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The Bracteate Hoard from Binham — An Early Anglo-Saxon Central Place?

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with a contribution by JOHN HINES[3]

THIS ARTICLE DESCRIBES the recent discovery of Britain's first certain hoard of gold bracteates, found in a field in Binham (Norfolk). This find is unique in Anglo-Saxon England where bracteates have previously been found either in graves or as single finds. A further two gold bracteates and a possible die have been discovered in the vicinity of Binham suggesting a 'bracteate cluster'. It is argued here on the basis of analogies with sites in Scandinavia and northern Germany that Binham may have acted as a central place in northern Norfolk in the early Anglo-Saxon period. In light of bracteate distribution across Anglo-Saxon England, the area of Binham is suggested as one of several sites with meaningful clusters of bracteate finds; these may have belonged to a network of central sites distributed across Scandinavia and along North Sea coastal areas in England.

INTRODUCTION

Between 2004 and 2013 five gold bracteates and two bracelets, one gold and the other copper-alloy, were found by metal-detector users Cyril Askew, Glenn Lister and Dennis O'Neill in the same field in Binham (Norfolk).[4] Of the bracteates, four were complete and one was chopped. The hoard is a unique find in England. While some 63 bracteates are now known from the early Anglo-Saxon period, this is the first hoard composed of several bracteates to be identified. Most bracteates known from England come from graves, while several individual finds appear to be single depositions.[5] Conspicuously, the pendants from Binham are among the heaviest bracteates found in England, where most examples weigh less than 3 g. With a combined weight of more than 93 g[6] (including the gold bracelet), this hoard also represents one of the largest finds of early Anglo-Saxon gold of this era, dating later than the mid-5th-century coin hoard from Patching (Sussex), and preceding the remarkable 7th-century coin hoards recovered at Sutton Hoo (Suffolk) and Crondall (Hampshire).[7]

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[4] Behr 2010, 56–8 (the first B-bracteate), 81 (the first A-bracteate, then described as 'Near Holt').
[5] Behr 2010, 77–8.
[6] The precise weight cannot yet be measured as the fifth bracteate has not been cleaned at the time of writing.
[7] White et al 1999, 304–5; Kent 1975, 652; Sutherland 1948.

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There are several other bracteate finds from the vicinity of Binham.[8] Comparable clusters have been observed in and around various Scandinavian and northern German sites that have been described as central places.[9] The iconography and deposition of bracteates suggest that they were amulets with religious significance. Based on these analogies, and archaeological observations of Binham and its environs, this hoard may also signal a place with central political and religious significance in northern Norfolk during the late 5th and early 6th centuries.

The Norfolk finds are not the only cluster in England: further concentrations can be observed around Lakenheath in Suffolk and in eastern Kent. The wide distribution of bracteates in Scandinavia and around the North Sea, with their long series of iconographically and stylistically related images, indicate that the religious and mythical ideas expressed on these pendants were shared across parts of northern Europe by members of elites in different regions and political territories. These clusters in eastern England represent sites that may have been part of this wider network.[10] At the same time, the choice of the bracteates and the ways they were deposited reveal subtle differences at each site pointing to local sacrificial traditions and customs. The finds at Binham may thus signal the adoption of more widely held religious ideas, while at the same time revealing evidence of local interpretation.

THE DISCOVERY OF THE HOARD

Binham is a parish of some 2847 acres (1152 ha) situated 6 km from the sea along the north Norfolk coast and best known for its Benedictine monastery (Fig 1). All five bracteates were discovered in ploughsoil near the base of a southern-facing slope leading down to a tributary of the river Stiffkey.[11] The significance of the first bracteate, discovered in June 2004, was not initially appreciated and the findspot was not recorded in detail. The discovery of the second bracteate in September 2009 led to closer attention to this and to subsequent finds made in August and September 2011 and September 2013. Accurate plotting, including GPS readings, was undertaken, demonstrating that the finds derive from within an area of approximately 10 sq m. Such a tight distribution immediately suggests their deposition as part of a hoard rather than as grave goods, graves being the only secure archaeological context in which bracteates have hitherto been discovered in Britain. This impression is strengthened by the absence of any other Anglo-Saxon artefacts from the surrounding area, with the exception of the two bracelets, apparently of the same date, and a 9th-century object of uncertain function.[12]

The bracelets are difficult to parallel but appear to be of 6th-century date. The first fragments found were of copper-alloy and were not thought to relate to the hoard. The discovery of the gold example now suggests they do. Like the bracteates, the findspots of

[8] The exceptional concentration of bracteates in the area between the rivers Stiffkey and Glaven in northern Norfolk was noted in Behr 2010, 76.

[9] Steuer 2007, 882–3, 895; Pesch 2011b, 231–4.

[10] Pesch 2007, 353–9; 2011b, 273–7.

[11] Reported through the PAS, they are centered at TF 979 404; the objects were subsequently declared Treasure. The first four bracteates have been acquired by Norwich Castle Museum (hereafter NCM), accession numbers 2005.756, 2011.755 and 2013.67.3 and .4. The fifth bracteate and bracelet were found in September 2013 and are currently going through the Treasure process (Case 2013 T628); the museum hopes to acquire these too. The gilded copper-alloy bracelet fragments have been donated to Norwich Castle by Mr Askew, Mr Lister and Mr O'Neill (accession numbers 2013.67.1 and .2).

[12] This copper-alloy object features typical East Anglian-style decoration of scrolled silver wire set in niello panels, mounted on a 'helm-spired' terminal. Its function is unknown but it was possibly a staff terminal or even a small censer cover: Rogerson and Ashley 2010, 132, fig 7.46. It is now NCM 2010.108.

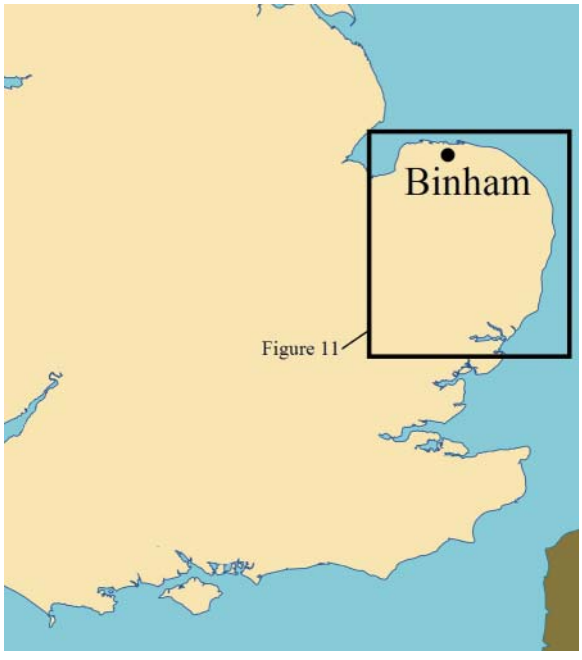

FIG 1
Location of Binham. *Illustration by T Pestell.*

the bracelets are both well and less-well located. The first copper-alloy bracelet fragment was found some 100 m to the north of the main cluster, whereas both subsequent pieces were from the same immediate area as the bracteates. The gold arm-ring was found c 30 m to the south of the cluster near the edge of the ploughland, at the bottom of the slope. Since the copper-alloy fragments belong together, it seems possible that the first piece had been dragged up the hill by the plough and that the gold arm-ring was dragged downhill, albeit not so far. Certainly, the agricultural regime works up and down the hill rather than across the break of the slope.[13] The findspots suggest these artefacts have been ploughed out of their original place of deposition.

To date, the location has been investigated by metal-detection and by geophysical survey, undertaken by Michael de Bootman. This shows that the area is largely devoid of visible archaeological features, with the exception of a small area of intense activity immediately to the south (Fig 2). Survey work beyond the adjacent hedge to the east revealed a few possible but undiagnostic archaeological features. Trial excavation is planned for 2014 which may resolve the archaeological context of the finds.

THE BRACTEATES

The five pendants are round gold foils, stamped with figurative images and small punch-stamps of various geometrical patterns arranged in concentric rings surrounding the central images. The two B-bracteates were stamped with the same central die and the three A-bracteates probably likewise share an identical central die.[14]

[13] William Wales pers comm (landowner).
[14] The description of the folded A-bracteate is largely based on an X-ray photograph. The identification of the central die and the stamps on the border zones remain provisional. We would like to thank Caroline Barton, British Museum, for providing a copy of the X-ray and unpublished analysis report.

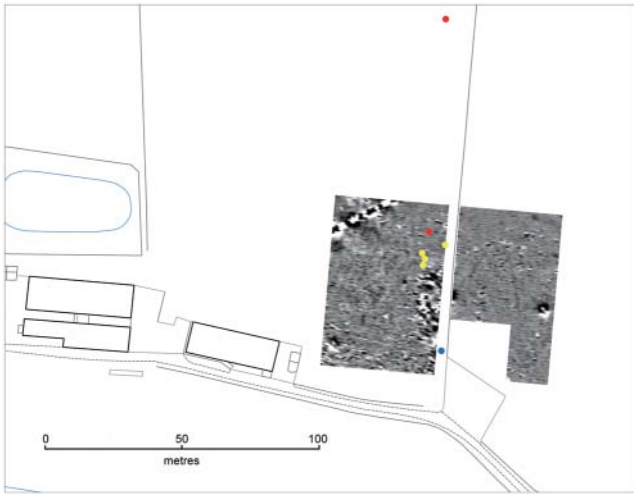

FIG 2

Geophysical plot of the hoard area with individual findspots superimposed. Yellow represents bracteates (the first bracteate found was not accurately plotted and is not shown); red indicates the copper-alloy bracelet fragments; blue indicates the gold bracelet. *M de Bootman/mapping data © Crown copyright and database rights 2011 Ordnance Survey 100019340.*

The largest of the three A-bracteates (*IK* 630,1) has a diameter of 70 mm and weighs 27.35 g, making it the largest and heaviest bracteate ever found in England (Fig 3a). The second one (*IK* 630,2) was smaller with a diameter of c 50 mm but had been chopped and folded (Fig 3b). The remaining half weighs 8.23 g. The third one (*IK* 630,3) has a diameter of approximately 50 mm and weighs (before cleaning) 12.9 g (Fig 3c). On the largest bracteate, four zones enclose the central motif. They were decorated alternately with a series of triangular and S-shaped stamps, the latter a well-known motif on Scandinavian and continental bracteates, clustering around the Baltic.[15] Only one other English example sports this motif, a fragment from the border zone of a bracteate also from Norfolk, probably Sporle-with-Palgrave (*IK* 631) (Fig 4).[16] On the two smaller and very similar bracteates, the same stamps were most probably used to decorate two surrounding zones: the inner zone with the S-shaped stamp, and the outer one with two series of the triangular stamp set against each other. Small fairly regular incisions along the edge of the obverse of the pendants appear to imitate the beaded wire usually attached to the rim of bracteate discs. The half bracteate (*IK* 630,2) has lost its loop. On the third bracteate the loop consists of a gold strip with low ridges; underneath, beaded gold wire has been attached on the stamped gold foil in the shape of a V ending in spirals.[17] On the largest example, a triangle formed of beaded gold wire framed by small spirals made from thinner beaded wire was attached beneath the now missing loop. The wire applications were quite unevenly formed and their attachments are rather patchy. Inside the triangle, a frame made of golden strips was set, possibly to hold a precious stone.[18] This bracteate represented a considerable investment in precious metal, making the craftsmanship, which tends to be very high among bracteate masters, sloppy and therefore exceptionally curious.

