

REPORT ON METAL DETECTOR FINDS FROM LOWER COLLIER'S HILL FARM, BAYTON, WORCESTERSHIRE



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Summary

This report publishes 47 artefacts and coins discovered by metal detector in the vicinity of Lower Collier's Hill Farm, Bayton (SO 698 724). Spanning the late medieval / early post-medieval to modern periods, the finds are consistent with domestic and agricultural activity known in the area from documentary sources, and contribute to our knowledge of activity in the parish during the post-medieval and modern period.

1 Introduction

In 2013 the North Worcestershire Archaeology Group (NWAG) were presented with a box containing 47 objects discovered by the late Mr David Parker using a metal detector in the vicinity of Lower Collier's Hill Farm, Bayton, Worcestershire. The exact provenance of the finds are unknown, although subsequent discussion with the landowners indicated that they originate from a field immediately south of the present farmhouse, centred on SO 698 724 (Figure 1). The length of time over which the objects were discovered remains uncertain, although it is probable that they were discovered intermittently over a period of years circa 2008 to 2012.

2 The site

The site sits atop bedrock geology of grey-green Carboniferous Halesowen formation mudstone, siltstone and sandstone, interfacing immediately west with Halesowen formation sandstone (British Geological Survey 2014). The soil, a poorly drained acidic loamy clay, continues to be used for sheep and cattle pasture. Streams and brooks border the field to the west and south, the latter forming the shared parish boundary with Mamble, with both watercourses accompanied by blocks of broadleaf ancient woodland which placename evidence suggests may have early medieval predecessors (Mawer and Stenton 1927, 40). Warwickshire group coal seams are numerous in the vicinity, giving birth to a historic coal-mining industry active into the early 20th century and reflected in documentary, place name and archaeological evidence from Bayton and the neighbouring parishes of Mamble and Rock (Buchanan 1944, 550).

While a handful of stray finds from the parish testify to activity from the Neolithic onwards, a lack of systematic fieldwork in the area means that few archaeological remains are known in the vicinity of the site, an exception being the moated site of Timberlake (WSM00760) approximately 150m to the west. Of particular interest to this report therefore are two buildings illustrated at the centre of the field on the 1884-5 OS map, named 'Highwood' on an October 1910 sketch plan (Lea 1912). The northernmost of these buildings is illustrated on an 1815 parish map (WAAS 970.5:126/BA1181), and parish registers and census records list families of colliers and agricultural labourers resident in the buildings into the 1880s. However, by 1891 census records list the buildings as uninhabited, and a late 19th

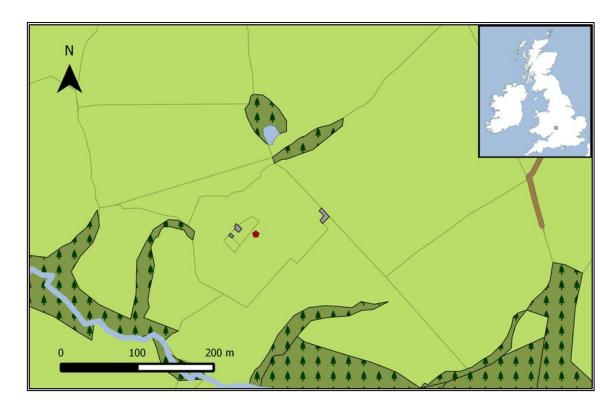


Figure 1: Centred location of metal detector finds (red). Data from 1st Ed OS Map, 1884-5, and OpenStreetMap (© OpenStreetMap contributors).

or early 20th century abandonment is implied by their omission from the 1901 census and absence of both buildings from OS maps dating to 1927 onwards. Their sites are marked in the present by nettle patches.

2.1 Artefact recovery policy

The finds recorded here were passed on to NWAG without precise findspots and with no details of recovery policy, although the composition of the assemblage is consistent with a mix of metal detected and chance finds. All finds have been bagged and labelled with the site code and find number.

3 Method of analysis

The finds were examined manually and recorded on a Microsoft Excel 2007 spreadsheet. All have been identified, quantified and, where possible, dated using standard reference works. Detailed summaries of individual objects are included in sections 9 and 10.

4 Artefact analysis

The finds assemblage consists of 47 metal, ceramic and glass objects weighing 573.17g, summarised in Table 1.

