick 1997).

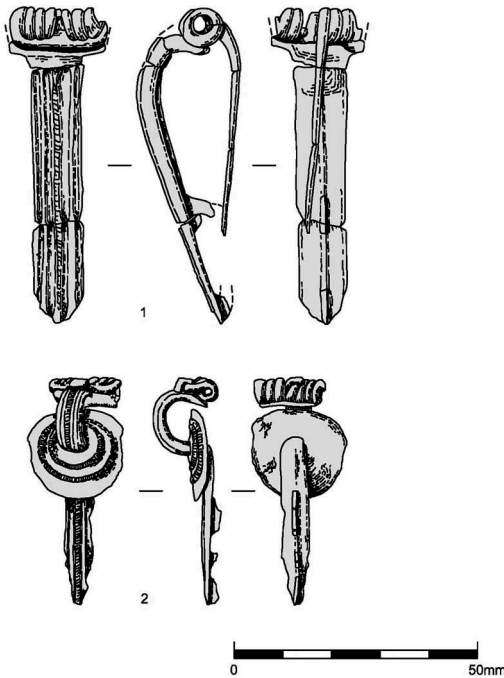


Figure 4. Copper alloy objects. (1) Langton Down brooch; (2) Rosette or Thistle brooch. Drawings: Miles Russell and Jon Milward.

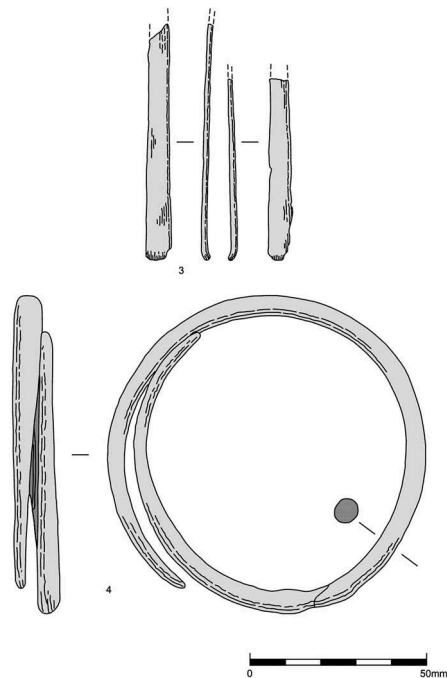


Figure 5. Copper alloy objects. (3) Tweezers; (4) Spiral bracelet / armlet. Drawings: Miles Russell and Jon Milward.

- (4) Copper-alloy spiral bracelet/armlet ([Figure 5](#)). The metal is circular in cross-section and tapers to a point at either end. Weight 50g. The bracelet or armlet is of a form which dates to the later Iron Age. Parallels made from copper-alloy and precious metal dating to the early first century BC can be seen from the site of Snettisham, Norfolk ([Stead 1979](#), 74–75), although the metal is most often rectangular in cross-section rather than round as it is here. The terminals of two bracelets from Burton Fleming overlap but these examples both have deep incised ornament in the area of the overlap ([Stead 1979](#), 74–75).

Copper alloy mirror

By Jody Joy

A Copper alloy mirror in multiple pieces ([Figure 6](#)) comprising two substantive sections, a handle and the majority of a decorated, kidney-shaped plate, together with other plate fragments. As reconstructed, the mirror measures 296mm from the bottom of the handle to the rim, the plate formed from a thin sheet of copper alloy, approximately 2mm thick, measuring 191mm in height and 214mm at its widest point. The plate is decorated on the reverse decoration being inscribed or chased onto the plate surface. The pattern is difficult to reconstruct, but the outline forms an extended lyre-loop ([Joy 2015](#), [Figure 5.3](#)), frequently seen on mirrors found in contexts dating to the middle decades of the first century AD, belonging to Joy's Western group, such as Birdlip, Chettle, Desborough and Portesham ([Joy 2010](#), 69–70). The second substantive piece comprises a section of the mirror plate and the handle, a Joy Type IV loop ([Joy 2010](#), 142) within the grip. This has a large terminal loop, at the bottom of which is a raised knob. The arms, which are short, have slots into which the plate has been wedged. At the centre of the arms, at the juncture of the plate and handle, is a ring similar to the loop appearing on the handles of the Pegsdon mirror ([Burleigh and Megaw 2007](#); [Joy 2010](#), 115, 160) an unattributed mirror from Oxfordshire ([Joy 2010](#), 123) and the handle of a mirror from Portland ([Joy 2010](#), 126).

The mirror is unusual in a number of respects. Beginning with the handle, the grip is formed of a single loop with a tear-shaped void, the majority of known examples with this particular handle type having two tear-shaped loops and a single circular loop at the end. It is possible a third loop of the handle was broken off in antiquity leaving behind the raised knob present on the bottom loop, but this seems unlikely given the bottom loop is circular not tear-shaped and the knob is smooth, showing no sign of breakage. Decoration is also visible behind the top ring of the handle, which does not appear to be a part of the design. When the handle of the Birdlip mirror was removed for conservation an area of test decoration was revealed which had been hidden from view by the upper part of the handle ([Stead 1996](#), 12). It is therefore possible that the area of decoration on the Langton Herring mirror was a practice piece probably intended to be covered by the handle. Combined with its unusual form, the visible areas of practice decoration suggest that the handle was a replacement.

Elements of the decoration are also unusual. The infilling of motifs was created using a rocked pattern rather than the more typical basket-hatching seen on most decorated mirrors. Parallels for this can be seen on the mirrors from Chettle ([Joy 2010](#), 85, 97),



Figure 6a. The copper alloy mirror. Photograph: Chris Moody.

Colchester (Joy 2010, Figure A12), Holcombe (Fox 1972; Fox and Pollard 1973) and Old Warden (Spratling 1970). The outlines of many of the motifs are also formed of dots rather than solid lines, which is more usual. In this respect, the decoration can be compared to Colchester II and Rickling (Joy 2010, Figures A13 and A28). Sections of the decoration,

