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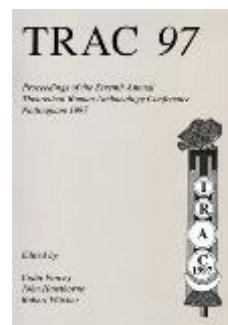
Britain: More Than Meets the Eye?

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# Brooches and Identities in First Century AD Britain: more than meets the eye?

by S. Jundi and J. D. Hill

It is only shallow people who do not judge by appearances. The true mystery of the world is in the visible, not the invisible.

Oscar Wilde *The Picture of Dorian Gray*.

## *Introduction*

The main intention of this paper is to suggest that brooches can be looked at in new ways, to provide a fuller and, possibly, different perspective on social change in Late Iron Age and early Roman Britain. Pages of illustrated brooches are taken for granted in any Roman excavation report. Their importance as evidence for dating sites is well known, but from an Iron Age archaeologist's perspective, it is the very fact that there are broadly datable styles of brooches in such large numbers that needs explanation. Rather than taking these objects for granted, this paper suggests new ways to look at brooches and their use in first century AD Britain. It will argue that the possible roles brooches played in conveying information about the wearer changed in form and importance between c.100BC and AD75. The paper will outline these changes and suggest possible avenues for explaining this phenomenon. We will then discuss one example: the post-conquest Dragon-esque brooches of northern England and southern Scotland.

Brooches formed part of the costume and overall appearance of late Iron Age and early Roman people and were meant to be seen. In terms of dress, brooches have the dual purpose of being both functional and ornamental. They not only hold together a person's clothes, but they may also serve to express gender, ethnicity, age, and group membership depending upon where, how, and what type of brooch is worn. They formed part of the overall appearance of people in the past. As such, they can be considered as part of a code which, if deciphered, creates a sphere of discourse with its associated social arrangements, in which dress also plays an important role in communicating social symbols (Eco 1972; Lurie 1992). This important role of dress and overall personal appearance is common across many living cultures today, and can be assumed for all human cultures for the last 40,000 years – even when we may have little physical evidence for this area of social life in the archaeological record. In Iron Age and early Roman Britain few actual articles of clothing survive, and representations of dressed individuals are scarce. However, some 'words' that may have comprised the original message of personal appearance in this period do survive – dress accessories and more specifically brooches. Do these traces give us any indication of the importance and types of messages that personal appearance might have been conveying in the period? If brooches may be seen as part of the original communication of this non-verbal language, can examining brooches through theories of dress and appearance offer a unique insight into the possible identities perpetuated by a society? If so, the thousands of late Iron Age and early Roman brooches in southern Britain might be approached from these perspectives to ask about the roles dress and appearance may have played in expressing identities of differing kinds in this period of marked social change.

*An abundance of brooches*

The role of dress and personal appearance, possibly even the specific attitudes to the brooch itself should probably not be seen as static at this, or any, time. Sociology would suggest that people may have become particularly concerned about their own appearances in a time of anxiety and risk such as the marked social changes of the first centuries BC and AD. This is supported by the surviving evidence for appearance which shows considerable changes in this period. The most striking of these changes is the massive increase in brooch numbers. Brooches are comparatively unusual finds in the British early and middle Iron Ages (Hill 1995a; Haselgrove 1997). There are only 360 provenanced early and middle Iron Age brooches in Britain (Haselgrove 1997), which can be contrasted to figures such as the 115 brooches from the mid-first century AD 'massacre' deposit at South Cadbury Castle (Alcock 1972), the 162 brooches from late pre-Roman Iron Age (LPRIA) and early Roman Iron Age (ERIA) Baldock (Stead & Rigby 1986), and the 237 from the King Harry Lane cemetery (Stead and Rigby 1989).

	<i>Hallstatt</i>	<i>La Tène A-B</i>	<i>La Tène C</i>
Excavated Settlement	4	49	51
Burials	5	15	108

*Table 1: Numbers of excavated early and middle Iron Age brooches in Britain (after Haselgrove 1997)*

The paucity of brooches in most of the Iron Age is partly due to the absence of formal archaeologically-visible burial rites, except in East Yorkshire, as it is from these contexts on the continent that brooches were commonly placed. Even where burials occur in the early and middle Iron Age, brooches are not that common. Haselgrove calculates that 57% of all middle La Tène brooches come from burials. Although almost all of these come from East Yorkshire (Haselgrove 1997), surprisingly only 23% of the Middle Iron Age East Yorkshire burials contain brooches (Jundi 1997).

