


# A SAXON SPEARHEAD FROM HAVERSHAM, BUCKS

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An itinerant digger working with the Milton Keynes Archaeological Unit accepted a lift in a lorry. On the floor of the lorry cab, he noticed an iron object which had, according to the driver, been found whilst collecting gravel from the ARC quarry in Haversham parish. The object, which turned out to be a Saxon spearhead, had been found on a heap of topsoil. The gravel quarry covers a considerable area between the village of Haversham and the River Ouse. The find spot was not recorded by the finder, therefore a precise national grid reference cannot be given to the find.

The spearhead, which has been placed in the Bradwell Abbey Museum Collection, bears the accession number 1977/189.

After provisional identification as a Saxon spearhead the object was submitted to Vera Evison who had kindly supplied the following report and illustration, left.

  
Spearhead, L. 39 cms. The tip is missing as well as the socket. The blade is nearly parallel-sided, sharply keeled and 12mm thick, tapering at a slight angle to the socket. There are possible traces of an iron band c. 1 cm. wide round the socket, and traces of textile on various parts of the surface. At a point in the middle of the blade where the rusted surface has been lost, the underlying iron in the middle has a smooth surface and the edge is more pitted, suggesting that the edges were a different kind of iron welded on to a core. Under magnification marks of a file are visible, as well as other longitudinal striations in the iron in the middle sector but not on the edges, so suggesting a band of pattern-welding as a core to the blade.

A fragmentary spearhead without context is difficult to identify. It does not appear to conform to pagan types. E4, for instance has a flatter blade and more definite angle between blade and socket, and B1, a spare-sectioned spike, has no angle at that point as the blade is no broader than the socket<sup>1</sup>. However, it has traits in common with spearheads of the later Saxon period,<sup>2</sup> i.e. a long, slender, tapering blade, sharply keeled, with little angle as it constricts narrowly to join the socket. This is somewhat similar to the spears from Loddon and the River Lark near Mildenhall<sup>3</sup> although the blade is narrower. The shape and apparently pattern-welded core make it certainly a product of the post-pagan period.

1.M. J. Swanton - *The Spearheads of the Anglo-Saxon Settlements* (1973) 87 fig. 29, 37 fig. 6.

2.R. E. M. Wheeler - *London and the Saxons* (1935) pl. XII, 5-9.

3.V.I. Evison - 'A Spearhead from Bletchley, Milton Keynes, fig. 3 b and c above.