

Anglo Saxon Costume Arms and Armour



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Introduction

This guide is aimed at those Society members who wish to add an Anglo-Saxon costume to their wardrobe.

We recognise that levels of interest in Saxon dress vary widely within the Society, therefore the guide is split into two separate sections. The first gives a basic description of Anglo-Saxon dress together with brief instructions on possible and practical methods of construction. This is followed by a more detailed, referenced "scholarly" portion for those interested in the evidence of archaeology and the art and literature of the period.

Although based in the tenth century, Society members also take part in events set in either the ninth or eleventh century. Consequently, we have included information on adapting tenth century gear to these two centuries where appropriate.

A final cautionary note: - whilst we believe that we have researched Anglo-Saxon costume fairly thoroughly it would be impossible to study all the information available. In addition new archaeological finds are constantly adding to the available knowledge of the period. We stress that this is intended as a guide rather than a set of rules. Other Society members may be aware of different aspects of late Anglo-Saxon dress and equipment - if so we would welcome details.

Rachel Lowerson and Dave Parker
January 1992

Section 1

Late Anglo Saxon Costume

Introduction

i. The evidence

Evidence for Anglo-Saxon dress and military equipment stems from three areas: from the art and the literature of the period and from archaeological finds. A brief summary of these sources is given below. More detail can be found in the scholarly sections of the guide.

a. The evidence of art

Late Saxon manuscripts provide numerous illustrations of both male and female costume, weapons and armour. Some of these are rather stylised and others may reflect the persistence of traditional, often classical, images. However, keeping these limitations in mind, they do provide valuable information. The stone carvings of the Anglian and Anglo-Danish areas of England are, not surprisingly, rather less detailed. In addition, they may again represent stylised artistic traditions. Nevertheless the figures shown can offer occasional insights. Lastly figures are shown on other artifacts such as embroideries or brooches.

b. The literary evidence

Some details of Anglo-Saxon costume can be gauged from contemporary literature. These include Anglo-Latin glossies, prose and poetry and surviving wills.

c. The evidence of archaeology

The majority of archaeological evidence relevant to costume takes the form of ornamental metalwork. This category encompasses fasteners (strap ends, hooked tags, buckles) together with brooches and other jewellery. Finds of shoes and other leather articles are known from Anglo-Saxon sites such as Winchester and Durham. Several textile samples from various localities have also been unearthed and subsequently analysed. These provide us with useful data on fabrics, dyes, stitching and braids. Archaeological evidence also contributes to our knowledge of arms and armour.

The aim of the basic guide is purely to get people on the field or in the village in acceptable, yet reasonably distinctive, Anglo-Saxon attire. The more detailed guide presents the evidence for the garments and equipment outlined. In addition, the subject of more unusual (or less visible) items of clothing is addressed. For example, the scholarly section includes a discussion on the long-gown for high status men, the sleeveless overmantle for similarly aristocratic women and unusual headgear and undergarments. It is hoped that this section will be of interest to members particularly interested in authenticity, Anglo-Saxons or even both!

The Basic Guide to Anglo-Saxon Clothing

i. Fabrics and colours

Basic Anglo-Saxon clothing should be made of either woollen or linen cloth (or acceptable modern substitutes). Individuals who wish to portray a wealthy character may also use silk to trim their garments. Embroidery (for which Saxon women were famed) or tablet woven braid are alternative forms of decoration.

The harsh colours obtained with today's chemical dyes should be avoided. Suitable hues for which archaeological evidence exists include shades of blue, brick red, orange, yellow, green fawn and rose together with the browns, greys and creams of natural wool.

High status seems to have been conveyed largely by the use of decoration and finer quality fabrics rather than the use of specific costumes for the different levels of Anglo-Saxon society.

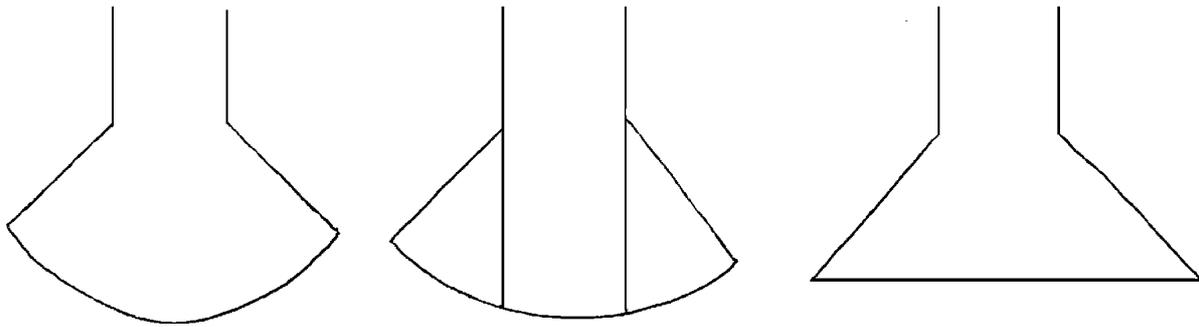
ii. Anglo-Saxon male dress

a. The Tunic

The available evidence indicates that the most common form of late Saxon tunic (cyrte) was knee length (when belted) and full skirted. The upper part of the tunic appears to have been fairly close fitting and was frequently worn pouched over the belt, which was consequently obscured. The tunic also featured long, reasonably tight sleeves which often extended beyond the fingertips and were then pushed back to the wrist. This resulted in a distinctive wrinkled appearance. The end of the sleeves could be decorated with braid, embroidery or trimming. However, we have been unable to find any evidence for a visible brooch fastener at the tunic neck. Labourers are occasionally shown barelegged with the tunic tucked up at the sides.

Three possible skirt patterns which can be used to construct a typical Anglo-Saxon tunic are shown below (Fig. 1). The tunic should reach to the knees even when belted, an initial skirt length reaching to the mid-calf allows for the characteristic pouched appearance.

When constructing the sleeves ensure they extend at least to the fingertips (if the distinctive wrinkled appearance is desired), and the cuffs are tight enough to stay in place around the wrist but not too tight to accommodate the hand! Additionally it may be possible to fold or tuck extra fabric back inside the sleeve if the tunic is to be used in a non-Saxon context.

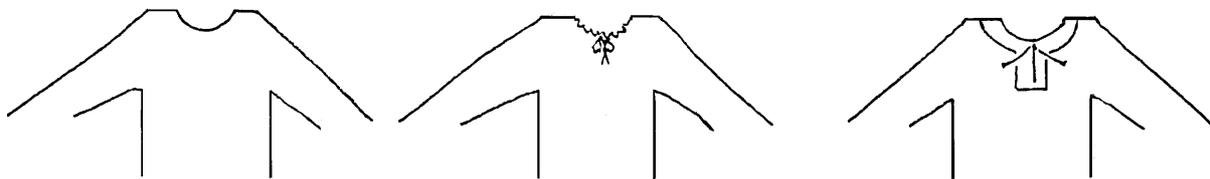


Curved hem single piece of fabric

Matching inserts added to skirt
Figure 1

Straight hem, single piece of fabric

Three varieties of neckline are shown in Fig. 2.



Simple round neckline

Drawstring neckline

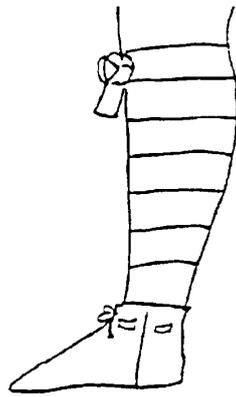
Round neck with front slit and ties

Figure 2

b. The Leg Covering

Anglo-Saxon trousers (brec) appear to have been so tight-fitting that the natural shape of the limbs was apparent. In addition, "puttees" (winingas) are often shown binding the lower leg. These were worn by all classes of society and, in the case of wealthy individuals, could be adorned with a decorated top band.

If trousers are to be worn without winingas, modify the instructions given for Viking costume so that the trousers are reasonably tight around the leg and close fitting at the ankle. Winingas are a very distinctive feature of Saxon dress (and can also be used to disguise looser trousers). When bound round the lower leg this form of leg-binding should completely obscure the trousers underneath. Consequently each strip of fabric needs to be fairly long. Practical experience indicates that a length of at least 10 feet is advisable whilst archaeological evidence points to a width of 3-4 inches. Very long strips can be wound down the leg and then back up again. The two loose ends can then be tied at the top. Another method involves winding the strip tightly from ankle to knee and then tucking the loose end in. Both suggestions are shown in Fig. 3. Although winingas are not essential to Saxon costume they are a valuable aid to distinguishing sides.



i.



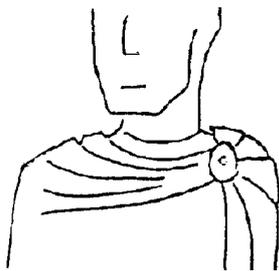
ii.

Figure 3

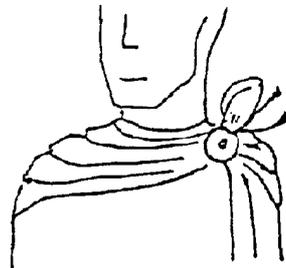
c. The Cloak

Saxon men appear to have worn a simple square or rectangular cloak (loða) of variable length. This is usually shown clasped at the shoulder with a round brooch. Two thongs or ribbons and occasionally a loop of material are sometimes featured projecting behind the brooch. Anglian carvings also suggest that a cloak and hood or a hooded cloak (hacele) may have also been worn. This garment was presumably more tailored.

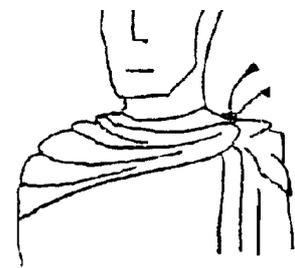
Three possible reconstructions of cloak fastening are shown in Fig. 4. Note that Southern Saxons, at least, should avoid the use of penannular brooches.



i. Round brooch,
(pin through both
sides of cloak)



ii. Loop and thong
(thong tied round a fold of
the cloak, brooch added)

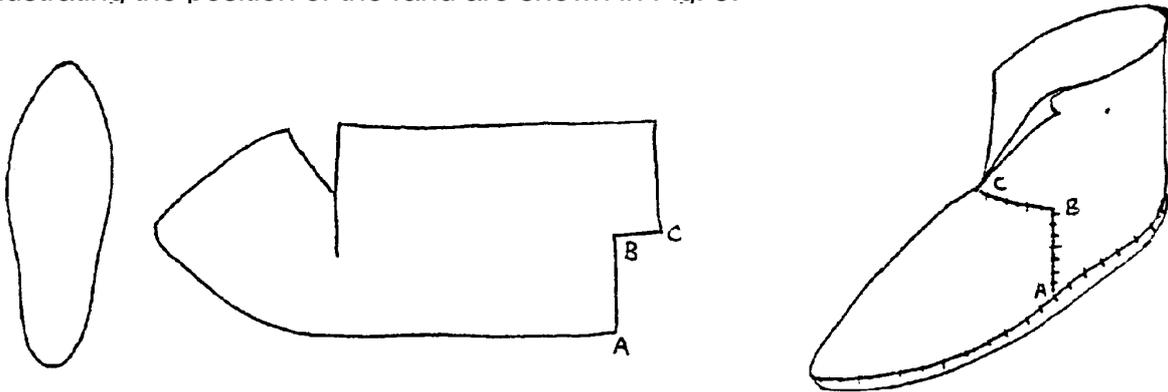


iii. Thong only,
(passing through a hole
in the back of the cloak)

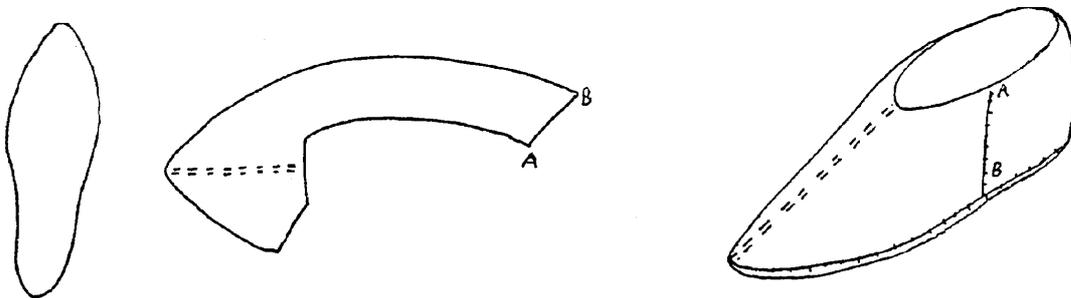
Figure 4

d. Footwear

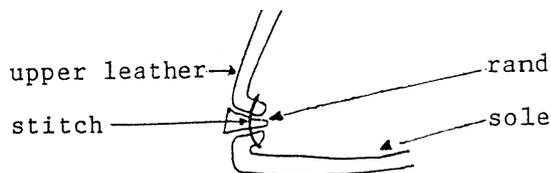
As with the Vikings, the typical Anglo-Saxon shoe was the turnshoe or boot. The uppers of Anglo-Saxon examples are usually one-piece and seamed at the outside edge. Unusual Anglo-Saxon shoes are known from Winchester and Durham; these finds include two shoes where a decorative false seam has been either scored or sewn down the centre of the upper (this accords well with manuscript evidence). Additionally, the top of another shoe has been folded down inside and then stitched in place which both reinforces and neatens the upper. Some Saxon shoes also incorporate a rand - a protective strip of leather sandwiched between the upper and the sole. Patterns for two typically Anglo-Saxon shoes, together with a diagram illustrating the position of the rand are shown in Fig. 5.



i. Anglo-Saxon Low Boot



ii. Anglo-Saxon shoe with false centre seam

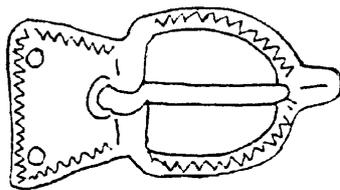


iii. Position of the rand.

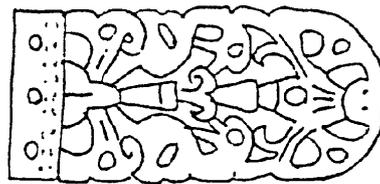
Figure 5

e. The Belt or Girdle

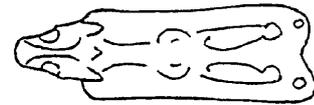
Although belts are rarely shown on manuscripts, they do feature on Northern carvings and on the Bayeux Tapestry. A late Saxon buckle from Winchester is illustrated in Fig. 6. Visible strap ends, if used, should ideally be large and tongue shaped or smaller with an animal head terminal. These smaller strap ends were probably used with a textile belt. For examples of strap ends, see also Fig. 6. Unless a belt with these distinctive Saxon fittings is available, it is perhaps best to pouch the tunic over a simple leather or fabric belt, especially as this arrangement is seen as typically Saxon.



i. Buckle



ii. Strap-end
(approx 2.5" long)
Figure 6



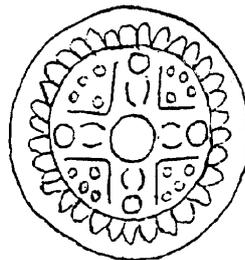
iii. Strap-end
(1-2" long)

f. Jewellery

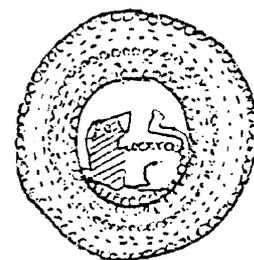
Numerous examples of late Anglo-Saxon jewellery are known from the archaeological record. This basic guide deals with the more noticeable varieties; namely brooches, necklaces and rings. Saxon brooches were almost invariably round and are shown in large (about 2.5-5 inches in diameter) silver disc brooch. These were either flat or slightly dished and could be decorated with dome headed rivets, gilding or black Niello. Poorer Saxons appear to have worn smaller (1-2 inches in diameter) disc brooches of white metal (such as pewter), bronze or occasionally copper. A number of designs are shown in Fig. 7.



i. Coin brooch



ii. Bossed brooch,
with equal armed cross



iii. Brooch with
backward looking
beast

Figure 7

Although necklaces are mentioned in the wills of the period, they are not shown in manuscripts and it has been suggested that bead necklaces became unfashionable after the ninth century. Several pendants are known from the archaeological record, and it has even been argued that the tenth century Scandinavian fashion for pendant mjollnirs arose as a response to the Christian fashion for crosses. Obviously the most distinctive pendant for our purposes is a cross.

Ornate gold finger rings were popular in the ninth century but appear to fall from favour in the tenth. By contrast, Viking type rings of twisted gold wire gained in popularity as the tenth century progressed and were naturalised by the eleventh century at the latest.

iii. Anglo-Saxon female dress

a. The Underdress

Manuscript evidence suggests that Saxon women customarily wore a long sleeved linen underdress. This was largely obscured beneath the overdress but showed at the wrist and, occasionally, the hem. The sleeves were close fitting and featured the characteristic wrinkled appearance also seen on men's tunics. A decorative band was sometime added to the cuff and hem.

For reconstruction purposes the dress can be flared slightly from the wrist or armpit to allow for increased freedom of movement. In the absence of pictorial evidence, the neckline is a matter of personal preference. For details of sleeve construction and appropriate styles of decoration refer to the tunic section of the male guide.

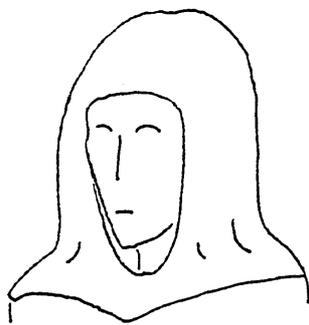
b. The Overdress

A long gown (cyrtel) was usually worn over the linen underdress. Contemporary illustrations indicate that the cut of this garment varied; some gowns were apparently tailored whilst others were loose fitting. Sleeves ranged from elbow to wrist length and could be turned back to form a distinct, and often decorated, cuff. In the tenth century the sleeves were straight or slightly flared, later eleventh century sources show extravagantly flared sleeves. This dress was often ankle length but could be shorter in order to display the hem of the underdress. The neckline was hidden beneath the folds of the headdress.

The overdress should be made of wool or linen-like material. The degree of tailoring employed when making this gown depends on individual choice and ability. Practical experience suggests that a long, fairly loose garment of a similar style to the underdress is easy to make and gives the desired effect. Slightly flared sleeves are perhaps preferable since they are appropriate to both a tenth and eleventh context. Decorative borders to the hem and cuffs can be employed and the dresses of wealthy characters may be extensively embroidered.

c. The Headdress

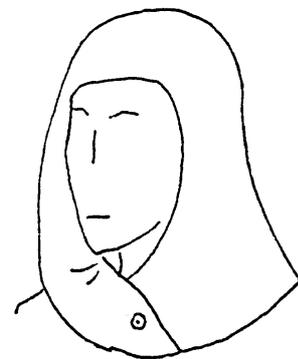
It is probable that all respectable Saxon women wore a headdress (wimpel)



i. Single piece hood like headdress



ii. Wrap around headdress



ii. Wrap around semi-circular headdress

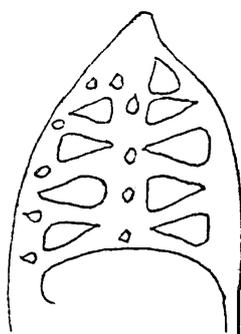
Figure 8

regardless of marital status. Manuscripts feature a variety of styles ranging from a loose wrap-around arrangement to a hood-like garment. Three possible reconstructions are shown in Fig. 8. A cloth or leather headband (fillet) could be worn either beneath or over the headdress (Fig. 8). The headbands of rich women are often very lavishly decorated.

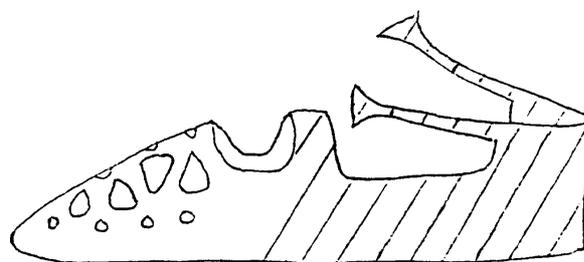
d. Footwear

Anglo-Saxon women are usually shown wearing flat-soled ankle boots, however literary and archaeological evidence indicates that boots, slippers and sandals were also worn.

The details of Anglo-Saxon footwear given in the "male" section of this guide may therefore apply equally to women. However, Fig. 9 shows a particularly attractive tenth century sandal from Durham. This unusual shoe was made by cutting a pattern in the upper of an otherwise simple turnshoe.



i. Actual find



ii. Reconstruction
Sandalised turnshoe

(cross hatched areas reconstructed)

Figure 9

e. The Belt or Girdle

The evidence of art shows that the overgown could either hang loose and unbelted or be confined with a belt or girdle. In some cases the gown is apparently pouched over a concealed belt in a manner reminiscent of mens' tunics. Other illustrations feature a self-coloured sash worn either at the waist or below the breasts. Occasionally the girdle is visible only at the front of the dress and may therefore have passed into and under the overgown at the sides and fastened at the back. Strap ends, buckles, pouches and personal possessions are not shown attached to the belt.

f. Jewellery

Archaeological evidence indicates that disc brooches could be worn by women although they are rarely shown in art. One isolated illustration suggests that a brooch may have been used at the neck to pin the two sides of the wrap-around wimple together. Although practical experience with this type of wimple confirms that some form of fastening is desirable, it appears that in most cases the fastener was obscured by the folds of fabric. Apart from this additional use, the details given in the section on jewellery in the male costume guide also apply to women.

iv. Children's' costume and toys

It appears from manuscript evidence that older children generally wore scaled down versions of adult dress. Very young infants are sometimes shown in long gowns or wrapped in swaddling that not only covers the body but also incorporates a wrap around headpieces. Archaeological finds reveal that children also wore leather turnshoes. Fig. 10 shows a particularly simple turnshoe pattern from Durham which has proved useful when faced with the ongoing problem of growing infant feet.

