

New Bracteate Finds from Early Anglo-Saxon England

By CHARLOTTE BEHR¹

THE NUMBER OF bracteate finds from early Anglo-Saxon England has increased substantially in recent years. A catalogue draws together for the first time all the finds since 1993 and one, possibly two, dies with bracteate motifs. This leads to a review of their find circumstances, distribution and their stylistic and iconographical links with continental and Scandinavian bracteates. The outcome is a revised picture of the function and meaning of bracteates in Anglo-Saxon society, with the suggestion that the English adopted the idea for these pendants from Sievern in Germany but adapted the concept and iconography for local manufacture. In Kent use links to high-status female burials but outside Kent ritual deposition is also a possibility.

With over 980 objects, mostly from Scandinavia, bracteates form one of the largest find groups in 5th- and 6th-century northern European archaeology. Examples from the early Anglo-Saxon period are yet another find group that has in recent years increased considerably thanks to metal-detector finds and their systematic recording in the Portable Antiquities Scheme (PAS) and the Treasure Annual Reports (TAR). Archaeological excavations have also contributed several new finds.² Bracteates are round pendants usually made out of gold foil, occasionally silver or bronze foil, with a stamped central image. Dated to the second half of the 5th and first half of the 6th centuries, they were looped and worn on necklaces. The central image was figurative showing either one or more animals or an anthropomorphic head or figure often together with animals.³ Depending on the size of the metal sheet, one or more concentric rings, sometimes decorated with individual geometrical stamps, surround the image. A beaded gold wire reinforces the edge of most bracteates. The intricate images and rare runic inscriptions on bracteates found in Anglo-Saxon England, their find circumstances, and close stylistic and typological links with the far

¹ Department of Humanities, Roehampton University, Roehampton Lane, London SW15 5PH, England, UK. c.behr@roehampton.ac.uk

² See below cat nos 1, 2, 3, 9, 12.

³ Since Montelius 1869 bracteates have been classified according to their central images as A- (anthropomorphic head in profile, with or without accompanying animals, inscriptions or symbols), B- (one or more anthropomorphic figures, again with or without further accompanying features), C- (anthropomorphic head in profile above a quadruped in profile with or without additional animals, inscriptions and symbols), D- (one or more stylised animals in Animal Style I with or without additional symbols but no inscriptions) and F-bracteates (no anthropomorphic representations but a quadruped with or without additional animals, inscriptions or symbols).

more numerous bracteate finds in Scandinavia, northern Germany and Frisia (Netherlands) have been the topics of several studies since E T Leeds published the first academic discussion in 1913.⁴ This research has contributed important aspects to the discussion of early Anglo-Saxon chronology and to the debates about connections between Anglo-Saxon England and the countries across the North Sea. Study of bracteates has also offered a better understanding of religious ideas and rituals in the pre-conversion period. Made out of precious metal with an intricate iconography, bracteates were not only valuable jewellery that conveyed status but also objects that Anglo-Saxons perceived as effective amulets.

The catalogue that forms the core of this paper systematically draws together the new finds made since 1993, to date unpublished or only published in brief notes.⁵ The new findspots extend the known area of bracteate distribution in Britain. Outside eastern Kent, where most Anglo-Saxon bracteates have been found, they were known from eastern England including Essex, Suffolk, Norfolk, Leicestershire, Nottinghamshire, Lincolnshire, Humberside and as far west as Oxfordshire and Warwickshire. The new finds enlarge this area with the first bracteate finds from Buckinghamshire and the Isle of Wight, and with the first gold bracteates from Humberside and from Norfolk, counties where so far we only knew of silver or bronze bracteates (see Fig 17).⁶ In northern Norfolk three gold bracteates have been found within an 8 km radius forming a significant cluster of precious gold objects. In the main bracteate area of southern Scandinavia, bracteates only come from hoards of various sizes, and to date archaeologists thought that bracteates in England were confined to graves. New evidence from archaeological excavations shows that, outside Kent, bracteates were buried both in graves and in single depositions. This therefore contributes to the debate about the occurrence of sacrificial and ritual hoarding in pre-Christian Anglo-Saxon England.⁷ The discussion about local production and stylistic developments versus Scandinavian/continental imports needs also to be reconsidered in the light of one, possibly two, new finds of bracteate dies. Several finds show close iconographic and stylistic links with bracteates found in various countries across the North Sea, which allows further thoughts about the relationships within the material culture of early Anglo-Saxon England and Scandinavia, northern Germany and Frisia. They can provide further insight into patterns of contact and exchange among the social elites in northern, western and central Europe.

The images of several new finds are unusual. They are so far unique within the body of bracteate iconography but still clearly thematically and stylistically related to other bracteate images pointing to specific local, Anglo-Saxon, developments in bracteate iconography. The interpretation of the images showing mythical figures and stories contributes to the understanding of bracteates as objects that the Anglo-Saxons intentionally deposited to mark or establish an

⁴ Leeds 1913; 1936; 1946; Hawkes 1956; Vierck 1970, 331–9; Bakka 1981; Chadwick Hawkes and Pollard 1981; Hines 1984; Hines and Odenstedt 1987; Gaimster 1992; Wicker 1992; Behr 2000.

⁵ In the most recent bracteate catalogue (*IK*: Axboe et al 1985–89), all finds known by 1989 are included with 3:1 photographs, drawings and detailed descriptions. The A-bracteate found in 1992 in Kingston Bagpuize, Oxfordshire, is described and discussed by Hines 1993.

⁶ Cat nos 7; 15 and 16; 14; 11, 12 and 13.

⁷ Wilson 1992; Crawford 2004; Hinton 2005, 33–4; Hamerow 2006.

exchange with powers of another world.⁸ There is much debate about bracteate iconography. Iconographical research has concentrated predominantly on the anthropomorphic representations of the A-, B- and C-bracteates.⁹ Karl Hauck proposes the most comprehensive interpretation of the bracteates images, suggesting that the most common motif of the male head above a quadruped was a healing scene in which the god Woden/Odin cured the injured foal of his son Balder, as the Merseburg charm describes this episode. The injury of Balder's foal is linked in the later literary tradition with Balder's death during a game of the gods where Balder through the treachery of the god Loki was fatally injured by mistletoe.¹⁰ This scene is recognisable on a small group of B-bracteates. On several anthropomorphic bracteates monster-type animals were added and are shown fighting with or have been overcome by the god. They are comparable to the different types of animals on the second largest group of bracteates, the D-bracteates, which depict them coiled up, interlaced with their own legs, thus unable to move.¹¹ They may represent death as vanquished. These interpretations suggest that the Anglo-Saxons perceived the amuletic power of bracteate images in two ways, as attracting divine favours through the image of the god, or as repelling evil forces through the image of the defeated monster.¹² Iconographic motifs that are similar to those found on bracteates feature also on other contemporary Anglo-Saxon metal objects like shield fittings or drinking-cup mounts.¹³

Including the new finds, 54 bracteates of the later 5th and first half of the 6th century are now known from England, of which 44 were made of gold, eight of silver and two of bronze, several of them showing signs of gilding.¹⁴ With 34 examples, most of them belong to the D-bracteates, only four are A-bracteates, two B-bracteates, eight C-bracteates and two F-bracteates. Four motifs are unclassifiable.¹⁵ D-bracteate motifs also feature on one, possibly two, copper-alloy dies,¹⁶ and on a pendant with gold filigree wires attached to the gold disc.¹⁷ Eastern Kent has the highest density of bracteate finds with 29 examples; the literature refers to the 25 bracteates found outside Kent as 'Anglian' bracteates.¹⁸ In addition, there are two bracteates of unknown provenance not necessarily from England,¹⁹ and three bracteates probably made in England were found in

⁸ Osborne 2004, 5; Hedeager 2001, 505.

⁹ The iconographic method is explained in Hauck 1986; 1988a.

¹⁰ Hauck 1992; 1994; Axboe and Kromann 1992; Hines 1997, 392; Gaimster 1998, 30–2; sceptical Wicker 2003, 536.

¹¹ Hauck 1988a, 31–9; 1992, 457–9; Kitzinger 1993, 3–6 on the apotropaic function of interlaced animals in early medieval art.

¹² Hauck 1988a, 38.

¹³ Dickinson 2005, 149–53; Dickinson and Parfitt 2007, 118–19.

¹⁴ Axboe 2004, 28.

¹⁵ *IK* 388 Welbeck Hill, Lincolnshire, grave 14; *IK* 227 Broughton Lodge, Nottinghamshire, 33; *IK* 293 Little Eriswell (fragments), Suffolk; *IK* 285 Jaywick Sands, Essex.

¹⁶ *IK* 609 Essex and *IK* 589 Billington: cat nos 8 and 10.

¹⁷ *IK* 603 St Nicholas at Wade: cat no 6.

¹⁸ Not all 'Anglian' bracteates are from Anglian settlement areas. Still, the expression is used as a convenient short form for bracteates found outside Kent.

¹⁹ They are not included in the overall figures: *IK* 33, a C-bracteate found either in Denmark or England known as 'British Museum', first mentioned by Smith 1923, 161, and *IK* 554, a D-bracteate that was possibly found in Kent and belonged to the Wellcome Collection when it arrived at the British Museum.

Normandy, France, and in Sachsen-Anhalt, Germany.²⁰ The 29 gold bracteates from eastern Kent including 28 D-bracteates and one B-bracteate were made with 20 different dies. Up to four bracteates among those found in England were made with the same die.²¹ The six recent finds from Kent include three bracteates from three wealthy female graves 204, 245 and 250 in the rich Anglo-Saxon cemetery in Dover Buckland. They were excavated in 1994 when the second half of the already known Anglo-Saxon cemetery of the 5th to the 7th centuries was discovered.²² Metal-detectors recently located three pendants in Kent.²³ The rather smaller number of bracteates found outside Kent has increased since 1993 from 17 to 25. In addition to the pendants, two bronze discs with bracteate motifs have been discovered in Essex and in Norfolk. The new finds confirm the existing pattern of predominantly D-bracteates from Kent and a wider variety of motifs from finds outside Kent.

BACKGROUND TO CATALOGUE

Between 1677, when Robert Plot described the first English gold bracteate,²⁴ and 1992, 41 bracteates have been recorded. Since then a further 12 gold and one silver bracteate as well as two bronze discs and a gold filigree pendant with D-bracteate motifs have been discovered. These 16 objects will be described in the following catalogue. As much information as was available about the find locations and the find circumstances is recorded.²⁵ However, it is in the nature of metal-detector finds made outside professional archaeological excavations that any statement about precise locations, additional finds and contexts remains to some degree doubtful.

Descriptions of motif and style of the central images, the stamps used in the border zones and technical and stylistic details of the framing wires and the loops should help to identify parallels with bracteates from other English but also from continental and Scandinavian finds. Iconographic, stylistic and technical comparisons can contribute to the research about links between bracteates from different regions and the question about their likely areas of production. It has long been recognised that within bracteate production many clusters of bracteates do not only share the same motif, but also great stylistic similarities

²⁰ *IK* 497 Schönebeck-D, grave 15b, Bez. Magdeburg, Germany, see Vierck 1970, 337; Hines 1984, 309–18; Axboe 2004, 28. In the 5th and early 6th century Schönebeck belonged to the Thuringian kingdom. *IK* 492, 2 Hérouvillette, grave 39, Dep. Calvados, France, a D-bracteate that was made with the same central die as *IK* 492, 1 from Sarre, grave 90, Kent and *IK* 492, 3 from unknown provenance in Kent, and *IK* 440 Hérouvillette, grave 11, Decaëns 1971, 39–41, 74–8, 104; Chadwick Hawkes and Pollard 1981, 328; Behr 2000, 49.

²¹ *IK* 426, 1 and 2 Finglesham graves 203 and D3 with two pendants in either grave: Chadwick Hawkes and Pollard 1981, 331–2, 333–7; Chadwick Hawkes and Grainger 2006, 139–40. Die-identity between bracteates can be determined by means of comparing shapes and sizes of individual details and their positions relative to each other but also by taking the processes of striking bracteates into account that could lead to minor differences, Axboe 1982, 4–11.

²² Parfitt 1995, 460; Evison 1987. Cat nos 1, 2, 3.

²³ Cat nos 4, 5, 6.

²⁴ Plot 1677, 352, pl XVI 5, A-bracteate from St Giles' Field, Oxfordshire (*IK* 323). Plot did not recognise the bracteate as an early Anglo-Saxon object but interpreted it as an *angel*, a coin that was given in the Middle Ages to scofula patients after the king had healed them with his royal touch.

²⁵ No exact grid references are given for metal-detector finds and the find location of cat nos 8 and 14 are vague at the request of the metal-detectorist.

in their designs.²⁶ The similarities are such that it is inconceivable that they were manufactured independently. Alexandra Pesch has recently made a systematic study of these groups of stylistically related clusters of bracteates, so-called *Formularfamilien*, with precise definitions for each cluster and distribution maps.²⁷ It is noticeable that the English finds can be allocated to a very limited number of these clusters.

The chronology of bracteates is a much discussed topic. However, the new finds do not contribute further information to the dating of bracteates because the metal-detector finds are all single finds without datable contexts and the new grave finds with bracteates from Dover Buckland, East Leake and possibly Freshwater are not yet fully analysed and published. That is why the likely time span of their manufacture derives here from stylistic comparisons with dated bracteates. Egil Bakka studied the chronology of Kentish bracteate graves in order to synchronise the Scandinavian relative chronology of the migration period with the far better dated continental and Anglo-Saxon chronology systems. He concluded that the period of Scandinavian D-bracteates was short, possibly only one generation lasting from the first quarter of the 6th century until the mid-6th century, whereby he dated his variety 1 of Kentish D-bracteates to the first quarter and the derivative varieties 2 and 3 to the second quarter of the 6th century.²⁸ Sonia Chadwick Hawkes came to fairly similar conclusions by dating the deposition of Kentish bracteate graves and then deducting a probable time span that had elapsed since their production, which was derived from the degree of wear found on the bracteates.²⁹ On this basis she agreed with an end date for D-bracteate production in the mid-6th century but considered the possibility that D-bracteates of Bakka's variety 1 may have started already in the last decades of the 5th century.³⁰ John Hines dated the Anglian bracteates on stylistic grounds between the mid-5th to the mid-/third quarter of the 6th century. He distinguished between the A-bracteates from Undley, Suffolk (450/480) and St Giles' Field (towards the end of the 5th century), the C-bracteates (between 500 and 550) and the D-bracteates (between 520 and 570).³¹ Morten Axboe has recently completed extensive research into the relative chronology of A-, B- and C-bracteates based on the seriation of all bracteates with an anthropomorphic head in a correspondence analysis. He could distinguish four phases, H1 to H4.³² By comparing and assessing the relative degrees of wear of C- and D-bracteates that have been found together in closed finds Axboe could show that D-bracteate production started later than the C-bracteates and lasted at least as long. Taking also the find combinations of bracteates in Norwegian graves into account and the typical high relief of the D-bracteates that were often chip-carved, he concluded that D-bracteates emerged during the production

²⁶ Already Salin 1895 arranged bracteates into groups according to stylistic similarities and named them after their main distribution area. It remained an important feature in the presentation and discussion of bracteates, Mackeprang 1952.

²⁷ Pesch 2007.

²⁸ Bakka 1981.

²⁹ Chadwick Hawkes and Pollard 1981, 339–40 were aware of the methodical pitfalls of using signs of wear for chronological estimates when, by comparing die-identical bracteates from two graves in Finglesham, Chadwick Hawkes found that the two bracteates from the older grave (D3) were considerably more worn than the two from the more recent grave (203).

³⁰ Chadwick Hawkes and Pollard 1981, 350.

³¹ Hines 1984, 204–18.

³² Axboe 2004, 122–42; 2007, 29–34.

period of H₃.³³ On the basis of hoard finds that included coins and bracteates, as well as stylistic developments of animal ornamentation and datable grave finds, Axboe concluded in terms of absolute chronology that bracteate production started with H₁ around 450, phase H₂ around 475, D-bracteate production around 500 and that production ended sometime between 530 and 570.³⁴ The new finds have not shifted significantly the chronological distribution of the English bracteate finds. There are still no finds in phase H₁, few belong to H₂, one new find is probably attributable to H₃ and the majority date to the latest phase H₄.³⁵

CATALOGUE OF FINDS SINCE 1993

I. DOVER BUCKLAND, KENT, GRAVE 204,
D-BRACTEATE (FIG 1)³⁶
British Museum, London, No 1995,0102.1.
(IK 580).
Diameter 32 mm, weight 3.3 gr.

Find context The bracteate was found in a NW/SE-orientated inhumation grave

next to the lower jaw.³⁷ In the breast and neck area were a disc brooch with garnet inlay, more than 100 amber and glass beads and an iron needle. One hand bore a silver finger ring with garnet inlay. Next to the hip lay a bronze buckle and three rivets belonging to a belt and the remains



FIG 1

Gold bracteate from Dover Buckland, grave 204. (a) Front (b) Drawing. Scale 2:1.

Photograph The Trustees of The British Museum. Drawing by K Morton.

³³ Axboe 2007, 60–4.

³⁴ Axboe 2004, 260; 2007, 65–76.

