

# Reflections on a '9th-century' Northumbrian Metalworking Tradition: A Silver Hoard from Poppleton, North Yorkshire

By GABOR THOMAS

*A HOARD of Late Saxon ornamental metalwork, comprising two matching sets of four strap-ends each and four fragments of an openwork silver disc, was discovered in the parish of Upper Poppleton, on the outskirts of York. Particular emphasis is laid on the date, function, manufacture and localisation of the strap-ends, which rank amongst the most accomplished examples yet discovered of this ubiquitous class of Late Saxon ornamental metalwork. On the basis of close stylistic links drawn to other artistic media from the north of the Humber, it is argued that these strap-ends occupy a focal point in the definition of a 9th-century Northumbrian metalworking tradition embodying a regional version of the Trehiddie style.*

The recent dramatic increase in the corpus of Middle and Late Anglo-Saxon ornamental metalwork, fuelled primarily by the recording of metal-detector finds but also by the input of major excavated assemblages from urban and 'productive' rural sites, is contributing fresh insights into a host of social, cultural and artistic developments during the Christian Anglo-Saxon period. Over the past 25 years, the publication of museum catalogues and finds' corpora, augmented by a flurry of notes in the pages of this and other journals, has drawn attention to many significant new finds which have not only extended the repertoire of known types of contemporary dress-fitting, jewellery and horse-trapping, but also furthered our understanding of typological, regional and chronological variations within established categories.<sup>1</sup> In the economic sphere, such material has underpinned the identification and maturing conceptualisation of so-called 'Productive Sites', as articulated in several recent studies, and continues to fuel current debates on site characterisation and ranking in the

<sup>1</sup> See, for example, J. A. Graham-Campbell, 'Some new and neglected finds of 9th century Anglo-Saxon ornamental metalwork', *Medieval Archaeol.*, 26 (1982), 144–5; D. A. Hinton, 'A Winchester-Style mount from near Winchester', *Medieval Archaeol.*, 40 (1996), 214–17; idem, *The Gold, Silver and other Non-Ferrous Alloy Objects from Hamwic* (Southampton, 1996); D. Williams, *Late Saxon Stirrup-Strap Mounts* (CBA Res. Rep. 111, York, 1997); idem, 'Two Late Saxon spur fragments from Sussex and Hampshire', *Medieval Archaeol.*, 46 (2002), 115–17; L. Webster and J. Backhouse (eds.), *The Making of England: Anglo-Saxon Art and Culture ad 600–900* (London, 1991), *passim*.

Early-medieval landscape.<sup>2</sup> From a cultural perspective meanwhile, the same source has been highly evident in driving forward recent, post-revisionist thinking on the scale and nature of Scandinavian colonisation during the late 9th and 10th centuries.<sup>3</sup>

It is clear that the finds increase is transforming the somewhat bleak picture painted by David Hinton some thirty years ago, when the limited corpus appeared resistant to anything other than unsatisfactorily broad chronological, cultural and regional attributions.<sup>4</sup> In contrast, the present paper, framed largely around the contextualisation of a new hoard, highlights how the finds increase of recent decades is contributing to a more nuanced understanding of the repertoire, production, and cultural affinities of contemporary ornamental metalwork. Central to the discussion is a structured analysis designed to localise the two closely related sets of strap-ends. The firm conviction arising from this analysis that both sets were made within the kingdom of Northumbria, is testament to the power of the expanded dataset as a tool for mapping the geographic orbit of contemporary artefact style-zones in Middle and Late Anglo-Saxon England.

### CIRCUMSTANCES OF THE DISCOVERY

The fourteen silver fragments which constitute this hoard, were discovered in a ploughed field by five detectorists over a three-year period (spanning 1998 to 2001), on Burlands Farm in the parish of Upper Poppleton, North Yorkshire. Testimonies by the finders indicate that the objects were scattered fairly widely within the ploughsoil at a consistent depth of between four and six inches (c. 10–15 cm). The ‘freshness’ of some of the breaks observed on the damaged pieces, and the lack of other contemporary finds from the field, strongly suggests that the finds were derived from a single deposit only recently dispersed by the plough. The pieces were declared Treasure after preliminary identification and analysis at the British Museum and were subsequently acquired by the Yorkshire Museum where they are currently on display.<sup>5</sup>

### ARCHAEOLOGICAL AND HISTORICAL CONTEXT OF THE FIND

Upper Poppleton and its twin settlement of Nether Poppleton, in the Vale of York, straddle a promontory of glacial sands and gravels rising above the alluvial floodplain on the south banks of the River Ouse, some 5 km upstream

<sup>2</sup> K. Ulmschneider, ‘Settlement, economy and the “productive” site: Middle Saxon Lincolnshire A.D. 650–780’, *Medieval Archaeol.*, 44 (2000), 53–80; T. Pestell and K. Ulmschneider (eds.), *Markets in Early Medieval Europe* (Bollington, 2003).

<sup>3</sup> S. Margeson, ‘Viking settlement in Norfolk: a study of new evidence’, 47–57 in S. Margeson, B. Ayres and S. Heywood (eds.), *A Festival of Norfolk Archaeology* (Norwich, 1996); K. Leahy and C. Paterson, ‘New light on the Viking presence in Lincolnshire: the artefactual evidence’, 181–202 in J. A. Graham-Campbell, R. Hall, J. Jesch and D. M. Parsons (eds.), *Vikings and the Danelaw* (Oxford, 2001); G. Thomas, ‘Anglo-Scandinavian metalwork in the Danelaw: reconstructing social interaction and regional identities’, 237–55 in J. D. Richards and D. Hadley (eds.), *Cultures in Contact: Scandinavian Settlement in England in the Ninth and Tenth Centuries* (Turnhout, 2000).

<sup>4</sup> D. A. Hinton, ‘Late Anglo-Saxon metal-work: an assessment’, *Anglo-Saxon England*, 4 (1975), 171–80.

<sup>5</sup> Yorkshire Museum Acc. No. 2000.455(1–12). The strap-ends formed part of the recent exhibition held at the Yorkshire Museum and appear in the accompanying catalogue: M. Garrison, J. L. Nelson and D. Tweddle, *Alcuin & Charlemagne: The Golden Age of York* (York, 2001), 26, cat. no. 7. A preliminary account of the hoard, including the only published photograph of the openwork-disc fragments, appears in the *Treasure Annual Report 1998–9* (Lancon, 2000), No. 76, 42–5.

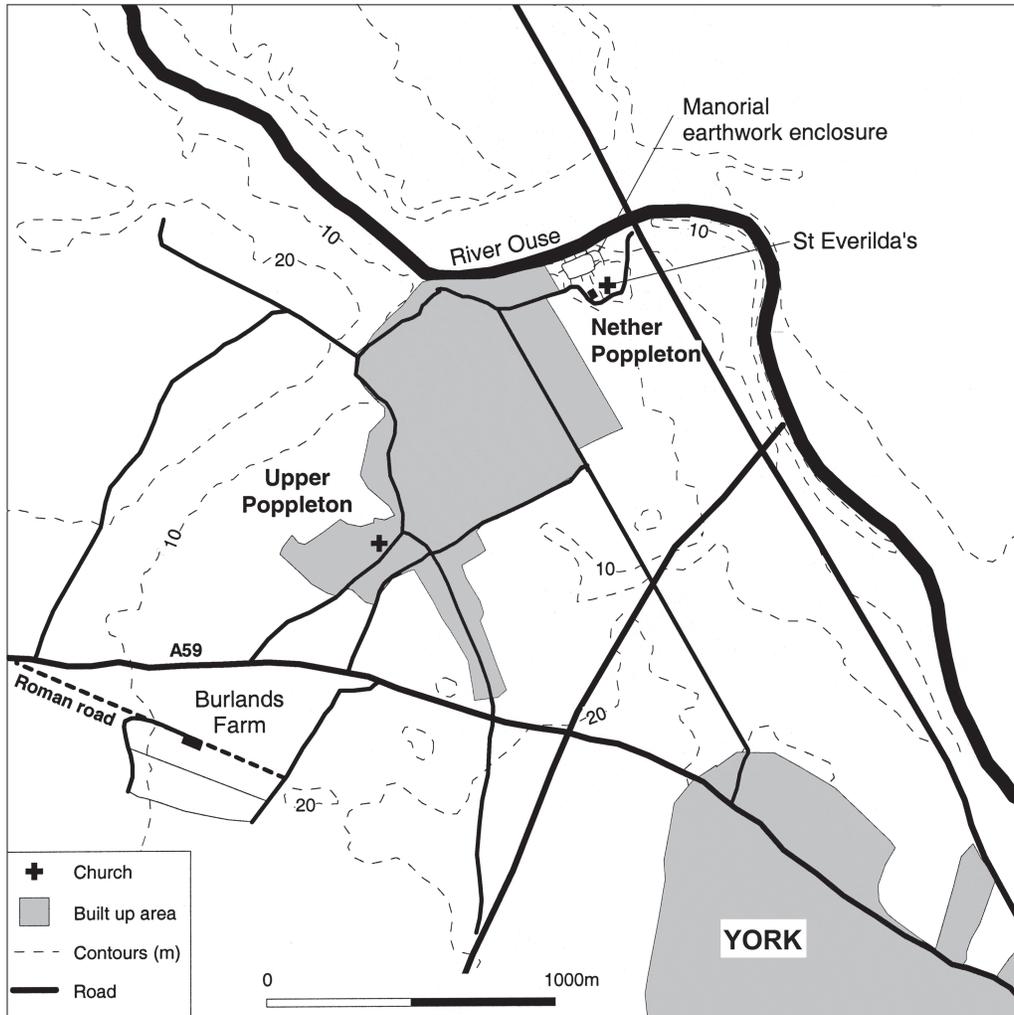


FIG. 1  
THE LOCATION OF THE POPPLETON HOARD.

