

CHAPTER 5: DISCUSSION OF THE ARTEFACTS

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INTRODUCTION

The excavation at Wolverton produced a wide range of artefacts, almost all as grave goods deposited with the inhumation and cremation burials. These are listed, described and illustrated in Chapter 3 and Appendix 2. On the whole the objects are characteristic of the Anglo-Saxon 'conversion' period, c.7th century AD. In addition, a few objects of earlier periods and a number of natural items were recovered from some graves.

In this chapter, aspects of the artefactual assemblage are discussed. For the purposes of discussion, the artefacts from the cemetery have been divided into the following categories: personal adornment or dress, weapons and knives, tools and household items, personal items, keepsakes and fabrics.

Conservation

Following the excavation, the finds assemblage was submitted to the Conservation Laboratory in the Archaeology Department, University of Leicester, for consolidation and examination. The iron objects were found to be in generally poor condition and unlikely to respond well to intensive cleaning, so they were x-rayed and selectively cleaned in order to ascertain object profiles and any decorative details indicated by the radiography. Many of the drawings in the burial catalogue were prepared with information from the x-ray negatives. In contrast, the non-ferrous materials were in a far better state of preservation. Subsequent cleaning and stabilisation revealed a wide range of diagnostic objects. Preservation of mineralised organic material was also found to be extensive including linen, wood and leather.

Where possible, objects were cleaned using mechanical methods, following microscopic examination. Mud was removed using alcohol, containing water. Copper-alloy objects were stabilised with benzotriazole solution and coated with Inctalac acrylic lacquer, which is soluble in acetone. Repairs were made using Paraloid B72 adhesive, also soluble in acetone.

Treasure

Under the provisions of the *Treasure Act 1996*, the finds from five graves (2045, 2082, 2168, 2203, 2360) were reported to the Buckinghamshire Portable Antiquities Officer and the Milton Keynes Coroner because of the presence of silver artefacts in those assemblages. After consideration they were declared not to be treasure.

PERSONAL ADORNMENT OR DRESS

Bangle, Brooch & Ring

<i>Grave</i>	<i>Find no.</i>	<i>Description</i>
2005	7	Ring
2005	8	Bangle
2126	51	Penannular brooch

A finger ring (7) and a shale bangle (8) were found in the grave of adult inhumation 2004, possibly a female. The ring, of copper-alloy with traces of tinning, can be identified with some certainty as a finger ring by the decoration on its outer edge, comprising three parallel raised bands. The bangle was originally identified as a purse ring, though shale seems a rather unusual material to use as a purse ring and Saxon purse rings were more commonly made of elephant ivory (*cf* Timby 1996, 62–63; Haughton & Powlesland 1999, 117). Shale bangles similar to this example are known from the Roman period (e.g. Williams & Zeepvat 1994, 368, 420) and from Saxon levels at Coppergate, York (Mainman & Rogers 2000, 2599 & fig. 1293): 8 could be of either date, used either for its intended function or maybe as a purse ring.

Penannular Brooch

Michael Farley

A possible penannular brooch (51) was recovered from Grave 2126, a child burial. It is incomplete, but appears to have had a plain cast ring with large trapezoidal terminals (Fig. 5.1). Its position, and the probability that it was incomplete when buried, indicates that it may have been a keepsake contained within a belt purse at the time of burial.

The classification of penannular brooches of the early medieval period in Britain seems to have last been discussed in detail by Dickinson (1982), based on earlier work by Fowler (1963, with extensive type lists) and some suggestions by James Graham-Campbell (1976). There appears to be no current database of such finds. The essential elements of the incomplete Wolverton brooch may be characterised as the possession of a plain hoop and a lozenge-shaped terminal containing pellets (there is a hole in the terminal, probably due to corrosion of a thin casting here, which may have removed some of these).

Dickinson helpfully illustrates several penannulars. It is notable that a number of these incorporate a lozenge-

shape form in their terminals or include the shape within the design. Several of the lozenge forms contain multiple dots (Dickinson's group G1.4, fig. 4) and others (apparently) contain groups of pellets (mainly Dickinson group G1.3, fig. 6). The former mainly have ribbed hoops, the latter are mainly plain, as is the Wolverton penannular. Among the most closely-dated but late examples of the Type G tradition is a silver penannular brooch of simple form decorated with a lozenge containing pellets in its terminal, from the Cornish Trewhiddle hoard, which is coin-dated to the late 9th century (Wilson 1961). (Dickinson's illustrations show that, when complete, these penannulars had pins at least twice the diameter of the brooch itself).

The closest link between the Dickinson series and the basic form of the Wolverton brooch is therefore Dickinson's G1.3 group. However, an extra facet of the Wolverton example is the presence of two pairs of opposing decorative features that clasp the basic lozenge form. Each pair itself consist of two depressed circles and each pair is joined to the other by a tapering element. It is tentatively suggested that the pairs might represent opposed animal forms.

Penannular brooches are fairly rare element among Anglo-Saxon grave finds, although as some were certainly made of iron the type may be considerably under-represented. At Lechlade, for example, there were eight probable iron penannulars, but only two of copper-alloy. Of the latter, one had a simple folded back terminal, the other was simply expanded (Boyle *et al* 2011). In order to emphasise the general absence of penannulars from Anglo-Saxon graves and the general lack of elaborate decorative features when they are present, a few examples may be cited. At Morning Thorpe, Norfolk, where a wide range of brooches was present, many being annular, only three were penannular and these have simple rolled or expanded terminals (Green 1987, 165). Empingham II, in Rutland (Timby 1996), has several annulars but only one penannular: that also has a simple rolled terminal. Edix Hill, Cambridgeshire (Malim & Hines 1998), has one annular and three penannulars, two in graves and one unstratified. Of the latter, two have simple expanded terminals and one a rolled terminal. Spong Hill, Norfolk has twenty-three annulars, many in pairs, but no penannulars (Hills *et al* 1984). The cemetery at Norton, Cleveland, contains many more annulars than in any cemetery noted above, a 'possible grand total of 65 brooches, of which 55 are made in copper-alloy ... nine of iron and one of lead', but only two penannulars. Of these, one is a fairly simple brooch with expanded terminals, the other – a very small example – has two simple lozenge-shaped terminals, each containing a four-pointed star. The author notes that the latter can be attributed to the 6th century and is of a group generally located in Scotland (Sherlock 1992, 40–41). Buckland in Kent had ten annular and one penannular with rolled terminal (Parfitt 2012, 74, 456 gr 214). Although this does not represent a systematic search of the literature, it does indicate that the relatively sophisticated Wolverton brooch is a particularly unusual item in an English grave.

Although penannulars of any form are rare in graves in southern and eastern England, where they do occur they

nearly always have simple terminals. A few examples occur a little further west in Warwickshire, Gloucester and Somerset. Grave 405 at Cannington, Somerset, contained an unusually elaborate example with circular glass studs, suggested to be of 8th-century date. Two other small examples from the same cemetery had terminals containing lozenges with four punched dots (Rahtz 2000).

The penannular brooch form in Britain has a long history, but their most elaborate development from the 7th century onwards takes place in Wales, Scotland and Ireland, although apparently the brooches are rarely recorded from graves. A Welsh find from Llanmadog has a passing similarity to the Wolverton brooch in that its terminals are lozenge shape (with another lozenge within each terminal) and, as the Wolverton brooch, the lozenge is contained between two double-ended forms which lie across the axis of the hoop (Lewis 1982, plate V, no. D). The terminals of three other Welsh brooches from Newton Moor, Linney Burrows and Longbury Bank also have a lozenge shape in their terminals (Redknap 1995). On balance, it seems very likely that the Wolverton style of brooch lies with a western tradition. The character of the brooch therefore suggests a link, however tenuous, between the child and western Britain.

[The writer is very grateful to Professor James Graham-Campbell for commenting on a draft of his text and drawing attention to publications of which the writer was unaware.]



Figure 5.1 Penannular brooch 51, suggested reconstruction

Beads

Twenty-six beads were recovered from six inhumations, of either females or unsexed individuals. The assemblage, which included beads of bone, glass, shell, semi-precious stone, wire and one composite bead, mostly came from necklaces, though a few were associated with chatelaines.