³⁵ A similar pattern of chronological range can be observed in other peripheral areas of bracteate distribution like Norway, Axboe 2004, 189–93.

³⁶ Parfitt 1995, 462; Behr 2000, 30, 45; Webster 2001, 258; Axboe 2004, 286, 326, 330; Pesch 2007, 276–9; Kruse 2007, 373; Hines forthcoming.

³⁷ The graves excavated in 1994 have not yet been fully published and I am grateful to Cathy Haith, British Museum, for information about the three bracteate graves and their grave goods.

of an iron and bronze chatelaine complex, as well as a Roman coin. Next to the left leg were a spindle whorl, another Roman bronze coin, a conch and a small stone. Between the lower legs lay two bronze strap-ends.

Description The gold bracteate is looped and the disc is surrounded with a beaded wire. Wire and loop are clearly worn but the bracteate is quite well preserved. The loop has four broader ridges framed by more narrow ones. The die negative is clearly visible on the back. The motif is executed in high relief.

Motif An interlaced animal is shown from the right with its head turned backwards. The head is underneath the loop and has a large drop-shaped beak. The round eye is surrounded by a semicircle with a rectangular bar decorated with small triangles. Neck and body are ribbon-shaped. From the large rounded shoulder and hip, each with a central dot, start a front leg and a hind leg ending in curved pointed feet with heels. The front leg crosses the body twice and then the neck; the hind leg too crosses the body twice. The reversed S-shaped body is sectioned into disjointed segments. In front of the beak a human ear in the shape of a volute is placed on the edge of the picture and in the centre a human leg with foot.³⁸ The border zone is decorated with three concentric rows of dots punched from the back.

Parallels The motif belongs to the most common D-bracteate animals found on Anglo-Saxon bracteates. Stylistically the bracteate design is closely related to several Kentish finds, including the four

die-identical bracteates from Finglesham, graves 203 and D3 (*IK* 426, 1 and 2) and the two die-identical bracteates from Bifrons, grave 29 (*IK* 410). More dissolved versions of the design have been found on a third bracteate from grave D3 in Finglesham (*IK* 425) and on the bracteate from grave 250 in this cemetery.³⁹ The three die-identical bracteates from Sarre, grave 90, Hérouvillette, grave 39 and unknown findspot in Kent (*IK* 492, 1–3) are also closely related but they show no human leg in the centre of the image, and on the bracteate from Dover Buckland, grave 20 (*IK* 421) there is no human ear. The recent find from Northbourne (*IK* 616) (Fig 5),⁴⁰ is also related, however, instead of the human ear a small bird is placed in front of the beak. Outside Kent, stylistic parallels lie in Suffolk (*IK* 565 West Stow) and on the Isle of Wight (*IK* 629 Freshwater) (Fig 16),⁴¹ and on numerous examples from Jutland (Denmark), northern Germany and Frisia.⁴²

Dating The bracteate grave can be dated provisionally to the central 6th century,⁴³ and the bracteate to the first half of the 6th century.⁴⁴

2. DOVER BUCKLAND, KENT, GRAVE 245, D-BRACTEATE (FIG 2)⁴⁵

British Museum, London, No 1995,0102.143. (*IK* 581,1).

Diameter 28 mm, weight 3.8 gr.

Find context The bracteate lay on the breast of the skeleton in a NW/SE-orientated inhumation grave. From the same area come: 47 serrated glass beads and 22 glass, one amethyst, one bronze and 46 amber beads; a disc brooch and a

³⁸ For these anthropomorphic features *IK* vol 3.1, 1989, 36–7; Chadwick Hawkes and Pollard 1981, 353, 356–7; Bakka 1981, 13–14 however, described the ear as, ‘a small C-scroll’.

³⁹ Cat no 3.

⁴⁰ Cat no 5.

⁴¹ Cat no 16.

⁴² Pesch 2007, 276 described this cluster of stylistically related bracteates as *Formularfamilie* Dg.

⁴³ Webster 2001, 258 based her dating on several finds from the rich assemblage in the grave; Axboe 2004, 330 put it either in Kentish Phase III (530/40–560/70) or in Phase IV (560/70–?580/90). Parfitt and Bruggmann 1997, 95–9.

⁴⁴ Based on stylistically related bracteates Bakka 1981, 24–8; Chadwick Hawkes and Pollard 1981, 342–51; Hines 1984, 217.

⁴⁵ Parfitt 1995, 462; Behr 2000, 30, 45; Webster 2001, 258; Axboe 2004, 286; Pesch 2007, 467 (in the list of bracteates without other stylistically related bracteates forming a cluster); Kruse 2007, 373; Hines forthcoming.



FIG 2
Gold bracteate from Dover Buckland, grave 245. (a) Front. (b) Drawing. Scale 2:1.
Photograph The Trustees of The British Museum. Drawing by K Morton.

rosette brooch, both with garnet inlay; a silver shield pendant and two silver rivets. In the belt area a buckle made out of silver, bronze and iron with garnet inlay was found together with a bronze rivet, a knife and several iron keys. Behind the head was a spindle whorl.

Description The gold bracteate is looped and surrounded with a beaded wire. The loop has six ridges. Wire and loop are clearly worn but the bracteate is quite well preserved. The die negative is clearly visible on the back. The motif is executed in high relief.

Motif The motif derives from the interlaced D-bracteate animal dissolved into five unconnected shapes. Under the loop features a T-shaped figure with a curved top bar. Underneath are four rounded loops with central grooves, two of them have single contour lines attached in the shape of curved feet. The dot in the centre is the imprint of the hole from the

compasses in the die. The central image is surrounded by the imprint of the edge of the die and the border zone is decorated with punched semicircles with dots inside opening towards the edge of the pendant.

Parallels There is a die-identical bracteate from another findspot in Kent that has no decorated border zone.⁴⁶ The bracteate image has no close parallels among the Anglo-Saxon, Scandinavian or continental D-bracteates. However, dissolved images of D-bracteate animals are not uncommon.⁴⁷

Dating The bracteate grave can be dated provisionally to the central 6th century.⁴⁸

3. DOVER BUCKLAND, KENT, GRAVE 250, D-BRACTEATE (FIG 3)⁴⁹
British Museum, London, No 1995,0102.174. (*IK* 582).
Diameter 41 mm, weight 9.2 gr.

⁴⁶ Cat no 4.

⁴⁷ See, for example, the bracteate from Ozingell, Kent (*IK* 483) where the design is composed of six arches and two circles with dots, Axboe 1982, 78, or the recent find of a bracteate die, cat no 8.

⁴⁸ Webster 2001, 258.

⁴⁹ Parfitt 1995, 462; Behr 2000, 30, 45; Webster 2001, 258; Axboe 2004, 286, 30; Pesch 2007, 276–9; Kruse 2007, 374; Hines forthcoming.



FIG 3

Gold bracteate from Dover Buckland, grave 250. (a) Front. (b) Drawing. Scale 2:1.
Photograph The Trustees of The British Museum. Drawing by K Morton.

Find context The bracteate lay on the breast of the skeleton in the NW/SE-orientated inhumation grave at the end of a necklace that comprised five amber and 139 glass beads, a serrated gold bead, a bronze spiral fingering, a shield pendant and an iron needle. Next to the left arm were an iron knife, a bronze mount in the shape of a fire steel, a bronze ring, a round bone disc and an iron chatelaine complex. On the left leg lay an ivory (?) ring, a round bronze disc, some iron fragments and seven garnet discs. At the left foot were a weaving sword and under the feet a bowl and two glass cups.

Description The gold bracteate is looped and a beaded wire was put along the edge of the disc on its front. Opposite the loop a section of the wire was replaced with a different type of beading. The loop has a broad middle ridge framed by two smaller ridges. Underneath the loop a triangle formed out of gold filigree wire ending in two spirals and filled with several S-shaped wires has been laid on the gold disc. Two similar S-shaped wires were attached outside the triangle next to each spiral. The bracteate is well preserved, but wire, loop and surface show signs of heavy wear. The die negative is clearly visible on the back. The motif is executed in high relief.

Motif An interlaced animal is shown from the right with its head turned backwards. The design is dissolved into disjointed features and a comparison with a similar D-bracteate animal, like the one on the four die-identical bracteates from Finglesham graves D3 and 203, *IK* 426,1 and 2, in a less dissolved version allows a better understanding of the different shapes. The large drop-shaped beak is underneath the loop. The head is surrounded by a semicircle with a rectangular bar decorated with small squares.

Neck and body are ribbon-shaped; crossing them are a front and a hind leg that are detached from the large looped shoulder and hip. The dot in the centre is the imprint of the hole from the compasses in the die. On the edge of the picture underneath the loop indicating the detached hip is a semicircular feature, possibly a human ear, and below the centre of the picture is an angled shape, probably representing a human leg with foot. The central image is surrounded first by a line of dots, then by a zone punched with narrow triangles crowned with small circles, followed by broader dotted triangles again crowned with small circles.

Parallels The main design is closely related to the most common D-bracteate animal on Kentish bracteates, including the bracteate from grave 204.⁵⁰

Dating The bracteate grave can be dated provisionally to the central 6th century,⁵¹ and the bracteate to the first half of the 6th century.⁵²

4. DENTON, KENT, D-BRACTEATE (FIG 4 AND 2b)⁵³
Museum of Canterbury, Inv.-Nr. CAN-CM:2005.121. (*IK* 581,2).
Diameter 21.99 mm, weight 2.58 gr, 89% gold content on the surface.

Find context April 2004 metal-detector find; nothing known of context.⁵⁴

Description The central motif is die-identical with the D-bracteate from Dover Buckland, grave 245 (*IK* 581,1) (Fig 2).⁵⁵ However, loop, border zone and the vertical axis differ. The loop is not in the same position as on the Dover Buckland bracteate, therefore the vertical axis is moved some 45° to the left. The bracteate has no border zone around the central image. The metal sheet is surrounded with a

⁵⁰ For further parallels, see cat no 1. Pesch 2007, 285 allocated the bracteate to her *Formularfamilie* D9a, comprising bracteates related to D9 but with more dissolved designs.

⁵¹ Webster 2001, 258; Axboe 2004, 330 either Kentish Phase III (530/40–560/70) or Phase IV (560/70–?580/90).

⁵² See cat no 1.

⁵³ Ager 2006b: treasure number 2004T154; Villanueva 2007, 67–8; PAS No KENT-F530Fo; Pesch 2007, 467.

⁵⁴ Andrew Richardson pers comm.

⁵⁵ Cat no 2.



FIG 4

Gold bracteate from Denton, front. Scale 2:1. Photograph provided courtesy of the Portable Antiquities Scheme Kent.

ripped gold wire that has been torn at the loop and was welded together. The loop made of a gold strap of three narrow ridges passes through the gap of the

surrounding wire and is welded together. Wire, loop and surface show traces of heavy wear. The die negative is clearly visible on the back.

Dating The bracteate can be dated as the die-identical bracteate Dover Buckland, grave 245 to the first half of the 6th century based on the assumption that the die was used for both pendants at the same time.

5. NORTHBOURNE, KENT, B-BRACTEATE (FIG 5)⁵⁶

Museum of Canterbury CANCM:2007.3. (IK 616).

Diameter 22.2 mm, weight 2.19 gr, c 91% gold content on the surface.

Find context September 2005 metal-detector find; no recorded archaeological context but the surrounding field has produced a large number of Anglo-Saxon metalwork examples of the kind typical



a



b



c

FIG 5

Gold bracteate from Northbourne. (a) Front. (b) Detail, the small bird. (c) Reconstruction drawing. Scale 2:1 (a, c only). Photographs provided courtesy of the Portable Antiquities Scheme Kent. Drawing by J Farrant.

⁵⁶ Marzinzik and Behr 2008: treasure number 2005T352; PAS No KENT-0163F3; Pesch 2007, 276–9.

for a cemetery of the 5th to 7th century.⁵⁷

Description The gold disc is framed with a beaded wire. The suspension loop has a central groove framed by three narrow ridges on either side. Loop and wire show some wear. The die negative is clearly visible on the back. Two sections along the edge were bent backwards by c 90°. The motif is executed in high relief.

Motif An interlaced animal is shown from the right with its head turned backwards. The head is underneath the loop, has a large drop-shaped beak and is surrounded by a semicircle with a rectangular bar decorated with small squares. Neck and reversed S-shaped body are ribbon-shaped. A front and a hind leg ending in curved pointed feet start from the large looped shoulder and hip. The front leg first crosses the neck, then twice the body and again the neck, the hind leg crosses the body twice. On the edge of the picture in front of the beak is a small bird and in the centre of the picture a human leg with foot. The bird has a round head with a pointed beak and single contour curved body. It is facing away from the head of the larger animal.

Parallels The motif belongs to the most common D-bracteate animals found on Anglo-Saxon bracteates and is thus a member of the same stylistically related cluster as the D-bracteate from Dover Buckland, grave 204.⁵⁸ The only unusual feature is the small bird, rare on English bracteates. The only examples have quite different designs: the A-bracteate from Brinton, Norfolk (*IK* 584)⁵⁹ (Fig 11) and the F-bracteate from Market Overton, Leicestershire (*IK* 123). While some D-bracteate animals found in Jutland and northern Germany are accompanied by

birds,⁶⁰ the little Northbourne-D bird is unique in its position and shape. Commonly a volute-shaped feature interpreted as a human ear lies in this position.

Dating On stylistic grounds the bracteate can be dated like the other Kentish D-bracteates to the first half of the 6th century.⁶¹

6. ST NICHOLAS AT WADE, KENT, GOLD FILIGREE PENDANT WITH D-BRACTEATE MOTIF (FIG 6)⁶²

Returned to finder and now owned privately. (*IK* 603).

Diameter 22 mm, weight 3.85 gr, c 84% gold content on the surface.

Find context August 2001 metal-detector find; no certain information about the precise location or the find context.

Description The pendant is technically not a bracteate, defined as a gold foil pendant that was stamped with a die, but a gold pendant with the gold wire application of a D-bracteate motif. Two interlaced animals were attached with three-stranded filigree wire. The suspension loop was torn off and is lost. Twisted beaded wire that is now partly loose has been put along the edge of the disc on its front. The surface is heavily worn. The back is plain except for a scroll of beaded wire that may have belonged to the loop.

Motif Two interlaced animals are shown, one from the right and one from the left. The arrangement is not quite symmetrical. Gold beads framed by granulates were put as eyes in the round heads. The open jaws of both animals cross each other several times in the lower half of the image, the ribbon-shaped bodies with hip and leg in the upper half. Several details

⁵⁷ Andrew Richardson pers comm.

⁵⁸ Cat no 1.

⁵⁹ Cat no 11.

⁶⁰ From Jutland in Grathe Hede (*IK* 434), Skovsborg (*IK* 513 and 514) and Vester Nebel (*IK* 561) and from Lower Saxony, Germany in Sievern (*IK* 506).

⁶¹ See cat no 1.

⁶² Webster 2003, 45; treasure number M&ME 459; PAS No KENT-6DF693.



FIG 6

Gold pendant from St Nicholas at Wade. (a) Front. (b) Drawing. Scale 2:1.
Photograph provided courtesy of the Portable Antiquities Scheme Kent. Drawing by J Farrant.

can be read in two ways as either one body part of one animal or another body part of the other animal.⁶³

Parallels Style and technique are unique among Anglo-Saxon finds. Gold pendants with D-bracteate motifs applied with gold filigree wire exist in Norway, in Teig, Rogaland and Søndre Dingstad, Østfold, and in Germany, in Groß Lüben, Mecklenburg, with its related motif of two interlaced animals.⁶⁴ Two more-or-less symmetrically arranged interlaced stamped animals feature also on several Scandinavian D-bracteates from Norway and Jutland.⁶⁵ A rather dissolved version was found nearby in Sarre, grave 4 (*IK* 493).

Dating On stylistic grounds the bracteate can be dated to the late first half/mid-6th century.⁶⁶

7. HAMBLEDEN, BUCKINGHAMSHIRE, F-BRACTEATE (FIG 7)⁶⁷

Buckinghamshire County Museum, Aylesbury, Inv.-Nr. AYBCM: 2006.206.1. (*IK* 608).

Diameter 30 mm, weight 4.9 gr, 82% gold content on the surface.

Find context January 2005 metal-detector find; no other early Anglo-Saxon finds were reported from the vicinity.

Description The metal sheet is bent at the upper and lower edge, the beaded gold wire surrounding the edge has come loose in some places, the loop made of four irregular and faint ridges is flattened and like the surrounding wire quite worn. The surface is scratched on front and back. There is a clear impression of the die at the back. The motif has been executed in relief and contour lines. The decision was taken at conservation not to unfold and

⁶³ Double readings of iconographic elements in Animal Style I are not uncommon, Leigh 1984.

⁶⁴ *IK* 536, 1 and 2 Teig, two pendants with identical central images but different border zones, Barfod Carlsen and Kristoffersen 2004; *IK* 586 Søndre Dingstad, Astrup and Martens 1998; and *IK* 438 Groß Lüben, Axboe 1982, 81–2.

⁶⁵ From Norway *IK* 437 Grindheim, Hordland, *IK* 447 Holte and *IK* 460 Kydland, Rogaland, and from Jutland *IK* 530 Stenildvad.

