

SHORTER NOTICES

BRONZES FROM BRETtenham, BOXFORD, BARTON BENDISH, BOUGHTON AND BRADMOOR COMMON

by Andrew J. Lawson

Among the objects of the Sir John Evans Collection housed in the Ashmolean Museum, Oxford are twenty-two pieces from Brettenham, Norfolk. The majority of these are Romano-British personal ornaments (Clarke 1938, 136-7) and a few are medieval. However, one item (Cat. No. 1927.520; Fig. 1A), a small cast-bronze quoit-headed pin, which forms the subject of this note is probably of Bronze Age date.

The shank of the pin, with circular cross-section 0.4cm in diameter, lacks its point and the overall surviving length of 6.9cm is probably only half the full length of the original object. The thickness of the shank tapers smoothly to join the head which comprises a flat hollow disc 2.7cm in diameter, 0.1cm thick and 0.5cm wide. The pin was apparently cast in one, but both faces of the head were decorated with lightly incised ornamentation. Each face bears eight triangles, each infilled with between four and eleven lines parallel to one side of the triangle. Two further lines on each face accentuate the junction between the shank and head. The fragment is in sound condition, though slightly worn, with a few surface scratches and a single fracture. It has a dark green patina with a slightly pitted surface. The pin was accessed in the Ashmolean Museum as a handle, an erroneous description which was repeated by Clarke (1938, 137, No. 8). No precise provenance or date of find was given for either this object or the others from Brettenham; it is not mentioned in Evans's (1881) corpus of Bronze Age metalwork and it is assumed that he acquired it after this publication but before his death in 1908, unless he also considered it to be Roman. It is unlikely that all the objects from Brettenham were found together. Later annotation of the Ashmolean accession register (possibly by E. T. Leeds) suggests that 'perhaps some of these correspond to J. A. Bobby's Collection of . . . "small articles found at Brettenham, Norfolk near Peddars Way Ford." Exhibited at the R[oyal] A[rchaeological] I[nstitute] meeting Bury St. Ed[munds] 1869'.

In common with other Romano-British settlements in west Norfolk and Suffolk, Brettenham has produced a varied and interesting range of pins. Some of these pins have a marked similarity to the one under discussion and an example from Icklingham (Fig. 1B; Moyses Hall Museum F177) was included by Edwardson (1969, 3) in his catalogue of Bronze Age material in Moyses Hall Museum, Bury St. Edmunds. In the writer's opinion the two types are distinct, the Icklingham type being of cruder workmanship, the head possibly being made by hammering. It is probably of Romano-British or later date and related to the example from West Stow, Suffolk (Clarke 1940, Pl. xix, 8) or Hockwold-cum-Wilton (Fig. 1C; Moyses Hall Museum F192) which itself finds a parallel at Ruskington, Lincs. (Kendrick 1946, Pl. x, No. 8).

The Brettenham pin described here is probably a 'quoit-headed pin' of the twelfth century BC (Lawson 1979a, 63). Although a small example, it is similar in size to the recently discovered pin from Boxford, Suffolk (Lawson 1981). The incised decoration

lends weight to the interpretation since only two other quoit-headed pins have incised decoration; both are from Norfolk. The example from the Boughton Fen hoard is decorated with chevrons (Lawson 1979b, fig. 1A) but that from the Barton Bendish Hoard (*Inv. Arch.* G.B. 7.2) bears infilled triangles similar to those on the Brettenham example. The Brettenham pin appears to be another distinctive product of the late Middle Bronze Age ornament producing industry of West Norfolk.

Some of the finest bronzes of this industry have been found in the hoards from Barton Bendish, Boughton Fen, Bradmoor Common and Hunstanton. Only at Hunstanton are the circumstances of finding well documented (Lawson 1979). The hoards remain important, but the lack of information about their discovery leaves an uncomfortable suspicion that they are all parts of a single deposit. It is therefore worthwhile summarising what little is known of their histories.

The Boughton Fen hoard comprising a large quoit-headed pin and two basal-looped spearheads is accessed in the British Museum (P1964 12-1 26-28), but is currently on loan to the Castle Museum, Norwich. It previously formed part of the Wellcome Collection and had been purchased in 1920 from Baron Amherst of Hackney, Stowlangtoft Hall, Suffolk.¹

At one time, the hoard had probably formed part of the extensive collections of antiquities made by William Amhurst Tyssen-Amherst, first Lord Amherst of Hackney. Lord William was born in 1835 at Narford Hall, the home of his mother Mary Fountaine. Although he later lived at Didlington Hall, which he inherited on the death of his father in 1835 together with estates in Hackney, the Tyssen family home was the neighbouring Narborough Hall.