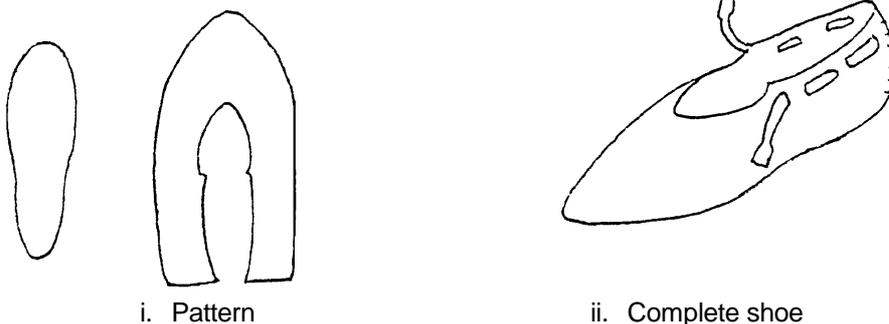
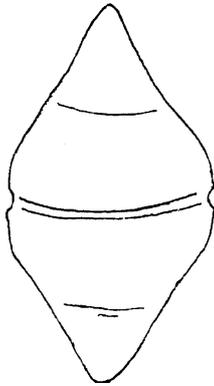
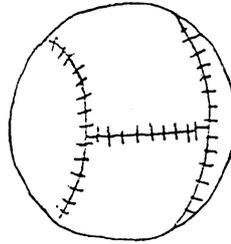


Figure 10

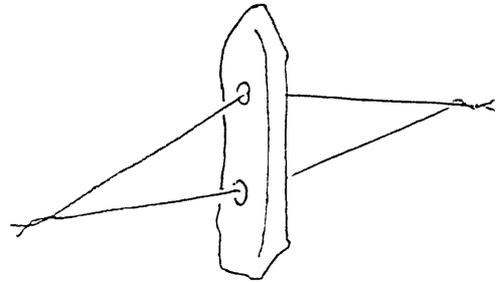
Childhood in the late Saxon period involved developing the crafts and skills needed for later life, however, finds from Winchester indicate that Anglo-Saxon children were not without playthings. Fig 11 shows three examples of these toys.



i. Wooden whipping top

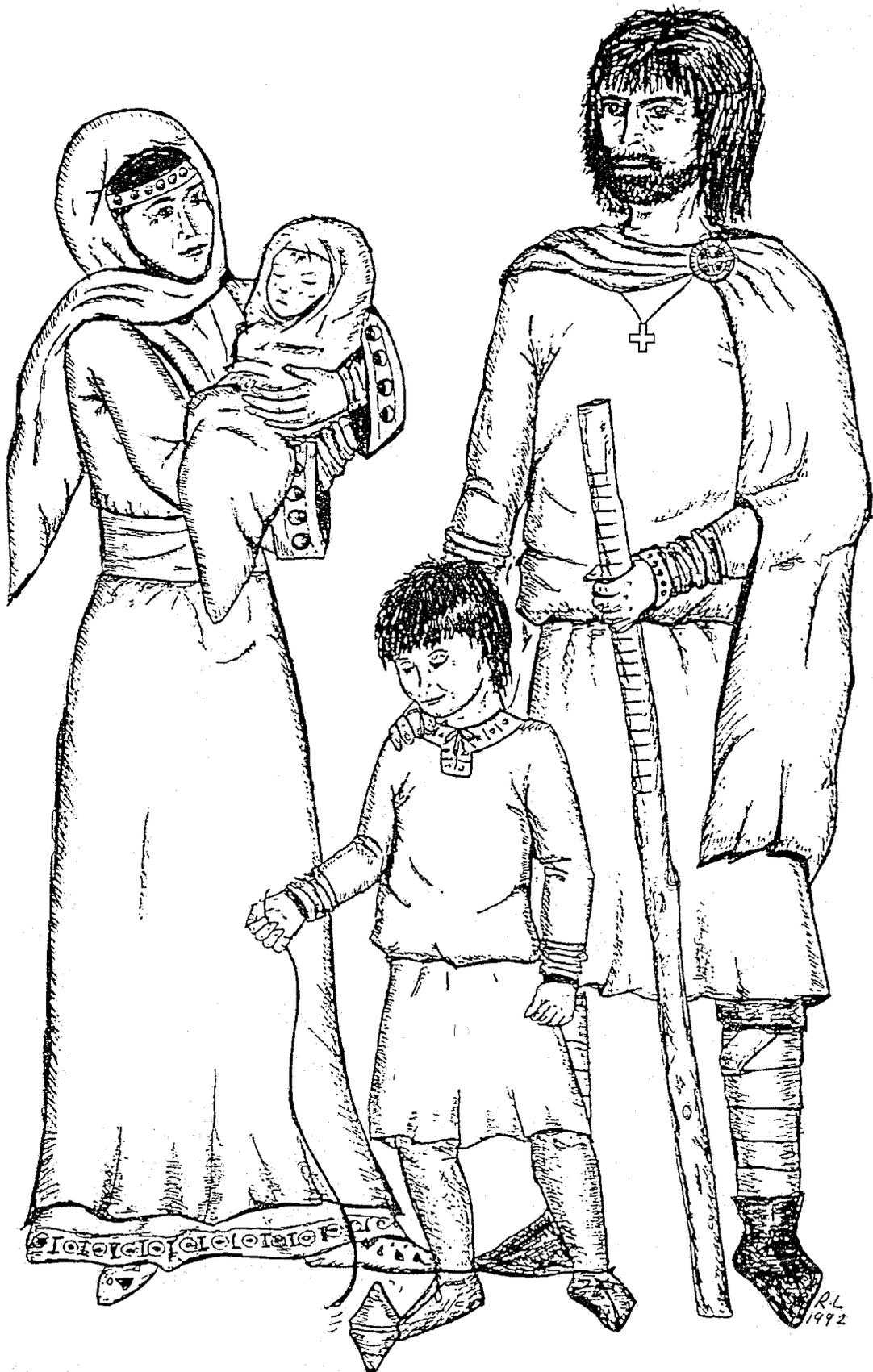


ii. Leather ball



iii. Bone whirrer

Figure 11



An Anglo-Saxon family Fig. 12

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v. Arms and Armour

a. The Shield

The shield was the principal form of defence in the tenth century. Unfortunately, there are apparently no surviving late Anglo-Saxon shields or shield fittings. However, comparison with earlier Anglo-Saxon examples and with Scandinavian shields of the ninth and tenth centuries allow for the following deductions: -

The shield was round and flat with a diameter of up to about a metre (although ensure that the size of your shield conforms with Society regulations). All the evidence suggests that Anglo-Saxon shields were planked; nevertheless, the use of plywood is both acceptable and practical. The shield was sometimes covered in leather, featured a central iron boss and could be strengthened by a leather or metal rim. In the absence of suitable Anglo-Saxon bosses, Viking style shields bosses are appropriate. Four possible options are shown in Fig.13.

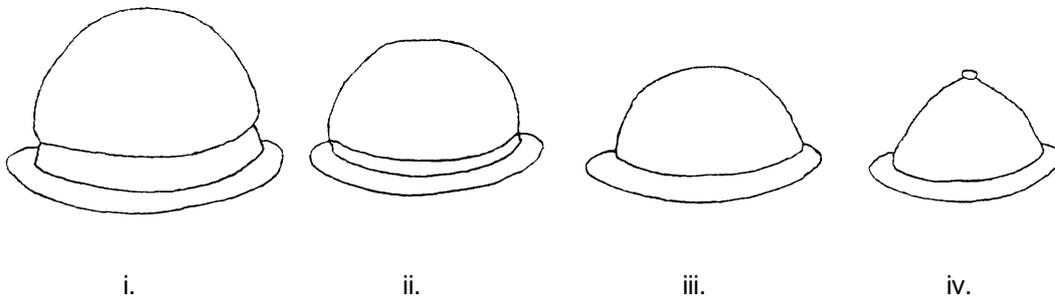


Figure 13

The shield was held by a single wooden grip, sometimes reinforced with a metal extension behind the boss. Fig. 14 shows three possible and practicable forms

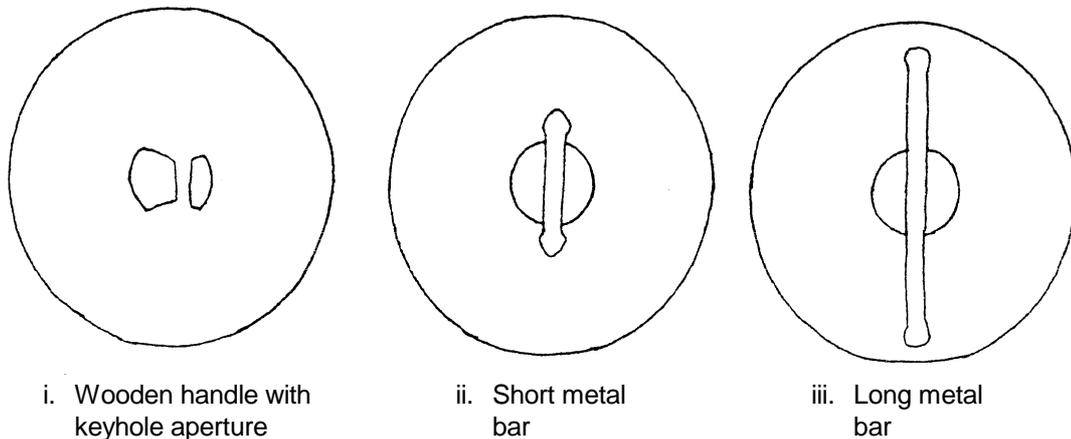
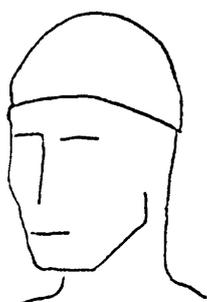


Figure 14

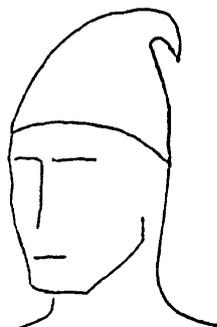
There is no evidence to suggest that shields were strapped to the forearm when used in combat. However, archaeology testifies to the use of carrying straps enabling the shield to be slung on the back when not in use. Decorative shield mounts predate our period and should therefore be avoided.

b. Helmets

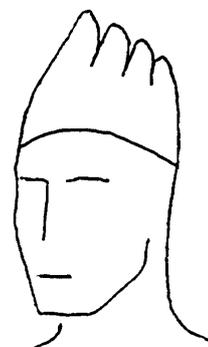
Helmets were probably rare amongst the Saxons in a tenth century context. Whilst simple conicals or conicals with nasals are suitable, the use of a leather or cloth cap affords a particularly distinctive Saxon look. For re-enactment purposes, these caps can be used to disguise a metal dome or simple conical helmet. Three suggested styles are illustrated below.



i. Rounded cap



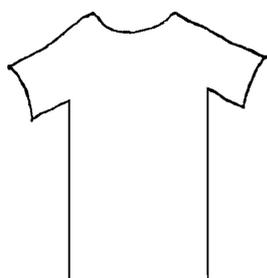
ii. Pointed cap
Figure 15



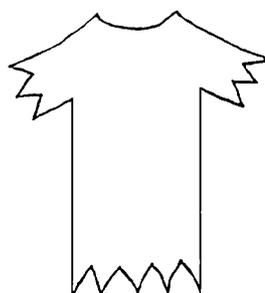
iii. Coxcomb cap

c. Armour

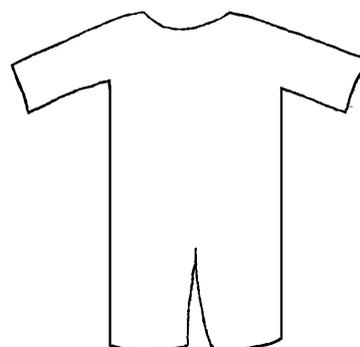
Evidence indicates that body armour was also rare amongst tenth century Saxons, although when mentioned it is invariably mail. Until the later medieval period, mail was composed of alternate welded and riveted rings but this form of construction is clearly not feasible for our purposes. As a guideline, individual rings had an external diameter of about 8-12mm and were made of 1-2mm thick wire. Three possible styles of mail shirt are shown in Fig. 16.



i. Plain, thigh-length shirt



ii. Dagged, hip-length shirt
Figure 16



iii. Long shirt split front and back (or back only) for riding

Leather armour may have been used by the Anglo-Saxons but the evidence is limited. If used, it is suggested that leather armour takes the form of a tough but flexible leather garment either of a similar cut to the shortest mail shirts or alternately as a sleeveless jerkin. Stiff leather cuirasses should be avoided.

Although lamellar armour is known from continental sources it was apparently not used by the Anglo-Saxons. Similarly there is no evidence for the use of padded armour in an Anglo-Saxon context. The cross-hatched garments shown in the Bayeux Tapestry are thought to represent mail. More information is given in the relevant section of the detailed guide.

d. The Spear

The most predominant offensive weapon of the early medieval period was the spear, which was the mark of a freeman and probably used by all warriors irrespective of class. Earlier Anglo-Saxon burials reveal a wide range of spears. A similar variation in type is apparent in the relatively few surviving spearheads of the middle and late Saxon period. A few noteworthy examples are illustrated in Fig. 17.

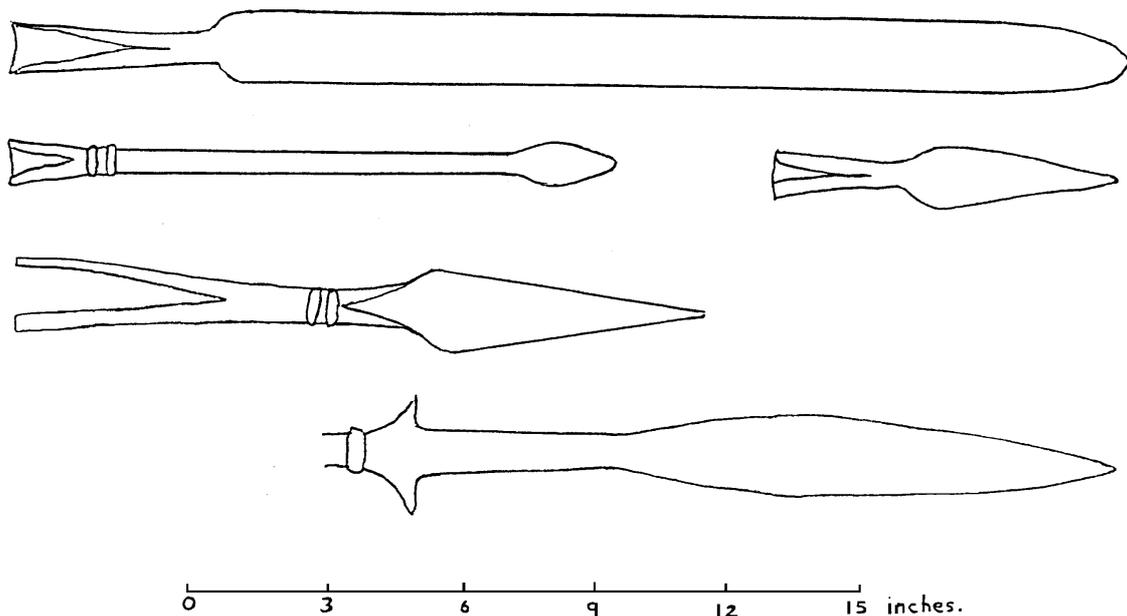


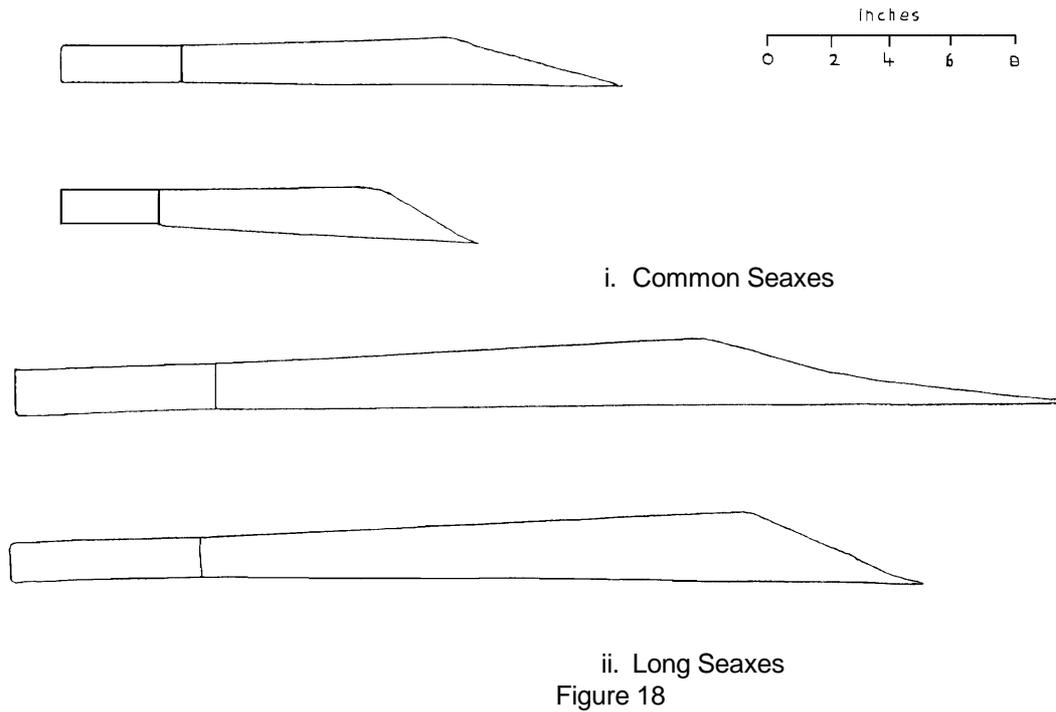
Figure 17

A distinctive feature of Anglo-Saxon spearheads was the split socket. This feature became obsolete on the continent prior to our period and by the tenth century was confined to Anglo-Saxon England. Many of these spear types are dated to the late Saxon period by the use of decorative moulding or incised grooves at the junction between the head and socket. Imported winged spears from the continent were also used. There is no archaeological evidence of spear length in the tenth century; manuscript evidence suggests that spears were as long, or slightly longer than, the bearer.

Lastly, remember that any spear in re-enactment must comply with Society regulations on both shaft length and blade dimensions.

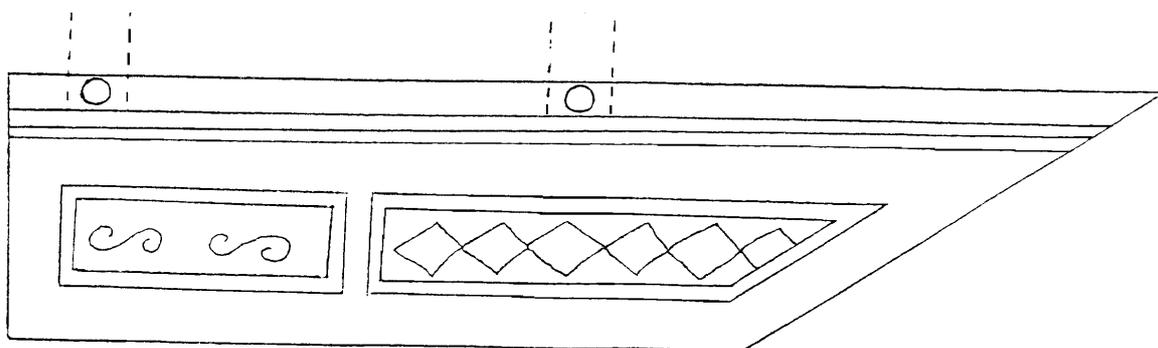
e. The Seax

These single edged knives and swords (commonly termed scramasaxes by archaeologists) are known from the continent as early as the sixth century. However, a distinctive type with a sharply angled back first appears in the late ninth/early tenth century and is characteristic of the Anglo-Saxons. The role of these heavy, broad-backed blades is uncertain but for our purposes they make ideal secondary weapons. They fall into two distinct categories; the common seax and the long seax. Typical examples are shown below (Fig.18). It appears that the Anglo-Saxon common seax was initially unknown amongst the Vikings but was later adopted following contact with the English.



f. Seax Sheaths

Several Anglo-Danish examples of scramasax sheath are known. They are usually made of folded, and often tooled, leather which is stitched or riveted along the blade side of the sheath. As Fig. 19 shows, their shape was designed to reflect that of the scramasax within and accommodated the full length of the knife except for the pommel. The common seaxes were probably carried blade upwards, suspended from attachment points at the mouth and half way along the sheath. It is probable that long seaxes were carried by the same means as swords.



Diagrammatic representation of typical common seax sheath
Figure 19

g. Swords

The sword was the most revered weapon of the period and would be restricted to the wealthier members of society. The sword blades used by the Anglo-Saxons were relatively long and broad, tapered to a rather rounded point and usually (though not always) possessed a fuller. Swords of the tenth century were not necessarily pattern welded. Typical sword dimensions are illustrated in Fig. 20.

There was little variation in the form of blade throughout our period and consequently swords are usually dated by reference to the form of the hilt and its attendant decorative features. Undecorated swords of the late Saxon period are difficult to date and any of the form known from the ninth to the eleventh centuries are suitable for our purposes. As a guide some known tenth century swords are shown below (Fig. 21). Pommels are usually made of iron although bronze and cast brass examples are known. Note that the use of the curved upper and lower guard is a typical Anglo-Saxon feature which was occasionally adopted by the Vikings.

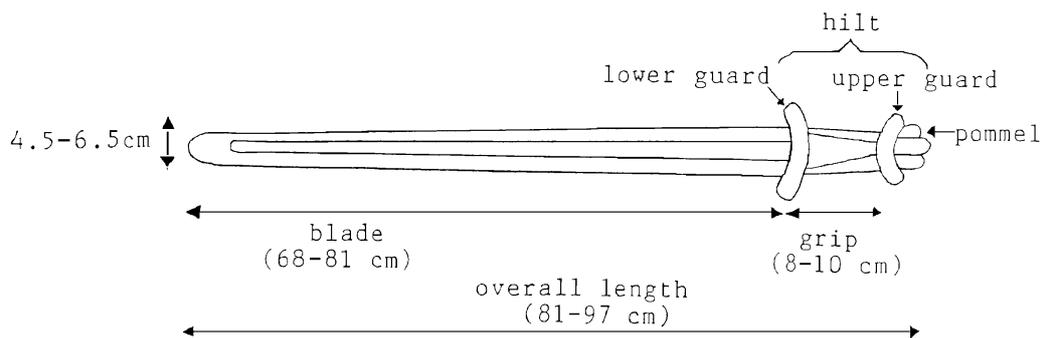
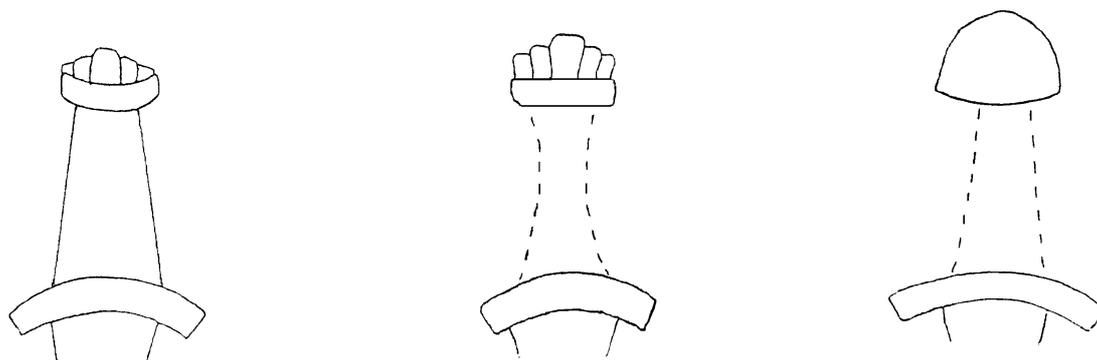


Figure 20



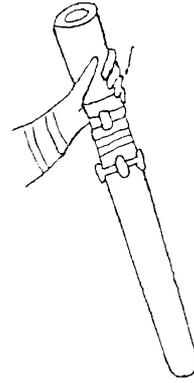
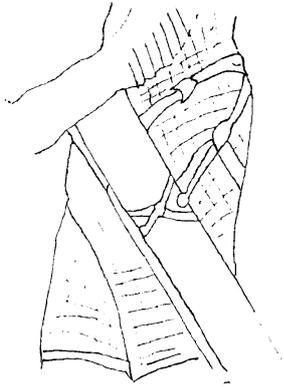
i. Witham sword

ii. Shifford sword
Figure 21

iii. Battersea sword

h. Scabbards

The evidence suggests that a scabbard was invariably used with a sword. Scabbards were often made out of two thin strips of wood usually covered in leather or cloth and often lined with wool, cloth or leather. A scabbard might be re-enforced by the use of a chape at the bottom and a locket at the mouth. A few examples of sword-length, stiff leather scabbards are also known. Two examples of scabbard fittings are reproduced in Fig. 22. See "Unsheathing the Dark Age Scabbard", Russell Scott, Society publication for further details.



Sources: i. Winchester frieze

ii. Aethelwolds Benedictional

Figure 22

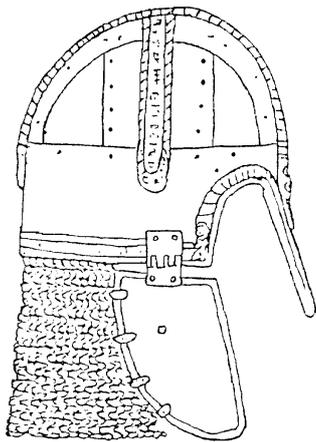
i. Axes

The axe was not a typical weapon of Anglo-Saxon warriors during the tenth century. However, the use of ordinary, domestic type axes by poorer warriors and local fyrdsmen is feasible.

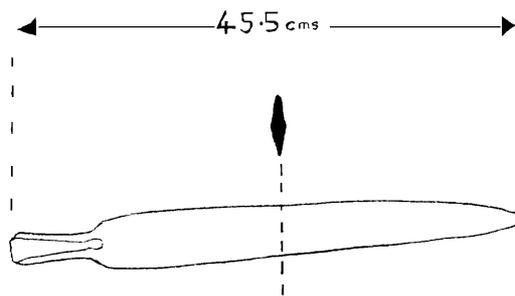
vi. Adaptations to Different Contexts

a. Adaptations to the ninth century

Helmets were rare in the ninth century and were probably confined to the leaders. The Coppergate helmet was made in the late eighth century and almost certainly continued in use into the ninth. This helmet, and a ninth century Anglian spearhead found with it, are shown in Fig. 23. This spearhead is similar to some of the tenth century examples already illustrated.



