

Introduction

1.1. Introduction

This book will form the foundations for future study on aspects of the Clayton Collection. It will bring together details of the life of its founder John Clayton (1792–1890), the history of the Collection and archaeological analysis of specific parts of the Collection. The archaeological analysis in the book is based on the Collection catalogue, which has been constructed as part of the research and is available at <http://www.claytonromantrust.online/index.html>. The Collection comprises archaeological finds, books, furniture and archival material. This important group of material has been hiding in plain sight for the last 160 years. Many scholars know of its existence, and some pieces, such as the Carvoran Modius (*RIB* 2415.56) or the Chesters Diploma (*RIB* 2401.10) are internationally renowned. Yet the vast majority of the material has never been studied, and there are many popular myths regarding Clayton, the museum and the Collection. Research into archival sources aims to reveal who John Clayton was, his place in 19th century society, and his links with other important antiquarians and archaeologists of the day. This introduction will include a brief biography of John Clayton, explain the history of the Collection, discuss the creation of a catalogue and summarise the book structure.

1.2. Aims and Objectives

This study has two main aims; firstly to understand how the 19th century context affected the excavation, collection and conservation policies of Clayton and secondly, to use the Collection to illustrate life on Hadrian's Wall in the Roman period, both as it was understood in the 19th century and as it is understood today. The exploration of these aims will show whether or not a 19th century collection can be used to answer 21st century archaeological research questions.

In order to address the first aim, this research will consider the 19th century context that Clayton was part of, both from an archaeological and antiquarian perspective, and in terms of 19th century Newcastle society. Alongside a full documentation of Clayton's excavations and publications, this will allow a measured assessment of how the 19th century context influenced the Collection. To address the second aim, a fully revised collection catalogue was constructed and the composition of the Collection considered. Detailed case studies focussing on selected artefact groups were carried out, and the material compared to other sites on Hadrian's Wall and further afield. Current research agendas are examined and specific research questions relating to life on Hadrian's Wall in the Roman period applied to the Collection (Symonds and Mason 2009a; 2009b; Petts 2006).

1.3. The Collection: An Overview

The Collection database contains 22,800 records as of January 2019. Whilst the vast majority of these records relate to archaeological finds, there are 53 books, 1282 records relating to archival material, 11 paintings, 6 photographs and 12 cases and cupboards. Clayton had a very large library, containing many archaeological books, some of which have remained in the Collection. Much of the archival material relates to the 20th century history of the Collection. In terms of archaeological material, coins represent a large part of the Collection, numbering 11,655, although 9344 of these are from the Coventina's Well deposit. Pottery is the next largest group, with around 5000 records (but many more sherds). The Collection has always been well known for its inscribed and sculpted stonework, and the figures bear this out with 97 altars, 39 statues and 56 centurial stones. Amongst the rest of the material are jewellery, tools, glassware, military equipment and votive offerings. The Collection contains a wide range of Roman material culture, presenting an opportunity to carry out archaeological analysis of this 19th century collection.

1.3.1. Provenance of Material

In order to avoid confusion throughout the book, Chesters will be used when referring to the modern house, whilst *Cilurnum* will be used when referring to the fort. John Clayton owned and lived at the mansion house of Chesters, which contained in the grounds the site of *Cilurnum*¹ and the fort is the site from which the majority of the Collection comes.² However, within the Clayton collection are finds from many other sites, both along Hadrian's Wall and further afield. Clayton did not own all of these sites, nor even excavate at all of them. Finds came to him by various means, sometimes through swapping material with friends, sometimes through purchase, and some through inheritance.

Although started by John Clayton, the Collection also contains material which has been added to the Collection since his death. This material is important and should be studied in conjunction with the material from the Central Sector of Hadrian's Wall; however, a distinction will be made throughout the book when material is discussed that was not collected by Clayton. The majority of 'non-Clayton' material within the Collection is that excavated

¹ It is likely that whilst he was working he spent much of his time at the Newcastle house on Fenkle Street and came to Chesters at weekends. In later life he spent more time at Chesters.

² If the 9344 coins from Coventina's Well and the 1977 coins from the Throckley Hoard are taken out of calculations, then the material from Chesters makes up c.45% of the Collection.

by F.G. Simpson in the early 20th century during his time as the estate archaeologist. Some of this material was discussed in his articles published in *Archaeologia Aeliana* (Gibson and Simpson 1909a; 1909b). His daughter, Grace Simpson, Honorary Curator of the Clayton Collection from 1950 to 1972, also published *Watermills and Military Works on Hadrian's Wall: Excavations in Northumberland 1907–13*, which covered much of the rest of his work (1976).