However there is also a marked scarcity of brooches on Iron Age settlements that is in distinct contrast to the Late Iron Age and early Roman period (Hill 1995a:121). Early and Middle Iron Age settlements usually only produce a few, if any brooches, whilst even the smallest excavations of Late Iron Age and Roman sites, on the whole, produce comparatively larger numbers (figure 1). If these features broadly reflect the real abundance of brooches it seems likely that they were not especially common throughout Britain over much of the Iron Age and that the explosion of brooches in the archaeological record of the first century BC appears to reflect a real change in the quantity of brooches being made, worn and lost at this time.

This phenomenon has been described by one of us as the Fibula Event Horizon (Hill 1995a, b, 1997) – with apologies to Douglas Adams (1978): this is a term coined to suggest that finding large numbers of brooches on first century BC and AD sites is a phenomenon that requires an explanation (see also Haselgrove 1997). Providing an explanation may require asking new and different questions of brooch finds, instead of taking them for granted as the everyday artefacts of late Iron Age and early Roman Archaeology.

It is important to stress, in the context of this paper, that this boom in brooch numbers occurs on many sites, particularly in parts of Southern England, well before the Roman Conquest. Whilst the pages of brooch illustrations and trays of brooches in museum collections are a

characteristic of the Roman period, this is an Iron Age phenomenon that continues on after the conquest. A marked increase in brooch deposition occurs in many parts of southern Britain from the first century BC onwards, although it does not spread to all sites in this region until the middle of the first century AD. In central Britain, large numbers of brooches are only apparent from the Flavian period onwards, when the Dragonisque brooch, amongst others, becomes current (see below).

*The 'Fibula Event Horizon': just more brooches?*

To what extent this increase in brooches is part of the general increase in the quantity of material culture in circulation in general, or a specifically separate phenomenon associated with personal appearance in particular, has been questioned (Haselgrove 1997; Willis 1997). The evidence supports the latter: this is not simply a situational increase in brooch numbers; rather there are changes both to the brooches themselves to the contexts from which they are recovered.

An initial examination of the large numbers of brooches on late first century BC and early first century AD settlement sites might suggest that their inhabitants were losing brooches more frequently or had more brooches to lose. Casual loss was probably one important way in which brooches and related objects entered the archaeological record. However, it was not the only way. Detailed research on site formation processes has become an increasingly important feature of Iron Age archaeology over the last decade (e.g. Gwilt 1997; Hill 1992, 1995a). This 'deposit

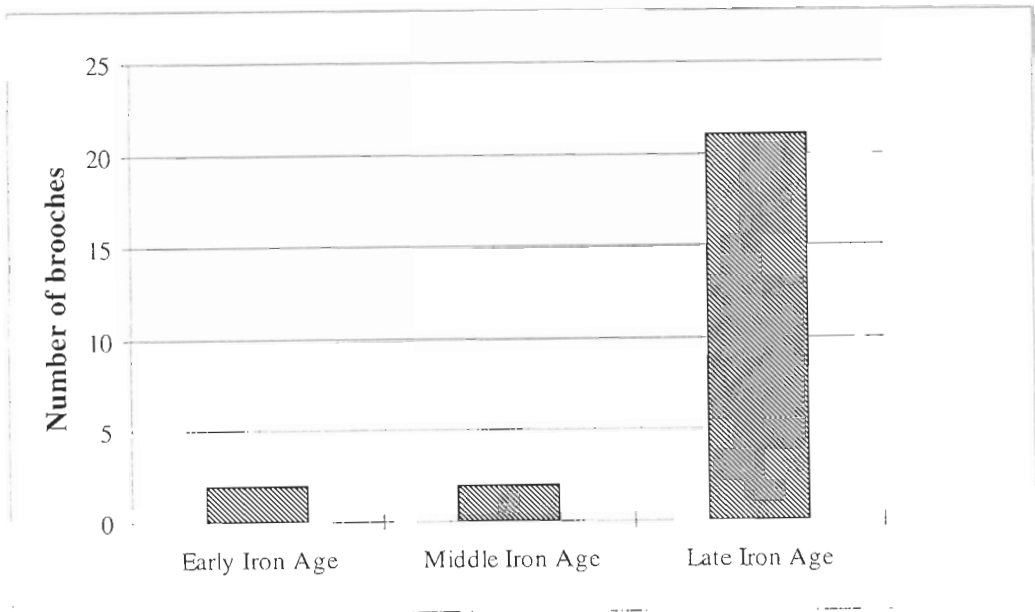


Figure 1. The numbers of brooches recovered per phase at the settlement of Gussage All Saints, Dorset (Data from Wainwright 1979)