⁶⁶ Webster 2003, 45 suggested second half of the 6th century but that appears to be a rather late date for an Animal Style I motif.

⁶⁷ Ager 2008: treasure number 2005T14; PAS No BUC-A2D047; Pesch 2007, 231, 239.



FIG 7
 Gold bracteate from Hambleden (a) Front. (b) Back. (c) Reconstruction drawing. Scale 2:1.
 Photographs Buckinghamshire County Museum Conservation Service. Drawing by J Farrant.

flatten the bracteate but retain the condition in which it was found. That is why some features of the design were not accessible for the description and the drawing.

Motif The quadruped animal with a worm-like creature that appears to bite it in the back is an unusual motif and so far unknown in the bracteate corpus. The quadruped animal has a bell-shaped head, open mouth, framed round eye and a large, pointed ear. A short curved neck and breast are partitioned by a dotted breast strap from the body, which tapers

off at the hip. A large front leg stretches forward and ends in a large flat foot. A second front leg ending in two toes and a hind leg, visible only from the back (Fig 7b), is designed as single curved contour lines. Both are pointing forward. The U-formed loop on the back of the quadruped is readable as the oval head of a worm with an oval eye. Its body curves, ending in a spiral-shaped hip and framed by contour lines. One leg is shown parallel to the body with its foot with two toes above the back of the quadruped next to the head. Lines of dots are alongside the body of the worm, underneath the mouth

of the quadruped along the front foot and underneath the hind leg, again only visible from the back. The central image is surrounded by a circular line and an undecorated border zone.

Parallels The quadruped animal has close stylistic parallels with the animals that have been found on all the C-bracteates in England,⁶⁸ and on the one other F-bracteate from an English findspot in Market Overton (*IK* 123).⁶⁹ The quadrupeds are stylised and characterised by a bell-shaped head with a round eye, pointed ear and open mouth. The curved neck and the body are at right angle with a dotted contour. Three legs are shown. On Hambleton the worm-like creature takes the place of the stylised anthropomorphic head. On the F-bracteate from Market Overton a bird replaced the head.

Dating On the basis of the stylistic similarities with the C-bracteate animals it is possible to date the bracteate to the latest

phase of production, second quarter of the 6th century.⁷⁰

8. ESSEX/HERTFORDSHIRE BORDER, COPPER-ALLOY DIE WITH D-BRACTEATE MOTIF (FIG 8)⁷¹

Permanent loan in Saffron Walden Museum. (*IK* 609).

Diameter 27.3 mm, thickness 2.7 mm, weight 9.9 gr.

Find context The die was found in 2005 in north-western Essex with a metal-detector. The finder declined to give any further information on the find context or on the precise location.⁷²

Description The well-preserved die has an even green patina, some slight signs of wear and a few chippings along the edge on front and back. The back is plain. The engraved segments of the design are in negative relief, partly with central grooving. Like all bracteate dies it was a matrix with which a bracteate was stamped on the front.⁷³



FIG 8

Copper-alloy die from Essex/Hertfordshire border. (a) Front. (b) Drawing. Scale 2:1. Photograph courtesy of The Portable Antiquities Scheme Essex and Colchester Museums. Drawing by R Massey-Ryan.

⁶⁸ See cat no 14. According to Mackeprang 1952, 41–2: ‘Den vestsandinaviske Gruppe’.

⁶⁹ Pesch 2007, 230–3 with *Formularfamilie* C16.

⁷⁰ Axboe 2004, 141–2; Hines 1984, 214 had dated them in a broader timeframe from 500 to 550.

⁷¹ PAS No ESS-13B5E6 and PAS Annual Report 2005–06, 66; McDonald 2006; Axboe 2007, 15.

⁷² Caroline McDonald pers comm.

⁷³ Axboe 2004, 1–2; 2007, 14–16.

Motif An interlaced but dissolved D-bracteate animal is seen possibly from the left. No head is discernable. That is why it is not possible to determine the vertical axis of the picture. The feature below the chipped area may be the neck, the body is disjointed, and curved segments may be identified as legs and jaws in comparison with less dissolved D-bracteate animals.

Parallels The design can be related to the type of animal that was most common on D-bracteates.⁷⁴ The representation has no close parallels among the several known D-bracteates with rather dissolved representations of an interlaced animal.

Dating The date of this die must be contemporary with the production of D-bracteates, sometime in the first half of the 6th century. The far-reaching disintegration of the design is not necessarily an indication for a late date in the sequence.

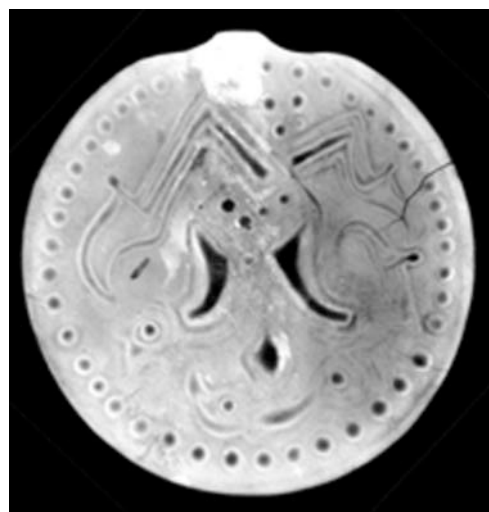
9. EAST LEAKE, NOTTINGHAMSHIRE, SILVER C-BRACTEATE (FIG 9)⁷⁵

No information about its current whereabouts is available. (*IK* 602).

Diameter and weight cannot be ascertained because the bracteate was lifted during the excavations in one block and has not yet been restored. The only available photograph is an X-ray image.

Find context The bracteate was found during professional excavations before April 2003 in a N/S-aligned grave together with two annular brooches and some beads in an incompletely excavated cemetery.⁷⁶

Description No edging wire can be discerned; the loop is underneath the front leg of the quadruped. That means, when worn the image was 'upside down'. The edge of the flan appears to be quite worn on both sides of the loop.



a



b

FIG 9

Silver bracteate from East Leake. (a) X-ray of the front. (b) Drawing, rotated by 180°. Without scale. Photograph *K Leahy*. Drawing by *P Haefs*.

⁷⁴ Cat no 1.

⁷⁵ Kevin Leahy has kindly called attention to the existence of the bracteate and provided the X-ray image. *Pesch* 2007, 230–3, 237.

⁷⁶ Kevin Leahy pers comm.

Motif The description of the motif is based on the X-ray image and has to be provisional. An anthropomorphic head is placed over a large quadruped, here seen from the right. Head and animal are highly stylised. The anthropomorphic head is rhombic, quite small and has a broad nose. The hairstyle ends in a round curl in the nape; over the forehead the hair merges into the round head of a bird with a round eye and a curved beak. The head of the quadruped is bell-shaped with a large round eye, open mouth and pointed ear. The broad neck is curved. A triangular breast and body strap with four dots separates the neck from the narrowing trunk ending in one hind leg with a large curved and pointed foot stretching forward. Two front legs are placed underneath the body but are disconnected from it. They are angled, with one leg stretching forward and the other backward, both ending in large curved and pointed feet. A line of dots surrounds the central image.

Parallels The bracteate belongs to the same cluster of stylistically related C-bracteates as the find from Bridlington area (Fig 14).⁷⁷ Within this cluster the closest parallel to the quadruped can be found on the F-bracteate from the nearby findspot in Market Overton (*IK* 123), which has similarly detached legs underneath the body ending in large feet. On Market Overton, however, a bird replaced the anthropomorphic head. The bird has a round head with a large round eye, curved beak and pointed ear. Its body is crescent shaped with a small wing in the back, a three-feather tail and a leg ending in a foot. The shapes of the anthropomorphic head on East Leake and the bird on Market Overton are closely related.

Dating The bracteate can be dated on stylistic grounds to around the second quarter of the 6th century.⁷⁸

10. BILLINGFORD, NORFOLK, BRONZE DISC WITH D-BRACTEATE MOTIF (FIG 10)⁷⁹
BM London, Inv.-Nr. 2000,1110.1. (*IK* 589).

Diameter between 28.4 and 29.9 mm, thickness 3.2 mm, made of leaded bronze.

Find context Single find in 1999 with a metal-detector from a field north-east of the village of Billingford that has been used quite often for metal-detector rallies.⁸⁰ There are no records about any finds made together with the disc or in its immediate vicinity. Metal-detectors and some limited excavations in adjacent fields have identified several early and middle Anglo-Saxon objects including brooches, pots, loom weights, pendants and pins.⁸¹ Still, it is difficult to judge whether these finds and the bronze disc came from unknown ploughed-up graves or, another possibility, from a so far undetected Anglo-Saxon settlement site. Evidence for a Roman settlement where metalworking took place and a middle Anglo-Saxon iron-working site has been found in Billingford.⁸²

Description The disc is well preserved with some chipping along the edge. There is little corrosion. The back is plain. No signs indicate that the disc was mounted or looped. The disc was made of leaded bronze with a trace of zinc, possibly indicating the reuse of scrap metal.⁸³ It was not a reused Roman coin because the zinc content is far too low for a Roman sestertius and the disc was not engraved,

⁷⁷ Cat no 14.

⁷⁸ Axboe 2004, 141–2; Mackeprang 1952, 41–2.

⁷⁹ The disc first appeared in *The Searcher* January 2000, 41, a magazine for metal-detector users, where Leslie Webster, British Museum, discovered its picture and a short note. Axboe 2004, 3–4; 2007, 15–16.

⁸⁰ Andrew Rogerson pers comm.

⁸¹ SMR 25939, 17229 and in the neighbouring parish of Foxley, close to the boundary with Billingford, an early 7th-century peltaic mount with bird heads on either side (SMR 33866), the foot of a cruciform brooch (SMR 31561) and a wrist-clasp (SMR 28911) were found.

⁸² The Roman settlement site and inhumation cemetery have been identified by stray finds including metalworking debris over many years and some excavations in 1991/92, 1995 and 1997; Frere 1992; Esmond Cleary 1998. The Roman roadside settlement was situated at the crossing of the river Wensum. During these excavations, several features and finds dating to the early and middle Anglo-Saxon periods have been made identifying an early Anglo-Saxon *grubenhäus* and a middle Anglo-Saxon ironworking site, SMR 7206.

⁸³ Meeks 2001. I thank Nigel Meeks for giving me access to his unpublished report about the Billingford disc.



FIG 10

Bronze disk from Billingsford. (a) Front. (b) Drawing. Scale 2:1.
 Photograph The Trustees of The British Museum. Drawing by J Farrant.

but disc and design were cast from an original carved wax model.⁸⁴ The design was carefully executed and the piece appears to have been completed.

Motif A zoomorphic design with elements characteristic of Animal Style I is shown.

The animal head and the curvilinear features are recognisable as a rather dissolved design of an animal known from D-bracteates. A comparison with more easily readable D-bracteates helps to figure out the animal on the Billingsford disc. On the Kentish D-bracteates from

⁸⁴ Meeks 2001.

Bifrons, grave 63 (*IK* 411), in a more complete version, and from Sarre, grave 4 (*IK* 495), in a more dissolved version, animals are shown from the right. They are characterised by their ribbon-shaped body with interlaced front and hind legs. From their U-shaped heads that are turned backwards a large beak is detached whose upper and lower parts are crossed over like a pair of scissors. On the disc from Billingsford the animal is mirror-image to these two examples showing it from the left with its head turned backwards. The head is the most distinctive feature, U-shaped ending on both sides in round curls with a line closing it off. The oval eye is lined by contours. The shoulder and the hip are formed as open loops that are not linked with the neck; the body or the legs are indicated as several straight and bent shapes, and are created by two parallel and tapered engraved lines. In the loops one or two dots are depressed, comparable to the dots in shoulder and hip on Driffeld-D (*IK* 422), Humberside. A third loop to the right of the head indicates part of the open jaws. The intricate structure of the more complete examples of the D-bracteate animal, which shows the repeated crossing of the legs and the beak with the neck and body of the animal, has been lost in this simplified version. By analogy to similar images, the feature in the centre of the image can be interpreted as a stylised human foot/leg that occurs frequently on D-bracteates.⁸⁵ Along the edge of most of the disc the field is surrounded with depressed dots.

Parallels The design, albeit rather dissolved, belongs to a large group of D-bracteates that share a comparable design.⁸⁶ These are found predominantly in Kent and in Jutland, with some further examples from Normandy and Frisia. The closest parallel for the unusual head

ending in a round curl and with a closing line, however, came from the gold bracteate in Blackeney Freshes, some 24 km north of Billingsford, also in Norfolk (Fig 13).⁸⁷

Dating The disc can be dated on stylistic grounds to the first half of the 6th century.

Was the disc a die for a bracteate? Only two dies for migration-period bracteates are known so far; the first was found in Postgården in northern Jutland in 1990,⁸⁸ and the second in an unknown find location on the Essex/Hertfordshire border in 2005.⁸⁹ Both were made from copper alloy and show partly dissolved versions of D-bracteate animals. Neither design is known from a pendant. The animals are shown in negative relief and are depicted, 'by a single line in rounded relief'.⁹⁰ It is unlikely that patrices, stamps that are convex and positive, in contrast to matrices that are concave and negative, were used to produce bracteates, considering that the back of migration-period bracteates always show a much flatter relief than the front, thus indicating their production with a matrix. This observation, however, causes some problems when trying to identify the disc from Billingsford as a bracteate die. Assuming it was a matrix the dots surrounding the central picture and the dots within the picture would appear raised as expected from the knowledge of other D-bracteates. The features identified as parts of the body of the animal, however, would appear as raised contour lines bordering the body parts that would be at the same level as the base. No D-bracteate was designed in that way: the motifs tend to be in high relief often with a central groove. This could still be achieved, assuming now that the piece was not completed when lost or discarded, by

⁸⁵ For example, cat no 1: Dover Buckland, grave 204 (*IK* 580).

⁸⁶ Pesch 2007, 286–8: *Formularfamilie* 10 and 10a.

⁸⁷ Cat no 13. The only other example of a similar head with a closing line but without the curls has been found on the six die-identical D-bracteates from Års, Dover, Nørre Hvam and Skovsborg, all in Jutland (*IK* 400). Other features of the animal are also quite similar.

⁸⁸ Axboe 1993; 2004, 3.

⁸⁹ Cat no 8; Axboe 2007, 15.

⁹⁰ Axboe 1993, 380.

engraving the disc within the contour lines. However, in that case the dots in the shoulder and hip loops would disappear. The head of the animal too would pose a problem, because in this part of the design the relief corresponds with heads typical for a D-bracteate and not its reverse as required for a matrix. The head is placed in a small sunken field and would be suitable for a patrix.⁹¹

These considerations do not mean necessarily that the Billingford disc was not used or intended as a bracteate die but the resulting pendant would be atypical. In that case it might be another testimony for particular Anglo-Saxon developments of bracteate production that were expressed not only in terms of new iconographic details and designs but also in technical features.

11. BRINTON, NORFOLK, A-BRACTEATE (FIG 11)⁹²

Norwich Castle Museum, on loan No L2008.160. (*IK* 584).

Diameter 31 mm, weight 2.76 gr.

Find context The pendant was found while searching with a metal-detector in August or September 1996.⁹³ While there are no further reports of finds in the immediate vicinity,⁹⁴ Roman, Anglo-Saxon and later medieval potsherds are known from within a wider radius.

Description The bracteate is generally in a good state of preservation despite the missing suspension loop. The design is in low relief framed mostly with single contour lines. The beaded wire around the outer edge of the disc is partly detached. On the back are clear imprints of the model and impression of textile.⁹⁵ A small boss underneath the lower eyelid is the imprint of the hole by the pair of compasses in the die.⁹⁶ The slight pit just to

the left of it appears to be the result of the pair of compasses used to prepare the round gold foil.

Motif A large anthropomorphic head in profile is shown with a stylised bird in front of it and an anthropomorphic figure underneath it lying on his stomach. Head, bird and figure are shown from the left. It is so far a unique motif among the bracteate images. The bracteate is classified as an A-bracteate because of the large anthropomorphic head. The head is comparable with heads on several A- and C-bracteates; however, the quadruped that is commonly placed under the head on C-bracteates is here replaced by the small figure in profile. The hairstyle of the large head consists of parallel strands of hair framed by a ribbon decorated with dots, echoing the image of the diadem worn by the Roman emperor whose head on Roman coins and medallions served as model for the bracteate images.⁹⁷ The hair ends at the nape in a bird's head with a bent beak and a round eye framed with a hatched border. The eye is round with a contour line around the pupil and a hatched lower eyelid. The nose is short and the mouth small above a chin and cheek beard. A bird, possibly half hidden behind the large human head, is shown in front of the head. Its beak is bent, its eye round and framed by a square-shaped head. Neck and body are sharply angled, in broad relief and framed by double contour lines. The beak and large claw are on the hair of the lying figure. The face of the small figure is facing the lower edge of the image. Its hair is in strands. He is wearing a moustache shown in hatched lines. The round eye has a pupil surrounded by a contour line, the small nose is pointed, and the mouth appears to be open with a short

⁹¹ Axboe 2004, 3–4.

⁹² Christensen 1997, 32–3; Hauck 1998, 34–5; Lamm et al 2000, 49–51; Axboe 2004, 201, 286.

