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Introduction

Celtic art did not die with the coming of the legions. As is well known, there was a persistence of indigenous design elements in the art of Roman Britain, and its offspring emerged in the north and west of the archipelago in the post-Roman period. Yet the persistence and development of Iron Age art styles in Roman Britain has seen much opinion but little analysis. My title is deliberately oppositional; both ‘Celtic art’ and ‘Roman Britain’ have too often been treated as monoliths, and it is only in recent years that more subtle approaches have begun to yield fruit. The main aim of this paper is to start the process of a more nuanced understanding of this complex area. It is not a unitary phenomenon: there is a wide range of styles on a wide range of objects, some indigenous, some Roman, and some hybrids (Figure 8.1). But the persistence of the indigenous styles and their reaction to Rome make it a fascinating area of study.

Figure 8.1. Group of ox mounts and other items from Little Orme, N Wales; although found together, the mounts differ considerably in detail, and some have markedly Classical features, such as dolphins. Photo: © National Museum of Wales.
**History of study**

The presence of Celtic-style decoration on Romano-British items has long been recognised and debated. This has mostly been framed in terms of the goodness or badness of Romano-British art. Haverfield set the tone in his ‘Romanization of Roman Britain’:

‘… the British Celt abandoned his national art and adopted the Roman provincial fashion … Little local manufactures of small objects witness to sporadic survivals’ (Haverfield 1923, 48)

This is rather dismissive both of provincial art and of the ‘definite survivals of Celtic traditions’ (ibid.). However, it was R. G. Collingwood who really vented his spleen on Romano-British art.

‘With the Roman conquest a rapid and disastrous change comes over the whole spirit of British craftsmanship … mass-production takes the place of individual design and execution. Within a generation, every trace of La Tène art has disappeared except in the north, where it lingers for another half-century; at last it dies out there also, and by the late second century everything that meets the archaeologist’s eye is infected with the uniform and sordid ugliness of drab Romano-British daylight’ (Collingwood and Myres 1937, 249)

As Martin Henig has rightly commented, these perceptions owed more to contemporary concerns than any objective assessment of the problem (Henig 1995, 9–10). Henig has been at the forefront of the rehabilitation of Romano-British art; among other things he comments on the ‘continued liking for line and pattern’ as an inheritance from earlier traditions. However, the persistence of Celtic art styles into Roman Britain has received rather shorter shrift. The treatment of this material has been rather superficial, with commentators focussing on the supposed debasement of this noble artistic tradition to a minor, commercialised craft, serving the army in particular. Its significance is downplayed: for Henig, the art persists on ‘minor trinkets such as studs, horse-trappings and, above all, brooches’ (1995, 103); for the Megaws (2001, 230), ‘it is noticeable how much decoration after the Roman Conquest is on trinkets – brooches and boxes, for example – and how little on the scabbards, shields, spears, torcs and armrings of the pre-Roman period’. By contrast, Collingwood noted, with some satisfaction, the survival of Celtic traditions in the ‘highland fringe’, and indeed that ‘it even develops into new forms, not unworthy of its best tradition’ (Collingwood and Myres 1937, 256–7). For all Henig’s despair at Collingwood’s views, he was a sympathetic commentator on this northern art. More recent work has downplayed this material; ‘trinket’ is a term as emotively loaded as any Collingwood used, and the trend towards smaller decorative items was well-established before the advent of Rome (Hill 1995, 121; 1997; Hunter 2007, 289–90).

This material has generated much heat and feeling, but surprisingly little reasoned analysis. There is both a considerable corpus and a marked diversity in treatment and development – one single story is insufficient. My focus here will be on this metalwork in Central Britain, the region between the Humber and the Forth. I will attempt to define a new set of questions about this art, and then characterise the range of objects and styles involved, the processes of change and some of the contexts of use, aiming towards a more nuanced understanding. This is a substantial topic, ripe for research, and this paper can only scratch the surface of it.
Framework for an enquiry