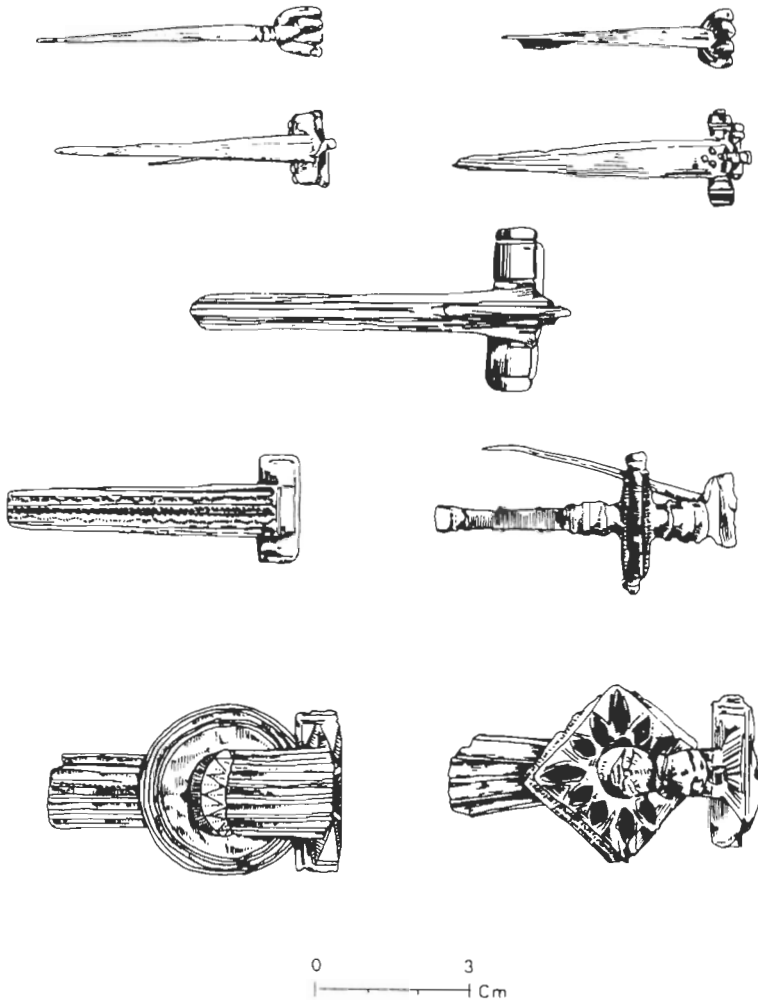


Figure 2. The increased visibility of new styles of brooch introduced between 100BC and AD 100

geist' (Willis 1997) has particularly emphasised that the archaeological record is not a simple, direct product of casual loss and garbage disposal. Rather, much of the material found on Iron Age settlements is the product of highly structured daily rubbish disposal and periodic ritual deposition – sacrifice (Hill 1995a). As such, the few brooches from early/mid PRIA sites in Wessex entered the archaeological record through clearly prescribed 'rules' which governed their 'discard' (Hill 1995a:66, 92, figure 9, 23).

There is little similar detailed work on late Iron Age and early Roman sites, although there are suggestions that such ritual deposits of domestic material continued, with the addition of new classes of material, including brooches. Many of the brooches from the latest phase at Gussage All Saints are from clearly structured ritual deposits (Hill 1995a). A similar explanation may account for many brooches at sites such as Braughing. A ritual interpretation may be



offered for the large number of brooches from the so-called 'massacre' deposit from the south west entrance at South Cadbury Castle (Alcock 1972). This deposit contains the partially articulated remains of at least twenty-two humans, weaponry and other finds including 115 brooches; these were initially interpreted as the stock of a fleeing brooch merchant. However, this deposit of partially articulated human remains has much in common to ritual practices in Britain and other parts of north west Europe and should probably be seen as a ritual deposit (Woodward and Hill forthcoming; cf. Hill 1995a; Wait 1985). The inclusion of brooches in such ritual deposits should not be a total surprise as brooches were important items for votive deposit at pre- and post-conquest shrines and temples (France & Gobel 1985; King & Soffe 1994; Selkirk 1993; Woodward & Leach 1993). They were also a very common grave good in late Iron Age and early Roman burials (Philpott 1991).

