Baldock torcs: penannular neck rings from south-eastern Roman Britain and their significance for the development of provincial identities

Abstract

This study defines and characterises the ‘Baldock’ group of copper-alloy penannular torcs, which were worn in south-eastern Britain during the first century AD. Torcs had an important local pre-Roman pedigree, but this new regional style of dress seems to have emerged around the time of the Claudian invasion and was worn in the heart of the new Roman province of Britannia. The significance of these torcs is explored, focusing on the new social contexts in which they circulated, their connections to new kinds of provincial identities, and the ways in which torcs were reimagined and transformed within Romano-British society.

Introduction

Torcs, rigid or semi-rigid metal neck rings, are amongst the most iconic artefacts of the European Iron Age, closely intertwined with ideas about ‘barbarian’ or pre/non-Roman identities in both the ancient and modern imagination.1 Gold torcs are the most famous, and in Britain these disappear from the archaeological record after the first century BC. However, some torc styles continued to circulate, and others emerged, even after the Roman invasion of AD 43.2 Such finds have typically been studied in the context of scholarship on ‘Celtic Art’3 and are often referred to as ‘Late Iron Age.’4 Torcs are largely excluded from syntheses of Romano-British dress,5 unless noted as part of an Iron Age prologue,6 as a barbarian attribute in Ro-

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1 See Eluère 1987; Johns 1996, 27-9; Adler 2003; Hautenauve 2005; Rowan, Swan 2015; Farley, Hunter 2015, 92-6, 104-7 and 140-1, for overviews.
5 E.g., Cool 1983; 2016; Johns 1996; Swift 2003; 2011; Croom 2004; Rosten 2008; Statton 2016.
man art,\footnote{E.g., Swift 2011, 203. However, Sande (2018, 15-7) critiques a simple equation between torcs and barbarian identities in Roman art and surveys a variety of contexts in which torcs feature associated with non-barbarian figures.} or as a type of Roman military award.\footnote{Maxfield 1974; 1981, 86-9; Linderski 2001.} Yet torcs were worn during the Roman period in several parts of the empire,\footnote{Both within the empire and in adjacent areas beyond its frontiers in Europe (e.g. Van Impe, Creemers 2002; Von Rummel 2007; Kuzmová 2008; Sand 2015) and further east, for example in Persia, Roman and late-antique Egypt, and the Byzantine world (Walter 2001; Von Rummel 2007; Mráv 2015; Stoner 2019, 12-13; Swift \textit{et al.} 2022, chapter 4).} and recent work has begun to resituate British finds in their contemporary social context,\footnote{E.g., Hunter 2008; Nowakowski \textit{et al.} 2009; Joy 2014.} arguing that “wearing a torc became part of being Romano-British, for at least some people in at least some places.”\footnote{Hunter 2010, 94.}

Research has so far focused on two regional groupings of decorated copper-alloy torcs dating to the first to second centuries AD: hinged ‘Wraxall collars,’ found mostly in south-western Britain,\footnote{Burns 1971; MacGregor 1976; 97-9; Hunter 2010.} and ‘beaded torcs,’ with mortice and tenon fastenings, common across an area stretching from southern Scotland down into the English Midlands.\footnote{Hunter 2008, 134.} Until recently, comparable torcs seemed “conspicuously absent” from south-eastern Roman Britain.\footnote{Hunter 2008, 134.} Yet it is now clear that a diverse range of torcs circulated in this area, appearing even in major urban centres where Roman cultural influence was strongest.\footnote{See Cotton 2008 and Redfern \textit{et al.} 2017, 6-7 for the Harper Road torc. Cotton \textit{et al.} (forthcoming) cover thistle-headed torcs and some initial notes on torcs from Roman London. Marshall \textit{(in prep.)} will provide a general discussion of the range of types found in southern Roman Britain.} Amongst this south-eastern material it is possible to define a group of copper-alloy decorated penannular rod and strip torcs that represent another distinct regional tradition (e.g., Figs. 1 and 2). Below, I will outline the character of this group and place it in its broader typological and social contexts, before exploring some of the complex roles that torcs played within Roman provincial societies and their importance as a medium for negotiating and expressing social identities.

**Typology, decoration, distribution, and dating of Baldock torcs**

The south-eastern group of torcs can be named after the Late Iron Age centre and Roman small town of Baldock, Hertfordshire which has produced several examples.\footnote{See Stead, Rigby 1986, fig. 52, no. 188; Ashworth \textit{in prep.; Wardle \textit{in prep.}}}. ‘Baldock torcs’ are made of copper alloy and are characterised by their lightweight, one-piece penannular construction and their decoration. They are technologically different from the other Romano-British traditions described above, and their distribution is also distinct, focusing on an area of eastern England north of the river Thames, encompassing London (x2), Essex (x1), Bedfordshire (x1), Hertfordshire (x4), and Norfolk (x5) (Table 1; Fig. 3).

Adult-sized torcs (Table 1, nos. 1-2, 6-7, and 9-14) are most common, but the group includes several smaller finds (Table 1, nos. 3-5 and 8), some of which are too small to have been worn on the neck, even for children and may therefore be bracelets or armlets.\footnote{See Swift \textit{et al.} 2022, chapter 4 for work on torc and bracelet diameters based on Egyptian grave finds. Other Romano-British bracelets may prove to be related to the Baldock torcs, but a complete reassessment of this large corpus of material is beyond the current scope.}
spective of size, they can be divided into five types based upon the form of their hoop and terminals (see Table 2 and Fig. 4). Stylistic features characteristic of much contemporary British, ‘native’ or ‘Late Iron Age’ metalwork, such as curvilinear ‘Celtic’ designs, enameling, and high-relief decoration, are seemingly absent. Instead, the group is mostly decorated with relatively simple incised and stamped incuse designs (Fig. 5). These vary but type A and B rod torcs/bracelets (Table 1, nos. 1-6) seem to be characterised by herringbone-like rows of incised chevrons, and a series of type E strip torcs are decorated with zigzags, sometimes in conjunction with saltires (Table 1, nos. 12-14). More complex combinations of similar motifs, accompanied by stamped circles or ring-and-dot, appear on torcs of types C, D, and E (Table 1, nos. 7-10).

Different types and decorative designs within this group have overlapping distributions and can co-occur, as at London, Baldock, and Barton Bendish, Norfolk (Table 1; Fig. 6). However, some types and designs seem to be more common either in the Hertfordshire area or in East Anglia, hinting at multiple workshops within a broader regional tradition, with different but overlapping catchment areas. Similar penannular jewellery from Dorset may suggest broader connections, but these geographical outliers are decorated differently and may not belong to the Baldock group per se (see Figs. 3, 6, and 8).

The chronology of Baldock torcs is anchored by complete examples of types A, D, and E from first-century AD inhumation burials outside Roman towns. New discoveries from a Late Iron Age and Romano-British cemetery at California, Baldock, excavated by Heritage Network, include a type D torc (Table 1, no. 9) from the poorly preserved burial of an adult, who has been identified as a possible female on osteological grounds. This could predate the invasion of southern Britain in AD 43, but a plain copper-alloy penannular bracelet from the burial is not closely datable and the associated Late Iron-Age-style pottery bowl is a type used into the AD 50s/60s. A type A torc (Table 1, no. 1) was worn around the neck in an adult female inhumation, sexed osteologically, from the same cemetery. This burial also produced a Romano-British Harlow-type Colchester-derivative bow brooch dated c. AD 40-90.

An inhumation at Harper Road, Southwark, London was found with rich grave goods: a type E torc (Table 1, no. 10; Fig. 2), a first-century AD rectangular copper-alloy mirror, an early Roman pottery flagon, and terra sigillata dishes, dated c. AD 45-65, as well as a joint of pork. The deceased has been identified as female on osteological grounds, but aDNA analysis recently identified male XY chromosomes. Rebecca Redfern et al. have previously argued that neither result need necessarily be incorrect. Regardless of biology, it was suggested that this person presented a female gender identity. This still seems likely, but the gendered asso-

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18 E.g., Davis, Gwilt 2008; Hunter 2008, 134-6; 2014. The choice of relatively simple designs, utilising incised/stamped motifs, may be part of a broader regional pattern of taste/metalworking technology in south-eastern Britain. For example, Cool (2016, 415-416) contrasts the ‘plain’ Romano-British brooch styles from the area with other regions where more use was made of enamelling (and also curvilinear and relief decoration).

19 Keefe et al. 2015; Ashworth in prep.; Wardle in prep.

20 Helen Ashworth, pers. comm. 2020; Thompson 1982, 299, type D1-1.

21 Mackreth 2011, 50-60 and 245.


23 Redfern et al. 2017, 257. An interesting study by Power (2020) discusses Harper Road further as a case study of a possible intersex person. I am informed that additional aDNA analysis of this individual is being undertaken by Dr Tom Booth (Rebecca Redfern, pers. comm. 2021), but the results have not yet been published.
ciations of torcs and mirrors are not entirely clear cut. Recent work has stressed the importance of considering less binary sexes and genders in archaeological interpretation. Isotopic analysis suggests that this person grew up locally. Another type E find, from a ditch in a cemetery at Colchester, Essex (Table 1, no. 14), was associated with copper-stained human teeth, probably the remains of a very poorly preserved adult inhumation. The ditch produced Roman building material.

