

A SPEARHEAD FROM BLETCHLEY, MILTON KEYNES

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The spearhead found near Bletchley, Milton Keynes, Bucks., (fig. 1a), is nearly complete, 49.5 cms. long, the blade being a broad pointed oval, the lower point overlapping the socket. The socket is short and split and the end is defective. The spear may be compared to one found not very far away at Harrold, Beds. in a partially disturbed context, but presumably a grave group (grave 3), consisting of a sword, the spear, a whetstone, remains of an iron bucket, a heckle, a bead and a knife.² The shape and size of the two spears, as may be seen from figs. 1a and b are almost identical, the only differences being that the Harrold blade has a more pronounced median ridge, tapers slightly more towards the tip, has three chevron grooves at the junction of blade and socket, and the socket is complete, showing that very little can have been lost from the Bletchley spear socket.

Firm dating evidence for late Anglo-Saxon spearheads is difficult to come by, for most of them are river finds. However, it may be seen that the Bletchley-Harrold type must be a development of the pagan type designated as C3 by Swanton,³ i.e. a long, leaf-shaped blade with short socket, often found in the latest pagan graves in company with objects datable to the late seventh century and early eighth century, such as sugar-loaf shield bosses.⁴ The grave at Harrold was in a pagan Anglo-Saxon cemetery, from which the grave goods retrieved by rescue works were few, but they were sufficient to demonstrate that the cemetery was in use in the late seventh to early eighth century. The inclusion of an iron pail and heckle in grave 3 is unique in an Anglo-Saxon cemetery and suggest Scandinavian influence, but the recorded dates of Viking settlement would not admit of this before the ninth century. A few continental parallels to the spear type in form and decoration have been noted,⁵ but there is no doubt that it is an Anglo-Saxon form, stemming directly from the pagan C3 type. One of similar shape was found in the Thames (fig 1d. Museum of London A.1943), but on this spear the blade does not continue in a point on to the socket.

A radiograph of the Harrold spear shows welding lines running parallel to the sides of the middle part of the blade, which means that the cutting edges were welded on to the core, a practice already followed by smiths in the manufacture of knives in the pagan period. These lines are indicated on the drawing, fig. 1b.⁶ A radiograph of the Bletchley spear, however, shows a more complicated structure, where the cutting edges

2.B. Eagles and V. I. Evison, 'Excavations at Harrold, Bedfordshire 1951-3', *Bedfordshire Arch. Journ.* 5 (1970) 39, fig. 12, b.

3.M. J. Swanton, *The Spearheads of the Anglo-Saxon Settlements* (1973) fig. 13, 55 ff.

4.V. I. Evison, 'Sugar Loaf Shield bosses', *Antiq. J.* XLIII (1963) 38-96, Melbourne, Cambs. grave 12, fig. 17, h, Loddington, Northants fig. 25, d; Ford, Laverstock, Wilts., *Antiq. J.* XLIX (1969) 105, fig. 5, a; Horndean, Hants., *Proc. Hants. Field Club & Arch. Soc.* XIX (1958) 140, fig. 12, 1.

5.Eagles/Evison op. cit. 1970, 44.

6.As with the rest of the drawings in this article, both visible surface indications and radiograph information is used to produce as complete a picture as possible.

