ARCHAEOLOGICAL NOTES 1969

PART II — SHORT NOTES

A. A MEDIEVAL GOLD RING FROM OLD LEAKE (fig. III, 2)

by J. Cherry, B.A., Dept. of Medieval and Later Antiquities, British Museum.

Few medieval gold rings have been found in the Lincolnshire area and so the recent discovery of this ring is of some interest. It was found in the Church End area of the parish of Old Leake, Boston, on the surface of the ground by Mr. N. Truepenny. There were no associated finds.

The gold signet ring (weight 20·1 grams) is an example of a common type with a round bezel standing clear of the hoop. The hoop has an internal diameter of 1·9 cms and external diameter of 2·3 cms. The hoop is decorated on the exterior with two grooves that intersect to provide a pattern of five lozenges. The bottom of the grooves are keyed for enamel, but no trace of enamel remains. The inside of the hoop is engraved in Gothic lettering with the posy “et de moy pencez”. The circular bezel (diameter 1·3 cms.) is engraved with an outer circle of crosses, within which there is an inscribed scroll. The reading of the inscription on this scroll is not clear but a probable reading is “de loialité nos honé vin” perhaps signifying “Our honour comes from loyalty”. In the centre there is a curled up lion.

There is a popular type of ring, though more commonly known in bronze rather than gold. The closest parallels to the general shape of the ring that can be cited are three rings in the British Museum’s collections Nos. 448, 449 and 450, which are assigned in the ring catalogue to the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. The ring from Old Leake probably dates from the late fifteenth or early sixteenth century.

The inscription on the inside of the ring is purely personal. It is not otherwise recorded in this form, though similar inscriptions “pencez de moy” and “de moy pencez” are recorded. The inscription and device on the bezel of the ring may be a family device or motto but it is not possible to suggest a family.

This ring has now been acquired for Lincoln Museum.

B. TWO FINDS OF IPSWICH WARE FROM LINCOLNSHIRE

by G. Coppock, B.A.

i. A sherd of Ipswich ware (fig. II, 6), the second piece recorded in Lincolnshire, was recovered from the site of Humberston Abbey (TA311052) to the south of St. Peter’s Church, and was recently identified by Mr. J. G. Hurst. This sherd represents the spout of a spouted pitcher though it is not possible to determine the exact form and rim diameter. Presumably the form would have been similar to that in Ipswich Museum from Falcon Street, (Cowell’s). There is no suggestion of surface decoration.

The vessel was thrown on a slow wheel and largely hand-moulded in the vicinity of the spout. The fabric is dark grey with a light grey core, is fairly smooth and well-fired. The sand content is not particularly high but this sherd certainly has affinities with East Anglian material, unlike the sherd from Hall Hill, West Keal (see below). This sherd would seem to date from the early 9th century.

1 Known examples are the late fifteenth century gold ring, said to have been ploughed up at Hatfield near Hornsea, Yorks, which is engraved with the superstitious formular Gut + got + humyu + amanizapa (Catalogue of the Finger rings in the British Museum by O. M. Dalton (1912) No. 876), the late medieval gold ring set with a sapphire found at Lincoln (Brod. No. 1767), and the massive fifteenth century (?) gold ring found at Lincoln, the impress being the initial W (exhibited by Mr. E. J. Willson in 1848 at the Museum of Antiquities formed during the Annual Meeting of the Archaeological Institute (Catalogue p. 24) but since lost.

2 Joan Evans, English posies and posy rings (Oxford 1931) pages 7 and 12.

ii. A re-examination of surface finds from the Anglo-Saxon cemetery site on Hall Hill, West Keal, (TF356640) brought into the City and County Museum, Lincoln, by Mrs. E. H. Rudkin in 1930, resulted in the discovery of a base sherd of knife-trimmed Ipswich ware (fig. II, 7), only the third such discovery in Lincolnshire, and only the second occasion that such a find has come from a Saxon cemetery. Unfortunately there is no evidence to show what relationship this sherd bore to the Saxon burials. Roman pottery has been noted from the same area, but no later material.

This sherd represents the base angle of a vessel with a sagging base, either a pitcher or a large cooking pot, although the exact form is uncertain. The fabric has a dark grey core, tending to a browny-grey on the surfaces, is very hard and smooth and is well fired. The sherd is scored as a result of knife trimming, used to tidy up the shape and give a sharp edge. Mr. J. G. Hurst dated this sherd to the late 7th or 8th century and points out that the fabric differs from both the East Anglian specimens and the York Ipswich ware, indicating the possibility of local manufacture. The production of such a ware, turned on a slow wheel would suggest that the Masey type wares, as found in recent excavations at Normanby-le-Wold, Lincs., were not necessarily the norm for the area.


C. A SHARD OF PINGSdorf TYPE WARE FROM LINCOLN (fig. II, S)

by G. Coppack, B.A.