Glass

Glass beads account for half of the collection. The majority are annular beads of plain blue, clear or yellow glass, though two of the larger blue beads (181) are deco-

<i>Grave</i>	<i>Find no.</i>	<i>Description</i>	<i>Material</i>
2018	20	?Bead, annular	Bone
2082	38	Bead	Composite
2135	39	Bead, annular	Glass
2135	57	Beads x2	Cowrie shell
2168	93	Bead, horned	Glass
2168	94	Bead, melon	Glass
2168	86	Bead	Cowrie shell
2197	127	Bead, annular	Glass
2203	133	Beads, annular x3 on wire	Glass
2203	135	Beads, annular x3	Glass
2203	136, 137	Beads, biconical wire x6	Silver wire
2360	183	Beads, pear-shaped x2	Amethyst
2360	180, 181	Beads, annular x3, blue glass	Glass & silver
2360	182	Bead	Cowrie shell

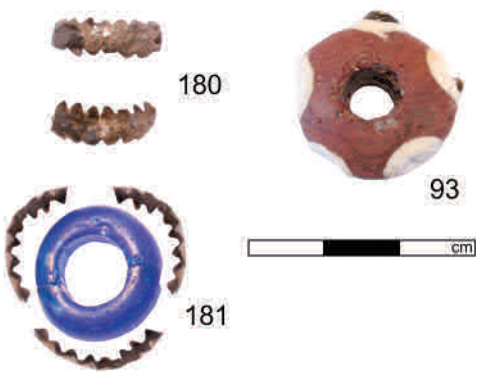


Figure 5.2 Beads 93, 181 and silver edging strip 180



Figure 5.3 Composite bead 38

rated with swirls of white glass, similar to examples in black glass with white waves from West Heslerton, Yorks (Haughton & Powlesland 1999, 110, type C2b). The third item in this assemblage, a large plain blue bead, appears to have been encircled by a thin silver strip with dog-tooth edges (180). This appears to be a unique piece (Fig. 5.2), involving a high degree of skill in its manufacture: no

parallels have yet been found for it. In Grave 2203, three annular glass beads were found threaded onto silver slip-knot rings (see *Necklaces*, below) and it is likely that the loose glass beads accompanying them (135) had originally been similarly mounted. Other glass beads worthy of note, both associated with chatelaines, are 94, a finely-made turquoise melon bead which is most likely of Roman date

and **93**, a large red/brown annular bead with ‘horns’ made of white glass blobs around the circumference, overlain with blobs of blue/black glass (Fig. 5.2). Horned beads are rare in England and on the continent, but have continental parallels of late 6th or very early 7th-century date (Koch 1977).

Silver Wire

The next most common beads in the assemblage, with six examples, are biconical beads fashioned out of silver wire (**136**, **137**). All were found in Grave 2203, that of a child, and with the accompanying glass beads and slip-knot rings probably formed part of a complex necklace – or one of several necklaces – buried with the deceased. Biconical beads of copper-alloy, silver or gold wire are known from other English sites, most notably the gold wire beads in the necklace from Desborough, Northants (Webster & Backhouse (eds) 1991, 28, fig. 13), and typically date to the second half of the 7th century (Geake 1997, 43).

Cowrie Shell

Of the remaining beads found at Wolverton, **57**, **86** and **182** are fashioned from cowrie shells. Cowrie shells tend to occur in 7th-century contexts, both in England and on the Continent (Meaney 1981, 124), as complete shells or as beads made from them. Finds are concentrated in Kent and Cambridgeshire, with a scatter throughout the rest of England (*ibid*, 123). Two types of cowrie shell have been identified in English cemeteries: *Cypraea Europa*, the more common European variety and the panther cowrie (*Cypraea pantherina* Lightfoot), a rare import from the Red Sea and beyond, identified from the cemetery at Butler’s Field, Lechlade, Glos (Boyle *et al* 2011, 88). Cowrie shell pendants and beads are most commonly found with the burials of adult women and children under ten: at Wolverton they were found with two adult females and the rich grave of an adolescent, probably female. The variety of shell used for the Wolverton beads was not identified. Cowrie shells are believed to have had amuletic properties, possibly related to the role of the female in society and as a fertility symbol (Meaney 1981, 181–189). As beads, they may have served as protection against the evil eye (*ibid*, 127: Lethbridge 1936, 31).

Other Beads

Bone bead **20** was originally identified from its shape as a spindle whorl, though its small size and weight make it unsuitable for this function. Beads of bone or antler have been found in cemeteries at West Heslerton (Haughton & Powlesland 1999, 114) and Lechlade (Boyle *et al* 2011, 52): Meaney (1981, 45) notes that they occur throughout the Saxon period. The two pear-shaped amethyst beads (**183**) were found with six silver slip-knot rings, two shell beads and three glass beads (see above), together probably constituting a necklace. Amethyst beads are generally dated late 7th to early 8th century (Geake 1997, 41). Composite bead **38** is possibly unique – no parallels have as yet been found – and from its complex structure of copper-alloy sheet and mother-of-pearl inserts it must have been an expensive object (Fig. 5.3). It was found near the head of Inhumation 2081, a young adult female, so she may have worn it around her neck on its own, as an amulet.

Pendants & Necklaces

Grave	Find no.	Description
2045	32	Scutiform pendant, silver Slip-knot rings x4, silver
2135	53	Composite pendant, white glass
	54	Composite pendant, turquoise glass
	55	Composite pendant, blue glass
2168	79	NECKLACE, comprised of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bracteate pendant, silver (80) • <i>Bulla</i> pendant, silver (81) • <i>Bulla</i> pendants x4, copper-alloy (82) • Disc pendant fragment, silver (83) • Slip-knot rings x4, silver (84, 85)
2203	130	NECKLACE, comprised of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Bulla</i> pendant, copper-alloy (131) • Twelve slip-knot rings, silver (133, 134)
2360	178	Necklace, six slip-knot rings, silver

Five individuals – three adult females, an adolescent and a child – were found with some form of necklace and/or pendant. Four necklaces were identified (Graves 2045, 2168, 2203, 2360), three of them in conjunction with pendants. Twelve pendants in total were found, seven in Grave 2168, with an adolescent and three in Grave 2135, with a middle-aged female. To this list should probably be added composite bead pendant **38** from Grave 2080, discussed above.

Slip-knot Rings

The principal element in the four necklaces was the slip-knot ring, of which a total of at least twenty-six, whole and fragmentary, was recovered at Wolverton. The largest number found in one grave was twelve, from Grave 2204, accompanying a child burial. All the rings were made out of silver wire c.1.5mm thick, and were between 18-26mm in diameter. In Grave 2204, at least three rings (possibly more) had annular glass beads threaded onto them. None of the rings found were joined together, suggesting that they were threaded separately onto a string and worn as a necklace rather than forming the individual links into a chain. A fragmentary copper-alloy slip-knot ring was found in Grave 2360, possibly forming part of the contents of a bag or purse (below).

Silver slip-knot rings are diagnostic of 7th-century dress (Hyslop 1963, 198–99; Dickinson 1976, 211–12), though they do occur occasionally in 6th-century contexts. A necklace including silver slip-knot rings, a silver disc pendant and beads of glass and amethyst found in the cemetery at Bottledump Roundabout, Milton Keynes, was dated to the 7th century (Parkhouse & Smith 1994, 112–3). Slip-knot rings are common on burial sites in East Anglia, Kent and



Figure 5.4 Necklace & scutiform pendant 32, Grave 2045



Figure 5.5 Necklace 130, bulla pendant 131 and biconical beads 136/7, Grave 2203

the Thames valley and are sometimes formed of copper-alloy wire (c.f. Boyle *et al* 2011, 50).

Pendants

Twelve pendants were found at Wolverton: one scutiform (32), one bracteate (80) and one disc (83), all of silver; three composite glass and copper-alloy (53-55) and six bulla pendants, five of copper-alloy (82 & 131) and one of silver (81).

The scutiform pendant (Fig. 5.4) is decorated with a star-shaped pattern of punched dots, and is therefore a variant of Høilund Nielsen's Type PE2e (Bayliss *et al* 2013, 212). Scutiform pendants are more commonly found in Anglian areas, where they frequently accompany female burials. One of the earliest occurrences of the scutiform pendant is from Holywell Row, Suffolk, dated to the early 6th century (Hines 1984, 227). The type continues to feature throughout the 6th century, although they do occur as late as the 7th century, for example at Shudy Camps, Cambs (*ibid.*). As their name suggests, scutiform pendants are thought to represent miniature shields and may have had amuletic significance (Haughton & Powlesland 1999, 114).

The bracteate pendant (Fig. 5.6) is comprised of a plain back-plate and a front plate decorated with Salin's (1904)

Style II animal art, and falls within Høilund Nielsen's Type PE3-a (Bayliss *et al* 2013, 212). The pendant was evidently of some antiquity when it was buried, as its original suspension loop has been lost and replaced by a crude hole punched through both discs.

The fragmentary disc pendant, from the same burial as the bracteate pendant, comprises a disc with a rolled edge and an intricate punched Celtic knot design, executed from the back of the piece. No direct parallels can be found in the literature, and it seems likely that the disc originally had a different function, as the suspension hole has been punched randomly, some distance from the edge. The Celtic knot design may suggest that this piece is originally of Roman date, reused as a pendant.

