

THREE EARLY ANGLO-SAXON METALWORK FINDS FROM THE ISLE OF WIGHT, 1993–6

By MARK STEDMAN

ABSTRACT

A Cruciform Brooch, a Disc Brooch and a Frankish/Merovingian Bronze Bowl are discussed in the light of the relationship between Late Roman villas and Early Anglo-Saxon cemeteries and settlements. Their findspots are also commented upon in regard to the suggested reuse of Bronze Age downland barrow cemeteries as property boundary markers. The Island's Early Anglo-Saxon settlement, focusing upon downland springlines, is also discussed.

A CRUCIFORM BROOCH FROM
BLOODSTONE COPSE,
EAGLEHEAD DOWN, NEAR RYDE
(Figs 1 & 2)

On 9 August, 1995, a Mr Beency brought a series of artefacts to the Isle of Wight Archaeological Centre for identification purposes. These included a fragment of a brooch which was collected as a surface find whilst the owner was metal detecting around a spring line in Bloodstone Copse, Eaglehead Down, near Ryde. The find spot was centred upon NGR SZ 5002 5753. The exact provenance of the object is uncertain, as it was found within a scrape made by a wild animal. However, its position at the base of the slope of the downland escarpment suggests that it could have been deposited within colluvium through the process of hill wash.

It is considered that the find came from an Early Anglo-Saxon cemetery or from secondary burials from a large Bronze Age cemetery of thirteen ploughed-out barrows, which was situated upslope to the west upon the escarpment of Eaglehead Down and located through aerial photography.

Description

Though incomplete in form the object under examination has a grey green patina which exhibits a high degree of scratch and wear. However the artefact fortunately seems free of any active corrosion. In its damaged state, from the top knob-headed terminal to the break in the artefact's 'bow' spine, it measures 47.5 mm in length. The object seems to have suffered damage in antiquity, since the breaks in the artefact are not clean. Its bow 'spine' is gently angled within the front piece, yet the foot plate is missing below the break. It is of solid construction, rather than being hollow in form, which could suggest that the artefact was an earlier variant or of a localised type (Eagles 1993, 133).

The foot plate of the brooch is missing below the break in the bow, which in turn has been severed at the point where the single pin connects at the reverse lug. The lower zoomorphic terminal would have been demarcated from the rest of the bow by a laterally incised decoration (Hattatt 1987, 303). This terminal would have been inscribed with a stylised animal head motif as a form of decoration. The design would also have been characterised by two raised circular dots for eyes.

From the reverse side, it can be seen that there was a single iron axis bar which held a spring coil. This has been broken away from the axis bar, perhaps lending weight to the supposition that the artefact was originally lost or discarded rather than being possibly attached to the clothing of a buried inhumation from within or around the suspected Anglo-Saxon cemetery. The pin has been cleanly removed, as the artefact at the reverse is completely free from the residue of corrosion (Rogerson 1985, 203).