The increasing selection of brooches as suitable items for different types of ritual deposition is an important feature of the increasing brooch frequency. It implies a major change in the role, significance, and meanings associated with the brooch. It can be argued that the ritual discourses typifying the Early and Middle Iron Ages excluded objects directly related to the individual (Hill 1995a:108, 112-4). From the first century BC onwards, when individuals began to be buried in archaeologically-visible ways; the objects worn and associated with individuals become increasingly acceptable items for votive deposition in other contexts.

An additional aspect of this changing importance and role of the brooch is the apparent increased rate of stylistic change in brooch forms and types. Although the exact dating is debatable, the first centuries BC and AD were marked by the introduction of a number of distinct brooch styles at different times. These introductions led to a century characterised by the diverse range of very different looking basic forms of brooches which replace the elaborations of the basic wire 'safety pin' design of the La Tène C and D brooch. Brooch types such as Colchesters, Rosettes, Langton Downs, Hod Hills, Dragonisque etc. demonstrate this tremendous pluralism of brooch types in pre- and post-conquest southern Britain. But what caused this diversity? Why did people desire to wear visually very distinctive brooches in this period when in the preceding centuries far less diversity of style was seen or even accepted?

While the diverse types of brooches available to first century AD Britons included a wide range of different shapes, a common underlying trend can be identified behind this variability. Viewed over the first centuries BC/AD it is clear that the brooch became increasingly more visible over time (figure 2). The simple wire La Tène C brooch would have presented only a thin wire strip to the observer when worn. first century BC brooches that develop from this form often have bosses and other elaborations on the wire of the brooch back that would have increased the visibility when worn. This trend of increasing visibility is a marked feature of Colchesters and later brooches. The large winged hinges, flattened and decorated backs and, finally, large protrusions or flattened plates that typify new first century AD forms all dramatically increased brooches' visibility. The brooch became increasingly more than just a dress fastener.

Along with the rapid introduction of new styles there is some evidence for regional distributions of certain brooch styles. This is an area which has not been researched in detail, but hints from cursory studies point to both local styles of minor technical details, along with regional concentrations of particular types of brooch that *might* correspond to political or tribal units.

Finally, it is important to stress that these changes are not just restricted to the brooch alone. Other items relating to dress and appearance, (e.g. mirrors, finger/toe rings, earrings, bracelets and necklaces) also become increasingly common in the archaeological record. These also include a variety of other dress fittings, such as pins, studs and toggles; this could point to an

increasing and changing importance of people's dress and appearance in general. Equally, new classes of items related to care and presentation of people's hair, faces and hands became a regular feature of the archaeological record of the first century AD (Hill 1997; Jackson 1985). Toilet objects for manicures, applying cosmetics to the face, and possibly even plucking nasal hair, point to changing bodily hygiene regimes, ways of changing people's facial appearance and even changing understandings of the human body (Hill 1997).

### *Discussion*

Taking the evidence that the increasing number and changing importance of brooches is a phenomenon of the late Iron Age and was not a product of the Roman conquest, it would be wrong to presume that the personal, 'class' and cultural identities of peoples in the period prior to the Roman conquest were static. The features of the Fibula Event Horizon demonstrate changes in the social role of dress and appearance. Styles of dress may have been changing: certainly some people appear to have been caring for the faces, hands (and feet?) in new ways, while the objects associated with individuals and their appearance were given new ritually sanctioned meanings at this time. These changes all point to the importance of people's appearance and particularly the creation of distinctions or statements through this medium.

Appearance can express the relationships between individuals or groups, and can give a unique understanding of the construction and symbolic reflection of social categories (Sørensen 1991:122). Appearance in both pre- and post-conquest Britain was one medium in which people's changing identities could be physically expressed and created. The wearing of the toga by a Roman citizen, or uniform by members of the Roman military establishment, are just two of the most obvious ways in which dress and appearance signify identities and membership. But in the generations before the Conquest a range of other, possibly new, identities were being created and challenged (Hill 1997). These included tribal, class and age-group identities.

These various forms and types of new and changing identities in pre- and post-conquest Britain were neither fixed nor exclusive. As Wells (1995,131) has argued for late Iron Age Germany, "identity is situational – people express different identities at different times under different circumstances". Society is not only responsible for the creation of identity, but also for its dynamic nature and communication through material culture. Material signs are used by people, be it consciously or not, to express meaning to others, and it is this approach that can be developed through the closer examination of brooch associations with appearance.