Bullae or *bulla* pendants are circular, formed as a boss surrounded by a narrow rim, with a suspension loop attached on the edge. Only one of those found at Wolverton, from Grave 2203, is more or less complete (Fig. 5.5): in contrast, the four copper-alloy and one silver *bullae* from Grave 2168 are fragmentary. All fall within Høilund Nielsen's Type PE8 (Bayliss *et al* 2013, 213). *Bullae* typically date from the mid to late 7th century.

The three composite pendants found in Grave 2135 each



Figure 5.6 Pendants: bracteate (80), disc (83) and components of composite pendant 53

consist of a copper-alloy backing plate, formed into a hanging loop on one edge, with an imitation cabochon of glass fastened round the edge by a dog-toothed copper-alloy strip (Fig. 5.6). The two smaller examples have cabochons of blue and green glass, while the larger is white glass with fragments of red glass pressed into it. These pendants are similar to Høilund Nielsen's Type PE9-d (Bayliss *et al* 2013, 214), save that the cabochons are not of yellow/green glass. A similar pendant of this general type is recorded from Finglesham, Kent, dated to the 7th century (Hawkes & Grainger 2006, 138).

Buckles

Grave	Find no.	Description	Type (Marzinzik 2003)
2018	18	Buckle and plate	II.24a.
2027	23	Buckle and plate	II.24a
2076	37	Buckle and plate	II.22b-ii
2141	67	Buckle and plate	–
2174	107	Buckle and plate	II.24a
2183	118	Buckle and plate	?II.24a
2215	106	Buckle and plate	?II.24a
2282	163	Buckle and plate	?II.24a
2381	196	Buckle	I.18a.
2442	200	Buckle and plate	II.10d-ii

Ten buckles, nine of them with plates, were recovered at Wolverton, seven from adult male burials, one accompanying an adolescent and two from child burials. All were typically found in the waist area of the burials. Five had buckles and plates of copper-alloy, two had iron buckles and copper-alloy plates and two were wholly of iron, as was the one example (196) without a plate. Most fell into Marzinzik's (2003) category II.24a (buckles with small rectangular plates), though single examples of three other types were identified. All fall within the date range late 6th to early 8th century.

Two distinct sizes of buckle were present: the larger, having buckle plates 16-20mm in width, were presumably

for belts. The smaller buckles, with strap widths of 10mm or less, were presumably for baldrics for hanging seaxes, or fastening knives to belts. Because of their location in relation to the inhumations, fabric traces were present on five of the buckles and many also had traces of leather within the two halves of the plate. One buckle (37) with a large, decorated tongue-shaped plate appeared to have been intentionally wrapped in cloth: traces of mineralised braid were also present.

Clothes Fittings

Grave	Find no.	Description
2174	101	Hooked tag, copper-alloy.
2360	187	Strap-slides x2, copper-alloy.

Hooked Tag Fastener

A copper-alloy hooked tag fastener was found on the upper body of the young adult male accompanied by the sword (Inhumation 2173). Such fasteners are commonly found in the Saxon and medieval periods, and it is generally assumed that they were used for fastening clothing in the absence of buttons. It has been suggested recently that they were used as purse fasteners (Rogers 2007, 134), though in this instance the location of the fastener in the burial points towards it being used to fasten an upper garment. On balance, both interpretations are equally plausible, depending on the location of the object in the burial.

Hooked tags were found in late 7th-century burials at Castledykes, Barton-on-Humber (Drinkall *in* Drinkall & Foreman 1998, 271). Drinkall observes that this type of fastener is typically associated with female burials and is often found in pairs, though that is clearly not the case at Wolverton.

Strap-Slides

Two strap-slides of copper-alloy were recovered from Grave 2360, containing a middle-aged female accompanied by an iron-bound box (Inhumation 2359). It is possible that they were interred within a bag, along with a slip-knot ring and a toilet set, both of copper-alloy (see below). A similar object from Riseley, Kent, is illustrated in Bayliss *et al* (2013, 185, fig. 5.102). The literature is not particularly forthcoming about the function of strap-slides, save that they were a form of belt fitting.

PERSONAL ITEMS

Bags & Purses

Excavations at Wolverton produced only slight evidence of bags and purses, though it is likely that at least two graves contained groups of objects originally deposited in some form of fabric container, of which no trace now remains.

Grave 2197, that of a middle-aged female, contained a large group of *objets trouvés* (128, below) placed at the feet of the deceased. While they could have been deposited loose, it seems more likely that they were originally in a bag. A similar case can be made for a group of objects found together in Grave 2360, to one side of the upper body of the deceased, also a middle-aged female. These

objects (184) comprised a slip-knot ring, two strap-slides and a toilet set, all of copper-alloy, and some fragmentary iron chain links. In this instance several fragments of leather were recovered from the same area of the grave and may suggest that this bag/purse was of that material.

Balance

A copper-alloy balance beam with a suspension hoop, pointer and scale pans (27) was found in Grave 2027 by the head of an adult burial, probably male. From its small size, the balance (Fig. 5.7) was intended for weighing small, light objects. A similar example, found in Buckland Grave C3a-b (Evison 1987, 273 & fig. 2), was probably buried in a box or other container and was associated with twelve Roman coins of varying weights, the largest being two coins riveted together, obviously intended as weights. Evison (*ibid*, 270 & fig. 119) lists over a dozen similar balances recovered from cemeteries in Kent, the Thames valley, the East Midlands and Yorkshire, to which can be added a scale pan from Butler’s Field, Lechlade (Clark in Boyle *et al* 2011, 89) and the complete balance from Wolverton. Dates of the balances range from the 5th to the 7th century: the Wolverton balance is associated with a buckle (23) and spearhead (25) both of likely 7th-century date.

A summary of the available evidence for Saxon balances and weights in England appears in Scull (1990), along with discussion of their likely function. Scull concludes (*ibid*, 209) that these balances were used for weighing coin or bullion for use as currency. He also suggests that the link with bullion provided by the presence of a balance may indicate a location or individual of considerable importance.

Also found in Grave 2027, about 350mm from the balance, was a small conical lead weight (26). This was originally identified as a fishing weight, because of the proximity (c.0.6km) of the river Ouse to the occupation site at Wolverton Turn, to which the Wolverton cemetery is most likely linked. It is possible that the weight could have fulfilled another function, such as a plumb bob, but its close proximity to the balance might suggest that these objects were related.

Chatelaines

Grave	Find no.	Description
2005	9	inc. Fe chain (10) and antler spacer ring (11)
2135	58	inc. Fe chain (59) and Ae suspension loop (60)
2168	89	inc. Fe & Ae chain (90-92) and beads (93, 94)
2203	139	inc. Fe & Ae chain (140, 141), antler spacer rings (142, 143), Ae ring (144) and bead (145)
2360	189	inc. Fe chain (190, 191)

Five graves contained the possible remains of chatelaines. Graves 2135 and 2360 contained burials of middle-aged females, 2005 held the remains of an adolescent-adult, 2168 an adolescent and 2203 contained a child burial. All the chatelaines were very poorly preserved, making description and interpretation difficult.



Figure 5.7 Balance 27

The chatelaines consisted of lengths of iron chain comprised of both oval and S-links: those from Graves 2168 and 2203 also included cast copper-alloy S-links. Accompanying the chains were miscellaneous small fragments of strip and rod, all too badly corroded for identification, which could have been items such as latch-lifters or girdle hangers, typically attached to a chatelaine. All were located alongside the thigh of the inhumation.

Also found in association with the chatelaines from Graves 2005 and 2203 were antler discs. The disc from 2005 (**11**) is c.50mm dia. with a central hole c.16mm dia., and has ring-and-dot decoration on both faces. To it is riveted an iron suspension loop and there are three small holes drilled around its rim. The two discs from 2203 (**142** & **143**) are 57 and 33mm dia. respectively, with central holes 10 and 24mm dia. Both have ring-and-dot decoration on both faces.

Similar objects have been found at Polhill, Kent (Hawkes 1973, 196 & 205, fig. 53) and Burwell, Cambs (Lethbridge 1931, 61-2, figs 31a & 32), while a larger (66mm dia.), plain example was recovered from Butler's Field, Lechlade (Boyle *et al* 2011, 58). The example from Polhill was associated with a workbox and chain. There has been some speculation regarding the function of these objects (*ibid.*), but the general consensus seems to be that they are associated with chatelaines as a spacer, part of a chatelaine bag, or as a girdle hanger.

In addition to the above, the chatelaines from Graves 2168 and 2203 are accompanied by objects that most likely were originally attached to them. The chatelaine from 2168 is associated with two glass beads (**93** & **94**) and a copper-alloy workbox (**95**). That from Grave 2203 is associated with a blue glass bead (**145**) and a copper-alloy ring (**144**), 23mm dia., with linen suspension cords still attached. The iron chain from Grave 2360 retained impressions of braid or cord, suggesting the presence of a fabric girdle, or a fabric attachment to the chatelaine.

