

# HOARD

**Unique ID:** NMS-8381A4

Object type certainty: Certain

Workflow status: Published

Near Holt, Norfolk: Two Anglo-Saxon gold bracteates (2011T657)

**Discovery:** The B-bracteate was found on 31<sup>st</sup> August 2011 and the folded A-bracteate on 16<sup>th</sup> September 2011, both while metal-detecting on ploughed land. Both bracteates were found on the same field in close proximity to each other and to the findspots of two earlier bracteate finds in 2004 and in 2009, a B-bracteate (2004T297) (TAR 2004, fig. 109) and an A-bracteate (LVPL-43ADD1, 2009T657) known as Near Holt (Behr 2010, 56ff., 81).

## B-bracteate

**Description:** The central image of the B-bracteate (IK 604,2) is die-identical with the B-bracteate found in 2004 nearby (IK 604,1). It shows a standing male figure in profile, turning to the right and confronting an attacking quadruped animal with large open jaws. He is equipped with a sword raising it in his right hand. Behind him a second quadruped animal lies on its back and appears to attack from behind. Along the edge of the picture a short runic inscription is put in front of the male figure's head. The motif was designed partly in high relief with contour lines, partly only with contour lines. To decorate the concentric fields surrounding the central image the same stamps as on the earlier found B-bracteate were used. The inner field was punched with triangles that were crowned with dots and pointed outwards and the outer field with equal-armed crosses set in square fields.

The loop is preserved and formed of a higher central ridge and two smaller, narrower ridges on either side. The gold flan is surrounded by a beaded gold wire. Underneath the loop a spiral made of twisted gold wire is applied. This wire appears to be similar to the framing gold wire of the earlier die-identical find. The relief on the reverse is only faint.

The pendant is heavily bent and the lower right-hand part is ripped off. Loop, reverse and framing wire do not show strong signs of wear.

**Dimensions:** Diameter 44mm, weight 8.5g (before cleaning).

**Discussion:** The scene of a male figure fighting two monstrous animals is also represented on seven die-identical bracteates that have been found in an unknown find spot, probably in Schleswig-Holstein, Germany, now known as 'Hamburg-B' (IK 71). They are stylistically very similar to the two Binham finds but mirror-image and without the runic inscription. Another example of the same motif has been found on a bracteate from grave 54 in Derenburg-Meeranstieg II, Sachsen-Anhalt, Germany. It was executed, however, in chip-carving technique (IK 599).

The runic inscription can again not be read unambiguously. Hines suggested *w a a t* but emphasized the uncertainty of this identification. 'Assuming that a doubled vowel represents a single long vowel, North Sea Germanic \*wát- could be a neuter a-stem noun meaning 'wet', 'moisture', 'liquor', 'drink', or the adjective 'wet'. Both of these occur as wæt in Old English texts. If the text is read as embodying the early Old English sound-change of ai > á, wát could still be the 1st or 3rd person present indicative of the verb witan, 'to know': '[I] know or [he, she or it] knows'. (Hines, April

2012).

### **A-bracteate**

**Description:** Slightly more than half of the folded bracteate is preserved (IK 630,2). The fragment is folded quite precisely in the middle with the reverse on the outside. The surface is scratched including long linear scratch marks. A faint imprint of the central die and the stamps in the two surrounding concentric fields are visible on the reverse. The identification of the representation and type of the central image are only possible with X-radiography. This suggests with a very high level of probability that the same die was used as on the earlier A-bracteate find from the same field (2004T297, 2009T657) (IK 630,1). The design consists of an anthropomorphic head in profile with a bust in the tradition of the imperial image on late Roman coins and medallions that served as model. Face, hairstyle and coat are drawn with contour lines. The hairstyle is decorated with a diadem and the coat is shown with two brooches and stylized folds. Surrounding the head is an inscription in Roman capital letters that cannot be read as meaningful words. The inner concentric field surrounding the central image was stamped with spirals and bordered by two concentric lines on either side. The outer field was decorated with triangles that alternated between pointing with one corner towards the outside and towards the inside. The triangles have inward curved sides and a central dot. Similar spirals and triangles were punched in the rims of the earlier A-bracteate from the same field, however in a different sequence: (from the inside outwards) triangles pointing outwards, spirals, triangles pointing outwards, spirals. Each zone was separated by two concentric lines. (A close comparison of both bracteates is needed to decide whether the same stamps have been used which appears to be very likely.) The loop or position of the loop have not been preserved. The pendant was not surrounded by a framing wire but along the rim of the flan small grooves were punched on the obverse that gave the impression of a beaded wire, again in a comparable fashion with the earlier A-bracteate.