That brooches were now playing a role in ritual is of particular importance. The brooch, an article of personal adornment directly associated with individuals, had been given the right to be placed in ritual contexts. Assuming that artefacts offered for ritual must be of importance to the donor, the conscious act of choosing particular brooches *must* show their increased importance. Their practical function of attaching textile to textile may not have changed, but their symbolism must have been newly significant. In order to correctly express a meaning a great deal of consideration may have gone into the choice of brooch and the way it was worn in association with the appearance of the individual.

The style of a brooch may be another means of understanding its significance. Wiessner (1989, 1990) suggests that the style of an object is one of several means of communication through which people negotiate their personal and social identity with others, indicating that a style could be used in archaeology to demonstrate the balance between the interests of an individual and their society. At this time new styles and types of brooches were rapidly introduced with new replacing old. A long term trend with this succession of new brooches is that sequential 'generations' become more elaborate, larger and have more ornate extensions. At

the heart of these changes appears to be the increased visual dominance of brooches. This produces an obvious assumption that the wearer intends the brooch to be noticed, allowing it to act like a badge, symbolising and displaying to others the individual characteristics of the wearer. This use of the brooch may have partly formed the individual's visual identity, demonstrating social and cultural status, or merely distinguishing between those that participate in the new custom from those that do not.

While clearly needing further and more detailed study, the phenomena considered suggest that people were using their bodies in new and differing ways in the first centuries BC and AD. These changes in personal appearance were more than just fashions; rather they seem to indicate that different groups of people were wearing different clothes. That rapid change took place in southern England in the century and a half before the Roman Conquest is now well recognised, but the changing roles of the brooch point to a new, possibly more deep-rooted and fragmented aspect to these changes. It implies that personal identities became a more unstable and contested arena as old identities of gender, age group and 'tribe' were possibly challenged and replaced. Dress and appearance may have helped to create and signal new social differences, and became an arena that may have perpetuated more ways to exhibit social and cultural identities. Getting at the full nuance and detail of these changes may be impossible given the limitations of the archaeological record, but the fact that changes in the uses, forms, deposition and abundance of the brooch discussed in this paper, happened, at least tells us that these types of major change were taking place. Understanding the importance of the brooches, and examining it more closely may enable us to go further down the path of understanding these changes in more detail.

The changing roles of brooches and their increasing presence in the archaeological record becomes visible around 150 years before the Roman conquest. This is not to argue that brooches before the late Iron Age did not play an active role in signalling or creating identities of different kinds in Britain. Rather, the roles played by brooches in the first centuries BC/AD were distinctly different to those in the third and second centuries BC. We do not want to suggest these changing roles were unique to southern Britain. The increasing number of brooches in parts of south-east England from 100/50BC onwards brought these parts of LPR1A north-west Europe into line with other parts in north-west France, Belgium and north-west Germany. The changing brooch styles and the trend towards increased visibility was shared on both sides of the English Channel. How these relationships were established, and whether they can be simply explained in terms of a core-periphery model need further consideration, as does the role of brooches after the Roman conquest. It may be wrong to suggest that nothing changes with the conquest in the role and importance of dress and appearance; if anything the abundance of brooches only increases. However, it may not have simply been that these trends were just amplified by the arrival of Rome: rather the trajectories and nature of this phenomenon may have changed. The Conquest brought with it new social categories and new identities that may have been visually expressed through dress, appearance or even just the brooch. This includes the possible expression of Roman and non-Roman identities. Further work is needed to explore these issues, but a short case study of one post-Conquest brooch suggests some of the avenues of future work.

#### *An example: Wearing the Dragonesque Brooch in post-conquest Central Britain*

The Dragonesque brooch is a common Roman type combining both the old and the new, drawing on a pre-existing discourse of visual motifs and ornament, expressed through the new medium of the highly visible brooch. Despite its form which harks back to the Iron Age, Dragonesque brooches are a phenomenon of the Roman period. This type of brooch was current



from the later first century AD until the end of the second century (Kilbride-Jones 1980; Macgregor 1976). In general, the Fibula Event Horizon appears to have taken place later in northern England/southern Scotland than further south. There are comparatively few pre-mid-first century AD brooches in central Britain, whilst Dragonesques and other brooch types occur in larger numbers from 40–60 AD onwards (cf. Hunter 1996, figure 6). The emergence of these large, often highly visual and decoratively elaborate Dragonesque brooches fits well into the broad trend of brooch visibility and use throughout the first century AD outlined above.