The motif on the three A-bracteates of an anthropomorphic head in profile remains close to its Roman model: the imperial head on late Roman coins and medallions with the imperial diadem, central jewel in the shape of a spiral, and the bust dressed with the imperial coat of which the

[15] Triangular stamps occur more frequently on English bracteates; very similar examples with a central dot and concave sides occur on the bracteates from Jaywick Sands (Essex) (*IK* 285) and from Bridlington (East Yorkshire) (*IK* 607). For the wide distribution of triangular border stamps on Scandinavian and continental bracteates, see Axboe 1982, 46–9. For S-shaped stamps see ibid, 51.

[16] The punch-stamp used on the 'Sporle' bracteate (now NCM 2010.136) is different from that used on the Binham pendants.

[17] Comparable wire applications on bracteates in the shape of a V ending in spirals are fairly rare but have been found on three A-bracteates from St Giles' Field (Oxfordshire) (*IK* 323), Sievern (Lower Saxony) (*IK* 156) and Terp Hitsum (Frisia) (*IK* 76), and on a D-bracteate from Dover Buckland (Kent) (*IK* 582).

[18] This feature is a rare occurrence on bracteates. Only two examples are known with comparable settings underneath the loop that may have held cut decorative stones. Triangular frames can be identified on a C-bracteate from an unknown findspot (*IK* 365,1) and a C-bracteate from Hjørlunde Mark (Zealand) (*IK* 78).

FIG 3

The Binham bracteates: (**a**) A-bracteate IK 630,1; (**b**) A-bracteate IK 630,2 X-ray photograph showing the folded-in design; (**c**) A-bracteate IK 630,3 uncleaned; (**d**) B-bracteate IK 604,1; (**e**) B-bracteate IK 604,2. Scale 1:1. (a), (d), (e) *Norwich Castle Museum and Art Gallery*; (b), (c) *The Trustees of The British Museum.*

FIG 4

Bracteate fragment IK 631, probably from Sporle, Norfolk. Scale 2:1. *Norwich Castle Museum and Art Gallery*.

stylised folds and the brooch are shown.[19] The face, hairstyle and coat were drawn, however, with contour lines, unlike the relief images on Roman coins. A line in front of the face was added to the head and bust, possibly representing a snake.[20] Copying the Latin coin inscription, imitations of capitals mixed with runic letters were placed round the head. The motif is rare among English bracteates; only two other A-bracteates, both from Oxfordshire, show a head surrounded by letters.[21] The motif is more frequent in southern Scandinavia and northern Germany.

The gold discs of the two B-bracteates are of the same size, 44 mm in diameter. The one still preserving its loop (*IK* 604,2) (Fig 3e) and with a spiral-shaped attachment of twisted gold wire underneath is, at 8.5 g, heavier than the other example (*IK* 604,1) of 6.93 g (Fig 3d). Both gold foils were framed with gold wire. It is noticeable that while the more common beaded wire was used on the pendant with the loop, the same twisted wire of its spiral-shaped attachment was used to surround the edge of the other bracteate; it is now largely detached. The central motif on both pendants is surrounded by two concentric fields that were decorated with the same stamps: the inner zones with a series of triangles crowned with a circle, and the outer ones with square panels in which an equal-armed saltire cross was set.[22] As Catherine Hills has noted, the stamps in the border zones of the Binham bracteates parallel stamps used to decorate urns in the nearby cemetery of Spong Hill.[23]

The two B-bracteates both sport a male figure in profile turning towards the right. His rounded hairstyle may indicate a helmet. Little detail of any clothing is shown except for a belt. In his right hand he has raised a sword ready to stab the quadruped animal that he is staring at in front of him while the animal is attacking him with its legs and appears to bite his left hand with its large jaws. The sword is shown with pommel, guard and fuller. Behind the figure is a very similar second animal, again with large jaws, a pointed ear, lengthy body and round hip but it is turning its head backwards. It appears to attack the male figure from behind with its legs and claws. Above the jaws of the right animal are four rather faint runic letters.

THE RUNIC INSCRIPTION OF IK 604,1 AND 2, *by* John Hines

The runes on both of the die-identical B-bracteates found at Binham are indistinctly stamped (Fig 5). Since the pictorial design of the standing figure and the two beasts is quite clear, this would appear to be the result of a deficiency of the die rather than of poor striking or of wear and abrasion.

There are four runes which, after microscopic examination lit from every possible angle, can be transcribed with reasonable confidence as ᚨᚨᚨᛏ. The first and fourth of these are perfectly clear; the second adequately so. The third, however, is only partly visible. What can be made out is ᚾ.

[19] Axboe and Kromann 1992, 279.

[20] Snakes in different shapes and positions are quite common pictorial elements on A-, B-, and C-bracteates as well as on some medallion imitations. A curled snake with a small head pointing towards the bust is shown in a similar position on the obverse of the medallion imitation from Aneby (Småland) (*IK* 14).

[21] *IK* 323 St Giles' Field and *IK* 577 Kingston Bagpuize. The recent find of a gold pendant from Berinsfield (also Oxfordshire) (PAS BERK-842B88) showing an anthropomorphic head surrounded by Latin letters is probably not a 5th- or 6th- century bracteate because it was made with a patrix which suggests a 7th-century date. Earlier bracteates were made with a matrix.

[22] Among the English bracteate finds a similar triangular border stamp is known from Longbridge-C (Warwickshire), and the equal-armed cross stamp from Welbeck Hill (Lincolnshire) (*IK* 388). For distribution in Norway, western Sweden and Denmark see Axboe 1982, 50.

[23] According to Hills and Lucy 2013, 200, 232 and 246 the respective stamp group 7/12 dates to the second half of the 5th century which corresponds well with Axboe's date of 'Hamburg'-B with its mirror image of Binham-B to the last quarter of the 5th/early 6th century (2004, 118).

This requires some extra by-stave to make a properly formed rune of this period, and under some lights what we have here may appear more like ᚾ (= **n**). Nonetheless, when lit from the top, what appears to be a faint upper by-stave can be discerned; altogether ᚿ appears the most reliable reading.

These runes will be transliterated a little differently in terms of the original Germanic *fuþark* or the Anglo-Saxon *fuþorc*, as **waat** or **wææt** respectively. The *fuþorc* is the modified runic alphabet that was developed and used in Anglo-Saxon England and Frisian areas of the Continent, initially as a result of regionally specific sound-changes.[24] Famously, the A-bracteate from Undley in Suffolk provides the earliest known example of one of these developments, with the *ōs*-rune, ᚩ, representing the phonetic development of the vowel *a* before a sequence of nasal and spirant consonants into a nasalised vowel *ã* and eventually to *ō* in the rune-name **ansuz*.[25] The runes on bracteates are normally transliterated according to the *fuþark*, and **waat** can therefore serve as a reliable basis for discussion.

The gap between the second and third runes is greater than that between any other pair, so it is possible that even this short text should be read as **wa at** rather than as a single word. The occurrence of double letters is not unfamiliar on bracteates;[26] unfortunately it has so far proved impossible to make any systematic sense of these occurrences, in terms of, for instance, the phonetic length of the vowel or consonant concerned. However both **waat** and **wææt** might be identified with known words in appropriate early Germanic languages, and indeed with words with a long vowel.

What would originally have been **wāt* appears in Old English as *wǣt* and Old Frisian as *wēt*, which is the modern English word 'wet', both as adjective and noun. This root also appears adjectivally in Old Norse as *vátr*.[27] In the 'Runic Scandinavian' language of the relevant period, however, that word should have some inflexional ending after the root **wāt-*.[28] As a noun, **wāt* could have the sense of 'liquid' or possibly 'drink'. While there is no obvious relationship between this word and the image on the bracteates, it might be regarded as a plausible interpretation in light of other terms that may designate drinks on bracteates: **alu**, 'ale'(?), which appears several times,[29]

FIG 5

Enlarged view of the runic inscription on B-bracteate IK 604,1. Without scale. *Norwich Castle Museum and Art Gallery*.

[24] Page 1999, 38–48.
[25] Page 1999, 43–4; Nielsen 1995. Forms of words cited with asterisks are reconstructed rather than directly attested.
[26] Cf Axboe 2011, 290–6, but note that this is not an exhaustive list of runic texts on bracteates.
[27] The form ending in *-r* is the masculine nominative singular form that is the standard dictionary citation.
[28] Nielsen 2000, 283–7.
[29] Heizmann 2011, 533–44.

and **medu**, 'mead'(?), which appears on the Undley bracteate. Recent German-language scholarship has, however, been surprisingly sceptical of the interpretation of **alu** as 'ale', preferring to argue for an Indo-European term meaning 'good fortune' or 'protection' that may have survived into Runic Scandinavian.[30] If it had, though, it must have become phonetically identical with a distinctively Germanic term *alu* meaning 'ale' by the period of the bracteates.

Another possible identification, although a slightly more problematic one in terms of the history of the relevant languages, is that **waat** represents a verbal form that also appears in Old English as *wāt* and in both Old Frisian and Old Saxon as *wēt*: the first and third person singular form of the present tense of the preterite-present verb *wita(n)*, 'to know'. The text could then be translated as 'I know', or 'he, she or it knows'. If so, it would show a completed sound-change from an early *ai* diphthong to the monophthong *ā* — which is possible, although the Binham B-bracteate die might be rather early for such evidence. The diphthong *ai* is preserved in the Caistor-by-Norwich astragalus inscription **raïhan**. Formally, another possibility is the same forms in all three languages in the preterite tense of the Class I strong verb *wīta(n)*, which has a range of senses that are difficult to summarise concisely, but which centre on taking or attributing responsibility for something; even 'to blame', 'to accuse'.

For an alternative identification from the inferred vocabulary of early Runic Scandinavian, we may consider the Old Norse verb *vátta*, 'to bear witness', and agent noun *váttr*, 'witness', of which a form with a zero ending could conceivably be the imperative singular ('see!', 'witness!') in the former case or a vocative ('O witness') in the latter. This hypothetical vocative has been suggested in the case of a number of personal names with a zero inflexional ending on bracteates,[31] but an imperative would apparently be unparalleled. The Old Norse root *vátt-* can be identified as a word cognate with, or even borrowed from, the Old High German verb *giwahan*, 'to report' and noun *giwaht*, 'fame', which in turn represents an Indo-European root that also produced Latin *vox*, 'voice'. Consequently, the spelling **waat** would imply a known early Norse sound-change: the phonetic assimilation of *h* to a following *t* with compensatory lengthening of the preceding vowel.[32] The assimilation of *h* to *t* within the consonant sequence *-rht-* is represented in the word **wurte** (English 'wrought') on a C-bracteate from Tjurkö in Blekinge, Sweden.[33] After a vowel, *h* is still present in **dohtriz**, 'daughters', on the runestone from Tune, Østfold, Norway: one of a collection of early runestones that are dated essentially on linguistic grounds to the 4th and early 5th centuries.[34] In this phonetic position, the *h* had been assimilated in the form **sot** (cf Old English *soht*) on the Norwegian Eggja stone datable to the 7th century.