It has long been clear that the flourishing of Celtic art in Britain was a late phenomenon in contrast to the Continent, with the bulk of British material dated to the first centuries BC/AD or so. A number of reasons may be suggested for this. There was a general increase in ornamentation and display during this time (cf. Hill 1997), while the proximity of Rome was probably a stimulus for creating very visible symbols in societies which felt under threat (MacGregor 1976, 177–8; Hunter 2007, 289). Yet this is not the full story. Hoard evidence shows that much late Celtic art was intimately associated with Roman items (e.g. Davies and Spratling 1976; Brailsford 1975). This was not just the dying throes of the tradition: production continued well into the Roman period, as seen clearly in the extensive recycling of Roman metal in later Celtic art (Dungworth 1996, 407–10; see also Gwilt and Davis, this volume), and confirmed by occasional mould finds (e.g. Prestatyn; Blockley 1989, 187–8). Finds from dated contexts in central Britain (especially from Roman forts) show that late Iron Age styles of object were in use throughout the first and second centuries AD (MacGregor 1976; Bishop 1998, 63–4; Garrow, this volume).

This creates a focus on two key topics: continuity and change. Why did these indigenous styles and forms persist? How were they adapted and modified, to appear on unfamiliar types of object or create new types? We need to start with some fairly basic questions as building blocks.

- What objects were involved?
- What styles were involved?
- Where did this take place, both spatially and socially? Who was making and using this material?
- How did things change?

From this we can start to develop interpretations. Are we dealing with regional styles, or preferences among particular social, political or ethnic groups? Was it indeed particularly popular with the auxiliaries? Does this reflect deliberate resistance to Rome; or an accommodation; or variable readings in different contexts? The starting assumption here is that these were more than simple decorative survivals: they were active social objects with a significance to their use. If our modern eyes mark them out as different from the Roman ‘norm’, it is likely that this difference was much more powerfully observed in contemporary society. These objects and their art were important and socially powerful things in the Iron Age; their continuity and adaptation into the Roman period are thus likely to be of significance, whatever that may be.

Yet these objects were inhabiting a changed world. The visual impact of the arrival of Rome must have been formidable. From an Iron Age world where most objects were plain, and where decoration was imbued with social and ritual significance, restricted to particular types of object (e.g. Evans 1989; Fitzpatrick 1997, 80–1), we enter a multimedia sensory explosion where little was left undecorated. People came face to face with new materials, such as silver and decorated glass-ware, new technologies such as niello and mould-formed pottery, and new iconographies where naturalism was dominant. What did the viewers make of the scenes on a decorated samian bowl in the precincts of Verlamion or on the summit of Traprain Law? What were their perceptions of this, and
what were the responses to it? The changes in indigenous art need to be considered in terms of reactions to this new sensory landscape.

This very visual wealth has an impact on our approaches to the archaeology as well. We are inundated on Roman sites with small finds – and as a result tend to treat them as everyday, ordinary items. Yet on Iron Age sites, any one of these brooches, tweezers or rings would be swooped upon as a special find, bagged, boxed and given pride of place in the report. When we try to understand this material, we should remember this contrast. There must have been visual dislocation and marked visual inflation in the Roman period, in terms of viewers’ expectations and the demands for their attention. The meaning of objects may be expected to shift in such situations of abundance. Yet this is likely to have led to more attuned and subtle approaches to using and understanding this visual culture. Far from transforming into mere trinkets, these small objects would have played a significant role in contemporary dramas of identity and understanding. But how are we to understand this? This quest feeds into topics of much broader interest in current scholarship, such as the nature and negotiation of identity, especially in the complex multicultural milieu of the Roman frontier (e.g. Eckardt 2005; Hill 2001; James 2001; Mattingly 2004). Such works form the intellectual landscape which guide this paper’s approaches.

The range of objects

What material are we dealing with here? Table 8.1 provides a summary of the main Iron Age types which persisted into the Roman period, and of Romano-British items which display Celtic-style ornament. The Iron Age types involved are ones which were key existing arenas of social display – personal ornaments, weaponry, horse gear and feasting paraphernalia. This reinforces the point made earlier that they should not be dismissed as trinkets, but rather seen as socially important objects.

It is also clear that there was a strong selectivity in the Roman material which was emblazoned with Celtic art. There is a marked focus on jewellery and vessels – again, both areas of social display in Iron Age and Roman Britain. With the former, as Catherine Johns has noted, indigenous styles are found almost exclusively on brooches, where they are relatively commonplace. They are rare or unknown on types of Classical jewellery introduced to Britain. She links this plausibly to a focus on familiar forms – while the brooch types may be novel, the idea of decorative brooches was not, in contrast to other kinds of jewellery (Johns 1996, 182–5). Two examples can show the different ways in which influences could work, to illustrate the complexities.

