

TWO GERMANIC MIGRATION PERIOD METALWORK PIECES FROM ST. CROSS, WINCHESTER, HAMPSHIRE

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ABSTRACT

Two early Anglo-Saxon metalwork pieces with strong continental homeland affiliations were recovered to the south of Winchester. The artefacts were retrieved from the Itchen river terrace within the environs of the St. Cross Roman Road and the Iron Age hill fort at St. Catherine's Hill.

INTRODUCTION

In 1998 a Hampshire metal detector user, operating with the permission of the landowner, recovered a miniature bow and a supporting arm brooch from the Itchen river valley terrace to the south of St. Cross, Winchester (Compton and Shawford Parish). The artefacts were located from find spots situated within 5 m of each other on the same day and could perhaps suggest the presence of a ploughed-out early Anglo-Saxon funerary context. This supposition cannot be proven conclusively without further work because of the extreme level of soil disturbance generated within the locality by the ground works associated with the construction of the M3 motorway. The objects were added to the Hampshire County Council Sites and Monument Record and were subsequently referred to in *Archaeology in Hampshire for 1998* (Iles 1999, 79).

MINIATURE BOW BROOCH (WMS: ID E85/I; PAS: 151/445)

The artefact is cast in one piece out of copper-alloy and weighs a total of 15 g; it measures 50 mm in length and 26 mm in width (Fig. 1). The exterior surfaces of the obverse are sharp, unworn

and display slight traces of gilding. Although the brooch is in good condition, some localised areas of bronze disease were found on the obverse head-plate. The artefact can be described from the top of the head-plate to the bottom of the foot-plate: the semi-circular head plate is surmounted by three knobs or spoke-like projections that give it a radiate appearance. It measures 13 mm in length by 25 mm in width with a raised bevel. A

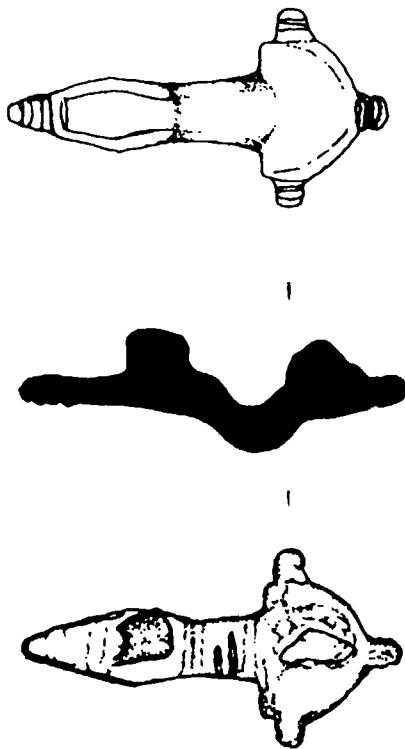


Fig. 1 Miniature bow brooch illustrated at the scale of 1:1

single sub-rounded projection is sited centrally at the top of the head-plate with two projections situated horizontally at either side. The projections were well cast, and are decorated with line mouldings. Below the head-plate the bow has a narrow form with a concave reverse and measures 13 mm in length and 4 mm in width. The foot-plate measures 24 mm in length and is lozenge shaped in form with an elegant bevelled border and has a transverse grooved terminal etched by four single lateral rib lines. On the reverse of the bow spine tooling marks are present at its apex. Evidence of the fastening mechanism survives on the brooch's reverse and consists of a safety-pin and catch-plate arrangement: on the head-plate is a perforated sub-rectangular pin bar lug measuring 6 mm in length, which has traces of ferrous metal corrosion denoting the former presence of an iron pin; while the foot displays a catch-plate which retains the remains of the iron pin and comprises a sub-rectangular flange measuring 6 mm long by 5 mm wide.

DISCUSSION

The brooch is a simple version of the late fifth- to early sixth-century AD miniature bow brooches of the radiate head type (Leslie Webster *pers comm*). Radiate-headed brooches are generally accepted as having 'Gothic' or 'Middle European' metalwork design features and are particularly prominent within the Frankish Rhineland during the earliest stages of the Germanic migration (Aberg 1926, 90–3, 95, fig. 152; Böhme 1986, 216, 224; Evison 1965, 86). Within England such brooches appear to be a 'Kentish' phenomenon and few local examples are known. However, at Alfriston cemetery (East Sussex) a pair of miniature bow brooches was recovered from Grave 29 in addition to four further examples from Grave 43 (Welch 1983, 74–75, fig. 13c, 19b); while a single small-long brooch with very similar characteristics to the St. Cross piece was recovered from Grave 26 at Highdown Hill (West Sussex) (Welch 1983, 68, fig. 97a).