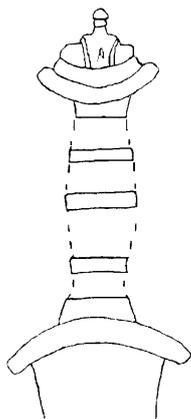
i. The Coppergate helmet
(note that the decoration and nasal
on this iron helmet is of brass)



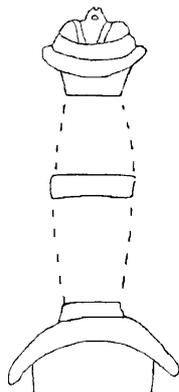
ii. Ninth century
spearhead

Figure 23

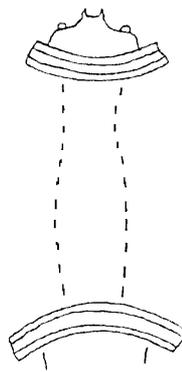
Some examples of ninth century swords are shown in Fig. 24.



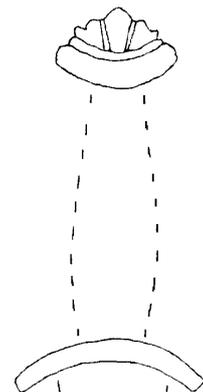
i. Gilling



ii. Fiskerton



iii. Abingdon



iv. Westminster

Fig. 24



A wealthy Tenth Century Anglo-Saxon Warrior

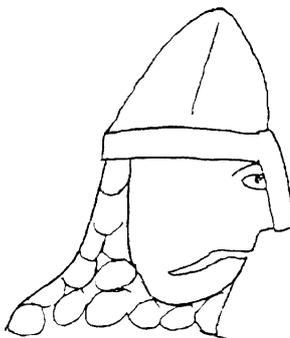
© Rachel Lowerson, Dave Parker and The Vikings 1992

b. Adaptations to the eleventh century

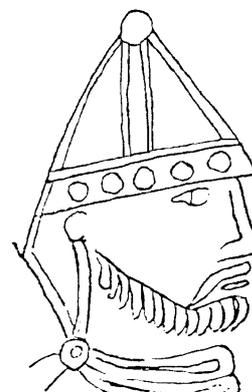
Helmets and mail became more common in the eleventh century (probably in response to Viking raids). Helmets, with or without a nasal, are usually conical and might include a neck guard. Some Anglo-Saxon varieties are shown below (Fig. 25).



i. Banded helmet without nasal



ii. Helmet with nasal and mail coif

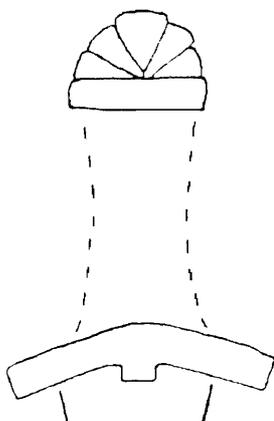


iii. Helmet with neck guard

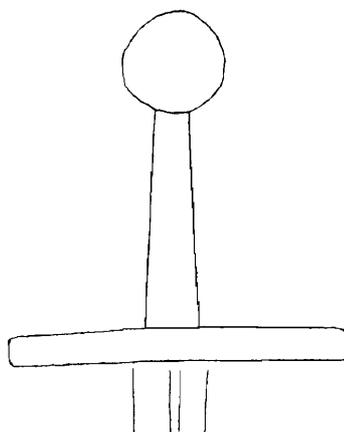
Figure 25

The mail of this period is often shown knee-length and split front and back (fig. 16.iii). By the second half of the eleventh century the mail may also have incorporated a coif, attached to the mail shirt. However, later evidence indicates that a separate coif could be used; a more practical option for our purposes.

Some eleventh century Anglo-Saxon swords are illustrated in Fig. 26.

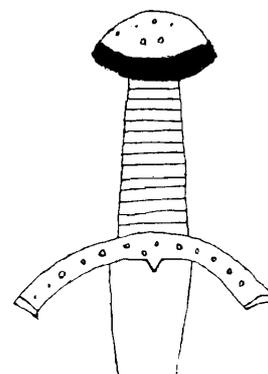


i. Mileham sword



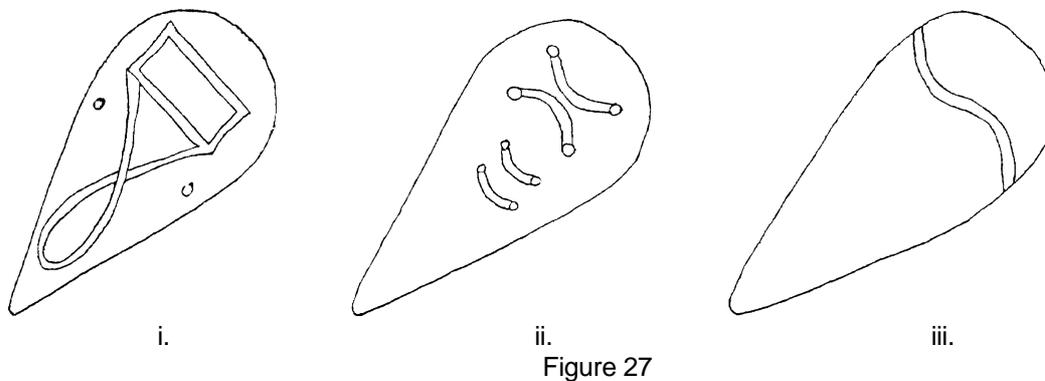
ii. Newbury sword c.1100 A.D.
(also shown in an eleventh
manuscript)

Figure 26

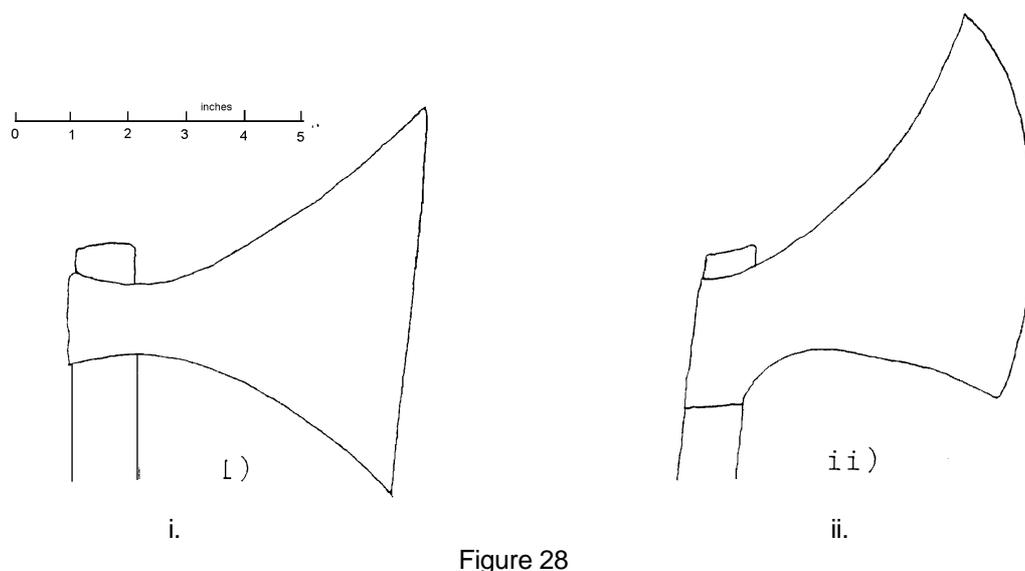


iii. Sword from
eleventh century
manuscript

The eleventh century saw the introduction of the kite shield. These were often rimmed, need not necessarily have a boss and were probably flat (they are used as makeshift tables in the Bayeux Tapestry!). They can be griped in a variety of ways as shown below (Fig. 27).



Danish influence during the eleventh century lead to the adoption of the double-handed axe as a weapon of the warrior classes (particularly the housecarls). Two examples of suitable axeheads are shown in Fig. 28.



c. Adaptations for female combatants

English Heritage guidelines state that women on the battlefield should be adequately disguised as men. In many cases a loosely belted pouch tunic will achieve this effect for unarmoured women. In the past, quilted jackets have been used to disguise the figure hugging properties of mail but there is no evidence that the Anglo-Saxons used these. However, practical experience suggests that the use of a sleeveless, hip length padded jacket either under the tunic or under a leather jerkin gives the necessary shapeless outline, especially if the mail is then belted at the hip

rather than the waist.

By contrast, women in the village would be dressed as women. Fortunately a long sleeved Saxon tunic can successfully double as an underdress when worn with an ankle length overdress. There is also evidence that Saxon women wore winingas beneath the ankle. Basically, the addition of an ankle length overdress and a wimple to basic male costume converts an unarmoured female warrior into a respectable Saxon woman in a trice.

Suggestions for further reading

There are relatively few books on late Anglo-Saxons costume. Illustrations of Saxons shown in wargames books such as the Osprey "Saxon, Viking and Norman" should be treated with caution as they can be misleading and inaccurate. The best guide to the dress of the period is found in Gale R. Owen-Crocker's "Dress in Anglo-Saxon England", which is now available in paperback. Information can be gleaned from older costume histories although these may be coloured by Victorian misconceptions and often predate important archaeological evidence. Readable accounts of the general history of the Anglo-Saxons include James Campbell's "The Anglo-Saxons" and Sir David Wilson's work of the same name, whilst a fascinating account of the role of women is found in "Women in Anglo-Saxon England" by Christine Fell. Lastly, an interesting insight into warfare and weapons is provided by "Weapons and Warfare in Anglo-Saxon England", by Sonia Chadwick Hawkes.

Section 2

The Detailed Guide

i. Textiles and Dyes

a. Introduction

The following summary of late Anglo-Saxon textiles and textile production is aimed at Society members who require more information on the type of cloth available and its' manufacture. It is hoped that this section will be of interest to anyone who is engaged in textile orientated crafts, carries out school visits or merely wants to discuss the subject more knowledgeably with the public.

Direct evidence of textiles from the late Anglo-Saxon period is fairly slight. Archaeological investigations of urban sites such as London and Winchester have unearthed fragments of cloth together with the tools and equipment associated with textile production [1,2]. Additionally several examples of middle or late Saxon embroidery are still in existence; these include the middle Saxon Maasik embroideries [3], and two eleventh century examples - the Bayeux Tapestry and the Basilica Ambrosiani fragment [4,5]. Lastly, the tenth century St Cuthbert's vestments feature outstanding late Saxon braids and embroidery [5,6,7]. Literary and pictorial evidence can also offer the occasional insight into the fabrics and attendant technology of the time.

Clothing in the late Saxon period was primarily of wool, linen and occasionally silk. More unusual fibres such as goat's hair, hemp, nettle and possibly mohair are also known in an insular context [1,8]. Finds of wool predominate in the archaeological record and it has been suggested [9] that woollen cloth was used for the majority of garments. However it has been suggested that the comparatively low occurrence of vegetable fibre finds may be attributed to the vagaries of accidental survival and earlier linguistic evidence corroborates the extensive use of linen garments by the Saxons [10]. Imported silk was obviously a luxury item and confined to the wealthier echelons of society. High status was conveyed by the use of opulent fabrics (silks, silk shot taffeta and high quality woollen cloth for example), expensive dyes and lavish embellishments [11].

b. Spinning

Examination of late Saxon textiles from London indicates that sheep were sheared rather than plucked. The resulting fibres could then be spun in three ways. Firstly, coarse fibres were spun straight from the fleece. The yarn thus obtained is described as "inexpertly drawn out and lumpy" [1]. The second type of yarn was finely spun from combed fleece where the subsequent alignment of the fibres produces a smooth lustrous thread [12]. Lastly a bouncy woollen yarn was produced using fleece teased out by hand (or possibly by teasel [13]). Wool could be either Z-spun or S-spun (spun to the right or the left respectively) although Z-spinning was apparently more popular. In addition woollen thread was sometimes plied [10]. The uneven or bouncy

yarns were often used as weft threads and was also exclusively used in the production of certain high quality woollen fabrics. Woollen felt is also known from late Saxon levels in Durham [14], this unspun and unwoven cloth may have been used for cloaks or blankets. Linen is produced by drying, partially rotting and then beating flax stalks. The resulting fibres are subsequently combed and spun, similar techniques are used for other vegetable fibres such as nettle.

c. Weaving

The loom weights and tools associated with the warp-weighted loom undoubtedly exist in late Saxon levels but their occurrence declines towards the eleventh century. Indeed, only one loom weight and sword type beater is known from the relevant period in Winchester. It therefore seems likely that an alternative loom was also in use in some localities in late Saxon England. It is often assumed that the warp-weighted loom was superseded by the horizontal treadle loom. Whilst it is possible that the horizontal loom reached Britain at an earlier date than has hitherto been suspected it seems more probable that a vertical two beam looms was contemporaneously utilised by the late Saxons to weave ordinary cloth. This is corroborated by Winchester finds of bone tools developed for use with this type of loom [15]. Yet another type of loom, the drawloom, was used to produce a silk fragment from London but it is unlikely that this braid was imported in its finished state [1]. Common woollen weaves were tabby, warp-faced and weft-faced three shed twills and a simple four-shed twill. Examples are shown below (Fig. 28).

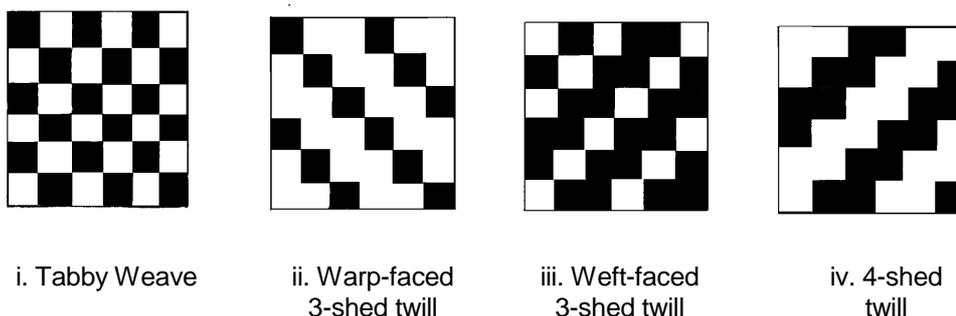


Figure 29

High quality patterned weaves such as the distinctive broken diamond twill were also used [10,12]. Patterned cloth could also be woven using mixed S and Z spun thread or different coloured yarns, for example a checked "plaid" cloth was found in Durham [14]. Tabby weave was commonly used for linen cloth and taffeta-like tabby silk is known from London [1].

d. Dyeing and finishing

Finishing processes can include fulling, tenting, dyeing and smoothing. Fulling decreases and thickens the fabric and it is particularly suited to textiles featuring a soft weft. It is usually followed by tenting whereby the fullled cloth is stretched out to dry on tenter hooks. Whilst there is no direct English evidence of fullled cloth from the late Saxon period associated tenter hooks certainly exist from tenth century levels [15]. The process was certainly used in both Romano-British and later medieval contexts [13].

Dye analysis on late Saxon fragments has revealed the use of dyers madder and related species, woad (or indigo), weld and lichen purple [1,16]. More fugitive dyes were almost certainly employed but are no longer detectable. High quality imported dyestuffs include the bright red kermes and Polish cochineal, whilst literary sources suggest the use of expensive shellfish dyes [6,10,16]. Additionally, the study of botanical assemblages from archaeological sites may provide evidence of possible dye plants such as yellow flag iris, tormentil and bracken [1,14]. Plant remains also suggest that the use of a clubmoss as a possible source of alum mordant in Northern England [17]. (We are unaware of any evidence pertaining to the availability of either imported mordants or the exploitation of native mineral deposits in the early medieval period). Naturally pigmented wool may have been used by the lower echelons of society. To summarise, available colours included hues of red, blue, yellow, orange, brown, fawn, green, grey, brown, cream, purple and black. However, the range of dyes would depend upon individual financial circumstances with violet and bright red, for example, restricted to the very wealthy.

Another finishing process suggested by archaeology is linen (and possibly wool) smoothing. Glass smoothers are known from Late Saxon levels at Fascombe, Netherton and Winchester suggesting that the process was not confined to Scandinavian culture [15,18].

e. Decorative techniques

Late Anglo-Saxons clothing could be embellished with embroidery braid or contrasting trimming.

Anglo-Saxon women were renowned for their embroidery skills, indeed there is a Saxon proverb "Fæmne et hyre borden geriseð (the place of a woman is at her embroidery)" [19]. Embroidery could range from a simple contrasting blanket stitch worked in wool along a hem to the virtuosity of the silk and gold embroidered St Cuthbert's vestments [1,7]. Surviving examples display the use of stem stitch, split stitch and couching in both silk and woollen thread. High status items might be adorned with flexible "spun gold" thread; namely silk thread wrapped in fine gold leaf. After incorporation in the embroidery this would be flattened and burnished. Another costly option is revealed by the Maasik embroideries where small pearls or beads were added to the finished work [3]. Ecclesiastical designs apparently featured appropriate subjects such as saints, secular motifs may have included Trewiddle style ornament together with the foliate acanthus sprays of late Saxon art [10]. Figure 30 shows two such examples drawn from the St Cuthbert's vestments.

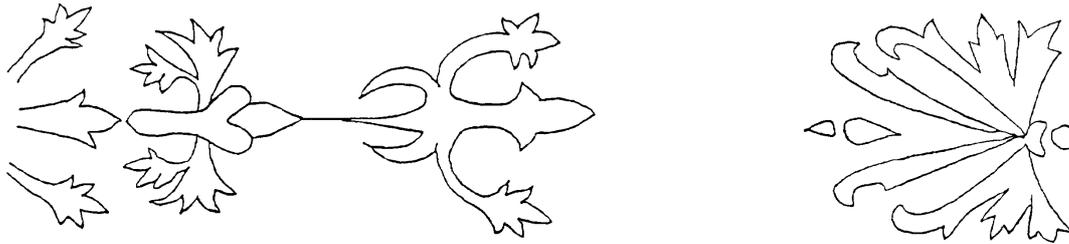


Figure 30

Early Anglo-Saxon tablet braid appears to have been either plain or simply patterned [20]. The survival of similar braids into the post pagan period is suggested by the discovery of a simple chevron weave (albeit gold brocaded) from Winchester. The remains of other Late Saxon gold brocaded braids have also been found at Winchester and Worchester [21,22]. Brocading, (which is inserted during the weaving process) could be used to produce either detailed designs or a simple but lavish solid gold border [21]. The aforementioned St Cuthbert's vestments include minutely worked silk, gold and gilt braids. For example, sixty-nine tablets were used to weave the 2cm wide gold brocaded girdle! Braid was not exclusively tablet woven, a fragment of high quality drawloom woven, silk braid is also known from London [1].

Art evidence indicates that a contrasting trim might be used on the sleeves, borders and necks of garments. Lengths of unpatterned silk ribbon are known from archaeology and it seems probable that trimming was one possible role for these [1].

ii. Anglo-Saxon male dress

a. The tunic

The tunic (cyrtel) was worn by men of all ranks in the Late Saxon period. Although no surviving tunic is known from the archaeological record there is a wealth of artistic evidence deriving from both manuscript and carvings. The tunic was typically knee length when belted. However, calf length and over the knee tunics are also occasionally depicted; examples are afforded by the St Mary Bishophill Junior carving (Fig. 31) and the Caedmon manuscript respectively (Fig.32) [23,24]. Manuscripts often show the tunic pouched over an obscured belt although belts are apparent on many stone carving and on the Bayeux tapestry.

The most prevalent tunic is shown with fairly close fitting upper part and a full skirt that appears to flare from the waist (Fig. 33). Three possible means of effecting this are illustrated in the basic guide; the requisite fullness may be achieved either by the addition of self-coloured inserts or by merely cutting the tunic pattern to incorporate a flared skirt. The use of a straight rather than curved hem may account for the noticeable dipped hemline seen on carvings such as the Gosforth cross [25]. That this full tunic could be tucked up at the sides when engaged in manual labour is evident from the calendars of the period (Fig. 34) [26]. It has been postulated that the tunic was seamed at the sides yet the double line sometimes shown down the back of

tunics may represent an alternative position for a seam [10]. This double line is apparent on the tunic of a harvesting figure in MS Harley 603 for example [27]. Decoration is shown on the tunic hem (Fig. 35) and is sometimes discernable higher up the skirt (Fig. 33).

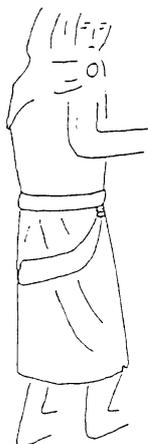


Figure 31
St Mary Bishophill
Junior carving

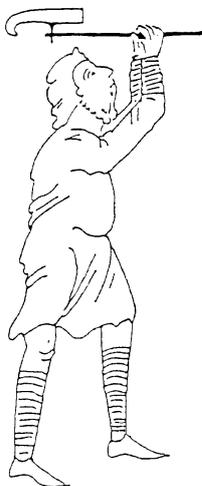


Figure 32
Caedmon MS



Figure 33
MS Cotton Tiberius Cvi

Very occasionally different varieties of tunic skirt are shown, a drawing of Orion in MS Harley 2506 clearly features a split sided tunic (although this may be an artistic attempt to accommodate the stars of the constellation) [28,29]. Moreover, figures in MS Cotton Julius Avi sport a double outline suggestive of a side split [10]. Some skirts in the Hexateuch, MS Cotton Claudius Biv, have a contrasting border that extends up the side of the tunic; however, as this does not necessarily coincide with the apparent position of the underlying leg it may merely be a decorative devise (Fig. 35) [28]. Possible split sided tunics are occasionally depicted in the Bayeux tapestry. These are usually associated with barelegged figures crossing water so it is equally likely that the embroideress intended to portray a variant of the tucked up tunic [4,30]. Alternatively it has been suggested that the split sided garment might be an undergarment to the tunic [10]. Front split tunics are also infrequently depicted, often in association with leading figures. An isolated example (Fig.36) shows a split front tunic apparently surmounting a full, unsplit garment [4,31,32].

The long, tight, sleeves of the tunic are often, but not invariably, characterised by a series of bands around the wrist and forearm, these are featured both in Saxon manuscripts and on Northern stone carvings such as the Nunburnholm cross [23,32,33]. It has been suggested that these lines represent numerous bracelets but it is more probable that the sleeves were cut overlong and when pushed back, wrinkled around the arm. A band of decoration is frequently employed at the cuff and more rarely around the upper arm. Illustrations of Goliath, (MS Cotton Tiberius Cvi) (Fig. 37) and King Edgar, (MS Cotton Vespasian Aviii) [26,32,35] provide examples of this

upper arm embellishment. It has been argued that this band may represent either an arm ring (known from art, literature and archaeology) or the sleeve edge of an overtunic. However, there is rarely corresponding colour contrast or interruption in the line of the sleeve so a decorative band of embroidery or braid appears a more likely proposition in the majority of cases. Nevertheless, unequivocal examples of short-sleeved overtunics are known from post conquest manuscripts (e.g. Cambridge, Trinity College MS 135 [36]) and may have sometimes been used in our period. Anomalous wide sleeves are featured on the Sheffield archer, it has been suggested that these may have been a distinctive feature of archer costume [10,33].

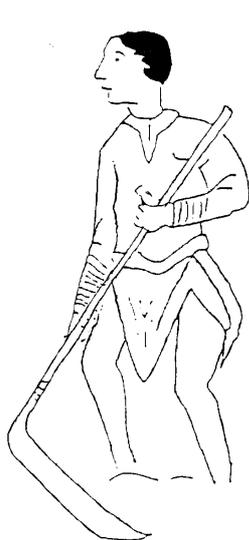


Figure 34
MS Cotton Tiberius Bv.