Lord William became a wealthy and respected landowner who participated in local affairs (Coates 1982, 17). He maintained a keen interest in archaeology, sponsoring Howard Carter's excavations at Tel el Armana² and becoming a Fellow of the Society of Antiquaries. He also conducted the excavation of a round barrow on his own lands in Hilborough (Hughes 1901). At Didlington Hall he amassed books and paintings, and developed two museums. The 'Old Museum' housed ethnographic material and the 'Large Museum' housed Egyptian and local archaeological objects. The latter included 'a few bronze . . . relics' (Amherst n.d., 10) and possibly the Boughton Fen hoard. These collections were visited by the Norfolk and Norwich Archaeological Society in 1866 (*Report*, iii) and were mentioned in contemporary directories (e.g. White's 1890, 262). However, no full catalogue of the collections is at present known.³

In 1906 Lord William's agent misappropriated large sums of money and in the following three years the baron was forced to sell his library, tapestries and furniture. Following his death in 1909, Didlington Hall was sold. Part of the estate passed to the eldest of his seven daughters, Mary Rothes Margaret, who succeeded to the barony and who in 1885 had married Lord William Cecil. Like her father, Lady Cecil also had a strong interest in archaeology, excavating at Aswam, and it is probable that she retained part of her father's archaeological collection. It seems likely that this material was moved to Lord Cecil's home at Stowlangtoft, Suffolk where it remained until its sale in the name of the third Baron Amherst of Hackney⁴ following the death of Lady Cecil in 1919.

The evidence for a provenance of 'Boughton Fen' comes from the annotation of an 1865 watercolour sketch of the objects in the Bulwer Collection in the Castle Museum, Norwich.⁵ Unfortunately, provenances for other bronzes sketched in this collection are

dubious since they contradict other contemporary ascriptions⁶ and on balance the Bulwer provenances seem the least reliable. When the items were exhibited in Norwich on 25 August 1865, the circumstances of discovery were stated merely as being found 'near Stoke Ferry', 'dug up from the peat in 1864' (*Norf. Arch.* VII, 1871, 351).

The circumstances of discovery of the Barton Bendish hoard are totally unrecorded (*Inv. Arch.* G.B. 7). The hoard which comprises a large quoit-headed pin, two palstaves, a knife and nine other ornaments, forms part of the Sir John Evans collection at the Ashmolean Museum, as does the Brettenham pin. Like the pin the hoard is assumed to have been acquired between 1881 and 1908 as it also is not mentioned in Evans's corpus.

Barton Bendish Fen lies at the extreme south-western edge of the parish and is contiguous with the former Boughton Fen and Boughton Common. On Faden's 1797 map the three are distinct, the two parishes being separated by a north to south stream or dyke. The first edition one inch Ordnance Survey (c. 1840) marks the stream but does not name Boughton Common or Boughton Fen. On the six inch OS (surveyed in 1883) the stream, although extant, no longer marks the parish boundary which has been moved westward. The area formerly called Boughton Common is then called Barton Bendish Fen.

It is, therefore, possible that by 1864, the suggested date of discovery of the Boughton Fen hoard, ambiguity existed over the name of Boughton Common or Boughton Fen. Had a single hoard been found and divided, or had two elements been found on separate