Although some examples are known from the continent, this is a British, particularly a Middle British, type of brooch of later first and second centuries AD. The distribution map of Dragonesques does show finds in southern Britain, but the majority of examples come from sites that lie north of a rough line drawn across England from the Humber estuary to Wirral peninsula, and south of the central Scottish valley (Macgregor 1976) (figure 3). Many of the find spots in this region have produced from two to as many as fifteen examples each. In this region Dragonesques are found in comparatively large numbers on individual sites that range from forts and *vici*, to small farmsteads and caves (see recent inventories in Kilbride-Jones 1980 and Macgregor 1976). For example, a number were found during excavations of late first and second century deposits at Traprain Law. Others come from sites such as Corbridge and South Shields forts, Edinburgh Castle and Milking Gap (Breeze 1996; Kilbride-Jones 1980). Caves make up a surprisingly large portion of the sites in this heartland of the Dragonesques' manufacture and use (e.g. Borness Cave, Kirkcaldbright; Victoria Cave, Settle; Thirst Horse Cave, Derbyshire).

The Dragonesque brooch was a visually very distinctive brooch, apparently predominantly made and worn in a particular part of Britain. Its shape clearly distinguished it from other common brooch types worn at this time, and the usually elaborately decorated, flat, visible surface was enamelled adding to the brooch's distinctiveness. These were undoubtedly brooches to be worn and to be seen, rather than just safety pins for fastening costumes. The basic shape of the Dragonesque is essentially a broken-back scroll motif from the repertoire of late La Tène art. Macgregor (1976), Kilbride-Jones (1980) and Megaw and Megaw (1989) amongst others have all indicated this and other close links between these brooches and the ornamentation of other late La Tène decorated metal objects, especially horse trappings and weapons made in roughly the same region. To these authors Dragonesque brooches are all examples of 'Celtic' art. While this Celtic identification is common, it has not often been asked why these 'Celtic' brooches were made and used during this period. They are not an Iron Age type of artefact in either form or function; rather they and other British brooches clearly decorated with La Tène motifs, all post date the Claudian conquest of southern England. They fit into the pattern of increasingly visible plate and other mid to late first century AD brooch types. Rather than divorce these brooches from their Roman context and place them alongside La Tène decorated metalwork of pre-Roman and Roman dates, attempting to understand why and when they were used requires them to be placed within the wider context of first century AD Britain. As has already been suggested, while the message conveyed by the shape and decorative vocabulary of Dragonesque brooches was visually distinctive, the medium of the message is clearly in common with the increased importance of the brooch, in general, at this time.

This is not to say that including part of the pre-Roman ornamentative vocabulary into a brooch is unimportant, rather that the circumstances in which this process took place need closer examination. In a milieu in which wearing a particular brooch type appears to have become an important medium to convey information about the wearer and their identities, a very distinctive and possibly archaising style of brooch emerged. That this particular type of brooch became popular in central Britain between c.60 and 150AD cannot be coincidental. The earliest