Figure 35
The Hexateuch



Figure 36
Roen MS A 27

An unusual short-sleeved tunic is apparently worn by a figure in *The Psychomachia* (Corpus Christi College 23, fol 2). This is not worn in conjunction with a long sleeved undertunic but may derive from classical iconography [35]. Necklines vary considerably; a rounded neckline with an added front split occurs regularly in the art of the period, on occasion this features added ties or tags. Examples of this device are seen on the aforementioned picture of Goliath (Fig. 37) and on a figure from MS Cotton Tiberius Bv [10]. Simple round necklines presumably large enough to accommodate the head appear on the Bayeux Tapestry, whilst a wrinkled effect (possibly indicative of the use of a drawstring) can sometimes be discerned [24]. We have found no pictorial evidence for the use of a brooch at the neck of the tunic in our period. The neckline is often decorated with contrasting trimming or dotted ornamentation reminiscent of braid or embroidery. Two figures on stone carvings from York and Monkwearmouth appear to possess tunics with a wide "collar" at the neck but it is possible that these represent exaggerated attempts to portray a similar contrasting trim [23,37].



Figure 37
MS Cotton Tiberius Cvi



Figure 38
The Bayeux Tapestry



Figure 39
The Bayeux Tapestry

b. The long gown

Manuscript evidence (MS Cotton Tiberius Aiii) indicates that the long gown was adopted by the Anglo-Saxon monarchy in the mid-tenth century although the tunic continued in use as an alternative costume [10]. The promulgation of this continental fashion in an insular context may have derived from the exchange of lavish gifts (including clothing) between kings and through the influence of foreign merchants and travellers [10]. The loose fitting gown is usually depicted as ankle length with long tight sleeves similar to those of the ordinary tunic. Decoration is frequently shown at the wrist and, in some cases, the skirt and front of the garment. (Fig. 38). Occasionally, a shorter long sleeved overgown is worn over the long gown (Fig. 39) or alternatively the gown may surmount a long undergarment [30]. The long costume is also sported by courtiers in at least one eleventh century manuscript (Cotton Claudius Biv) and is worn by an enigmatic seated warrior on the Nunburnholm cross, suggesting that this costume was not confined to royalty in this period. In the light of the available evidence it would seem feasible that the long gown was largely associated with ceremonial occasions [10,23].

c. The leg covering

Colour contrast in many late Anglo-Saxon manuscripts testifies to the use of some form of leg covering. The precise nature of these garments is not discernible as the upper part is invariably covered by the tunic, it is consequently impossible to determine whether trousers or hose were used. Rather inconclusive evidence for the use of trousers derives from the absence of metal "points" (used to attach hose in a later medieval context) from the relevant levels at Winchester, although both alternative uses for such fittings and different means of hose suspension are possible

[38]. In many cases the leg covering appears to extend right down to the shoes and possibly incorporated an integral foot in a manner similar to the earlier, continental, Thorsbjerg trousers [39,40]. The "trousers" were presumably made of woven cloth tailored to follow the shape of the leg and may also have been cut on the cross to allow for a tighter fit.



Figure 40
St Æthelwold's
Benedictional



Figure 41
BL Cotton Julius
Avi



Figure 42
St Æthelwold's
Benedictional

Puttee-like leg bindings (winingas) are frequently shown on both manuscripts and carvings. These are usually represented by a series of parallel bands around the leg extending from the ankle (Figs. 32 and 33). They are worn by all classes of society from kings (Fig. 40) to agricultural labourers (Fig. 41) although the garters of high status individuals are occasionally embellished with a decorated top band (e.g. BL Cotton Cleopatra cviii, fol 29) [35,41]. It has been convincingly argued that the loose, wrinkled, sock-like garments shown in some manuscripts are merely a stylised representation of these bindings [10]. The precise method of securing these garters appears to have varied. In some cases, a short strip extends downwards from the top of the gartering and may then have been tucked in (Fig. 41); more puzzling illustrations show a similar strip extending upwards under the hem of the tunic (Fig. 42) [41]. The winingas of the leading magi in the Benedictional of St Æthelwold (Fig. 40) are flamboyantly knotted and terminate in squarish tags or tassels similar to those sported by Duke William in the Bayeux tapestry (Fig. 43) [30]. Assuming these knots are an integral part of the bindings then the strip must first have wound down the leg and then back up resulting in two pendant ends under the knee. However, it is also feasible that a separate top band was used to secure the winingas. Archaeological evidence indicates that these leg bindings may have been woven as narrow strips and provides us with a putative width of approximately 9cm [8]. Additionally, numerous finds of small

hooked tags are known from the late Saxon period and appear to have been a particularly English fashion [42,43,44]. On occasion these delicate hooks have been found beneath the knee of late Saxon corpses and may therefore have functioned as garter fasteners. Similarly, it is not beyond the bounds of possibility that some of the many strap ends known from archaeology were used in conjunction with fabric garters. These could arguably account for the pendant tags shown in the art of the period (Figs. 40 and 43).

Cross gartering rarely features in late Anglo-Saxon manuscripts and is largely confined to biblical representations of King David which are influenced by a very specific iconographic tradition.

d. The cloak

Manuscript evidence indicates that the cloak was usually square or rectangular although it is possible that a more tailored garment was worn with the long costume. There appears to have been considerable variation in cloak length. For example, the *Benedictional of St Æthelwold* depicts figures with hip length, knee length and even calf length cloaks, although the latter garments generally accompany the long gown [41]. It seems probable that the length of cloak worn by an individual was related to both the state of their finances and the nature of their daily task [10]. Thus an impoverished labourer might wear a short (and therefore inexpensive) cloak unlikely to impede a normal activity. In addition the garments of the wealthier echelons of society might well reflect the vagaries of fashion. Occasionally, illustrations indicate the use of a decorative border; the cloak worn by King Edgar in *MS Cotton Vespasian Aviii* appears to be bordered with gold for instance [26]. Archaeology testifies to the existence of thick, woollen cloak and even felt which would be eminently suitable for use as cloak material [14]. Furthermore, analogy with both Anglo-Scandinavian and pagan period Saxon finds suggests the possible use of piled fabrics whilst literary sources mention cloaks of fur or skins [8,10].

Cloaks worn with the long gown are often clasped centrally and may consequently have been tailored to fit over the shoulders (Fig. 39). By contrast, when worn in conjunction with the tunic, the cloak is generally portrayed clasped at one shoulder by a round brooch although infrequent examples of centrally clasped cloaks are also known in this context [28]. Some illustrations feature a loop of fabric projecting behind the brooch (Fig. 44). The *Bayeux tapestry* (Fig. 45) and *MS Stowe 944* [30,45] depict two bands or ribbons in association with the cloak fastening, although it is not clear if these form an integral part of the clasp or are purely decorative. Possible interpretations of these somewhat ambiguous illustrations are given in the basic guide.



Figure 43
The Bayeux Tapestry



Figure 44
St Æthelwold's Benedictional



Figure 45
The Bayeux Tapestry

Alternatives to the ubiquitous circular brooch are rarely illustrated although the tapestry, and BM Tiberius Bv fol 876, show square and rectangular brooches [45]. An unusual carving from Codford St Peter depicts a cloak fastened with a long pin perhaps similar to the long bone pins known from archaeology (Fig. 46) [46].

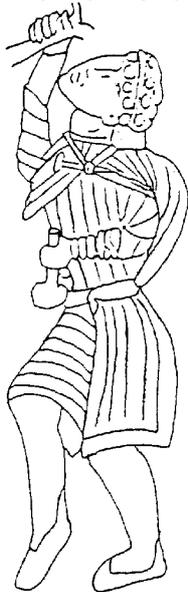


Figure 46
Codford St Peter



Figure 47
Westmerton Church

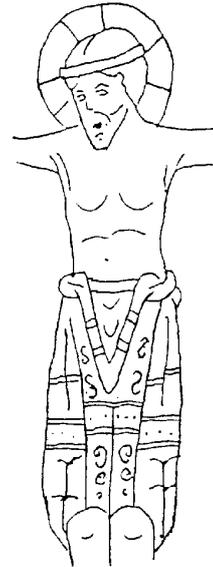


Figure 48
BL Arundel 60

The predominance of the disc brooch as a fastener during the late Saxon period is discussed more fully in the section dealing with jewellery, however it is worth stressing that penannular brooches are not apparently favoured by the Saxons [47,48]. It has been postulated that figures on two late Anglo-Saxon stone carvings (St Mary Bishophill Junior (Fig. 31) and Codford St Peter (Fig. 46) wear cloaks which are belted at the waist. In the case of the former example the cloak may additionally incorporate a hood.

e. Undergarments

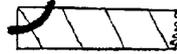
Literary evidence attests to the existence of an underskirt (scyrte) worn beneath the tunic. It seems likely that this garment was commonly made of linen and of a similar cut to the tunic [10]. Occasionally, the hem of this shirt is apparent in manuscript illustrations, the figure of Perseus from MS Cotton Tiberius Bv affords a particularly clear example [35]. Similarly, depictions of individuals wearing the long costume sometimes show the white hem of a long undergarment whilst robed and cowed figures in BL MS Harley 603 appear to wear long undertrousers [10]. Drawings made of an eleventh century wall painting from Westmerton church reveal the probable existence of shorts like underpants reaching to the mid thigh, unfortunately the original wall paintings were destroyed by fire in 1864 [49]. Lastly, the use of a loincloth is suggested by both linguistic and pictorial evidence. Admittedly, the latter derives almost exclusively from crucifixion scenes which are subject to strong iconographic traditions, nevertheless the existence of such a garment in a secular context is far from improbable.

f. Footwear

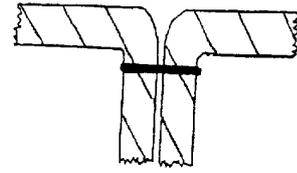
Archaeological evidence for late Anglo-Saxon footwear hails from a number of urban sites including Winchester, Durham and London. Anglo-Saxon shoes and boots were almost invariably of turnshoe construction, namely stitched inside out and then turned the right way round. The use of a one piece upper was also common although a top band was not infrequently added and a triangular or rectangular insert might also be employed to finish the shoe (Fig. 49) [50,51]. Early Anglo-Saxon shoes were often thonged together, however, the tenth and eleventh centuries appear to have witnessed the transition from thonging to finer stitching [9,51]. Both thonged and stitched shoes are therefore known from the relevant period. The thicker soles of surviving thonged shoes are pierced from the flesh side of the leather to the edge so that the full thickness of the hide is not penetrated. By contrast the thinner leather of the uppers is, of necessity, completely pierced from the flesh side through to the grain side. The advent of finer stitching allows for the use of flesh-edge seams on both the sole and upper. Other forms of stitching were also used as Fig. 49 illustrates. Some late Saxon shoes also incorporate a rand; a strip of leather sandwiched between the sole and upper seam, and finds from Durham also reveal the occasional use of a crescent shaped heel stiffener. Most finds indicates the use of ox hide although sheep or goatskin were sometimes also utilised [50,51].



i. Butted Seam



ii. Flesh-edge Seam
Figure 49



iii. Closed Seam

A characteristic of many Anglo-Saxon shoes and low boots is their wrap-around uppers, often, but not invariably, joined at the inside quarter rather than the back (Fig. 50). Another late Saxon feature is the use of an extended pointed heel corresponding with a V-shaped notch in the upper. It has been suggested that this method of construction was Scandinavian in origin and spread first to the North of England. Tenth century shoes and boots usually feature fairly rounded toes with more pointed toes gaining popularity in the eleventh century, however an unusual sandal from Durham affords an example of a finely stitched tenth century shoe with a fairly pointed toe. Decoration along the centre line of the upper is known from Durham and Winchester. In the Winchester example, this takes the form of two parallel rows of stitching whilst the Durham shoe is apparently scored along the midline. The shoe or boot could be secured by thongs passing through slots cut in the upper, the ends of these might be expanded or simply knotted to prevent them pulling through the slots. One decorative fragment of thonging with a fringed ending also survives.

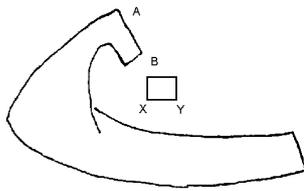


Figure 50i

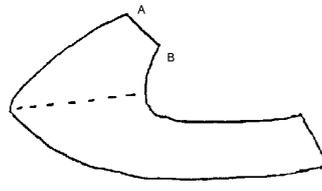


Figure 50ii

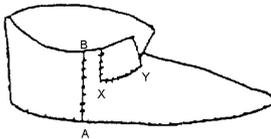


Figure 51

Footwear from York fastened with a flap over the arches is often seen as typically Viking. However, comparable shoes are known from early Frisian contexts and it is possible that the introduction of this style predates the Scandinavian incursions [44,52]. Figs. 50i and ii provide examples of two late Saxon shoes together with a peculiar backless slipper (Fig. 51) from the Sadler Street excavations [50].

Illustrations of late Saxon footwear usually depict black, flat shoes with a white central line. Infrequently this central strip is more lavishly embellished; this added decoration accords well with the available archaeological evidence from Winchester and Durham. A pair of shoes with exaggerated pointed toes are worn by a crowned figure in the Caedmon Manuscript although it has been argued that these reflect a particular stylistic idiosyncrasy [10,24]. Carvings such as the Slaidburn angel show footwear with projecting ankle flaps, it seems likely that these are an attempt to represent the low boot known from archaeology [10].

g. Hats and Hoods

Both artistic and linguistic evidence points to the use of hats and hoods in the late Saxon period despite the preponderance of bareheaded figures in contemporary manuscripts [10]. Caps of cloth or leather are not exclusively confined to a military context, for instance the figure of Aquarius in the Aratea wears a typical Anglo-Saxon coxcomb cap [45]. Some Northern carvings depict figures in conical headgear which could arguably represent either helmets or caps [53]. Round, cup-shaped caps are worn by the Israelites in the Hexateuch. These should be approached with caution as it has been suggested that they were modelled upon examples worn by an eleventh century English community of Jews and may thus have been confined to this specific ethnic group [54]. Lastly, a harvester in one late Saxon manuscript (Trinity College Cambridge MS R17) sports a broad, wide brimmed hat which would have afforded admirable protection from both sun and rain [27]. Similar hats abound in post-conquest Romanesque manuscripts [55]. Unambiguous portrayals of hoods or hooded garments in the late Saxon period are largely confined to monkish cowls although it seems likely that this eminently practical apparel was used in a secular setting [10]. An Anglian carved figure (St Mary Bishophill Junior) appears to wear some type of hood or hooded cloak. This is apparently pinned at the neck with a round brooch which might serve either to fasten an integral cloak or to secure the lower part of a separate hood (Fig. 31). A similar garment is suggested on the worn lower figure of the Bewcastle cross [25].

h. The Belt or Girdle

Late Saxon manuscripts almost invariably portray a pouched tunic with no visible belt although belts are represented in alternate forms of artistic media. In addition, there is ample evidence for a range of belt fittings from the archaeological record. It has been suggested that late Saxon belts were broader than those of the middle Saxon period, unfortunately no specific measurements are provided to corroborate this [9]. However, fragments from a leather belt have been recovered from Winchester which point to a possible width of 2.5-3cm [56]. Comparison with early Saxon and later medieval material indicates that fabric and braid belts might also be utilised [10,57]. The tunic of a crowned figure in the Caedmon manuscript is confined by a wide sash which may be a distinctive feature of royal costume [24].

Belt fittings known from archaeology include buckles, strap ends, belt stiffeners and decorative belt mounts. As many of these are highly decorated, it seems likely that they would be wholly obscured by the tunic in reality. A realistic compromise is suggested by a Frankish illustration where a decorated strap end hangs from beneath the pouched folds of the tunic [58].

Buckles are commonly constructed of copper alloy or iron, which might then be plated with a non-ferrous metal [59,60]. In addition, buckles of bone and antler are also known [59,61]. Early medieval buckles are usually roughly D-shaped or sub-rectangular, however a double-sided buckle is known from eleventh century levels at Winchester (Fig. 52) although this design is admittedly unusual for a late Saxon context.

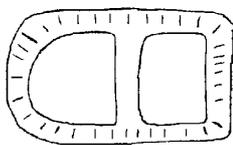


Figure 52

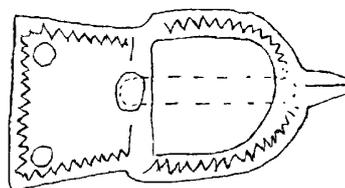


Figure 53

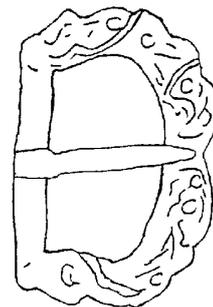


Figure 54

Buckles of the period could be attached directly to the belt, alternately a separately made or integral buckle plate might be fitted (Fig.53). Better quality buckles featured incised decoration or decorative casting and might incorporate precious metals (Fig. 54). It is interesting to note that the occurrence of buckles from the late Saxon period is relatively low, especially when compared to other belt fittings such as strap ends [59]. It seems possible in the light of this that knotted fabric belts were relatively widespread. It has also been suggested that rectangular belt sliders such as those found in the late ninth century Trewiddle hoard may have been used instead of buckles on occasion [62].

Leather and textile belts were often given metal mounts and stiffeners, these could be purely functional fitments (Fig. 55) or more ornate decorative appliquéés (Figs. 56 and 57) [63,64].

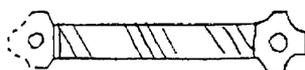


Figure 55

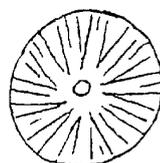


Figure 56

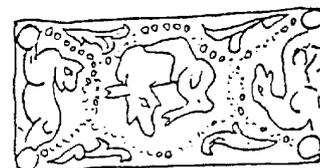


Figure 57

Strap ends are amongst the most common objects in the corpus of late Anglo-Saxon metalwork. The most prevalent type, particularly abundant in the ninth century, features an animal head terminal. The strap was inserted in the split end of the strap end and then usually secured by two rivets (Fig. 58) [48]. There has been a certain amount of controversy over the precise role of these artefacts. Their relative abundance at ecclesiastical sites such as Whitby and the fact that in many cases the split socket is not capable of accommodating a leather strap has led to the suggestion that they were used in conjunction with silk book markers [48,65]. Although some may have been used in this way other evidence indicates that they were used in dress accessories on garters, ribbons and belts [42,66]. The recent discovery of

Figure 58 Figure 59 Figure 60

no less than eighteen such strap ends at a non-ecclesiastical site in the Yorkshire Wolds tends to corroborate this [67]. The majority of these small strap ends are of bronze although iron and silver examples are known [48,68]. Zoomorphic ornament is common whilst other decorative with Niello and there is an isolated instance of a copper alloy strap end with nielloed silver ornament [70]. These animal headed fittings predominate in the ninth century and continued in use until the eleventh century, albeit in a debased form. Split end strap ends with geometric decoration are also known from late Anglo-Saxon levels, occasionally these were inlaid with silver wire [67]. One odd geometric strap end from Yorkshire was attached via a slot rather than a split socket (Fig. 59). From the tenth century larger, heavier, unsplit strap ends of metal, bone and ivory become more popular. These tongue-shaped accessories often feature the foliate ornament promulgated by the Winchester school or incorporated elements of the Anglo-Scandinavian Jelling style. The cast metal strap ends of this openwork ornamentation (Fig. 61) and are frequently of very high quality. Fig. 62 shows an example of a bone strap end of the period and Fig. 63 depicts a unique cast animal headed fitting from Fascombe Netherton which apparently amalgamates facets of both main types [18].

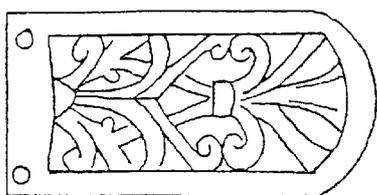


Figure 61

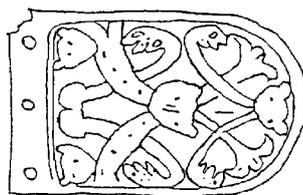


Figure 62

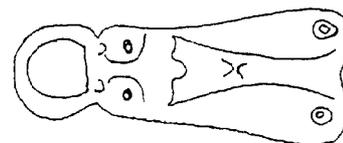


Figure 63

i. Jewellery

The use of jewellery is attested by both the archaeological record and the literature of the Late Saxon period. Curiously it is not corroborated by artistic sources where depictions of jewellery are largely confined to cloak brooches and possible armrings. The corpus of secular Anglo-Saxon jewellery includes a variety of brooches, rings, armrings, pendants and necklaces, all of which were probably worn by men.

a. Brooches - the dominant form of Saxon brooch for our period was indubitably the disc brooch. The clear supremacy of this form over alternate varieties is neatly summarised by the following quotes "The characteristic brooch form throughout the late Saxon period is the flat or slightly curved disc brooch" [47], it was "as ubiquitous in the South of England as the penannular was in Hiberno-Saxon areas" [48]. Numerous circular brooches exist from tenth century sites indicative of popularity throughout England. Wealthy individuals might own a large silver disc brooch, these spectacular and beautiful artefacts were used throughout the late Saxon period although the quality of workmanship declined somewhat towards the Conquest. Surviving silver disc brooches often feature a decorative central boss and may also incorporate peripheral bosses. Additional lavish embellishment might include intricate interlace, foliate or zoomorphic ornaments, often enhanced with black Niello. Gilding, glass inserts and added gold filigree work are also witnessed on extant examples. These brooches are fairly large; the tenth century Canterbury brooch is a massive 14.2 cm in diameter [48]. By contrast, Fig. 64 shows a rather smaller exemplar from Pentney [46]. Lesser disc brooches of white metal, bronze and occasionally copper are known from very many Anglo-Saxon contexts. In the tenth century an approximate diameter of between 3 and 5 cm predominates. Some of these brooches mimic the bossed quadripartite theme of the aforementioned silver brooches (Fig. 65), however many other designs also occur. For instance, lone central bosses are found in conjunction with a decorated or beaded border whilst central panels featuring backwards-looking beasts (Fig. 66) or imitation coins (nummular brooches) are common [48,71].



Figure 64

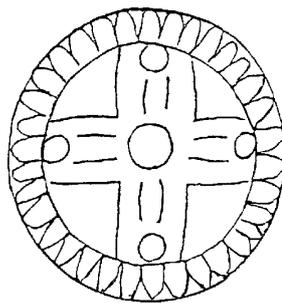


Figure 65



Figure 66

Openwork and occasionally annular brooches become more common as the eleventh century progresses. A number of delicate brooches of gilded copper with an enamelled central panels also exist from the relevant period [72]. The majority of these are small (2-3 cm in diameter) with a central panel ornamented with cloisonné or champlevé enamel. Although essentially disc shaped, seven of the known examples also feature a varying number of peripheral lobes (Fig. 67). A larger (4.35 cm) champlevé disc brooch also hails from a grave in Bedlington [73]. Rectangular brooches are occasionally shown on manuscripts and isolated instances also are known from the archaeological record (fig. 68) [74]. A lone penannular brooch is known from the ninth century Trehiddle hoard and analysis of pagan period evidence reveals that penannular brooches were never particularly popular amongst the Saxons (Welsh), they were certainly not in vogue in the tenth century [62,75].

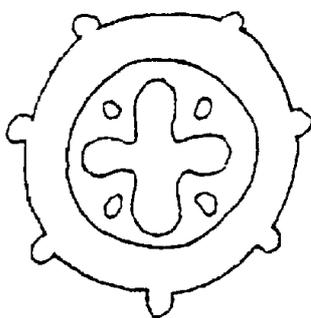


Figure 67

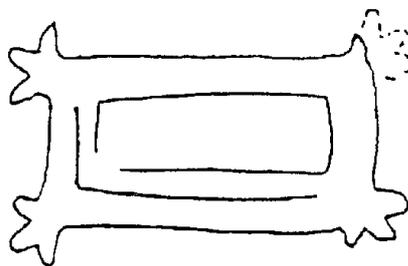


Figure 68

b. Rings - highly decorated gold and silver rings were apparently fashionable amongst wealthy Saxons in the eighth and ninth centuries and isolated examples occur in tenth century levels [9,76]. To generalise, however, highly decorated rings were unfashionable in the late Anglo-Saxon period although simpler rings continued in use. Indeed, finds of precious metal jewellery dwindle in the tenth and eleventh century altogether [78]. Simpler rings made of a number of strands of gold or silver wire twisted together were introduced by the Vikings and subsequently adopted by the Anglo-Saxon population of England. Consequently by the eleventh century at the latest, these twisted rings were "as much Saxon as Viking" [18]. An unusual inscribed, but otherwise fairly plain, silver ring may hail from the tenth century, similar examples are known from later medieval sites [79]. Winchester evidence also suggests the use of green glass finger rings in the late Saxon period [77].

c. Armrings - literary sources confirm that armrings were used by Anglo-Saxon men although it is difficult to ascertain to what degree these were decorative items as distinct from portable bullion [11]. Wynflaeds will contains the bequest of a gold cup to Edward to enlarge his armllet; this indirectly suggests that extra gold could readily be incorporated in the ring, tending to negate the possibility of high quality workmanship [78]. If the latter definition were correct, it might also account for the paucity of archaeological evidence. However, it is not impossible that more ornate

armrings also existed. Two such possible armlets are held in the Ashmolean museum and an Anglo-Scandinavian example constructed of seven plaited rods is known from Winchester. A twisted wire circlet which may represent an arming is shown in MS Cotton Tiberius Cvi [32]. Bracelets are also mentioned in literary evidence and may have been smaller versions of the armlet. Alternately the lavish gold brocaded braids known from archaeology may have been used as bracelets or adorned the upper arm.

