

SOME ANGLO-SAXON 'ANIMAL'-BROOCHES

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Since the publication in these Proceedings in 1958 of an account by Brian J. Philp, of brooches from Burgh Castle and Brantham,¹ the discovery of further examples in the museum collections at Dunwich and Ipswich led the writers to attempt a survey of their distribution. The fact then emerged that considerable work in this field had already been carried out by Mr. Gerald Dunning, F.S.A., of the Inspectorate of Ancient Monuments, and he was therefore asked to undertake the task of writing up the whole series. This he declined, but readily made available the information which he had gleaned for inclusion in this paper.

All the examples listed below have now been examined by us, and we are indebted to the keepers and curators of the collections concerned, and to the owner of one example in private hands, for allowing us not only to examine the brooches, but in most cases to have them in Ipswich for close inspection and photography. With the exception of those of the brooches from Cheapside, Butley and Swaffham, in the British Museum, and that from Icklingham in the Ashmolean Museum at Oxford, all photographs were taken by Mr. F. W. Simpson, of the Ipswich Museum. Text-figure 22 was drawn by Mrs. H. B. Miller, also of the Museum.

These brooches may be regarded as of East Anglian origin, since all but two have been found in Norfolk or Suffolk. Unfortunately not one, so far as we know, has come from a datable context.² It is necessary, therefore, to assess their age tentatively on style. In the museums where they now are, they are variously ascribed to the ninth, tenth or eleventh centuries, and regarded as of Anglo-Saxon or Viking origin.

The backward-looking beast is a convenient device with which to fill a square or circle. It is found on the Iron Age bronze disc from Westhall;³ it was popular on the Continent in sub-Roman

¹ Brian J. Philp, 'Anglo-Saxon Animal-Brooches from Burgh Castle and Brantham', *Proc. Suff. Inst. Arch.*, xxvii (1957), pp. 191-2, Plate XXXVII.

² J. Brønsted, *Early English Ornament* (1924), pp. 145-6, states that the example then in the Norwich Castle Museum (No. 657) was found in Felixstowe, together with a four-cornered strap-buckle of bronze, but it seems almost certain that it came from Butley and was an unassociated find. It is now in the Ipswich Museum (962-141). The buckle is in any case late mediaeval.

³ R. Rainbird Clarke, 'The Iron Age in Norfolk and Suffolk', *Archaeological Journal*, xcv (1940), Plate XVIII, 1.

times, and it was brought over to Britain by the Anglo-Saxon invaders in the fifth century A.D.⁴ It was still in use in the twelfth century, e.g., on the font at St. Marychurch, Devon⁵ and the tomb-slab at St. Peter's, Northampton.⁶

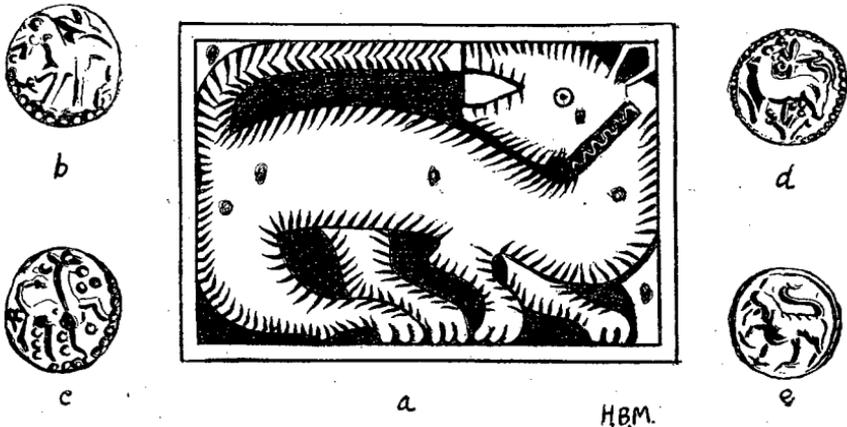


FIG. 22.—Plaque from Werden casket and four eighth century sceattas ($\frac{1}{2}$).