The only other excavated example previously assigned a date is a small type A torc or bracelet fragment from Baldock (Table 1, no. 3), published as part of a miscellaneous group dated to the second through fourth centuries AD. However, this fragment comes from a frequently re-cut quarrying feature alongside many first-century AD finds, including a Late Iron Age coin of Cunobelin, early-to mid-first-century brooches, and mid-first-century terra sigillata. Later material was present, but this fragment could easily be contemporary with the early finds.

Overall, no dated Baldock torc must be pre-Claudian, and none firmly post-date the first century AD. They were certainly in use shortly after the invasion of AD 43, and the more precisely dated finds hint at a mid-first-century floruit, at least for deposition within burials.

Relationships with other Iron Age and Roman torcs

Baldock torcs are markedly different to British Iron Age styles. Most Iron Age torcs were also penannular, but they were typically more massive and they are often of more complex composite construction and/or decorated with intricate ‘Celtic art.’ Their role as status symbols is suggested by this sophisticated workmanship and the fact that many were made of precious metals.

Copper-alloy, simple one-piece penannular torcs are much more common in Continental European Iron Age contexts than in Iron Age Britain; most British examples are either poorly...
dated or from early Roman contexts. See Stead, Rigby 1999, 62-72 for a good sample of Continental European copper-alloy penannular torcs from Champagne that includes many of the most common western/central European types. Some of the Continental types also appear in precious metal, and John Creighton (pers. comm. 2021) notes that precious metal torcs from north-west Iberia include some poorly-dated, gold one-piece bar forms with simple incuse decoration (e.g. Hautenauve 2005, nos. H265 and H267), though many of these have lapped rather than strictly penannular terminals. See MacGregor 1976, 96-7 and 113, ‘penannular rod torcs,’ map 13 for an earlier survey of simple, one-piece penannular insular finds.

Closely comparable British finds are rare. A torc similar to Baldock type B comes from a Middle Iron Age, adult female inhumation at Great Houghton, Northamptonshire, but it is much earlier, cruder, undecorated, and made of lead-tin alloy. Two copper-alloy finds from Dorset in south-west England are closer in form, material, and date but are geographical outliers, and their decoration is different (Figs. 6 and 8). One, from Maiden Castle hillfort, is similar to Baldock type B. Its terminals have worn transverse groove decoration but no surviving chevrons like the ones found on Baldock rod torcs. The heavy wear might hint at earlier, pre-Roman, manufacture, but it was found with both “Belgic pottery and Roman brick.” A few copper-alloy thistle-headed penannular torcs/bracelets from England are closely related to types known in the Low Countries, France, Germany, and Switzerland during the Iron Age. Gold examples of the type from the fourth-to-third-century BC hoard at Leekfrith, Staffordshire are certainly contemporary with these Continental parallels, and the copper-alloy versions have been assumed to be similarly early in date. However, the only excavated copper-alloy insular example was found alongside Roman finds in London and was probably deposited c. AD 60-125/135 (Fig. 7). Taken together with a few similar torcs found in other possible Roman contexts, the London find suggests that some copper-alloy torcs circulating in Roman Britain had strong connections to much earlier Continental or cross-channel traditions. Some styles may have been very long-lived or a few individual torcs may have been ancient heirlooms that circulated for centuries before deposition. This raises the possibility that the Baldock group may have been directly influenced by much earlier torcs, but the similarities are either quite general (e.g. their material and penannular construction) or based on the shared use of very common/simple decorative motifs.

32 See Stead, Rigby 1999, 62-72 for a good sample of Continental European copper-alloy penannular torcs from Champagne that includes many of the most common western/central European types. Some of the Continental types also appear in precious metal, and John Creighton (pers. comm. 2021) notes that precious metal torcs from north-west Iberia include some poorly-dated, gold one-piece bar forms with simple incuse decoration (e.g. Hautenauve 2005, nos. H265 and H267), though many of these have lapped rather than strictly penannular terminals. See MacGregor 1976, 96-7 and 113, ‘penannular rod torcs,’ map 13 for an earlier survey of simple, one-piece penannular insular finds.

33 See Cotton et al. forthcoming for a list of torcs; see Lethbridge, O’Reilly 1931, 152 and pl. VI.1 for a bracelet-sized example.

34 See Farley et al. 2017 on the Leekfrith hoard; Joy 2015, 151 for a gold fragment from Caister Lincolnshire. Jope (2000, 16) assigns a similar Iron Age date to the copper-alloy Medway torc, which he argues is imported and contemporary with the Continental examples.

35 Cotton et al. forthcoming discuss the London torc in detail; Wilmott (1991, 36 and 113-4, fig. 77, no. 270) describes its context in the Middle Walbrook valley, associated with first-century AD Roman pottery and later first- to second-century AD metalwork, and the fact that it was sealed by a fire horizon of probable Hadrianic date. Timber piles suggest the presence of an early Roman revetment and/or building.

36 E.g., Smith 1925, 137-8; MacGregor 1976, no. 196.

37 See Sand 2015; Joy 2016; 2019, for old torcs in later burials and hoards; Chittock 2019 considers ‘Iron Age antiques’ more generally. Torcs in pre-Roman styles (but not necessarily of pre-Roman date) appear in hoards with post-conquest Romano-British artefacts at Polden Hills, Somerset (Brailsford 1975, 230, pl. XXIe); Slay Hill, Upchurch, Kent (Smith 1925, 137-8), and Auldearn, Highlands (Hunter 2015).

38 E.g., simple incuse decoration of loosely comparable type appears on much earlier Continental Iron Age finds; e.g., herringbone/palmettes (Stead, Rigby 1999, pl. 83-4, nos. 1611, 1715, 1430, 1723) and saltires (Stead, Rigby 1999, pl. 74, no. 1797).


40 Wheeler 1943, 276-7, fig 90, no. 11.
penannular torc fragment comparable to Baldock type D, from Greenhill, Weymouth, is also from a post-conquest deposit and was found with both ‘Late Iron Age’ metalwork and Roman military finds of the mid-first century AD. However, it too is different in style, featuring curvilinear Celtic art, punched dot decoration, and glass settings. The Greenhill torc fragment has been identified as a south-western product, linked to the local hinged collars on stylistic grounds. However, the shape of its terminals and hoop suggest it may be a hybrid between south-western and south-eastern regional traditions, just as a hinged beaded torc from Dinnington, South Yorkshire seems to represent a hybrid of south-western and central British styles. Taken together with a few geographical outliers and some stylistic features which cross-cut types, these hybrids suggest some degree of mutual awareness and cross-fertilisation of ideas between these regional copper-alloy torc styles, which were at least partially contemporary and were probably in some sense analogous to one another. However, the differences are as interesting as the similarities.

The hinged collars and a few beaded torcs make use of distinctive insular styles of curvilinear ‘Celtic’ decoration, while the penannular Baldock torcs use simpler incuse, geometric designs (see further below). The Baldock torcs are also dramatically thinner and lighter than these other more massive types whose weights are more akin to Iron Age examples. Reported weights for Baldock torcs vary from c. 20-40 g in contrast to other neck ring styles which often weigh more than 100 g and occasionally over a kilogram. Such differences will have affected both the visual impact of torcs and the experience of wearing them. Some might have had more restricted uses, perhaps being worn only for special or formal occasions, and Vincent Megaw argues that some of the large, heavy D-sectioned hinged collars would be “uncomfortable for anything but the briefest of wearings.” The lighter penannular Baldock torcs could easily have been used as ‘everyday’ dress. Such factors are underexplored but perhaps hint at variations in the social significance/function of different types of torc or in the identity of their wearers.

Differences in chronology are easiest to address at present. The Baldock group seems to have been short-lived, perhaps remaining in fashion for only a few generations in the mid-
late first century AD. This is contemporary with the early campaigns of conquest fought in the area during the 40s AD and subsequent unrest, most notably the revolt led by the Icenian Queen Boudica in AD 60/61. By the Flavian period (AD 69-96), the emphasis of Roman military activity in Britain had largely shifted further north and west.49 While the local Baldock torcs seem to have waned in the increasingly peaceful, ‘civilian’ south-east, the other Romano-British regional traditions flourished in, or near to, more militarised frontier zones well into the second century AD.50 Given this historical context and the regionalised distribution of these types, it is tempting to hypothesise that they emerged specifically within a frontier milieu,51 perhaps as a reaction to the sudden impact of Roman military and cultural power and as a means by which wearers sought to redefine and orientate their identities within new provincial Roman social spheres.