⁹³ This date was before the Treasure Act 1996 came into effect on 24 September 1997. That is why the bracteate was not included in the TAR or the PAS database.

⁹⁴ A 'very close search in immediate surroundings failed to produce any other finds', Rogerson 1996.

⁹⁵ As shown by the radiograph, Helen Geake pers comm.

⁹⁶ A common feature on numerous bracteates, Axboe 1982, 16–17.

⁹⁷ Axboe and Kromann 1992, 279–81.



a



b



c

FIG 11

Gold bracteate from Brinton. (a) Front. (b) Back with textile imprints. (c) Drawing. Scale 2:1.
Photographs Norfolk Landscape Archaeology, Norfolk Museums Service. Drawing by M Lange.

line symbolising breath. He is wearing large jewellery on his neck shown as a line of dots framed by double contour lines. The round left shoulder with a short arm ends in a large hand with sideways-pointing thumb. Two lines above the legs could be a belt or the edge of a top of a costume. The two legs are parallel and angled ending in small feet. There are three dots aligned in front of the hand of the small figure and a relief triangle

above his feet. The central image is framed by the impression of the edge of the die, and the border zone is decorated with small stamped semicircles opening towards the centre. Hauck described the small lying figure as Balder who is collapsed and dying. He linked the representation with the text from the Poetic Edda (*Völuspá* 31f) that narrates Balder's fall and death. Thus, the image belongs to the same theme as the C-bracteates where

Balder's foal is shown injured, foretelling Balder's death.⁹⁸ In this interpretation, the quadruped and the small figure are exchangeable iconographic variants.

Parallels Despite being a unique motif among bracteate images, several A- and C-bracteates show parallels in style and motif. A group of A-bracteates from S and SW Norway, SW Sweden including Öland and Zealand (Denmark) is characterised by large anthropomorphic heads with hairstyles in parallel strands or hatched patterns ending in bird's heads with rounded beaks and oval eyes.⁹⁹ The shape of the face, the nose and mouth are comparable with the Brinton head, the eyes, however, are always oval. In the position of the bird on the Brinton bracteate a quadruped that has been described as a boar appears, and underneath the head a triangular-shaped bust ending on both sides in further birds' heads with rounded beaks is represented. Shape and stylistic details of the large head link closely to the A-bracteate from Geltorf, Schleswig-Holstein (Germany) (*IK* 255); however, instead of the bird and the anthropomorphic figure a swastika was placed in front of the head and a runic inscription underneath it. Additional anthropomorphic figures on bracteates dominated by a large head are quite rare. However, on several bracteates small heads and figures appear. They are also stylistically related to the head on Brinton-A. Among the C-bracteates two pendants from Hjørunde Mark, Zealand (*IK* 78 and 79) and one from Bolbro, Funen (Denmark) (*IK* 29) show heads that have comparable hairstyles with parallel strands and ribbons decorated with dots, ending in bird's heads with curved beaks and round eyes, on *IK* 79 even framed with a hatched border. The eyes are oval-shaped and only the face on *IK* 79 has a dotted beard along chin and cheek, whereas the other two faces have moustaches. Apart from the small quadrupeds underneath the heads in front of it, a bird is facing the

head on Bolbro-C (*IK* 29), whereas on one of the Hjørunde Mark bracteates a small anthropomorphic head with short hair and a round eye is placed in front of the large head (*IK* 78) and on the other one (*IK* 79) between the large head and the quadruped. In addition to the small head, a small male figure holding a sword in his left hand having pulled it from its scabbard on the right side is shown in the position in front of the large head. The figure has short hair, a large round eye, a dotted chin and cheek beard, large hands with splayed thumbs, two arm rings on the left arm and two ankle rings on each leg. On another bracteate from Zealand, from the area of Esrom Sø (*IK* 50), a small male figure is placed in front of the large anthropomorphic head. This time he is shown with a hairstyle in parallel strands and an oval eye, wearing a hatched tunic-type dress and two arm rings on each arm. In the right hand he is holding a staff and in the left hand a small round object. The hairstyle of the large head is hatched and ends in a bird's head; the eye is oval. A small anthropomorphic figure is also placed in front of the large head on the C-bracteate from Sankt Ibs Vej, Roskilde, Zealand (*IK* 585) with his left arm raised to the face and his thumb in the mouth. The large head, however, is stylistically quite different from the head on Brinton. These examples of A- and C-bracteates from various parts of Scandinavia show that there are stylistic parallels to the large head on the bracteate from Brinton. A small male figure in stylistically quite distinct variants appears on several bracteates from the island of Zealand. They are never in the position underneath the large head but always in front. Still, they too may represent the same story.

Dating As the bracteate is without archaeological context, it can only be dated on stylistic grounds. As a recent find it was not included in Axboe's correspondence analysis. However, considering the diagnostic details of the large and the small

⁹⁸ Lamm et al 2000, 48–9.

⁹⁹ Pesch 2007, 72–4; *Formularfamilie* A1; Hauck 1988b, 206–7.

heads that were decisive for the placement within the seriation it is possible to place the bracteate within Axboe's groups H₂, second half, or more likely H₃, that is last quarter of the 5th or first quarter of the 6th century.¹⁰⁰

12. BINHAM (HOLT AREA), NORFOLK, B-BRACTEATE (FIG 12)¹⁰¹
Norwich Castle Museum No 2005.756A.
(IK 604).

Diameter: 44 mm, weight 6.93 gr, gold content on the surface 83%.

Find context A single find in June 2004 with a metal-detector on cultivated land about 10 cm deep; there are no further details about the find context or any additional finds.¹⁰²

Description The bracteate is well preserved, yet there are some signs of wear, especially at the wire surrounding the metal flan and on the surface in the area of the hair. The flan is dented, bent and the surface has been scratched, especially in the area of the runic inscription. Some of the scratches may be recent. The wire along the edge is loose nearly everywhere and it is torn away at the top where the now missing loop would be expected. There are no signs of soldering of the loop. A second wire was used for repairs. The motif is partly executed in relief with contour lines, including the head, body and arms of the man and the bodies of the two animals, partly in single contour lines, notably the animal legs and jaws and the hands and feet of the man.

Motif A standing male figure in profile is shown fighting two quadruped animals, one in front of him and one at his back. The male figure has a round hairstyle

with strands of hair, a round eye, broad nose, drop-shaped ear, small mouth and marked chin. Of his dress, only a belt is shown. Both arms are outstretched, the fingers of the left hand end between the jaws of the animal in front, and in his right hand he holds a sword with pommel and guard facing upwards ready to strike. The animal behind the male figure is seen from the right with its head turned backwards. It has a small round head with a round eye and pointed ear. The long open mouth has slightly curved jaws. Neck and body are shown bent ending in a pointed hip with a hind leg that has two long toes appearing to attack the man from behind as does the front leg that crosses the right arm of the man, with its two toes reaching towards the nape of his neck. The animal in front of the man is seen from the left with a round head with round eye and pointed ear. The large mouth with its open curved jaws nearly reaches the nose of the man. Neck and body are curved ending in a pointed hip. Front and hind leg have two long toes that point towards the man. The border zone is decorated with two concentric rows, the first one decorated with punched triangles crowned with dots and pointing outwards, and the second one with equal-armed crosses set in square fields.

Inscription The bracteate has a rare runic inscription.¹⁰³ In front of the forehead of the male figure are four runic letters written from left to right. Only the first letter **w** and the fourth letter **t** are unambiguously legible. The second and third letters are scratched and can only tentatively be recognised as possibly **a** and either **i** or **t**. Hines has cautiously suggested it to read **w a i t** and translate as, 'the 1st or 3rd person singular present indicative of the

¹⁰⁰ Axboe 2004, 126–37 and pers comm. The diagnostic features include: the hairstyle that is bent upwards ending in a bird's head, the line of dots framing the hairstyle, hair in parallel strands, round eye with pupil and hatched lower eyelid. The last feature only appears in H₃.

¹⁰¹ Ashley and Ager 2006 (as Holt area): treasure number 2004T297; Pesch 2005, 7; 2007, 120–2; Norfolk Museums and Archaeology Service 2005.

¹⁰² According to the Norfolk Landscape Archaeology Historic Environment Record only very few finds have been made in the parish of Binham that can be dated to the early Anglo-Saxon period whereas Roman and middle and late Anglo-Saxon activities are clearly visible.

¹⁰³ It is only the third bracteate found in England that has a runic inscription, Hines 1997, 393; Page 1999, 180, 183–5.



FIG 12

Gold bracteate from Binham. (a) Front. (b) Drawing. Scale 2:1.

Photograph Norfolk Landscape Archaeology, Norfolk Museums Service. Drawing by J Farrant.

common and familiar preterit-present verb, Old English “witan”: to know. It would therefore imply “[I] know”, or more likely “[he] (or she or it) knows”.¹⁰⁴ It is not a sequence of runic letters known from any other bracteate.

Parallels The motif of this bracteate was previously known from a hoard find of seven die-identical bracteates of an unknown findspot, probably in Schleswig-Holstein, Germany. Found before 1824, the literature refers to them as ‘Hamburg’-B (*IK* 71). The image of this die is nearly identical to the die used for the Binham pendant but mirror-inverted. Several minor differences indicate that it was not made from a cast. The main difference is that there is no runic inscription; instead, a dot is placed in front of the male figure.¹⁰⁵ The twisted wire placed on the edge of the flan fits well into Axboe’s group of wires that occur predominantly in northern Germany and only very occasionally in other areas including Jutland and Funen, Denmark, and on two examples from Kent, the D-bracteates from Finglesham, grave D3 (*IK* 425) and Monkton (*IK* 467).¹⁰⁶ Similar stamps in the border zone are known from other bracteates. The equal-armed crosses set in square fields have been found on several bracteates from western Sweden and Denmark,¹⁰⁷ whereas the closest parallels for the triangle with the dot are on various Anglo-Saxon finds, including Longbridge-C (*IK* 114), Warwickshire, Sarre-D, grave 4 (*IK* 496) and Dover Buckland-D, grave 250 (*IK* 582).¹⁰⁸ In 1999 a bracteate with the same motif

but in chip-carving technique and in a more simplified style was found in Derenburg-Meerenstieg II, grave 54 (*IK* 599), Sachsen-Anhalt, Germany, in an area that belonged to the early medieval kingdom of Thuringia.¹⁰⁹ The grave can be dated between the late 5th and first third of the 6th century.¹¹⁰

Dating There is no datable archaeological context for the Binham bracteate. The close similarity with ‘Hamburg’-B suggests that Binham is of a similar date. According to Axboe’s correspondence analysis ‘Hamburg’-B belonged to phase H2, that is the last quarter of the 5th or early 6th century.¹¹¹ Ashley and Ager dated it to the late 5th or early 6th century.

13. BLACKENEY FRESHES, NORFOLK, D-BRACTEATE (FIG 13)¹¹²
Norwich Castle Museum, Inv no L2003.2. (*IK* 601).
Diameter 41 mm, weight 7.67 gr.

Find context The bracteate was found by metal-detector during an archaeological evaluation that was undertaken on the site of proposed sea defences at Blakeney Freshes, Cley next the Sea during February and March 2003. It was a single find in trench 51, ‘within an undisturbed sandy deposit and there was no apparent cut feature’.¹¹³ A few ‘medieval’ and post-medieval potsherds were found in the vicinity but the bracteate remained the only early Anglo-Saxon find on the site.

Description The bracteate is well preserved, although it was slightly bent when found and had some light signs of wear, mostly on the loop. The loop was formed

¹⁰⁴ John Hines pers comm.

¹⁰⁵ Other differences include details of the costume on ‘Hamburg-B’ on wrist and knees that are not visible on Binham.

¹⁰⁶ Axboe 1982, 39–40.

¹⁰⁷ *IK* 12 area of Alingsås-C, Västergötland and *IK* 241 Eskatorp-F, Halland in Sweden, *IK* 273 area of Hjørring-A, northern Jutland, *IK* 471,1 Store Anst-D, western Jutland and *IK* 455 Killerup-D, Funen.

¹⁰⁸ Variations of triangles with dots are also on the Norwegian bracteates from *IK* 209 Vindingland-C, Rogaland and *IK* 318 Romul-C, Sortrondelag.

¹⁰⁹ Müller 2002, 78–9; Schlenker 2005.

¹¹⁰ Schlenker 2005.

¹¹¹ Axboe 2004, 118 and Tafel D in position 105.

¹¹² Penn and Gannon 2005; treasure number 2003T35; PAS No NMS2259; Penn 2003 (with thanks to Richenda Goffin who made this report available to me); Pesch 2007, 292.

¹¹³ Birks 2003, 6.



FIG 13

Gold bracteate from Blackeney Freshes. (a) Front. (b) Drawing. Scale 2:1.
Photograph Norfolk Landscape Archaeology, Norfolk Museums Service. Drawing by M Footitt.

of three wider ridges each framed by two narrower ones. No wire was put around the edge of the flan, but small triangles punched along the rim on the front of the pendant may have served as an imitation of a beaded wire. There is a clear impression of the die negative on the back. The motif was designed mainly in high relief with central grooves, the legs are single contour lines and the head is framed by a contour line.

Motif A typical interlaced D-bracteate animal is seen from the right with its head bent backwards. The design is to some degree dissolved. The head is underneath the loop framing a large round eye with a semicircular front and a curved nape with looping ends, the lower one finishing in a spiral. The large jaws are shaped like a pair of scissors and are unconnected to the head but slightly shifted to the left crossing the body and ending at the hip. The long neck and reversed S-shaped body are in form of a ribbon. Shoulder and hip are formed as large open loops, and the legs are unconnected, both crossing the body and ending in bent feet. The small boss in the centre of the pendant is the impression of the hole from a pair of compasses used on the die. Next to the small central boss, the short slightly bent single contour line may be a reduced version of a human foot and leg, as a comparison with thematically linked designs suggest. This detail is quite common on D-bracteates. The central image is surrounded by small irregularly punched triangles pointing inwards and a ring of equally irregularly punched small circles, while the outer zone is undecorated.¹¹⁴

Parallels The motif of an interlaced, ribbon-shaped animal with large jaws in the form of a pair of scissors occurs on a number of bracteates that have been found in Kent, Normandy, Jutland and Frisia.¹¹⁵ The head is unusual and has its closest parallels on the bronze disc also found in Norfolk, at Billingford (Fig 10),¹¹⁶ and on six die-identical bracteates from Jutland (*IK* 400, 1–4). This observation confirms links between Kentish and Anglian D-bracteates that Hines has already observed with the earlier find from West Stow (*IK* 565) in Suffolk.¹¹⁷ Bracteates without a wire surrounding the flan so far only come from England and the Baltic island of Gotland, Sweden.¹¹⁸ However, the ‘wireless’ bracteates in Gotland do not give the impression of a beaded wire with punch marks along the edge. Most bracteates without a framing wire are Anglian, and only one example comes from Kent. The bracteate from Sarre, grave 4 (*IK* 496) has a thicker edge with little notches.¹¹⁹

Dating There is no datable context for the bracteate from Blakeney Freshes. In analogy with the D-bracteates from Kent it can be dated to the first half of the 6th century.

14. BRIDLINGTON AREA, HUMBERSIDE, C-BRACTEATE (FIG 14)¹²⁰

East Riding Museum Service, Treasure House, Beverley, ERYMS:2006.79. (*IK* 607).

Diameter 36 mm, weight 4.99 gr, 85% gold content on the surface.

¹¹⁴ Similar circles were punched in the border zone of the Kentish D-bracteates from Finglesham, grave D3 (*IK* 426, 1) and Bifrons, grave 63 (*IK* 411).

¹¹⁵ Pesch 2007, 286–8; *Formularfamilie* D10. In Kent: *IK* 411 Bifrons, grave 63, *IK* 494 and *IK* 495 Sarre, grave 4, *IK* 456 King's Field; in Normandy: *IK* 440 Hérouvillette, grave 11, which may also be a Kentish bracteate; in Jutland: *IK* 471, 1 and 2 Nørre Hvam and Store Anst, *IK* 562 Vester Nebel, *IK* 521 Snorup and *IK* 400, 1–4 Ars, Dover, Nørre Hvam and Skovsborg; in Frisia: *IK* 405, 1 and 2 Wurt Achlum.

¹¹⁶ Cat no 10.

¹¹⁷ Hines 1984, 215.

¹¹⁸ Lamm and Axboe 1989, 466–71; Wicker 1992, 158 used this observation to suggest exchange and contact between eastern Sweden and Anglian England several generations before some of the spectacular finds from Sutton Hoo mound 1 pointed to links between these areas.

¹¹⁹ No framing wire and no imitation of it are on the bracteates from *IK* 565 West Stow, Suffolk, *IK* 448 Hornsea, and *IK* 422 Driffild, both Humberside, *IK* 388 Welbeck Hill, grave 14, Lincolnshire, *IK* 306 Morning Thorpe, grave 80, Norfolk, *IK* 123 Market Overton, and *IK* 285 Jaywick Sands, Essex, whereas punched imitations but no wires have been found on the pendants from *IK* 114 Longbridge, Warwickshire, *IK* 607 Bridlington area (cat no 14), *IK* 387 Welbeck Hill, grave 52, and *IK* 288 Kirmington, both Lincolnshire.

