The 9th-century Anglo-Saxon Horn-mount from Burghead, Morayshire, Scotland

By JAMES GRAHAM-CAMPBELL

Lecturer, Department of Scandinavian Studies, University College, London

THE silver horn-mount found at Burghead, Morayshire, and now in the National Museum of Antiquities of Scotland,[1] is of a form otherwise unrecorded amongst the corpus of late Anglo-Saxon metalwork. Although it was discovered nearly 150 years ago, the mount has never received the full publication it merits and, as a result, a number of mistaken ideas concerning it have become established. Previous discussion on the use of horns by the Anglo-Saxons has largely been confined to the subject of drinking-horns, but Anglo-Saxon literature and manuscript representations indicate the importance of blast-horns for various purposes, such as signalling in battle and summoning men to feasts. This type of horn is best seen as a combination of hunting-horn and bugle and, as part of a warrior's equipment, is likely to have been highly decorated. That the Burghead mount may have come from such a blast-horn must be considered seriously.

THE mount was found by workmen during excavations for the new town of Burghead, when the greater part of the Pictish fortified area was destroyed,[2] but the exact location is unknown. The owner of the land, Mr. Young, presented the mount to Sir Thomas Dick Lauder, who considered it to be a bracelet of Danish or, more likely, of Roman date, as he informed the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland on 27 February 1826. His brief observations were published in 1831, accompanied by a sketch which is here reproduced (PL. XV, A).[3] Its identification as a bracelet was maintained by Daniel Wilson,[4] but was finally dismissed by 'a competent authority, Mr. Franks of the British Museum', who rightly observed that it was the mounting of a horn,[5] and that it was 'of either Scandinavian or Saxon manufacture, and of an age not prior to the tenth century'. In 1862, the mount was presented to the Museum of the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland by Lady Dick Lauder and was illustrated in the Society's

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[1] Reg. no. IL 214. I am most grateful to the staff of the National Museum of Antiquities of Scotland, Edinburgh, for every assistance during my examination of the mount; also to Dr. Hugh McKerrell for discussion of his analytical results, to Professor David Wilson for much helpful advice and to Miss F. Carson for providing the drawings.

[2] For the site see A. Small, 'Burghead', *Scottish Archaeological Forum* (Edinburgh, 1969), 61–8 and refs.

[3] *Archaeologia Scotica*, III (1831), 39–40, pl. V, 1.

[4] *The Archaeology and Prehistoric Annals of Scotland* (Edinburgh, 1851), 443.

[5] *Proc. Soc. Antiq. Scotland*, IV (1860–62), 358.

Proceedings[6] with a careful woodcut, since reproduced several times. Joseph Anderson[7] also maintained that it was from a drinking-horn and was a Scandinavian piece of the Viking period. His conclusions were accepted by Sigurd Grieg who, by including it in his corpus of Viking antiquities in Scotland,[8] set a seal upon its mistaken identification as being Scandinavian work. Unfortunately Grieg introduced a number of other errors into what has remained the most detailed description of the object; in particular, there is no stamped ornamentation on the mount, as he claimed. It remained for David Wilson,[9] in his definitive publication of the Trewhiddle hoard, to point out not only that the Burghead mount was ornamented in the Anglo-Saxon Trewhiddle style of the 9th century, but also that it had a number of features in common with certain mounts in the Trewhiddle hoard itself. In view of Alan Small's recent work at Burghead,[10] it seems an appropriate moment to do justice to the mount, in particular by detailing the stylistic features which enabled Wilson to attribute it so confidently to an Anglo-Saxon origin.

DESCRIPTION (PL. XV, B–D)

The mount is made of two pieces of silver: a plain rim-binding and an ornamented strip, now much damaged. These form a complete circle, of 7·5 cm. external diameter, for attachment to the rim of a horn which has not survived.

The rim-binding. This is a single plain strip, now fragmented, Ht. 0·8 cm., T. 0·1 cm., bent into the shape of an open, or unfinished 'P' of which the downward curving element does not return to meet the straight stem (FIG. 19, *a*). This straight portion was attached to the inner face of the horn by three rivets placed at more or less regular intervals around its circumference (*infra*, p. 46). The upper portion was bent over the rim of the horn before curving in to meet the upper edge of the ornamented strip.