Torcs might have been favoured by local communities because of their traditional roots. However, many Romano-British torcs are quite different from local British Iron Age finds and so cannot simply be considered a conservative continuation of pre-Roman dress. Torcs were also significant in Roman military contexts, both as a form of battle honour worn on the chest, a symbol of power appropriated by Rome from the ‘barbarian’ world,52 and as a style of dress worn by some auxiliary soldiers of provincial background.53 Indeed, torcs were still worn in several other areas of the empire, including parts of Gaul, Germany, and Pannonia.54 It is possible that encounters with other torc-wearing Roman communities may even have influenced the new Romano-British regional styles. A remarkably wide range of torcs are now being recognised in southern Britain. While this material has not yet been researched in detail, some examples are similar to styles found elsewhere in Late Iron Age and Roman Europe and might reflect either the presence of torc-wearing immigrants or the local adoption of more widespread and varied torc styles.55

For now, we can tentatively define two major strands within this varied material. One is comprised of more massive penannular torcs, including the cross-channel thistle terminal types noted above (e.g., Fig. 7). These large styles have Iron Age roots but are still sometimes found in Roman contexts in southern Britain and can appear in hoards alongside Clas-
sical Roman jewellery, perhaps as late as the second century AD.\textsuperscript{56} The second strand is comprised of a diverse range of lightweight, often fastened, torcs/necklets. These are more comparable to the Baldock torcs in weight and are made of simple bars/wires, twisted wire cables, or torc-twisted bars or strips.\textsuperscript{57} Comparable torcs exist in prehistoric traditions, including as precious metal finds,\textsuperscript{58} but it is noteworthy that these styles also correspond closely with common types of ‘Roman’ bracelets, sometimes differing from them only in size. They may have resonated more closely with such fashions and may even have been worn together with, or made in the same workshops as, Roman jewellery styles.\textsuperscript{59} A fastened twisted bar torc with a bulla-style pendant from a late-second- or early-third-century adult female inhumation in Roman London falls into the latter group and is amongst the latest dated torcs from Roman Britain (FIG. 9). Similar neck rings with bullae, lunulae, or wheel-shaped pendants have also been found in other parts of the empire, and it may be significant that these same amuletic/symbolic pendant types also feature in Classical jewellery traditions.\textsuperscript{60}

\textit{Styles, contexts, and identities}

We must be cautious about uncritically defining all torcs from Roman Britain as local or native dress, especially if this is defined in rigid opposition to ‘Roman’ dress.\textsuperscript{61} Some styles emerged only after the conquest, and others belong to, or are related to, types that also circulated beyond Britain. Baldock torcs have a well-defined regional distribution, suggesting localised manufacture and use, but we still need to carefully outline our arguments about their social significance and the identities of their wearers. Indeed, another closely related class of regionalised Romano-British penannular jewellery has recently been argued to have been worn by incoming Roman soldiers rather than by members of the native population.\textsuperscript{62}

Copper-alloy penannular strip bracelets of Cool group IX\textsuperscript{63} also appear in the peri-conquest period and are found in a similar area, concentrated in eastern England north of the Thames though extending somewhat further along the Jurassic Way into the English Mid-

\textsuperscript{56} Smith 1925, 13-8; Cotton et al. forthcoming.

\textsuperscript{57} For some southern British examples, see Boon 1957, 111; Kelly 2003, 42-43, fig. 49; Wardle 2003, 153-4 <S19>; Gurney 2011, 65-67; Durham, Fulford 2014, 173-174, fig. 118, no. 100.

\textsuperscript{58} This not only includes Bronze and Iron Age gold ribbon torcs (e.g., Farley, Hunter 2015, 93, fig. 78) but also poorly-dated gold knotted wire cable torc fragments from Birdlip, Gloucestershire (Green 1949) and Braidwood Castle, Midlothian (MacGregor 1976, no. 190) and thinner torc-twisted bar finds in gold from the Late Iron Age Netherud, Peeblesshire hoard (MacGregor 1976, no. 192, possibly penannular) and in silver from Late Iron Age or Roman Silchester, Hampshire (Boon 1957, 111, fig. 16.9).

\textsuperscript{59} For equivalent Roman-period bracelet styles, see Cool’s (1983) groups I, III, and IV. Carroll (2013, 296) makes a similar point about the links between torcs and bracelets, highlighting the matching set of torc and bracelets depicted on the tombstone of Regina from South Shields (see FIG. 11).

\textsuperscript{60} E.g., Hamat 2010, 224-5, no. 12 from Dacia; Sas, Thoen 2002, 169, no. 76 from Monceau-sur-Sambre, Hainaut, Belgium. For funerary iconographic evidence, see for example, Allason-Jones 2005, 116 from Chester, England; Rothe 2012a, figs. 29, 49, and 52 for the Danubian provinces; and Stoner 2019, 13, fig. 2 from Egypt.

\textsuperscript{61} Rothe (2012b), Joy (2014), and Hingley et al. (2018) discuss some of the difficulties of terminology and especially dichotomies such as Roman vs native or indigenous vs immigrant.

\textsuperscript{62} Crummy 2005.

\textsuperscript{63} Cool 1983, 144-6; Crummy 2005 for a more recent update and revised interpretation.
lands and the south-west. They have incised/stamped decoration with cabled ribs and grooves running around their circumference and squared-off decorated terminals, normally defined by transverse lines or cabled ribs. They are probably the closest bracelet-sized analogues available for the penannular strip torcs of Baldock type E. Most Baldock torcs lack the prominent cabled ribs found on group IX bracelets, but these motifs do appear on the terminals of the type E Harper Road torc (Table 1, no. 10; Figs. 2 and 10). Other strong decorative similarities between these two types of penannular jewellery include the use of palm-like motifs, stamped circles, and diagonal lines/zigzags (Figs. 5 and 10).

Nina Crummy has highlighted technological and decorative similarities between group IX bracelets and various types of first-century AD Roman metalwork, including military belt plates and Aucissa and Hod Hill brooches. She suggests that their S-stamped cabled ribs are a distinctly military decorative technique and represent stylised wreaths. Based on these features, and on their date and distribution, she has argued that these bracelets are examples of armillae used as military awards, possibly based on pre-Roman British prototypes but made in military workshops and awarded to Roman soldiers who served in early campaigns in Britain. Of particular interest in this respect are two silver strip bracelets with the same cabled rib decoration. These come from the Colchester Insula 19 hoard of Roman coins and jewellery, mostly made in Mediterranean style, which also included a male Roman citizen’s bulla. This hoard may have belonged to the household of a Roman citizen soldier or veteran living in the Colchester colony when it was destroyed by Boudica in AD 60/61. Like the copper-alloy examples, these silver bracelets have no exact Mediterranean parallels. However, they are not truly penannular, and they lack terminal decoration, a key feature which links the copper-alloy group IX bracelets with the Baldock torcs. Instead, the overlapped ends are secured with strap loops, identical to a third bracelet within the hoard that is hinged and decorated with images of Jupiter, Victory, and Fortuna. This selection of Classical iconography would be very appropriate for a military award.

Given the similarities between group IX bracelets and Baldock torcs, these possible military connections deserve careful consideration here. Torcs, like armillae, were sometimes awarded as battle honours, and the Romano-British regional torc styles seem to have emerged and flourished during periods when Roman soldiers were present. Some types of torc in Britain have even been found in possible association with militaria or at forts.

The similarities between group IX bracelets and Continental Roman metalwork identified by Crummy are real, and her interpretation is plausible. However, I would argue that the connection between this style and military smiths is not conclusive and that the stylistic parallels

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64 Crummy 2005, 93-9, tables 1 and 2, fig. 2. Recent work on finds from the Portable Antiquities Scheme (PAS) extend and clarify this distribution but do not dramatically alter it (Statton 2016, 196-7, fig. 55; Edwin Wood, pers. comm. 2019).
65 Crummy 2005, 95-8, figs. 3 and 4.
67 Crummy et al. 2016, 7-9, fig. 6, nos. 7 and 8.
69 See deposits at Fremington Hagg, Yorkshire (Webster 1971; MacGregor 1976, no. 196; which objects belong to the hoard is a matter of some uncertainty), Greenhill, Dorset (Megaw 1971, 153), and Polden Hills, Somerset (Brailsford 1975).
70 E.g., Maxfield 1974 and Croom 2001, though in both of these cases the beaded torcs are argued to be native dress rather than military honours.
with militaria are not precise or exclusive enough to prove manufacture in the same workshops. S-stamped decoration already appears on Iron Age metalwork from the area (e.g., on the Baldock bucket71) and on local, non-military objects like cosmetic mortars.72 Wreath-like bands or cabled ribs appear on Iron Age coins (e.g., Whaddon Chase gold staters) and on Late Iron Age Rosette and Langton Down brooches.73 A gold penannular strip bracelet, that parallels both the form and S-stamped cabled rib decoration of group IX bracelets, was found in the early- to mid-first-century AD Alton II, Hampshire hoard, alongside local Late Iron Age coins and a Roman-style gold finger-ring.74 The hoard could be pre-conquest and may have been deposited by a Briton, although connections with the Roman world are implied by the finger-ring and the ‘Romanised’ style of the Atrebatic coins. Many of the object types considered above attest to cross-channel connections to some degree, but these links are not exclusively military and often began well before the Claudian invasion.75

Very simple motifs like those seen on the copper-alloy torcs and bracelets, including ring and dot, diagonal lines, and herringbone patterns, also appear much more widely in the Iron Age. In studies of Celtic Art, such motifs have received less attention than the complex curvilinear designs which feature prominently on famous items of prestige metalwork. However, similar motifs feature across a wide range of British Iron Age objects and are very common on objects of everyday life, including bone and antler combs and pottery.76 Towards the end of the Iron Age, simple stamped and incised motifs of this type began to be used in new ways, featuring on a wider range of insular metalwork, perhaps partly influenced by the circulation of imported metal objects featuring similar motifs.77