The style of the East Anglian brooches is however most closely paralleled by the design on the eighth century coins known as sceattas. Some of these have animals with beak-like mouths, and also the four equi-distant legs, the inner two lengthened to fit the circle, which are a feature of our brooches. The backward-looking beast and the beaded border are also commonly found on the sceattas (Fig. 22 b-e).⁷

Brønsted, who noted the resemblance, would date the brooches to the early ninth century, after animal ornament had disappeared from the coinage of Southern England.⁸ He derives the animal from Merovingian-Oriental prototypes, and David Wilson⁹ draws attention to another continental parallel, namely the shaggy, tail-biting beasts on the gold plaques of the Werden casket in the

⁴ Vera L. Evison, *The Fifth Century Invasions South of the Thames* (1965), Fig. 26, a, b, Fig. 2, 3, Plate 14, c.

⁵ George Zarnecki, *English Romanesque Sculpture, 1066-1140*, (1951), Plate 66.

⁶ George Zarnecki, *Later English Romanesque Sculpture, 1140-1210*, (1953), Plate 18.

⁷ These and other examples may be seen on Plate I of North's *English Hammered Coinage*, (1963), vol. 1.

⁸ Brønsted, *op. cit.*, p. 146.

⁹ D. M. Wilson, *British Museum Catalogue of Antiquities of the Later Saxon Period: I, Anglo-Saxon Ornamental Metal-work 700-1100* (1964), p. 37.

Rheinisches Museum in Cologne, also probably of eighth century date (Fig. 22 *a*).¹⁰

Reginald Smith¹¹ compares the East Anglian series with the bronze roundels from the Viking ship-burial excavated in 1880 at Gokstad in Norway, and dated to about A.D. 900 (Plate XXIV, *d*). Bronsted regards these as early ninth century imports from Southern England, and Arbman says that though they are unmistakably Norse products they are direct copies of English originals.¹² Here again is the backward-looking beast and the beaded border, though in this case the design is openwork, but as David Wilson points out,¹³ the resemblance is rather to the more elaborate and sophisticated type of animal disc-brooch like the pewter example from Bird-in-Hand Court, Cheapside, London (Plate XXIV, *a*); these are in any case probably roughly contemporary with the East Anglian series.

A disc brooch with a crouching animal, though forward-looking, was found in Thetford with Thetford ware pottery; the excavator, Group-Captain Knocker, suggested a tenth century date for the layer in which it was found, but said that the brooch was much worn and was probably older than the pottery (Plate XXV, *f*).¹⁴

A trick of style which appears on some, though not all, of the East Anglian brooches, is the use of a roundel to represent the eye and the hip and shoulder joints, but this also has a long life. It is seen on the Werden casket, but is also common in the fifth century in Britain and on the Continent, e.g. the Howletts Brooch, and that from Nordheim in Norway.¹⁵ A somewhat similar device was used on the dragon mount from the late sixth century shield from Sutton Hoo; each limb joint is emphasised by a loop encircling a garnet.

Certain brooches, e.g. those from Butley, Butley Priory, Winchester, Lakenheath and Faversham (Plate XXV, *a-c*), have a less sharply incised finish and more rounded contours than the other East Anglian examples, and the beads of the borders are of more rounded form; they are also more highly patinated. One would be tempted to regard them as being of earlier date were it not for a curious feature; the Butley specimen, like the general run of East Anglian types, has twenty-eight beads in the border, and this is an

¹⁰ Julius Baum, *La Sculpture Figurale en Europe à l'Époque Mérovingienne*, Fig. XXXIII.

¹¹ *Victoria County History*, I (1911), p. 348, Fig. 16.

¹² Holger Arbmann, *The Vikings*, (1961), p. 128.

¹³ David Wilson, *op. cit.*, p. 37, note 5; for 'Oseberg' should evidently be read 'Gokstad'.

¹⁴ Our thanks are due to Group-Captain G. M. Knocker for supplying this information in advance of publication.

¹⁵ Sonia Chadwick Hawkes, *Archaeologia*, xcvi, Plate XV, *a*, Fig. 13.

almost constant phenomenon¹⁶ in the East Anglian series. Unfortunately the brooch from Butley Priory has an incomplete margin, and cannot therefore be compared in this respect with the other Butley brooch. It seems quite incredible that this constancy in the number of marginal beads can be the result of mere chance, though the precise significance is impossible to determine. Was the brooch some form of distinctive badge?—Or had it some magical import? Twenty-eight is a multiple of seven, a number generally regarded as having an occult significance.