from the centre of York (Fig. 1). The field in which the hoard was discovered, approximately 1 km south-west of the inhabited core of Upper Poppleton, is bounded to the north by the Roman road *Dere Street* — the major northern routeway linking York (*Eburacum*) with Catterick (*Cataractonium*), via Aldeborough (*Isurium*) — close to the point where its alignment converges with that of the present-day A59.<sup>6</sup>

As tempting as it might be to link the circumstances of the hoard's deposition directly to the Northumbrian capital, not an unreasonable

<sup>6</sup> *City of York Vol. I: Roman York* (RCHME, 1962), 3.

assumption given its location beside a major communication artery within easy reach of the city, it is worth briefly considering a more localised context for the find, especially now that new, albeit slender, evidence for pre-Conquest Poppleton has recently come to light. Merged today, Nether and Upper Poppleton were enumerated separately in the Domesday survey, although both were united in having strong ecclesiastical connections with York, a situation which may hark back to the possible existence there of a pre-Viking religious community.<sup>7</sup> The key reference is the Domesday entry for Nether Poppleton recording an estate in the ownership of one Odo the Deacon which was formerly 'land of St. Elurild', a name that survives in the dedication of the parish church to St Everilda.<sup>8</sup> According to an account in the York breviary, which may be excerpting a lost *Vita*, Everilda (OE *Ælfhild*) was a girl of West Saxon birth who, along with two nuns, Bega and Mildred, received confirmation from Archbishop Wilfred to establish a community on land previously called *predium episcopi*. It is further recorded that this land became known as *mansio Everildis* (English *Everlidesham*), and that her convent grew to accommodate over 80 virgins.<sup>9</sup> Moreover, both Hugh Candidus and Leland record that the relics of the saint were preserved at York, raising the possibility that, in the words of John Blair, 'the relics of a genuine St. *Ælfhild* [formerly at Poppleton] were translated into York and acquired a York *persona*'.<sup>10</sup>

This historical tradition may of course be little more than post-Conquest invention by which York legitimised land-claims over Poppleton and, in this connection, it can be noted that there is no known pre-Conquest fabric or sculpture within or without the church to support the case that St Everilda's is located on the site of a pre-Viking precursor. Recent trial excavations on an area of earthworks to the north and east of the church were, however, successful in locating pre-Conquest remains including a 4 m-wide ditched boundary and a second substantial feature of indeterminate character, both broadly datable to A.D. 450–850.<sup>11</sup> The possibility that this boundary represents a portion of a *vallum monasterii* enclosing Everilda's monastic complex cannot be ignored, but a safer inference on the basis of the fragmentary evidence available would be that the site of the church, and the surrounding earthworks, relates to an early settlement nucleus (with or without an ecclesiastical component), perhaps to be regarded as a progenitor to the double *vill* which had emerged by the Conquest. Certainly all the indications are that the Poppletons were prominent locally during the Late Saxon Period; the fact that one of the manors in archeopiscopal control (Upper Poppleton) supported a prebend — notably the only prebend

<sup>7</sup> For historical background, I am indebted to Thomas Pickles who kindly shared information drawn from his doctoral research (University of Oxford) into the church in Anglo-Saxon Yorkshire.

<sup>8</sup> *Domesday Book, Yorkshire*, Phillimore edition, eds. F. M. Faull and M. Stinson (Chichester, 1986), f. 329r.

<sup>9</sup> *Breviarium ad Usum Insignis Ecclesie Eboracensis ii*, ed. S. W. Lawley (Surtees Soc. 75, 1883), Durham, cols. 388–91.

<sup>10</sup> J. Blair, 'A handlist of Anglo-Saxon Saints', 495–565 in R. Sharp and A. Thacker (eds.), *Local Saints and Local Churches in the Early Medieval West* (Oxford, 2002), 504–5, s.n. 'Ælfhild'.

<sup>11</sup> The trial excavations were undertaken as part of a televised archaeological survey for the programme *Time Team*; an evaluation and assessment of the results were subsequently prepared by the Trust for Wessex Archaeology (Rep. Ref.: 55756.01).

recorded in the Yorkshire Domesday — suggests that it was held in some esteem by its ecclesiastical proprietors.<sup>12</sup>

Although a refined characterisation of pre-Conquest Poppleton is well beyond the limits of the archaeological and historical evidence, a consideration of the contextual sources, such as they exist, leaves little doubt that the hoard was buried near a focal settlement in the hinterland of York. This insight at least raises the possibility that the hoard was owned by a wealthy individual (whether a layperson or cleric) with close connections to Poppleton. Anticipating stylistic arguments for the dating of the strap-ends detailed below, it may be noted that the Poppleton find would appear to fit quite neatly into a chronologically-defined cluster of numismatic and mixed hoards buried in and around York during the last third of the 9th century which bear witness to historically-attested Viking activity within Northumbrian territory.<sup>13</sup>

### THE CONTENTS OF THE HOARD

#### STRAP-ENDS 1–4 (Figs. 2–3; Tab. 1)

The four larger strap-ends, constituting a matching set, are convex-sided and split laterally at their upper attachment-end to accommodate a strap, originally fastened by pairs of low dome-headed silver rivets; only nos. 1 and 4 retain their full complement of rivets, a single right-hand rivet survives on no. 3, while no. 2 is missing both. An angular projection located centrally within a scallop at the upper edge of the split-end forms the base of an engraved pendant foliate motif which emerges between and beneath the rivets in a fan-shaped field. The motif comprises a solid basal bulb which bifurcates into looping tendrils. Within the loop, each tendril emits an internal offshoot which terminates in a bud or leaf-like appendage before crossing back over itself to join the other in a central terminal, in the process forming a hollow stem.

In each case, the strap-ends terminate in a finely-modelled animal's head seen from above with facial details engraved in low relief. At the top of the head is a pair of large, angular, comma-shaped ears with chiselled-out interiors; these flank a central elongated lobe, also engraved internally and inlaid with niello; the inlay is missing on no. 1. At the sides, a pair of lentoid eyes protrude beyond sunken, curving sockets which form the concave edges of a conjoined sub-triangular brow and snout, the upper surface of which is engraved with a foliate motif inlaid with niello. Proceeding upwards from the bottom, snout-end, of this field, a thin stem decorated with a pair of horizontal nicks rises up between the eyes before bifurcating into pointed leaves which splay outward on to the expanded brow, either side of a central bud. On nos. 1 and 2 the foliage also carries double nicks. The bottom edge of the snout is slightly curved and in the case of nos. 2 and 4 is shaped to represent nostrils.

The central panel of decoration on each strap-end is engraved, inlaid with niello and enclosed within plain borders; it is sub-rectangular in shape, its

<sup>12</sup> Op. cit. in note 8, f. 303v.

<sup>13</sup> N. Brooks and J. A. Graham-Campbell, 'Reflections on the Viking Age silver hoard from Croydon, Surrey', 91–110 in M. A. S. Blackburn (ed.), *Anglo-Saxon Monetary History* (Leicester, 1986), 105–7.