Period	Material class	Material subtype	Object type	Count	Weight (g)
Late Medieval / Post-Medieval	Metal	Lead	Weight	1	7.76
Post-Medieval	Ceramic	-	Pottery	2	24.6
Post-Medieval	Metal	Lead	Weight	2	42.11
Post-Medieval	Metal	Cu alloy	Coin	5	21.6
18th century	Metal	Cu alloy	Coin	11	64.6
18th century	Metal	Cu alloy	Button	1	6.1
18th-19th century	Metal	Lead	Pistol shot	1	13.9
18th-19th century	Metal	Cu alloy	Button	2	7.4
18th-19th century	Metal	Cu alloy	Tap key	3	48.8
18th-19th century	Metal	Cu alloy	Weapon fitting	1	36.5
19th century	Metal	Zinc	Button	2	14.3
19th century	Metal	Tin	Button	1	5.1
19th century	Metal	Cu alloy	Button	1	3.1
19th century	Metal	Cu alloy	Coin	2	14.4
19th-20th century	Ceramic	-	Marble	1	4.2
19th-20th century	Glass	-	Window glass	1	4.8
19th-20th century	Metal	Cu alloy	Cu alloy object	4	86.6
20th century	Metal	Cu alloy	Coin	3	22.4
21st century	Metal	Cu alloy	Coin	1	7
Unknown	Metal	Lead	Lead object	2	137.9
Total				47	573.17

Table 1: Quantification of assemblage

The pottery consisted of 3 post-medieval and modern objects, quantified by fabric in Table 2.

Period	Fabric code	Fabric common name	Count	Weight (g)
Post-Medieval	81.4	Miscellaneous late stoneware	1	11.8
Post-Medieval	91	Post-medieval buff ware	1	12.8
Post-Medieval / Modern	100	Miscellaneous post- med/modern wares	1	4.2
Total				28.8

Table 2: Quantification of ceramics by fabric type (Hurst and Rees 1992).

5 Discussion

5.1 Ceramics

Although extremely small in size, the ceramic assemblage from Lower Collier's Hill Farm includes a range of post-medieval forms and fabrics, including a probable body/neck sherd from a late stoneware (Fabric 81.4) jug (SF008) and a base sherd from a glazed post-medieval buff ware (Fabric 91) mug (SF009), both types conventionally attributed to the 18th-20th centuries. In addition to these finds the assemblage included a whiteware marble (Fabric 100; SF014) decorated with two grey spirals on opposing poles, a type most likely produced in Germany or Southern England and datable to c.1885-1910 AD (Carskadden and Gartley 1990, 61).

5.2 Glass

A single well-preserved sherd of flat light-to-medium emerald green window glass (SF007) was recovered from the site, whose thickness and patina is consistent with a 19th to early 20th century date (Weiland 2009, 30).

5.3 Metal

5.3.1 Weights

Three cast lead objects from Lower Collier's Hill Farm (SF001; SF002; SF003) can be identified as weights, although dating is difficult given the simplicity of forms and absence of stratigraphic data. One probable 17th-19th century example (SF001), sub-spherical in form and perforated by a 7mm diameter cylindrical hole, is of a type traditionally described as a loom weight, but can perhaps be more convincingly reinterpreted as a net weight used by poachers or farmers to catch rabbits or birds (Bailey 1995, 29). A second specimen (SF002) can be identified as a bun-shaped trade weight (Biggs and Withers 2000, 21), circular in plan and with a plain reverse and linear tracery motif on the obverse; a similar specimen of unknown date is recorded by Biggs and Withers (2000, 25, no. 42), although of a much heavier weight. At 7.76g the object weighs slightly over ¼ oz avoirdupois (Biggs and Withers 2000 14), suggesting a probable late medieval to post-medieval date (1400-1800 AD) (Biggs and Withers 2000 21). An additional object, provisionally identified as a cast lead trade weight, has been recorded from the site (SF003); circular in plan and sub-rectangular in section, the obverse is

stamped with a crossed-key motif, possibly representing the town of Peterborough (Biggs 1992, 77), with the reverse bearing a plain shield-shaped depression. At 20.21g the object would be slightly underweight of ¾ oz avoirdupois, and may represent a trader's weight. An alternative identification as a bag seal is possible on the basis of an almost identical specimen from Kingston-upon-Hull recorded by the Portable Antiquities Scheme (YORYM-EC5B75); however, the identification of the Lower Collier's Hill Farm example as a weight seems more likely given its heavier weight and lack of any obvious perforations.