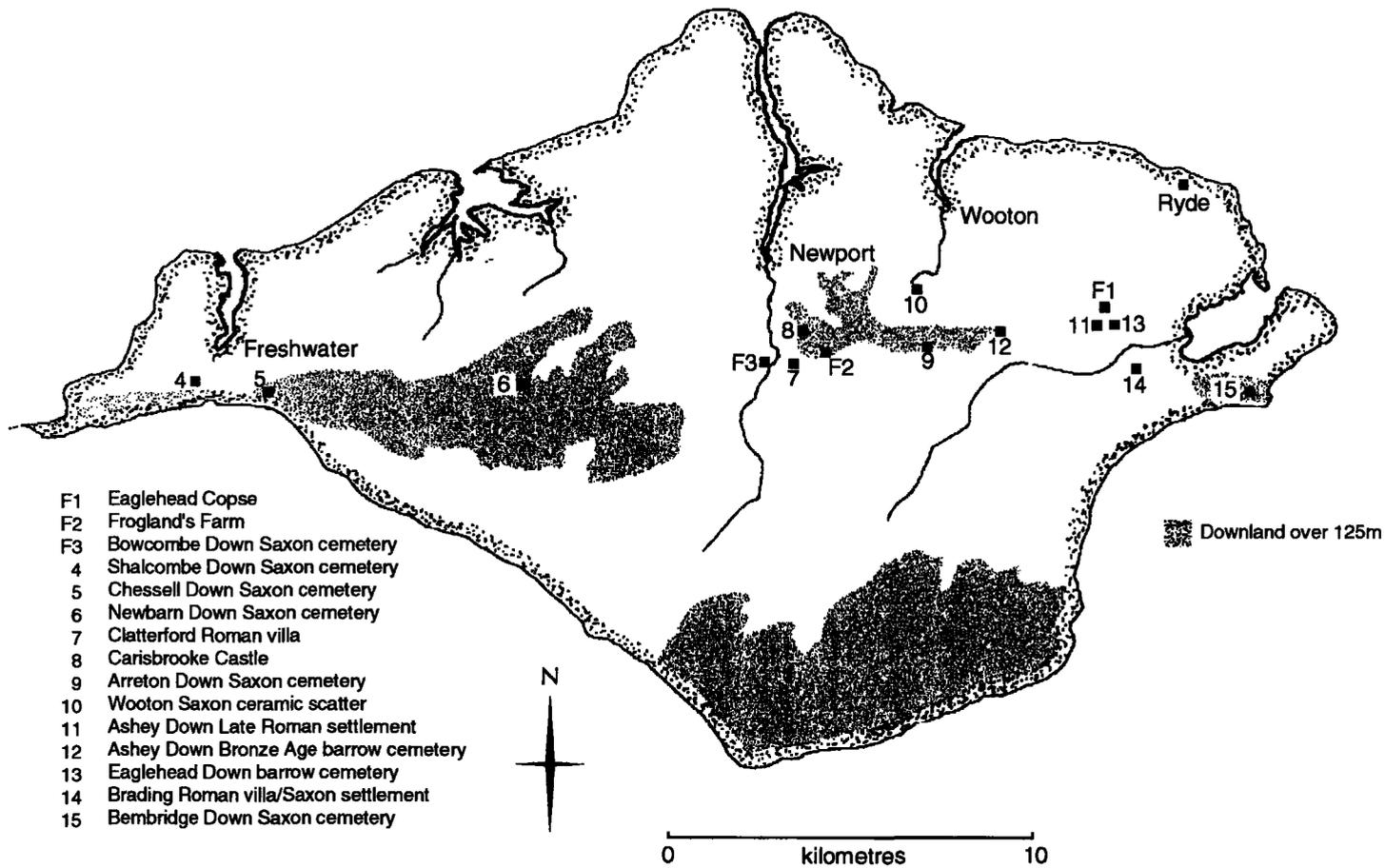


Fig. 1 Map of the Isle of Wight, showing sites mentioned in the text

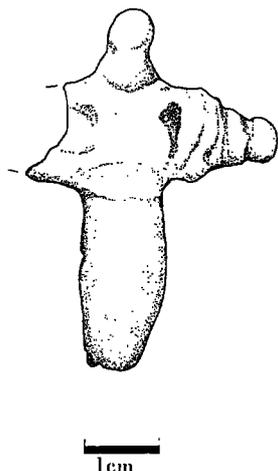


Fig. 2 Cruciform brooch from Bloodstone Copse, Eaglehead Down

The artefact's small square head plate is surmounted by three knob-headed terminals, that seem to have been cast as a complete component. However, the third right-hand horizontal terminal is missing. The knob-headed terminals have been subject to a great degree of wear and tear and cannot be evaluated as being spherical in form. They are certainly not polyhedral in design as exhibited by other brooch variants. These knob-headed terminals would have been joined to the axis bar head plate thus giving the brooch an overall width of 50 mm. Along the centre of the brooch's front piece the bow spine has a very badly worn raised linear decoration which can just be discerned: unfortunately the design is badly worn and is indeterminate.

Classification and parallels

The object can be identified as closely resembling an Anglo-Saxon cruciform brooch in design and form (McGregor & Bolick 1993, 95-7). It is fairly close to the variant described as Aberg 1926 Group 1. Earlier academic thinking suggests that this brooch type was common during the period AD 450-500 and is derived from the continental Teutonic 'P' shaped

brooch. This date has been supported by Reichstein who attributes the design and form to a date of *c.* AD 500. Catherine Mortimer and John Hines also support a date centred upon the 5th century (Stoodley 1996; 1997, Pers. Comm.). There is a strong possibility, however, that the deposition of the brooch within the suggested funerary context at Eaglehead Down may have been at a later date. Intensive wear patterns on the artefact could be indicative of a well-handled family heirloom.

