ART. X – *A group of pre-Conquest metalwork from Asby Winderwath Common*

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THE group of metalwork to be described was discovered in 1993 by a metal detector user. It was reported to the British Museum through the kind offices of Mr Kevin Leahy, F.S.A., of Scunthorpe Museum (now of the North Lincolnshire Museum Service), and ultimately shown to and purchased by the British Museum. It consists largely of iron objects, though its most distinguished component by a large margin is of copper alloy. As a result of the circumstances of the discovery, there is no certainty that any one object was originally associated with the others. Dating evidence is relatively rare, but there can be little doubt that most of the objects come from within a bracket of two hundred years between 800 and 1000 A.D. The find comes from an area of much archaeological interest. Numerous late prehistoric settlement sites include the well-known Castle Folds (Richmond, 1933); the finder of the present hoard has also discovered a fine Iron Age sword in the vicinity (BM Reg. No. 1994.2-4.1 to 2-4.5; Richardson, 1999, 6 & Plate 1); and the site of the Orton Scar find of a Viking penannular brooch and neck ring (Birley, 1964) is only 1.6 miles (2.5 km.) away. There is also evidence of recent mineral working nearby.

Site

The area of Winderwath Common within the civil parish of Asby (Fig. 1) consists of Carboniferous Limestone on which limestone pavement has developed. It was subject to late enclosure (1874) and is therefore divided into fields by straight dry-stone walls. Within one of these fields there is an area where there are curvilinear dry-stone walls, often utilising slabs set up on their sides, which are likely to be of prehistoric origin. Through the south-east corner of the field runs a dry valley, steep-sided enough to have been created by the collapse of a cave system. On the margin of this valley lies a rectangular sheep-fold, probably of relatively recent date, and in the extreme north-east corner of the field are the remains of several small dry-stone buildings, at least one of which incorporates a natural limestone scarp as one of its walls (Plate 1). There is virtually no means of dating these buildings, within which the finds with which we are concerned were made. The NGR is NY 660 110.

The objects (Figs. 2-12)[1]

In total 115 objects are registered at the British Museum under the general number 1995.9-1.*, where the asterisk represents a subsidiary number. These subsidiary numbers are given in brackets after the serial number in the list which follows. Thus 3.(64) below indicates that the object numbered 3 in the current list has the registration number 1995.9-1.64. Of the 115 objects, ten are of copper alloy and the remainder of iron. The copper alloy plaque is dealt with first; thereafter the objects numbered 2-104 and 113 and 114 are of iron and 105-112 and 115 are of copper alloy.

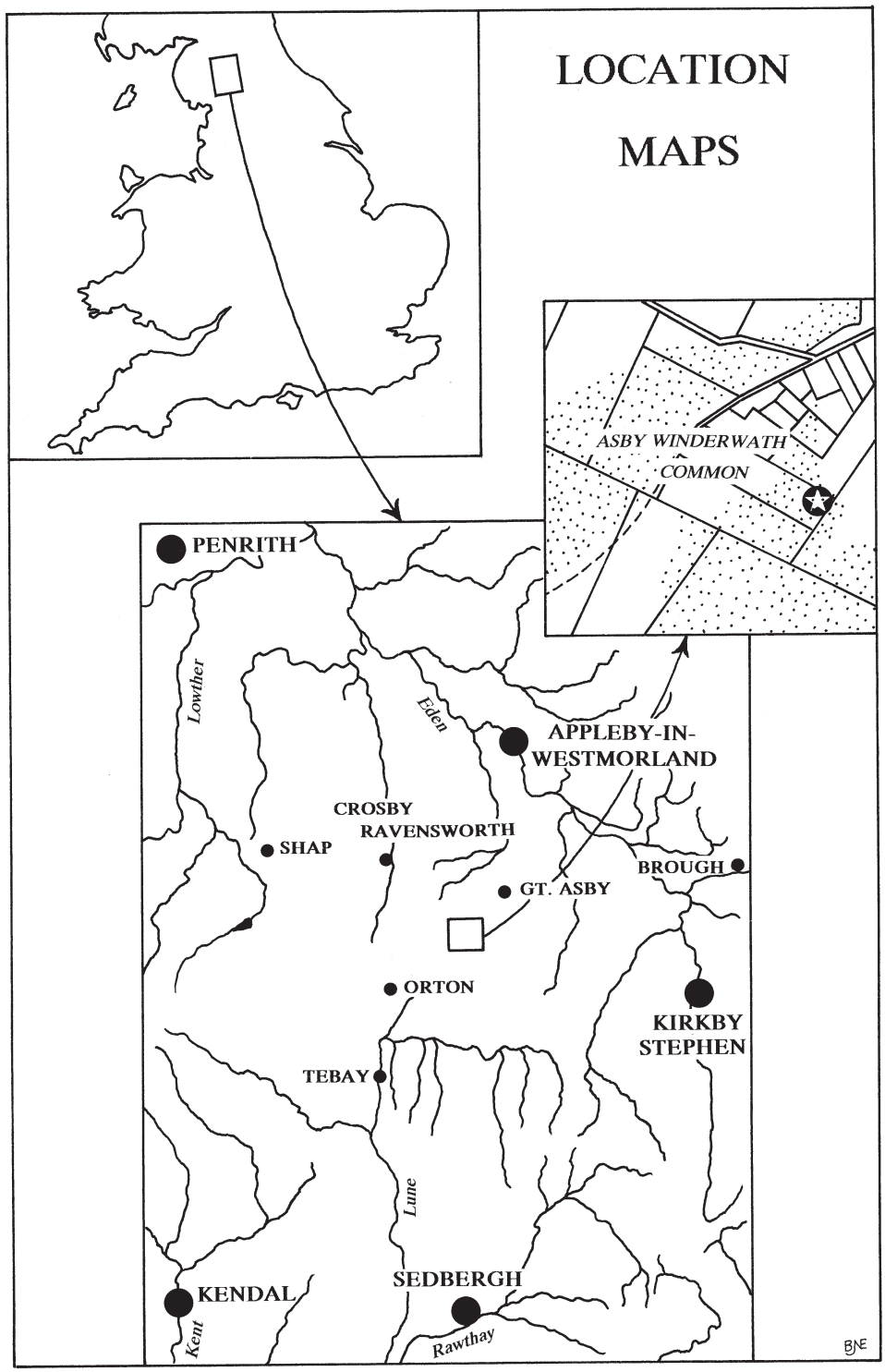

FIG. 1. Location maps.

Copper alloy plaque

1.(1) Copper alloy openwork plaque with gilded surface (Fig. 2 and Plate 2). This plaque has already been published by Susan Youngs of the British Museum (Youngs, 1999), and the following summary of her conclusions has received her approbation. 1. The decorative scheme of the plaque consists of a vine-scroll on which feed two pairs of animals – quadrupeds at the top, birds at the bottom. This surrounds a cross-marked disc interpreted as the sacred host. 2. This scheme implies a religious, specifically eucharistic, context for the piece. 3. It was riveted to its background – possibly a box or satchel for carrying the host. 4. Consideration of a wide range of evidence from stone sculpture, metalwork and manuscripts leads to the conclusion that the plaque is Northumbrian work of *c.*800 A.D. 5. The removal of the plaque from its original position with sufficient force and lack of care to damage it, together with the modifications carried out at the other end, have implications for the presence of the plaque at Asby. (These are discussed below, p. 140.) The final summary (Youngs, 1999, 294) reads as follows: "By itself this small plaque epitomizes the Insular style, taking that to be a hybrid of Irish and Anglo-Saxon traits feeding on the post-classical Christian iconographic tradition and growing into something new, distinctive and influential; it is a modest but interesting addition to the art of the Golden Age of Northumbria". To this might be added that, from the point of view of Cumbria, it is one of very few objects illustrating that art, and, as such, rather more important than that summary suggests.
Maximum dimensions 85.5 mm x 63 mm.

Auger or spoon bit

2.(47) This object is an example of an extremely long-lived type. It is found in Roman contexts (e.g. Curle, 1911, 281, Pl. LIX, No. 12), is widespread throughout the pre-Conquest period and its equivalents outside England, and continues into the medieval period (and, ultimately, into the more recent past, and indeed to the present day). Examples from the first millennium include those from York (Ottaway, 1992, 532-536) where eight such objects are identified, five of them complete; Hurbuck, Co. Durham (Page, 1905, 213-214 and Pl. f. 214); Middle Harling, Norfolk (Rogerson, 1995, fig. 68, No. 102); Flixborough, Lincs. (Loveluck, 1998); Stidriggs, Dumfries. (Unpub. Dumfries Museum); Mästermyr (Sweden) (Arwidsson and Berg, 1985, Pl. 28, Nos. 46-50); Mikulčice (Czechoslovakia) (Poulík, 1975, 25, fig. 11, Nos. 4 & 5). Ottaway (1992, 532) reconstructs the tool in which such bits were used as having a winged handle, but refers also to the well-known ship-building scene in the Bayeux Tapestry (Stenton, 1957, fig. 38), where a breast drill is in use.
Dimensions: Overall length, as surviving 13.9 cm.

"Scythe" blades

3.(64) This object, together with Nos. 4.(112) and 5.(33), has a straight blade, a tang at right angles to it, and a further short projection or spike at right angles to the plane of both the last. It is precisely paralleled at Hurbuck (Co. Durham) (Page, 1905, 213-214 and Pl. f. 214) and Stidriggs (Dumfries.) (Unpub. Dumfries Mus.).

PLATE. 1. The remains of buildings among which the finds were made. (Photo: author).

PLATE. 2. The copper-alloy plaque. (Photo: author).

At Hurbuck, where there were four examples, they were referred to as scythe blades, and inferences have been drawn from this which require some modification.

These blades differ from recent and modern scythe blades in three respects: they are straight rather than curved in plan; they are smaller; and, perhaps most importantly, the blade and tang (and therefore the shaft) lie in the same plane. This last characteristic is important because in a modern scythe the blade is almost parallel to the ground when the shaft (*sned, sneath*) is up by its user's shoulder. Indeed, to quote Stephens (1852, 193) "Theory would advise the placing of the *plane of the blade* parallel with the ground, when the scythe is held for cutting; but practice requires the cutting edge to be a little elevated from the ground because it is apt to run into the ground when swung parallel to it".

This point was ignored by Wilson (1960), when he illustrated the Hurbuck blades as scythe blades, and coupled them with illustrations based on BL MS Cotton Tiberius B.V. (August, f. 6v). This picture shows three reapers using scythes while a fourth stands by, holding his scythe with its shaft vertical and its blade horizontal above the level of his head. These scythes have straight shafts with a single handle (*nib*), although the latter is not shown on the idler's scythe. While the relative size of objects in drawings of this type is sometimes arbitrary and often related to the comparative importance of the objects within the drawing, there is no reason to think that here the relationship between tool and user has been falsified. All four scythes have nearly straight blades and their length is about equivalent to the distance between the top of their users' heads and their waists – say 27 inches (67 cm).

At the extreme left of the picture, beyond a figure using a pitchfork, a sixth figure is sharpening his scythe. The blade of this tool is equivalent in length to no more than the shoulder-to-waist measurement – perhaps 16 inches (40 cm), and its shaft barely reaches from the ground to the user's shoulder.

It was thought at first that the archaeologically attested blades (i.e. Hurbuck, Stidriggs, Asby) were from an implement closer to what was called, in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, a *Hainault scythe*. This, with a short shaft held in one hand, was closer in concept to a sickle or hook. Further work, however, suggests that they may represent the blades of an implement known in northern English dialects as a *ley* (*lee, lea*). This is shown in use in a photograph in Dawson (1985, Plate 1, reproduced here as Plate 3), and the blade of the implement is obviously no more than 16 in. (40 cm) in length. *The English Dialect Dictionary* (s.v. lea) quotes Lucas (1882) on its use in Nidderdale. He begins by describing the lea as "a large and heavy scythe" which does not accord with either the archaeology or Dawson's photograph, but the remainder of his description – "with a straight handle, and blade flat with the handle, unlike those of the south" – agrees perfectly. Lucas goes on to describe the different mode of use of the tool from that of the south, saying that it "has the appearance of being far more laborious".