Combs

Grave	Find no.	Description	Type
2123	48	Comb, antler	Double-sided
2180	108	Comb, antler	Double-sided
2277	160	Comb, antler	Double-sided
2355	166	Comb, antler	Single-sided
2436	203	Comb, bone/ antler.	Double-sided

Five combs were found at Wolverton, **48** and **160** with middle-aged females, **166** with a young adult male, **108** with an adolescent / adult of uncertain gender and **203** accompanying cremation 2437, that of a young adult female. The women's combs were in similar locations: **48** was next to the deceased's left hand, while **160** was by the right hand. **166** was found near the shoulders and **108** was by the waist. Comb **203** was inside the cremation jar but was not burnt, indicating that it had been inserted after cremation but prior to burial.

All but one of the combs (**166**) are double-sided. Comb **48** has finer teeth on one side, whereas the other double-sided combs have teeth at the same pitch on both sides. All are of similar construction, with toothed plates sandwiched between two ribs, fastened together with iron rivets. The ribs of **160** and **166** are decorated with ring-and-dot decoration. When complete, the double-sided combs would have been c.125-150mm in length. The double-edged comb was the most common type of comb used during the early Anglo-Saxon period, although such combs are known from the 3rd to the 13th centuries (Hawkes 1973, 198). Deliberate burial of whole combs was rare until the later 6th century, becoming a common practice in the late 7th century (Dickinson 1976, 218).

The single-sided or 'hump-backed' comb is probably slightly later in date than the more familiar double-sided comb. Two examples found at the Castledyke cemetery, Barton-on-Humber (Foreman *in* Drinkall & Foreman 1998, 288, figs 57 & 93) are dated to the 7th century.

Knives

(See following page for table)

Thirty-eight knives were found with the eighty individuals excavated at Wolverton. Until the 18th century the knife was an important multi-purpose implement carried by many people, used for eating as well as a cutting tool and also a weapon. Possession of knives does not appear to have been restricted by age or sex at Wolverton: of the cemetery population, 41% of children, 70% of adolescents and 44% of adults were found with knives. Among those adults where sex could be determined, knives were more commonly found with women than with men. All were found at the waist of an inhumation except **72** (Grave 2154), where only a skull fragment remained of the former occupant, a child.

Of the thirty-eight knives found, twenty-nine were sufficiently well-preserved to classify, using Evison's typology based on the assemblage from the Buckland cemetery, Dover (Evison 1987, 113). The most numerous were types 3 (angled back, curved cutting edge) and 4 (curved back, straight cutting edge). Five examples of Evison's type 1 (curved back, curved cutting edge) and two of type 5 (angled back, straight cutting edge) were also noted. Few of the knife blades/tangs were sufficiently complete to permit determination of the ranges of blade lengths present: overall lengths within the assemblage range from c.100-190mm, with an average blade width of c.18mm.

Many of the knives retained traces of mineralised fabric on their blades: not surprising, considering that they were most likely tucked behind a waist belt. Impressions of a leather scabbard are present on knives **71** and **109**. Evidence of wooden handles appears frequently on tangs in the assemblage: knife **167** has traces of a possible horn handle.

Spoon

In Grave 2360, containing the burial of a middle-aged female, the bowl of an iron spoon (**175**) was found by the waist of the deceased. The deep, pear-shaped bowl (Fig. 5.8) suggests that it is modelled on a late classical type, similar to pair of silver spoons found in the Sutton Hoo burial, c.AD624/5 (Carver 1998).

<i>Grave</i>	<i>Find no.</i>	<i>Description</i>	<i>Type</i> (Evison 1987)
2011	13	Knife	3
2017	15	Knife	4
2018	19	Knife	3
2024	22	Knife	3
2027	24	Knife	3
2030	31	Knife	unclassified
2064	33	Knife	unclassified
2067	34	Knife	5
2076	36	Knife	unclassified
2108	41	Knife	3?
2117	42	Knife	4
2126	50	Knife	4
2135	61	Knife	4
2141	68	Knife	4
2148	70	Knife	unclassified
2151	71	Knife	4
2154	72	Knife	unclassified
2156	78	Knife	3
2174	106	Knife	unclassified
2180	109	Knife	5
2183	117	Knife	unclassified
2203	138	Knife	3?
2206	147	Knife	unclassified
2212	148	Knife	4
2215	152	Knife	4
2222	154	Knife	3
2227	155	Knife	4
2251	156	Knife	4?
2272	159	Knife	1?
2282	162	Knife	3
2309	164	Knife	unclassified
2344	165	Knife	4
2355	167	Knife	3
2360	192	Knife	1
2365	194	Knife	1
2381	195	Knife	1?
2387	198	Knife	1?
2442	199	Knife	3



Figure 5.8 Spoon 175

Along with the knife (see above) the spoon was a basic implement in Anglo-Saxon food consumption. Silver spoons, such as the Sutton Hoo examples, were obviously for the very wealthy, and possibly for certain limited uses: spoons for everyday use would have been made of wood, bone or iron. An iron spoon was recovered from the Buckland cemetery, Dover (Evison 1987, 118 & fig. 38). Spoons were normally suspended from the waist girdle or chate-laine, along with keys (*ibid*).

Toilet set components

<i>Grave</i>	<i>Find no.</i>	<i>Description</i>
2360	188	Toilet set, copper-alloy
2251	158	Tweezers, copper-alloy, incomplete.

Components of a toilet set comprising copper-alloy ear scoop and tweezers (**188**) were found with the burial of a middle-aged female, possibly as part of the contents of a bag (see above), located alongside the upper body. Both implements are small (22mm) in length, and are missing their customary suspension ring. A waisted length of copper-alloy strip or sheet, originally identified as a pointer for a balance similar to **27** (above), appears on balance more likely to be one arm of a pair of tweezers, similar in size to those in **188**. It was found in the grave of a middle-aged individual, gender undetermined.

Toilet sets are common in Anglo-Saxon burials from the 5th to the 7th century. In form they are often difficult to distinguish from Roman toilet sets: some could have late Roman origins.

Workboxes

<i>Grave</i>	<i>Find no.</i>	<i>Description</i>
2005	1	Workbox, copper-alloy.
2168	95	Workbox, copper-alloy.

Two complete copper-alloy caskets or workboxes were found at Wolverton, accompanying an adolescent / young adult (Inhumation 2004) and a middle-aged adult (Inhumation 2167), both probably females. The former workbox was found by the deceased's right arm with a group of finds which could have been in a bag: the latter was by the deceased's right thigh and could have been hung from a chatelaine, for which there was evidence (**9**, above). Each box is comprised of a pair of domed ends c.50-52mm dia. and a number of pieces of curved copper-alloy sheet, which had originally been riveted together. Two small copper-alloy chain links and a suspension loop were also found with box **1**. The body of box **1** is decorated with chevrons formed from punched dots: **95** (Fig. 5.9) has lines of repoussé dots on the body and ends, and bears a runic inscription on the body, which is discussed below. From the way both boxes were found, it appears likely that they were disassembled prior to burial.

Workboxes first appear in Anglo-Saxon female burials in the mid-7th century. They are found mainly north of