It is unwise to assign an ethnic attribution to an artefact such as this. This brooch type was previously unknown on the Isle of Wight, and is, on the whole, more usually attributed to areas of Anglian settlement within England. Dr Martin Welch, however, is unwilling to prescribe an 'Anglian' label to the object, since cruciform brooches have been also found in Jutish East Kent. The Isle of Wight and Southern Hampshire have been traditionally regarded as having had cultural traditions which were more akin to the Jutish people (Yorke 1990, 137; Arnold 1982). Perhaps the closest parallel to this object is a terminal of a copper-alloy Aberg Group I or II 'Jutish' cruciform brooch from the sub-Roman and Early Anglo-Saxon site at Northbrook Farm, Micheldever (Johnston 1998). The Isle of Wight artefact may have exhibited a similar zoomorphic terminal which is thought to represent a horse.

Few known comparisons have been found in Central Southern England except one notable metal detector find at Hod Hill, Dorset (Eagles & Mortimer 1993, 132). The significance of this artefact is of some note, as alongside an equal-armed brooch with an animal terminal, the artefact is one of 'the earliest Anglo-Saxon objects to be found within the heartland of Wessex. (Hampshire, Wiltshire, and Dorset)' (Eagles 1995, 13). It was found close to the site of a Roman building situated below the Hod Hill hillfort adjacent to the River Stour.

Finds in England from within sealed contexts in cemeteries include brooches in Graves 52 and 55 in Westgarth Gardens, Suffolk (West 1988, 59-60), Grave 26 from Spong Hill in Norfolk (Tomalin 1996, Pers. Comm.) and Grave 17 at Brancaster, Norfolk (Rogerson 1985, 203). Other

examples cited also include the brooch from Grave 13 at Girton, Cambridgeshire (Rogerson 1985, 205).

The find-spot and its possible significance

The brooch would appear to be from a secondary or primary barrow burial. This is strongly supported by the location by aerial photography of a Bronze Age barrow cemetery of some thirteen barrows on the downland escarpment to the west, which may have been the focus for a Saxon cemetery; also by a scatter of sub-Roman and unabraded Early Anglo-Saxon pottery from that site and from a sealed stake-hole context at the spring line below (Stedman forthcoming).

The find spot of the brooch is within 100 m of the Newchurch/Brading parish boundary (Margham 1996, Pers. Comm.). The barrow cemetery on the downland may have been respected by the Newchurch/Brading parish boundary, which may not have originated until the Late Saxon period with the establishment of the new church. Yet the parish boundary as a whole may have evolved out of its use in part as Combley Roman villa's estate boundary (Cahill 1996, Pers. Comm.). If this is the case the downland escarpment boundary or parts of its length may be of pre Roman date due to its relationship to the barrow cemetery. Similar Early Anglo-Saxon barrow boundary markers can be suggested at Chessell Cross and Bowcombe Down (Stedman 1996). Furthermore, study of the Isle of Wight's parish boundaries' relationships to pagan burial sites has revealed that two barrow cemeteries at Kingston and Chessell Down are located upon parish boundaries (Arnold 1982). Two other cemetery sites at Bembridge and Arreton Downs are also situated less than 200 m from nearby parish boundaries (Basford 1980, 35).

Therefore of the Island's thirteen known Early Anglo-Saxon cemeteries just under half could be suggested to be closely related to these landscape features. It is unsure, however, in the case of the Eaglehead Copse brooch whether the suggested barrow cemetery may respect or demarcate a prehistoric land boundary. Yet within the wider

sphere of Southern Central England, there is a similar trend in which the burial sites themselves exist upon or near land boundaries, as well as being sited in or near existing settlements (Bonney 1966, 28).

The find spot of the brooch is also significant with respect to the relationship between Early Anglo-Saxon and Romano-British settlements. It was found within the environs of a Romano-British settlement situated adjacent to the springline at the mouth of the Eaglehead Coombe. Such sites could be the focus of Anglo-Saxon occupation, as demonstrated by the nearby Brading villa, where there is evidence of sub-Roman activity and an Early Anglo-Saxon building (Trott 1997, Pers. Comm.). The Brading site was also related to a late Romano-British settlement on the downland above, with its adjacent Bronze Age and secondary Anglo-Saxon barrow cemetery at Ashy Down (Drewett 1970). This would reinforce Dr Arnold's hypothesis that the Island's Early Anglo-Saxon settlers farmed and lived within visual contact of their downland barrow cemeteries. Possible continuity of occupation nearby in terms of the indigenous and incoming migrants' settlement is underlined by the fact that a cremation burial from one of the Ashy Down barrows used a sub-Roman Overwey type vessel.