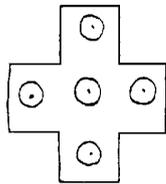


Figure 69
Jet Cross

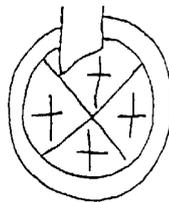


Figure 70
Metal Pendant

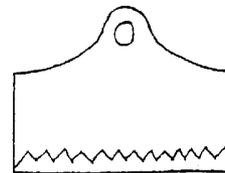


Figure 71
Metal Pendant

d. Pendants and necklaces - a variety of metal and mineral pendants are known from Late Saxon contexts. Figs. 69-71 afford examples [80]. Additionally, tiny silk relic pouches are known from archaeology and may have feasibly been hung from the neck [8]. Similarly preventative and curative amulets are described in contemporary literature and could also be sewn in a bag and worn around the neck [81]. Bead necklaces allegedly fell from favour in the South of England from the ninth century although from the eleventh century the increasing popularity of rosaries provided an alternative use for beads. By contrast bead necklaces may have remained in use in Viking influenced areas [82].

j. Bags and Pouches

There is a dearth of archaeological, linguistic and manuscript evidence pertaining to late Anglo-Saxon pouches. A diamond shape silk herb or amulet pouch measuring 10 cm across from corner to corner is known from Winchester. Although the aperture of this particular pouch is only 2.5 cm wide it does suggest a possible, albeit necessarily amended, design for a belt pouch. This pouch was apparently suspended by a small loop handle attached to one point (Fig. 72) [2]. Analogy with a small twelfth century pouch from London also suggests that small rectangular leather or fabric pouches with a drawstring fastening might be used (Fig. 73) [57]. Late Anglo-Saxon denizens of Scandinavian influenced regions may have used Viking style pouches such as those from Birka and Hedeby. However, London medieval evidence suggests that similar pouches attached directly to the belt and with a closing flap were not popular until at least the fourteenth century. A commodious bag is shown hanging from the neck or shoulder of a figure in the Harley Psalter. This is closed by a flap to which three tasselled cords are attached (Fig. 74). Owen Crocker suggests that the bag is made of skins and that these tassels are tails. Nevertheless, it seems probable that a fabric or leather bag fastened with an arrangement of fringed cord or thong and perhaps secured using beads or round toggles is portrayed, especially as both terminally fringed thong and plied cord tassels are known from Late Saxon levels [1,51]. Additionally large bags or baskets carried in the hand or over the arm are

known from the art of the period [24].

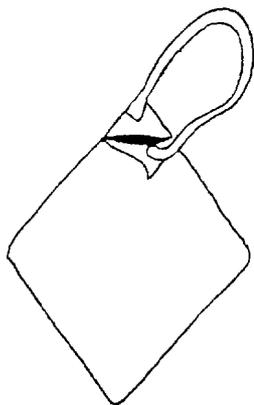


Figure 72

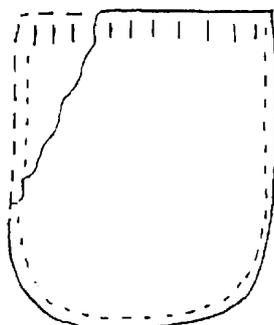


Figure 73

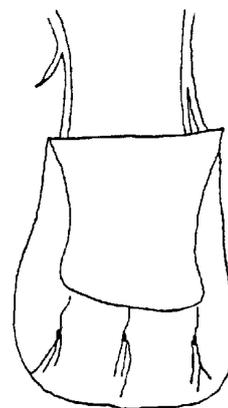


Figure 74

iii. Anglo-Saxon Female Dress

a. The Underdress

Manuscript evidence indicates that Late Saxon women were accustomed to wear an underdress. This is frequently coloured white and was therefore probably constructed of linen [10]. The bulk of this garment is usually surmounted by the overdress and is thus only visible at the wrists and ankles, hence it is impossible to gauge its precise form. However, continuity of occasional decorative devices between the visible cuffs and hem imply that a single gown was utilised rather than a blouse and petticoat arrangement [41]. In many examples wrinkled, tight sleeves reminiscent of the mans tunic are apparent, often with a decorated band around the cuff (Fig. 75). Other illustrations feature straighter close-fitting sleeves (Fig. 76) [35]. Occasionally the underdress is not visible at the cuff at all (Fig. 77), indicating that a sleeveless or shorter sleeved variety might have been known [24]. Indeed, the figure of Luna in MS Cotton Tiberius Bv is portrayed in an analogous sleeveless shift [10]. Manuscript depictions which reveal the lower part of the gown suggest that a fairly full but straight garment was commonly used. Nevertheless certain figures in the Caedmon manuscript (Fig. 77) do appear to possess folded or even pleated undergowns. Pleated linen garments are known from contemporaneous Scandinavian sources so it is not entirely impossible that they occurred in an insular context [83,84]. Additionally, folded fragments of linen are known from London, however, these folds may be due to burial accident rather than pleats [1].



Figure 75
The Benedictional
of St Æthelwold



Figure 76
Judith's Gospels



Figure 77
The Caedmon Manuscript

b. The Overdress

Evidence for a sleeved overdress (cyrtel) surmounting the undergown derives from both artistic and literary sources.



Figure 78
MS Stowe 944



Figure 79
The Bayeux Tapestry



Figure 80
New Minster Charter

It has been argued that this garment was tailored although, as Figs. 77-80 show, loose fitting, relatively shapeless gowns are also known from art [10,24,30,35]. The neckline of this gown is almost invariably obscured by the folds of the ubiquitous wimple. Fortunately, the headdresses of personified virtues and vices in *The Psychomachia* (Corpus Christi College MS 23) are rather less all encompassing and reveal simple round or squarish necklines (Figs. 81-83) [19]. As with the man's tunic we have found no Pre-Conquest evidence of a brooch fastener at the neck.

The gown is usually ankle or calf length although unusual knee length overgowns are featured in the aforementioned Caedmon manuscript [24]. Typically, this dress has wide sleeves which reach to either the forearm or the wrist. Tenth century sleeves are commonly depicted as straight or only slightly flared whilst in the eleventh century flamboyantly flared sleeves seemingly gained in popularity (Figs. 76 and 79). The ends of the sleeves are commonly turned back to form a distinct cuff, however, anomalous straight sleeves in MS Cotton Claudius Biv hang down past the fingertips and presumably served to keep the hands warm [10]. Decoration is occasionally shown on the cuff and hem garment and more rarely on the skirts and sleeves of the dress. Clear examples of these decorative devices occur in the Lambeth Palace MS 200 fol 68 and BL MS Arundel 60 fol 12v respectively [35]. By contrast, the New Minster Charter appears to show an overdress with the tight wrinkled sleeves generally associated with the undergown (Fig. 80) [26].



Figure 81



Figure 82



Figure 83

c. The Sleeveless Mantle

Women in Late Saxon art are not infrequently portrayed clad in a loose poncho-like garment (Figs. 75,80 and 84). This is often longer and fuller at the back and hangs down in a curve between the arms at the front (Fig. 84). On occasion this mantle is apparently worn as an alternative to the sleeved overgown. However, it is equally possible that evidence of the overdress is merely obscured by the loose folds of the "poncho" as clear illustrations of the sleeveless mantle surmounting both dresses are known [10]. It is unclear whether this garment might sometimes incorporate an integral headdress. Colour contrast in certain manuscripts (such as *Benedictional of St Æthelwold* [41]) indicates that separate wimples could certainly be worn with the sleeveless overgarment but other sources are more ambiguous. The preponderance

of this garment in ecclesiastical imagery has led to the suggestion that its adoption was promulgated by the dissemination of Christian art. It has consequently been argued that the mantle passed into secular usage amongst high status women in the eleventh century [10]. Nevertheless it is surely feasible that the garment was worn by seculars prior to this date and that its predominance in religious iconography stems merely from the prestige accorded to Biblical figures. The evidence of the Bayeux Tapestry indicates that this apparel was espoused by the nobility and illustrations featuring lavish embellishment accord well with this view (Fig. 84 [41]).



Figure 84
St Æthelwold's
Benedictional



Figure 85
BL Add1 MS 24199



Figure 86
Rouen Bib Mun Y 6

d. The Cloak

Literary evidence reveals that cloaks were worn by women, unfortunately Late Saxon artistic sources are not particularly helpful in determining the form of this garment [10]. The majority of illustrations are somewhat ambiguous and might depict either a hooded, centrally clasped cloak or an all-encompassing headdress. Hooded cloaks are shown in the earlier Franks casket (Figs. 87 and 88) and may have been worn in a Late Saxon context. An isolated illustration of Superbia (MS Addl 24199) portrays an analogous cloak or flamboyant headdress clasped at the neck by a round brooch [86]. Arguably women may have worn simple rectangular cloaks akin to those sported by men although we have found no direct pictorial evidence for this. The closest example is afforded by an eighth century Anglo-Saxon ivory panel from Munich. This portrays The Virgin in an asymmetrically clasped cloak which is either hooded or pulled up over the head, the carving also seems to suggest that the cloak is somehow belted at the front but this may reflect classical iconography [26]. Alternately, the sleeveless overmantle may have performed a similar function to the cloak, at least for high-ranking women. An early eleventh century manuscript from Canterbury (Fig. 86) appears to show a symmetrical cloak presumably clasped centrally and shaped to fit over the shoulders, similar garments are seen in conjunction with the mans long gown [35].

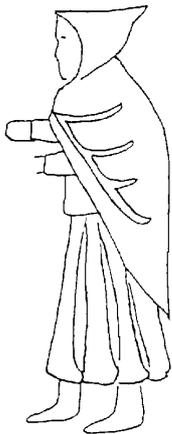


Figure 87
Franks Casket

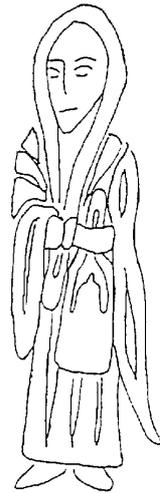


Figure 88
Franks Casket



Figure 89
Caedmon MS

e. Undergarments

The use of an underdress with the women's costume has already been discussed and there is little pictorial or linguistic evidence to attest to the use of additional underclothes. However, the aforementioned illustration of Superbia reveals the use of puttee-like leggings bound about the lower leg in a manner comparable with male costume [10,86]. Additionally, circumstantial evidence may be adduced from the discovery of hooked tags in a Late Saxon setting. These tags are occasionally found behind the knee of corpses of both sexes and may have been used to fasten gartering or leggings. According to Hinton, they are a particularly English accessory, it is therefore possible that these tags were utilised in conjunction with the characteristic winingas known from insular art [43].

f. Footwear

Manuscript illustrations generally show women wearing flat ankle shoes although linguistic and archaeological evidence reveals that boots and slippers were also available and were worn by women [10,50,51]. Consequently the details outlined in the previous discussion of masculine footwear also apply to women. Two figures from a Late Saxon manuscript (Lambeth Palace Library 200) wear low shoes with a central projection (Fig. 90) [35]. A similar arrangement is known from early Christian shoes found in Ireland although there appear to be no analogous Anglo-Saxon examples [85]. Another dainty and (at least by today's standards), ladylike shoe hails from the Durham Saddler Street excavations [50]. This attractive turnshoe has been sandalised by the simple method of cutting a pattern in the upper. Only the foremost part of the upper was recovered, consequently it is not known whether this sandal was secured by straps or thongs over the arch or around the ankle. Two possible reconstructions are shown in Figs. 91i and ii.



Fig. 90
Lambeth Palace Lib 200

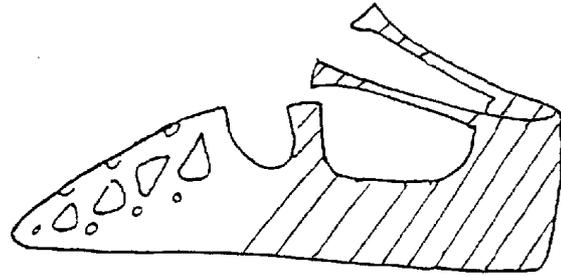


Figure 91 i

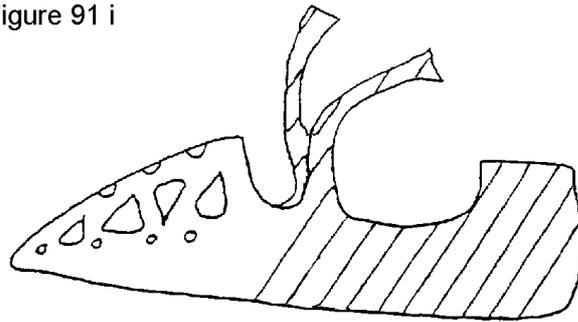


Fig 91ii
(cross hatched areas not recovered)

g. The Headdress

Manuscript evidence indicates that Anglo-Saxon women, regardless of marital status, wore a headdress (wimple) which swathed the head and neck. The only exceptions to this rule appear to be personified vices suggesting that bareheaded women were frowned upon in the Christian society of Late Saxon England [10]. There is considerable variation in the depiction of this garment and it seems probable that different types of wimple were utilised. Many sources reveal the use of a wrap around headrail (Fig. 89 for example) and attempted reconstructions suggest a range of suitable outlines including rectangular, semicircular, oval and trapezoid patterns [29,30,31,32,35]. It is probable that the extent and shape of this headdress depended upon both personal preference and financial status. A lone illustration of Superbia features a round brooch clasp the neck of a flamboyant headdress or cloak [86]. Although similar fasteners are not shown on other manuscripts practicality dictates that some form of clasp would have been desirable. Other illustrations feature a cowl or hood-like garment (Figs. 78 and 79) although this lacks the pointed apex of the monkish cowl. Post-conquest Romanesque sources reflect the use of a two-piece wimple incorporating a separate chin and neckpiece surmounted by a veil [36]. The absence of clear Pre-conquest examples may derive simply from stylistic innovations after the Norman invasion, nevertheless we have been unable to find an unambiguous example. It has been suggested that a simple square veil may have been characteristic of the costume of royal women [10]. Decorated Lambeth Palace Library MS 200 (Fig. 90) and in the Bury St Edmund's Psalter [35]. Both these manuscripts feature figures with embroidered or jewelled headdress.

A headband or fillet is often shown in conjunction with the headdress, literary evidence implies that this band was typical of a married women's appearance [10]. The fillet was worn either under the wimple (Fig. 78), occasionally terminating in decorated ribbons or braids, or as a continuous circlet surmounting the headdress. It has been argued that the fillets of wealthy secular women could be extremely lavish; perhaps brocaded with gold in the manner of extant ecclesiastical vestments (Fig. 85) [11]. Indeed, the considerable bullion value of the headbands is attested by the wills of the period. It seems probable that both forms of fillet played a valuable role in securing the headdress, the former type presumably providing anchorage for the dress or hairpins known from literature and archaeology. Where headdresses are depicted without apparent fillets three possible means of alternative attachment may be conjectured. Firstly, a plain unadorned band may have been used beneath the wimple, secondly the wimple could be pinned directly onto the plaited hair and lastly the headdress may have been attached to a close fitting under-cap, perhaps similar to the silk caps known from Anglo-Scandinavian sites [8,10].

h. The Belt or Girdle

Artistic evidence indicates that the woman's gown could be worn without a belt (Fig. 79) [30]. In addition, the gown is often shown pouched over an obscured belt in a manner reminiscent of male costume (Fig. 77) [24]. Alternately a broad, self coloured and sometimes twisted sash might be wound about the waist or beneath the breasts. Moreover, a similar sash is occasionally portrayed confining the front of the sleeveless overmantle (Fig. 75) [41]. The aforementioned profiled figure of Judith of Flanders (Fig. 76) shows a tight self coloured sash visible only at the front of the gown. It seems feasible that the belt passed into and under the fabric of the gown at the sides thereby allowing the back of the dress to fall in the cloak-like folds visible in the picture (this effect is enhanced if extra material is incorporated in the back of the dress, a device also employed in a Danish medieval kirtle to ensure a becoming, cape-like effect [39]. A similar disappearing belt is also apparent in MS Cotton Tiberius Cvi, fol 14 [32]. There is evidence from artistic sources that Late Saxon women appended personal possessions to their belts.

i. Jewellery

The inscription on an eleventh century disc brooch from Sutton, Ely confirms that these spectacular artefacts could be owned by women despite the dearth of pictorial evidence [48]. It is probable that, with the exception of armrings, the jewellery discussed in the male guide was also worn by women.

j. Bags and Pouches

Saxon women are sometimes illustrated carrying handled baskets or bags, examples are afforded both Cotton Claudius Biv and the earlier Franks casket (Fig. 88) [11]. There is no evidence for the use of belt pouches per se by Late Saxon women, although it is feasible that relic bags were carried by both sexes [81]. For details of these, and analogous pouches see the relevant section on masculine dress.

iv. Children's Costume and Toys

Male children are occasionally featured in late Saxon manuscripts, usually in a biblical context. These children are generally attired in miniature versions of adult clothing although infants are sometimes depicted in long gowns. Babies are illustrated swaddled in a wrap which incorporates a wimple-like headpiece (Fig. 92) [24]. Archaeological evidence of children's costume from the Late Saxon period is confined to footwear and reveals that soft sheep or goats skin might be used for simple children's turnshoes [51].

A small number of toys are known from Winchester, these include the wooden spinning top, bone whirrer and leather ball shown in the basic guide [87]. It is probable that Anglo-Saxon children spent much of their time developing the skills and crafts needed for later life.

v. Ecclesiastical Dress

At the outset of the tenth century English monasticism was in decline and secular, often married clergy were common [88]. It is probable that ecclesiastics of this period wore similar dress to the lay population. The advent of the Benedictine reform in the second half of this century marked the revival of the monasteries and the adoption of monkish dress by their denizens. Benedictine monks traditionally wore black habits, it seems probable that these were actually woven of undyed black goat or sheep wool as the utilization of costly black dyes would contravene the spirit of Benedictine monasticism. Numerous tenth and eleventh century manuscripts depict cowed monks, Fig. 93 affords but one example [35]. In addition, charters of the period testify to the use of distinct ecclesiastical garb by Late Saxon monks [89].



Figure 92
Caedmon MS

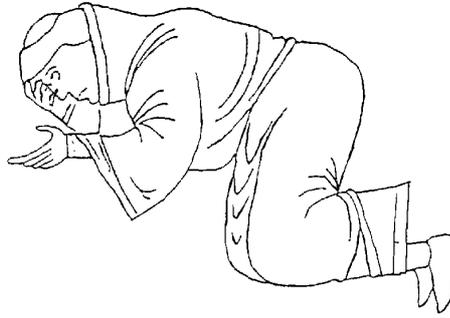


Figure 93
Bodleian Lib
MS Auct F iv



Figure 94
St Æthelwold's
Benedictional

It seems likely that nuns were also supposed to dress somberly although anecdotal accounts indicate that this rule was not invariably adhered to [88]. Fig. 90 is thought to depict a group of nuns and suggests that female monastic dress resembled that of secular women [35]. The traditional costume of an early medieval bishop included a white linen alb, a split sided dalmatic and a sleeveless chasuble together with a fringed stole worn around the neck. Surviving artefact and literary evidence reveal that these vestments could be very lavishly embellished [11,6]. An example of a Late Saxon bishop is shown in Fig. 93.

vi. Arms and Armour

a. Introduction

The aim of this section is to provide a reasonably comprehensive overview of the form and probable construction of Anglo-Saxon military dress and equipment. Some of the detail contained herein is general background material for interest only, it is not expected that pattern welded blades, planked shields and riveted mail will make a regular appearance on the battlefield!

Information concerning Anglo-Saxon military equipment is commonly drawn from the following sources:-

1. Archaeological finds - Anglo-Saxon military artifacts of the Christian period are mainly restricted to isolated, and therefore difficult to date, river finds of bladed weapons.

2. Representations from art - armour and weapons are depicted in a variety of media including Saxon manuscripts, sculpture, coins and, of course, the Bayeux Tapestry. However, none of these sources can be taken at face value and should be approached with caution as the art forms of the time rarely approached utilised original imagery but customarily copied or adapted earlier examples [90]. For example, the iconography of many manuscripts ultimately derives from classical models via Frankish intermediaries. The most useful manuscripts for our purposes include a late Saxon copy of the Utrecht Psalter (MS Harley 603), Aelfric's Old English Hexateuch (MS Cotton Claudius Biv), the Psychomachia of Prudentius (MS Cotton Cleopatra Cviii) and the Caedmon manuscript (MS Bodleian Junius XI) [91]. However, only the iconography of MS Harley 603 seems to have been extensively analysed with the aim of identifying late Saxon artifacts [90].

3. Literary evidence - occasional reference to military equipment can be found in the Anglo-Saxon chronicles, late Saxon poetry and contemporary legal documents. Heriots are a particularly useful source as they detail the return of requisite military equipment to a lord upon a warrior's death [92].

4. Comparative material - the above evidence can be supplemented by contemporaneous Viking, and earlier pagan Saxon, grave goods. Reference to such material can be particularly useful but chronological and geographical differences must be borne in mind.