In a number of important ways the St. Cross brooch can be compared to several other brooch types. In particular, the miniature foot-plate is

highly evocative of the lozenge-shape footplate (with lateral rib mouldings) of a small-long brooch with horned head-plate excavated from Grave 12 at Highdown Hill (West-Sussex) (Welch 1983, 609, fig. 93). Two small-long brooches with lozenge shaped footplates and with transverse grooved terminals were excavated from the sixth-century cemetery at Barrington (Edix Hill) (Cambridgeshire) (MacGregor & Bolick 1993, 15, 145–6, fig. 15.78, 15.79). Stylistically, such foot-plates could have originated east of the Weser, in Thuringia during the second half of the fifth century to early sixth century AD (Böhme 1986, 216–224; Welch 1983, 68, 74). In terms of the head-plate the St Cross piece is comparable to small-long brooches with radiate and triple lobed head-plates. But it is the true radiate-headed brooches that predominate in Kent, which the St. Cross brooch has the closest affinities with. Like the St Cross brooch, the head-plate of these brooches typically has three knobs of semi-circular form, for example the small brooches recovered from the Chatham Lines cemetery (Kent) (MacGregor & Bolick 1993, 148–150). More recently, radiate-headed brooches have been found at Cobham, Littlebourne and Faversham in Kent (Ager & Lewis 2000, 239, 241, fig. 1e).

SUPPORTING ARM BROOCH (WMS: ID E85/2: PAS: 151/446)

The brooch is cast in one piece out of copper alloy and has a total weight of 20 gm (Fig. 2). The exterior surfaces of the metalwork exhibit a good surface patina that is sharp and unworn. From the top of the head-plate to the bottom of the footplate the artefact measures 37 mm long and 29 mm wide. The obverse surfaces of the head-plate are covered in a thick ferrous corrosion which may hide decorative details. The ferrous corrosion also indicates the former presence of a coiled iron spring situated in the middle of the brooch's head-plate. The iron pin would have pierced the two inverted 'D'-shaped terminal flanges of the head-plate which both measure 15 mm in length and 10 mm in width. Three transverse lines were incised across the lower head-plate directly above two semi-circular notches that border the spring-

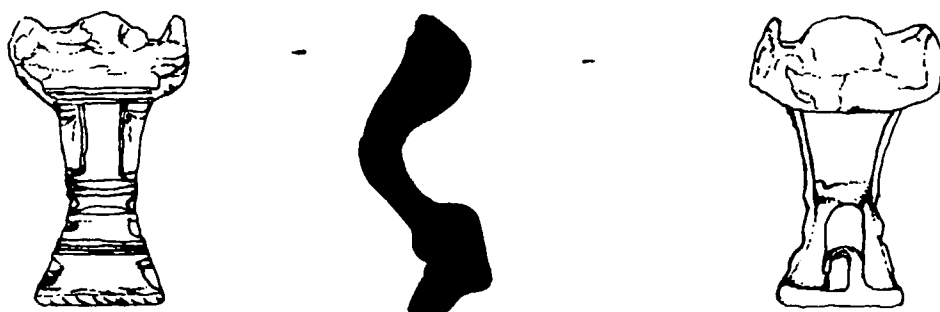


Fig. 2 Supporting arm brooch illustrated at the scale of 1:1

ing bow. The bow has a tapering outline and a slightly concave reverse that is hollow in section. A wide longitudinal carination comprising two vertical lines is present, while the obverse of the bow measures 10 mm in length and 5 mm in width. Two further lines are present at the base of the bow. The expanding foot-plate is decorated by two zones of transverse incised lines that are separated by three groups of semi-circular notches. The obverse of the foot-plate exhibits a bevelled and beaded moulding situated on its edge, while the foot-plate's reverse has a solid curving spring catch-plate whose intact extent measures 10 mm in length and 11 mm in width. The surviving sub-rounded pinhole perforation measures 3 mm in diameter.

DISCUSSION

Supporting arm brooches (*Stützarmfibel*) with expanding footplates belong to the *Mahndorf* type that dates from the early to the middle of the fifth-century AD (Böhme 1974, 13–14; Evison 1977, 127). On the whole the brooch has a distribution that is centred on eastern England with examples being found in Essex at Springfield Lyons (Tyler 1990, 144) and at Pishiobury, Harlow, (Tyler 1994, 263), while Suffolk has produced numerous of these small costume fasteners (see West 1998 for a recent corpus). Within Hampshire supporting arm brooches have been recovered from several locations. A brooch that was common within migration period Lower

Saxony was found within the environs of the Roman villa at Shavards Farm, Meonstoke (Davies *pers comm*; King 1987; Stoodley & Stedman 2001, 133). From a similar Late Roman context another brooch was excavated from the villa complex at Wherwell (Fullerton) (Cunliffe 2002, 42).

