

# BROOCH

**Unique ID:** FAHG-7B3D73

Object type certainty: Certain

Workflow status: Published

Gilded copper-alloy great square-headed brooch of early Anglo-Saxon date, complete with red enamel inlays on head, bow and foot, and with the remains of silver plates on the footplate. Ancient repair on the bow. The brooch has relief decoration in Salin's Style I, and the silver-and-gold colour scheme is known as the Bichrome Style. The brooch fits squarely within Hines's Group X, which is tentatively dated at present to the later part of his Phase 2 (in calendar years, perhaps c. 525-c. 550 AD; Hines in Hunn et al. 1994, 129).

**Headplate** The headplate has a rectangular inner panel decorated in the upper corners with a pair of circular cells set with dark red enamel. Narrow ridges run from these cells inwards to meet and then continue onto the bow as a single wide flat-topped ridge, probably representing the nose of a human mask. The space beneath the enamelled cells is filled on each side with a pellet, probably representing an eye, underneath a ridged eyebrow. The treatment of each eyebrow is slightly different; that on the left (as you look at it) has an outer ridge as well, making part of a D shape, but the right-hand one does not, having just a curved brow.

The headplate inner panel is framed by a second panel consisting of a wide flat-topped ridge outside two narrower chip-carved V-shaped concentric ridges. The narrower V-shaped ridges run around three sides of a rectangle, but the wider flat-topped ridge also turns at the bottom to meet the bow. Below the bottom of this part of the ridge are two very short horizontal ridges, which fill in the space between the headplate's second panel and the bottom of the headplate.

Outside the second panel is the headplate frame, which is decorated on each of its three sides with a single human mask in Style I. The masks are seen en-face, with their eyebrows next to the inner panel and their mouths outwards. The lower corners of the headplate frame are undecorated, making raised square panels which are gilded together with the rest of the headplate.

Each of the masks on the sides is slightly different. On the right-hand side as you look at the brooch, the eyebrows are formed from double ridges, or ridges with narrow central grooves, growing out of (or running into) the nose so that the nose has a pair of grooves running down it; there is a tiny transverse groove across the top of the nose forming a division between nose and eyebrows. The eyebrows curve over the eyes and then recurve upwards slightly. The eyes are pellets, with curved raised eyeframes below which do not join the eyebrows. Below these are blocks forming the cheeks. The nose is square-ended and below is a pointed-oval mouth with an indented centre, with a raised line forming a chin underneath.

The mask's right cheek (lower down on the brooch) has a large cheek with pointed upper end and a diagonal groove dividing it into two; there is a further short groove separating the cheek blocks from the chin. The other cheek is a single line forming the edge of the face, continuing the line of the chin and then recurving downwards.

On the left-hand side as you look at the brooch, the mask is similar, but the lower cheek is a simple triangle which is joined to a less well formed chin. The mouth is a simple groove between the ridge of the chin and an upper ridge which then curves up under the eye-frame and recurves downwards.

This mask is perhaps not quite so well modelled.

The mask on the upper part of the frame is again similar, but has the pointed-oval mouth and square cheeks, each of which has a delicately engraved tiny L-shaped groove adding definition (part of this tiny groove has worn away on the left cheek).

The human masks alternate with Style I animals, so that there is an animal above each of the side masks and one to either side of the upper mask. The animals are separated by lentoid (pointed-oval) cells containing dark red enamel; these cells are set diagonally and the headplate corners are stretched out to accommodate them.

Despite the Style I being very well made, the identity of the animals' body parts is not immediately obvious. To either side of the pointed-oval cells are tightly curved elements, and on the lower sides these resolve themselves into curved ankles with multi-toed feet beyond. Then there are two (right-hand side) or three (left-hand side) triple-stranded elements, probably the body; the third element is replaced by a square block. The curved element attached to one cheek of each human mask may well be a front leg. In this interpretation, the animal body is in profile and the human mask is in the place of the animal's head, turned to face the viewer; it is clearest on the left-hand side.

It is possible that the multi-toed feet are also present on the other (upper) side of the pointed-oval cell, but that the details of the toes have now been worn away. There are again two or three multi-stranded body elements (two on the right plus an odd double-arched space-filler, and three on the left) but the largest element now has four strands instead of three. This four-strand element curves around a pellet which could be seen as a rounded cheek from the human mask, or an eye; and in fact if these two extra pellets are two extra eyes, we now have enough mask elements to give each one of our profile animals a full human mask to turn to the viewer. This works well for the right-hand half (supposing the brooch is still being held the right way up, with the animals upside-down) but not apparently so well for the left-hand half, although this may be because the gilding is more worn away here on one of the pellets and so the eyes appear to be of different sizes. Below each of the cheek/eye pellets there is a square panel decorated with a tiny L-shaped groove, which may represent the cheek of the animal's face.

On the reverse of the headplate is a double pin bar lug, the space between the lugs only c. 6 mm. The remains of an iron pin bar, coiled iron spring, and a tiny stub of pin survive; the pin comes from the edge of the coil nearest the brooch. There is no evidence for any surviving textile. Width of headplate 70.5 mm.