R. C. Bosanquet excavated at Housesteads in 1898, under the aegis of the Society of Antiquaries of Newcastle upon Tyne (hereafter SANT) (Bosanquet 1904, 204). Unusually for work supported by SANT, not all of the material went into the Society's museum. Some finds went to the Clayton Collection, perhaps as thanks for allowing the excavation on Clayton land, and this was the start of Bosanquet's association with the Collection, which continued for many years and will be discussed in more detail in Section 2.2. From 1907 Simpson and J.P. Gibson excavated at Haltwhistle Burn, the *vallum* at Cawfields, and elsewhere; again this material became part of the Clayton Collection (Gibson and Simpson 1909b; Simpson 1976).

Over the years there have been occasional new acquisitions made by the Clayton Trustees. These have mostly been restricted to material found at *Cilurnum*, whether by visitors, the Ministry of Works projects or other means.

Some items which have been added into the collection are not archaeological items *per se*, being books, cases or paintings. These all add information when studying Clayton and his strategy of collecting, as they form part of the history of the Collection. Table 1.1 shows which sites Clayton excavated and when, whilst Table 1.2 shows the material from sites not excavated by Clayton and Graph 1.1 illustrates the proportion of finds from each site excluding the coins from Coventina's Well.

1.3.2. Missing Material

The Collection is lacking any quantities of animal bone and coarse-ware pottery despite Clayton regularly finding deposits of this type of material. One example noted by Clayton was when "large quantities of horns and bones of deer and cattle, oyster shells" were found at *Cilurnum* (1876a, 173) much of which appears not to have been kept. The practice in the 19th century was often to 'cherry-pick' what was deemed interesting and important, and much of the material we would describe as bulk-finds today was ignored. In particular, unworked animal bone, which today would be used to identify agricultural and butchery practices, as well as provide data about the environment and diet, was not kept as it was not seen as useful or interesting. The more detailed environmental work of soil analysis, seeds and pollen had only rarely been considered. Figures 1.1 and 1.2 show many pieces of animal bone

Table 1.1. Sites where Clayton excavated and the number of items known to come from each site

Site	Excavated	No. of items
Carrawburgh	1871, 1873, 1874 and 1876	171
Carvoran	1886	26
<i>Cilurnum</i>	From 1840s onwards ^a	4374
Coventina's Well	1876 and 1877	153
Haltwhistle (various sites)	Unclear as to exact dates	83
Housesteads	1849 onwards ^b	140
Housesteads- Chapel Hill	1883	5
Turret 26b (Brunton)	1872, 1873, 1878 and 1880	2
Turret 29a (Blackcarts)	1873	2
Turret 45a (Walltown)	1883-6	Unknown
Turret 45b (Walltown West)	1883	Unknown
Milecastle 29 (Tower Tye)	1857	Unknown
Milecastle 33 (Shield-on-the-Wall)	1884	Unknown
Milecastle 37 (Housesteads)	1852 and 1853	4
Milecastle 39 (Castle Nick)	1854	2
Milecastle 42 (Cawfields)	1847, 1848, 1849	14

a More detail will be given of specific work at *Cilurnum* in Chapter 4.

b Full details are not always known but there was definitely excavation in the North Gateway in 1856 and 1862, and the civilian settlement 1883-4.