This relationship can also be seen at Meonstoke, Hampshire, where a late Roman building with a sub-Roman and Early Anglo-Saxon phase is closely related to an Early Anglo-Saxon cemetery (Champion & Dennis 1978; Hughes 1986). At Northbrook Farm, Micheldever, a possible cemetery was located near a sub-Roman and Early Anglo-Saxon settlement adjacent to the river Dever (Johnston 1998).

A DISC BROOCH FROM FROGLAND'S FARM, CLATTERFORD, CARISBROOKE (Figs 1 & 3)

During April 1995 a Mr Heath brought a series of objects to the Archaeological Centre for identification, conservation and evaluation purposes. The owner had recovered the artefacts with the use of a metal detector from the site of 'Jones

Field' which is situated within the environs of Frogland's Farm (OS parcel 2344; NGR SZ 4820 8740).

Description

The artefact is a circular copper alloy disc measuring 35 mm in diameter. The flat surface of the front piece is decorated with an inscribed concentric circle motif, which contains a punched and inscribed decoration in the form of a 'ring' and 'dot' design. On examination of the artefact the edges of the disc seem to be smooth, except for an area of damage at the right hand bottom side of the object.

Its edges do not betray any degree of notching in terms of decoration. The front of the disc's outer concentric ring decoration is reminiscent of a hoop design which measures 4.5 mm in width. The outer ring contains fourteen 'ring and dots'. The diameter of these 'bulls eyes' actually touch the outer concentric ring, the central concentric ring also has a width of 4.5 mm, which is centrally surmounted by a single 'bulls eye' motif.

The overall condition of the disc's front piece can be described as being badly abraded. The design and form of the artefact is still discernible though its condition is far from stable. The artefact is light green in patina and the front piece betrays evidence of tin plating. The original bronze sur-

face can be plainly seen, and a lighter gold colour seems to be picked out within the 'bulls eyes'. The presence of this discolouration may suggest the process of gilding.

Detailed conservation work will have to be undertaken to check the areas that are affected by bronze disease. On the artefact's lower right hand side an area of the disc has suffered damage which has led to the snapping off of a small percentage of its front piece in antiquity. The damage has made inroads into the outer edge of the concentric ring. The reverse side of the disc reveals a hinge and catch plate which is still to be seen *in situ*: these fixtures contained a pin which appears to be missing.

Classification and parallels

The object can be identified as an Early Anglo-Saxon disc brooch, which in form can be dated to AD 450-550. It is particularly difficult to make definitive statements concerning the form, origin, and chronology of the brooch as there is no specific style of decoration which falls into a convincing typological group. Each disc brooch seems to have its own blend of concentric rings, mouldings, notch decoration, and 'bulls eyes' (Dickinson 1979, 39). The presence of tinning upon the front piece of the Frogland's Farm brooch shows that it was gilded in white metal, which probably consisted of a high tin and bronze content. This may denote a more superior form of variant because of the scarcity within Southern England of brooches that bear this form of decoration.

Parallels from the Isle of Wight are few in number. No similar early disc brooches have been found, yet certain comparisons can be drawn from other contexts which may hint at the possible Island provenance of the brooch. For instance, although the pin is missing, the catch plate bears some similarity to that of the Shalcombe garnet-inlaid disc brooches found within Barrow I (iii-iv) (Arnold 1982, 82). Other comparisons can be made with the Chessell cemetery, where a semi-circular tinned bronze pendant (Grave 2. viii) displays a central roundel as well as a stamped egg and tongued circular border at the edges of its front piece (Arnold 1982, 82). The diversity of decoration and form of these three artefacts could

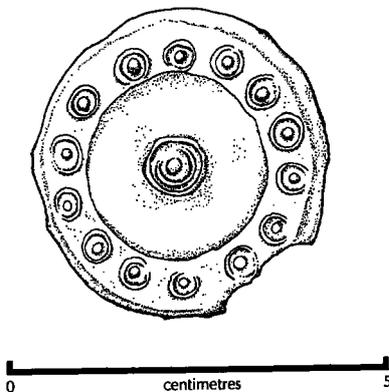


Fig. 3 Disc brooch from Frogland's Farm, Clatterford

lend weight to the supposition that the Island had a craft and metal working tradition (Arnold 1982, 105). It should also be noted that a piece of scrap gold has also been found in the vicinity of Frogland's Farm, which has been dated by the British Museum to the 4th–10th centuries AD. The suggestion of local jewellery making may be complemented by the idea that the Island was also an attractive market for luxury products with a high-status display component.

