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The Traprain Law Environs Project

Fieldwork and Excavations 2000-2004

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APPENDIX 2
RECENT WORK ON ‘STRAY FINDS’ OF
ROMAN OBJECTS IN EAST LoTHIAN

FRASER HUNTER

(with a contribution by Jennifer Price)

Introduction

As discussed in Chapter 2, aerial photography, geophysics and excavation can usefully be complemented by a consideration of stray and metal-detecting finds. These can reveal new sites and provide new information on known sites with minimal intervention. This appendix reports on three East Lothian find clusters where ‘stray finds’ can be put into a landscape context and inform us about the underlying archaeology. Two, Gilmerton House (Athelstaneford) and Harperdean (Haddington), were known from cropmarks but had seen little or no previous investigation; the third, Aberlady, is a previously unknown site revealed by metal-detecting. The key findings from all three have been incorporated in the discussion in Chapter 7; the purpose of this appendix is to put the finds and their circumstances on record.

Gilmerton House, Athelstaneford
(Figures A2.1–A2.3)

Metal-detecting by Ian Kinloch in a field immediately south-east of Gilmerton House in 2007–8 produced a remarkable cluster of four Romano-British trumpet brooches and a probable Romano-British stud. Aerial photographs show a later prehistoric sub-circular enclosure some 70m in diameter in this field (NT 555 775; NMRS NT57NE 34). Mr Kinloch also reported that a pair of rotary quern stones were found here after sub-soiling some twenty years ago, and he recovered stray finds of flints, a coarse stone tool and medieval material from this and the adjacent field to the north. Although fieldwalking is often overlooked as a technique for later prehistoric sites in this area, indications here suggested it might be worthwhile. The results of a day’s walking proved this to be correct.

Key for present purposes is the later prehistoric and Roman material, summarised in Table A2.1 and catalogued below. The fieldwalking finds clustered to the west of the enclosure; the metal-detecting finds lay to the north-east and south-east (Figure A2.1). This lack of correlation with the known cropmark may reflect a more extensive open settlement in the area.

Table A2.1
 Summary of later prehistoric and Roman finds from
 Gilmerton House

<i>Material</i>	<i>Description</i>
Non-ferrous	4 trumpet brooches (one silver) Disc-headed stud (copper alloy)
Glass	2 sherds of Roman glass, prob from a cylindrical bottle
Pottery	1 later prehistoric body sherd
Stone	3 pounders 1 (perhaps 2) whetstones Rotary quern pair (lost) Cannel coal roughout

However, it may equally reflect the off-site disposal of settlement debris, perhaps in the spreading of midden material; this is a valuable corrective to the oft-stated material poverty of the lowland Scottish Iron Age, which is likely simply to reflect habits of rubbish deposition, with the material ending its life off-site.

Vitrified material was found in some quantity, although little was securely related to iron-working, and the bulk is probably post-medieval. A very thin scatter of struck lithics (only five pieces) included two Mesolithic blades and a post-medieval gunflint. A cluster of medieval and post-medieval pottery at the northern edge of the field is probably connected to a site in the adjacent field suggested by finds of hammered coinage.

As discussed in Chapter 7, Roman finds reached virtually all contemporary Iron Age sites in East Lothian. However, the quantity and range of material, and the presence of a rare silver brooch, suggests the Gilmerton House site was of above-average importance. It also shows the value of metal-detecting and fieldwalking such sites.

The finds are with East Lothian Museums Service; Treasure Trove reference numbers are given.

Metal

- Copper alloy trumpet brooch in very poor condition (Figure A2.2, A): the original surface is lost, foot broken off and bow tip bent, the spring and pin lost and the hook which held the spring broken. Plain, with full acanthus