6.(113) and 7.(37) are considered to be parts of similar blades.
Dimensions: 3 overall length 34.0 cm; length of tang 10.0 cm; max. w. of blade 4.0 cm: 4 overall length of blade 25.5 cm; length of tang 8.0 cm; max. w. of blade 3.8 cm: 5 overall length as surviving 19.5 cm; length of tang 8.5 cm; max. w. of blade 3.7 cm: 6 length 19.7 cm; max. w. of blade 3.2 cm; 7 length 11.3 cm; max. w. of blade 3.1 cm.

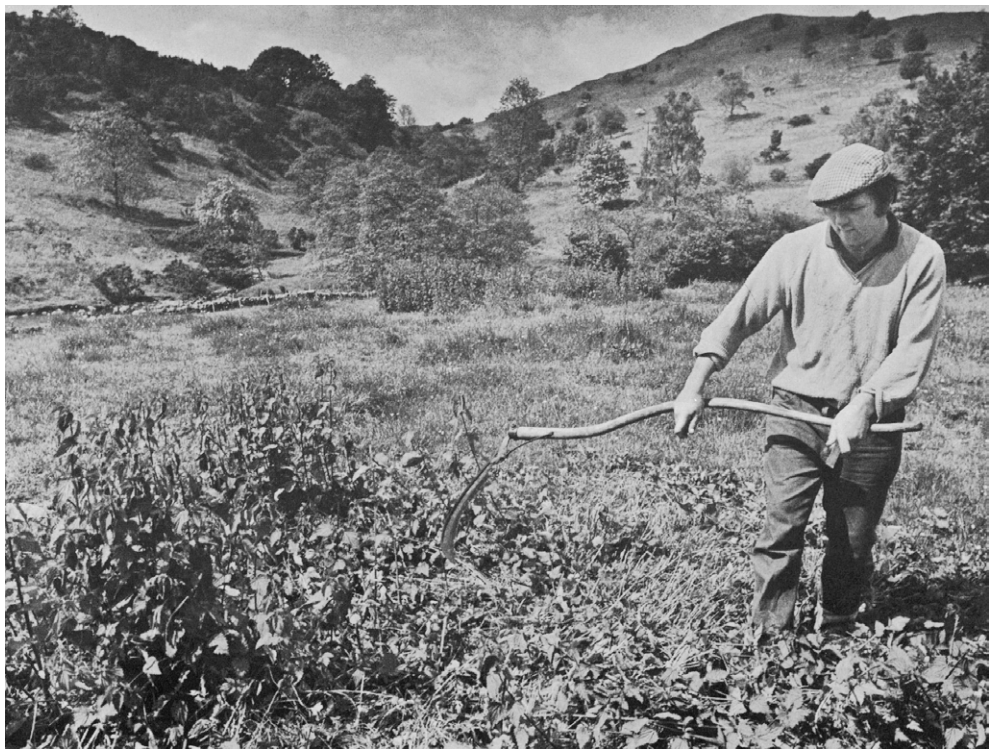

PLATE. 3. A modern ley in use.

Bells

There are two complete or nearly complete bells and parts of two others. There is a tendency to regard bells as necessarily ecclesiastical, but of course they were likely to have been in common use as sheep and cow bells at a period when enclosure was at a minimum. Thus, their presence here at Asby, like those from, for example, Gauber High Pasture (Yorks.) (King, 1978, 22) and Flixborough (Lincs.) (Loveluck, 1998, Fig. 8a) is not unexpected, while those from York (Ottaway, 1992, 557-558) are presumably related to manufacture. With regard to the construction of such relatively small bells in the first millennium, those of copper alloy were generally cast, while those of iron were cut from sheet, folded, and brazed at the seams. Ottaway (1992, 557) gives a diagram of the type of pattern likely to have been cut. Those from Mästermyr (Arwidsson and Berg, 1985, Pl. 17, Nos. 26-28) were somewhat different, being made from three pieces of sheet, and having paired clappers suspended by two different systems unlike any of those so far cited. Variants on the general pattern existed; Goslin (1891, 11) illustrates an iron bell with the seams riveted, while "St. Patrick's Bell" at Downpatrick (Co. Down), was made of sheet iron, riveted and "dipped in bronze". Bourke (1980) discusses both bronzed iron bells and cast bronze bells. Ottaway notes (1992, 558) that the York bells were entirely covered in brazing metal. There is some interesting variation at Asby in the manner of hanging the clappers.

8.(14) A large bell, so large that it must have been a cow bell rather than a sheep bell. It is ovoid in plan, trapezoidal in side view and follows the pattern of manufacture already alluded to in that it consists of a single sheet of iron, folded, and with its seams brazed. Residual external bronzing survives. Two holes cut through the top part of the bell at the cutting-out stage allowed the insertion of a bar bent in the form of a ring from which the clapper (16) was suspended inside the bell while the bell itself was suspended from the external part of the ring. The portion of the ring inside this example has disappeared, but the clapper survives. It is a rough bar with a small loop for suspension at its upper end, and a rough, looped thickening to form the functional part of the clapper, at the other.
Dimensions: plan at base 13.0 cm x 6.0 cm; height of bell 11.0 cm with a further 3.0 cm for the suspension loop.

9.(15) Reproduces all the features of 8 on a smaller scale, though the suspension ring is complete but the clapper is missing. As in the case of 8, some bronzing remains.
Dimensions: plan at base 5.5 cm x 4.2 cm; height of bell 5.5 cm with a further 1.5 cm for the suspension loop.

10.(69), 11.(72) These are two fragments of bells of the general size of 9. They differ from both 8 and 9 in that in each case one end of a suspension loop survives, but it is inserted through the top of the bell and ends inside the bell in a neat tapered terminal. It is not immediately clear what kept it in position. 11 alone retains part of the system for suspending the clapper, and here a piece of metal has been inserted from the interior of the bell through to the exterior, where its flattened ends have been turned outwards in the manner of an old-fashioned brass paper clip.
Dimensions: 10 height of surviving part of bell 6.7 cm; h. of surviving part of loop 3.2 cm: 11 h. of surviving part of bell 3.5 cm; h. of surviving part of loop 3.0 cm; estimated original w. of bell at top 6.5 cm.

Knives

There are twelve blades, with and without parts of a tang, which may be classified as knives. Four of these are of the classic "angle-back" form usually associated with the pre-Conquest period. Ottaway (1992, 562-572) classified the knives from Anglo-Scandinavian levels at York into five forms (A-E) with some sub-divisions, of which form A is the true angle-back. The finer details of the classification do not seem to have any great cultural or chronological significance. He says (563) "The angle-back form . . . originat[ed] perhaps on blades of the late Roman period . . ." and "continue[d] to be common in the 9-11th centuries"; [they] "may have been made on occasions after the Norman Conquest, and examples have been found in contexts dated as late as the 13th century". This accords well with the verdict of Grew (in Cowgill, de Neergaard and Griffiths, 1987, viii) in which he describes "[knives] of the Saxon tradition, with an angular 'hump' on the back of the blade . . ." [which] "did not persist long beyond mid [12th] century." It is a useful corrective to the view expressed in *L. M. Med. Cat.* 7 (1954, 51) that "the characteristic angle halfway down the back of the blade . . . appears regularly right down to the 15th century", a view based apparently almost entirely on manuscript illustrations.

In the descriptions which follow, Ottaway's classification (cited above) is used, and, in the case of the four "angle-backed" blades, the angle between the front and rear parts is given.

12.(34) Blade fragment; probably form A1; angle 20°.
Dimensions: Length, as surviving 5.5 cm; w. 1.7 cm.

13.(29) Complete; form A1; angle 20°.
Dimensions: Length of blade 7.0 cm; w. of blade 1.7 cm; length of tang 2.2 cm.

14.(36) Complete blade, damaged tang; ?form A3; angle 28°.
Dimensions: Length of blade 8.7 cm; w. of blade 2.0 cm; length of tang, as surviving, 1.3 cm.

15.(30) Complete; ?form A3; angle 24°.
Dimensions: Length of blade 7.8 cm; w. of blade 2.1 cm; length of tang 2.9 cm.

l6.(56) Complete, apart from broken tip; unusually thick blade back. Form D.
Dimensions: Length of blade, as surviving 8.0 cm; w. of blade 1.9 cm; length of tang 3.2 cm.

17.(35) Two conjoined portions of straight-backed blade, form E.
Dimensions: Overall length, as surviving 10.8 cm; w. of blade 1.9 cm.

18.(39) Narrow tapering blade with part of tang. Form E.
Dimensions: Length of blade 10.8 cm; w. of blade 1.9 cm; length of tang, as surviving 1.0 cm.

19.(54) Blade fragment, form E.
Dimensions: Length, as surviving 7.2 cm; w. 1.2 cm.

20.(82) Apparently a knife, but with a very thick back. ?Form E.
Dimensions: Length of blade 7.0 cm; w. of blade 1.6 cm; th. of back 1.0 cm; length of tang 3.1 cm.

21.(40) Blade fragment. Form not determinable.
Dimensions: Length, as surviving 6.7 cm; w. of blade 1.7 cm.

22.(28) Knife blade with damaged tip and tang. Form not determinable.
Dimensions: Length of blade, as surviving 6.5 cm; w. of blade 1.5 cm; length of tang, as surviving 1.5 cm.

23.(27) Apparently complete knife with short blade and short tang. Form not determinable.
Dimensions: Length of blade 4.7 cm; w. of blade 1.7 cm; length of tang 1.0 cm.

Nails

Of twenty-one objects so classified, all but five clearly have heads, and are unequivocally correctly so named. The five without clear heads are almost all clearly pointed, and do not obviously offer themselves as anything else. Their numbers are 24.(53) and 25-44 (89-96, 98-109).

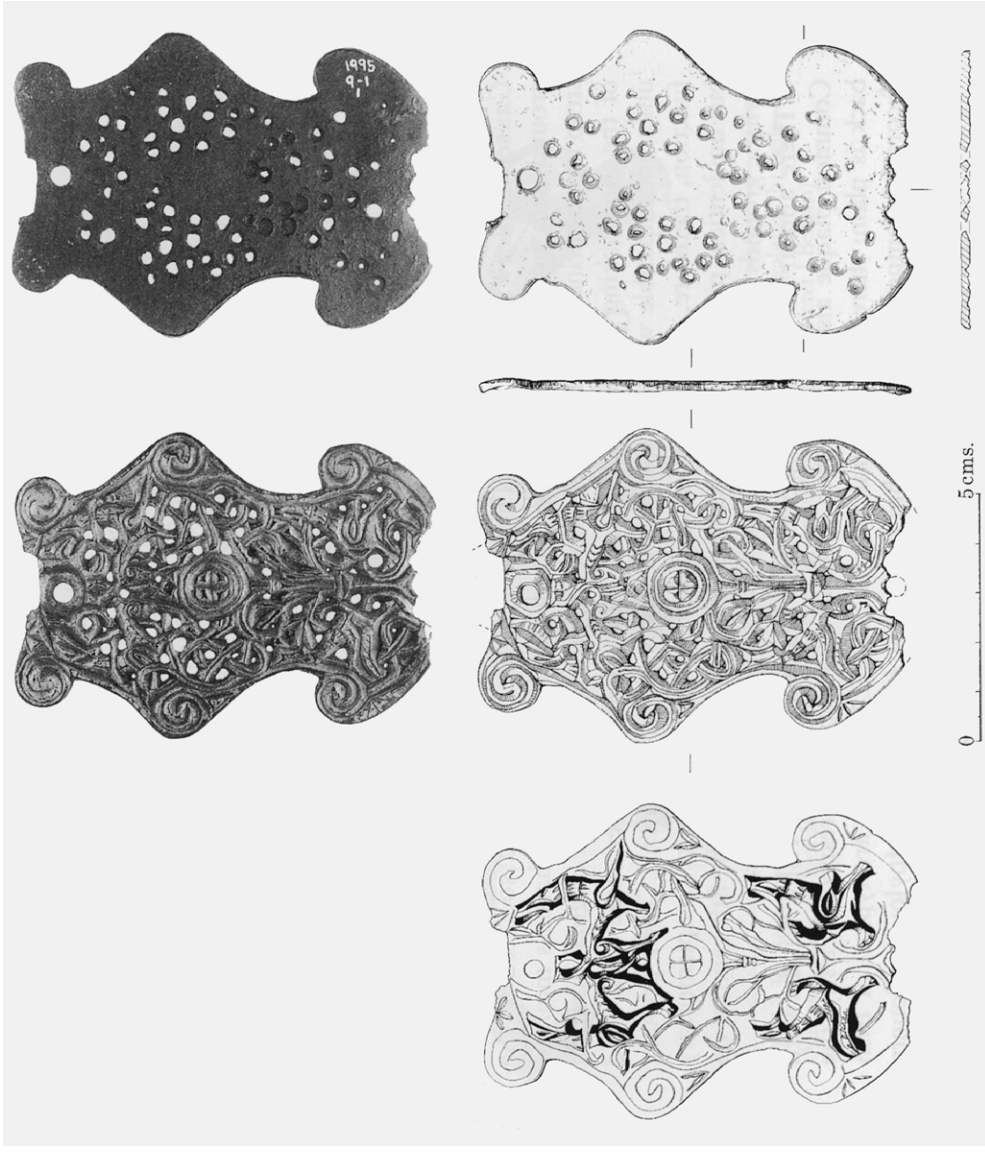

FIG. 2. The copper alloy plaque. (Copyright British Museum).