The closest comparisons that can be drawn from Southern Central England are from sites centred upon the Solent Shore. A disc brooch that has strong similarities with the Frogland's Farm example was found in the sealed context of a well at Portchester (Cunliffe 1976, 205). It also has well-executed outer and central concentric rings and 'bulls eyes' design. A pair of disc brooches was found within Grave 36 in the Droxford cemetery (Aldsworth 1979, 133, 169). Although different in diameter (30 and 39 mm respectively), they have a similar date to the Island brooch and also have a similar bold 'ring' and 'dot' compass-inscribed ornamentation. A single disc brooch that came from an unstratified context at the Roman site at Bitterne (Cotton & Gathercole 1955, 29) has similar comparable traits. An outer concentric ring of 12 'bulls eyes' ring a single off centre 'bulls eye'. These outer 'bulls eyes' are not demarcated by a circular border, so this brooch could be described as being simpler in form. The 'bulls eyes' are similar to the Frogland's Farm brooch, as they are strongly punched.

Other similar examples from Central Southern England include a series of brooches from the site of a cemetery at Charlton, Wiltshire (Davies et al. 1985). Contacts with the Isle of Wight may be illustrated by the closeness of Grave 38's disc brooch's design to that on a brooch pendant from Chessell Down (Arnold 1982, 20). Other similarities in decoration also include examples from Graves 17 and 32, which have tinned surfaces and diameters of 35 and 37 mm respectively. The cemetery at Portway, near Andover, has probably revealed the closest examples in design and form to the Frogland's Farm brooch. Grave 32 offers a very similar example in design, although without an outer concentric ring it has 13 'bulls eyes'. A disc brooch from Grave 16 exhibits no 'bulls eyes'

except one central punched dot which is surrounded by a single concentric ring border. Other disc brooches can be found in Graves 1, 2a, 16, 22, 32, 38, and 42. The majority of the Portway brooches have a date centred upon the period circa AD 600 (Cook 1985, 78).

Several examples of this brooch variant with punched ring and dot decoration come from Sussex, from the cemeteries at Beddingham Hill, Alfriston, and Highdown. The closest parallel to the Frogland's Farm brooch comes from Alfriston, grave 12 (Welch 1983, 558). This example had a central punch enclosed by two concentric rings, which however contain no 'bulls eye' punches.

The find-spot and its possible significance

The artefact find spot was situated within the environs of a Late Roman villa at Clatterford which utilised the Lukely Brook springline. Within the Bowcombe Valley a highly concentrated series of Roman buildings including masonry structures has led Dr David Tomalin and Mr Kevin Trott to suggest that the site and its environs was a 'proto town' (Trott forthcoming), situated directly below the site of Carisbrooke Castle with its possible sub-Roman fort (Tomalin 1996, Pers. Comm.) or Late Saxon Burh context (Young 1996, Pers. Comm.). The brooch was also located within 100 m upslope of the find spot of a Late sub-Roman quoit brooch (Toscavin, Isle of Wight SMR 1995). Its findspot is of significance as a recent evaluation trench found a contemporary Late Roman trackway nearby, that ran parallel to a possible Late Anglo-Saxon estate boundary situated adjacent to Plaish Farm (Stedman 1996). A group of Early Anglo-Saxon burials has also been found on the declivity of the Carisbrooke hilltop site.

If the Frogland's Farm brooch comes from an Early Anglo-Saxon cemetery, its topographical location does not seem to fit into the wider Isle of Wight cemetery pattern of being situated upon downland crests above springlines (Arnold 1981). Instead, it may reflect an adjacent settlement sited on a valley bottom springline, a location that was widely exploited in the late and sub-Roman period. The site, due to the significant concentration of

Early Anglo-Saxon finds (including the disc brooch), does perhaps have both a burial and a possible settlement site context. Most of the Early Anglo-Saxon material consists of artefacts of high status. There is also a strong suggestion that these finds, with their lower position in the Bowcombe valley (in reference to Arnold's cemetery pattern model, and directly upslope from the Clatterford villa site) may represent the grave goods from boundary burials, or a settlement with a cemetery component (Stedman 1996). Later Germanic finds such as Sceattas coinage suggest that the location may have had a possible level of Mid Saxon continuity.