No reading of the text on the Binham B-bracteates can be certain: the runes themselves are indistinct, and one can at best identify and evaluate possible interpretations. In contrast with the incomprehensibility of many of the runic texts on bracteates, however, in this case we have a range of explicable and credible readings. I would argue that a noun *wāt* standing for a drink is not only phonologically least open to doubt but also morphologically, lexically and semantically in line with what we can identify in the wider bracteates corpus. It is nonetheless of considerable interest that this would be an expression in the West Germanic pre-Old English or Old Frisian language rather than in the contemporary Runic Scandinavian deployed in the majority of legible bracteate inscriptions.[35] This must also be the case with the Undley bracteate inscription, on phonemic grounds, because of the use of the *ōs*-rune, and has been argued for a C-bracteate found at Terp Hitsum in Frisia as well.[36] While that certainly makes a provenance for the die in England possible, it remains equally possible that the bracteates represent a die produced somewhere along the North Sea littoral of the Continent; indeed at the relevant date it is not possible to determine how far east or even north the boundary of the relevant linguistic forms may have lain. The equivalent of modern

[30] Ibid; cf Düwel 2008, 53; and Hines 2013b, 257–8.
[31] Nielsen 2000, 149–50.
[32] Magnússon 1989, 1153 sv. VOTTUR; West 2007, 31–2; Seip 1955, 28.
[33] *IK* 184.
[34] Nielsen 2000, 279–87; Spurkland 2005, 35–71.
[35] The spelling *ē* in Old Frisian *wēt* is understood to represent a low vowel [æ:] equivalent to Old English *ǣ*: Bremmer 2009, §§33–5 and 75. In some Old English dialects this vowel was also eventually raised to *ē*.
[36] Seebold 1996.

English 'wet' may not occur in the Old Saxon sources we have, but in light of the relatively limited range of that material, and the influence of Old High German on literary Old Saxon, that is not decisive evidence. At the same time, an origin within the Runic Scandinavian zone remains possible. The runic texts on the gold bracteates as a group are simultaneously intriguingly and frustratingly difficult to pin down, and in this respect the Binham B-bracteates are true to form. We might note, at the same time, however, that the inadequacy of the die to produce clear runes may actually imply that the reading and interpretation of these as a legend was not afforded much care and attention.

THE BRACELETS

The two bracelets from the hoard are unusual finds. The first was discovered in three fragments, two joining pieces mirroring the design of the other slightly larger fragment (Figs 6a and b). They are made from copper-alloy sheet that has been curved over into a C-section, one end of which tapers and flattens out into a strip, the other end tapering and curving completely over into a flattened tubular section. The larger fragment (i) is 136 mm long on its external face and up to 9 mm wide, the flat end being 6 mm wide and approximately 1.2 mm thick. The smaller, joining fragments (ii and iii) are together about 121 mm long on their external side and flare out up to 10 mm wide, before tapering to 6 mm wide and again some 1.2 mm thick. The two smaller fragments mirror that of the larger piece, flaring from a tubular-sectioned end into a more open C-shape section and then flattening out to a strip. Initially these were thought to comprise two individual items, not least as the larger was found 100 m to the north. It now seems likely that they represent a single item that has become distorted and broken along the flat-sectioned strip, both ends of which share identical dimensions. The overall length of this reconstructed bracelet is some 257 mm, similar to that of the gold bracelet.

Interestingly, the copper-alloy fragments are heavily gilded on both sides, more readily creating the impression of a solid gold object. Decoration was applied using two punch-stamp designs, one triangular containing a capital 'A' shape, the other a 'Y' shape, using a rounded bowl. The bracelet is divided into identical zones, the wider curved sections each using three bands of transverse lines at either end to contain stamps, with a larger zone between featuring a median band made up of five lines bounded on either side with the Y-shaped stamps. The rectangular-section central strip is decorated with two rows of the triangular stamps.

The gold bracelet is larger and is formed from a strip of gold some 260 mm long (Figs 6c and d). Its design features a straight bottom edge, the top edge flaring and tapering to produce two low triangles 11 mm wide at their apex, with the mid-point of the band only 3.5 mm wide. One end is now 4 mm wide and has a sloping edge slightly rounded off, suggesting it is an original end; the other has clearly been chopped and then snapped off. If the bracelet design was equally balanced, it can be suggested that some 14 mm in length has been lost. The design has been beaten from a strip, as the narrow ends and central area are up to 1.5 mm thick, whereas the flaring triangular elements see the thickness narrow to about 0.9 mm. The arm-ring is decorated with two punch-stamp designs. The first uses two recessed 'V' shapes to create a prominent central 'V' design. This is arranged in two rows that follow the edges of the bracelet at its broad flaring points, with the pointed ends facing inwards. The narrow central area of the band uses a smaller stamp comprising two small squares arranged diamond-wise and linked by a shallow line. This is used in a single row, but creates the impression of two rows of tiny stamps. The arm-ring is now stretched and misshapen, probably due to plough damage, but some distortion may also have been caused prior to deposition, given that one end has been chopped.

Bracelets are uncommon finds in Migration Period contexts and the two examples from Binham have few close parallels.[37] The gold bracelet is unique to Anglo-Saxon England, although it shares a similar form to the pair of silver sheet bracelets excavated from Grave 40 at Norton (Cleveland). There, the spiral design also uses one straight edge, the other widening and tapering to form two low triangles, with the edges decorated with V-shaped punch-stamps and circlets.[38]

[37] We are grateful to Barry Ager for his assistance in suggesting continental analogues.
[38] Sherlock and Welch 1992, 47–9, fig 45, nos 12 and 13.

FIG 6

The Binham bracelets: (**a**) and (**b**) Copper-alloy bracelet fragments: i was found 100 m to the north, joining fragments ii and iii within the cluster of bracteates. Scale 1:2. *Photograph Norwich Castle Museum and Art Gallery. Drawing by J Gibbons.* (**c**) and (**d**) Gold bracelet. Scale 1:2. *Photograph by T Pestell, drawing by C Williams.*

Another silver spiral bracelet of similar dimensions to the Binham example was found in Newchurch (Isle of Wight). Made of silver sheet with punch-stamp decoration, it has an overall length of c 330 mm and is up to 12.5 mm in width.[39] The copper-alloy bracelet is less readily paralleled, but has similarities with the two silver-sheet spiral bracelets excavated from Boss Hall (Ipswich).[40] While different in overall design and material, the bending of the sheet to create ribbing at Boss Hall is similar to the single curved lengths from Binham. The ribbing is continued to their ends, only straightening to a flat-sectioned band at the centre and both ends are relatively unfinished. Interestingly, the punch-stamps on the Boss Hall bracelets are rows of V-shapes and smaller round stamps arranged in two rows, not dissimilar to the effect on the Binham gold bracelet.

The rarity of bracelets from Anglo-Saxon contexts is paralleled on the Continent where existing examples generally tend to be of round section, for example one of copper-alloy rod beaten into a decorative flat strip at the front from Gartarve, Tingstäde (Gotland) although examples made of flat strips appear to be closed bands rather than spirals, and to use double hook or hook-and-eye fastenings.[41] Similar examples are noted by Geake in several 7th-century English bracelets from, for example, grave 18 Harford Farm (Norfolk), and grave 110 Dover Buckland (Kent).[42] A more ornate Norwegian coiled silver-gilt sheet bracelet provides a parallel of sorts, but is possibly Roman or Iron Age in date, while a silver sheet spiral bracelet allegedly from a cemetery at Herpes is in all likelihood an imported Anglo-Saxon item.[43]

In conclusion, the form and punch-stamp decoration of the two Binham bracelets can most reasonably be interpreted as Anglo-Saxon in origin. More specifically the presence of bracelets, generally made of silver, appears to be most common in East Anglia; more are known from cemeteries in Suffolk than anywhere else. This suggests that they represent 'a distinctive regional material culture'; their rarity and frequent presence as part of wider assemblages might also underline their special status.[44] As grave goods such bracelets appear as female accessories, like bracteates, and based on their associations as part of wider grave assemblages, they generally date to the first half and middle of the 6th century.[45]

THE IMAGERY OF THE B-BRACTEATES

Seven die-identical B-bracteates are known that are close mirror images of the two Binham pendants. The exact findspot of this group is unknown, but they were found in the 19th century, probably in Schleswig-Holstein, Germany and in the literature they are referred to as 'Hamburg'-B (*IK* 71). There are some small differences, like the absence of the runic inscription and the more detailed drawing of the clothing that indicates a belted long-sleeved dress and knee-length trousers. However, the zone enclosing the central image was stamped with small semi-circles, the framing wire consisted of two plaited gold wires and the loop was made with a large ridge decorated with S-shaped filigree wire between two fringes also adorned with filigree. A third, altogether more simplified version in chip-carving technique, has been found in a female grave in the cemetery of Derenburg (Sachsen-Anhalt, Germany) (*IK* 599), once within the early medieval kingdom of Thuringia.[46]

The motif is rare and unusual within bracteate iconography, showing the scene of an armed warrior fighting hostile creatures (Fig 7). Unlike the A-bracteates there are no obvious Roman models from which the represented scene may have been derived. The iconographic pattern could have been inspired by the ancient theme of the man between two beasts.[47] Alternatively, Roman

[39] *Treasure Annual Report* 2004, 62, no 73.
[40] Scull 2009, 102–3, fig 2.34.
[41] Nerman 1935, 74, Taf 43.
[42] Geake 1997, 55–6, fig 4.14.
[43] Rygh 1885; Delamain et al 1892, 11, pl XI, no 71. For uncertainty over the material from Herpes see Ager 1997.
[44] Scull 2009, 103. Although one might note the silver bracelet and gold bracteate with identical stamps occurring in a grave from Longbridge (Vierck 1970, 336) and the bracteate and silver bracelet from grave 20, Dover Buckland (Evison 1987, 220–1).
[45] Kennett 1970, 27–8; Sherlock and Welch 1992, 47–9.
[46] Müller 2002, 78–9.
[47] Polizzotti Greis and Geselowitz 1992, 36–9.