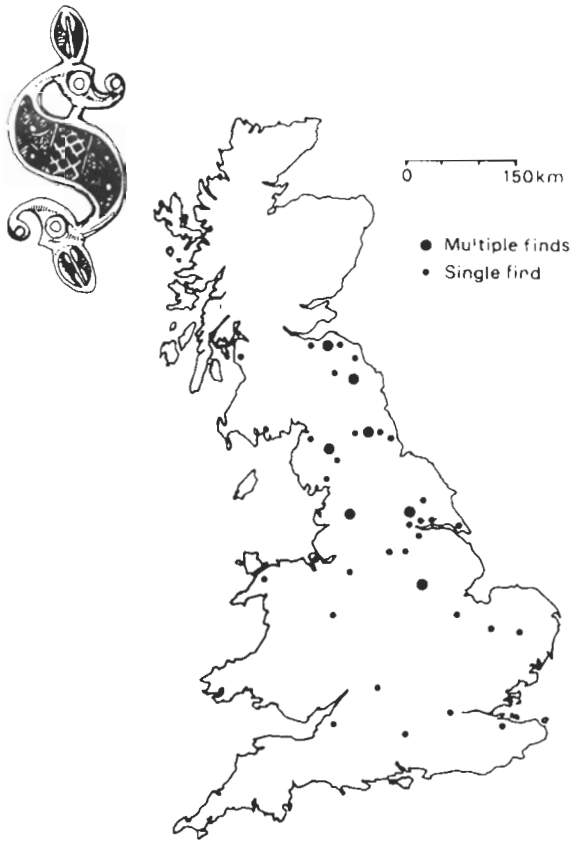


Figure 3. A distribution of Dragonesque brooches c. AD 40 to AD 200

Dragonesques post-date the Roman conquest of southern Britain, and are most common north of the original extent of the Claudian conquest, becoming popular during or soon after the time when Roman military activity brought these parts of northern England then southern Scotland under direct rule. Much elaborate La Tène decorated metalwork was deposited in these regions during the first and early second centuries AD (Hunter 1997; Macgregor 1976), but this form of ritual and political discourse appears to have been limited to those groups outside direct Imperial administration. What is interesting about Dragonesque brooches is that they were worn both by those living beyond, and, more commonly by those well within, the northern frontier of the province. Equally, the common nature and range of contexts from which these brooches come suggests they were worn by a wide cross section of people.

Can we infer, then, that wearing a Dragonesque brooch had real significance and meaning for both the owner and those who 'read' it? This type of brooch is neither a local variant on a common or pre-existing form, nor a local form of a Colchester that could simply be a product of local workshop traditions and variations. This is a completely new shape and form of brooch being made and worn for the first time in the aftermath of Roman military campaigns and conquest. Can we say that the choice of wearing an object clearly drawn from a local and non-Classical artistic repertoire was more than purely ornamental but worn to actively express a non-Roman identity? (cf. Hunter 1996). While there would clearly have been obvious differences

between the costume of a local citizen and Roman soldier in uniform, the daily dress of locals, soldiers, administrators and craftspeople in northern England may have been less varied, except through the use of accessories, fasteners and brooches. This is not to suggest that all Dragonesque brooches always had a single specific meaning. Meanings are mutable and may have changed significantly through time and in different areas, such as southern England. However, it is perhaps ironic that the Megaw's have a Dragonesque brooch on the front of their book *Celtic Art* (1989). Here is an object that may have been explicitly connected with expressing a distinct identity as non-Roman and possibly crossing pre-existing 'tribal' boundaries. This is not to suggest these late first century central Britons saw themselves as Celts, but these small La Tène objects may have had a greater role in expressing a (new) ethnic identity than much of the larger La Tène decorated metalwork from pre-Roman Europe. It suggests that the La Tène decoration on these and other trinkets may have carried significantly more meaning than simply as products for native craftspeople in search for a new market or as a form of 'tourist art' (Megaw & Megaw 1989:230).

Dragonesques were not the only example of a new post-conquest brooch allowing people in parts of the Roman province to wear non-Roman, La Tène motifs. A small number of other La Tène decorated brooches are known from Britain including: the gilt bronze Fan tail brooch from Tre'r Ceiri, the silver gilt Carmarthen Trumpet brooch and the ten centimetres long 'Aesica' gilt bronze brooch from Great Chesters fort. All must date to the second half of the first century AD or later and all carry elaborate La Tène decoration on objects which are essentially 'Roman' in form and role. These noticeable objects may be interpreted in similar ways suggested for the Dragonesque brooches, a way of asserting a new, and possible non-military, non-Roman identity in the years following conquest.