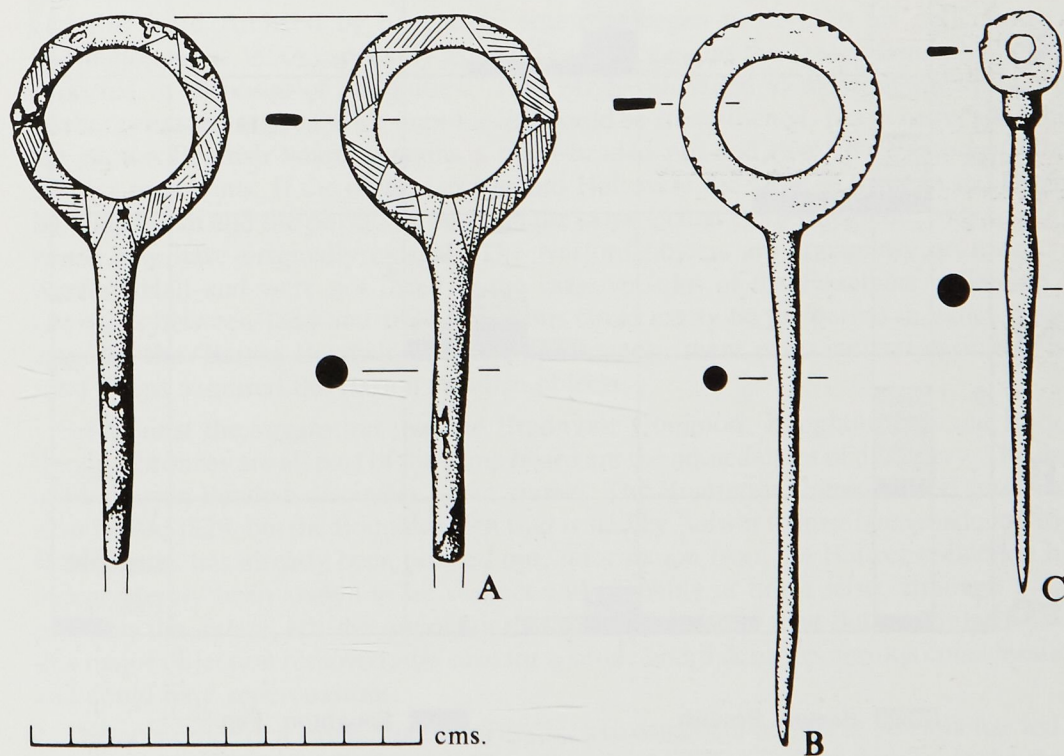


Fig. 1

Bronze pins from - A; Brettenham, Norfolk, B; Mitchell's Hill, Icklingham, Suffolk, C; Hockwold-cum-Wilton, Norfolk. Scale 1/1.

