

NOTES

A THIRTEENTH CENTURY BRONZE BUCKLE FROM STONE, BUCKINGHAMSHIRE

The bronze buckle plate (pl. VIII, top) was found by Mr. M. Woodford, in whose possession it remains, not far from Stone Church, in 1979. The plate is roughly square in shape (35 by 38 mm.) and two attachments project some 2 mm. for securing the buckle. The back of the buckle plate is formed from the same piece of bronze. Two rivets, probably original, remain in the corners of the buckle plate. The surface of the buckle plate has been cut away leaving the two addorsed dragons in reserve. The background would presumably have been enamelled but all traces of the enamel have now disappeared. Traces of gilding remain by the projections for the attachment of the buckle. The present buckle is of iron and presumably replaces an original bronze buckle.

The buckle plate provides an additional example of a particular type of Limoges enamelled buckle. The characteristics of this type are that they are square or almost square, have two rivet holes in the corners, and figures, such as dragons, birds or foliage, in reserve against an enamelled ground. The group has been discussed by Dr. I. Fingerlin who concludes that they date from the late 12th and 13th century. They have been found widely scattered in Europe and were probably a part of the Limoges production of enamels.¹

The interest and attractiveness of the buckle plate lies in the vigorous depiction of the two dragons. These stand back to back on their foliate tails which have been filled with enamel. Their legs are placed straight down in front of them and their necks are curled round so that they bite their shoulders. The wings are shown with long lines, while the lower part of the body and neck is beaded. Short strokes, for instance on the thighs and under the chin, may indicate scales.

No other buckle in the group assembled by Dr. Fingerlin is decorated with addorsed animals. Such animals are however known from other fittings particularly mounts on caskets. They occur on the openwork roundels on the front of the coffret known as the casket of St. Louis in the Musée du Louvre which may be dated to the 13th century.² They also occur on the central roundel of the casket in the cathedral of St. Eusebius, Vercellio, Italy, which may be dated to the second half of the 13th century.³ An English example is the decorated bronze horse pendant with addorsed lions, in the Salisbury Museum.⁴

The Stone buckle is not the only example of this group known from England. There is also an example from Faversham in Kent, formerly in the Gibbs collection and now in the British Museum (1157.70). This rectangular buckle plate (34 by 32 mm.) shows a winged dragon (pl. 8, bottom) with raised head, wings and pointed tail. The Faversham buckle, hitherto unpublished, is remarkable in that it provides an astonishingly close parallel to the buckle found at Avesnes-la-Comte and now in the Museum of the Palais St. Vaast at Arras.⁵

Although we know very little about the production of buckles in England in the 13th century, it seems likely that both the Faversham and Stone buckles were made abroad and imported into England.

John Cherry

NOTES AND REFERENCES

1. Dr. I. Fingerlin, *Gürtel des hohen und späten Mittelalters* (Berlin 1971) pp. 36–42.
2. *La France de Saint Louis* (exhibition catalogue), (Paris, 1970–71), no. 44.
3. M. M. Gautier, *Émaux du moyen âge occidental* (Fribourg, 1972) cat. no. 138, page 375.
4. *Old Särum*, (D. o. E. Guide), 1965, p. 30.
5. This buckle has been extensively published. E. Rupin, *L'oeuvre de Limoges, Bd 2: les monuments* (Paris, 1890), p. 583, fig. 660. E. Enlart, 'Le costume; *Manuel d'archéologie française Bd. 3* (Paris, 1916) p. 279, fig. 294. I. Fingerlin, *op. cit.* in note 1, p. 309, fig. 9.