¹²⁰ Ager 2006a: treasure no 2004T436; PAS No NCL-C85065; Walton 2005, 51–2; Pesch 2007, 230–3.



FIG 14

Gold bracteate from Bridlington area. (a) Front, left side. (b) Front, right side.

(c) Reconstruction drawing. Scale 2:1. *Photographs courtesy of The Portable Antiquities Scheme North and East Yorkshire. Drawing by J Farrant.*

Find context November 2004, single find by metal-detector at a depth of c 15 cm in ploughsoil; no report of further Anglo-Saxon finds in the area.¹²¹

Description The bracteate is quite well preserved, despite being folded, and the loop and a small part of the edge have been torn off and are missing. Presumably

¹²¹ Steve Llewellyn and Philippa Walton pers comm.

only after the loop was lost, the pendant was folded three times. Left folded during conservation,¹²² not all parts of the design are visible to be described. The die negative is visible on the back and has been used to reconstruct the design. The pendant has no framing wire; instead small punched triangles along the edge on the front appear to imitate a beaded wire. The motif is executed in relief with contour lines.

Motif A large anthropomorphic head is shown above a rather stylised quadruped animal, both in profile looking towards the right. The head has a round eye, large square nose, and the short lines on chin and cheek are a beard. Under the nose are five thin lines perhaps indicating breath. The chin is pointed. The hairstyle ends in a round coil at the back and in a bird's head with a long neck and bent pointed beak above the forehead. The animal has a small bell-shaped head with a large round eye, bent pointed ear and wide-open mouth. The neck is narrow and curved, and along its lower side are several dots. Neck and trunk meet at nearly right angles with a dotted strap. Hip and hind leg are concealed in the folds of the gold foil. One front leg is visible from the back of the pendant (Fig 14b). It is stretched to the front ending in a hoof with three round features. By analogy with the C-bracteate from Kirmington in Lincolnshire (*IK* 288) that shows the same motif, it is possible to recreate a second front leg stretching backwards and to complete the hind leg with a hoof. In the drawing these reconstructions have been added tentatively. The image is surrounded by a line of dots that were part of the die and are spaced quite irregularly. Two circles separate the outer zone, which is decorated with individually punched triangular stamps formed by a ring surrounded by three small dots.

Parallels This design is closely related to a cluster of C-bracteates that show a distinctly western prevalence within the bracteate distribution area. They have been found over a wide area with findspots along the North Sea coast from SW Norway, western Sweden, Jutland, northern Germany to Frisia and England.¹²³ All C-bracteates found in England belong to this cluster.¹²⁴ Among the bracteates of this cluster, Bridlington area-C is particularly closely related to the C-bracteate from Kirmington (*IK* 288), a findspot in close proximity in Lincolnshire. The similarities between these two bracteates are greater than with other members of this cluster in terms of some design details, which include the shape of the animal's front leg hoof, the bird's head in which the hairstyle ends and the dotted strap of the animal. Both bracteates have similar punches along the edge imitating a surrounding gold wire.

Dating There is no datable context for this bracteate. The close stylistic similarities with the other C-bracteates in England, especially the one from Kirmington, suggest a similar date in the latest phase of bracteate production in the second quarter of the 6th century.¹²⁵

15. NEAR SHALFLEET, ISLE OF WIGHT, D-BRACTEATE (FIG 15)¹²⁶
Isle of Wight Heritage Service, IWCMS: 2008T127. (*IK* 624).
Diameter 22 mm, weight 1.88 gr.

Find context February 2008 metal-detector find from ploughsoil; no reports of further finds in immediate vicinity. However, there are numerous early medieval finds from the general area, including an Anglo-Saxon S-shaped brooch and a pseudo-imperial gold tremissis, probably Visigothic, dating to the 6th century that was found some 100 m from the bracteate

¹²² Corfield 1988.

¹²³ Mackeprang 1952, 41–2; Pesch 2004, 164–6; 2007, 230–3.

¹²⁴ *IK* 114 Longbridge, *IK* 387 Welbeck Hill, grave 52, and *IK* 288 Kirmington, *IK* 602 East Leake, (cat no 9), *IK* 306 Morning Thorpe, grave 80, *IK* 228 Chippenham, Cambridgeshire.

¹²⁵ Hines 1984, 214 dated the English C-bracteates to 500–50; Axboe 2007, Tafel D placed Kirmington right at the end of H4 in his seriation.

¹²⁶ Treasure no 2008T127. Frank Basford pers comm.



FIG 15

Gold bracteate from Near Shalfleet. (a) Front. (b) Drawing. Scale 2:1.
Photograph courtesy of The Portable Antiquities Scheme Isle of Wight. Drawing by J Farrant.

findspot.¹²⁷ The findspot is about 1 km north-west of the well-known Anglo-Saxon cemetery of Chessell Down.¹²⁸

Description The bracteate is well preserved with only slight signs of wear on wire and loop. The disc is slightly bent affecting the relief in the upper-right-hand quarter where it is somewhat flattened. The loop consists of a gold strip with a wide central ridge framed by two smaller ridges and is soldered to the disc. A beaded gold wire is laid on the front of the gold foil along the edge doubling up under and in front of the loop where it ends giving the impression of an incomplete manufacture. The design was stamped with a die and the relief was then reworked with a pointed tool from both sides. The border zone is plain. The relief is clearly visible from the back.

Motif A typical D-bracteate design of an interlaced animal is shown, albeit in a version that is to some degree dissolved. The animal is shown from the right with

its head underneath the loop turned backwards. It has a large beak formed of a triangular shape that was framed by a pointed shape ending in two parallel lines. There is no eye. The long neck is bending along the edge of the image towards the spiral-shaped, somewhat angular shoulder. The mirror-inverted S-shaped body ends in a spiral-shaped hip. The limbs are disjointed.

Parallels Despite the similarity of the design that links this bracteate with the D-bracteates from eastern Kent and East Anglia, and also Frisia, northern Germany and southern Scandinavia, especially Jutland, this version is stylistically unique because the relief is unusually broad leaving no spaces between the different features.¹²⁹ With a weight of under 2 gr, this pendant is lighter than the Scandinavian finds and comparable to the on average lighter continental and English finds.¹³⁰

¹²⁷ The tremissis is probably an imitation of a type introduced by Theoderic I in 509. It may be contemporary imitation with the official issue. 'The design is also known from Merovingian and Burgundian coins so the possibility remains that it might be Merovingian or Burgundian but the design is much more in the mould of Visigothic examples. This coin is an exceedingly rare find in a British context.' John Naylor and Frank Basford pers comm.

¹²⁸ Arnold 1982, 13–19.

¹²⁹ See cat no 1.

¹³⁰ Axboe 2007, 82–6.

Dating There is no datable context for this bracteate. As a D-bracteate it can be dated to the first half of the 6th century.

16. FRESHWATER, ISLE OF WIGHT, D-BRACTEATE (FIG 16)¹³¹

Currently as treasure find in the British Museum. (IK 629).

Diameter 29 mm, weight 4.0 gr.

Find context Found May 2009 during a metal-detector rally, together with fragments of several silver-gilt brooches and four fragments of a silver-gilt sieve spoon or skimmer.¹³² Already in 2003 fragments of several prestigious objects have been found at the same findspot including silver and silver-gilt brooches, a silver-gilt sieve spoon, most probably belonging to the same spoon as the newly found fragments, and a rock-crystal ball. Ager suggested in 2005 that the objects might be the remains of grave-goods from a

single, well-equipped female Anglo-Saxon grave.¹³³ The bracteate and the newly found fragments may well have belonged to the same assemblage. A similar composition of grave-goods comprising a silver-gilt sieve spoon, silver-gilt square-headed brooches and a crystal ball was discovered together with six D-bracteates in the wealthy grave 4 in Sarre, E Kent.¹³⁴

Description The bracteate is well preserved with only slight signs of wear along the beaded rim. The disc has recently been scratched and bent, especially on the right-hand side. Beaded gold wire is set on the edge of the gold flan. The loop is formed of a broad gold strip consisting of four ridges subdivided by smaller ribs. It is now squashed and while still soldered on the back it is loose on the front. The edge of the die with which the design was stamped is visible on front and back. The motif is executed in high relief



FIG 16

Gold bracteate from Freshwater. (a) Front. (b) Drawing. Scale 2:1.

Photograph courtesy of the Portable Antiquities Scheme Isle of Wight. Drawing by J Farrant.

¹³¹ Treasure no 2009T264. Frank Basford pers comm.

¹³² Frank Basford pers comm.

¹³³ Ager 2005.

¹³⁴ Brent 1863, 310–20; Chadwick Hawkes and Pollard 1981, 359–61. Whereas in continental female burials either a perforated spoon or a crystal ball are quite common grave goods, in Anglo-Saxon graves, they have typically been found together. This combination occurs most frequently in Kent, one example is so far known from the Isle of Wight, from the cemetery in Chessell Down, grave 45. Arnold 1982, 64–5; Parfitt and Bruggmann 1997, 67.

and clearly visible on the back. A small boss in the centre is the imprint of the hole by the pair of compasses used in the die.

Motif An interlaced animal is shown from the right with its head turned backwards. The head is underneath the loop and has a large drop-shaped beak. The round eye is surrounded by a semicircle from which a curved and pointed ear extends to the edge of the image. Neck and body are ribbon-shaped. From the large rounded shoulder and hip, a front leg and a hind leg arise. The front leg crosses first the neck, then the body and finally again the neck, the hind leg crosses the body twice and both legs end in curved feet with heels. The head, neck,

reversed S-shaped body and limbs are drawn in disjointed segments.

Parallels Despite the close similarity of the design that links this bracteate to the group of the most common D-bracteates from eastern Kent and East Anglia, to which for instance the bracteate from Dover Buckland, grave 204 (Fig 1) belongs, this version is also unique in two respects. None of the animals on bracteates from this cluster has an ear and the shape of the head lacks the otherwise typical bar in front of the semicircular feature.¹³⁵

Dating On stylistic grounds the bracteate can be dated like the related Kentish D-bracteates to the first half of the 6th century.

DISCUSSION

PRODUCTION

What can the new finds contribute to the question of the origin of the English bracteates — were they imported or locally manufactured? It matters where bracteates were made, because as imports they may have retained the particular significance that was derived from their iconography and their uses as amulets only for the individual who brought the pendant to England. As local products, however, they can be interpreted as evidence for a continuous understanding of their meaning and function in England. In that case, the investment of scarce resources of gold emphasises their enduring ritual or religious importance. The new finds contribute to the question of bracteate production in several ways and confirm the probability of local production of most finds.

The close iconographic and stylistic links between the English, especially the Kentish, and the Scandinavian/northern German bracteate finds have played a significant role in discussions about contacts between Anglo-Saxon England and the countries around the North Sea in the 5th and 6th centuries. Already Leeds saw the possibilities that archaeological finds had to offer for the enquiries into early Anglo-Saxon history beyond the written sources and discussed the origin of the Anglo-Saxon immigrants in *The Archaeology of the Anglo-Saxon Settlements*, published 1913.¹³⁶ In his review of the so-called Jutish question he tried to find out from where the inhabitants of Kent originated who, following Bede's famous clue in HE 1.15, were Jutes. Apart from some cruciform brooches, Leeds knew in 1913 of 14 bracteates, which he dated into the first half of the 6th century, these being the only objects that had any links with Jutland.

¹³⁵ This more simplified shape of the head has been found on D-bracteates with animals that are similarly interlaced but have instead of a drop-shaped beak wide-open scissors-shaped jaws. Examples from Kent include Bifrons-D (IK 411), King's Field-D (IK 456) or Sarre-D (IK 494).

¹³⁶ Leeds 1913, 3.

That is why Leeds suggested that, at most, the leaders of the settlers came from Jutland and that they transferred their ancestry to all immigrants, who predominantly had come from the lower Rhine area.¹³⁷ He described all bracteate finds in England as imports because they ceased at the same time as in Scandinavia.¹³⁸ Chadwick Hawkes took up the subject of Jutish immigration again in 1981 when she used several new bracteate finds from the cemetery in Fingle-sham to reassess the Kentish finds. She too interpreted them as imports, probably from northern Jutland, and dated the earliest Kentish bracteates into the late 5th century.¹³⁹ Coming from wealthy female graves, she described them as valuable heirlooms that the leading families in Kent may have stored and treasured for several decades as precious mementos to their old homelands before giving them to a grave.¹⁴⁰ In the same year, Bakka argued, however, that most Kentish bracteates were probably made locally and he interpreted them as important evidence for relationships between the elites in Kent and in Scandinavia during the first half of the 6th century, at a period when the archaeological finds in Kentish cemeteries suggest that contacts with the Franks prevailed.¹⁴¹ The observation that in Kent cemeteries with bracteate graves tended to be close to places that were linked with early Kentish royal sites led to the thesis that bracteates were made in Kent because they carried specific ideological messages that were significant for the newly emerging kings of (eastern) Kent. While in the later written tradition the origins of the Kentish kings from Jutland and their descent from Woden were emphasised, the gold bracteates with their specific iconography may have been used to illustrate visually significant Scandinavian links and the importance of the Woden/Odin cult in the late 5th and earlier 6th centuries.¹⁴² The recent Kentish finds of further, stylistically closely related D-bracteates fit into this picture of pendants produced in a local workshop for a particular ideological purpose. They too belonged to richly equipped female graves in the cemetery at Dover Buckland, which had royal connections that may extend back to a period before written evidence referred to a royal estate.¹⁴³ It is impossible to say how the Denton bracteate

¹³⁷ *Ibid.*, 125, 137. Leeds continued to study the English bracteate finds. In 1936 he revised his earlier interpretations although the number of finds had only increased marginally. He now emphasised the importance of Jutish culture in the first post-Roman settlement phase of Kent in the second half of the 5th century and described it explicitly as Jutish phase that only in the early 6th century was replaced by his Frankish phase. In 1946 Leeds argued, after comparing all English bracteate finds with finds from Scandinavia and Frisia, that contacts with Denmark continued into the first half of the 6th century. He could not decide however, whether these contacts were direct or indirect via Frisia.

¹³⁸ Leeds 1946, 26.

¹³⁹ Chadwick Hawkes and Pollard 1981, 327.

¹⁴⁰ Chadwick Hawkes and Pollard 1981, 326, 331–9.

¹⁴¹ Bakka 1981, 11, 14–15; Webster 1977, 342 and Hines 1984, 216, and forthcoming, argued that it may be possible to distinguish between imported and locally made bracteates in Kent. On the basis of metallurgical analyses Arnold 1991 suggested that Kentish bracteates were more likely made in Kent than abroad. Barford Carlsen 2002, 135 used the differing gold contents of the Kentish finds in conjunction with her typological assessments of the D-bracteate iconography to argue that those Kentish D-bracteates with a lower gold content were imported from Jutland, while those with a higher content were local products. Sceptical Kruse 2007, 284.

¹⁴² Andrén 1991; Behr 1994; 2000, 28–9, 50–1; Hedeager 1999; Yorke 2008, 25.

¹⁴³ Yorke 1990, 40; Behr 2000, 45. In her study about the Jutish character of Kent, Kruse 2007 emphasised the absence of any evidence for large-scale Jutish immigration but suggested that objects like the Scandinavian-type bracteates were ‘made to order for a specific group of people in Kent who understood the symbolism of these objects and that they were most likely manufactured by a Jutlandic craftsman . . . who worked for some time in east Kent’ (354).

was deposited; still, because it was made with the same die as the one from grave 245 in Dover Buckland it belonged to the same workshop. The find from Northbourne appears to come from a ploughed-up grave, in a cemetery close to the royal estate at Eastry.¹⁴⁴ The bracteate may show a local interpretation of the D-bracteate iconography because the small bird placed in front of the beak of the interlaced animal is in a position usually taken by a volute-shaped feature interpreted as a human ear.¹⁴⁵ No comparable example for a D-bracteate with a bird placed in this position exists (Fig 5). In the iconographical language of bracteates, different pictorial details could replace each other as iconographical variants and be used to express the same meaning.¹⁴⁶ It is probable that the bird stood like the volute-shaped ear for the god Woden/Odin. The design of the gold pendant from St Nicholas at Wade shows a rare bracteate motif of two interlaced animals (Fig 6). Motif and technique of this pendant are unique in England.

Early scholars rarely discussed the few bracteates found outside Kent. Leeds dealt with the Anglian bracteates in the context of the Kentish finds and perceived them as Kentish influences in the Saxon and Anglian settlement areas. Hayo Vierck, however, argued in 1970 that the Anglian bracteates were a reflection of an independent insular reception of the Scandinavian bracteate tradition.¹⁴⁷ He saw them, in contrast to the, in his opinion, imported Kentish finds, as locally produced pendants, an observation that was conveyed though particular technical differences including the use of silver or silver gilded instead of gold foil, the lack of a wire surrounding the edge of the foil or the use of loops that were made from simple metal strips.¹⁴⁸ Hines continued these considerations when he discussed in detail the 16 Anglian bracteates known in 1984. He argued that the two A-bracteates from St Giles' Field and from Undley were imported in the 5th century and that subsequently in the 6th century Anglian bracteate production started.¹⁴⁹ To answer the question from where the bracteate tradition was adopted in Anglian England, Hines drew a complex picture where he differentiated between the A-bracteates that were exported from Schleswig-Holstein or southern Scandinavia, the C-bracteates that may have been inspired by pendants from Norway or Sweden or less likely from Denmark, and the D-bracteates that either were derived from Kentish examples that depended in their part on Jutish models or directly from Jutland.¹⁵⁰ Nancy Wicker tried to show that some technical parallels between the Anglian and Gotland bracteates may indicate 6th-century links between East Anglia and eastern Sweden several generations before the possible links suggested by the rich 7th-century boat graves in Sutton Hoo, Vendel and Valsgårde.¹⁵¹

¹⁴⁴ Indications for Eastry as a royal site in the early Anglo-Saxon period, Chadwick Hawkes 1979; Behr 2000, 39–45.

