

LUNULA

Unique ID: DOR-2198F8

Object type certainty: Certain

Workflow status: Published

An incomplete gold lunula found in three pieces. A flat crescent shaped sheet of gold of which approximately three quarters remains. The lunula is torn and bent at the break and there is some damage and denting along the edge and at the widest point. On the larger piece, the surviving expanded terminal is sub-angular with rounded corners and a pronounced mid-rib. It is set at right angles to the plane of the body. The body of the crescent is wide and tapers to the remaining terminal. The central body is undecorated apart a triple stranded framing band along both edges. The lines continue to the apex of the remaining horn of the crescent, increasing to four lines on the inner edge for a short distance (possibly a slip in the engraving). The lines on the inner edge remain equidistant and curve around below the neck of the terminal. The lines around the outer edge start to converge and terminate at the edge. The remaining horn of the crescent is decorated with incised geometric patterns of a type commonly seen on lunulae. At the apex of the horn is an area of fine incised cross-hatching forming an open lattice. The lines here are slightly finer than in other areas of decoration. The cross hatching (x) is bordered by a series of five transverse lines (-), roughly parallel, below which are three downward triangles (v) infilled with transverse lines, a plain area (p) and a group of upward pointing triangles (□), similarly in-filled. The pattern of spaces and triangles separated by transverse lines is repeated four further times but with variation in the numbers of transverse lines and an increase in the number of triangles. The decoration is as follows:

x-vp□-vp□-vp□-vp□-v.

The variations in triangles and lines are:

x- (5)v(3)p□(3)-(5)v(3)p□(4)-(4)v(4)p□(4)-(3)v(4)p□(4)-(4)v(5).

It is likely that the decoration was repeated on the missing horn. The line thicknesses vary through the decoration. The thickest and deepest are the framing bands, followed by the transverse lines and triangles then the triangle infill. The finest and lightest lines being those comprising lattice pattern at the apex. The lines are not neatly applied with frequent crossing of the transverse lines into other areas of decoration, irregularity in spacing and angle and open apexes to the triangles. The back is undecorated, but on the horn of the crescent the geometric lines on the front have been applied to sufficient depth for them to be faintly visible in low relief.

Dimensions: 142 mm x 180 mm Maximum surviving width - 46.27 mm. Average plate thickness - 0.30 mm . Terminal dimensions - 17.70 mm x 18.10 mm x 1.0 mm (rib thickness)

Weight: 71.63 g

A smaller piece which was found during fieldwork on the findspot is more damaged, but appears to join to the break on the larger piece. It is torn and folded at both ends and along the inner edge. The triple strand decoration at the outer edge is visible, as are the lowest transverse decorative elements mirroring those seen on the horn of the main piece. What remains comprises, from top to bottom, □(4)-(4)v(4). The dimensions of the smaller piece are:

Dimensions: 43.40 mm x 38.14 mm x 0.52 mm Weight: 9.61 g

A further fragment was unearthed in 2015. It appears to be the missing terminal and fragment of horn. It has the same style expanded terminal, being sub-angular with rounded corners and a pronounced mid-rib. Attached is the tapering horn of the crescent. It is torn, twisted and folded at the end. It is just possible to see traces of the same style of geometric decoration as is visible on the larger, less damaged piece. This item has been given Treasure number 2015 T870.

The dimensions of this piece are: 66.65 mm x 19.26 mm x 0.57 mm Weight: 9.56 g

Date: Early Bronze Age - c. 2400 - 2000 BC

Total Weight: 81.24 g

A third fragment was also unearthed and reported as Treasure case 2015 T870:

A further fragment of the lunula discovered in 2014 (T257) It appears to be the missing terminal and fragment of 'horn' - the upper part of the body of the crescent-shaped lunula necklace. It has the same style expanded terminal, being sub-angular with rounded corners and a pronounced mid-rib. Attached is the tapering horn of the crescent. It is torn, twisted and folded at the end. It is just possible to see traces of the same style of geometric decoration as is visible on the larger, less damaged piece.

Dimensions: 66.65 mm x 19.26 mm x 0.57 mm

Weight: 9.54 g

Date: Early Bronze Age - c. 2400 - 2000 BC

Analysis of this fragment showed by the Department of Conservation and Scientific Research, The British Museum:

Non-destructive X-ray fluorescence analysis of the lunula fragment from the Tarrant valley, Dorset, indicated a surface composition of approximately 94-95% gold and 4-5% silver, with a trace of copper. The lunula fragment weighs 9.54 grams.

Notes:

Lunulae are rare finds for mainland Britain, although they are more common in Ireland, and this is the thirteenth such find. The Dorset findspot is also unusual as most of the previous examples were recovered in coastal or upland locations. This is the third lunula recorded on the PAS database with the two other examples coming from Cumbria (LANCUM-449151) and the East Riding of Yorkshire (DUR-A24C08). This example is of the Provincial type (as defined in Taylor, J. 1980. *Bronze Age Goldwork of the British Isles*. Cambridge University Press) being narrower, of thicker sheet and less accomplished decoration.

Subsequent actions

Current location of find: Dorset County Museum

Subsequent action after recording: Acquired by museum after being declared Treasure

Treasure details

Treasure case tracking number: 2014T257

Chronology

Broad period: BRONZE AGE

Subperiod from: Early

Period from: BRONZE AGE

Period to: BRONZE AGE

Date from: Circa 2400 BC

Date to: Circa 2000 BC

Dimensions and weight

Quantity: 1

Length: 142 mm

Width: 180 mm

Thickness: 0.55 mm

Weight: 71.63 g

Discovery dates

Date(s) of discovery: Saturday 29th March 2014

Personal details

Found by: This information is restricted for your login.

Recorded by: Ms Ciorstaidh Hayward Trevarthen

Identified by: Ms Ciorstaidh Hayward Trevarthen

Other reference numbers

Other reference: SCMS 016599

Treasure case number: 2014T257

Materials and construction

Primary material: Gold

Completeness: Incomplete

Spatial metadata

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

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

District: [North Dorset](#) (District)

To be known as: Tarrant Valley

Spatial coordinates

Grid reference source: GPS (From FLO)

Unmasked grid reference accurate to a 1 metre square.

Discovery metadata

Method of discovery: Metal detector

Current location: Dorset County Museum

General landuse: Cultivated land

Specific landuse: Minimal cultivation

finds.org.uk