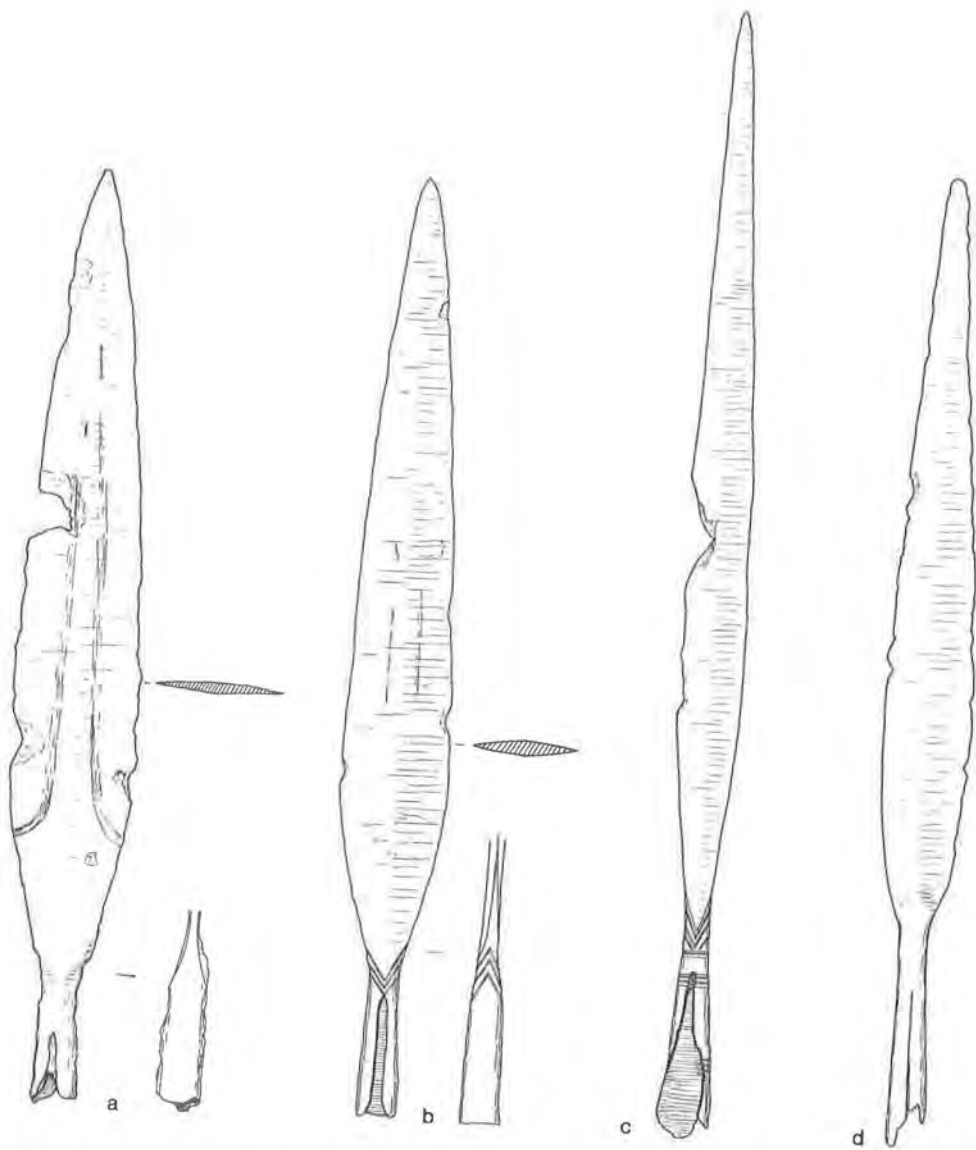


Fig. 1. (a) Bletchley, Bucks.
 (b) Harrold, Beds.
 (c) Thames at Wandsworth
 (d) Thames

Scale $\frac{1}{4}$

are welded on in the same way, but between the blade and the core runs a ribbon of pattern-welded metal in an elongated curved V shape (fig. 1a). This is not now visible on the blade itself. It is most probable that similar pattern-welded bands are present on the Harrold spear although they do not show up on the radiograph, for the welding lines revealed are in a corresponding position. The function of the pattern-welding band is to ornament the blade as well as to add flexibility.

A number of spearheads of more slender form, but with the same unequal proportions of blade to socket, with the pointed join of blade to socket, and sometimes with the chevron grooves, were found in the Thames at various points (figs. 1c, 2a and b). These would appear to be a development of the more slender form also in use in the late pagan period, labelled C4 by Swanton.⁷ Some show a development of the pointed end of the blade at the junction with the socket where it curves outwards to reach the full diameter of the socket and continues a little further, projecting as a knob, described elsewhere as a 'beak'⁸ (fig. 2c from Staines).

On two spearheads with groove-decorated sockets the lines of the V-ribbon pattern welding run from the widest part of the blade nearly to the tip, as it does on the Bletchley spear (figs. 2a and b) A 1978 and A3085.

Two others, however, no doubt represent a later development, where the blade ends in a beak while the top of the socket is flattened laterally, and the V-shaped pattern-welding does not appear to run so far along the blade (figs. 2c, d, 10955 and 02057 from Staines, Old England and Brentford).

A still later type must be the lozenge-shaped spearheads where the weak point of the narrow junction of blade with socket, a point where the spear 02057 (fig. 2d) is bent sideways, is strengthened by baluster moulding. The V-strips of pattern-welding are still present, although in a straighter form on the spears from the River Cam in Cambridgeshire (figs. 2 e,f). One of these has a closed socket which may be indicative of a late date, or possibly of foreign influence, but collected documented evidence of relative forms from abroad is not available for comparison.

One spearhead with more elaborate ornamentation is a developed C4 type and is closely related to those mentioned above by the curved V band of pattern-welding on the blade. It is further ornamented by wires of silver and copper twisted and inlaid in the blade, and there are also traces of a row of inlaid triangles following the curved V shape (fig. 3a). This spearhead, part of the Pitt-Rivers Collection, was found in the Thames at Egham in Surrey, and has recently been cleaned so that the pattern, hidden before by rust, can now be seen. Precisely the same combination of a ribbon of pattern-welding with inlaid twisted wires and triangles of sheet inlay was also used to decorate Anglo-Saxon seaxes of the ninth century.⁹ The radiograph of the spear from the Thames at Wandsworth (fig. 2a A.3085) shows four bands of higher density on the socket, and this must also represent the remains of inlaid strips of another metal such as silver or copper.

Pattern-welding does not seem to have been incorporated in spearhead blades of the pagan period in England, and it is not common on Viking spearheads. Pattern-welding can be seen, however, on some Carolingian spearheads, as on the distinctive winged

⁷Mr. Swanton, however, does not recognise the existence of any development of this type after the pagan period: Swanton op.cit. 1973, 59.

⁸R. E. M. Wheeler, *London and the Saxons* (1935) 171, fig. 40

⁹V. I. Evison, 'A decorated seax from the Thames at Keen Edge Ferry', *Berks Arch. Journ.* (1963-4), 28-36.