Table 1.2. Material in the Collection not excavated by Clayton

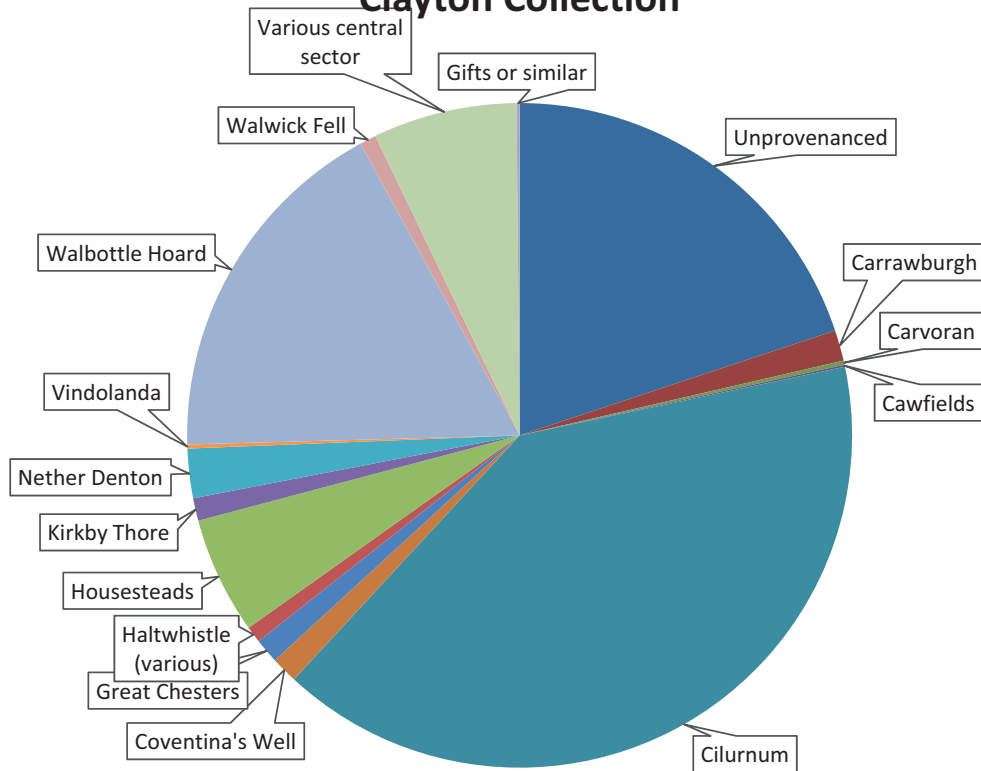
Site	Items	Source
Barcombe/Thorngraston	Arm purse and 63 coins	Clayton purchased the Barcombe/Thorngraston purse in Nov. 1858 (Birley 1963)
Birdoswald	Arm purse	Gift from J. C. Bruce (Birley 1963)
Castleary	Burnt wheat	Gifted to him- signature unclear on the letter
Corbridge	Late Medieval copper-alloy skillet and ewer	Gift from J. C. Bruce
Great Chesters	135 items, mainly pottery	Gift from H. J. W. Coulson ^a
Halton Chesters	1 piece of sculpture and 18 pieces of pottery	Gift from Blackett Family ^b
Heddon-on-the-Wall	2 prehistoric pieces of flint	Presented to the Collection in 1900 by Cadwallader J. Bates
Horncastle	14 Roman coins	Gift from Miss Caull, presumably to Miss Clayton
Housesteads	142 coins, numerous iron arrowheads and three pieces of stonework	R. C. Bosanquet excavated here in 1898
Huntcliff	A piece of textile, framed and annotated	From 1912 excavations of the site, a gift to F. G. Simpson for his help in identifying pottery
Hutcheson Hill, Antonine Wall	Plaster cast of RIB 2189- Antonine Wall distance slab	Other museums have casts of this stone, presumably Clayton purchased one also
Isle of Harty	Two Samian ware dishes	Gift to Miss Clayton from the Ridley family at Walwick Hall (Payne 1893, 97; Simpson undated b)
Kirkby Thore	124 records, mixed material	Discovered in 1838 - Clayton's sister received the material from their Aunt Jane (Anonymous 1927)
Lanchester	2 pieces of stonework	Purchased – details unknown
Mediterranean	13 coins	Souvenirs from a Mediterranean visit
Nether Denton	184 records, mixed material	Material found when building vicarage in 1868 and given to Clayton
Pompeii	>10 tesserae	Two groups; 1 st group in a box labelled H. W. Coulson. 2 nd wrapped in paper with a note in a different hand.
Rochester and Alnham, Northumberland	Finger ring and 6 beads	Gift from H. W. Coulson ^c
Multiple Milecastles and turrets, including Haltwhistle Burn	c.1500 records	F. G. Simpson excavated 1907-1914
S. England	2 tiles	A gift or a purchase. Perhaps from the Isle of Harty
Throckley/ Walbottle Hoard	1977 coins and the ceramic vessel	Purchased the coins and pot from the finder in 1879/80
Vindolanda	23 inscribed or sculpted stones	Inscriptions from Crindledykes were chance finds. Other material inherited when site purchased in 1863.

a Mr. Henry J. W. Coulson was the owner of the land in 1894 (Gibson 1903b, 20). In the 1871 census Henry Coulson was staying with Clayton at Chesters, along with his sister Alice. If they were family friends, perhaps Clayton was given material found on their land as they knew he was a collector and antiquarian. By 1881 Coulson is living in Surrey and he stays in the south until at least the 1901 census.

b Halton Chesters was owned by the Blackett Family. Clayton was legal advisor to the 8th Baronet, Hugh Blackett, as well as a friend, so it is possible that Sir Hugh gave Clayton the material.

c A shale bead is illustrated in the *History of the Berwickshire Naturalists Club* as found by Coulson on Castle Hill, Alnham (Hardy, 1882-4, 548). This cannot be matched to any of the beads in the collection unfortunately but may have been lost.

