



# **Determining the Functions of the Pre-Old English Runic Inscriptions.**

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## Table of Contents

<i>Determining the Functions of the Pre-Old English Runic Inscriptions.....</i>	<b>1</b>
<i>Table of Contents .....</i>	<b>3</b>
<i>Abstract.....</i>	<b>5</b>
<i>Acknowledgements .....</i>	<b>6</b>
<i>List of Abbreviations .....</i>	<b>8</b>
<i>List of Figures.....</i>	<b>9</b>
<i>List of Tables.....</i>	<b>12</b>
<b>1 Introduction.....</b>	<b>15</b>
<b>1.1 Aims of thesis .....</b>	<b>15</b>
<b>1.2 Structure of thesis .....</b>	<b>20</b>
1.2.1 Defining the ProERC and literature review .....	20
1.2.2 Pragmatics and the methodology .....	22
1.2.3 Summarising the analysis of the ProERC.....	24
<b>2 Methodology .....</b>	<b>27</b>
<b>2.1 Introduction .....</b>	<b>27</b>
<b>2.2 The ProERC .....</b>	<b>27</b>
<b>2.3 Literature review .....</b>	<b>36</b>
2.3.1 Literature review of the ProERC.....	37
2.3.2 Literature review of pragmatics in runology .....	40
<b>2.4 Historical pragmatics.....</b>	<b>47</b>
<b>2.5 Methodology of this thesis.....</b>	<b>51</b>
2.5.1 Linguistic analysis.....	51
2.5.2 The ‘Bad Data Problem’ and the ProERC .....	56
2.5.3 Pragmaphilological analysis.....	61
<b>2.6 Outline of ProERC analysis .....</b>	<b>66</b>
<b>3 The Pre-Old English Runic Inscriptions. ....</b>	<b>71</b>
<b>3.1 Bracteates.....</b>	<b>71</b>
3.1.1 Binham I (IK 604.1, 604.2) .....	72
3.1.2 Undley (IK374; Wax. OERC83) .....	79
3.1.3 Welbeck Hill (IK388; Wax. OERC87) .....	89
3.1.4 Discussion .....	93
3.1.5 Conclusions .....	103
<b>3.2 Brooches.....</b>	<b>106</b>
3.2.1 Boarley (Wax. OERC9) .....	107
3.2.2 Dover (Wax. OERC26) .....	113
3.2.3 Harford Farm (Wax. OERC14) .....	120
3.2.4 Hunstanton .....	129
3.2.5 Wakerley (Wax. OERC84) .....	133
3.2.6 West Heslerton (Wax. OERC96) .....	138
3.2.7 Discussion. ....	141

3.2.8	Conclusions .....	149
<b>3.3</b>	<b>Urns .....</b>	<b>151</b>
3.3.1	Spong Hill (Wax. OERC77).....	152
3.3.2	Loveden Hill (Wax. OERC54).....	163
3.3.3	Discussion .....	171
3.3.4	Conclusions .....	179
<b>3.4</b>	<b>Swords and Sword Fittings.....</b>	<b>180</b>
3.4.1	Ash Gilton (Wax. OERC2) .....	182
3.4.2	Chessell Down (Wax. OERC17).....	190
3.4.3	Faversham .....	198
3.4.4	Discussions.....	201
3.4.5	Conclusions .....	208
<b>3.5</b>	<b>Miscellaneous Items .....</b>	<b>211</b>
3.5.1	Caistor by Norwich Astragalus (Wax. OERC13).....	211
3.5.2	Cleatham Hanging Bowl (Wax. OERC18).....	219
3.5.3	Chessell Down (Wax. OERC16).....	225
3.5.4	Eye Fragment (Wax. OERC28).....	232
3.5.5	Selsey Fragments (Wax. OERC79).....	236
3.5.6	Watchfield Fitting (Wax. OERC86).....	241
<b>4</b>	<b><i>Discussion.....</i></b>	<b>250</b>
<b>4.1</b>	<b>Text production .....</b>	<b>250</b>
4.1.1	Summaries.....	250
4.1.2	Findings.....	254
4.1.3	Challenging Assumptions in Runological Literature .....	258
<b>4.2</b>	<b>Text Reception .....</b>	<b>261</b>
4.2.1	Summaries.....	261
4.2.2	Findings.....	264
<b>4.3</b>	<b>Textual analysis .....</b>	<b>269</b>
4.3.1	Lexical texts .....	269
4.3.2	Non-lexical texts .....	277
4.3.3	‘Hidden’ inscriptions.....	287
<b>4.4</b>	<b>Establishment of a ‘writing community’: social relationships and the PrOERC .....</b>	<b>289</b>
<b>5</b>	<b><i>Conclusions .....</i></b>	<b>292</b>
<b>5.1</b>	<b>Findings .....</b>	<b>292</b>
<b>5.2</b>	<b>Importance of my research .....</b>	<b>293</b>
5.2.1	In runology .....	293
5.2.2	In historical pragmatics .....	294
<b>5.3</b>	<b>Future research.....</b>	<b>294</b>
<b>6</b>	<b><i>Bibliography .....</i></b>	<b>296</b>



## Abstract

This thesis offers a comprehensive analysis of the pre-Old English runic corpus (ProERC)—runic inscriptions from Britain between c. 400 and 650 AD—to investigate the functions of the runic script. Two overarching research questions guide this study: what are the functions of runic script, and how can those functions be identified?

Previous research has largely approached these inscriptions from a neo-Grammarians perspective, focusing on phonological, morphological, and syntactic analysis to determine meaning. This approach has led to uneven results: while some inscriptions could be ‘read’ and their functions inferred, others, particularly the non-lexical texts that make up nearly a third of the corpus, could not be analysed in the same way. Non-lexical inscriptions do not form words and, as such, were often excluded from functional interpretation.

The field of runology, the study of runic inscriptions, has recently embraced more context-focused methodologies, including semiotics, sociolinguistics, and pragmatics. This thesis evaluates the applicability of pragmatics as a methodological framework for analysing runic inscriptions, concluding that while pragmatics is a valuable tool, it requires methodological adaptation for this purpose. The study employs a pragmatics-informed approach, dividing its analysis into two complementary areas: linguistic analysis and contextual analysis. The linguistic analysis focuses on lexical inscriptions, identifying formulae based on their structural patterns and assigning communicative functions accordingly. The contextual analysis applies pragmatology, a methodology that considers contextual factors such as the roles of the text producer and receiver to determine function. Both lexical and non-lexical inscriptions undergo this contextual examination.

This thesis reaches significant conclusions about the functions of inscriptions within the ProERC. Lexical texts exhibit a variety of functions, typically expressed through formulae dominated by personal names. These formulae often reflect the relationship between the rune-bearing object and the individual(s) mentioned in the text. Non-lexical texts, on the other hand, derive their functions primarily from their interaction with the rune-bearing object, mimicking the functions of lexical texts in similar contexts. The findings underscore the necessity of a context-forward analysis for each inscription to fully understand the functions of runic script in the corpus.

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## List of Abbreviations

* – reconstructed forms and sounds	ON – Old Norse
<. – developed from	OS – Old Saxon
>. – developed to	P-Gmc. – Proto-Germanic
acc. – accusative	plr. – plural
dat. – dative	PN – personal name
fem. – feminine	pres. – present tense
gen. – genitive	pret. – preterite
IK – <i>Ikonographischer Katalog</i>	PrOERC – pre-Old English Runic
number	Corpus
masc. – masculine	sg. – singular
N – noun	SGRC – South Germanic Runic
neut. – neuter	Corpus
nom. – nominative	V -- verb
OE – Old English	E/MC – early-to-mid century
OERC – Old English Runic Corpus	LC- late century
OF – Old Frisian	C – century
OFRC – Old Frisian Runic Corpus	MC- mid-century
OHG – Old High German	

## List of Figures

FIGURE 1 THE HUNSTANTON BROOCH, EDITED TO SHOW BOTH S- AND G-RUNES.	
IMAGE: NORFOLK ARCHAEOLOGICAL SERVICES. EDITS: JH.....	36
FIGURE 2 A DIAGRAM WHICH DEMONSTRATES THE NAMES OF EACH PART OF A RUNE,	
BEING A W-, A- AND N-RUNE RESPECTIVELY. IMAGE: JH.....	67
FIGURE 3 THE BINHAM BRACTEATE, IK 604.1. IMAGE: NORWICH CASTLE MUSEUM.	72
FIGURE 4 THE BINHAM BRACTEATE, IK 604.1 CLOSE-UP, SHOWING THE TEXT. IMAGE:	
NORWICH CASTLE MUSEUM. EDITS: JH. ....	74
FIGURE 5 THE UNDLEY BRACTEATE, IK374. IMAGE: THE BRITISH MUSEUM.....	79
FIGURE 6 THE WELBECK HILL BRACTEATE, IK 388. IMAGE: HANSON AUCTIONEERS.	
.....	89
FIGURE 7 THE WELBECK HILL BRACTEATE CLOSE-UP, SHOWING THE TEXT. IMAGE:	
HANSON AUCTIONEERS. EDITS: JH.....	91
FIGURE 8 A DIAGRAM OF BRACTEATE PRODUCTION FROM WICKER (2006: 436). EDITS:	
JH.....	94
FIGURE 9 THE BOARLEY BROOCH, FROM HINES (2006: 260).....	107
FIGURE 10 THE DOVER BROOCH. IMAGE: THE BRITISH MUSEUM. ....	113
FIGURE 11 THE DOVER BROOCH CLOSE-UP SHOWING ONE OF THE TEXTS. IMAGE: THE	
BRITISH MUSEUM. EDITS: JH. ....	119
FIGURE 12 THE DOVER BROOCH CLOSE-UP, SHOWING ONE OF THE TEXTS. IMAGE: THE	
BRITISH MUSEUM. EDITS: JH. ....	119
FIGURE 13 THE HARFORD FARM BROOCH. IMAGE: NORWICH CASTLE MUSEUM. ....	120
FIGURE 14 THE PIN OF THE HARFORD FARM BROOCH. IMAGE: NORWICH CASTLE	
MUSEUM/RUNES DATABASE.....	128

FIGURE 15 THE HUNSTANTON BROOCH. IMAGE: NORFOLK ARCHAEOLOGICAL SERVICES.....	129
FIGURE 16 THE WAKERLEY BROOCH, FROM ADAMS AND JACKSON (1988: 152). ....	133
FIGURE 17 THE WAKERLEY BROOCH CLOSE-UP, SHOWING THE TEXT, FROM ADAMS AND JACKSON (1988: 152). EDITS: JH. ....	136
FIGURE 18 THE WEST HESLERTON BROOCH, FROM HAUGHTON AND POWESLAND 1999: 311). EDITS: JH.....	138
FIGURE 20 EXAMPLE OF KENTISH STYLE DRESS AND BROOCH POSITION. IMAGE: THEGNS OF MERCIA. EDITS: JH. ....	145
FIGURE 20 EXAMPLES OF BROOCH POSITIONS PINNING OUTER LAYERS. IMAGE: THEGNS OF MERCIA. EDITS: JH.....	145
FIGURE 21 URNS C1224 AND C1564. IMAGE: JH. EDITS: JH. ....	152
FIGURE 22 THE ALU STAMP. IMAGE: NORWICH CASTLE MUSEUM. EDITS: JH. ....	161
FIGURE 23 THE LOVEDEN HILL URN. IMAGE: THE BRITISH MUSEUM. ....	163
FIGURE 24 IMAGES SHOWING THE 'SIGHTWAYS' OF THE URNS. IMAGE: JH. EDITS: JH. ....	175
FIGURE 25 IMAGE HIGHLIGHTING THE INSCRIPTIONS ON BOTH LOVEDEN HILL (L) AND SPONG HILL (R) FROM ABOVE. IMAGES: SKETCHFAB AND JH. EDITS: JH. ....	178
FIGURE 26 THE ASH GILTON POMMEL. IMAGE: JH.....	182
FIGURE 27 ASH GILTON INSCRIPTION SHOWING REPEATED E-RUNE AND AN M-RUNE. EDITS: JH.....	187
FIGURE 28 THE CHESSELL DOWN SCABBARD MOUTHPIECE. IMAGE: THE BRITISH MUSEUM.....	190
FIGURE 29 THE FAVERSHAM POMMEL. IMAGE: THE BRITISH MUSEUM.....	198

FIGURE 30 IMAGE OF EXPECTED WEAR ON A POMMEL FROM BRUNNING (2019) (L), AND THE ASH GILTON POMMEL (R). IMAGES: BRUNNING (2019) AND NATIONAL MUSEUMS LIVERPOOL. EDITS: JH. ....	202
FIGURE 31 IMAGES SHOWING THE POSITIONING OF A SWORD ON THE BODY. IMAGES: THEGNS OF MERCIA. EDITS: JH. ....	207
FIGURE 32 THE CAISTOR-BY-NORWICH ASTRAGALUS. IMAGE: NORWICH CASTLE MUSEUM. ....	211
FIGURE 33 A ROE-DEER, WITH ANKLE AREA HIGHLIGHTED. IMAGE: BRITANNICA. ...	212
FIGURE 34 THE CLEATHAM HANGING-BOWL. IMAGE: JH. ....	219
FIGURE 35 THE CLEATHAM HANGING-BOWL CLOSE-UP, SHOWING THE TEXT. IMAGE: JH. EDITS: JH. ....	221
FIGURE 36 THE CHESSELL DOWN PAIL CLOSE-UP, SHOWING THE TEXT. IMAGE: THE BRITISH MUSEUM. EDITS: JH. ....	225
FIGURE 37 THE EYE FRAGMENT. IMAGE: SUFFOLK ARCHAEOLOGICAL SERVICES.....	232
FIGURE 38 THE SELSEY FRAGMENTS. IMAGE: THE BRITISH MUSEUM.....	236
FIGURE 39 THE WATCHFIELD MOUNT CLOSE-UP, SHOWING THE TEXT. IMAGE: OXFORDSHIRE MUSEUM. ....	247
FIGURE 40 THE HUNSTANTON BROOCH CLOSE-UP, SHOWING THE NON-RUNIC CHARACTER. IMAGE: NORFOLK ARCHAEOLOGICAL SERVICES. EDITS: JH. ....	281

## List of Tables

TABLE 1 THE PROERC. SUMMARY OF THE PROERC; DATES FROM HINES (2019: 58-59). TRANSLITERATIONS BY JH. ....	30
TABLE 2 COMPARISON OF ALTERNATIVELY DEFINED PROERC.....	33
TABLE 3 THE PROERC FORMULAE. ....	53
TABLE 4 PREVIOUS INTERPRETATIONS OF BINHAM.....	73
TABLE 5 BINHAM AUTOPSY. ....	77
TABLE 6 PREVIOUS INTERPRETATIONS OF UNDLEY.. ....	82
TABLE 7 UNDLEY AUTOPSY. ....	88
TABLE 8 PREVIOUS INTERPRETATIONS OF WELBECK HILL.. ....	90
TABLE 9 THE WELBECK HILL AUTOPSY.....	93
TABLE 10 PREVIOUS INTERPRETATIONS OF BOARLEY.....	108
TABLE 11 BOARLEY AUTOPSY. ....	112
TABLE 12 PREVIOUS INTERPRETATIONS OF DOVER.....	114
TABLE 13 DOVER AUTOPSY. ....	118
TABLE 14 PREVIOUS INTERPRETATIONS OF HARFORD FARM. ....	121
TABLE 15 PREVIOUS INTERPRETATIONS OF HUNSTANTON.....	130
TABLE 16 HUNSTANTON AUTOPSY .....	131
TABLE 17 PREVIOUS INTERPRETATIONS OF WAKERLEY .....	134
TABLE 18 WAKERLEY AUTOPSY .....	135
TABLE 19 PREVIOUS INTERPRETATIONS OF WEST HESLERTON.....	139
TABLE 20 WEST HESLERTON AUTOPSY .....	140
TABLE 21 DESCRIPTIONS OF THE SPONG HILL URNS ACCORDING TO HILLS (2023: 48-49).....	153
TABLE 22 PREVIOUS INTERPRETATIONS OF SPONG HILL.....	155



TABLE 23 SPONG HILL AUTOPSY .....	161
TABLE 24 PREVIOUS INTERPRETATIONS OF LOVEDEN HILL .....	164
TABLE 25 LOVEDEN HILL AUTOPSY .....	167
TABLE 26 PREVIOUS INTERPRETATIONS OF ASH GILTON .....	183
TABLE 27 ASH GILTON AUTOPSY .....	187
TABLE 28 PREVIOUS INTERPRETATIONS OF CHESSELL DOWN (SCABBARD MOUTHPIECE) .....	192
TABLE 29 CHESSELL DOWN (SCABBARD MOUTHPIECE) AUTOPSY.....	195
TABLE 30 PREVIOUS INTERPRETATIONS OF FAVERSHAM .....	199
TABLE 31 FAVERSHAM AUTOPSY .....	200
TABLE 32 PREVIOUS INTERPRETATION OF CAISTOR-BY-NORWICH .....	213
TABLE 33 CAISTOR-BY-NORWICH AUTOPSY .....	217
TABLE 34 PREVIOUS INTERPRETATIONS OF CLEATHAM .....	220
TABLE 35 CLEATHAM AUTOPSY .....	221
TABLE 36 PREVIOUS INTERPRETATIONS OF CHESSELL DOWN (PAIL) .....	226
TABLE 37 CHESSELL DOWN (PAIL) AUTOPSY .....	229
TABLE 38 PREVIOUS INTERPRETATIONS OF EYE .....	233
TABLE 39 EYE AUTOPSY .....	234
TABLE 40 PREVIOUS INTERPRETATIONS OF SELSEY .....	237
TABLE 41 SELSEY AUTOPSY .....	239
TABLE 42 PREVIOUS INTERPRETATIONS OF WATCHFIELD.....	242
TABLE 43 WATCHFIELD AUTOPSY .....	247
TABLE 44 THE PROERC FORMULA .....	269
TABLE 45 SIMPLE-NAME FORMULA DESIGNATION POSSIBILITIES .....	273
TABLE 46 THE NON-LEXICAL TEXTS IN THE PROERC. ....	278

TABLE 47 GRAF'S (2012) SCRIPT TYPES APPLIED TO THE NON-LEXICAL TEXTS OF THE	
PROERC. ....	282

## 1 Introduction.

### 1.1 Aims of thesis

What are the earliest surviving texts in the language we recognise as English or its predecessor, Old English? We know it is not William Shakespeare's plays, misunderstanding the term Old English to mean 'older English'; another option is Middle English texts through Geoffrey Chaucer or John Gower. We can go further, perhaps saying that the earliest instances of the English language can be traced back to the period known as Old English, which was spoken from roughly the fifth to the eleventh centuries, and that English evolved from the Germanic languages brought to Britain by the Anglo-Saxons, a group of tribes from what is now Germany, Denmark, and the Netherlands. Discussing the earliest instances of Old English, we can mention the seventh-century *Cædmon's Hymn*, a religious poem written by a supposedly illiterate and unmusical cow-herder, or the enigmatic eighth-century Franks Casket, a whale's bone chest depicting a range of biblical and mythological scenes with an inscription both in Latin and in Old English, or more likely the epic poem *Beowulf*, charting the rise and fall of the eponymous hero.

Very few would say that the earliest instances of the English language are found in the pre-Old English runic inscriptions. Nonetheless, this does not make the fact any less accurate that the earliest stage of the Germanic language that later became English is not Old English but pre-Old English and that the earliest attestations of the English language can be found in a small corpus of 24 runic inscriptions dated between the fifth and the mid-seventh century, before the aforementioned *Cædmon's Hymn*, the Frank's Casket, and *Beowulf*. These inscriptions are written in the runic alphabet, otherwise called the *futhorc*, named after the first six letters. They are short inscriptions of up to three words long, and most of them are single words such as personal names. One of the challenges of

these inscriptions is that some are fragmentary, meaning that they are incomplete due to damage, or they are considered non-lexical, meaning the inscription cannot be deciphered. The inscriptions are on a range of small, portable objects, such as brooches, urns, swords, bracteates, and other items (cf. 2.2).

These inscriptions are studied by scholars called runologists, who aim to research runic inscriptions using their knowledge of historical linguistics and archaeology, among other disciplines. The pre-Old English runic corpus is not well studied; though a generalisation, it can be said that the study of the Scandinavian inscriptions dominates runology, and this is understandable, partly due to the large number of runic inscriptions found in the Scandinavian countries Norway, Denmark, and Sweden, and the success in teaching people about the Scandinavian runic inscriptions both at university and engaging the public. The smaller sets of runic inscriptions, such as the pre-Old English runic corpus (henceforth ProERC), are, arguably, understudied. There is no ‘corpus edition’ which would provide a reader with all known inscriptions and their relevant information, simply, for example, what they say, and few scholars regularly work on the pre-Old English inscriptions, though Waxenberger (forthc.) will rectify this. Several important aspects of these inscriptions have not been touched on in existing scholarship (cf. 2.3), mainly the functions of script, which I will explore in this thesis.

This PhD project confronts the challenge of an inconsistently studied runic corpus by applying new methods to the ProERC to evaluate the core question of any early attestations of a language: the function of the language itself, i.e. what is the language being used for, by whom, and why? This thesis aims to collect the earliest runic inscriptions from Britain and analyse the inscriptions using a pragmatics-

informed methodology. My analysis will determine the different functions of the runic script, asking:

- 1) what are the functions of the runic script in Britain c.400-650AD?
- 2) how do we determine the functions of the runic script?

One might think that the study of the PrOERC that focuses on the function of the texts themselves would focus on ‘reading’ the texts, examining what they say, how they say it, and what the text means. Though this is undoubtedly part of the methodology of this thesis (cf.2.5.1), almost a third of the texts in the PrOERC cannot be analysed this way due to their fragmentary or non-lexical nature.

Contextual information can aid in the understanding of the function of these texts, both lexical and non-lexical.

Historical pragmatics is a branch of linguistics that studies how context influences the interpretation of meaning in communication in the past (cf. 2.4). The discipline desires to go beyond the literal meaning of words and instead examines how people in the past used language in real-life situations, how listeners or readers interpret it, and how factors like social norms, cultural background, and the specific circumstances of the interaction shape meaning.

One of the critical concepts in historical pragmatics is context. Context refers to the circumstances, conditions, or factors surrounding and giving meaning to an event, situation, or information. It helps to understand why something is happening or why it is relevant by providing background and situational details. Pragmatic context specifically refers to the situational factors and background information influencing how language is interpreted in communication. Pragmatic context is essential for grasping the full meaning of any instance of language, whether historical or not. Though pragmatic context is essential for understanding how

language functioned in the past, defining historical context can be tricky. It includes a wide range of factors, which perhaps include the consideration of:

- historical period: the specific era or moment in which the communication occurred. Language use and interpretation are influenced by that time's norms, values, and events.
- cultural norms and social structures: the social, cultural, and political norms that shaped communication. This includes understanding the roles, hierarchies, and expectations of people within the language community that existed during the period
- speaker's intent and audience reception: the intentions of the speaker or writer and how their audience genres and textual conventions likely interpreted their message. These conventions affect how texts are constructed and understood by their audiences.

However, there are issues with establishing context for the ProERC. Information regarding the pragmatic context of the inscriptions is often extensive, perhaps looking at factors which would be considered medial and cultural (Culpeper 2009: 154), focusing on specific social situations and the broader cultural context, which would be almost impossible to reconstruct with individual instances of language use in fifth and sixth century Britain. This thesis, instead, focuses on the pragmatic context that can be inferred or reconstructed, using what is classed as 'local' context (cf. Leech 1983; Culpeper 2009). 'Local' context is gaining pragmatic context from the text itself- how it was written, when, and by whom, as well as the content of the text and the writing surface on which it is inscribed. Using this information, I have established clear boundaries for what information can be used to establish pragmatic

context and consistently examine each runic inscription in the PrOERC using this method (cf. 2.5.3).

By examining the entire PrOERC using an innovative context-forward approach, I can come to conclusions concerning the functions of the script. The textual analysis that all lexical texts undergo reveals patterns in the surviving linguistic data: the PrOERC is dominated by personal names, both of men and women, which are used in a range of formulae that dictate the function of the personal name in relation to the object (cf. 4.3). Most names appear singly, indicating the denotation of owner, donor or maker, but other texts which feature another word or more alongside the personal name are more specifically donor or maker. Whilst the textual analysis does reveal some of the functions of the script, the context illuminates the textual analysis by providing further qualifying information to narrow down the functions or challenge ideas concerning the functions of particular words. I also assign functions to the non-lexical texts comprising a third of the PrOERC. The functions of the non-lexical texts mirror those of the texts that share a common writing surface. Non-lexical texts are examples of script imitation and function similarly to their lexical counterparts depending on the writing surface on which they are inscribed; therefore, they imitate the script and the function. It is revealed through the contextual analysis that the writing surface is critical to understanding how the text is produced, when, where and by whom, and who, when and where the text was read. These concepts, as explored in pragmaphilology (cf. 2.5.3), dictate the realisation of the functions of the script: in short, without the text being produced and seen, the intention of the text- its function- cannot be realised, and to be produced and seen is dictated by the writing surface and thus the rune-bearing object. Therefore, I suggest that through an in-depth study of the writing

surface itself, and the changes to the surface made by incising the runes, the functions of the PrOERC can be better understood.

## 1.2 Structure of thesis

### 1.2.1 Defining the PrOERC and literature review.

Whilst Chapter 1 is the introduction, Chapter 2 focuses on my methodology. It starts by assessing the definitions of the PrOERC. Previously, the PrOERC was not a separate corpus, but the inscriptions were included in the Old English Runic Corpus (OERC). It was not until Waxenberger (2010, 2019) that the OERC and the PrOERC were split into two corpora. Nonetheless, the PrOERC is inconsistently defined in runological literature, and to demonstrate this, I provide comparisons between the lists of Looijenga (2003), Waxenberger (2013, 2019), and Hines (2019), who provide the most recent lists of the PrOERC. Waxenberger's (2019) definition hinges on the inscriptions belonging to a specific stage in the development of pre-Old English. However, many inscriptions in my version of the runic corpus do not provide evidence for this; there are challenges concerning the inclusion of texts that cannot be classified as 'language' and, therefore, do not enhance our understanding of the linguistic stage of Old English. Notably, eleven texts included in this thesis' definition of the PrOERC are non-lexical, representing no known language and thus not meeting Waxenberger's (2019) stricter criteria. Since my goal is to investigate the function of runic script rather than the surviving instances of pre-Old English, a broader definition of the PrOERC than previously established is required to align with the research objectives. Consequently, I define the PrOERC as a runic corpus comprising inscriptions discovered in Britain, dated to approximately 400–650 AD.



Next, I provide a literature review. The literature review is divided into two parts, reflecting the study's focus on runology and historical pragmatics. The first part reviews scholarship on the PrOERC while the second examines the application of pragmatics methodologies to runological data. Early scholarship did not distinguish the PrOERC from the Old English Runic Corpus (OERC). Waxenberger (2010, 2019) was pivotal in separating the OERC into two subcorpora: the earlier PrOERC and the later OERC. Works such as Hines (1990), Parsons (1999), and Looijenga (2003) also categorised the English material based on phonology, graphology, and chronology, and note a change in these aspects c.650AD, marking two distinct corpora. No comprehensive corpus editions of the PrOERC or OERC exist yet, though editions are anticipated through the Niedersächsische Akademie der Wissenschaften zu Göttingen project 'Runische Schriftlichkeit in den germanischen Sprachen' (RuneS). Current handlists provide limited overviews of inscriptions, focusing on specific research questions rather than a thorough corpus edition. Major works dealing with the PrOERC include Elliott (1959, 1989), Page (1973, 1999), Parsons (1999), Looijenga (1997, 2003), the many articles of Hines, Bammesberger, and Odenstedt, as well as the work of Waxenberger (2010, 2013). While prior scholarship sometimes explores the communicative functions of runic inscriptions, these discussions have largely lacked a pragmatics-focused theoretical framework. Early works debated whether runic texts were primarily magical or ritualistic. Later scholars, such as Page (1999) and Antonsen (2002), critiqued overly imaginative interpretations of some of the runic inscriptions. Zimmermann's (2006, 2010) pioneering work introduced speech act theory to runology, applying frameworks by Austin (1962) and Searle (1969) to analyse Danish fibula inscriptions. This approach emphasised the communicative context, integrating archaeological data and

inscriptional features into the study of the inscriptions. However, Zimmermann acknowledged limitations, particularly the fragmentary nature of historical data and the lack of explicit linguistic markers necessary for identifying illocutionary acts. Kaiser (2021) expanded on this work through the Old Frisian Runic Corpus (OFRC), critiquing the applicability of speech act theory to corpora with no verb forms and fragmentary inscriptions. Kaiser proposed a broader pragmatic approach. Her model built on prior frameworks (Düwel 2008; Waldispühl 2013), incorporating socio-cultural and material analyses. However, her text-type formulae left non-lexical and fragmentary inscriptions unaddressed, signalling methodological challenges for future studies. The review underscores the need for methodological innovation in studying the PrOERC, which lacks comprehensive corpus editions or detailed analyses of its distinct features and communicative functions.