FIG 7
Line drawing of the B-bracteate IK 604,1. Scale 2:1. *Drawing by J Farrant.*

images, possibly of gladiatorial scenes depicting a *bestiarius* or a *venator* battling wild animals, that were frequently represented on pots and mosaics may have stimulated the picture.[48] Still, identifying a potential model of an image does not mean that we understand its significance on a bracteate. Interestingly, a pair of opposed beasts with similar beak-like heads are depicted on an openwork girdle hanger from North Elmham (Norfolk) (HER 25848), shown with cloven feet as on the bracteates from Binham. Another pair of beasts, albeit with more tusk-like heads, are used as shield mounts in Grave 26, Bergh Apton (Norfolk) (Figs 8a and b).[49]

The scene on the bracteate has been interpreted in various ways: as the god Woden accompanied by his two wolves; as Woden fighting the Midgard snake and the Fenris wolf at Ragnarök; or, alternatively, as an heroic battle against monsters.[50] The image has also been considered to illustrate a story known from the 13th-century *Edda* representing the situation where the gods planned to fetter the Fenris wolf. The wolf, however, mistrusted the gods and demanded that one god should put his hand into its mouth as a sign of goodwill. The god Tîw agreed and when the wolf realised that he was misled, bit the hand off. This scene appears on the obverse of a bracteate from Trollhättan (Västergötland, Sweden) (*IK* 190).[51] Sigmund Oehrl interpreted the second animal in the scene as indicative of double peril.[52]

None of these interpretations is fully convincing, but the moment of battle captured in the Binham image is interesting; while the fighter raises his sword to strike the creature with a decisive

[48] Wilmott 2008, 162–5; Neal and Cosh 2009, 265–8; de la Bédoyère 2000, 22; Wamers 2009, 40–2.
[49] The hanger is NCM 2004.869. For the shield mounts (NCM L1976.4.26 (B and C)) see Green and Rogerson 1978, fig 80, pl II. A very similar shield mount, unprovenanced, but 'found in East Anglia', was sold at Bonhams in 2006 (Antiquities Sale 13 October, Lot 223) and potentially shows the replication of this particular animal form.
[50] Hauck 1977, 173–5; Neiß 2004, 20–1.
[51] von Oxenstierna 1956, 36.
[52] Oehrl 2011, 96–7.

FIG 8

Similar 'beak-headed' beasts to those shown on the B-bracteate. **(a)** Copper-alloy girdle-hanger or belt fitting depicting two opposed beak-headed beasts from North Elmham; **(b)** A pair of tinned copper-alloy shield mounts from Bergh Apton. *Photographs Norwich Castle Museum and Art Gallery.*

blow, he may already be in mortal danger, attacked from both sides, at risk of losing his other hand. A similarly ambiguous scene is narrated on stamped foils known from the helmets in Sutton Hoo mound 1, Vendel 1, Valsgärde 7 and 8 and the gold disc from Pliezhausen.[53] Again it is a critical moment in the battle when in the different variations of the image a horseman is throwing a spear assisted by a divine helper, while the already defeated enemy lying on the ground is stabbing the horse, an act that will inevitably lead to the downfall of the horseman. Hilda Davidson argued that the rider was under the protection of Woden and thus doomed to die in battle.[54] Heinrich Beck interpreted the ambiguity of the scene as an expression of the deadly danger any warrior is exposed to, even when he is helped by the gods; as a hero he has to be prepared for his death.[55] If the images of Binham, 'Hamburg' and Derenburg are understood in a similar metaphorical way, we may gain some insight into the world-view of the Migration-Period warrior elite who owned and used these golden pendants. Fighting held risks; the warrior was exposed to mortal danger, vulnerable and in need of protection. The iconography may have been employed as sympathetic magic, banishing the danger by representing it.

Locating the precise origin of bracteates is difficult because stylistic and technical details that provide diagnostic features often point to various regional affinities. The question of local Anglo-Saxon, Scandinavian or continental production can be answered relatively easily for the Binham A-bracteates as they display a technical peculiarity that only occurs on bracteates made in England in the absence and imitation of the framing wire.[56] The B-bracteates are more difficult; the close similarity with the 'Hamburg' pendants makes it impossible to argue that they were designed independently of each other. There are arguments for their origins in Anglo-Saxon England *and* northern Germany, if we consider parallels with stylistic details of the central image, the runic inscription, the distribution patterns of the stamps in the concentric fields surrounding the centre or the types of the gold wires and the decoration of the loops.

[53] Hauck 1981, 203–6; Steuer 1987, 202; Gaimster 1998, 57–8.
[54] Davidson 1972, 13–14.
[55] Beck 1964, 39–40.
[56] Vierck 1970, 336; Behr 2010, 67.

The very wide geographical spread of the Binham motif from Norfolk to northern Germany and Thuringia is unusual but not unique.[57] Bracteates are characterised by long series of closely related images of the same motif. Alexandra Pesch has called these groups *Formularfamilien* — 'affinity clusters'— groups that are so akin that they could not have been designed and crafted independently.[58] Bracteates from the same *Formularfamilie* were often found in different places but cannot be located to a particular place of manufacture because their stylistic, but also technical details, may point to various places of origin. This observation has led Pesch to postulate a different explanatory model for understanding the distribution of bracteates. It is based on the detailed mapping of these 'affinity clusters'. She argued that bracteates were produced in various places that can be described as elite residences; only these places provided access to precious material, the expert knowledge needed to design these sophisticated images and formulate the runic inscriptions, and the master craftsmanship required to make them.[59] Pesch argues that these elites were in close and on-going contact with each other — they shared not only ideas and values but also the artistic expressions of their ideologies. With this model of constant and rapid exchanges, Pesch is able to explain the almost simultaneous appearance of bracteate images and other objects decorated in Germanic animal styles across political and ethnic boundaries in northern Europe.[60]

THE BRACTEATES IN THE CONTEXT OF HOARDING

Hoards were deposited for many different reasons: to hide and safeguard valuable objects with the intention of later recovery; for objects to remain buried and be deposited as votive offerings to gods, spirits or forces of another world; or to store as provisions for the afterlife. Few precious-metal object hoards have been found in Anglo-Saxon England and the exceptional nature of the Staffordshire hoard is still the subject of intense discussion.[61] In the Binham hoard all objects were fragmentary or damaged. While some of the damage may be post-depositional, for example occurring during ploughing, most of it appears to have been deliberately undertaken before the objects were buried.[62] One A-bracteate was broken roughly in the middle and then folded quite precisely in half with the reverse on the outside — only one half remains. The largest A-bracteate found in its current open, crumpled, state[63] has a kink that could indicate it was originally folded as well. The loop was cut off, a form of destruction not observed before among bracteate finds. The third A-bracteate is heavily bent and twisted but only slightly cracked. The absence of any scratches, fissures and breaks suggests that the damage occurred before it was buried. The manner of the distortion may be explained by deliberate compression of the pendant. Only one of the B-bracteates still has a loop, the other having been ripped off. Of the bracelets, one was found in three pieces, having been bent open; it is unclear whether this damage is post-depositional. The gold bracelet has clear evidence for the cutting or chopping off of one end. The bracelet was also heavily twisted. Objects in such a spoiled state may be interpreted as a collection of valuable raw material that had been hidden awaiting recycling, and for some reason left unrecovered. Certainly, the field in which they were found was accessible and not a typical place of votive deposition such as a lake or bog.

[57] Examples of a group of B-bracteates that are characterised by an anthropomorphic figure whose large head is upturned and around whose arms snake-like animals were intertwined have been found in northern Germany, Västergötland in Sweden and in a more simplified version in Kent (Pesch 2007, 108–11, *Formularfamilie* B3).
[58] Pesch 2007, 44–9.
[59] Ibid, 353–9.
[60] Ibid, 674–8.
[61] Leahy and Bland 2009. For papers from the 2010 symposium considering the hoard see <*http://finds.org.uk/staffshoardsymposium*>.
[62] Only the damage of the B-bracteate with the still preserved loop (*IK* 604, 2) appears to be clearly post-depositional.
[63] G Lister pers comm (finder).

The Binham cluster shares parallels, however, with other bracteate hoards, suggesting similar ideas and intentions were being expressed when it was assembled. Bracteate hoards are characterised by similarities in terms of their composition and deposition,[64] something described as 'repetitive orthodoxy' by Sally Crawford when distinguishing secular treasure hoards from sacrificial ones.[65] This does not mean the hoards were identical, but they shared certain features, like the use of precious metal in their composition. Four hoards have been found that included bracelets and bracteates: Broholm (Oure, Fyn); Halskov Overdrev (Zealand); Hvolbæk (Jutland); and Djurgårdsäng (Västergötland). The latter two included gold spiral bracelets.[66] The damaged state of the Binham pendants also has parallels; numerous bracteates have been found folded, including Scandinavian and Anglo-Saxon examples.[67] Folded bracteates, thus pendants that could not be used anymore in their intended way, are not found in graves where the pendants are part of the funerary costume and assemblage. While it is impossible to determine the reasoning and aim when folding or crushing a bracteate, we may interpret this deliberate destruction as a ritual act perhaps associated with sacrificial deposition. If the Binham hoard was indeed an intentional, votive, deposit then we need to examine its landscape context in order to further illuminate its significance.

THE EARLY ANGLO-SAXON ARCHAEOLOGY OF BINHAM AND ITS ENVIRONS

Evidence for the early Anglo-Saxon period in Binham is patchy and provided principally via metal-detection. The Norfolk HER lists 150 sites in the parish, of which only ten have produced material of certain early Anglo-Saxon date (Fig 9). All were located through metal-detection, and without further archaeological survey it is difficult to interpret these except in general terms. One site, however, appears to represent the ploughed-out remains of an inhumation cemetery judging by the density and range of finds, which include annular and cruciform brooches and wrist-clasps (HER 53786). These lie immediately to the south of the second-largest findspot in the parish yielding early Anglo-Saxon material, including a buckle, brooch, ring, wrist-clasp and girdle hanger (HER 29339). Together, the sites suggest either a single or perhaps two small cemeteries, spread out over the landscape.[68] Test-pitting in 2009, located roughly between these two sites in an area within the current village, recovered early, middle and late Anglo-Saxon pottery. This could imply early Anglo-Saxon settlement activity or given the surrounding metalwork finds, the pottery could derive from cremation burials. Finally, east of the main concentration, metal-detecting has yielded a pendant, brooch and a 7th-century buckle plate (HER 24150). Together these finds imply the major density of activity in Binham, between the 5th and 7th centuries, lay to the south of the stream and valley bottom that bisects the parish, occupied by the present-day village.

A number of additional finds attest to activity in the Binham hinterlands; a cruciform side-knob located to the south-west of the same large field as the bracteates (HER 56139), a brooch from a huge field immediately east of the bracteate field (HER 24151), and a small-long brooch located in the far south of the parish (HER 55381). The earliest Anglo-Saxon activity in the village seems to be concentrated to the east of the modern settlement and the priory precinct and may have developed on from Roman activity in the valley

[64] Hines 1989; Hedeager 1992, 56–60.
[65] Crawford 2004, 90; see also Tarzia 1989, 102–3.
[66] Hedeager 1992, 58–64; Hagberg 1983.
[67] Behr 2010, 78.
[68] As broadly suggested in the survey of cemetery data undertaken by Chester-Kadwell 2009, 81.

