

Notes and News

ANGLO-SAXON DOUBLE-TONGUED BUCKLES (Fig. 1)

In 1986 and 1987 a largely unfurnished, W.-E. orientated cemetery was excavated by the York Archaeological Trust on Ailcy Hill, a steep knoll partly destroyed by quarrying, 200 m due E. of Ripon Cathedral.¹ The cemetery is still at a provisional stage of analysis, but it seems that three phases of burial were present, all the sexable graves being male.² The second and third phases included chest burials similar to those at Dacre,³ and produced four calibrated radiocarbon dates, of A.D. 660-806, 666-825, 685-876 and 785-982, all at 95% probability.⁴ Grave 1064, belonging to the first phase, contained a double-tongued iron buckle and a knife, and this has been radiocarbon dated to A.D. 563-661 at 95% probability.⁵ The Ailcy Hill buckle therefore joins a small group of eight or perhaps nine other double-tongued buckles from the late 7th or early 8th century.

1. Finglesham 214, Kent.⁶ An iron buckle with no plate, in the grave of an adult male in a largely furnished cemetery. The grave also contained part of a knife.
2. Snell's Corner S5, Hampshire.⁷ A copper-alloy buckle with a rectangular plate secured by three rivets, in the grave of an adult male in a largely furnished cemetery. The grave also contained a knife and a small iron ?rivet.
3. Ailcy Hill 1064, North Yorkshire.⁸ An iron buckle with no plate, in the grave of an unsexed adult in a largely unfurnished cemetery. The grave also contained a knife.
4. King Harry Lane 26, Verulamium, Hertfordshire.⁹ An iron buckle with a rectangular plate secured by three rivets, in the grave of an unsexed adult in a largely furnished cemetery. The grave also contained a Swanton type C2 spearhead and a knife.
5. Breach Down, Kent.¹⁰ A copper-alloy buckle, with a tongue-shaped plate secured by three asymmetrically placed rivets, from Sir Thomas Mantell's excavations in this largely furnished barrow cemetery. The grave associations are not known.
6. Ford 18, Wiltshire.¹¹ An iron buckle, with a rectangular plate secured by three rivets covered by cabochon garnets set in gold filigree collars, in the primary barrow-burial of an adult male. The grave also contained two spearheads, a seax and tiny copper-alloy buckle, a Dickinson Group 7 shield-boss and three shield-studs, a double-sided comb, a hanging bowl containing onions and crab-apples, and a possible handle lug from a wooden vessel.
7. Swallowcliffe Down, Wiltshire.¹² A tinned copper-alloy buckle, with a rectangular plate secured by three rivets, in the secondary barrow-burial of an adult female, placed on a bed. The grave also contained two buckets, an iron vessel, two palm cups, a bronze-mounted wooden casket containing a copper-alloy water-sprinkler, five silver safety-pin brooches, a copper-alloy lace-tag and strap-mount, an iron ?spindle, two knives, two beads and a hump-backed comb, and a satchel with a suspension belt secured by the double-tongued buckle.
8. Polhill 42, Kent.¹³ An iron buckle, with a rectangular plate secured by three rivets, in the grave of an unsexed adult in a largely furnished cemetery. There were no other grave-goods.
9. Goblin Works S24, Ashted, Surrey.¹⁴ A copper-alloy buckle, with a rectangular plate secured by three rivets, in the grave of an adult male in a largely furnished cemetery. The grave also contained a knife and a Swanton type C3 spearhead.