**Dimensions:** Approximate diameter 49.6mm, weight of the fragment 8.23g (before cleaning), gold content 88-91%, silver content 8-9%, remainder copper (La Niece and Simpson 2012).

**Discussion of the group:** The find of four gold bracteates over several years but in close proximity in the same field suggest that they were deposited together as a hoard. No evidence for a burial has been observed. Two bracteates respectively, the two B-bracteates and the two A-bracteates, are linked through their iconography, their stamps in the border zones and, on the B-bracteates, the use of similar twisted gold wire, and on the A-bracteates, by the absence of a framing wire. Also the treatment of the two A-bracteates appears to show similarities as the earlier A-bracteate seems to have been folded in the middle as well. The four bracteates from Binham stand out among Anglo-Saxon bracteate finds not only as the first likely deposition of a hoard comprising several bracteates but also through their above average size and weight.

**Date:** Late 5<sup>th</sup>-6<sup>th</sup> century

### **Literature:**

Ashley, S J and Ager, B 2006, 'Holt area, Norfolk: Anglo-Saxon gold bracteate (2004T297)', TAR 2004, 79.

Behr, C 2010, 'New Bracteate Finds from early Anglo-Saxon England', *Medieval Archaeology* 54.

Hines, J 2012 'B-bracteate from Binham (nr Holt), Norfolk' (unpublished report).

IK = Axboe, M, Düwel, K and Hauck, K (eds) 1985-89, *Die Goldbrakteaten der Völkerwanderungszeit. Ikonographischer Katalog 1-3*, Münstersche Mittelalter-Schriften 24 and

Axboe, M and Heizmann, W (eds) 2011, Die Goldbrakteaten der Völkerwanderungszeit - Auswertung und Neufunde, RGA Ergänzungsband 40, Berlin - New York, pp. 893-999.

La Niece, S and Simpson, A 2012 'Report for the coroner on the analysis of a folded fragment of a bracteate from Holt, Norfolk item of potential treasure 2011T657' (unpublished report file no 7492 46).

### **Find of note status**

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

**Class:** bracteate

### **Subsequent actions**

Current location of find: Norwich Castle Museum

Subsequent action after recording: Acquired by museum after being declared Treasure

### **Treasure details**

Treasure case tracking number: 2011T657

### **Chronology**

Broad period: EARLY MEDIEVAL

Subperiod from: Early

Period from: EARLY MEDIEVAL

Subperiod to: Early

Period to: EARLY MEDIEVAL

Ascribed Culture: Anglo-Saxon style

Date from: Circa AD 470

Date to: Circa AD 600

### **Dimensions and weight**

Quantity: 2

Weight: 16.73 g

### **Discovery dates**

Date(s) of discovery: Wednesday 31st August 2011 - Friday 16th September 2011

### **Personal details**

This information is restricted for your access level.

### **Other reference numbers**

SMR reference number: 40776

Treasure case number: 2011T657

## Materials and construction

Primary material: Gold  
Completeness: Complete

## Spatial metadata

Region: [Eastern](#) (European Region)  
County or Unitary authority: [Norfolk](#) (County)  
District: [North Norfolk](#) (District)  
To be known as: Near Holt

## Spatial coordinates

Grid reference source: GPS (From FLO)  
Unmasked grid reference accurate to a 0.01 metre square.

## Discovery metadata

Method of discovery: Metal detector  
Current location: Norwich Castle Museum  
General landuse: Cultivated land