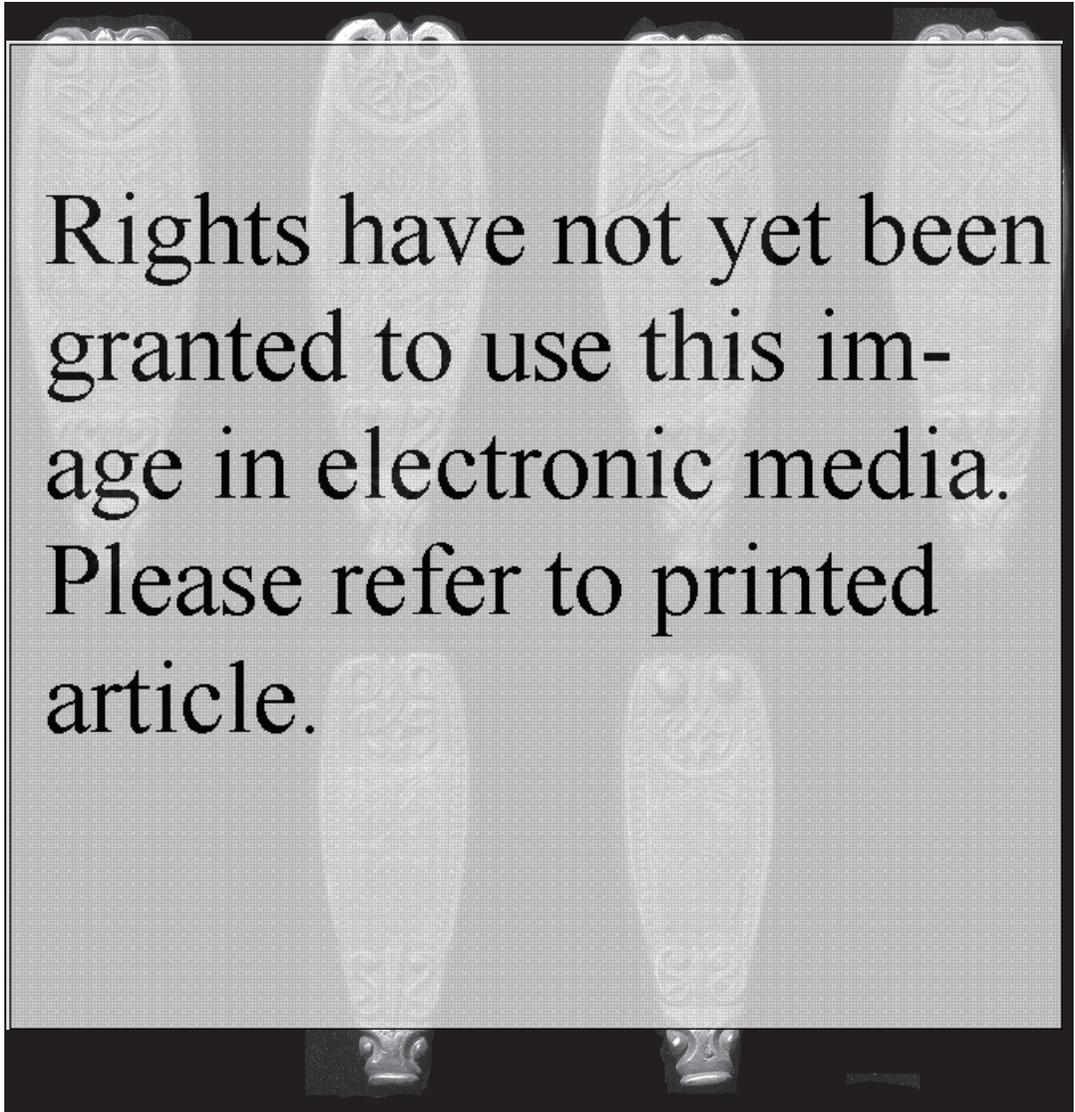


FIG. 2  
GROUP PHOTOGRAPH OF THE POPPLETON HOARD.  
Scale 1:1. © *Yorkshire Museum.*

longest sides being convex, its upper concave, whereas the lower edge is scalloped. Although the style and technique of decoration used among the strap-ends is very closely related, each displays a unique composition which necessitates individual descriptions, as follows:

- 1) The composition is based on three nicked and speckled, profiled quadrupeds placed one above the other between a lateral border of fine, looping, double-contoured interlace. The animals are portrayed in various poses. The

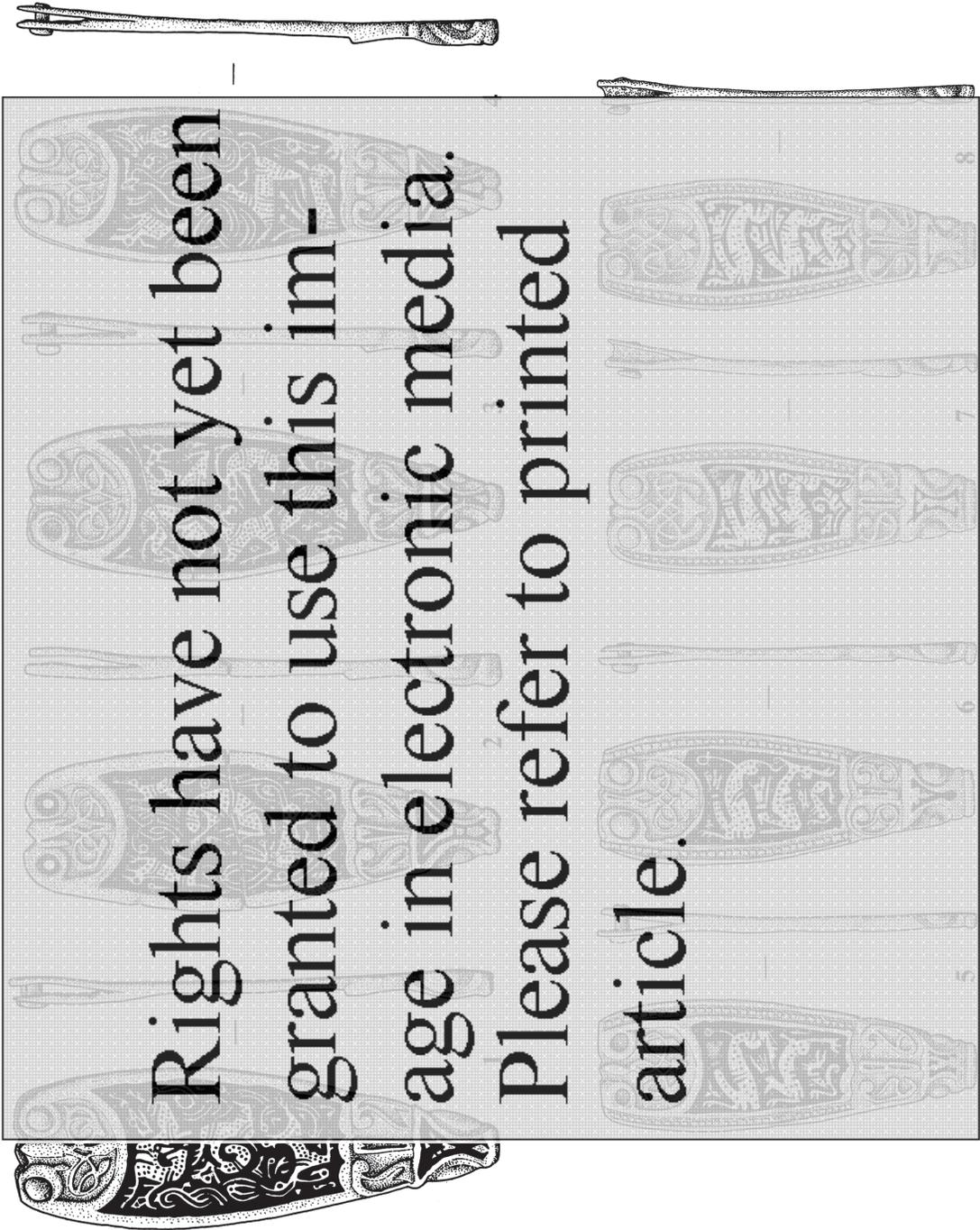


FIG. 3  
THE POPPLETON STRAP-ENDS (NOS. 1-8). Scale 1:1. Drawn by Nick Griffiths. © *Yorkshire Museum*.

TABLE I  
DIMENSIONS AND WEIGHTS OF STRAP-ENDS 1-4

1) 2000.455-1	L. 72.7 mm	W. 24.6 mm	Th. below split 4.25 mm	Wt. 33.08 g
2) 2000.455-2 (i & ii)	L. 71.0 mm	W. 24.3 mm	Th. below split 4.95 mm	Wt. 33.08 g
3) 2000.455-3 (i & ii)	L. 72.5 mm	W. 24.2 mm	Th. below split 4.25 mm	Wt. 31.88 g
4) 2000.455-4	L. 71.6 mm	W. 24.3 mm	Th. below split 4.00 mm	Wt. 32.55 g

disjointed body of the upper animal forms a horizontal figure-of-eight pattern; its neck and forequarters curve clockwise and cross over at the neck to form a loop, which is balanced by a second loop formed by its hindquarters and extended lower jaw; the former piercing the latter through the foot. The middle animal, orientated to face the top of the field, stands on its rear legs with its forequarters raised upwards. Its attenuated neck, which curves round in a clockwise loop, follows the contours of the animal's arched back to produce a spiral. The lower animal stands rampant on its back legs with its forequarters and head raised upwards in a biting gesture.

The jaw of the upper animal and tail of the lower feed into the delicate, free-flowing interlace which entwines loosely at the edges of the animals in knots and figure-of-eight patterns. In places the interlacing strands terminate in either drilled circular lobes, or in animal heads, as in the case of a pair of double strands which flank the raised head of the lower animal.