The headplate of this brooch fits well into Hines's Group X. Pointed-oval motifs in the headplate upper corners, and human masks on the top and sides of the headplate, are found on all of Hines's Group X brooches. In some cases there are single masks at the top (Dinton 8, unprovenanced, Little Wilbraham 28) and in other cases there is a pair of masks (Little Wilbraham 3, Little Wilbraham 40) or even three (Broughton Lodge 16, Alveston Manor 89). The undecorated lower corners are paralleled at Broughton Lodge 16, Little Wilbraham 3 and 40 and the unprovenanced Group X brooch. The circular cells and human mask in the headplate inner panel are echoed in Little Wilbraham 40 and Broughton Lodge 16, which both have two circles in addition to eyes, but also have Style I elements filling the rest of the inner panel.

Bow The bow is shallowly arched, and tapers slightly from 22 mm wide at the top to 21 mm wide near the bottom. It has a central flat-topped longitudinal ridge, tapering slightly to either end, interrupted in the centre by a circular cell filled with dark red enamel. The bow is decorated with a square panel on the top, framed by a bold double groove; the longitudinal ridge is higher than any part of this frame and so appears to run over it. There is a lot of iron corrosion here obscuring detail,

but a small area on the right-hand lower side of the bow can be clearly seen, showing that there was no other relief decoration on the bow; the double groove fills most of the space.

A break across the bow just above the circular cell has been mended in antiquity. A thick piece of copper-alloy strip, tapering to fit the width of the bow, has been attached by four circular-section iron rivets added through circular rivet holes. There is a scrape on the edge of this copper-alloy sheet with the original uncorroded copper alloy showing through.

The bows of Group X brooches are various, but that on the unprovenanced example (which is now lost and known only from a photo) appears to be the closest, with a double groove framing a squarish panel, a bold longitudinal ridge, and a circular boss in the centre which may once have held enamel (Hines 1997, pl. 34b).

Footplate A ridge runs down the centre of the footplate, forming a continuum with the ridge on the bow. It runs down to a central circular cell filled with dark red enamel which is set slightly below the centre of the footplate. The ridge then continues for a short distance before stopping just above the eyebrows of the terminal lobe. The ridge divides the footplate inner panel into two.

The footplate upper borders are angular, and each contains enigmatic Style I relief decoration. At the top are bold flowing curving ridges which appear to form crests; the crest is on a profile head on the right-hand side and what appears to be a head turned to look en-face on the left-hand side. The profile animal has an angled triple-strand headframe which has a transversely nicked top, forming the edge of the brooch - or perhaps this combination of triple strand and transverse nicking should be read as a multi-toed foot. Below is another eye and two curving ridges which may be from a subsidiary animal. There is also one more ridge which curves around the right-hand cell.

The left-hand design is subtly different, in that it has many of the same elements but the details of angle and curve give a different impression. Here the triple-strand headframe is gently curved as if outlining the curve of a cheek. Two pellet eyes have a more gently curved ridge between them, perhaps a nose. The transverse nicking might here represent a fringe of hair and a further single curved ridge appears to form the other cheek. There is no obvious subsidiary animal.

Below the footplate upper borders is a pair of circular cells inlaid with dark red enamel. These are not paralleled on any other great square-headed brooch known to Hines, but can be seen as related to the round eyes from central human masks such as that on Broughton Lodge 16 or Dinton 8.

Each of the two footplate inner panels contains long sinuous single-strand elements of animals' bodies arranged around the circular cell. The scheme of the decoration is identical in both halves, but there are variations in detail such as angles and lengths. None of these elements is precisely identifiable. A fairly close parallel to this decoration might be the single-strand elements arranged around a large circular boss on the brooch from Little Wilbraham 3. Below the circular cell, the narrow points of the panels contain pellets - three sub-circular pellets on the left-hand side and four more flattened pellets (or perhaps ladder pattern) on the right-hand side. These pellets are perhaps derived from the transverse ribbing of the Group X brooch from Alveston Manor 89 and the unclassified brooch from Nassington 33, which has several links to Group X.

The inner panels are bordered by four wide flat-topped ridges. The lower pair extend from the eyebrows of the terminal lobe and curve around towards the side lobes; they end in what appears to be a headframe, eye and triple-strand curve; this may be derived from a predatory bird's head in profile. Again, Little Wilbraham 3 probably provides the best parallel to this decorative scheme.

The upper pair of curved ridges framing the footplate inner panel runs from the upper pair of

circular cells towards the footplate side lobes. The squared-off ends of these ridges, by the footplate side lobes, have incurved sides, which on the left-hand side accommodate a pair of pellet eyes. These eyes are absent on the right-hand side, which has a single short space-filling ridge in the place of one of them. A triple-strand element issues from the end of each ridge, which curves upwards to end in a multi-toed foot.

The footplate side lobes have squared-off ends. The left-hand end appears to be silvered; it has a white-metal coating which appears possibly too silvery and too neatly applied to likely to be solder from a separate silver plate, although a distinction between the two is difficult. There are what appear to be very faint annulet punchmarks towards the upper outer corner of this silvered area. The right-hand end has a fragmentary silver plate soldered on. The silver areas are roughly T-shaped, and in the curved angle above the stem of the T are triple-strand legs curving round and ending in multi-toed feet. On the left-hand side, the foot has a pellet next to it. These toes meet the toes of a similar leg and foot which curves down from the footplate upper borders, although these can also be seen as triple-strand eye-frames around a pellet eye.