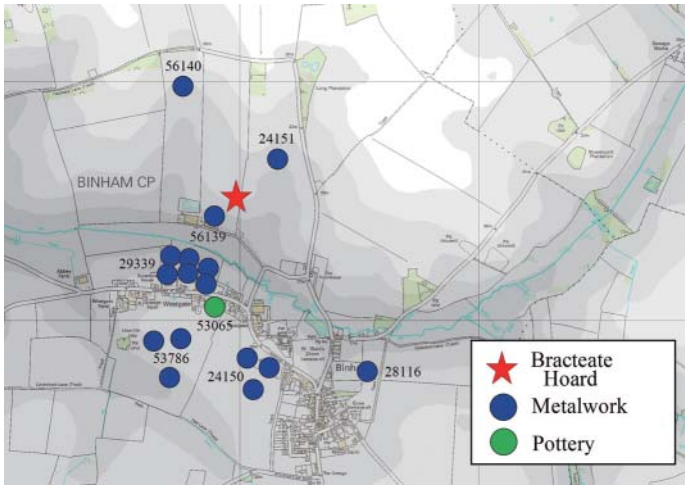

FIG 9

Early Anglo-Saxon finds from the parish of Binham, with HER numbers. *Map by P Watkins and T Pestell. Mapping data © Crown copyright and database rights 2011 Ordnance Survey 100019340.*

which appears to have concentrated around a villa site again in the south of the valley (HER 31571).[69] Middle Anglo-Saxon activity seems to have continued to the south, with a possible easterly shift. Greater archaeological visibility rendered through the use of the durable Ipswich ware has resulted in pottery being found in five locations to the south and west of the priory precinct and at one site to the north-east of the priory and across the stream (HER 28556). Finds of metal dress accessories in these areas (HER 24150) and the discovery of two early 8th-century sceatta coins emphasise a dense area of activity immediately south of the priory. Perhaps more importantly, these finds underline the isolation and absence of activity apparent in the northern field that yielded the bracteate hoard.

On present evidence the hoard does not appear to have any immediate relationship to this other Anglo-Saxon evidence. Likewise, the finds from the parish are not exceptional for the period, perhaps apart from a silver disc brooch of Kentish type (Fig 10). The brooch is of Avent Class 7.1 and has four panels of back-biting serpents executed in triple-band interlace, separated by triangular garnet-inlaid cells set over hatched gold foils with a calcite central boss and a zigzag pattern created by reserved, niello-inlaid, triangular punch-stamps as an outer border.[70] The brooch can be compared with an example from Faversham (Kent) and an unprovenanced specimen now in the Ashmolean Museum.[71] Such brooches are uncommon finds in Norfolk and East Anglia more generally and so its appearance in Binham, from directly the opposite side of the river valley to the hoard find, is potentially significant. More immediately, it provides another example of a wealthy 6th-century object from the parish, and one that was presumably imported into East Anglia. The wider 6th-century evidence for the importance of Binham may be limited, but later archaeological and landscape evidence is more suggestive.

THE ARCHAEOLOGY OF THE WIDER BINHAM AREA

While the deposition of five gold bracteates and two bracelets in a single hoard is notable enough, a fundamentally important aspect to the Binham deposit is the discovery

[69] Ibid, 131–5.
[70] The brooch is now NCM 2006.184.
[71] Avent, 1975, 37–8, pl 41; MacGregor and Bolick 1993, 76, no 6.23.

FIG 10
Kentish-style silver disc brooch from Binham. *Photograph Norwich Castle Museum and Art Gallery.*

of two further gold bracteates in close proximity to the parish, the three findspots all being within a radius of 9 km (Fig 11). The first, an A-bracteate, was discovered in Brinton (*IK* 584) on a site with little else except non-contemporary pottery.[72] The second, a D-bracteate (*IK* 601), was discovered as a single find without indications of a grave or associated finds during the archaeological evaluation of a suggested medieval chapel at Blakeney Eye on Fresh Marshes in Blakeney.[73] Both may be stray losses or small single depositions. Local manufacture of bracteates is suggested by a bronze disc found in Billingford (*IK* 589), some 15 km south of Binham, that carries a typical D-bracteate motif with an interlaced animal that has its closest stylistic relative in the Blakeney D-bracteate. The function of this disc is not obvious because it has no loop but it would not work as a typical bracteate die either.[74] Interestingly, another bronze disc with fine relief decoration of animals in Style II, possibly a patrix die, has been found in the parish of Field Dalling, which adjoins Binham to the east (Figs 12a and b).[75]

The first issue is the extent to which these three bracteate findspots represent a genuine cluster rather than a pattern produced by preferential metal-detecting in this area. This may be swiftly dismissed. Not only does Norfolk yield a far greater quantity of material than anywhere else in the UK, thus giving greater potential for even rare objects like bracteates to be discovered; an important note by Gurney plotted the distribution of metal-detecting activity within the county.[76] Although this showed the spread of such work was uneven, there was no particular bias to the north Norfolk coast. Moreover, an updating of Gurney's work by Chester-Kadwell has validated many of his earlier findings, reinforcing the likelihood that the cluster is genuine.[77] The western fen-edge of Norfolk is where the great majority of early Anglo-Saxon cemeteries have been located and where greater evidence of wealth has traditionally been seen, ranging from the construction of Roman villas, the appearance of wealthy 'productive' sites in the 8th and 9th centuries, and even the appearance of large estates and country houses in the post-medieval period.

In the Roman period, an arc along the western edge of Norfolk describes the apparent prime area for villas, with a concentration of major centres to the south and west. While this leaves much of north Norfolk blank, an exception is the cluster of settlements around the Roman small town of Walsingham, where an important temple site has yielded

[72] Discovered in 1996 as a metal-detector find (HER 32044); Behr 2010, 53–6. The bracteate is now NCM L2008.160.
[73] Discovered in 2003 (HER 37793). Behr 2010, 58–60. The bracteate is NCM L2003.2.
[74] Behr 2010, 50–3. The die is now British Museum 2000, 1110.1.
[75] HER 25251. The record comprises a black and white Polaroid image. Die diameter 39 mm, thickness unknown. The patrix has since been sold and its present whereabouts is unknown.
[76] Gurney 1997.
[77] Chester-Kadwell 2009.

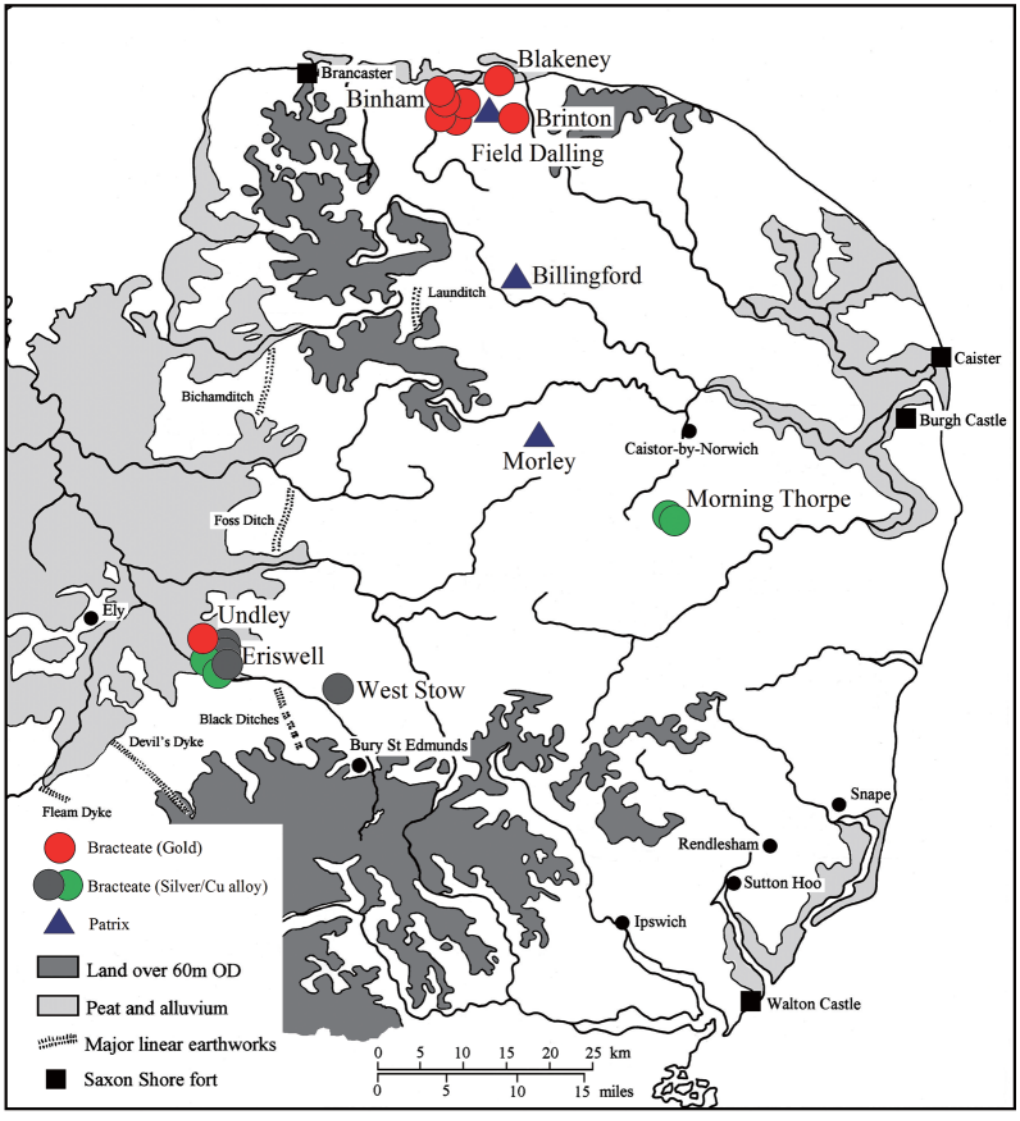

FIG 11
Bracteate finds in East Anglia. *Illustration by T Pestell.*

large quantities of votive material.[78] The density of Roman occupation in Walsingham (subsequently divided into Great and Little Walsingham), and Wighton, both adjacent to Binham, provide our first indication of the former importance of the Binham region. This is reinforced by a more general density of Roman settlement in the wider area, defined by the rivers Stiffkey to the west and Glaven to the east. Our three bracteate findspots lie within this broader area.

Early Anglo-Saxon cemeteries are concentrated in this block of land.[79] By the late Anglo-Saxon period documentary evidence provides a useful perspective on the enduring

[78] Bagnall Smith 1999.
[79] As seen in the latest *Historical Atlas of Norfolk*: Penn 2005.