Crummy’s argument that Roman iconography could be referenced by these kinds of decoration is interesting. Some of the torc motifs could be viewed as wreath or palm designs, complementing her reading of the group IX bracelets. Such iconography bore connotations of victory for Roman audiences and would be suitable for use on military awards.78 However, even in the Roman world such motifs were not exclusively military,79 and they also appear in Late Iron Age Britain, especially in the context of coinage. These motifs could retain direct links to Roman ideas but could also be recontextualised or reinterpreted locally.80 For example, some Roman-influenced Late Iron Age coin types depict the Roman goddess Victory but swap her customary wreath for a torc.81 A perforated Roman coin from a female burial at Langton Herring, Dorset, dated c. AD 25-53, depicts Victory holding a palm branch and riding in her chariot. This Roman coin was transformed by being converted into a pendant, and the image may have highlighted the power of its female owner and resonated with the im-

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71 Stead 1971; Stead, Rigby 1986, 51-9, fig. 24.
72 E.g., Jackson 2010, 212, no. 581.
73 Mackreth 2011, pls. 15-21.
74 Crummy 2005, 94 and 101 on bracelets generally; Cheesman 1998 on the Alton II hoard – the bracelet is British Museum accession 1996,0701.2.
75 E.g., Creighton 2000; Mackreth 2011, 8 and 26-33; Leins, Farley 2015 for specific examples. Creighton (2006) provides a general perspective, and Pitts 2019 takes a quantitative approach based on burials, pottery, and brooches.
76 See for example, Sharples 2008, 206-209, fig. 11.2-3.
77 Davis, Gwilt 2008, 166-8.
78 E.g., Maxfield 1981, 86-9, and fig. 9 for overtly wreath-like Roman military torcs.
79 E.g., Swift 2017, 171 for palm branches on finger-rings for Roman children, probably serving an apotropaic function.
80 Creighton 2000.
portance of the chariot in pre-Roman Britain. Jon Cotton has also previously suggested that the decoration on the type E torc from Harper Road (Table 1, no. 10; FIGS. 2 and 10) is figurative, perhaps a peacock feather used as a female-gendered allusion to the Roman goddess Juno. This reading is again plausible but does not seem applicable to the Baldock group of torcs as a whole, whose decoration is so abstract and so variable, as to call any single figurative interpretation into doubt (FIG. 6; e.g., Table 1, nos. 3 and 10-14). Both in the past and in the present, the interpretation of these kinds of simple abstract designs is contingent on the perspective and cultural knowledge of individual viewers.

Similar complexities can be seen amongst a series of first- to second-century AD hinged bracelets and neck rings found mostly in western Britain. Some of the bracelets have Mediterranean Roman prototypes or utilise Roman-style metalworking technology, and some have wreath-like cabled rib decoration or decorative features that resemble Continental hinged brooches. However, they appear both in ‘native’ contexts (e.g., a bronze pair from Braich-y-Dinas hillfort and in direct association with Classical styles of Roman female jewellery (e.g., a gold find in the Rhayader hoard). Some examples feature more insular Celtic motifs, and the ‘swash-N’ terminal decoration on several hinged strip bracelets directly parallels motifs found on the strip-sectioned hinged neck ring from Stichill, Borders. It is tempting to see this connection as analogous to the stylistic relationship between penannular group IX strip bracelets and penannular Baldock type E strip torcs. ‘Matching sets’ have not yet been found in close association, but a mismatching group comprised of two penannular strip bracelets and a strip-sectioned hinged collar was recovered from a disturbed first- to second-century AD (?)female burial at Boverton, Vale of Glamorgan.

Imitation, appropriation, and cross-fertilisation of ideas across both object types and decorative styles was clearly common during this period, and fashions may have spread between, or have been shared across, social groups. The Roman military use of torcs and bracelets was appropriated from conquered peoples and may also have been copied in turn. Following Crummy’s interpretation of group IX bracelets, I have previously suggested that the decoration of the copper-alloy penannular strip torc from Harper Road (Table 1, no. 10; FIG. 10) could be evidence of local torc wearers copying or co-opting the powerful aesthetics of Roman military awards. The discussion above still allows for such connections to Roman metalwork but places more emphasis on the local context and a broader interchange of material

82 Russell et al. 2019, 212 and 226.
83 Cotton 2008, 155. An alternative reading of some of the feather/palm-like motifs would be to see them as simplified imitations of the textures of more complex twisted rod and cable torcs, but again this cannot reasonably be applied to all Baldock torcs.
84 See Cool 1986 and Hunter 2008, 134 on these bracelets and their connections. Statton (2016, 200) discusses and lists several newer PAS hinged bracelet finds, mostly from south-western Britain. Maxfield (1981, 89, fig. 9) illustrates similar strip bracelets in a military context.
85 Harold Hughes 1934.
86 Cool 1986.
89 Nowakowski et al. 2009, 8-10 fig. 7; Adam Gwilt, pers. comm. 2021. NB The bracelets are not of Cool group IX and have a different style of punched decoration.
90 Maxfield 1981, 87-9; Rowan, Swan 2015.
culture that began well before the Claudian invasion. Similar motifs had long been present within local metalwork and, in the form that they appear on the Baldock torcs, may not necessarily have been regarded as appearing ‘military’ or ‘Roman’ per se. However, similarities with contemporary Roman decoration may still have added to the appeal of this style in early Roman Britain. In dress ensembles, it may also have allowed a wearer to more easily and subtly “mix-and-match” locally-made and imported objects.

Context is key, and as noted above, a good case can be made that the silver bracelets with lapped ends from the Colchester hoard were made by a smith working in a Roman tradition and given as military awards to a Roman citizen. Conversely, the closely related penannular gold bracelet found with the (?pre-conquest) Alton II hoard of Iron Age coins might have belonged to a Briton. Crummy argues that this could also be a military award, perhaps given to a local who had fought for or alongside Rome. Yet if this is correct, it further blurs any hard distinction between the dress and identities of Britons and Romans.

Written sources describe torcs and bracelets used as military awards as being made of precious metal. This perhaps suggests that the copper-alloy Baldock torcs and bracelets are not military awards, although more recently Crummy has argued that the base metal group IX bracelets could be lesser ‘campaign medals’ rather than battle honours of precisely the same type as the precious metal finds. Firm military contexts are quite rare for either class of copper-alloy penannular jewellery. Group IX bracelets are found at the fort at Richborough, Kent, and a Baldock type E strip torc (Table 1, no. 14) and several group IX bracelets come from Colchester, the site of a legionary fortress converted into a colony to settle veterans. However, Colchester was also a major Late Iron Age centre, and the inhabitants of this town, and the Richborough fort, will have included some non-military personnel. Crummy has suggested that the widespread distribution of group IX bracelets beyond formal military contexts reflects the settlement of Roman veterans across southern Britain, but it might equally indicate their use by a different, or wider, section of society.

Overall, the contexts for the excavated Baldock copper-alloy torcs and bracelets have a strong urban emphasis, coming from three large Roman towns (x4 finds) and two ‘small towns’ (x4 finds). However, some metal-detected/stray finds (x6 finds) may have circulated in more rural settings (Table 1, nos. 2, 4, 7, and 11-13). These include a remarkable concentration of three unstratified fragments from the parish of Barton Bendish, Norfolk, a densely

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92 See Pitts 2019 for broader perspectives on such cross-channel networks.
93 Crummy et al. 2016, 7-11, fig. 8, no. 9.
94 Nina Crummy, pers. comm. 2020. Pliny (Natural History, 33.10) mentions a distinction between silver awards for citizens and gold for non-citizens.
96 Nina Crummy, pers. comm. 2020. See also footnote 53 above for a copper-alloy torc found with militaria in a burial in France, although this could be an object worn on the neck, perhaps as an indication of the deceased’s ethnic origins, rather than a military award.
97 Crummy 2005, table 2, no. 33. I am grateful to Edwin Wood (pers. comm. 2019) for emphasising the importance of the Richborough bracelets to me.
98 Crummy 2005, 100-01.
99 Harlow (2021, 103-08) finds a military origin for these bracelets plausible but also expresses uncertainty as to whether they can be used to map the movement of soldiers. She highlights the fact that other dress objects that may have been introduced by the military, such as Aucissa and Hod Hill brooches, do not retain an exclusive military significance.
populated Iron Age and Roman rural landscape which has also produced a fragment of a buffer-terminal copper-alloy torc. The contexts for group IX strip bracelets are similar, encompassing a range of urban and rural sites within a comparable area, and these jewellery types co-occur at many key sites such as London, Colchester, St Albans, and Baldock. These types obviously circulated within a broadly similar social milieu, but as such settlements had diverse populations, including locals and immigrants, soldiers and civilians, this does not confirm whether they were worn by the same kinds of people or not.