### 1.2.2 Pragmatics and the methodology

After this, pragmatics is defined and methodologies within the field examined to assess their suitability for the PrOERC. Historical pragmatics bridges pragmatics (language in use) and historical linguistics (language variation and change). Two major pragmatic approaches exist: the ‘Anglo-American’ view, which treats pragmatics as a linguistic component (e.g., speech acts, deixis), and the ‘European’ view, which adopts a broader cultural and social perspective, considering pragmatics a lens for studying language use. This thesis aligns with the European approach, particularly its ‘context-forward’ sociopragmatic framework, which prioritises the study of the social and cultural conditions shaping language. Historical pragmatics is divided into subfields: diachronic pragmatics (examining change over time), pragmahistorical linguistics (exploring pragmatic factors in linguistic change), and

pragmaphilology. Pragmaphilology studies the pragmatic features of texts or periods, focusing on factors like social relationships, sociohistorical context, and communicative intentions.

The thesis employs pragmaphilology, analysing inscriptions using a combination of linguistic formulae and reconstructed social contexts. By integrating multiple linguistic aspects (morphology, syntax, etc.) with a systematic contextual analysis, the study advances a sociopragmatic methodology tailored to the needs of the runic data. The PrOERC corpus is unsuitable for many linguistic pragmatic analyses, including speech act theory, due to its limited verb data, fragmentary inscriptions, and non-lexical content. As a result, an alternative linguistic analysis grounded in phonology, morphology, and syntax is adopted. This approach follows Kaiser (2021) and Düwel et al. (2020) by assigning formulae to inscriptions based on lexical units and their morphological features. Formulae represent communicative intentions derived from the structure and content of the inscriptions. Non-lexical and partially deciphered texts, which cannot be assigned formulae, are analysed through pragmaphilological methods focusing on contextual information. Additionally, non-lexical inscriptions are examined using Graf's (2010, 2011, 2012) framework for categorising script imitation. The pragmaphilological analysis is then outlined, defining terms key to the study, and outlining what type of contextual information is key to the pragmatic analysis of the texts.

Furthermore, the issue of 'bad data' is discussed. The challenges of working with historical linguistic data are well-documented. Labov (1972, 1994) characterised historical data as 'impoverished', highlighting issues like accidental survival, non-representative vernaculars, and fragmentary or corrupted records. For

example, materials like metal artifacts survive more readily than organic ones, leading to imbalanced datasets. Some inscriptions may not reflect spoken language (e.g., non-lexical inscriptions), and damage over time often obscures text, as seen with the Chessell Down pail and Eye fragment. Runology exemplifies these challenges. The survival of runic data depends heavily on the materials used (e.g., the rare preservation of wood inscriptions like the Bryggen finds). Fragmentary and damaged inscriptions complicate interpretation but can be mitigated through consistent transliteration practices. Ultimately, while Labov's concerns are valid, modern approaches emphasise reconstructing context and treating all surviving forms—spoken or written, lexical or non-lexical—as valid data for pragmatic analysis.

Finally, an outline of the methodology is given, with a step-by-step framework on the application of the methodology to each runic inscription in the corpus.

### 1.2.3 Summarising the analysis of the PrOERC

Chapter 3 details each individual runic inscription in the PrOERC. The inscriptions are grouped depending on the rune-bearing object under analysis. This means that there are bracteates, brooches, sword fittings and urns grouped together, alongside a 'miscellaneous' chapter which details singly-attested rune-bearing objects, which feature an astragalus bone gaming piece, a possible finger ring, a metal piece, and a case fitting. The sub-chapters all begin with individual corpus-style entries for each inscription, providing all information needed for the second part of the sub-chapter, which is the pragmaphilological discussion determining the function of text for that

group of objects. Each sub-chapter comes to conclusions about the functions of the texts on particular objects. The pragmaphilological discussions come to conclusions about the text production and reception of the texts, concluding that the object that the text is inscribed on is key to the production and reception of the text, ultimately dictating the function of runic script.

Chapter 4 summarises the findings of Chapter 3. Some inscriptions were likely directly engraved by metalsmiths or potters as part of object creation or repair. Some texts may have been added by owners, particularly on personal items like brooches. Texts produced via stamping or die-making indicate early integration into object design. Analysing wear patterns and production methods helps contextualise the timing and creators of these inscriptions. The reception of runic texts is shaped by two main factors: the physical characteristics of the writing surface and the function of the inscribed object. These elements determine how the text is viewed and whether it achieves its communicative purpose. The interaction between the text and the object—both facilitating and constraining visibility—is crucial. Many inscriptions remain hidden unless the owner chooses to reveal them, though some objects, like urns, bypass this dynamic by being integral to communal rituals. The durability and portability of runic inscriptions allow them to be received across changing contexts, extending their relevance beyond their original creation.

The analysis classifies texts in the PrOERC corpus using formulae based on their lexical composition and communicative functions. Lexical texts are assigned one of five identified formulae, while non-lexical texts are not assigned formulae. Personal names dominate the corpus, often serving as identifiers. Ambiguities in interpretation are addressed, considering context, such as the object's function or

repair history. The analysis emphasises the relationships between the rune-bearing objects and the individuals mentioned, with formulae often specifying the object's ownership, creation, or gifting. However, challenges in classification arise, particularly with incomplete or ambiguous inscriptions, and further study is needed to clarify certain formulae's communicative functions. While non-lexical texts are not assigned specific meanings, their presence indicates an understanding of writing as a medium of communication. The function of these inscriptions can be interpreted through their pragmatic context, much like lexical texts. For instance, the non-lexical texts might imitate the communicative functions of simple-name or maker's formulas seen in other inscriptions. Ultimately, these texts, whether lexical or non-lexical, likely served to mark the relationship between the object and its owner or maker.

## 2 Methodology

### 2.1 Introduction

This chapter establishes the methodology of my thesis, which is grounded in historical pragmatics. It begins by defining the PrOERC and identifying key challenges associated with this corpus, including the brevity of inscriptions, the presence of non-lexical elements, and the complexities of interpretation. Next, it examines previous research on the pre-Old English Runic Corpus (PrOERC) and evaluates pragmatics-based methodologies previously applied in runology, providing a critical review of relevant scholarship. Particular attention is given to the theoretical foundations of these pragmatic approaches and their applicability to the runic corpora under study. The chapter then outlines the theoretical framework of my own methodology. Finally, the chapter presents a detailed, step-by-step application of the methodology for each inscription.

### 2.2 The PrOERC

Runes are graphemes: a grapheme is the smallest unit of a writing system that represents a single sound or functional unit of meaning in a language. It is the written counterpart to a phoneme, which is the smallest unit of sound in a language. Runes belong to a writing system called *futhoric*, named after the first six letters of the writing system and are primarily used by Germanic language speakers from c.200 AD through to the sixteenth century (Düwel 2008: 2). In the British Isles, runic writing began c.400 AD with the arrival of the Germanic-speaking peoples to the islands and lasted in their epigraphic form until the eleventh century (Waxenberger 2019: 61). Alongside being incised on a wide range of portable objects, runic inscriptions in Britain can also be found in manuscript form (cf. Derolez 1954, 1991, Symons 2016, Van Renterghem 2018).

A runic corpus is a set of runic inscriptions defined by a set of criteria; criteria for these groupings are often geographical, concerned with a specific period, use of a particular *futhorc* or a mixture of these. For further discussion on the history of scholarship on different runic corpora and the creation of corpus editions, cf. younger *futhorc* inscriptions from modern Sweden (Källström 2021), younger *futhorc* inscriptions from modern Norway (Knirk 2021), older *futhorc* inscriptions, particularly the South Germanic runic corpus (henceforth SGRC) and the Scandinavian inscriptions (Zimmermann 2021), runic inscriptions from modern-day England and the Netherlands (Findell 2021), and younger *futhorc* inscriptions in Britain (Barnes 2021).

A crucial development resulting from the work of Waxenberger (2010) is the division of the OERC into two: a Pre-Old English subcorpus and an Old English subcorpus. The PreOERC includes inscriptions produced between c. 425–650AD (Waxenberger 2019: 61) using what she calls the ‘pre-*futhorc*’. The ‘pre-*futhorc*’ is ‘close to the Common Germanic *futhorc* (= Older *futhorc*) of 24 characters but was extended and modified during the Pre-OE period (ca. 425-610/650)’ (Waxenberger 2019: 60). There was a development of the pre-Old English *futhorc* with the addition of new runes and the assignment of new values to some of the older ones to accommodate the ongoing reorganization of the vowel systems in Germanic dialects around the North Sea geographical area during this period. The inventory of the Common Germanic *futhorc* had to be modified due to specific sound changes happening in pre-Old English, resulting in a modified grapheme inventory. As summarised by Waxenberger (2019), the changes are as follows:



- The older-**a** rune ᚠ, which previously had the sound value /a(:)/ with allophones [a], [a:], [æ], and [æ:] , adopted a new sound value /æ(:)/, whilst the previous sound value became attached to a new grapheme ᚦ
- The allophones of the older **a**- rune are phonemicised, receiving new graphemes: /ɔ̃(:)/ and /a(:)/ are assigned ᚦ and ᚠ respectively
- The older **o**-rune ᚩ was affected by i-umlaut /o(:)/ > /œ(:)/, with the grapheme now representing the new sound value in the i-umlaut environment; in a non-i-umlaut environment, the new rune ᚦ / ɔ̃/ takes its place

There are difficulties in defining the chronology of these sound changes (cf. Waxenberger 2019), which results in uncertain interpretations of some of the inscriptions. Difficulties with chronology are partially caused by issues of pinpointing the date range for the object and/or the inscription and pinpointing the date range for the sound changes. Nonetheless, the new and modified runes with the new sound values appear in the Harford Farm inscription, making the inscription, dated mid-to-late seventh century, the cut-off point for the ProERC.

In this thesis, the term ‘ProERC’ is used as a definition for the corpus, but strictly speaking, the definition established by Waxenberger (2019) relies on the inscriptions being part of the linguistic stage in the development of Old English. Still, many of the inscriptions listed in my version of the runic corpus below do not provide information regarding this, mainly because they do not feature specific sound changes as outlined above. Furthermore, there are issues regarding the inclusion of texts that could not be considered ‘language’ and thus do not contribute to our understanding of the linguistic stage of pre-Old English. There are eleven texts in this thesis’ definition of the ProERC which are non-lexical and thus are not

examples of known language, and therefore could not be considered pre-Old English in the strict sense Waxenberger (2019) outlines. Since I aim to determine the function of runic script, not the function of surviving instances of pre-Old English, a more expansive definition of the PrOERC than previously established is needed to suit the research aims of this thesis. Therefore, I define the PrOERC as a runic corpus that features inscriptions with find spots in Britain, dated c.400-650 AD and have no diagnostic features that place them in another runic corpus.

With the splitting of the Old English runic material into two corpora, there are now up-to-date handlists to consult when defining the PrOERC for my thesis (Hines 1990, 2019, Waxenberger 2010, 2013, forthc.), and the RuneS database. Runic inscriptions are continually being found across Europe, including in Britain; this list reflects the known ones included in this thesis as of late 2024. The PrOERC, according to this work, is as follows:

***Table 1 The PrOERC. Summary of the PrOERC; dates from Hines (2019: 58-59). Transliterations by JH.***

<b>Find</b>	<b>Object description</b>	<b>Dating</b>	<b>Transliteration</b>
			<i>Principles of transliteration are discussed in 2.6</i>
Ash Gilton pommel	Silver sword pommel	E/MC6	...(e)[.]sigim(e)r[.](e)...
Binham bracteate	Gold bracteate	LC5	<b>wa(a)t</b>
Boarley brooch	Disc brooch	LC6/E C7	<b>at(o)(i)l &lt;-</b>

Caistor by Norwich astragalus	Roe-deer astragalus, a gaming piece	E/MC5	<b>raiħan</b>
Chessell Down pail	Copper alloy pail	E/MC6	<b>](b)wseeeekkkaaa</b>
Chessell Down scabbard mouthpiece	Silver scabbard mouthpiece	LC5/E C6	<b>ako:(.)ri</b>
Cleatham bowl	Copper alloy hanging-bowl	LC6/E C7	<b>]edih</b>
Dover brooch	Disc brooch	MC7	<b>{s/b}li(.)i{s/b}</b>  <b>(i)w(d)</b>
Eye fragment	Metal fragment	C5-C7	<b>gub[</b>
Faversham sword pommel	Sword pommel	LC6/E C7	<b>a</b>
Hunstanton brooch	Open work brooch	C6	<b>(.)s(t)(u)usu{i^g/g^i}</b>
Harford Farm brooch	Disc brooch	M/LC7	<b>luda:gibœtæsīgilæ</b>  <b>æp(.)</b>
Loveden Hill urn	Cremation urn	C5/C6	<b>sīp{a/æ}b{a/æ}d.{p/w}i{ u/k}w.hl{a/æ}(.)</b>
Selsey fragments	Gold fragments, possibly a finger ring	LC-C8	<b>]brnrn[</b>  <b>](æ)n(.)m(.)[u/l][</b>
Spong Hill urns (x3)	Cremation urns	MC5	<b>alu</b>

Undley bracteate	Gold bracteate	LC5	<b>g<sup>^</sup>ag<sup>^</sup>āg<sup>^</sup>a.maga.medu</b>
Wakerley brooch	Great square-headed brooch	E/MC6	<b>buhu(i)</b>
Watchfield case fitting	Copper alloy case fitting	E/MC6	<b>haribœki:wusa</b>
Welbeck Hill bracteate	Silver bracteate	C6	<b>læw</b>
West Heslerton brooch	Cruciform brooch	E/MC6	<b>neim</b>

This is larger than previously defined in both Waxenberger (2010, 2019) and Hines (1990, 2019) because the corpus is defined here as one that includes all runic inscriptions with find-spots in Britain that can be dated before the mid-seventh century and do not contain any diagnostic features which would place them in another corpus. For example, the Ufo I/Bateman brooch (SG121) was found in Britain but possibly has features of a Germanic dialect spoken on the Continent and is therefore excluded from this corpus (cf. Düwel, Nedoma and Oehrl 2020: 651-656); furthermore, the notoriously tricky Skanomodu solidus is excluded for similar reasons (for extensive analysis on the solidus, cf. Kaiser 2021: 195-211). Any coins, too, are excluded due to the dating of the coins to post-c.650 AD (Blackburn 1991: 137-198).

There are some differences in the content of the PrOERC compared to the other handlists for numerous reasons. Below is a comparison of the handlists:

*Table 2 Comparison of alternatively defined PrOERC.*

Higgs	Hines (2019: 58-59)	Looijenga (2003: 276-295)	Waxenberger (2013: 55-59), (2019)
Ash Gilton pommel	✓	✓	✓
Binham bracteate	✓	Not found yet	✓
Boarley brooch	✓	✓	✓
Caistor by Norwich astragalus	✓	✓	✓
Chessell Down pail	✓	✓	✓
Chessell Down scabbard mouthpiece	✓	✓	✓
Cleatham bowl	✓	✓	✓
Dover brooch	✓	✓	✓
Eye fragment	✓	Not found yet	✓
Faversham sword pommel	X	X	X
Hunstanton brooch	X	✓	X
Harford Farm brooch	X	✓	✓
Loveden Hill urn	✓	✓	✓
Selsey fragments	X	✓	✓
Spong Hill urns (x3)	✓	✓	✓

Undley bracteate	✓	✓	✓
Wakerley brooch	✓	✓	✓
Watchfield case fitting	✓	✓	✓
Welbeck Hill bracteate	✓	✓	✓
West Heslerton brooch	✓	✓	✓

Included in my corpus but excluded from Waxenberger (2010, 2013, 2019) are the single rune inscriptions, and the Faversham sword pommel. Single rune inscriptions are included in this definition of the ProERC since, under the methodology outlined in 2.5 Methodology, such inscriptions can be pragmatically analysed and thus fit the scope of the research aims of this thesis. The Harford Farm brooch is excluded from Hines (2019) because of dating but included in my ProERC as a marker of the end of the dating period. The Sarre sword pommel, which once contained a runic inscription that can no longer be made out, is excluded since no runic inscription can be analysed. However, Hines (2019: 58) includes it in his handlist and states it is ‘indecipherable’. Though certain aspects of the object could be pragmatically analysed, especially in the case of text reception, no text remains to be received, and it has thus been excluded from this thesis for those reasons. The mismatch between myself and Looijenga (2003) is not based on methodological disagreement on the content of the corpus but instead on two differences:

- 1) the date range, since Looijenga (2003) stops at c.700 AD and myself at c.650AD

2) because of new finds since her publication.

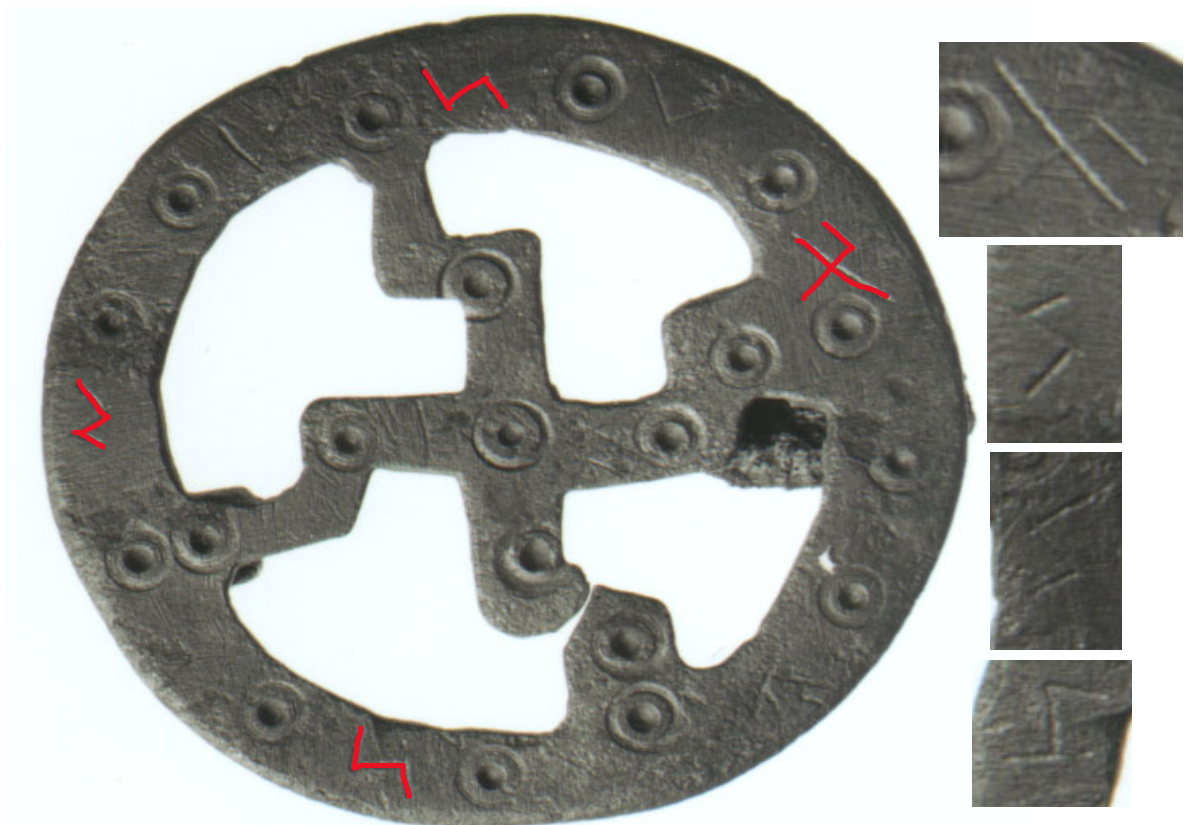
The primary difference between Looijenga's (2003) catalogue and the handlists by Waxenberger (2013) and Hines (2019) is her inclusion of 'pseudo-runic' inscriptions, which she determines are 'possibly runic'. In this part of the list are both Sarre, which Hines (2019) includes, and Hunstanton, which I include, as well as an object with non-runic cuts on it, Barrington, and brooches from Willoughby-on-the-Wolds and Sleaford which have the **d**-rune, which could be considered an ornamental sign instead of a deliberate single-rune inscription.

Excluded from both Hines (2019) and Waxenberger (2013) are Faversham and Hunstanton; Hines (2019) provides no reasoning for his exclusion of Faversham, and though Waxenberger (2013) excludes single-rune inscriptions from her discussions of the English runic material, Hines (2019) does include another single-rune inscription in his handlist, Willoughby-on-the-Wolds, making his inclusions of the single-rune inscriptions inconsistent.

Looijenga's (2003: 295) inclusion of Hunstanton in the category of 'possibly runic, non-runic and ornamental signs' summarises the approach to Hunstanton in the runological literature. Dismissed as 'pseudo-runic', Hunstanton is not considered part of the PrOERC in the handlists without a robust argument to class it as such. I have included it in my PrOERC because I can see parallels between most of the runes on the Hunstanton brooch and the rest of the PrOERC, which have not been considered 'pseudo-runic'.

For example, identifiable runes on the Hunstanton brooch are shown here as (from left to right), **g<sup>^</sup>l<sup>^</sup>g**, a bind-rune of **g** and **l**, and three **s**-runes, formed with three individual cuts. A bind rune of **g** with vowels is found on Undley, whilst a three-stroke **s**-rune is also attested on the Loveden Hill urn and the Chessell Down

pail. These are similar looking enough, in my opinion, to that of Hunstanton to include Hunstanton in the same corpus. Whilst some markings cannot be established as runic (cf. 4.1.1.4), this should not exclude the brooch from being analysed in this thesis since many of the markings on the brooch can be established as runic. For a further discussion on identifying individual runes, cf. 3.2.4.



*Figure 1 The Hunstanton Brooch, edited to show both s- and g-runes. Image: Norfolk Archaeological Services. Edits: JH.*

### 2.3 Literature review

Since my study is based on two areas, runology and historical pragmatics, the following literature review is also divided into two parts. The first part is concerned with scholarship about the ProERC and the second part is concerned with how pragmatics methodologies have been used to discuss runological data.



### 2.3.1 Literature review of the PrOERC.

When discussing scholarly work on the PrOERC, it is essential to note that before the work of Waxenberger (2010, 2019), the PrOERC was not necessarily considered a separate corpus from the OERC. Only with Waxenberger's (2019: 61) division of the OERC into two sub-corpora, the PrOERC and the later OERC, is the PrOERC discussed separately. Nonetheless, throughout the literature, the Old English runic material has been divided into two based on phonological, graphological and chronological grounds. Some works, such as Parsons (1999), the article by Hines (1990) and Looijenga (2003), divide the English material into a pre-and post-650 AD set.

As of 2024, there are no complete corpus editions of the PrOERC nor the OERC, though there should be editions of both corpora upcoming because of the RuneS project (Waxenberger forthc.). The closest to current and complete corpus editions of the PrOERC are the handlists, often only with information about the scholarly argument, found in the works of Waxenberger (2013, 2019), Parsons (1999), Looijenga (2003) and Hines (1990, 2019). Like this thesis, the work discussed below had research aims, and none were designed to be a corpus edition of the PrOERC or OERC; thus, the scholarship focuses on information essential to the research, and none provides a thorough overview of each inscription.

The PrOERC is often discussed in works researching the OERC. Pre-twentieth-century scholarly work discusses the OERC, often including some Scandinavian runic inscriptions (cf. Waxenberger 2010: i). It was in the mid-to-late twentieth century that OERC-focused scholarship started to take off. The first modern attempt at bringing all the OERC inscriptions together was Elliot's (1959) *Runes, An Introduction*, which also had a second edition in 1989. Not designed as a critical edition, Elliott deals with some of the PrOERC grouped into object classes,

such as coins and weapons. Page's (1973, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed.1999) *An Introduction to English Runes* remains a crucial reference work for all those working on the PrOERC; this book aimed to introduce the reader to runology more generally through the study of Old English runes. Readings and interpretations of individual inscriptions in the PrOERC are to be found throughout the book since the work is not presented in the manner of a corpus edition, and individual inscriptions are dealt with sparsely at times. Nonetheless, it dealt with all OERC inscriptions known at publication.

In 1999, Parsons published *Recasting the Runes: the Reform of the Anglo-Saxon Futhorc*, which was based on his doctoral thesis (1994). The work examined evidence of the 'reform' of the OE *futhorc* in the mid-seventh century within a monastic context. He deals, therefore, primarily with the PrOERC, in which he numbered sixteen inscriptions; he also summarised the OERC corpus. Despite sometimes brief entries, Parsons' work is balanced, providing information on archaeological findings, provenance and dating of the rune-bearing object, and a discussion on the inscription itself.

Looijenga's (1997, 2003) work is *Texts and Contexts of the Oldest Runic Inscriptions*. This considers all runic inscriptions known at the time that could be dated before c.700 AD in her 'catalogue', in which she divides them into the early Danish and Southeast European runic inscriptions, bracteates with runes, the Continental inscriptions, early runic inscriptions in England, runic inscriptions in or from the Netherlands, and finally, Swedish and Norwegian runic inscriptions in the older *futhorc*. In her 'early runic inscriptions in England' part of the catalogue, Looijenga (2003) deals with most of the PrOERC and includes a list of inscriptions thought to be pseudo-runic. Inscriptions from the PrOERC on bracteates are dealt with separately in her 'Bracteates with Runes' chapter. Information provided on each

inscription is often brief and condensed. However, a bigger issue is her ‘normalised’ grapheme usage throughout, so the reader would not know that the rune form in the inscription deviates from Looijenga’s (2003) suggestion unless viewing an additional photograph or drawing. Looijenga (2003) often provides her innovative reading of the inscription, which differs from the main line of scholarship.

Waxenberger (2010) is the closest to a corpus edition, but since it is her unpublished *Habilitationschrift*, it is not easily accessible. Her scholarship aims to provide an analysis of the phonology and graphematics of the OERC, including the PrOERC, thus certain inscriptions often considered to be Old Frisian (henceforth OF) such as the Hamwic bone and the **skanomodu** solidus, are included because they are important to the discussion of the sound changes in pre-Old English. Furthermore, some non-lexical inscriptions, such as Hunstanton, are excluded because they do not pertain to her research aims. Nonetheless, Waxenberger (2010) is a key text for those studying the PrOERC because it deals systematically with the corpus, providing information on the object and its dating and providing previous scholars’ transliterations and interpretations of each inscription alongside her own. Waxenberger (forthc.) is slightly different than her *Habilitationschrift*, with corpus entries having a different layout and accompanied where possible with additional images and additional information regarding the processes of dating the inscriptions. Waxenberger (forthc.) will include an overview of transliteration, translation and interpretations in the existing literature and provide her own, as well as graphemic and design features also being discussed, along with, finally, a discussion on text-type formulas. This means it will parallel the work of Kaiser (2021) in formatting and information given in each corpus edition, and it will be bringing in the

pragmatics and graphemics modules from the RuneS project into the discussion of the PrOERC.

Alongside these monographs are individual articles in anthologies or other works that detail the PrOERC. Frequently referenced are Hines (1990, 1991a), Odenstedt (1980, 1981, 1983, 1986, 1987, 1990, 1991, 1992) and Bammesberger (1991a, 1991b, 2003). Hines (1990, 1991a) provides two handlists; in Hines (1990a), a list of the PrOERC at the time is provided, with drawings of each inscription alongside brief archaeological information. The subsequent 1991a article offers a second, less detailed handlist which supplements an article which discusses the provenance and dating of the inscriptions in the PrOERC, alongside their possible linguistic and social functions. Bammesberger's (1991a, 1991b) separate articles from the same volume also provide brief discussions of multiple inscriptions in the PrOERC, including the Loveden Hill urn, the Undley bracteate, the Chessell Down scabbard mouthpiece and the Caistor-by-Norwich astragalus.