Rivets

45-48.(26 a-d) The four rivets are distinguished from nails by being short in the shank and having large sub-circular or sub-rectangular heads.
Dimensions: length of shank 9 mm – 2.0 cm; heads 1.5 cm x 7 mm – 1.6 cm x 1.5 cm.

Staples

This term is used for a piece of iron bar of rectangular cross-section, bent in the form of a "U" or further towards "O". There are three of these. Parallels are scarcely needed, but are available in plenty at York (Ottaway, 1992, 619-623).

49.(76) A simple staple for driving into wood. "U"-shaped with near right angle bends. One leg slightly longer than the other and both sharpened.
Dimensions: w. 3.5 cm; length of legs 4.0 and 3.0 cm.

50.(83) Slightly more complex than 49, one leg being broadened and flattened, while the other is bent round almost to the form of a "C".
Dimensions: length of "foot" 1.7 cm; overall height 2.4 cm.

51.(78) A staple bent to form a complete sub-rectangular "O", with the sharpened ends overlapping. One is tempted to see in this something which was buried in wood or leather – a rein guide or the like.
Dimensions: ring 2.2 x 3.4 cm.

Hinge fittings

These consist of ovoid plates each pierced by a single rivet hole. At their upper ends they have carefully made loops in the same plane as the plates. They appear to be the type of hinge fitting which has been postulated as being hinge fittings of chests, which have sometimes having been re-used as coffins. There is a particularly good collection of them from the excavations at Dacre (Newman and Leach forthcoming), only 15.5 miles (25 km) north-west of Asby. In his report on these, Ottaway (forthcoming) reconstructs the way in which the hinges probably worked, with an element A being a fitting such as those now under discussion, and an element B consisting of a strap not unlike 89 in the present collection, but larger. This produces a workable hinge in which the two elements are fitted to the outside of the chest. Ottaway's reconstruction has the lid of the chest/coffin slightly bevelled to allow clearance for the loops on the fittings, but they could have been more easily accommodated by small rebates. Where the Asby fittings differ fundamentally is that their loops are *in the same plane* as the plates, and therefore could have been fitted to two pieces of wood at right angles to each other (chest wall and lid) much more easily than the Dacre fittings. There are, of course, other possibilities. The Asby fittings are not a pair, thus disposing largely of the possibility that they represent the sole remnants of a container for the rest of the hoard. At the same time, they may represent the two elements of a single hinge, thereby reinstating that possibility.

52.(23), 53.(24) These two are so similar that they can be dealt with together. They are long ovoid plates each having had a single rivet, of much the type represented by 45-48, towards the top. One rivet survives *in situ* (52); the hole in the other

escutcheon (53) is empty. The loops are carefully made, and chamfered internally. Rogerson (1995, 73) regards a not dissimilar object with two rivets (No. 62) as a hinge pivot, but again the loop is in the plane at right angles to the plate; and at York, Ottaway (1992, 624-625) cites extensive evidence (not here repeated) that such objects were chest hinge fittings. The lack of the expected second rivet in our examples may be accounted for by the use of staples.
Dimensions: 52 Overall length 14.9 cm; max. w. of plate 2.5 cm; centre of rivet 4.5 cm from top of loop; max. int. w. of loop 9 mm: 53 Overall length 12.6 cm; max. w. of plate 2.2 cm; centre of rivet hole 4.0 cm from top of loop; max. int. w. of loop 6 mm.

Rings

The variety of possible uses for iron rings is almost endless. Only five are represented in whole or part at Asby.

54.(73) Complete.
Dimensions: Max. diam. 5.7 cm; max. diam. of ovoid cross-section 7 mm.

55.(25) Heavily made ring.
Dimensions: Max. diam. 3.5 cm; max. diam. of square cross-section 5 mm.

56.(111) Complete.
Dimensions: Max. diam. 3.1 cm.

57.(74) Slightly more than half of a large but thin ring.
Dimensions: Max. diam. 4.9 cm; max. diam. of ovoid cross-section 4 mm.

58.(75) Part only of a ring similar to 57.

?Chain Link/hasp

59.(44) This is a chain link in the sense that it has been a complete ring. Thereafter it has been constricted in the centre to form an elongated ring with loop-like ends and bent at right angles about two-thirds of the way along. This process of several stages must have been done for a particular purpose, though what that was is not obvious.
Dimensions: length of longer part 5.2 cm; of shorter part 3.2 cm; int. diam. of loops *c*.8 mm; cross-section of square bar making up loop 4-5 mm.

Hook/strike-a-light

60.(45) This is a carefully-made hook, the shank of which tapers upwards and then turns at right angles to the plane of the hook itself. The latter has a slightly recurved end, and a nick in the back of the hook suggests second thoughts about the removal of a little more metal there. The hook itself is slightly bent out of the plane of its shaft. Without the right-angled portion, this would have been identified as a strike-a-light. Ottaway (1992, 651) identifies his No. 3556 as a wall-hook *contra* 680, Nos. 3681, 3682, strike-a-lights. There were four not dissimilar objects from Gjermundbu (Grieg, 1947, Pl. X, 13-16). Of these, the first has a looped end to the shaft, 14-16 have tightly rolled ends to the "hook", while the shaft of 14 is pierced like York No.

3681. All four Gjermundbu objects are laconically identified by the word "crok".
Dimensions: length overall 10.0 cm; right-angled portion *c*.3.0 cm.

Ferrules

The principle of fitting the end of a wooden shaft with a pointed iron ferrule is so simple that it is widely done in both space and time. It is necessary only to say that, while there were six at York (Ottaway, 1992, 654-656), and one from Hurbuck (Page, 1905, 214 & pl. f. 214), there was a Roman example at Newstead (Curle, 1911, P1. LVIII, No. 6), closer in appearance to the Asby examples than any at York.

61.(63) Ferrule made by folding over a sheet of iron to form a rough cone. The edges meet over less than half the length of the object. The shaft for which the ferrule was designed was circular, and it was secured in position by a single rivet, the hole for which survives near the top. The lowest part of the ferrule is cut off straight and is almost square in cross-section.
Dimensions; length overall 12.1 cm; diam. of shaft *c*.2.0 cm; hole 4 mm in diam., 1.7 cm from top.

62.(31) Ferrule similar to the last, but with more of the edge broken away. The lowest part is pointed.
Dimensions: length overall 16.1 cm; diam. of shaft *c*.2.0 cm; hole 5 mm in diam., 1.2 cm from top.

Keys

There are two keys, almost identical in appearance and size. They can be paralleled at York, where they are classified as keys for locks with sliding bolts and springs (Ottaway, 1992, 674). This means that in the locks concerned (diagrams in Ottaway, 1992, 661-663, figs. 282 and 283) the two projections to be seen on the keys pass through some part of the lock's mechanism and thus press against a spring, deforming it so that the bolt can move and the object locked can be opened. Given the obvious interest in security in Anglo-Scandinavian York, which can be deduced from the number of items connected with locks in Ottaway's report, it is interesting that there are really only two keys at all like those from Asby, a bare half-dozen if size and number of projections are discounted. This may well be explained by Ottaway's comment (1992, 674) "L-shaped or T-shaped slide keys are common in Roman and in 8th-9th century contexts in Britain and northern Europe. They are, however, almost unknown in later 9th-11th century contexts . . .".

63.(18) Key with two projections on a portion turned at rather less than a right angle.
The handle broadens and flattens towards the top, and the extreme top turns over somewhat in the other plane from the end with the projections.
Dimensions: length overall 10.5 cm; length of projections *c*.1.0-1.5 cm; max. w. of handle 1.1 cm.

64.(19) Second key, reproducing all the elements of 63 except that the turnover at

the top of the handle is slightly more pronounced and somewhat recurved.
Dimensions: length overall 11.5 cm; length of projections *c.*1.0 cm; max. w. of handle 1.0 cm.

Buckles

There are parts of four buckles. None calls for special comment.

65.(13) Ovoid loop complete with tongue, the distal end of which turns slightly downwards.
Dimensions: loop (overall) 4.7 cm x 3.1 cm; length of tongue 4.0 cm; cross sections, of loop rectangular, of tongue square.

66.(70) Rectangular loop, now broken, complete with tongue.
Dimensions: loop (overall) *c.*4.0 cm; length of tongue 2.1 cm; cross sections of both square.

67.(60) Ovoid loop only.
Dimensions; loop (overall) 4.4 cm x 3.0 cm.

68.(79) Rectangular loop only.
Dimensions; loop (overall) 2.5 cm x 2.0 cm.

Arrowhead

69.(32) A single small pointed piece is identified as an arrowhead on the basis of the internal hollow. Even if the identification is correct, it is probably no more than the extreme tip of the projectile.
Dimensions: 3.0 cm x 1.3 cm.

Binding strips

70.(46); 71.(49); 72.(50); 73.(52); 74.(51) This name has been given to five pieces of semi-tubular iron, which look as though they may have protected the edge of some wooden object *c.*1.0 cm thick. Discounting the piece which is a mere fragment (74), three of the four pieces are pierced by a hole or retain a rivet. Two of them end in a flattened and expanded terminal, pierced in one case and not in the other. It is highly probable that more than one class of object was provided with semi-tubular edge-binding. The only local parallel is from the Ormside Viking burial (Cowen, 1934, 173 & Pl. III, 3), and in his discussion of its possible function, Cowen, having eliminated several possibilities, admitted defeat. More recent publications have suggested the possibility that these pieces may be from the edge-binding of a saddle. Two decorated pieces of copper alloy from the River Shannon at Athlone (Youngs (ed.), 1989, 30, No. 13) were so identified, and reference was there made to a find including similar objects from Barrybeg (Co. Roscommon). This find (Kelly, 2001) was an almost-complete set of the fittings of a saddle which seems to have had edge-bindings both to an oval opening and to the straight external edges. The former were, of course, curved (as were those from Athlone); the latter straight. The Irish bindings are of copper alloy and some are decorated; the Asby objects of iron and

plain. Again, the suggested date of the former is seventh century, while the Asby material is unlikely to be earlier than the late eighth century. However, technological change is likely to have been slow in the period, and the possibility that the Asby mounts are from a saddle is at least worth consideration.
Dimensions (overall in each case): 70 16.7 cm x 1.8 cm: 71 17.5 cm x 1.7 cm: 72 7.6 cm x 1.7 cm: 73 8.9 cm x 1.4 cm: 74 2.7 cm x 1.5 cm.

