

bucket. Also associated with an Italian jug is Welwyn grave B4 where the Italian silver cups were also found. The third group to include a skillet of this type is the series of bronze vessels found in 1854 in Creed Lane, London, and now in the British Museum.⁵ The skillet here has a plain rim to the bowl and a stylised swan's head termination to the handle. It was associated with three bronze bowls, one of which has an affixed palmette design.

The two finds from London, that in Bedford Museum and that from Creed Lane, add to the lists given by Werner in 1954⁶ and Birchall in 1965.⁷ Together they suggest that if the occupation of London did not begin until 43 A.D. the accepted dating of 'Ornovasso' skillets to the first century B.C. will need on extension.⁸

NOTES

- 1 For a general discussion of this type see J Werner 'Die Bronzekanne von Kelheim' *Bayr. Vorg.* 20 (1954) 43-73.
- 2 Following H J Eggers *Der Romische Import im Friesenland* (1951) 41 and 171, type 130.
- 3 *British Museum Quarterly* 28 (1964) 21-29; also *Archaeologia* 52 (1890) 317-388.
- 4 *Archaeologia* 63 (1912) 1-30.
- 5 British Museum, 1855, 8-4, 23; drawing given by H J Eggers 'Romische Bronzegefasse in Britannien' *Jb R-G Zm Mainz* 13 (1966) 101 with abb.51u. The remaining vessels of this find are unpublished.
- 6 Werner, *loc. cit.*, 67.
- 7 *P P S* 31 (1965) 295 with map 4.
- 8 I am grateful to Mr F W Kuhlicke, Hon Director of Bedford Museum, for permission to publish this vessel: access to the comparative vessels in the British Museum, Dept Prehistory and Roman Britain, was kindly provided by Mr K S Painter.

An Anglo-Saxon Grave-cover at Cardington Church

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With the exception of the chancel, the church of *St Mary, Cardington* (TL 086479) was pulled down and rebuilt between 1898 and 1901. During the demolition of the central tower a number of fragments of medieval gravestones came to light. The discovery is recorded in the *Bedfordshire Times and Independent*.¹

On the site of the church of *St Mary, Cardington*, there doubtless originally stood an Anglo-Saxon church. . . . The discovery of an Anglo-Saxon coffin-slab in the walls of the Norman portion of the tower, and of a number of Early English slabs in the upper portion, points conclusively to the above facts.

The gravestones were subsequently built into the east wall of the south chancel chapel, while other fragments, mostly architectural in character, were set into the walls of the ringing chamber of the new west tower.

Among the fragments in the east wall of the south chapel is the Anglo-Saxon coffin-slab (or

more correctly, 'grave-cover') referred to by the *Bedfordshire Times and Independent* (fig 4). It has unfortunately not survived complete, having been broken away at both ends. In its present form the slab measures 2ft 10½in (876mm) in length and 1ft 7½in (495mm) in width at its broader end, tapering to 1ft 1¼in (337mm). As it is set into the wall of the church, the thickness of the slab cannot be determined. Its surface is slightly rounded, and there is a shallow chamfer along the two edges.

The surface of the slab is decorated with four panels of interlace as background to a cruciform framework. The panels are disposed in pairs on either side of a central shaft which stretches from end to end of the slab, with a cross-arm at the centre. The cross-arm and the upper part of the central shaft are indicated by means of incised lines, but in the lower half of the slab the central shaft is directly flanked by the panels of interlace. The arms of the central cross expand outwards and are not closed at the ends. The design was no doubt

originally completed by crosses at each end of the slab, but of these no trace has survived. In all four panels the interlacing work consists of regular four-cord plaitwork. In the two upper panels the straps of the plaitwork have a central incised line.

The Cardington slab belongs to a group first discussed by Sir Cyril Fox² in 1921. The grave-covers of this group are characterised by interlacing panels disposed as background to a wide variety of cross-forms, which are sometimes cut in relief and sometimes, as at Cardington, indicated by incised lines. For the most part they are austere in treatment, showing no decorative motifs other than interlaced ornament. Grave-covers of this type are found over a wide area of East Anglia, the chief concentration being in Cambridgeshire. The only other example known from Bedfordshire is at Milton Bryan.³ Examples from Cambridge Castle and Peterborough Cathedral indicate that grave-covers of this type were laid on the surface to mark the site of a burial. In no case has a coffin been found in association with any of these grave-covers.

Fox demonstrated convincingly that the group can be dated within the century 970-1066. The Cardington example is probably late in the series, dating perhaps from the twenty or thirty years preceding the Norman Conquest. The closest parallels to it occur in two late fragments from Little Shelford, Cambs.⁴ These fragments not only have central cross-arms similar to the Cardington example, but they are also the only other grave-covers in the group with a central incised line in the straps of the plaitwork. As at Cardington this trait appears in the upper but not in the lower panels. It seems likely therefore that the fragments from Cardington and Little Shelford are related and that a late date similar to that of the Little Shelford fragments can be assigned to the Cardington slab, though the evidence is far from conclusive.