5.3.2 Firearm equipment

Two pieces of mid-18th to mid 19th century firearm equipment are represented in the assemblage. These included an incomplete cast Cu alloy trigger guard bow (SF016) from a post-medieval firearm, most likely a mid-18th to mid-19th century flintlock pistol on the basis of size and material (Wilkinson 1979, 82), and a complete cast lead pistol shot (SF015). Part of the sprue is still visible on the shot which, at 32 bore, is likely to have been from a flintlock pistol; the absence of obvious impact deformations suggests that it was never fired but instead represents a casual loss.

5.3.3 Agricultural equipment

Agricultural equipment is represented at Lower Collier's Hill Farm by three cast Cu alloy barrel tap keys (SF004; SF005; SF006; c.f. Bailey 1995, 61, no. 4), each with an elongated oval-shaped bow, oval in section, and a cylindrical shaft terminating in a projecting diamond-sectioned socketed bit, the latter missing on one incomplete example (SF005). These objects are fairly common as metal-detector finds from rural sites in western England, and are usually associated with the provision of cider and ale to agricultural labourers during harvest and other work seasons; the phenomenon of part-payment in cider is known to have persisted in Worcestershire well into the 19th century (Gaut 1939, 384).

5.3.4 Buttons

Seven buttons were recovered, including four specimens in Cu-alloy (SF020; SF022; SF023; SF025), two specimens in Tombac (Zinc alloy) (SF019; SF021) and one of Tin (SF024). The majority of buttons were of large 18th century flat types (Meredith, Meredith and Cuddeford 1997, 8), with both wire-shanked

(SF020; SF022; SF025) and raised conical (SF019; SF021) reverse loops represented and a mix of wavy-line decorated and plain designs; one had been given a thin surface plate of silver (SF025), which has largely worn away. Two 19th century types (Bailey 2004, 40; Meredith, Meredith and Cuddeford 1997, 8) in Cu alloy (SF023) and tin (SF024) were also represented, both with plain designs, wire-shanked reverse loops and concavo-convex (SF023) and planoconvex (SF024) profiles.

5.3.5 Unclassified metal objects

Six objects were recorded which eluded identification, largely due to ambiguous forms or fragmentation. These included SF010, a sheet Cu alloy elongated oval plate with two bevelled punch holes along a central axis towards the terminals, and SF013, a cast Cu alloy ring, both of which might feasibly be machine fittings; two fragmentary sheet and cast Cu-alloy objects (SF011; SF012) might also be from machinery, although their small size precludes much interpretation. The patination of all of these objects suggests a 19th to 20th century date. In addition, two lead objects could not be fully identified or dated. This included SF018, a plano-convex cast lead ingot of unknown date; specimens from stratified contexts are known from the late Bronze Age onwards and are traditionally interpreted as the primary product of lead smelting in a bowl furnace, although analogous forms in lead are known to have been used as palm-guards during the 19th century (Bailey 1995, 65). However, this specimen lacks the characteristic paired circular indentations of many palm guards, so its identification remains disputable. SF017, a sub-triangular cast lead object, might possibly represent casting waste, although its white patina contrasts with the consistent grey of SF018 and may therefore represent the product of a different, possibly earlier, casting process.

5.4 Coins

The coin assemblage consists of 22 base metal coins, 16 of which could be identified to individual reigns and denominations. The coins are summarised as a list in Table 3 and fully catalogued in section 10. Wear and corrosion states have been recorded following IFS (1995), and, where possible, catalogue references (S#) given following Skingley (2012).

Issuer	Denomination				
100001	Two pence	Penny	Halfpenny	Farthing	
George II			1		
George II-III			1		
George III			9	1	
Victoria		1			
Edward VII		1			
George V		1			
Elizabeth II	1		1		
Indeterminate			4	1	
Total	1	3	16	2	

Table 3: Summary coin list by issuer and denomination.