Flesh fork

75.(20) This is a tanged two-pronged fork, with some indication that one at least of the prongs was hooked. The tang has been slightly bent. In view of its size it seems best to regard this as a cooking implement, and to follow Rogerson, who identifies a three-pronged example (1995, 70, No. 2) as a flesh-fork.
Dimensions: tang *c*.4.0 cm; prongs *c*.7.0 cm; w. overall 5.7 cm.

?Vessel handle

76.(17) This object consists of a bar of square cross-section, with one end flattened and expanded to a maximum width *c*.2.5 cm from the end. The other end is T-shaped, but one end of the cross-bar of the T is rolled into a tight inward spiral, while the other has been straightened and damaged. While there is no obvious identification for this object, it is possible that it is the handle of a vessel of the general form of a frying-pan. Youngs (1989, 204-205, No. 207) has a photograph of just such a vessel with inward-turning spiral terminals to its flat handle. It came from Correen, Co. Roscommon, and it is suggested that it, and similar examples in Ireland, despite their "frying-pan" appearance, were used in the working of glass.

Bars and strips

Eighteen pieces are assigned to this category. They consist of pieces generally of rectangular cross-section, some nearly square, others more flattened. Some have loops at their ends, some are pierced by rivets. Almost all are doubtless parts of larger objects and their precise functions are difficult or impossible to ascertain.

77.(48) Straight bar of rectangular cross-section. No obvious function, but bears an interesting resemblance to an item from Garranes (Co. Cork) described as an awl (Youngs, 1989, 211, No. 223).
Dimensions: Length 26.1 cm; max. w. 1.2 cm, tapering to 4 mm.

78.(97) Slightly bent bar of square cross-section. This object, too, tapers, and could also be an awl or a similar tool. It is also possible that it is a woolcomb tooth, though it lacks the "bearded" appearance resulting from the method of manufacture of these (see Ottaway, 1992, 540).
Dimensions: Length 8.6 cm; w. 3 mm.

79.(85) Short bar of oval cross-section.
Dimensions: Length 4.3 cm.

80.(87) Bar of rectangular cross-section at one end, changing to circular at the other.
Dimensions: Length 13.1 cm; max. w. 9 mm.

81.(43) Bar of rectangular cross-section with one end flattened. The resemblance to a large stylus is probably fortuitous.
Dimensions: Length 18.8 cm; w. of shaft 7 mm; max. w. 1.1 cm.

82.(42) Bar of square cross-section. One end flattened and spread to form an ovoid terminal through which is a carefully-made ovoid hole. A not dissimilar, though somewhat smaller, object comes from Middle Harling (Norfolk) (Rogerson, 1995, 74, No. 88, fig. 65). In terms of function for this and similar objects, he says, "Looped spikes were driven into joints in masonry to hold door jambs in place, or into timber posts possibly to hold candlesticks, to secure hangings, or for other purposes". The possibility that it is a lynchpin should not be overlooked.
Dimensions: Length 17.5 cm; w. of shaft 9 mm, tapering to 7 mm; w. of terminal 2.0 cm; hole 9 mm x 5 mm.

83.(59) Bar of square cross-section; both ends widened and slightly flattened.
Dimensions: Length 9.7 cm; w. of shaft 5 mm.

84.(77) Bar of square cross-section; one end bent round in hook-like manner.
Dimensions: Overall length 5.3 cm; w. of shaft 5 mm.

85.(41) Bar, one end of square cross-section, the other flattened. Bent in a reverse-S curve in one plane, the flattened end bent in a hook-like manner in the other plane. Ottaway (1992, 537, fig. 210, No. 2269) describes an object of similar appearance as a woodworking gouge with a crank-shaped tang. He refers to a gouge from the Mästermyr hoard (Arwidsson and Berg, 1985, pl. 28. No. 58) which has a less pronounced crank than either the York example or that from Asby, but is flat-ended rather than having a U-shaped cross-section as does York No. 2269. With an overall length of 9.0 cm it is in the same range as the one under discussion.
Dimensions: Overall length 13.5 cm; w. of square section 6 mm; w. of flattened section 9 mm.

86.(21), 87.(22), 88.(57) These three objects are generally so similar that they must represent a deliberate artefact. Each is made of a flattened strip, widest in the middle. Each is then bent at one end, in the plane of the flattening, to form a loop. One (87), has a further piece of metal at the end furthest from the loop turned at right angles in the opposite plane.
Dimensions: 86 Length 7.4 cm; max. w. 1.0 cm; diam. of loop 6 mm x 4 mm: 87 Length 8.2 cm; max. w. 1.0 cm; diam. of loop 9 mm x 6 mm; attached piece length 2.4 cm: 88 Length 8.4 cm; max. w. 9 mm; diam. of loop 1.2 cm x 1.0 cm.

89.(80) Flattened strip with loop worked in one end by cutting away part of the strip and bending over the remainder. Ottaway (1992, 625) comments that, among hinge fittings for chests at York and elsewhere "it is usual for the end of the strap to have been drawn out and curved around to form a loop and then welded back onto the strap", and it may well be that this object is part of such a fitting.
Dimensions: Length 5.4 cm; w. 1.7 cm; diam. of loop 8 mm x 5mm.

90.(88), 91.(86) Two pieces of thin strip. Each retains the remains of a rivet passing through it and 91 has an empty rivet-hole in addition. 90 is somewhat bent, but this is probably accidental.
Dimensions: 90 Length 6.7 cm; w. 8 mm: 91 Length 7.3 cm; w. 1.0 cm; space between rivets 4.0 cm.

92.(38) Part of a thick strip, slightly bent. Tapers in width from one end to the other. The wider end retains part of a square or rectangular hole which has been cut, off centre in the long axis, through the object.
Dimensions: Length 5.0 cm; w. 2.7 to 1.5 cm; th. 4 mm; hole (as surviving) 5 mm x 5 mm.

93.(62), 94.(61) Two portions of strip which have been bent in the plane of their long axes to produce a tightly-rolled end. As in the case of 86-88, their function is not obvious, but their similarity suggests deliberate manufacture for a particular function.
Dimensions: 93 Length 7.0 cm; w. tapers from *c.*1.0 cm at the rolled end to 8 mm at the other; diam. of rolled end *c.*1.5 cm: 94 Length 6.3 cm; w. 1.0 cm; diam. of rolled end *c.*1.3 cm.

Miscellaneous and unidentified

95.(55) Bent strip. It has a circular end, through which remains a rivet. From the end it narrows and then widens again before beginning to narrow to a point at which it is broken. The bending of this strip immediately suggests a spring, operating against a sliding mechanism like the bolts of some kinds of locks. It is, however, probably too small.
Dimensions: length 5.3 cm; w. of end 1.3 cm; w. at narrowest point 5 mm; at widest point 1.5 cm.

96.(65) Elongated piece; could be the end of a bell-clapper.
Dimensions: Length 6.7 cm.

97.(66) Small piece of bar, changing direction through *c.*45° about half-way along.
Dimensions: Length overall: 6.3 cm; cross-section 6 mm x 4 mm.

98.(67) Piece of plate, with a ?rivet hole through it.
Dimensions overall: 5.0 cm x 3.5 cm.

99.(68) Piece of iron looking like the top of a large "fiddle-key" nail.
Dimensions: length 3.4 cm; w. of head 3.0 cm.

100.(71) Fragment with drilled hole.
Dimensions: 3.3 cm x 1.7 cm.

101.(81) 102.(84) Fragments of triangular cross-section.
Dimensions: 101 length 3.2 cm; cross-section *c.*8 mm each way: 102 length 3.7 cm; cross-section *c.*5 mm each way.

103.(110) Comma-shaped fragment.
Dimensions: 1.6 cm x 1.1 cm.

104.(58) ?Boot-plate. Crescentic or lunate plate pierced by four holes, through which survive four nails. Three of these have long, roughly ovoid, heads with the shank at one end. The fourth nail has a more-or-less round head. Parallels for this are hard to come by. Ottaway, (forthcoming) has suggested that boot plates from Dacre are post-Conquest, but there certainty does not seem to be any technical reason why such objects should not have been made earlier.

Strap-ends

There are five strap-ends and part of a sixth in the collection. The largest has only geometric decoration; the next two in point of size are effectively plain; while the remaining two carry zoomorphic decoration of the type generally called Trewhiddle-style. Little remains on any of them of their animal-head terminals. Strap-ends are a widely distributed class of artefact, and those with the Trewhiddle-style decoration are of particular interest. The writer has seen similar objects from Shap, only 6.5 miles (10.5 km) from the Asby site, but they have not been properly recorded; there is a single degenerate example from Dacre (Ottaway forthcoming), and one with more elaborate and better-designed animals from Wetheral (Cumbria) has been published (Richardson, 1990, 40-41, fig. 21), as have two mould-fragments from Carlisle (Taylor and Webster, 1984). Bailey has shown that some, including the type represented by the larger Asby strap-end, were manufactured in the north of England, probably in the vicinity of York (Bailey, 1993), though the Carlisle mould fragments suggest that there were other centres of manufacture. Wilson, in an appendix to the paper on the Trewhiddle Hoard (Wilson and Blunt, 1961, 120-122) included six strap-ends from Meols (Cheshire) (Hume, 1863, Pl. XI) among a list of "strap-ends of the Late Saxon period of form generally similar to that of the decorated strap-ends of the Trewhiddle Hoard". None of these six appears to carry Trewhiddle-style ornament, but it is interesting that, on both the strap-ends and other objects from Trewhiddle itself which carry the "Trewhiddle animal", that animal has its body "speckled" as though to key enamel. The Asby strap-end animals have punched decoration, which might perform the same function. Hume (1863, Pl. XII, No. 21) illustrates what he describes as a strap ornament which was enamelled. Despite having been dated to the thirteenth century by A. W. Franks, this object carried a Trewhiddle-style animal. Strap-ends and their function in the study of Anglo-Saxon ornamental metalwork are the subject of a very recent study (Thomas, 2001).[2]

105.(5) Long strap-end, secured by two rivets, part of one of which survives. The decoration consists of six chevron-shaped depressions, two parallel rectangles (?for niello; Rogerson (1995, 60) suggests that enamel may have been present on strap-ends at Middle Harling see above), and two small crescentic depressions at the distal end, which probably represent the "ears" of the vestigial animal head with which such strap-ends often terminate.
Dimensions: length 4.9 cm; w. of strap *c*.8 mm; max. w. 1.2 cm.

106.(6) 107.(7) Two plain strap-ends, both slightly defective at the proximal end.
Dimensions: 106 length as surviving 4.6 cm; max. w. 1.2 cm: 107 length as surviving 4.3 cm; max. w. 7 mm.

108.(2) Short strap-end, slightly defective at the proximal end. The decoration consists of a trefoil-like feature, or palmette, at that end, with a panel containing two somewhat contorted quadrupeds nearer the distal end. The proximal one of these has a clear body, tail and legs, and a backward-turned head. No detail is visible within the head. The other animal has the rear of its body contorted to fit within the front and back legs of the first; eye, tongue in open mouth, and ear are clearly visible. The bodies of both animals are covered in small circular punch-marks, presumably to represent fur or hair. This is precisely the type of strap-end which Bailey has shown to have a northern English centre of manufacture (Bailey, 1993), possibly at York. He points out that the reading of the decoration is by no means unambiguous, and that the four strap-ends described in his paper, although similar in decoration, are not from the same mould, though they may have had a single model as their origin.
Dimensions: length as surviving 3.4 cm; max. w. 1.1 cm.

109.(3) Short complete strap-end. The main decoration is a panel containing a much-distorted animal. It is difficult to be certain, but, while the whole animal fills a nearly square panel, its head appears to be facing back towards the strap. Like the animals on 108, its body is marked with small circular punch-marks. Either side of this panel, there are traces of further decoration. Parts of both rivets remain *in situ.*
Dimensions: length 2.4 cm; max. w. 1.0 cm.