For some of the Baldock torcs we are lucky to have burial contexts, described above, which allow us to consider their associations at the level of the individual. Of these finds, no. 1 (Table 1; perhaps also no. 14) was worn around the neck, as opposed to hanging on the chest like the torcs used as Roman military awards. At least some seem to have belonged to women (Table 1, no. 1, more arguably nos. 9 and 10). Isotopic analyses suggest the owner of no. 10 grew up in the local area. These details rule out an exclusive association with immigrant male Roman citizen soldiers, and taken together with their regional distribution, they lend support to the idea that these torcs are a local style of dress, perhaps associated specifically with adult women. Some associated grave goods, such as the local Iron-Age-style pottery and south-eastern Romano-British brooch found at California, Baldock (with Table 1, nos. 1 and 9), further underline these local connections, but here again we should avoid creating an unhelpful dichotomy between ‘native’ and ‘Roman’ material culture or cultural identities.

The Harper Road, Southwark burial is a case study in this complexity (Table 1, no. 10). This person may have been born before the Claudian invasion, and isotopic evidence suggests they probably grew up in south-eastern England. However, they were buried with several imported objects on the outskirts of a newly founded Roman city. This was a community in which they probably lived and to which they may well have felt like they belonged. Imported ‘Roman’ artefacts had already begun to be integrated into local society generations before AD 43, and their inclusion here resonates with both local funerary traditions and broader provincial Roman patterns. For example, the mirror is a new ‘Roman’ type, but insular styles of mirror had previously featured prominently in similarly rich British Iron Age burials. Iron-Age-style mirrors with ‘Celtic’ decoration disappeared from burials in the south-east after the first century BC, well before the Claudian conquest and generations earlier than they disappeared from south-western Britain. Instead, ‘Roman’ mirrors appear in both pre- and post-conquest burials in the area. This may represent the continuation of earlier local social practices even while Late Iron Age societies in this area started to develop preferences

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100 Rogerson et al. 1997, 8-17.
101 Natasha Harlow, pers. comm. 2020; Norfolk Historic Environment Record Reference No. 18849.
102 For the distribution of group IX bracelets, see Crummy 2005, 96 and 99, table 2; cf. Statton 2016.
103 Maxfield 1981, 88. It is likely torcs worn on the chest were also smaller than ones worn on the neck.
104 See Hingley et al. 2018 for a helpful critique of dichotomous identities and false contrasts between indigenous and mobile/immigrant identities, which includes a comment on the Harper Road burial. Unfortunately, this paper introduces a minor factual error by suggesting that the burial included a toilet set (a mistake also repeated in Hingley 2018, 36-7), probably based on a misreading of the discussion of the mirror in Redfern et al. 2017, 258.
105 See Pitts 2019 for a valuable recent survey.
106 Joy 2011, 474-6; Swift 2012.
107 In addition to Harper Road, see pre-conquest King Harry Lane, St Albans (Stead, Rigby 1989, 103) and Flavian Stanley Avenue, Norfolk (Gurney 1998, 23-7, figs. 16-18).
for new styles of material culture. This regional patterning in mirror styles echoes the distinction between insular Celtic decoration on south-western hinged collars and the less distinctively British style found on south-eastern Baldock torcs.

The condition of the broken Harper Road torc and its position at the foot of the grave closely match the treatment of an example found in a burial with local Iron-Age-style pottery at Baldock (Table 1, no. 9; Fig. 4d). Cotton has suggested that the Harper Road torc was broken to send it to the afterlife with its owner and placed at their feet in a deliberate inversion of how it was worn in life.\(^\text{108}\) Even if both torcs had been accidentally broken,\(^\text{109}\) they must have then been curated until death before being similarly treated at the time of burial. This suggests that they had a shared symbolic significance and a similar role within the funerary rite, regardless of the ‘native’ or ‘Roman’ character of the other grave goods.

**Wearing torcs in south-eastern Roman Britain**

It is now clear that torcs were worn in south-eastern Britain during the early Roman period. While such objects could have been regarded as being somehow rooted in “indigenous antiquity,”\(^\text{110}\) they do not simply represent “peripheral archaism,” and it is becoming more widely accepted that their interpretation needs to be anchored within the social dynamics of contemporary Roman societies.\(^\text{111}\) Indeed, a scarcity of British torc finds dated to the early first century AD may suggest a decline in torc use, or at least deposition, before the Roman conquest. The emergence and spread of new types from the mid-first century AD onwards, some utilising novel technologies, materials, and styles, might therefore be considered a renaissance or reinvention of the torc within a provincial Roman context.\(^\text{112}\)

A shift in emphasis from precious to base metals suggests that this form of dress was becoming more “socially widespread” by the early Roman period,\(^\text{113}\) and Iron Age gold torcs seem to disappear from the archaeological record in Britain after the mid-first century BC. Shifting political affiliations and orientations may have been a factor in the abandonment of gold torcs by certain native elites. Many began to demonstrate wealth and sophistication through alternate practices and goods, often introduced from the Roman world, perhaps aiming to impress new peer groups both within and beyond Britain.\(^\text{114}\) Cassius Dio describes the rebel Icenian Queen Boudica as wearing a large twisted gold torc as late as AD 60/61,\(^\text{115}\) but

\(^{108}\) Cotton 2008, 159.
\(^{109}\) Joy 2019, 466-7 on torc wear and breakages.
\(^{110}\) Carroll 2013b, 305.
\(^{113}\) Hunter 2008, 133.
\(^{114}\) E.g. Woolf 2002; Creighton 2000; 2006. This included new types of dining, architecture, and costume. A few instances of imported gold jewellery of Mediterranean origins or Roman style dating to between the middle of the first centuries BC and AD might attest to this increasingly outward looking perspective within elite dress – e.g., finds from the Winchester and Alton II, Hampshire hoards (see Cheesman 1998; Hill et al. 2004; Creighton 2006, 42-4; Poux et al. 2007). The thick gold chain necklaces from the Winchester hoard, probably imported but perhaps deliberately referencing the earlier local idea of the torc, may represent a transitional or hybrid statement. Other important changes include the emergence of precious metal coinage as an alternate, more easily divisible and exchangeable medium for storing and leveraging wealth.
\(^{115}\) Cassius Dio Roman History LXII, 2.2-4.
this account was written much later and is saturated with long-lived tropes. A gold torc, perhaps an heirloom, could have been an effective way for a rebel leader to stake claim to authority anchored in the pre-Roman indigenous past, but here it could also serve as shorthand for a Mediterranean writer seeking to signal Boudica’s barbarian nature and equate her with earlier defeated enemies of Rome. Torcs were a contested symbol of power, both seized as loot and appropriated as a form of Roman military award. If gold and silver torcs were worn as late as the first century AD, then competing claims placed upon these symbols by the new authorities, the post-conquest extraction of wealth by Rome, and state control over precious metal mining might be key factors in their disappearance.

Wearing a torc may well have seemed an overtly ‘native’ or even ‘barbarian’ dress practice to some. However, torcs need not necessarily be understood as ‘anti-Roman’ symbols, as has sometimes been suggested. Some types, including the Baldock torcs, circulated extensively within ‘Roman’ social contexts in the provinces. Indeed, it appears that some Roman auxiliary soldiers of Gallic background wore torcs on their necks, perhaps to highlight their ethnic identity or reinforce their positions within their own native communities in parallel with their newly adopted roles within the Roman regime. The continued symbolic importance of torcs during the Roman period is also suggested by their use in religious iconography. In several parts of the north-western provinces, including southern Britain, miniature precious metal torcs could be added to figurines of deities such as Mercury or Venus, playing a role in negotiating and articulating connections between native and Roman beliefs or creating new syncretic/hybrid ones.

Torc hoards, perhaps representing communal or elite votive offerings, were particularly characteristic of deposition in the Iron Age but seem to have vanished from Britain by the first century AD. A few base metal torcs continued to appear in mixed hoards alongside other valuables, and torcs are found in other possible votive contexts, but single site finds are far more common in Roman Britain. In the south of the province, a growing number of base metal torcs were being buried alongside their owners. Torcs were common grave goods in