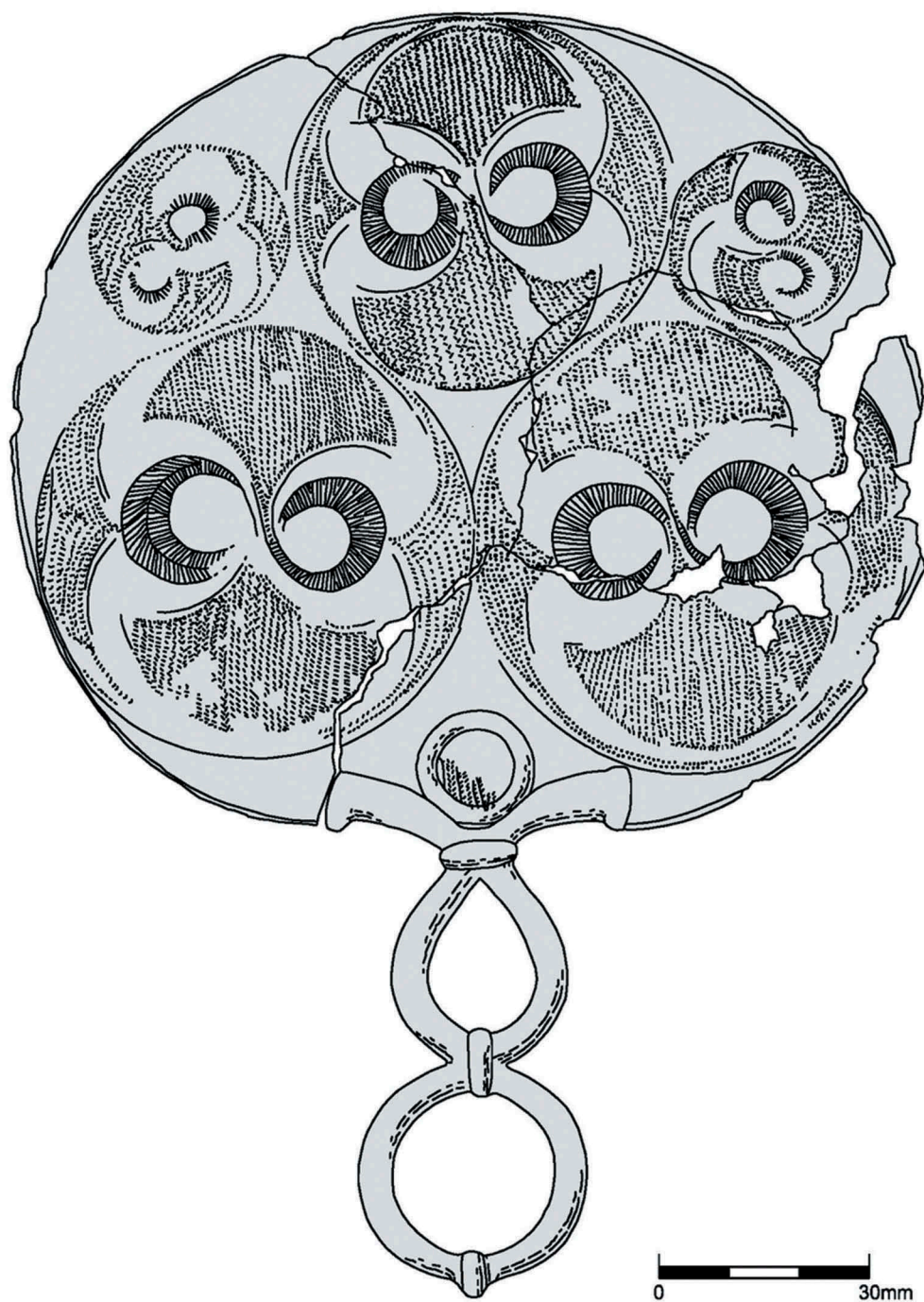


Figure 6b. The copper alloy mirror. Drawing: Miles Russell and Jon Millward.

such as the crescent-shaped or ‘armadillo’ motifs (Joy 2010, Figure 4.9) look to have been drawn free-hand whereas the lyre-shaped outline was more precisely laid out, perhaps using compasses. More generally, mirror decoration is laid out using one or other of these

techniques, although it has been suggested that in some instances, decoration was a two-stage process, with the decorative outline marked out first and the details added later, perhaps by a different individual (Joy 2010, 30–31). Further evidence for the free-form nature of the design can be seen in the unusual form of the crescent-shaped motif in the far-left quarter of the mirror, filled with a chevron pattern bisected by a central line. This is highly unusual as this motif is frequently filled by parallel lines. It is possible the inside half of this motif was marked out first, with the outside section created later to enlarge the motif, matching the size of the crescent it mirrors in the overall design.

Like much Celtic art, the mirror is a one-off bespoke item. Elements of its design and manufacture are unusual, and some (particularly the decoration) appear *ad hoc*, but it also shares many attributes with other mirrors. This ‘same but different’ quality is characteristic of the group as a whole, as is the longevity of the artefact, since the replacement handle suggests it may have already been old before it was buried. As already mentioned, its size and the extended lyre-loop pattern places the mirror in Joy’s Western group (Joy 2010), dating to the mid-first century AD. It is closest geographically to the mirrors from Chettle (Joy 2010, 85, 97) and Portesham (Fitzpatrick 1997) which, like the Langton Herring mirror, both share the same extended-lyre pattern and are from contexts dating to just before, or soon after the Roman conquest.

The coin

By Miles Russell

A silver-plated, copper-alloy Late Republican forgery of a denarius serratus, originally minted in Rome between 83 and 82 BC (Figure 7). Diameter: 17mm x 19mm; weight 3.1g. Obverse depicts a laureate head of Jupiter, facing right, with S.C (Senatus Consulto) behind and .K (a control mark) appearing below the chin. The reverse depicts Victory riding a quadriga holding chariot reigns and long victory palm forward



Figure 7. Silver-plated denarius serratus. (a) obverse; (b) reverse. Photographs: Chris Moody.

in her left hand and a victor's wreath upward in her right. Inscription reads, in typographic ligature, Q. ANTO. BALB (Quintus Antonius Balbus) with PR. (praetor) in exergue. This was originally a special issue, minted by Quintus Antonius Balbus by decree of the Senate to finance armies to defend Rome against Lucius Cornelius Sulla who, in 83 BC, was preparing to march on the city. The depiction of Victory holding a wreath and palm branch, anticipates a glorious triumph over the armies of Sulla by his main rival, Gaius Marius. Unfortunately for Balbus, a supporter of the Marian faction, this was not to be for he was defeated in battle by Sulla's legate, Lucius Marcius Philippus, in 82 BC and killed.

The coin has been perforated, presumably for use as an amulet, piercing having been directed from the reverse side in order to carefully avoid contact with the horses, chariot and driver, but indiscriminately damaging the obverse image of Jupiter. Evident patterns of wear, differentially polishing both the forehead of Jupiter and the palm and wreath held by Victory, indicate the original area of cord attachment. Absence of impact damage across the coin appears to suggest that the object was worn as a stand-alone pendant, rather than with a suite of objects such as the beads (below) as part of a necklace. The nature of coin curation (a century between manufacture and deposition at Langton Herring), together with the circumstances of its transportation from a securely Mediterranean context, to arrive in the hands of this young Durotrigian woman, must unfortunately remain unknown. As an object with meaning and importance perhaps combined from its substance (silvered) and design, however, it may have had a social, political or 'protective' significance beyond the mere artistic curio, the wearer being keen to display the female charioteer and horse-drawn multi-purpose prestige vehicle on the reverse, rather than the obverse image of a male bearded god.

The beads

By Elizabeth M Foulds

Many of the glass beads recorded from Iron Age Britain derive from uncertain or unspecified locations. Although the circumstances of discovery at Langton Herring have obscured some of the contextual data, such as the precise nature of bead placement, this inhumation assemblage is a hugely significant addition to our understanding of this particular artefact type.

- (1) Diameter: 32.1 mm; Height: 15.2 mm; Perforation Diameter: 8.4 mm; weight: 21.90 grams; Guido Class 7a/Foulds Class 11 Type 2801 (Figure 8 and 10). A complete translucent purple annular bead, with opaque white whirl and translucent purple linear spiral applied over the opaque white. One area has large broken bubbles on the surface. While the purple glass seems to have very light weathering causing surface dulling, the opaque white glass has sustained more surface wear.
- (2) Diameter: 31.9 mm; Height: 12.3 mm; Perforation Diameter: 10.9 mm; Weight: 17.69 grams; Guido Class 7a/Foulds Class 8 Type 1604 (Figure 8 and 10). A complete, slightly irregular annular whirl bead made from translucent blue and opaque yellow glass. One area is more weathered than the other. Both



Figure 8. Bead assemblage: glass beads 1, 2, 3, 4 and 5. Photograph: Chris Moody.