The coin finds from Lower Collier's Hill Farm represent a chronologically broad selection of base metal small change spanning roughly 260 years, with a bias towards copper coins of George II-III, a pattern consistent with an accumulation of casual losses. Of interest is the large proportion of well-worn and corroded counterfeit coppers of George III, making up around a quarter of the whole assemblage; given similarities in size, weight, degree of wear and corrosion, it is likely that many of the 'uncertain' coins are also forgeries attributable to this period. This can presumably be associated with the collapse of official copper coin production throughout the 17th-18th centuries (Sutherland 1973, 180), where the shortfall was made up with privately-issued tokens and counterfeit coins; the pervasiveness of fake coin in regular circulation is well demonstrated by the purse hoard from Mill Street, Stafford (deposited 1775-1800), where roughly 60% of the halfpennies were struck counterfeits (Robinson 1972, 152).

Since the combination of a resumption of large-scale copper production from 1797 onwards and the withdrawal of official pre-Soho coins between 1814-17 meant that many earlier counterfeits would have been removed from circulation by the 1820s, it is likely that the counterfeits from Lower Collier's Hill Farm entered archaeological deposits c.1770-1820, suggesting an increase in coin-using activity – possibly associated with payments to agricultural labourers – at the site during this period. However, this interpretation must be taken with some caution; owing to a lack of comparative assemblages, the degree to which this peak simply

reflects regional and national, rather than site-specific, patterns in the development of coin use is essentially uncertain.

6 Conclusions

Due to the limited quality of findspot data, it is difficult to draw detailed conclusions from the assemblage. Broadly speaking the finds are consistent with the picture of post-medieval and modern domestic and agricultural activity recorded in the documentary and cartographic evidence, offering insights into the variety of forms that this activity might take, from casual poaching and hunting (SF001; SF015-6) possibly undertaken by high-status gentlemen (SF025) to payments made in cider or beer (SF004-6) or cash (SF026-043) to poorer agricultural labourers, to the games played by local children at home (SF014). Owing to the apparent lack of systematic recovery and findspot recording, however, these activities can only be interpreted very tentatively, and it is imperative that any future metal detector surveys in the parish record findspot details with a greater degree of precision in order to make sense of the resulting finds.