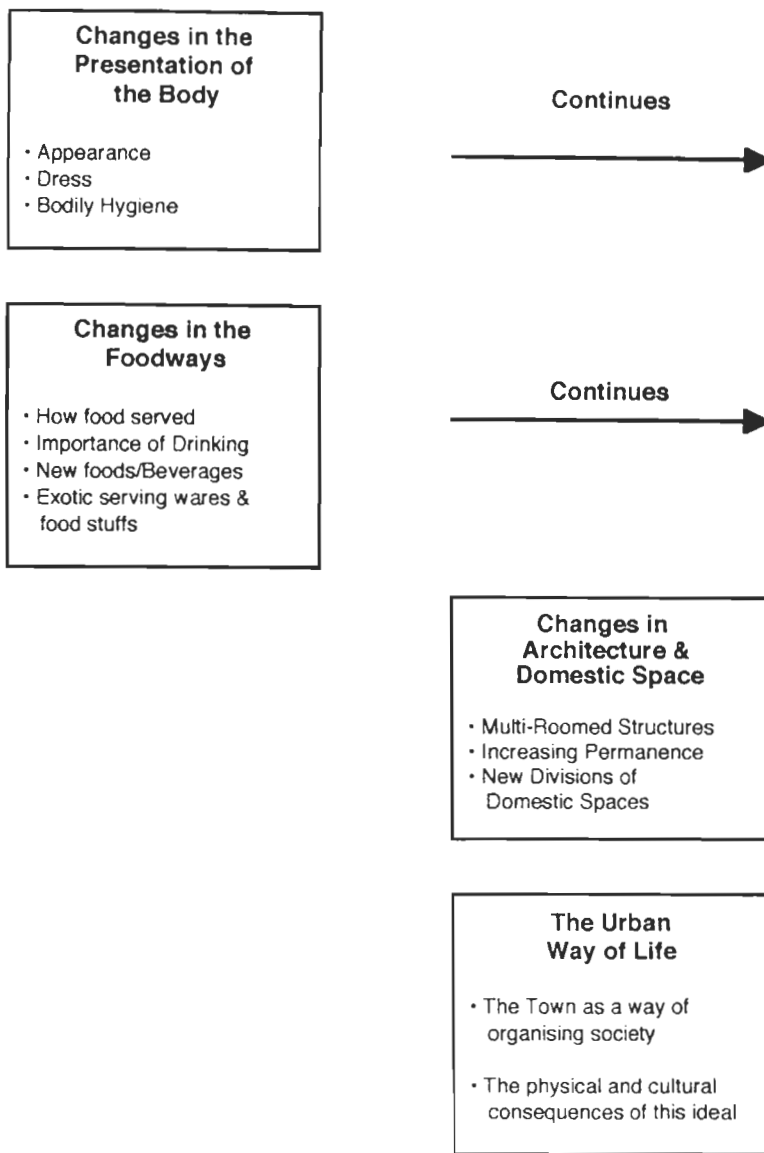
### *Conclusions*

In this paper we have made four major points. The most important is simply to highlight the existence of the Fibula Event Horizon in the first place and to show that the common occurrence of large numbers of brooches on early Roman sites. This is an important phenomenon in itself, that deserves full explanation. Secondly, we have suggested that a common and taken-for-granted artefact, the brooch, can provide more information about a society than previously thought, when approached from new perspectives. This indicates the importance of finding new contexts in which to consider the most ordinary of objects to provide different insights into first century AD Britain.

Another important feature of this increase in brooches is that it has been shown to be essentially an Iron Age phenomenon that continues, in possibly altered ways, with the Romanization of Britain. Traditionally the regions where the Fibula Event Horizon could be seen before the conquest, were interpreted as Romanized before the Conquest. However, if the late Iron Age is to be understood in its own right, it has to be recognised that most of the developments in pre-conquest Britain may owe little to 'Romanization' or even the impact of a Roman centred World System. Even those changes in material culture that continue from late Iron Age to early Roman Britain may not easily be called 'Romanization' before the conquest; Gallicization might be a more appropriate term. It is therefore significant to ask what we mean by the term 'Romanization' and be clearer in establishing what changes with the Roman Conquest (figure 4). The Fibula Event Horizon and the introduction of toilet objects demonstrate the occurrence of important changes in people's personal social identities expressed through their dress appearance. However, these changes, like those in the area of cuisine, clearly start before the conquest, even if they are used in different ways afterwards in new post-

**Changes before the Conquest**

**Changes after the Conquest**



*Figure 4. A summary of the key features of cultural change in southern England before and after the Roman Conquest*



conquest social milieux.

We have also argued that dress is an important aspect of society that should be stressed when interpreting the past, since through a person's dress and appearance, symbols and meanings about all types of identity can be visualised and understood. Dress and physical appearance ought not to be interesting sidelines confined to museum displays and 'popular' accounts of everyday life, but be considered more centrally to the analyses of Iron Age and Roman societies. In many ways we must explore the Fibula Event Horizon through dress appearance, since the original function of the brooch was wholly associated with clothing the individual. Appearance may have been an important means to differentiate between the increasingly fluid gender, social and cultural identities that occurred both in the late Iron Age and also after the Roman conquest. However, future research still needs to revolve around questions such as: why the Fibula Event Horizon occurs? What does it signify? What sorts of identity are becoming important? if brooches do not contain any symbolism about identity through appearance, why should these possible regional differences occur?

Hopefully, this paper has shown that these artefacts contain a valuable and previously untapped source of information for demonstrating that the social role of appearance changes in the late Iron Age and early Roman period. It also highlights the role of the brooch as a communicative tool allowing different types of identities to be expressed or created. Therefore, should the brooch *still* be considered just another archaeological artefact to be catalogued, illustrated and taken for granted?

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