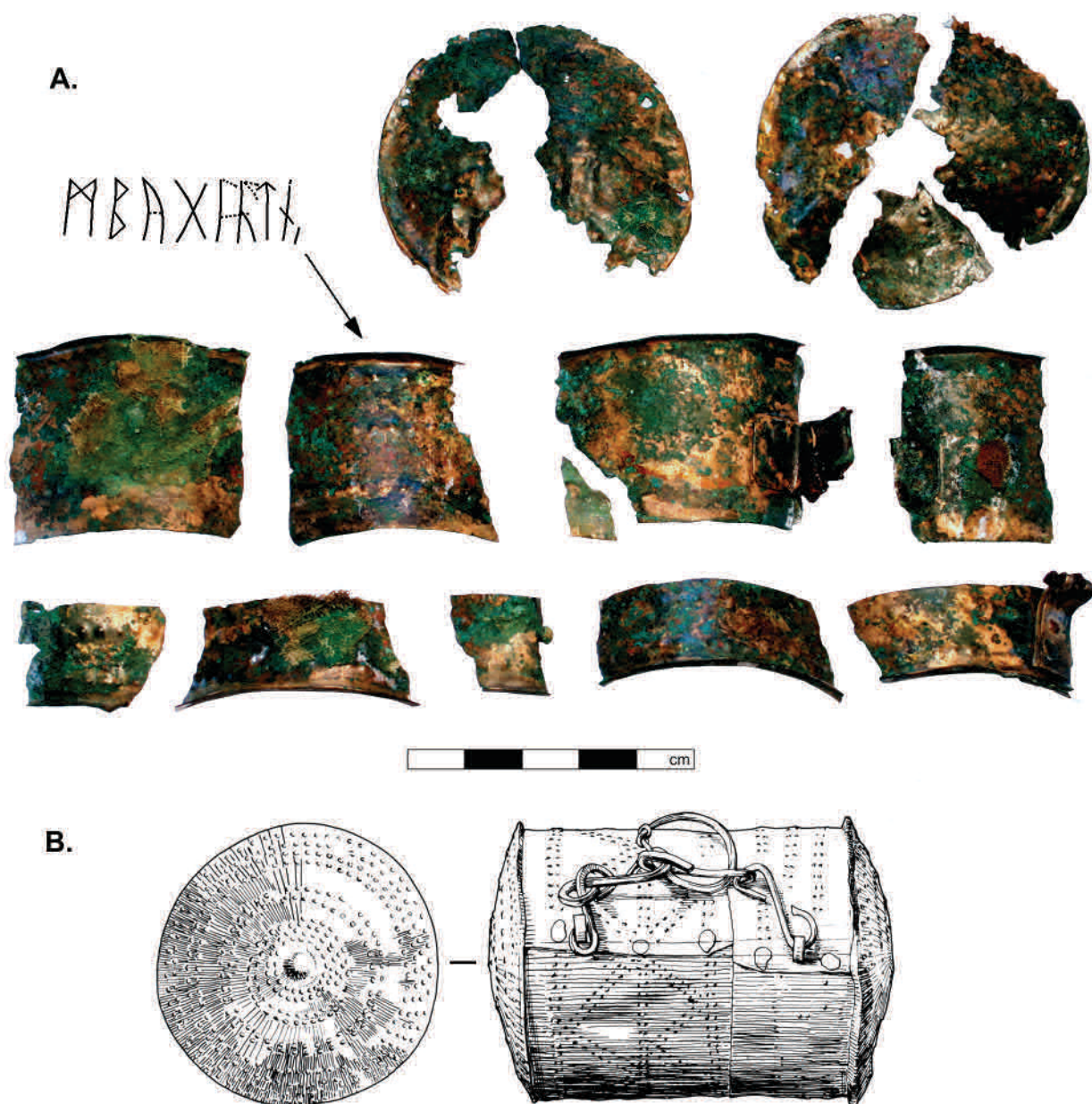


Figure 5.9 A. Workbox 95, showing the runes and their location. B. Drawing of complete workbox from Butler's Field, Lechlade (after Boyle *et al* 1998, fig. 5.42)

the Thames (near the Icknield Way), in Derbyshire and in North Humberside and Yorkshire (Drinkall & Foreman 1998, 285). Workboxes can vary in length from c.50–110mm, but most are c.50mm dia. They are commonly decorated with patterns of punched or repoussé dots, as for example a workbox from Butler's Field, Lechlade (Boyle *et al* 2011, 72 and 1998, fig. 5.42: reproduced here in Fig. 5.9). They were suspended from the waist girdle or chatelaine by means of a wire suspension loop or chain. There are various interpretations relating to their function: the workbox from Grave II at Castle-dyke contained threads and a possible iron pin (*ibid*), while others have also been found to contain thread. It seems likely that they were thread boxes (Hawkes 1973, 196–8), though others have stressed their potential for symbolic use (e.g. Dickinson 1976, 232; Meaney 1981, 181–9).

The Runic Inscription

David Parsons

One of the four fragments of the cylinder of Workbox 95 bears an undoubted runic inscription (Figs 3.27 & 5.9). The characters are very lightly incised with a sharp point and can never have been very evident, though with careful lighting and especially using microscopy they are clearly enough visible even on the surviving, partially corroded surface. However, the corrosion and the presence on this fragment of incisions or scratches which are not obviously script, make for problems in parts of the identification.

The runes are set between the lower two of the three horizontal rows of punched dots. They are approximately 8mm–9mm high; the first visible stave is some 10mm from the left edge, and the inscription then extends approximately 25mm to the last rune, which is broken away at the right-hand edge. Eight characters can be made out, as follows:

mbugi?tn

- 1 is clearly **m**, the crossed arms set high and meeting neatly at the tops of the staves.
- 2 is **b** with triangular bows slightly separated at the stave.
- 3 is **u**, the stave curving slightly in anticipation of the open bow, which itself is relatively narrow and meets the stave in a point at the top. There is a faint horizontal line crossing the character half-way down. It is not clear that this is made with the same implement, nor that it is not an accidental scratch. However, it is possible that it could have linguistic significance, as discussed below.
- 4 is **g**, 'leaning back' at a slight angle.
- 5 consists of a stave, and is probably to be identified as **i**. However, in some lights it appears possible that there is a downward-sloping arm at its top which would convert it into **l**. In addition, towards its base a line comes off, angled slightly upwards and running to, and slightly across, the stave of 6. Since this is not consistent with any rune-form, it is presumably an accidental scratch.
- 6 is complex. There is a clear stave and an arm sloping down towards the bottom which could be consistent with the c-rune of the standard Anglo-Saxon runic alphabet. But there are also two possible arms at the top, one almost horizontal, which is perhaps less clear, the other downward-sloping, which looks more convincing. If the two sloping arms were intended this is perhaps an 'a'.
- 7 is very probably **t**, its left-hand end just clear of the uncertain horizontal at the top of 6.
- 8 is a stave crossed by arms in the middle, as **n**. The top of the stave is broken away at the edge of the fragment, but there is no obvious alternative to the identification.

After 8 there is a possible base of a further character before the break, but this is very uncertain. Unfortunately the surface of the adjoining fragment, where the inscription might be expected to continue, is damaged at the point immediately adjacent to the break. It is notable, however, that on the undamaged surface just a few millimetres after the break there is no sign of a continuation of the inscription. Instead, there is a group of similarly incised lines, but in an angular pattern inconsistent with letter-forms. Comparable patterns are scratched on at least one more of the side-fragments, and one of the pieces of the lid. They appear casual and inconsequential rather than decorative or informative.

It is not easy to interpret such an inscription. A sequence beginning *mb-* is not expected in early English, or any other locally conceivable language. It is possible that runes have been lost before the *m-* and *-mb-* is certainly a cluster that can appear in Old English medially, finally, or across a word-break. Although the surface is somewhat

corroded and pitted here, it is not markedly more damaged than the following section, and there is no clear sign of earlier characters.

The sequence *bug-* is more promising, bringing to mind the Old English verb *bugan* 'to bow, bend', and perhaps, derived from it, the attested personal name *Buga*. Personal names are much the most common recognisable elements in early runic inscriptions, and must be possible here. If the following rune is correctly identified as **i**, then this could be explained as a feasible side-form to the attested *Buga*, though it is not quite the identical name. More interesting, perhaps, is the possibility that there could here be a meaningful term, rather than a name. *Byge*, literally 'a bend, a bent thing', is well attested in Old English and is applied, for instance, to the rounded apex of a helmet and to a circular band (albeit in a passage relating to monastic tonsure). When found on an object with a rounded profile, it is possible that there is a reference here to the object, as the 'roundel, ring'. Self-reference along these lines is probably the next most common category amongst identified elements in the inscriptions.

However, just as the beginning of the text is difficult, so is the end. It is possible that 5 should be read as **l** rather than **i**, which is hard to reconcile with the preceding *bug-*. In either case a following *ctn-* or *atn-* is also problematic, and no interpretation suggests itself.

Although the text is hard to interpret in detail, it is typical of early runic inscriptions from England. I published a corpus of 5th- to 7th-century inscriptions in 1999: it amounted to sixteen items, none of them longer than three words or sequences, and most of them largely unintelligible. To my knowledge there have only been one or two possible additions to this corpus in the last decade. The inscriptions are not infrequently accompanied, as here, by further script-like marks or doodles, which fall somewhere between writing and geometric designs.

This corpus of early Anglo-Saxon inscriptions is principally dated on archaeological grounds, which can sometimes be problematic; typologically, however, it hangs together neatly enough, because almost all of the items are finds from accompanied burials. By contrast, there is a much larger corpus of Anglo-Saxon runic inscriptions from the 'Christian period', many of them on explicitly Christian memorial stones, and generally datable between c.700 and c.900. These 'Christian' inscriptions are very different in character to the early grave-finds, not least in being almost always largely intelligible in the light of known (written) Old English. Part of our difficulty in understanding the earlier group of inscriptions probably reflects our inability to penetrate perceptions of linguistic representation in a culture as yet uninfluenced by Latin literacy.

My research indicated a significant break in the development of the runic alphabet used in England between the grave-finds and the later group. I interpreted this as a 7th-century reform of the inherited alphabet, under the auspices of or at least quickly adopted by-the church. Unfortunately none of the characters found in this inscription is diagnostic of this apparent reform (This form of **b**,

with bows that do not join at the stave, is characteristic of the early inscriptions, though it is not wholly restricted to them). It is likely that, as with the other grave-finds, this inscription belongs typologically to the pre-reform group, but there is no clear evidence.