Most Group X brooches have rather various Style I masks on their footplate side lobes, but similar squared-off ends are found on both Alveston Manor 89 (after Style I masks) and on Broughton Lodge 16 (with no Style I masks) - but neither of these are recorded as having any silver plates, or solder either. The symmetrical disposition of the ornament at the inner end of this brooch's silver plates argues again for a link to other Group Xs - other square lobes, e.g. those on Group XV brooches, tend to have single profile birds' heads here.

The footplate terminal lobe can be compared with that from other Group X brooches, notably Little Wilbraham 3, and read as a full-face mask. There is a pair of eyes, with triple-strand eyebrows curving round the eyes and looking a bit like a pair of goggles. The eyes are flanked by long curling ears which run back up along the edge of the brooch to form the footplate lower borders; these ears are found on most Group X brooches. Below the eyes is a deep transverse groove, and then below the groove is a raised undecorated square panel; on other brooches, this raised square panel represents the nose of the mask. Curling ridges extend outwards and downwards from the square panel's upper corners, then curl upwards again. Below the curl on the left-hand side is a four-strand and a double-strand curving block, perhaps the body of a Style I animal. On the right-hand side, there are the usual subtle differences; a raised triangular panel and two blocks of worn triple stranding.

From the lower corners of the block extend two more long curved ridges, and between these is a triangle with three chip-carved pointed-oval indentations, one vertical above and two horizontal below. There is a similar single vertical pointed-oval indentation on Alveston Manor 89. On other brooches, because the square panel in this area represents a human nose, the effect of the curved lines is that of a giant luxuriant curling moustache.

To either side of this mask, and joined by the deep transverse groove, is another pair of circular cells filled with dark red enamel. Around and above these are tiny out-ward curling ridges. The cells here are in the same position as large pellets on Little Wilbraham 3, and may represent the cheeks of the mask.

At the very bottom of the brooch is a sub-rectangular silver plate, one end of which is now missing. There are faint marks along the top of the silver plate, suggesting that underneath it there may have been punchmarks which have become transferred when the silver plate was pressed into place. On the reverse of the footplate, slightly off-centre and near the top, is a catchplate which is curled over towards the left (as you look at the reverse). This retains a fragment of iron pin. There is no evidence for any surviving textile. The width of the footplate is 60 mm.

In general The total length is 131.5 mm. All the dimensions are hard to take because of irregular edges and the large size of the object; they should be checked from an image with a scale. Weight 97.5g.

The use of enamel is not common on a great square-headed brooch. Hines knew of seven examples (Hines 1997, 220), four of which came from cemeteries in South Cambridgeshire. Of these, two brooches were of his Group X (Little Wilbraham 28 and 40) and it is possible that the now lost unprovenanced Group X example was also enamelled (Hines 1997, 93). On the other hand, enamelling is 'significantly frequent' on brooches from the cemeteries of Little Wilbraham and Linton Heath, both close to each other in Cambridgeshire (Hines in Hunn et al 1994, 129), and the technique is well known on other early Anglo-Saxon objects from Cambridgeshire and Suffolk.

### **Notes:**

A picture of this brooch and some information about its discovery was published by Julian Evan-Hart in Treasure Hunting magazine in October 2008, p. 25-6. The account of the finding of the brooch includes the information that it was found by Jason about 20 inches down.

### **Find of note status**

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

**Class:** great square headed **Sub class:** Hines's Group X

### **Subsequent actions**

Subsequent action after recording: Finder applying for an export licence

### **Chronology**

Broad period: EARLY MEDIEVAL

Subperiod from: Early

Period from: EARLY MEDIEVAL

Date from: Circa AD 525

Date to: Circa AD 550

### **Dimensions and weight**

Quantity: 1

Length: 131.5 mm

Width: 70.5 mm

Weight: 97.5 g

### **Personal details**

Found by: This information is restricted for your login.

Recorded by: Dr Helen Geake

Identified by: Dr Helen Geake

### **Materials and construction**

Primary material: Copper alloy

Completeness: Complete  
Surface Treatment: Gilded

## Spatial metadata

Region: [Eastern](#) (European Region)  
County or Unitary authority: [Cambridgeshire](#) (County)  
District: [South Cambridgeshire](#) (District)  
Parish or ward: [Harston](#) (Civil Parish)

## Spatial coordinates

4 Figure: TL4249  
Four figure Latitude: 52.121083  
Four figure longitude: 0.072682  
1:25K map: TL4249  
1:10K map: TL44NW  
Grid reference source: From finder  
Unmasked grid reference accurate to a 100 metre square.

## Discovery metadata

Method of discovery: Metal detector  
Discovery circumstances: Unknown

Hunn, A., Lawson, J. and Farley, M., 1994 [The Anglo-Saxon Cemetery at Dinton, Bucks](#) ,