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## A FURTHER GROUP OF LATE SAXON MOUNTS FROM NORFOLK

by Steven Ashley, Kenneth Penn and Andrew Rogerson

Amongst a remarkable group of decorated Late Saxon mounts of copper alloy from Norfolk and Suffolk previously published in this journal (Margeson 1986), only one, from Hethersett, carries a face as the main element in its decoration. Many more mounts, in a variety of styles, but all of the same basic form that Margeson has suggested is indicative of fittings from large boxes, have since been recorded on the county Sites and Monuments Record. Seven of these new finds, which share the common characteristic of depicting faces, of humans or animals, are described here.

*Fig. 1 nos 1 and 2. Runhall.* County number 25403. Private possession. These two mounts, found within a few metres of each other, are very similar, and differ only in minor details. Each is pierced by a single iron rivet at the top and through the curving basal flange. The front surface of no. 1 is covered by iron corrosion around the upper rivet, while only slight traces of the upper rivet survive on no. 2. Both are decorated with somewhat comical oval animal faces in relief. There is much emphasis on eyebrows, eyes and nose, but no sign of mouths. The long sides are unevenly wavy and marked by very faint linear decoration.

*Fig. 1 no. 3. Hindringham.* County number 25071. Private possession. A single rivet hole is placed at the top and through the curving basal flange. A bizarre oval animal face in relief has bulging eyes and an open fish-like mouth. Hair is indicated by diagonal grooves below an arched cordon and line of finely incised rectangles. Further faint decoration occurs on the flange and at the top. The long sides and the top are wavy and followed by a groove.

*Fig. 2 no. 4. Middleton.* County number 24141. Private possession. A rivet hole passes through the top and another through the deep flange, on the front and reverse of which are traces of corroded iron. An enigmatic face, perhaps human, is shown in relief, with lentoid eyes and a broad nose. Again there is no attempt to show a mouth. Above the eyebrows, relief decoration in the form of an inverted anchor may represent the bindings of a helmet. There are indications of ears in projections from the sides.

*Fig. 2 no. 5. Brinton.* County number 25803. Private possession. A rivet hole passes through a projection at the top, and two holes containing iron pass through the deep basal flange which is decorated on the underside with grooves. A deposit of iron corrosion is attached to the reverse of the flange. A face and ?helmet is shown in relief in similar fashion to no. 4. The eyes here are rounded and the nose broader at the base. Ears are again indicated by projections from the sides.

*Fig. 3 no. 6. Erpingham.* County number 12991. Private possession. There are rivet holes through a broken projection at the top and through the basal flange, the latter still containing iron. A human face is indicated by grooved decoration, although the nose is formed in low relief. There is no suggestion of ears.





Fig. 1

Copper alloy mounts from Runhall and Hindringham. Scale 1:1.