The ornamented strip. The strip, now incomplete, with max. Ht. 1·6 cm., T. 0·15 cm., has a straight top and a saw-edged bottom divided into eighteen inverted sub-triangular fields (FIG. 19, *b*), and one trapezoidal field. The sub-triangular fields contain engraved, nielloed ornament, but the trapezoidal one is plain, and bears a semicircular rod forming a loop for suspension. The top of the strip is plain whereas the bottom has a beaded border which connects a series of dome-shaped rivets placed at the corners of the sub-triangular fields. The angle between each pair of triangles is filled with a small tear-shaped drop.

The ornaments of the individual fields are described in a clockwise direction taking the suspension-loop as being the top of the mount. The ornament of some fields is no longer decipherable and in others it is obscure, and must remain so, since cleaning has probably proceeded as far as is safe, owing to the fragile condition of the mount.

[6] *Ibid.*, 378.
[7] *Proc. Soc. Antiq. Scotland*, x (1872–74), 586.
[8] In H. Shetelig (ed.), *Viking Antiquities in Great Britain and Ireland* (Oslo, 1940), ii, 159–61, fig. 75.
[9] *Archaeologia*, xcviii (1961), 87 f., pl. xxix, *b*.
[10] *Op. cit.* in note 2; Mr. Small kindly informs me that a full report is in preparation.
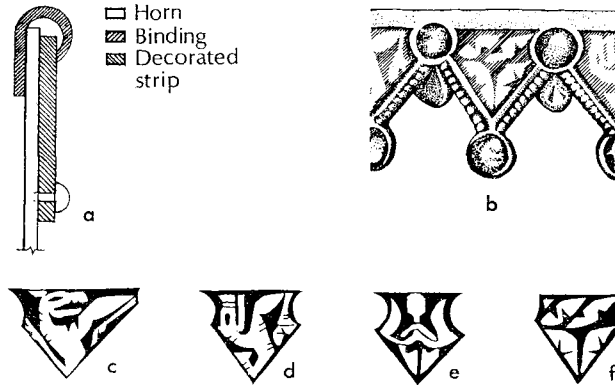
FIG. 19

DETAILS OF ANGLO-SAXON HORN-MOUNT FROM BURGHEAD, MORAYSHIRE

a. Schematic section (pp. 44, 46); *b.* Layout of ornamented strip (pp. 44, 48); *c–f.* Ornament of fields 1–3 and 5 (pp. 45, 48 f.). Sc. ⅜

1 (FIG. 19, *c*). The head of the animal is placed in the top left-hand corner of the field and is backward-looking; it has a square snout and a V-shaped mouth, a pointed eye and a leaf-shaped ear. The body is sub-triangular with an emphasized hip from which extends a thin hind-leg. This, and the foreleg, lie one along each of the lower edges of the field; in both the foot is nicked to suggest toes. The animal itself is plain except for a series of double cuts at the edge of the body.

2 (FIG. 19, *d*). The animal in this field is similar to that in the first, except that the head looks upwards and has only the suggestion of an ear. A further difference is that its rear foot develops into a leaf.

3 (FIG. 19, *e*). This field contains a balanced plant motif consisting of two pairs of leaves with interlaced stems growing out of a central sub-rectangular feature, very much like an inverted potted plant.

4. The animal here is very similar to that in no. 2, although the ear is absent and the foreleg is practically non-existent.

5 (FIG. 19, *f*). This contains two pairs of bifoliate ornaments.

6. The animal repeats that in nos. 2 and 4.

7. The backward-looking head of an inverted animal is placed in the bottom angle. Its hind-leg develops from a well-formed hip and lies along the top edge of the field; the position of the foreleg is obscure. A trefoil form fills the right-hand side of the field between the animal's head and back.

8. This contains the same 'potted-plant' motif as no. 3.

9. Indecipherable.

10. This contains an animal similar to that in no. 7, with a short foreleg extending to the left.

11. The ornament is not clear, but consists of an animal with a thin hind-leg with toes, which may possibly be equated with that in no. 1.

12. The ornament here is also obscure, but possibly consists of the same 'potted-plant' motif as in nos. 3 and 8.

13. This contains an inverted animal differing from the others, but uncertain in detail. It is nearest to that in no. 7.

14–17. Missing.

18. This, which is at present incorrectly reconstructed as field 17 (see *infra*), contains what seems to be the same animal as appears in no. 1, although its position is reversed. The exact position of the head is, however, uncertain.