### 2.3.2 Literature review of pragmatics in runology

What is clear from the previous work focusing on the PrOERC (and often the OERC along with it) is that some scholarship deals with pragmatic-orientated questions without a pragmatics-orientated methodology: for example, scholarship may focus on the functions of individual runic inscriptions, or perhaps query what we could call 'speech (or in this case, writing) communities', which are socially or linguistically defined group using and/or producing a certain language (cf. Hines 1991). No previous discussions of the PrOERC have included an analysis of the PrOERC using pragmatic theory or method. Nonetheless, despite pragmatics being a field of linguistics only recently introduced into runology through the work of Zimmermann

(2006, 2010), some works have discussed pragmatics and runology using different corpora, such as the Danish fibula inscriptions (Zimmermann 2006, 2010) and the Old Frisian runic corpus (henceforth OFRC) (Kaiser 2021), and less directly, on the SGRC (Düwel et al. 2020). Work before Zimmermann (2006, 2010) and Kaiser (2021) focused primarily on the communicative potential of runic inscriptions with a focus on the assumed ‘magical’ and ‘ritual’ context’ such as the work of Schneider (1956) versus the work of ‘sceptical runologists’ who regard runes as like any other script, such as Bæksted (1945) and Moltke (1985) according to Kaiser (2021: 117). Page (1999: 12-13) regards this as a debate between two types of runologists, the imaginative runologist and the sceptical runologist; he criticises the labelling of the function of texts as magical or ritualistic as an attempt to avoid critically thinking about non-lexical inscriptions. He is joined by Antonsen (2002: 41-2), who further highlights that ‘claiming that such use [magical] was the original and primary purpose of the development of runic writing’ negatively affects the runological discipline, resulting in ‘remov[ing]...[them] from the realm of serious linguistic research’.

The initial research in runology using pragmatics methodologies focuses on speech act theory, specifically as theorised by Austin (1962), Searle (1969) and Wunderlich (1976). Speech act theory focuses on the illocution of a spoken utterance; illocution is the communicative intention of the utterance and is one of three parts that make up an utterance, and the other two parts are locution, which is the phonetic realization of an utterance through speech, and perlocution, which is the consequences of the illocution (Austin 1962: 98). Searle (1976: 10-13) distinguishes five types of illocutionary act:

- *representatives*, which are reports and/or statements

- *directives*, which are requests or advice to the hearer and often include verbs such as ask, request, entreat, invite, etc
- *commissives*, which are promises of threats or future actions
- *expressives*, which express an emotion such as thanking, apologising, etc.
- *declaratives*, which bring about an event such as naming.

Searle's (1976) taxonomy is not the only classification of illocutionary acts, and other taxonomies exist (cf. Habermas 1971: 111; Mass 1972: 199; Wunderlich 1976: 77; Bayer 1984: 138; Ossner 1985: 101), but as Zimmermann (2010: 88) points out, Searle's (1976) classifications are 'most commonly used and accepted', and so far are also the only speech act classifications that have been used in runology.

Speech act theory was used by Zimmermann (2006, 2010) in her work concerning the Danish fibula inscriptions. Zimmermann (2010: 86-7) starts by summarising that studies on runic inscriptions tend to focus either on studies of corpora or studies that 'search for the meaning- and in most cases, this is the semantic meaning only- of an individual inscription'. Zimmermann (2006: 343) observed that previous studies of the Danish fibula inscriptions concerned the lexical-semantic meaning of an inscription without the 'speaker-situational-context' and argued that to understand the meaning of the text. The communicative context must be reconstructed, though she further notes that reconstructing the communicative context is limited in the case of historical data. She suggests that instead of assuming one homogenous literate culture, different text types might show a particular distribution in time and be informed by various contexts, which perhaps indicate different literate cultures. To study this, Zimmermann (2010: 88) suggests using speech act theory, providing an overview of the older futhark inscriptions by

picking out several illocutionary acts. She then discusses the issues of encoding illocutionary acts through extra-linguistic communication instead of through the form of the act. From here, Zimmermann (2010: 92-3, 96) discusses the reconstruction of communicative contexts, including information gathered through object biography and archaeological context, as well as inscribing features. In her 2006 article, Zimmermann (2006: 44) outlines the issues of using speech act theory with runic data. Speech act theory requires that the illocutionary act is primarily expressed through the written inscription itself, and thus, the utterance cannot be ‘defective’; that is, the utterance cannot be fragmentary or unintelligible, nor can it lack verb forms which would indicate the illocutionary act (Kaiser 2021: 121).

Kaiser (2021: 121) notes that Zimmermann’s (2006: 44) prerequisites for applying speech act theory to runic data make the application of speech act theory difficult for runic corpora, especially, in her case, the OFRC. She notes that the OFRC has only one verb form, and thus no illocutionary indicators can be identified; furthermore, several inscriptions have ‘no satisfactory interpretation’ and are thus non-lexical. This makes the OFRC unsuitable for applying speech act theory, and she calls for a ‘different approach to pragmatic analysis’ (Kaiser 2021: 121). Kaiser (2021: 122-3) starts by discussing Ehlich’s (1994) ideas of ‘scripting’, the process of rendering oral communication into written communication. In particular, she focuses on how the ‘physical substrate [...] has consequences for the communicative context’. The OFRC comprises small portable objects, which have high mobility potential; therefore, there is a variation in those who can read the texts on the object. This makes both the text and reader ‘locomobile’, a word that Kaiser (2021: 122) uses to describe small, often personal items that are easily portable, such as an inscribed comb, in comparison to ‘locostative’ objects, such as an inscription on a

wall, which are less movable and, to a certain extent, fixed in place. Kaiser (2021: 122) suggests that due to locomobile text and readers being able to move around, the communicative context is expanded and broader than the one that first existed when the text was produced. She states that:

In this expanded communicative context, the linguistic content remains constantly embedded within the original communicative context, while the agents and situative contexts are dynamic and variable. Nevertheless, an inscription as a written utterance is originally designed and executed within a specific context, involving interactive agents, a carver/designer, and a receiver; the communicative intentions can only be reconstructed hypothetically. (Kaiser 2021: 122)

Kaiser (2021: 123) goes on to present previous models for the interpretation of locomobile inscriptions (Düwel 2008:16-17; Waldispühl 2013b: 106-110); both models are used to form the theoretical framework for the socio-cultural context part of Kaiser's (2021) pragmatic analysis. Neither Düwel nor Waldispühl's work claims to be a pragmatic analysis despite Kaiser claiming that a 'pragmatic model for the interpretation of locomobile inscriptions is presented' by them, which shows a disparity, again, between the pragmatic-orientated discussions such as the work conducted by Waldispühl (2013) and pragmatic theory and method being applied (Kaiser 2021). Düwel's model is split into two: the intra-linguistic content and the extra-linguistic context. The intra-linguistic content is the focus of linguistic interpretation, whilst the extra-linguistic context is used to form an understanding of the broader cultural context. The spatial placement informs the extra-linguistic



context of the inscription, the time of inscription affixation, and matching or diverging signs of wear of both object and inscription.

Furthermore, object provenance is considered, whether the object is an import or export from a location that is not the find-spot, the deposition circumstance and general archaeological context, and the function of the object in material culture. Waldispühl (2013: 106-109) uses Düwel's (2008: 16-17) extra-linguistic context as a base for her analysis of socio-cultural context, and linguistic analysis is similar to Düwel's but also includes a grapho-typological analysis. Additionally to Düwel's model, Waldispühl considers the object and text's visual design, considering the inscription layout, the graphic design, and any additional ornamental features. Key to Waldispühl's (2013: 108) discussion on the function of the script is the materiality of the object and how that might affect the method of inscription affixation, as well as how the function of the object might affect the wear and tear. Since Kaiser (2021: 124) bases the contextualization aspect of her pragmatic model on Düwel and Waldispühl, she includes all information previously discussed in their models in her own; furthermore, she focuses on finding typological parallels for the objects to provide accurate dating, and further offer contextualization with similarly inscribed objects in other runic corpora. Where Kaiser (2021: 124-129) is the most innovative is the linguistic analysis in her pragmatic model, where she focuses on text-type formulae.

It should be noted that this is not a linguistic pragmatic analysis previously done in historical pragmatics. This is where inscriptions are 'neutrally differentiated by the number of lexical items present [...] and] the formal structure of each item was described according to phrases' (Kaiser 2021: 124-125). Kaiser (2021: 125-129) then provides an overview of the formulae assigned to the OFRC and the formulae's

communicative functions. Despite the contextual part of the pragmatic analysis being systematically applied to each inscription in the OFRC, the application of Kaiser's (2021) text-types formulae leaves the fragmentary and non-lexical inscriptions from the OFRC unassigned to formulae and thus a communicative function.

There are several gaps in the current research. There is no current complete list of the PrOERC, which includes non-lexical inscriptions as part of the corpus, and limited methodologies are being applied to the PrOERC. The previous work has had a neo-grammarians focus on establishing readings of individual inscriptions; such a focus aims to further research in Germanic historical linguistics with a particular emphasis on phonology or, in some cases, graphemics. There are currently no published corpus editions of the PrOERC; almost all previous work compiles the OERC and the PrOERC together into one corpus, which did not allow for a fully-fledged discussion on the distinctions between the two corpora until recently in Waxenberger's work.

There has also been a lack of engagement with the PrOERC and different methodologies in the published literature. However, the RuneS project is undertaking a study on the pragmatics of the PrOERC and OERC, this literature has not been published. Furthermore, areas of research that overlap with pragmatics, such as sociolinguistics (Schulte 2015, Holmberg 2015) and semiotics (Åkerström 2020, Bianchi 2010, Graf 2011), have been applied to different runic corpora. This means a research gap exists in applying such methodologies to the PrOERC. The application of pragmatics to the OFRC (Kaiser 2021) highlights some unique methodological issues in doing so; it is important, for the future of pragmatics methodologies in runology, to also assess other unique methodological issues that

perhaps come up in other corpora, such as the PrOERC, especially how to deal with non-lexical and fragmentary data.

## 2.4 Historical pragmatics

Historical pragmatics has a wide range of definitions. It combines the disciplines of pragmatics, which is the study of language in use, and historical linguistics, which is the study of language variation and change. Therefore, according to Brinton (2023: 2), the most basic definition of historical pragmatics is the ‘study of language in use as it varies within historical periods and over time’. Another definition is given by Jucker and Taavitsainen (2013: 2): historical pragmatics is the ‘study of patterns of language use in the past and how such patterns developed over time’. Though scholars agree that pragmatics studies language in use, there are two main approaches to pragmatics, called the ‘Anglo-American’ approach and the ‘European’ approach (cf. Huang 2007: 4-5, 2012: 8; Jucker 2008: 894-895).

The ‘Anglo-American’ approach, sometimes called the component view of pragmatics, treats pragmatics as a core component of language, such as phonology, morphology and syntax. This approach to pragmatics studies implicature, presupposition, deixis, and speech acts, among other areas. This approach to pragmatics has been used in previous runological studies (Zimmermann 2010) but is critiqued due to its inapplicability to some runological data (Kaiser 2021: 121), and this approach is not the one used in my thesis.

My thesis uses the European or Continental definition of pragmatics, particularly a ‘context-forward’ approach. The European definition of the discipline takes a broader cultural and social perspective on language. Instead of being a

component of linguistics, pragmatics is instead seen as a specific perspective for studying language use. Mey (2001: 6) explains that:

‘Communication in society happens chiefly by means of language. However, as social beings, the users of language communicate and use language on society’s premises; society controls their access to linguistic and communicative means. Pragmatics, as the study of the way humans use their language in communication, bases itself on a study of those premises and determines how they affect and effectualise, human language use. Hence: pragmatics studies the use of language in human communication as determined by the conditions of society’.

This view is sometimes called the ‘perspective’ view of pragmatics because ‘pragmatics should be taken as presenting a functional perspective on every aspect of linguistic behaviour’ (Huang 2013: 3), placing the approach in the wider field of functional linguistics. The European definition of pragmatics does not ignore the narrower Anglo-American definition: how research is conducted in the Anglo-American definition is often included in the studies conducted under the European definition. It should be noted, however, that the European definition is not simply the Anglo-American definition of studying language with additional ‘social context’; instead, it places the social aspect of language use at the forefront of the study and is open to using many different approaches to studying specific instances of language, for example using the traditional areas of linguistic research such as syntax and semantics to aid their analysis, or examining text organization or specific social contexts. Historical pragmatics primarily, according to Jucker and Landert (2017: 82), takes the Continental or European definition; this is because the use of historical data usually requires a ‘considerable amount of familiarity with the social and

cultural context in which they were used’, and thus the broader perspective of a social approach to pragmatics is often a necessity. Whilst some European pragmatic studies focus on particular pragmatic markers, it is common for this approach to be more ‘context-forward’, and when the study focuses primarily on how context informs particular usages of language, those types of studies can sometimes be considered a separate discipline called sociopragmatics (cf. Culpeper 2011: 1-4). Indeed, Culpeper (2009: 182) states that such an approach to pragmatics concerns itself with ‘any interaction between specific aspects of social context and particular historical language use that leads to pragmatic meaning’. Therefore, the focus is not on individual linguistic forms but on the social, cultural, and historical contexts determining language use.

Scholars will position themselves within these definitions of pragmatics when researching historical pragmatics. Jacobs and Jucker (1995) further divide historical pragmatics into several subfields. Brinton (2023: 18) notes that numerous scholars have named and defined the subfields differently. However, she claims that Jacobs and Jucker’s (1995) three-way distinction is still valuable for discussing different subfields. Using the most common names in the scholarship, the three subfields are pragmaphilology, diachronic pragmatics, and pragmahistorical linguistics. Diachronic pragmatics (cf. Brinton 2023: 20) focuses on conducting a pragmatic study with a focus on examining the change in pragmatic factors over time; though the ProERC covers c.400-650AD, the study conducted using this corpus is not diachronic in focus, and thus the subfield is not suitable for this thesis’ aims. This is because the inscriptions in the ProERC cannot always be precisely dated or in some cases, the date range spans 50+ years, which causes issues with the relative chronology of the inscriptions and thus a diachronic study could not be

conducted effectively. Pragmehistorical linguistics (cf. Brinton 2023: 20-21) focuses on pragmatic factors to explain linguistic change, such as phonological or syntactic change. This subfield is also inappropriate for the aims of this thesis since it requires lexical data and a more extensive data set than the PrOERC allows.

The third sub-field of historical pragmatics is pragmaphilology, which is the approach used in this thesis. Pragmaphilology has two definitions, a wider definition as outlined in Jucker and Landert (2017: 86), or the narrower approach outlined in Jacobs and Jucker (1995: 11). Jucker and Landert (2017: 82) consider pragmaphilology to be the study of pragmatic features in historical data regardless of the diachronic variability; this, essentially, means that all studies conducted without a focus on diachronic change would come under pragmaphilology. Taavitsainen and Fitzmaurice (2007: 13-14) also note that pragmaphilology is a synchronic approach and not a diachronic approach, meaning it deals with a fixed point in time such as a single text and is not concerned with change over time. This contrasts with the narrower view of pragmaphilology as it was originally coined by Jacobs and Jucker (1995: 11). Considering both approaches but calling them ‘historical pragmatics proper’ and ‘pragmaphilology’ respectively, Brinton (2023: 18) defines the narrower view of pragmaphilology as an approach which ‘describes the pragmatic aspects of a historical text or period’. These aspects, according to Jacobs and Jucker (1995: 11) are the addresser/addressee and their social and personal relationships, the physical/sociohistorical setting of the text, and the aims or communicative intentions of the addresser. I take the narrower, more clearly defined approach to pragmaphilology as outlined by Jacobs and Jucker (1995: 11) which details the context under consideration during a pragmatic study. Further discussion on the

details of Jacob and Jucker's (1995: 11) context and how they can be reconstructed appears in 2.5.3.

The pragmatic analysis undertaken by Zimmermann (2006, 2010) and Kaiser (2021) distinguishes two areas of analysis: the linguistic and the contextual. Following Kaiser (2021), this thesis undertakes a text formulae approach to the linguistic aspect of the analysis; this means that the PrOERC inscriptions are, where possible, assigned formulae according to the number of lexical items present and their morphological inflexions. The contextual aspect of the pragmatic model is based on a pragmaphilology.

This thesis positions itself within the European approach to pragmatics, and more specifically under the historical sociopragmatic approach of pragmaphilology. This is because multiple areas of linguistics ie. morphology, syntax, phonology etc. are used to inform the reading of the text and the subsequent analysis, thus placing it within the European definition of pragmatics. Furthermore, the methodology focuses on establishing a systematic approach to defining the social context for each runic inscription and then examining how such context informs the meaning of the individual inscriptions. This makes the approach outlined in this thesis a context-forward, sociopragmatics approach within the field of European historical pragmatics.

## 2.5 Methodology of this thesis.

### 2.5.1 Linguistic analysis.

The PrOERC is not suitable for most linguistic pragmatic analysis. Though speech act theory, as discussed in the literature review, is often the only linguistic pragmatic analysis applied to runic inscriptions, the issues outlined with applying speech act

theory to the OFRC as stated by Kaiser (2021) also apply to the PrOERC: that the data do not feature enough verbs to allocate illocutionary acts, and that some of the data are fragmentary and non-lexical. The nature of the PrOERC data also rules out other linguistic pragmatic analyses such as the examination of discourse markers, etc. Therefore, an alternative linguistic analysis must be proposed, as fitting with the European definition of pragmatics, that relies instead on a study of the phonology, morphology, and syntax of the inscriptions in the PrOERC.

I follow the work of Kaiser (2021) and Düwel et al (2020) in the application of formulae to runic corpora where possible. Formulae are defined by Waxenberger (2013b: 498) as ‘a set of slots filled with a certain set of lexical items’; this means, then, that the inscriptions are identified based on the number of lexical units and their inflectional morphology. They are then assigned formulae. Such formulae have supposed communicative intentions through their use, which then provides the possible communicative intention of the formulae through linguistic analysis. Kaiser’s (2021: 125) and Düwel et al’s (2020: cxxi-cxxviii) approaches identify individual lexical items and describes these lexical items according to their formal structure within the phrase.

The identification of formulae starts with a study of the inscription. Starting with identifying individual graphs in each inscription, a detailed description cut-by-cut description of each graph is then provided. This is repeated for each graph in the inscription. If a lexical item can be distinguished in the inscription, then the formal structure of each word is described; this could be a verb (V), personal name (PN), noun (N), noun phrase (NP) etc; if a noun or personal name, then the case is assigned, being nominative (nom), accusative (acc), genitive (gen) or dative (dat). Once cases are attributed to the individual units that require them, a formula is



constructed and assigned a possible communicative function. If there is a personal name then the gender, if known, is assigned, and syntax, where possible, assessed.

Whilst some of the formulae's communicative function used here comes directly from Kaiser's (2021: 125-126) OFRC formula and Düwel et al's (2010: cxx) formula, some formulae have been identified in the PrOERC that are not found in the OFRC or SGRC, and thus have their names, structures and functions assigned from this research alone. It should be noted that these formulae are not considered universal formulae and are only applicable to the PrOERC. These formulae and the communicative functions of the formulae that have been found in the PrOERC are listed below in Table 3:

<i>Table 3 The PrOERC formulae.</i>				
<b>Type</b>	<b>Name of formulae</b>	<b>Structure of formulae</b>	<b>Function of formulae</b>	<b>Examples in the PrOERC</b>
Single word	Simple-name formula	NP [masc./fem, PN <sub>nom</sub> ]	Identifies the owner, maker, or donor of the object; marks possession	Ash Gilton, Boarley, Cleatham, Eye, Wakerley
	Simple-noun formula a: object designation formula	N [N <sub>gen/dat</sub> ]	Denoting object function or material of object	Caistor by Norwich

	Simple-noun formula b: non-designation of object formula	N	States a common noun which does not identify the object material or function of the object	Binham, Welbeck Hill, Spong Hill
Two word	Complex donor formula	NP1[masc./fem. PN <sub>dat</sub> ] + NP2 [m/fPN <sub>nom</sub> ]	Marks object as a gift, mentioning donor PN <sub>nom</sub> and benefactor PN <sub>dat</sub>	Watchfield
Three word	Complex maker's formula	NP [masc./fem. PN <sub>nom</sub> ] + V [V <sub>finite</sub> ] + NP [N <sub>acc</sub> ]	Emphasises the work of the craftsman PN <sub>nom</sub> alongside mentioning the product that has been worked on N <sub>acc</sub>	Harford Farm

11 of the 24 individual inscriptions are assigned formulae; the non-lexical inscriptions are not assigned formulae and are left unmentioned here. It was possible

to reconstruct 5 formulae from the evidence in the corpus. Where certain case attributions are uncertain, all options are discussed in the individual entries on each inscription. Further discussions on the formulae can be found 4.3.1.

There are cases in the PrOERC where there are partly lexical texts; these texts have lexical elements, such as personal names, but the rest of the inscription is undeterminable. These examples are the Chessell Down scabbard mouth piece, which reads ‘Ako: ?’, a personal name with an undeciphered second part, and the Loveden Hill urn, which has a personal name alongside the word ‘female servant’. Since a formula is formed by assigning all lexical units to certain positions within the formulae and determining their case and gender, it is not feasible to assign only partly deciphered texts to a formula.

In some cases, the inscriptions in the PrOERC are considered non-lexical and cannot be analysed via a formula-based approach. Whilst all texts undergo a pragmaphilologically informed analysis (cf. 2.5.3) which focuses on contextual information to determine the function of the script, some texts do not receive the textual analysis as outlined above. Instead, these texts are further discussed considering the understanding of non-lexical texts according to Graf (2010, 2012). Whilst there are no examples of *Paraschriftliche Zeichen* (‘parawritten characters’) such as ornamental signs like swastikas in the PrOERC, Graf’s (2010: 48-56, 2012: 112-115) work on the non-lexical inscriptions provides categorization for non-lexical texts under the term ‘script imitation’, falling into three categories. These three categories and whether the non-lexical texts of the PrOERC map onto Graf’s (2012) ideas of script imitation are explored in 4.3.2.

### 2.5.2 The ‘Bad Data Problem’ and the PrOERC

Working with historical data with a pragmatic methodological approach brings its challenges. As famously pointed out by Labov (1972: 100, 1994: 11), the data available for historical linguistic study is supposedly ‘impoverished’. By this, Labov meant several things. Firstly, the data survives by accident; for the PrOERC, this is shown through the small amount of ‘natural’ material surviving such as bone (Caistor by Norwich), and the high number of metal objects surviving. While purely organic material such as bone or wood would decay, the surviving data is mostly comprised of metal, a material with a variety of corrosive tendencies depending on the metal used. Secondly, the data may not resemble the vernacular of the time; for the PrOERC, this is evident through the high number of non-lexical inscriptions in the corpus, which do not represent the pre-Old English language stage. Finally, the data is sometimes fragmentary or corrupted; there are instances of possibly incomplete inscriptions (Eye, Selsey), and ones which have been ‘corrupted’ by the wear and tear of the material they were written on, like the corrosion on the Chessell Down pail making the inscription incredibly difficult to read. Age is a cause for several of these problems. Taavittainen and Fitzmaurice (2007: 11) note that ‘data problems grow more conspicuous the further back in time we go’.

Others have argued against the issues of ‘bad data’; McDonald (2014: 7) notes that the bad data problem primarily arises when there is an assumption that written data is comparable, or in place of, spoken data in a study; she claims that written forms of language are not meant to represent speech, and that is it not a ‘fair representation of the decision taken by the writer’ of the inscription to view the text as a representation of speech. Romaine (1982: 122) also notes that ‘although historical data, of course, may be fragmentary... the only way in which they can be held in the other sense intended by Labov is by invidious or inappropriate

comparison with the spoken language. Historical data can be valid in their own right (as can other instances of the written language) regardless of the extent to which they reflect or are removed from the production of native speakers’.

Historical pragmatics has dealt with speech-to-writing dichotomy in numerous ways (cf. Brinton 2023: 29-30). The discussion of to what extent runic inscriptions reflect speech in a pragmatics-based study is discussed in Zimmermann (2010) and Kaiser (2021); both discuss that the production of texts, in certain circumstances, is the attempt at making momentary speech into permanent written communication. Zimmermann (2010: 91-92) and Kaiser (2021: 121-3) look at Ehlich’s (1994: 19, 21) *Verdauerung*, the ‘practice of creating persistence of linguistic utterances’ and discusses the process where elements of the spoken discourse are rendered into the written, serving as new communicative markers, primarily being the object itself.

Furthermore, the other issue is that it is commonly said that in the early stages of writing, writing functions as a way to make speech permanent (Ehlich 1994: 19, 25); Zimmermann (2010: 91) notes that ‘extending the duration of the existence of an utterance and thereby its communicative meaning is especially relevant in contexts in which it seems of some importance that the utterance outlives its given oral context. Transfer to the written medium allows it to be preserved for a longer period of time’. This is prevalent idea in runology, and is likely partially responsible for the push of speech act theory in runology. This assumption – that early instances of writing function as a way to make speech permanent- is expressed routinely in runology. An example of this is Düwel (1988; Heizmann and Axboe 2011).

Düwel's (1988; Heizmann and Axboe 2011: 475-523) article on bracteate inscriptions is an example of the narrowing of speech-writing dichotomy in runology. Düwel (2011) deals with both lexical and non-lexical inscriptions in his article; reconsidering ideas of 'illegibility' of the bracteate inscriptions, he reassesses the inscriptions in light of Roman letters on medallions, suggesting that, like the Roman inscriptions, some bracteate inscriptions can be explained through their association with what Wicker and Williams (2012: 193) call 'letter magic and alphabet sorcery'. Düwel (2011: 513-519) lists multiple ways in which the inscriptions could function: acrostics, alphabets, anagrams, variation of initial sounds, insertion of alien letters, contractions, *notarikon* (making a new word by using another word's letters), palindromes, squares, *Schwindeschemata* (arrangements of gradually disappearing sequences), suspension, substitution of syllable and letters, vowel variation, prefixed or otherwise added syllables. He even assigns the non-lexical inscriptions a function, suggesting that they are perhaps glossolalia, which is the utterance of unintelligible noises, made as part of communication with the arcane. Such strong relationship between the bracteate inscriptions and an arcane function is primarily cemented by the belief that the object, a bracteate, is an amulet, which is an object thought to give protection against evil, danger or disease.

So, one way to deal with this is to acknowledge that there is no complete dichotomy between written and spoken communication; indeed, it is said by Culpeper (2010: 191) that the gap narrows between written and spoken communication the further back in time one goes; later medieval texts are acknowledged to contain an 'oral residue' (cf. Reichl 2012).

It should be stated that we do not have to divorce runic inscriptions entirely from speech but recognise that in some instances they perhaps represented speech. In other instances, such as the non-lexical inscriptions, they do not represent recoverable speech, though there are instances of attempting to make it so (cf. Düwel (1988; Heizmann and Axboe 2011). There is a movement away from Labov's (1972, 1994) 'bad data' problem' with the expansion of different types of data being used in historical pragmatics studies, and an understanding that all data can be pragmatically analyzed. Brinton (2023: 31) claims that perhaps the best avenue to approach the 'bad data' problem is to recognise that all texts, either written or spoken, are 'communicative acts shaped and constrained by pragmatic principles and including pragmatic forms and thus amenable to pragmatic analysis', and that Jucker and Taavitsainen (2013: 25) state that 'both spoken and written language are forms of communication produced by speakers/writers for target audiences with communicative intentions, and language is always produced within situational constraints. Therefore, all forms of language that have survived and provide enough information to contextualise the use, are considered potential data for historical pragmatics'. I would go further to say that even instances of script which do not portray language- ie. the non-lexical inscriptions- can be potential data also. To partially solve a 'bad data' problem the reconstruction of 'context', whatever that means for the analysis, must be done for there to be a pragmatic analysis of 'bad data'.

Runology cannot escape the issues outlined by Labov (1972, 1994); though scholars have argued against the issues of historic data representing speech, the problems associated with data surviving by accident, and of it being fragmentary and/or damaged, are perhaps more pertinent to using runological data for a

pragmatics study than other data. Concerning the ‘accidental’ survival of data, runologists consider what is colloquially termed as ‘Derolez’s dictum’, where Derolez (1981: 19-20) warns that only a small percentage of runic material survives. Runologists must consider that not all material survives over time; certain materials, for example wood, are more likely to have deteriorated and any inscription inscribed on wood is less likely to have survived to the modern day except in unique circumstances. An example of these unique circumstances are the Bryggen inscriptions, a collection of several hundred runic inscriptions on wood and bone found after a series of fires, the last in 1955, in the Bryggen area of Bergen, Norway. Therefore, the ‘accidental’ survival of runic inscriptions is primarily concerned with the material on which the inscription was written, and one working with such material must consider that the material surviving is perhaps not representative of the ‘runic writing tradition’ that existed. Related to this is the issue of fragmentary data; certain materials can be fragile after a long period and break due to stress on the material or corrode or decay enough to obscure the runic inscription on the object. This can cause issues with reading an inscription because it results in only a part of the inscription surviving (cf. Eye fragment, Chessell Down pail). This cannot be resolved, since in most cases the different fragments cannot be put together (an exception from the PrOERC being the Selsey fragments) and surfaces cannot be made to be like new. Nonetheless, runology can compensate for these issues by having a consistent transliteration practice which informs the reader of how fragmented and/or damaged an inscription is, and how that affects a reading of the text itself. Furthermore, consistent transliteration practices result in non-fragmentary and lexical inscriptions being able to be compared with the fragmentary and non-



lexical ones, helping to elucidate the fragmentary ones. Labov's 'bad data' idea is exemplified by runological data, but these can be mitigated with clear expectations.