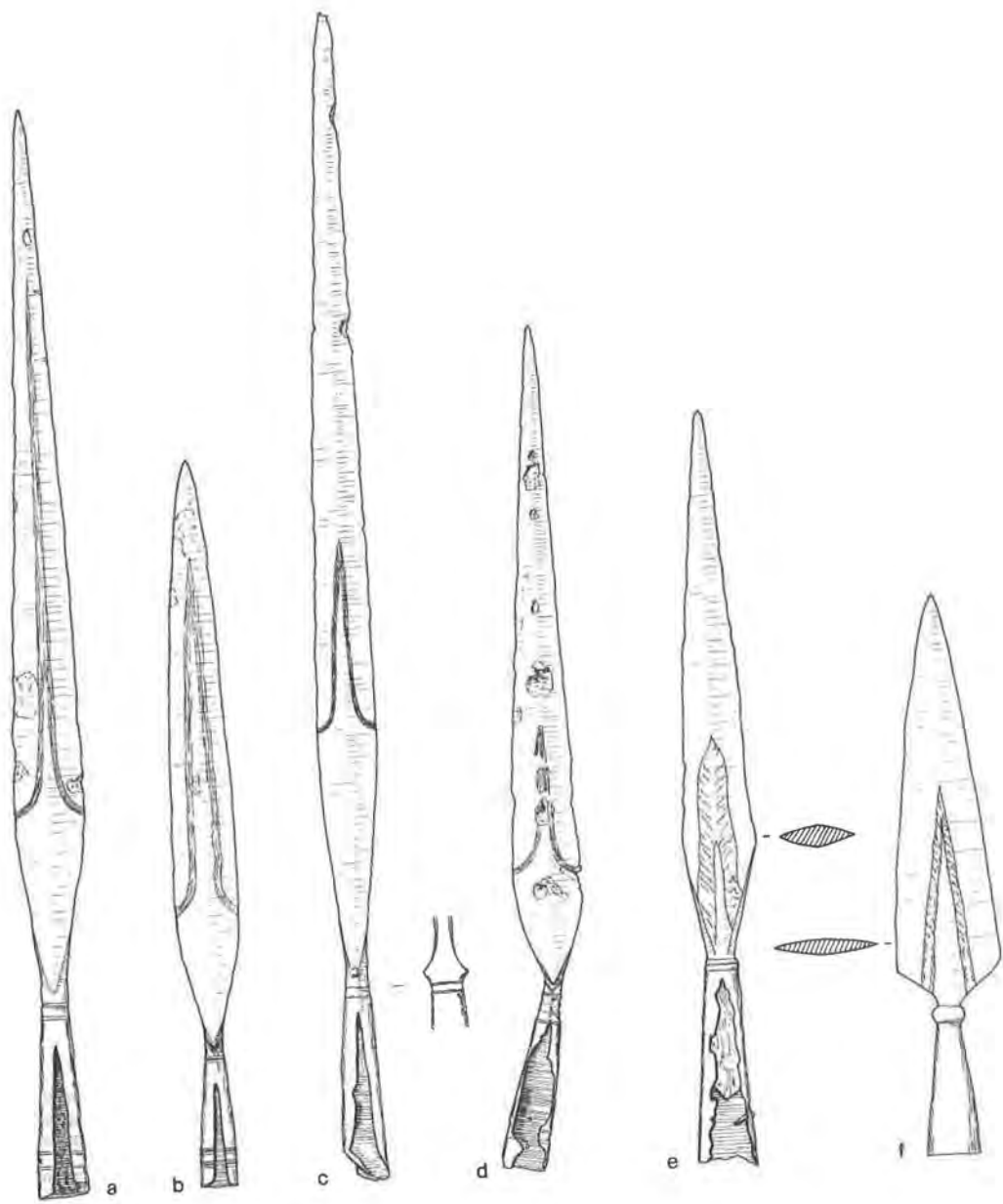


Fig. 2. (a) Thames at Wandsworth.
 (b) Thames at Vauxhall.
 (c) Staines, Middlesex.
 (d) Old England, Brentford.
 (e) River Cam.
 (f) River near Ely.

Scale $\frac{1}{4}$.