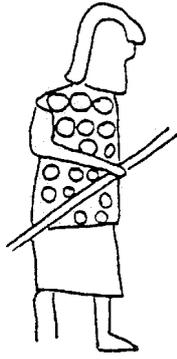
b. Armour

For the Anglo-Saxon warrior the most common form of protection in battle was the shield. Manuscript illustrations often depict warriors equipped solely with a shield or occasionally with the addition of a leather or cloth cap to complete the defensive panoply. The use of mail (the Anglo-Saxon byrnie) was known from the early Saxon period (for example, the Sutton Hoo ship burial) but its use was probably restricted to important leaders [93]. A general lack of helmets and body armour appears to have been the norm until the late tenth century. For instance, tenth century heriots of English nobles did not normally specify any armour [94]. The early eleventh century saw increased usage of helmets and body armour, probably on the instigation of Aethelraed II, as a response to the increased severity of the Viking attacks and the

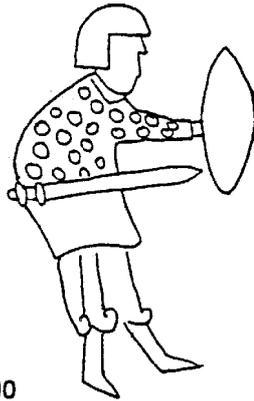
military disasters of the tenth century [92]. The Anglo-Saxon chronicle for the year 1008 A.D. records that a helmet and byrnie should be produced from every eight hides throughout England and indeed, from this point on, helmets and byrnies were included in the wills of English magnates as a matter of course. The evidence of the Bayeux Tapestry suggests that by the end of the eleventh century English Thegns (the warrior class) were well armed and equipped individuals.

c. The Byrnie

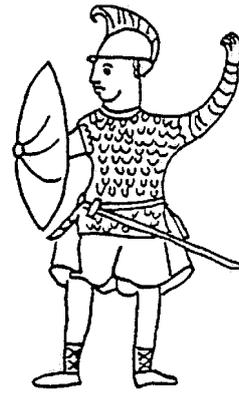
The only extant Anglo-Saxon byrnie is that found in the seventh century Sutton Hoo burial [93]. Unfortunately, the form of the Sutton Hoo mail shirt is not discernible, although a variety of pictorial sources depict mail shirts (Figs. 95 a-h). The mail clad figures of the Frank's casket (c.700 AD, Fig. 95a), although pre-dating our period, are perhaps suggestive of the form of mail available at the start of our period [26]. Figs. 95b and c should be used with caution. According to a mid-nineteenth century text Fig. 95b allegedly hails from a tenth century Anglo-Saxon manuscript, however it is curiously absent from more recent works [95]. Similarly, Fig. 95c, which appears in a popular modern work is given without date or provenance [96]. The shorter style dagged mail of Fig. 95d is from a late tenth/early eleventh century copy of the *Psychomania of Prudentius* [4,35], it may however derive from earlier examples [91]. Dagged mail is known from late medieval times (e.g. the Sinigaglia shirt [97]). Additionally, Collingswood's illustrations of the enigmatic Kirklevington figure feature dagging at the waist. The remaining figures all date from the eleventh century and are consistent in showing knee length byrnies split front and back. The necessity for the double split may have arisen to facilitate horse riding, as English troops of the period customarily rode to battle even though they fought on foot [98,99]. It is worth noting, however, that the only known surviving tenth century mail hauberk from mainland Europe (the St Wenceslas shirt) is knee length with a rear split only [100,101,102]. Figs. 95e and f derive from *The Old English Hexateuch* and MS Harley 603. It has been convincingly argued that elements of these particular manuscripts are usually reliable in their depiction of Late Saxon armour [90,91]. It has been postulated that the curious mail "leggings" of the Bayeux Tapestry may have been produced by lacing the mail to the leg [92,100,101]. This theory is supported to some extent by Figs. 95e and f together with a fragment of the Pre-Conquest (1016-35) frieze from Winchester which clearly shows mail on the inside of the leg (Fig. 95g) [92,103]. The evidence of the Bayeux Tapestry suggests that by the end of the eleventh century, the mail shirt could incorporate a mail coif. Whether this was an integral part of the shirt or a separate item is unclear, however, for re-enactment purposes a separate coif affords greater versatility. Moreover some figures do appear to wear separate coifs, possibly of fabric or leather [100,105].



a) Franks Casket c.700



b) Latin psalter 10th century



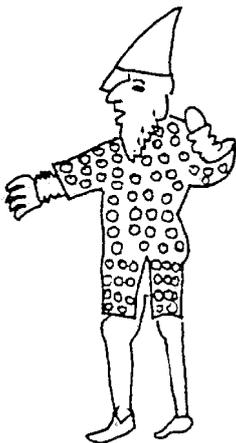
c) Saxon M.S.
(no provenance)



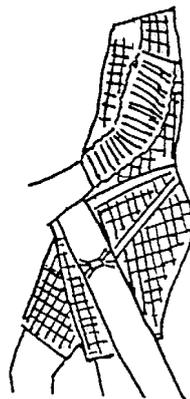
d) Prudentius 10/11th century



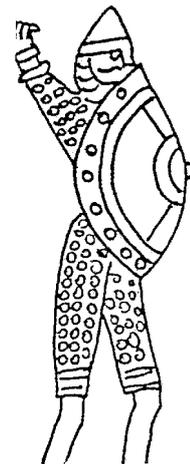
e) Hexateuch 11th century



f) Harley Psalter 1025-50



g) Winchester frieze 1016-35



h) Bayeux Tapestry c. 1075

Figure 95
The brynne in Anglo-Saxon Art

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Mail of the period was constructed by alternating rows of whole (punched) and riveted rings [93]. Indeed, this method of manufacture appears to have continued into the late fourteenth century when wholly riveted mail became more common [126]. Typical ring dimensions are shown in Table 1. The dimensions quoted are for guidance only. Whole rings were often of a slightly different size when compared to the riveted rings, additionally later medieval shirts seem to have been intentionally constructed with variations in wire thickness (corresponding to the defensive requirements of the different areas of the shirt). The wire used for ring construction could have a rounded cross section analogous to modern washers [123,124,125].

Table 1: Typical Dimensions of Mail Rings

Find Place	Date	o.d. (mm)	Thickness (mm)	Reference
Vendel XII	7th century	8-10	ca. 2	[128]
Sutton Hoo	7th century	ca. 8	**	[93]
Coppergate (aventail)	8th century	8	2	[107]
Lund	Late Viking	11		[118]
Russia	8-10th century	8-12	1-2.5	[123]

** too rusted for accurate measurements

d. Alternative to mail

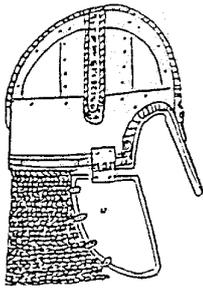
Evidence for the use of any body armour, other than mail, amongst the Anglo-Saxons is scarce. Warriors in manuscript illustrations are usually shown unarmoured and only mail is stipulated in legal documents. However, it is possible that in some circumstances leather armour may have been worn. The chronicle of the Abbey of Croyland records that in 1063 AD Harold Godwinson ordered his men to don leather armour to facilitate the pursuit of lightly armed Welsh, however it must be noted that elements of Ingulf's Croyland Chronicle are of dubious veracity [129]. This tradition is reiterated in the twelfth century account of Gerald of Wales [130]. The appearance of leather armour is unknown, although the dagged byrnie illustrated earlier is often interpreted as leather (Fig. 95d). This may stem from a mis-understanding of the use

of colour in Anglo-Saxon art as the drawing is executed in brown ink, nevertheless a pattern based upon an appropriate style of mail shirt is a plausible interpretation.

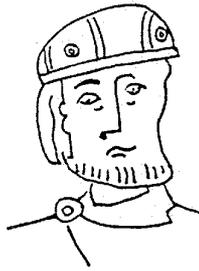
There is no archaeological evidence, to date, for the use of padded or quilted armour (the later medieval gambeson) amongst the Anglo-Saxons, neither are there any references to such an armour type in contemporary literature [92,94]. Readers should be wary of the more popular modelling and wargames books which include pictures of padded armour based upon the evidence of the Bayeux Tapestry. This is almost certainly a misinterpretation of mail hauberks shown with a pattern of criss-cross lines. Most modern authorities unequivocally identify the armour shown on the Tapestry as mail [12,102,131].

e. The Helmet

Examples of extant early Anglian helmets are known from the Sutton Hoo and Bentley Grange burials whilst depictions of further helms may be seen in Northumbrian art such as the Franks casket and the Leningrad MS [93,104,105]. The context of these burials and the general dearth of surviving helmets suggests that their use was restricted to the wealthier echelons of society. Certainly pagan period Anglo-Saxon weapons graves do not normally include helmets. The only existing insular Viking Age helmet is the Anglian helmet found at Coppergate, York (Fig. 96a) [106]. This helm is thought to have been made between 750 and 775 AD, had seen action and was probably used well into the ninth century [107]. The helmet consists of an iron dome constructed from eight separate pieces riveted together with added cheek pieces and a mail aventail. The iron nasal is surmounted by a decorative brass nasal incorporating brass eyebrow ridges [106,107]. Further ornamentation is provided by brass crests decorated with symbolic Christian motifs. In general, warriors may have joined the fray protected by little more than a leather cap, although this cannot be substantiated by archaeology [108]. Various forms of "Phrygian" and "coxcorn" caps, often interpreted as leather, may be seen in eleventh century Saxon manuscripts (Figs. 96b-d). As discussed previously, the use of helmets, along with mail, was probably enforced during the reign of Ethelred II [92,94]. The preoccupation with improvements in armament revealed by the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle entry for the year 1008 AD coincides with the appearance of a coin of Aethelraed II known as the helmet issue (1003-9 AD) [92,94,109] (Fig. 96e). However, it should be noted that the helmet issue coins of Aethelraed are close copies of Roman originals and consequently do not depict contemporary armour. Nevertheless, Brooks considers that parade helmets with cheek pieces of Late Roman derivation may have continued in use amongst high ranking officials [92,94]. The argument has since been reiterated by Tweddle, and, in the light of the Coppergate find, would seem a feasible proposition. The standard form of helmet in the eleventh century was probably the conical helm to which a number of manuscript and the Bayeux Tapestry attest. The helmet could consist of a simple cone with a "banded" appearance. Whether the helmet was of spangenhelm construction or utilised reinforcing or simply decorative bands is unknown. The helmet is depicted both with and without a nasal whilst features suggestive of neck guards are seen in later helmet issue coins and the Bayeux Tapestry. The helm shown in the Harley



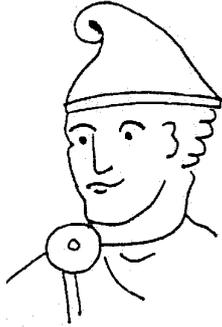
a) Coppergate 8-9th century



b) Prudentius 11th century



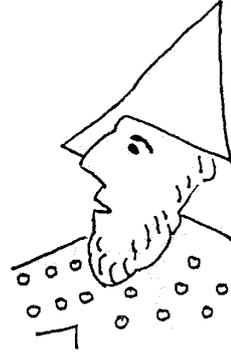
c) Hexateuch 11th century



d) Prudentius 10/11th century



e) coin Aethelred II 1003-9



f) Harley Psalter 1025-50



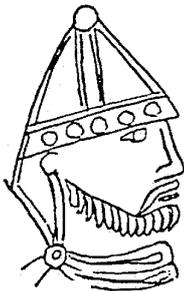
g) Tiberius Psalter mid 11th century



h) Tiberius Psalter



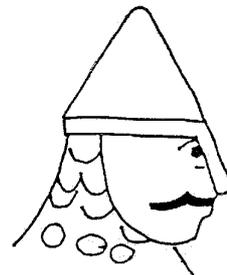
i) coin Cnut 1024-30



k) coin Edward 1053-6



j) coin Edward 1053-6



l) Bayeux Tapestry c. 1075

Figure 96
Anglo-Saxon helmets

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Psalter is probably a contemporary Saxon artefact (as opposed to a copied manuscript tradition) as it does not appear in the original Frankish model [90,01].

f. The Shield

Due to the absence of pertinent archaeological evidence for the Late Saxon period any discussion concerning shields must perforce rely upon the evidence of earlier Saxon grave finds supplemented by contemporary Scandinavian material. Recent findings have overturned many entrenched views on shield construction and any accounts written prior to 1981 should be treated with caution. These prior accounts often use the fragmentary shield fittings from Petersfinger as evidence for curved Saxon shield constructed from a form of plywood. This suggestion is now untenable following Harkes reappraisal of the Petersfinger material [110]. Current thinking is neatly summarised in the following quote "as a concept then, laminated wood layer construction can no longer be accepted and the curvature of a shield grip is not necessarily an indication of curvature of the shield wood" (Welch) [75]. Shields then were in all probability flat and of a planked construction as indeed contemporary Viking shields appear to have been [75, 110,112]. Illustrations of "lenticular" shields apparently stem from a poor grasp of perspective, indeed, when shown from the back they are commonly drawn inside out! Furthermore, lenticular shields would seemingly afford little defensive advantage. Precisely how the planks were fitted together is still the subject of debate, a few instances of wooden pegs are known from the earlier Thorsbjerg find [111] but any form of dowelling is unknown from Anglo-Saxon contexts [112]

Figure 98
Shield Construction

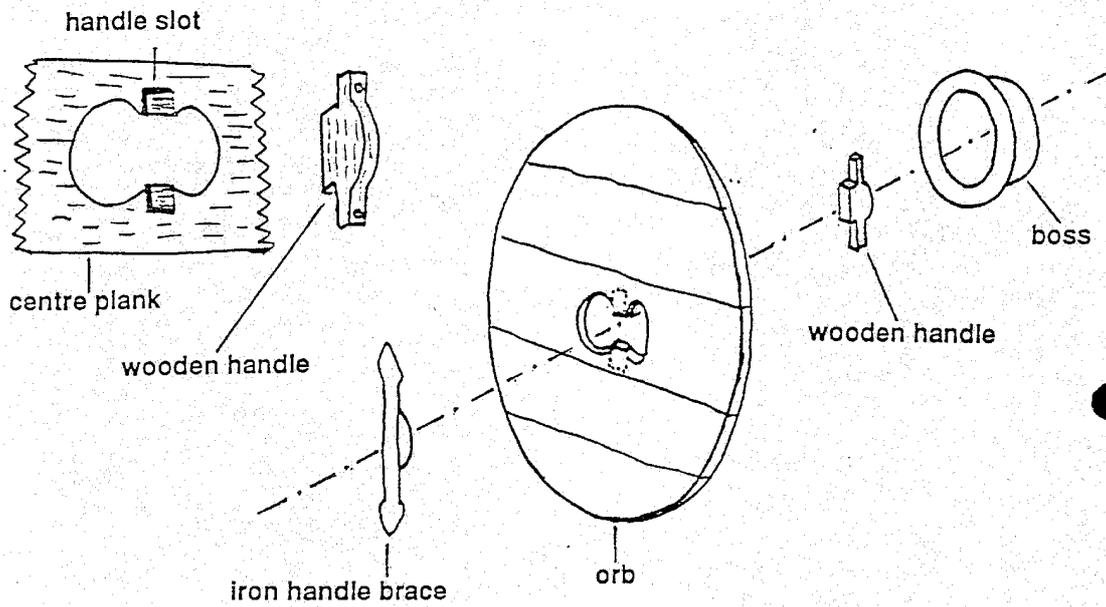


Figure 99
Schematic Representations of Handle Constructions
from Anglo-Saxon Shields (after Harke)

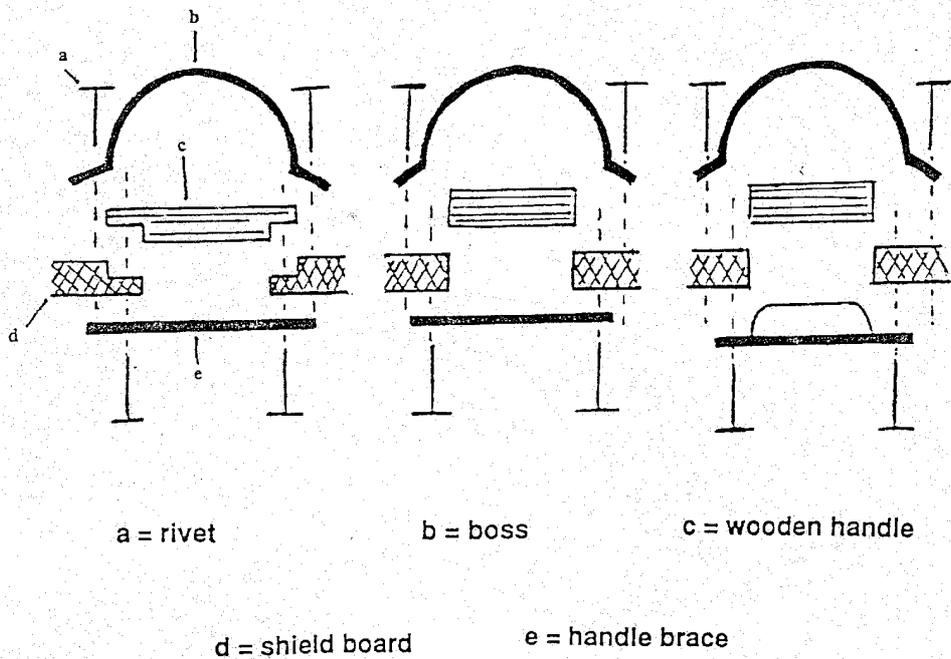
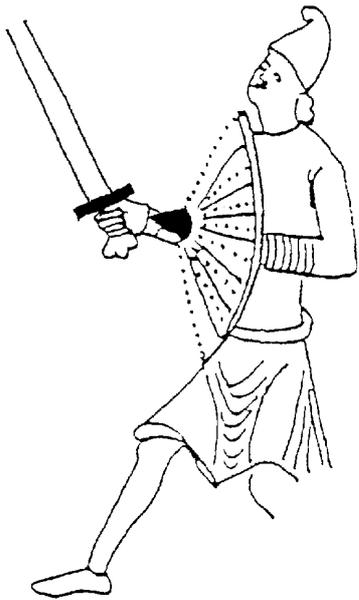


Table 2: Representative Shield Dimensions

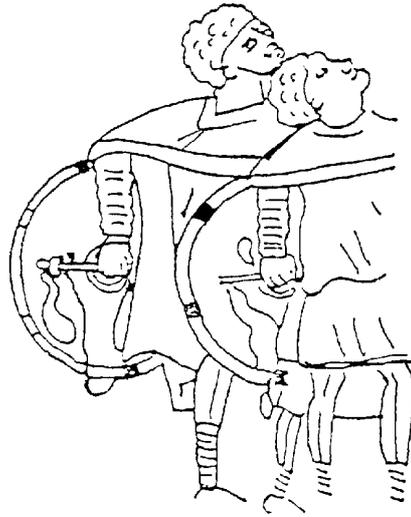
	Period	Location of find	Diameter (cm)	Reference
Anglo-Saxon	Pre-	Petersfinger Gr.3	33.5 (min?)	[75]
		Glynde Gr.26	76.5	[75]
		Mucking	60-64	[75]
		Finglesham (Sutton Hoo)	61 min. 91.5	[120] [93]
Scandinavian	Viking	Vendel	115	[93]
		Valsgarde	95-110	[93]
		Birka	80+	[115]
	Viking	Gokstad	94	[122]

Successful analysis of wood types is rare although lime, ash, alder, poplar and oak have all been identified from Anglo-Saxon shields. Willow and lime are mentioned in the surviving literature and linden (lime) is an oft used epithet for the shield [75,112,113,114]. Estimates of wood thickness are generally in the region of 5-8mm which accords well with the contemporary finds from Birka (5-6mm) and Valsgarde (5-6mm) [93,112,115]. early Anglo-Saxon shields (apart from the East Scandinavian derived Sutton Hoo shields) appear to have been on the small side although diameters based on the size of shield grips should perhaps be regarded as minimums. Representative shield sizes are shown in Table 2.

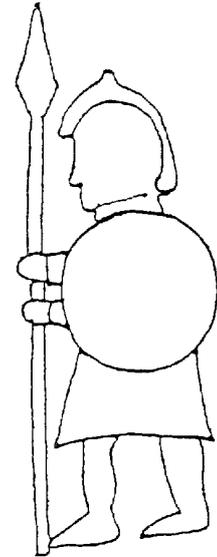
In use the shield was held by a single handgrip behind the boss, a method suggested by the surviving fittings and supported by illustrations from contemporary art (Fig. 97a and b). It should be noted that the Sutton Hoo shield, originally incorrectly reconstructed with a double arm grip, has since been reinterpreted with a single hand grip [93].



a. Saxon
(Hexateuch mid 11th century)



b. Carolinian
(Bible S.Paulo c.870)
Fig 97



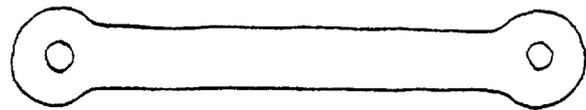
c Anglo-Danish
(Sockburn 10th century)

The Shield in Art

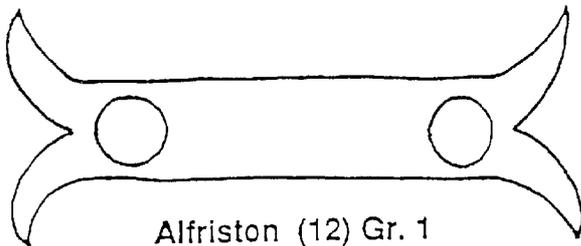
A separate wood handle fitted into rebates in the shield front, was off centre with respect to the shield and spanned a "keyhole" shaped opening (Fig. 98) [110,112,113]. Complete surviving examples of such handles are known from Thorsbjerg and Cologne [111,116]. The wooden handle was fastened to an iron brace at the back of the shield, this brace could be short (approximately the diameter of the boss) or long (up to the full diameter of the shield) and could incorporate a flange to encompass the wooden handle (Figs. 99, 100 and 101).



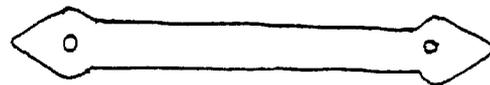
Alfriston (12) Gr. 42



Alfriston (12) Gr.34



Alfriston (12) Gr. 1



Birka Gr. 764 (1:3)

Figure 100
Handle Braces Scale 1:2

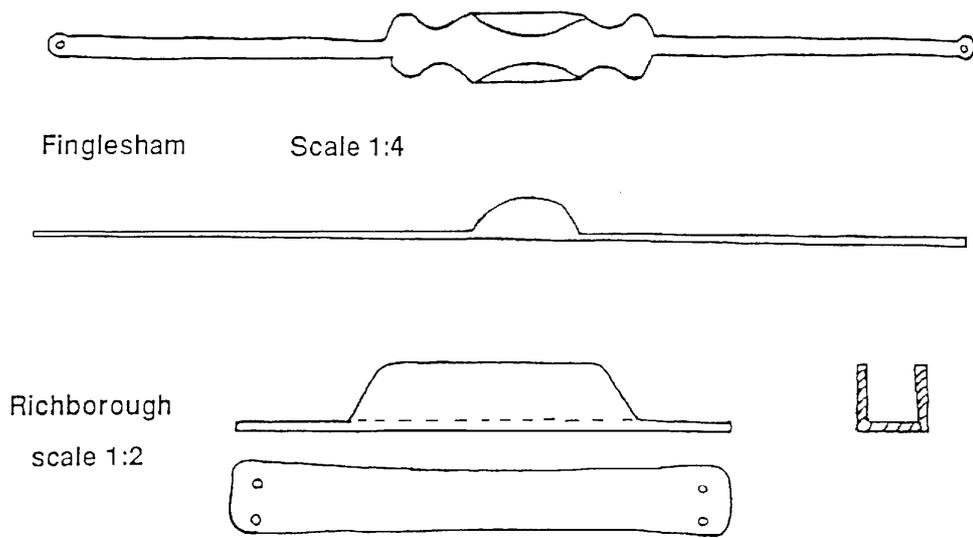
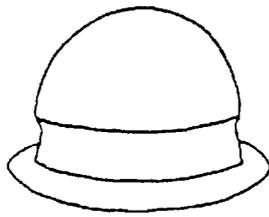


Figure 101
Flanged Handle Braces

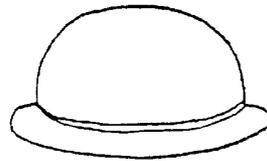
Other grip constructions are known and include wooden handles bound (or otherwise attached) directly to the handle brace, metal grips with leather binding or padding and wooden handles cut as an integral part of the board [110]. It is noteworthy that only twelve of the sixty eight shields found at Birka provide evidence of metal handgrips, suggesting that, for analogous Viking shields at least, simple wooden grips were common [115].

As yet there appears to be no complete typology of Saxon shield bosses and evidence is scarce after the seventh/eighth century when the provision of grave goods ceases [117]. In the absence of suitable Anglo-Saxon types, Fig. 102 shows appropriate Viking examples. Boss types are commonly categorised according to a typology proposed by Rygh [115]. Rygh type 564 is the earliest of the series and is characteristic of the first half of the ninth century. The most prevalent tenth century example is Rygh type 562 which first appears c.850 AD [115,118]. The boss seems to have been commonly fixed to the board by five rivets [110,114,112,115].

In some cases, the shield boards appear to have been covered on both sides with leather. Where identified this leather is of bovine origin and indeed the Laws of Aethelstan prohibit the use of sheepskins on shields [112]. Further strength could derive from the addition of a reinforcing rim. Two distinct types of reinforcement are known from contemporary shields from Birka (Fig. 103). The first type (Fig. 103a) comprises a leather rim held on by metal clamps whilst the second type consists of contiguous metal plates over a thickened rim (103b), however it must be noted that any form of metal edging is rare in Anglo-Saxon contexts [112,115,119].