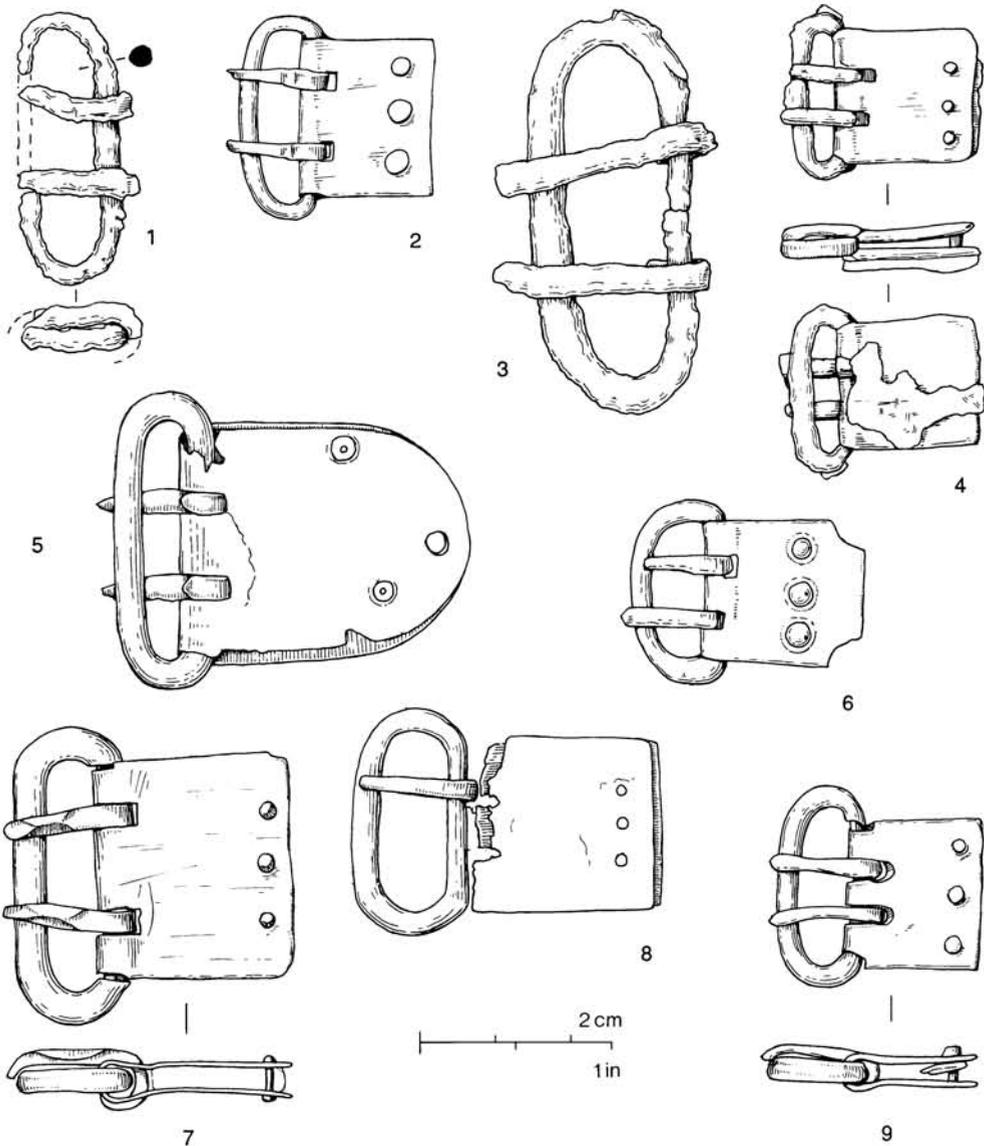


FIG. 1

Anglo-Saxon double-tongued buckles

10. Harrietsham III Kent.¹⁵ According to Audrey Meaney's *Gazetteer*, an iron double-tongued buckle was found in a grave in 1933 during chalk digging, with a copper-alloy strap-end, an iron ring and a knife. No other account of the discovery mentions two tongues to the buckle.