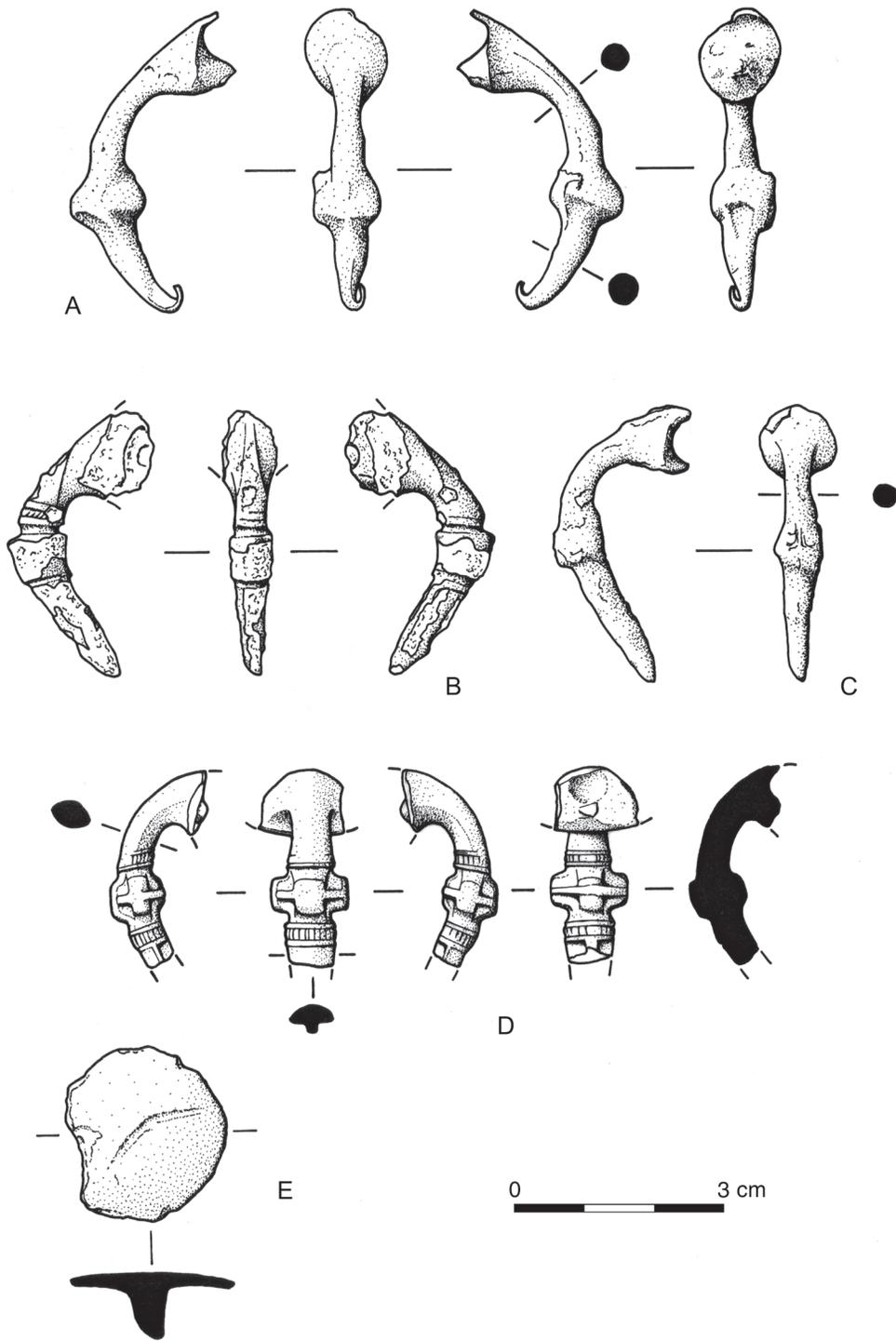


Figure A2.2
Roman brooches and Roman Iron Age stud, Gilmerton House (Alan Braby)

moulding (Collingwood & Richmond (1969, 297) type R(ii); Hull type 158A; Bayley & Butcher (2004, 160-4, 235-6) type A). L 42, W 12, H 19mm. (TT 79/07)

- Decorated copper alloy trumpet brooch (Figure A2.2, B). Much of the surface is lost; the catchplate is broken off, the pin is missing and the edges of the head are destroyed. Surviving traces on the badly-damaged central knob imply

it was a full acanthus moulding flanked by triple ribs, the central one with worn incised cable decoration (type R(ii)/Hull 158A). The head is decorated with an incised line on either side, curving from the lower edge of the knob and meeting in a point on top of the head, creating a series of curved areas. Most of the head is lost; the underside has a solid bar pierced to hold the iron axis of the spring. L 37, W 7, H 18mm. (TT 46/07)