110.(4) Proximal end, with two surviving rivets, of a large strap-end. Between the rivets is decorative feature similar to that on 108.
Dimensions: length as surviving 1.2 cm; max. w. 1.5 cm.

Pins

There are four pins, two each of copper alloy and of iron. There are similar pins among those recorded from the Cheshire shore at Meols (Hume, 1863, Pl.XXIII; Bu'Lock, 1972. 42, fig. 8.).

111.(9) Copper-alloy pin with head roughly circular in one plane and wedge-shaped in the other. From above the head is rectangular. Each of the faces bears a number of ring-and-dot stamps, three on each of the circular faces and four on each of the others. This very battered object presumably originally had a facetted head like one from Middle Harling (Norfolk) (Rogerson, 1995, 54-55, No. 9). The same decorative technique is employed on several of the Meols pins (Bu'Lock, 1972, 42, fig. 8a, b.).
Dimensions: overall length 8.8 cm; head 2.5 cm x 7 mm.

112.(12) Copper alloy pin with globular head and traces of a moulding where head meets stem. Cf., Rogerson, 1995, 54-55, Nos. 16, 17.
Dimensions: overall length 10 cm; head 1.2 cm diam.

113.(11) 114.(10) Two iron pins with roughly globular heads having an equatorial moulding and small collar at meeting of head and shaft.
Dimensions: 113 overall length (point missing) 7.0 cm; max. diam. of head 1.0 cm: 114 overall 6.8 cm; max. diam. of head 1.0 cm.

Brooch/button

115.(8) This object consists of a circular disc with a raised rim, within which, in relief, is an equal-armed cross with very slightly expanded arms. In the spandrels between the cross arms are four different raised patterns which look at first like alphabetical characters. Closer study has not yielded any obvious significance for these patterns, and all that can be said is that they are quite definitely different from each other. At the back of the disc in the centre is a broken fitting like that on modern brass buttons. This demonstrates that the object was fitted to some other object or material, possibly cloth, and that it was not set into, for example, a larger object of metal as a decorative escutcheon, nor was it a brooch with a pin and catch-plate.
Dimensions: diam. 7.2 cm; depth of fitting at back 1.1 cm.

Discussion

Three main points are raised by the collection under consideration. First, how far is it a homogeneous group unadulterated by later additions? Second, what is the date of the whole or the majority of it? And third, how did it come to be where it was found? The possible implications of the answer to the third point will form a coda to the discussion.

The first two questions posed above are interrelated, in that the main criterion for regarding any given piece as part of a closed group is that it does not conflict in date with the rest. No other obvious criterion, such as whether or not the collection forms the stock in trade of a particular kind of craftsman or dealer, seems applicable here. Given that, it must be said that, while certain items are certainly (the copper alloy plaque 1) or probably (the "scythe" blades 3-6 and the hinge fittings 52 and 53) Anglo-Saxon,[3] there is nothing among the remainder which *must* be post-Conquest. The boot-plate (104) might be considered a candidate, and the boot-plates from Dacre (Ottaway forthcoming) are so regarded. Nevertheless, there is no certainty in that dating, and there seems to be no reason why smiths who could manufacture the other objects could not have made this. The circumstances of the find, too, tend to support the idea of a group. While detail is lacking, the find was made using a metal detector, implying that it was below ground. As has been mentioned, it was within a small dry-stone building partly walled by a limestone scarp still *in situ*. While the area at the present day is largely limestone pavement, this is probably of fairly recent origin. After all, it was worth enclosing only just over 125 years ago. Economy of hypothesis suggests that the discovery inside a building means that the concealment was carried out in relation to that building, and even possibly that the building was in use then. It is worth noting that the farmstead at Gauber High Pasture, Ribblehead (Yorks.) (King, 1978, 22), which, whatever its Viking credentials, is certainly pre-Conquest in date, was situated on limestone pavement when excavated, which cannot have been the case when it was in use.

As to how the ironwork came to be where it was, there are several strands to the possible answer. We have come across, in the course of the catalogue, a number of instances of finds of groups of pre-Conquest ironwork. There are certain elements which are common to several but not all of these. They include the presence of a container; of "scythe" blades; of axe-heads; of spoon-bits; and of bells. The

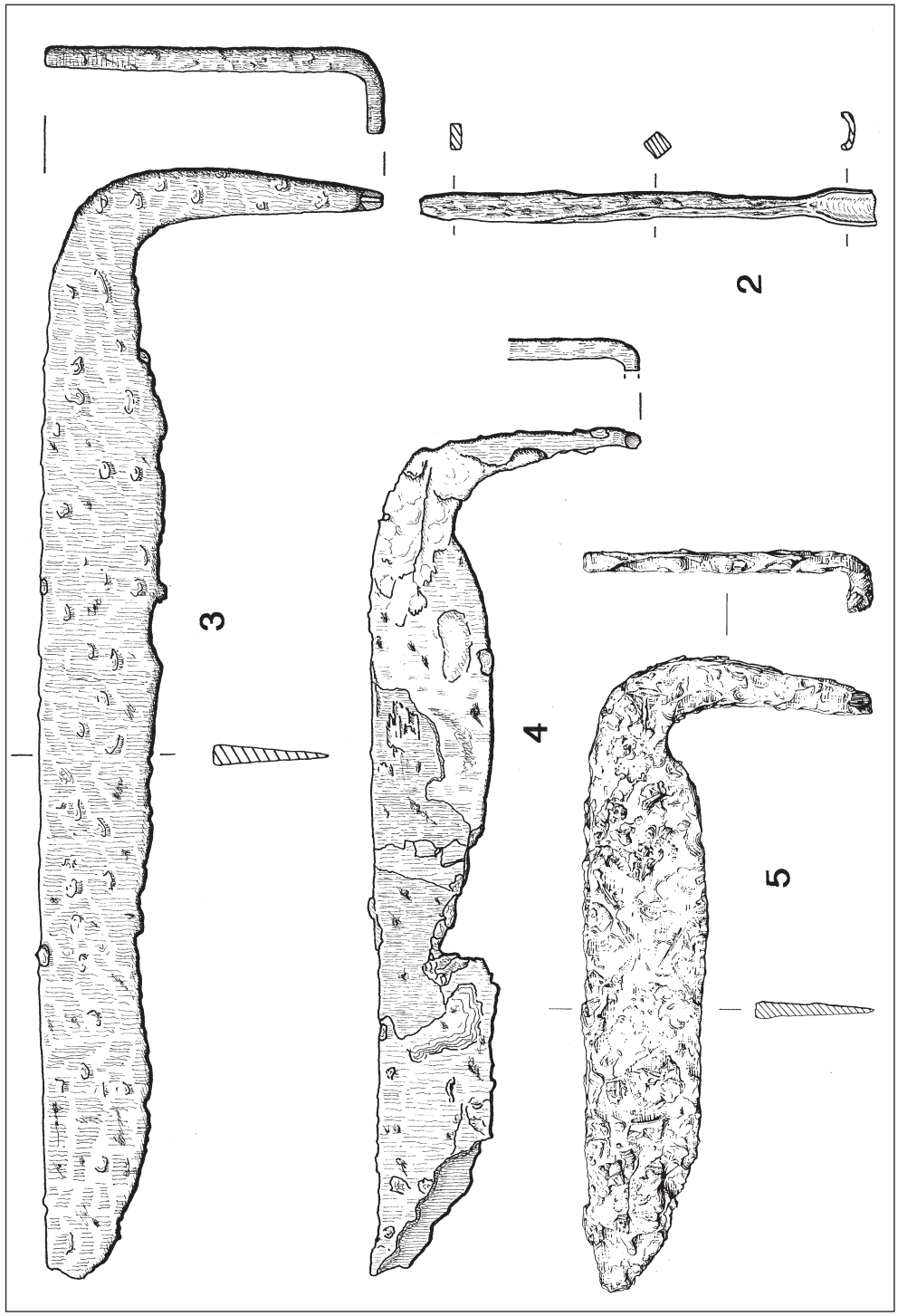

FIG. 3. Nos. 2-5. Scale 1/2.

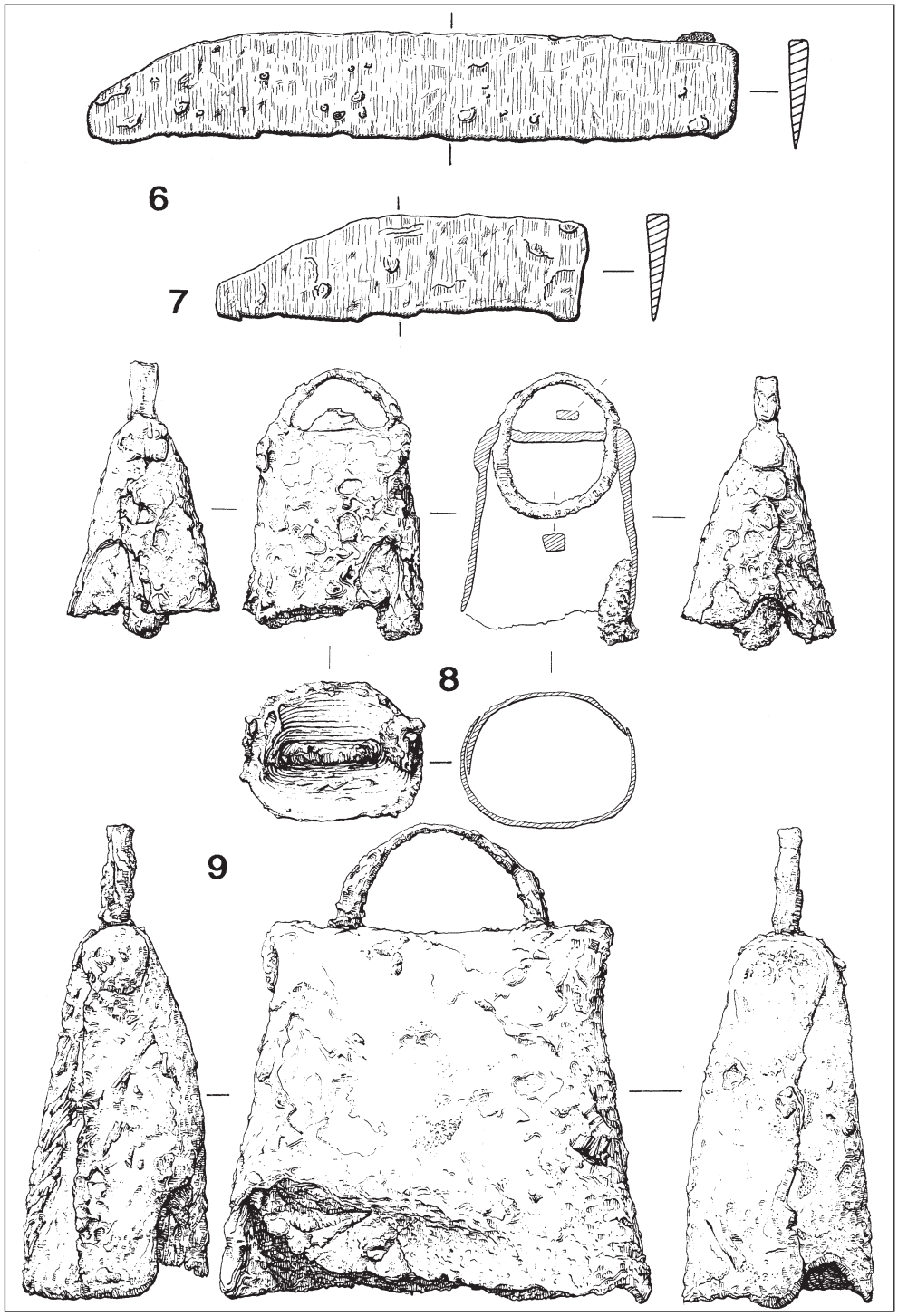

FIG. 4. Nos. 6-9. Scale 1/2.

