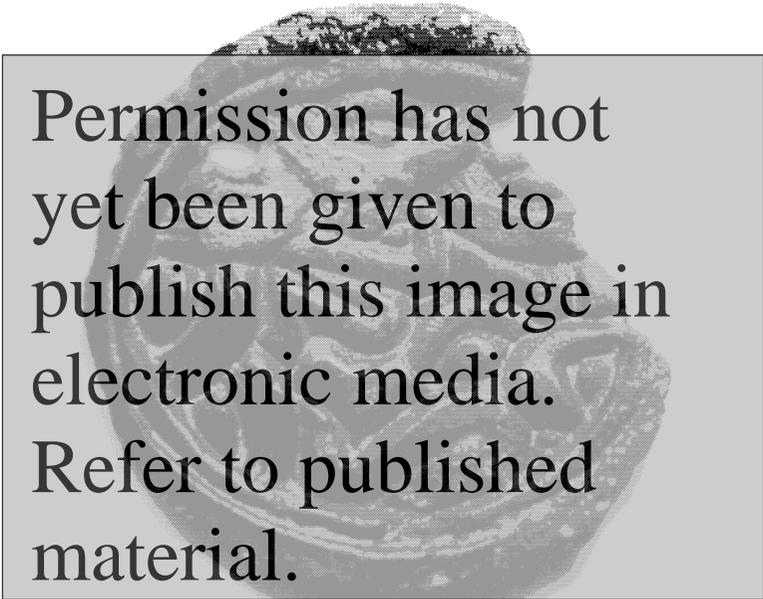


AN ANGLO-SAXON DISC FROM KENT (Figs. 2–3)

The disc which is the subject of this note was found by metal-detectorists in Kent in 1998: no more precise provenance was recorded. The disc measures about 29 mm in diameter and is about 2 mm thick, has high relief decoration on the front and is plain on the back. A small chip has become detached between 1 o'clock and 4 o'clock, probably where the disc has been weakened by one of the two suspension holes which is broken through. Both perforations appear to be secondary, and to have destroyed a small part of the ornament.

Analysis of the metal was carried out by Mr Ian Merchant, Nottingham University, using X-Ray fluorescence spectrometry, examining a number of areas on both the front and back. The base metal was a copper-zinc-tin alloy (possibly a bronze as the tin level was a little higher than the zinc), with iron and lead detected at low levels, suggesting that they were impurities. Gold was detected within the decorated front surface of the disc but not on the back, which also showed no evidence of solder. It seems unlikely that the back of the disc had ever been plated (though in theory a plating might have worn off completely due to rubbing action). The gold on the front could either have been due to plating, or to some other form of contact.

The ornament is generally in keeping with Style I in England, and consists of a single, forward-facing crouched animal with an indecipherable pattern (perhaps including two



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FIG. 2

Cast and perforated copper-alloy disc, Kent. Scale 3:1. *Photograph: J. Laing*

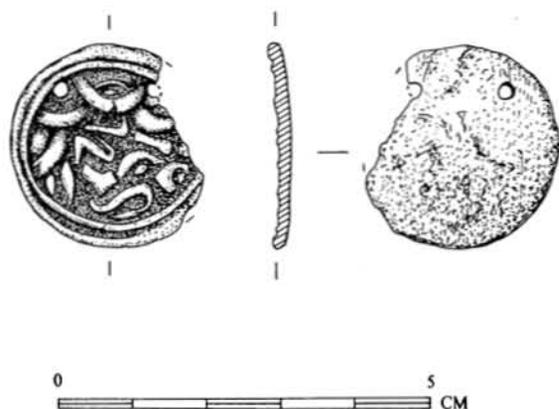


FIG. 3

Cast and perforated copper-alloy disc, Kent. Scale 1:1

facing 'eyes') above. The design has been cast, but some secondary detail has been added by incision. The head does not correspond to any of Salin's definitive designs,¹ but a number of features (including the 'feathered' foot and hollow at the base of the 'tail' as well as the treatment of the eye) are in keeping with Kentish Style I and the version of Style I represented at Herpes and elsewhere in Charente, where the objects so decorated are probably Kentish exports. Related animals can be seen on a square-headed brooch from Bifrons,² and on brooches from Milton-next-Sittingbourne and Herpes.³

It is reasonable to assume that this was intended to be a disc, and has not been cut down from some larger object — the absence of a pin on the back suggests it was not attached to the bow of a square-headed brooch (as the Barton Mills, Cambs, disc may have been),⁴ nor was it the roundel from the foot of a square-headed brooch broken off and re-used — brooches with round disc terminals on their feet are not represented in the Kentish assemblage, and the only brooch known to me with Style I ornament on a circular foot-disc is that from Thornborough, N. Yorkshire,⁵ which is also the only brooch with a disc comparable in size.