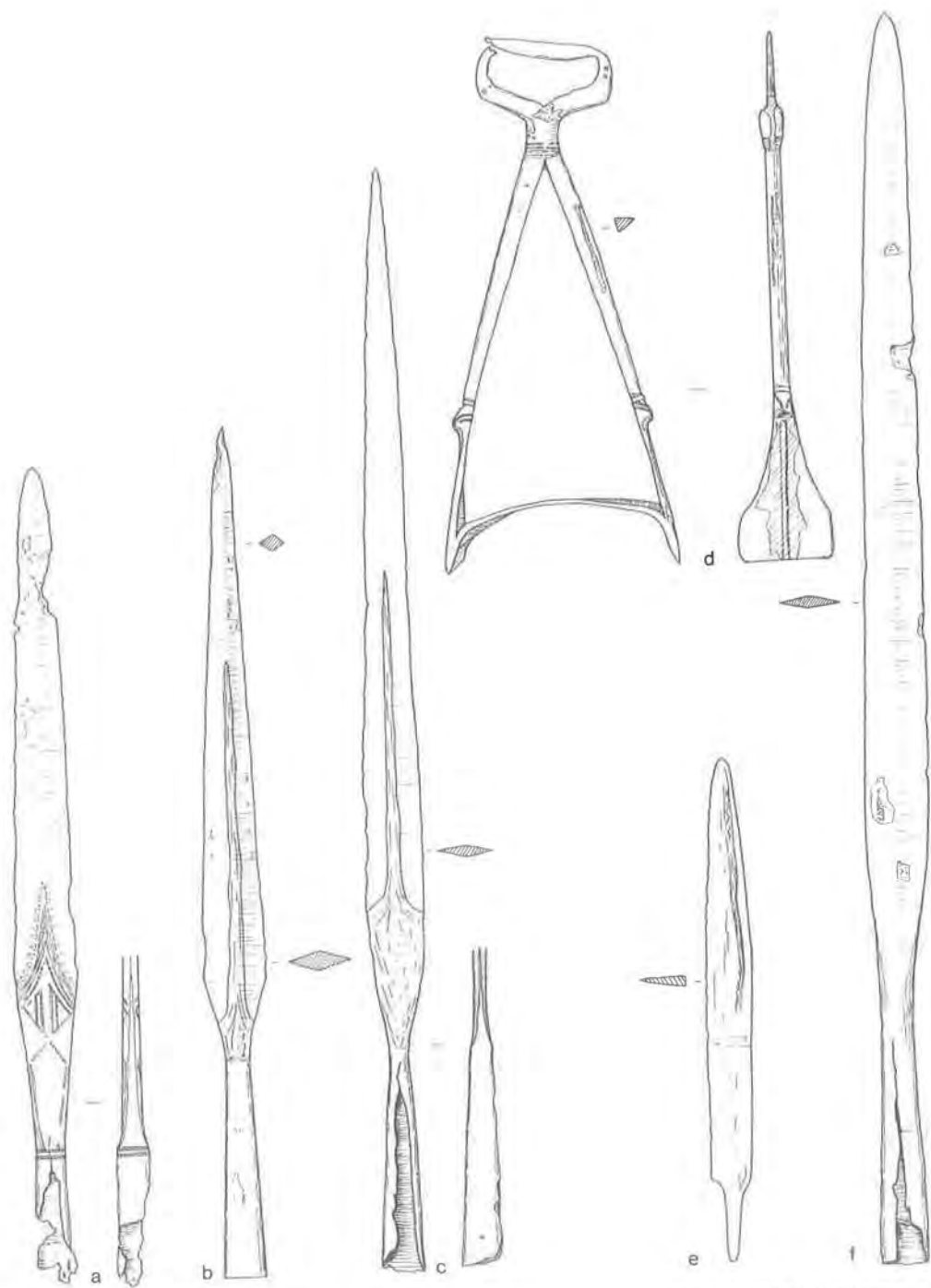


Fig. 3. (a) Thames at Egham
 (b) Loddon, Norfolk
 (c) River Lark near Mildenhall

(d) Finedon, Northants, stirrup.
 (e) Finedon, Northants, seax.
 (f) Finedon, Northants, spear.
 Scale $\frac{1}{4}$.

form found in the River Ouse at Brahams Farm, Cambs.¹⁰ In Scandinavia pattern-welding begins to appear on spearheads in the late Migration and early Viking periods and is attributed to Frankish origins.¹¹ A type with long narrow, leaf-shaped blade with pattern-welded core and a chevron-grooved socket was exported from the Rhineland in the eighth and ninth centuries to Finland and Russia.¹² There can be no doubt about the Anglo-Saxon origin of the Bletchley and related spears, and judging from the number of seaxes and spears of these series from the Thames it seems that one of the centres of production for this kind of work must have been in that area.

A spearhead with long, angular blade from Loddon, Norfolk (fig. 3b) has a long, narrow medial insertion of pattern-welding which widens at the base to meet the edges of the blade and forms the connecting shaft to the socket, finishing in a double arc line. This spear is similar to those discussed but has significant differences. The pattern-welding appears to be a block inset rather than in the form of two narrow bands. The blade retains its thickness while narrowing to the point, so forming a strong bar tip. The socket is closed and sturdy, showing on its surface the remains of silver inlay in geometric and probably zoomorphic patterns. These characteristics indicate a continental origin, and a tenth-century date has been suggested for the type.¹³ A number with well preserved, inlaid decoration have been found in the Baltic area.¹⁴

Another spearhead in the insular series of slender leaf-shaped blades with split socket from the River Lark near Mildenhall (fig. 3c) has a similar long medial core of pattern-welding which expands at the base to occupy the whole width of the blade to the pointed junction with the socket.¹⁵ There is obviously some relationship between the pattern-welding on the imported spear, the Mildenhall spear and the Anglo-Saxon series, and it may be that this genus of imported spearhead provided a model for the Anglo-Saxon smiths to copy. However, if the continental type with silver-inlaid socket cannot be attributed to a date earlier than the tenth century, it may be that by this time the Anglo-Saxon weapon smith was sufficiently advanced in prowess to have evolved techniques worth passing on to his continental colleagues. The pagan Anglo-Saxons had used pattern-welded swords although they may not have manufactured the blades themselves, and by the ninth century L-type sword grips of native workmanship were fitted to pattern-welded blades. Pattern-welding in the form of strips was an integral part of seaxes of ninth-century Anglo-Saxon manufacture, and it can now be seen that this practice was extended to spearheads.¹⁶

It is rare for a late Saxon spearhead to be found anywhere except in a river, but as the nearest parallel to the Bletchley spear turned up not far away in an Anglo-Saxon grave at Harrold, the theory that it, too, was part of the furniture of a grave must at least be entertained, in fact, one wonders whether it can be added to the list of 'Viking' graves in southern England. These are graves furnished in the pagan manner, but with

10. H. Shtetlij, *Viking Antiquities* IV (1940), 64, fig. 31; cf. H. Arbman, *Schweden und das Karolingische Reich* (1937), 232-3; M. Strömberg, 'Untersuchungen zur jüngeren Eisenzeit' in *Schonen I* (1961), 144.

11. B. Thordeman, *Vapen* (1944), 40 and 54.

12. E. Kivikoski, *Die Eisenzeit Finnlands* (1947/51) Taf. 101, 796; Varangian Problems, *Scando-Slavica Supplementum* I (1970), 71, fig. 8. For a clear drawing of a spear blade with pattern-welded core, see Ed. B. Almgren, *The Viking* (1966), 217.