A LATE SAXON PIN FROM SKIRMETT

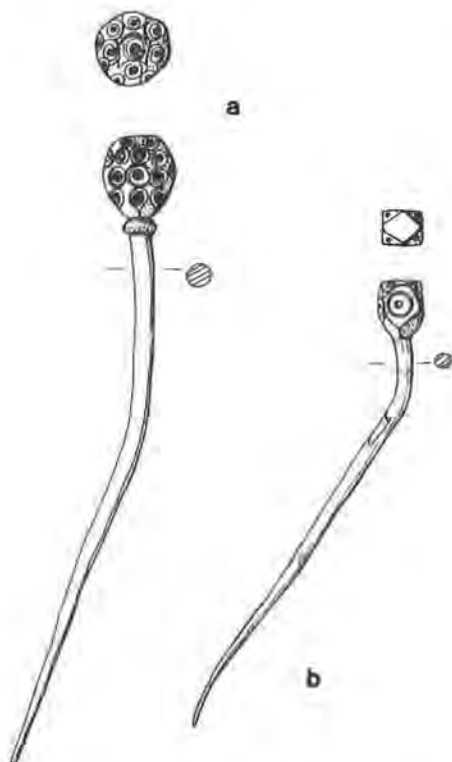


Fig. 1 Late Saxon pins from (a) Skirmett, (b) Buckingham. (Scale 1:1).

Scandinavian about it; true, two similar pins were found at York (Waterman 1959, Fig. 11), but a third was found at the Saxon monastery of Whitby (Peers and Radford 1943, Fig. 14), so it may be safer to regard the pin as 'of the period', making allowances for the particular problems of dating at Whitby (Cramp and Rahtz 1976).

A second Buckinghamshire pin of late Saxon date decorated with ring-and-dot ornament, from Buckingham, is also illustrated here for comparison (Fig. 1, right, previously published by Hall 1975, Fig. 10.12). Both drawings are by Melanie Steiner.

Michael Farley

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- | | |
|--------------------------------|--|
| Anon., 1928. | Obituary for Alfred Heneage Cocks, F.S.A., <i>Recs. Bucks.</i> 12, 149-151. |
| Cramp, R. and Rahtz, P., 1976. | Appendices B and C in Wilson, D., ed., <i>The Archaeology of Anglo-Saxon England</i> . |
| EPNS, 1925. | 'The Place names of Buckinghamshire', <i>English Place Name Society</i> 2. |

Late Saxon metalwork from Buckinghamshire is uncommon enough for an unpublished example to be put on record. The pin illustrated in Fig. 1, left, was amongst finds transferred in 1949 from the Marlow Museum to the County Museum (acc. no. 100.73). It was attached to a card reading 'Danish or Viking bronze pin, Greenhase, Poynetts, c. 1' deep. In posthole inside of hedge on east side. Probably from the island of Gotland (Sweden). About 7th - 9th centuries. 7.12.10'. On the reverse of the card A. H. Cocks, Esq. is invited to an 'at home'. Mr. Cocks, a former secretary of the society and well-known antiquary, owned a small estate at Poynetts, north-west of Skirmett hamlet (Anon. 1928, 149-151). By a fortunate chance Mrs. A. Colmer recently kindly showed the Museum manuscript notes of her husband's grandfather, Francis Colmer, which include a reference to the pin 'of Viking character . . . now in the Marlow Museum' and states that it came from the grounds of A. H. Cocks' house. Although the name 'Greenhase' has not been traced locally; it was presumably in the vicinity of the present-day Poynetts Farm.

The pin itself is 85 mm. long with a tapering shaft and solid oblate head, flattened at the top. Below the head is a small plain collar. The head itself is covered with rows of drilled ring-and-dot ornament with a single dot drilled on the flat top. Attractive as it may be to regard the piece as 'Viking', particularly in view of the fact that its findspot lies near Skirmett, an Old English name modified by Scandinavian usage (EPNS 1925, 180), there is nothing inherently

Hall, R.A., 1975.

'An excavation at Hunter Street, Buckingham', *Recs. Bucks.* 20, 100–133.

Peers, S.V.C. and Radford, C.A.R., 1943.

'The Saxon Monastery of Whitby', *Archaeologia* 89, 27–88.

Waterman, D.M., 1959.

'Late Saxon, Viking and Early Medieval Finds from York', *Archaeologia* 97, 59–105.

A SPINDLE-WHORL FROM WESTON TURVILLE

The lead spindle-whorl illustrated in fig. 1 came to light on the tine of a fork in 1977, whilst Mr. Colden was digging in a neighbour's garden at 45 Bates Lane, Weston Turville. The whorl is 30 mm. diameter and weighs 55 g.. It has been given to the County Museum, acc. no. 430.77 (CAS 4086).