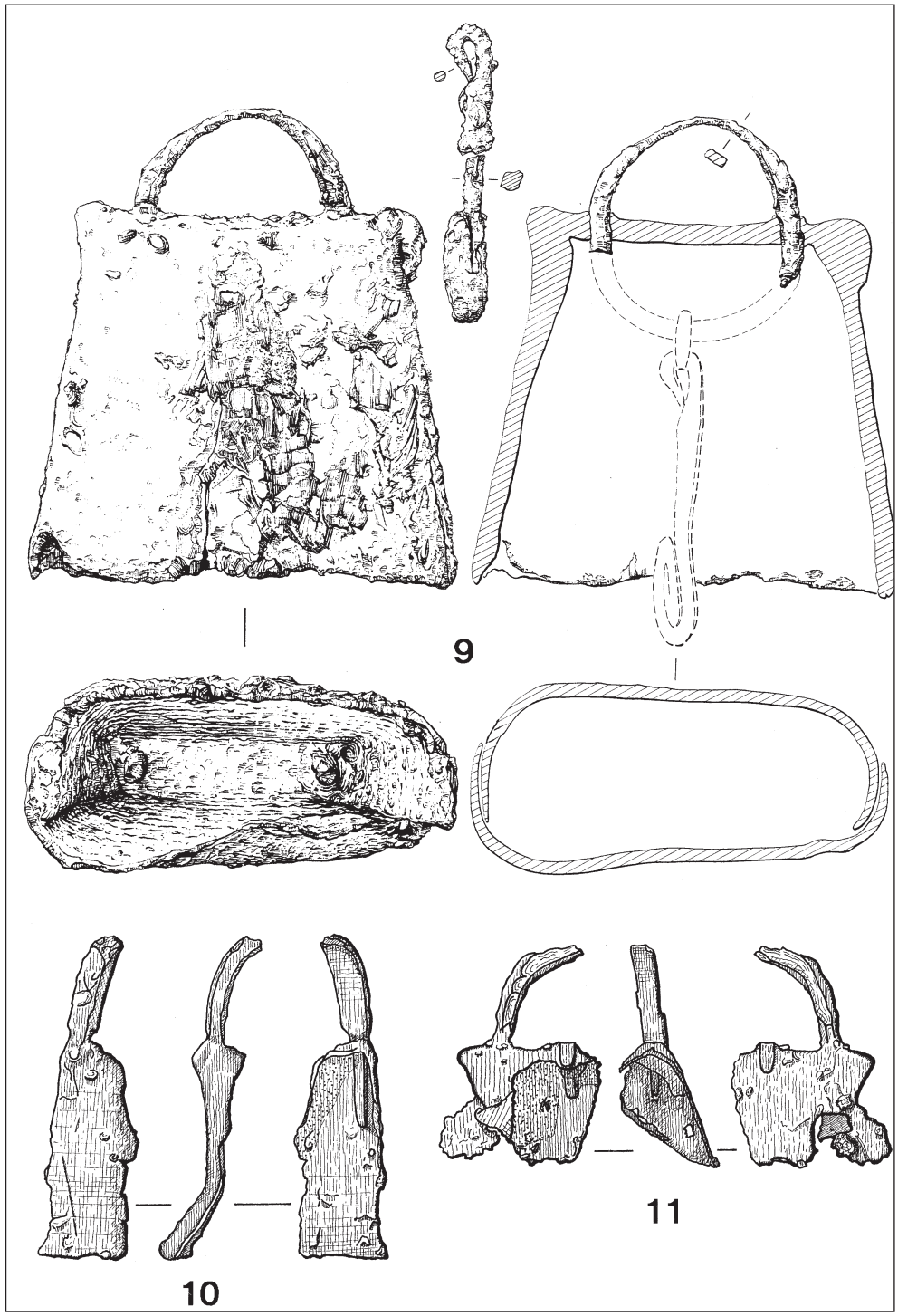

FIG. 5. Nos. 9-11. Scale 1/2.

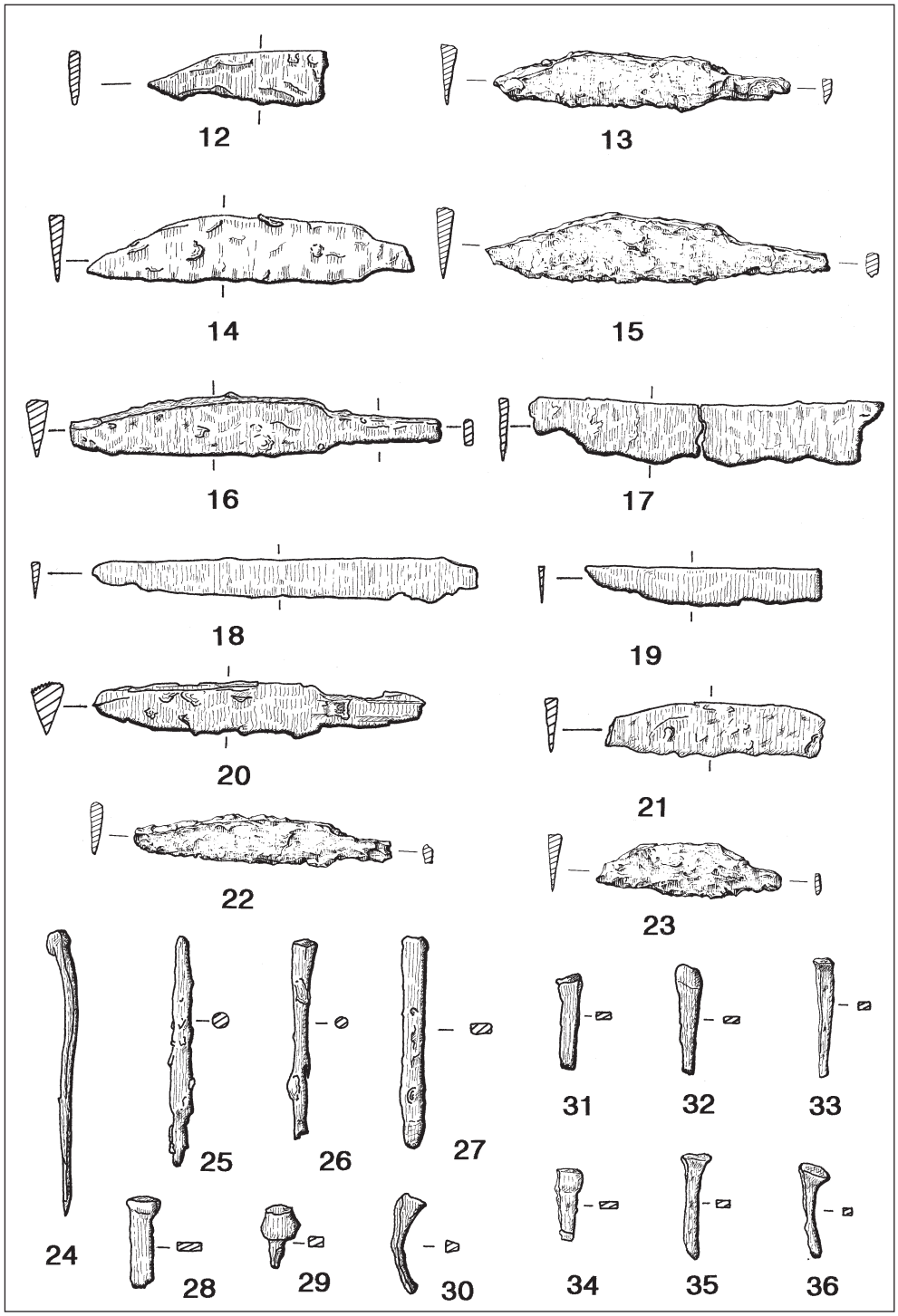

FIG. 6. Nos. 12-36. Scale 1/2.

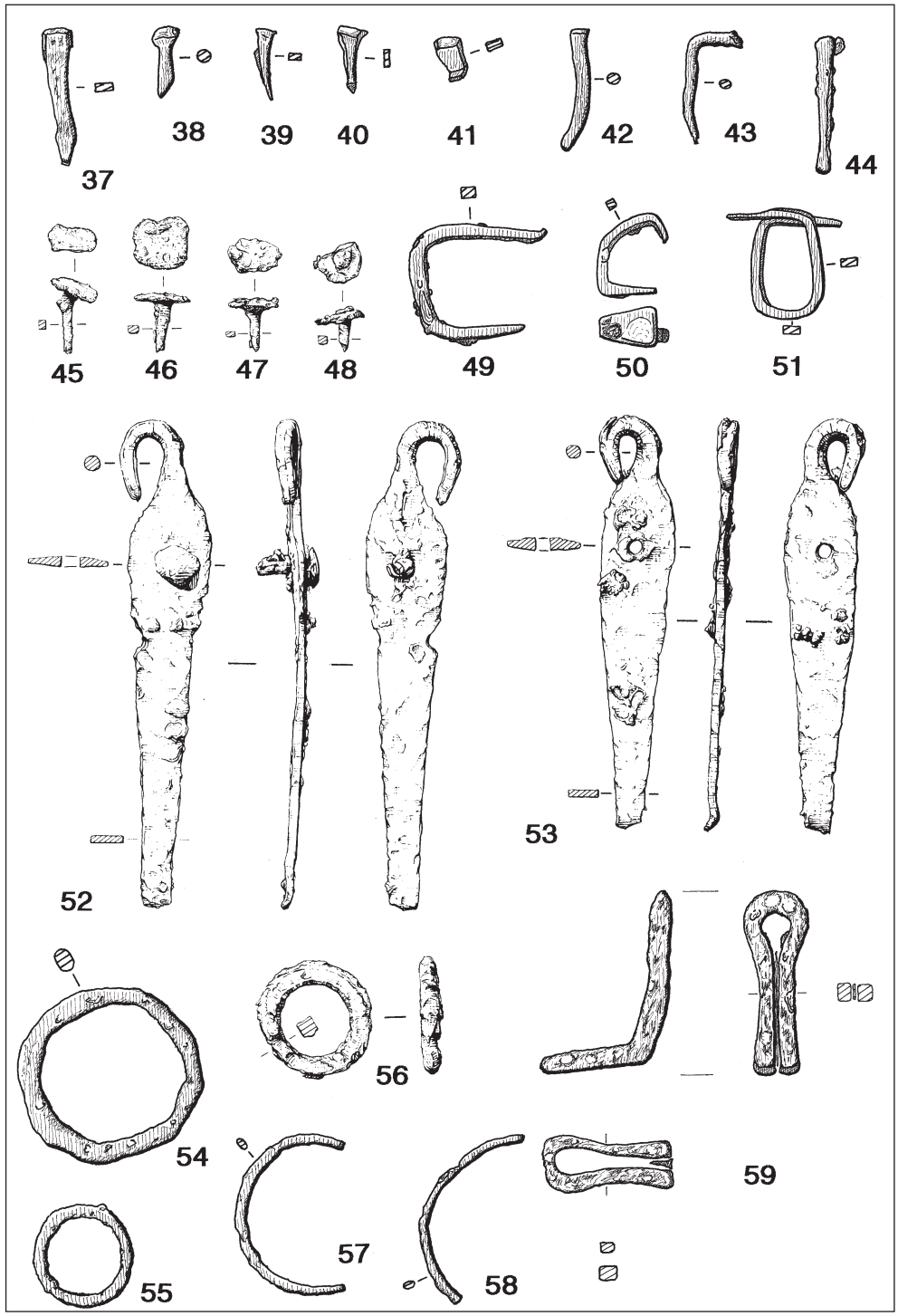

FIG. 7. Nos. 37-59. Scale 1/2.