Method of attachment. The dome-shaped rivets placed at the bottom of each field would appear, at present, to have been simply for ornamental purposes, since all four extant examples are flattened against the back of the strip. This is, however, a mistaken impression since it is clear that in the 19th century the nine such rivets then surviving were of such a length as to have necessarily penetrated the horn (PL. XV, A).[11] It is not now evident whether the upper row of rivets has been treated in the same manner; however, in three instances they pierced both the horn and the inner portion of the rim-binding, thus securing it to the horn. The only surviving example of these three rivets is that between fields 6 and 7; the others were between fields 12 and 13, and 17 and 18.

The present reconstruction. The mount is at present reconstructed round a perspex ring and is supported on a perspex stand. This reconstruction, although suitable for display purposes, is unfortunately at fault. Most significantly, the perspex ring, representing the rim of the horn, has been placed on the outside of the ornamented strip (cp. FIG. 19, *a*). Secondly, it is clear from the original published drawing (PL. XV, A), and from examination, that what is at present reconstructed as field 17 is really no. 18, which adjoins the plain trapezoidal field to which the suspension-loop is attached. The additional point concerning the now flattened rivets has been discussed already.

The analysis. The metal of the mount has been analysed by Dr. Hugh McKerrell, of the National Museum of Antiquities of Scotland, as part of a major analytical programme covering 1st to 10th-century silver. Only the results concerning coins have so far been published,[12] but the methods described are the same, as are the factors governing the interpretation of the results. The results for the Burghead mount are published here by courtesy of the National Museum, alongside those for the 9th-century Anglo-Saxon strap-end from the Talnotrie, Kirkcudbright, hoard:[13]

	%Ag	%Cu	%Zn	%Pb	%Sn
Burghead mount:	95·4	3·9	0·1	0·6	0
Talnotrie strap-end:	96·0	3·4	0·1	0·5	0

Both objects consist of very fine silver (sterling silver$=92\cdot5\%$ Ag.), hardened by the addition of a small amount of fairly pure copper. In the absence of further

[11] See also the woodcut, *loc. cit.* in note 6, which clearly shows a projecting rivet at the base of field 12; it is now flattened.

[12] H. McKerrell and R. B. K. Stevenson, 'Some analyses of Anglo-Saxon and associated oriental silver coinage' in *Methods of Chemical and Metallurgical Investigation of Ancient Coinage*, ed. E. T. Hall and D. M. Metcalf (Royal Numismatic Society, special publication no. 8, 1972), 195–209.

[13] *Proc. Soc. Antiq. Scotland*, XLVII (1912–13), 14.

results from 9th-century Anglo-Saxon coins and artifacts little in the way of interpretation can be offered except to contrast broadly this purity with the results obtained for 10th-century Anglo-Saxon coinage. During this century, to harden their silver, Anglo-Saxon moneyers 'turned, increasingly as time went on, from the use of mixed copper-tin-zinc alloys to material much nearer brass in composition'.[14] These results for the 10th century have suggested that 'there must exist a distinct possibility of dating (by analysis) objects or hoards containing silver derived from coins of this period'.[15] This promising beginning points to the desirability of continuing and extending such an analytical programme, particularly if more Anglo-Saxon samples can be made available.

DISCUSSION

The mount. The rim-binding of the Burghead mount is in effect a straightforward adaptation of the simple rim-bindings, in the form of an inverted U, which are well enough known from northern Europe at this period on both horns and cups. Wilson[16] cites that from Ballinaby, Islay, as a parallel to the Burghead example. Only a small part of this bronze rim-binding survives; it is without rivet holes but has adhering to it the remains of a vertical retaining-strip. Retaining-strips were the normal method of attaching such rim-bindings to drinking-vessels, as, for example, that from grave 15 in the cemetery at Holywell Row, Suffolk.[17] It has been suggested that a fragment of a silver strip, ornamented in the Trewhiddle style, from the Cuerdale, Lancs., hoard, may have been used for such a purpose.[18] There is, however, no evidence for the use of such retaining-strips with either the Burghead or the Trewhiddle mounts, all of which were directly attached by rivets. The particular form of the Burghead rim-binding allows for the addition of the ornamented strip of which it overlaps the upper edge. Being hidden, this upper margin is plain, unlike that of the large Trewhiddle mount.[19] The implication is, therefore, that it is unlikely that such an arrangement would have applied to the large Trewhiddle mount, if in fact it was designed to be fixed round the mouth of a horn.