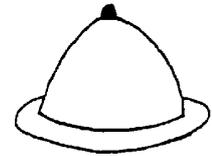
Rygh Type 564



562



563



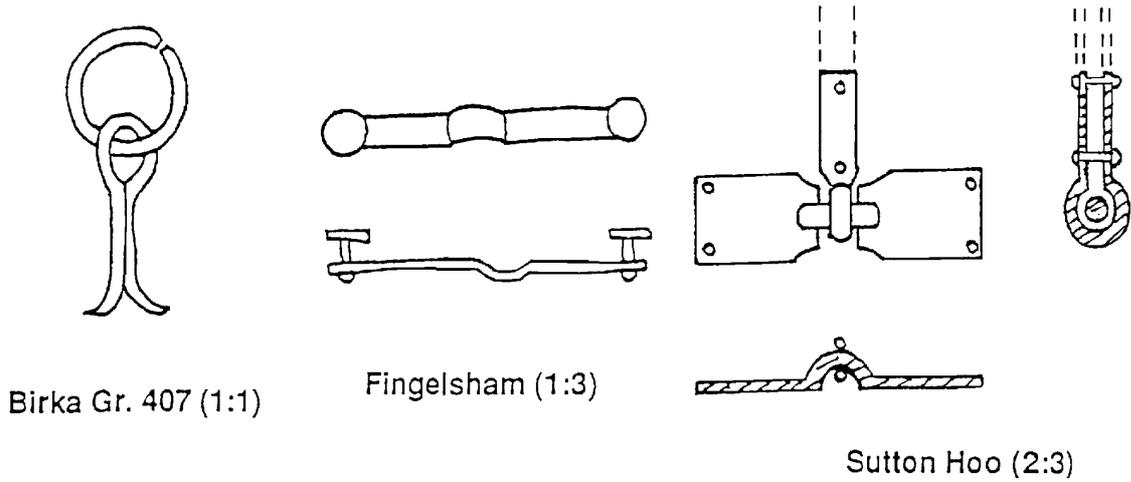
565

Figure 102
Viking Age Shield Bosses from Birka Scale 1:4

It is clear from diverse pictorial sources (both insular and continental) that some shields were fitted with carrying straps (Figs. 97b and c). Various forms of strap fittings are known from archaeology and are shown in Fig. 104 [93,115,119,120]. Ornamentation on shields of the period appears to have been restricted to the handgrip at the back of the shield, whereas the front was probably painted [115,121]. A wood and leather shield fragment painted in black, cream, red and white is known from Ballateare, the tenth century boat grave of Valsgarde 9 contained a red shield and the Gokstad ship burial yellow and black [115,121,122].



Figure 103 Shield Rims from Birka



Birka Gr. 407 (1:1)

Fingelsham (1:3)

Sutton Hoo (2:3)

Figure 104 Strap Fittings

Manuscript evidence suggests that the kite shield was in use amongst the Anglo-Saxons by the early eleventh century [90,91]. Although later kite shields were almost certainly curved in profile, those shown on the Harley Psalter and Bayeux Tapestry are all flat (some are even used as improvised tables). Various types of handgrip for kite shields are shown in Fig. 26.

g. The Spear

In Anglo-Saxon society the universal weapon of the free warrior was the spear and shield [134]. Early heriot formulae, heroic literature and archaeology all indicate the spear was carried regardless of rank and whether or not any additional armaments were provided for [133]. However, the spear should not be viewed merely as a weapon, to the Anglo-Saxons it was the symbol of free warrior status and specifically withheld from the unfree [94,108,133]. It is noteworthy that, according to the Law of Ine, the penalty for providing a runaway slave with a spear was greater than the penalty for the equivalent crime with a sword, despite the latter's greater value [133]. As late as the reign of Edgar the withholding of the right to carry a spear was still considered a great penance [133]. Until the early eighth century the provision of this prestigious status symbol extended to the grave and even children were, on occasion, buried with a spear [133]. Consequently there is a considerable corpus of early Anglo-Saxon spearheads but evidence postdating the abandonment of the pagan funerary custom is relatively scarce [133,134]. This early material has been classified into twelve categories (A-L) in a comprehensive and definitive work by Swanton [133,135], the analogous material has been similarly classified (A-M) by Petersen [118].

A distinguishing feature of Anglo-Saxon spearheads is the use of the split socket, a characteristic absent from continental spears from a relatively early date and by the tenth century diagnostic of Anglo-Saxon spears. Furthermore English spearheads rarely featured a pronounced midrib but were usually lozengiform or lentoid in cross section [133,134]. A notable characteristic of later Saxon spearheads is the great increase in average length compared to earlier types. The resulting heavier blades were often strengthened with baluster moulded or beaked junctions. Thus spearheads with sockets reinforced or decorated with mouldings or grooves became typical of the Middle and Later Saxon period [133,134]. Other forms of decoration are rarely encountered on Anglo-Saxon spearheads and, apart from a gilded spearhead from Durham Cathedral, finely decorated spearheads (so popular in Scandinavia), of English manufacture are unknown [108,136,137]. Typical spearheads of the Middle and Late Anglo-Saxon periods are shown in Fig. 105, the provenance for each of these examples together with an explanatory note (where appropriate), is described below.

105a. Bexley - ninth to tenth century [133,137]. This spearhead is derived from Swanton class C2; the commonest type of leaf shaped blade found in Anglo-Saxon graves. A notable feature this example is the use of inlaid panels of pattern welded material on the blade. This unusual decorative device is featured on less than on less than fifty other specimens across the country, a relatively small proportion of the vast corpus, of extant spearheads. Petersen recognised no Viking spears of this form although a few Frankish examples are known.

105b. Thames, Wandsworth - [133,134]. This example is derived from Swanton class C3, the largest form of leaf shaped blade, but exhibits the characteristic, Late Saxon beaked junction. There are no continental parallels for this type.

scale |-----|
6 ins
15 cms

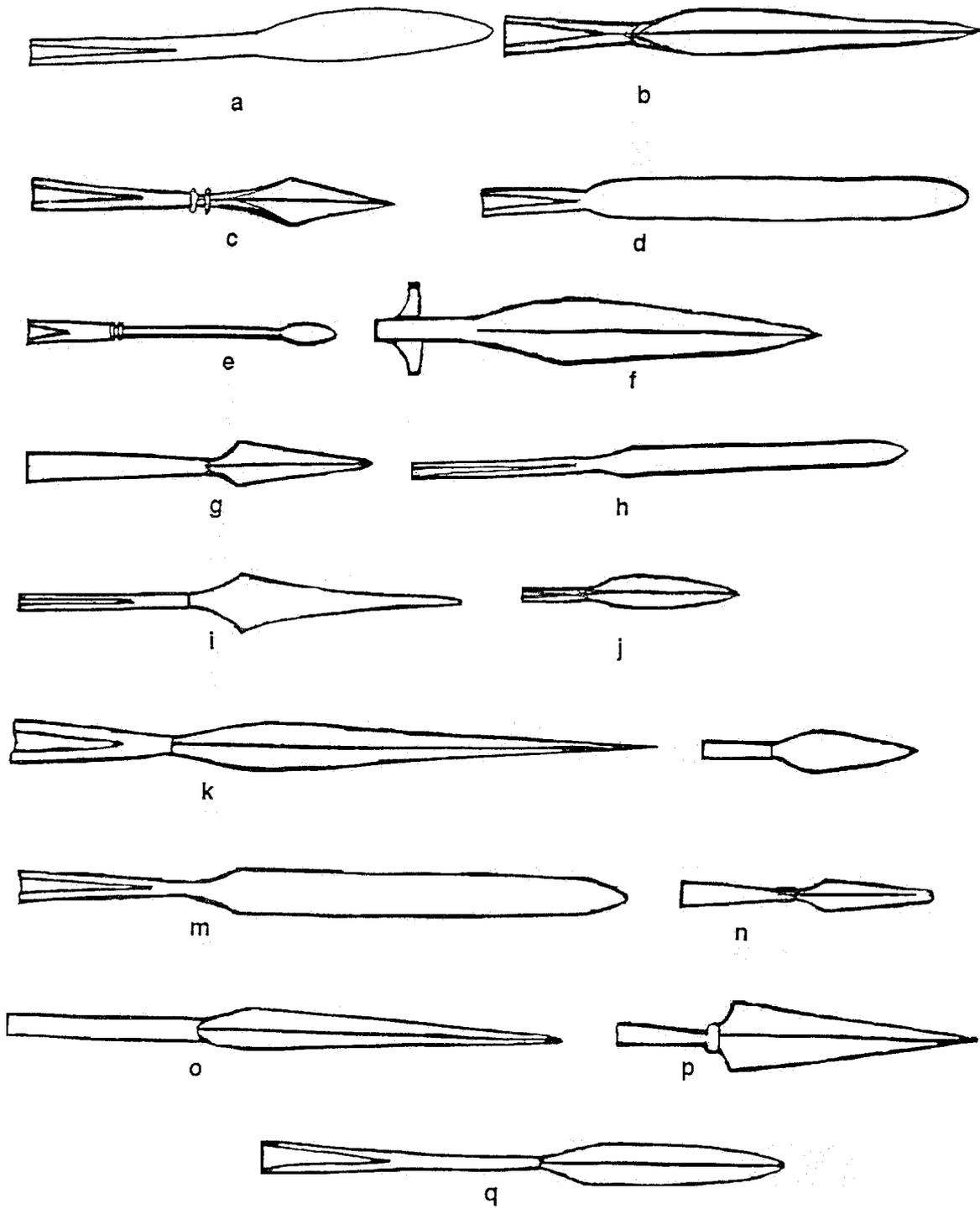


Figure 105
Spearheads of the Middle and Late Saxon periods

105c. London - [133,134]. Swanton class E2, popular in the seventh century, is also well attested in later contexts and is related to the slender blades of Petersen type M (the latest of Viking forms). This variety is usually found in areas of Saxon settlement and is comparatively scarce in Northern Anglian regions.

105d. Coppergate, York - ninth century [106]. This spearhead was found with the Coppergate helmet and is derived from Swanton class E3, the commonest of all Late Pagan period spearheads. This form was very popular in the seventh century and its survival into later times is attested by, amongst others, this example and two late tenth century finds from Westley Waterless. Similarities exist between this type and Petersen's Viking class G [133].

105e. Thames, Wandsworth - [134]. This spearhead is similar to Swanton class D3, mainly of seventh century date, but exhibits typical Late Saxon moulding. Although isolated examples of this type are known from probable Late Saxon contexts, no continental development is traceable from earlier exemplars. Consequently, it is possible that this variety was rarely used in our period.

105f. River Ouse, Cambridge - [138]. Winged spears are often associated with the Saxons but were probably not an indigenous type. The example shown here is of Carolingian form, produced in large quantities in the Middle Rhine region and thought to be a ninth century import. The apparently winged spears shown on many Anglo-Saxon manuscripts are thought to be merely iconographic conventions and Swanton contains a useful cautionary note on the use of such material [133,134,138].

105g. Thames - [134].

105h. Thames, Wandsworth - [134].

105i. Chiswick - [134].

105j. Westminster - [134].

105k. Thames, Wandsworth - [134].

105l. Kempsford -ninth to tenth century, similar to Petersen type H [139].

105m. Thames, Fulham - [134].

105n. Thames, Mortlake - [134].

105o. Thames, Brentford - [134].

105p. Thames, Kempsford - tenth to eleventh century, similar to Petersen type G [139].

105q. Thames - Wheeler suggests that the exaggerated length and slenderness of this spearhead indicates that it was deliberately weakened for use as a throwing weapon. Like the Teutonic angon or Roman pilum this would bend easily on impact and render re-use by the opponent difficult [134].

Spear shafts were traditionally made of ash. Early Iron Age finds from Hjortspring, La Tene, Vimose and Nydan all testify to the use of ash spears as do some of the few identifiable wood remains from Anglo-Saxon contexts (although hazel and oak are known from Polhill). It is thus hardly coincidental that the commonest Old English word for spear is aesc (ash) [92,108,111,133,140,141]. Grave finds indicate that spears were commonly the same length or somewhat longer than the wielder and are usually depicted as such in later manuscripts. However, it should be noted that the surviving spear shafts from Nydan were between 2.52 and 3.54m in length and evidence for spears of unusual length has been noted in Anglo-Saxon graves [92,108,111,133,140]. The earlier, continental Nydan examples have shaft diameters of approximately 2.5cm and invariably feature a whittled end to accommodate the spearhead. Some spears were provided with a "grip" of tightly wound cord at the point of balance, this occasionally extended into a small loop which may have allowed the spear to be held in the shield hand [111,133,140]. In some cases the spear was provided with a butt ferrule [133].

h. The Seax

The seax was a heavy, single edged knife, probably of Frankish origin, which first appears in Anglo-Saxon contexts late in the pagan period [48,142]. Single edged knives are often termed scramasaxes by analogy with the Frankish knife described by Gregory of Tours. However, there is no evidence to suggest that the single edged knives encountered in archaeology and Gregory's scramasaxes should be equated [142,143,145]. The common term for knife in Anglo-Saxon is seax, which is perhaps a preferable epithet [142,143,144]. The precise role of the seax is not fully understood, although its inclusion amongst weapons in Saxon heriots suggests a possible military role many examples are too small to have been effective weapons [92,142]. Similarly, highly decorated examples are unlikely candidates for ordinary tools. The practise of decorating the blade together with its inclusion in grave goods is perhaps indicative of its role as a mark of social standing, indeed Gale suggests that the seax may have developed from the aristocratic hunting knife into a more general status symbol [142].

Earlier Merovingian seaxes have been classified by Bohner and the seax types encountered in England have been likewise treated by Wheeler (Fig. 106) [134,142,144].

Wheeler types 1 and 2 predate our period and are generally either imported or insular developments of the Frankish form. Wheeler type 3 (the Hurbeck type), is characterised by a straight cutting edge and an angular or "broken" back [48,34]. The broad bladed Wheeler type 4 (the Honey Lane type) also displays the angular form but in this case the back rises out of parallel with the cutting edge. Seaxes can be further grouped by blade length, and hence possible usage, into the long seax (Fig. 107) and

the more prevalent shorter version, herein termed the common seax (Fig. 108) [142].

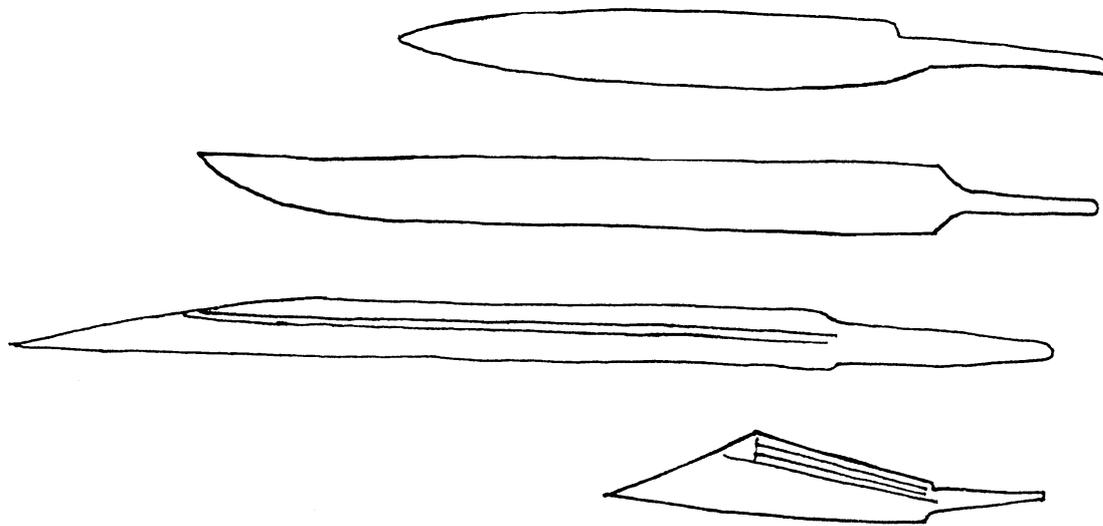


Fig 106 Classification of Seax blades (after Wheeler)

Type I
'Frankish'
 6-8th century

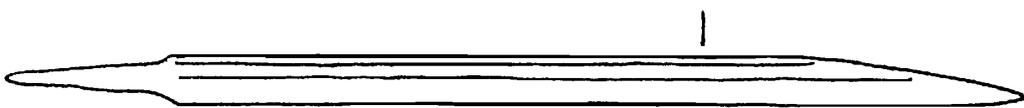
Type II
'Norwegian'
 7 & 8th century

Type III
'Hurburk'
 8-10th century

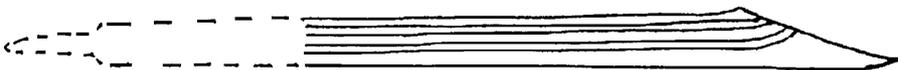
Type IV
'Honey Lane'
 10-11th century



Battersea



Kempsford



Keen Edge Ferry

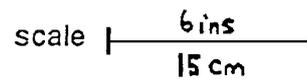


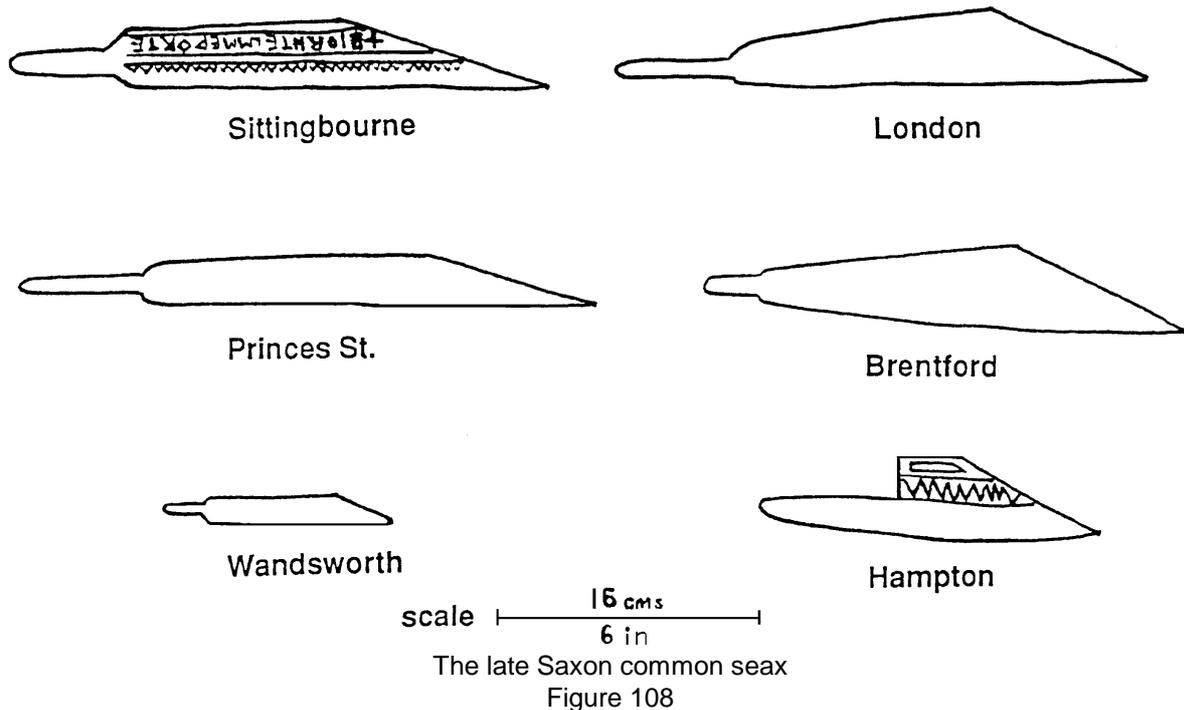
Fig 107 Late Saxon Long Seaxes

Surviving long seaxes generally have blade lengths in the region of 54-76 cm

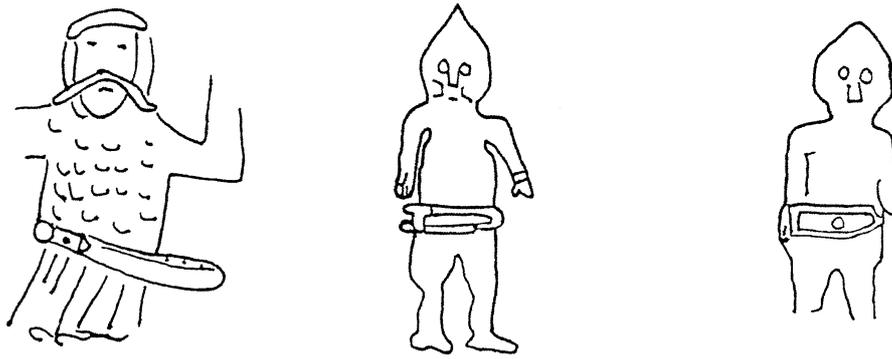
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whilst common seaxes vary between 8 and 36 cm with blades of about 24 cm predominating [142]. Additionally, seaxes typically have rather thick blades, for example, that from the River Lea is 8.5 mm thick [139].

Blades may be pattern welded and a common form of decoration is a series of incised grooves and lines running parallel with the back. These may be inlaid with a variety of metals including bronze, silver, brass and copper [48,134,139,142]. No late Saxon handles have survived although traces of wood remained on the tang of the long seax from Hurbuck, County Durham [48,142].



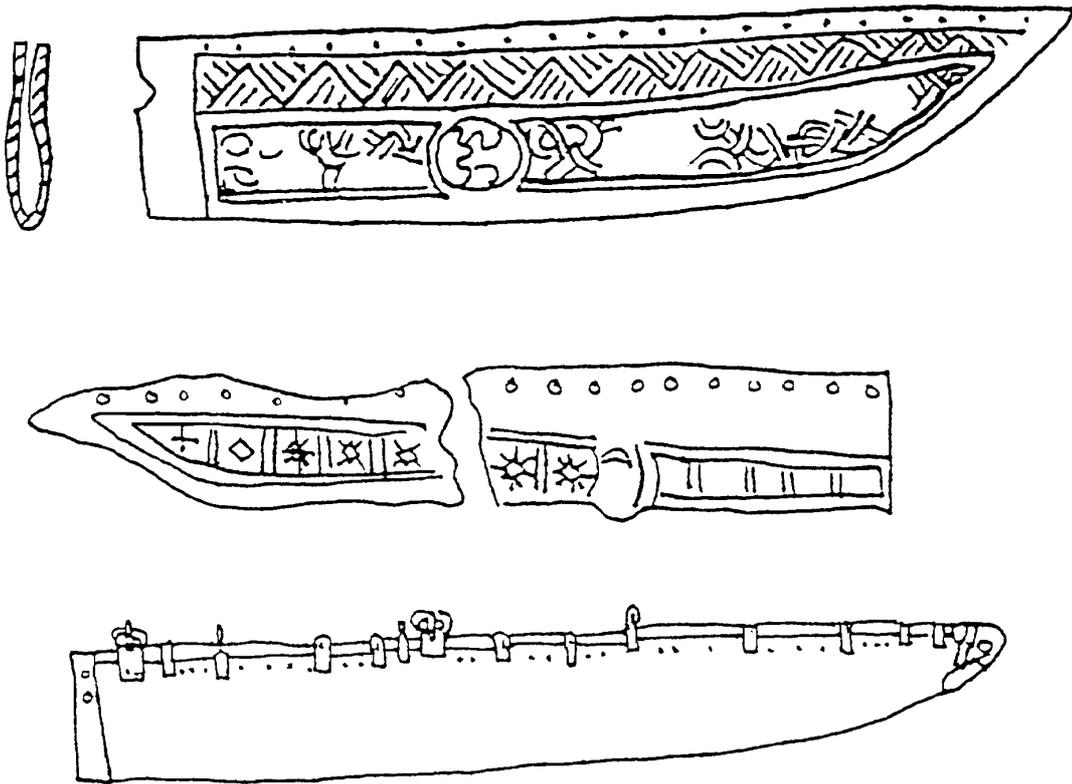
The long, angled back, seax seems to be exclusively English (including an example from Norway which Evison regards as an import). Although the Norse had their own version of the single edged sword (Wheeles type 2) with a straight back and curved blade, this would not be confused with the long seax proper. Additionally, the Norse do not seem to have had a knife type of similar size and shape to the common seax, indeed, finds from York suggest it was adopted as a result of contact with the English [142].



Seaxes from contemporary sculpture
Figure 109

Although the seax is rarely depicted in Anglo-Saxon manuscripts a few contemporary sculptures do illustrate sheathed seaxes and their method of suspension (Fig. 109) [13,142,146]. These show the seax slung horizontally from a waist belt which accords well with early Frankish evidence and pagan period grave finds, although it should be noted that other methods of suspension are possible (see below) [142]. A few surviving scabbard fittings are known from earlier grave finds (Fig. 110) [118,133,138,142,147,148,149].