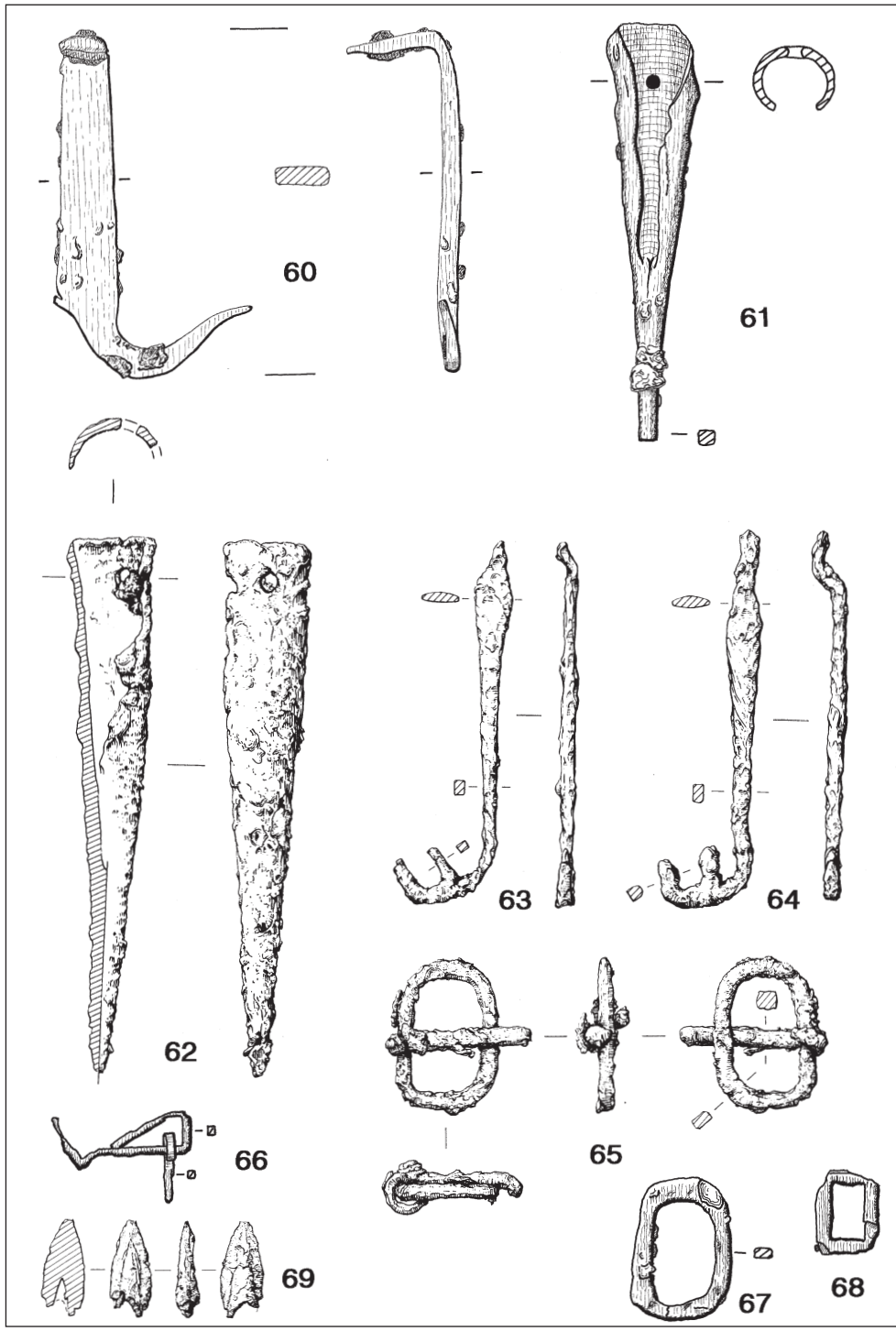

FIG. 8. Nos. 60-69. Scale 1/2.

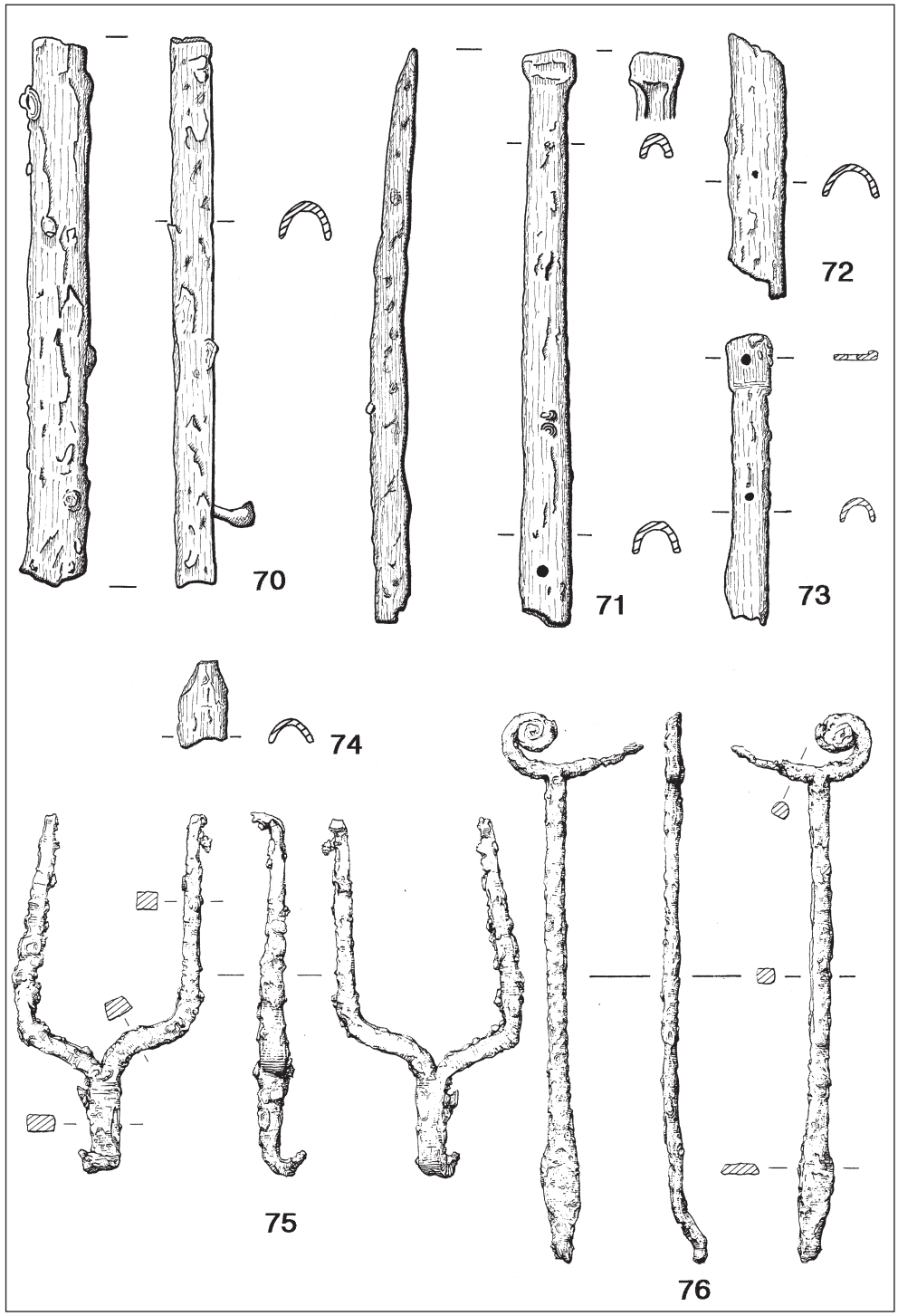

FIG. 9. Nos. 70-76. Scale 1/2.

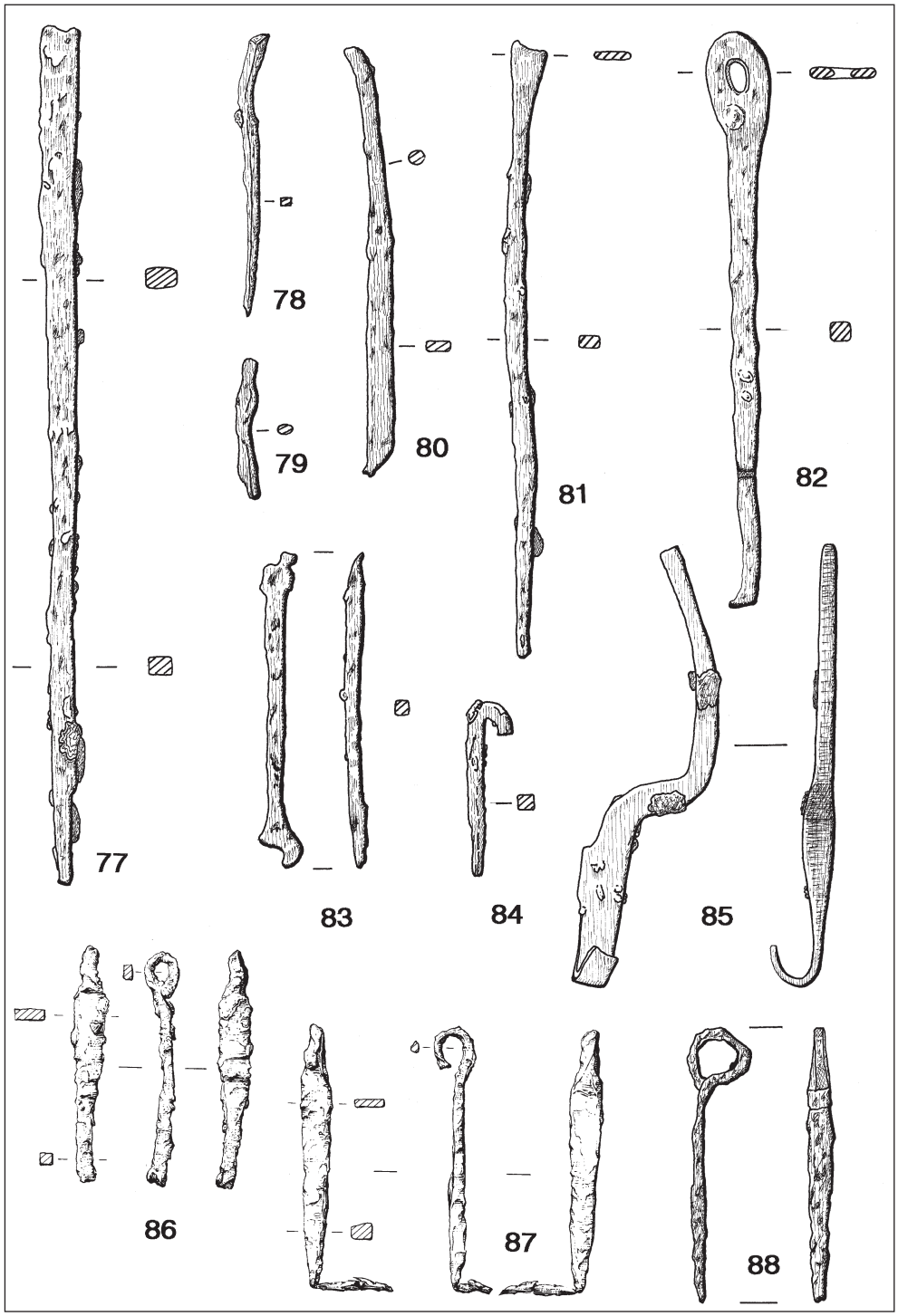

FIG. 10. Nos. 77-88. Scale 1/2.