There is, however, one detail of the inscription which is potentially of great interest to runologists and linguists. If 5 is **ii** rather than 1, then an early Old English sequence *bugi* would be expected to develop, by the sound-change known as i-umlaut, to *bygi*. (This, in turn, would be the expected antecedent of the later-attested *byge*; a personal noun. *Bygi*, later *Byge*, would also be the expected side-form of *Buga* alluded to above.) The later Anglo-Saxon runic alphabet developed a new rune (I) to represent the new sound, which is represented in roman script by 'y'. It is therefore very intriguing to see what seems instead to be a horizontal line across the **u** in this inscription, as 1. It is conceivable that this horizontal should be interpreted as a diacritic to distinguish the umlaut-vowel *y* from the original *u*.

WEAPONS

Weapons were conspicuous by their relative absence at Wolverton. Three large *seaxes*, five spearheads and one sword were recovered from nine graves. No evidence for shields (e.g. bosses, studs) was found. The weapons accompanied adult or adolescent/adult burials, predominantly male, with the exception of spearhead 174, which was found in grave 2360, that of a middle-aged female accompanied by a wooden box and numerous other grave goods, presumably an individual of some status. It has been suggested that this item may be an example of a so-called 'spear-shaped weaving batten', a leaf-shaped spear with a blunt tip sometimes found in 7th-century graves in Cambridgeshire and Gloucestershire (Rogers 2007, 33–4).

All the weapons were found singly: the spears, the sword and one of the seaxes were accompanied by knives. Three of the spears and the sword were associated with larger (belt) buckles. The locations of the weapons within graves is interesting. Seaxes 12 and 63 were found by the right and left hip respectively, where one might expect them to be if the deceased was fully dressed for burial. Placement to the right or left does not necessarily indicate that the deceased was left- or right-handed: the majority (c.60%) of seaxes in Anglo-Saxon graves are found near the left hip and lower arm (Boyle *et al* 2011, 13). In contrast, seax 69 lay alongside the right upper arm of Inhumation 2147, suggesting that it had been placed separately in the grave.

With only a single sword from Wolverton, comment on the location of the weapon within the grave must be limited. The sword was found with its lower part alongside the flexed right thigh, its point at the knee, the blade passing under the pelvis, with the pommel in the stomach area. This position would be too high for wearing the sword or for using it effectively, so it seems likely that it was placed separately in the grave.

In the case of the spears, it was evident from their location and alignment that spears 25, 113 and 174 had been displaced post-burial, presumably by more recent agri-



Figure 5.10 Seaxes 12 & 69

cultural activity. Spearhead **64** was found to the right of the head of Inhumation 2140, while **197** lay beside the right shoulder of Inhumation 2386. Spears in Anglo-Saxon graves are normally found to the right of the body (Boyle *et al* 2011, 13), so burial practices at Wolverton – albeit from a small sample – seem to conform to the norm.

Seaxes

Grave	Find no.	Description	Type
2008	12	Seax	SX2-a (light broad)
2138	63	Seax	?
2148	69	Seax	SX3 (short broad)

Seaxes **12** & **63** (Fig. 5.10) were found with adult male burials, while **69** accompanied an adolescent. Based on Høilund Nielsen’s classification, **12** is a light broad seax, Type SX2-a, while **69** is a short broad seax, Type SX3 (Bayliss *et al* 2013, 194–8). In contrast, **63** has an incomplete tang and – by comparison with the other two seaxes – an incomplete blade also, and could not be classified.

All three seaxes had wooden handgrips, evidenced by abundant traces of mineralised wood on the pommels. Leather traces, presumably from a scabbard, are present near the point of **69**. X-rays of all three seaxes indicate that the blades were pattern welded.

Spears

Grave	Find no.	Description	Type
2027	25	Spearhead	Swanton C2
2141	65	Spearhead	Swanton C2
2183	113	Spearhead	Swanton C2
2360	174	Spearhead	Swanton C1
2387	197	Spearhead	Swanton C2, or possibly a short C5

Five spearheads were recovered from five burials, two of adolescents and three of middle-aged adults, one of them female. The spearheads have been classified using Swanton’s typology (Swanton 1973). Only two (possibly three) types are represented, all leaf-shaped or lanceolate (Fig. 5.11).

While it was not feasible to undertake species identification of the mineralised wood traces present in all but one of the sockets, it is likely that the wood used was ash, this being the favoured material for Anglo-Saxon spear shafts. Spears of ash are mentioned in the Saxon poem *The Battle of Maldon* (trans. Alexander 1977), where the warrior Brythnoth ‘raised the shield board, shook the slim ash spear’. From the presence of wood in the spear sockets it is likely that the spears were buried with their shafts. Possible shaft lengths – inferred from



Figure 5.11 Spearheads 64, 113 & 174

the location of the two in-situ spearheads (**64** & **197**) within the grave – were 1.6m and 1.3m respectively. A similar exercise with a much larger sample at Butler’s Field, Lechlade, suggested that the majority of spears were 1.67-1.90m in length, though a few were 1.3-1.4m (Boyle *et al* 2011, 14). It is possible, of course, that spear shafts were ritually broken when the spear was placed in the grave.

Sword

The excavation at Wolverton recovered a single sword (Fig. 5.12, **102**), from Grave 2174, the burial of a young adult male. As noted above, the sword appeared to have been placed in the grave with the deceased, rather than being attached to a belt or baldric. Compared to other iron artefacts recovered from the cemetery the sword was in remarkably good condition, probably owing to the quality of the metal used in its construction.

Sword **102** is a typical Anglo-Saxon weapon of the 7th century, with a parallel-sided blade 810mm in length and

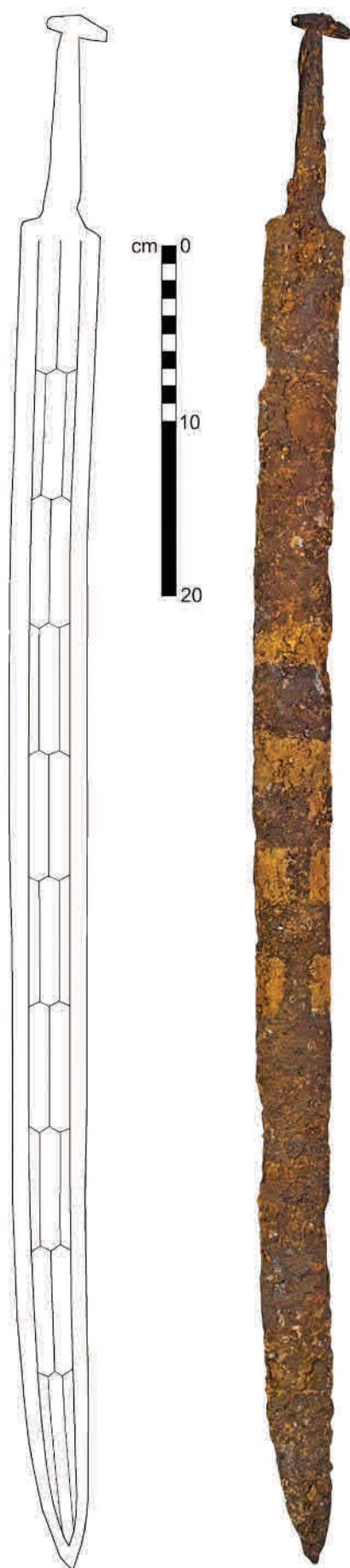


Figure 5.12 Sword 102, showing pattern-welding scheme revealed by x-ray

40mm wide having a full-length fuller, a tapered tang and an oval pommel. The blade is pattern-welded, with an iron core alternately twisted at right angles (Fig. 5.12) and steel cutting edges. As with other examples of pattern-welded swords, the blade was probably highly polished to bring out the pattern produced by the welding process. No trace remains of the cross guard or hilt, which were presumably organic. Traces of a leather scabbard are preserved on the blade, though no scabbard fittings were present in the grave. A ring-headed pin (104) and three pieces of copper-alloy sheet (105) found alongside the sword do not appear to have any direct link to the weapon, though the well-worn whetstone (103) may be more directly associated with the sword.

Swords are far less frequently found in Anglo-Saxon burials than seaxes or spears because they were expensive to produce and highly valued, probably often being kept as heirlooms. The value attached to Anglo-Saxon swords is illustrated by a mid-10th century source which records that one sword was considered the equivalent of 120 oxen or fifteen slaves (Wilkinson 1978, 42). It is possible that the individual buried with the sword was wealthy, though none of the other objects found in the grave support this interpretation.



