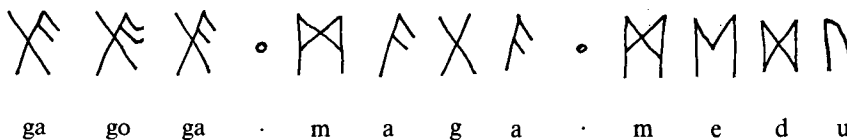


A GOLD BRACTEATE FROM UNDLEY

by S.E. West, M.A., Ph.D., F.S.A.

In June 1981 a single gold bracteate was found by a farmer on his land at Undley. No other Anglo-Saxon finds are known from the site, although there are unsited Early Anglo-Saxon finds known from Undley, possibly from a cemetery somewhere in the vicinity. When found, the piece was folded in half and was opened out by the finder.

The bracteate (Pl. VIb) is of sheet gold with a stamped design, and a ribbed loop for suspension; its weight is 2.24 grammes and maximum diameter is 23mm. The back is quite plain. The design is strong and well-cut and consists of a helmeted head right with a wolf-and-twins motif below. In the field behind the head is an eight-pointed 'star' and a circle. There appears to be another circle and another star obscured by the double spiral in gold wire attached to the bracteate beneath the suspension loop. There is an outer border of 'V' shapes. A runic inscription forms, in part, an inner border with large, well-cut runes in three blocks, separated by small annulets. The inscription, which is unintelligible and probably magical, is reversed on the bracteate and when transposed, it reads:



The last rune acts as an end to the innermost border; it is worth noting that the inner border-line at the first rune starts well beyond the first stroke, suggesting the possibility of a further rune, under the right-hand spiral, which would give four runes to each block.

The head has a fringe below the jaw; it is likely that this is not a beard but a representation of a collar. The wolf and twins is particularly well shown, outlined and with diagonal strokes for the fur.

The Department of Coins and Medals at the British Museum consider that the design of the bracteate is based upon a Roman bronze coin of *Urbs Roma* type, minted at Trier and of the first workshop style (information L. Webster, B.M.).

This important discovery can be considered as an early form of the 'C' bracteate series; the wolf beneath the head may well be the inspiration for the animals which feature so largely on these.