Anglo-Danish seax sheaths appear to have been constructed of folded leather stitched or riveted along the top (blade side) edge. The scabbard from York was probably suspended from suspension points at the throat and at a second point halfway along its edge. The sheath was ornamented with tooled decoration reflecting the shape of the knife within, this reveals that the whole length of the seax, blade and handle, was enclosed by the sheath and that the seax was again carried blade upwards. Earlier sheaths constructed of leather covered wood are known which occasionally evince additional fittings such as buckles, chapes and mouth lockets. The example from Shudy Camp and Ford scabbard similarly encloses the full length of the blade and half the grip [133,148]. A noteworthy feature of the Ford sheath is the presence of alternate fittings permitting the seax to be slung from a baldric and indeed grave finds occasionally indicate that the seax might be worn at the side.

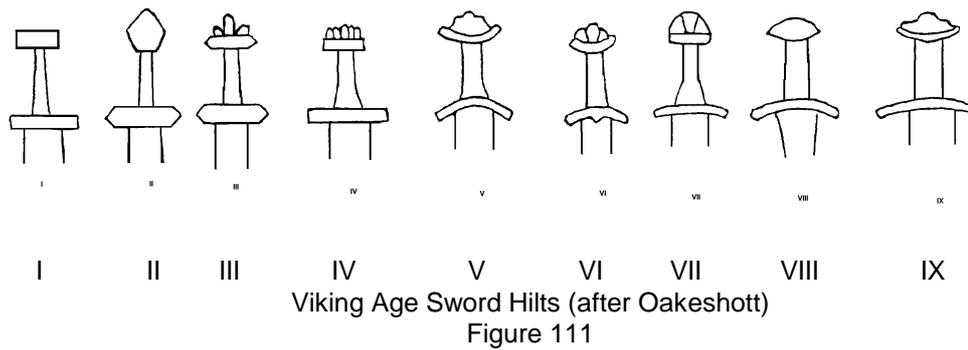


Seax sheaths
Figure 110

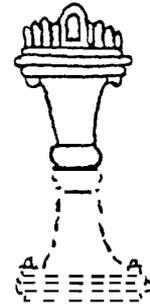
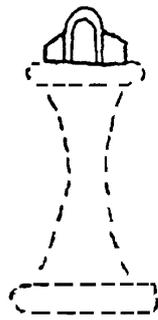
i. The Sword

The sword was perhaps the most prestigious weapon in the early medieval armoury. The cost of a sword was likely to be prohibitive to the general populace, for instance some of the more highly decorated examples, such as that left by King Alfred, could be worth as much as three thousand, six hundred silver pennies. Consequently possession of a sword would generally denote membership of the Thengly class. Furthermore, unlike the spear or bow, the sword's only possible use was in warfare [75,150,151].

Although sword blade manufacture in the seventh century commonly utilised pattern welding, this technique dwindled in the ninth and tenth centuries. Indeed, analysis of sword blades in the British Museum reveals that only forty-five percent of blades from this period are pattern welded [152]. There was relatively little variation in the form of Late Saxon sword blades, typical dimensions are given in Fig. 20 [150,151]. Sword blades often featured a pronounced, rounded fuller although unfullered examples are known [150,151,153,154,155,156].



Swords of the Late Saxon and Viking period are generally dated and classified with reference to the form of the hilt and its attendant style of ornamentation. However, Wilson avers that precise dating of an undecorated English sword hilt to a particular century is probably impossible as art history cannot be invoked. Furthermore, it should be understood that the hilt and blade are separate entities; as the sword from Hegge reveals, new hilts could be fitted to old blades and *visa versa* [155,156]. Viking period sword hilts have been grouped into twenty six types and twenty sub-types by Petersen, however a simplified typology proposed by Wheeler and amended by Oakeshott covers most of the forms relevant to the British Isles (Fig.111) [118,132,151,157]. Types I-IV and VIII, although popular on the Continent, are rare in Britain. By contrast, the predominant English style of the late ninth and earlier tenth century is type V, which is characterised by acutely curved lower and upper guards. Isolated examples of this type occur in Scandinavian contexts but are believed to be imports n account of their Trewhiddle style ornamentation [151,155,156,158]. Type VI is characterised by less pronounced curvature of the guards and is dated to the late tenth, early eleventh century and was widely copied by the Vikings. From the second half of the eleventh century manuscript evidence exists for the disc pommel (Fig. 26ii) [35]. This accords well with contemporaneous continental archaeological evidence [157,159]. At the other end of the scale there are only two fragmentary English hilts, from Windsor and Fetter Lane, dated to circa 800 A.D. Nevertheless these arguably reflect English hilt styles prior to the introduction of type V in the late ninth century (Fig. 112) [150,160].

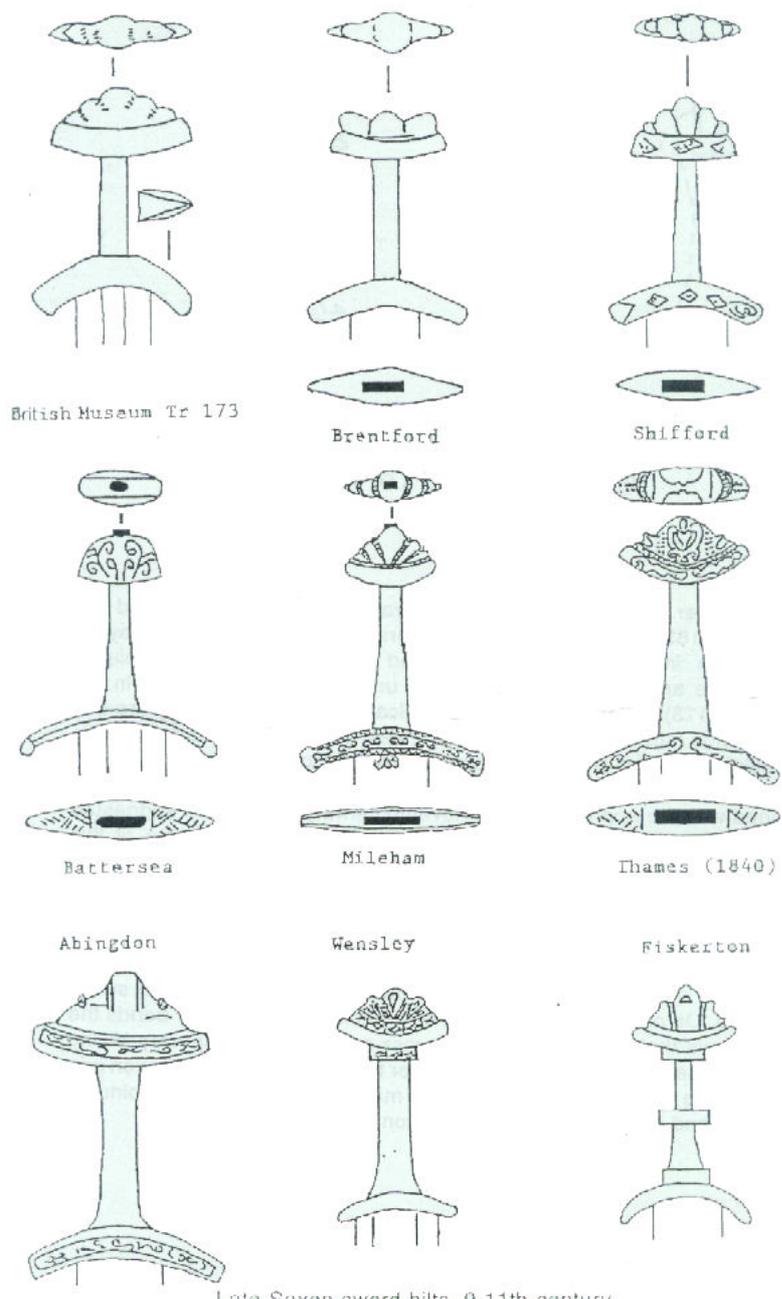


Windsor
English hilts of c.800 A.D.
Figure 112

Fetter Lane

A selection of later Saxon sword hilts are illustrated in Figs. 21, 24, 26 and 113 [150,155,156,159,162,163]. Sword fittings are generally made of iron and may be highly decorated with inlaid precious metals and niello. However, completely undecorated examples are known and include an unprovenanced example in the British Museum (Fig. 113). Additionally, archaeological evidence testifies to the use of bronze sword fittings [48,132,155]. Furthermore, cast brass fittings such as those evinced on the Mileham sword are known from Late Saxon contexts. The pommel of this sword was cast with integral fake wire inlay, as the quality of Saxon ornamental metalwork declined with the approach of the eleventh century it has been suggested that this technique reflects this trend [78,156]. Another noteworthy feature of this particular sword is the presence of a projection on the underside of the lower guard which presumably interlocked with the mouth of the scabbard, a similar device is known from the bronze cross guard from Sherborne Lane and from manuscript evidence [32,132,155,156].

Traces of wood on the tang of surviving swords indicate that wooden sword grips were employed. On occasion, these might be embellished with silver bands the shape of which reveals that grips were oval in cross-section. Contemporary Viking swords with complete metal grips are known, however the only comparable Saxon grip is the earlier Fetter Lane example. Similarly, there is minimal evidence for wire binding in an insular context and none whatsoever for Saxon swords [156].



Late Saxon sword hilts, 9-11th century

Late Saxon sword hilts, 9-11th century

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It is probable that scabbards were invariably used with swords, indeed, Frankish legislative sources stipulate that the value of sword and scabbard was twice that of a sword alone. There are no extant Late Saxon examples of swords surviving intact with scabbards however the evidence suggests that scabbards were commonly constructed from two laths of wood, lined with fleece, fur or textile material and covered with leather [150,151]. Other constructional techniques are possible, for instance the Sutton Hoo scabbard was of lined wood with a binding of fine linen tape [93], whereas the contemporary Viking burials of Cronk Moar and Ballateare afforded textile lined wooden scabbards with an extra layer of linen beneath the outer leather covering [121]. Later medieval scabbards frequently had an outer linen covering over the leather layer, this accords well with the contemporary description of the scabbard of Charlemagne "this sword was enclosed first by a scabbard, secondly by leather of some kind, thirdly by pure white linen rendered stronger by clearest wax and strengthened towards the centre by little raised crosses for the destruction of the heathen" [151]. Additionally, two leather scabbards "for a long knife or a sword" (Thornton) are known from Durham [50]. One scabbard is of pliable leather with a central butted seam whereas the second example, of stiffer leather, is seamed at the side. Two similar scabbards (one very fragmentary) hail from Anglo-Scandinavian levels at York [44]. Traces of leather and fur or fleece were found on an earlier Anglian sword from Yorkshire. The absence of detectable wood remains has led to the tentative suggestion that an unusual lined leather scabbard might have been used with this sword [163].

Pagan period Anglo-Saxon and contemporary Scandinavian evidence suggests that, on occasion, scabbards might feature mouth lockets and chapes [75,138,164]. The authors are unaware of the existence of unambiguous surviving Late Saxon chapes, but it is clear from surviving Viking scabbard remains that these were by no means a universal feature [121]. A contemporary scabbard chape from York is shown in Fig. 114. However, it must be noted that this is of a type normally found in the Baltic region [118,138].

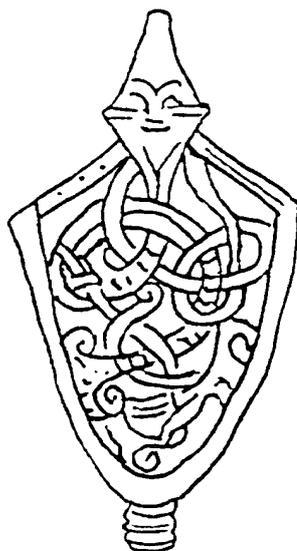


Figure 114

It is clear from illustrative evidence that scabbards could be slung from either a belt or baldric. Although a wide range of extant scabbard fittings are known from earlier Anglo-Saxon and pagan period continental contexts, there is little evidence for the method of scabbard suspension in the Late Saxon period

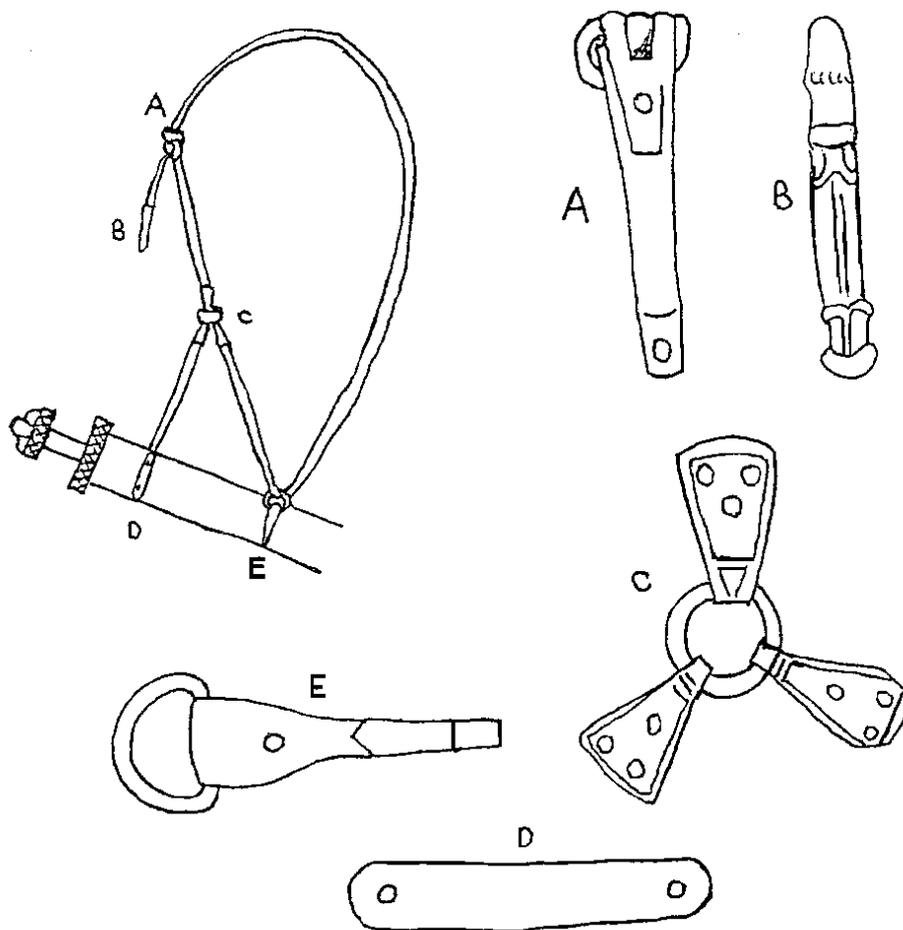


Figure 115

Early Saxon scabbard fittings could include strap holders, buckles, "buttons" and pyramidal studs whereas scabbard fittings from Late Saxon art are shown in Figure 22 [164,165,166,167]. A sword harness from the burial mound at Ballateare is shown in Fig. 115. Although this is a Viking burial, Wilson considers the harness mounts are of Anglo-Saxon origin [121].

j. The Axe

The occurrence of axes in Anglo-Saxon grave finds is very rare. Although it is acknowledged that ritual funerary custom may not reflect actual military usage, this does suggest that the axe was not accounted a prestigious weapon [168,170]. Similarly, the axe does not occur in Late Anglo-Saxon heriot formulae, the none inclusion of the axe in these documents is particularly revealing as they specifically detail military equipment [92]. It is probable that ordinary agricultural axes were used in extremity by the lower echelons of society. The eleventh century witnessed the introduction of the double handed axe, seen on the Bayeux Tapestry, amongst the warrior caste. It is likely that the use of this weapon was promulgated by the Scandinavian incursions and by the model afforded by troops retained during the reign of Cnut. Examples of double handed axeheads from London are shown in Fig. 27. Other Viking Age axeheads, as classified by Wheeler, are shown in Figure 116. Of these types, I and II are best regarded as tools.

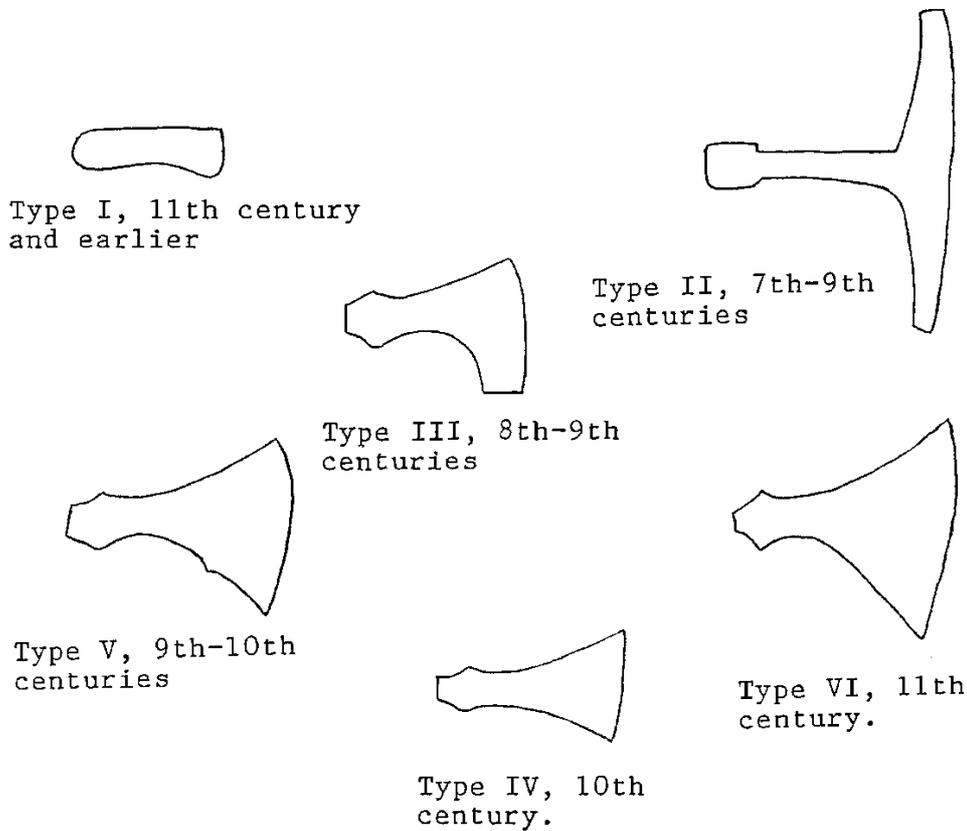


Figure 116

k. Banners

Illustrative evidence exists for the use of banners in a Late Saxon context and the use of a royal standard is attested by Bede [171]. The predominant type depicted in contemporary manuscripts is shown in Fig. 117i whilst Figures 117ii, iii, and iv illustrate analogous standards from the Bayeux Tapestry and the Carolingian Utrecht Psalter. It is noteworthy that Fig. 117ii may represent a windsock style standard akin to those known from antiquity [30,32,35]. It is probable that these banners were embroidered, a skill for which Anglo-Saxon women were famed, although appliquéd decoration cannot be ruled out.

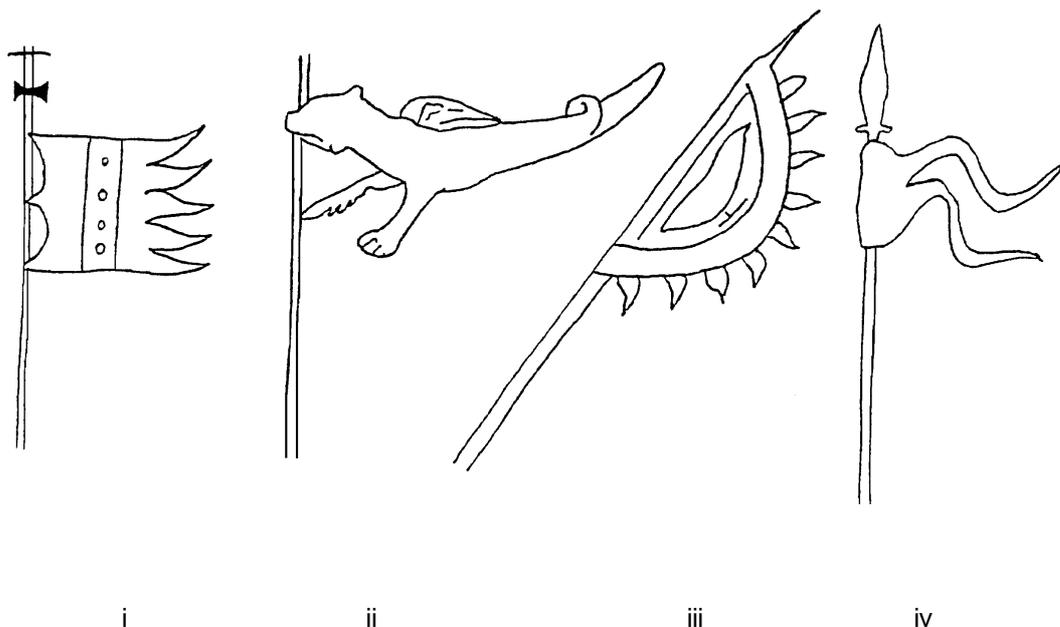


Figure 117

l. Missile Weapons

a. The Bow - archaeological, textual and pictorial evidence attest the use of the bow in Late Saxon England [35,172]. Literary evidence, most particularly that afforded by "The Battle of Maldon" also reveals that the bow could be used in a military context [173]. However, the comparatively low profile afforded the archer in art and literature together with the relative paucity of arrowheads in pagan period graves suggests that the bow was not viewed as a particularly prestigious weapon [172]. It is probable that the bow was extensively used in hunting and may, therefore, have been regarded more as a tool than a weapon per se.

A lone pagan period Saxon bow stave from Chessell Down measures 1.52m in length, this accords well with continental and illustrative evidence for bows of between 1.2 and 2.1 m long [172]. Manuscript evidence apparently depicting recurve bows may well be the product of iconographic tradition. Relatively few arrowheads are known from the archaeological record, especially from the Late Saxon period. This has led to the suggestion that fire hardened or bone points were also employed by archers [172]. The most common type of metal arrowhead throughout the Anglo-Saxon period

was "the leaf shaped blade variety with a circular cleft socket" (Manley), although barbed, bodkin-shaped and triangular arrowheads are known from eleventh century Winchester [172,174]. By contrast, the majority of Viking arrowheads often featured a pointed tang for attachment to the shaft [172]. The evidence of the Bayeux tapestry suggests that quivers could be carried at the waist or hung at the hip from a neck strap [4]. The Harley Psalter provides evidence of a bound quiver at the hip suspended from a baldric [90]. Alternatively it appears that large arrow bags placed on the ground were also utilised, a device often employed by the later medieval archer [175].

b. The Crossbow - literary sources suggest that the crossbow as a weapon was unknown in Anglo-Saxon England. Nevertheless, there is compelling evidence for the use of the crossbow in Pre-Conquest insular contexts, perhaps as a weapon of the chase. A seventh to eighth century crossbow nut from Ayrshire reflects the use of this bow in Northern Britain from a relatively early stage, this is borne out by Pictish stone carvings of crossbowmen [176,177]. In a Saxon setting both ninth and tenth century crossbow nuts and bolt heads are known from Winchester. These hail from sites of high status occupation where the use of sophisticated technology might be expected [176].

c. The Sling - depictions of slingers occur in Late Anglo-Saxon art. Although these often portray David vanquishing Goliath hunting scenes occasionally feature slingers. To what extent this simple but ancient weapon was used in a military context during our period is unknown. However, it is unlikely that its brutal effectiveness as a projectile weapon was recognised and might, on occasion, be exploited [35,178].

List of Abbreviations

Act.	Arch.Acta Archaeologia
ANS	Anglo-Norman Studies
Ant	Antiquity
Antiq. J.	Antiquaries Journal
Arch.	Archaeologia
Arch. J.	Archaeological Journal
ASE	Anglo-Saxon England
BAR	British Archaeological Reports (British series)
CAM	Conservation, Archaeology and Museums
Med Arch	Medieval Archaeology
Win 7ii	Winchester Studies
WWASE	Weapons and Warfare in Anglo-Saxon England, Oxford University
	Committee for Archaeology Monograph 21
YAJ	Yorkshire Archaeological Journal
YAT	York Archaeological Trust

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