Another more controversial interpretation could also be suggested if the artefacts had a later date in terms of funerary deposition, namely that a conversion period cemetery with a Minster Church component could have existed close to the Carisbrooke Burh site (Young 1996, Pers. Comm). This could be supported by Mr Kevin Leahey's analogy that Minster sites found in Northern England have been known to produce significant quantities of high-status metal work as well as Sceattas coinage (Margham 1996, Pers. Comm.).

Placing the artefact type into the wider national context, research by Helen Geake suggests that the overall distribution of disc brooches is concentrated in South Eastern England. Finds from individual graves and cemeteries suggest that these artefacts continued to be deposited throughout the 7th Century (Geake 1995, 79). If the Frogland's Farm brooch was deposited within a grave as an heirloom there could be the suggestion that the possible cemetery or boundary burials may have had a later Early Anglo-Saxon date. Therefore it could not be ruled out that the Frogland's Farm site may also have a conversion period context.

The potential valley basin cemetery site at Frogland's Farm may conflict with the downland escarpment model for early Anglo-Saxon cemeteries (Arnold 1981). Yet it is interesting to note that the closest Early Anglo-Saxon burial ground is only 1.5 km distant, at Bowcombe Down. There could be a separate Early and Mid Anglo-Saxon cemetery pattern in the Bowcombe Valley, with Frogland's Farm forming the later of the two. This proximity of successive cemeteries can be seen at

the well-known sites of Winnall I and II, near Winchester, which were only 500 m apart (Meaney & Hawkes 1970, 6).

A FRANKISH OR MEROVINGIAN EMBOSSSED-RIM BOWL FROM BOWCOMBE DOWN ANGLO-SAXON CEMETERY, CARISBROOKE (Figs 1 & 4)

On 25 March 1994, a Mr Thompson contacted the Isle of Wight Archaeological Centre with information to the effect that a bronze object of some considerable size had been located whilst metal detecting on the site of the Bowcombe Down Early Anglo-Saxon cemetery. Evidently the finder had located a previously unknown grave, and so the staff immediately visited the site in Mr Thompson's company. The position of the grave was established at NGR SZ 46121 87286 on the crest of Bowcombe Down. The grave was situated 128 m above sea level and its underlying geology was comprised of angular flint gravels over Upper Chalk.

On inspection the embossed rim of a metal bowl could be seen *in situ* at a depth of 71 cm within the topsoil. Due to the exposed position of the site it was decided to recover the bowl, which meant the enlargement of the hole made by Mr Thompson. Time was of the essence due to the failure of the light so recovery was not carried out within the most ideal of conditions. When the bowl was lifted it was found to be lying on the upper leg bones of a human skeleton (Basford, Isle of Wight SMR 449). Underneath the bowl lay seven glass and amber beads sealed within the context of a dark humic soil matrix, which was retained for analysis. The matrix also contained the remaining fragments that had detached themselves from the bowl's base.

The skeletal bones were exposed from the base of the pelvis to just above the position of the knees. Both thigh bones were lying 21 cm apart from each other and could be described as actually cradling the bowl. The skeleton's head was lying to the west. The hole was then further checked by metal detector, which indicated that there was another metal object located within the area of the pelvic region. On further excavation a 6th-century AD oval bronze buckle with a violin shaped tongue was revealed. The object lay centrally positioned over