13. Evison op.cit. 1963-4, 34; Arbman op.cit. 1937, 234, note 2.

14. M. Strömberg, 'Untersuchungen zur jüngeren Eisenzeit' *Schonen I* (1961), 141-3, Taf. 66,7, Textabb. 16,1 and 2; 17.

15. This observation is visual from surface indications only as these two spears have not been X-rayed.

16. A slender spearhead, length 44.3 cm. with leaf-shaped blade and split socket was found in the mud of the River Cray under the High Street, Old Bexley, Kent. It is reported that an X-ray shows a strip of pattern-welding each side of the middle of the blade. *Arch. Cant.* LXXXV (1970), 212-4.

goods that belong to the ninth century or later, and so they must either be graves of Vikings or of Anglo-Saxons influenced by Viking or other pagan ritual. The list already produced amounts to no more than six or seven.¹⁷

Another group of objects must also be considered in this connection. This is a find not before published, but made in September 1926 in black silt 7-9 feet below the present meadow surface during bridge widening at Finedon County bridge, Northants in company with animal bones and flint implements. The three objects, a long, narrow leaf-shaped spearhead of the extraordinary length of 72 cms., a seax with a band of pattern-welding, and a stirrup with remains of a silver or tin covering of the surface (figs. 3 d, e, f). One might consider these to be likely constituents of a Viking period grave group, but against this is the fact that the most usual find spot for stirrups of this period is in a river by a bridge,¹⁸ for, together with weapons, they were most likely to be lost in skirmishes in defence of the river crossings. The spearhead is unusually long, with a less distinct encroachment of the base part of the blade on to the socket. It is a later development of the C4 type, but not closely datable. Although no pattern-welding was revealed by the radiograph, a part of the blade where the surface is missing revealed pitted iron separated from streaky iron by a straight line parallel to the edge, so indicating a weld for cutting edge and/or a pattern-welded strip.

The seax type with pattern-welding, as in this find group, is fairly common in the ninth and tenth centuries.¹⁹ The stirrup is a type also current about the same time although the outline of the bow is less curved as in most British examples and nearer to that of a straight-sided triangle. A similar, but unprovenanced example, also with silver plating, is in the Museum of Archaeology and Ethnology at Cambridge.²⁰

As pagan period material is so much more abundant than that of the later period, it is not surprising if some grave groups have been mistakenly attributed to the earlier series when they actually belong to lesser known types of the later period. There are two, at least, of these in Norfolk which come to mind. A single burial, south of London Road, Thetford, Norfolk, near the site of a pre-conquest church and a tumulus, contained a sugar-loaf shield boss with decorative iron strap mounts on the shield, and a spear.²¹ (fig. 4, a-c) The boss is distinguished from others by the shape of its point, the extra width of the flange and the large number of twenty one rivets calculated from the remnant of rim fragment. The spearhead is 52.8 cm. long, the very slender blade having a median ridge, and ending in a point on the socket. The sugar-loaf shield boss type had begun in this country by the end of the seventh century, but the form frequently appears in manuscript illuminations from the ninth century, and a similarly prominent type occurs in the eleventh century, so that the general form no doubt continued in use for a long period.²² The unparalleled features of the shield boss, together with the form of the spear which has gone as far in development of a slender pointed blade as those from the

17. V. I. Evison, 'A Viking grave at Sonning, Berks.', *Antiq. J.* XLIX, 333 ff. Dr. D. Wilson's latest remarks on late burials in the south of England are given in note 23 on p.402. *The Archaeology of Anglo-Saxon England* (1976). Ed. D. M. Wilson where it is said that the Reading sword was not associated with a skeleton: However, according to the original report P.S.A 2nd ser. III, 461 it was found with the skeletons of a man and a horse. The grave from Harrold, Bedfordshire is said to be 'almost certainly not' the grave of a Scandinavian, but no reason is given for this point of view.

18. W. A. Seaby, 'Late Dark Age finds from the Cherwell and Ray' 1876-86, *Oxoniensia* XV (1950), 29-43.

19. *Sussex Arch. Soc.* CVI (1968) 140, fig. 1 and 143-4.

20. No. 23, 1157, I am grateful to Mr. P. Woodfield for drawing my attention to this stirrup. For Scandinavian stirrups see: O. Rygh, *Norske Oldsager* (1880), 590; H. Arnbman, *Birka* I (1943), Taf. 34, 3-4, 36 and 37.

21. Evison op.cit. 1963, 44-5, fig. 3, fig. 24, b-d for site - *East Anglian Archaeology* 4 (1976), fig. 3.

22. J. Hubert, J. Porcher, W. F. Vollbach, *L'Europe des Invasions*, (1967) 206, 212-3; Idem, *Carolingian Art* (1970) 212; H. Miller, *Anglo-Saxon Manuscripts AD 900-1066* (1976) No. 310.