### 2.5.3 Pragmaphilological analysis

Previous approaches to a pragmatic model for the interpretation of locomobile inscriptions are presented by Düwel (2008: 16-17), Waldispühl (2013: 106-110) and Kaiser (2021: 121-129). Düwel (2008) considers the locomobile texts synchronically, splitting his suggested analysis into intra-linguistic and extra-linguistic. Intra-linguistic content focuses on the linguistic interpretation of the text. Extra-linguistic content focuses on defining the relationship between the inscription and its object, as well as the wider cultural context in which the object was made. It focuses on spatial placement of the inscription, the time of inscription affixing, and matching or diverging signs of wear on object and inscription, as well as object provenance, deposition circumstance, and other archaeological information to establish an object biography. Waldispühl (2013: 106-109) focuses on similar areas to Düwel (2008), but with different labels; for her, the intra-linguistic content is 'linguistic content' whilst extra-linguistic content is 'socio-cultural context' and 'inscription-bearing object'. In addition to all that is mentioned by Düwel (2008), Waldispühl (2013) adds a discussion on the function of the rune-bearing object in material culture, as well as subsequent consideration of how the material characteristics of the rune-bearing object affect the production and subsequent readability and reception of the text. Again, Kaiser's (2021: 125-126) work is based on Düwel and Waldispühl and this includes all information previously mentioned in her methodology concerning both the linguistic and contextual content used to inform her discussion on the function of the script in the OFRC; she differs in her

additional linguistic analysis, which focuses on formulae and their possible communicative intentions. Where my work differs is that the contextual content is of equal weight in the analysis of the PrOERC to determine the script functions, instead of primarily focusing on the linguistic context to inform meaning as arguably Kaiser (2021) has done; though the formula approach as borrowed from Kaiser (2021) is applied to the PrOERC where applicable, the entire corpus gets a systematic analysis of the pragmatic context as outlined below.

Context takes many definitions, and in modern pragmatics, it is often concerned with the speaker-situational context, body language, tone, etc. These aspects are not reconstructable when applying pragmatics methods to historical data. Furthermore, historical pragmatics has moved away from solely seeing written data as a representation of speech, and therefore now considers a wide range of information to be key in establishing the context for historical texts. Historical pragmatics has attempted to outline pragmatic context since its first conception, but the differing approaches to pragmatics and the wide range of historical linguistic data being used have resulted in a wide range of definitions of what context means. Indeed, historical pragmaticians use the term ‘context’ as an overarching term which often means context concerning the cognitive, cultural, or social, ideological and/or political (Verschueren 1999: 7, 109). Archer (2018: 19) further points out that the type of context being used is dependent on the data being investigated; she uses the example of historical, ideological, and political context in the case of studying political pamphlets. It is also the case that when studying the PrOERC, particular contexts must be used to inform the pragmatic analysis, and the type of contexts are determined by the data set.

There are multiple ways to ‘do’ context in a historical pragmatic study. Culpeper (2009: 154) notes in his examination of sociopragmatics that there are generally three areas of context that can be studied, with sociopragmatics, the area of this thesis, focusing on ‘local’ conditions. He cites Leech (1983: 10-11), who distinguishes three areas of pragmatic context being studied under three areas of pragmatics: general pragmatics, concerning ‘the general conditions of the communicative use of language’, sociopragmatics, concerning ‘more specific ‘local’ conditions on language use’ and pragmalinguistics, concerning ‘the particular resources which a given language provides for conveying particular illocutions’. Culpeper (2009: 179) points out that Leech (1983) does not outline what ‘local’ means for the sociopragmatics studies, and instead devises three tiers of context: ‘one might postulate that the immediate text and co-text of interlocutors is the most local; the social situation (including speech events, activity types, frames, etc.) is medial; and cultures (national/regional cultures, institutional cultures, etc.) tend to be the most general’. Though he goes on to argue that sociopragmatics should study medial context, the three areas cannot neatly be separated. In this study, I take both Leech's (1983) and Culpeper's (2009) ideas of ‘local’ context to be studied. This is because the ‘local’ context as outlined by Culpeper (2009) is based on the immediate text and its environs, which are available for the study of the ProERC.

Alongside the obvious historical context, the study of the entire inscription, including the object on which it is situated, can provide the most immediate social context. The ‘local’ pragmatic context as outlined by Jacobs and Jucker's (1995: 11) pragmaphilology is the pragmatic context provided for the analysis of the ProERC. This approach to historical pragmatic context was selected because it outlines what type of context could be used to inform a pragmatic analysis; furthermore, the areas

of context outlined in pragmaphilology could be reconstructed using archaeological and material cultural evidence. Ehlich (1994: 24) notes that the text-bearing object can contribute to the communicative meaning of the written utterance, since paralinguistic features associated with the text are transferred from person to object. Zimmermann (2010: 92), furthermore, encapsulates this clearly when she states that the rune-bearing object is of high importance in a study concerning the communicative function of inscriptions: '[the object] is of special importance for early literate communities in which utterances are not written down on neutral objects such as today's paper or medieval parchment. Instead, they are often written down on meaningful objects, objects which have a specific place and function in their respective material culture'.

In Jacob and Jucker's (1995: 11) original definition, pragmaphilology is defined as a research area that 'describes the contextual aspects of historical texts, including the addressers and addressees, their social and personal relationship, the physical and social setting of text production and text reception, and the goal(s) of the text'. Since its conception, pragmaphilology has had no other definitions. This means that for this thesis, the individual aspects of context as outlined in pragmaphilology need to be defined for the application of the approach to be systematic. In my thesis, the definitions are as follows:

- Addresser: one person who imparts information via the text; in some cases directly named
- Addressee: the person to whom something is addressed, in some cases directly named but in others hypothesised
- Text production: how, when and by whom the text is produced; can sometimes be related to addresser

- Text reception: how, when and by whom the text is received; can sometimes be related to addressee

In some cases, the pragmaphilological context as outlined above can be gauged through the text itself; for example, there are some simple-name formula examples where the masc./fem.PN<sub>nom</sub> possibly indicate the owner, donor or maker of text, referring to the addresser, who could also be the text producer. Other texts such as Watchfield's complex donor formula state the PNs of both donor and benefactor, being then the addresser and addressee. However, such direct information is not always available from the texts themselves, especially when the texts are non-lexical, and must be inferred from information relating to the inscribed object itself, such as object biography including possible ownership and practical function(s) of the object. In these cases, reconstructing the text production and reception possibilities can be key to analysing the text- whether lexical or not- pragmaphilologically.

It should be noted that these definitions of addresser, addressee, and text reception area are affected by the object's biography, that is, how the object is used over time. Time or changes in location can cause the separation of text from the initial context in which the text would have been produced and received. Due to the text being on a mobile object which can change location and ownership, new communicative scenarios can be created, especially considering the longevity of certain objects. This results in an expanded communicative context which can change over time and place. In particular, the issue of addresser/addressee changes over time and place; objects can have different owners, and the way the inscription is received by those around the owner perhaps changes also. Therefore, as Kaiser (2021: 123) puts it, the aim of reconstructing script usage is focused on 'a certain

point of time within a certain culture’. I acknowledge that over time, these contexts as outlined by pragmaphilology might change, and this is discussed; though the aim of the research is synchronic, the diachronic elements of context changing are acknowledged.

## 2.6 Outline of PrOERC analysis

To effectively apply the methodology, each inscription in the PrOERC is analysed systematically. To do this, there is an entry for each inscription in the corpus, which details information about the pragmaphilological analysis. Firstly, there is a recording of archaeological information: this includes findspot information, object description and dating information, as well as any wear and tear on the object which perhaps are indicative of the object’s usage.

Alongside a brief overview of previous scholarship and interpretations of the text, the inscription is then given a personal reading, which provides details on the individual graphemes and the etymology of the individual words in the inscription where possible, and the text is assigned to a formula. The graph-by-graph description of the text is provided so that inscriptions can be assigned ‘runic’ or otherwise; this is because there are inscriptions included in this thesis which have otherwise been deemed ‘pseudo-runic’, and the aim of the graph-by-graph description is to demonstrate that there are runes, and not ‘rune-like’ graphs, in the inscription. Each individual runic graph is described using specific terms, which are outlined in the figure. The graphs are broken down into ‘stave’ ‘bow’, and ‘twig’ (labelled 1, 2 and 3 in the corresponding figure respectively), illustrated in Figure 2. The stave is a diagonal line; some graphs, such as the *i*-rune *l*, are made of a single stave, whilst others have either one or more bows or twigs anchored to the stave. Some twigs,

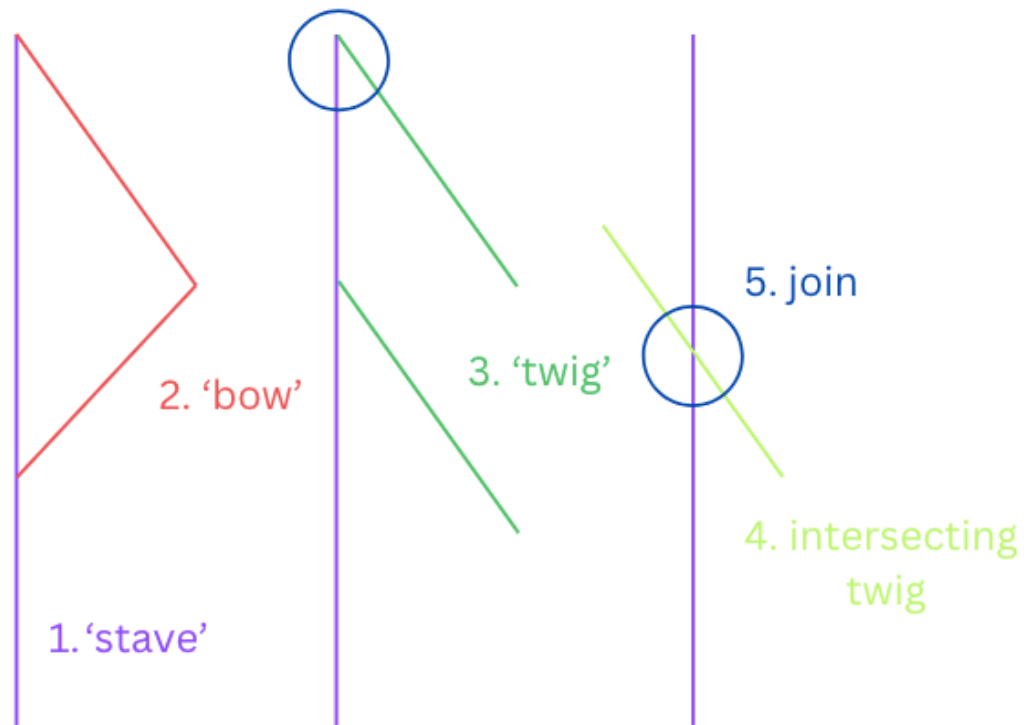


Figure 2 A diagram which demonstrates the names of each part of a rune, being a w-, a- and n-rune respectively. Image: JH.

such as those on the n-rune  $\mathfrak{n}$ , intersect the stave, running at a slanted angle through the stave. Where two cuts that make up each element meet, it is called a join. Each element of the graph is described, noting possible changes in the way in which the graph has been made; for example, whether there are two **a**-runes  $\mathfrak{a}$ , but the twigs are different lengths between one and the other, or the shape of the bow in the **b**-rune  $\mathfrak{b}$  differs within an inscription.

The information gathered in the entries is then subsequently used in the pragmaphilological discussions at the end of each chapter.

The entries are grouped according to object type (brooches, bracteates, bowl and bucket, swords, urns, and miscellaneous items which are singular) and are listed within that group in alphabetical order, mostly naming them for their find spots, for example, the entry titled 'Faversham' refers to the inscribed sword pommel found in Faversham, Kent. After individual entries, there is a pragmaphilological analysis of the inscriptions as an object group. Each runic inscription is presented similarly:

- The object: details of the rune-bearing object are given here, including a general description of the object, its findspot, provenance and dating.
- Previous transliteration and interpretation: previous scholars' interpretations of the inscription are presented, along with an easy-to-read transliteration and details of their argument as to the meaning and function of the text
- Personal reading: details concerning the location and execution of the inscription, and my reading and interpretation of the text, are detailed, along with a graph-by-graph description

The transliteration method applied in my study is based on Waxenberger's (2010) transliteration principles, which relate to transliteration methods developed specifically for OE runes by Dickins (1932) and Page (1973, 1984). Runes are rendered in lower-case, bold characters, ie. **neim** (cf. West Heslerton). The transliterations aim to represent the epigraphic material as closely as possible; therefore, word dividers and similar orthographic symbols are also recorded and represented. Word dividers differ in their form and execution and will be commented on in the respective text entry. In the case of two or more optional readings, the uncertain options will appear in curly brackets, divided by a slash. Square brackets indicate the exclusion or inclusion of characters or indicate missing parts of a fragmentary inscription. Readings of other scholars are adapted to this notation system, if not stated otherwise. The major difference in my transliteration process to that of Waxenberger (2010, and afterwards) and Kaiser (2021) is that even when the sound value of the rune is uncertain, the runes are always transliterated into Roman equivalents. The rune is not retained in the transliteration because I believe it makes



it harder for the reader to comprehend the text. If necessary, the more complex rune in question is discussed further in the literature.

] runes are missing on the left side of the inscription

[ runes are missing on the right side of the inscription

[.] one character is illegible; additional dots indicate further characters also illegible

(b) the graph in-between the parenthesis is uncertain

| or . word divider; the closest form is used to match the real word divider, but notes will elucidate

<- or -> indicates reading direction, especially if graphs are orientated that way

{u/c} indicates two possible readings of the graph

Alongside this transliteration of the text, I have aimed at noting all additional markings on or near the text, especially those which perhaps create uncertainty in the reading of the text.

The text is then rendered into a formula (cf. 2.5.1), which has the additions of the formal structure of each word. For example, for the Boarley inscription, the text is transliterated as **l(i)(o)ta** <-, with the formal structure rendered as fem. PN<sub>nom</sub>, being a feminine personal name in the nominative case. When the reading is uncertain, all interpretation options are discussed and, where possible, a reading, whether tentative or more certain, is produced. The texts which are non-lexical are provided with a transliteration but no interpretation.

After this comes the pragmaphilological analysis. The pragmaphilological analysis is done in object groups to prevent the repetition of object-specific pragmatic information. For example, the text reception opportunities for inscriptions on the back of brooches would be similar across all of the brooches in the PrOERC and therefore, treating this level of pragmatic analysis individually would result in repetition which can be avoided by analysing the objects as a group. Furthermore, grouping the inscriptions by object follows a ‘common archaeological practice’ (Kaiser 2021: 22) and mirrors work already conducted by Kaiser (2021) and Looijenga (2003).

### 3 The Pre-Old English Runic Inscriptions.

#### 3.1 Bracteates.

Bracteates are flat, thin, single-sided metal discs featuring a central motif. They were produced in Northern Europe predominantly between the fifth and sixth centuries and found primarily in modern-day Scandinavia. Mostly fitted with loops, bracteates were intended to be worn suspended by a string around the neck.

There have been three bracteates featuring runic inscriptions found in Britain: Binham, Undley, and Welbeck Hill. All are treated in the newer literature concerning bracteates as a corpus of objects (cf. Heizmann and Axboe 2011); bracteates found in Britain, both runic and the much more prevalent non-runic, are discussed in relation, either concerning their central motifs or the runic inscriptions, to their Scandinavian and Continental counterparts (Chadwick Hawkes and Pollard 1981; Hines and Odenstedt 1987; Gaimster 1992, Behr 2000, Hansen 2021). Undley is by far the most examined due to its tricky inscription and possible depiction of the city of Rome's foundation myth, directly linking the early medieval bracteate with its supposed Roman medallion prototypes (cf. Behr in Heizmann and Axboe 2011: 153-165). The three runic bracteates of the PrOERC are treated below, concluding that the runic script on bracteates function as a part of the motif design and, therefore, as part of the object itself, being jewelry.

### 3.1.1 Binham I (IK 604.1, 604.2)



*Figure 3 The Binham Bracteate, IK 604.1. Image: Norwich Castle Museum.*

#### **The object.**

A loose find, the two bracteates featuring the same runic text and motif, thus coming from the same die, were found on cultivated land in Binham, Norfolk, as part of a hoard in June 2004 with a metal detector on cultivated land (Behr 2010: 56). The hoard had likely been ploughed out of place (Behr, Pestell and Hines 2014: 44). The bracteates are gold and are 44mm in diameter; they are well preserved with some denting to the flan and scratches on the surface, though Behr (2010: 56) notes that some scratching may be recent.

The close similarity with 'Hamburg'-B (IK 71) suggests that Binham is of a similar date; according to Axboe's correspondence analysis 'Hamburg'-B belonged to phase H2, the last quarter of the fifth or early sixth century (Behr 2010: 58). Concerning the provenance, Hines (in Behr, Pestell and Hines 2014: 51) suggests that though the die that produced the three bracteates may have been made in

England, it ‘remains equally possible that the bracteates represent a die produced somewhere along the North Sea littoral of the Continent’. Production being in the Continent is feasible due to the close similarity between the dies of Binham and ‘Hamburg’-B; the twisted wire placed at the edge of the flan occurs predominantly in northern Germany (Behr 2010: 58). The motif of this bracteate is attested from a hoard of seven die-identical bracteates of an unknown find spot, probably in Schleswig-Holstein, Germany; found before 1824, the literature refers to them as ‘Hamburg’-B (IK 71) (Behr 2010: 58). According to Behr (2010: 58), the image of this die is nearly identical to the die used for Binham but mirror-inverted, though several minor differences indicate that it was not made from a cast, and the main difference is that there is no runic inscription on ‘Hamburg’-B (IK 71).

The iconography of the bracteate is a standing male figure in profile shown with two animals, one in front of him and one at his back. Both arms of the figure are outstretched, with the left hand near the animal's jaws in front, whilst in the right hand is a sword. There are multiple interpretations of the scene: as the god Woden accompanied by his wolves, as Woden fighting the Midgard snake and the Fenris wolf at Ragnarök, and as a heroic battle against monsters (Hauck 1977:173-175; Neiß 2004: 20-21). For details regarding the image on the bracteate, see Behr (2010: 56) and Behr, Pestell and Hines (2014: 49).

#### **Previous transliteration and interpretation.**

<i>Table 4 Previous interpretations of Binham.</i>		
<b>Author</b>	<b>Transliteration</b>	<b>Interpretation</b>
Behr (2010: 56-58)	<b>w(a)(i)t</b>	OE <i>witan</i> , ‘to know’ in 1 <sup>st</sup> or 3 <sup>rd</sup> person; ‘[I]

		know’ or ‘[he/she] knows’.
Behr, Pestell and Hines (2014: 50-51)	<b>wa at</b>  <b>wa(a)t</b>	-  *wāt, OE wæt ‘wet’, as in ‘liquid, drink’.  Alternatively, *wāt from <i>witan</i> ‘to know’.
Hines (2019: 58)	<b>waat</b>	-



Figure 4 The Binham Bracteate, IK 604.1 close-up, showing the text. Image: Norwich Castle Museum. Edits: JH.

The text on the Binham bracteates has had little attention so far; interpretation of the text has been done only by Behr (2010) and Hines (Behr, Pestell and Hines 2014).

From personal communication with Hines, Behr (2010: 58) writes that the text could be read as ‘the first or third person singular present indicative of the

common and familiar preterite-present verb, Old English *witan*: ‘to know’. It would, therefore, imply ‘[I] know’, or more likely ‘[he] (or she or it) knows’.

Following this lead in Behr, Pestell and Hines (2014), Hines (2014: 51) discusses the *witan* interpretation further, noting that rr.2-3 **a(a)** would have to show a completed sound change of monophthongisation from the diphthong /ai/ to the monophthong /ā/. However, they suggest that the date of the bracteate may be too early for this sound change to have been completed, which casts doubt on that interpretation.

Alternatively, Hines (Behr, Pestell and Hines 2014: 50-51) also suggests *\*wāt* ‘wet’ as both an adjective and a noun. As a noun, *\*wāt* could have the sense of ‘liquid’ or ‘drink’. Appearing in Old English as *wæt* and attested in OF as *wēt*, Hines notes that an inflexional ending after the root *\*wāt-* would be needed for the word to be in ‘Runic Scandinavian’ of the time period, a phrase that Hines uses in this discussion which is perhaps otherwise known as ‘early Runic’ (Nielsen 2000) or ‘Urnordisch’ (Schulte 2018). Though Hines (Behr, Pestell and Hines 2014: 50) notes that there is no apparent relationship between the iconography and the word, he thinks that such an interpretation is plausible due to the other terms that may designate drinks on bracteates, such as **alu** and the singly attested **medu**. However, he does note that some recent scholarship on the **alu** inscriptions, including Hines himself (Düwel 2008: 53; Hines 2013: 257-258), has been sceptical towards the interpretation of **alu** as ‘ale’, preferring to argue for an alternative, with **alu** being a term meaning ‘protection’ or ‘good fortune’. Nonetheless, he argues that *\*wāt*, referring to ‘drink’, is the phonologically most plausible and morphologically, lexically and semantically in line with the wider bracteate corpus, even if the word is expressed in a West Germanic pre-Old English or OF language rather than the



‘contemporary Runic Scandinavian deployed in the majority of lexical bracteate inscriptions’.

Summarising, the interpretations of the text fall into two: OE *witan* ‘to know’ in the first or third personas ‘I/he/she knows’, or P-Gmc. \**wāt*, OE *wæt* ‘wet’, as either an adjective or a noun.

### **Personal reading.**

The position of the text is on the right-hand side of the bracteate between the left arm of the human figure and the circular geometrical patterns around the edge of the bracteate. The text runs at an angle that starts at the figure’s head and finishes at the end of the item being held in the arm of the figure. All graphs are orientated left to right. The distance between each graph is uniform throughout except between r.2 and 3, which has a larger distance between them. The graphs are ‘indistinctly stamped’, likely due to deficiency in the creation process, since the images on the bracteate are much clearer (Behr, Pestell and Hines 2014: 49). R.1 and r.4 are deeply pressed and thus clear, with distinctly raised edges, whilst the rest are much fainter. There is possibly a divider between r.1 and r.2 in the form of a faint dot-like mark, though this may be a mark in the metal or an accidental mark in the die since the mark is very faint. With the text running l-r and graphs orientated r-l:

R.1 **w**: The stave is straight; the bow is pointed.

R.2 **a**: this graph is less clear, marred by the lightness of the metal pressing into the dye. A stave is clear, and there are two twigs, the lower one more visible than the upper one, joined flush at the right-hand side of the stave.



R.3 (**a**): again, this graph is less clear, but there appears to be a stave and two right-hand twigs. Hines (Behr, Pestell and Hines 2014: 50) notes that though a reading of **n** is possible in certain lights when this graph is lit from above, a ‘faint upper by-stave can be discerned’, making the **a**-rune ‘the most reliable reading’.

R.4 **t**: The stave is straight; both twigs, which are positioned left and right at the top of the stave, are of equal length.

<i>Table 5 Binham autopsy.</i>			
Autopsy date	Transliteration	Structure	Interpretation
August 2024, Norwich Castle Museum	<b>wa(a)t</b>	Adj./N./V.	* <i>wāt</i> , OE <i>wæt</i> ‘wet, moisture’, ‘liquor, drink’.  * <i>wāt</i> , OE <i>witan</i> ‘to know’; ‘I/he/she knows’

I take the text as **wa(a)t**. The OE *wæt* could be either an adjective or a noun. As an adjective, OE *wæt* could mean ‘wet, moist’, and as a noun, it could mean ‘wet, moisture’, or ‘liquor, drink’ (Bosworth Toller s.v. *wæt* adj., *wæt* n.).

Hines’ (Behr, Pestell and Hines 2014) discussion of the text referring to ‘liquor, drink’ has the primary issue of determining a corpus of drink-related bracteate text interpretations where there is perhaps none. To interpret the Binham text as ‘liquor, drink’, other words that feature on bracteates that could relate to drink are mentioned to make the interpretation more plausible: the two words that are referenced are **alu** and **medu**. **medu** has two linguistically plausible interpretations,

one being *medu* ‘mead’ and the other being *mēd* ‘reward’ (cf. Odenstedt 1983, 1987; Looijenga 2003; Waxenberger 2010); for further discussion of *mēd*, cf. Undley. The interpretation of *alu* is uncertain, with only one interpretation being ‘ale’. Therefore, there is no certainty over the interpretation of these words. Thus, interpreting the meaning of *wæt* as ‘liquor, drink’ in the case of the Binham bracteate over ‘wet, moisture’ has no certain basis. Nonetheless, this does not mean that the reading of **wa(a)t** as *wæt* ‘wet’ should be ruled out entirely.

The rendering of **wa(a)t** as *\*wāt* from *witan* ‘to know’ is also plausible due to the possibility of the monophthongisation of *\*/ai/ > /ā/*; the Binham bracteate’s production date sits somewhat at the earlier stages of the monophthongisation period between c.475-575CE, which means that the completed sound change cannot be ruled out but is also not guaranteed to have happened. From Waxenberger’s (2010: 152-153) collation of the early runic evidence for the monophthongisation of WGmc *\*/ai/ > OE /ā/*, the monophthongisation happened between c.475-575CE, with Binham sitting in that time frame, in the late fifth to the early sixth century; thus, it is plausible that rr.2-3 could show the monophthongised */ā/*.

It is impossible to determine the text's interpretation with any certainty since both interpretations mentioned above are linguistically plausible. However, I rule out the interpretation of *wæt* as a noun referring to ‘liquor, drink’ over any other reading of the noun.

### 3.1.2 Undley (IK374; Wax. OERC83)



Figure 5 The Undley Bracteate, IK374. Image: The British Museum.

#### **The object.**

A farmer found the bracteate on his land at Undley, Lakenheath, Suffolk, 1981 (Parsons 1999: 62). The object is a gold bracteate measuring 23mm in diameter with a repoussé design featuring a profile helmeted head and a depiction of the she-wolf suckling Romulus and Remus. The dating of the bracteate is generally placed to the second half of the fifth century: 450-480 (Hines 1984; Odenstedt 1983: 4), 450-500 (Hines 1990: 441), and 475 (Seebold 1991: 503). The provenance of the object is contentious. Suzuki (2006: 32) states that ‘it is...because of the unique or near-unique features on the Undley bracteate that the artefact seems to defy precise

characterisation in terms of ...place of manufacture'. Hines and Odenstedt (1987) consider that the object may not have been made in the locality of the find spot, instead being a possible import from southern Scandinavia or Schleswig-Holstein, with their evidence primarily focused on the bracteate's form. Hines (1987) highlights that the type of suspension loop featured is widespread in Scandinavia and North-West Germany, while the rim type is common in southern Scandinavia; furthermore, the s-shaped spirals attached to the front of the flan below the suspension loop are attested on only one other bracteate, the now lost b-bracteate from Heide, Schleswig-Holstein (IK 74). Hines prefers Undley's provenance to be north German or southern Scandinavian. By comparing the combination of iconographic elements on the front and back sides of the bracteates, Seebold (1998: 273) too prefers a southern Scandinavian provenance; he concludes that the maker of the Undley bracteate must have acquired their knowledge from the bracteate-tradition of Sjælland (or possibly Fyn).

Nonetheless, there are alternative suggestions concerning the provenance of the bracteate; the presence of the diagnostic Anglo-Frisian rune ᚠ complicates the discussion. Page (1985:38) points out that the Undley Bracteate is 'runologically at home where it was found', namely in England, and that if it is considered an import from Scandinavia or Schleswig-Holstein on archaeological grounds, such an argument 'is to exalt the evidence of art history over that of runology'. Waxenberger (2010: 116) emphasises that the diagnostic Anglo-Frisian rune ᚠ identifies England as the home of the inscription and considers the Undley inscription 'as a form of Pre-OE on the basis of its language and the diagnostic rune'. Hills (1991: 150), too, holds the view that a southern Scandinavian provenance is possible but also states that an 'alternative English origin must be regarded as quite possible'. Moreover, if it

was made in England, Hills (1991:150) argues that its maker ‘could have belonged to one of several different cultural and/or ethnic groups and by no means need he or she have been an Angle from Schleswig-Holstein’. Waxenberger (2010: 115) agrees with Hills that it would seem ‘premature to rewrite runological and linguistic history on the basis of this one find’.

