

Conservation Report - 2 iron objects from Cowdown, Longbridge Deverill.

Report
1975

COWDOWN 674114 Fragments of iron brooch

X-RAY NOS. A598, A775

PHOTO. NOS. CON 3, ^{CON 6} CON 7, CON(8) 1

This brooch was originally given to the A.M. Laboratory in 1967, when some kind of 'treatment' must have been given. This probably took the form of prolonged soaking which had a detrimental effect on the brooch-head. Although some reconstruction was done, many of the fragments which must have broken off were not kept. Consequently, there remain some modern break surfaces on the head. It seems, from the excavator's drawing, that the bow and foot may have been found in one piece, but these no longer fit together, so part of the bow may have been lost.

Received in 1974 : 2 main fragments 1) head and part of bow

2) foot

4 small fragments.

Examination:

The condition of the metal is very poor, being almost totally mineralised. It is, therefore, extremely brittle.

Examination of the surface under the binocular microscope showed little of interest. A piece of replaced botanical material at the right hand end of the head (looking down the top of the bow) has been left in position, but it is unlikely that it had any connection with the construction of the brooch.

Construction:

'High-bow' type of brooch with a spring mechanism of 4 coils. There is no evidence of any central pin or rivet through the coils. The external cord is missing, as is the pin. The foot is open, having a triangular space. The catchplate is a simple groove cut in the bottom of the foot. The foot terminates with an iron 'ball' which has a shaped 'tail' meeting the bow. The whole brooch would have been forged from a single piece of metal.

Treatment:

An attempt was made to reveal the main features of the head and foot using the air-brasive technique (aluminium oxide abrasive). The brooch was then soaked in changes of distilled water, at 90 deg. C, to remove the chloride salts. After drying, a coating

of microcrystalline wax was given. Repairs were done with an epoxy resin (commercial Araldite).

COWDOWN 674115 Fragment of iron, possibly part of a brooch.

X-RAY NO. A598

PHOTO. NOS. CON 4, 6NS

Like 674114, this fragment was first sent to the Laboratory in 1967 and probably received similar treatment. The surface is covered in modern breaks where mineralisation products have broken off, probably whilst undergoing soaking 'treatment'. None of these small fragments have been retained.

Examination:

The metal is in poor condition and is very fragile.

The fragment was viewed under a binocular microscope but no significant surface remains were observable.

Construction:

This is a single piece of iron wire with a bow, and a loop at one end. The other end is fractured. If the object is to be interpreted as a brooch, the loop must represent either a) the foot - no catchplate is discernible, however, on either the X-ray or the object,

or b) part of the head - if the brooch had a hook-spring hinge mechanism, the loop could be the central part of the hinge, the other part having been lost in antiquity.

Treatment:

The lacquer, which had been applied previously, was removed with acetone. The corrosion products from the centre of the loop were removed mechanically, partly by air-brasion (aluminium oxide abrasive). The ^{obj.}brooch was then soaked in changes of distilled water, at 90 deg. C, to remove the chloride salts. After drying, a coating of microcrystalline wax was applied.

During treatment, the loop fractured at its weakest point (see X-ray) and was repaired with an epoxy resin (commercial Araldite).

Storage:

These objects should be stored in dry conditions, preferably with fresh supplies of silica gel. They should be handled as little as possible.

J. Ridgway. August '74