Wilson has pointed out the manner in which the saw-edged bottom of the Burghead ornamented strip parallels the arcaded bottoms of the three Trewhiddle mounts. At the same time he suggested that 'the sub-triangular panels which appear below the lips of both the Taplow and Sutton Hoo horns are perhaps the origin, or the inspiration, of the arcaded base of the Trewhiddle mounts and of the toothed base of the Burghead mount'.[20] This hypothesis remains the most probable

[14] *Op. cit.* in note 12, 200–1.

[15] *Ibid.*, 201–2.

[16] *Op. cit.* in note 9, 87.

[17] T. C. Lethbridge, *Recent Excavations in Anglo-Saxon Cemeteries in Cambridgeshire and Suffolk* (Cambridge Antiq. Soc., 4to publ., n.s. III, 1931), 12, fig. 14. This is wrongly ascribed by Wilson, *op. cit.* in note 9, 88, to the cemetery at Burwell, Cambs.

[18] *Med. Archaeol.*, XIV (1970), 152–3.

[19] For a definitive description and discussion of the Trewhiddle mounts and other objects in the hoard see D. M. Wilson and C. E. Blunt, 'The Trewhiddle hoard', *Archaeologia*, XCVIII (1961), 75–122. Further individual references will not normally be given here.

[20] *Ibid.*, 88.

explanation for the form of these mounts, despite the lack of 8th-century examples to fill out the proposed sequence.

It is, however, reasonable to suggest that there exists in the silver object from Cricklade, Wilts., a fragment of another such 9th-century mount ornamented in the Trewhiddle style. This has been described by Wilson as part of a strap-end,[21] but two features argue against this identification. First, the strip (T. 0·08 cm.) is too thin to permit the end to have been split to receive a strap, unless it was atypical in first expanding for this purpose. On the other hand, its thickness corresponds well with that of the Burghead ornamented strip (0·15 cm.) and those of the Trewhiddle mounts (large and second mounts: 0·1 cm.; smallest mount: 0·08 cm.). Secondly, the position of the animal in relation to the borders of the strip strongly suggests that the fragment should be seen as having one horizontal edge with the opposite one at a slope, rather than having the symmetrical, gently curving sides of a strap-end.

The general similarity in form between the Burghead mount and those from the Trewhiddle hoard (deposited *c.* 875), and their common use of rivets for attachment, could well be taken as an indication of a 9th-century date for the Burghead piece. A more definite attribution to the 9th century is, however, forthcoming from its style of ornamentation.

The ornament. The beaded border dividing the ornamented strip into a series of small fields provides a direct link between the Burghead mount and the large Trewhiddle mounts. In fact this tendency to use beaded borders to divide an area into small fields, each containing an individual motif, is a particular characteristic of the Trewhiddle style, as is the use of dome-headed rivets. The Burghead mount combines both these features in that the beaded border serves to link each rivet, or boss, in a series of short, straight lines forming a continuous zig-zag pattern (FIG. 19, *b*). The motifs on the mount relate it most closely to a number of objects in the Trewhiddle hoard and also to the gold finger-ring from Poslingford, Suffolk,[22] which is itself closely related by its ornament to the Trewhiddle mounts.

Of the original eighteen fields of ornament on the Burghead mount only fourteen now survive. Amongst these it is possible to identify a minimum of six different motifs, although more were probably used. The same motifs were repeated, however, with only minor variation in detail, as for instance in nos. 2, 4 and 6, but there is no apparent pattern behind these repetitions (see also, e.g., nos. 3, 8 and ?12). An exception to this is the felicitous touch of apparently repeating the animal in field 1 in the final field (18), but reversed, so that these two animals appear, as it were, back to back on either side of the plain field to which the suspension-loop is attached.