Figure 9. Bead assemblage: stone beads 6, 7 and 8. Photograph: Chris Moody.

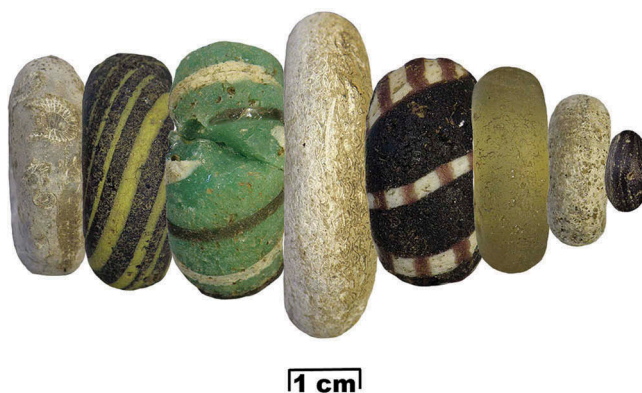


Figure 10. Bead frame (from left to right): 8, 2, 5, 6, 1, 3, 7 and 4. Photograph: Chris Moody.

perforation faces are worn very smooth – which may indicate how it was used. In some places the opaque yellow, which is only on the surface, has worn through to the translucent blue glass.

- (3) Diameter: 28.4 mm; Height: 9.8 mm; Perforation Diameter: 11.6 mm; Weight: 10.89 grams; Guido Class 5/Foulds Class 5 Type 701 (Figure 8 and 10). A complete colourless annular glass bead. Opaque yellow glass is seen around and inside the perforation. The colourless glass does not appear to have any bubbles, but the surface is pock-marked. Striations suggest that the bead may have been formed by wrapping the colourless glass around a mandrel.
- (4) Diameter: 13.5 mm; Height: 5.9 mm; Perforation Diameter 6.5 mm; Weight 0.91 grams; Guido Group 6(?)/Foulds Class 1 Type 108 (Figure 4 and 10). A complete, but very uneven annular bead, made of purplish-brown glass. Striations, revealed through light weathering, suggest that the bead was formed by wrapping the glass around a mandrel.
- (5) Diameter: 37.7 mm; Height 15.8 mm; Perforation Diameter: 10.0 mm; Weight 25.08 grams (fragmented); Guido Class 7c/Foulds Class 9 Type 1704 (Figure 8 and 10). A fragmented, partially reconstructed, somewhat opaque green annular bead that is approximately 80% complete. Surface decoration is formed from strands of opaque white and brown-black opaque glass. While the opaque white glass is very devitrified, the brown-black glass is still lustrous in places. A cross-section from a broken area shows that the decorative glass is sitting just on the surface of the bead rather than being incorporated into the body. The decorative motif extends all the way to the perforation but does not line the inside of the perforation although it could, however, have worn away if abraded.
- (6) Diameter: 43 mm; Weight 26 g; Large stone bead of Purbeck Marble (Figure 9 and 10).
- (7) Diameter: 29 mm; Weight 14 g; Stone bead of eroded limestone (Figure 9 and 10).
- (8) Diameter: 22 mm; Weight 5 g; Stone bead: flint with fossils (Figure 9 and 10).

The majority of the Langton Herring beads fit into the established typology suggested by Margaret Guido (1978). Beads 1, 2 and 5 fit into Guido's Class 7 'Celtic Whirl and Ray' types: annular in shape with either straight (rays) or curling (whirl) decorative lines of glass radiating out of the perforation, wrapping around to the other side. Number 5 is of the ray variety, and number 2 is definitely a whirl, however, number 1 is not quite either as some of the ray/whirl limbs curl whilst others are straight. Number 1 is also unusual because it has a spiral made from translucent purple glass overlaying the opaque white glass, which wraps around the bead circumferentially producing a checkerboard appearance. Guido's typology divides Class 7 into three sub-categories (a, b and c) based on the dominant colour of the bead. Of these, sub-type 'a' is the most common (Guido 1978, 57). Number 1 and 2 fit into this sub-type, which contains purple and blue beads, while number 5 fits sub-type 'c'.

A date range of between 150 BC – AD 50 has been suggested for the Class 7a beads (Guido 1978, 58), although there are very few well-dated examples, none of which fit the description of the Langton Herring beads. Class 7c are a mixture of beads that do not fit into the other Class 7 sub-types and which are not accurately dated. There is only

one mention of a green bead in Guido's catalogue and, although this is in a collection at the National Museum of Scotland, it possibly originated from Ireland. Bead number 3 is Guido's Class 5 Hanging Langford type (Guido 1978, 51). These are very distinct in appearance, the colourless glass working as a magnifier which, with the opaque yellow underneath, created an optical illusion, making the bead appear to glow. This example is, so far, the largest, in terms of diameter and height, an example found during the excavations at nearby Maumbury Rings, Dorchester, being nearly a centimetre smaller in diameter (Guido 1978, 111).

Class 5 beads are mostly found in the southern counties of Britain, Guido suggesting a second century BC – first century AD date (Guido 1978, 53). In the majority of cases, however, the dating evidence for Class 5 beads do not relate to a specific feature or phase, but to the site as a whole, making it difficult to pinpoint a precise date. A Late Iron Age to early Roman date (with the possibility of reuse) would therefore not be out of place for the class. Guido's typology classifies Langton Herring number 4 as a Group 6 undecorated annular-shaped bead. This group is further subdivided by size and colour, however there is no sub-type for beads made of purplish-brown glass. Plain annular beads are not unusual for Iron Age or Roman period sites, although most tend to be translucent blue, green, or opaque yellow.

Although dating these bead types remains somewhat imprecise, in keeping with the overall nature of the metalwork, a very Late Iron Age/early Roman date is suggested for the Langton Herring assemblage. Regardless of the dating issues, however, the beads found form a highly unusual assemblage. No other site has produced more than two Class 7 beads, whilst Class 7 and Class 5 beads have only been found together at two to three other sites: Meare Lake Village West, Somerset, Nor'nour, Scilly and possibly also Colchester in Essex (Guido 1978, 117–120). In each of these cases, however, the Class 7 beads are different in size and colour from those recovered from Langton Herring. It should also be noted that other Class 5 and 7 beads are from settlement contexts and, with the exception of those from East Yorkshire, it is rare for glass beads to be found with Iron Age inhumations. Both Class 5 and Class 7 beads are types that Guido thought were likely to have been manufactured on the continent and brought to Britain (Guido 1978, 51–53, 57–59). Although it is not possible to tell if bead number 5 at Langton Herring was made locally or further afield, its colour certainly does not fit with the dominant colour-types used in the production of glass beads from this period (translucent blue, opaque white, colourless, and opaque yellow). It is interesting, therefore, that the glass beads from this burial are possibly of continental origin, whilst the metalwork appears to be produced locally. Even though the glass beads are all very different, they all belong to types found in southern England from the first century BC onwards.

Burial assemblage: date and context

The Langton Herring artefacts come from a grave which should date from the last few decades of the first century BC to the mid first century AD, most likely around the time of the Roman conquest. Although the actual date of the burial could be in the early Roman period, the mirror and the spiral bracelet/armlet both date to the late pre-Roman Iron Age. A coin from the burial gives a firm *terminus post quem* of 83 BC whilst a Rosette or Thistle brooch from the right clavicle dates to between c.AD 25–60.