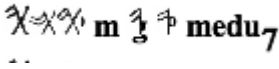

Suzuki (2006) suggests an alternative provenance. Suzuki (2006: 39) does not find this parallel between the Heide and Undley bracteate convincing, noting that only the left half of the spiral has remained on the Heide bracteate, and suggests that it ‘fail[s] to be a perfect analogue... it would constitute a flipped counterpart’ of Undley’s spirals. Suzuki (2006: 32) highlights that some of the bracteate’s features outlined are either unparalleled or rarely found on fellow A-bracteates (cf. Suzuki 2006: 32 for list of unique features). Nonetheless, there are parallels with other bracteates; Suzuki (2006: 32) highlights the similarity between the Undley bracteate and the Sievern (IK 156) and Wurt Hitsum (IK 76) bracteates in terms of featuring bearded heads and having outward-orientated runes that are positioned within framing lines. Drawing parallels with the distribution of Dösemoor and Nesse-type equal-arm brooches in Lower Saxony, Frisia, and East Anglia, he concludes that the Undley bracteate likely belongs to the Saxon group of A-bracteates.

The iconography on the flan comprises a helmed profiled head, a she-wolf suckling two children, two stars, two dot-in-circle motifs, and a runic text. Hines (1987: 74) stresses that the design of the Undley bracteate is sourced from the coins and medallions featuring the iconography of *Vrbs Roma* and the she-wolf with twins, which are motifs presented on a series of mid-fourth-century coins and medallions. Suzuki (2006: 32) highlights that some of the bracteate’s features outlined are either unparalleled or rarely found on fellow A-bracteates (cf. Suzuki

2006: 32 for list of unique features), for example, the combination of the motifs of the Vrbs Roma and the she-wolf with twins, being unparalleled as bracteate motifs.

### Previous transliteration and interpretation.

<i>Table 6 Previous interpretations of Undley.</i>		
<b>Author</b>	<b>Transliteration</b>	<b>Interpretation</b>
Bammesberger (1991: 400)	<b>ga gan ga.maga.medu</b>	'a companion strong (=a strong companion) (is) mead'
Eichner (1990: 316)	<b>gægō(n)gæ.mægæ.mēdu</b>	'Es wurde zuteil dem Verwandtem Belohnung' (trans. 'a reward was given to the relative')
Hines (2019: 58)	<b>g^ag^āg^a.maga.medu</b>	-
Looijenga (2003: 220)	<b>gægogæ.mægæ.medu</b>	'gægogæ- the password, the kinsmen's consent'
Odenstedt (1983: 6; 1987: 92, 1990: 138; 1991: 63)	<b>g^æg^og^æ.mægæ.medu</b>	'a she-wolf (is) reward to the kinsman'  '(this is a) a she-wolf. (the bracteate is a) reward to the (my) kinsman'  '(this is) a she-wolf. Reward to a relative (or kinswoman?)'

		‘(this bracteate representing’ a she-wolf (is) a reward to a relative (‘kinswoman’?)’
Page (1999: 184)	<- <b>g^ag^āg^a.mægæ.medu</b>	‘?.mead/consent, good-will’
Parsons (1999: 62)	<b>g^ag^āg^a.maga.medu</b>	-
Waxenberger (2010: 15-19, 2013: 47, 2018)		 (is) the reward to the relative’

The similarity between rr.1-3 and the Kragehul spear shaft (KJ27, DR196, DR196) has been repeatedly stressed in the literature (Odenstedt 1983: 6, Page 1999: 184, Looijenga 2003: 219; cf. Kragehul see Düwel 1983, Pieper 1990, MacLeod and Mees 2006:78) and thus the analysis of the inscription tends towards the ‘charm’ or ‘formula’ interpretation. For example, Flowers (1999: 42) considers that the initial bind-runes have an ‘extra-linguistic’ or ‘magical’ function, and Parsons (1999: 63) states that rr.1-3 ‘echoes Scandinavian runic charm-language’; he suggests that the **g** and **a** may stand for their rune-names, \**gebu* ‘gift’ and \**ansuz* ‘god’, with the bind-rune taking on some ‘symbolic significance’. Page (1999: 184) also mentions the

likeness of Undley's first part of the text to Kragehul, stating that the sequence is 'strikingly like that on a spear shaft from Kragehul, Fyn'.

Odenstedt's (1983: 5, 1987: 91) reading of rr.1-3 is based on a reading of ƿ denoting /o:/, and the new sound value was attributed to ƿ; he then reads rr.1-3 as *\*ga-gō-ōjan* (> OE *goian* 'to sigh, groan, lament'), by adding the prefix P-Gmc. *ga-*, OE *ge-*. This leads him to translate rr.1-3 as 'howling female', meant to reference the picture on the bracteate. His suggestion (1983: 11; 1987: 92) that the rune X represents /j/, is considered by Eichner (1990: 316) to be 'problematic'.

Eichner (1990) interprets rr.1-3 as the 3<sup>rd</sup> person pres.sg.subj. of the OE verb *gegan-gan* 'to be allotted to a person'; r.3 featuring the final -æ would have been derived from P-Gmc. *\*/ai/*, and the same applies to the ending of rr.4-6 **mægæ**.

Bammesberger (1991: 400) reads rr.1-3 as **g^ag^ang^a**, with r.2 as a bind-rune **g+a+n**, stating of rr.1-3 that 'we would have to posit a nominal formation basically of the *companion*-type: P-Gmc. *\*ga-gang-an-* would contain the root of the verb for 'go' preceded by the particle *\*ga-*'. For rr.4-6 **maga**, Bammesberger (1991: 400) thinks this is the weak adjective OE *maga* 'powerful, strong', whilst rr.7-9 **medu** is the predicate noun OE *medu* 'mead'.

Page (1999: 184) notes that he 'does not assert what phonemic value should be attached to the graphs ƿ and ƿ', offering different meanings of rr.7-9 **medu** as OE *medu* 'mead', OE *mēd* 'reward', or even OE *(ge)mēde* 'consent, good will'.

Parsons (1999: 64-65) lists a variety of interpretations of rr.3-6 and 7-9 but cannot 'favour any single reading'. He notes that rr.3-6 are 'strikingly reminiscent' of the Kragehul spear shaft and thinks the Undley sequence probably mimics the Scandinavian 'rune charm-language'. Parsons does note the difference of r.2 but does not think it brings the sequence away from its parallels. He states that perhaps **g**



and **a** stand for their rune names *\*gebu* ‘gift’ and *\*ansuz* ‘god’, and that the bind rune, which combines them, had some symbolic significance. Then, when *\*ansuz* passed from 𐌱 to 𐌶, ‘a tension would arise between the traditional *\*gebu*-*\*ansuz* symbol and its constituent parts’. Parsons (1999: 64) thinks the altered sequence on Undley may reflect a stage when **g<sup>a</sup>a** was still a familiar symbol, but the *\*ansuz* name had transferred to the new rune. He goes on to give two interpretations for rr.4-7, either *mēdu* ‘reward’ or *medu* ‘mead’, and suggests a range of options for rr.7-9, including *mæg* ‘kindman’, *maga* ‘able, powerful, strong’, *magu* ‘son, youth’, and *maga* ‘stomach’.

Looijenga (2003: 220) reads rr.1-3 as a non-interpretable word. Looijenga (2003: 220) considers Eichner’s (1990: 317) parallel to Kragehul’s **gagaga** parallel in Beowulf ll.244-247a, *no her cuðlicor cumin ongunnon lindhæbbende, ne ge leafnesword guðfremmendra gearwe ne wisson, maga gemedu*, ‘never have shield-bearing warriors made their approach more clearly, and yet you had no knowledge of the warriors’ password agreed on by our kinsfolk’. She speculates that if the Undley text contains a similar text to *maga (ge)medu*, then it would be possible to take **gægogæ** as a *leafnesword* ‘password’ (Bosworth Toller, *leafnesword*). She reads **maga** as the gen.pl of the masc. u-stem noun OE *maga* ‘kinsman’, read it as ‘of the kinsmen’, with **medu** being the fem *ō*-stem nom.sg OE *medu* ‘reward’.

Waxenberger (2010: 159-160) reads rr.1-3 transliterated as either **g<sup>a</sup>ag<sup>a</sup>og<sup>a</sup>a** or **g<sup>a</sup>æg<sup>a</sup>og<sup>a</sup>æ**, stating that she believes that **a** must have been ‘in a state where it denoted the allophones [æ] and [a] or P-Gmc. \*/a/’ if a date towards the end of the fifth century is considered, or [æ:] or [a:] if a date closer to the middle of the fifth century is considered. She prefers to state that ‘at present, I cannot decipher’ rr.1-3. This is also the case for rr.5 and 7; Waxenberger (2010: 162) prefers the reading rr.4-

7 as *mægæ* as dat.sg of *mæg* ‘relative’. Finally, she states that ‘for semantic reasons, I prefer ‘reward’ to ‘mead’ and translate [rr.4-11] therefore’, ‘...(is) the reward to the relative’. In her later work, Waxenberger (2018) surveys all previous and possible interpretations of the Undley bracteate by scholars and, using her understanding of the sound changes responsible for the emergence of the new runes ƿ and the new value attached to ƿ narrow down ‘the number of possible interpretations by my analysis of which root vowels and inflectional endings are possible’ (Waxenberger 2018: 528). She states that the most probable interpretations are Eichner’s (1990: 316) and Bammesberger’s (1991: 400). However, she believes there are issues with both interpretations of rr.1-3 since she believes ƿ should denote /ǃ/, but this is not considered in either interpretation. Waxenberger (2018: 528) considers rr.1-3 ‘uninterpretable at present’, making the meaning of the whole sequence ‘a matter of speculation’.

### **Personal reading.**

The tops of the graphs, which are closest to the centre of the bracteate, have been pressed more deeply than the bottoms, which appear more faintly pressed into the metal. This is especially the case towards the middle of the text, where the bottoms of the graphs are shallower. The graphs are all retrograde and the text runs r-l, likely from the die creation process where the text producer cut the text r-l, resulting in the reverse, l-r, on the final product. There are no intrusive marks that affect the reading of the text. At least one framing line runs along the top of the text, curving to mirror the bracteate shape from which the graphs hang, and the framing line curves around the end of the text. However, it is difficult to determine whether a parallel framing line runs underneath the text due to the positioning of the bottom of the graphs flush

with the outer rim design; the rim design, perhaps, fulfils the function of a framing line.

There are dividers in the shape of hollow circles which appear to hang downwards from the arms of graphs rr.3 and 7. The text reads:

R.1 **g<sup>a</sup>a**: bind rune. All staves are straight, and both twigs are equal; this is the quality of the cutting taken through the entire inscription unless otherwise stated.

R.2 **g<sup>a</sup>o**: bind-rune.

R.3 **g<sup>a</sup>a**: bind-rune. The bottom twig is touching a circular divider.

R.4 **m**. Very close to the divider is the right stave.

R.5 **a**. Here, the left-hand side of the twigs are slightly less deeply pressed.

R.6 **g**. The bottom and the left-hand side of the graph are less deeply pressed.

R.7 **a**. Again, the cut of the stave is less deep towards the end. The divider is close to the bottom twig.

R.8 **m**. The bottom of the staves is less deeply pressed.

R. 9 **e**. Here the graphs are more uniformly pressed; all cuts are precise.

R.10 **d**. The graph is clearly cut, and both bows are equal.

R.11 **u**. Here, the join is curved with the twig and stave almost parallel, and the gap between them becomes slightly wider towards the bottom of the graph.

<i>Table 7 Undley autopsy.</i>			
<b>Autopsy</b>	<b>Transliteration</b>	<b>Structure</b>	<b>Interpretation</b>
January 2021, British Museum	<b>g^ag^og^a.maga.medu</b>	? +N+N	‘? .reward. relative/kinswoman’  ‘?.mead.relative/kinswoman’

I see rr.1-3 as uninterpretable and leave them with a question mark to represent this. However, rr.-4-6 and 7-9 are interpretable. I read rr.4-6 **maga** as OE *mæg* ‘relative’, a masc. a-stem noun in the dat.sg, reading ‘to the relative’. Waxenberger (2018: 516) states that the reconstructed pr-OE dat.sg. ending was \*/-æ/, which would have been represented by the **a**-rune. A similar choice would be OE *mæg* ‘woman, kinswoman’, a fem. *ō*-stem noun in the dat.sg., which features the same ending and thus would also be a possible reading. For rr.7-9 **medu**, two readings are possible, either from the OE *medu* ‘mead’, a masc/neut. u-stem noun in the nom.sg., or OE *mēd* ‘reward, pay, price, compensation’, a fem. *ō*-stem in the nom.sg with a \*/-u/ ending.

### 3.1.3 Welbeck Hill (IK388; Wax. OERC87)



*Figure 6 The Welbeck Hill Bracteate, IK 388. Image: Hanson Auctioneers.*

#### **The object.**

The bracteate was excavated in 1963 from grave 14 of a cemetery at Welbeck Hill, South Humberside (formerly Lincolnshire) (Parsons 1999: 70). The object is a silver bracteate and features a retrograde runic text. The bracteate is dated to the sixth century (Page 1973: 20; Parsons (1999: 103; Looijenga 2003: 221). Hines (1990: 445) states that the bracteate was likely manufactured ‘well within the 6<sup>th</sup> century but not later than circa 570’.

Vierck (1970: 339) and Hines (1984: 217-218) agree that the bracteate may be of local 'Anglian English' manufacture, though its ‘cultural background’ is

certainly southern Scandinavian. Concerning the bracteate image, Page (1973: 183) states that the design on the bracteate is 'so obscure that it is hard to tell what it represents or derives from'.

### Previous transliteration and interpretation.

<i>Table 8 Previous interpretations of Welbeck Hill..</i>		
<b>Author</b>	<b>Transliteration</b>	<b>Interpretation</b>
Hines (2019: 59)	<b>law</b>	-
Looijenga (2003: 199)	<b>laþ(u)</b>	'Probably short for <i>laþu</i> ', pr-Gmc <i>*laþu</i> 'invitation, calling'
Page (1973: 183, 1999: 180)	<b>law(u)</b>	Likely from <i>*laþu</i> 'invitation, calling'
Parsons (1999: 70)	<b>laþ</b>	pr-Gmc <i>*laþu</i> 'invitation, calling'
Waxenberger (2010: 124)	<b>læw</b>	OE <i>læw</i> 'injury'

Interpretations of the Welbeck Hill text are divided into two: one being P-Gmc *\*lapu* ‘invitation, calling’, relying on the text being a mis-rendering of a well-attested bracteate formula word, or reading OE *læw* ‘injury’. Looijenga (2003: 199) and Page (1999: 180) both state that the text is ‘probably short for **lap(u)**’,



Figure 7 The Welbeck Hill Bracteate close-up, showing the text. Image: Hanson Auctioneers. Edits: JH.

whilst Parsons (1999) and Waxenberger (2010) prefer OE *læw*.

Page (1973:183; 1999:180) links this sequence to ‘early bracteate inscriptions of Denmark, for these often have the sequence **la** or **al** in connection with **u**, **w**, or **p**’, further stating that ‘probably Welbeck Hill is a distant copy of some bracteate text such as this, and so descends from Scandinavian rather than West Germanic prototypes’. Page (1973: 218) takes the Welbeck Hill inscription as an indication ‘of a northern influence upon the form of Old English’. Page (1999: 180) notes the **lapu** bracteate texts from Denmark and states that **p** could have ‘easily’ been mistaken for **w** by an ‘incompetent copyist. As a corroboration of his theory, he names a bracteate from Darum, Jutland, which has the retrograde **lapu** (a “magical word”) where **p** has the form readily confused with Welbeck Hill’s **w**.

Though Parsons (1999:70) prefers a reading of *\*lapu* ‘invitation, calling’, he points out an alternative reading, that **law** may be linked to OE *læw* ‘injury’ but ‘the character of the parallel with the Scandinavian bracteates, particularly in the light of

other evidence of parallels between Anglian England and Scandinavian runic charm-language - most certainly **alu** on the Spong Hill urns - tends to favour **lapu'**.

Waxenberger (2010: 124) states that by following Hines' (1990: 445) dating of c.500-570, then r.2 could be either a short or long vowel: if a short vowel, then it 'should denote the fronted allophone [æ] of P-Gmc. \*/a/ as it occurs in a monosyllabic word', whilst she further suggests that if r.2 is a long vowel, then it would be /æ:/ since the phonemic split of PrGmc \*/a:/ into /æ:/ and /a:/ should have been completed at that time, meaning that the 'new' āc rune would have been established for [a]. Waxenberger (2010: 124) further suggests that **læw** could be *læw* 'injury'.

### **Personal reading.**

The text is positioned along the interior edge of the punched, decorative ring running around the bracteate. The text was pressed into the bracteate mould deeply and with uniform pressure throughout, meaning the impression onto the metal is very clear. Page (1973: 183) points out that the text is set 'radially' and is 'retrograde'; the text runs from right to left, with all individual graphs orientated to be retrograde and facing right to left. There are no framing lines. The text reads as follows:

R.1 **l**: the graph is retrograde, with the twig on the right side of the stave. The twig is shorter than the twigs of r.2.

R.2 **æ**: the graph is retrograde, with the two twigs on the right-hand side of the stave. Like r.1, the twigs are short, with the second twig being longer than the first.



R.3 **w**: the graph is retrograde, with the bow positioned on the right-hand side of the stave.

<i>Table 9 The Welbeck Hill autopsy.</i>			
Autopsy	Transliteration	Structure	Interpretation
N/A	læw	N.	OE <i>læw</i> ‘injury’

Like Waxenberger (2010: 123) and Hines (2019: 59), I take the inscription at face value and, therefore, read the third rune as **w**, not a miscopied **p**. Whether this reading was the intended word or a reference to the **lapu** bracteates is uncertain. However, it is indeed the case that the Darum I (IK 42) bracteate features a **w** where a **p** is expected, the Darum I bracteate features the final **u**, reading, at face value, **lawu**, but the final **u** is not present on Welbeck Hill.

I follow Waxenberger’s (2010: 123) argument that relies on Hines’ (1990: 445) dating of the bracteate (c.500-570), that r.2 represents either the fronted allophone [æ] of \*/a/ because it occurs in a monosyllabic word or represents the long vowel /æ:/ since the phonemic split of \*/a:/ into / æ:/ and /a:/ must have been completed during that time frame. This makes the reading, following Waxenberger (2010: 123), as OE *læw* ‘injury’.

#### 3.1.4 Discussion

Text production is related to the bracteate dies and their preparation; knowledge of the die creation process, therefore, assists in understanding how the texts were made. Although the focus is on the runic bracteates, there is no substantial difference between the production of bracteates with or without runes. Some bracteates are nearly identical except for the presence of a runic inscription, indicating that the

same metalsmith made objects with and without runic inscriptions (Wicker 1998: 253). The die-creating process is the same for runic and non-runic materials except for the presence of runes.

Central to the production of the bracteate is the die. The making of the die is one of the least understood steps in bracteate production, according to Wicker (2006: 416); nonetheless, tool and design traces on the bracteate themselves reveal clues about die preparation. Over two hundred bracteates have a knob or pit at the centre, demonstrating that a compass was used to delineate the picture area of the die. The jeweller probably lightly sketched out the motifs (including the inscription), using the centre dot for orientation. Once the die model is made, several further steps exist (cf. Wicker 2006: 423-424). A die model is cut in sunken relief into the clay with a mirror image of the desired final product. The dried clay model is pressed into another lump of clay to make a mould, with the design in raised relief. Molten bronze is poured into the mould. The resulting die (with motifs in sunken relief)

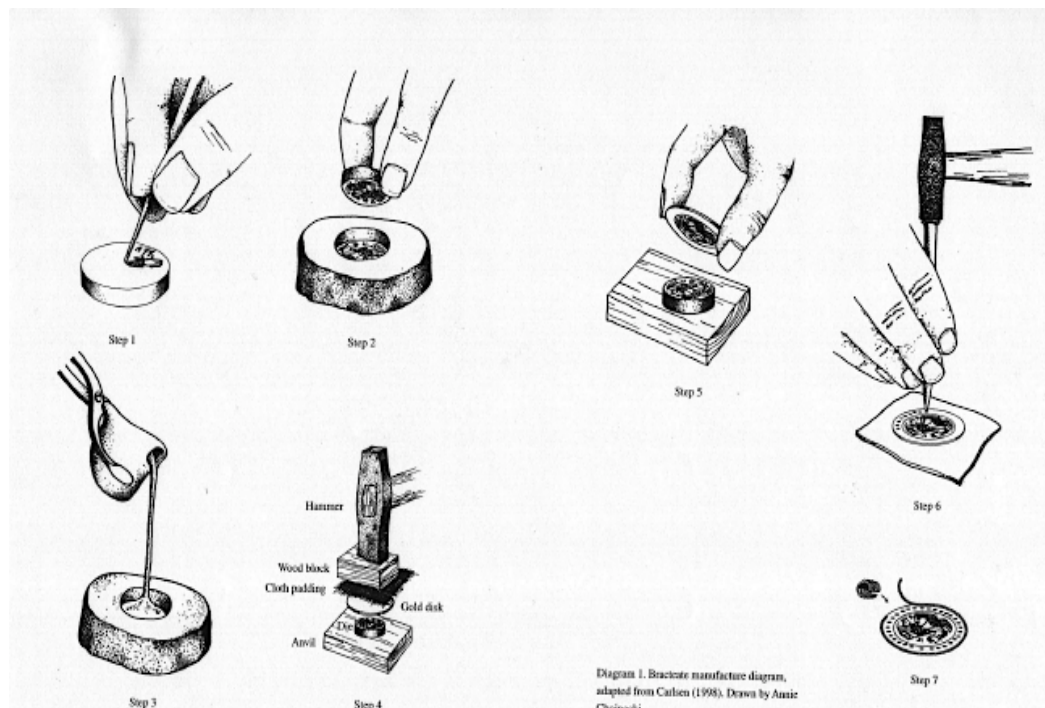


Figure 8 A diagram of bracteate production from Wicker (2006: 436). Edits: JH.

could be touched up at this stage. From the bottom, the negative die with the design in reverse of the desired final product is used as the anvil; the prepared flan of gold is laid on top of the die, and the hammer is struck onto the metal. After the central die is stamped, the ornamentation of the bracteate can be carried out, including edge trims and the attachment of the loops.

The production of runic script on the bracteate would have happened at the die model-creating processes, though there would be opportunities to touch up the die once it had come from the die model. Finished bracteates show a mirror image of the die; writing on the clay model would have required the runes to be retrograde if wanting a standard right-to-left orientation on the finished product. Wicker (1994: 67-8) notes that ‘mistakes’ on bracteate inscriptions were likely down to the challenge of executing an inscription in reverse on a small disk often only 25-30mm in diameter. Indeed, this can be seen on both the Welbeck Hill and Undley bracteates, where the graphs on the bracteate appear in retrograde, meaning they were cut with a r-l orientation during the die-making process. The shallower depth of r.3 on Binham could also be the result of die production, though it also could have resulted from an uneven striking of the die into the metal disc.

Inscriptions do not appear to have been made using different tools; in the case of the PrOERC bracteates, the thickness of the lines is like that of the rest of the iconography present on the bracteate, though in the case of Binham, the graphs appear more lightly pressed into the metal, though this could be a striking problem. Wicker (2006: 417) states generally concerning bracteates that ‘without a doubt, runic inscriptions were engraved into the die, with the same quality of lines as the motif and made with the same tool and presumably the same artist’s hands’,

therefore there is no time lag between the manufacture of the object and the engraving of the inscriptions.

Upon examination of the bracteate production, it can be said that those who made the PrOERC bracteates were probably goldsmiths. Behr (2007: 18) suggests that most goldsmiths were working for a lord who had access to raw materials and provided them with the gold needed to produce the bracteate and worked ‘either permanently or temporarily close to the seat of whose who commissioned the bracteates’ since archaeological evidence suggests that early medieval metalworkers were at least intermittently itinerant workers (Werner 1970; Roth 1986: 40; Leahy 2003: 167). Therefore, since there is no tool difference between the iconography and the runic inscription, and it is known that metalsmiths produced bracteates with and without runic texts, it is likely that the metalsmiths did the inscribing of the text as part of the bracteate die creation process.

The metalsmiths that made the bracteates created dies to produce multiple copies of the same bracteate; nonetheless, only the Binham text has multiple attestations currently known. This means there are three individual bracteate texts, reading **wa(a)t**, **g^ag^og^a.maga.medu** and **læw** on Binham, Undley and Welbeck Hill respectively. To a certain extent, all texts are deemed lexical, meaning that the text is constructed with known words or mixed with lexical and an unknown word, in the case of Undley. Nonetheless, all interpretations of the texts are uncertain, with several viable interpretations offered for each text. Binham reads **wa(a)t**, from *\*wāt*, OE *wæt* ‘wet’, as in ‘liquid, drink’, either as an adjective or a noun. This makes it a single-word inscription; similarly, another noun from the bracteate sub-corpus is the inscription from Welbeck Hill, reading **læw**, from OE *læw* ‘injury’. The final inscription is the three-word sequence on Undley, either reading ‘? .reward.

relative/kinswoman’ or ‘?.mead.relative/kinswoman’, with the first part of the sequence untranslated.

The study of the function of runic texts on bracteates is primarily dominated by the influence of Karl Hauck’s work on bracteates, chiefly his focus on interpreting the motifs on bracteates. It is thought that bracteates behave as amulets, though the study of the function of bracteates by others come to a wide range of conclusions: amulets, or ritual or religious functions (Looijenga 2003: 219; Axboe 2001: 119-136) and/or part of the display and use of wealth (Suzuki 2006: 31; Gaimster 1992: 21). Coming from the belief that bracteates function as amulets, it is assumed in an array of literature that the texts refer the motif and that both text and object refer to mythology (Heizmann in Heizmann and Axboe 2011: 1-28). For example, Düwel and Nowak (Heizmann and Axboe 2011: 389) assert that it is ‘more and more probable that bracteate pictures present Oðinn in various mythic and ritual constellations, and consequently that an attempt may be made to interpret the accompanying inscriptions as designations of that divine ruler or to understand him as speaker or recipient of such messages’ (Wicker and Williams 2012: 188). Grønvik (1996: 96) argues that the text on IK 1Ågedal refers to a part of a poem recited as preparation for a sacrifice and burial; Düwel and Nowak (Heizmann and Axboe 2011: 406) suggest that personal names on bracteates could refer to priests or Odin himself. The study of bracteate texts began with Krause’s (1966: 236-276) division of the texts into two groups, ‘magic formula’ and ‘runemaster’; though the ‘magic formula’ group is now more commonly referred to as ‘formula’ or ‘charm’ inscriptions (Wicker 2014: 29), the grouping still stands in the runological literature of the bracteates, and there is a heavy focus on determining bracteate texts to be magic-associated, or at the very least referring to the object or the motif featured on

it. Such an association is emphasised by the readiness to assume that bracteates function as amulets; though it is known that bracteates were worn as pendants around the neck due to their suspension loops, some inscriptions also appear to suggest this, such as IK 98, reading ‘I give luck/protection’ (Düwel 2008: 49), though this inscription is not as straightforward as it first appears (cf. Wicker 2014: 29). Nielsen (1978: 355–359) summarises the different inscription types found on bracteates: rune-master inscriptions (PN + verb-form of Gmc *haitan*, 1st person sg.), magic formulas (**alu**, **laukaR**, **lapu**), inscriptions with individual interpretable words, uninterpretable inscriptions, and inscriptions with unknown characters. This is not the only set of religion-focused categories provided. In Heizmann and Axoboe (2011), chapters are formed on names, interpretable bracteate inscriptions, letter and alphabet magic, and formulae. Even if I did ascribe more readily to the amuletic function of the bracteates and subsequently their texts, it would be difficult to assign the PrOERC bracteate texts into any category above aside from the ‘interpretable words’ or ‘interpretable inscriptions’; even that poses problems, since Undley is not wholly interpretable, and what precisely the interpretation of Binham is, is not certain. Only Welbeck Hill, with its reading of **læw** as *læw* ‘injury’ is certain, and even that is cast into doubt when the text could be considered a mis-rendering of the familiar formula **lapu**.

It could not be said that the texts on the PrOERC bracteates refer to anything amuletic or religious. However, Binham’s motif is referred to as Odin; the text does not refer to it as such, and the motif’s mythological interpretation should not be assumed as correct but instead as one of many possible interpretations of the scene. Welbeck Hill, too, features a text unrelated to its motif in any obvious way. It is not as straightforward with Undley: whilst the motif features the She-Wolf suckling her

human cubs in reference to the city of Rome's foundation myth, the text, according to Odenstedt (1983: 6; 1987: 92, 1990: 138; 1991: 63), makes reference to a she-wolf in rr.1-3, which could be a rendering of *\*ga-gō-ōjan* (> *OE goian* 'to sigh, groan, lament'), translating it as 'howling female' or 'she-wolf'. This is the only interpretation of the text referring to the motif and perhaps is a result of the assumptions made in some bracteate literature that the text must refer to the motif. None of the texts fit any of the previously mentioned categories with certainty.