Fox considered it unlikely that monuments of this type continued to be produced in the period after the Conquest, and the Cardington slab, as an example that is probably late in the series, certainly does not weaken this conclusion. It is clear from the account in the *Bedfordshire Times and Independent* that the slab was found embedded in Norman masonry. There is now no way of knowing whether the tower was eleventh or twelfth century in date, but there must in any case have been a considerable interval between the production of the slab and its re-use as building material. The possibility of a date after the Conquest cannot be excluded, but the circumstances would certainly

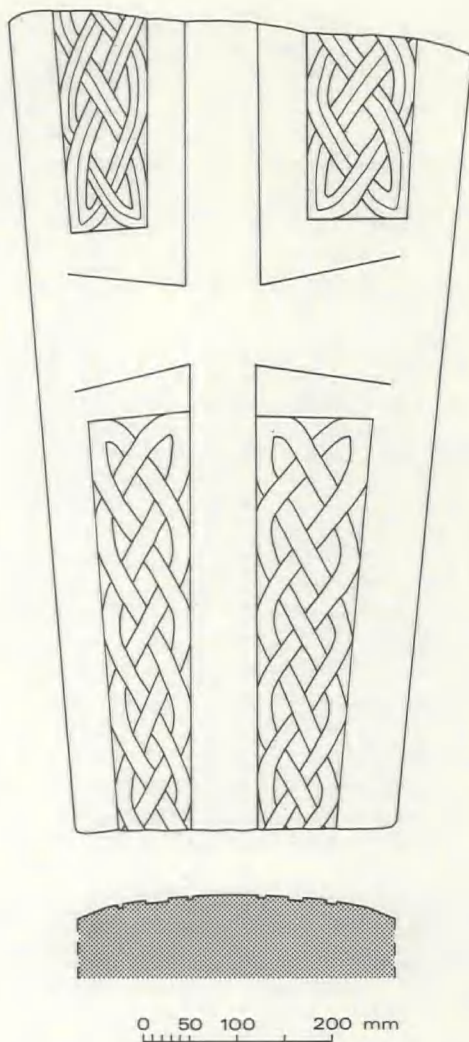


Fig 4 Anglo-Saxon Grave cover in Cardington Church.

seem to suggest the likelihood of a date before the Conquest.

The Cardington slab shows that the grave-cover at Milton Bryan is not an isolated outlier of the East Anglian group. If two such grave-covers have survived in Bedfordshire to this day, it seems fair to conclude that originally there were probably more. However, the extent to which this form of funerary art was prevalent in the area in late-Saxon times cannot be satisfactorily determined in our present state of knowledge.

NOTES

- 1 *Bedfordshire Times and Independent*, 2 August, 1901, an article in the series 'Round the County', written by the editor, Arthur Ransom, an antiquarian.
- 2 C Fox, 'Anglo-Saxon Monumental Sculpture in the Cambridge District', *P Camb Ant Soc* 23, 1920-21, 15-45. In addition to the forty-seven examples listed by Fox there are fragments of this type at Caxton, Conington, Orwell and Balsham in Cambridgeshire and Huntingfield in Suffolk. The first three were referred to in RCHM, *W Cambs*, 1968, *passim*, while the Balsham example was published in *P Camb Ant Soc* 32, 1932, 51. For the Huntingfield fragments see a guide-book on sale in the church.
- 3 *P S A* 20, 1903-05, 355-6. Also illustrated in N Pevsner, *The Buildings of England: Bedfordshire*, 1968, 126, attributed to the twelfth century.
- 4 Fox, 1920-21, 22 and 34 (Nos 20 and 22, Plates V and VI).

A Twelfth Century Carved Head from St Mary's Church, Bedford

F.W. KUHLCHE

The Church of St Mary, Bedford stands within the southern half of the Anglo-Saxon *burh*,¹ on the south bank of the River Great Ouse, and beside the main north-south street through the town. (Grid reference: TL052494). It had long been recognised that the church contains early Norman features,² but in 1959 restoration work by Major John Gefge, consisting in the systematic removal of Victorian additions to the fabric, revealed evidence of basically Saxon work; this work is considered by T.P. Smith to belong to the period after the conquest when Anglo-Saxon building traditions were not, in the smaller churches, wholly displaced by the more cosmopolitan forms of Romanesque.³

In the course of Gefge's work a niche in the east wall of the south transept was opened, and this proved to be an Anglo-Saxon window which had been partly blocked probably in the fourteenth century. Amongst the rubble-blocking was discovered a remarkable corbel-head, vigorously carved in Caen stone, which Gefge and myself at first dated to the Anglo-Saxon period; however, Prof E.P. Lasko and Prof G. Zarnecki (private communications) consider it as belonging to the second half of the twelfth century, possibly to c.1160. If this dating be correct, then the corbel is a remarkable instance of Anglo-Saxon stylistic survival into the Norman era.

The Bedford head (pl 6) is 24cm across the forehead, is 15cm deep, 30cm high, and 23cm broad at the base. There are traces of red pigment on the lips, nostrils, and cheeks, though this may have been applied when the recently discovered

murals were painted. The principal features are the drooping moustache with small upcurled volutes at the extremities, the very subtly carved indications of hair on the chin, and the well-defined eyebrows. The hair is crisply curled upon the forehead and falls in 'corkscrews' behind the ears, which are boldly carved. Indeed, the ears and the slightly protruding, wide eyes beneath widely sweeping brows are the most striking features and give the whole piece a marked 'Viking' look.

Two parallels have been brought to my attention:⁴ a far less well preserved corbel over the south doorway of St Mary's Church, Luton; and a pair of small heads on the Prior's Doorway, leading from cloister to nave, at Ely Cathedral.

The Luton head is the only remaining piece of the late Saxon church in the town and is entirely disconnected architecturally from any part of the surviving medieval building.⁵ It has wider sweeps of curve in the moustache and the eyes are in very much lower relief, but lack the firm outlines of the Bedford head. The latter is that of a warrior sure of himself, the former that of an older and rather weary man.

Unlike the Luton corbel, the Ely heads are integral parts of the Norman Prior's Doorway, the tympanum and lintel of which bear well-marked Scandinavian associations in the foliage-scroll pattern upon them.⁶ The lintel rests on two brackets — both carved with the foliage-scroll — supported by the corbel-heads, which have much in common with that from Bedford. This resemblance is seen chiefly in the 'Viking' — like countenance, the