Percentage of finds from each site within the Clayton Collection



Graph 1.1. Showing the percentage of material from each site (excluding the Coventina's Well coins) accessioned in the Collections.



Figure 1.1. Photograph of ongoing excavations at Cilurnum showing pottery and animal bone lying around trench edges (Clayton N.G. photo album).



Figure 1.2. Photograph of ongoing excavations at Cilurnum showing pottery and animal bone lying in the niches of the bathhouse and on the top of the trench (Clayton N.G. photo album).

and pottery laid out on the sides of trenches or within the niches at the bathhouse. One photograph from the time shows pottery strewn along the riverbank. It is presumed most of this material was re-buried or disposed of.

As well as the practice of not retaining animal bone, it appears human bone was not retained. Thirty-three human skeletons were found just outside the fort bathhouse at *Cilurnum* (Bruce 1885b, 101); however, they are no longer in the Collection and their disposal is not discussed in the report on the excavation. Perhaps they were re-buried in the local churchyard, as it seems unlikely they were simply thrown away, given the religious beliefs of Clayton and Bruce.³ This is an extreme example but highlights the difference in the recording practices between the 19th century and now. Whatever happened to the bones was not published; it may have been recorded in Clayton's private papers, but these sadly too are lost.

It is clear that parts of the Collection were sold in a sale in 1930. These range from coins to paintings of the excavations and from shells to Roman stonework. There

is scant detail, with Lot 640 merely described as a "mixed lot including a cast of the Chesters diploma" (Hampton and Sons 1930, 43). Coins seem to have been the most popular item to be sold, with at least 1510 coins being sold. Unfortunately, the entries from the auction catalogue are vague, and do not state from which sites they came, or even provide any detail on the coins themselves. Appendix A contains everything that was listed in the auction catalogue which would have formed part of the Collection if they had not been sold.

Another way that items have left the Collection after excavation was the practice of fellow antiquarians giving gifts to each other. The presence of *tesserae* from Pompeii in the Collection shows that this took place internationally as well as within Britain. Clayton certainly received archaeological material as gifts from Bruce and other antiquarian acquaintances (see Table 1.2 and Chapter 3 for more details). There is also evidence that he gave items away, with the Hawick Archaeological Society noting in their minutes that they had contacted him for a donation of coins from Coventina's Well (Hogg 1876). As well as this informal method of exchanging finds, it was still the practice for material which was considered important or significant to be donated to the British Museum, and in this way, Clayton donated the Chesters diploma (*RIB* 2401.10).

³ The current vicars of St. Michael's and All Angels Church in Warden, St. Giles' Church in Chollerton with Birtley and St. Aidan's Church in Thockrington were contacted and could not provide any information.

Overall, much of the material missing from the Collection can be identified, whether individual items or more general groups, and will be acknowledged throughout the work where relevant.

1.4. Chapter Outline

Chapter 2 will discuss the sources and the methodology for data collection for the project, as well as giving a history of the Collection up to the present day. Approximately 6000 items from the Collection had been put into an electronic catalogue when research for this study began. This equated to just under half of the items which had been assigned a number (c.12, 000). Another c.4000 items were numbered and added to the database during the course of this study, with the database now containing 22,800 records.⁴ Multiple issues were encountered when constructing the new Collection database. The main problem was the difference between the standard of recording in the 19th century compared to that expected in the 21st century. Information for this catalogue was mainly taken from the cataloguing books at the Corbridge store, but where these were not available, or sufficient, other sources were used. The catalogues compiled by Hall and Budge in 1900 and 1903 respectively were useful for confirming provenance information. Archival sources held at Northumberland Archives Centre, Woodhorn, such as letters to and from Clayton, which mention excavations, and the Blair sketchbooks,⁵ both provided further information. Similar sources were also used for filling in details regarding the history of the Collection, which is more complicated after Clayton's death. The resulting history showed that the Collection has been at risk more than once, and thankfully saved from dispersal by various groups.