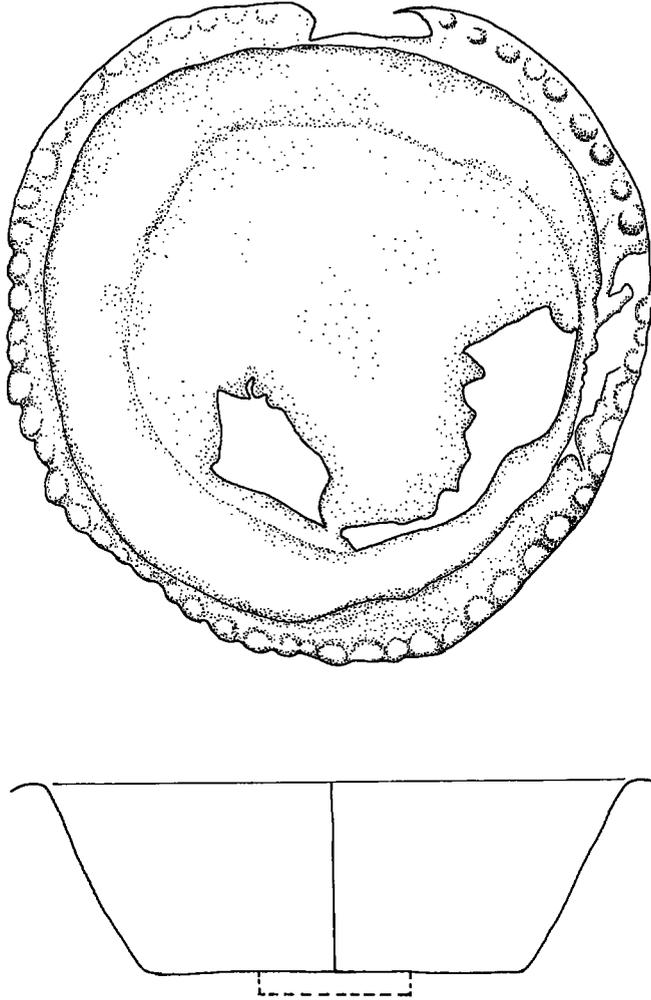


Fig. 4 Frankish or Merovingian embossed-rim bowl from Bowcombe Down Anglo-Saxon cemetery, Carisbrooke

the pelvis, which was in turn covered by the right arm bone. The hole was carefully back filled and the finds were dispatched for conservation.

Description

Upon examination the artefact could be described as being a spun or cast bronze bowl. Possible

traces of drilling could be seen on the inside of bowl's base. This was unusual as the bowl during its finishing process may have been finally beaten into the shape that the craftsman desired. In composition it was probably made of a copper alloy mixture, and in form could be described as being a wide open and flanged bead-rim variant, which has a slightly convex appearance in curvature.

The bowl's diameter including the lipped flange rim is 264 mm, and its height excluding the missing foot ring measures 78 mm. If the foot ring was present the complete total height of the artefact would measure 87 mm (an additional 9 mm). The diameter of the foot ring would have been 66 mm, but unfortunately only an estimate of the artefact's base diameter of 153 mm can be given.

The bowl's base has suffered some damage with two jagged holes that collectively cover a third of the area of the base. The fragments from these holes were found directly below the base. The artefact is slightly buckled and mildly exhibits an oval shape rather than a completely intact circular form. The damage was probably due to soil pressure instead of the object's poor general condition at the moment of deposition. On excavation, the condition of the artefact was good, and conservation work has left the item with a grey green patina.

The flanged embossed bead rim is decorated by a tightly spaced series of punched concentric dimples which exhibit some degree of wear. The bowl's rim measures 18 mm in width, and has incurred some damage in two distinctive areas, which however does not effect the overall condition of the rim.

Classification and parallels

The bowl seems to contain all of the defining characteristics of being Frankish or Merovingian in origin. The closest comparable continental examples have been found from a variety of sites within the Rhineland and the Meuse valleys, which date to the 5th-6th centuries AD. The distribution pattern of these artefacts has been found to extend as far as Thuringia in the east and England to the west. Examples from the Meuse valley include the site of Pouligny, grave 3: 2. This artefact is similar in dimension and form to the Bowcombe bowl but it does not possess a bossed beaded rim (Tomalin 1995, Pers. Comm.). Another example from Saint Martin de Fontenoy, grave 46:1, is a closer parallel in size, diameter, and decoration (Basford 1995, Pers. Comm.). It is particularly striking in terms of similarity as it has a rim diameter of 276 mm. A further example from Bassin au Pole in the Meuse region also has some similar comparative traits, and can be dated to the period AD 475-550.