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116 Allason-Jones (2005, 116) makes a similar point.
118 E.g., Thorsten Opper’s (2021, 101, fig 77) recent characterisation of a south-western Romano-British hinged collar as an “evolution of earlier gold and silver torcs that had traditionally expressed the wearer’s status and may now have been used to express opposition to Rome, as these were found exclusively on the edges of the province.”
119 See footnote 53.
120 E.g., Kaufmann-Heinemann 1991; Worrell, Pearce 2015, 368-70. Interestingly, several of the miniature torcs added to the necks of these statues are actually reused silver penannular snake finger-rings. Other possible connections between torcs, snake jewellery, and the god Mercury (with his caduceus of two snakes) deserve more investigation. For example a second-century AD hoard including large quantities of snake jewellery was deposited at Snettisham, Norfolk, close to the site of the famous torc hoards, and it has been suggested that there could be a connection (Johns 1997, 70-3; Harlow 2021, 114-6). There may be another co-occurrence between hoards including torcs and snake jewellery at Slay Hill, Kent, but the details of these finds are somewhat ambiguous (Smith 1925, 137-8; Julia Farley pers. comm. 2020).
121 Hutcheson 2004; Fitzpatrick 2005; Garrow, Gosden 2012, 137-8; Joy, Farley forthcoming.
122 See footnote 37 for some examples. Interestingly these are mostly larger Iron-Age-style torcs.
123 A Baldock type find (Table 1, no. 5) from Billingford, Norfolk is a possible example. This is a miniature torc or bracelet that was broken in two and reworked into two separate rings. Only one was stratified, but the same context produced a fragment of ceramic incense burner (Lyons 2011). Another votive deposit on the same site included a full sized torc/necklet of a different type (Gurney 2011). The cluster of fragments at Barton Bendish, Norfolk could hint at a disturbed hoard or another focus for larger scale deposition.
some Continental Iron Age societies, but they were rare in British Iron Age burials, and so this change reflects new social practices and may hint at new connections with very personal aspects of identity. Parallels can also be drawn with provincial Roman contexts beyond Britain. For example, in southern Bavaria copper-alloy neck rings appear in female ‘Heimstetten’ inhumation graves of the mid-first century AD. Again these burials represent a fairly short-lived phenomenon, emerging after the Roman conquest but drawing on pre-Roman dress ideas. They have been characterised as “peoples expressing conflicting identities in the process of change” through “re-creation of indigenous traditions several generations old” and as “eager to adopt goods from the Roman world but not to give up important traditional signs of their status and identity in their native social systems.” Other finds suggest similar concerns, such as a first-century AD female cremation burial at Mamer-Juckelsbësch, Luxembourg, which exhibits distinctive funerary rites anchored in local Iron Age traditions and contains both an ancient heirloom torc and Roman objects.

Conquest and incorporation into the Roman empire imposed new power dynamics and presented a challenge to native social structures. Some people, especially those dwelling in military frontier zones or within new urban settlements, also found themselves within increasingly diverse populations amongst whom an understanding of, or respect for, their native identities and cultural practices could not be taken for granted. Within such settings, torcs may have been particularly useful for maintaining and expressing locally important ethnic, gender, and status related identities, because they were somewhat distinct and decentred from Italian Roman styles of dress and were less closely associated with newly introduced or imposed Roman social structures and norms.

In those parts of Roman Europe where we have sufficient iconographic or funerary data to work with, it appears that torcs often feature as an element of local female ethnic dress or in mixed native/Roman female dress ensembles. It has been argued that the cultivation of identity through dress was particularly important for native women, who had fewer opportunities than men to win and express rank and status within new Roman legal and social structures. This might be a plausible model for interpreting the Baldock torcs, although we have already noted that some torcs were also worn by men. Lindsay Allason-Jones has argued that the large gold torc described in Cassius Dio’s account of Boudica was male dress and that she was therefore performing a kind of gender swap by “symbolically investing herself with the authority of an Iron Age warrior chieftain.” Whether or not Boudica truly wore such a torc, Dio’s account echoes Roman descriptions of male Celtic warriors, and the speech ascribed to her emphasises conflicts between Roman and non-Roman ideas about gender identity. Miller Power considers the possible military influences on torcs and links between power and

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124 Garrow, Gosden 2012, 137; Harding 2016, 229.
125 For a broader discussion of the increasing number of dress accessories and toilet implements entering the archaeological record during the first centuries BC and AD, see Hill 1997; Jundi, Hill 1998.
126 Keller 1984; Adler 2003, 244, figs. 77 and 78.
128 Sand 2015.
129 E.g., Kuzmová 2008; Rothe 2012a; Carroll 2013a; Sand 2015.
130 Carroll 2013a; 2013b, 299; Rothe 2012b.
132 E.g., Hingley, Unwin 2006, 205-6; Adler 2008.
masculinity within Roman society, arguing that the Harper Road torc may have been used to adopt a masculine gender identity or one not contained within Roman gender binaries. Gender roles in first-century AD native British communities are certainly less well understood than Roman ones and might have differed markedly from them. However, many torcs are associated with female sexed or gendered bodies in both European Iron Age and provincial Roman iconography and funerary contexts. As such, torc-wearers may have been laying claim to types of status entirely congruent with native female identities instead of adopting specifically masculine ones.

Some torc types probably formed an important element within particular local or ethnic costumes. The major Romano-British torc groups could perhaps be understood in this way, as they are distinctive, regionalised, and close to mutually exclusive in their distributions (FIG. 3). However, we need not expect torcs to form badges of a fixed single identity or to equate directly with specific named ethnic/political groups. Their distributions crosscut or extend beyond both conjectured pre-Roman ‘tribal areas’ and the Roman civitates from which they have largely been inferred. For example, Baldock torcs appear in areas ascribed to the Catuvellauni, Trinovantes, and Iceni. The technological and stylistic aspects of the distinctions between British torc traditions suggest that their distributions are related to metalworking traditions and workshop locations or catchment areas. These were probably important social as well as economic patterns, perhaps revealing broader zones which interacted and shared cultural tastes or strategies of self-representation. These types were sufficiently distinctive in style and distribution that they may have provided a clue as to the wearer’s background, indicating to a knowledgeable audience that they had a connection to a particular area or community. For those familiar with these specific cultural contexts, torcs could

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133 Power 2020.
135 E.g., Rothe 2012a; Carroll 2013b.
136 See Moore 2011 for a robust critique of ideas about British Iron Age tribal identity/social organisation.
137 We have already noted similarities between Baldock torcs and group IX bracelets. Other finds with distributions concentrated in eastern England north of the Thames include Baldock-type nail cleaners (Eckardt, Crummy 2008), Harlow-type Colchester derivative brooches (Mackreth 2011), and certain Roman hairpin styles (e.g., Cool 1991, 175-6, fig. 15). Similar patterns and ideas are considered by Harlow 2021, 134; pers. comm. 2020. The distribution of Baldock torcs is slightly more restricted than many of these other types, focusing on the core area, but that might prove to be due to the modest sample size currently identified.
138 Similar ideas emerge from studies of the overlapping regionalised distributions of brooches (e.g., Eckardt 2014, 128-34; Cool 2016, 415-6; Pitts 2019, 91-95; Harlow 2021, 25-98). These appear in varied assemblages and are unlikely to reflect a strictly proscribed form of ethnic dress, but regional variation may well have contributed to a sense of local dress style(s) and reflected local tastes. Brooches that were unfamiliar or obviously outside of their typical distribution area, perhaps worn by travellers or immigrants, may have stood out (e.g., Ivleva 2011). At present, some torcs seem to have more distinct distributions within Britain (FIG. 3). Some evidence survives to suggest that the regionalised torc and brooch styles from equivalent areas were sometimes worn together within ensembles – e.g., the Lamberton Moor, Berwickshire hoard (Anderson 1905) which contained a beaded torc and three central British enamelled brooches, perhaps all forming part of a female dress ensemble, and an inhumation burial at California, Baldock, Hertfordshire (Ashworth forthcoming) where a south-eastern Colchester derivative bow brooch was found in the grave of a woman wearing a type A Baldock penannular torc (Table 1, no. 1).
have communicated more subtle information about age, gender, and status, although these may well have differed by region and by torc type.\footnote{For a discussion of nested/varied readings of provincial ethnic or ‘native’ dress, as read by different audiences and in different contexts, see Carroll 2013a and 2013b.}

For Romano-British torcs such matters need to be explored further.\footnote{Farley, Hunter 2015, 141.} One interesting case study is the second-century AD tombstone of Regina, who was buried on Britannia’s northern frontier at the Roman military base of Arbeia at South Shields, Tyne and Wear. She is depicted wearing a simple fastened twisted torc and a pair of matching twisted bracelets (Fig. 11).\footnote{Carroll (2013b) offers a sophisticated and wide-ranging discussion of the tombstone in its wider context. However, her emphasis on the torc as a ‘British’ object differs slightly from the ideas advanced here, as does the suggestion that it was now somehow anachronistic in a Roman context; cf. Allason-Jones 2005, 115.}

Regina was a Briton and a former slave, but her tombstone indicates that she died as a fairly wealthy member of a diverse Roman military community. The funerary inscription is written in Latin and Palmyrene Aramaic, but it includes an ethnonym indicating that she was a Catuvellaunian who came from the same area of south-eastern Britain where Baldock torcs had been worn in the previous century. Regina’s torc is later in date than the Baldock group, and it is of a different type, but it complements the evidence from south-eastern graves and supports the idea that some Catuvellaunian women wore torcs. Regina’s tombstone draws on thoroughly Roman artistic and epigraphic conventions and records her marriage to a Palmyrene, but the somewhat atypical inclusion of an ethnonym suggests that her origins amongst the Catuvellauni remained important to her. This sense of ethnic identity might have influenced the decision to portray her as wearing provincial styles of jewellery and clothing, rather than Italian-style Roman dress.\footnote{Carroll 2013b, 288.}