From this list it will be clear that double-tongued buckles appear in a wide range of grave types, with men and women, in rich isolated barrows in Wessex as well as largely unfurnished

cemeteries in Northumbria. Their predominantly southern distribution need not be significant, as Anglo-Saxon graves have only recently been discovered in numbers in Northumbria, and further research will doubtless reveal more. Rather, their distribution should be seen as widespread, in common with other distinctively 7th- and 8th-century artefact types.¹⁶

Although most of the buckles are very simple, they are stylistically linked to the smaller simple buckle typical of 7th- and early 8th-century graves¹⁷ by their folded rectangular or tongue-shaped plates secured by a row of rivets. The more elaborate buckle from Ford bears decorative rivet-heads of cabochon garnets set in gold filigree collars, again characteristic of the 7th and early 8th centuries.¹⁸ The double tongue may draw its inspiration from Late Roman double-tongued buckles, such as those found in the Ténès hoard¹⁹ from Algeria; there is a bronze example from Kent in the British Museum.²⁰

All the cemeteries that have certainly produced double-tongued buckles have been predominantly 7th-century or later in date. The datable finds known from Breach Down are all from the 7th and early 8th centuries, including five type A and B sceattas. Snell's Corner and Goblin Works were in use throughout the 7th century, and Polhill and King Harry Lane from the middle of the 7th century until the beginning of the 8th century at least. The cemetery at Finglesham was used in two distinct phases, firstly during the middle of the 6th century and secondly in the 7th and early 8th centuries; grave 214 is situated on the W. edge of the cemetery, in a group belonging to the later phase. The objects associated with the cemetery graves containing double-tongued buckles, however, are of little help in narrowing the date-range, as the best-dated, the spearheads, were in use from the later 6th to at least the early 8th century.²¹

The radiocarbon dates from the cemetery at Ailcy Hill span the 6th to the 10th centuries, although its unfurnished, W.-E. orientated character, its lack of female burials, and its axial relationship to Wilfrid's monastery church at Ripon Cathedral suggest a monastic connection, and make it unlikely that the cemetery was in use before the middle of the 7th century; this does not conflict with the radiocarbon dates, which are concentrated from c. 650 to c. 850. The two isolated barrows, Ford 18 and Swallowcliffe Down, are securely dated to the second half of the 7th century, Ford by its two-handed narrow seax and 142 mm tall Dickinson Group 7 shield-boss,²² and Swallowcliffe by a number of elements, but especially the art-styles used on its circular bag-mount.²³

The evidence therefore points to a narrow date-range for double-tongued buckles, centring on the second half of the 7th century. Such a narrow range is unusual for an object which can be deposited both in largely furnished ('Final Phase') and largely unfurnished ('churchyard') cemeteries.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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NOTES

¹ R. Hall and M. Whyman, 'Ripon Yarns ... getting to the root of the problem', *Interim*, 11.4 (1986-87), 29-37; R. Hall, 'Ripon Yarns 2: return to the hill', *Interim*, 12.3 (1987), 15-22. *Medieval Archaeol.*, 31 (1987), 169; 32 (1988), 290.

² J. Anderson, *Palaeopathological Interpretation of Anglo-Saxon Articulated Skeletal Material from the Summit of Ailcy Hill, Ripon* (unpublished archive report, York Archaeological Trust, 1988).

³ *Medieval Archaeol.*, 29 (1985), 167; id. 30 (1986), 127-28; 'Dacre' *Current Archaeol.* 10 (1989), 233-35.

⁴ Grave 1045, UB-3150; Grave 2005, UB-3152; Grave 2006, UB-3153; Grave 1044, UB-3149.

⁵ UB-3151.

⁶ Sonia Hawkes, pers. comm.

⁷ G. M. Knocker, 'Early burials and an Anglo-Saxon cemetery at Snell's Corner near Horndean, Hampshire', *Proc. Hants. Field Club Archaeol. Soc.*, 19 (1957), 117-70.

⁸ Hall, *op. cit.* in note 1.

⁹ I. M. Stead and V. Rigby, *Verulamium: the King Harry Lane site* (HBMC Archaeological Report 12, London, 1989), 219-39.

¹⁰ J. Y. Akerman, *Remains of Pagan Saxondom* (London, 1855), 58 and pl. xxviii, fig. 5.

¹¹ J. Musty, 'The excavation of two barrows, one of Saxon date, at Ford, Laverstock, near Salisbury, Wiltshire', *Antiq. J.*, 49 (1969), 98-117.

