

IRON ANGLO-SAXON BROOCH.

Suffolk Institute of Archæology and Natural History.

A FEW NOTES ON AN IRON ANGLO-SAXON BROOCH SUPPOSED TO HAVE BEEN FOUND AT HOXNE, SUFFOLK.

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IN 1906 the effects of the late Miss K. H. Betts of Wortham were sold by auction. One lot came into my possession. It is described in the auctioneer's catalogue as "a case of ancient bronze and flint ornaments found at Hoxne, Suffolk." The case (which probably belongs to the early Victorian period) contained the following Anglo-Saxon ornaments, which had evidently been found in some Anglo-Saxon graves:—

A pair of long brooches of bronze with horse-head terminals, the two side knobs of the head being missing in each case;

One small bronze brooch, with ring-and-dot decoration;

Half of a bronze-gilt clasp with ring decoration;

Twelve Saxon beads of various shapes and sizes;

A broken flat amber bead, and parts of a hollow silver bead;

And, last, but most important, various parts of a large iron brooch of unusual workmanship.

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Mr. Reginald Smith of the British Museum kindly offered to have the pieces of the last-mentioned brooch put together, and a drawing of the same made under his supervision.

Plate 1 shows the parts found in their correct arrangement.

Plate 2 represents the complete brooch as it probably appeared originally.

This brooch is made of iron and is nearly 8 inches long. In the middle of the head is a panel of copper-gilt, with centre socket for jewel, either garnet or amber. The panel is let into the iron of the brooch. By the engraving around the jewelled centre the age of the brooch can be determined. It represents an animal curled up so as to fill the panel. The beast takes various forms in ornaments of different periods: the one represented here is of the conventional pattern described as Style I. in "Die Altergermanische Thierornamentik," by Bernhard Salin, and was used between the years 500 and 600 A.D. When the various parts of the design are arranged in order and laid out flat, the beast looks something like a dog with an attenuated body, large ears and eyes, and is probably a debased form of the Roman Lion. As time goes on, the body becomes more elongated and the limbs disappear, so that in the later periods the design may be called serpentine and sometimes degenerates into double lines interlaced. The peculiar positions taken by this beast are very cleverly and clearly shown in the book mentioned above. Sometimes the head was calmly put on backwards; in one engraving a leg was in the way, so it was passed through a hole in the lower jaw and then through the open mouth.

On either side of the panel the head of the brooch is ornamented with two silver plates bearing incised

scroll-work on the inner edges. These plates are for some reason double in each case.

The knobs of the head are crescent-shaped, covered with silver plates, and attached to the head by narrow necks around which run hollow mouldings of bronze or copper-gilt, the ridges being of silver with ribbed edges.

The bow is ornamented on each side with an inlaid S-curve of copper or bronze. Judging from the rest of the brooch, I should say this was of copper-gilt.

The foot of the brooch consists of several parts. At the top, below the bow, is a panel similar to that in the head, and also of copper-gilt, with a centre-piece of amber. The same animal is used as a decoration. The wings projecting from the foot below the bow are only partly covered with silver without decoration. Beneath these are narrow mouldings, similar to those on the knobs of the head, the raised parts of ribbed silver and the hollows of copper-gilt.

In the earlier type of bronze brooch, the terminal represented a horse's head, the nostrils being below. The present example is very ornate, and is decorated with silver plates of various shapes with signs of gilding. Between the nostrils springs a crescent similar to the knobs of the head, which are simply the flattened-out bosses found on the older brooches of this type, such as the two I have in this find; but the crescent shape is very unusual. It occurs in bronze specimens found in Norfolk and Worcestershire; but this brooch is later in character and must date, Mr. Reginald Smith thinks, from between 550 and 600 A.D. (A brooch with crescent wings is figured in Vol. I., Suffolk Institute Proceedings, Plate 7).

Iron brooches of this period are very rare indeed. I have not been able to find a record of any having

been discovered before. One reason for this may be that the iron is soon destroyed unless preserved by exceptional conditions. The two long brooches mentioned above have both lost their side knobs, simply because in this early type they were not cast in one piece with the head, but fixed to the iron cross-piece for the pin, and so have fallen away when the iron rusted.

Gilt panels similar to those described are mentioned in Vol. III., "Collectanea Antiqua," by Roach Smith, one found at Rochester and another at Canterbury (now in the Museum there). These may have been parts of a similar iron brooch or some other ornament.