¹⁴⁵ Cat no 5.

¹⁴⁶ Hauck 1986, 277.

¹⁴⁷ Vierck 1970, 336.

¹⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 336–7.

¹⁴⁹ Hines 1984, 219.

¹⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 219–20.

¹⁵¹ Wicker 1992.

The new die from Essex confirms bracteate production in England even if no pendant made with this die is known. The die also confirms the significance of the bracteate tradition in Anglo-Saxon England as already the making of a copper-alloy die constituted a considerable expenditure both in terms of workmanship and in material.¹⁵² The interpretation of the disc from Billingford as another die is difficult,¹⁵³ still, it indicates at the very least knowledge of, and experiments with, the D-bracteate motif. The close stylistic relationship with the D-bracteate from Blakeney Freshes, both with their unique head designs makes it likely that both objects were made in northern Norfolk. Neither the find from Essex nor from Billingford can be linked archaeologically to a contemporary workshop or metalworking area. Metalworking debris has only been identified from the Roman and middle Anglo-Saxon periods in Billingford. However, the proximity of the large cremation and inhumation cemetery of Spong Hill, in use from the mid-5th to the early 7th century, less than 4 km from the significant Roman road site settlement in Billingford on the river Wensum, fits into a pattern that can be observed in several places in East Anglia where a 5th-century cemetery is closely related to an important place from the Roman period.¹⁵⁴ This observation suggests that these Roman settlements continued as, 'central places into the fifth century, and perhaps later, and that the small tribal territories which succeeded the *civitas* continued to have their main focus at or near to them'.¹⁵⁵

Bracteate dies are very rare finds. Before these two finds only one die was known, from Postgården in Jutland, a metal-detector find made in 1990 without archaeological context.¹⁵⁶ The quantity and quality of finds at Postgården, mainly by metal-detector, suggests that a middle-ranking settlement existed here that did not belong to the group of the most wealthy and outstanding migration-period settlements in Denmark, but to a group of sites that was still wealthier than the majority of contemporary settlements.¹⁵⁷ The die was for use as a matrix. It was made of copper alloy with a D-bracteate motif in negative relief. The design was rather poorly executed. Neither this die nor the two newly found ones allow yet a clear statement about methods of manufacture.¹⁵⁸ The motif could either have been engraved into the blank with a burin or into a preliminary model, possibly made from wax or clay, which was then used to make the die. The second method using a material that can be worked more easily than copper alloy appears to be more probable considering the minute details of many bracteate designs, even if not of these three examples.¹⁵⁹ The uncommonness of bracteate dies is quite unlike the significant number of dies used as patrices that have been found for gold foil figures, *Pressblech* ornaments and

¹⁵² Coatsworth and Pinder 2002, 110.

¹⁵³ Cat no 10.

¹⁵⁴ Williamson 1993, 67–8; Gurney 1995, 59–61.

¹⁵⁵ Williamson 1993, 67.

¹⁵⁶ Axboe 1993; 2007, 14–15.

¹⁵⁷ Axboe 1993, 389–90.

¹⁵⁸ Following his scientific analysis Meeks 2001, 3 concluded that it was more likely that the disc from Billingford was 'simply a casting of an original carved wax model' and not 'cast from the wax impression taken from an original positive form'.

¹⁵⁹ Axboe 1982, 11–14; 2004, 4–8; 2007, 14–16.

other metal pendants.¹⁶⁰ Several dies were made in Animal Style I comparable to the D-bracteate animals.

Technical idiosyncrasies among the East Anglian bracteates that distinguish them from the bracteates found in Scandinavia but also in Kent also exist among the new finds. The C-bracteate from East Leake (Fig 9) is made with silver foil like West Stow-D as are the fragments from Little Eriswell, grave 27, both from Suffolk, Welbeck Hill, graves 14 and 52, Lincolnshire, the fragment from Broughton Lodge, Nottinghamshire, Hornsea-D and Driffield-D, both from Humberside and Schönebeck-D, Thuringia, Germany, probably an Anglo-Saxon export.¹⁶¹ Only nine Anglian bracteates have wires surrounding the flan.¹⁶² They were all made with a gold flan. In contrast, the silver bracteates from West Stow, Hornsea, Driffield, Welbeck Hill, graves 14 and 52, East Leake, Schönebeck and the two bronze bracteates from Morning Thorpe, lack wires as do the gold bracteates from Blackeney Freshes-D, Near Bridlington-C, Longbridge-C, Kirmington-C and Market Overton-F.¹⁶³ The only Kentish bracteate without a framing wire comes from Sarre, grave 4 (*IK* 496). On several bracteates small stamps were punched on the front along the outer rim imitating the missing wire.¹⁶⁴ Based on these observations most if not all East Anglian bracteates appear to be made locally.

Several pendants are not only technically distinct from the Scandinavian ones but their motifs are variations unknown from Scandinavian or continental bracteates and not just rather dissolved versions of known motifs. For example, on the F-bracteates from Hambleden (Fig 7) and Market Overton a worm-type animal and a bird respectively are placed above the quadruped in the position of the anthropomorphic head.¹⁶⁵ The A-bracteates from Undley and Brinton (Fig 11) are technically and stylistically comparable with Scandinavian pendants but their figurative representations are also — so far — unique within the corpus of bracteate images. The bracteate from Undley (*IK* 374), found in 1981, has been the topic of some debate. The image was derived from both sides of the so-called *Urbs Roma* coins first issued by emperor Constantine the Great showing the goddess Roma in profile, here changed into a male bearded and helmeted head together with the she-wolf and the twins.¹⁶⁶ A runic inscription runs along the edge, and two stars and two encircled dots are placed behind and above the head. Whereas Hines argued for its likely origin in southern Scandinavia or Schleswig-Holstein, Hills and Page preferred England and Suzuki the old Saxon settlement area between the rivers Elbe and Weser.¹⁶⁷ The question of origin is

¹⁶⁰ 'Ten cast-bronze dies with figural gold foil motifs' have been found so far in Denmark and Sweden, Lamm 2004, 110; Watt 1999. About a dozen *Pressblech* dies are known from early Anglo-Saxon England alone, Capelle and Vierck 1971; 1975; Chadwick Hawkes et al 1979; Speake 1980, 68; Klein-Pfeuffer 1993, 77–9; Drinkall and Foreman 1998, 94, fig 118.3; Laing 1999; Coatsworth and Pinder 2002, 109–11; Leahy 2003, 157–8; 2006.

¹⁶¹ Axboe 2004, 28.

¹⁶² Hambleden-F (*IK* 608, cat no 7), Brinton-A (*IK* 584, cat no 11), Binham-B (*IK* 604, cat no 12), Near Shalfleet-D (*IK* 624, cat no 15), Freshwater-D (*IK* 629, cat no 16), Undley-A (*IK* 374), St Giles' Field-A (*IK* 323), Kingston Bagpuize-A (*IK* 577), Chippenham-C (*IK* 228).

¹⁶³ Cat nos 13 and 14; Hines 1984, 209–16; Axboe 2004, 22.

¹⁶⁴ Sarre, grave 4 (*IK* 496), Longbridge-C (*IK* 114), Bridlington area-C (*IK* 607, cat no 14), Kirmington-C (*IK* 288), Blakeney Freshes-D (*IK* 601, cat no 13).

¹⁶⁵ Cat no 7 and *IK* 123.

¹⁶⁶ Hines and Odenstedt 1987, 74.

¹⁶⁷ For the arguments in detail see Hines and Odenstedt 1987, 76, 82; Hills 1991, 56–7; Page 1999, 183–5; Suzuki 2006, 39.

decisive when assessing the runic inscription and has linguistic implications, because it contains one runic letter that scholars commonly judge as an Anglo-Frisian development and forms an important element for the understanding of early Old English language formation.¹⁶⁸ Since its discovery, several new gold bracteates have been found in East Anglia, some of high quality, some with unique or rare motifs. In this context the bracteate from Undley does not appear to be as exceptional anymore as in 1981 when few gold bracteates were known from the area and most of them showed rather dissolved versions of bracteate images. These observations support the local manufacture hypothesis.

The new A-bracteate from Brinton relates closely to the typical C-bracteate motif. Stylistically it has close links to a number of A- and C-bracteates from various Scandinavian sites.¹⁶⁹ However, instead of the horse, an anthropomorphic figure is placed underneath the large head. Again, the question of its origin remains debatable. Objects and tools but also craftsmen could move.¹⁷⁰ That is why it is difficult to determine the place of origin of a particular object. Unique images among bracteates, a type of pendants that is after all characterised by longer or shorter series of stylistically related objects, are unusual. They tend to be more common in the peripheral areas of bracteate production. It appears also to be less probable that unique images were made and then chosen to be taken to England and more probable that the bracteates from Undley and Brinton, like Hambleton and Market Overton, were designed and made in England with the knowledge and understanding of the meaning they held in Scandinavia. Thus they became local expressions of the same religious ideas. It is worth noting that in England they remained single representations — that is at least what the find situation suggests — and did not start series of stylistically related pendants.

The B-bracteate from Binham (Fig 12) has parallels with bracteates from an unknown findspot probably in Schleswig-Holstein and from a grave in Derenburg-Meerenstieg, Thuringia. The seven model-identical finds from the unknown findspot known as ‘Hamburg’ show nearly mirror-image representations to the one from Binham, with only minor differences in details. The only significant difference is the runic inscription on Binham. Runic inscriptions are rare occurrences in England and particularly seldom on bracteates, not least because most English bracteates belong to type D that never carries runic inscriptions. Including Binham only three English bracteates have runic inscriptions and two bracteates have imitations of Roman letters.¹⁷¹ The Binham inscription is difficult to read and to interpret and has no parallels among bracteate inscriptions or even within the corpus of early runic inscriptions.¹⁷² The B-bracteates from Binham and Derenburg-Meerenstieg are not the only archaeological links

¹⁶⁸ Hines 1990, 30; 1995, 40–2; 2006, 435; Hills 1991, 58; Page 1994, 107–8; 1999, 183–4; Nielsen 1995; Parsons 1996, 146–8; 1999, 62–7; MacLeod and Mees 2001; Suzuki 2006, 41–5.

¹⁶⁹ Cat no 11.

¹⁷⁰ Position and role of goldsmiths in the migration period and their possible ways of working as itinerant craftsmen and/or dependent or free goldsmiths in workshops at elite residences are debated issues: Werner 1970; Roth 1986a, 40–2; Coatsworth and Pinder 2002; Leahy 2003, 167–9; Behr 2007, 18; Kruse 2007, 354.

¹⁷¹ Page 1999, 180 on Welbeck Hill grave 14 (*IK* 388) and 183–5 on Undley (*IK* 374). Imitations of Roman letters are on *IK* 323 St Giles’ Field, Leeds 1946, 23, and *IK* 577 Kingston Bagpuize, Hines 1993, 219.

¹⁷² Krause and Jankuhn 1966; Page 1999.

between early Anglo-Saxon and Thuringian finds. The already mentioned D-bracteate from Schönebeck may well be an Anglo-Saxon export. Several brooches in Thuringian graves are of Anglo-Saxon provenance.¹⁷³ Because of its runic inscription, Binham is the most detailed version within this cluster of stylistically related bracteates. On this basis it could be assumed that it was the earliest version and the two other versions were later copies. Still, it is equally possible that on the version from 'Hamburg' a runic inscription was added. Assessing parallels of the bracteate from Binham, its image, border stamps and type of framing wire point to several different geographical areas.¹⁷⁴ This example demonstrates graphically the difficulties of locating the origin of bracteates whose design and technical details can be determined by a number of general design criteria and by various local influences.¹⁷⁵

Near Shalfleet-D (Fig 15) and Freshwater-D (Fig 16) are the first two bracteates reported from the Isle of Wight.¹⁷⁶ Both find locations lie on the western side of the island within the area of the median chalk ridge that is particularly rich in Anglo-Saxon finds including the important cemeteries of Chessell Down and Bowcombe Down.¹⁷⁷ The Freshwater find most probably belongs to a ploughed-out grave. It was made on a small knoll overlooking the surrounding fields, a typical find situation of early Anglo-Saxon finds on the Isle of Wight.¹⁷⁸ Anglo-Saxon graves have been found in Shalfleet intermittently since the early 19th century.¹⁷⁹ The field on which the bracteate was discovered produced a good number of metal-detector finds, among them a 6th-century Visigothic pseudo-imperial gold tremissis. The finds distribution suggests more probably a settlement site than an undiscovered cemetery.¹⁸⁰ The animals on the bracteates belong to the same type of interlaced animal that has been found on Jutish, Kentish, northern German and Frisian D-bracteates. Still, they both feature unique design elements. On Freshwater-D, the shape of the head and the ear are unusual and on Near Shalfleet-D the style of the design, especially the great density of the different body parts is without any close parallels among the Kentish finds or the continental and Scandinavian ones. The relatively light weight of the Near Shalfleet pendant is more typical of English and continental bracteates than of those from Scandinavia.

DISTRIBUTION

Scholars have long used the stylistic dependency of English bracteates upon continental and Scandinavian ones to attempt to identify geographical areas of

¹⁷³ Vierck 1970, 355–7; Schwarz 2001; Schmidt 2005, 405–6.

¹⁷⁴ Cat no 12.

¹⁷⁵ Axboe 1982, 55–6.

¹⁷⁶ In 2005 a golden loop with narrower and wider ribs and grooves typical for bracteate fixings was found in Afton, some 100 m from the findspot of the Freshwater bracteate, which may point to another, now lost, pendant (treasure find 2005T408). Basford and Ager 2008.

¹⁷⁷ Arnold 1982.

¹⁷⁸ Frank Basford pers comm.

¹⁷⁹ Arnold 1982, 78–9.

¹⁸⁰ Frank Basford pers comm. He based his suggestion on a comparison with the finds' spread in West Wight, a site of comparable geographical features and agricultural uses, which is quite distinct from the far more sparsely distributed finds in Shalfleet. Ager 2006c publishes some of the finds from West Wight.

contact based on the assumption that stylistically related bracteates were produced in one area or place and then the objects spread from there.¹⁸¹ However, the various distribution patterns of individual clusters formed of stylistically related bracteates can vary considerably and extend over large areas without any obvious focal point, thus making this assumption rather inadequate. A scheme recently proposed by Pesch for the distribution of bracteates provides a better explanatory model for a convincing description of the manufacture of bracteates and the spread of images as it is observable archaeologically. According to Pesch, craftsmen first devised bracteates in workshops located in so-called central places.¹⁸² Archaeologists recognise central places through unusual concentrations of precious metal objects, and imported goods, evidence for crafts, especially metalworking, cult sites and objects with religious iconography and uncommonly large buildings. They are defined as multifunctional sites that had central functions in trade and manufacture, religion and political leadership.¹⁸³ Only in these places it is conceivable that the artistic, technical and religious expertise was available to conceptualise and design bracteates and their images and compose the accompanying inscriptions.¹⁸⁴ The images were then multiplied in different central places through copying processes for which bracteate dies were made that varied the images only within very narrow limits. A decentralised method of producing bracteates can explain the wide distribution of stylistically related groups that have only minor differences between them. Different bracteate images were thus not the expression of local traditions but belonged to wider concepts developed in several places through ongoing exchanges of the 'religious experts' who were in charge of religious iconography.¹⁸⁵ In these processes, making a bracteate seems to have been the subject of some form of control that prevented a much greater variety of images and details to emerge.¹⁸⁶ The more common appearance of unique images and iconographic details in the peripheral areas of bracteate distribution may reflect weaker forms of control further from the centre.¹⁸⁷

Among the 56 clusters or *Formularfamilien* that Pesch could identify and describe within the entirety of bracteate images and that cover more than 70% of all bracteates, only seven *Formularfamilien* appear in England.¹⁸⁸ Brinton-A and Undley-A, as mentioned above, are unique images and do not belong to any cluster but they have some stylistic similarities with C- and A-bracteates. The A-bracteates from St Giles' Field (*IK* 323) and Kingston Bagpuize (*IK* 577), both from Oxfordshire, show not only a male head but a bust as well. Both heads are

¹⁸¹ Chadwick Hawkes 1981, 327–8; Hines 1984, 219–20.

¹⁸² Pesch 2007, 354–9. For a recent overview of the extensive literature on central places, see Steuer 2007.

¹⁸³ Hedeager 2001, 480.

¹⁸⁴ Pesch 2007, 358.

¹⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, 356.