An interesting sherd of Pingsdorf type ware was found unstratified during the 1969 excavations at Flaxengate, Lincoln, at a depth of about 10 feet in made ground at SK97687130 (see Part I, Section 5a), and was subsequently identified by Mr. J. G. Hurst of the Ministry of Public Building and Works. The distribution of such wares in Britain is generally confined to the south-east, with an outlying group on the east coast, with the northernmost example at York. This sherd fills a gap between York and Boston and obviously more sherds of this type await discovery to show the full distribution on the east coast and on major rivers. Mr. Hurst dates this sherd to the 11th century, if not earlier, as it is an early form.

The sherd is part of a wheel-turned spouted pitcher with the addition of a hand-made spout, which has been carefully smoothed on to the body. The ware has a light grey core, tending to orange on the inner surface, and orange-grey on the exterior. Just below the spout is a continuous band of painted swags in a dirty brown paint. It is similar to examples from Miles Lane, London (Guildhall Museum) and Binlough Castle, Sussex, and could represent a product from Limbourg. Pingsdorf ware and its derivatives represent an imported group produced in kilns on the Rhine and in the Low Countries, with the major distribution in the general Bonn-Cologne area, and on the Maas, and on the Belgian and Dutch sea-boards. This pottery comes to Britain via the Sheldt estuary and one would expect a heavy distribution on the south-east, with a liberal splashing on the east coast, and on major eastern rivers. The red-painted ware pitcher is derived from the Badorf type wine amphora, to which a foot-ring has been added. Generally Pingsdorf ware was in production from the mid-9th to the late 12th century, throughout which period it was arriving in England.

1 P. V. Addyman 'Dark Age Settlement at Maxey, Northants' in Medieval Archaeology, Vol. 8, 1964.
4 Medieval Archaeology, Vol. III, 1959, p. 58, No. 9
D. A Steel Yard Weight from Swineshead, Lincs.

by C. N. Moore, M.A.

A medieval bronze steel yard weight was found during road works near Swineshead Post Office in 1966 (TF23734034) by Mr. B. Stanhope. It is a very good example of the bronze cased steel yard weights which are fairly commonly found in Southern England and occasionally in the Midlands.¹ This example is decorated with three shields, one clearly a lion rampant, the other two possibly very degenerate representations of a double-headed eagle, and has a band of incised ornament running round the top of the weight. Like other similar weights, the bronze casing is not complete and shows the lead core. This was presumably so that lead could be added or subtracted to make fine adjustments to the balance of the steel yard. The weight weighs 1 lb, 13 ozs. which places it amongst the class of smaller weights, which were probably used for weighing up to about a hundredweight.

Traditionally these steelyard weights have been dated to the mid-13th century on the grounds that the lion and double-headed eagle are the coats of arms of Richard, Earl Cornwall, the second son of King John, who was granted the farming of the new coinage in 1244. It has been suggested that steelyard weights were at the same time issued under his jurisdiction. However this view has been challenged² and it seems more likely that the coat of arms on the weights was purely to give prestige to merchants using them. No two steelyard weights seem to be identical, though they fall into a number of broad classes. This would argue against a central issuing authority. The Swineshead weight is a particularly degenerate example, though it is fairly similar to one found on the Wiltshire/Berkshire boundary in the River Cole at Coleshill.³ In view of this, a date either late in the 13th or early in the 14th century is likely for its manufacture.

E. Two Interesting Finds from Church Field, North Owersby


Amongst a variety of objects (see Part I, Section 7b) found by Mr. K. Parrott during field walking in the field south and west of St. Martin’s Church, North Owersby (centred on TF61109475) was one item of particular interest.

This is part of a thin bronze plate (fig. I, 13) the present dimensions of which are 3.9 cm by 2.8 cm and 0.5 mm thick. There is a small hole in each of the surviving two corners for attachment to a wood or leather backing, and in one of these a small iron stud or rivet remains. The plate is decorated with dots punched from both sides, to form a border containing a leaf pattern. The original length of the plate was probably about 7 cm, the pattern being repeated once.

Punched bronze plates of this type are found during the Roman period as decoration on


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wooden or leather objects and while there is no definite evidence, the small iron rivet on the Owersby example would suggest attachment to leather rather than wood. Also the general dimensions agree with those of belt-fittings elsewhere (e.g. Hawkes & Hull *Camulodunum*, 1947, p. 339 and pls. C and CII, though these examples have niello decoration). It seems certain therefore that the Owersby plate is a Roman belt-fitting.

The other unusual find is that of a grey-ware vessel (fig. II, 8) found in grave-digging in the churchyard. In form this vessel is a *butts-beaker*, a Gallo-Belgic and native type, but it is in a clearly Roman fabric. The form is debased and the fabric would suggest a 2nd century date but in the absence of associated finds this date should be treated with caution.

The fabric is hard, but smooth, and light grey in colour. The core is of a very light grey and where exposed is soft and easily abraded. The exterior surface is burnished from below the rim to the base except for two bands of burnished lattice decoration between two zones of four grooves. The vessel stands 31·5 cms. high and has a rim diameter of 11 cms. The fabric would seem to be closely related to material from kilns at Market Rasen and it is possible that this vessel is a product of these kilns.

*Correction to Excavations at Somerby, Lincs., 1957* by D. C. Mynard which appeared in *Lincolnshire History and Archaeology*, No. 4, 1969.

Fig. 14, scale ½. This should read scale ¾.