Beaded torcs and hinged bracelets

Beaded torcs occur in two types, with separate (A) and solid (B) beads; there is probably a typological progression from A to B, although both are found in the first two centuries AD. The concept of the torc is not a Roman one – we can presume this comes from indigenous influence – but (with the exception only of the ornate Lochar Moss torc; MacGregor 1976, no. 204) the decoration shows nothing clearly ‘Celtic’ in style.

Since the last survey (MacGregor 1976, 97–9, 113–5), excavations and metal-detecting have increased the database from 14 examples to 37 (Hunter forthcoming). This leads to
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A significant shift in our understanding of the type. The distribution is now markedly broader, with many new finds from the English Midlands; rather than Forth to Humber, the core distribution runs south to the Severn-Wash line (Figure 8.2). Finds with associations confirm the first-second century AD date which MacGregor suggested; indeed, the quantity from Hadrian’s Wall and from Antonine contexts elsewhere suggests a second century floruit.

This firmly Romano-British dating leads to a number of questions. Torcs are seen as a quintessentially Iron Age object: what are we to make of these late examples? In truth the type now looks very Romano-British – a development from and transformation of the earlier indigenous idea of torcs. Rather than the elite examples, primarily in gold, known from the late Iron Age, the use of copper alloy (and the fairly mundane decoration) suggest these beaded torcs were rather more socially widespread, although their occurrence in hoards indicates they were still valued. They can be seen as a

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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Objects</th>
<th>Key studies / examples</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>IRON AGE TYPES</td>
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<td>(MacGregor 1976 unless stated)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Horse gear</td>
<td>Bridle bits (derivative three-link)</td>
<td>Wild 1970</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Terrets (various)</td>
<td>Stead 2006</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Button and loop fasteners</td>
<td>MacGregor 1976, nos 15–17; for revised identification see Stead 2006, no. 203</td>
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<tr>
<td>Swords</td>
<td>Group IV swords</td>
<td>MacGregor 1976</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Suspension rings</td>
<td>Hunter forthcoming</td>
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<tr>
<td>Jewellery</td>
<td>Beaded torcs</td>
<td>Wild 1971</td>
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<tr>
<td>Vessels</td>
<td>Wraxall-type collars</td>
<td>Stead 2006</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Tankard handles</td>
<td>MacGregor 1976</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Zoomorphic vessel mounts</td>
<td>Hunter forthcoming</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sheet mounts (‘casket ornament’)</td>
<td>Megaw 1971</td>
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</tbody>
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Table 8.1. The main types of Iron Age objects found in Roman Britain, and Romano-British objects with Celtic-style decoration. *Note: other brooch types occasionally show Celtic-style ornament, as listed in Table 8.3.*
development of local styles in the Roman period, creating a distinctively Roman-British object. They are not found across Roman Britain, being all but unknown in the south; but equally they are not solely a product of the developing culture of the military zone which is explored below. Rather, they are a widespread regional type.

These beaded torcs can be fitted into a wider picture of Romano-British neck ornaments. A hybrid from Dinnington (S Yorks) provides a link to the Wraxall class of hinged collars (Beswick et al. 1990; Megaw 1971). These have much more ‘Celtic’ decoration, and their more restricted distribution in south-west England is broadly complementary to that of beaded torcs (Figure 8.2). Although the collars are poorly dated, they seem to be contemporary with beaded torcs. This points to the existence of a series of regional types of neck ornaments, developed from earlier concepts of torcs, across and indeed beyond Roman Britain, but conspicuously absent from the south-east.

A different trajectory is seen with hinged bracelets. The key piece here is the gold hinged strap bracelet from Rhayader, Powys. Cool (1986) has argued that the type is derived from Hellenistic and Roman parallels but was made in Britain – and tellingly, the terminals feature an enamelled trumpet scroll motif. This indicates the adaptation of imported forms into local traditions, and can be linked to a series of copper alloy hinged strap bracelets, mostly with Celtic-style ornament (MacGregor 1976, 102–3). Apart from serving to show the active modification of imported prototypes, the Rhayader find shows that this indigenous survival found its way at times into precious metalwork as well, implying objects of some status.