FIG 12

(**a**) Possible bracteate die from Billingford, Norfolk; (**b**) Possible patrix die from Field Dalling, Norfolk. Scale 2:1 (a) and 1.5:1 (b). *Photographs (a) Trustees of The British Museum; (b) Norwich Castle Museum and Art Gallery*.

importance of the region, although caution is inevitably needed when making such back-projections. To begin with Binham, the most important archaeological feature of the parish is its Benedictine monastery, founded c 1093.[80] Although post-Conquest, three features of this foundation are unusual. First, when established, it was from the start designed to be a fully conventual monastery with its own landed endowment and infra-structure. By contrast, most other monastic foundations at this time were 'alien' cells, comprising parcels of land used to endow monasteries back in their benefactors' native Normandy.[81] Those few, like Binham, that were founded as full institutions were both rarer and more expensive creations and most had an Anglo-Saxon past as a religious community.[82] Second, while we lack direct evidence in Binham's case, it is notable that the monastery was founded by appropriating an existing parish church. This process ensured that the villagers continued to have full parochial use of the monastic church's nave. By analogy, this arrangement strongly suggests the monastery was founded on an existing Anglo-Saxon minster church whose *parochia* could well have been coterminous with, or based upon, a multiple estate.[83] Finally, it is notable that Peter de Valognes should choose to found his monastery in Binham. A tenant-in-chief at Domesday, Valognes was not of high baronial rank, yet owned land in six counties at Domesday. He does not appear to have been responsible for any castle building, which makes his priory at Binham the likely location of his chosen *caput* within Norfolk.

[80] Although the foundation charter published in Dugdale's *Monasticon Anglicanum* dates to 1101x1107 an earlier origin is evident from Matthew Paris who in his *Vitae Abbati Sancti Albani* describes how Abbot Paul of St Albans, who died in 1093, contributed to Binham's endowment: Caley, Ellis and Bandinel 1817–30, iii, 345–6; Riley 1867, i, 57.

[81] Pestell 2004, 171–5.

[82] Ibid, 194–9.

[83] As seems to have happened at Wymondham in Norfolk, founded c 1107, within a massive parish that was considered a half-hundred in its own right: Pestell 2004, 194–6; Rogerson 2007.

Place names may back up the early importance of Binham. The name incorporates the *–ham* suffix which Williamson has argued indicates a 'superior' settlement in Norfolk, often an early estate. Indeed, he points out that *hams* are often associated with important royal estates, manors to which hundreds were attached or from which hundreds had taken their names.[84] Binham has not given its name to the hundred (it lay within North Greenhoe), and neither was it a royal hundred. Some measure of its status is revealed in Domesday, however, which shows it was both a large estate and one to which Edgefield and Wells next the Sea (not contiguous parishes) appertained.

A study of the wider geographical area is also helpful (Fig 13). Hindringham, a larger rectilinear parish adjoining the south of Binham, held an economic importance not revealed by Domesday. A number of early sceatta coins, as well as an array of middle Anglo-Saxon pins and strap-ends, places Hindringham in the same league as a number of so-called 'productive' sites in East Anglia.[85] The vill comprised a substantial estate of four carucates (approximately 480 acres) in the possession of the bishops of East Anglia, which may well suggest an early estate.[86] To the north-west of Hindringham, and adjoining Binham's western boundary, is Wighton, a royal manor at Domesday and the hundredal manor for North Greenhoe. Together these parishes, along with the Walsinghams, create a substantial sub-rectangular block of land. Parishes to the north are visibly different, being longer, narrower and aligned north–south. These parishes, which extend to the sea, have the appearance of having been created by a process of fission from an earlier land unit. While the evidence is therefore uncertain, enough hints exist to suggest that the land area between the Stiffkey and Glaven rivers may have formed a single large land unit in the middle Anglo-Saxon period, before being split probably in the 10th and 11th centuries. The concentration of Roman finds provides equally difficult evidence, but may suggest that there was originally an administrative area based around the small town complex of Walsingham/Wighton.[87] It is not inconceivable that the concentration of bracteates in this same area reflects the establishment of an early Anglo-Saxon elite here and with them the possibility of some continuity of power or land tenure.

BRACTEATES AND CENTRAL PLACES IN SCANDINAVIA

A different approach towards interpreting the Norfolk bracteate cluster is provided by contemporary central places across the North Sea. The concentration of bracteate hoards in and around Gudme in south-east Fyn, Denmark, provided an early indication of the special importance of this site, later confirmed by extensive metal-detector searches, systematic field surveys and focused archaeological excavations.[88] Similar observations of bracteate clusters have been made at several sites in southern Scandinavia and on the Continent that can be described as elite residences or central places.[89] This association between bracteates and central places has been interpreted as meaningful because the pendants were visual signs of leadership depicting symbols of power; they also demonstrated wealth and very importantly they had religious connotations.[90] The figurative iconography of bracteates has been interpreted as a highly abbreviated, emblematic narration of mythical stories of various Nordic gods but especially of Odin/Woden. The occasional

[84] Williamson 1993, 85–9.
[85] Pestell 2003, 129; Rogerson 2003, 112.
[86] *LDB*, fol 192a.
[87] Davies 2009, 125–6 and 181–2.
[88] Thrane 1994; Nielsen 1994.
[89] Hauck 1992, 231–7; Steuer 2007, 882–3; Pesch 2011b, 232–6.
[90] Axboe 1994.

FIG 13

Binham and its surrounding parishes. *Illustration by T Pestell.*

inscriptions are explained as magical formulae that allowed the communication with another world, while as pendants on necklaces they may have functioned as amulets that provided protection.[91]

Archaeological research has shown that in the late Roman period social differences increased markedly in Scandinavian societies and a new elite group emerged whose members demonstrated their status explicitly, by importing rare and valuable Roman objects, by using precious, locally manufactured artefacts, by adopting Roman imperial iconography and by erecting considerably larger than average buildings.[92] A correlation between elite residences and sites of religious rituals has also been observed in several places in the late Roman and early Migration Periods.[93] Evidence for religious activities include sacrificial hoards within settlement areas and the iconography not only of bracteates that refer to mythical scenes of gods but also of gold foils. As well as this, buildings have been recognised that have been identified as cult houses.[94] Place names that refer to gods, sacred places and sacrifices, especially the cluster of sacred place names around Gudme and its name which means 'home of the gods', provide further leads.[95]

[91] Hauck 2011; Düwel 2011.
[92] Lund Hansen 2001.
[93] Fabech 1998; Hedeager 2002; Jørgensen 2009.
[94] Fabech 1991; Thrane 1992; Sundqvist 2011; Larsson and Hårdh 1997; Lund Hansen and Vennersdorf 2009.
[95] Kousgård Sørensen 1992; B Jørgensen 2011.

While Gudme remains the most intensively explored and studied example of a late Roman/Migration-Period central place, recent archaeological research at Uppåkra in Skane, south-east Sweden, and at Sorte Muld on the island of Bornholm has confirmed and expanded current knowledge.[96] Gudme is situated about 2 km from the seaside where a seasonal trading and craft site has been identified at Lundeborg. In the settlement area an unusual building complex was identified that was interpreted as a large ceremonial hall with a cult building. Both buildings had been rebuilt several times on the same site.[97] The aristocratic character of this centre is emphasised by its many rich and exotic finds demonstrating long-distance contacts; a concentration of metalworking places suggests the local production of high-quality artefacts and military equipment is present too.[98]

Among the numerous precious-metal hoards that have been discovered inside the settlement area and in its immediate vicinity were two hoards with several bracteates.[99] The Gudme II hoard was discovered in 1982 by a metal-detector. It had been deposited in the posthole of a roof-bearing post that belonged to a small building in the workshop area of the settlement. The hoard consisted of ten gold bracteates, including one large B-bracteate with a 'luxury' loop (*IK* 51,3), a small B-bracteate (*IK* 391) probably imported from the Continent, four die-identical C-bracteates (*IK* 392,1 and 2), another C-bracteate (*IK* 393) and three die-identical D-bracteates (*IK* 455,2), as well as two round and bossed gold pendants, a gold finger ring, a very worn Roman silver denarius with a loop attached and a sword stud with garnet cloisonné inlay.[100] The objects belonged probably to one individual set of jewellery.[101] The Broholm hoard with gold objects weighing more than 4.5 kg was ploughed up in the field between the settlement area of Gudme and Lundeborg in 1833. Including finds from later follow-up investigations, the hoard consisted of nine gold bracteates, three neck rings, a finger ring, numerous complete and fragmentary rings of various sizes, ingots and *solidi*.[102] Among the bracteates were four C-pendants (two model-identical *IK* 34,1 and 2, *IK* 35, *IK* 36), four A-bracteates (*IK* 47,3, *IK* 225 and two model-identical *IK* 47,2) and one F-bracteate (*IK* 226). In Lundeborg one A-amulet (*IK* 295) was discovered as a single find and further north from Lundeborg close to the shoreline were the two additional findspots of Hesselager Skov. One C-bracteate (*IK* 75,1) was discovered as a single find, while a die-identical bracteate (*IK* 75,2) was retrieved some 70 m away together with a gold neck ring, presumably forming another hoard.[103] While there is no direct proof for the manufacture of bracteates in Gudme, for example in the form of a die, there is ample evidence for the working of precious metal in several of the farmsteads. Among the bracteates from Gudme and its vicinity is a concentration of finds that can be dated on stylistic grounds very early in the bracteate sequence. That is why Gudme is considered as one of the sites where bracteates were first conceptualised.[104]

Uppåkra in Skane (Sweden) is another site that has been identified as a Migration-Period central place in recent years.[105] The site, positioned a few kilometres inland from

[96] Steuer 2007, 894–903. These three sites are not the only central places in Scandinavia where ritual elements including a cult house, depositions, gold bracteates and sacred place names have been observed; Helgö in Lake Mälaren (Sweden) provides another well researched example. Zachrisson 2004; Arrhenius 2011; Sundqvist 2011, 67.
[97] Sørensen 1994; Pesch 2011a, 51–3; L Jørgensen 2011, 83–5.
[98] Hedeager 2001, 485–7; L Jørgensen 2011, 82.
[99] Petersen 1994; Pesch 2011b, 244–6.
[100] Axboe 1987; Sørensen, 1994; 2003, 434.
[101] Hauck 1998, 489–92. The reconstruction is based on nine bracteates as the tenth was only discovered in 2000 (*IK* 392,2).
[102] Thrane 1992, 311–2.
[103] Geisslinger 1967, 151.
[104] Hauck 1994; Axboe 2007, 96; Pesch 2011b, 246.
[105] Hårdh 2000; 2003a; Larsson 2003.

the coast, offers a convenient harbour position. It has produced evidence for outstanding wealth, long-distance trade, crafts, especially metalworking, and ritual activities.[106] A cult house ranks as one of the most exceptional finds, built with unusually large posts and rebuilt at least six times on the same plan over many hundreds of years, from c 200 AD until the 9th century.[107] Inside the building numerous religious and ceremonial artefacts have been discovered, including a unique metal beaker decorated with gold foils in animal Style I and a multi-coloured glass bowl,[108] a fragment cut out from a gold bracteate (*IK* 611), more than 100 gold foil figures and five dies to stamp them.[109] Several large depositions of deliberately broken weapons, reminiscent of the large bog finds in southern Denmark and northern Germany,[110] and of animal bones, including some human, were made outside the complex.[111] Apart from the fragment, six bracteates have been found in the settlement area of Uppåkra.[112] Four were found together with a cross-shaped gold pendant, scattered inside the area of a building, a few metres west of the cult building that had been reused repeatedly over the centuries. They include a C-bracteate (*IK* 625), an A-bracteate (*IK* 610) and two die-identical C-bracteates (*IK* 591,2). A third copy (*IK* 591,1) was found as a single find in the settlement area, as was another C-bracteate (*IK* 587). In the vicinity of Uppåkra further bracteates have been found. Close to the coast only 2 km from the settlement area, a small hoard composed of two C-bracteates (*IK* 4 and 5) was found in 1855.