Given that Regina was an immigrant to northern Britannia, it is also interesting to note that she was not depicted wearing a beaded torc, the distinctive regional style common in the area where she died and was buried.\footnote{Beaded torcs are known from South Shields itself (Croom 2001) and were in use well into the second century and possibly even later (Hunter 2010). The date of Regina’s tombstone is much debated, but Carroll (2013b) places it in the second century AD.} Beaded torcs may have had their own well-defined local social or ethnic significance which may have made them inappropriate for an incomer. Alternatively, Regina may have had a personal or cultural preferences for a different style, but at present it is less certain whether her torc would have been recognisable as a Catuvellaunian, south-eastern, or even British type. Simple twisted torcs/necklets could be found in her homeland (e.g., Fig. 9), but similar styles are also known in other parts of the empire,\footnote{E.g., in Pannonia (Kuzmová 2008) where a variety of simple twisted styles are known. See also footnotes 57, 58, and 60 above for other simple twisted torcs/necklets from Late Iron Age and Roman contexts elsewhere in Britain, Belgium, and Dacia, for example.} and her torc complements her twisted bracelets which can be paralleled widely across the Roman world.\footnote{See above and footnote 59.} Some torc styles may have had no single localised ethnic significance, either because they were an element incorporated into a variety of different native costumes or because they formed part of a more widespread or globalised style of dress. Related arguments have been applied to the so-called ‘female Gallic ensemble’ of clothing, a variant of

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which Regina also wears (Fig. 11). This was widely adopted across the north-western provinces and incorporated into various native or mixed native/Roman types of dress, sometimes replacing earlier regional styles. It developed from local dress traditions and remained distinct from Italian Roman clothing, but it probably spread as a direct result of increasing personal mobility and interaction between provincial communities within the context of the Roman empire. Such fashions may even have reflected, or contributed to, the emergence of new pan-regional identities within the north-western provinces.\textsuperscript{146}

South-eastern Britain had strong connections with neighbouring regions across the channel, perhaps involving kinship or clientage. These links preceded, and to some degree remained distinct from, new connections based upon expanding Roman imperial networks.\textsuperscript{147} This influence on local dress was already visible before the Claudian invasion\textsuperscript{148} and may be reflected in the character of the Baldock torcs as well. These objects eschewed the insular Celtic art found on some other Late Iron Age and Romano-British torcs in favour of simpler geometric decoration which may have resonated with both older local traditions and a developing taste for new Continental and Roman styles.

The local Baldock style of torc was short lived, reflecting the dynamic nature of change in the peri-conquest period. However, as we have seen, other less regionalised torc styles continued to circulate locally into the second century AD and perhaps beyond. The lightweight torcs/necklets described above may have played a comparable role to the Baldock torcs within local female dress ensembles and may have effectively supplanted them. These torcs are recognisable as neck rings when seen complete, as in a few important iconographic, funerary, and votive contexts, but many more examples may remain unidentified because it is difficult to distinguish them from bracelets when they survive only as fragmentary site finds.\textsuperscript{149} Some of the potential benefits of these styles for members of an increasingly cosmopolitan and mobile provincial community have already been noted. Their simplicity and their similarity to both native and Roman styles of jewellery may have lent them broad appeal across different segments of society. It may also have made them easier to acquire, or to replace, than some of the distinctive regionalised styles which may have been made in far fewer workshops. These torcs may also have been inherently more multi-vocal, blurring the boundary between ‘native

\textsuperscript{146} See Wild 1985 and Rothe 2012b for the female Gallic ensemble. For detailed discussion of Regina’s clothing, see Carroll 2013b. While textile remains and iconographic sources for southern Britain are limited, a marked decline in the deposition of brooches, starting in the south-east during the late first century AD, may reflect the adoption of this garment style, which did not require them (e.g., Cool 2016, 413-415; Cool, Baxter 2016).

\textsuperscript{147} E.g., Creighton 2000; 2006; Pitts 2010; 2019; Webley 2015. Martin Pitts has recently placed particular emphasis on connections between the Catuvellauni and the Treveri, a people who lived in the area around modern Luxembourg and the Moselle region of Germany (e.g., Pitts 2019, 214).

\textsuperscript{148} Intense, and relatively pervasive, connections with Gallic communities are suggested by the adoption and adaptation of Continental styles of copper-alloy brooch in south-eastern England during the late first century BC and early first century AD, such as the Simple Gallic/Colchester, Rosette/Thistle, and Langton Down types as well as the presence of a few more unusual Continental forms (Jundi, Hill 1998, 127-31, fig. 2; Pitts 2010; 2019, 91-5; Mackreth 2011, 8-48, for typology). Early long-distance connection to Roman imperial networks may be indicated by rarer examples of elite objects in precious metal (see footnote 113).

\textsuperscript{149} See for example Regina’s tombstone depicting a twisted rod/cable torcs and matching bracelets (Carroll 2013b), a twisted bar torc from a female inhumation burial at Atlantic House, London (Keily 2003), and the twisted strip torc found in a votive deposit at Billingford, Norfolk (Gurney 2011). Since becoming more aware of the variety of Roman torcs, the author has begun to identify possible examples of lightweight fastened torcs in his own work (e.g., Marshall, Wardle forthcoming), but fragments can often be ambiguous.
torc’ and ‘Roman necklace.’ As such their meanings may have been contingent on specific audiences or social settings within provincial Roman society and may have been emphasised, altered, or accentuated by the way in which they were integrated into different dress ensembles by their wearers.

Conclusions

Baldock penannular torcs appeared around the mid-first century AD as a new regional type of dress object, worn by some native women in south-eastern Britain. Torcs had an important pre-Roman pedigree in the region, but these examples are not simply a direct continuation of local Iron Age dress. Torcs were reimagined in new materials, sizes, and styles and became important within new social practices, including the deposition of copper-alloy torcs within female burials and the use of miniature precious metal torcs to adorn images of the gods. These changes are related to patterns seen elsewhere in Europe, and it seems likely that the meanings associated with Romano-British torcs were shaped by increased contact and dialogue with a wider network of torc-using communities. The emergence of the Baldock torcs may reflect efforts to emphasise local native identities during a period of instability and to help shape and define their relationship to this wider world. These local torcs proved rather short-lived, and the growing popularity of more globalised styles of Roman dress, of both Italian and provincial origins, may well be a factor in their disappearance. However, there is some evidence to suggest that other types of torcs may have flourished within this same context as new kinds of Roman identities developed and spread in the provinces.

Torcs were not static signifiers of specific pre-Roman British identities, they were diverse, flexible, and changing symbols, dynamically incorporated into new Roman social contexts through processes of cultural bricolage. Some torcs may have been heirlooms inherited from ancestors or may have deliberately drawn on earlier meanings, but these objects were also subject to local innovation and to influence from a variety of external sources. We have seen how Roman colonial contexts seem to have inspired or rejuvenated torc-wearing in many areas, sometimes resulting in the emergence of new styles, meanings, and social roles. In some areas, torcs seem to have become established elements of a distinctive local ethnic costume, while in other contexts they may have become closely enmeshed within more globalised Roman fashions and identities or bound up with new Roman forms of authority.

Future work must look beyond the pre-Roman native origins of torcs and place more emphasis on exploring and comparing their diverse iterations and uses within the Roman world. Comparing the character, distribution, and historical trajectories of different types, and their appearances within disparate dress ensembles and social contexts, should reveal more about how these objects were used by their wearers to variously shape, distinguish, or integrate their identities within the complex social networks of the empire. This work would ideally include comparison with other kinds of dress objects and with areas, such as the eastern empire, which have largely fallen beyond my scope here. Such perspectives may also help to clarify the long-term legacy of these provincial Roman torcs, such as their relationship to the

150 See Terrenato 1998.
precious metal styles that were used as prestige dress objects once again in later Roman and Byzantine contexts and to types found in early medieval Europe.

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Thank you to Courtney Ward for organising the stimulating Rome conference, for the invitation to speak, and for her patience through a period of major professional changes and the disruption caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. I am especially indebted to Helen Ashworth and Heritage Network, Glynn Davis, Jackie Keily and the Museum of London, Laura Pooley and the Colchester Archaeological Trust, and Angela Wardle for bringing torcs to my attention, sharing useful observations, and very kindly allowing me to make use of details/images, in some cases in advance of their own publications. I am also grateful to Lindsay Allason-Jones, Helen Chittock, Jon Cotton, John Creighton, Nina Crummy, Julia Farley, Matthew Fittock, Adam Gwilt, Natasha Harlow, Fraser Hunter, Tess Machling, Katie Miller, Elsa Price, Rebecca Redfern, Michelle Statton, Ellen Swift, Francine Toon, and Edwin Wood who have answered queries or provided help on various torc and bracelet related matters. Nina, Jon, John, Glynn, Fraser, and Angela provided insightful comments on drafts or sections of this text, and Katie patiently read through and commented on multiple versions. Of course, any errors that remain are entirely my own responsibility.

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151 E.g., Croom 2000, 85; Walter 2001; Von Rummell 2007; Mráv 2015, on high-status, elite torcs. Many of these seem to have been worn by elite males, and some may have had military connotations. Swift et al. (2022) have also begun to explore the wider context of contemporary torcs in Egypt which also include base metal examples, some of which were worn by women and children.