Figure 5.13 Scabbard chape 45

Scabbard Fittings

<i>Grave</i>	<i>Find no.</i>	<i>Description</i>
2117	43	Cruciform mounts x2, copper-alloy sheet.
	45	Scabbard chape, U-section copper-alloy strip

Although no sword-related fittings were found in Grave 2174, a group of possible sword/ seax scabbard fittings was recovered from Grave 2117 in association with the burial of a middle-aged female, found by her waist. No weapons were found with these fittings, though the grave did contain a knife (42).

These fittings comprised two small cruciform mounts cut from copper-alloy sheet (43) and a length of U-section copper-alloy strip bent into a U shape (45), with attached fastenings of copper-alloy sheet (Fig. 5.13). Bayliss (2013, 188) illustrates similar items to the latter from Alton, Hants and Bifrons (Patribourne), Kent, identifying them as scabbard chapes or end bindings. The two cruciform mounts could have been scabbard mounts. Also found with these items, a length of strip similar to that described above but formed into a circle, a small copper-alloy hinge and two strip fragments do not appear to be associated with the possible scabbard: their functions remain uncertain.

In addition to the above fittings, traces of leather scabbards were found on sword 102, seax 69 and on several knives from the site.

CONTAINERS

Wooden Boxes

Grave	Find no.	Description
2168	96	Box fittings, iron
2360	168	Box fittings, iron

Two burials, an adolescent, probably female (Grave 2168) and a middle-aged female (Grave 2360) appear to have been accompanied by wooden boxes with iron bindings and fittings.

In Grave 2168, twelve fragments of badly corroded rectangular fittings and small bent nails (96), possibly corner mounts and other fittings from a wooden box, were found along the southern edge of the grave, suggesting that the box they had belonged to had been in the south-east quarter of the grave, on the right side of the deceased, but had subsequently been disturbed. In view of this, little can be determined regarding the size of that box or its contents.

In Grave 2360 the box (168) had been placed between the head of the deceased and the east end of the grave and appeared undisturbed, its extent being marked by a rectangle of darker soil within the fill of the grave. The fragmentary remains from at least eight iron corner box-mounts (169), similar to those in Grave 2168, were found around the edge of the soil rectangle, along with fragments of a possible iron hinge (Fig. 5.14). Traces of wood and embossed leather were found on the inside faces of the fittings (see Chapter 6 for details). A barrel padlock (172, below) was found in association with the box and may have secured it, though no evidence of a hasp was found. Although the likely size of the box can be inferred from the evidence above, insufficient of the box and its fittings remains to permit reconstruction. Inside the box

were a Y-shaped iron object (173), function unknown and a crude copper-alloy ferrule (176). A spearhead (174) appears from its relationship to the box fittings to have been laid on the lid of the box, though it could have been displaced by subsequent agricultural activity.



Figure 5.14 Fittings from box 168, Grave 2360

Iron box fittings are commonly found in the graves of Anglo-Saxon women, notably in Kent, though fittings for two boxes were found in graves at Butler’s Field, Lechlade (Clark in Boyle *et al* 2011, 72), eight boxes at Castledyke, Barton on Humber (Drinkall in Drinkall & Foreman 1998, 296–7), two boxes at Edix Hill, Cambs (Malim & Hines 1998, 234) and at Chamberlain’s Barn, Leighton Buzzard (Hyslop 1963, 196). Reconstructed examples from Buckland, Dover are of similar length and breadth to the suggested dimensions of the box from Grave 2360 (Evison 1987, 102, fig. 18). It has been suggested that most boxes had sliding lids (Malim & Hines, *op. cit.*), though hinged lids are known at Buckland, as well as the Wolverton example. Where it has been possible to identify the wood used, alder, ash and oak (Castledyke) and beech (Buckland) have all been used, either with dove-tail joints (Buckland) or dowelled (Castledyke). Some boxes have been found with built-in locks, though one (Castledyke) was associated with a barrel padlock, as at Wolverton. The contents of these boxes vary, though the contents of those that are not empty are normally personal items. Boxes are usually a feature of cemeteries from the 7th century onwards (Drinkall in Drinkall & Foreman 1998, 297).

Buckets

Grave	Find no.	Description
2027	30	Bucket handle and hoops, iron.
2141	65	Bucket handle, iron.
2197	119	Bucket fittings, iron.

Iron fittings from possibly three wooden buckets accompanied three middle-aged inhumations: one male, one probable male and one female. All appear to have been

of stave-built construction, tapering inwards from a flat base, with iron bindings at the base, middle and top linked by upright iron strips and loops for the semi-circular rod handles. Although abundant mineralised wood impressions were found on the iron bindings, the type of wood used was not determined. Reconstruction of bucket (30) was possible (Fig. 3.4). Based on its dimensions, the vessel would have had a volume of c.6 litres. Buckets (30) and (65) were found beside the heads of the burials; 119 was beside the upper body.

Iron- and copper-alloy-bound buckets are commonly found in Anglo-Saxon burials throughout England. Excavations at Butler's Field, Lechlade (Cook *in* Boyle *et al* 2011, 66–69), produced evidence for six iron-bound buckets, along with fittings from several copper-alloy-bound vessels. Diameters ranged from c.125mm to c.240mm, similar to the Wolverton buckets. In general, the iron-bound buckets from Butler's Field appeared to be of 7th-century date, later than the copper-alloy-bound vessels. They were found with burials of all ages and both sexes, though unlike the Wolverton burials, the buckets tended to be placed in the lower (foot) end of the graves. Fittings for a slightly larger iron-bound bucket were found in the Empingham II cemetery, Rutland, also at the foot of a grave (Timby 1996, 71). This site also produced three copper-bound buckets with yew staves, of late 6th to mid-7th-century date. Yew staves were also used in the two iron-bound wooden buckets found at West Heslerton, Yorks (Haughton & Powlesland 1999, 127), though these were much larger than the Wolverton or Butler's Field examples.

Hanging Bowl

A copper-alloy mount with concentric floral *millefiori* decoration (21) was found with an adolescent burial in Grave 2024. The rear of the mount is fastened to a piece of silver-plated, copper-alloy sheet, part of the fabric of the vessel to which it was originally attached. On this evidence the mount has been identified as an escutcheon from a hanging bowl (Fig. 5.15).



Figure 5.15 Hanging bowl escutcheon 21

Hanging bowls are enigmatic high-status objects, typically of mid-6th and mid-7th century date, whose function remains a mystery. Most hanging bowls are made of copper-alloy: there are very few examples of silver bowls, perhaps the most famous being the Witham bowl from Lincolnshire, now lost. The escutcheons of hanging bowls typically have enamelled decoration in Celtic style. The use of *millefiori* is unusual: this is only the eleventh example recorded out of over one hundred bowl or bowl fragments from Britain. Two bowl escutcheons have previously been found in Buckinghamshire, a 19th-century discovery at Oving (Bruce-Mitford corpus 9) and a metal detector find from Brill (Bruce-Mitford corpus 174). The latter contains one central piece of *millefiori*. Another a well-known example of the use of *millefiori* in this context is the hanging bowl from Sutton Hoo (Carver 1998). Why the individual in Grave 2024 should possess a fragment from such a high-status vessel is uncertain.

TOOLS & HOUSEHOLD ITEMS

Padlock

Found in association with box 168 in Grave 2360 was barrel padlock 172, most likely used in conjunction with the box, although nothing resembling a hasp was found. The lock is of composite construction, the mechanism being made from iron and the barrel cylinder casing, bolt collar and plate from soldered copper-alloy sheet. The lock plate is missing and the external loop is incomplete.

Barrel locks became common in the medieval period (Goodall 1981, 60): only one comparable Anglo-Saxon example has been identified, from Grave 1 at Castledyke (Drinkall *in* Drinkall & Foreman 1998, 296).

Shears

Shears 88 were found in Grave 2168 by the right hand of a single adolescent burial, probably female. Associated finds include a necklace and pendant, chatelaine, workbox and a possible iron-bound wooden box. The shears are small – 150mm total length – and therefore most probably used for needlework (*cf* Parfitt & Bruggman 1977, 76–7).

Shears have been found in a number of Anglo-Saxon cemeteries, mostly with female burials. At Butler's Field, shears 190mm in length were found with an adolescent female (Clark *in* Boyle *et al* 2011, 63), while at Edix Hill shears 80mm in length were recorded (Malim & Hines 1998, 220 & fig. 5.8). At Castledyke, much larger shears (length c.300mm) and therefore probably intended for household use or sheep-shearing were found in two female graves (Drinkall *in* Drinkall & Foreman 1998, 292). In the small late 7th-century cemetery at Westbury-by-Shenley, Milton Keynes, the burial of a young adult female was accompanied by shears c.190mm in length (Mills *in* Ivens, Busby & Shepherd 1995, 320, fig. 145), laid by the right side of the body.

Shears of varying sizes occur throughout the archaeological record, from the Roman period until the advent of scissors in the 16th century: smaller examples intended for lacemaking can still be purchased from craft shops today. Clark (*in* Boyle *et al* 2011, 63) observes that shears seem to be more common in 7th-century graves than earlier.