In describing the brooches, attention has first been given to those outside the East Anglian series, but exhibiting some affinities with it. The brooches found at Faversham and Winchester must be regarded as of East Anglian origin, resembling closely as they do the others of the series. Where it has been possible to examine specimens in detail (as in most cases) the angle at which the pin is set is noted, as this could be an indication of the position in which the brooch was worn. The formula used is based on the clock-face, giving the hinge position first, e.g., X—IV indicates that, looking at the front, the hinge would be found behind the upper left-hand side, the catch-plate at the lower right. This would seem to suggest that the brooch was worn on the right side of the breast.

RELATED BROOCHES

Bird-in-Hand Court, Cheapside, London. (British Museum 52, 3-25.2). (Plate XXIV, a).

Diameter: 1.64 inches.

A very elaborate brooch. Beast left, couchant, with head turned backward and mouth open. Tail turned back, but this and the rump quite naturalistic. The design is enclosed in a circle .81 inches in diameter, of 45 beads, with outside this three rings of small beads, one of larger oval beads, two of small beads, and an outer circle of large oval beads.

The position of the hinge has not been examined.

Buckinghamshire. (Cambridge University Museum 48.1659). (Plate XXIV, b).

Diameter: 1.65 inches. Thickness: .11 inches, centre raised.

Inner circle .75 inches, surrounded by a band .08 inches wide, outside which is a border beaded in three of the four segments and plain in the fourth, forming the inner margin of a surround $\frac{2}{3}$ of an inch wide with outer border beaded. Between these is a pattern of beaded oblique lines in zig-zag pattern, divided by the four 'phaeons' which limit the segments.

¹⁶ The brooch from Lakenheath is exceptional, with 43 beads.

The central design consists of a beast, right, passant, head back-turned almost meeting the recurved tail. Rump, a five-spoked wheel! Pin missing, XII—VI. According to Vierck, this brooch had at one time traces of red enamel, but these are not now evident.

Magdalene Street, Cambridge. (Cambridge University Museum Z.14969). (Plate XXIV, *c*).

Diameter: 1.65 inches. Thickness: .09 inches, centre raised.

Inner disc 1.2 inches. Outer border plain, sloped outwards. Inner disc surrounded by plain margin.

Beast, left, couchant, head turned backward, mouth open, nearly meeting tail, which curls up under the hind leg, and ends in a knot. Body spotted and striped. Low relief, but deeply cut. There are traces of red enamel. There are only vague indications of a pin, which may have been at II—VIII.

BROOCHES OF EAST ANGLIAN TYPE

Butley, Suffolk. (British Museum 54, 12-27.66). (Plate XXV, *b*).

Diameter: 1.25 inches.

Beast, left, passant, strikingly similar to that on the Butley Priory brooch, described below, except that the eye is raised, not pierced, and the tail is rather less wavy. It has the same slight indications of a mane. Feet with 3 : 3 : 2 : ? claws. The design is surrounded by a circle of beading of diameter 1 inch, with 28 (or possibly 29) beads, and there is a raised rim round the outer border. Position of the pin not known.

Butley Priory, Suffolk. (Ipswich Museum 962-141). (Plate XXV, *a*).

This brooch was formerly in the Castle Museum, Norwich, but was transferred to the Ipswich Museum, when material from the two counties was interchanged.

Diameter: .99 inches. Thickness: .1 of an inch.

Beast, left, passant, with head turned backward and mouth open. Tail turned back, not straight as in most of the East Anglian examples, but with a more naturalistic flourish. There is a slight indication of a mane. Eye pierced, with a small roundel. Feet with 3 : 3 : 3 : 3 claws. As in the Butley brooch, the general form is more naturalistic and rounded than is the case in most of the East Anglian series, and the beads of the border are more 'bead-like' and rounded. A break in the margin prevents a count. Hinge broken, X—IV.

Lakenheath, Suffolk. (Cambridge University Museum Z.14964). (Plate XXV, *d*).

Diameter: .9 inch. Thickness: .05 inch.

Badly cast. Beast, left, passant, head turned backward, with mouth slightly open. Tail turned back, nearly meeting head, but rounded and bushy, not sharp as in the example from Ixworth, and some others. Claws indeterminate. Border of 43 sub-triangular beads. Perfect hinge and catch, VI $\frac{1}{2}$ —XII.

Winchester, Hampshire. (Winchester Museum). (Plate XXV, e).

Diameter: 1 inch.

Beast left, passant, with head turned backward, mouth open. Mane of oblique strokes. Tail turned back into mouth. Feet with 2 : 2 : 3 : 4 claws. Disproportionately large hinge and catch XI—V.