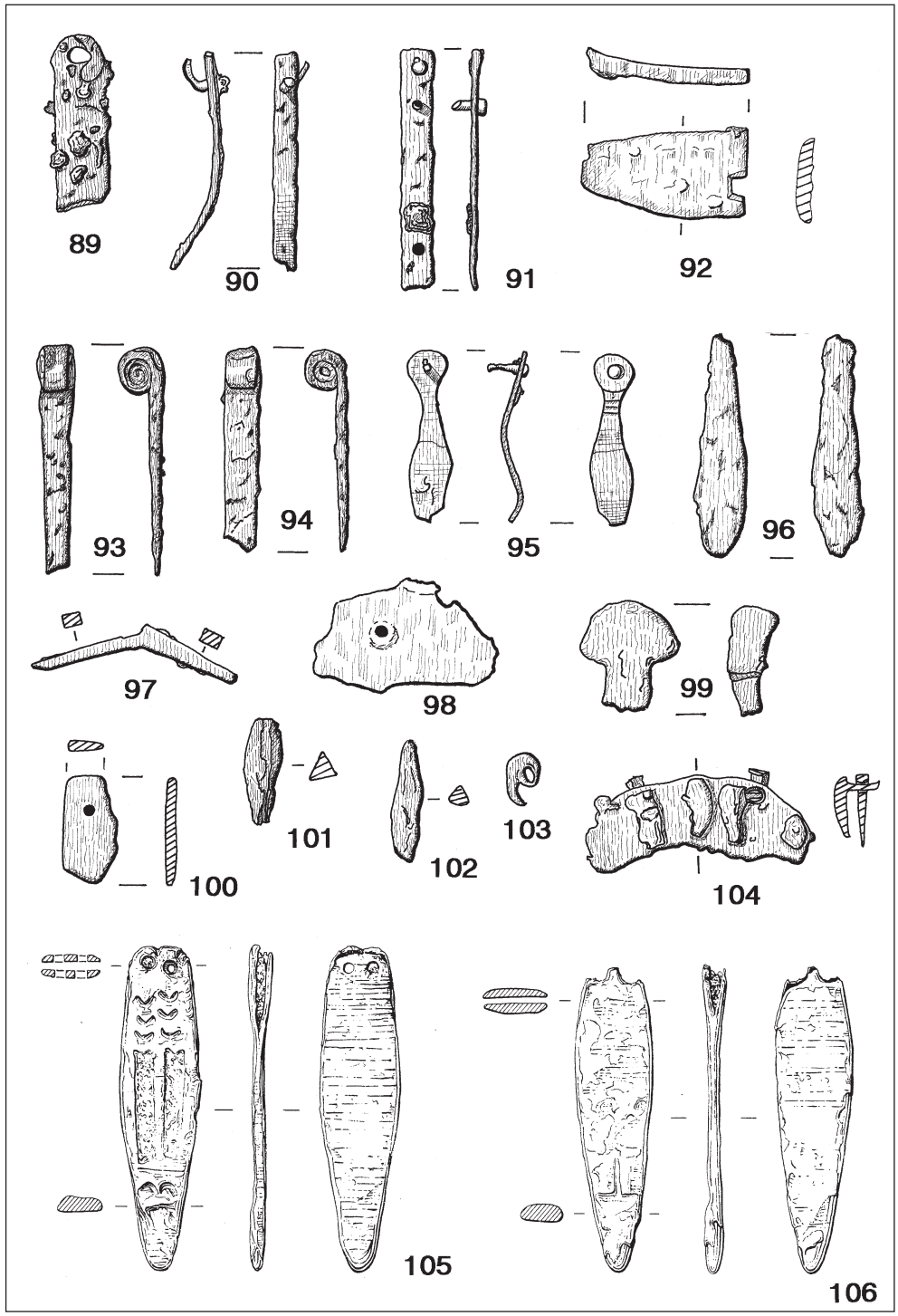

FIG. 11. Nos. 89-104. Scale ½; Nos. 105-106 – full size.

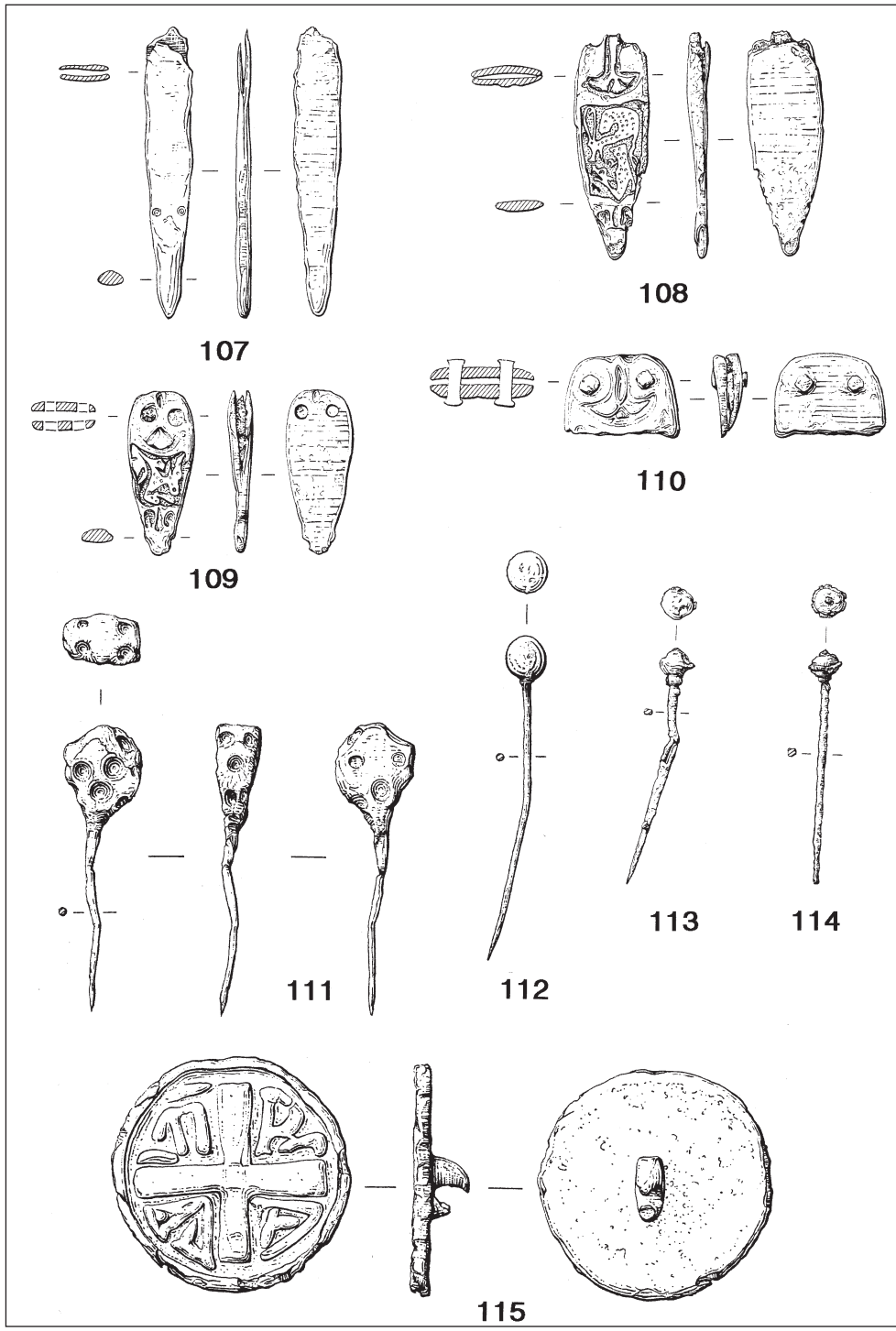

FIG. 12. Nos. 107-110 – full size; Nos. 111-115 – Scale 1/2.

incidence of these different components is shown in Table 1. It will be seen that Asby fits in quite well with this group, having four of the eight components. As to exactly why these hoards of ironwork should have been deposited where they were, there is no clear answer. Undoubtedly iron would have been more valuable for re-working than we tend to imagine. The hoarding of what today are precious metals requires no explanation, but that iron was valuable in its own right when manufacturing furnaces and processing establishments other than simple smithies were rarities, requires emphasis. None the less, this may not be the whole explanation. In the circumstances outlined, one might expect fewer apparently undamaged items and more "scrap" – just as Bronze Age founders' hoards are readily recognisable from their contents. It may be that there are, in fact, more damaged items than one realises; many of the items are now damaged, but there is a natural tendency to attribute this to a thousand years in the soil and the accidents of discovery; but some are not. Were the damaged items in the course of being recycled and the others simply old and out of date?

TABLE 1.

	Asby	Hurbuck	Stidriggs	Flixborough
Swords	–	2	–	–
Axes	–	8	2	6
Adzes	–	–	1	1
Scythes	4	4	3	–
Bells	3+	–	–	1
Augers	1	1	1	3
Ferrules	1	1	–	–
Lead Container	–	1	1	2

Another strand in the answer to how these objects came to be where they were may lie in the wider political and historical situation. The assessment of this in an area such as Cumbria, where documentary evidence is almost entirely lacking, is notoriously difficult. As Susan Youngs observed, in her publication of the copper alloy plaque (1) (Youngs, 1999, 294) ". . . it may have been recycled in the 9th or 10th centuries, the time when many Irish and Anglo-Saxon mounts reached Norway". She then drew attention to the evidence for nearby Viking activity (noted in the introduction, above, p. 111). This type of evidence is relatively frequent (it is summed up in Edwards, 1998), but evidence for what might be called indigenous settlers is more difficult to come by. It should be borne in mind that, with the exception of the copper alloy plaque, and the possible exception of the strap-ends, none of the present collection would have been reported if found alone. Dacre (Newman and Leach forthcoming) is certainly one site with such evidence, though further judgement must be suspended until the long-awaited report appears. Rare though such archaeological sites may be, no one has ever doubted the presence of what I have called indigenous settlers. Their place-names abound, both Old English and Celtic, and even if the period of giving of such names was long over when the Asby ironwork was current, there is no reason to think that the descendants of such settlers were not present to have their lives disrupted by the arrival of Norsemen in the late 9th century – an event (see Higham, 1985) which may just lie behind the

deposition of the group of ironwork which has been described.

As a tailpiece, it may be worth noting that evidence of this kind, relating to the everyday lives of people at this time, is everywhere rare in England – even in "classic" Anglo-Saxon areas such as the Northumbrian heartland or East Anglia. As Richards (1999, 44) observed "Unfortunately, one searches hard for the everyday villages and farms to place alongside the rich manuscript and sculptural evidence of 7th- and 8th-century Northumbria". So the 17 pieces of ironwork which were found accidentally in two lead containers near the high-status Middle Saxon site at Flixborough (Lincs.) have been described as "one of the most important finds of Anglo-Saxon ironwork ever made" (Leahy, 1995, 352). While the Asby collection lacks the axes and adzes of that group, the variety of its contents renders it of some importance evidentially.

Acknowledgements

My thanks go first to Mrs. Leslie Webster, F.S.A., and Mrs. Susan Youngs, F.S.A., of the British Museum, who originally asked me to look at this collection, and who have been consistently helpful and patient ever since. I visited the find-spot with Mr. Mike Daniell, then County Archaeologist for Cumbria, and I am grateful to him and to the tenant of the land, Miss Marjorie Campion. My debt to the splendid report on the Anglo-Scandinavian ironwork from Coppergate, York, by Dr Patrick Ottaway, F.S.A., will be obvious. Ms Maree Lee Haynes, then Conservator at Dumfries Museum, allowed me to see and photograph the Stidriggs Hoard, for which my thanks go to her. I am particularly appreciative of the fact that Miss Rachel Newman, then Acting Director of the Lancaster University Archaeological Unit (now Oxford Archaeology North), responded so promptly to my request, and sent me copies of the reports on both the fine metalwork (by Dr Dominic Tweddle, F.S.A.) and the ironwork (by Dr Ottaway) from the excavations at Dacre. Mr John Dawson readily gave permission for the reproduction of the photograph (by Asadour Guzelian) from his book *Torver: The Story of a Lakeland community*.

Footnotes

1. As a result of the circumstances of the finding of this material, 34 items were drawn at the British Museum by Lisa Reardon, to whom I am very grateful, and the remainder were drawn by the author. There are inevitably, therefore, slight variations in style and convention, which I hope the reader will not find disturbing.
2. I am very grateful to Sue Youngs for additional references in this section.
3. We must here beg several questions for the convenience of having a usable adjective. "Anglo-Saxon" is here used to mean post-Roman and pre-Norse in Cumbria.

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