The only discs known to me with Style I ornament are those from Chichester, Sussex,⁶ which is larger and in quite a different style, and from Edix Hill (Barrington A), Cambridgeshire, which was identified as a shield mount.⁷

¹ B. Salin, *Die altgermanische Tierornamentik*, 2nd. ed. (Stockholm, 1935), especially figs. 701–04.

² N. Åberg, *The Anglo-Saxons in England in the Early Centuries after the Invasions* (Uppsala, 1926), fig. 122

³ For these brooches, Åberg, *op.cit.* in note 2, figs. 127–28. Some details are considered in E. Bakka, 'On the Beginnings of Salin's Style I in England', *Universitet i Bergen Aarbok*, 1958, 52–54 and fig. 48 (where feathering of the foot is apparent on an Anglo-Saxon brooch from Meurthe-et-Moselle, France).

⁴ E. T. Leeds, *A Corpus of Early Anglo-Saxon Great Square-Headed Brooches* (Oxford, 1949), no. 126.

⁵ J. Hines, *A New Corpus of Anglo-Saxon Great Square-Headed Brooches*, (London, Soc. Ant. Lond. Res. Rep., 51), 199 and pl. 86b.

⁶ M. Welch, *Anglo-Saxon Sussex*, Oxford (B.A.R. Brit. Ser., 112, Oxford, 1983), 501 and fig. 127a; ornament in H. Ellis Davidson, and L. Webster, 'The Anglo-Saxon burial at Coombe (Woodnesborough), Kent', *Medieval Archaeol.*, 11 (1967), fig. 10, f & g; Hines, 1998, *op. cit.* in note 5, fig. 106d.

⁷ T. Malim and J. Hines, *The Anglo-Saxon cemetery at Edix Hill (Barrington A), Cambridgeshire*, (CBA Res. Rep., 112, York, 1998), 93 and Fig. 3.65, no. 15. I am indebted to Prof. Hines for drawing my attention to this, and for his comments on the disc.

The style of the disc shows some similarities to that of the Class D bracteates; it might have been an attempt to emulate a bracteate using a more familiar Style I design.⁸ The problem with this interpretation is the absence of any evidence for its primary use as a pendant, which, in the case of the bracteates, have single suspension loops, or of its original attachment to anything due to the absence of solder or other attachment on the back. There is another possibility. Prior to modification for use as a pendant, it may have in fact been used as a die for the production of *Pressblech* discs, possibly bracteates, which would account for the traces of gold on the front, the foils being laid on the face and worked into the design with a blunt point. Dies and their use in *Pressblech* have been discussed by Capelle and Vierck,⁹ and are represented both on the Continent and in England.

LLOYD LAING

⁸ S. C. Hawkes, and M. Pollard, 'The gold bracteates from sixth-century Anglo-Saxon graves in Kent in the light of a new find from Finglesham', *Frühmittelalterliche Stud.*, 15 (1981), 316-70; J. Hines, *The Scandinavian Character of Anglian England in the pre-Viking Period* (B.A.R. Brit. Ser., 124, Oxford, 1984), 221-43, for further discussion of the chronology and use of bracteates and the derivative scutiform pendants in 6th-century Kent.

⁹ T. Capelle and H. Vierck, 'Modeln der Merowinger- und Wikingerzeit', *Frühmittelalterliche Stud.*, 5 (1971), 42-100; additionally should be noted the die for a circular disc with a Style I design on the obverse and interlace on the reverse from Liebenau: A. Genrich, 'Ein Bronzemodel der Merovingerzeit aus Liebenau', *Nachrichten aus Niedersachsens Urgeschichte*, 41 (1972), 64-76, and a larger die for *Pressblech* work dated to the 7th century from Karlbürg: M. Aufleger, 'Metallarbeiten und Metallverarbeitung', in K. von Welck, (ed.) *Die Franken* (Mannheim, 1996), II, 618-28 and fig. 480.