Questions of style

We can now turn to the question of style. For central and northern Britain, the analysis of Morna MacGregor (1976) provides a valuable guide. While embedded in diffusionist perspectives and prone to art-historical sequencing on little hard evidence, she did isolate a plausible series of four main traditions within this material, all of late Iron Age date. Stripped of her use of ‘schools’ and areas / tribes, these may be defined as:

- North of the Forth, the ‘massive metalwork’ tradition of north-east Scotland; this falls outwith our remit here.
- ‘Boss style’ (following Leeds 1933, 54–5, 110), characterised by boss ornament, petals and slender conjoined trumpets.
A style using polychrome enamelling, generally in small, simple fields, along with slender trumpets in fairly simple arrangements.

A style making use of more sinuous flared trumpets, berried rosettes, swash-N motifs, broken-back scrolls and die-stamping.

The latter three are of prime concern here. The existence of these three reasonably well-defined traditions allows us to consider questions of their interrelations and use. MacGregor saw them as geographically separate, albeit overlapping, with the boss style in lowland Scotland, polychrome enamelling among the northern Brigantes and the sinuous style among the southern Brigantes. In fact, the evidence can sustain a different interpretation. The boss and polychrome enamel styles broadly co-occur, with a strong focus north of the Humber and south of the Forth (Hunter 2007, fig. 2). They also share a closely similar range of products, with a focus on horse harness (and to a lesser extent weapons), as Table 8.2 indicates. By contrast, they share almost nothing in terms of product range with the sinuous tradition, which is found more on vessels and jewellery. The split between these traditions seems in origin to be a technological one: whereas the products of the boss and enamel styles are overwhelmingly cast, the sinuous style is found predominantly on sheet-work, such as the Meyrick helmet, the Balmaclellan mirror mounts, the Elmswell plaque, and the Plunton Castle and Thurst House Cave bracelets (Jackson 1995; MacGregor 1976, nos 189, 211–2, 273, 336). There are exceptions: the style of the Aldborough terret and Aesica brooch relate them to these pieces, though they are cast (MacGregor 1976, nos 61, 251; Bishop 1996, 6). However, the root difference between these traditions was one of technology, with a predominantly sheet-working tradition contrasting with the two casting traditions.

Such metalwork is commonplace on Iron Age, Roman military and Romano-British sites (Hunter 2007, fig. 5; ‘Roman Iron Age’ is used for material from southern Scotland, and ‘Romano-British’ for non-military sites to the south, but with acknowledgement that the fluctuating frontier makes it dangerous to draw simplistic oppositions). It is no

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Boss</th>
<th>Enamel</th>
<th>Sinuous</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Horse harness</td>
<td>Bits</td>
<td>Rare: Aldborough terret</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Strap junctions</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(cruciform, elongated)</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Strap mounts</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Strap fasteners (III, Va)</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Slider</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Knobbed terrets</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Swords</td>
<td>Group IV swords</td>
<td>Rare (one scabbard mount and die; MacGregor no. 161, 163)</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Suspension rings</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Vessels</td>
<td>Tankard handle</td>
<td>Casket mounts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jewellery</td>
<td>Stichill collar</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Hinged bracelets</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Aesica brooch</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>Meyrick helmet</td>
<td>Balmaclellan mirror</td>
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Table 8.2. Comparison of the products of the main three central British LIA metalworking traditions. Fastener types refer to Wild (1970).
surprise to find this material on either an indigenous site (within or beyond the frontier) or a Roman fort in the area. Indeed, there are few forts dug on any scale which have failed to produce ‘indigenous’ finds: of the fifty or so Roman forts and fortlets in Scotland which have seen (very varying) degrees of investigation, around a third have produced Celtic-style metalwork. It does not occur in large numbers, but this is equally true of most small finds apart from brooches; this is sufficient to indicate that this Celtic-style material was a part of everyday life.