I have searched the Proceedings of both the Norfolk and Suffolk Institutes of Archæology, but have not found any account or mention of this find at Hoxne; nor am I able to obtain any information about it from any other source.

A Major Betts of Wortham Hall was a member of the Suffolk Institute for the year 1871.

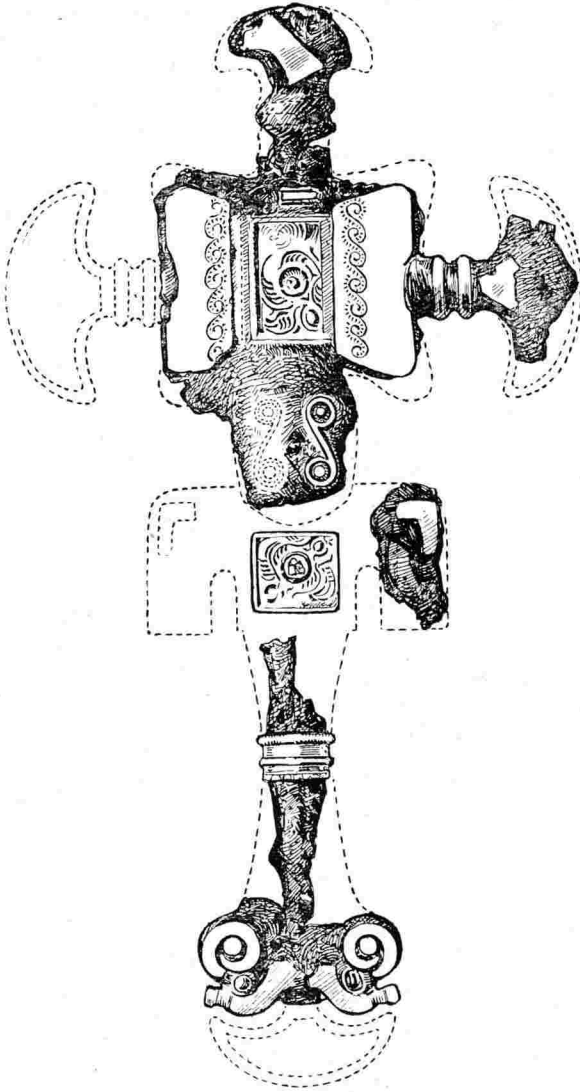
In the proceedings of our Institute several Anglo-Saxon finds are mentioned or described, especially in the earlier Volumes.

I extract the following references:—

Vol. I., page 220: Mr. Warren exhibited two cruciform fibulæ, found at Stow Heath.

Page 223: At the following meeting he exhibited "a pair of double clasps of bronze" found at the same place.

Page 304: Mr. Gwilt exhibited urns, bosses of shields, spear-heads, bronze fibula, clasps and beads found at the Anglo-Saxon Cemetery at Icklingham, &c. Mr. Warren—"a large bronze fibula found at Ixworth."



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Page 306 : The Secretary exhibited "a large gilt fibula, and pair of clasps found at Stow Heath."

Page 315 : A paper on Anglo-Saxon relics from West Stow Heath by Mr. Samuel Tymms (with plates). Figures 4 and 5, Plate 8, are similar to the small bronze brooch found at Hoxne, and Fig. 8 is of the same design as the half buckle or clasp.

Vol. II., page 204 : Mr. Warren exhibited a buckle of gold set with slabs of garnet, found at Tostock.

Vol. III., page 296 : Mr. Warren describes the finding of a gold cross and a circular fibula found at Ixworth. (These are of later date, probably seventh century).

Vol. IV., page 292 : A paper by Mr. Henry Prigg on the Tumuli of Warren Hill, Mildenhall.

Vol. VI., page 57 : A paper by Mr. Prigg on the Anglo-Saxon graves at Warren Hill, Mildenhall.

Amongst the finds were silver ornaments, a fibula partly covered with "thin laminæ of silver," and a large fibula "Moth-shaped, and, like many found in this district of East Anglia, terminating in a rude and grotesque representation of a horse's head."

Vol. XIII. : Miss Layard's paper on her grand find at Ipswich. This included no long brooches.

I have now presented the brooch to the British Museum, and have to acknowledge help received from both Dr. Read and Mr. Reginald Smith, the latter of whom has kindly examined the proof of this article.

The pen drawing is by Mr. C. J. Praetorius, F.S.A., and the coloured drawing by Mr. F. Anderson.