Wicker (2014: 38) warns that 'when interpretations of inscriptions are based on the assumption that Odin and Balder are the figures depicted on bracteates, then all readings lead to a circumscribed range of possibilities'. Indeed, Wicker (2014: 37), Starkey (1999), Enright (1988: 504) and others call for a shift in focus from the amulet, religious-focused interpretation of both bracteates and their texts to a more contextual approach, focusing on the social reasons for wearing bracteates, and why they would feature texts. This is related to the text reception of the object and, therefore, the text.

Once the bracteate was made, it would have then been given away; bracteates were likely given for a multitude of reasons, including as part of gift exchange between chieftains to their retinue (Gaimster 1992: 21), signifying Scandinavian identity (Andrén 1991), morning gifts for women from their husbands (Arrhenius 1995), and signifying Scandinavian descent and political affinity (Fischer 2003). The bracteates were made by goldsmiths who were likely attached to a wealthy patron, suggesting that they were part of a high-status gift-giving exchange, meaning the text reception was likely done within a limited social setting restricted to those of a higher social status. The commissioner of the text is sometimes thought of as a

runemaster or a runic magician, or even Odin as the speaker or recipient of bracteate texts (Düwel and Nowak in Heizmann and Axboe 2011: 388-296). Though a wealthy patron would have commissioned the bracteate, the person who designed the motif and the text is unknown.

Primarily, archaeological evidence suggests that bracteates were worn on the body. Hauck (Heizmann and Axboe 2011: 206) makes only a few claims about how bracteates were used and who wore them beyond the fact that he asserts that men used and wore bracteates, just as men wore the Roman medallions; he cites IK 189 Trollhättan, which he believes is self-referential showing a figure holding a bracteate. However, Wicker (2010: 74) notes that very few bracteates are known from men's graves. Indeed, most bracteates have been found in women's graves and some as loose finds (Behr 2000: 25-52; Gaimster 2001: 143), with most bracteates in Britain being part of burials and found at the neck or chest area along with glass beads, suggesting their function as jewellery for women (Hansen 2021: 44).

Bracteates are equipped with loops so that they could be suspended as pendants and, presumably, worn around the neck; wear on loops is very common, suggesting that they were worn for long periods, with some loops being lost entirely (Wicker 2005: 50). Some bracteates were found either worn singly or as part of a necklace with additional bracteates or other pendants, as well as with beads (Wicker 2005: 54-56). Glass or amber beads, and gold spacers, appear to have been used to space the bracteates and/or pendants apart in the necklace entourage. Multiple bracteates together suggest that bracteates could have been combined and displayed together 'for greater visual effect and to convey greater status than a singleton' (Wicker 2005: 57).



Due to being worn on the body around the neck and chest area, bracteates' decorative features – whether featuring runic inscriptions or not- would not necessarily be distinguished from a distance; the bracteate could be seen from a distance as a small gold pendant and upon closer inspection, the bracteate's detail would be seen. This means that the text reception of an object was viewed as part of the dress ensemble; the reception of the inscription itself would have been limited to close contact situations. It should be noted that I cannot, with certainty, claim that the PrOERC bracteates were displayed in this way, especially considering the poor recording of the Welbeck Hill site means that we do not know its deposition context, and the fact that Undley was a loose find means it lacks any contextual information. Nonetheless, it can be assumed that the PrOERC bracteates were, at some point, worn as jewellery around the neck like most bracteates were worn, especially Undley since we can see the surviving loop.

This does not mean that the bracteate was permanently around the neck as part of the jewellery ensemble of women. In particular, the Binham bracteates could have an alternative text reception other than being worn since they were found as part of a hoard. Hoards were deposited for many different reasons, for example, to hide and safeguard valuable objects with the intention of later recovery, for objects to remain buried and be deposited as votive offerings, or to store as provisions for the afterlife (Behr, Pestel and Hines 2014: 57). Behr (Behr, Pestell and Hines 2014: 48) is uncertain concerning the function of the hoard at Binham; almost all the items in the Binham hoard are damaged, with the bracteates folded or cut, and folded bracteates are not found in graves where the pendants are part of the funerary ensemble, with Behr (2014: 58) interpreting their destruction as a deliberate ritual act perhaps associated with sacrificial deposition. However, Behr (2014: 58) discusses

that the findspot is unusual for a votive deposition because it was found in a field and not a bog or lake as supposedly expected, and instead suggests that the function of the hoard was a collection of material ‘awaiting recycling and for some reason left unrecovered’.

However, it should be noted that whilst IK 630.1, 630.2, and 630.3 are folded or cut, the bracteates featuring runic inscriptions, IK 604.1 and 604.2, are less altered, only featuring small tears in the outer wiring. Behr (Behr, Pestell and Hines 2014: 57) claims that ‘only the damage of the b-bracteate with the still preserved loop (IK 604.2) appears to be post-depositional’, meaning that this damage was not done at the same time as the rest of the altered bracteates. The destruction, or lack thereof, could have been a deliberate choice by those participating in the creation of the hoard at Binham; it could suggest that the bracteates with runic inscriptions were somehow seen as different as those without in this context and thus left untouched. The creation of a hoard would provide opportunities for close contact text reception – it does appear that the compiler of the hoard was aware of the faint texts on the Binham bracteates and may have chosen not to fold or cut them. Regardless of such a hypothesis, the bracteates in a hoard context would have a text reception period where they were collected with other objects and put into the ground. In the context of a hoard, the Binham bracteates would have been removed from their primary function as jewellery and instead given a new function as a hoard object, meaning that their function as objects changed over time, and thus, the social setting of text reception also changed. The change, however, was more concerning the social setting, from being viewed on the body to being viewed on the ground. The text reception would still be limited to close contact social settings due to the nature of the rune-bearing object itself.

### 3.1.5 Conclusions

Since these bracteates were likely made in Britain, the idea that these bracteates may have been used differently from the bracteates made and used in the Continent or Scandinavia is an idea applied to the PrOERC bracteates also (cf. Hansen 2021: 44; Wicker 2014: 37). Though they were made in the same way as their foreign counterparts, the find contexts for these bracteates are different. Undley is a loose find, Welbeck Hill a grave find, and Binham a hoard: all these deposition contexts could suggest different functions for the bracteate itself at different points in their object biography. Whilst the Binham bracteates were considered objects designated to a hoard and possibly as jewellery before this, it could be assumed for Undley and Welbeck Hill that the bracteates functioned as jewellery until the point of deposition, either accidental or not. As Hansen (2021: 44) states:

English bracteates have overall been studied as objects connected with influential or ruling families trying to present an image of legitimacy. This is hardly surprising: the area comprising modern-day England was subject to rapid change in power balance and demographics during the Migration Period. As an expression of Germanic – particularly Scandinavian – art, the new rulers used artistic as well as military prestige to secure their influence. For elites originating from overseas, objects like bracteates could be used as an expression of wealth and status, but also for their symbolic connection to continental dynasties (Hinton 2005).

Since it can be assumed that the bracteates in Britain had a diverse function as objects referencing social status and wealth since they were often solid gold objects

on physical display by being worn as jewellery around the neck. The text cannot be divorced from the object in the case of the bracteates: as shown through the text production, the text was conceived as a part of the overall bracteate design, and though not necessarily referencing the central motif, the text was still planned and subsequently created as part of the entire object. It is, therefore, likely that the text functioned similarly to the object itself, demonstrating to the text receiver the wealth and social power of the woman wearing it.

Nonetheless, the texts, and to some extent the bracteates themselves, were not big objects: physical closeness was required to receive the text due to its size. These are some of the smallest texts in the ProERC, the graphs that make up the text on Bingham, for example, being no more than a few millimetres tall. This calls into question the direct relationship between object function and text function: in the case of the bracteates, perhaps it is not the case that the text refers to the motif present on the bracteate but is received alongside a close examination of the motif, therefore serving a decorative purpose or a communicative purpose now beyond our knowledge, but socially meaningful to those using the bracteates for their social gain, especially those that could get physically close enough to the object to view it. These texts had social meaning to those wearing and viewing the bracteates; the placement of runic bracteates in a hoard, like so many found in Scandinavia, but not damaged in the same way as the non-runic bracteates, perhaps suggests that the text, and therefore the bracteate that carried it, continued to have social meaning beyond being worn as jewellery. Perhaps echoing a well-attested phenomenon in Scandinavia being brought to England and used to cement social legitimacy, the runic inscriptions on bracteates functioned similarly, echoing runic bracteates in

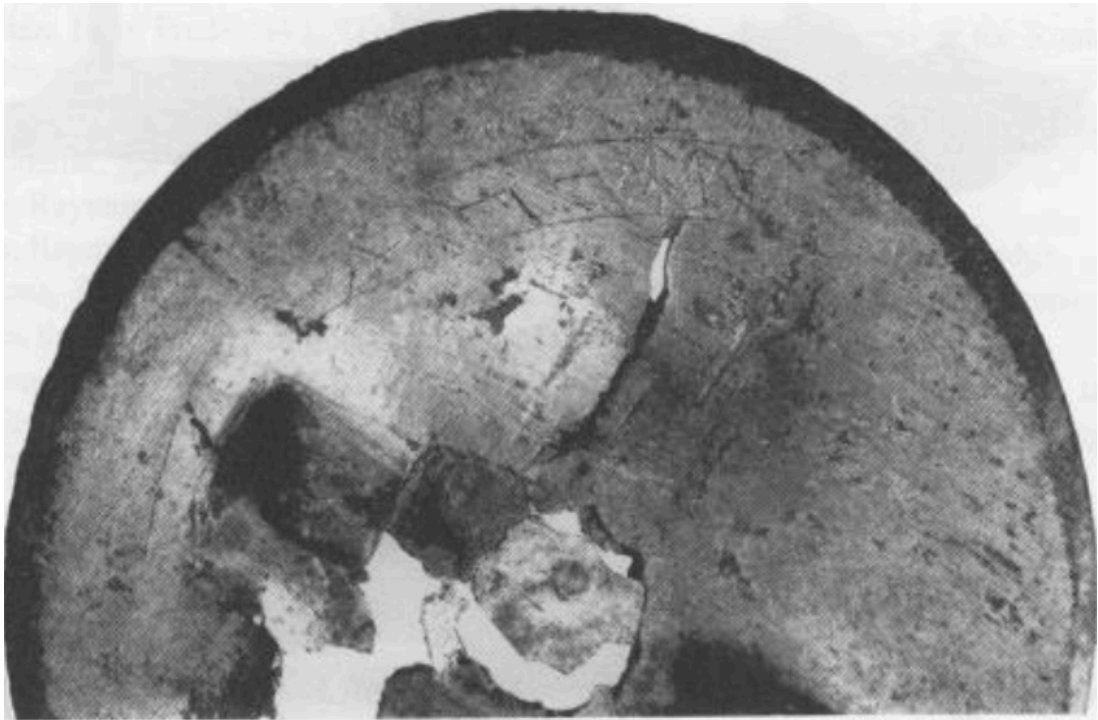
Scandinavia with their enigmatic inscriptions which are a part of some of the bracteate motif and design.

### 3.2 Brooches

A brooch is a jewellery item featuring a pin and clasp. It is designed to be attached to garments, often to fasten two pieces of fabric together. Made of metal and often featuring decorative front-plates or faces, brooches come in a range of types, which fall into two categories: the long (bow) brooch and the circular (disc) brooch.

There have been six brooches that feature runic inscriptions found in Britain: Boarley, Dover, Harford Farm, Hunstanton, West Heslerton, and Wakerley. Dover and Harford Farm have two runic inscriptions on them; the smaller of the Harford Farm texts has been rarely mentioned in the literature and is so faint that it is possible scholars have previously missed this text. The longer of the Harford Farm texts is one of the most discussed runic inscriptions in all the PrOERC and is an outlier in the PrOERC in its inscription length and its lexicality, and late dating of the object. Harford Farm is therefore used as an ending point for the PrOERC. The six brooches, with eight inscriptions in total, are treated below, concluding that the function of runic script on brooches is personalisation of an item that is a necessary part of daily dress.

### 3.2.1 Boarley (Wax. OERC9)



*Figure 9 The Boarley Brooch, from Hines (2006: 260).*

#### **The object.**

The brooch was a loose find found by a metal detectorist between 1989 and 1990 at Boarley Farm, near Hollingbourne, Kent (Parsons 1999: 46). The brooch is a gilt copper-alloy Kentish keystone disc brooch; the front of the brooch is inlaid with garnet and shell and decorated with chip-carved ornament. It features an equal-armed cross, and in each quadrant, there is a pair of birds placed back-to-back or possibly a human mask (Parsons 1999: 46). There are signs of repair on the brooch (Martin 2015: 136). According to Parsons (1999: 46), the brooch is datable to the late sixth or early seventh century and 'fits into a well-established series of Kentish disc-brooches', suggesting it is a local product of Kent. Looijenga (2003: 278) follows Parsons' (1999: 46) date, whilst Page (1999: 28) places Boarley on his post-650CE map, which suggests he believed it to be dated to the later seventh century. Hines (2019: 59) dates the brooch to the late sixth or early seventh century.

**Previous transliterations and interpretations.**

<i>Table 10 Previous interpretations of Boarley.</i>		
<b>Author</b>	<b>Transliteration</b>	<b>Interpretation</b>
Hines (2019: 59)	<b>atsil or liota</b>	-
Knirk (1992: 8)	<b>li(o)ta    at(o)il</b> <b>lislā    alsil</b> <b>lista    atsil</b> <b>li(o)la    al(o)il</b>	‘none of these make obviously better sense than Parsons’ <i>Liota</i> , though a possible association of <b>sil</b> with OE <i>sigle</i> ‘brooch’ is inescapable’
Looijenga (2003: 278)	<b>æt sil -&gt;</b>	to/at/with the brooch
Nedoma (2004: 365)	<b>[?][t][o/s]il &lt;-</b>	<i>Liota</i> , Scandinavian female personal name
Parsons (1992: 8, 1999: 46-7)	<b>liota -&gt;</b>	<i>Liota</i> , Frisian female personal name
Waxenberger (2010: 41-42 2014: 41-3)	<b>(.)t(.)l &lt;-</b>	-

The interpretations of the inscription focus on its varying reading direction, on which there is little consensus. Most interpretations of the inscription conclude a female personal name, of varying linguistic origins.

Knirk (1992: 8), when commenting on Parsons’ (1992: 7) initial report on the brooch, notes that though Parsons (1999: 2) concludes that a right-to-left reading is correct, there are up to eight different possible readings. He does conclude that ‘none



of these makes obviously better sense than Parsons' **liota**, though a possible association of **sil** with OE *sigle* 'brooch' is inescapable'.

Parsons (1999: 46) suggests **liota**, though he notes that his reading is 'clearly very uncertain'; the reading is based on the angle of the incised grooves leaning in a direction that suggests a right-to-left carving and right-to-left reading. He further states that the name may relate to P-Gmc. *\*leudi* 'people'; the name *Lioda* is attested in Old English (Redin 1919: 51), but the **t** for **d** suggests an Old High Germanic cognate, and *Liota* is found as a female personal name (Forstemann 1900: 1032). Parsons (1999: 47) goes on to say that a Germanic name in Kent c.600 is not necessarily problematic considering the Continental influences on the Kent area at the time but does note that the brooch is of local Kentish manufacture.

Looijenga (2003: 278) reads the text left-to-right and takes **sil** as an abbreviation for OE *sigle* 'brooch', stating that **sil** could be from '*sigil*, *sigel* f. (later n.) 'sun' or 'brooch''. She suggests the text may not have been finished and interprets **æt sil** as 'to/at/with the brooch'.

Nedoma (2004: 364f.) argues that Parsons' (1999) interpretation of **liota** is phonologically impossible, as the Pre-OHG shift /d/ > /t/ had not been carried through in c.600AD. He also states that r.1 would be a retrograde rune as its twig points to the right instead of the left. Alternatively, Nedoma (2004: 365) considers the text a female personal name of Scandinavian origin and believes it is not a South Germanic name.

Waxenberger's (2010: 41-42, 2014: 41-3) reading acknowledges Parsons' (1999: 46) right-to-left reading but only reads two out of the five runes as certain.

### **Personal reading.**

The runes are cut into the back of the brooch, positioned above and to the right of the pin mechanism. They measure between 4 and 4.5mm in height (Parsons 1999: 46), with uniform width and height. They appear to have been cut with a thin, sharp inscribing tool. According to Parsons (1999: 46), the orientation of the inscription is likely right-to-left due to how the graphs were cut: ‘under high magnification, the incised lines are well defined, to the extent that it is easy to determine which lines overlie which others; on these indications it is evident that the inscription was cut from right to left’. Nonetheless, there are difficulties with determining the orientation: the arm of r.1 is to the right of the stave, suggesting a left-to-right orientation of this graph, whilst r.5 is a mirror-rune and therefore can be orientated both right-to-left and left-to-right. Since Parsons (1999) has examined the brooch at a microscopic level and concluded that the angle of the individual cuts that make up the graphs are slanted a way that indicates the text was inscribed right-to-left, I prefer a right-to-left reading of the text. The text is set between two near-parallel framing lines drawn freehand and curve upwards from left to right, narrower as they move right. To the left of the graphs are possibly decorative zig-zag forms.

To the left of the text, there are additional markings. There are three zig-zag shapes made of three cuts, which are like that of one form of the *s*-rune. There are two, possibly three, further markings after these, one which could be another zig-zag with an additional line forming from the join made by the second and third cut, and the final marking (or two) being two cuts forming acute angles. The zig-zag forms overcut r.5, meaning they were placed between the framing lines after producing the text. They appear to be more faintly inscribed than the text to its right but of similar thickness and thus were likely done with a comparable tool but at a different time, possibly a different hand, than the lexical text. Therefore, the text and the zig-zag

forms, which could be interpreted as an **s**-rune, should not be taken as one cohesive composition and were likely done by different persons at different times. The chronology of the text and the zig-zags can be established: the text came first, then the zig-zags were later additions, seen by the overcut of the right-hand zig-zag on r.5. However, the gap between the production of the text and the production of the zig-zags is uncertain. I suggest that the additions to the back plate alongside the text appear to be an attempt to fill the framing lines. The reading is based on a right-to-left reading following Parsons (1999: 46-7).

R.1 **l**: formed with two cuts just outside the framing lines.

R.2 **(i)**: a single straight line, the bottom of the graph joins with the bottom of r.3.

R.3 **(o)**: This graph is uncertain. A short stave comes down from the top framing line; from there, two lines diverge outwards, with the left-hand side coming down in three equal zig-zag strokes, whilst the right side has a single stroke, a gap, and then another short stave. Parsons (1999: 46) reads **o** but notes its 'extraordinary form', noting it is 'lopsided and distorted'. Looijenga (2003:278) categorises r.3 as an 'inexpertly carved **s** in four strokes'. I read this as an o-rune.

R.4 **t**: a stave with two twigs, one on either side coming from the top of the stave.

R.5 **a**: this is a mirror-rune; a single stave has four twigs, two on either side of the stave. A zig-zag shape cuts over the top of the bottom half of the graph.

<i>Table 11 Boarley autopsy.</i>			
<b>Autopsy date</b>	<b>Transliteration</b>	<b>Structure</b>	<b>Interpretation</b>
Not conducted; used photo from Hines (2006: 206) and drawing from Parsons (1999: 47)	<b>at(o)(i)l &lt;-</b>	Fem.PN <sub>nom</sub>	<i>Liota</i> , a female personal name

I agree with the general reading of a Germanic female personal name in the nominative case, *Liota*, with additional non-lexical markings, possibly an s-rune, in the forms of zig-zags that follow on from the text. The personal name is in the nominative, meaning that the personal name can refer to a wide range of people with different relationships to the brooch, including the owner of the brooch where the personal name is claiming ownership over this particular item, carver of the text, a donor or beneficiary of the brooch who has inscribed their name as part of the commemoration process in a donor-beneficiary relationship, or maker of the brooch who used their personal name to create a ‘makers’ mark’.

### 3.2.2 Dover (Wax. OERC26)



*Figure 10 The Dover Brooch. Image: The British Museum.*

#### **The object.**

The brooch was excavated from grave 126 of the Long Hill cemetery near Buckland, Dover, in Kent (Evison 1964: 243). The grave was cut through and destroyed by a digger in January 1952, and a workman retrieved the brooch; the brooch was subsequently reported in April 1953 (Evison 1987: 243). The brooch is a plated Kentish disc brooch with concentric zones of decoration on a gold plate, and has garnets, white paste, cloisonné garnets and glass settings. The back-plate is silver. The brooch measures 42mm in diameter. The brooch is dated, according to Hines

(1990: 447), to a ‘period circa 575-625’ and later claims it to be mid-seventh century (Hines 2019: 59). Evison (1964: 243) thinks the brooch to be of local Kentish manufacture, stating, ‘there is no doubt at all of its Kentish manufacture... [and] the type must have been produced during the latter part of the sixth century and the beginning of the seventh’.

### Previous transliterations and interpretations.

Where a reading direction has been indicated in their interpretation, it is included in the table below.

<i>Table 12 Previous interpretations of Dover.</i>		
<b>Author</b>	<b>Transliteration</b>	<b>Interpretation</b>
Bruggnik (1987: 53)	<b>bss(.)lb &lt;-</b>  <b>iwd -&gt;</b>	-
Evison (1964: 244)	<b>bli bkk or blissb</b>  <b>pd</b>	For the first inscription, Evison (1964: 244) states that ‘this makes no sense’, and alternatively offers a reading based on OE <i>bliss</i> , <i>blīps</i> ‘bliss, joy’. Concerning the second inscription, Evison (1964: 244) states that ‘the runes do not form a word and guess as to meaning would not seem profitable’.
Flowers (1999: 16)	<b>bkknlb</b>	-

	<b>dwi</b>	
Hines (1990: 447; 2019: 59)	Considered 'illegible'; 'undecipherable'	-
Looijenga (2003: 290)	<b>bli -&gt;</b> <b>bss or bkk or bli</b> <b>&lt;-</b> <b>pd</b>	Looijenga (2003: 290) suggests that 'perhaps the inscription's purpose is purely ornamental'.
Mitchell (1994: s.v. DB3)	<b>blnssb -&gt;</b>  <b>iwd</b>	-
Page (1999: 182)	<b>iwd</b>	-
Parsons (1999: 52- 3)	<b>bl(n) -&gt;</b> <b>bkk &lt;-</b>  <b>iwd</b>	Parsons (1999: 53) states that 'it can only be concluded that read conventionally, in any direction... the inscription must be considered unintelligible'.
Waxenberger (2010: 59)	<b>(s)li(.)is</b> or <b>(b)li(.)ib</b>  <b>(.)wd</b>	-

It is clear from the survey of previous scholarly work that the primary difficulty with inscription A is identifying individual graphs and their orientation. Furthermore,

almost all interpretations note that both inscriptions are non-lexical. Often, the inscriptions are transliterated with very little to no further discussion on interpretation.

Evison (1964: 244) notes that the smaller Dover inscription is very lightly inscribed and consists ‘only of two runes’, reading **þ** and **d**, placed in a rectangular frame with one side extending further upwards than the other. She notes that since an upward stroke of the **d** forms one edge of the frame, it may be that the longer frame is meant to be a runic **i**. Evison (1964: 244) reads the second inscription in two ways: **bli bkk** or **blissb**. The inscription is ‘contained between parallel lines, the ends of the frame are formed by the upright strokes of two **b** symbols facing opposite ways’. To read **bli bkk**, she stops at r.3 and reads upside down from the right-hand side, as possibly reflected in the rr.4-6 orientation. Alternatively, the final rune could be a symbol used ‘for pictorial effect to close the frame’, with rr.4 and 5 being read as **s**, noting that the form of **s** appears on the Thames seax and Cuthbert’s coffin and thus, on Dover, could represent an **s**, noting that the Dover brooch may be ‘late enough in the pagan period also to be influenced by the Christians’, specifically ‘the earlier Frankish contacts’. This would make the reading **blissb**, with the word OE *bliss*, *blīps* ‘bliss, joy’ with a final decorative **b**.

Page (1973: 186; 1999: 182) states that inscription A begins and ends with **b**, one of them retrograde so that it faces inwards, making it impossible to determine which way round to read the inscription.

Hines (1990; 2019) considers the Dover brooch to have illegible inscriptions and does not discuss either inscription in detail or provide an interpretation.

Attempting to find an answer to the illegibility, Hines (2006: 200) suggests that in



the case of the Dover brooch, there was 'relative unfamiliarity [with] the runic tradition [that] allowed for imaginative, deliberately enigmatic uses of runes'.

Parsons (1999: 52-53) states that the runes, or, as he calls them, 'rune-like symbols', cannot be read consistently in one direction, noting that a direction change is needed halfway through the inscription.

Looijenga (2003: 290) notes that there is a possibility that rr.1-3 are read right-to-left, then, after turning the brooch 180 degrees, the rest of the inscription can be read right-to-left. On the individual graphs, Looijenga (2003: 290) notes that rr.4 and 5 of inscription A may feature a form of **I** that is sometimes found on bracteates. Finally, she suggests that 'perhaps the inscription's purpose is purely ornamental'.

Waxenberger (2010: 60) does not provide an interpretation of the inscriptions but instead states that the 'sequence has not yet been deciphered'.

### **Personal reading.**

The brooch features two texts, both positioned on the back plate. Inscription A runs horizontally above the catalogue number, and inscription B runs diagonally under the catalogue number. Both texts are shallowly cut, though inscription B is shallower than A. Both texts are set within framing lines. According to Parsons (1999: 52), inscription A is 3mm high, but he does not give the height of the second inscription. The orientation of individual graphs varies throughout; Looijenga (2003: 290), when considering the orientation of inscription A, suggests that the graphs can be read from r.3 onwards in a left-to-right direction if the brooch is turned 180 degrees. Page (1999:182) also notes the orientation of rr.1 and 6 of inscription A means that one of them is retrograde depending on the reading direction. The depth of inscribing between inscription A and B is different, which could suggest they were produced at

different times. The framing lines could be ‘boxed’ framing lines, meaning that there are both horizontal and vertical framing lines on both inscriptions; if this is the case, then for rr.1 and 6 on inscription A read **s**. Looijenga (2003: 290) notes that the framing lines look as though ‘the manufacturer wanted to imitate stamps’.

Alternatively, the vertical framing lines could be staves, making rr.1 and 6 a **b**.

<i>Table 13 Dover autopsy.</i>			
<b>Autopsy date</b>	<b>Transliteration</b>	<b>Structure</b>	<b>Interpretation</b>
18-19 <sup>th</sup> January 2022 at the British Museum, London.	<b>(s)li(.)is</b> or <b>(b)li(.)ib</b>  <b>(i)w(d)</b>	N/A	Two non-lexical inscriptions.

### Inscription A

R.1 **(s/b)**: it is difficult to determine whether a vertical framing line is present at the inscription's beginning and end, making the framing lines into a box-like shape. If this is the case, it is likely that r.1 is a 4-stroke **s**, but if framing lines are not meant, then it is a **b**, with the vertical line being the stave. This is the same with r.6 but retrograde.

R.2 **l**: a single line stave with a short twig positioned to the right of the stave.

R.3 **i**: a single line stave. An intrusive scratch runs from rr.3-4 at an angle.

R.4 **(.)**: Looijenga (2003: 290) suggests **k** or **l**, since she notes that the graph form ‘may denote **l** as it is sometimes found on bracteates’.

R.5 **i**: a single line stave with a short twig on the left-hand side, possibly an intrusive scratch. Again Looijenga (2003: 290) suggests **l**.

R.6 (**s/b**): Page (1999:

182) considers

this **b** as

retrograde or

inverted so that it

faces inwards and,

therefore, notes that it is difficult to know which way round to take the text.



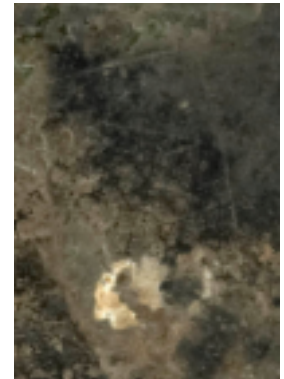
*Figure 11 The Dover Brooch close-up showing one of the texts. Image: The British Museum. Edits: JH.*

### Inscription B.

R.1 (**i**): This is read as an **i** by Flowers (1999: 16).

R.2 **w**: Read as **w** by Waxenberger (2010: 59) and Flowers (1999: 16), and as **p** by Looijenga (2003: 290).