Metal Composition Chart

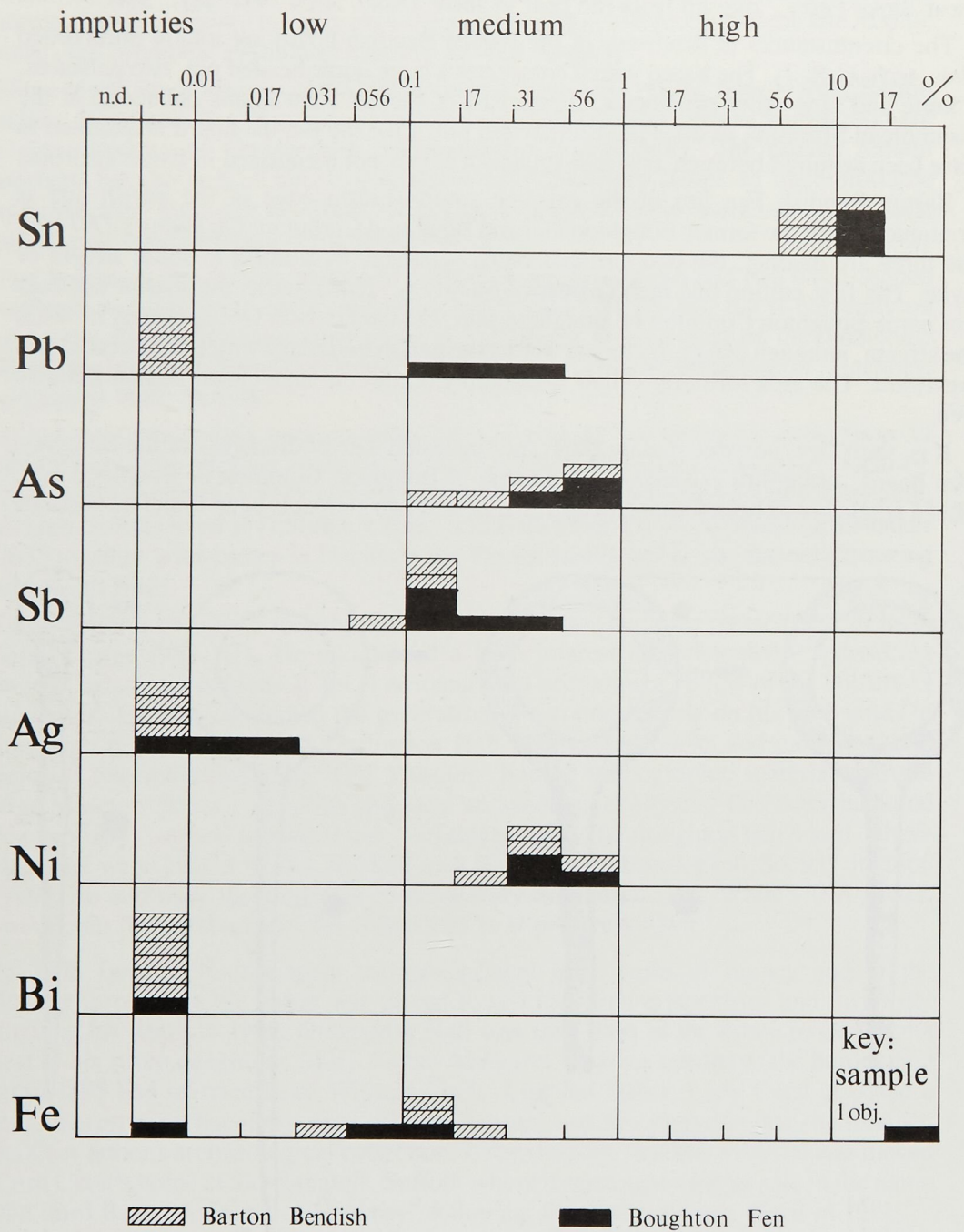


Fig. 2

Comparison of metallic trace elements in the compositions of bronzes from the Boughton Fen and Barton Bendish hoards.

occasions, the same find spot may have been referred to as either in Boughton or Barton Bendish parish. If the Barton Bendish hoard was found in the Fen it may well have been part of the 'Boughton Fen' hoard.

Metallographic analyses have been conducted on some objects in the Barton Bendish hoard by the Oxford Laboratory (Brown 1983, 41) and more recently on the Boughton Fen hoard by the British Museum.⁷ Apart from consistently lower lead values (i.e. less than 0.01%) in the Barton Bendish hoard, the compositions of the two groups are virtually indistinguishable (Fig. 2) and are consistent with the other analysed Middle Bronze Age hoards from Stibbard in Norfolk or Edington Burtle in Somerset (Margaret Brown pers. comm.). While the analyses provide useful ancillary information, they cannot be used to strengthen or diminish the case for association between the two 'hoards'.

The hoard from Bradmoor Common, Pentney comprising at least two quoit-headed pins and two broken 'celts', is only known from single references in 1829 and 1830 (Lawson 1979b, 123-4). One of the quoit-headed pins was seen by S. S. Woodward in 1829 at Narborough Hall. Although the Hall was the property of the Tyssen family, Woodward met there a Mr Sypin who named the find spot and the whereabouts of one of the other objects (the pin) which was said to be at Narford Hall, the family home of the Fountaine family. This is the only known source of the information and no precise drawing of the Bradmoor Common objects is known to exist.⁸ What if the stated provenance for this hoard was imprecise and the objects were actually found in Boughton or Barton Bendish Fen? The quoit-headed pin in Narborough Hall may well have been given to Lord Amherst by his family when he began to develop his collections at Didlington in the 1850s especially as on different occasions the Tyssen family had either collected or disposed of antiquities.⁹ Had Mr Sypin failed to mention spearheads or further ornaments the case for imprecision would be strengthened. It will be recalled that the Barton Bendish hoard contains a quoit-headed pin and two 'celts' amongst other smaller ornaments. If the objects in Narford Hall were the same as those in the Barton Bendish hoard and the pin at Narborough the same as that from Boughton, only a single hoard may have originally existed. The Narford objects are apparently no longer at Narford Hall and were not listed in the massive sales of the Fountaine collection at Christie's between 1884 and 1894,¹⁰ but this could easily be the period in which Evans acquired the 'Barton Bendish' hoard. Unfortunately, there is no indication of how Sir John Evans acquired the Barton Bendish objects.

Set against the suggestion that the Bradmoor Common, Boughton Fen and Barton Bendish bronzes are all part of the same hoard are the quoted dates of discovery. The date of the Barton Bendish discovery is not known. The Bradmoor Common find was made in or before 1829, but the Boughton Fen find is said by Bulwer to have been made in 1864. However, as has already been pointed out, information from the Bulwer collection has independently been shown to be suspect and probably at times false, although it was probably the source, artist or annotator that was at fault rather than Bulwer himself. With this major objection removed, the case for a single hoard deserves serious consideration and could have repercussions.