The Bowcombe bowl also has another contemporary parallel from the Isle of Wight. A near identical bowl was excavated during the excavations carried out at Carisbrooke Castle during the early 1980's. It is particularly significant that these two sites are only 1.5 km apart. Like the Bowcombe burial, the Carisbrooke burial (grave 1612) is particularly rich and has strong similarities in terms of the quality of grave goods which are also derived from Frankish or Merovingian contexts (Young, 1995, Pers. Comm.). The Carisbrooke bowl is slightly larger with a rim diameter of 340 mm, and also a greater height, and more of a convex curvature. It is probably of a similar date, being placed within the second decade of the 6th century AD (Young forthcoming). Another interesting point is that within the wider context of the three Carisbrooke graves, one burial exhibited a rite in which a coin was placed in the mouth of the grave's occupant. Only two examples of this custom have been found in the whole of England.

Within the Isle of Wight besides the immediate parallel of the Carisbrooke artefact no other example has been located from cemeteries or other contexts. However a hanging bowl from the Chessell Down cemetery (grave 26) can be cited. This artefact was found alongside the remains of a bucket, a spearhead, a knife, sword and shield and ten iron arrow heads. The grave is important as the bucket possibly dates from after AD 600. Dr Helen Geake believes that the Island's Early Anglo-Saxon cemeteries may have burials from the conversion period, yet these cannot be located within the archaeological record and cannot be recognised within the repertoire of the graves (1995, 185). She cites Chessell Grave 26 as a rare example because it contained the bucket.

As well as those from the Isle of Wight, other bowls and similar Frankish material have been found in south-east Kent. Vera Evison considers that the bronze bowl excavated from Buckland cemetery, Dover, can be placed within the first phase of the site, which gives the artefact a date range of AD 475-525 (Welch 1992, 77). The cemetery at Alfriston in Sussex can be cited as another relevant context. From Grave 28 a skeleton was found to have a bowl at its feet. The bowl's base was decorated with a circular ribbon which took the form of a tinned wash (Welch

1983, 146). The diameter is the same as that of the Bowcombe bowl.

Burial sites in the areas of so called 'Anglian' settlement have produced bowls of a similar style. An example from Grave 200 (a:ii) at Morning Thorpe, Norfolk (Green et al. 1987, 256) appears to match the Carisbrooke vessel in form, scale, and decoration. It is similar to another example from the cemetery at Spong Hill, Grave 24:1 (Hills et al. 1984, fig 81). Both have a very similar rim diameter measurement to the Bowcombe find. Other near identical bronze bowls within Anglian areas include the vessel from Sawston in Cambridgeshire. This artefact was excavated by Thomas Kerrick in 1817 and was found alongside an inhumation whose grave goods also included a bronze cauldron, sword and shield. The accompanying drawings with Kerrick's account have no scale yet by visual comparison the bowl seems to be identical to the Bowcombe Down and Morning Thorpe examples (Clarke 1824, 340).

Discussion

Other types of bronze vessel manufactured in the Meuse valley in the 5th–6th centuries AD can help to contextualise the Bowcombe Down bowl. Vera Evison (1965) shows that cauldrons with triangular lugs have a distribution in the same regions as the bowls already mentioned, including north of the River Thames. As far as the Isle of Wight is concerned, Frankish settlers or merchants could have had access to the Island and the Southern

Hampshire basin as a trading area through using the Jutish Kentish kingdom as a form of spring-board. However, the absence of Frankish burial practices suggests that the presence of Frankish objects within graves need not necessarily indicate the presence of Frankish settlers (Yorke 1996, Pers. Comm.).

The bowl could date from anywhere between AD 475–550, but a more secure dating can be given to the grave itself when the oval bronze buckle is considered. The shield-on-tongue variant of this artefact can be placed within a mid 6th century AD context, therefore giving the grave a possible date of c. AD 520–550 (Arnold 1982, 95). The bowl may have been old at the time of deposition, and could represent an heirloom.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to thank the following for their advice, help, and encouragement: Mrs K Ainsworth, Dr C Arnold, Mrs M Banbrook, Mr F Basford, Dr N Cahill, Mr C Currie, Dr H Geake, Mr J Heath, Mr R Iles, Mr D Johnston, Prof A King, Mrs R Loader, Dr M Lyne, Mr J Margham, Mr D Motkin, Mr G Scobie. Mrs J Stedman, Dr N Stoodley, Dr N Thorpe, Miss S Tindall, Dr D J Tomalin, Mr K Trott, Mr A Turner, Dr B Yorke, Dr M Welch and Dr C Young. Special thanks must go to Vanella Mead for providing the drawings of the artefacts, and to Simon Parmar and Alex Turner for preparing the map.

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