7 Acknowledgements

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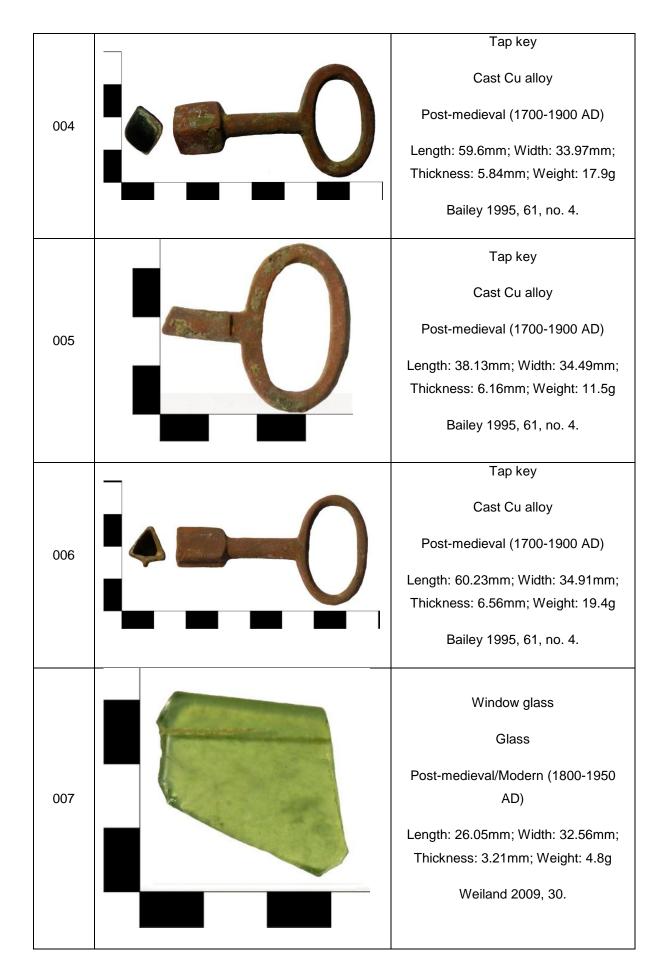
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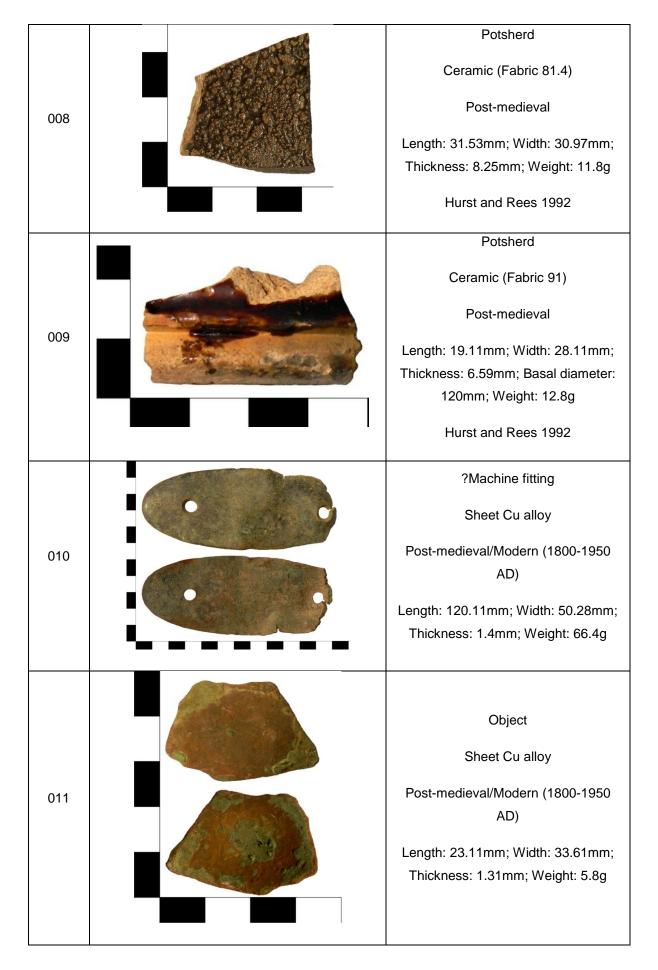
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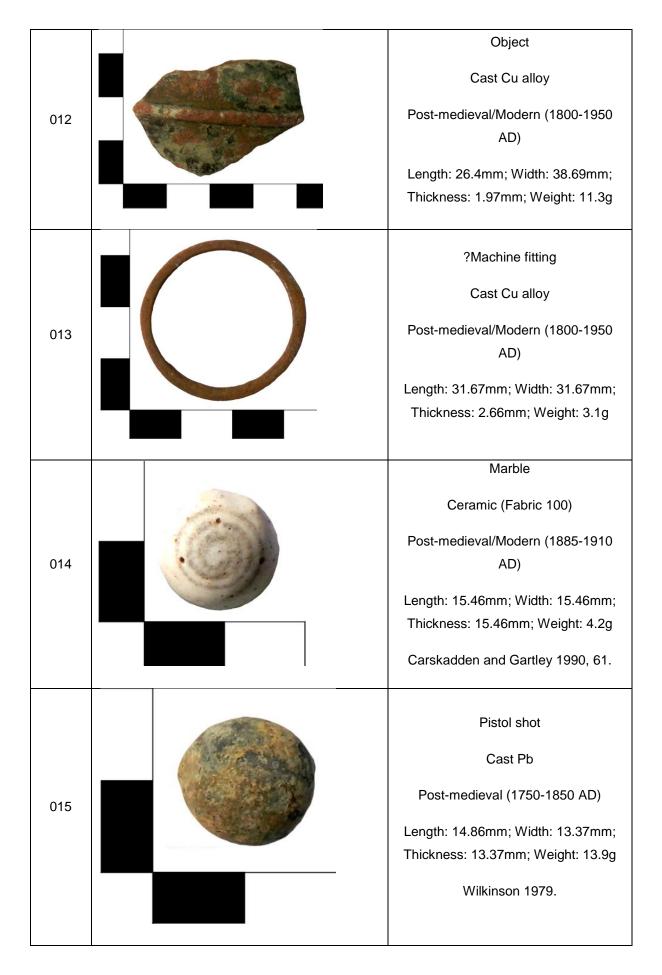
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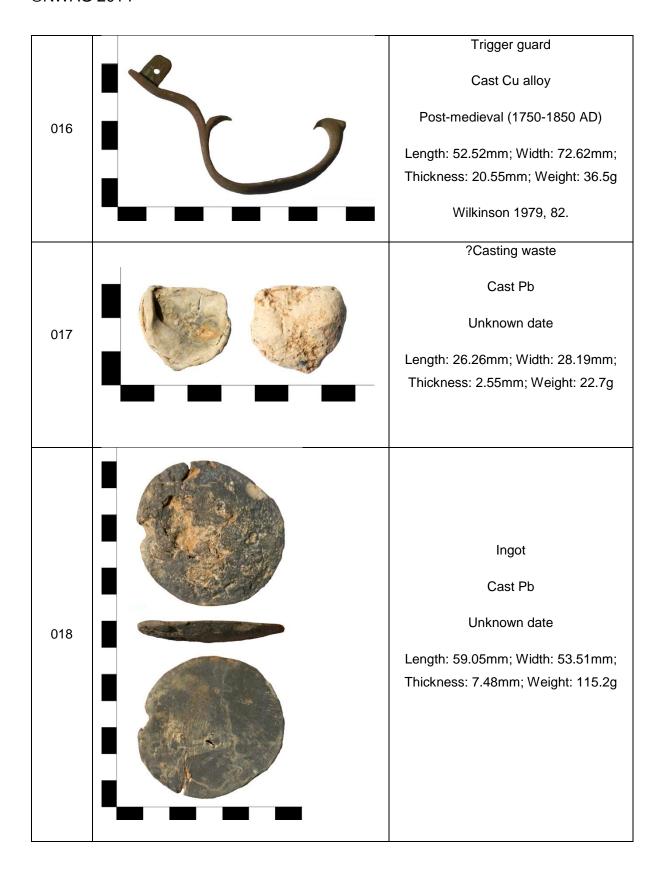
9 Artefact catalogue