Amongst the best preserved fields four different motifs are represented which merit detailed discussion. Two of these consist of single animals (FIG. 19, *c, d*) and

[21] *Ibid.*, 104, pl. xxix, *c.*

[22] D. M. Wilson, *Anglo-Saxon Metalwork, 700–1100, in the British Museum* (London, 1964), 160–1, pl. xxviii, 61.

the other two are of a vegetable nature (FIG. 19, *e*,*f*). This alternation of animal and vegetable patterns on the same object is a well known feature of the Trewhiddle style, as for instance on the Poslingford ring. It is convenient to discuss together the two animal motifs from fields 1 and 2 since they have all their essential features in common and they are closely paralleled by the animal in field 8 on the largest of the Trewhiddle mounts. These features are, briefly, a squared snout, a sub-triangular body, a shaped hip and a thin leg with toes. A feature at variance, like the rear foot of the animal in field 2 which terminates in a leaf, can easily be paralleled elsewhere on the largest Trewhiddle mount by the tail of the animal in field 6. The only significant differences are in the treatment of the eyes, which are pointed on the Burghead animals and circular on the Trewhiddle ones, and in the absence of the characteristic speckling on the bodies of the Burghead animals. Absence of speckling is, however, a feature of the ornament of the smallest Trewhiddle mount, on which this decorative device is replaced by a series of double cuts in the contour of the body of the animal. This is a particular feature of the Burghead animals and means that they combine significant elements of the first and third of the three groups of ornament distinguished by Wilson in the art of the Trewhiddle hoard, thus demonstrating the close unity involved between the different manifestations of this one style.

The two leaf motifs employed in pairs in field 5 (FIG. 19,*f*) can both be paralleled exactly on the ornament of the lid of the box-like object found in the Trewhiddle hoard. Like the rest of the ornament on the Burghead mount these leaf motifs are unspeckled. The inverted 'potted-plant' motif of field 3 (FIG. 19, *e*) is without parallel in the Trewhiddle hoard itself but is very similar to one on the Poslingford ring. This ring has two versions of the motif,[23] but that of direct interest in the present instance is to be found in field 2. Although the treatment of the leaves of this particular 'potted plant' is more elaborate than that of the Burghead one, the layout of the motif is the same. The ornament of the Poslingford ring is unspeckled and its animals have double cuts on their bodies; they have, however, the circular eyes of the Trewhiddle animals. There can be no doubt whatsoever of the existence of a very close relationship between the Burghead mount, the animal-ornamented pieces in the Trewhiddle hoard and the Poslingford ring.

In the light of this close stylistic relationship between the Burghead mount and certain objects in the Trewhiddle hoard—a relationship which extends in the case of the mounts to a resemblance in form—it is unnecessary to repeat the arguments advanced by Wilson for a 9th-century date for the Burghead mount and other pieces decorated in the Trewhiddle style.[24] Suffice it to say that the close relationship noted with the Trewhiddle mounts might suggest that the manufacture of the Burghead mount is earlier than the deposition of that hoard *c*. 875. But the fact remains that the Trewhiddle mounts were in fine condition when buried so that it would be foolish to attempt to narrow down the period within the 9th century when these separate mounts were made.

[23] For a discussion of this motif see *Brit. Mus. Quarterly*, XXI (1956), 90.
[24] *Op. cit.* in note 19, 106–8, and *op. cit.* in note 22, 21–35.

DRINKING-HORN OR BLAST-HORN?

The statement by Wilson[25] that the Burghead mount 'is undoubtedly either a drinking-horn or cup mount' requires close examination. A significant feature in deciding the exact nature of the object to which the mount was attached is the presence of the suspension-loop. No obvious reason presents itself for the addition of suspension-loops to a cup and indeed none of the extant mounted cups, such as that from Sibertswold Down, Kent,[26] is so provided. On these grounds it would seem that the idea that it was a cup can be eliminated. Likewise there exists no absolute necessity for drinking-horns to be equipped for suspension, other than that they are somewhat clumsy objects which it would be convenient to hang up when not in use. Consequently it is not surprising that the earlier Anglo-Saxon mounts and terminals from drinking-horns, those from Taplow[27] and Sutton Hoo,[28] have no special provision for suspension. On the other hand, a number of Irish examples, such as that from Carraig Aille, co. Limerick,[29] and others found in Viking-age contexts in Norway[30] do have rings on their terminals, or other arrangements to permit their suspension.