Many additional case studies could be discussed but a final and third example will suffice. Sorte Muld on the island of Bornholm is a central place that has produced a number of bracteate finds.[113] Thick cultural layers, rich in finds, lie on raised ground c 2 km from the coast. Famously, more than 2400 gold foil figures have been discovered in the central area of Sorte Muld.[114] A wide range of precious-metal finds, dress accessories, weapons, glass, beads, metalworking tools, weights, ingots and Roman coins, even surgical instruments provide evidence for above-average wealth, crafts and manufacture and access to Roman goods; the finds are comparable with assemblages from Gudme and Uppåkra.[115] Weapons that have been deliberately bent or destroyed suggest cultic ceremonies inside the settlement area, not dissimilar to the weapon rites evident at Uppåkra.[116] Sites with sacred place names lie in the vicinity. Several smaller settlements surrounded the site, many providing exceptional finds. Two bracteate hoards within 24 m of each other were found in 2001 at Fuglesangsageren on the fringe of the main site.[117] Sørensen argued that they probably belonged to the building phase, in the first half of the 6th century, of a farm building that had been rebuilt several times on the same site. The first hoard was close to the end of the house, the other just west of it — both presumably within the farm's enclosure.[118] The first hoard consisted of five bracteates, six looped *solidi*, two cruciform pendants and eight gold beads that had been placed in a round, Roman silver plate that was rolled up like a paper bag. The jewellery may have formed

[106] Hårdh 2003a; 2003b; Larsson 2006.
[107] Larsson and Lenntorp 2004.
[108] Hårdh 2004; Stjernquist 2004.
[109] Watt 2004.
[110] Helgesson 2004.
[111] Pesch 2011b, 248–9; Larsson 2011, 195.
[112] Axboe 2001; Axboe and Stoklund 2003; Pesch 2011b, 247–50.
[113] Watt 1991; Pesch 2011b, 251–4.
[114] Watt 1999; 2009, 43.
[115] Adamsen et al 2009.
[116] Lund Hansen 2009.
[117] Axboe 2002; 2009.
[118] Sørensen 2009, 139.

an elaborate necklace that had been dismantled before it was deposited.[119] The smaller C-bracteate (*IK* 592) was well preserved, but the four larger, die-identical C-pendants (*IK* 593) were bent. The second hoard was made up of five bracteates, two die-identical C-pendants (*IK* 596) and three die-identical B-amulets (*IK* 595) and one *solidus*. The iconography of the B-bracteates is interesting because it provides a particularly detailed depiction of a scene that has been interpreted on the basis of late Old Norse mythological texts as a representation of the death of Balder.[120] Two single finds have also been found, one in the main settlement area (*IK* 397-C), the other in Sylten (*IK* 570-C). The latter is unusual as it is the only unfinished bracteate known so far. The stamping was blurred and that may have been the reason why it was folded, probably to be reworked.[121]

Gudme, Uppåkra and Sorte Muld demonstrate the close association between concentrations of bracteate depositions and central places or elite residences in southern Scandinavia in the second half of the 5th to the mid-6th century. In each place the choice of motifs used in the bracteate images, the treatment of the pendants before they were deposited, the composition and sizes of the hoards and the placement of the depositions in the settlements, all signal subtle differences. As all bracteates followed certain stylistic and iconographic rules they were instantly recognisable, despite the differences in their iconography. They carried a common meaning and significance.[122] The motifs of the bracteates suggest a supra-regional consensus of their religious and mythical meaning. In the usage, ceremonial deployment and ritual disposal of the pendants, however, local traditions and concepts may have been expressed.

The only comparable example of a spatial relationship between an elite residence and a ritual centre in early Anglo-Saxon England has been identified at Yeavering (Northumbria). Various structures and depositions point to the performance of religious rituals.[123] At the royal hall in *Ad Gefrin* the Christian missionary Paulinus spent 36 days with King Oswald of Northumbria preaching, teaching and baptising (*HE* ii, 14). In his *Historia Ecclesiastica* Bede has only a little to say about pre-Christian religion or ritual sites, but the stories he told about the Northumbrian kings Edwin and Oswald (*HE* ii, 13f) demonstrate how eminently political religion was, and how closely linked political leadership, military victory and the divine were perceived.[124]

BRACTEATE CLUSTERS IN EASTERN ENGLAND

The distribution pattern of Anglo-Saxon bracteates shows that Binham and its vicinity is not the only area in eastern England to host a cluster of bracteate finds. Concentrations of bracteates have been found in burials in several cemeteries in Suffolk and Kent and can be linked with sites where archaeological and some later documentary evidence point to an early Anglo-Saxon elite presence. The suggestion that these sites were royal or high-status places has not been made on the basis of the bracteate finds, thus avoiding a circular argument. They provide support for the suggestion that Binham may have been a locally-important central place in the early Anglo-Saxon period.

The iconography of Anglo-Saxon bracteates has clear Scandinavian and continental connotations, and as a result they have usually been interpreted as additional evidence of the influence exerted by these regions in eastern England. The boat graves from Snape

[119] Horsnæs 2002, 134–5; Axboe 2009, 36.
[120] Axboe 2009, 40–1; Pesch 2011b, 252.
[121] Hauck and Axboe 1990, 75–7.
[122] Pesch 2007, 40–3.
[123] Hope-Taylor 1977; Owen 1981, 43–7; Walker 2010.
[124] Wallace-Hadrill 1971, 8–15.

and Sutton Hoo and some of the finds from mound 1, including the helmet, have been used to postulate close connections between the royal dynasties in Vendel, eastern Sweden and Suffolk.[125] John Hines investigated the distribution and chronology of wrist clasps, scutiform pendants and bracteates in eastern England and argued for immigration from Norway during the 6th century.[126] The bracteate finds from Kent were explained as an indication at first of settlers from, and then on-going connections with, Jutland.[127] The Binham hoard, like the other bracteate clusters, is probably not a sign of on-going immigration or influence from Scandinavia; instead these are more likely to signal the existence of an elite network in northern Europe that exchanged ideas and meaningful objects.[128] The almost simultaneous appearance of animal Style I decorated objects in the second half of the 5th century in regions around the North Sea is best explained through an underlying social structure characterised by intensive communication and joint values.[129] These objects seem to have conveyed common ideas of divine power, rulership and identity. Following this model, the hoard from Binham may provide evidence for a high-status site whose elite inhabitants were part of this supra-regional exchange network, sharing ideas and the embodiment of these ideas in artwork.

The conjecture that Binham may have been an elite residence because of the bracteate cluster is not only supported by the analogies with finds from Scandinavia, but also by the interpretation of further bracteate clusters in the Lark Valley in Suffolk and in eastern Kent. The Lark Valley was among the earliest areas to witness Germanic settlement in the 5th century as the excavations of the village and cemetery at West Stow and other settlements and cemeteries show.[130] One cemetery in Lakenheath stands out because of the discovery of two richly equipped horse and warrior burials dating to the early 6th century that have been interpreted as warrior chieftains.[131] Seven bracteates have also been found in Lakenheath, West Stow and in nearby Undley. Three contemporaneous cemeteries of the 5th to the 7th centuries have been excavated in Lakenheath, known as Eriswell ERL 046, ERL 104 and ERL 114 (also known as Little Eriswell). Here fragments of a silver bracteate of unknown type (*IK* 293) were found in the well-equipped grave 27, together with numerous beads, two annular brooches, a gilded bronze brooch, rings, a knife and fragments of textile.[132] In ERL 046 in grave 5 two die-identical D(?)-bracteates made in copper-alloy (*IK* 633) (Fig 14) were deposited, and in grave 42, two die-identical silver C-bracteates (*IK* 634) (Fig 15).[133] In one of the graves at West Stow, excavated in 1840, a silver D-bracteate (*IK* 565) was discovered. The bracteates from the graves were all either made of silver or copper alloy, whereas the bracteate from Undley (*IK* 374) that was possibly buried as a single deposition was made of gold. It was folded when it was discovered.[134] The pattern that bracteates buried in graves were made of a lesser metal than those found as single depositions or in a hoard can be observed with other finds in

[125] Bruce-Mitford 1986; Wicker 1992.
[126] Hines 1984, 272–6; but see now Hines 2013a, 23–38.
[127] Chadwick Hawkes and Pollard 1981, 352. But see Behr 2000, 48–50 who argued for local Jutish production.
[128] Ament 2005, 588–9; Pesch 2012, 660–1.
[129] Pesch 2007, 378.
[130] West 1985; Plunkett 2005, 34.
[131] ERL 104 graves 4116 and 0355, see Fern 2005, 43–4; 2007, 92–6; Hines 2010, 9.
[132] Hutchinson 1966, 9–10. The fragments of this bracteate are now lost.
[133] The bracteates were excavated in the late 1990s but were recognised as such only in 2010 during post-excavation analyses. Grave 5 also contained a silver-plated cruciform brooch, two copper-alloy annular brooches, two pairs of clasps, 19 glass, 117 amber and two rock crystal beads, 13 copper-alloy pendants and three, possibly four scrutiform silver pendants, an iron buckle, a knife and an iron key and iron fragments. Grave 42 also included two silver finger rings, two copper–alloy annular brooches, two pairs of clasps, a necklace of four glass and 51 amber beads suspended from two small copper-alloy rings, a knife, an iron key, an iron belt ring and iron fragments: John Hines pers comm.
[134] West 1985.