Faversham, Kent. (Canterbury Museum 2155). (Plate XXV, c).

Diameter: 1.3 inches. Thickness: .2 inch.

Beast, left, passant, with head turned backward and mouth open. Tail turned back, not straight as in most examples, but with a flourish as in the Butley specimen, which it also resembles in the generally more rounded form, with higher relief. Eye enclosed in an inscribed circle but not itself indented. Feet with 2 : 3 : 3 : 3 claws.

Double border of circular beads, the outer larger than the inner. Thick flan reinforced with plaster. Hinge and catch with vestiges of pin, almost VI—XII.

The brooches so far described fall into a category in which the relief is smooth and rounded, such as might be produced were the model executed in clay, and applied to the surface of the flan. The technique employed in fashioning the model of those now to be described must have been somewhat different, working directly on a flat surface with a sharp tool. Definition is on the whole sharper, the relief lower.

Felixstowe, Suffolk. (Moyses's Hall Museum, Bury St. Edmunds K.36). (Plate XXVI, b).

Diameter: 1.25 inches. Thickness: .04 inch.

Beast, left, passant, with head turned backward and mouth open. Tail turned back towards the head. Spiky mane. Claws 2 : 3 : 3 : 3. Eye marked, but no roundels.

Border of 28 sub-rectangular beads, with a plain rim. Hole pierced above head.

Nearly perfect hinge and catch, VIII—II. The red enamel referred to by Reginald Smith in his account in the Victoria County History has entirely disappeared. It will be observed that the

drawings of this brooch figured by Smith and Brønsted are inaccurate, so far as the number of beads in the surround is concerned.

Brantham, Marsh Farm, Suffolk. (Ipswich Museum 955-127). (Plate XXVI, *d*).

Diameter: 1.13 inches. Thickness: .08 inch.

Beast, left, passant, with head turned backward and mouth open. Tail, which like the mane is very spiky, is turned up and back nearly reaching the head. Feet with ? : 3 : 3 : 3 claws.

Border of 28 coarsely sub-rectangular beads with outer rim. Part of hinge and base of catch, VIII—II.

Although on the whole falling within the series with an apparently incised pattern, this brooch has a higher and more rounded relief than the others of this type.

Swaffham, Norfolk. (British Museum 54, 7-21.1). (Plate XXVI, *c*).

Diameter: 1.13 inches.

Beast, left, passant, with head turned backward and mouth open. Tail turned back, parallel with snout. Spiky mane. Feet with ?2 : 3 : 3 : 3 claws.

Border of 28 sub-rectangular beads, surrounded by rim.

Roundels are present at eye, shoulder and rump, but much worn and indistinct. Hinge not examined.

Ixworth, Suffolk. (Cambridge University Museum 02.252). (Plate XXVI, *a*).

Diameter: 1.2 inches. Thickness: .05 inch.

Beast, left, passant, with head turned backward and mouth open. Tail turned up and back, nearly meeting head. Spiky mane. Feet with 3 : 4 : 3 : 3 claws.

Border of 28 sub-rectangular beads, within a plain rim. Eye with roundel clearly marked but no roundels on shoulder or rump.

Perfect hinge and catch, VIII—II.

Burgh Castle, Suffolk. (Ipswich Museum 958-29). (Plate XXVI, *g*).

Diameter: 1.05 inches. Thickness: .06 inch.

Beast, left, passant, with head turned backward and mouth open. Tail turned back, running parallel with snout. Spiky mane. Feet with 2 : 2 : 3 : 3 claws.

Border of 28 sub-rectangular beads, surrounded by rim. Roundels at eye, shoulder and rump.

Hinge and catch VIII—II.

Swainsthorpe, Norfolk. (In private possession). (Plate XXVI, *h*).

Diameter: 1.04 inches. Thickness: .06 inch.

Beast, left, passant, with head turned backward and mouth open. Tail turned back, running parallel with snout. Spiky mane. Feet with 2 : 2 : 3 : 3 claws.

Border of 28 sub-rectangular beads, surrounded by rim. Roundels at eye, shoulder and rump.

This brooch is almost certainly from the same mould as that from Burgh Castle, but is perhaps a little more worn. The pin, however, is reversed, the hinge (broken) being at II, and the catch missing, but probably at VIII. There is a lead reinforcement covering the area of the missing catch-plate.

