

**Finds on your Doorstep – 6000 years of life in Bonby - finds recorded on the Portable Antiquities Scheme Database (search for [fnds.org.uk](https://fnds.org.uk)) – by Martin Foreman, Finds Liaison Officer for North Lincolnshire.**

## **Prehistory, Neolithic to Late Iron Age (4000 BC – AD 43) 12 records**

The Wolds of East Yorkshire and Lincolnshire may be low hills, but they're still the highest driest ground to the west of the Ural Mountains! It's no surprise they attracted people from earliest times. Flints and barrows were well-recorded in Yorkshire, but Lincolnshire prehistory had few friends to salvage it from the plough. Bonby looks down from the Wolds, and Middlegate Lane takes the route of an ancient trackway along their slopes, above the modern road and skirting the Ancholme marshes below. But when did people start to travel it, tramping from the Humber southwards, or from the eastern midlands up to that great river?

Greenstone axes are among the earliest finds. These prestige pieces came from Langdale (Cumbria), but such a long-distance traffic developed that they are otherwise most commonly found round the Humber.



**Greenstone axe from Middlegate Lane**

NLM-CE7EF4



**Bronze Age axe – handsome tool or weapon?**

WMID-58D2F4

By about 500BC, land near today's road was already in use: a pin was found here. Were Iron Age 'coins' of silver and gold actually given as cult offerings? Do some come from a higher and holy place on the wold?



**Pin from Bonby**

WMID-5E9EB1



**Two gold and three silver coins of the Corieltauvi tribe, 60-50 BC**

CCI-42589

CCI-4241

CCI-42411

CCI-30917

CCI-40697

## **The Roman period (AD 43-410) 11 records**

It was nearly 200 years after the legions landed before the first Roman coins were lost around Bonby. Brooches in the form of a crescent moon and a bird come from the higher part of the parish. Just as Celtic coins might suggest an Iron Age shrine thereabouts, *plate brooches* might show membership of later cults. The higher you got, the closer you were to the gods?

The lower track led straight to Horkstow, where in late Roman times a local big-wig held court in one of the largest and most impressive mosaic-paved halls in Britain. It's around this road that Roman coins cluster.

Were these brooches perhaps left by cult members who looked to the skies, just as their own ancestors had devoted silver to moon and gold to sun? But the low road at Bonby led to the local seat of all earthly power..



**Moon and bird brooches from the heights**

WMID-18E917

WMID-18D5B5



**Cart fitting and coins found downslope**

WMID-5D1326

NLM-8EEA54

NLM-8EC8C2

### Big Boss Man...

The paved mosaic floors of a villa at Horkstow made up the floor of a great audience hall. The mosaics were laid in a themed sequence. It begins with a chariot race full of ups and downs, presenting the owner as one of life's winners. The middle chapter features over-the-top Classical mysteries full of sex and violence, all supported by mutant giants. You only got to see the boss across a final floor presenting him as Orpheus, who tames all wild things – and natives too? You'd feel pretty small by then...

### The Anglo-Saxon period (AD 410-1066) 6 records

An Early Anglo-Saxon presence is usually betrayed by finds from disturbed graves, as these incomers buried the dead – especially their wives – in spectacular ‘national costume’. Barbarians like the Anglo-Saxons were first called in as mercenaries to prop up the later Roman empire, and then the *tyrants* who took authority after its regular troops were withdrawn. Finds from the parish date from shortly after this time, and point to an established community following Anglo-Saxon customs. Their fathers might have been brought in by the last ‘Horkstow Boss’, but these folk were parked on his drive! Roman rule was truly dead and gone.

Brooch fragments suggest a cemetery lay uphill and north of the present village. Equally battered bits found down-slope hint at its later disturbance by ploughing, though burials *may* also lie west of today’s road.



**Bits of cruciform brooches – oddly, most are from the ‘foot’ ends**

WMID-190684

WMID-5DEDE4



NLM-14CBE4



**Spangle from a dress pin**

WMID-337966

Later Anglo-Saxon activity is suggested only by a strap end and a silver penny. Both were found below the village. The strap end is a down-market piece; the silver coin was issued by Vikings settled in East Anglia. An Anglo-Scandinavian strap end of AD 1050-1100 is from Bonby itself – this is a new Viking place-name.



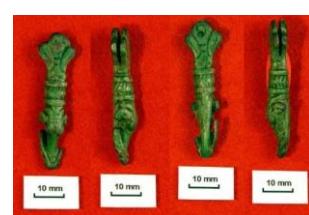
**Poorly made Saxon strap end**

WMID-5CD146



**Shiny Viking penny**

WMID-ED3FC2



**Anglo-Scandinavian strap end**

NLM-898E86

## The Medieval period (1100-1500) 29 records (one from Saxby All Saints)

Most medieval finds from Bonby are silver pennies; they were issued between 1154 and 1470. Earlier coins include only one cut coin – *halfpennies* or *farthings* (a fourth of a penny) were used for daily purchases. So, this may be rent money or savings rather than housekeeping - people shopped elsewhere.

Two *seal matrices* come from near Bonby. One found just over the parish boundary in Saxby was owned by *Roger son of Eve* – his father was unknown or ranked below his wife. Both show peasants played the local land market – formerly Viking areas were less likely to have serfs tied to feudal duties at every turn.

A stamp or *seal matrix* was struck into hot wax which formed the seal on a document. It let you participate in business regardless of education, and served in law as your signature. Most such deals were over land.



**Seal matrices from Saxby and Bonby**

NLM-1D1835



**Early pennies, of Henry II and Henry III**

WMID-E286D7



NLM-6342A5

Later pennies of Edward I and Edward II are most common. But why? It seems the mass of coins struck to pay for service in royal wars in Wales and Scotland would eventually leave silver in every English palm.



**English coins of Edward I and Edward II, contemporary Low Countries' copy, and a Scots' halfpenny**

NLM-1DED66

WMID-78A4A1

NLM-1DE2D2

NLM-631D11

WMID-2FC651

NLM-635692



## The Post-Medieval period (1500-1900) (5 records)

Later objects from Bonby are few and far between. It may be that finders don't bother to keep or report them. Or, there may be some change in the practices which took objects from where they were used and lost to where they were found.

If finds come from living areas, but were found in fields, how did they get there? Perhaps these things were all accidentally swept out with rubbish from homes, and the rubbish was spread to manure the land. But, where ploughing gave way to grazing, there may have been less need for compost, and thus fewer finds.

Later silver often looks worn out. Copper alloy coins and tokens replaced the smallest silver issues to serve as halfpennies and farthings. Jettons were counters to use on a *chequerboard* for sums, while tradesman had their own brass halfpennies made. All might be used as small change so long as people would accept them.



**Clasp fragment**

WMID-5DE1E2



**Coins of James I and Charles I**

LIN-BC2102

NLM-8EAF18



**Jetton, and a brass token from Hull**

NLM-DA6F90

NLM-E03B21