¹⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, 371–2.

¹⁸⁷ For example, among the 11 bracteate finds from the Langobardic settlement area in Pannonia (Roman province in modern-day western Hungary and in parts of Austria, Croatia, Serbia, Slovakia and Slovenia) unique motifs were discovered in Šaratice, Czech Republic, grave 6/47 (*IK* 491), Poysdorf, Austria, grave 4 (*IK* 484), both D-bracteates and in Várpalota, Hungary, grave 21 with one B-bracteate (*IK* 206) and three die-identical D-bracteates (*IK* 559). The hoard finds from Szatmár and Debrecen, both Hungary, and from an unknown findspot, all C-bracteates (*IK* 182, 1–3 and 375), were, however, stylistically closely linked to two clusters that were predominantly represented in eastern Scandinavia.

¹⁸⁸ Pesch 2007, 327. They include the *Formularfamilien* A7, B3, B6, C16, D7 (exclusively in England), D9, D10.

surrounded in front and behind by various imitations of Latin capital letters and on St Giles' Field an equal-armed cross. Whereas the head of Kingston Bagpuize has only a few lines indicating hair, the head on St Giles' Field is helmeted. It is noteworthy that the heads on Undley-A, Sievern-A (*IK* 156), Lower Saxony and terp Hitsum-A (*IK* 76), Frisia too are helmeted.¹⁸⁹ All three heads are bearded. There are further noticeable parallels. On St Giles' Field and Sievern a beaded gold wire in the shape of a V ending in spirals on both sides is laid on the front underneath the loop. A similar gold wire, in the shape of a double spiral is in the same position on Undley and the remnants of a V-shaped gold wire ending in a spiral are on terp Hitsum. A further parallel is on the B-bracteate from Heide (*IK* 74), Schleswig-Holstein where a damaged gold wire spiral is found underneath the loop to the left.¹⁹⁰ Gold wire applications tend to be rare on bracteates. The runic inscriptions on Undley, Sievern and terp Hitsum are facing outwards which is uncommon for runic inscriptions on bracteates — they tend to follow the Roman models of coin inscriptions that are facing inwards. The inscriptions are framed. On terp Hitsum a small equal-armed cross is placed behind the head. On the basis of these parallels Suzuki suggested that Undley was the earliest example of this group of what he called, 'Saxon A-bracteates' and was like St Giles' Field and Kingston Bagpuize made in the old Saxons' settlement area and subsequently brought to England by immigrants.¹⁹¹

The two B-bracteates are from Binham and Bifrons (*IK* 23).¹⁹² The B-bracteate from Bifrons with its representation of a male figure turning his head upwards, raising his arms and bending his legs backwards belongs to a cluster of bracteates found in Sievern (*IK* 333) and Nebenstedt (*IK* 308), both in the Elbe-Weser area of Germany and in Sjöheden (*IK* 337) in Västergötland, Sweden.¹⁹³ The B-bracteate from Kent is the most simplified version within this cluster showing only the male figure and two circles. The most detailed version comes from Nebenstedt where the central figure is surrounded by and interlaced with three griffin-type animals with snake bodies. Sievern-B and Sjöheden-B show reduced versions of the animals that are comprehensible through the knowledge of the more complete representation on Nebenstedt.

The English A- and B-bracteates are dated to Axboe's second and third phases H₂ and H₃ of bracteate production, whereas the eight C-bracteates all belong to the latest phase H₄.¹⁹⁴ The A- and B-bracteates were all made with gold foil, and among the C-bracteates are also two pendants made with bronze and one with silver foil. All C-bracteates belong to the same cluster and are

¹⁸⁹ Ibid, 93–4: *Formularfamilie* A7.

¹⁹⁰ Hines 1984, 205 and 2006, 435 reconstructed a double spiral and used this observation as one parallel to argue for locating the Undley bracteate to Schleswig-Holstein. Suzuki 2006, 39, however, suggested a reconstruction of a V-shaped application ending in spirals comparable to the ones on Sievern and St Giles' Field.

¹⁹¹ Suzuki 2006, 40; Hines 1984, 210; 1993.

¹⁹² Binham has parallels probably in Schleswig-Holstein and in Thuringia, see above cat no 11; Pesch 2007, 120–2: *Formularfamilie* B6.

¹⁹³ Pesch 2007, 108–10: *Formularfamilie* B3.

¹⁹⁴ Axboe 2004, 189–93.

characterised by high relief and rather stylised representations of the anthropomorphic head and the horse. The horses on the two F-bracteates from Hambleton (*IK* 608) and Market Overton (*IK* 123) are related to the horses on the C-bracteates.¹⁹⁵ The distribution pattern of this large cluster covers the western part of bracteate dissemination and extends along the North Sea coastline from W Norway, to SW Sweden, Jutland, the Elbe-Weser area and Frisia and in England to Buckinghamshire, Cambridgeshire, Norfolk, Warwickshire, Lincolnshire and Humberside.

Most English D-bracteates are variations of a griffin-type animal shown in profile with its S-shaped body and two legs interlaced.¹⁹⁶ Their distribution concentrates on Jutland and NW Germany with some additional examples from Normandy, Frisia, W Sweden and SW Norway. The only exceptions are the D-bracteate from Hornsea (*IK* 448) showing a unique bird of prey and the pendant from St Nicholas at Wade with two interlaced animals.¹⁹⁷

The appearance of bracteates in England is usually perceived as a series of unrelated events. According to this model some bracteates were brought by immigrants, others were made locally following Scandinavian or continental models, yet others reflect ongoing contacts between old and new homelands.¹⁹⁸ Thus they show, 'a complex pattern of Scandinavian influence on Anglian England, with shifting courses of influence, arguably each associable with differential time stages'.¹⁹⁹ Using this model, which is based on the assumption of unconnected incidents happening randomly leading to the introduction of bracteates into England at various times during the later 5th and earlier 6th centuries, it remains difficult to explain the limited number of clusters of stylistically related bracteates represented within the English group of bracteates. A different explanatory model may provide a more convincing interpretation: it is notable that bracteates from five of the seven clusters that are represented in England have been discovered in hoards that belong to the settlement area of Sievern in the Elbe-Weser-triangle (Fig 17). Bracteates were found in Sievern in 1942 when a hoard of 11 bracteates was discovered during peat cutting in Moosmoor, in 1950 when a single B-bracteate was retrieved by a farmer on his farm in a sand delivery that came from Grapenberg, possibly from a grave, and in 1999 when a hoard of two bracteates was detected, both of them die-identical with earlier finds from Sievern.²⁰⁰ The Moosmoor bracteates comprise one A-bracteate, two die-identical C-bracteates and eight D-bracteates of three different dies. The A-bracteate (*IK* 156) relates stylistically to the Frisian find from terp Hitsum (*IK* 76) and the English finds from St Giles' Field and Kingston Bagpuize, but also to Undley as discussed above. The B-bracteate from Grapenberg (*IK* 333) belongs to the same cluster as Bifrons-B. The C-bracteates (*IK* 157, 1 and 2) represent

¹⁹⁵ Pesch 2007, 230–3; *Formularfamilie* C16.

¹⁹⁶ Bakka 1981, 13–14 argued that all D-bracteates in England were derived from three Scandinavian prototypes that were closely related. Pesch 2007, 265–7, 276–9, 286–8 allocated the English D-bracteates to three *Formularfamilien* D7, 9 and 10.

¹⁹⁷ Cat no 6.

¹⁹⁸ Leeds 1913, 124–5; Chadwick Hawkes and Pollard 1981, 320, 327–8; Bakka 1981, 11–12; Hines 1984, 216 considered the role of Kentish bracteates as models for the Anglian D-bracteates.

¹⁹⁹ Hines 1984, 219–20.

²⁰⁰ Hauck 1970, 34. The latest find is not yet published, Morten Axboe pers comm.

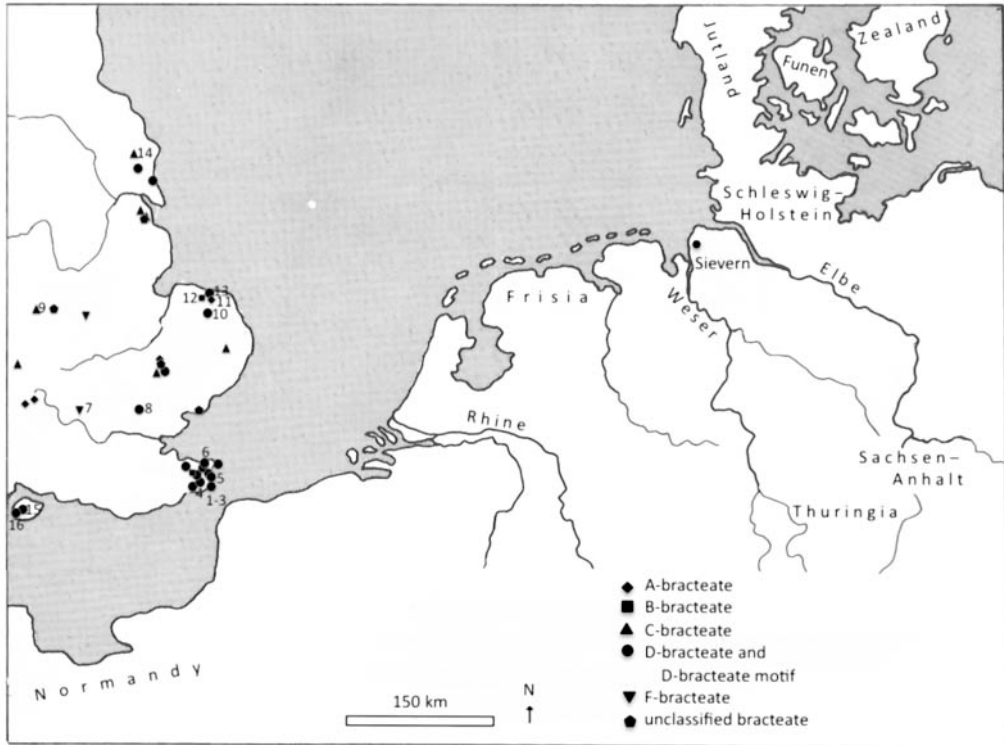


FIG 17

Distribution of Anglo-Saxon bracteates with catalogue numbers of the new finds. Kent (1–6); Buckinghamshire (7); Essex/Hertfordshire border (8); Nottinghamshire (9); Norfolk (10–13); Humberside (14); Isle of Wight (15–16).

the same cluster as the English C-pendants. Two of the three D-bracteate images (*IK* 505, 506 and 507) show the most common D-bracteate animal found in Kent, the Isle of Wight and in East Anglia. Even if the congruencies between bracteate images from Sievern and from England are not complete with some English finds without a ‘Sievern match’, the correlation is very high and may not be a chance effect.²⁰¹ Technical details like the uncommon application of a gold wire spiral or volute underneath the loop that occur on several pendants from Sievern and from England stress the probability of a direct link.²⁰²

Sievern is long recognised as a central place with regional and supra-regional importance. Indications for its prominent position are two prehistoric earthworks, four hoards with gold objects, an exceptionally high number of

²⁰¹ Pesch 2004, 164–5 emphasised the equally important close stylistic links of the bracteates from Sievern with bracteates found in coastal areas further west and in Scandinavia.

²⁰² Sievern-A (*IK* 156) and Sievern-D (*IK* 507, 2) (one of the seven die-identical pendants) with a V-shape ending in spirals on both sides, Sievern-B (*IK* 333) with two volutes and Sievern-C (*IK* 157) (one of the three die-identical pendants) with one volute. St Giles’ Field-A (*IK* 323) with a V-shape ending in spirals on both sides, Undley-A (*IK* 374) with a spiral, Dover Buckland-D (*IK* 582, cat no 3) with several S-shapes and a D-bracteate from an unknown find location, possibly in Kent (*IK* 554) with a volute, Axboe 1982, 78.

cemeteries, its convenient location for transport by land and water and the recognition of unusually intense settlement activities as shown by phosphate analyses.²⁰³ Strong links between the Elbe-Weser-triangle and eastern England are archaeologically well attested.²⁰⁴ Instead of multiple independent connections leading to the English bracteate distribution, the idea of bracteates and their specific iconography may have been conveyed predominantly through one channel only. The rich bracteate hoards found in the settlement area of Sievern suggest that bracteates have been made and/or been exchanged at this place. Sievern seems to be one of the nodal points in the network of central places that provided the expertise for the designing of bracteates and their images, the resources for making them and the establishment for spreading the pendants. The hoards of Sievern comprised bracteates from several different phases of their production. Bracteates of different phases often occur together suggesting that they were used together and their introduction to England may have happened during a very short time period.

A distinctive feature of many central places of the migration period in southern Scandinavia, northern Germany and Frisia are in fact bracteate finds, singly and in larger hoards, within the settlements and in their close vicinity.²⁰⁵ The discovery of three gold bracteates in northern Norfolk within 8 km of each other and of a disc with a bracteate motif, a possible die, some 15 km further south raises the question whether this accumulation can be explained as random find distribution or as a concentration that is indicative of a central place, an aristocratic manor, a religious sanctuary, or a place with cosmological significance.²⁰⁶ The three bracteates also stand out because of their iconography; apart from Undley-A, they are the only English finds that do *not* belong to any of the other clusters that are represented in England and in Sievern.²⁰⁷ Whereas more than 30 so-called productive sites from the 7th century onwards have been identified in England over recent years, no early Anglo-Saxon site with central functions in the 5th and 6th centuries has ever been detected.²⁰⁸ Any attempts to describe the concentration of bracteates in northern Norfolk must remain hypothetical in the absence of any other features that are pointing towards a special place between the valleys of the rivers Glaven and Stiffkey.²⁰⁹ Still, it is an area where systematic fieldwalking and co-ordinated metal-detector work may lead at some point in the future to a better understanding of the context of this bracteate concentration.²¹⁰

²⁰³ Hauck 1970, 31–5; Berger and Schlüter 1991; Zimmermann 2005; Jöns 2008.

²⁰⁴ Hills 1979, 315–6; Capelle 1990, 15; Weber 1998, 207–10.

²⁰⁵ Axboe 1994; Fabech 1999, 456, 460–3; Hårdh 2003, 64, 69; Nicolay 2005, 61–4; Steuer 2007, 882–3, 895.

²⁰⁶ See for an analogous interpretation the discussion of Gudme, Funen by Hedegaard 2002.

²⁰⁷ Brinton-A (cat no 11) is unique, Binham-B (cat no 12) has parallels probably in Schleswig-Holstein and in Thuringia and while the interlaced animal on Blakeney Freshes-D (cat no 13) is familiar from most English D-bracteates its head is uncommon and only paralleled on the disc from Billingsford (cat no 10).

²⁰⁸ Ulmschneider and Pestell 2003; Steuer 2007, 893–4.

²⁰⁹ A closer investigation of the early Anglo-Saxon finds at the Roman site of Walsingham/Wighton on the river Stiffkey with its temple precinct and the nearby Anglo-Saxon cemetery at Great Walsingham may reveal continuous central functions of the Roman site in the early Anglo-Saxon period. Williamson 1993, 67; Gurney 1995, 57–9; Smith 1999.

²¹⁰ The concentration of bracteate finds in northern Norfolk may not be the only concentration of its kind in early Anglo-Saxon England. In Suffolk around Lakenheath with its exceptionally rich cemeteries and settlement finds, three bracteates have been found including the A-bracteate from Undley, a silver D-bracteate from a grave in West Stow that is iconographically closely related to Kentish D-bracteates and fragments of a silver bracteate from a grave in Little Eriswell.

DEPOSITION

According to the widely accepted view of bracteate deposition, they were put into hoards in the main distribution area in southern Scandinavia and northern Germany and into graves in the peripheral areas in Poland, Frisia, northern France and Anglo-Saxon England and central and southern Germany. In SW Norway and on the Baltic island of Gotland both forms of deposition have been observed.²¹¹ Already in 1993 Hines considered in his publication of a new gold bracteate find from Kingston Bagpuize (*IK* 577) the possibility that this A-bracteate was in fact deposited in or near a small stream and not in a grave.²¹² As a metal-detector find, no secure information about the precise location or circumstances was available. He also pointed out that there was no reason to assume that the first bracteate found in Oxfordshire in St Giles' Field (*IK* 323) was a grave find; recovered before 1677, no contextual information survives.²¹³ Hinton suggested that they may, 'represent some sort of votive sacrifice deposited in running water'.²¹⁴ Excavations in 2003 in Blackeney Freshes provided the first archaeological confirmation that bracteates (in this instance a D-bracteate) may well have been deposited singly in Anglo-Saxon England.²¹⁵

In the light of this observation the other Anglian bracteate finds need to be reviewed.²¹⁶ Of the 25 English bracteates found outside Kent, 11 were definitely grave finds.²¹⁷ The other 13 finds are all either old finds without precise or in fact any information about find circumstances, or recent finds made by metal-detector and thus also outside documented archaeological contexts. Still, some clues suggest that among these finds were further single depositions. The finders extensively searched the immediate vicinities of the other two new Norfolk finds at Brinton (*IK* 584) and Binham (*IK* 604) and there is no further reported evidence for the existence of graves.²¹⁸ Equally, metal-detectorists investigated the immediate area surrounding the Near Shalfleet pendant findspot in the so-called honey-pot fashion without yielding any evidence for a grave.²¹⁹ The second bracteate from the Isle of Wight, Freshwater-D, however, was probably deposited in a grave.²²⁰

²¹¹ Andrén 1991, 248 with a map showing the areas of the different find contexts.