R.3 (**d**). This rune may be in the shape of a **d**.



*Figure 12 The Dover Brooch close-up, showing one of the texts. Image: The British Museum. Edits: JH.*

The previous literature agrees that the texts on the Dover brooch are non-lexical except for the suggestion by Evison (1964). Still, runologists have little agreement about the form of the individual runes. I can offer no alternative, but I agree that these are non-lexical texts, such as reading **bli(.)ib/sli(.)is** and **(i)w(d)**.

### 3.2.3 Harford Farm (Wax. OERC14)



*Figure 13 The Harford Farm Brooch. Image: Norwich Castle Museum.*

#### **The object.**

The brooch was found in grave 11 in area A of the Harford Farm cemetery, Norfolk, and placed inside the coffin was a range of personal items, including keys, rings, a toilet set, a knife, a set of shears, and possibly a comb (Penn 2000: 14). The brooch was associated with fragments of textile and therefore it could have been attached to clothing. However, the brooch is positioned with other items, such as a toilet set and rings, which, especially in the case of the toilet set, might not, or could not, have been worn on the body. Penn (2000: 14) notes that some of the personal items found in the grave had a 'backing' of textile that was possibly leather, which could indicate that the items were laid out on top of, or in, fabric, such as a bag. Alternatively, the

brooch could have been attached to the deceased's clothing near the chest or shoulders, with the other items laid next to the shoulder or in a bag.

The Harford Farm brooch is a composite disc brooch. It has a face of gold sheet and gold filigree, garnets in cloisons, and garnets and glass in bosses, arranged in a cruciform design. The face of the brooch has been repaired (cf. Penn 2000: 46-47). A rim of silver strip holds the face to a silver back-plate, secured with five rivets. The back plate retains its pin mechanism and bears inscribed zoomorphic style II animals and cross-hatching, as well as two runic inscriptions, one positioned at the top of the back plate and the other on the head of the pin. The diameter of the brooch is roughly 177mm. There are typological parallels with two composite brooches from Milton, Oxfordshire and Ixworth, Suffolk, which point to a date of manufacture for the Harford Farm brooch in the period c.610-650CE (Hines in Penn 2000: 81, cf. Avent 1975 no.182 and 167). Hines (1991b: 6) suggests that a 'safe provisional date-range for the manufacture ... is ca. 610-650, more likely towards the later end of that range than the earlier', whilst stating later (2006: 191) that the repair of the brooch was probably in the middle of the seventh century. The date of the burial, and therefore the inscription's *terminus ante quem*, is c.690-700AD (Hines in Penn 2000: 81). The brooch is of Kentish type, and Hines (1991b: 6) observes that East Anglian manufacture for the brooch is a possibility, and therefore this could be a local product.

#### **Previous transliterations and interpretations.**

<i>Table 14 Previous interpretations of Harford Farm.</i>		
<b>Author</b>	<b>Transliteration</b>	<b>Interpretation</b>

Bammesberger (2003: 135)	<b>luda:gibœtaesigilæ</b>	'May Luda make amends (or 'make compensation' or 'atone') by means of the brooch'.
Hines (1991b: 7)	<b>luda:gibœtaesigilæ</b>  <b>æ[.]</b>	'Luda repaired the brooch'.  -
Looijenga (2003: 278)	<b>luda:gibœtaesigilæ</b>	'Luda repaired the brooch'.
Parsons (1999: 54)	<b>luda:gibœtaesigilæ</b>  <b>æ[.]þ</b>	'Luda repaired the brooch'.  -
Waxenberger (2010: 48)	<b>luda:gibœtaesigilæ</b>  <b>æ[.]</b>	'May Luda make amends (or 'make compensation' or 'atone') by means of the brooch'.  -

The discussion of the three-word inscription is primarily centred around two interpretations, whilst the second inscription has received little attention.

Rr.1-4 read **luda**. *Luda* is an n-stem masculine personal name, with the final –a representing the nominative singular ending, making this word the sentence's subject.

Rr.5-10 **gibœtae**: OE verb *gebetan* 'to repair'. Two arguments concerning rr.5-10 are summarised in Hines (1991b, 2000) and Bammesberger (2003). Hines (1991b: 7, 2000: 81) identifies rr.5-10 as the third person singular preterite indicative form *gebette*. He suggests that r.9 could represent the geminate -tt-, where 'long

consonants are as a rule represented by single graphs in runic inscriptions’, and that the inflectional -æ ending is ‘perfectly regular for this form of the verb at this date (Hines 2000: 82), and quotes Campbell (1959: 750). Bammesberger (2003: 134) points out that if rr.5-10 were the pret. of *gebētan*, then the form expected would be *gibættæ*, OE *-bættæ* > P-Gmc. *\*-bōtidē* with syncope of -i- after the long root syllable and assimilation of -t-d > -tt-. He goes on to state that it would be ‘barely thinkable that the geminate -tt- should have been simplified in the runic inscription’ since it appears throughout the attested history as *gebette*. He, alternatively, suggests the present subjunctive singular form *gebēte*. According to Bammesberger (2003), the subjunctive *gebēte* was frequently used in law texts meaning ‘may he (= the culprit) make amends, may he compensate, may he atone’, and was followed by the dative in the function of an instrumental. He further sees rr.11-16 **sigilæ** as the dative form of *sigill/sigel* ‘brooch’, having a dative singular -æ ending, which he claims is possible in seventh century OE, and functioning as the instrumental.

Rr.11-16 **sigilæ**: *ō*-stem (> *n*-stem) noun *sigle*, *sigel* ‘brooch’. While Bammesberger (2003: 134) states that **sigilæ** is the dative functioning as the instrumental, Hines (2000: 82) alternatively suggests that the -æ ending is the accusative singular ending belonging to the feminine *ō*-stem noun paradigm, stating that though ‘*sigel* and *sigle* are usually neuter nouns in OE... a strong feminine form does occasionally appear elsewhere in OE texts (Bosworth Toller 1921, s.v.*sigle*)’. Bammesberger (2003: 135) debates Hines’ suggestion, pointing out that *sigel* is ‘regularly a neuter in Old English’. There are three attestations of *sigle* being a feminine noun, making the feminine form marginal compared to the more regular neuter form (Bosworth Toller 1921, s.v. *sigle*).

Concerning the second inscription, only Parsons (1999: 54) provides any detail, noting that after the *æ*-rune, there is a graph that ‘represents a y-shape resembling the top part of a *g*-rune, though below it the surface remains intact’.

### **Personal reading.**

There are two texts on the Harford Farm brooch: inscription A is positioned on the top half of the back-plate, whilst text B is placed on the back of the pin mechanism. Inscription A is positioned centrally, with the zoomorphic designs curving around the back plate's top and bottom edges and surrounding the inscription. Compared with the zoomorphic designs, inscription A is smaller in width and height; its central position, however, means that the text is immediately viewable once the back-plate is turned to face the viewer. The depth of text A is of medium quality, equally inscribed throughout. Inscription B is inscribed much more faintly than inscription A. After r.4, six dashes run vertically between rr.4 and 5, where the initial dashes are offset to the right while the remaining dashes run straight. The spacing of rr.1-4 is wider than the rest of the text.

A faint, curved guiding line appears to run parallel to the pin mechanism in an arch. There are panels of animal ornamentation on either side of the pin, including crosses at the four compass points, which Parsons (1999: 54) points out could be *d*-runes. The guiding line appears perfectly curved and was thus unlikely to be done free hand, suggesting a craftsman's tool. This guiding line means that the text's curve was planned to fit around the rest of the decorative features on the brooch, meaning that the decoration and text were intended to be inscribed simultaneously. Penn (2000: 49) suggests an order for the design of the back plate: 1) the guiding lines were marked out, 2) the zoomorphic design was inscribed, and 3) the runic text was



done. He also states that ‘the runic text is evidently later; the text carries over to the pin anchorage and the pin base itself’.

Autopsy date	Transliteration	Structure	Interpretation
July 2024, Norwich Castle Museum, Norfolk	<b>luda:giboetæsīgīlæ</b>	m/PN <sub>nom</sub> +  V <sub>finite</sub> + N <sub>acc</sub>	‘Luda repaired the brooch’.
	<b>æ[.]þ</b>	N/A	-

To the left of r.1, roughly one-third of the way down the stave is a short mark, which both Hines (2000: 81) and Looijenga (2003: 278) suggest could be a mark to designate the beginning of the text, but Hines (2000: 81) however suggests that it could be an intrusive scratch, and since the back-plate has many other intrusive scratches, this is certainly a possibility. Nonetheless, I note that the line is made deeply, with a similar depth to r.1 to the right of the mark, and therefore, it could be an intentional mark to designate the beginning of the text. The text begins:

### **Inscription A.**

R.1 **l**: A single stave with a right-hand twig from the top.

R.2 **u**: The shape is angular: the stave is straight and there is a falling straight twig creating a sharp angle where the stave and twig meet.

R.3 **d**: The staves are parallel, but the meeting of the two twigs do not cross at the centre and instead are lower down. Some joins are not flush, and the width of the graph is the widest of all graphs.

R.4 **a**: After r.4, six dashes run vertically between rr.4 and 5, where the initial dashes are offset to the right while the remaining dashes run straight. The spacing between rr.1-4 is variable, as are the graph sizes. The graph comprises a stave and two right-hand twigs, with the top twig having an up-tick addition.

R.5 **g**: Cross-arms. The graph is smaller than the previous ones and tilted with the head to the left.

R.6 **i**: The stave is straight, the same size as r.5, and similarly tilted.

R.7 **b**: Same as previous orientation. Both bows are angular and do not meet, leaving a stretch of stave bare. Some joins are not flush.

R.8 **æ**: The orientation of the graph is more upright but still tilted with the head to the left. The form lacks the angles in many other graphs and appears to have been done in a single stroke, moving from right to left, which is evident from where the lines overlap.

R.9 **t**: Made of a stave with two twigs either side of the top of the stave. Follows r.8 in orientation and size.

R.10 **æ**: The graph is made of a stave and two right-hand twigs. Again, it follows r.8 in orientation and size.

R.11 **s**: The rune is made of five individual strokes and is marginally bigger than the previous rune. The rune is not slanted to the left like previous ones. Some lines are overcut.

R.12 **i**: A single stave. Follows orientation of r.11.

R.13 **g**: Cross-arms. Here, the runes are inscribed onto the pin base, and the runes are cut less deeply. R.13 suffers from damage on its bottom half. The rune is slightly smaller than the previous rune.

R.14 **i**: A single stave. Same as r.13 but no damage.

R.15 **l**: A single stave with a right-hand twig coming from the top. Same as r.13 but no damage.

R.16 **æ**: The graph is made of a stave and two right-hand twigs. Larger and more deeply cut than the previous runes on the pin mechanism.

There are two major interpretations by Hines (1991b) and Bammesberger (2003) as reviewed above. I prefer the Hines (1991b) interpretation based on the view of the object's noticeable repair contextually supporting this interpretation.

Between r.4 and r.5, there are six short vertical slashes. These slashes serve as a divider, in this case, a word divider. This is the only instance of a word divider in the text; rr.5-10 and rr.11-16, which are two words, are not separated, thus left to run on from each other. Hines (2000: 81), though acknowledging that the slashes should be taken as a word divider, suggests that 'the syntactical character of this division... is probably accidental'. I propose, however, that this syntactic division could have been deliberate. Rr.1-4 are larger than the rest of the text, with the runes also more spread out, meaning that rr.1-4 takes up almost the same amount of room as rr.5-16. It could be the case that the inscriber intended all the text to be equally spaced and sized and then ran out of room and had to inscribe the runes smaller and closer together after r.4, especially since rr.13-16 run on to part of the clasp mechanism. However, rr.1-4 is a personal name and the subject of the text; therefore, the inscriber could have drawn attention to the subject of the text by making it larger

and more visually noticeable in comparison with the rest of the text. The word divider could function similarly: only dividing the subject from the verb and object of the sentence draws attention to what is separated. The word divider, then, could act not only to highlight a practical syntactic division in the text but as a visual marker to separate the personal name from the verb and object of the sentence to indicate the importance of the personal name.

### **Inscription B.**

R.1 æ: The graph is made of a stave and two right-hand twigs, with the top twig having an up-tick addition. The form is clearly but lightly inscribed.

R.2 [.]: A slanted line can be seen running from right to left, similarly lightly inscribed as r.1.

R.3 þ: A stave can be made out with a faint, angular bow.



*Figure 14 The pin of the Harford Farm brooch. Image: Norwich Castle Museum/RuneS database.*

I read this, as others have, as a non-lexical inscription.

### 3.2.4 Hunstanton



*Figure 15 The Hunstanton Brooch. Image: Norfolk Archaeological Services.*

#### **The object.**

Hunstanton is an openwork bronze brooch in the form of a swastika; the flat surface is decorated with ring-and-dot punch work (Hawkes and Page 1967: 23). Made of copper alloy, the diameter of the brooch is c.119mm. Noted as ‘Anglian type’ by Hines (1990: 450), Hawkes and Page (1967: 23) date the brooch to the sixth century and prefer a local production instead of an import.

**Previous transliterations and interpretations.**

<i>Table 15 Previous interpretations of Hunstanton</i>		
<b>Author</b>	<b>Transliteration</b>	<b>Interpretation</b>
Hawkes and Page (1967: 23)	No clear transliteration was provided; ‘four examples of ‘u’ (we do not know which way up the letters should read) alternate with three of ‘s’. The first of these may be ‘u’, the second ‘s’... the eighth character is ‘i^g’.	? <i>alga</i> , ‘common medieval magic word’
Hines (1990: 450)	-	-
Looijenga (2003: 295)	[...] g^i [...]	-

There is little scholarly work on the Hunstanton brooch due to its general assignment in the runological literature as ‘pseudo-runic’.

Concerning the individual runes, Hawkes and Page (1967: 23) note that the eighth character is ‘unlikely to be ornamental’ due to being asymmetrical and unrepeated but considers the others ‘might be simple decorative forms’. They consider r.8 to possibly be a ‘runic ‘g’ bound with another, retrograde, character, ‘l’ or perhaps ‘æ’ (or a), perhaps even both’. They further state that ‘there could then be a reference to the common medieval magical word *agla*, which appears occasionally in Scandinavian runic inscriptions, but the closest parallel is the bind-rune...

repeated several times in a partly magical context on the spear shaft from Kragehul, Fyn’.

Hines (1990:450) states, ' the incommunicative nature of the Hunstanton inscription is obvious from its form’.

Looijenga (2003: 295) notes that ‘one of the ‘arms’’ of the swastika bears a cross-like sign, which may be a **g**-rune. The cross has a side twig attached to one extremity so that a bind-rune **gi** may be read, comparable to other inscriptions like **ga** in Kragehul, **gæ** and **go** on the Undley bracteate, and **gi** in Kirchheim unter Teck (SG63).

### **Personal reading.**

The graphs are spaced out along the outer rim of the brooch; they are not at regular intervals between the other decorative features, though some are placed between a ring-and-dot punch at intervals. The graphs are incised relatively deeply. The graphs appear to be relatively uniform in height and width, with r.8 being a little bigger than the rest. There are no framing lines, additional markings, or images.

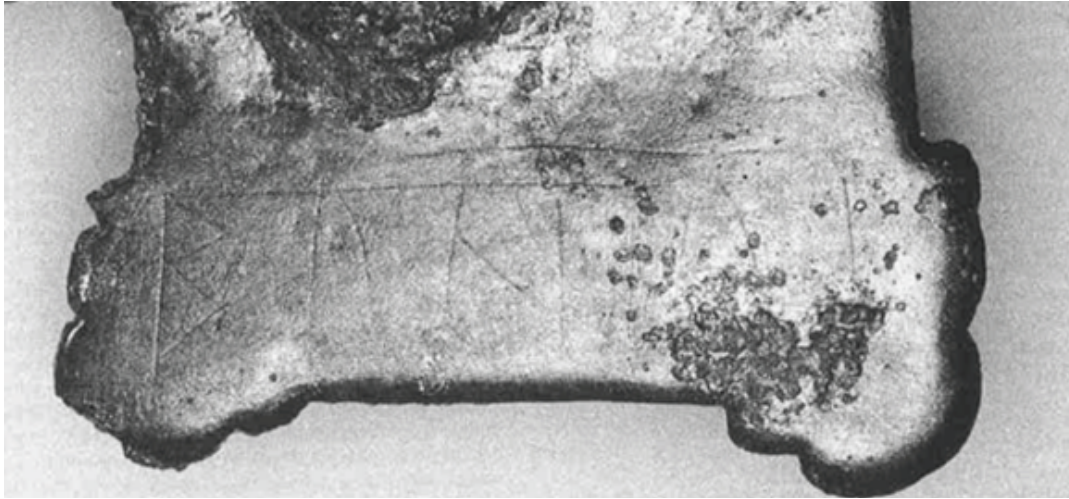
<i>Table 16 Hunstanton autopsy</i>			
<b>Autopsy</b>	<b>Transliteration</b>	<b>Structure</b>	<b>Interpretation</b>
It was not conducted; photos were used from the RuneS database.	<b>(.)s(t)(.)(.)s(.)(i^g/g^i)</b>	<b>N/A</b>	<b>-</b>

- R.1 (.): This graph is uncertain; it appears to be made of four cuts, two of which are of equal length, and the final two are shorter, forming a zig-zag pattern.
- R.2 s: Made of three lines of equal length to form a zig-zag shape. This, and r.6, is like the three-stroke s on Watchfield.
- R. 3 (t): I can make out a single stave with possible faint marks in a tent shape above the stave.
- R.4 (.): Though RuneS reads s, I can only make out two cuts creating a tent shape.
- R.5 (.): Like r.4, with two equal straight twigs making an inverted tent shape.
- R.6 s: Made of three lines of equal length to form a zig-zag shape.
- R.7 (.): Like r.5, it is angular and formed with two straight twigs, making a tent, though the right-hand twig is longer than the left.
- R.8 ( $i^g/g^i$ ): This is the clearest graph form and is possibly a bind-rune of  $i^g$  or  $g^i$ . Two cross-arms overlap to form an x-shape, with an twig coming off on the right-hand lower cross-arm, a little higher than the end of the arm.

I read this as a non-lexical inscription.



### 3.2.5 Wakerley (Wax. OERC84)



*Figure 16 The Wakerley Brooch, from Adams and Jackson (1988: 152).*

#### **The object.**

Excavated in 1970 from a cemetery at Wakerley, Northamptonshire, the brooch came from a grave with two bronze annular brooches, a pair of silver scutiform pendants, two pairs of bronze wrist-clasps and 64 amber and glass beads (Adams and Jackson 1988/9: 134).

It is a square-headed brooch made from copper alloy; the measurements are c.292mm in length and c.152mm in width. The brooch has signs of repair (Martin 2015: 136; Parsons 1999: 67).

Hines and Bayliss (2013:AS-FB; Hines 2019: 58; Hines 1990: 440) date the brooch to the early to mid-sixth century.

Adams and Jackson (1988-9: 151) argue that the brooch is a local East Midlands production. Hines (1990: 440) also states that a local manufacturer is probable, and his distribution map shows the Wakerley-type of great square-headed brooches clustered in the southeast Midlands.

**Previous transliterations and interpretations.**

<i>Table 17 Previous interpretations of Wakerley</i>		
<b>Author</b>	<b>Transliteration</b>	<b>Interpretation</b>
Adams and Jackson (1988: 152)	<b>buhu</b> <b>buhui</b>	‘Similar personal and place-name elements do occur’.
Hines (2019: 58)	<b>buhui</b>	-
Looijenga (2003: 287)	<b>buhui</b>	OE <i>bēag</i> ‘ring, piece of jewellery’; OE <i>boga</i> ‘little clasp, small bend’.
Page (1987: 193; 1999: 19)	<b>buhui</b>	-
Parsons (1999: 67)	<b>buhu</b> <b>buhui</b>	‘No interpretation of the sequence can be offered’.
Waxenberger (2010: 118)	<b>b(u)h(u)i</b>	‘In my opinion this text is not deciphered’.

Adams and Jackson (1988: 152) note that though there are similar personal and place-name elements, they should not be taken as evidence that this inscription is a name ‘or even a proper word’. They note that the single-barred **h** has a ‘north and east Germanic characteristics, and is widespread in Scandinavia... suggests affinities with the north of Europe’.

Parsons (1999: 67) notes that the inscription can either read **buhu** or **buhui**, with the final **i** ‘conceivably being a framing line, but it does not meet the horizontal framing line that runs above, which probably suggests that the rune was intended’.

Looijenga (2003: 287) wonders whether ‘**buh-**’ is cognate with OE *bēag* m., OS *bōg* ‘ring, piece of jewellery etc.’, OE *boga*, OS *bogo*, ON *bogi* ‘bow’, inf. OE *būgan* ‘to bend’. The text of the inscription could present a synonym for ‘brooch’. Looijenga (2003: 287) states that ‘a designation of the object ‘little clasp, small bend’ may be meant’.

Johnson (2020: 81) finds Wakerley’s **buhui** like **bubo** on the Weimar brooch B (SG125) and **bobō** on the Borgharen belt buckle (SG18), which is both thought to be abbreviated masc. personal names according to Looijenga (2003: 261, 279, 287).

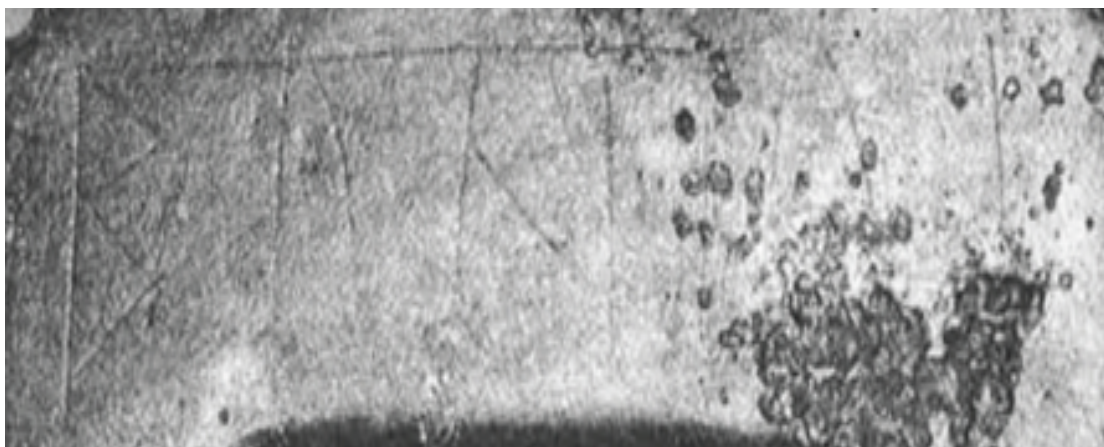
### Personal reading.

Parsons (1999: 67) notes that the inscription is ‘scratched faintly’ onto the back of the brooch; the graphs are lightly inscribed with equal pressure throughout and run along the width of the headplate.

There is a single framing line above the text, with one line used as a hanging framing line running from rr.1-3, where the tops of the graphs meet the framing line without a secondary line underneath. The line is broken in two, with overlapping sections above r.3. The second part of the framing line runs above rr.3-5, but unlike the line from rr.1-3, the graphs do not hang from it. There are no additional marks or images.

<i>Table 18 Wakerley autopsy</i>			
Autopsy	Transliteration	Structure	Interpretation
It was not conducted; photos were used from	<b>buhu(i)</b>	masc.PN <sub>nom</sub>	Possibly a male personal name

Adams and Jackson (1988: 153).			
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*Figure 17 The Wakerley Brooch close-up, showing the text, from Adams and Jackson (1988: 152). Edits: JH.*

- R.1 **b**: The bows are sharply pointed at the joins and are of similar size. R.1 has flush, pointed joins for the bows whilst the stave is leaning towards the left.
- R.2 **u**: The descending twig is shorter than the stave. The twig curves slightly. R.2's stave also leans towards the left, though the join is flush.
- R.3 **h**: single barred type.
- R.4 (**u**): this is made of two lines that do not join, though they are at an angle similar to that of r.2. The damage on the plate means that it is not possible to see whether the stave and twig are of equal length or whether they mimic r.2. The right twig curves slightly.
- R.5 **i**: This is a single diagonal line, possibly a single stave being **i**. Parsons (1999: 67) notes that the final graph could be a framing line, but it 'does not meet the horizontal framing-line that runs above, which probably suggests that a rune was intended'. I note, however, that

r.4's joins are not flush, the framing line is doubled, meaning that the runes do not meet the higher framing line throughout, and r.2 overshoots the framing line. Therefore, the inscribing style reflects the possibility that r.5 is, instead, a diagonal framing line that does not join flush to the top framing line.

My interpretation of **bubu(i)** is that it contains an element of a personal name, or is a full personal name. There are superficially similar names found in the SGRC. For example, there are the personal names **boba** (Bad Krozingen SG10), **bobo** (Borgharen SG18), and **bubo** (Weimar I SG125). However, it should be noted that though **boba** and **bobo** likely feature the same personal name element, **bubo** does not (Findell 2010: 148). According to Nedoma (2004: 259-260), the **u** in **bubo** cannot represent /*ō*/ or represent any stage of the /*uo*/ < /*ō*/ diphthongization process. He then suggests that the name **bubo** is perhaps a lall-name, which is a phonologically simplified name that is given to a child as a nickname but continues into adulthood, which features the stem *bu*, or is perhaps an imitative or meaningless sound (Nedoma 2004: 259-260). One option for **buhu(i)** is that the inscription features the *bu* stem and perhaps is similar to **bubo** as a lall-name; the alternative is that if the intervocalic consonant <*h*> is lost in the sequence **buhu(i)** and the initial vowel lengthened, then the sequence looks similar to the masc. PN *Búi*, from ON *búi* 'dweller' from the verb *búa* 'to dwell'. Regardless of the etymology of the text, I read a personal name, which means that it could refer to a supposed owner, carver, donor, beneficiary or maker.

### 3.2.6 West Heslerton (Wax. OERC96)

#### **The object.**

The brooch was recovered from grave G177 as part of the large, early Anglo-Saxon settlement and cemetery site of West Heslerton, North Yorkshire (Haughton and Powlesland 1999: 310-311). The grave was of a woman aged 30-35; a pair of annular brooches were also found (Haughton and Powlesland 1999b: 310). The cruciform brooch was found in



*Figure 18 The West Heslerton Brooch, from Haughton and Powlesland 1999: 311). Edits: JH.*

the grave positioned at the throat, with the two annular brooches positioned higher up at either side (Haughton and Powlesland 1999: 312).

The brooch is 51mm across the footplate (Haughton and Powlesland 1999: 310). There are signs of repair on the brooch (Martin 2015: 136); Haughton and Powlesland (1999: 311) note that the ‘brooch was broken in antiquity at the base of the head plate and was repaired by riveting a piece of sheet copper alloy over the break’.

Hines (1990: 446; 2019: 59) and Bayliss and Hines (2013: AS-FB) date the brooch to the early to mid-sixth century.

**Previous transliterations and interpretations.**

<i>Table 19 Previous interpretations of West Heslerton</i>		
<b>Author</b>	<b>Transliteration</b>	<b>Interpretation</b>
Hines (1990: 445; 2019: 49)	<b>neim</b>	-
Looijenga (2003: 279)	<b>neim</b>  <b>mien</b>	-  OE <i>mene</i> ‘necklace, collar, ornament, jewel’.
Page (1987: 285)	<b>neie</b> or <b>neim</b>	
Parsons (1999: 55)	<b>nei(.)</b>	‘No interpretation of the runes suggests itself’.
Waxenberger (2010: 125)	<b>neim</b>	-

The inscription is discussed briefly in some of the literature, but only Looijenga (2003) provides a possible interpretation based on a left-to-right reading of the text. Looijenga (2003: 279) favours the reading **mien**, stating that it could be an ‘orthographical error of OE *mene* ‘necklace, collar, ornament, jewel’ and highlighting the widespread set of self-referential inscriptions.

**Personal reading.**

The graphs are positioned diagonally on the back of the brooch on the footplate; this is a section of the lower half of the brooch. Parsons (1999: 55) describes them as

'relatively tall and narrow runes'. The height follows the writing space, meaning that rr.3-4 are much taller due to the space increasing. There are no framing lines, additional marks, or images.

<i>Table 20 West Heslerton autopsy</i>			
<b>Autopsy</b>	<b>Transliteration</b>	<b>Structure</b>	<b>Interpretation</b>
It was not conducted; photos were used from Haughton and Powlesland (1999: 99).	<b>nei(m)</b>	N/A	A non-lexical inscription.

R.1 **n**: the stave is straight, intersected halfway with a twig running horizontally, higher on the right and lower on the left.

R.2 **e**: Formed with two staves with cross-arms joining them; the cross-arms start slightly further down the staves.