The dominance on military sites may well be misleading, as the traditional military emphasis of frontier archaeology means there is not a lot else to compare to. Celtic-style material is certainly found beyond the forts – where excavation is extensive, it occurs in some quantity, as at Shiptonthorpe, E Yorks (Allason-Jones 2006), and it is seen also on a wide range of sites further south, including villas and urban centres (e.g. Atkinson 1942, pl. 51 no. A342; Neal 1996, fig. 32 no. 21; Cooper 1999, 276–7, fig. 134 no 188). However, this material was clearly in common use by the military as well as among indigenous settlements. This was not just a matter of consumption, but also of the production of such material in a range of cultural contexts: Roman military, Romano-British, and Iron Age power centres (Hunter 2007, 294, note 5).

So how should we interpret this material found within and beyond the frontier, in military, civilian and ‘barbarian’ contexts? The same objects were being interpreted and used in different cultural settings. In the Iron Age world, such decorative metalwork can be interpreted as the dominant way of expressing ideas of status, power and identity in material culture, and it probably continued in this role into the Roman period. Such metalwork also became a significant feature on fort sites, although in the much more varied visual environment of a Roman fort this ornamental material was less pre-eminent. However, as argued above, it was not insignificant. Instead, alongside the developing styles to be considered below, I suggest it played a key role in defining the changing culture of the frontier at a time of flux. It was an influence drawn from the local surroundings and incorporated into a military environment. Its widespread nature suggests this is not simply a matter of local recruitment or auxiliary taste, but represents adoption and adaptation of a local style by the military. Of course, the military still presented a distinctive identity compared to the rest of the population, who themselves embodied various views and uses of this material; but these finds represent a link running through and across the frontier zone. It seems inevitable that they will have been used and seen differently by different groups, with their significance and meaning varying (see Hunter 2007, 291–3 for further discussion). As the styles became current more widely in the frontier zone, they became embedded in the emerging frontier cultures; for many users, it is likely they were interpreted not as ‘Celtic’ but as ‘frontier’, their indigenous origins increasingly obscured as they were more broadly adopted. The way in which the military in particular adopted not only weaponry but dress styles and fittings from local populations is well-attested on other frontiers (James 2006).

Making new things

The Iron Age types found in Roman Britain were not simply heirlooms or curios. As the example of hinged bracelets indicated, we are not dealing with the afterlife of Celtic art,
but with a thriving craft tradition which was responding to changed circumstances. This can be seen in the reaction to new forms of artefact and new artistic stimuli. Adaptability is seen in the existence of morphological hybrids, as with terrets, where a number have Celtic-style decorated hoops with typically Roman-style fittings (e.g. Spratling 1971; Cooper 1999, 276–7, fig. 134 no. 188 (misidentified)). Button-and-loop fasteners are another good example – a number show the adoption of strongly Roman imagery,

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type</th>
<th>Decoration</th>
<th>Key references/examples</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Dragonesque</td>
<td>Enamel (mostly geometric); boss</td>
<td>Feachem 1951, 1968</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trumpet and variants</td>
<td>Enamel (curvilinear)</td>
<td>Bateson 1981, 26–8; Bayley and Butcher 2004, 163–4</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Moulded decoration</td>
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<td></td>
<td>¶ Wales, W England (Carmarthen type)</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>¶ N England/S Scotland (simple lyre-pattern head mouldings)</td>
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<td></td>
<td>¶ Complex fantail variant, N England</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Incised (and inlaid) decoration</td>
<td>Thompson 1963; Atkinson 1942, 205–7, fig. 37</td>
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<tr>
<td>Headstud</td>
<td>Conjoined trumpets around headstud</td>
<td>e.g. Painter and Sax 1970, nos 6, 9</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Enamelling</td>
<td>e.g. MacGregor 1976, fig. 5.4–5; Dearne and Parsons 1997, 62, fig. 6 no. 37</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Relief decoration on head</td>
<td>e.g. Mackreth 1996, 301–2, fig. 94 no. 12; Bayley and Butcher 2004, 164–5, fig. 136</td>
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<tr>
<td>Aesica</td>
<td>Symmetrical raised trumpet decoration (one, from Aesica, with sinuous decoration)</td>
<td>Collingwood and Richmond 1969, fig. 105 nos 92–3; Hattatt 1989, no. 1476</td>
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<tr>
<td>Bow and fantail</td>
<td>Enamel with reserved pelta (E Midlands concentration)</td>
<td>Bayley and Butcher 2004, 168 Lucerna 27 (2004), 19</td>
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<tr>
<td>Polden Hill</td>
<td>Openwork catchplate ornament</td>
<td>e.g. Callander 1918, 26–8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disc with triskele</td>
<td>Repoussé triskele (concentrated in Hadrian’s Wall and hinterland)</td>
<td>Bayley and Butcher 2004, 173, 260, fig. 174; Webster 1986, 51–2</td>
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<tr>
<td>Trompetenmuster</td>
<td>Enamelled triskele (mostly southern)</td>
<td>Laing 2005, 150; Bateson 1981, 40</td>
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Table 8.3. Main brooch types with Celtic ornament. There is additionally a range of less common variants (e.g. a localised group of trumpet brooches from Wroxeter with a trumpet-decorated headloop, or a few enamelled pelta brooches; Webster 2003b, 297–8, fig. 8.1 no. 12; Hattatt 1985, 170, no. 605). Celtic-style designs also feature on a number of unusual or hybrid examples, probably individual commissions or local styles. This trend is well-illustrated by Hattatt’s collection: e.g. enamelled Polden Hill with swash-N motif; T-shaped with enamelled S; dolphin with openwork catchplate bearing moulded decoration (Hattatt 1985, nos 377, 405; 1989, 370, no. 1390); note also an unusual rectangular plate brooch with swash-N from Shiptonthorpe (Allason-Jones 2006, fig. 10.2 no. 70).
notably ones from Newstead, the Perth area and Castleford which appear to represent bunches of grapes (MacGregor 1976, nos 254, 256; Bishop 1998, fig. 24 no. 280).

