

A Group of Late Saxon Mounts from Norfolk (Plates I–VI, Figs. 5–6)

by Sue Margeson

A group of cast copper alloy mounts has recently been acquired or recorded by the Castle Museum. The mounts are probably all of 11th-century date and they represent an important addition to the corpus of Anglo-Saxon ornamental metalwork.

Description

1. *Belaugh*. Pl. I. County number 17227. On loan to Castle Museum L.1984.5.
A sub-triangular mount with a pierced circular terminal. There are two rivet holes at the base and an uneven flange on the reverse at the base, at right angles to the body of the mount. The mount is decorated with a quadruped with raised head, a tail ending in a scroll above its back, and a raised front paw. At least one paw is three-toed. The decoration is very worn. The uneven flange may be the result of faulty casting, which would explain the need for the rivet holes (clearly secondary as they disturb the ornament).
Length 45mm
2. *Bradwell* (Suffolk until 1974). Pl. II. County number 18004. Castle Museum 23.982.
A sub-triangular mount with a lobed pierced terminal. There are two iron rivets at the base, and a small flange (between the rivets) on the reverse at the base, at right angles to the body of the mount. The mount is decorated with two strands of conventionalised foliage, flanking a lobe which extends from the terminal of the mount.
Length 48.5mm
3. *Hellesdon*, Norwich. Pl. III. Castle Museum (no data).
A sub-triangular mount with narrow base, expanding above it to form a lozenge-shaped plate. There is a circular pierced terminal. There are two iron rivets above the base securing an iron strip on the reverse. A small flange runs the length of the base on the reverse at right angles to the body of the mount. The mount is decorated with four sunk lozenge-shaped fields, roughly scored for ?inlay. There are projecting bosses along the edge and in the centre, and a contour line border.
Length 48mm
4. *Hethersett*. Fig. 5. County number 22604. Private possession.
A trapezoidal openwork mount with slightly curved flange, pierced twice with one iron rivet still in place. The rivet secures a fragment of iron sheet on the reverse. The terminal was broken in antiquity, but there were apparently two rivet holes for attachment (only one survives). The mount is decorated with an animal head shown frontally, in relief, with long muzzle and round eyes.
Length 36mm
5. *Horsham St Faith*. Pl. IV. County number 17769. Castle Museum 437.981.
A sub-triangular mount with narrow base, expanding above it to form a lozenge-shaped plate. There are two rivet holes above the base, one containing an iron rivet, and a small flange between the rivet holes on the reverse, at right angles to the body of the mount. There are six lobes on the edges of the mount and a damaged circular terminal, pierced for attachment. The incised decoration is very worn. The field within the contour line border contains a zoomorphic interlace motif with tendrils.
Length 40mm



Pl. I Belaugh



Pl. II Bradwell



Pl. III Hellesdon



Pl. IV Horsham St. Faith



Pl. V Norwich



Pl. VI Walsingham

6. Martham. County number 15388. Private possession.
A sub-triangular mount with a flange at the base on the reverse at right angles to the body of the mount. The circular terminal was probably in the form of a lobe. The worn decoration may have been foliage in a symmetrical pattern.
Length 47mm
7. Mile Cross Bridge, Norwich. Pl. V. Castle Museum 45.983.
A sub-triangular openwork mount with the terminal missing. There is a narrow flange at the base at right angles to the body of the mount, pierced by one rivet hole slightly off centre. The mount is decorated with a sinuous biped in profile, having a spiral hip and long neck. The head is missing (where the end of the mount is broken). The animal interlaces with a ribbon. See also *Norfolk Archaeology* vol. XXXVII, Part iii (1980), pp. 354-5.
Length 45mm
8. Skeyton. County number 22226. Private possession.
A sub-triangular mount with terminal missing. The basal flange at right angles to the body of the mount is pierced once. There is iron on the reverse running the length of the flange. The mount is decorated with a quadruped, with tail curving above its back, and feet with three toes. One front paw is raised. The head is missing where the mount is broken.
Length (surviving) 24mm