The occurrence of a small number of distinctive ornament hoards in Norfolk has led to the suggestion of a Middle Bronze Age ornament tradition in East Anglia. If the three principal hoards are actually one, the idea of a 'tradition' might be undermined as a single hoard may have been imported. Fortunately the well documented Hunstanton

hoard, as well as a range of single finds including the pin from Brettenham, give some substance to the original concept.

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1. The objects were bought at Foster's on 30 June 1920, Lot 717A.
2. NRO MC 84/168, p.14.
3. No such catalogue is listed by de Ricci (1906).
4. Lady Cecil's son, William Amherst Cecil, heir to the barony, was born in 1886, but was killed in 1914, five years before her death. Consequently, her grandson born in 1912 became the third baron.
5. NCM 1223.B106.235.951.
6. Dr. Stuart Needham pers. comm.; Norfolk Museums service 1977, 19, 20, 22, 23, 25, etc.
7. Drs. M. Tite and P. Craddock present the following report (File No. 4916): The drilled samples were analysed by Atomic Absorption Spectrometry using the methods described in Hughes et al (1976). The results have a precision of $\pm 1\%$ for major elements and $\pm 2\%$ for trace elements. All quoted elements could be detected down to 0.005% in the metal.

RESULTS

	Cu	Sn	Pb	As	Sb	Bi	Ag	Ni	C	Fe	Au	Cd
Spearhead Welcome 645.1937	83	14.9	0.2	0.6	0.1	0.005	0.007	0.75	0.04	0.08	—	0.001
Spearhead Welcome R644.1937	86.5	12.9	0.14	0.55	0.12	0.005	0.02	0.5	0.03	0.005	—	—
Quoit-headed pin P. Reg. 1964 12-1-152	86	11.2	0.5	0.65	0.1	0.002	0.015	0.015	0.64	0.1	0.005	—
	Mn, Zn, not detected											

COMMENT

The metal is high tin bronze, typical of the Middle Bronze Age in Britain. The pattern of trace elements is quite distinctive in the 3 pieces; relatively high arsenic, nickel and cobalt, and relatively low silver (Craddock 1979). This strongly suggests the three pieces were made from the same stock metal.

8. S. S. Woodward correspondence for 25 July 1829 (NCM) contains an inaccurate sketch of the quoit-headed pin.
9. White's 1845 Directory. Sales at Sotheby's in December 1801 and May 1802.
10. Sales at Christie's on 16 to 18 June 1884, 7 July 1884 and 6 July 1894.

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RECENT WORK AT GRIME'S GRAVES, WEETING WITH BROOMHILL

by Frances Healy

Works undertaken by the Department of the Environment and, subsequently, by the Historic Buildings and Monuments Commission in connection with the maintenance of the Grime's Graves flint mining complex (site 5640) have provided opportunities for archaeological observation and investigation.

1. The excavation of a cable trench, 1982-3

A trench approximately 30cm wide, 55 cm deep and 285m long was dug by hand for a mains electricity cable to be laid from the entrance to the guardianship area to the Custodian's hut (Fig. 1). Towards its south-eastern end the trench cut three pits, none of which was visible from the surface. They were flanked by dump deposits which consisted mainly of chalk and sand in varying states of admixture, comminution and weathering, and which were identical in section to the dumps of upcast surrounding Neolithic mine shafts excavated elsewhere on the site (e.g. Mercer 1981, fig.4). An antler pick was found in a layer of chalk rubble and flint nodules.

No pits were observed in the remainder of the trench, between the car park and the entrance (Fig. 1). The entrance lies, however, at the bottom of a dry valley in which the topsoil is deeper than on the higher ground to the south, so that, for a distance of 50m from the entrance south-eastwards, the bottom of the trench did not always reach below topsoil. This depth of soil may obscure traces of mining or related activities. That such occurred throughout the length of the trench is indicated by the undoubtedly incomplete collection of 1795 pieces of struck flint made from the upcast. This was, not surprisingly, most frequent at the south-east end, where it reached densities of up to 185 pieces per 10m length of trench; but densities of up to 80 pieces per 10m persisted up to the entrance.

The remaining 750m of trench (site 19205), from the entrance to the monument north