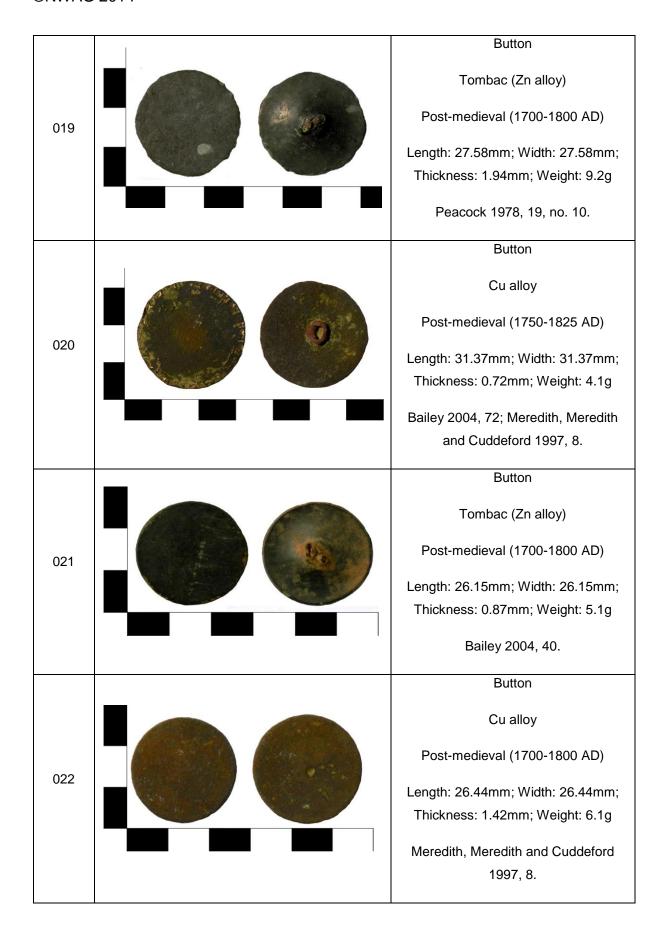
5 Arteract catalogue					
SF no.	Photograph	Summary details			
		Net weight			
	Yang	Cast Pb			
001		Post-medieval (1600-1900 AD)			
		Length: 17.84mm; Width: 17.8mm;			
		Thickness: 14.27mm; Weight: 21.9g.			
		As Bailey 1995, 34, no. 65.			
		Trade weight			
		Cast Pb			
		Late Medieval / Post-medieval (1400-			
002		1800 AD)			
		Length: 17.21mm; Width: 15.91mm;			
		Thickness: 4.52mm; Weight: 7.76g			
		Biggs and Withers 2000, 21.			
		Trade weight			
		Cast Pb			
000		Post-medieval (1600-1900 AD)			
003		Length: 22.86mm; Width: 22.18mm;			
		Thickness: 6.4mm; Weight: 20.21g			
		Biggs 1992, 77; Biggs and Withers			
		2000.			
L		ı			

