

THE CONTEXT AND DATE OF THE ANGLIAN CEMETERY AT IPSWICH

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The pagan Anglian cemeteries of Norfolk and Suffolk fall into six regional groups based upon the river-systems of the northern tributaries of the Ouse, the Stiffkey and the upper Wensum, the Yare, the Lark, the Waveney and in south-east Suffolk, the Alde, the Deben and the Gipping. While it has been suggested that this distribution reflects the lines of entry of separate, independent invading groups, it is better regarded as indicating the pattern of East Anglian settlement on the soils most suitable for primitive arable farming, that is to say, the Pleistocene gravels of the river valleys. So far as is known, the cinerary urns of the various districts are more remarkable for their similarity to each other and to their Continental antecedents than for local differentiation. The Angles occupied all the most favourable districts, in such a way as to suggest that they acquired them by wholesale conquest or by arrangement (the process attested by the literary records for Kent and Wessex) rather than by piecemeal infiltration among established Romano-British communities.

Dr. Myres has warned us of the dangers of the simple view that cremation is an earlier rite among the Anglo-Saxons in England than inhumation.¹ At the same time his own analyses of the cinerary pottery of Lincolnshire and Norfolk define so large a proportion of urns as probably fifth century as to show that in certain districts, at any rate, this was indeed the earlier practice.²

In south-east Suffolk, there is only one urn-field of any size, at Snape, where there is at least one Anglo-Frisian urn of the fifth century.³ A problem of outstanding importance is the relation in time of this urn-field to the seventh-century boat inhumation in a barrow on the same spot, and the relation of the barrow-cremation (1938) at Sutton Hoo to the seventh century boat-burial (1938) and ship-cenotaph (1939) at the same site. If cremation in this district ceased appreciably before the seventh-century boat and ship barrows, as Mr. Bruce-Mitford suggests,⁴ it is strange that the cremation sites should be re-used after the interval. Moreover, the

¹ *Antiquity*, xvi, 330.

² *Arch. Journal*, cviii, 65; *Norfolk Archaeology*, xxvii, 185 ff.

³ *Proc. Suff. Inst. Arch.*, xxvi, 23.

⁴ *ibidem*, 21 f.

two deposits of burnt bone in the Sutton Hoo barrow-cremation were accompanied by seventh-century sherds, probably from one pot (in the Ipswich Museum). In short, some communities in our district, including those using the royal site, were practising cremation in the seventh century. A second barrow-cremation, on Brightwell Heath, Martlesham, is possibly also of this late date.⁵ Here, cremated bones, human and animal, were contained in a bronze bowl and accompanied by (among other things) an ornamented bone disc of a type matched in seventh-century contexts in Cambridgeshire.

Single cinerary urns, probably of the sixth century, are known from Kesgrave and from the churchyard at Waldringfield, the latter site suggesting that some pagan cemeteries, at least, continued in use after the Conversion.

Yet within the circumscribed area of south-east Suffolk inhumation also was practised in the sixth century. Finds of cruciform brooches from Akenham Hall, Ipswich (a pair, Åberg's Type III), Felixstowe (a pair, Type III, with part of a girdle-hanger), Coddendam (Type III) and Ufford (Type IV) can only be from female inhumation graves of this date. A sixth-century glass from Aldeburgh is also most probably from an inhumation,⁶ and a small late sixth or seventh-century pot from Bramford is typical of the vessels which accompany inhumations elsewhere in Eastern England.⁷ These finds suggest that the local material culture in the sixth century was not much different from that of the other Anglian areas. Connections with the Celtic West are seen in a spiral-headed pin from Felixstowe.⁸ These finds are admittedly isolated, none of them coming from sites known to be established cemeteries. But, such as they are, they tend to refute Mr. Rainbird Clarke's thesis that in this district a native cremating Anglian population was superseded in about 500 A.D. by an altogether intrusive inhuming population derived from Scandinavia, and characterised by the square-headed brooches and other special features of the cemetery at Hadleigh Road, Ipswich.⁹

Through the 'Ipswich people' Mr. Clarke accounts for the origin of some of the Scandinavian elements which pervade the material culture of this part of Suffolk in the mid-seventh century, as seen in the Sutton Hoo cenotaph.

⁵ *Journal of the Ipswich and District Field Club*, vi, 11 ff.

⁶ *Dark Age Britain*, 159 III, c.9.

⁷ *Norfolk Archaeology*, xxvii, 192 Note 6.

⁸ *Trans. Bristol and Gloucs. Arch. Soc.*, LVIII, 168.

⁹ R. R. Clarke, *East Anglia*, 138.

The Hadleigh Road site is indeed important, if only by reason of its size. It was estimated to have had about 200 inhumations with an unknown, but large, number of cremations. Nina Layard in 1906 excavated 159 graves, of which only 15 were by cremation.¹⁰ Urn-burials were, however, concentrated in a part of the site which remained largely unexcavated. It seems that cremation had been the earlier rite, falling into desuetude at the time of the excavated graves, which occupied a new but adjacent part of the cemetery. In general, the finds have been assigned to the sixth century. The bodies were furnished with grave-goods which, in 1906, marked the site as very unusual. There were as many as eight large square-headed fibulae, twenty annular brooches, two garnet disc brooches and six glasses. More remarkable was the entire absence of bronze girdle-hangers, wrist-clasps and cruciform and small-long brooches, such as are elsewhere the usual concomitant of Anglian female graves.