However, this living tradition is seen most clearly in the making of new kinds of things; creations which reacted to Roman objects and produced something new as a result. Sometimes this took the form of draping Celtic art on a selected range of new canvases, such as seal boxes and buckles (Bateson 1981, 48–50; Chapman 2005, 112–3). More interesting is the alteration and response in both form and decoration to create hybrids, as seen in hinged strap bracelets (above) and most clearly in brooches. The existence of distinctively Romano-British brooches has long been recognised, with the influence of indigenous art drawn out clearly by Collingwood (1930). The major types are those which he delineated, but we can add some more detailed definition (Table 8.3; Figure 8.3).

Most of these fit into the central British Roman Iron Age styles (Table 8.4): in a development of local metal-working traditions, existing indigenous styles were applied to these new forms of metalwork. These brooches are not high-status items; they were widely spread and widely used, indicating a persistent demand for these styles into the later second century. However, on occasion the workshops were called on to produce more spectacular pieces. The best example of a ‘status brooch’ is undoubtedly one from

Figure 8.3. Examples of Romano-British brooches with Celtic-style decoration. (a) Trumpet brooch with enamelled decoration (Inchyra, Perthshire; Hunter 1996, fig 3). (b) Trumpet brooch with northern-style moulded decoration (Co. Durham; Hattatt 1985, no 434). (c) Trumpet brooch with western-style moulded decoration (Petersfield, Hants; Hattatt 1985, no 431). (d) Trumpet and fantail brooch (South Shields, Co. Durham; Snape 1994, no 1). (e) Headstud brooch with teardrop decoration and enamelled swash-N motif (Corbridge, Northumberland; MacGregor 1976, fig 5.4). (f) Aesica brooch (Hook Norton, Oxfordshire; Collingwood and Richmond 1969, fig 105 no 92). (g) Bow and fantail brooch (South Yorkshire; Dearne and Parsons 1994, fig 105 no 92). (h) Polden Hill brooch with openwork decoration (Polmaise, Stirlingshire; MacGregor 1976, fig 5.1). (i) Disc brooch with repoussé triskele (unprovenanced; MacGregor 1976, fig 5.7). (j) Disc brooch with enamelled triskele (Wanborough, Wilts; Anderson et al 2001, fig 26 no 132). Redrawn from the sources noted by Alan Braby.
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the Aesica hoard, covered in sinuous decoration, where the Celtic tradition is very much to the fore. Another good example is the massive variant of a trumpet brooch, with delicate slender trumpet decoration on the head, from Perthshire (Callander 1918). Like the Aesica brooch it serves as a reminder of the continuing role of Celtic art at the grandiose end of the brooch spectrum.