The roughly bi-conical whorl has both its upper and lower faces divided into six fields by raised strips, each field containing single relief designs. The design has been damaged in antiquity but Mr. N. Tuckley, who kindly drew the piece, has attempted to reconstruct its original appearance in his drawing below. Since one of the designs was initially thought to resemble a rune, the advice of Dr. R. I. Page of Corpus Christi College, Cambridge, was sought. He points out that although one character bears a superficial resemblance to a rune, the remainder are completely 'un-runic'.

A group of relief-decorated lead whorls of truncated bi-conic form and of similar size to the Weston Turville example were found at Lymm, Cheshire (Bearpark and Johnson, 1977) in a deposit tentatively dated to the second half of the fifteenth century, and this seems at present to provide the best date. Other decorated examples of similar form come from West Hartburn, Co. Durham (Still and Pallister, 1964) and Wharram Percy, Yorks. (Hurst, 1979). The considerable weight of lead whorls in comparison with the more usual bone, limestone and ceramic ones suggests they may have had a special function.

Michael Farley

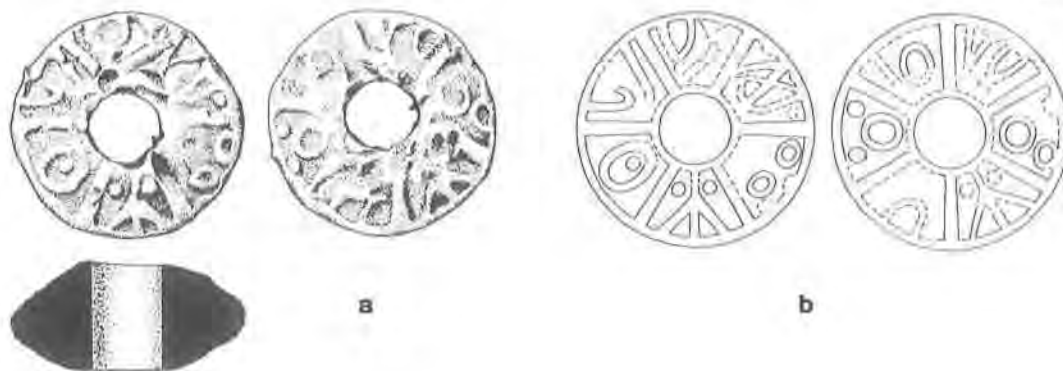


Fig. 1 Spindle-whorl from Weston Turville (a) as found, (b) reconstruction. (Scale 1:1).

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Bearpark, P.J. and Johnson B.,

'Lymm' in Davey, P. J., ed., *Medieval Pottery from Excavations in the North-West*, 52–53.

Hurst, J.G. ed., 1979.

'Wharram I', *Med. Arch. Soc. Monog.* 8, 114 and fig. 59.

Still, L. and Pallister, A., 1964.

'The excavation of one house site in the deserted village of West Hartburn, Co. Durham.' *Arch. Aeliana* 42 (4th ser.), 197–198.