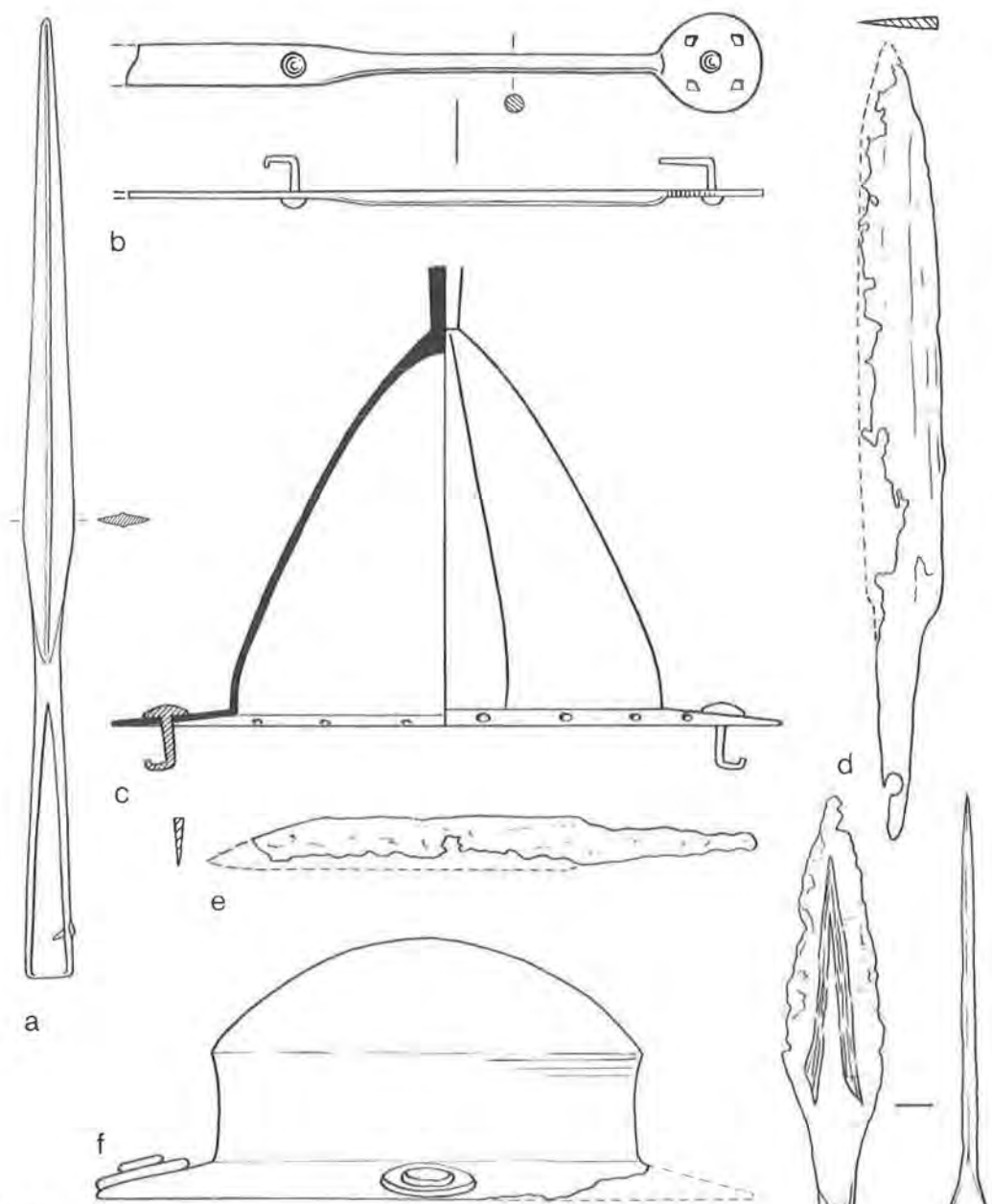


Fig. 4.

- (a) Thetford, Norfolk, spearhead
- (b) Thetford, Norfolk, shield ornament
- (c) Thetford, Norfolk, shield boss
- (d) Wretton, Norfolk, knife
- (e) Wretton, Norfolk, knife

- (f) Wretton, Norfolk, shield boss
 - (g) Wretton, Norfolk, spearhead
- Scale $\frac{1}{2}$ except (a) $\frac{1}{4}$.

Thames, suggest a date for the grave further from the end of the pagan period, perhaps in the ninth century.

Another Norfolk grave, from Wretton, was also a single burial and contained a shield boss, a spearhead and two knives. (fig. 4 d-g). This shield boss, too, has different characteristics from those of the pagan period. The low, waisted convex dome shape with wide flange is one proper to the sixth century, but the spacing of the two remaining rivets seems to show that there were four instead of the usual five disc-headed rivets of the pagan period, and each one of these was fixed through a larger disc washer. Moreover, there is no sign of the spike or button top on the dome normal to the Anglo-Saxon boss. The form does, however, correspond to a mid way stage between an early ninth century Norwegian type with waist and hemispherical dome (Rygh 564) and a later evolved lower dome and rudimentary waist (Rygh 562).²³ The spearhead has now lost its original profile, but an early photograph shows that it was quite short, c.17 cm. long with a split socket, and with either a leaf or lozenge-shaped outline. Even in its present defective state, however, it shows the continuation of the blade in a point on to the socket, and a rectilinear V shape of pattern-welding is clearly visible on each side of the blade.²⁴ This is similar to that on the spear from the River Cam (fig. 2f) which has the late feature of a knob between blade and socket, and it seems likely that both shield boss and spear and therefore the grave should be allocated to a period as late as the tenth century.

It is becoming apparent that furnished graves are more frequent in this later period than has been assumed to be the case, and although none have been scientifically excavated, they are mostly reported as single burials. It may be that other inhumations which have been regarded as belonging to the period before conversion to Christianity were in fact deposited in the eighth century or later. Among these is a grave in a cemetery at Brundall Norfolk containing a knife and a boring bit,²⁵ for tools are rarely found in pagan Anglo-Saxon graves, but spoon bits and other tools are frequently found in Viking graves.²⁶

Three inhumations were found in 1953 near Bury Road, Thetford,²⁷ one containing a knife and a spearhead fragment, length 30.5 cm, with a parallel-sided blade. A stray-find of a spoon bit nearby may have come from another grave. This again, one would suspect should be Viking, and it can perhaps be established by other means that this burial ground was in use in the late Saxon period for a stone grave cover carved in a late Saxon style was found over a kerbed grave in the same area near Queensway School in 1963.²⁸ Further to the south of England a late Saxon cemetery which has produced a ninth-century strapend has recently been reported from Bedhampton, Hants.²⁹

A conclusion regarding the method of use in battle of these spearheads may be made from the condition of the blades, for a number illustrated here, including the two from Harrold and Bletchley, have sustained damage to the edge of the blade by a blow, but

23. Rygh *op.cit.* 1880; J. Peterson, *De Norske Vikingesverd* (1919), 47.

24. P.P.S.I. (1913) 336-7, pl. LXXIV.c. This is allocated to type E1 by Swanton 1974, 90, without description or discussion. Interpreted as a javelin head by R. R. Clarke, *Norfolk Arch.* 27 (1941) 236, and as a boring bit by D. M. Wilson 'Anglo-Saxon Carpenters' Tools', *Studien zur europäischen Vor- und Frühgeschichte* (1968): 143-50, fig. 2.c.

