

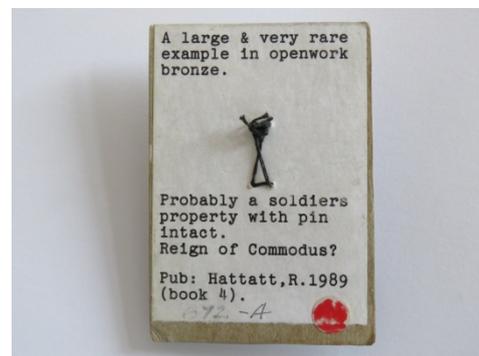
A Cautionary Tail

Auction houses and the Internet are awash with antiquities for sale, whilst the majority are genuine there are an increasing number of fake or stolen artefacts coming on to the market. Before buying any antiquity you should always ask about the provenance, Auction houses and genuine dealers are more than happy to supply you with any information they have regarding a sale item. Before you buy from Online auctions always ask the seller where the item came from. If you are not happy with their answers don't buy it.

In 2016 we were informed by Richard Hobbs BSc PhD FSA, Weston Curator of Roman Britain, Britain, Europe & Prehistory at the British Museum that a second century Roman Temple Brooch purporting to have come from Brading Roman Villa was for sale by auction. After finding the auction on line the trustees of the Friends of Brading Roman Villa decided to try and acquire the brooch for the Villa's collection.

The photographs shown on line were of a brooch attached to a piece of card, printed on the card is what looks like a good provenance, giving an explanation as to the origin of the brooch.

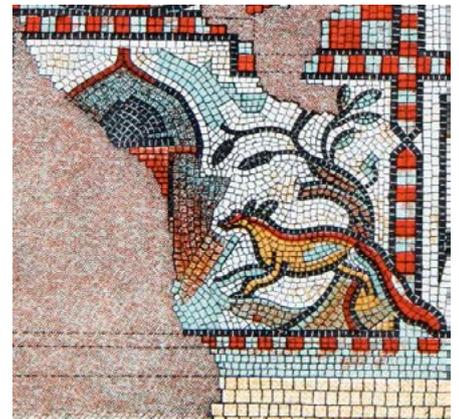
(See photographs below)



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At face value this looked like an opportunity to acquire a lost artefact originating from Brading Roman Villa. I harboured ideas that it could be associated with the domed building depicted on the

mosaic in room three; the top of the brooch is tantalizingly similar to that building. There have been several theories put forward as to the purpose of the domed building; unfortunately there are no other buildings on British mosaics to compare it with. One theory is that it is a Temple building. However, something was bothering me about the brooch and I could not put my finger on it. The more that I looked at the brooch the more uneasy I became, and then it struck me. The card that the brooch is attached to looks very old, the type face looks as if it is from an old typewriter however, there is a statement on the back of the card that mentions that the brooch was published in Hattatt 1989.



Price and Price 1880.

The auction house had however put a footnote with the description of the brooch,

Richard Hattatt, *Ancient Brooches and Other Artefacts*, Oxford, 1989, item 1625.

Footnote:

"The brooch-type figures in Hattatt's book (items 1625A,B) but both examples are noted as having been found in northern France. Neither is a match for the present example".

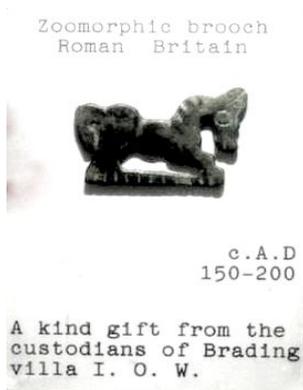
My concern was that the type face and the card is intended to look old but because of the 1989 reference the card cannot be more than 27 years old. Why is the card and type face made to look older? My belief is that they were ment to deceive. Also, as the two examples in Hattatt do not match the Temple brooch; this leads me to think that Hattatt is only mentioned in order to give the brooch an air of respectability.

Before contacting the auction house I decided to investigate further. I could not find anybody connected with the Villa present or past who knew of the existence of the brooch, the general consensus was that no one from the Victorians to the present day would give a way such an important artefact.

I can find no mention of the brooch in any of the archaeology reports dating from 2010 to 1879. A search on the internet found an identical brooch for sale on ebay; whilst this brooch did not have a card attached to it you could see that it had come from the same mould.

I contacted the seller and asked him where he had acquired it; he said that he bought it from a detectorist in Cyprus. I find it strange that 2 identical objects would show up in such a short time. At the time of writing this article another two have shown up on ebay, one of them in the USA, the seller in the USA describes his as a copy.

Another search produced a dealer's website that has pages dedicated to exposing fake artefacts.



The site is operated by Dr Bron Lipkin. Contact was made with Dr Lipkin for his comments about the Brading brooch; he suspects that the fakes are being made in Bulgaria. On his site is another example of a Roman brooch claiming to have come from Brading Roman Villa; this example is a zoomorphic horse brooch with the same printed legend as the temple brooch.

If you visit: www.collector-antiquities.com have a look in the Real or Fake section. Once I had collated my evidence I contacted TimeLine Auctions, who were very helpful. They examined the card and brooch under a microscope and found that the printing on the card was done on a laser printer and that the patina is modern. The brooch was then withdrawn from the market.

collector-antiquities.com

I contacted Richard Hobbs at the British Museum to inform him that the brooch had turned out to be a fake; Richard suggested that we try to acquire the brooch in order to make sure that it was permanently taken off the market, ensuring that no one in the future would be deceived by it.

I put this to the MD of TimeLine Auctions; once again he was very helpful, agreeing that the brooch would be better off at Brading Roman Villa. I'm happy to say that the brooch is now in the safe keeping of the Oglander Roman Trust.

People have asked why we would want to keep a fake. Under normal circumstances we would not touch a known fake with a barge poll but because this particular one was given a (false) provenance purporting to come from Brading Roman Villa it has become part of the story of the Villa. It will be used to educate people with regards to how much effort is put in to making well-crafted fakes and how easy it is to deceive.

Richard Hattatt

From: collector-antiquities.com

He was a collector in the UK who between 1982 and 1989 published four books describing the brooches in his collection. The volumes contain some nearly 2000 brooches illustrated mostly by his own well done drawings ranging from the Bronze and Iron Ages through the Roman and Anglo-Saxon periods to Medieval. Most are from Britain with others from the continent and the Near East. There are also some comprehensive brooch date charts, and a section summarising the types and distribution of some types of brooches. The second part of the 4th volume contains several hundred other artefacts, mainly items of personal adornment, toilet articles, dress fasteners and ornaments, seal-boxes and locks, surgical and dental instruments, votive models and many other artefacts.

His large collection was broken up and sold some years ago. A very large number of his pieces were mounted on double sided card stands with typed and annotated descriptions.

R.Hattatt Ancient and Romano-British Brooches, Dorset 1982

R.Hattatt Iron Age and Roman Brooches. A second selection from the author's collection, Oxford 1985.

R.Hattatt Brooches of Antiquity: a third selection of brooches from the author's collection, Oxford 1987

R.Hattatt Ancient brooches and other Artefacts. A fourth selection of brooches...., Oxford 1989.

David Reeves. FRSM.

Chairman: Friends of Brading Roman Villa.

Vice Chairman: Vectis Archaeological Trust.

Events secretary ASPROM.