

BOOK FITTING

Unique ID: HESH-7ACEC5

Object type certainty: Certain

Workflow status: Published

Copper-alloy book clasp of Howsam type A.1.3, with Limoges-style enamelling dating it to c.1150-1300 AD. It is incomplete, comprising a central rectangular enamelled plate with a sub-rectangular projecting knop which is pierced from side to side. The opposite edge of the plate is broken with two abraded projections, presumably the remnant of a broken hinge. The plate is sub-rectangular in cross-section, with slightly bevelled edges.

The fitting measures 21.1mm length, 25.4mm width, is 4.3mm thick and weighs 7.03g.

The upper face of the central plate is decorated with intricate and well-preserved enamelling around a central 3mm diameter hole which probably fitted over a peg on the opposite cover of the book. The enamel design consists of four sub-oval shapes, probably petals, positioned diagonally to form an irregular saltire cross around the central hole. This hole would probably have fitted onto a peg on the book's opposite cover. The petals are decorated with green enamel and veins on the leaves are depicted using a yellow substance, either enamel or possibly gilding. Positioned between these petals and also around the central hole, is a lozenge decorated with four separate enamel colours in concentric bands. The central enamel is red, which is bordered with white, then blue and finally a green enamel similar to that on the petals. Both these central elements are set against a field of blue enamel which is itself has a reserved gilt-metal border decorated with an incised design, which forms a rope-like pattern.

Projecting from one long edge of the central plate is a sub-rectangular knop decorated with a cast and incised animal head, probably a dog, with open jaws and wide eyes. The head is pierced by a transverse hole (with a diameter of 2.3mm) presumably to hold a cord to help to remove the clasp.

The reverse of the plate is decorated with a gilt surface which has been partially removed by abrasion. This would suggest that this part of the plate was not secured directly to the book and instead moved freely, on the hinged fitting.

The clasp is a mid purple green colour with a well formed but slightly abraded patina. The edges of the fitting are slightly irregular and asymmetrical. The breaks are relatively old but are likely to have been a result of movement within the ploughsoil. There is no evidence of active corrosion present and the enamel surfaces are relatively secure and firm.

A direct parallel of an enamelled book fitting can be seen at SWYOR-D9A074. Similar examples of non-enamelled hinged book clasps can be seen in Ottaway and Rogers, *Finds from Medieval York*, pp. 2936 - 2937, nos. 14478, 14641, 15236; and in Egan 1998, nos. 919-925. This form of non-enamelled book clasp appears to have been in use during the later medieval period (14th and 15th centuries), but the use of Limoges-style enamel argues for an earlier date, in the late 12th and 13th centuries. Limoges-style enamelled pieces are often associated with religious artefacts: parts of processional crosses, reliquaries, crucifixes and chalices. It is highly likely that this clasp was from a religious book, either a bible, or more likely a 'book of hours' or personal prayer book.

Find of note status

This has been noted as an interesting find by the recorder.

Class: clasp **Sub class:** Howsam type A.1.3

Chronology

Broad period: MEDIEVAL

Period from: MEDIEVAL

Period to: MEDIEVAL

Date from: AD 1150

Date to: AD 1300

Dimensions and weight

Quantity: 1

Length: 21.1 mm

Width: 25.4 mm

Thickness: 4.3 mm

Weight: 7.03 g

Personal details

This information is restricted for your access level.

Materials and construction

Primary material: Copper alloy

Completeness: Incomplete

Surface Treatment: Multiple

Spatial metadata

Region: [Eastern](#) (European Region)

County or Unitary authority: [Cambridgeshire](#) (County)

District: [South Cambridgeshire](#) (District)

To be known as: Ickleton

Spatial coordinates

Grid reference source: From finder

Unmasked grid reference accurate to a 0.01 metre square.

Discovery metadata

Method of discovery: Metal detector

General landuse: Cultivated land

Ward Perkins, J.B., 1940 [The London Museum Medieval Catalogue](#) London: HMSO ,