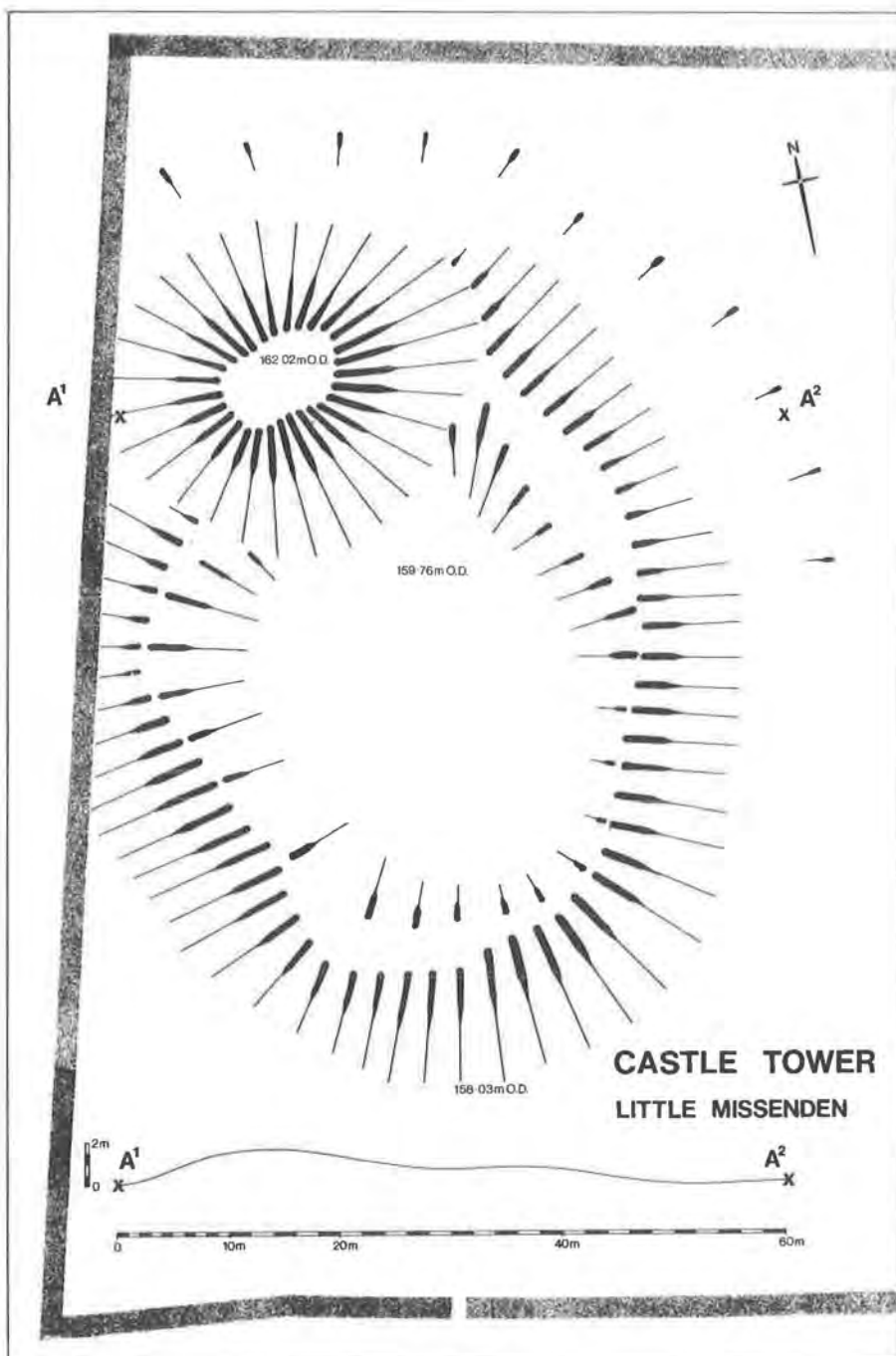


Fig. 1 Motte and bailey at Little Missenden.

CASTLE TOWER, LITTLE MISSENDEN

A survey of this motte and bailey (SU 9267 9967) was carried out by Mrs. J. Taylor and the writer in November 1981. The site consists of an oval mound c. 35.0 m. x c. 30.0 m. which survives to a height of c. 2.26 m. above the northern end of the bailey which adjoins it to the south. (Fig. 1). The bailey forms an enclosure of c. 0.15 Ha, which is noticeably small for this type of structure, and slopes down gradually from north to south. The surrounding bank varies in definition on the inner side, but is generally well defined on the outer. The ditch of the bailey is only discernible in the north-east quadrant, but to the west this, together with part of the bank and mound, has largely been obliterated by a copse planted shortly after the war.

The history of the site is obscure, the earliest known reference being as late as the twentieth century (R.C.H.M. Bucks., Vol. I, 1912). However it is worth noting that the site lies c. 500 m. east of Mantles Farm, the probable site of the manor held by Turstin Mantel in 1086. Also, it is located almost centrally in that section of the parish situated north of the River Misbourne. Its location provides it with a good view of the valley. Castle Tower is a Scheduled Ancient Monument.

S. P. O'Connor Thompson

AN ANGLO-SAXON BROOCH FROM THORNBOROUGH

The cast saucer brooch illustrated in Fig. 1 was found during 1980 in a stream bed at Thornborough by Mr. G. Barry and was brought to the attention of the County Museum by Mr. C. Saunders. The brooch is exceptionally thin and its surface irregular. It has a shiny copper finish with traces of black patina remaining. The catchplate conceals remnants of an iron pin, and iron staining is evident between the two pin holder lugs. The relief-cast decoration on the front appears crude. The central disc and three triangular wedges, which divide the field, are ornamented by drilled depressions, while the areas between are subdivided into irregular small segments, as if cross-hatched. Greatest rim diameter: 37.1 mm. ; thickness: 1.25 – 0.70 mm.