9. Swafield. Fig. 6. County number 21435. Private possession.
A sub-triangular mount with pierced circular terminal. The basal flange at right angles to the body of the mount has a central pierced hole. There is a fragment of iron sheet along the flange on the reverse, and traces of iron in the rivet hole at the terminal. The mount's edges have incised transverse lines. It is decorated with a quadruped with raised head, and raised front paw, and a tail ending in a leaf curves above its back. The paws have three toes. The mount's edges have incised transverse lines. It is decorated with a quadruped with raised head, and raised front paw, and a tail ending in a leaf curves above its back. The paws have three toes.
Length 45mm
10. Wicklewood. County number 8897. Castle Museum 43.983(2).
A sub-triangular mount with terminal missing, and two lobes at the base. Two iron rivets above the base secure an iron strip on the reverse. There is no flange. The mount is decorated with debased animal ornament, and is very worn.
Length 40mm
11. Walpole St Peter. County number 21341. Castle Museum 130.986.
A sub-triangular mount with a lobed, pierced terminal. The basal flange at right angles to the body of the mount has a rivet-hole with traces of iron in it. The edges

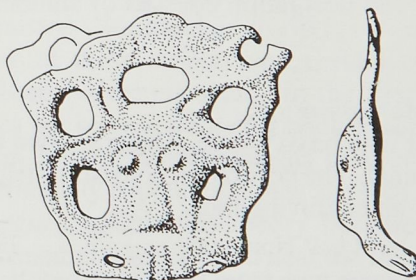


Fig. 5 Hethersett

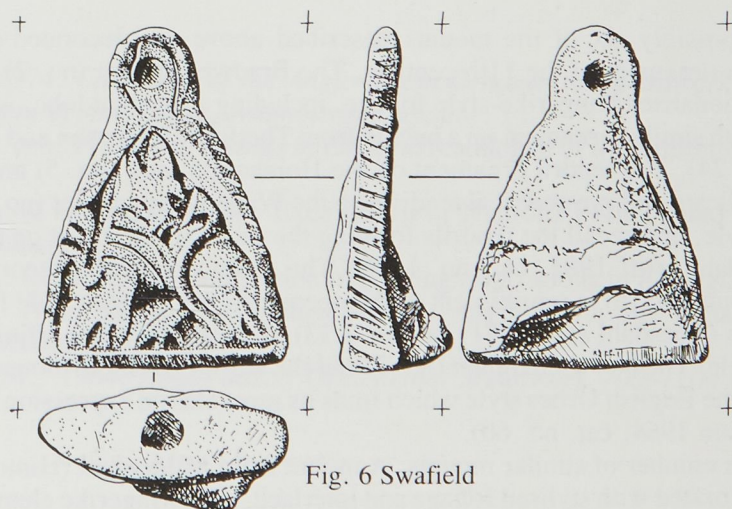


Fig. 6 Swafield

of the mount have incised lines. It is decorated with a quadruped with raised head, a tail ending in a leaf curving above its back, and a raised front paw. The decoration is very worn.

Length 47mm

12. Walsingham, Pl. VI. County number 2024(c.9). Castle Museum 379.985(3).

A sub-triangular mount with a flange at right angles at the base. The mount is pierced at the centre, and with two rivet holes at the base. There is iron stain on the surface and in the rivet holes. The terminal is in the form of an animal-head with tendrils developing from it to form a symmetrical pattern over the body of the mount. Two projecting lobes at the base are in the form of animal-heads facing 'outwards'.

Length 49mm

Mounts from Suffolk

13. Covehithe beach. Private possession.

A sub-triangular mount with a pierced circular terminal containing an iron rivet. The flange at the base has a single rivet hole off centre, and an iron strip along its length on the reverse. The decoration consists of sinuous animal ornament but is very worn.