The present suggestion is that these facts may be partially explained by giving a later, seventh century, date to many of the finds. As may be seen from Mr. Lethbridge's excavations at Burwell and Shudy Camps in Cambridgeshire, fibulae, bronze girdle-hangers and wrist-clasps went out of fashion in the seventh century, and new types of object, some of them common to Ipswich and the Cambridgeshire sites, came in.

In considering the date of the cemetery, one receives no help from the cremations, or the inhumations without grave-goods or with knives, spear-heads or beads only; these amount to 102 graves. To the sixth century may be assigned seven graves with square-headed brooches of Leeds' Types B1 and A4, five more graves with annular brooches, two with disc brooches set with garnets, and a few men's graves with carinated shield-bosses—in all about a score. Of the remaining graves several are certainly seventh century, and many more probably so.

Dr. Harden has noted that five of the six glasses from the cemetery (stray finds and Graves 5 and 85) are of this date;¹¹ the sixth is lost. Leeds regarded one of the square-headed fibulae, Type C3 (Grave no. uncertain) as seventh century.¹² An imported Frankish buckle (Grave 26) and a buckle of Kentish type with interlace ornament (Grave 118) are seventh century. An annular silver neck-ring with an amber bead threaded on (Grave 12), unusual in East Anglia, is well matched at seventh century

¹⁰ *Archaeologia*, LX, 325; *Proc. Soc. Ant.*, XXI, 241; *Proc. Suff. Inst. Arch.*, XIII, 1.

¹¹ *Dark Age Britain*, 162, 167.

¹² E. T. Leeds, *Corpus of Early Anglo-Saxon Square-Headed Brooches*, 121, 132 no. 138.

PLATE XXXI



Hanging Bowl from Ipswich.



Detail of Hanging Bowl.

sites in Kent.¹³ Small contracting rings of silver or bronze wire found with beads (Graves 85, 154, 157) are a known seventh-century type in Kent¹⁴ and Cambridgeshire. In addition, most of the Ipswich shield-bosses are of seventh century forms, either conical (including those of Graves 58, 115, 133 and others) or of the Holborough type,¹⁵ of which there are several examples. Sixteen small bronze buckles, mostly from men's graves, are of a type most frequent in 'Christian Saxon' contexts of the seventh century at Burwell and Shudy Camps (Cambs.) and Holywell Row (Suffolk).¹⁶ At Ipswich, as at Burwell, bronze girdle-hangers in the women's graves are replaced by girdle-rings of bronze or iron, from which may suspend plain iron hangers like single or double pot-hooks. Two graves yielded the remains of iron chatelaine chains (Graves 78, 158) parallel, again, to those of Burwell.

Finally, there is a very beautiful little hanging bowl of seventh-century date from the site (Plate XXXI). This has only recently been acquired by Ipswich Museum. It is of spun bronze, diameter about 7 in., height 2½ in., with a flanged rim, on the outside of which is an iron band, presumably for strengthening. There are three bird-shaped escutcheons enamelled with spiral patterns in red, and complete with suspension rings (Plate XXXII). The print on the inside has a ribbed silvered bronze frame enclosing a zone of red enamel spiral designs, circling an interior zone of gilt bronze interlace and a central blue and white millefiori stud (Plate XXXII). The piece is not likely to date before about 650 A.D.

In brief, the unusual features of the Ipswich assemblage are largely due to the site's continuing in use until at least the middle of the seventh century. It is, indeed, the largest seventh-century cemetery in south-east Suffolk. For it is interesting to observe, in view of the well attested political importance of this district in the seventh century how few individuals are represented in the archaeological record for this period. The barrows at Sutton Hoo did not, so far as we know, contain the remains of many people. The Coptic bronze bowl with openwork foot from Wickham Market, found with a comb, and the lost hanging bowl from Needham Market, found with a second similar Coptic bowl, may be the remnants of two more grave-groups. A cloisonné disc brooch from Sutton, near Woodbridge, a cloisonné buckle from Melton and a gold ring from Aldeburgh were isolated finds.

¹³ B. Faussett, *Inventorium Sepulchrale*, pl. xvi, 11.

¹⁴ *ibidem*, pl. vii.

¹⁵ *Arch. Cant.*, LXX, 95 f.

¹⁶ *Cambs. Ant. Soc.*, Quarto, N.S., III, 78.

As yet, there appears to be no direct connection between any of this material and the Middle Saxon wheel-made Ipswich ware described by J. G. Hurst and S. C. West.¹⁷ The latter can hardly begin until 700 or later, and has not so far been found associated with objects of the seventh century 'Christian Saxon' assemblages of Mr. Lethbridge. A bronze belt-disc associated with Ipswich ware at Framlingham Castle is probably later than those of Burwell; it may be of foreign manufacture, and is just as likely to be eighth century as seventh.¹⁸

My thanks are due to Mr. Smedley for permission to refer to material in the Ipswich Museum, for bringing the Ipswich hanging bowl to my notice and for the photographs.

¹⁷ *Proc. Cambs. Ant. Soc.*, L, 29-60.

¹⁸ *Proc. Suff. Inst. Arch.*, xxvii, 79.