When combined with a calibrated AMS radiocarbon date, these artefacts give at 2 sigma a date range for the burial of c.AD 25 – AD 53.

The modern catch-all term ‘grave goods’ for assemblages associated with burials is one that covers a multitude of deposit types and depositional forms which could originally have served many distinct functions in relation to both the dead and also to those witnessing the placement of the deceased into the ground. Harding has recently summarized later prehistoric forms into seven broad categories, namely: lavishly equipped grave furnishings, sometimes including equestrian equipment (such as the chariot burials of eastern Yorkshire); personal ornaments and dress-fastenings, including brooches and bracelets that may have been worn by the deceased in life; indicators of rank or role in society, such as parade weaponry or other symbols of office; funerary accessories, including drinking cups or joints of meat, required by the dead in their journey to the afterlife; residues from the funerary process, such as food or drink set aside from a commemorative or funeral feast; tokens of esteem deposited by clients or kin (which may have had no direct link with the deceased); offerings to the gods or supernatural (perhaps even subterranean) forces (Harding 2016, 169–170).

Attempting to classify burial assemblages is not an easy task, especially as some of the categories noted above were probably not mutually exclusive (Harding 2016, 170). Whatever the ultimate reasons behind the collection of material for deposition with a body, we can at least presume that some of the artefacts recorded from grave contexts were in some way connected to the deceased as personal effects. Dress fittings, especially brooches, beads or rings, and toilet instruments, such as ear scoops, are furthermore likely to have had an intimate or special attachment to the individual, especially if used as an expression of identity or status. Toilet gear, in particular those items concerned with grooming and facial modification, seem to have proliferated in later Iron Age grave contexts, perhaps reflecting an increase in hygiene or that people were signifying difference and degrees of social identity through their appearance (Hill 1997; Jundi 1997).

Although apparently a British phenomenon, the basic form of the Iron Age mirror references those manufactured within the Greek, Etruscan and Roman world (Joy 2010, 5). The earliest British mirrors appear as small, simple, undecorated iron plates with long, straight handles, whilst later examples, dating from the first century BC, are usually of bronze, with late and very insular forms of La Tène style decoration (Joy 2011, 468; Harding 2016, 230). The decoration on the back of the Langton Herring mirror, an extended lyre-loop, is commonly found in contexts dating to the mid first century AD (Joy 2010, 69–70). It is interesting to note that, when found in graves, mirrors are frequently associated with tweezers, as at Langton Herring, and ear scoops, suggesting that body modification (and certainly depilation) was a primary factor in both use and popularity, although the possibility of mirrors also having ‘magical’ connotations for example as apotropaic items or means of divination need not be excluded as such items could have been simultaneously viewed as having both ritual and practical functions.

In an Iron Age context, the term ‘mirror’ is perhaps somewhat deceptive, given its modern association with highly reflective, silvered looking-glasses used predominantly for personal grooming. In contrast to these, prehistoric mirrors comprise kidney-shaped metal plates, usually attached to a looped bronze handle. The business side of the plate would originally have been highly polished, providing a passable reflection of

the observer. Once in the ground, the bright, shiny surface of such mirrors dulls quickly to a dark, mottled green, dissipating all reflective quality.

The occurrence of decorated copper alloy mirrors within Iron Age grave assemblages demands some explanation, given that these were prestigious and, one may assume, treasured artefacts which could be passed to subsequent generations as heirlooms. The concept of inheritance, an object being introduced to a burial context only after a prolonged period of use, is one that is supported, at least in part, by the observation that many prehistoric status artefacts appear to have gone through significant periods of modification and repair (Harding 2016, 185). Composite workmanship is certainly apparent in the Langton Herring mirror, the handle failing to obscure an area of practice decoration on the mirror plate. As a much-repaired heirloom or keepsake with significant dynastic credentials, not to say monetary value, the occurrence of such a mirror within a grave assemblage suggests a termination of social currency. It could be that the Langton Herring woman was too young, or indeed too unwell, to have produced an heir, something which would have perhaps provided sufficient reason to remove the artefacts from general circulation (Joy 2011, 479).

During the excavation and lifting of the inhumation, a copper alloy Thistle brooch was recorded at the right clavicle whilst a second copper alloy brooch, of Langton Down type, was found behind the head. The position of the Thistle brooch makes sense as a dress fitting, fixing a tunic and overcloak at the shoulder, suggesting at least a basic level of clothing at the time of interment. At Portesham in Dorset and Pegsdon in Bedfordshire, brooches were found attached to the terminal loop of mirror handles (Fitzpatrick 1997; Burleigh and Megaw 2007). Closer examination of these and other mirrors has revealed wear on the handle loops consistent with a brooch or other fastener having been secured during the lifecycle of the artefact, rather than being added at the point of deposition in the grave (Joy 2011, 477). Such wear patterns could have occurred if the mirrors had originally been suspended from a wall or ceiling when not in use (Fox and Pollard 1973, 23), hung from the owner's clothing or belt by a brooch or, perhaps more plausibly, if they had regularly been covered or wrapped in material and fastened with a brooch to protect the reflective surface (Joy 2011, 477).

Assuming that the Langton Down brooch had originally been placed on the Langton Herring body, the observed placement behind the head could reflect significant post burial disruption of grave fill. In the Iron Age cemeteries of Burton Fleming and Rudston in east Yorkshire (Stead 1991) and Winterborne Kingston in Dorset (Russell et al. 2014), however, inhumations had a single brooch placed behind or within the immediate vicinity of the head rather than upon the shoulders or torso. This makes no sense in terms of simple dress-fitting, or indeed of hair attachment, but may indicate that the bodies were originally wrapped in a shroud or placed in material pinned together at the top (Giles 2012, 129; Russell et al. 2014, 218; Harding 2016, 168–9). If taken at face value, the placement of brooches at Langton Herring could indicate that the deceased was dressed and wrapped in a shroud when placed in the grave.

As brooches combined both the functional and ornamental, they were ideal signifiers of identity in life and death, serving to express gender, age, ethnicity and degrees of group membership (Jundi and Hill 1998, 125). The late pre-Roman Iron Age saw a sudden and significant increase in the number of brooches being made, worn and lost in southern Britain as well as being formally deposited in both graves and settlement sites (Jundi and

Hill 1998, 126). Presumably, in a burial context, such as recorded within the Langton Herring grave, the duality of distinctive brooch-forms was a significant aid to help negotiate and affirm the identity of both the deceased and the wider social group.

Despite the fact that the copper later Iron Age alloy spiral bracelet/armlet from Langton Herring had been removed from the grave fill prior to detailed archaeological recording, patterns of staining on the bone suggest that it had originally been worn by the deceased on the right upper arm. Bracelets are rarely encountered from burials in Dorset and the south west, although simple arm and finger/toe rings have been recorded, most notably a penannular iron bracelet at Whitcombe (Aitken and Aitken 1990, 64) and the shale armlets and finger/toe rings of copper alloy and iron recovered from Maiden Castle (Wheeler 1943, 352–356). Bracelets/armlets and armrings are far more commonly recovered from Iron Age burials in east Yorkshire where, it has been suggested, the number, location or combination worn on the upper body may have signified degrees of social status (Harding 2016, 175).