²¹² Hines 1993, 221.

²¹³ Plot 1677, 352.

²¹⁴ Hinton 2005, 33. In Scandinavia and northern Germany bracteate hoards have been found both in wet contexts and on dry land, Hines 1989, 198–9; Fabech 1991, 290–2; Hedeager 1992, 56–60.

²¹⁵ Cat no 13.

²¹⁶ All Kentish bracteates were found in graves with the exception of the metal-detector finds from Northbourne (cat no 5) and Denton (cat no 4) and the old find from an unknown find location that is die-identical with bracteates found in Sarre, grave 90 and in Hérouvillette, grave 39 (*IK* 492,1–3). It appears to be probable that these finds too were originally deposited in graves.

²¹⁷ West Stow-D (*IK* 565): Tymms 1853; Little Eriswell, grave 27, fragments (*IK* 293); Hutchinson 1966, 9–10; Morning Thorpe-C, grave 80, two die-identical bracteates (*IK* 306); Green et al 1987, 58, 223; Broughton Lodge, grave 33, fragment (*IK* 227); Axboe 1982, 74; East Leake-C (*IK* 602): cat no 9; Market Overton-F, (*IK* 123); Crowther-Beynon 1911, 488, 491–3; Leeds 1946, 23; Longbridge-C (*IK* 114); Burgess 1876, 378–80; Leeds 1946, 23; Welbeck Hill-C, grave 52 (*IK* 387) and Welbeck Hill-?, grave 14 (*IK* 388); Vierck 1970, 337–9; Driffild C38-D, grave 26 (*IK* 422); Mortimer 1905, 281; Leeds 1946, 36–7.

²¹⁸ Cat nos 11 and 12; Tim Pestell pers comm.

²¹⁹ Cat no 15; Frank Basford pers comm.

²²⁰ Cat no 16.

When the C-bracteate from Near Bridlington (*IK* 607) was discovered again no indications of a grave were observed.²²¹ The pendant was folded twice when found (Fig 14); it was obviously folded intentionally roughly along the middle into two halves and a second fold hides most of the back half of the animal. Several bracteates folded before deposition are known from Scandinavian findspots. For example, the A-bracteate from Senoren in Blekinge, Sweden (*IK* 354), was found rolled like an old-fashioned paper bag, the recent find from Uppåkra in Skane, Sweden, was folded into two, the never completed C-bracteate from Sylten on the island of Bornholm, Denmark, was folded into quarters with its back towards the outside before being bent again into halves, and the unique B-bracteate from Söderby (*IK* 583), Sweden, was rolled up with its loop torn out.²²² So far, folded bracteates only come from single depositions or from hoards. If the position of one or more bracteates in a grave is reported, it or they always occur in the breast area, often together with beads and other pendants that allow the reconstruction of a necklace.²²³ In graves bracteates were buried as part of the personal jewellery of the deceased. This observation suggests that the C-bracteate from Bridlington area may also have been a single deposition.

The precise findspot of the A-bracteate from Undley is debated. There was no evidence for a grave, but depending on where the findspot was it may have been found close to a cemetery and could then have been washed up.²²⁴ Still, the bracteate was folded into half when found which suggests that it was not buried in a grave.²²⁵ The pendant from Jaywicks Sands (*IK* 285) was reported as a single find on the beach.²²⁶ The C-bracteate from Kirmington (*IK* 288) was found on its own during ploughing.²²⁷ Nothing is known about the discovery of the C-bracteate from Chippenham, Cambridgeshire (*IK* 228), the D-bracteate from Hornsea (*IK* 448), or the F-bracteate from Hambleden (*IK* 608).²²⁸

Even with the very limited data that are available, it is possible to postulate the existence of depositions of small bracteate hoards containing one pendant in early Anglo-Saxon England. The stark distinction between the contemporary find situation in southern Scandinavia that is characterised by numerous larger and smaller hoards with precious metal objects and the seemingly complete absence of similar hoards from contemporary Anglo-Saxon England has led recently to the re-evaluation of settlement finds, the role of grave goods in furnished graves and weapons discovered in rivers.²²⁹ In the foreground of this debate are the methodological and theoretical challenges in discovering, identifying and describing depositions. The archaeological appearance of an object that has been discarded or casually lost or deliberately deposited can be exactly

²²¹ Cat no 14.

²²² Senoren (*IK* 354): Forssander 1936/37, 90; Uppåkra (*IK* 591): Axboe 2003, 22–4; Sylten (*IK* 570): Hauck and Axboe 1990, 72; Söderby (*IK* 583): Lamm et al 2000, 5.

²²³ Chadwick Hawkes and Pollard 1981, 333 and fig 6, with the reconstruction of the necklace from Finglesham, Kent, grave 203; Gaimster 2001, 145–8.

²²⁴ West 1985; Hines and Odenstedt 1987, 74; Hines 2006, 434; Stanley West pers comm.

²²⁵ West 1985.

²²⁶ Webster 1977, 206.

²²⁷ Axboe 1982, 74. Kirmington is known for significant Roman and early Anglo-Saxon finds but they are all stray finds without contexts. Everson and Knowles 1978; Leahy 1980; Myres 1989, 180.

²²⁸ Axboe 1982, 75. Vierck 1970, 337; Axboe 1982, 73. Cat no 7.

²²⁹ Hines 1989; 1997, 380–1; Hedeager 1992, 48–53; Webster 2000, 52–3; Hamerow 2006; Crawford 2004.

the same.²³⁰ To lose, however, a precious metal object and not to recover it seems to be rather unlikely. Equally, to discard a gold pendant whose rare and costly material could at the very least be recycled appears improbable. Even the observation that many Anglian bracteates were found without loop and thus had become unusable as pendants may not mean that they were thrown away. The tearing off of the loop may even have been an intentional act.²³¹ A deliberate deposition may have been envisaged as a permanent offering or a temporary, precious-metal, safe-guarding hoard. Hoards that look the same in archaeological terms may have had very different meanings. We cannot categorically exclude the possibility of the Anglian bracteates being deposited as treasure but it appears to be the less probable explanation. Assuming all or some of the singly found bracteates were depositions it appears to be strange that the treasure that was meant to be kept safe and eventually to be recovered always consisted of exactly one bracteate. Crawford used the term, ‘repetitive orthodoxy’ as an argument for a ritual explanation in favour of more secular motives of treasure hoards.²³² Similar arguments explain the Scandinavian hoard finds with bracteates, which also appear to have a non-random composition and which tend to follow particular patterns suggesting that the hoards fulfilled specific ritual functions.²³³ The majority of Scandinavian bracteate hoards consisted of single finds; other hoards contained either several bracteates or bracteates associated with other precious metal objects including coins, ring gold, rings, brooches and occasionally scabbard mounts. To describe the single bracteate finds as ritual depositions, votive offerings or as sacrificial hoards assumes different intentions and expectations. Still, they all have in common that the burying of the object in the ground was part of some form of communication with another world, gods, spirits or divine forces.²³⁴ Deliberately bending or folding of metal objects before their ritual deposition has been observed in the archaeological record from various periods.²³⁵ In analogy with these finds, the folding of bracteates may be explained as part of the ritual acts that preceded the deposition of the pendants and that was believed to enhance their effect on the supernatural powers.²³⁶

When relating the choice of metal of the Anglian bracteates with their find circumstances it is noticeable that among the bracteates found in graves only

²³⁰ Osborne 2004, 4.

²³¹ Lamm et al 2000, 5 referring to bracteates in the Swedish hoards from Söderby, Uppland (*IK* 176, 522 and 583) and Finnekumla, Västergötland (*IK* 427 and 428). Several of them appear to have been treated forcibly which may have included the tearing off their loops. Individual loops that may well have been once part of a bracteate have been found in Afton, Freshwater area, on the Isle of Wight, Basford and Ager 2008, and in Fincham, Norfolk, a metal-detector find in 1992/93, SMR HER 33016.

²³² Crawford 2004, 90.

²³³ Hedeager 1991, 204–6; 1992, 53.

²³⁴ Osborne 2004, 2.

²³⁵ Merrifield 1987, 29–31, 91–2 refers to deliberately bent weapons, tools and coins from the pre-Roman, Roman and medieval periods; Woodward and Leach 1993, 103–5, 113–14, 131–3 note folded Roman votive plaques and rolled then flattened inscribed lead tablets in the shrines at Uley, Gloucestershire with references to similar finds in other Romano-British sanctuaries; Hinton 2005, 211 mentions bent medieval coins and pewter tokens as good luck charms; literary evidence of the practice from the Middle Ages is discussed in Finucane 1977, 94–5. See also Anderson 2010, this volume.

²³⁶ Merrifield 1987, 91.

two were made of gold, whereas all the others were made of silver or bronze.²³⁷ Among the single finds and finds without known contexts all bracteates were made of gold, only one was made of silver that was gilded.²³⁸ This observation about some correlation between material and form of deposition could be a random effect considering the relatively small number of objects or it may reflect deliberate decisions about the use of gold for the manufacture of amulets buried intentionally as single depositions. The role of gold objects following Roman traditions not just as symbols of power within political and social spheres but also in the communication with the spiritual world is well recognised.²³⁹ Gold finds datable to the early Anglo-Saxon period are very rare.²⁴⁰ Even in Kent with its relative wealth of precious metal items, the overall number of gold objects is small; it includes some gold coins.²⁴¹ This situation may reflect great scarcity of the precious metal in 5th- and 6th-century England or very efficient forms of recycling.²⁴² Either way it seems remarkable that gold bracteates with their particular Scandinavian-inspired iconography were deposited in graves or hoards rather than recycled. The uniform find situation in Kent where bracteates were found consistently in wealthy female graves in selected cemeteries points to a particular use for which this type of pendant was adopted in eastern Kent, whereas outside Kent the ritual practices were distinct indicating a different role and meaning.²⁴³

We know of hoards and sacrificial depositions in Britain from the Roman period and the Iron Age.²⁴⁴ Depositing bracteates may thus be the expression of continuous ritual practices where only the objects to be sacrificed had changed to these new style pendants. Alternatively, in certain areas of early Anglo-Saxon England the inhabitants may have adopted the ritual use of bracteates in depositions from Scandinavia or northern Germany together with this specific type of pendant and its particular iconography. In that case, the ritual practice of depositing precious objects may have been restricted to gold bracteates and people did this because these particular pendants, their iconography, precious material and ritual usages were meaningful to them.

CONCLUSIONS

A reassessment of the English bracteates in the light of the many new finds and their iconographic, stylistic and technical parallels suggests that the idea for these pendants may have been introduced to England through contacts with the central place in Sievern in the Elbe-Weser-triangle. The concept of the golden

²³⁷ Market Overton-F (*IK* 123) and Longbridge-C (*IK* 114). Freshwater-D (*IK* 629, cat no 16) should probably be added to Anglian bracteates from graves made of gold. The situation is different for the Kentish bracteates as they were all of gold and all were probably from graves.

²³⁸ Hornsea-D (*IK* 448) with unknown find circumstances.

²³⁹ Janes, 1998, 40–1, 74–7; Capelle 2001; Gaimster 2001, 148.

²⁴⁰ Hinton 2005, 16, 33; Webster 2001, 254.

²⁴¹ Gaimster 1992, 7–8; Webster 2001, 258.

²⁴² Webster 2000, 53–5; 2001, 256–8.

²⁴³ Behr 2000, 47–9.

²⁴⁴ Henig 1989, 223–4; Hinton 2005, 7–9; Guest 2005, 20, 28–32.

pendants and their iconography was then adopted leading to their local production. In Kent they appear to be linked exclusively to women with royal connections but outside Kent their uses and meanings were different. Whereas some bracteate images are so dissolved that it is questionable what religious significance they still carried, other images are very detailed and sophisticated.²⁴⁵ If in fact they were made in England their unique designs point to local independent developments of bracteate iconography by using iconographic variants indicating lasting understanding and continuous significance of the stories told by the images. Their ritual uses and depositions as small hoards may contribute to a better appreciation of the cultural landscape in the early Anglo-Saxon period.

ADDENDUM (MARCH 2010)

Since the completion of this manuscript a metal-detector has found another bracteate in Norfolk, known as Near Holt-A (*IK* 630). It was discovered close to the finds from Brinton, Binham, Blackeney Freshes and Billingsford (cat nos 10–13), thus adding to the concentration of bracteates found between the valleys of the rivers Glaven and Stiffkey and confirming several observations made from the earlier finds. Among Anglo-Saxon bracteates the new find is unusually large and heavy with a diameter of 70 mm and a weight of 27.35 gr. It is an A-bracteate showing a male head in profile with a bust surrounded by letters imitating Latin capitals. Four circular zones with stamps alternating between triangles and spirals surround the central image. Along the edge of the flan incisions imitate a beaded framing wire. Underneath the loop that was cut off a triangle formed of beaded wire was laid on the flan. It enclosed several gold strips that may have framed a now – lost decorative stone. The bracteate is in several respects unique: style and design of the image have no close parallels, it is the first time that it has been observed that a bracteate loop was cut and not ripped off and the manufacture of the pendant was not of the same high technical quality that is common for bracteates.

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²⁴⁵ Hines 1997, 393.

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Abbreviations

- IK* *Ikonographischer Katalog*, see Axboe et al 1985–89.
- PAS* Portable Antiquities Scheme <www.finds.org.uk>.
- RGA* *Reallexikon der Germanischen Altertumskunde*, ed by H Beck, H Steuer and D Timpe, 2nd edn 1973–2007, Berlin: De Gruyter.
- TAR* *Treasure Annual Reports*, ed by Department for Culture, Media and Sport <www.culture.gov.uk/1205.aspx>.

*Résumé***Nouvelles découvertes de bractéates datant du début de la période anglo-saxonne en Angleterre** *par* Charlotte Behr

Le nombre de découvertes de bractéates datant du début de la période anglo-saxonne en Angleterre a connu une augmentation substantielle au cours des dernières années. Pour la première fois, un catalogue rassemble toutes les trouvailles depuis 1993, y compris un, et peut-être même deux poinçons en relief. Ce travail a permis une réévaluation des circonstances de leur découverte, de leur distribution et de leurs liens stylistiques et iconographiques avec les bractéates trouvées en Europe continentale et en Scandinavie. Le nouveau tableau de la fonction et de la signification des bractéates dans la société anglo-saxonne qui en a découlé suggère que l'idée de ces pendentifs trouve son origine à Sievern, en Allemagne, et que les Anglais en ont adapté le concept et l'iconographie aux méthodes de fabrication locales. Dans le Kent, les bractéates étaient utilisées dans le cadre des funérailles de femmes de rang social élevé, mais en dehors de ce comté, un dépôt rituel est également considéré comme une possibilité.

*Zusammenfassung***Neue Brakteatenfunde aus dem frühen angelsächsischen England** *von* Charlotte Behr

In den vergangenen Jahren ist die Zahl der Brakteatenfunde aus dem frühen angelsächsischen England erheblich gestiegen. Zum ersten Mal werden nun in einem Katalog alle Funde seit 1993 sowie ein, vielleicht auch zwei Prägestempel mit Brakteatenmotiven zusammengestellt. Dies führt zu einer Neubewertung ihrer Fundumstände, ihrer Verteilung und ihrer stilistischen und ikonographischen Verbindungen mit kontinentaleuropäischen und skandinavischen Brakteaten. Daraus hat sich ein revidiertes Bild der Funktion und Bedeutung von Brakteaten in der angelsächsischen Gesellschaft ergeben, sowie die These, dass die Angelsachsen den Gedanken für diese Amulette von Sievern in Deutschland übernommen, aber das Konzept und die Ikonographie für lokale Herstellung angepasst haben. In Kent ist die Verwendung mit Grabstätten von Frauen mit hohem gesellschaftlichem Status verknüpft, während außerhalb von Kent auch rituelle Deponierungen möglich sind.

*Riassunto***Bratteati: nuovi reperti del primo periodo anglosassone in Inghilterra** *di* Charlotte Behr

Negli ultimi anni il numero di ritrovamenti di bratteati del primo periodo anglosassone in Inghilterra è aumentato notevolmente. Esiste ora un catalogo che riunisce per la prima volta tutti i ritrovamenti effettuati a partire dal 1993, oltre a uno stampo, o forse due, con motivi di bratteati. Questo porta alla revisione delle circostanze dei ritrovamenti, della loro distribuzione e dei legami stilistici e iconografici con bratteati di altri paesi europei e scandinavi. Ne emerge un quadro riveduto della funzione e del significato dei bratteati nella società anglosassone, quadro che induce a pensare che in Inghilterra l'idea di utilizzare questi monili da portare sospesi al collo sia venuta da Sievern in Germania, ma che il concetto e l'iconografia siano stati adattati per la produzione locale. L'uso che ne fu fatto nel Kent è legato a sepolture di donne di alto rango, ma al di fuori del Kent potrebbe anche trattarsi di deposizione rituale.