26. J. Petersen, *Vikingetidens Redskaper* (1951), 227ff, fig. 122, 123.

27. *East Anglian Archaeology Report No. 4 Norfolk* (1976), fig. 3. Information on provenance is not precise, but the Norwich Museum records indicate a position slightly north-west of the spot marked on this map.

28. Recorded by Miss Barbara Green, to whom I am grateful for this information. Further investigations in progress may clarify the nature of this site.

29. *Med. Arch.* XIX (1975), 222.

none at all exhibit serious damage to the tip. They were therefore used for parrying blows in hand to hand combat rather than for throwing at the enemy from a distance. The continental spear from Loddon (fig. 3b), however, which has a blade much thicker in section, does appear to have been thrown, damaging its tip as it landed.

Little interest has been taken in late Saxon spearheads since Wheeler's examination in 1935 of spears found in the London area, mostly in the Thames. The finding of the Bletchley spearhead, however, has led to the distinguishing of a type of spearhead with V-shaped pattern-welding produced by Anglo-Saxon smiths in the Christian period, and further acts as a reminder that unfurnished inhumations were not entirely absent at that time south of the Humber.

DESCRIPTIONS OF COMPARABLE SPEARS WITH ASSOCIATED FINDS

HARROLD, BEDS., GRAVE 3 (fig. 1b)

Spearhead with a wide leaf-shaped blade, narrow at the point, and ending in a point on the socket with three chevron grooves; the socket short and split. Two welding lines visible on radiograph in the middle of the blade parallel with the sides. L.50 cm. Eagles/Evison 1970, 39, fig. 12,b.

THAMES (fig. 1d)

Broad leaf-shaped blade narrow at the point. The split socket is all but closed and continues in a point into the blade. L.51.8 cm. Museum of London A.1943 (no radiograph available).

THAMES AT WANDSWORTH (fig. 1c)

Long, narrow, leaf-shaped blade damaged in middle, and joining the socket in a point bordered by chevron grooves. The short socket is split and ornamented with horizontal grooves (no radiograph). L.60.2 cm. Museum of London A.7443. R. E. M. Wheeler, London and the Saxons (1935), 171, fig. 40,3.

THAMES AT WANDSWORTH (fig. 2a)

Leaf-shaped blade with narrow point. Lines of pattern-welding visible here and there in the middle, and a radiograph reveals the ribbon pattern-welding insertions at the widest part of the blade. Short split socket with grooves at junction with blade and near butt end. Radiograph shows bands of higher density on the socket, which must indicate remains of inlaid wires of another metal. L.59 cm. Museum of London A.3085 Wheeler, 1935, 173, pl. XII,6.

THAMES AT VAUXHALL (fig. 2b)

Leaf-shaped blade, short split socket with horizontal grooves near butt end and horizontal and triangular grooves at junction with blade. A V-shaped band of pattern-welding runs along most of the length of the blade. Two rivet holes in each side of the socket. L.39.4 cm. Museum of London A.1978.

STAINES (fig. 2c)

Leaf-shaped blade with narrow point, finishing in a 'beak' at junction with socket:

socket relatively short and split with two horizontal grooves near the 'beak'. A narrow pattern-welded strip is visibly inserted in a V-shape at the widest part of the blade. The surface of the iron is more deeply pitted between this strip and the point than on the other side. L.63.5 cm. Museum of London A.10955, Wheeler 1935, 174, pl. XII,9.

OLD ENGLAND, BRENTFORD (fig. 2d)

Leaf-shaped blade with narrow point and finishing in a point at junction with socket. The outline of a V-shaped band of pattern-welding just visible. At the junction with the blade the short split socket narrows laterally but broadens from back to front and is ornamented on the sides with a corded triangle. Below this there are horizontal grooves and two other zones of grooves lower down the socket. Two rivet holes in the middle of the back of the socket L.45.5 cm. Museum of London 0.2057.

RIVER CAM AT THE JOLLY ANGLERS, CAMBS. (fig. 2c)

Lozenge-shaped blade with an irregular V-shaped band of pattern-welding insert near the base. Double moulding marks the junction of socket and blade. The socket is split and contains remains of wooden shaft and one rivet. L.41.2 cm. Cambridge Museum 25.435 V.C.H. Cambs. I (1938) 325, pl. X, e.

RIVER NEAR ELY, CAMBS. (fig. 2f)

Lozenge-shaped nearly triangular blade, a V-shaped band of pattern-welding inserted at the base. Knob at junction with socket which is closed. L.29.5 cm. Cambridge Museum 22702B (Cole Ambrose Collection), V.C.H. Cambs. I (1938) pl. X, f.

THAMES AT EGHAM, SURREY, 1891 (fig. 3a)

Long, pointed leaf-shaped blade coming to a point at junction with socket. The socket is split and defective. A curved V-shaped band of pattern-welding in the widest part of the blade, point towards tip. Traces of a row of triangles which must have once held sheet inlay running parallel outside this strip. Inside the strip two lines of inlaid twisted wires, silver and copper, in curved V-shape, one of which continues downwards in a diagonal cross, then parallel to the sides of the blade to meet two horizontal bands of inlaid wires, each a double twist, at the junction with the socket. L.47.3 cm. Salisbury Museum, Pitt Rivers Collection.