Archival research was extremely important for finding out more about John Clayton, both personally and professionally. His personal papers have not survived,⁶ so in order to get an insight into his character and interests, the papers of his friends and colleagues have been investigated. These unpublished archives contained letters from Clayton and offer an insight into his character. In total, over 50 letters from him to colleagues and friends have been located (Appendices H and J). These mostly deal with antiquarian matters and offer an insight into his thoughts and plans for excavation.⁷

In order to understand Clayton in context it is necessary to situate discussion within an analysis of antiquarian study in the 19th century, which is dealt with in Chapter 3. Clayton's role as Town Clerk and lawyer will be investigated. His wealth,

accumulated through shrewd business deals, allowed him to purchase land and carry out excavations. Clayton's legacy of the Hadrian's Wall estate, the Collection, and the information produced through his excavations will be explored.

Coins are the focus of the second half of Chapter 3, where they are used as a case study in exploring the cultural biography of objects after discovery. Many of the coins discovered by Clayton are no longer in the Collection, whilst some coins in the Collection were gifts from friends and family. They are small portable items, immediately recognisable and very collectable. This case study will also help to highlight some of the antiquarian networks in existence both in Clayton's time, and later.

A discussion of the history of *Cilurnum*, from the Roman period to today, is given in Chapter 4. As approximately 45% of the material in the Collection comes from *Cilurnum* it is important to understand the history of investigation at *Cilurnum*, as well as the current understanding of Roman *Cilurnum*, much of which is based on Clayton's work. Very little study has been undertaken at *Cilurnum* since Clayton's death so fully understanding his work is vital to understanding Roman *Cilurnum*. Short case studies on some groups of material will be presented, including querns, pottery and glass.

Personal adornment is discussed in Chapter 5. Items of personal adornment can be used to look at various aspects of Roman life, including fashion, trade, manufacturing, religion, status and identity. The Clayton Collection's ability to illuminate these questions is explored where the evidence allows. In particular, evidence for 4th century occupation through the items of personal adornment will be analysed. There will be a focus in the second half of the chapter on brooches. 143 brooches can be assigned a type, of which 87 were from *Cilurnum*, allowing collection-wide analysis, as well as a focus on *Cilurnum*. Issues over the dating and typology of brooches in Roman Britain will be analysed, discussing the strengths and weaknesses of the current systems. The Clayton brooches will be compared with a large number of sites, from Hadrian's Wall, the North of Britain, the south of Britain and the Continent.

Chapter 6 deals with the *militaria* within the Collection and aims to discuss the material in relation to military equipment from other sites in Roman Britain. It will explore whether it is possible to identify a 'normal' *militaria* assemblage, and if so, how does the Clayton Collection compare? The Collection contains 693 items that can be classified as *militaria*. These will be compared with material from South Shields, Vindolanda and the National Museum of Wales in order to compare from Hadrian's Wall and further afield. Evidence for the cavalry unit based at *Cilurnum* will be sought in this assemblage, to discover whether we can identify units from their material culture as well as inscriptions.

The major theoretical debate in this chapter will focus on the question of 'what is *militaria*?' Many weapons could

⁴ Almost 9,344 of these new numbers have been assigned to coins from Coventina's Well, which have been identified by British Museum staff.

⁵ These will be discussed in more detail in Chapter 4, in particular Table 4.5.

⁶ Although they were present in 1903 when Budge published his catalogue (Budge 1903, vii).

⁷ The letter books from 1826-1940 from Clayton's law firm are held by Tyne and Wear Archives but were not dealt with as it was felt their contents were peripheral to the thesis' study area (DT.CG Acc.39).

have been used for hunting, and civilians could have worn belt fittings or decorative mounts. The difficulty in clearly defining items used only by the military personnel will be explored. The accepted categories are used, although the flaws in this methodology will be discussed. Beads and their multiplicity of uses are a case in point, with melon beads having been found on harness, scabbards and spade sheaths, as well as possibly being worn as jewellery.

Evidence for craft and industry at *Cilurnum* will be discussed in Chapter 7. Iron tools will be the main source of evidence used, but unfinished items or waste will add to the picture. Evidence for antler- and bone-working, as well as bronze-smithing and iron-working will be reviewed. As

Clayton only excavated within the fort area at *Cilurnum* the material may indicate that soldiers were carrying out these activities. This has an impact on our understanding of craft and industry at the forts along the northern frontier.

The final chapter, Chapter 8 will summarise the research and its findings, as well as its wider impact. This will include suggestions for future work on the Collection that was not possible within the scope of a doctoral thesis, on which this book is based. Equally, ideas for further work on Clayton and his place in 19th century Newcastle will be highlighted. Evidence will be put forward to show that a 19th century collection can be used to answer 21st century research questions about life on Hadrian's Wall.