Spindle Whorls

Grave	Find no.	Description
2082	39	Spindle whorl, bone.
2088	40	Spindle whorl, fired clay.

Two spindle whorls were found, both accompanying young adult female burials. One (39) was bone, while 40 was carved out of the base of a Roman pottery vessel in the local soft pink grogged fabric of 2nd to 3rd-century date (Marney 1989, fabric 2). At 16g and 19g respectively, both are on the light side for spindle whorls, as 20-30g is necessary for spinning wool. Slightly heavier spinning whorls are necessary for spinning flax (Mynard & Zeepvat 1992, 155).

Spindle whorls are frequently found in Anglo-Saxon burials, made in a variety of materials (bone/antler, ceramics, stone and lead). They accompany both male and female burials, more frequently the latter. Spindle whorls are not closely dated generally (Boyle in Boyle *et al* 2011, 66).

Sharpening Steels

Grave	Find no.	Description
2011	14	Sharpening Steel
2154	73	Sharpening Steel

Two iron objects identified in the catalogue as chisels were found in child and adolescent burials, accompanying knives at the waist. Both were originally identified as chisels, though both are too small when compared with modern woodworking chisels. A similar object found in with a male burial in Grave 148 at Buckland was identified as a sharpening steel (Evison 1987, 110 & fig. 59): this identification certainly fits better with the objects and their location.

MISCELLANEOUS

Roman Coin

A single Roman coin (62) was found at Wolverton in Grave 2135, beside the right knee of a middle-aged female burial. The coin, a worn late 2nd-century copper-alloy *as* or *dupondius*, is unperforated.

It is not uncommon to find Roman coins, often in considerable numbers, on early Anglo-Saxon occupation and cemetery sites (Evison 1994, 86–7). Most, unsurprisingly, are later 3rd and 4th-century copper-alloy issues, though coins going back as far as the 1st century are present too. The assumption is that these coins were found and collected by the Anglo-Saxons and used as objects of value primarily for their metal content (King 1988).

Objets Trouvés

Grave	Find no.	Description
2076	35	Arrowhead, flint, Neolithic.
2180	112	Ammonite, <i>Cadoceras sublaeve</i> (J. Sowerby). Lower Callovian, Oxford Clay.
2197	128	Seven fossils, one piece of amber and thirteen geological specimens: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Baltic amber, nodule.• Ammonite, unidentified upper Cretaceous or Oxfordian species.• Sea urchin, <i>Micraster coranguinum</i>. Upper Chalk.• Two sea urchins, <i>Echinocorys</i> (<i>sp</i>) Upper Chalk.• Unidentified sponge, Upper Chalk.• Bivalve, <i>Lopha gregarea</i> (J. Sowerby). Bathonian to Oxfordian.• Bivalve, probably <i>Lithophaga inclusa</i> (Phillips). Oxfordian, Corallian Beds.• Granite, cone-shaped, banded with white quartz.• Ironstone fragment.• Flint nodule, naturally perforated.• Flint nodules x6, two giving a distinct rattle when shaken.• Fossiliferous limestone piece.• Quartzite pebble, clear, heart-shaped.• Quartzite pebble, brown.• Ironstone pebble, roughly spherical.• Pink and white quartzite pebble.
	129	Boar's tusk.
2212	150	Flint nodule, spherical.

Three graves, one of a middle-aged female and two (adolescent and adult) where sex could not be determined, contained a range of fossils and geological specimens (112, 128, 150), none of which are present in the soils locally (Fig. 5.16). Also included in this assemblage is a Neolithic flint arrowhead (35) from a child's grave and a boar's tusk (129), both of which could probably be found in the locality. Collectively, these objects are referred to in this report as *objets trouvés*, as they have been apparently collected randomly: other reports frequently classify them as 'amulets' (e.g. Boyle *et al* 2011; Malim & Hines 1998).

The inclusion of invertebrate fossils, shells and geological specimens in Anglo-Saxon graves has been discussed by Meaney (1981, 113–30) under the heading 'animal amulets'. She notes that fossil sea urchins – of which three were found at Wolverton – may have been regarded as protection against lightning strikes, or were associated amuletically with general prosperity. In contrast, ammonites are less frequently found: Meaney (*op. cit.*, 113) cites

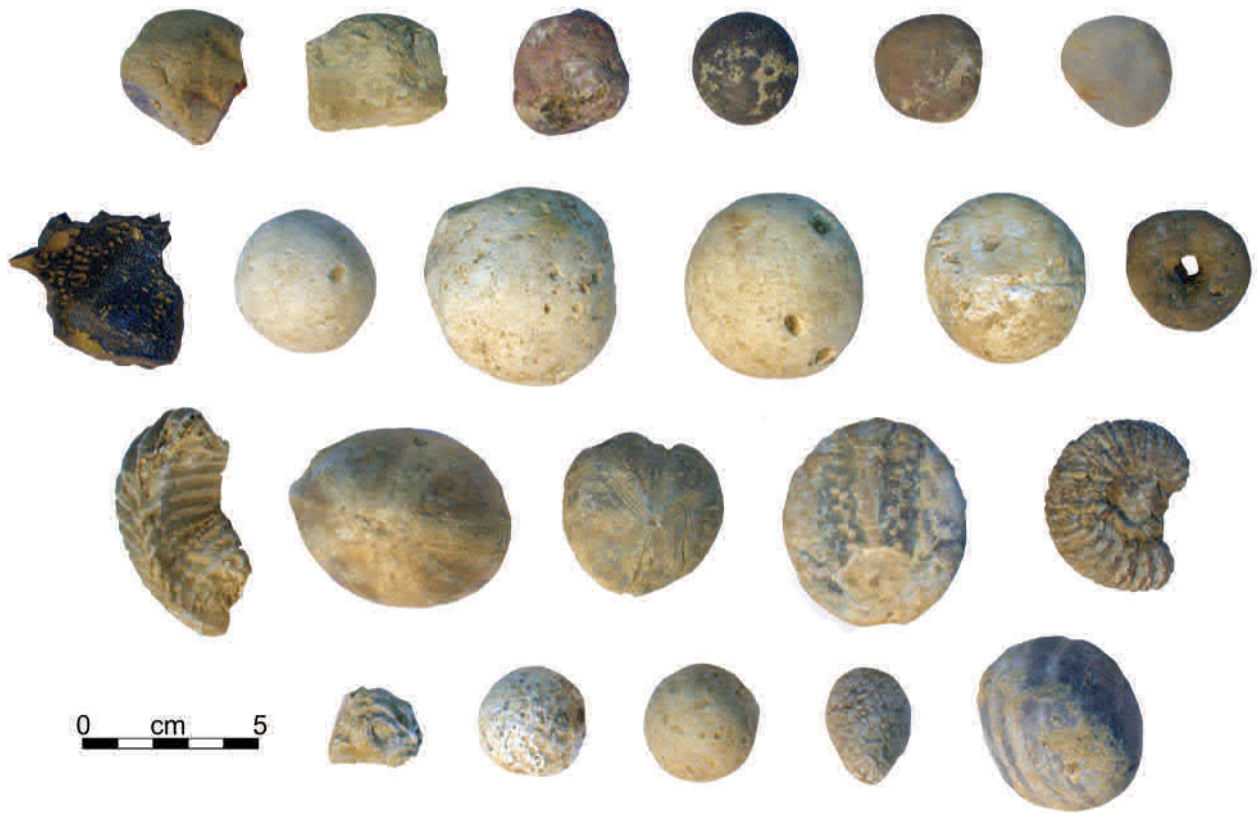


Figure 5.16 Objets trouvés 128, from Grave 2197

only one instance, from a 7th-century grave near Wrotham, Kent. In traditional folklore the ammonite is sometimes referred to as a 'snakestone' (Timby 1996, 65).

While the fossils found at Wolverton can be readily seen to have some potential for amuletic properties, the same is less certain for some of the geological specimens. Items such as the naturally perforated flint and the rattling flint nodules may have an attraction simply because of their physical properties: the same is true of the heart-shaped quartzite pebble or the spherical pebbles, and items such as the Neolithic arrowhead. While the arrowhead could equally be a residual find, it is worth noting that flint

arrowheads have been referred to in English folklore as 'elf arrows', and were viewed as having amuletic powers, not always for good.

Boar's tusks are occasionally found in Anglo-Saxon burials, normally (but not exclusively) those of women and girls. One found in the grave of an adolescent, sex unknown, at Butler's Field, Lechlade was perforated, presumably to be worn as an amulet (Boyle *et al* 2011, 40). Meaney (1981, 32) recorded boar tusks or pig teeth from twelve Anglo-Saxon graves, though not all are perforated. She suggests that they may have served as protective amulets, also having fertility connotations.