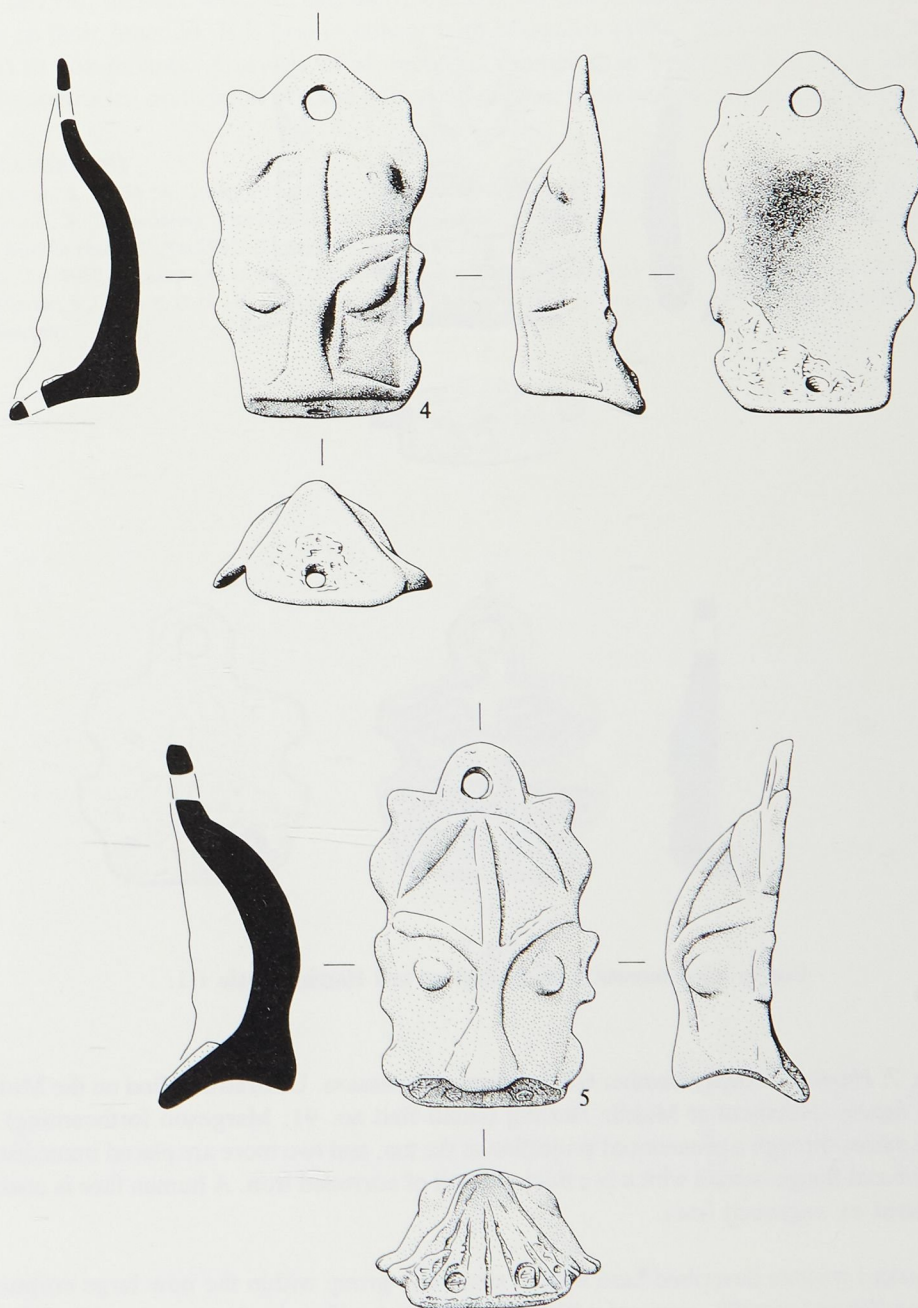


Fig. 2  
Copper alloy mounts from Middleton and Brinton. Scale 1:1.



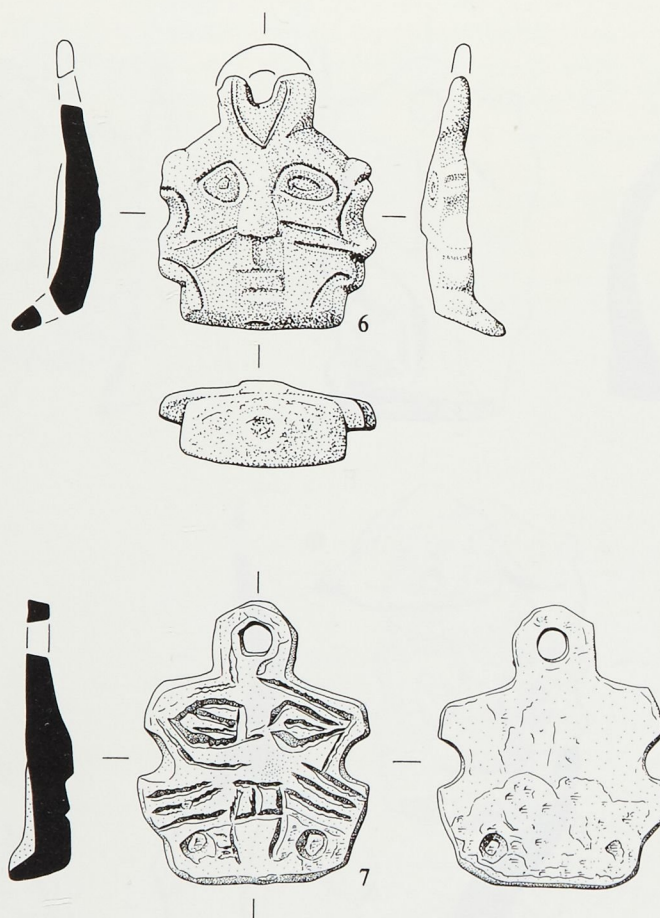


Fig. 3

Copper alloy mounts from Erpingham and Harling. Scale 1:1.

*Fig. 3 no. 7. Harling.* County number 6033. Private possession. Unstratified find on the Middle and Late Saxon settlement at Middle Harling (small find no. 91; Margeson forthcoming). A rivet hole passes through a pronounced projection at the top, and two more are placed immediately above the basal flange behind which is a thick deposit of corroded iron. A human face is coarsely delineated by engraved lines.

The masked mounts described here form a small sub-group within the now large corpus of Late Saxon flanged mounts, many of which are decorated with animal ornament of both Scandinavian and Anglo-Saxon inspiration. These pieces find few parallels. Three examples from Domburg (Netherlands) show the faces of a man, an ogre and a monster (Roes 1958, pl XVII, nos 3-5). To highlight facial features, each employs openwork, a technique not used on the Norfolk mounts, and all three are of much cruder workmanship. The distribution of flanged mounts, both on occupation sites and as isolated finds, might suggest that some at least were attached to objects more mobile than boxes, and some association with horse trappings might be possible. Although they are similar in form to Scandinavian stirrup plates (e.g. Backhouse *et al.* 1984,

cat. no. 98), they are less than half the size. However this is not the place to further the discussion on their function. It is best to concur with Margeson (1986, 327) and continue to regard them as box mounts. A review of all recorded examples, or better the discovery of a mount in the controlled excavation of a site with good organic preservation, might provide the answer.

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