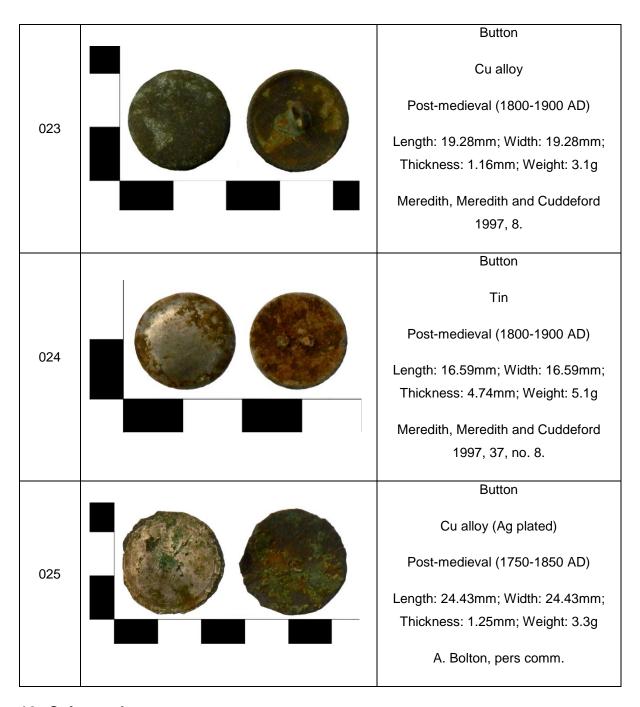












10 Coin catalogue

SF no.	Coin description		
	Obv: [GEOR]GIUS II RE[X], Old laureate and cuirassed bust r. Rev: BRITAN NIA / [],		
026	Britannia seated I. 1740-5 AD. AE; Halfpenny; 6.3g; 180°. Wear A5/A4, corrosion K3/K3.		
	S 3718.		
	Obv: [GEORGIVS III REX], Laureate and cuirassed bust r. Rev: [BRITAN NIA / 177],		
027	Britannia seated I. 1770-5 AD. AE; Halfpenny; 4.4g; 90°. Wear A5/A4, corrosion K3/K3.		
	Copy of S 3774.		