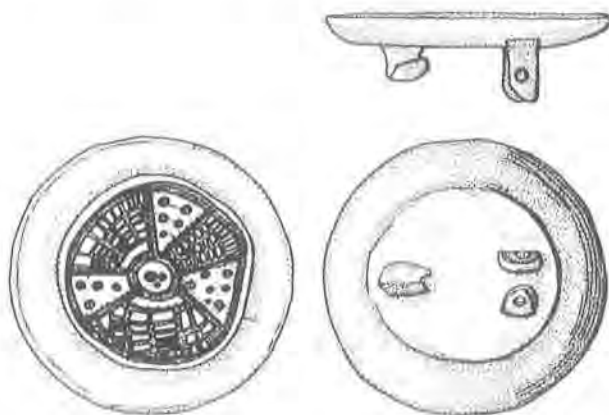


Fig. 1 Thornborough brooch (scale 1:1).

Discussion

Among the corpus of over 500 cast saucer brooches now known to me, there is no parallel for the Thornborough specimen. Such individuality is, however, typical of the later products of the series (that is, mid-sixth to early seventh centuries) as is the use of decorative motifs such as triangular

wedges and cross-hatching or 'basketwork' (Dickinson 1976, 77–100, Groups 10–18). Generally, the brooches of these later and more complex groups are also larger, so that the Thornborough brooch is unexpectedly small by comparison. Nonetheless two aspects of its general decorative appearance may be singled out to suggest that it does belong to the same milieu. First, the three dominant triangular wedges relate it to quite a number of brooches with this feature, some of which clearly imitate Kentish garnet-inlaid disc brooches and so presumably should date from the second quarter of the sixth century onwards (cf. Avent 1975; Dickinson 1976, 85–87, Group 11). Among these the very large pair from grave 14, Wheatley, Oxon (Leeds 1912, Pl. XXVIII, 8), has only small marginal triangles, but the mélange of tiny decorative (?zoomorphic) elements which fills the field compares somewhat in its *effect* with that of the Thornborough 'cross-hatching'. Closer still to the latter, perhaps, is the pair from grave 71, Long Wittenham I, Oxon: again these are very large and they have four plain wedges dividing the field, but, in between, the three segments of horizontally-divided bars bear a marked resemblance to the Thornborough design, albeit much more regular. The second point really leads straight on from this. The approximate line of the Icknield Way, from the Thames through Buckinghamshire to Bedfordshire, is distinguished by a distinctive group of saucer brooch finds: they are exceptionally large and their decoration involves complex but symmetrical combinations of wedges and small-scale 'basketwork', or similar motifs. Examples come from grave 5, Abingdon I, Oxon; Ashendon and Stone, Bucks; Puddlehill II, grave 2, and Kempston, Beds; in turn these relate to other Upper Thames brooches, including the Wheatley grave 14 pair (Dickinson 1976, 95–97, Groups 16.3 – 16.5). The Thornborough brooch, although much smaller and simpler, does not seem out of context in this regional company. Further comments on its individual context and significance must await, and are likely to be subsumed by, the large-scale analysis now possible for the entire corpus of saucer brooches (Dickinson, in preparation).

Tania M. Dickinson

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Avent, R. A., 1975.

Anglo-Saxon Disc and Composite Brooches. British Archaeological Reports 11 (Oxford, 1975).

Dickinson, T. M., 1976.

The Anglo-Saxon Burial Sites of the Upper Thames Region, and their bearing on the History of Wessex, c. A. D. 400–700. Unpublished D. Phil. thesis, submitted to University of Oxford, 1976.

Dickinson, T. M.,
Leeds, E. T., 1912.

in preparation. *A Corpus of Anglo-Saxon Cast Saucer Brooches*. 'The distribution of the Anglo-Saxon saucer brooch in relation to the battle of Bedford A. D. 571', *Archaeologia* 63 (1912), 159–202.