LODDON, NORFOLK (fig. 3b)

Long, narrow angular blade with median ridge, retaining its thickness up to the tip. A narrow insertion of pattern-welding runs along the core, widening at the base, divided from the socket by a pair of arcs. The socket is closed and decorated with inlaid silver sheet in cable and zoomorphic patterns, and with a pair of rivet holes. L.49.2 cm. Norwich Castle Museum 259.958.

RIVER LARK, NEAR MILDENHALL, SUFFOLK (fig. 3c)

Long, narrow leaf-shaped blade. A pattern-welded insertion along the middle of the blade opens to the full width and ends in a point on the socket. Split socket, one rivet hole. L.63.8 cm. Norwich Castle Museum 529.972.

FINEDON, NORTHANTS (fig. 3d-f)

Spearhead: long, leaf-shaped blade with short split socket containing one transverse rivet. There is no indication of pattern-welding on the radiograph. At the widest part of the blade a damaged patch has rusted longitudinally at the edge, and in a pitted fashion along a line further in suggesting the presence of two different types of iron and therefore a cutting edge welded on, and/or a pattern-welded strip. L.71.8 cm. Knife, angle at back, cutting edge curves slightly to the point. A narrow band of pattern-welding is visible near the point and continuing along the back. A radiograph also indicates a weld for a cutting edge. L.29 cm.

Stirrup, Rectangular loop with knob and transverse moulding at junction with bow. The arms of the bow are nearly straight, triangular in section and have an animal head at the point where they expand into a wide band which is folded up to form the tread. There are remains of a silver or tin coating of the surface. L.29.8 cm. Northampton Museum.

THETFORD, NORFOLK (fig. 4 a-c)

Spearhead, slender lozenge-shaped blade with median ridge ending in a point on the socket. Split socket with one rivet. L.53.4 cm. Shield boss, tall, folded curved conical dome with widening spike on top; wide flange with 21 dome-headed rivets. Diam. 18.5 cm., ht. 12.8 cm. Six decorative iron strap mounts with disc terminals. L.17.5 cm. Thetford Museum.

WRETTON, NORFOLK, in the Stoke Ferry-Downham Market main road (fig. 4 d-g).

Spearhead: blade leaf or lozenge-shaped ending in a point on the socket with V-shaped insertion of straight pattern-welding. The socket short and split. L.16.2 cm. (originally c. 17 cm.)

Knife, angled back, point missing. L.14 cm.

Knife, both sides curve to point. Three grooves are visible along the back and an X-ray shows a cutting edge welded on. A rivet hole in the tang. L.21.5 cm.

Shield boss, convex dome, carination, vertical waist, wide, sloping flange with two of original four rivets remaining, both fixed through a disc-shaped washer. Textile impressions on the dome. Diam. 18.2 cm., ht. 7.3 cm. Norwich Castle Museum ex J. S. Warburton Collection 153.929.P.P.S.I. (1913) 336-7, pl.74.

NOTE on circumstances of finding of spearhead. Charmian Woodfield.

The spearhead was brought in to Bradwell Abbey Field Centre by Mr. Warley, 31 Goring, Stantonbury, Milton Keynes, in May, 1975, having been discovered by him in December, 1974. Mr. Warley had found the spearhead whilst engaged in mechanical digging in connection with the construction of the H5/V8 new road link between Shenley Road and Whaddon Way, in West Bletchley (SP85473521). He had also noted the presence of a road way (which appears to be a minor Roman road still represented in part by a hedge and parish boundary) and the spear was found a few yards to the NW of this road, and about a quarter to half a mile (some 500m) SW of the Roman Watling Street. It is reported to have come from a depth of 14"-18" down, at the point where the plough soil separated from the top of the clay subsoil during mechanical digging.

The site was subsequently briefly examined by Mr. Stephen Green in September and October 1975, and produced evidence of Roman occupation, but no evidence of further Saxon/Viking finds. However in view of the disturbed nature of the ground, the lapse of time since the find was made, and the fact that the reported findspot itself was not examined as it was thought to look too disturbed, it cannot be concluded that this was not a burial, nor that other less conspicuous finds were not disturbed and lost at the time of the discovery of the spearhead itself. However, the possibility of its being lost in some sort of boundary skirmish in the late ninth century or later should perhaps be borne in mind.

The spearhead is now in the Bradwell Abbey Museum Collection, Accession Number 1975/25.

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A related spear has recently been published from Lühesand on the Elbe a few miles west of Hamburg in Germany.³⁰ Its profile and closed socket corresponds to those of the spear from Loddon, Norfolk (fig.3b), but its V-shaped zone of pattern-welding and the row of triangles as decoration corresponds to the spear from the Thames at Egham (fig.3a). A number of iron weapons and artifacts were dredged from the river Elbe at the same place, ranging in date from the Merovingian period and the ninth century to the sixteenth century. The migration period was suggested as a possible date for this spear, but its characteristics are those of the ninth century, and the fact that it was found in dredging adds weight to this conclusion as many weapons of this later period are river finds.

30 C. Ahrens, *Vorgeschichte des Kreises Pinneberg und der Insel Helgoland* (1966), 91, 471, Abb. 12; *Sachsen und Angelsachsen, Ausstellung des Helms-Museum, Hamburgisches Museum für Vor- und Frühgeschichte*, (Hamburg 1978), 594, No. 206.