Great square-headed brooch from Chessell Down Isle of wight;

Great square-headed brooch, early 6th century,
Early Anglo-Saxon, From Grave 22, Chessell Down, Isle of Wight © Trustees of the British Museum
Because buttons and zippers had not been invented, clothes in Anglo-Saxon England were fastened with pins or brooches.

This fine silver-gilt and niello brooch is perhaps the most beautiful of all surviving great square-headed brooches. The casting reveals an artist in complete mastery of his material and current art styles. The brooch was found by George Hillier in 1855 in the grave of a woman, together with two stamped pendants, a pair of tweezers, and iron knife and a waist buckle. It was probably made in the first quarter of the sixth century.

The brooch is the best example of a small group of brooches that reflect southern Scandinavian influence. Like its Scandinavian predecessors, it was cast in silver and then gilt on its front surface. The piece has close stylistic parallels with objects found in Kent, although large square-headed brooches are not typical Kentish types.

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The outer border of the head-plate is decorated with scrolls on the sides and two Style I quadrupeds with long ears and humanoid feet at the Centre. Scrolls and disembodied Style I body parts fill the rest of the head-plate field within borders of stamped and nielloed triangles. The bow is plain. The footplate below the bow is decorated with face masks in the side lobes and another larger face mask in the centre below two Style I heads.

Suggested readings:
C.J. Arnold, The Anglo-Saxon cemeteries on the Isle of Wight (London, The British Museum Press, 1982).
E.T. Leeds, A corpus of early Anglo-Saxon (Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1949).
J. Hines, A new corpus of Anglo-Saxon Great Square-Headed Brooches
(Woodbridge, Boydell for the Society of Antiquaries of London, 1997).
R.A. Smith, A guide to the Anglo-Saxon and Foreign Teutonic Antiquities (London, British Museum, 1923).

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