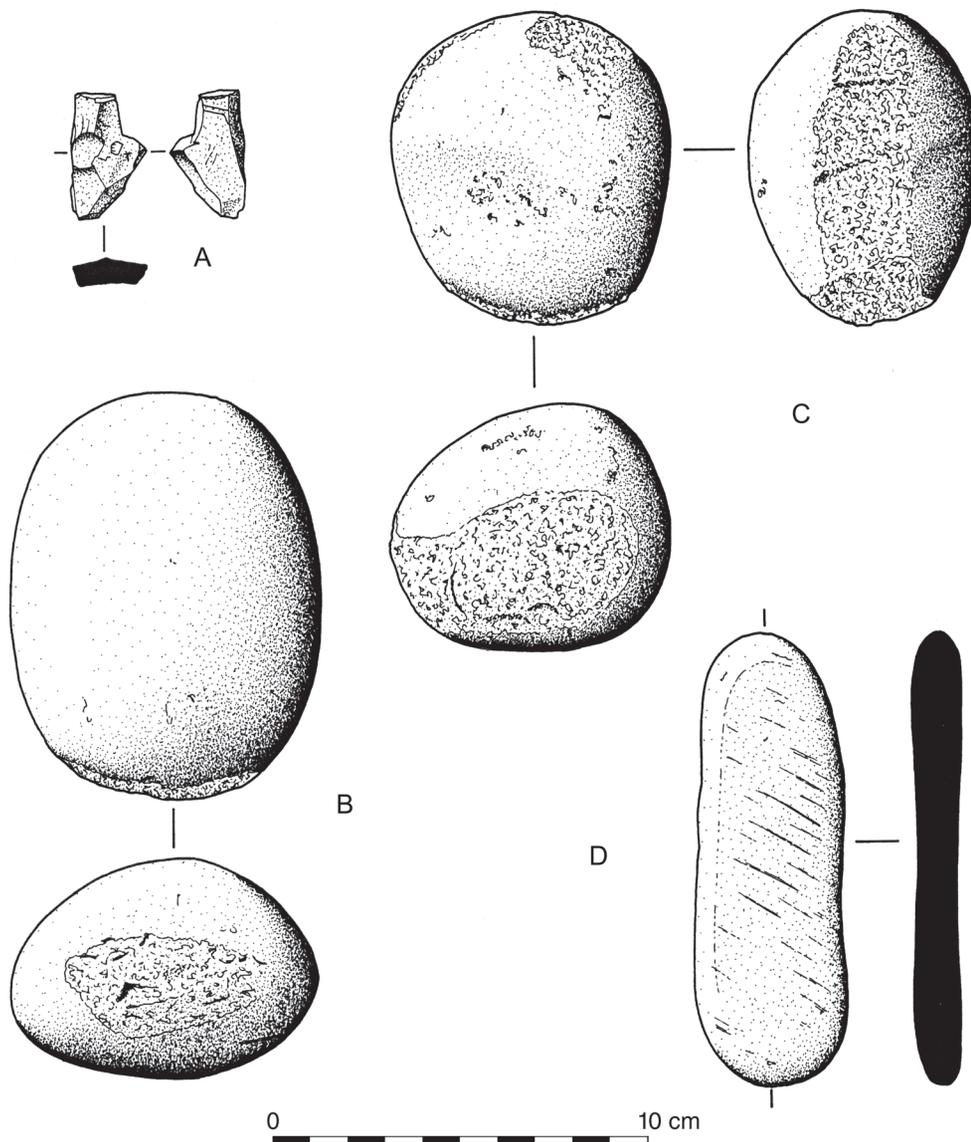


Figure A2.3
Stone finds, Gilmerton House (Alan Braby)

- Copper alloy trumpet brooch in very poor condition (Figure A2.2, C), the original surface almost entirely lost, catchplate broken and pin lost. The surviving morphology implies it had a full acanthus moulding (type R(ii)/Hull 158A); plain ovoid head, hollowed underneath with an integral broken central hook for the spring. L 39.5, W 11, H 17mm. (TT 46/07)
- Silver trumpet brooch (Figure A2.2, D), the bow lost a little below the knob; head margins damaged and pin lost. It had seen heavy use, with extensive wear, especially on the upper surface, and post-depositional scratching. The brooch is plain, with a full acanthus knob on the bow flanked by triple-rib mouldings, the central one bearing incised ladder decoration (type R(ii)/Hull 158A); the rib nearest the head is split in two on the underside by an additional incised line. The catchplate ridge runs up to the mouldings. The rather D-shaped head is slightly hollowed to accommodate the spring, with the broken stump of a fastening hook. It is likely the brooch broke in use. L 29.5, W 12, H 11mm. (TT 38/07)
- Disc-headed stud (Figure A2.2, E). Cast, with the short broken stub of an oval-sectioned tang and a plain disc, slightly plano-convex in section, the margins slightly damaged. D 24.5mm, H 10.5mm, shank D 3.5–4mm. Although not a diagnostically Romano-British type, similar studs are frequently found on such sites (e.g. Allason-Jones and Miket 1984, nos

3.975–8) but are unusual on Iron Age ones; its patina is consistent with such a dating. (TT 79/07)

Glass – Jennifer Price

- Two small curved blue-green body sherds, with elongated bubbles; probably from a cylindrical bottle, perhaps from the same vessel. Wall thickness 2–2.5mm. Such bottles are late first–early second century in date (Price & Cottam 1998, 191–4). sf 87, 99.