- 2) The design comprises four nicked and speckled quadrupeds shown in various profiled poses. The largest of the animals which is centrally placed, is hunched over to face the left, and has an extended foreleg which pierces through the animal's neck as if to scratch its ear. It is set face-to-face with a lower, left-hand facing animal, which thrusts its head upward, and flanked above by a pair of confronted, crouching animals which extend into the upper corners of the field. As in 1, the tails of the animals feed into fine double-contoured interlace which in this instance encloses the lower, and acts as a space filler between the upper pair of confronted animals. The interlace is equally flowing and eccentric in its pattern and movement and incorporates sub-foliate appendages and drilled circular lobes, the latter appearing as both nodes and terminals.
- 3) The decoration is composed of five similarly sized nicked and speckled quadrupeds shown in profile; the upper are arranged in pairs leaving a singleton at the bottom left-hand of the field flanked on the right by a single strand of interlace which emits downward drooping tendrils, each erupting along its length in a drilled circular lobe. The upper pair of animals are portrayed hunched over, back-to-back and with curving necks which pass in front of their extended forelegs. The left-hand of the lower pair of animals crouches side-on to face the top of the field, while its left-hand facing neighbour, notable for its elongated, strand-like ear, is portrayed hunched over with an extended foreleg. The lower animal is portrayed in an upside-down pose with its body curving upwards and over to the left and with its head is turned inwards to face the top of the field.
- 4) The decoration comprises four nicked and speckled quadrupeds shown in various profiled poses. In a similar manner to the composition of no. 2, an upper pair of confronted, crouching animals are placed in the upper corners of the field, whereas the remaining two are placed centrally towards the bottom. The uppermost of the latter faces the left in a rampant pose with its forequarters raised and its head thrust upwards, in contrast to the subdued posture of the

lower animal which crouches down onto its front haunches and turns its head backwards to face the right. Fine, double-contoured interlace occupies a roughly triangular space located between and below the uppermost pair of animals. Of a similar form to that which appears on nos. 1 and 2, the interlace is characterised by a loose, flowing asymmetry, in this instance organised around an upper, central figure-of-eight which branches off into a pair of knots located behind each of the upper animals. The central figure-of-eight also emits an elongated strand forming a loop with a single twist located within a space to the right of the bottom animal. The base of this loop erupts into a drilled circular lobe with a pair of trailing foliate lappets.

#### STRAP-ENDS 5–8 (Figs. 2–3; Tab. 2)

The four smaller silver strap-ends, also comprising a matching set, share many features in common with the one just described. Like the larger examples they are convex-sided, although slightly less tapered, and have split attachment-ends pierced by pairs of silver, domed-headed rivets, of which both survive on nos. 6 and 7, the right-hand is missing on no. 8 and both are missing on no. 5. The engraved split-end decoration, consisting of a looping palmette enclosed with a fan-shaped field, is almost exactly identical to that belonging to the larger set; detailed differences being that the two principal tendrils cross over to form an extra loop in the central stem and the presence of a central sub-triangular bud, which marks the point where the tendrils meet at the tip of the motif.

Similarly, turning attention to the form of their terminals, only the subtlest of differences distinguish the smaller from the larger set. These include a squared-off snout defined by a transverse ridge and the more rounded appearance of the comma-shaped ears which are elaborated internally by an additional circular incision. The heads belonging to this group are also characterised by a greater degree of variability in respect to both dimensions — that belonging to no. 5 is foreshortened — and to decoration; the engraved foliate motif on no. 5, for example, is portrayed on a niello ground, whereas that belonging to no. 6 is itself inlaid.

One of the most obvious differences displayed by the smaller group is the use of the billeted outer borders to frame both the split-end features and the central panel of decoration. The latter is of a similar shape and technique to that used on the larger set, except that its bottom edge is composed of a pair, instead of three, scallops. Unlike the unique compositions displayed by the larger four-some, the decoration on the smaller strap-ends is more uniform. It consists of three related nicked and speckled animals which diminish in size as one travels

TABLE 2  
DIMENSIONS AND WEIGHTS OF STRAP-ENDS 5–8

5) 2000.455.5	L. 56.5 mm	W. 20.2 mm	Th. below split 2.65 mm	Wt. 20.82 g
6) 2000.455.6	L. 56.7 mm	W. 20.1 mm	Th. below split 3.25 mm	Wt. 20.49 g
7) 2000.455.11	L. 54.3 mm	W. 20.0 mm	Th. below split 2.9 mm	Wt. 20.93 g
8) 2000.455.12	L. 55.6 mm	W. 19.0 mm	Th. below split 2.53 mm	Wt. 20.81 g

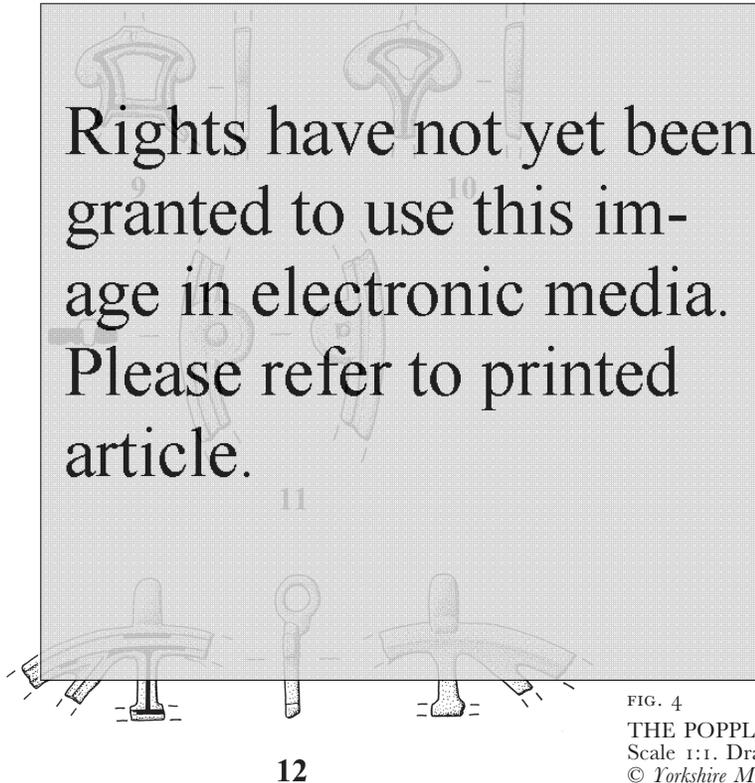


FIG. 4

THE POPPLETON DISC (NOS. 9-12).  
Scale 1:1. Drawn by Nick Griffiths.  
© Yorkshire Museum.

down the field towards the terminal. They are portrayed in a profiled pose with their heads thrust backwards to face their tails. The two uppermost animals have long, collared necks, slender forelegs raised upwards parallel with the left-hand edge of the field terminating in splayed toes, trailing hindquarters, and extended, string-like tails which terminate in loops or curls. In each case the smallest of the animals represents a simplified, tail-less version of the animals above, that on no. 5 having a distinctive fish-like appearance whereas that on no. 7 is inverted with a coiled body. Although interlace is absent, a small trefoil motif is sometimes used to fill the space between the extended foreleg and neck of the uppermost animal.

#### THE OPENWORK DISC (Figs. 2 and 4; Tab. 3)

The four fragments of a silver openwork disc comprise the following:

- 9) Cast fragment in the form of an openwork pelta of sub-rectangular section, comprising a central stem which expands into a mushroom-shaped cap with lobed terminals and a central sub-triangular opening. The fragment has been broken away at two diametrically opposed points, one at the stem and the other centrally at the curved outer surface of the cap to leave a protruding stub. The front surface is decorated with an internal nielloed medial groove which runs

TABLE 3  
DIMENSIONS AND WEIGHTS OF OPENWORK DISC FRAGMENTS 9-12

9) 2000.455.7	Max d. 15 × 16 × 2.5 mm	Wt. 2.47 g
10) 2000.455.8	Max d. 15.5 × 14.9 × 2.3 mm	Wt. 2.0 g
11) 2000.455.9	Max d. 24.3 × 9.7 × 2.7 mm	Wt. 3.02 g
12) 2000.455.10	Max d. 25 × 19 × 2.2 mm	Wt. 4.63 g

along the length of the stem and around the central piercing in a sub-triangular loop. A notch visible in the section of the broken stub at the upper edge suggests that this extension was similarly decorated. The surface at the back is flat and undecorated.

- 10) Cast openwork fragment of similar pelta-shaped form to that on no. 9. This shares similar dimensions, a sub-rectangular section and a convex cap with lobed terminals. It is distinguished in having a pair of convex arms joined by a cross-bar forming a central sub-rectangular opening with curving sides. Positioned centrally at the outer edge of the cap, as on no. 9, is the stub of a broken extension, also notched centrally. The front surface is similarly decorated with an internal nielloed medial groove, whereas the reverse is flat and undecorated.
- 11) Fragment of a curving rim of sub-rectangular section incorporating a semi-circular internal projection pierced centrally by a silver dome-headed rivet. The front of the rim is decorated with a pair of internal parallel grooves, originally inlaid with niello, which terminate either side of the pierced projection so as to create a circular border for the rivet. On the plain reverse, 6 mm from its outer edge is a low, continuous step.
- 12) A second rim-fragment with a circular attachment/suspension loop set at a perpendicular plane to that of the rim. Two broken projections, from an openwork frame, extend from the internal edge of rim; the first, which is T-shaped, is in a radial alignment with the attachment/suspension loop, whereas the second projects at an acute angle. As with fragment no. 11, the rim is decorated with a pair of nielloed grooves which join up with single medial grooves on the fragmentary portions of the openwork frame.