A single glass bead was recovered during the excavation, within the loose, disturbed fill of the primary investigation slot, four further glass beads, three of stone and a perforated Roman coin having been recovered from the central part of the burial. As the majority of beads had been disturbed by the primary plough-strike and subsequent investigation, it is impossible to determine whether the deceased had originally been wearing them, in the form of a necklace, or had them stored in a leather or fabric bag, since decayed. Four of the beads are quite large and may have been cumbersome if worn together around the neck, an arrangement which may further have obscured or damaged the smallest bead. Thus, it is possible, therefore, that they may originally have been used or worn individually as charms or amulets rather than together as a group, although, in this context, it should be noted that the Queen's Barrow at Arras had a necklace of around 100 beads whereas Barrow L at Cowlam contained 70 (Stead 1979, 78 and 80). An amulet explanation may certainly stand for the perforated Roman coin (above), the design of which would probably have been obscured if originally placed within or at the centre of a necklace.

Glass beads from the British Iron Age are comparatively rare, especially from burials recovered outside of eastern Yorkshire (Dent 1982; Foulds 2017). In Dorset, a group of at least 11 glass beads, comprising six blue annular examples with an opaque white wave decoration, a green melon bead, two amber-coloured beads, a brown opaque bead and fragments of one made of pale yellow glass, and two wooden spacers were recovered from a crouched burial of a young female at Whitcombe (Aitken 1990, 64, 76–79). The beads were found at the left shoulder of the body and may originally have been held in a bag or pouch. This particular grave assemblage also included two Durotrigian bowls together with a Samian bowl and globular beaker both dating to the mid-first century AD (Aitken 1990, 79).

Mirrors, burials and gendered assumptions

Over sixty Iron Age mirrors, comprising complete examples together with handles and fragments of plate have been recorded from the British Isles Cottam et al. (2010, 1, 85–87), the majority occurring in grave contexts dating from the fourth century BC to the later first century AD (Joy 2011, 468). The literature on Iron Age mirrors has been united by a common thread which generally holds these objects to be items associated with women, an assumption

which may be drawn more from preconceived notions of gender and simplistic cultural stereotyping than any ancient reality (Joy 2011, 478). Indeed, a review of the archaeological literature returns a distinct lack of primary data regarding human remains associated with prehistoric mirrors, a deficiency which largely reflects the extent to which the acceptance of human osteology as an important archaeological specialism is a relatively recent development, post-dating the discovery of the vast majority of such well-appointed graves. The notion that mirrors were generally buried with women, in fact, rests upon surprisingly uncertain foundations, the number of examples for which reliable assessments regarding age and sex of the associated human remains being decidedly small.

The most recent comprehensive surveys of mirrors from the period (Joy 2010; Moyer 2012) list seventy-six examples from across Europe. The majority of these (sixty-four) are from Britain, with three from Ireland, two from France, four from Germany, one from the Netherlands and two of unknown provenance. Of the overall sample, thirty-four were deposited as sole items in their respective contexts. Of these, four were placed in wet contexts, five from settlement contexts, three from terrestrial contexts unrelated to settlements, leaving twenty-two for which the context is simply unknown. The remaining forty-two mirrors had been deposited in graves. This sample further divides into five (presumed to have come from graves but for which no human remains were encountered) and twenty (associated with cremated bone), leaving only seventeen excavated as part of inhumation burial assemblages.

The majority of all Iron Age burials with mirrors as grave goods were discovered during the nineteenth or earlier twentieth century. Demographic assessments of human skeletal remains dating from before 1960 are commonly unreliable and frequently fail to supply the data on which they are based (Smith and Brickley 2009, 17–40). Moreover, it is often the case that attributions of biological sex in older analyses were based on assumptions drawn from the presence of ostensibly gendered grave goods, rather than from anatomical observations. Furthermore, assessment of sex, along with other demographic traits, from cremated remains was considered impossible prior to 1960 (Wells 1960).

There are only eighteen burials with mirrors which were either excavated or for which re-analysis of the human remains has been conducted since 1960. Of these, eleven comprise deposits of cremated bone, for which sex determination was only possible in two cases. The first, burial 13 at King Harry Lane, St. Albans was assessed as male (Stirland in Stead and Rigby 1989) although no information is given as to how this conclusion was reached. The second, discovered at Chilham Castle, Kent in 1993 was identified as female on the basis of the small size of a mandibular condyle (Parfitt 1998), a tentative indicator at best. Of the seven inhumations analysed since 1960, one, from Bryher on the Isles of Scilly, furnished with a sword and shield as well as a mirror, proved too poorly preserved for either osteological assessment or aDNA analysis (S. Mays pers.comm). The remaining burials were all assessed as female, although an example from Reinheim Germany only survived as two teeth (Keller 1965), the assessment here resting on the nature of grave goods.

An individual buried with a mirror at Garton Slack, Yorkshire (Brewster 1971) was reported to be a female aged 25–30, although the excavation was never fully published, details being deposited on microfiche (Brewster 1980). The mirror from Birdlip, Gloucestershire, discovered with one of three burials excavated in the nineteenth century, was assessed as female (Staelens 1982) although the pathology report unfortunately remains unpublished. Similarly, no osteological data were provided in the article presenting the ‘young adult female’

in wheeled-vehicle burial 2 from Wetwang Slack, Yorkshire (Dent 1985). Two short articles detailing the 'mature female' from the wheeled vehicle burial at Wetwang Village (Hill 2001, 2002) do not discuss human remains in any detail. This leaves only the individual found at Portesham in Dorset in 1994 for which a modern, detailed human osteological report is publicly available (McKinley in Fitzpatrick 1997). The human remains from this grave, however, were badly fragmented, meaning that it was only possible to characterise the individual as probably female, aged between 26–45. Prior to the discovery of the Langton Herring woman, the Portesham find had the dubious honour of being the most reliably sexed Iron Age burial with a mirror recovered from north-western Europe.

Landscape setting

Consideration has recently been made concerning the placement of well-furnished Iron Age burials with mirrors in the landscape, some being established towards the top of an escarpment, overlooking river systems as single, comparatively isolated deposits placed in a prominent locale (Joy 2011, 473). The burial with a mirror from Latchmere Green, in Hampshire, for example looked down on a number of rivers, including a tributary of the Thames (Fulford and Creighton 1998), whilst examples from Chilham Castle, Kent (Parfitt 1998), Birdlip, Gloucestershire (Staelens 1982) and Dorton, Buckinghamshire (Farley 1983), had extensive views of the Great Ouse, Severn valley and Vale of Aylesbury respectively. Joy has suggested that Iron Age burials with mirrors tend to be clustered, identifying four chronologically and geographically distinct concentrations in the UK: East Yorkshire; Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly; western; south-east and southern England (Joy 2011, 470–471). The Langton Herring burial fits within the western concentration, a group defined by large, decorated bronze mirrors deposited from c. AD 40–75 often associated with inhumations. A smaller, sub set can in fact be identified within the western concentration, where 5 other burials with mirrors have been found within an 18km radius of Langton Herring, all of which were located on south-facing slopes with extensive views of the English Channel.

