

SPOON

Unique ID: HAMP-BC38B6

Object type certainty: Certain

Workflow status: Published

A corroded cast copper-alloy Roman multifunctional eating utensil, best described as a folding spoon for convenience. The handle is in the form of an elongated, crouching feline, probably a lion, with front legs outstretched. The legs are set forward of and below the animal's head which has moulded ears, slight recesses for eyes and a groove showing the mouth. The elongated body behind is U-shaped in cross-section, the underside being recessed. Just over halfway along the animal is a slight bulge representing the creature's hind quarters and legs. The handles continues, terminating in a crescentic curve. One half of this piece sliced and pierced. A groove runs along the side of the handle from the crescentic terminal to just past the bulge. An implement, possibly a spike for extracting flesh from crustaceans, would have hinged around a rivet within the perforation and been stored against the handle's side, following the groove and retained within a double notch at the beginning of the paw on this side. The notch only survives vestigially. On the lower surface, at the beginning of the crescent terminal, is a double perforated lug, now truncated. Shiny metal on the stubs suggests either a recent cut or testing of the metal. This hinge would have retained a probable blade that would have folded underneath the handle in the wide groove. Remains within the hinges suggest that the rivets would have been made of iron; traces in the side groove suggest too that the spike was also iron. Other than the moulded decoration noted corrosion has meant that decoration is difficult to discern. There are possible rouletted punches behind the animal's head on the side not featuring the spike. There are possible traces of tinning on the underside of the crescentic terminal. Otherwise the piece has corroded to a variable mid-green colour. The paws have been slightly squashed inwards and misaligned.

The form of the handle is known from published examples, and can be classified as Sherlock's (1976, 250) Type B. Other examples have been recorded on this database (see 'Notes' below). It is known the spoon bowls were held within the paws and would have folded up above the cat's head. The general dating given to these folding spoons is 2nd or 3rd century given the form of spoon bowls and the contexts in which they have been excavated.

Notes:

These objects have been examined by David Sherlock. They are rare and often misidentified simply as folding knives in the absence of a bowl (e.g. Mills 2000, 86; ref. RB258). In 1976 Sherlock had gathered details of four handles, alongside three separate bowls with their distinctive L-shaped attachment ends. Very few were found with their bowls attached (e.g. BM Registration number: 1856, 0701.1152); all but one of these were 'mandolin' shaped. By 2007 Sherlock's cumulative totals had reached eight handles and six separate bowls. Excitingly, along with this example, a further six handles have been recorded on this database: SF2196, GLO-C01E93 (= UKDFD 9052), DENO-AEBF93, LIN-A68C52, KENT-DD9F73, NCL-635E92. To these we might add HAMP-349434 (a possible bowl) and NLM4722 (a seemingly related piece). If one of Sherlock's (2007, 364; ref. B12) examples is treated as a related piece (Crummy 1983, 69; ref. 2020 - in the form of a dolphin), and the bowls treated with caution, then the six definite PAS examples nearly double the known corpus.

Most examples are of a comparable form, although another as yet unpublished is more ornately decorated. Another is of the same style but far more involved, with extra lugs for a total of six implements (Meadows 2003, 36; ref. 12; Sherlock 2007, 364-365; ref. B14). The distribution pattern of the corpus so far recorded does not suggest any clear pattern and seems to rule out a direct association with the army as with the latter day successor of these objects, the Swiss Army knife.

The recorder is indebted to Mr Alan Cracknell for his illustration of this artefact

Find of note status

This is a find of note and has been designated: Potential for inclusion in Britannia

Class: folding

Subsequent actions

Subsequent action after recording: Returned to finder

Chronology

Broad period: ROMAN

Period from: ROMAN

Date from: Circa AD 100

Date to: Circa AD 300

Dimensions and weight

Quantity: 1

Length: 64.75 mm

Height: 12.3 mm

Width: 16.15 mm

Weight: 11.16 g

Discovery dates

Date(s) of discovery: Sunday 20th December 2009

Rally details.

This object was found at [Weekend Wanderers - Broughton \(20/12/09\)](#)

Personal details

Found by: This information is restricted for your login.

Recorded by: Mr Robert Webley

Identified by: Mr Robert Webley

Other reference numbers

Other reference: E2812

Materials and construction

Primary material: Copper alloy

Manufacture method: Cast

Completeness: Incomplete

Surface Treatment: White metal coated

Spatial metadata

Region: [South East](#) (European Region)

County or Unitary authority: [Hampshire](#) (County)

District: [Test Valley](#) (District)

Parish or ward: [Broughton](#) (Civil Parish)

Meadows, I., 2003 [Other finds](#) Cambridge: Cambridge Antiquarian Society 36