## DISCUSSION

### THE FRAGMENTARY OPENWORK DISC

The fragmentary disc, an interesting if somewhat problematic addition to the corpus of Late Saxon ornamental metalwork, may be dealt with summarily first because its incompleteness precludes a definitive reconstruction. However, certain basic elements can be put in place without recourse to too much speculation. The curvature of fragments nos. 11 and 12 indicates that the rim had a diameter of some 60 mm, and, on the basis of the rivet on the former fragment, we can conclude that the rim was pierced by a series of (most likely four) ornamental rivets, such as commonly occur on Anglo-Saxon disc-brooches. In particular, the combination of an outer rim pierced by rivets and a stepped reverse, with an internal decorative openwork frame, finds a close analogue in the smallest brooch from the Pentney hoard, Norfolk, which is of composite

construction comprising an openwork frame riveted to a gilded sheet-silver plate.<sup>14</sup> On this basis it may be suggested, with a reasonable degree of confidence, that the Poppleton disc was itself originally mounted to a now missing base-plate.

The reconstruction of the design of the openwork frame is, however, a task which is more equivocal. Some headway can be made by interpreting the two surviving fragments, nos. 9 and 10, as the splayed arms from two interlocking crosses, such as appear on a group of 8th-/9th-century openwork disc-shaped objects, including the circular chip-carved mounts from Whitby (N. Yorks) and the Trehiddle-style disc-brooch from Elmsett (Suffolk).<sup>15</sup> The latter parallel would appear to provide a tolerably close impression of what, was probably, Poppleton's original design: in this scenario the arms of the smaller cross, represented by no. 9, would have projected between the arms of the larger, represented by no. 10, to create a central octagonal field (Fig. 5A). This interpretation would be entirely satisfactory if it were not for the angled inner projection on the attachment-loop (fragment no. 12) which introduces an untidy asymmetry into an otherwise coherent design. From such uncertain foundations it is difficult to account for this aberrant feature; indeed, it is not out of the question that this fragment may represent a second disc of the same general form and construction bearing a different motif.

Leaving aside ambiguities surrounding the disc's ornament, two possible functions may be suggested on the basis of its reconstructed form together with a suspension/attachment loop.<sup>16</sup> The first, and least likely, is that it represents part of the head from a linked-pin set, following in the tradition of the triple-pin suite of later 8th-century date from the River Witham.<sup>17</sup> Whereas on the Lincolnshire find each pin head is drilled for attachment (as appears to have been standard), examples from Thorpe Salvin (S. Yorks) and Hitchin (Herts), demonstrate that projecting attachment loops were sometimes used.<sup>18</sup> Against this attribution, however, is the disc's estimated diameter (at 60 mm being well over that of the largest pin-heads on record which only just exceed 40 mm) and its openwork design, which finds no precedent in the linked-pin series.

Under its preferred interpretation, as part of a disc-brooch, the projecting loop would have been used to attach a safety-chain (the primary pin-fastening mechanism would have been attached to the missing back-plate), as has been claimed for the 9th-century Strickland brooch which carries a similarly positioned loop also in a projecting, right-angled, plane.<sup>19</sup> The estimated size of the Poppleton disc is also much more in keeping with that of a disc-brooch; even if,

<sup>14</sup> Webster in Webster and Backhouse, op. cit. in note 1, cat. no. 187f.

<sup>15</sup> Webster, op. cit. in note 14, cat. nos. 107a and 245a; S. West, *A Corpus of Anglo-Saxon Material from Suffolk* (East Anglian Archaeol. 84, Gressenhall, 1998), 25, fig. 24.6.

<sup>16</sup> A third possibility, a pendant, is not impossible but highly unlikely given the rarity of such objects in the Late Anglo-Saxon cultural horizon into which the disc most readily fits on stylistic and morphological grounds.

<sup>17</sup> Webster, op. cit. in note 14, 227–8, cat. no. 184.

<sup>18</sup> J. Parsons, 'A linked pin from Thorpe Salvin, South Yorkshire', *Medieval Archaeol.*, 36 (1992), 169–70; D. M. Wilson, *Anglo-Saxon Ornamental Metalwork 700–1100 in the British Museum* (London, 1964), 58, pl. IIa.

<sup>19</sup> R. L. S. Bruce-Mitford, 'Late Saxon disc-brooches', 171–201 in D. B. Harden (ed.), *Dark Age Britain: Studies Presented to E. T. Leeds* (London, 1956), at p. 191.

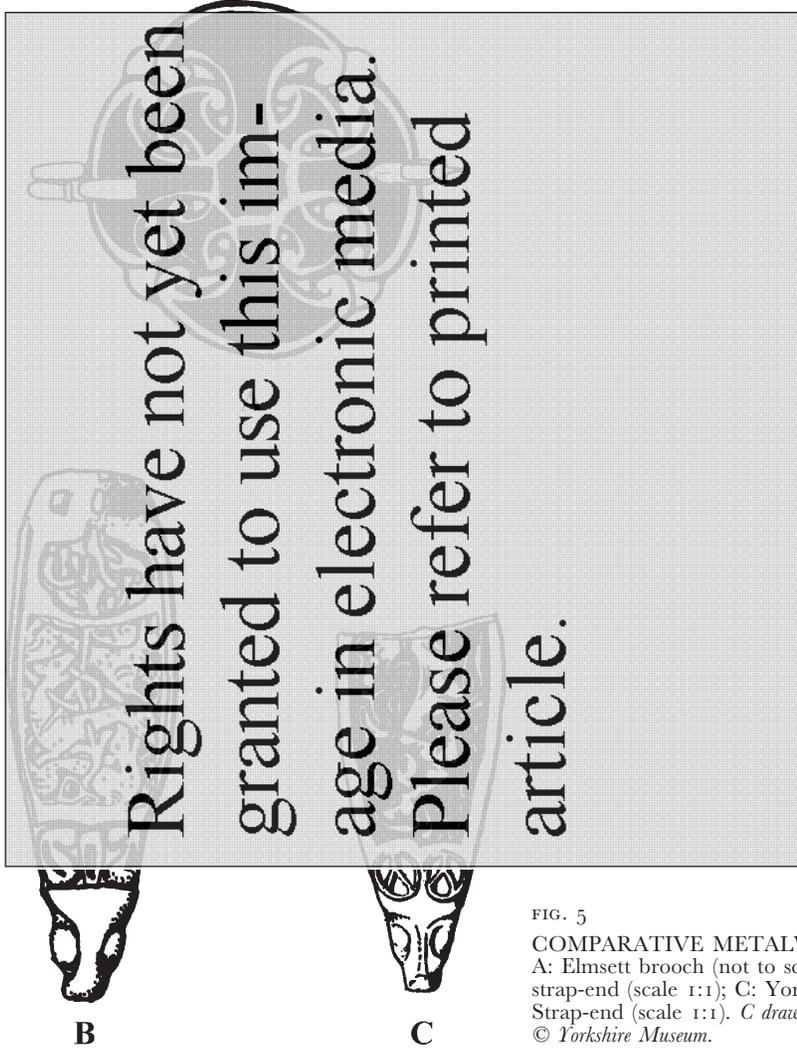


FIG. 5  
 COMPARATIVE METALWORK.  
 A: Elmsett brooch (not to scale); B: Bamburgh strap-end (scale 1:1); C: Yorkshire Strap-end (scale 1:1). *C drawn by Nick Griffiths.*  
 © Yorkshire Museum.

at 60 mm, it falls towards the smaller end of the range, it would by no means be the most diminutive example on record.<sup>20</sup> In conclusion, as will now be apparent, elements of the construction, design and composition of the Poppleton disc are best paralleled among the Late Anglo-Saxon disc-brooch series, although it relates closely to no one exemplar.