¹² G. Speake, *A Saxon Bed Burial on Swallowcliffe Down* (HBMC Archaeological Report 10, London, 1989).

¹³ B. Philp, *Excavations in West Kent 1960-1970* (Dover, 1973), 164-214.

¹⁴ R. Poulton, 'Rescue excavations on an early Saxon cemetery site and a later (probably late Saxon) execution site at the former Goblin Works, Ashstead, near Leatherhead', *Surrey Archaeol. Coll.*, 79 (1989), 67-97.

¹⁵ A. L. Meaney, *A Gazetteer of Early Anglo-Saxon Burial Sites* (London, 1964), 123.

¹⁶ H. Geake, 'Burial practice in seventh- and eighth-century England' in M. O. H. Carver (ed.), *The Age of Sutton Hoo* (Woodbridge, 1992), 83-94.

¹⁷ e.g. E. T. Leeds, *Early Anglo-Saxon Art and Archaeology* (Oxford, 1936), 98 and pl. xxixb; A. L. Meaney and S. C. Hawkes, *Two Anglo-Saxon Cemeteries at Winnall* (London, 1970), 42-43.

¹⁸ e.g. on objects from Desborough, Northants; Sarre and Kingston Down, Kent; and Boss Hall, Suffolk, in L. Webster and J. Backhouse (eds.), *The Making of England* (London, 1991), 28-29, 48-53.

¹⁹ J. Heurgon, *Le Trésor de Ténès* (Paris, 1958), 31-32, pl. iii and fig. 7.

²⁰ Accession number M & LA 1942, 10-7, 5.

²¹ M. Swanton, *The Spearheads of the Anglo-Saxon Settlements* (London, 1973), 51-59.

²² Musty, *op. cit.* in note 11, 113.

²³ Speake, *op. cit.* in note 12, 75-80.

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AN INCISED CHALK WEIGHT FROM THE ANGLIAN SITE AT COTTAM, HUMBERSIDE (Pl. XIII, A)

In December 1989 a perforated chalk object was found in ploughsoil during field collection near the Anglian site at Cottam. Although it had recently been struck by the plough it was intact and had an incised representation of a boat on one surface; the object probably functioned as a weight, with the graffiti registering ownership.

The site of Cottam lies on arable land high on the Yorkshire Wolds, *c.* 10 miles from the coast (NGR 49754667). It was discovered in 1987 by metal detector enthusiasts and has subsequently been intensively worked, yielding a rich collection of predominantly mid Saxon metalwork. The metalwork finds have been systematically plotted, and published in the *Yorkshire Archaeological Journal*.¹ To date the published finds include some 30 simple pins, 26 strap-ends, 8 lead spindle whorls, 40 iron knife blades, 14 9th-century stycas, plus a Jellinge-style brooch and a Viking Age bell. There were two main concentrations of metal finds, each roughly coterminous with crop marks of sub-rectangular and circular enclosures and droveways. The date range of the artefacts suggests that the site was in use for much of the 8th and 9th centuries A.D.. Excavations carried out during 1993, directed by the present author and B. E. Vyner for York University, revealed settlement evidence, including the remains of at least two post-built halls, in one of the areas of concentration of metal finds (see this volume, p. 228). The principal source of the metal finds was demonstrated to be the upper fills of the crop-mark features which had largely been disturbed by ploughing. The results of the excavations are to be published in due course, and this note is limited to a discussion of the significance of the chalk weight, which was found *c.* 1 km SE. of the excavated area, at Cottam Grange Farm (NGR 49844659).

The weight has maximum dimensions of 58 × 137 × 145 mm and weighs 1.31 kg. Dr G. D. Gaunt comments that there is evidence of marine infestation, suggesting it had been immersed in water for some time; the natural rounding is further clear evidence that the weight was a natural beach pebble which had been picked from the shore for its suitable shape. Its origin must have been one of the east coast beaches to the south of Flamborough Head where chalk naturally outcrops. It appears that one of the marine molluscan holes was