England outside eastern Kent.[135] The find of a bracteate die in 2010 in Morley (Norfolk) (*IK* 637; HER 29937) throws further light on the finds from Lakenheath/Eriswell (Fig 16).[136] Bracteate dies are very rare finds and this is the first known die for a C-bracteate.[137] The motif is stylistically related to the two C-bracteates from grave 42 in ERL 046 and to the two die-identical copper alloy bracteates from grave 80 (*IK* 306) in the cemetery of Morning Thorpe (Norfolk).[138] While the use of silver and copper-alloy and certain technical details, like the lack of a framing wire of the pendants, place the manufacture of the bracteates in England, the find of a die in the not so distant vicinity suggests a local workshop. The A-pendant from Undley has a unique motif among bracteates and is similar in this respect to the finds from Binham and Brinton in Norfolk that also have unique or rare motifs.[139]

A second area where it is possible to argue for an association between bracteate clusters and elite residences is eastern Kent, where about 30 gold bracteates have been found, mostly buried in the graves of rich females. In several cemeteries, small clusters of two, three or four bracteate graves have been found with up to seven bracteates in one cemetery.[140] Several of these cemeteries can be linked to sites where archaeological and later documentary evidence indicates overseas trading connections and central functions within the early Anglo-Saxon royal administration.[141]

The best-researched example is Eastry where toponymic, historical and archaeological evidence suggests the centre of a royal administrative area since at least the 6th century.[142] The density of cemeteries dating to the 5th–7th centuries with their range of exceptionally well-equipped male and female graves, including the suggestion of a high-status horse and warrior grave,[143] reveal, as Tania Dickinson, Chris Fern and Andrew Richardson concluded in their recent study 'a central place in the early Anglo-Saxon mortuary landscape. And as such, it corresponds with other cases where administrative districts correlate with major cemeteries [. . .]'.[144] It is noteworthy that among the very wealthy female graves in the vicinity of Eastry, at Finglesham, two graves contained bracteates, while from another cemetery indicated by a density of metal-detector finds 1 km north of Finglesham in Ham in the parish of Northbourne, a further bracteate (*IK* 616) was discovered.[145]

A second example from Kent is Lyminge, where in one of the two early Anglo-Saxon cemeteries one bracteate (*IK* 462) has been found. Lyminge has long been discussed as a possible centre because of its name ending in **ge*, meaning district or region, referring

[135] Behr 2010, 79–80.
[136] Now NCM 2011.37.
[137] Previously known dies for D-bracteates are discussed by Axboe 2004, 1–4; 2007, 14–16.
[138] All C-bracteates that have been found in England belong to the same *Formularfamilie* C 16 (Pesch 2007, 230–3); similarly, the D-bracteate from West Stow and probably the two from Eriswell 046 belong to *Formularfamilie* D9 (Pesch 2007, 276–85); only very few of the 56 *Formularfamilien* that Pesch identified are represented among Anglo-Saxon bracteates, Behr 2010, 72. The Morningthorpe bracteates are NCM L1976.3.80mi and .80mii.
[139] The stylistically closely related design on the possible die from Billingford (*IK* 589) and on the gold pendant from Blakeney Freshes (*IK* 601) belong to a deviation of *Formularfamilie* D10 (Pesch 2007, 286–92).
[140] In the cemetery in Finglesham two graves were found: 203 with two bracteates (*IK* 426,2 two die-identical pendants) and D3 with three bracteates (*IK* 426,1 two die-identical pendants and 425). In Sarre too, two graves with bracteates were found: grave 4 with six pendants (*IK* 493 in three copies, 494, 495 and 496) and grave 90 with one pendant (*IK* 492,1). In Bifrons three graves contained bracteates: grave 29 had four pendants (*IK* 23, 412,2 and 410 in two copies), and graves 64 (*IK* 412,1) and 63 (*IK* 411) each contained one. At Dover Buckland four graves contained a single bracteate: 20 (*IK* 421), 204 (*IK* 580), 245 (*IK* 581,1) and 250 (*IK* 582) (Chadwick Hawkes and Pollard 1981, 352–62; Behr 2000, 41–6; 2010, 39–43).
[141] Behr 2000, 45–7.
[142] First suggested by Chadwick Hawkes 1979, 94–7.
[143] Dickinson et al 2011, 54–5.
[144] Ibid, 73.
[145] Behr 2010, 44–5; Dickinson et al 2011, 67.

FIG 14
D(?)-bracteate from Eriswell, grave 5. Scale bar 5 cm. *Photograph: Suffolk County Council Archaeological Service.*

FIG 15
C-bracteate from Eriswell, grave 42. Scale 2:1. *Photograph: Suffolk County Council Archaeological Service.*

FIG 16
C-bracteate die found by metal-detection at Morley, Norfolk. Scale 1:1. *Photograph Norwich Castle Museum and Art Gallery.*

to the region of the Limen,[146] similar to Eastry, with its name element **ge* (*in regione eastrgena*).[147] The royal foundation of a double monastery in the 7th century underlined the royal connections of Lyminge that are now further supported by the find of a 21 m long timber hall dated to the 6th/7th century with numerous high-status artefacts, including fragments of glass vessels and worked bone, found during recent excavations in the summers of 2012 and 2013 by Gabor Thomas. This discovery has similarities with the hall known from Cowdery's Down in Hampshire and may be interpreted as a pre-Christian royal vill.[148]

[146] Chadwick Hawkes 1970, 189; Brookes 2011, 159.
[147] The first mention of Eastry appears in a charter from 788: Reaney 1961, 59.
[148] Thomas 2013.

The examples from Suffolk and Kent demonstrate an association between bracteates and high-status or royal sites in England; the function, meaning and significance of these pendants may have varied, however, for the people on each site, affecting the way they used and deposited them, just like the examples from Scandinavia. In Kent, bracteates made in gold were associated with wealthy women who were probably close to the royal household or royal administration and they formed part of their personal jewellery. In Suffolk bracteates too were part of female jewellery but they were made of copper alloy or silver; at the same time ritually folded, single gold bracteates were being intentionally deposited at other places in the landscape. At Binham and in its vicinity — at least so far — only gold bracteates have been found, and they were buried either on their own or in groups together with other jewellery. Several show signs of pre-depositional destruction.

CONCLUSION

The discovery of the Binham hoard is both exciting and important, demonstrating evidence of similar hoarding practices to Scandinavia. The wider clustering of bracteate finds is clearly not coincidence or chance but indicative of wider processes. It may signal the presence of an early 'gateway community' on the North Sea coast, having familiarity with, and active participation in, the reception, use and dissemination of Scandinavian-style bracteates.

Little evidence exists to study the political organisation of eastern England between the end of Roman provincial rule and the earliest references to kings and kingdoms in the second half of the 6th century. No relevant information can be gained from any contemporary written sources and attempts to project later political units and structures back in time provide particular problems. Among archaeological finds, the large number of furnished burials comprises the only extensive resource with which to explore early Anglo-Saxon society and political systems. The observation of a bracteate cluster, including a unique bracteate hoard, in the Binham area, thus gains particular importance as comparable bracteate clusters are known from well-researched sites on the other side of the North Sea in Scandinavia and northern Germany. That these sites have been interpreted as elite residences or central places with political, economic and religious functions naturally raises questions for our cluster in north Norfolk.

Were the hoard to have been found in Blakeney or Brinton, it would still have been noteworthy, but unlike these single bracteate findspots, it was probably not coincidence that it was Binham in which the hoard was found. Even the hoard's location within this large parish may be further proof of its wider religious and political dimension. It may be coincidence that the hoard was buried directly opposite the area of Anglo-Saxon settlement across the valley, but it was probably not. That it was also opposite the site of a possible middle Anglo-Saxon minster, subsequently a medieval priory, only enhances this point. Indeed, if viewed in a long-term trajectory, a central place at Binham in the 5th and 6th centuries may have evolved out of an important Roman religious centre at Little Walsingham and resulted in the development of a subsequent royal manor in Wighton. The Binham hoard has left us with many questions still to answer — but it has at least enabled us to begin articulating them.

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Abbreviations

HER	Historic Environment Record
HMSO	Her Majesty's Stationery Office
IK	*Ikonographischer Katalog* (Axboe, Düwel and Hauck 1985–89; for new finds between 1989 and 2010, see also Axboe, Behr and Düwel 2011)
LDB	*Domesday Book Norfolk*, 2 vols, ed P Brown, Chichester: Phillimore, 1984
PAS	Portable Antiquities Scheme, <*www.finds.org.uk*/>
RGA	*Reallexikon der Germanischen Altertumskunde*, ed by H Beck, H Steuer and D Timpe 1973–2007, 2nd edn, Berlin: De Gruyter.

Résumé

Le trésor de bractéates de Binham — un lieu central du début de la période anglo-saxonne? *par* Charlotte Behr *et* Tim Pestell, *avec la contribution de* John Hines

Cet article retrace la découverte récente en Grande-Bretagne du premier trésor indéniable de bractéates en or, qu'on a retrouvé dans un champ à Binham (Norfolk). Cette trouvaille est unique en son genre pour l'Angleterre anglo-saxonne, car les bractéates trouvés jusque-là étaient soit dans des sépultures, soit isolés. Deux autres bractéates en or et un potentiel poinçon ont été découverts dans les environs de Binham, suggérant ainsi un "regroupement de bractéates". Sur la base d'analogies avec d'autres sites de Scandinavie et d'Allemagne du Nord, on fait valoir ici que Binham aurait pu occuper une position centrale dans le nord du Norfolk au début de la période anglo-saxonne. Vu la répartition des bractéates dans l'Angleterre anglo-saxonne, nous suggérons que la région de Binham pourrait être l'un des sites renfermant des regroupements significatifs de bractéates mis à jour ; ils auraient pu faire partie d'un réseau de sites centraux répartis à travers la Scandinavie et le long des zones littorales de la mer du Nord en Angleterre.

Zusammenfassung

Der Brakteatenhort von Binham — ein Zentralort in der frühen angelsächsischen Zeit? *von* Charlotte Behr *und* Tim Pestell, *mit einem Beitrag von* John Hines

Dieser Artikel beschreibt die jüngst erfolgte Entdeckung des ersten gesicherten Hortes von Goldbrakteaten in Großbritannien, der in einem Feld in Binham (Norfolk) gefunden wurde. Dieser Fund ist einzigartig für das angelsächsische England, wo man Brakteaten zuvor nur entweder in Gräbern oder als Einzelfunde entdeckt hat. Zwei weitere Goldbrakteaten und ein möglicher Prägestempel wurden in der Nähe von Binham entdeckt, was auf ein "Brakteaten-Cluster" schließen lässt. Hier wird auf der Basis von Analogien mit Fundstätten in Skandinavien und Norddeutschland argumentiert, dass Binham möglicherweise in der frühen angelsächsischen Periode ein zentraler Ort in Nord-Norfolk war. Angesichts der Verteilung von Brakteaten im angelsächsischen England wird vorgeschlagen, dass Binham einer von mehreren zentralen Orten mit bedeutungsvollen Clustern von Brakteatenfunden ist; diese könnten zu einem Netzwerk zentraler Orte gehört haben, die über Skandinavien und entlang der englischen Nordseeküste verteilt waren.

Riassunto

Il tesoro di bratteati di Binham: un centro del primo periodo anglosassone? *di* Charlotte Behr *e*Tim Pestell, *con un contributo di* John Hines

Questo articolo descrive la recente scoperta del primo tesoro certo di bratteati d'oro in Gran Bretagna, rinvenuto in un campo a Binham nel Norfolk. Questo ritrovamento è unico nell'Inghilterra anglosassone, poiché i bratteati rinvenuti in precedenza provenivano da tombe oppure si trattava di ritrovamenti isolati. Nelle vicinanze di Binham sono stati scoperti altri due bratteati d'oro e una possibile matrice, il che fa pensare a un 'agglomerato di bratteati'. In base ad analogie con siti della Scandinavia e della Germania settentrionale, si sostiene che nel periodo anglosassone più antico Binham possa avere avuto un ruolo centrale nel Norfolk settentrionale. Tenuto conto della distribuzione dei bratteati in tutta l'Inghilterra anglosassone, l'area di Binham viene indicata come una delle varie località in cui ci sono stati significativi ritrovamenti di 'agglomerati di bratteati'. Si avanza l'ipotesi che queste località facessero parte di una rete di siti centrali sparsi in tutta la Scandinavia e lungo le zone costiere del Mare del Nord in Inghilterra.