It remains to attribute the openwork disc to a chronological horizon, and to a possible source. Whereas the metalworking fashion for the use of silver and niello extended from the late 8th to the 10th centuries, the parallels cited above

<sup>20</sup> The 9th-century silver disc-brooch from the River Cam, near Barrington, Cambs, has a diameter of just 53 mm. Webster, *op. cit.* in note 14, 232–3, cat. no. 189.

for the stylistic, constructional, and morphological features of the postulated disc-brooch narrow the probable limits for its manufacture to between the mid-8th and late 9th centuries. The stark simplicity of what survives of the Poppleton disc does not provide much of a basis for attempting its localisation; there are nevertheless some indications that its distinctive cross type, featuring expanded arms with curved terminals, emerged within a Northumbrian milieu.<sup>21</sup>

#### THE STRAP-ENDS

##### *Form and dating*

The strap-ends from Poppleton are exponents of the commonest category of Late Saxon ornamental metalwork, although they immediately stand out both for their opulence and because matching sets are much rarer than pairs. David Wilson was first to draw attention to the comparative ubiquity of this class of animal-headed strap-end over forty years ago when he appended a list of some 80 examples to his discussion of the silver pair deposited in the Trewhiddle hoard.<sup>22</sup> The most recently enumerated total, taking in the wealth of recent metal-detector finds in private collections, has increased this figure tenfold.<sup>23</sup> The explosion in the number of finds has brought to light several decorative groups, with the most populous, to which the Poppleton series belong, deploying motifs drawn from the repertoire of the Anglo-Saxon Trewhiddle Style. As the Poppleton examples attest, such decoration was frequently reserved for the very finest strap-ends made of silver (of which over 80 examples are now known), although versions of the style, usually in a simplified form, are also reproduced on the cheaper, base-metal end of the market. With a few notable exceptions, the remaining groups document the popularity of simpler geometric decoration, usually incised or engraved, together with the widespread use of decorative inlays.<sup>24</sup>

As regards dating, no significant new evidence has come to light to alter the 9th-century chronology traditionally ascribed to the series by reference to discoveries in coin-dated silver hoards or to more general stylistic arguments — with the proviso that there has hitherto been a tendency to telescope the limits of its currency into a century-long straight-jacket. At the one end, stratified discoveries from Hamwic (from contexts dated c. 700–850) and Whithorn now provide independent dating evidence that the class was already fully developed

<sup>21</sup> For a discussion of the Northumbrian associations of this form of cross, reproduced on items of liturgical metalwork and sculpture found at Whitby, Hackness and Hartlepool, see R. Cramp, 'A reconsideration of the monastic site of Whitby', 64–73 in R. M. Spearman and J. Higgitt (eds.) *The Age of Migrating Ideas: Early Medieval Art in Northern Britain and Ireland* (Edinburgh, 1993), at pp. 67–8.

<sup>22</sup> D. M. Wilson and C. E. Blunt, 'The Trewhiddle hoard', *Archaeologia*, 98 (1961), 75–122.

<sup>23</sup> G. Thomas, *A Survey of Late Anglo-Saxon and Viking-age Strap-ends* (unpubl. Ph.D. thesis, University of London, 2000).

<sup>24</sup> G. Thomas, 'Silver-Wire strap-ends from East Anglia', *Anglo-Saxon Stud. Archaeol. Hist.*, 9 (1998), 81–101; C. Stapleton, S. G. E. Bowman, P. T. Craddock, S. La Niece and S. Youngs, 'Corinthium Aes and Black Bronze in the Early Medieval Period', *Antiq. J.*, 75 (1995), 383–90.

by the first third of the 9th century, lending weight to the suggestion that the origins of the type may lie in the preceding century.<sup>25</sup> At the other end, some support for an extended chronology in the north of the country is gained from the temporal distribution of Trewhiddle-style strap-ends at the settlement of Cottam on the Yorkshire Wolds. Significantly, this is the only one of the decorative groups found at Cottam that appears to have straddled a localised shift between an Anglian and a later Anglo-Scandinavian settlement focus, a strong indication that its currency extended into the 10th century.<sup>26</sup> Further, it may be noted that the extended chronology observed at Cottam tallies well with manufacturing evidence from nearby York which bears witness to the continued production of Trewhiddle-style media well into the 10th century.<sup>27</sup>

The emerging picture that Trewhiddle-style metalwork may have had an extended currency in northern England has implications for the dating of the Poppleton strap-ends if, as will be argued below, they can be localised to this same, artistically conservative, region. Unfortunately, this claim cannot derive much further support from stylistic analysis since the Trewhiddle style has proved to be remarkable resistant to temporal sequencing, a situation which is unlikely to change to any appreciable extent until more contexts yielding fine metalwork are dated using high-precision techniques.<sup>28</sup>

#### *Method of manufacture*

Close examination reveals that the Poppleton strap-ends were fabricated using a hand-wrought technique previously advanced on the basis of the interpretation of surface details on the exquisite pair of silver filigree-inlaid strap-ends from Ipsden Heath (Oxon.).<sup>29</sup> This process, which produces slight variations in the dimensions of the matching strap-ends, and longitudinal fold- or crease-lines along their edges, involved bending a strip of silver in two about the terminal

<sup>25</sup> A suggestion previously advanced on stylistic arguments by, amongst others, J. A. Graham-Campbell, review of D. A. Hinton, *Catalogue of the Anglo-Saxon Ornamental Metalwork, Ashmolean Museum, Medieval Archaeol.*, 28 (1975), 233–5. Notwithstanding limitations in the precision to which archaeological contexts can be dated, certain finds stand out as being potentially early. These include strap-ends from Hamwic recovered from contexts carrying the label 'Early to Mid-Middle Saxon' (c. 700–850), as defined in P. Andrews (ed.), *Excavations at Hamwic, Vol. 2* (CBA Res. Rep. 109, York, 1997), 13–14. One of the Whithorn strap-ends (BZ19, 3) was recovered from a midden deposit associated with 'Ultimate Period II' occupation in the central sector of the site between the main church complex and the halls to its south. An associated coin-sequence of Northumbrian *styccas* suggests that this material is unlikely to have been deposited after c. A.D. 845 at the latest: A. Nicholson and P. Hill, 'The non-ferrous metals', 360–404 in P. Hill, *Whithorn and St. Ninian: The Excavation of a Monastic Town, 1984–91* (Stroud, 1997), at p. 374, fig. 10.58, no. 3. For discussion of the relevant phasing, see pp. 135–9 of the main report.

<sup>26</sup> J. D. Richards, 'Cottam: An Anglian and Anglo-Scandinavian settlement on the Yorkshire Wolds', *Archaeol. J.*, 150 (1999), 1–110, at pp. 11–14.

<sup>27</sup> D. Tweddle, J. Moulden and E. Logan, *Anglian York: A Survey of the Evidence* (The Archaeology of York, 7/2, York, 1999), 258–9.

<sup>28</sup> One notable exception concerns Leslie Webster's analysis of the rich array of zoomorphic and plant motifs exhibited on the brooches from Pentney (Norfolk), which, through comparisons of the stylistic repertoire of the so-called Tiberius Group manuscripts, has advanced our appreciation of what may be termed 'early' Trewhiddle features circulating within an 'Anglian' style orbit; see Webster, *op. cit.* in note 14, cat. nos. 187, 191 and 192.

<sup>29</sup> A. MacGregor, 'A pair of late Saxon strap-ends from Ipsden Heath, Oxfordshire', *J. British Archaeol. Assoc.*, 97 (1993), 122–7.

and then hammering the two sides together till they merged, a wedge being placed at one end to maintain a cleft to receive the strap, after which the decoration and rivet holes were added. An additional observation in the case of the Yorkshire group is that the original unfolded strip was deliberately tapered widthways at both ends to reinforce the attachment end; once folded and brought together, the ends taper in opposing directions to form an interlocking disposition capable of withstanding greater stress. Through such a modification, the Poppleton craftsman was evidently attempting to combat an Achilles heel in the design of such strap-ends and so to prevent his handiwork suffering the same fate as the multitude of casual losses with damaged and missing split-ends populating the artefactual record.

### *Function*

The remarkable suites of strap-ends from the Poppleton hoard warrant a pause for reflection upon the possible functional associations of this ubiquitous class of metalwork.<sup>30</sup> In a period generally lacking the informative contextual information provided by furnished burials, hoards, as acts of deliberate deposition, can provide some clues as to how dress accessories and associated accoutrements were used. In the case of strap-ends, hoards provide an important corrective to the multitude of casual losses found on settlements, and other activity sites, which might lead one to suppose that the predominant functional context of such items called for them to be worn or attached singly. In fact, the growing number of pairs and matching sets of strap-ends being recovered from hoard contexts, when taken together with other finds such as the pair deposited in the burial of a Viking women at Westness, Rousay (Orkney) suggests that matching pairs or sets worn *en suite* were perhaps the norm.<sup>31</sup>

Where does this realisation take us in defining their original role? The wearing of pairs does need not conflict with Wilson's theory that one of the primary uses of these multi-functional items was as decorative terminals to woven girdles; indeed, the paucity of buckles from this period suggests that girdles were mainly tied necessitating a pair of strap terminals which, in addition to adding aesthetic value (by allowing them to hang down attractively), would have prevented the fabric from fraying at both ends.<sup>32</sup> The exceptional discovery of two matching suites of four strap-ends at Poppleton (allowing for the possibility of the two sets being worn together) takes us into slightly different territory *vis-à-vis* the range of functional contexts previously proposed. Certainly, the size and general robustness of the Poppleton sets and the two pairs from Lilla Howe

<sup>30</sup> The fact that the strap-ends are riveted indicates that both suites were in use and mounted to straps prior to their final concealment, an observation which is further supported by scratch- and wear-marks visible on their reverses.