The area immediately surrounding the site of the Langton Herring burial shows very little obvious activity in the magnetometry survey (Figure 11). However, on closer inspection, a number of faint positive magnetic anomalies, interpreted as round, pit-like features, are present, which may possibly indicate graves. Excavation at Whitcombe in Dorset has shown that the Iron Age 'warrior' burial there was an unusually well-furnished grave, within an otherwise largely undistinguished Durotrigian cemetery. The lack of any significant magnetic anomalies such as ditches and storage pits in the immediate vicinity of the Langton Herring grave may indicate that this burial was also similarly placed. Upslope, to the north and northwest of the Langton Herring grave, significant areas of settlement activity were detected by the geophysical survey. This activity can be suggested on morphological grounds to date from the Iron Age, as evidenced by the presence of round house structures, through to the late Roman period and beyond, as indicated by what appears to be a small cottage villa associated with a large rectangular sunken feature building and an aisled building to the east.

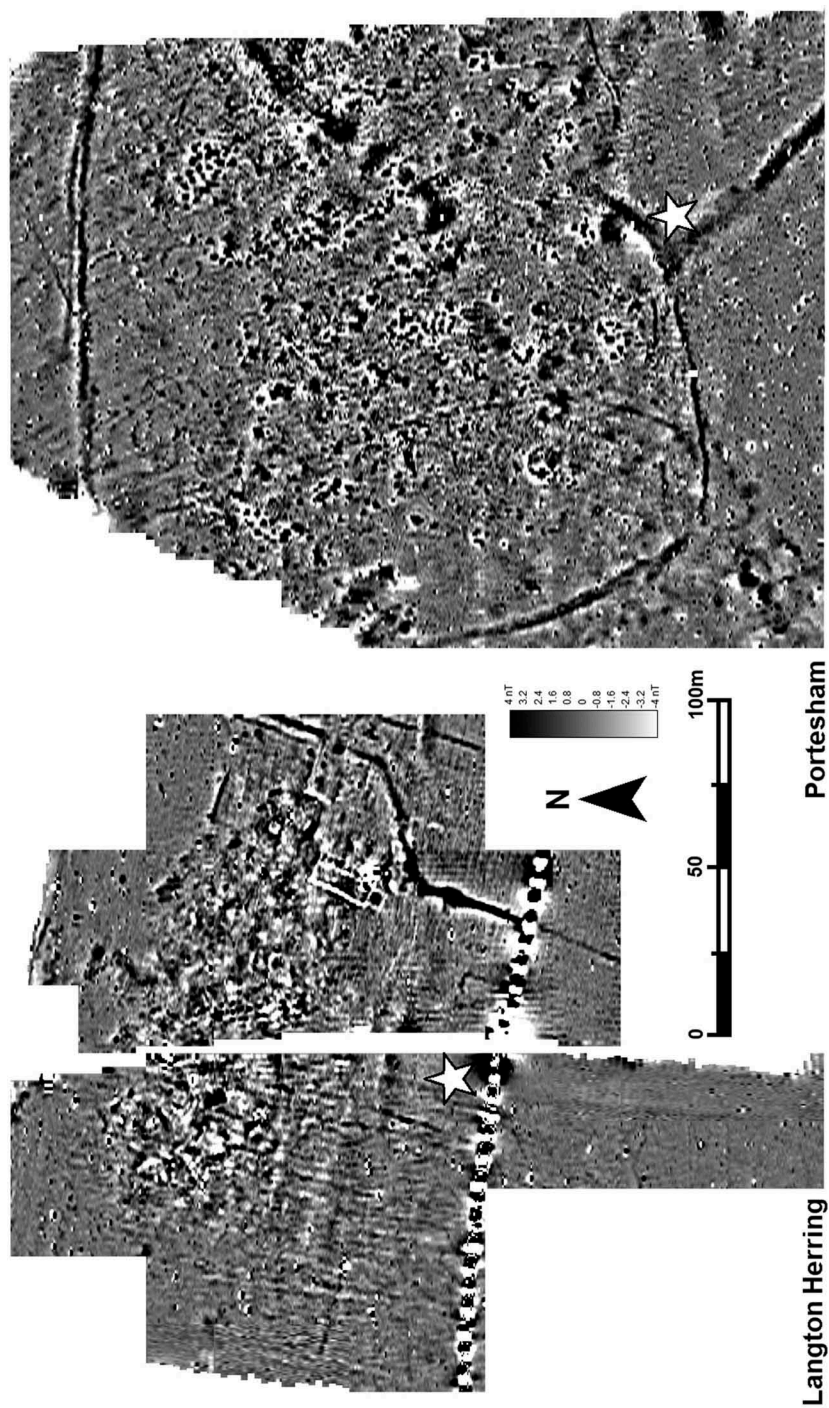


Figure 11. Fluxgate gradiometry magnetic surveys of the area surrounding Langton Herring and Portesham with the positions of the Iron Age burials with mirrors marked (with a star), black indicating positive magnetic anomalies. Note that in both cases the burials are adjacent to, but down slope from, substantial settlements, which on morphological evidence and finds date from the Iron Age through to late Roman. Langton Herring surveys: Rebecca Woodward and Hannah Simpson; Portesham survey: Amy Green.

As with Langton Herring, the nearby well-furnished burial with a mirror from Portesham was also sited just downslope from a major settlement spanning the Iron Age to the later Roman period, in an area free from settlement features (and so possibly within a cemetery) whilst the cemetery containing the Whitcombe warrior was, in part, overlain by later Romano British masonry buildings. This suggests that these so-called wealthy elite interments are possibly associated with otherwise unremarkable rural settlements, of a type and status that are found all over Dorset (Russell et al. 2014) and which do not produce such well-furnished burial deposits. Such a context would seem to suggest that while these particular burials may be well-furnished, the communities in which the individuals buried with mirrors lived do not morphologically exhibit any special or potentially particularly wealthy status. Therefore, we must avoid misinterpreting the evidence by considering specific individuals themselves as being of higher status or wealthier than the other individuals in such otherwise unexceptional rural settlements.

Reflecting on the Durotriges

On a regional scale, the Langton Herring burial may be defined as an inhumation of Durotrigian affiliation. The Durotriges, a Later Iron Age tribal group, whose territory roughly conformed to an area that covered much of Dorset and parts of southern Wiltshire and Somerset, are themselves unusual in the context of pre Roman Iron Age Britain in that they preferred inhumation rather than cremation or other, less archaeologically detectable, forms of body disposal (Whimster 1981, 37; Papworth 2008, 82–86; Sharples 2010, 277–280). As a consequence, the group affords some of the best opportunities in Britain for investigating society in Later prehistory through funerary remains.

Although flexed (crouched or contracted) inhumations are considered characteristic of the Durotriges, they do not occur uniformly across the whole of Dorset, being largely confined to the coastal fringe (Figure 12), south of the river Frome, from Lyme Bay in the west to Swanage Bay in the east (Whimster 1981, 37; Papworth 2008, 82–84; Harding 2016, 83). Whether this broad spread, distinct from the main distribution clusters of Durotrigian coinage and pottery (Papworth 2008, 91–95), indicates a discrete sub-sept of the tribe, or a wholly different ethnic or cultural group, is unknown. Despite the uncertainty regarding the cultural footprint of the tribe, the term Durotrigian is retained for the south Dorset burial group for the sake of convenience and classification (Papworth 2008, 84; Harding 2016, 83).