	Obv: [GEORGIVS III REX], Laureate and cuirassed bust r. Rev: [BRITAN NIA / 177],
028	Britannia seated I. 1770-5 AD. AE; Halfpenny; 9.3g; 0°. Wear A5/A5, corrosion K3/K3.
	Copy of S 3774.
	Obv: [GEORGIVS III REX], Laureate and cuirassed bust r. Rev: [BRITAN NIA / 177],
029	Britannia seated I. 1770-5 AD. AE; Halfpenny; 4.9g; 180°. Wear A5/A5, corrosion K3/K3.
	Copy of S 3774.
	Obv: [GEORGIVS III REX], Laureate and cuirassed bust r. Rev: [BRITAN] N[I]A / [177],
030	Britannia seated I. 1770-5 AD. AE; Halfpenny; 4.9g; 180°. Wear A5/A4, corrosion K3/K2.
	S 3774.
	Obv: [GE]OR[GIVS III] R[EX], Laureate and cuirassed bust r. Rev: [B]R[ITAN] N[I]A /
031	[177], Britannia seated I. 1770-5 AD. AE; Halfpenny; 5g; 270°. Wear A5/A5, corrosion
	K3/K4. Copy of S 3774.
	Obv: [GEORGIVS III] REX, Laureate and cuirassed bust r. Rev: [BRITAN NIA] / [177],
032	Britannia seated I. 1770-5 AD. AE; Halfpenny; 5.9g; 60°. Wear A5/A5, corrosion K3/K4.
002	Copy of S 3774.
	Obv: [GEORG]IVS III RE[X], Laureate and cuirassed bust r. Rev: BRI[TAN NIA] /
033	17[7], Britannia seated I. 1770-5 AD. AE; Halfpenny; 7.2g; 180°. Wear A4/A4,
	corrosion K3/K3. S 3774.
	Obv: [GEO]RG[IVS II]I R[EX], Laureate and cuirassed bust r. Rev: [BRITAN NIA],
034	Britannia seated I. 1770-5 AD. AE; Farthing; 4.2g; 180°. Wear A4/A5, corrosion K4/K4. S
	3775.
035	Obv: Illegible, Indeterminate. Rev: Illegible, Indeterminate. 1660-1790 AD. AE;
	Halfpenny; 4.5g. Wear A5/A5, corrosion K5/K5.
	Obv: Illegible, Indeterminate. Rev: Illegible, Indeterminate. 1660-1790 AD. AE;
036	Halfpenny; 3.8g. Wear A5/A5, corrosion K4/K4.
037	Obv: Illegible, Indeterminate. Rev: Illegible, Indeterminate. 1660-1790 AD. AE;
	Halfpenny; 4.4g. Wear A5/A5, corrosion K4/K5.
	Obv: Illegible, Indeterminate. Rev: Illegible, Indeterminate. 1660-1790 AD. AE;
038	Halfpenny; 6.4g. Wear A5/A5, corrosion K5/K5.
039	Obv: Illegible, Indeterminate. Rev: Illegible, Indeterminate. 1660-1790 AD. AE; Farthing;
	2.5g. Wear A5/A5, corrosion K3/K3.

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0.40	Obv: Illegible, Bust I/r? Rev: [BRITAN NIA], Britannia seated I. 1729-90 AD. AE;
040	Halfpenny; 4.9g. Wear A5/A5, corrosion K5/K4. Copy as S 3717-74.
	Obv: [GEORGIUS III DEI GRATIA REX], Laureate and draped bust r. Rev:
041	B[RI]T[AN]N[IA] / [1799], Britannia seated I. 1799 AD. AE; Halfpenny; 5.9g; 180°. Wear
	A5/A4, corrosion K5/K4. S 3778.
	Obv: GEORGIUS III D G REX / 1806, Short haired laureate and draped bust r. Rev:
042	B[RITANNIA], Britannia seated I. 1806 AD. AE; Halfpenny; 6.3g; 180°. Wear A4/A4,
	corrosion K4/K4. S 3781.
042	Obv: VICTORIA D:G: BRITT:REG:F:D:, Laureate bust I. Rev: ONE PENNY / 1860,
043	Britannia seated r. 1860 AD. AE; Penny; 8.1g; 0°. Wear A3/A4, corrosion K2/K2. S 3954
	Obv: EDWARDVS VII DEI GRA:BRITT:OMN:REX FID:DEF:IND:IMP, Bare head r. Rev:
044	ONE PENNY / 1910, Britannia seated r. 1910 AD. AE; Penny; 9.1g; 0°. Wear A2/A1,
	corrosion K1/K1. S 3990.
	Obv: GEORGIVS V DEI GRA:BRITT:OMN:REX FID:DEF:IND:IMP, Bare head I. Rev:
045	ONE PENNY / 1931, Britannia seated r. 1931 AD. AE; Penny; 9.1g; 0°. Wear A2/A1,
	corrosion K1/K1. S 4055.
	Obv: ELIZABETH II DEI GRA:BRITT:OMN:REGINA F:D, Young laureate bust r. Rev:
046	HALF PENNY / 1956, Ship sailing I. 1956 AD. AE; Halfpenny; 4.2g; 0°. Wear A2/A2,
	corrosion K2/K2. S 4158.
	Obv: ELIZABETH-II-D-G REG-F-D-2001, Crowned head r. Rev: TWO PENCE, Prince of
047	Wales feathers. 2001 AD. Cu-plated steel; Two pence; 7g; 0°. Wear A2/A1, corrosion
	K2/K2. S 4690.