Within these traditions there is evidence of regional variation, especially in trumpet brooches (Table 8.3). Here one group with Celtic-style decoration flourished in western England and Wales, and another in northern England and southern Scotland. The western group often produced silver brooches, again emphasising these were rather out of the ordinary. The best example is one from Carmarthen (Boon and Savory 1975), a fine example of a status object drawing on indigenous styles to make an impression. As with the northern brooches, the styles here echo local artistic traditions, with parallels to the decoration on Wraxall-type collars.

Dissecting dragonesques

We can take this theme further with the case of the dragonesque brooch. This is a favourite for students of both Celtic art and Roman Britain, a regular cover-shot for books and ever-popular on the antiquities market. Most commentaries are based on Feachem’s valuable overviews (Feachem 1951; 1968) with Jundi and Hill’s (1998) consideration of the type a valuable recent perspective. There has been no published synthesis of this material since 1968, but, while I would not claim a comprehensive list, from published sources and the Portable Antiquities Scheme over 200 brooches are now known.

With this expanded dataset, the classification becomes much clearer, and previously unique brooches are now much better represented. The type will be discussed in more detail elsewhere (Hunter forthcoming), but the main division is between enamelled and non-enamelled types. The enamelled brooches predominate, forming about two-thirds of the total, and may be seen as products of the central British enamelling tradition. This is reinforced by a few instances which incorporate trumpet decoration in the design (e.g. Hunter 1994, figs 2–3). It was already clear from Feachem’s publications that the non-enamelled brooches include a number ornamented in boss-and-trumpet style, but they were drowned out by the more common enamelled ones. However, their number has been markedly expanded by recent finds. They occur in both openwork versions and solid, with a similar range of designs; as Figure 8.4 indicates, these are straight from the

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type</th>
<th>Boss</th>
<th>Simple enamel</th>
<th>Sinuous</th>
<th>Other</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Dragonesque</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td></td>
<td>English styles of enamel and stipple</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Complex enamel Western style moulded decoration</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trumpet</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>?</td>
<td>Symmetrical raised trumpets</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Headstud</td>
<td>x (rare)</td>
<td>x</td>
<td></td>
<td>Complex enamel Western style moulded decoration</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aesica*</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Symmetrical raised trumpets</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bow and fantail</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Complex enamel</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disc with triskele</td>
<td></td>
<td>x</td>
<td>Complex enamel</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*NB: the eponymous Aesica brooch, decorated in northern sinuous style, seems a clearly northern product, but it is at marked variance with other (southern) members of the series.

Table 8.4. Main Romano-British brooch types considered in terms of Celtic art styles.
The repertoire of the boss-and-trumpet tradition, and include some very elegant compositions. The two main types of dragonesque thus fall into the main metalworking traditions of the north. Also of interest are the hybrids and unusual specimens, as these show something of the creative process. I know of two examples with non-northern styles of decoration. One has a version of south-east English enamelling familiar from crescentic terrets (Hattatt 1987, 167, fig. 54, no. 1026), while the other, from Well, N Yorks, uses stippled decoration, again a southern technique (Hunter in prep.).

The dragonesque brooch thus provides a good example of the development of a Romano-British form, the continuity and development of indigenous art styles on a new canvas, and experimentation in other styles. It was a successful and popular brooch. But what did it mean? With an object which was (to our eyes) so obviously linked to indigenous traditions, can we see any patterns in its use? Was it particularly popular in particular areas, or with particular social groups? Was it a symbol of ‘non-military, non-Roman identity’ as Jundi and Hill (1998, 134) have suggested? Wider studies have certainly showed significant patterns in brooch preferences; for instance, Celtic-style brooches enjoyed a disproportionate popularity on the edge of the frontier and beyond (Hunter 1996, 121–3). Can a more detailed consideration of the dragonesque throw any more subtle light on this? With the diversity of types, are there any differential preferences being expressed?