Icklingham, Suffolk. (Ashmolean Museum, Oxford). (Plate XXVI, *f*).

Diameter: 1.15 inches. Thickness: .06 inch.

Beast, left, passant, with head turned backward and mouth open. Tail turned back and running parallel with snout. Spiky mane. Feet with 3 : 3 : 3 : 4 claws.

Border of 28 sub-rectangular beads, surrounded by rim. Roundels at eye, shoulder and rump.

Barnham, East Farm, Suffolk. (Cambridge University Museum 49.D.1). (Plate XXVI, *e*).

Diameter: 1.13 inches. Thickness: .06 inch.

Beast, left, passant, with head turned backward and mouth open. Tail turned back, running parallel with snout. Spiky mane. Feet with 2 : 3 : 3 : 3 claws.

Border difficult to interpret, 28-30 sub-rectangular beads surrounded by rim. Roundels at eye, shoulder and rump.

It is possible that all the roundels have been added later and not cast. Those on the Barnham brooch distinctly give this impression, although the Burgh Castle and Swainsthorpe examples show a remarkable exactitude in positioning if this is the case. A point in favour of the theory is the rather greater degree of hollowing-out of the centres of the roundels of the Burgh Castle brooch, by comparison with those on the Swainsthorpe specimen.

BROOCHES SHOWING AFFINITIES IN TECHNIQUE
WITH OTHER EAST ANGLIAN EXAMPLES,
BUT DIFFERING IN DESIGN

Ipswich, Suffolk. (Ipswich Museum 1940-79). (Plate XXV, *h*).

Found in Ipswich in 1870.

Diameter: .85 inch. Thickness: .06 inch.

Beast, right, passant, with head forward and merging into border. Tail curled forward to meet back. Legs straight, feet not divided. The design enclosed in a border roughly .15 inch, bevelled out. Remains of red enamel which evidently filled interstices of design.

The resemblance in style to the Gokstad trinkets may be noted.

Dunwich, Suffolk. (Dunwich Museum). (Plate XXV, g).

Diameter: .95 inch. Thickness: .09 inch.

Beast, right, passant, with head turned backward and mouth open. Tail projecting to rear. Division of feet not distinct.

The design is enclosed in a plain raised rim, .75 inch in diameter, within a plain border, slightly bevelled out. Hinge and remains of catch-plate, VIII—II.

Thetford, Norfolk. (Norwich Castle Museum 12-950). (Plate XXV, f).

Excavated by G. F. Knocker, Site 6: Grid S11 (Hut S4) at 14 inches above floor. Small Find No. 1202.

Diameter: 1.02 inches.

Beast, very indeterminate. Fat, crouched animal, left, head forward, longish snout, small ears, stubby tail, long leg under body. Branched 'tree' (vine scroll?), rising from body. Border of 23 beads. Hinge (coiled spring?), I—VII.

SUMMARY

The recent discovery of a number of circular brooches, usually regarded as of Anglo-Saxon date, in East Anglia, suggested the advisability of a survey of known examples, their distribution, and any factors which might throw further light on their point of origin and date. They are of a type bearing a representation of an animal, usually though not always with head and tail turned back, and resembling the design of some sceattas of the eighth century.

Although examples have been found as far afield as Winchester in Hampshire and Faversham in Kent, the majority come from Norfolk and Suffolk, and the type would seem to be East Anglian. No specimens have so far been found with datable material, but on typological grounds a date in the ninth, or even the eighth century, would appear probable.

PLATE XXIV



a



b



c



d

Anglo-Saxon Brooches and Norwegian Roundel.
a, Cheapside, London. b, Buckinghamshire. c, Magdalene Street, Cambridge.
d, Roundel from Ship-Burial, Gokstad, Norway. (†).

PLATE XXV



Anglo-Saxon Brooches.
a, Butley Priory. *b*, Butley. *c*, Faversham, Kent. *d*, Lakenheath.
e, Winchester, Hants. *f*, Thetford, Norfolk. *g*, Dunwich. *h*, Ipswich. (†)

PLATE XXVI



a



b



c



d



e



f



g



h

Anglo-Saxon Brooches.

a, Ixworth. b, Felixstowe. c, Swaffham, Norfolk. d, Brantham. e, Barnham.
f, Icklingham. g, Burgh Castle. h, Swainsthorpe, Norfolk. (†).