There is, however, another type of horn which had to be suspended, normally about one's person, to make it readily available for use. This is the blast-horn, for which the nearest modern analogy might be a hunting-horn, although a bugle brings to mind rather better some of the uses to which a blast-horn was put. On this matter of the use of horns by the Anglo-Saxons, there is some interesting information to be gained from Riddle 14 in the Exeter Book,[31] the solution of which is generally accepted as being 'a horn':

> I was a soldier armed; but now a proud
> Young warrior covers me with gold and silver,
> With twisted rings of wire. Sometimes men kiss me;
> Sometimes by voice I summon to the battle
> The loyal friends; sometimes a splendid steed
> Bears me across the mark; sometimes a sea-horse
> Gay in its colours ferries me across
> The waters; or a maiden, ring-adorned,
> Fills up my bosom; sometimes on the tables
> I have to lie, hard stripped, without my head;
> Or sometimes beautiful, bedecked with trappings,
> I hang upon the wall where heroes drink.
> Sometimes when warriors wear their noble war-gear
> On horseback, then must I, adorned with treasure,
> Swallow the wind puffed out from some man's breast;

[25] *Op. cit.* in note 19, 87.
[26] B. Faussett, *Inventorium Sepulchrale* (London, 1856), 113, no. 69.
[27] *British Museum, A Guide to the Anglo-Saxon . . . Antiquities . . .* (London, 1923), figs. 5 and 71.
[28] R. L. S. Bruce-Mitford, *The Sutton Hoo Ship Burial: A Handbook* (London, 2 ed. 1972), 33–5.
[29] *Proc. Roy. Irish Acad.*, Sect. C, LII (1949), 64–5, fig. 8.
[30] *Ibid.*, 66–7, with refs.
[31] For the Exeter Book see G. P. Krapp and E. V. K. Dobbie, *Anglo-Saxon Poetic Records*, III (1936); also F. Tupper (ed.), *The Riddles of the Exeter Book* (Boston, 1910); and A. E. H. Swaen, 'The Anglo-Saxon horn riddles', *Neophilologus*, XXVI (1941). Translation quoted, by permission of R. Hamer and Faber and Faber, Ltd., from *A Choice of Anglo-Saxon Verse* (London, 1970). I am most grateful to Miss Lucy Mitchell for drawing my attention to this version, and to Professor Alan Bliss for his advice.

> Sometimes I summon by my proclamation
> Proud men to wine; sometimes my voice must rescue
> The stolen property from enemies,
> Put foes to flight. Now find out what I am.

In this riddle the main emphasis is placed on the use of the horn for signalling in battle, that is, on the blast-horn, although its use for drinking purposes is not totally forgotten. For the riddler the 'voice' of the horn is its most important attribute whether employed in war or for more peaceful ends, such as summoning 'proud men to wine'. Representations in late Anglo-Saxon manuscripts of, for instance, a feast scene[32] and an attack on a town[33] show the blast-horn in use for both these purposes. Two other points relevant to the present discussion are contained in lines 13–15. First, a blast-horn constituted a part of a warrior's 'noble war-gear'. Confirmation of this is to be found in Riddle 80, which is now generally accepted also as referring to a horn. It commences:[34]

> *Hwæt!* I am always at the ætheling's shoulder,
> his battle-fellow . . .

Secondly, it is made clear that such horns were richly ornamented. The riddler brings both these points together in lines 11–12 of Riddle 14. The reference seems to be, not to a drinking-horn as suggested by Ray Page,[35] but to an ornate blast-horn hung, as was appropriate, among the weapons on the walls of a hall during a feast, when the drinking-horns themselves would presumably have been required for practical rather than decorative purposes.

Whereas it can never be said definitely to what the Trewhiddle mounts were attached, it would seem virtually certain that the Burghead mount was made for the mouth of a horn. Furthermore, it is not unreasonable to suggest that, since its suspension-loop forms an integral part of the mount, this horn might well have been a blast-horn rather than a drinking-horn. The Burghead mount is small enough in diameter to have fitted a horn of convenient size for carrying about the person. How such a fine piece of equipment belonging to a 9th-century Anglo-Saxon warrior came to Burghead must remain a matter for conjecture, although the possibility of Viking intervention must be borne in mind.[36]

[32] British Museums MS. Cotton Tiberius B.v., 'April'.
[33] British Museum MS. Harley 603, fol. 25v.
[34] M. Alexander, *The Earliest English Poems* (Penguin Classics, 1966), 101.
[35] R. I. Page, *Life in Anglo-Saxon England* (London, 1970), 152.
[36] *Op. cit.* in note 2, 67, where the mount itself is incorrectly described as 'Viking'.

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