<sup>31</sup> Hoards containing pairs include Lilla Howe (N. Yorks.): Webster, *op. cit.* in note 14, cat. nos. 249a and b, and Rogart (Sutherland): D. A. Hinton, *A Catalogue of the Anglo-Saxon Ornamental Metalwork in the Department of Antiquities, Ashmolean* (Oxford, 1974), cat. nos. 33–4. Metal-detected examples include the aforementioned pair from Ipsden Heath (Oxon), *op. cit.* in note 29, and a trio from West Rudham (Norfolk): A. Rogerson, 'Six Middle Saxon sites in West Norfolk', *op. cit.* in note 2, 110–21, fig. 10.3.

<sup>32</sup> G. Owen-Crocker, *Dress in Anglo-Saxon England*, 2nd ed. (Woodbridge, 2004), 152–3.

(which may also have been worn as a foursome) lend added weight to the suggestion that examples could, on occasion, be used on heavier leather straps such as baldrics, satchels and horse harnesses, thereby bringing them into a similar functional domain as the more robust, tongue-shaped class of strap-end of continental inspiration by which the Anglo-Saxon animal-headed series was superseded during the course of the 10th century. The latter are rarely found in sets greater than pairs, however, so perhaps what we may be glimpsing in the case of the larger animal-headed suites was an Insular vogue for accessorising using similarly accoutred bodily attire and *personalia*.

### *Localisation*

The close correspondences noted between the two matching sets of strap-ends from Poppleton shows that they certainly emanate from the same artistic milieu, with the strong possibility that they were made within the same workshop, perhaps even by the same hand. The natural question to be asked therefore is whether it might be possible to pin their source to a particular locality, given the inherently portable nature of hoards? In the same way that the random distribution of single finds has allowed the source of some Middle Anglo-Saxon series of *sceattas* to be attributed with a reasonable degree of certainty, the finds' increase associated with Middle and Late Anglo-Saxon ornamental metalwork is also beginning to shed light on regional trends in production, in some cases reflecting the output of individual workshops, and, in others, broader style zones.<sup>33</sup> As will be argued below, the significance of the strap-ends lies in their embodiment of an unusually wide range of diagnostic and 'mappable' idioms that together form a secure hook upon which to hang a Northumbrian localisation.

The first attribute to be considered as a means to localise the strap-ends is their unusually large size, for with an average length in excess of 70 mm the more robust of the two sets from Poppleton are giants in comparison with the majority of their counterparts discovered in southern and Midland regions of the country. Indeed, even the strap-ends in the smaller set are large by southern standards, where length rarely exceeds 55 mm. It is difficult to escape the conclusion that this morphological distinction represents a Northumbrian vogue when it is considered that the overwhelming majority of strap-ends belonging to a 'king-size' category of 60 mm and longer, including the two handsome pairs from Lilla Howe, are derived from northern locales.<sup>34</sup>

The stylistic repertoire of the Poppleton strap-ends points unequivocally to the same geographical source. The *en face* animal-head terminal and pendant plant motif (near identical on both sets) provide a convenient starting point for this analysis as both are treated idiosyncratically; the former, featuring comma-shaped ears and bulging eyes, replaces the dominant head-type

<sup>33</sup> For the localisation of regional *sceatt* issues, see D. M. Metcalf, *Thrymsas and Sceattas in the Ashmolean Museum Oxford*, 3 (London, 1994). For similar treatment of metalwork, see Thomas, *op. cit.* in note 24, and L. Webster, 'Metalwork of the Mercian supremacy', 263–77 in M. P. Brown and C. A. Farr (eds.), *Mercia: An Anglo-Saxon Kingdom in Europe* (Leicester, 2001).

<sup>34</sup> Webster, *op. cit.* in note 14, cat. nos. 249a and b.

displayed by the series distinguished by rounded ears and sunken or drilled eyes, whereas the latter substitutes the usual fleshy-leaved palmette with an attenuated version featuring looping, interlaced tendrils. The geographic spread of strap-ends bearing these variant species of animal head and palmette is confined to counties located to the north of the Humber (Fig. 6). A northern focus is also strongly apparent in the spread of strap-ends carrying one or other of the variant traits in isolation. Thus, examples carrying the variant palmette are also exclusively derived from counties north of the Humber, whereas the core distribution of strap-ends carrying the variant terminal, though slightly less defined, is nevertheless focused north of The Wash.<sup>35</sup>

Detailed scrutiny of the Trewhiddle-style decoration displayed on the principal decorative panels of the larger set further reinforces this Northumbrian attribution. The Poppleton strap-ends follow many of the style's basic conventions, as set out by Wilson, the most generalised being the use of niello inlay to pick out the decoration, the provision of surface texture in the form of nicking and speckling and, as appearing on the smaller set, the use of beaded borders as a framing device.<sup>36</sup> The various nuances associated with the handling of the zoomorphic ornament are also hallmarks of the style, from the preference for the depiction of profiled semi-naturalistic animals in crouched or backward-turning postures, to the selection of anatomical details such as splayed paws, collared necks and drilled eyes and ears, the latter (as can be seen on the larger set) sometimes attached to the back of the animal's head by a thin strand.

Whilst sharing these defining attributes, there is a fundamental stylistic divergence between the two sets of strap-end, a divergence which places the larger set firmly outside the artistic canon of the mainstream Trewhiddle Style. One of the most striking features of the larger set's virtuoso decoration is its lively, animated style articulated through the sprightly animals and their interplay with the flowing, idiosyncratically entwined, interlace. These subtly different though equally dynamic compositions can be readily contrasted to the formalised, stolid displays of the smaller strap-end set. In the latter case, whilst the columnar arrangement of three animals within the same decorative field could be said to be unusual (see below), the conventionalised backward-turning animal upon which the composition is based is fairly standard, featuring widely amongst Trewhiddle-style metalwork, with the strap-ends from Westmeston (E. Sussex) and Talnotrie (Dumfries & Galloway) offering particularly close analogues.<sup>37</sup>

The distinctiveness of the decorative style of the larger set is brought to the fore when set into a wider, national context. Outside the hoard, on the few objects where more than one animal appears within the same decorative field (the norm is to segregate motifs singly within their own fields), the overwhelming

<sup>35</sup> In the case of the variant species of palmette, a direct workshop link can be established on the basis of the recovery of a fragmentary strap-end mould from Carlisle bearing the same motif: J. Taylor and L. Webster, 'A Late Saxon strap-end mould from Carlisle', *Medieval Archaeol.*, 28 (1987), 178–81.

<sup>36</sup> Wilson, *op. cit.* in note 18, 26–35.

<sup>37</sup> Webster, *op. cit.* in note 14, cat. nos. 193 and 248a.