Length 48mm

14. Dunwich Beach. Private possession.

A sub-triangular mount with basal flange. There are two iron rivets at the base and one in the circular terminal. The decoration consists of triple-contoured lines which have been 'pecked' by an engraving tool.

Length 47mm

There are two mounts of the same type from Harling, Norfolk (Rogerson forthcoming), one with a cast grotesque human face, and the other with three arms ending in stylised animal heads.

Discussion

Five and possibly six of the mounts described above are decorated with Anglo-Scandinavian ornament of the 11th century. The Bradwell mount (no. 2) is decorated with conventionalised Ringerike-style foliage, including a pendant lobe, which may be compared with similar ornament on a buckle from Thetford (Rogerson and Dallas 1984, Fig. 110 no. 24). The tendril ornament on the Horsham mount (no. 5) and the animal head with delicate and symmetrical tendrils on the Walsingham mount (no. 12) are also Ringerike style, and recall the tendrils forming the mane of the beast on the St Paul's stone (Roesdahl *et al* 1981, cat. no. I 19). The worn openwork decoration on the Martham mount (no. 6) is reminiscent of the openwork Winchester-style foliage found on strap-ends (Roesdahl *et al* 1981, cat. no. J 13), a style which has affinities with the Ringerike style. The Norwich mount (no. 7) and the worn Covehithe mount (no. 13) are examples of the English Urnes style which finds its most classic expression in the Pitney brooch (Wilson 1964, cat. no. 60).

There are a number of similar mounts. A mount from Mildenhall (Hinton 1974, cat. no. 19) is decorated with stylised foliage and interlace, with Ringerike elements, similar to the decoration on the Bradwell mount (no. 2), though more elaborate. There are two mounts with openwork Urnes-style decoration which may be compared with the

Norwich and Covehithe examples, one from Lincoln (Wilson 1964, cat. no. 33; Roesdahl *et al* 1981, cat. no. L 6) and the other a recent find from Hemel Hempstead now in the Verulamium Museum, St Alban's (Webster *et al* 1984, cat. no. 107). Two further mounts in the British Museum collections have more debased Urnes-style ornament, though not in openwork (Wilson 1964, cat. nos. 26 and 58, from Kemsley Downs and Peterborough).

The mounts from Belaugh (no. 1), Skeyton (no. 8), Swafield (no. 9) and Walpole St Peter (no. 11) belong to a group decorated with lion-like quadrupeds, including one from Ixworth, Suffolk (Roesdahl *et al* 1981, cat. no. L 8), and others found at Cambridge, Fordham in Cambridgeshire, Rochester in Kent, and Wiltshire (Wilson 1964, 58 for references). The animal is of Anglo-Saxon rather than Scandinavian ancestry and may be compared with the interlocked animals on the sides of the Canterbury censer cover (Webster *et al* 1984, cat. no. 73). The animal head on the Hethersett mount (no. 4), a leonine mask, belongs to the same tradition (compare the 'gargoyles' on the hipped roof of the censer).

The three mounts of this type in the British Museum when Dr. Wilson compiled his catalogue (Wilson 1964, cat. nos. 26, 33 and 58) were described as book-mounts and this identification has persisted (Roesdahl *et al* 1981, cat. nos. L 2, 6 and 8). In view of the increasing number of these objects and certain characteristic features, this identification should perhaps be reconsidered. In the first place, they are nearly all slightly convex which does not seem suitable for book-mounts. Furthermore, their size and sturdiness make them rather cumbersome as book-mounts. Their 'heavy-duty' quality may be more convincingly explained if they are seen as fittings from large boxes or chests. Dr. Wilson argues against this theory because of the rivet holes on the flanges. However, the substantial traces of iron near the flanges on the reverses of those mounts examined before cleaning (nos. 3, 8, 9 (Fig. 6), 10 and 13), and the presence of iron rivets (nos. 3, 4, 5, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12) suggest that the mounts may have been fastened over iron bindings on a chest. This would also explain the necessity for the flange, an almost invariable characteristic.

Bibliography

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