Stone

- Rotary quern stone pair, found in subsoiling ‘about twenty years ago’; now lost, type unknown.
- Cannel coal object, probably a broken roughout (Figure A2.3, A). Triangular, one corner broken off; both faces flaked; one edge snapped square, others bifacially flaked. The shape suggests it may have been intended as a pendant, although it is an unusual form and the identification is not certain. The good conchoidal fracture and lack of laminations identify it as cannel coal. 33×20×8.5mm. sf 88.
- Pounder (Figure A2.3, B). Ovoid cobble with pecked facet (47×27mm) at one end. 108×82×58.5mm. Found by Ian Kinloch in the field to the north. sf 143.
- Pounder (Figure A2.3, C). Irregular pyriform cobble with broad pecked facet on the narrow

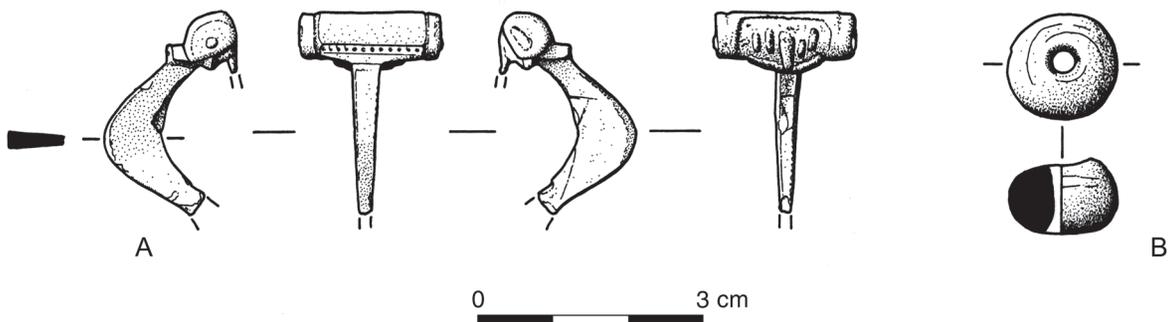


Figure A2.4
Finds from Harperdean (Alan Braby)