152 Cessford (1995) considers the impact of Roman-period torcs on later prestige neck ornaments found in early medieval Scotland. Goldberg explores similar ideas, also considering whether penannular Roman military torcs, worn on the chest as awards, might have encouraged the growing popularity of the penannular brooch as a form of elite expression in late and post-Roman Britain (Goldberg 2015, 165-6). Neck rings found in sixth-century burials in England, largely associated with children, are lightweight fastened rings of strip section made of copper-alloy and decorated with simple incuse designs. These are much more modest in character and are actually somewhat comparable to earlier Romano-British finds from the region (e.g., the much earlier Baldock E penannular torcs or the lightweight fastened necklets). Walton Rogers (2007, 132-133) rejects connections to British prehistoric neck rings in favour of links to Continental styles of the third to fifth centuries but does not discuss the possibility of any relationship to Romano-British torcs.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No</th>
<th>Type</th>
<th>Size</th>
<th>Condition</th>
<th>County</th>
<th>Site</th>
<th>Context</th>
<th>Reference</th>
<th>Fig nos.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>Adult torc</td>
<td>Complete</td>
<td>Hertfordshire</td>
<td>California, Baldock</td>
<td>Roman small town; burial; 1st C AD</td>
<td>Ashworth in prep; Wardle in prep, SF 21</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>Adult torc</td>
<td>Complete</td>
<td>Hertfordshire</td>
<td>Buntingford</td>
<td>unknown; metal detected</td>
<td>Watters 2004; PAS BH-905682</td>
<td>4;5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>Smaller size</td>
<td>Fragment</td>
<td>Hertfordshire</td>
<td>Walls Field, Baldock</td>
<td>Roman small town; quarrying pit; 1st C AD+</td>
<td>Stead &amp; Rigby 1986, 125–8, fig 52, no. 188</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>Smaller size</td>
<td>Complete (bent)</td>
<td>Bedfordshire</td>
<td>Great Billington</td>
<td>unknown; metal detected</td>
<td>Watters 2012; PAS: BH-5519C4</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>Smaller size (reworked)</td>
<td>Fragments made into two rings</td>
<td>Norfolk</td>
<td>Billingford</td>
<td>Roman small town unstratified/periglacial feature</td>
<td>Cooper 2011, 45-6, fig 32, nos. 17-18</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>B</td>
<td>Adult torc</td>
<td>Complete</td>
<td>London</td>
<td>Bank of England, City of London</td>
<td>Roman town; unknown context</td>
<td>Unpublished; Marshall in prep; MoL accession no. 13850</td>
<td>1;4;5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>Adult torc</td>
<td>Fragment</td>
<td>Norfolk</td>
<td>Barton Bendish</td>
<td>unknown; metal Detected</td>
<td>Bales 2006; PAS: NMS-IC7B25</td>
<td>4;5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>Smaller size</td>
<td>Fragment</td>
<td>Hertfordshire</td>
<td>St Albans</td>
<td>Roman town; unknown context</td>
<td>Wheeler, Wheeler 1936, 210-11, fig 45, no. 42</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>D</td>
<td>Adult torc</td>
<td>Complete (broken)</td>
<td>Hertfordshire</td>
<td>California, Baldock</td>
<td>Roman small town; burial; mid-1st C AD</td>
<td>Ashworth in prep; Wardle in prep, SF 12</td>
<td>4;5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>E</td>
<td>Adult torc</td>
<td>Complete (broken)</td>
<td>London</td>
<td>Harper Road, Southwark</td>
<td>Roman town; burial; mid-1st C AD</td>
<td>Dean, Hammersom 1980, 19-21, fig 6; Cotton 2008, 155-9, figs 3.6.3.3 and 3.6.4; Redfern et al 2017, 5-9, fig 3. Marshall in prep; MoL Accession HR79[310]&lt;83&gt;</td>
<td>2;5;10</td>
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<td>Adult torc</td>
<td>Fragment</td>
<td>Norfolk</td>
<td>Barton Bendish</td>
<td>unknown; metal detected</td>
<td>Gurney 2005, 737, fig 1a</td>
<td>5</td>
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<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>E</td>
<td>Adult torc</td>
<td>Fragment</td>
<td>Norfolk</td>
<td>West Acre</td>
<td>unknown; metal detected</td>
<td>Rogerson 2013; PAS: NMS-A10245</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>E</td>
<td>Adult torc</td>
<td>Fragment</td>
<td>Norfolk</td>
<td>Barton Bendish</td>
<td>unknown; metal detected</td>
<td>Gurney 2005, 737, fig 1b</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>E</td>
<td>Adult torc</td>
<td>Complete</td>
<td>Essex</td>
<td>Arena Leisure Centre, Colchester</td>
<td>Roman town; ?burial</td>
<td>Baister 2015; Benfield 2015, 12, SF1</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 1 - List of Baldock copper-alloy penannular torcs/bracelets. See Table 2 for type definitions.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Nos.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>Rod hoop and simple terminal with incised decoration</td>
<td>1–5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>Rod hoop (torc-twisted) and simple terminal with incised decoration</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>Rod hoop and moulded terminals with incised/stamped decoration</td>
<td>7–8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D</td>
<td>Rod hoop with flat strip terminals with incised/stamped decoration</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E</td>
<td>Flat strip hoop and terminals with incised or incised/stamped decoration</td>
<td>10–14</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2 – Typology of Baldock copper-alloy penannular torcs/bracelets. See Table 1 for list and numbering and Fig 3 for illustrations.
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83 [Accessed: 17 Feb 2023].
Fig. 1 – Copper-alloy penannular rod torc with torc-twisted hoop of Baldock type B, from the Walbrook valley at Bank of England, City of London (Table 1, no. 6; photograph © Museum of London). Diameter 129.4 mm, viewed at an angle to show terminal decoration.

Fig. 2 – Copper-alloy penannular strip torc of Baldock type E from burial at Harper Road, Southwark, London (Table 1, no. 10; photograph © Museum of London). Diameter 123 mm, now (?)deliberately) broken across the hoop at the top/back.
Fig. 3 – Map of southern Britain showing the distribution of Baldock copper-alloy penannular torcs and bracelets, contrasted with the core distribution areas of other Romano-British torc traditions (defined based on Hunter 2008, fig. 8.2, excluding outliers). See Table 1 for details and numbering of Baldock tradition torcs and bracelets. Related penannular finds come from Maiden Castle and Greenhill, Dorset (see Fig. 8 and text for details). Map created by author using QGIS software. Base map contains OS data © Crown copyright and database right (2020), used under OGL License.
Fig. 4 – Type figure for Baldock copper-alloy penannular torcs and bracelets. See Table 1 for numbering and Table 2 for definition of types. Drawings by author. Type A (no. 2; after Watters 2004); Type B (no. 6; MoL 13850); Type C (no. 7; reconstructed by author based on a distorted fragment, after Bales 2006); Type D (no. 9; after Ashworth in prep; © Heritage Network), and Type E (no. 14; after Benfield 2015; © Colchester Archaeological Trust).

Fig. 5 – Representative sample of decoration found on the terminals and hoops of Baldock copper-alloy penannular torcs/bracelets, arranged by type (A–E). See Table 1 for numbering and see Table 2 and Fig. 4 for definition of types. Drawing by author, after sources as Table 1. Not to fixed scale.
Fig. 6 – Map of south-eastern Britain showing the distribution of Baldock copper-alloy penannular torcs/bracelets (and selected related types) labelled by type/shape (left; see Fig. 4) and by terminal decoration style (right; see text). Map created by author using QGIS software. Base map contains OS data © Crown copyright and database right (2020), used under OGL License.

Fig. 7 – Copper-alloy penannular rod torc with lozenge hoop section and expanded thistle-headed terminals from early Roman deposit in the Walbrook valley at St Swithin’s House, City of London (Photograph © Museum of London). Diameter 141 mm.
Fig. 8 – Copper-alloy jewellery fragments, possibly related to Baldock penannular torcs from first-century AD contexts in Dorset. Left: small penannular torc or bracelet/armlet from Maiden Castle Hillfort. Right: (?)penannular torc from probable hoard at Greenhill, Weymouth. Reconstruction drawings by author, after Wheeler 1943; Megaw 1971.

Fig. 9 – Copper-alloy fastened torc/necklet made of torc-twisted bar, with hollow spherical bulla-style pendant, from a Roman inhumation burial at Atlantic House, City of London. Drawing by author, after Keily 2003; Watson 2003.

Fig. 10 – Comparison between decoration of type E torc from Harper Road, Southwark London (no. 10) and a sample of decoration from the terminals of penannular strip bracelets of Cool group IX. Drawings by author, bracelet terminals after Crummy 2005 and Portable Antiquities Scheme finds: LON-F13324 and KENT-EB39D6. Not to fixed scale.
Fig. 11 – Roman tombstone from the military base at South Shields, Tyne and Wear for Regina, a 30-year-old Catuvellaunian freedwoman and wife of Barates, a Palmyrene. She is depicted wearing a twisted rod or cable torc, presumably fastened at the back, and matching bracelets. Other aspects of provincial costume include her clothing, which is a variant on the so-called ‘female Gallic ensemble.’ The tombstone is in Roman style, and the box and spinning equipment are traditional Roman symbols of female virtue. The inscriptions are in Latin and Palmyrene Aramaic. © Tyne & Wear Archives & Museums / Bridgeman Images.