Durotrigian cemeteries include both shallow, oval-shaped pit-cuts and stone-lined cist-graves (Papworth 2008, 83; Harding 2016, 84). Burials can often be found clustered together in small cemeteries (Bailey 1967; Aitken and Aitken 1990; Davies et al. 2002; Valentin 2003) at the periphery of settlements (Sharples 2010, 280), perhaps representing the interment of discrete family or clan groups. Some Durotrigian burials deliberately targeted earlier features, cemeteries being placed within the partially backfilled remains of long-abandoned monuments. At Winterborne Kingston, near Bere Regis, the interior of an Early Iron Age banjo enclosure gave way to organised forms of burial at some point in the late pre-Roman Iron Age (Russell et al. 2014, 220–221) whilst nearby, burials were added to the backfill of a Later Bronze Age boundary ditch (Russell et al. 2017, 106–108). Body deposition at defunct monuments is also apparent at Maiden Castle (Wheeler 1943,

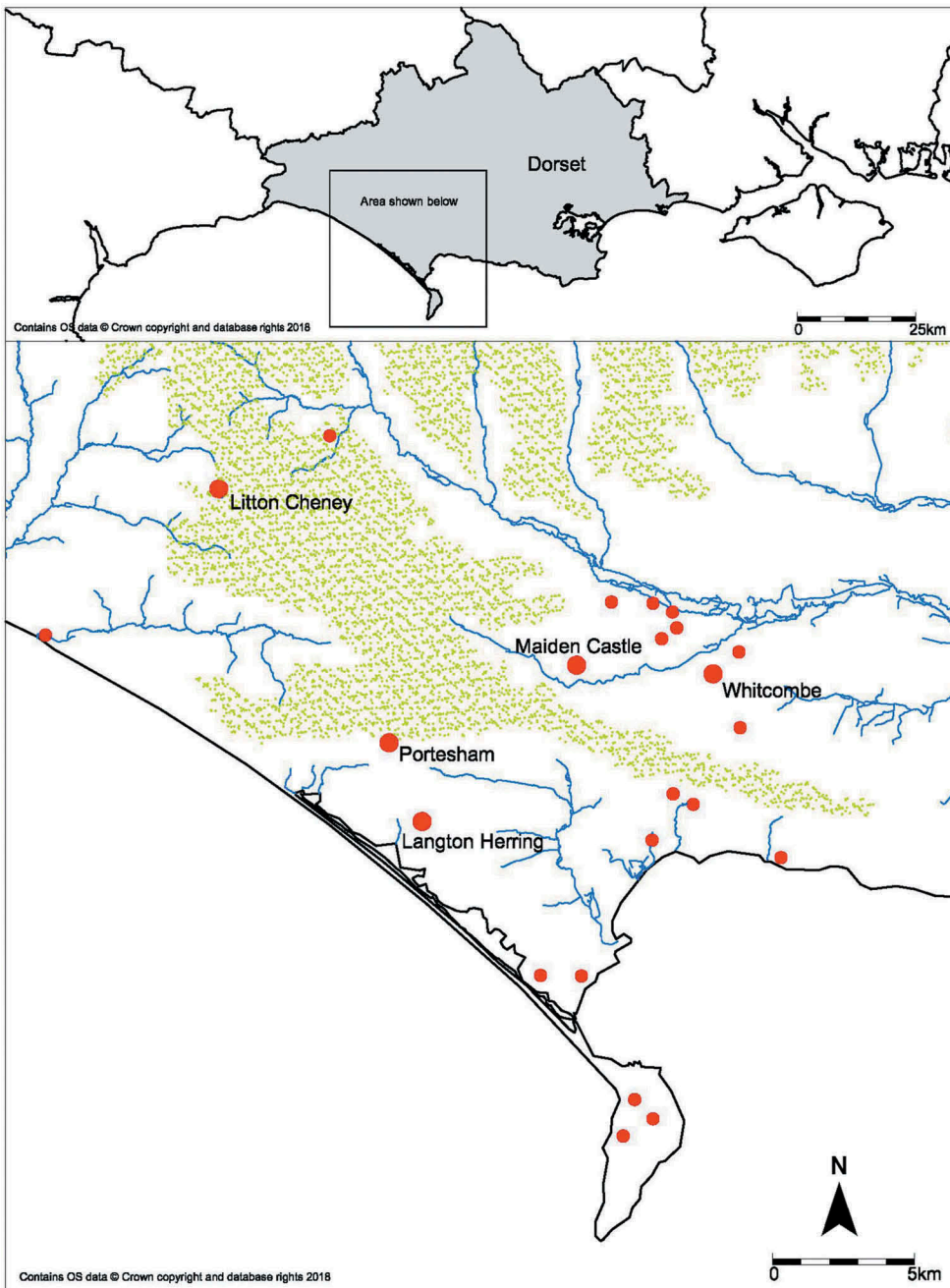


Figure 12. Location of Langton Herring in relation to other Late Iron Age Durotrigian burials and well-furnished graves noted in the text (after Papworth 2008, 85). Drawing: Jon Milward.

357–358) and Spettisbury Rings (Akerman 1859, 188; Gresham 1939), hillforts which were both largely abandoned by the start of the first century BC (Stewart and Russell 2017, 155–170). Perhaps the appropriation of disused earthworks was a defining element of Durotrigian inhumation, social groups rewriting the meaning of earlier monuments,

claiming them as their own. This raises questions regarding the origins of Durotrigian communities, potentially reviving a debate that was once thought resolved; namely whether innovations in material culture at this time represent developments among indigenous groups or the arrival of immigrants from further afield, possibly from across the English Channel.

Distinctive Durotrigian-style cemeteries came into existence by the very end of the first century BC and continued on until at least the first quarter of the second century AD (Papworth 2008, 82–83; Sharples 2010, 277; Harding 2016, 83–84). Grave goods are comparatively rare but, where found, principally comprise pottery vessels and/or joints of meat, usually beef, mutton or pork. Dress accessories, such as copper alloy brooches, simple arm or finger/toe rings and glass beads, as well as gaming or grooming objects have also been encountered (Bailey 1967, 147–159; Aitken 1990, 76–79; Russell et al. 2014, 2017). Pottery found within funerary contexts is most commonly represented by locally manufactured (Poole Harbour) handled tankards and bead-rim bowls (Papworth 2008, 83–84; Harding 2016, 84), although imported Gallo-Belgic and Samian wares of the early and mid-first century AD have also, less frequently been found (Whimster 1981, 50; Aitken and Aitken 1990, 79; Russell et al. 2017, 108–109).

The irregular and, some may argue, rather meagre nature of Durotrigian burial accessories makes the Langton Herring assemblage appear all the more spectacular. Other notable deviations to the general rule of sparsely furnished graves include the Portesham burial with mirror (Fitzpatrick 1997) and those interments from Whitcombe, to the east of Maiden Castle (Aitken 1990). Within Grave 9 at Whitcombe, the remains of a young adult male buried with an iron sword, scabbard and fittings, an iron spearhead, iron file, spindle-whorl and a copper alloy brooch were identified (Aitken 1990, 57–93). Grave 8, to the north-east, contained the remains of a young adult female together with at eleven glass beads, two bead spacers, two Durotrigian bowls, two Samian vessels, a bowl and a globular beaker (Aitken 1990, 64, 76–79). In addition to these, two further burials within the Whitcombe cemetery, both representing the remains of young adult women, contained grave goods other than pottery vessels: a glass bead from head of Burial 3 and a penannular iron bracelet on the left wrist of Burial 7 (Aitken 1990, 64).