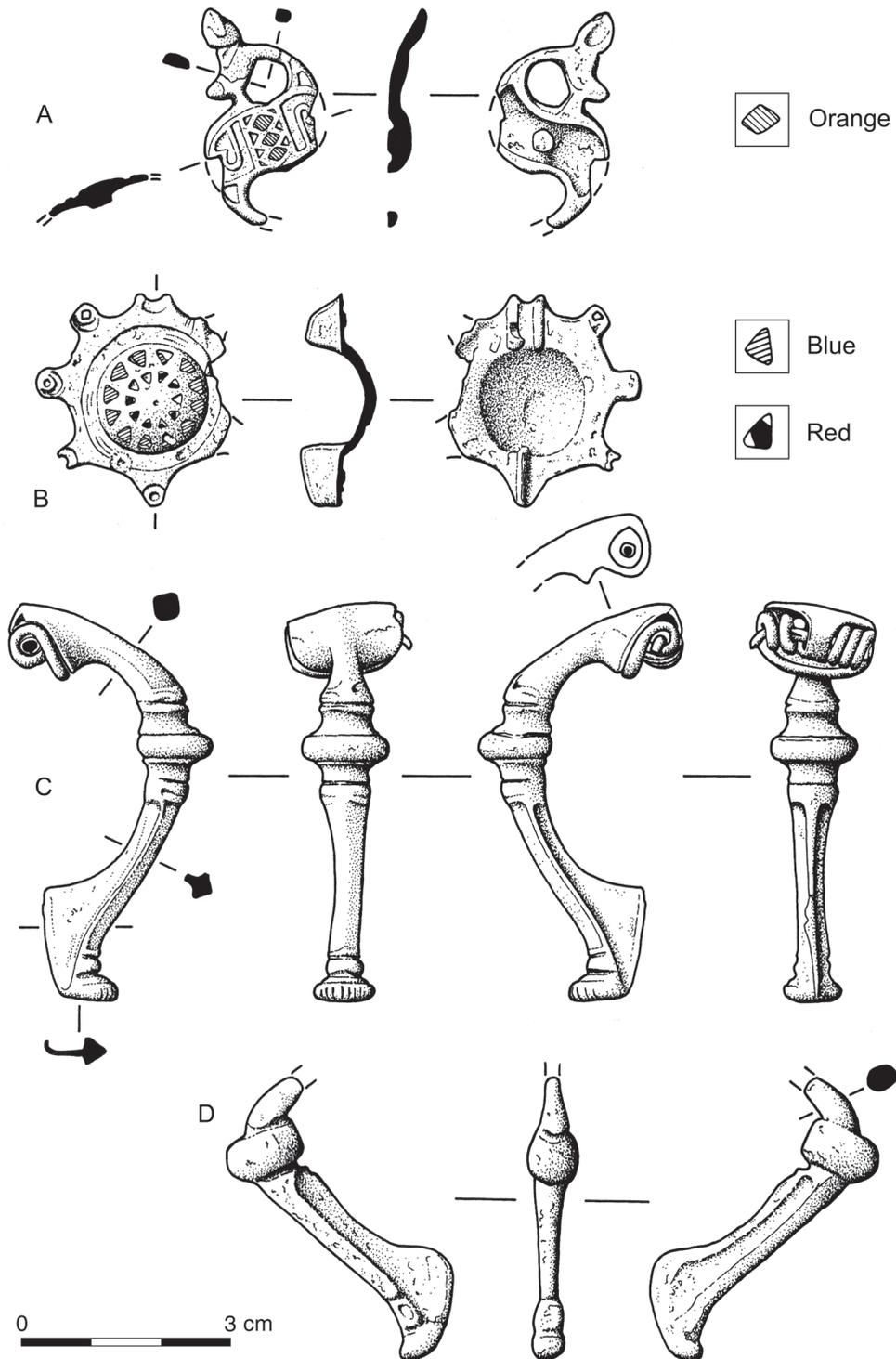


Figure A2.5
Roman brooches from Glebe Field, Aberlady (Alan Braby)

tip running up one edge; small facet on one corner of broader end. 83.5×76×66mm. sf 81.

- Barely-used pounder. Discoid cobble with lentoid section, one end with three small pecked hollows over an area 28×8mm, the other with a very small, narrow pecked facet (L 33mm) largely destroyed by a single flake removed due to hammering. 105×89×49mm. sf 28.
- Probable whetstone (Figure A2.3, D). Flat elongated cobble with rounded ends and lentoid section. Faces slightly smoothed and dished, one with staining. 120×41×12.5mm. sf 125.
- ?Whetstone/sharpener. Broken end of a rather irregular tabular pebble, one face smoothed and bearing fine diagonal striations. Too small for certain identification. 29.5×25×23mm. sf 123.

Pottery

- Single later prehistoric body sherd; relatively fine, with oxidised red-brown exterior, reduced interior, and <5% small grit temper. Wall T 9mm. sf 112.

Harperdean (Figure A2.4)

In 2007 Gerald McAleer found a Roman brooch and a glass bead at Harperdean, immediately north of the A1 at Haddington, in a field known to contain later prehistoric settlement evidence (NT 512 747; NMRS NT57SW 53, 93, 117). An enclosed settlement lies to the north of the findspot, but these finds probably derive from the nearby open settlement – of unknown extent – located in trial trenching ahead of the A1 upgrading (DES 1995, 51).

Two Roman coins are also recorded from the farm, both recent detecting finds: a sestertius of uncertain date and a follis of Constantius I (AD 313–7; Bateson and Holmes 2006, 165). These are likely to derive from the same settlement cluster: the sestertius is from NT 514 746, very close to the recorded open settlement; the follis is a little more distant, some 300m west of the brooch findspot at NT 509 746.

While Roman brooches are one of the commonest finds from Iron Age sites in the region (Chapter 7), knee brooches are conspicuously rare, and do not seem to have caught local tastes. The main exception is Traprain Law, where there is an unusually large quantity of such brooches. Given this, it may well be

that the Harperdean brooch came first to Traprain and was passed on from that power centre to a dependent settlement in the vicinity.

At the time of writing the finds have been claimed as Treasure Trove (TTDB 2007/47); it is anticipated they will be allocated to East Lothian Museums Service.