However, the corpus of examples from southern England have not been the subject of a detailed study and consequently it is as yet unclear whether they were manufactured in England by the newly arrived Germanic immigrants, or were brought across from the Saxon homelands (Dickinson 1976, 183; Evison 1977). A very close parallel to the Hampshire piece was excavated from Berinsfield (grave 64) (Oxon) (Boyle *et al.* 1995, 80–1, fig. 67). A *Mahndorf* brooch was also recovered close by at Dorchester-upon-Thames (Oxon) (Dickinson 1976, 183, plate 53d), while the lower reaches of the Thames has produced a brooch with trapezoid foot from Mucking (grave 987) (Evison 1977, 129, fig. 1). Although the St. Cross piece compares well with finds from the Saxon homelands, this and other English *Mahndorf* brooches can perhaps be best placed within the context of material recovered from Holland which seems to reflect wider patterns of migration (Besteman *et al.* 1992; Ager *pers comm*).

CONCLUSION

The two Germanic metalwork pieces were recovered from the vicinity of St. Catherine's Hill Iron Age hill fort, and the Roman Road that ran in the

direction of modern Southampton. The find spots should be treated with caution as both objects may have been brought in with soils extracted from the Twyford Down motorway cutting. The condition, type, date, and the spatial relationship of the brooches could suggest however that the pieces were not re-deposited from a disturbed source, but may have been derived from a hitherto unknown early Anglo-Saxon funerary context. The find spots could also indicate that Germanic migrants were active around the established southern route-ways that were associated with the Roman *civitas* (Stedman 2003). This is significant because modern excavations undertaken within the Roman walled circuit of Winchester have revealed only slight evidence for a fifth- to sixth-century AD Germanic presence (Biddle 1972, 229; Biddle 1973, 299), though it is perhaps safer to regard the finds as coming from a site that was taking advantage of the fertile soils which the Itchen Valley had to offer; such is the likely context for the early Saxon cemeteries located at Worthy Park (Hawkes and Garinger 2003) and Itchen Abbas (McCulloch 1992, 6).

Nevertheless, the two brooches are important evidence for the local Germanic 'Adventus' and the wider possible background and reach of the incoming settlers (Scull 1992, 8). In addition to settlement the jewellery may also indicate the existence of trade or kinship arrangements between the settlers in Hampshire and peoples from Northern Germany, Friesland and Rhineland regions, while coastal trade between the Solent Basin and East Anglia, Kent, Sussex, and Wight may have sustained these links with the continent. The *Mahndorf* brooch was probably well known by Saxons who settled on either side of the English Channel coast, while the miniature bow brooch appears to have had Kentish-Frankish affiliations, a factor that may indicate that local

Germanic communities in southern Hampshire were affected by the growing power of Kent, a kingdom that served as a vital cross-channel conduit for maritime trade, as well as military and diplomatic activity during the sixth century AD (Welch 1991, 261). With supporting arm brooches distributed between the lower reaches of the Elbe and Weser rivers (Böhme 1974, Karte 4; Evison 1977, 129) it is interesting to note that trapezoid footplate variants of this brooch type have also been recovered along the southern continental coast line between the Rhine and the Seine rivers (Böhme 1974; 1986, 527–31). The Hampshire brooches could easily have been worn by Frankish as well as Saxon immigrants, particularly with Saxon communities gaining a firm foothold on both sides of the English Channel during the late fifth-century AD (Welch 1991; Yorke 2001, 130) and may indicate wider social, cultural and economic contact between Hampshire and the continent than previously was believed to be the case.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The assistance and encouragement of the following individuals, institutions, and organisations are gratefully acknowledged within the preparation of the report: Professor B. Yorke, Professor A. King, Dr. N. Stoodley and Dr. S. Narkiewicz (King Alfred's College, Winchester). Mr. B. Ager and Ms. L. Webster (British Museum). Mr. J. Newman, (Suffolk County Council). Professor B. Cunliffe and Ms. E. Harrison (University of Oxford). Dr. B. Eagles (Salisbury). Ms. K. Ainsworth and Mr. D. Allen (Hampshire County Council). Ms. S. Worrell (University of London). Mr. R. Iles (Winchester Museum Services). Professor D. Hinton (Southampton University). Mr. D. Hopkins, Mr. B. Howard, Mr. I. Wykes and Mr. M. Brown (Hampshire County Council). Appreciation is extended to Mr F. Windybank and Mr. M. Gaines.

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