Figure 8.4. Dragonesque brooches with boss-and-trumpet decoration. NB not to scale; taken from publications or PAS images except those marked *, drawn from the original. (a) *E Ness, E Yorks (NCL-4F6884); (b) *Driffield, E Yorks (NCL-9700.A8); (c) Leyburn, E Yorks (LANCUM-AFF133); (d) Elwick, Cleveland (NCL-EAB477); (e) *Norham, Northumberland (NCL-3EABC0); (f) Clitheroe, Lancs (LANCUM-411DE2); (g) Christie’s London, Antiquities 13.12.88, lot 198; (b) Edinburgh Castle, Midlothian (Mackreth 1997, fig 120.3); (i) Brantingham, E Yorks (YORYM-A580.A5). Drawn by Alan Braby.
To investigate these questions, the brooches were divided according to general site type and their numbers compared to the expected proportions from the overall representation of different types in the total database (Figure 8.5). The quantity known from military sites indicates that they cannot be seen as ‘non-military, non-Roman’; rather, they represent the modified identity of the military and others on the frontier. However, there is an interesting difference – enamelled brooches are markedly more popular on military and urban sites than they are on rural/native ones. This is not a picture of exclusion – more or less all brooch types are found on all site types – but of patterns of preference. Interestingly, this is not part of a general preference for ‘boss style’ on native/rural sites, as horse harness in boss style is very common on military sites. It is thus nothing so simple as a single style being preferred, but more subtle patterns of preference – although further work is required to tease out the reasons behind these patterns.

Reading the designs
A final area to consider is the varied relations of such Celtic styles to Classical art. A good example is the series of copper alloy vessels (primarily skillets and flasks) and vessel mounts bearing enamelled decoration. This includes everything from very Classical motifs (such as the wreaths, vine scroll and hunt scenes typical of the skillets) to very
Celtic ones (on a series of hexagonal flasks, known from Corbridge, Vindolanda, Dinorben and Carmarthen: Casey and Hoffmann 1995, 24; unpub; Gardner and Savory 1964, 148–9, fig. 19.10, pl. XXXIV.4; James 2003, fig. 8.4 no. 57).

Of particular interest are the pieces where some fusion of the traditions is evident. The classic example is the plaque from Elmswell (E Yorks; Corder and Hawkes 1940). Here the sinuous Celtic scrolling may be read as a complement to the enamelled Classical vine scroll above. In contrast, and more complex, is the Ilam pan (Staffs). Full study of this is still in progress, but initial commentators were struck by the Celtic decoration (Burnham et al. 2004, 326, 344–5). Yet the situation is more complex. When first viewed, the triskele pattern seems dominant, but if we consider the reserved metal rather than the surviving enamelling, suddenly a vegetal scroll is the dominant motif. The triskele was actually rather more hidden when the pan was fresh, as the enamel served to dissolve the motif, with single colour blocks spreading across the roundels in several cases to follow the curves of the scroll. Yet the triskele is still there. This complex, creative fusion, capable of multiple readings, is a fine exemplar of the best of the surviving Celtic (or Romano-British traditions), drawing on older traditions and more recent stimuli to create new and complex art.

Conclusions

The complexities and pitfalls which await anyone trying to understand Celtic art are well known. I have tried in this paper to put this interesting late flourishing of the tradition into a more complex context than has been the case before; to make it more complicated, with more snares for our studies. The arguments are still at an early stage, but I hope it provides some potential routes. This material should not be seen as a poor relation to other groups of Celtic art, nor an insignificant byline in the study of Romano-British art. It played a key role in the developing cultures of central Britain in the crucial first two centuries AD, and continues to pose tantalising problems, especially in the integration of this indigenous material into the lifestyles of the army and the wider province. Rather than expressing any non-Roman or non-military identity, or being a rejection of Rome, its prevalence in military contexts suggests instead it played a role in forging a new identity – that the army became linked to a wider frontier culture. The material adapted to these circumstances, changing and responding to changed times to decorate new objects and create new forms of material culture. There are also signs of regional variety (e.g. in the different brooch types in western England and Wales, and in neck ornaments); and hints of more subtle choices being expressed in the selection of objects, as the dragonesque example indicated. These are areas where more detailed study is required.

Many questions remain. There is similar material, albeit less frequent, from southern sites which merits attention; and the development of the late Iron Age art styles such as the complex enamelling which Hutcheson (2004) has considered in Norfolk, needs further work. And why does this tradition end – or does it? What role does the appearance of trompetenmuster ornament from the mid second century onwards play in the development of the tradition, and how does this link to the later Celtic art which flourished in the post-Roman period (Laing 2005)? There is material enough here to keep scholars busy, frustrated and enthused for some time to come …
Acknowledgements

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