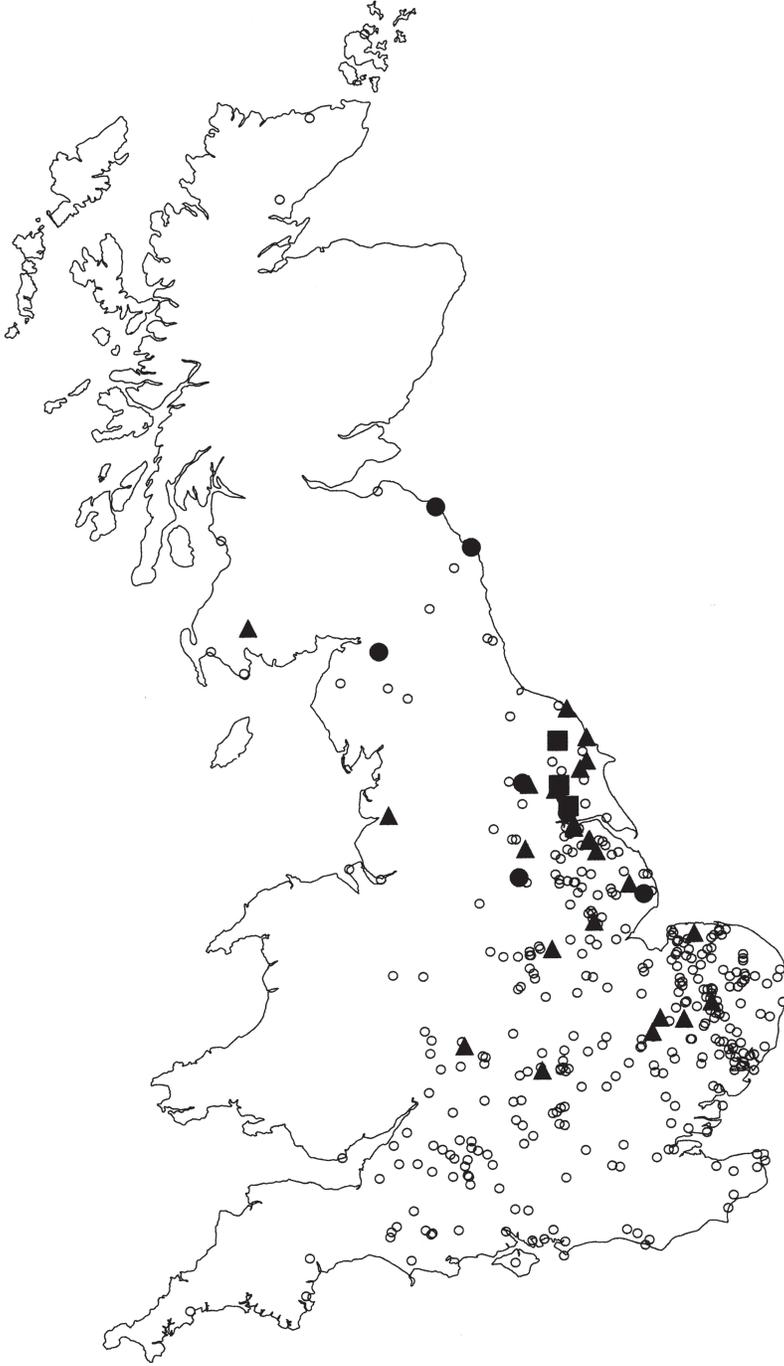


FIG. 6

DISTRIBUTION OF STRAP-ENDS WITH VARIANT SPECIES OF TERMINAL AND PALMETTE. Open circles = general background spread of 9th-century strap-ends bearing conventional features. Closed circles = strap-ends carrying both variants. Triangles = strap-ends carrying variant terminal. Squares = strap-ends carrying variant palmette. Data current as of 2000.

preference is for symmetrical compositions comprising pairs of confronted animals. Moreover, in such cases, the interlace usually emerges from tails and hindquarters in solid strands to intertwine in a tightly controlled manner below the animals; rarely does it encircle the animals at the periphery of the decorative field in the eccentric manner of the Poppleton strap-ends.<sup>38</sup>

Amongst the extant corpus of Trehiddle-style metalwork known to the author only two further pieces come close to the style and character of the decoration of the larger Poppleton set: both are deluxe strap-ends with a Northumbrian provenance. The first, the better preserved example from a pair discovered during excavations within the royal Bernician stronghold of Bamburgh Castle (Northumberland) has previously been published summarily, but the opportunity is taken here to illustrate its ornament, as revealed from X-ray taken of its inset decorative silver inlay (Fig. 5B).<sup>39</sup> The decorative composition is based upon a column of three sprightly, backward-turning animals with speckled and nicked bodies which share a striking resemblance to the lower beasts on panels of Poppleton nos. 2 and 4. All three animals are pierced by interlacing strands, which, although solid, share dotted terminal swellings and sub-foliate appendages in an open, asymmetrical configuration which is an almost exact match for the central portion of Poppleton no. 4. It may be noted that parallels also extend to the detailed treatment of the northern variant terminal and palmette, including the central lobe placed between the ears of the former.

The second parallel, an unpublished metal-detector find with a 'North Yorkshire' provenance, is fragmentary with a missing attachment-end, although enough of its central decorative panel survives to recognise the familiar style (Fig. 5C).<sup>40</sup> On this occasion, the characteristically animated field features a pair of animals depicted in a lively chase (designed to be read with the strap-end side-on); with the larger lead animal, pierced in two places by the body of its pursuer, shown thrusting its head over its shoulder in an attitude of confrontation. The character and handling of the interlace, whilst composed of single, not double-contoured strands, is also closely related to Poppleton's, both in regards to its fineness and open, eccentric patterning, as well as its disposition around the edges of the field to form a partial frame to the animals.

Turning attention from the overall composition of the larger quadruplet to the detailed handling of individual motifs brings into focus further local parallels. The contorted and encircled body-postures distinguishing two of the animals appearing on Poppleton no. 1, otherwise absent in the menagerie of southern

<sup>38</sup> See, for example, the paired animals appearing on the silver strap-end from St Paul-in-the-Bail, Lincoln, and the shoulders of the gold ring from Bologna, Italy; Webster, *op. cit.* in note 14, cat. no. 192; Bruce-Mitford, *op. cit.* in note 19, pl. XXII d.

<sup>39</sup> Webster, *op. cit.* in note 14, cat. no. 195.

<sup>40</sup> The find, which is in private possession, was submitted to the Yorkshire Museum for identification and recording. I am grateful to Elizabeth Hartley for bringing it to my attention and allowing me to reproduce the accompanying illustration prepared by Nick Griffiths.

metalwork, reappear in the zoomorphic content of two remarkably standardised groups of copper-alloy strap-end (of which the archetypal exponents are from Wooperton and Coldingham Priory, Northumberland) that can be confidently ascribed a Northumbrian pedigree on the grounds of their defined northern distributions.<sup>41</sup> Moreover, the standardised design distinguishing the Coldingham Priory group provides one of the few parallels for the use of median-incised interlace in a Trewhiddle-style context, a motif otherwise restricted to the pairs of silver strap-ends with northern variant terminals and palmettes from Lilla Howe. This form of interlace is more commonly associated with Anglo-Scandinavian material from the Danelaw decorated in debased versions of the Scandinavian Borre style, including a typologically later tongue-shaped strap-end from York; such hints that the Poppleton strap-ends and their local correlates were manufactured during the late 9th or early 10th century.<sup>42</sup>

### CONCLUSION

The foregoing discussion, centred upon the remarkable suite of matching strap-ends from Poppleton, has isolated a distinct group emanating from a geographically constrained area tolerably close in extent to the historic kingdom of Northumbria.<sup>43</sup> At the apex of this material is a select range of large, elaborate silver strap-ends, of which the Poppleton series are the finest representatives, sharing unusually playful and inventive compositions that rank them alongside some of the most exuberant and artistically creative pieces in the whole of the Trewhiddle-style repertoire. These prestige commissions, perhaps to be regarded as the limited output of a virtuoso atelier or workshop, appear, in certain details, to have drawn upon a similar stylistic reservoir as a range of base-metal versions, indicated by a number of shared idioms — from the variant species of terminal and palmette, through to contorted animal postures and double-contoured interlace.

Thus defined, this family of strap-ends may take its place alongside two other distinctly northern versions of the Trewhiddle Style, a consideration of which brings into focus further interconnections in the zoomorphic vocabulary peculiar to the region's cultural output. The sword pommel from Scales Moor,

<sup>41</sup> R. N. Bailey, 'An Anglo-Saxon strap-end from Wooperton', *Archaeol. Aeliana*, 5(21B) (1993), 87–91; G. Thomas, 'Strap-ends and the identification of regional patterns in the production and circulation of ornamental metalwork in Viking-age Britain', 81–101 in M. Redknap, N. Edwards, S. Youngs, A. Lane and J. Knight (eds.), *Pattern and Purpose in Insular Art* (Oxford, 2001).

<sup>42</sup> D. M. Wilson, 'Two 10th century bronze objects', *Medieval Archaeol.*, 9 (1965), 154–6.

<sup>43</sup> At its political apogee under Oswiu (642–70), the Northumbrian kingdom, comprising the unified sub-kingdoms of Deira and Bernicia, extended from the Humber in the south to beyond the Firth of Forth in the north and westwards across the Pennines to encompass Lancashire, the Cumbrian coastal plain and southern Dumfriesshire; see Rosemary Cramp, *Whithorn and the Northumbrian Expansion Westwards* (Third Whithorn Lecture, Whithorn, 1995). By the 9th century, despite the loss of territory to its British neighbours to the north and north-west and the expansionist policies of Mercia to the south, Northumbria is likely to have retained dominion over much of this landmass: N. J. Higham, *The Kingdom of Northumbria ad 350–1100* (Stroud, 1993), 140–4.

Ingleton (N. Yorks), for example, one of a group of northern swords distinguished by their silver- and gold-inlaid hilts bearing bands of Trewhiddle-style ornament of an unusually devolved form, displays a selection of multi-headed grotesques clearly drawn from the same menagerie as the animals on the Coldingham Priory and Wooperton groups of strap-end.<sup>44</sup> Additionally, a close relative of the backward-looking fish-headed beast reproduced on a distinctive group of northern finger-rings, exemplified by the gold example from Selkirk, Scotland, is to be found on one of the silver pairs of strap-ends in the Lilla Howe hoard.<sup>45</sup>

In its various interrelated manifestations, this Northumbrian sub-genre (as it may justly be identified) appears to be one of the most vigorous strains of the Trewhiddle Style to have been brought to light by the recent finds increase.<sup>46</sup> A consideration of the Poppleton hoard has extended the vocabulary of this artistic dialect and, it is hoped, brought to wider attention the vitality of Late Anglo-Saxon craft-working practised between the Humber and the Tees.

#### ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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<sup>44</sup> Wilson, *op. cit.* in note 18, 32–3; Webster and Backhouse, *op. cit.* in note 1, cat. nos. 250–1.

<sup>45</sup> Webster, *op. cit.* in note 14, cat. nos. 203–4.

<sup>46</sup> This identification represents a step towards meeting the expectation that regional groupings will be elucidated as the body of Trewhiddle-style metalwork continues to grow: J. A. Graham-Campbell, *op. cit.* in note 1, 145.