- Romano-British knee brooch (Figure A2.4, A); lower part of bow, foot and most of pin lost. The sharply-angled bow has a tapered rectangular section; the cylindrical head has a slight incised groove round each end and a transverse bar at the head-bow junction, decorated with a row of dots. Four-coil spring with internal chord, held by a copper alloy solid rod axis. Most surfaces show filemarks from finishing; the brooch has a white metal coating, probably tin (based on other analysed examples). This variant (Hull type 176 (Bayley and Butcher 2004, 179–80); Snape (1993, 19) type A) is a Continental type with a broad distribution in Britain (Bayley and Butcher 2004, 256; Snape 1993, 19 records 16 from the Stanegate frontier, and there is one from Newstead; Curle 1911, pl LXXXVII, 33). It dates to the period *c.* AD 150–200. L 16, W 19, H 24mm.
- Glass bead, globular, in translucent dark blue glass (Figure A2.4, B); the swirls of the glass from forming it round a core are clearly visible, with small protrusions at either end where it was twisted off the rod. It is slightly uneven in shape. D 14mm, H 10.5mm, perforation D 3.5mm. In Guido's classification (1978), this is a medium globular bead of group 7 (iv), a common and long-lived type with a currency from the Later Iron Age throughout the first millennium AD.

Aberlady (Figure A2.5)

Metal-detecting by Roger McWee over a number of years in fields close to the shore at Aberlady has revealed a 'productive site' with an assemblage predominantly of Anglo-Saxon and Medieval date; the small Roman Iron Age component is of interest here (for some of the Anglo-Saxon finds see Lowe 1999, 55; for geophysics, DES 1995, 48–9). Four brooches are known, all from the Glebe field (centred on NT 4600 8000). In addition, a dupondius of Antoninus Pius and a samian sherd are recorded

from Luffness, on the opposite side of the bay (Bateson and Holmes 2006, 165; Hardy 1885), part of a general scatter of material along the coastal dunes from Gosford to North Berwick (Figure 7.17). While the Anglo-Saxon material is more spectacular, it seems clear that the site had its origins in the Roman Iron Age if not before. The brooches cannot be more tightly dated than later first – second century, except the umbonate brooch, for which Bayley and Butcher (2004, 173) suggest a later first century date.

The finds are in the National Museum.

- Dragonesque brooch (Figure A2.5 A), reverse-S form, lozenge and scroll type (Feachem 1951, type ii), lacking the pin and one head. Vertical ear with central lentoid ridge, separated from the head by a brow; flat head with no eye, the nose lost, joined to the body by a short cylindrical sprue attached to a low marginal lip flanking the outer curve of the body. Enamelled decoration comprises a central row of orange lozenges flanked by discoloured triangles (with some stray orange chips). This discoloured enamel (surviving as a pale translucent blue-green; original colour unknown) also fills the main scrolls, which enclose a small field of discoloured dark enamel; the latter also survives in a triangular field on the neck. The underside is hollowed, with the central stub of a casting sprue. L 31, W 18, T 3.3mm. NMS FT 113.
- Umbonate disc brooch of Hull's type 267C (Figure A2.5 B; Bayley and Butcher 2004, 173), with eight marginal protruding discs (two now lost), each with a ring and dot motif. These show no trace of enamel; in some, the dot is a

perforation, in others the motif is off-centre. A shallow circumferential groove (unenamelled) surrounds the boss; this carries two concentric rows of enamelled triangles, the lower a dark translucent blue, the upper an opaque red; the central dot is plain. Damaged fittings on rear for a hinged pin, the catchplate return and part of the hinge lost. D 31mm, H 10.5mm. NMS FT 114.

- Plain trumpet brooch (Figure A2.5, C), intact apart from the pin, the head slightly twisted. Plain central disc moulding with low flat collars (Collingwood and Richmond (1969) type R(i); Hull type 153C), flanked by triple mouldings; those nearer the head curve slightly to form lipped motifs. Foot decorated with edge ribbing; two collars demarcate it from the bow. The integral cast hook holds a six-coil spring with internal chord, the axis formed of a rolled sheet cylinder. L 58, W 18, H 27.5mm. NMS FT 102.
- Trumpet brooch fragment, head lost (Figure A2.5, D); the full moulding is too worn for detailed identification. Plain bow and foot, with collar at foot. L 45, W 7.5, H 28mm. NMS FT 123.

Acknowledgements

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