At Portesham, a mature adult woman of the Later Iron Age had been buried with a decorated copper alloy mirror, a copper alloy strainer, a toilet set comprising two pairs of tweezers and an ear scoop, three copper alloy brooches, an iron knife, two pottery vessels and joints of pork and mutton (Fitzpatrick 1997). In addition to Portesham and Langton Herring, burials with mirrors may also be attested at West Bay in Bridport, Chettle, the Grove and the Verne (both on Portland) and possibly also at Jordan Hill, Maiden Castle and Bulbury (Joy 2010, 85–86), although the precise nature and circumstances of the latter three remain uncertain. Within the small sample of burials investigated at Pins Knoll, Litton Cheney, only two graves contained grave goods of note. A child, aged around five (Grave F), was found with two copper alloy brooches (penannular and hinged), a copper alloy bracelet with a copper alloy ring attached to it, an iron pin and a pedestalled bowl, whilst young adult male (Grave B) was accompanied by twenty gaming counters and an iron stylus (Bailey 1967).

Further afield, a cluster of poorly recorded burials unearthed in the eighteenth and nineteenth century at Fordington, a crossing point of the river Frome, suggest high status grave assemblages. The reference, in particular, to ‘bodies with swords’ (Royal Commission on

Historical Monuments 1970, 573) could indicate deposits similar to Whitcombe Grave 9, whilst the 'horse and human finds' found beneath the church may possibly represent the remains of a cart or chariot burial (Royal Commission on Historical Monuments 1970, 554; Papworth 2008, 137–138). At Spettisbury, although a significant quantity of prehistoric metalwork, including iron spearheads, fibulae, a torc, various copper alloy rings, a copper alloy cauldron, iron currency bars and at least one sword and multiple fragments of scabbard, were recovered in association with burials (Donaldson 1859, 190; Gresham 1939; Hawkes 1940), the precise nature of the finds cannot be determined due to the wholly unsatisfactory nature of recovery (Akerman 1859, 188).

At Maiden Castle, apart from the ceramic vessels and animal bone deposits accompanying burials in the so-called 'war cemetery' at the eastern entrance of the hillfort, a small number of grave goods were recorded. These comprised a copper alloy ear scoop, iron knife and iron axe blade accompanying an adult male burial (P22), three copper alloy spiral toe rings from the feet of adult males (P2, P19A and P30), a bronze ring in with the grave fill of an adult male (P28), a double iron ring on the fingers of an adult female (P14), iron bracelet on the wrist of an adult male (P27), a shale armlet from an adult female (P33) and an iron clasp at the left shoulder of an adult male (P34: Wheeler 1943, 352–356). The leaf-shaped iron spear head discovered with burial P7A (incorrectly cited as a Roman ballista bolt: Wheeler 1943, 105) represents the cause of death rather than an associated grave good (Smith 2017, 149–150; Stewart and Russell 2017, 160–161).

Conclusions

The Langton Herring burial is archaeologically important on a number of levels, from the local to the international. As a well-furnished grave of Durotrigian affiliation, the discovery contributes significant new information on the nature of that particular tribal group at the very end of the Iron Age. Whether the woman represented here was a high status member of her community, interred with a mirror as the sole burial in a prominent and remote locale, or an individual placed in an artefact-rich grave within a cemetery at the edge of an otherwise undistinguished Iron Age settlement, remains unclear without further archaeological investigation. A further point that remains to be clarified is the overall significance that should be attached to the copper-alloy mirror as the 'defining' feature of the burial assemblage. Should the artefact, for example, be more simply be viewed as one of a selection of items that each possessed a variety of levels of meaning, either for the wearer or for those she came into contact with. In this sense we have tried to refrain, in this report, from describing the Langton Herring inhumation as a 'mirror burial', as other aspects of the funerary treatment could equally be emphasised. For example, several items of the burial assemblage relate to personal care, which may be of interest in light of the osteological indications that this young woman, although beset with illness, was well-looked after and was not apparently disadvantaged by diet or general hardship of lifestyle. In this regard, some of the grave goods might be seen not just as somewhat 'sterile' accoutrements befitting a woman of a particular status, but rather take on a more personal and sympathetic nature, perhaps as amuletic or curated objects intended to care for, adorn and protect a frail and vulnerable body, in life as well as in death.

Taking a broader view, even though the exact position of artefacts in the grave is unknown, the burial assemblage offers important insights into a variety of connections between the Durotriges and the wider world. The unusual nature of the glass beads, some of which are

almost certainly of continental origin, combined with those of fossiliferous limestone from south east Dorset, together with the brooches, arm-ring, set of tweezers and the silvered Roman coin, confirm not only a developing interest in bodily modification and adornment in the later Iron Age, but also hint at economic and political links between the tribe and societies beyond central southern England. The inclusion of trade goods, including a strainer and toilet set as well as a mirror, with the Portesham burial, less than 3km from Langton Herring, suggested that the female there died at, or shortly after, the Roman conquest in the first century AD (Fitzpatrick 1997, 67). A similar argument, surrounding interment at a time of major socio-political change, may also apply to the Langton Herring woman.

Late Durotrigian funerary practices, such as those identified at Langton Herring, Portesham and Whitcombe were effected against a backdrop of increasing political and economic interference from Rome, which perhaps summoned new ideas around the nature of individual power, identity and persona. Such external pressure may have led to the increasing assertion of group identities and lineages through the prominence of particular characters in death as well as in life. It is of interest in this respect that such individuals recovered archaeologically not only included 'heroic' male figures buried with weaponry and other martial accoutrements, but also female individuals interred with items that may have been imbued with multiple layers of meaning for those placing them in the grave.

The Roman coin found with the beads and mirror at Langton Herring raises further intriguing issues surrounding the modification and manipulation of prehistoric identity. Was this merely an unusual and much-worn decorative trinket, adding uniqueness to an amulet or bead cluster, or was more thought given to the item the wearer and later by the mourners at the grave side? The application of an overtly Roman artefact may conceivably have been intended to reflect an economic, ideological, or political association with the Mediterranean, perhaps even acknowledging the new provincial government of the first century AD. More likely, given that the coin was perforated in such a way to minimise damage to the horses, chariot and driver on the reverse, piercing the image of Jupiter in the process, it was clearly the female equestrian scene that the wearer wished to emphasise. Perhaps, then, it was the more assuredly 'Celtic' associations with the high-status activities of horsemanship and charioteering that were paramount. Given what we know about the decidedly unRoman nature of the Durotrigian cultural footprint, both before and immediately after the Roman invasion, this should come as no surprise. It is also interesting to note that it was precisely this combination of chariot and deity that influenced the lively and distorted images that appeared so prominently on Durotrigian coin (Van Arsdell 1989, 347–351; Cottam et al. 2010, 113).

It is worth reiterating that, however important the finds from Langton Herring are, the key significance of the discovery lies in the fact that the interment is the first example of a well-furnished burial from the European Iron Age, in which a mirror is included, for which a detailed bioarchaeological analysis, applying modern standards and methods, has been conducted and published. How representative the woman was of the type of individual 'normally' associated with such well-furnished artefactual assemblages, in this instance young, semi-sedentary, well-fed but with signs of ill-health suggestive of poor dietary choices and respiratory problems, will of course depend upon the future detailed analysis of similar Late Iron Age graves.

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