R.3 **i**: a single stave longer than other staves due to the increasing size of the writing surface.

R.4 **(m)**: two staves run parallel, with the right-hand stave curving slightly to the left. The cross-arms start towards the top of the staves; the cut running left-to-right does not meet the stave on the right.

There is no indication from the individual cuts which suggests that the text on the West Heslerton brooch should have a right-to-left reading direction. This makes a



right-to-left reading suggested by Looijenga (2003: 279) unlikely. I read **nei(m)**, making it a non-lexical inscription.

### 3.2.7 Discussion.

The text producers inscribed eight texts; five of them have been assigned as non-lexical, meaning most of the sub-corpus of brooches cannot be assigned a linguistic function via the textual analysis. These texts are Dover A and B, Harford Farm B, Hunstanton, and West Heslerton. There are a further three that can be assigned linguistic functions: Boarley, Harford Farm A, and Wakerley. Two texts, Boarley and Wakerley, are simple-name formulas, meaning that they have the structure male  $PN_{nom}$  and fem.  $PN_{nom}$ ; the function of this formula is to identify and denominate a range of possible people, including the owner, maker, or donor of the brooch and/or its text. Harford Farm A reads ‘Luda repaired the brooch’, and the text is structured masc.  $PN_{nom}+V_{finite}+N_{acc}$  meaning that the text is a three-word complex maker’s formula. This, according to Kaiser (2021: 126), ‘emphasises the work of the craftsman besides additionally mentioning the product’. In this case, the product is the brooch, which has been repaired by the craftsman mentioned, who is called *Luda*.

All texts appear to have been produced with thin inscribing tools of some kind. There is at least one indicator of additional tools being used to produce the texts. In the case of Harford Farm A, there is a curve which runs along the top of the text where the top of the graphs hang down from; this curve was likely done by a specialist tool to draw curves and circles. Other framing lines, like those that feature on Boarley, Dover and Wakerley, were done freehand without additional tools.

In the case of Harford Farm A, the text producer is referenced in the text. The male personal name *Luda* refers to the repairer of the brooch. Since the text refers to the repairer with the communicative intention of emphasising the work of the craftsman's repair, it is plausible that the craftsman created the text for that purpose. Such references to the text producer in the other texts are not so clearly determinable. Though Boarley and Wakerley could refer to the maker of the brooch and/or the text, the PN<sub>nom</sub> texts could also refer to a range of other people in relation to the brooch and/or text such as owner or donor. The non-lexical texts cannot linguistically refer to the text producer.

By examining the biography of the brooches it is possible to suggest a production period and text producer in the case of the brooches which perhaps do not directly refer to the text producer. The brooches of Boarley, Wakerley, Harford Farm and West Heslerton feature signs of repair before burial (Martin 2015: 35). In the case of Harford Farm, inscription A references the repair done to the face of the brooch and was thus likely produced during the repair period; the three other brooches also have repairs and thus would have had repair periods also. Indeed, Martin (2015: 136) suggests that 'presumably their inscriptions were added at the time of repair'. It is reasonable to think that the texts were produced during the repair process because the repair process is a time when the brooch does not have to be doing its primary function, that is, pinning fabric together. Since the back plate of the brooches, which is in all but Hunstanton's case the writing surface, would be facing the wearer when the brooches are pinning fabric together, then the writing surface would not be available to be written on when the brooch is functioning as a clasp. Furthermore, it should be noted that Wakerley's male personal name could refer to the maker of the text. Therefore, it is plausible that the text producers were

metalsmiths undertaking the repairs on the brooches, especially in the cases of Wakerley and Harford Farm A.

Nonetheless, metalsmiths producing the text as part of the repair process is not the only situation in which texts could be produced on the brooches. The presence of a female personal name as well as a male personal name calls into question the metalsmiths being the text producers. Boarley, the text with the female personal name *Liota*, had a repair, meaning that the text production could still have been done by a metalsmith, but since we do not know the gender split concerning craftsmen, we cannot say with any certainty that a woman would be inscribing her own name as reference to herself as metalsmith and subsequent brooch repairer. Nonetheless, there are multiple other options: it is possible that the metalsmith still inscribed the text in reference to his own work but wrote the name of the brooch owner; it is also possible that instead of a metalsmith producing the text, the owner of the brooch produced the text at a different time period after or before the repair had been made. Wakerley, featuring a male personal name, should also not immediately be taken as a name referring to a maker, the metalsmith text producer. Whilst still being a text producer, it is possible that the name refers to a donor of the brooch to a woman as part of gift-giving. This is thought to be the case with Weimar I in the SGRC, where it is thought that the male personal name on the brooch refers to a donor formula (cf. Weinmar I, Düwel et al. 2020: 680). This demonstrates, then, that the simple name formula can refer to a wide range of people involved in the owning, mending and/or giving of the brooch.

There are multiple ways that a woman could receive a brooch: gifts associated with rites of passage (cf. Martin 2015: 73-77), heirlooms, and gift exchange (Scull in Hamerow, Hinton and Crawford 2011: 848-864). The PrOERC

brooches are unlikely heirlooms: their dates of production do not differ greatly from the deposition dates, and Martin (2015: 85-86) states that the ‘handing down of jewellery items... does not seem to have been a typical practice... [and] appear to be the exception rather than the rule in the fifth and sixth century’. Gifts, either as markers of rites of passage or part of gift-giving, involves more than one person, suggesting a social relationship between the giver and receiver; nonetheless, in theory, any kind of object could be given, and therefore, ‘archaeological evidence for gift-giving is therefore usually seen, or sought, in the recognition of material culture items with apparent symbolic qualities, and/or of high value and scarcity in the sphere in which they circulated and were deposited’ (Scull in Hamerow, Hinton and Crawford 2011: 851). It could not be said with certainty that the inscribed brooches are of particularly high value, but it does open the question of whether the inscriptions themselves differentiate the brooch to be of higher value and scarcity. The inscriptions could have been commissioned by a patron to differentiate the brooch and make it more valuable in a gift-giving exercise, either marking rites of passage or cementing relationships between people.

Brooches, pins, clasps, and buckles were an essential part of clothing for both men and women. The brooches in the PrOERC were found in graves that are assigned female in sex, (though one, Boarley, is a loose find) and therefore the discussion is narrowed to feminine dress. Brooches are not a distinctly feminine dress accessory since men too needed brooches to pin together fabric; though men needed fasteners for their clothing, it appears that they very rarely fastened them with elaborate jewellery (Owen-Crocker 2004: 105; Walton Rogers 2007: 111).

Early medieval women from before the mid-sixth century could be dressed, at any given point, in many layers of clothing. Peplos dresses were the standard form of clothing for women in the fifth and sixth centuries outside of Kent (Walton Rogers 2007: 144; for a discussion on the peplos through history, cf. Walton Rogers 2007: 144-153). The peplos was a tubular dress pulled up over the body and fastened at the shoulders by a pair of brooches (Stoodley 1999: 117); it appears that in some cases there is a sleeved inner gown underneath the peplos (cf. Walton Rogers 2007: 154-6). The layers of clothing required fasteners in the form of pins and brooches. As well as fastening the peplos, additional brooches could be found fastening outer garments such as cloaks and closing dress sleeves worn under the peplos at the wrist (Walton Rogers 2007: 144). Smaller brooches such as disc, saucer, small long, annular or openwork brooches mostly fastened the peplos dress (Martin 2014: 29), meaning that pairs would have been needed to fasten at both shoulders, though there



Figure 20 Example of Kentish style dress and brooch position. Image: Thegns of Mercia. Edits: JH.



Figure 20 Examples of brooch positions pinning outer layers. Image: Thegns of Mercia. Edits: JH.

are instances of non-pair brooches being used (Walton Rogers 2007: 152-3). Larger brooches such as cruciform and great-square headed brooches were often used to fasten cloaks (Martin 2014: 29), either a singular brooch at the throat or chest area or two brooches positioned at the chest.

Harford Farm likely pinned an outer garment singly at the throat or chest area. Hunstanton's find context is uncertain, but openwork brooches mostly fastened the peplos dress in pairs. Both the cruciform brooch, West Heslerton, and the square-headed brooch, Wakerley, were singletons at or near the chest, likely indicating that they were cloak fasteners also. It appears, then, that the dress accessory function of Harford Farm, West Heslerton and Wakerley was to fasten outer garments as singletons, and in the case of Hunstanton it is the only brooch that would have the peplos and thus had a different function. Boarley and Dover were found in Kent. Kentish dress for women had differences from much of the rest of Britain at this time (Walton Rogers 2007: 190). It consisted of a garments with a vertical front opening, clasped together with two brooches that were often circular (discs) brooches, one at the throat and the other at the chest. Over the top of this garment could go a front-opening coat, which was fastened by more brooches, usually long (bow) brooches. Since both Boarley and Dover are Kentish disc brooches, then they would have likely fastened the garment at the throat or chest area.

Despite brooches being part of everyday dress, either outer or inner garments, and worn every day, the text placed on the back plate results in limited text reception due to the back plate facing the clothing of the wearer, being hidden from view whilst the brooch is worn. Since five out of the six brooches had inscriptions on the back plate, the writing surface would have been facing the clothing of the wearer. This is supported by an examination of wear and tear on the back plates of these

brooches. All brooch back plates in the PrOERC feature scratches and other marks which indicate frequent contact between the writing surface and the fabric which would create such markings. Fabric can create small scratches and polished areas through consistent rubbing of the fabric against metal. Furthermore, additional pins, brooches and other accessories could cause damage to the backplate, overall creating a worn surface. These markings are seen to cut over the top of the inscription itself, causing intrusions to the individual cuts that make up the graphs of the text. This means that the wear and tear on the back plate happened after the text was produced, indicating that the brooch was frequently worn post-text production. All but one brooch, Hunstanton, has inscriptions on the back; Hunstanton has its inscription on the openwork face of the brooch and thus likely functioning as part of the peplos dress ensemble, so that the openwork face of the brooch would face outwards, and not against clothing as in the case of the other brooches. This means that the text reception is different for Hunstanton; the text would be seen when in physically close contact situations with the wearer.

Most of the texts were not seen when the brooch functioned as a clasp. This complicates the interpretation of the lexical text's functions: one could ask, how can the simple name formula texts on Boarley and Wakerley imply maker, donor or benefactor if the texts cannot be received when the brooch performs its primary function? In the case of Harford Farm A's complex maker's formula, it would be difficult to advertise the work of the repairer of the brooch if one can only view the handywork on the front of the brooch but not the personal advertisement on the back.

However, brooches are not static items. They are handled every day when getting dressed, pinned, and re-pinned to adjust clothing or add layers; the brooch owner likely handled her brooches every day, and may have had help getting dressed

depending on her social status. Dressing is not the only option for text reception.

Waldispühl (2014: 69) discusses the SGRC as forming parts of hypothetical ‘social actions’, where the text itself stimulates conversation (cf. ‘textual communities’ Stock 1983: 88-91). This is particularly pertinent when considering the brooch texts and their limited text reception opportunities when the brooches are being worn.

Waldispühl (2014: 84) states that ‘in possible situations where the back of [a] brooch was examined, more than one person could be involved’ - the owner’s knowledge of the text on the back plate could invite them to take off the brooch to show to viewers, and such an act could stimulate conversation around the brooch. For example, this would be an effective way to discuss Harford Farm A’s repair. Still, the invitation to discuss the brooch could also be stimulated by the non-lexical texts on Dover, Hunstanton and West Heslerton since they could still be viewed as unique feature of the brooch, despite their lack of semantic meaning.

The PrOERC brooches are the only objects which feature more than one inscription: Dover and Harford Farm both have two inscriptions each. Waldispühl’s (2014: 84) discussion of the creation of ‘textual communities’ around Bülach (SG20), a disc brooch featuring more than one runic inscription, also indicates that handling situations were perhaps the cause of secondary non-lexical texts. She hypothesises that viewing the first inscription on the back plate of the brooch could invite imitation of script, producing the second text. The second text producer perhaps understood that the function of the first text on the brooch was personalization, marking the brooch as different from many other brooches, and thus desired to further personalise the brooch with a second inscription. Explaining the non-lexical nature of the second inscription, Waldispühl (2014: 84) further notes that ‘the writing’s visual characteristics were sufficient to perform this function, so the



graphs did not necessarily have to convey a lexical meaning... formal similarities to runic writing served the purpose in the communicative context'. This might explain the non-lexical Harford Farm B, or either one of the texts on Dover.

### 3.2.8 Conclusions

From an examination of the object biography and textual references, some of the texts on the PrOERC were likely produced by metalsmiths. These metalsmiths, in several instances, could have written their own names: in the case of Harford Farm A, the text clearly states that *Luda* was the metalsmith that repaired the front face of the brooch. Less certainly, the possible male personal name *Buhui* on the Wakerlery brooch could also refer to such a metalsmith, inscribing his name to refer to his own handiwork. However, metalsmiths do not have to just be producing their own name, even in spite of doing repairs on the brooches.

There are multiple possible interpretations for a personal name, including owner, donor, or maker of the object, or the inscriber of the text. The female personal name *Liota* on the Boarley brooch likely refers to the owner of the brooch: in this case, script functions as marking ownership over an object. Furthermore, I am reminded of Weimar B from the SGRC, an inscription which features a male personal name *Bubo* on a woman's brooch, possibly showing a donor formula via a single male personal name. It is not implausible, then, that Wakerley follows suit. Perhaps the male personal name on Wakerley infers donor relationship, where script makes permanent a donor-receiver relationship. In the case of Harford Farm, inscription A clearly declares that 'Luda repaired the brooch'; the complex maker's formula indicates who repaired what, and acts as advertisement for *Luda*'s abilities. It is possible that metalsmiths were commissioned to produce these texts at times of

repair, but the wide range of possibilities of the simple name formula functions cannot be ignored, and it should not be said that metalsmiths only produced their own name.

Indeed, the text reception means that the texts are only seen in close contact situations, where the woman is removing layers of clothing, likely her outer garments. This means that these are not public displays of texts. The texts are not readily available for viewing, and the owner of the brooch dictates when the texts can be viewed. This does not mean that the texts on brooches could not be seen at all. When considering the possible intimate moments of dress, where the brooches' back plates could be seen, Waldispühl's (2014) suggestion that inscribed brooches not only stimulate conversation but also would encourage examination. It could even perhaps encourage imitation, which perhaps explains the non-lexical second texts on Harford Farm and Dover. Therefore, aside from Harford Farm's complex maker's formula, the text production suggests that the texts were not designed for public viewing, and instead were private instances of communication, stating perhaps a donor of the brooch, or the brooch's owner. This results in personalisation of a brooch, a very common item for most women in the fifth and sixth centuries.

### 3.3 Urns

Funerary urns are vessels designed to hold the cremated remains of a deceased individual for burial. Cremation was a widely practiced mortuary tradition, coexisting with inhumation burials in early Britain; cremation burials first appear around the mid-fifth century and become less common by the sixth century (Williams 2011: 240). The cremation process involved preparing the body for burning, arranging objects to accompany the deceased as pyre goods, such as combs and miniature versions of toilet implements like tweezers, blades, shears, and razors (Williams 2003, 2007). Additionally, animal sacrifices were sometimes made. The pyre was prepared, and the body was placed on it for burning. After the cremation, the pyre debris was examined, and the ashes of the deceased were collected. Along with these ashes, any remaining human and animal bones, as well as the accompanying pyre goods, were gathered and placed in a funerary urn. For an unspecified period, these urns—containing ashes, bones, and other goods—were kept in temporary storage, potentially at the deceased's home or near the burial site, before being interred in an urn field (McKinley 1994: 82–86).

In Britain, two runic texts have been identified on a total of four urns. At the Spong Hill cemetery, three urns feature the same runic stamp applied multiple times. Meanwhile, an urn from Loveden Hill bears a singular inscribed runic text. These inscriptions appear to play a dual role within the cremation funerary process. Not only did they serve as ornamentation, but they also carried communicative functions, conveying information about the deceased. The runic texts may have been part of the sensory engagement associated with cremation practices, contributing to the ritual's visual, tactile, and symbolic dimensions.

### 3.3.1 Spong Hill (Wax. OERC77)

#### The object.

The three urns were excavated from the Spong Hill cemetery site in North Elmham, Norfolk, UK (Hills 1974, 1977). C1224 was buried near the middle of the cemetery; C1564 is buried ten metres south, whilst C2167 is about 30 metres to the west of the other two, at the western edge of the cemetery (Hills 1991: 50; Hills 2023: 48-9).

There are three separate cremation urns under discussion, each featuring the same runic stamp; these urns are C1224, C1564, and C2167. The dating for the urns is primarily in the fifth century (Looijenga 2003: 282; Hines 1990: 443); Hills (1991: 49) initially suggested 450-550CE as a ‘safe range’, and later (Hills 2023: 51) states that the urns were made ‘probably [in] the middle decades’ of the fifth century.

It is not thought that the urns are anything other than local products. Hills (2023: 51) states that they are ‘local products made and buried in central Norfolk’ since they are made of ‘local boulder clay’ (Hills 2023: 49). All the urns were ‘handmade, not wheel-thrown, and not fired in a kiln’, according to Hills (2023:



Figure 21 Urns C1224 and C1564. Image: JH. Edits: JH.

46), and thus were likely left to dry. A detailed description of each urn can be found in Hills (2023: 48-49) and is summarised below:

<i>Table 21 Descriptions of the Spong Hill urns according to Hills (2023: 48-49).</i>			
<b>Descriptions of the urns</b>	<b>C1224</b>	<b>C1564</b>	<b>C2167</b>
Cremains and urn goods	Cremated bones of a young mature adult, possibly female; cremated animal bones, iron tweezers, glass beads, and four antler playing pieces.	Cremated bones of an older mature adult, possibly male; animal bone, copper alloy sheet fragments, an iron nail, glass beads, and ivory fragments.	Cremated bones of a subadult human; sheep bones, iron miniature tweezers, iron miniature sheers, and an iron bar or needle.
Urn general description and completeness	‘Relatively large’, 190mm in height and 275mm in diameter. Rim and part of the upper body of the urn are missing from plough damage	The urn is of similar size and shape to that of C1224. The urn was crushed <i>in situ</i> .	Slightly smaller than C1224 and C1564, the urn was also crushed <i>in situ</i> .
Description of urn decoration.	There are horizontal lines around the neck, separated by lines of oval indentations. Then,	Horizontal lines around the neck, and below a row of rosette stamps and another horizontal line. Then,	Horizontal lines around the neck, with rows of oval indentations like C1224. Then, there

	there is a band of alternatively sloping lines and grooves; below are four panels.	sloping lines and bands of circle stamps form triangular panels, within which is the stamp.	are triangular panels below the neckline.
Description and position of the stamped runic legend	Between the top and middle of the urn is a zone separated into four panels; in each panel is a small round boss surrounded by small round indentations and three impressions of the stamp.	A single instance of stamp legend is positioned within triangular panels.	A single instance of stamp legend inside triangular panels, like that of C1564.

All three urns have additional markings alongside the stamp of the runic text. Design parallels have been highlighted, especially in the case of the runic bracteates known as the Binham bracteates (IK 630.1, IK 630.2, IK 630.3, IK 604.1 and IK 604.2) and the non-runic urns from stamp group 7/12 at Spong Hill (Behr and Pestell 2014: 49). Behr and Pestell (2014: 49) highlight that ‘the stamps in the border zones of the Binham bracteates parallel stamps used to decorate urns in the nearby cemetery of Spong Hill’. These could be coincidental design similarities or show common design motifs across different media. The design similarities between the two different

objects demonstrate that it cannot be ruled out that the choice of a runic stamp may have been influenced by the knowledge of other crafts, especially since bracteates also feature runes both in Britain and in Scandinavia at this time. Hills (2023: 50), too, notes the similarities between looking at the concentric circular bands of decoration on the urns, which can be seen from above, and the concentric bands of stamped decorations seen on some bracteates. Providing parallels between bracteate Gudme II-B (IK51.3) and pots C1199 and C1029 from Spong Hill, Hills (2023: 50) also draws similarities between the triangle with circle and diagonal cross stamps of the Binham bracteates and the motifs found on the pots, noting that the Binham bracteate also features a runic inscription.

#### Previous interpretations.

<i>Table 22 Previous interpretations of Spong Hill</i>		
<b>Author</b>	<b>Transliteration</b>	<b>Interpretation</b>
Heizmann (2011: 540)	<b>alu</b>	‘repulsing the dead’
Hills (1974: 54, 87-91)	<b>ttiu or tty</b>	the "second and third runes give the name of the god Tiw", preceded by a double <b>t</b> rune
Looijenga (2003: 282)	<b>alu</b>	ale, ‘may be taken as a word indicating some cult or ritual, in which the use of ale may have played a central role’

Page (1999: 93)	<b>alu</b>	‘common enough in magical or at least mystical contexts in early Norse practice’
Parsons (1999: 62)	<b>alu</b>	‘ale’
Pieper (1987)	<b>alu</b>	-
Schwab (1998: 418)	<b>alu</b>	A ‘magic word’, with a ‘double effect’ due to the fact the runes could be read both r-l and l-r
Waxenberger (2010: 107-110; 2018)	<b>alu</b> <b>ula</b>	- ‘intoxicating drink’

Aside from the early reading of **tiy**, thought first to be “decorative or confused attempts at **tiy**, perhaps indicating the god-name Tiw, Tyr’ (Page 1999: 93), the sequence **alu**, from the right halves of the mirror-runes, first read as such by Pieper (1986; 1987: 67-72), is the almost unanimous interpretation of the stamp legend. Waxenberger (2018: 601) does discuss the possible alternative **ula**, OE *ūle* ‘owl’, but prefers the **alu** reading.

The text **alu** is attested elsewhere; according to Waxenberger (2018: 604), **alu** primarily occurs on bracteates (cf. Nowak 2003: 208-214) but is featured on other objects like the Elgesem stone (N KJ57) which reads **alu**, the Nydam axe handle SJY 67 reading **(wa)gagastiz | alu:(wi)h(gus)ikijaz:aipalataz**, and the Horvnes bone fragments (N A372) which reads **a(a)llu**]. Appearing on a wide range of objects, the interpretations of the text are also wide-ranging. The two interpretations of **alu** are as a noun; the first is P-Gmc. *\*alub* ‘ale’ (Bæksted 1945:



88), and the second being from the Hittite *\*aluwanza* ‘affected by sorcery’, and therefore ‘ecstatic state of mind caused by drinking’ (Polomé 1996: 103). The third interpretation is of **alu** as a verb, the first person singular present tense of P-Gmc. *\*alan* ‘to nourish’.

Looijenga (2003: 194) provides a catalogue of different interpretations for **alu**: ‘connection of **alu** with IE *\*alu-* ‘bitter’ and the mineral alum’, used in both medicine and as amulets, ‘cannot be excluded’; Polomé’s (1991: 103) attempt to link **alu** to Hittite *\*aluwanza-*, ‘affected by sorcery’; Antonsen’s (1984: 334) suggestion that it only denotes ‘ale’ but also a trance state caused by drinking it; and **alu** referring the liquid used for libations. Heizmann (2011: 540) highlights that the context of the inscription must be considered to provide a clearer meaning beyond the purely etymological definition of the word. Considering the different contexts of the **alu** inscriptions, Heizmann (2011: 542-544) concludes that the term had an apotropaic function meaning ‘Abwehr’ (= ‘protection’). Similarly, Schwab (1998: 418) considers **alu** a ‘magic word’ written backwards for the purposes of obscurity. Considering the trance that alcohol may induce in alcohol-fuelled rites, Antonsen (1984: 333) considers **alu** to denote the situation of a person in a trance as a result.

Zimmermann (2014: 48-51) considers **alu** to have two contexts, one concerned with rulers and retainers, such as the inscriptions on bracteates, and the second in the context of the afterworld. She (2014: 58) emphasises the central role of drinking ceremonies in the retainer's hall in the retainer-retinue relationship. She believes that bracteates played an essential role as prestigious gifts given within that relationship. Concerning the use in the afterworld context, Zimmermann (2014: 58) suggests that the word **alu** could stand for drinking ceremonies in the hall, giving

examples of common drinking in the afterworld in ON literature and stating that **alu** in a grave context may refer to this.

Also concerning the bracteate context of **alu**, Nowak (2003: 216) considers that runic **alu** and *\*alu* ‘beer’ are the same words, as well as considering that they are two separate words, suggesting that **alu** may be a verbal form in the first person singular present tense, ‘I nourish’, from P-Gmc. *\*alan*. Nonetheless, Nowak (2003: 225) does consider the meaning(s) of **alu** as unknown, though he prefers the ‘basic reading’ of **alu** as *\*alu* ‘ale’, because it requires neither the assumption of homonyms nor the assumption of a magical term where the precise meaning is unknown.

According to Schulte (2023:11), "[u]rn. *alu*" probably is an independent lexeme in the lexicon of proto-Norse, the origin and meaning of which is highly uncertain. He lists the suggestions made in the literature: 1. 'repulse, protection', 2. 'thriving, good luck, success', 3. Taboo, and 4. 'intoxicating drink, beer'. As Schulte argues, some of the meanings listed above are appropriate on some objects. For example, **alu** as a verb in the first person 'I strengthen, nourish, protect' is likely to be the interpretation for the word on bracteates, whereas other objects that feature **alu**, such as urns, memorial stones, would have a different meaning, possibly relating to protection or to beer, for example. As a conclusion of the various applications on different objects, Schulte proposes 'contrastive polysemy which has positive and negative connotations' for **alu**.

These interpretations of the text inform the readings of the Spong Hill urns' inscriptions. Page (1999:93) took the Spong Hill text 'first (...) to be decorative or confused attempts at **tiy**, perhaps indicating the god-name *Tiw*, *Tyr*' but follows Pieper (1987) in regarding the sequence as 'rune-forms that are doubled by mirror

images of themselves'. Parsons (1999: 60-62) reads the text as **alu** but does not discuss the inscription's meaning; instead, he alludes to the other Scandinavian inscriptions that feature the same text. Looijenga (2003: 282) suggests that **alu** in the context of the cremation urns is a 'word indicating a connection with some type of cult or ritual, in which the use of ale may have played a central part'. Looijenga (2003: 195) notes that drinking vessels were often put in graves so that the dead could 'partake in the eternal feast', so the word **alu** may have been used to replace the drinking vessels in cremations. Heizmann (2011: 540-544) states that **alu** likely had different meanings depending on the rune-bearing object that the inscription was placed on; therefore, the urns are central to his argument of the meaning of **alu**. He believes that **alu** had an apotropaic function with a transported meaning ("Sinngesamt") 'Abwehr' for Spong Hill, meaning that the text has the specific meaning of 'repulsing of the dead' in this instance.

It should also be noted that because the Spong Hill runes are mirror-runes, then the reading could also be **ula**. This interpretation is also dealt with: **ula** could refer to the OE feminine n-stem noun *ūle* 'owl', either referring to the bird, a female personal name, or alternatively a borrowing of Latin *olla* 'pot' (Waxenberger 2018: 601). Waxenberger (2018: 601) refutes the reference to a female personal name on archaeological grounds, mainly that at least one of the runic stamped urns contained male cremains, and rejects the Latin borrowing of *olla* 'pot' on linguistic grounds, noting that there is only evidence for that borrowing much later in the Germanic languages. Alternatively, she notes that on bracteates, **alu** appears as **lau**, **all**, **al**, **aul** and **tau** (cf. Nowak 2003: 211-212), and thus **ula** could also be read as **alu**.

### Personal reading.

Hines (1991:63) states that in the cases of the Spong and Loveden Hill runic urns, and the Undley and Welbeck Hill bracteates is the runic inscription certainly added to the rune-bearing object as part of the process of manufacture. Like some other decorations on the urns, such as the stamped motifs, the runes were pressed into the clay when it was still damp using a small, rectangular stamp with the runes cut in relief. This is the only instance of clay being stamped with runes in the PrOERC; Page (1999: 93) states that the ‘Spong urn-maker had devised a revolutionary technique’ for the reproduction of runic messages in soft material by ‘cutting them in relief...and printing them on the unfired pots’. The term ‘revolutionary’ here is perhaps a hyperbole since a similar technique is used for cutting into clay as part of the bracteate dye creation. Indeed, Looijenga (2003: 282) draws parallels with the technique of stamping and the manufacturing of bracteates, stating that ‘there might be a connection with the manufacturing of bracteates, which also bear stamped runic legends, such as alu’. Furthermore, Waxenberger (2018: 615-616) and Hills (2023: 50) discuss the similarities between the decorations on the urns and other objects such as bracteates, concluding from Hills (2023: 50) that though they cannot say that the decorative features have the same ‘meaning’, the urns and bracteates are mostly contemporary and share similarities in the circular and punched designs.

The runic stamp is placed at a 180-degree angle on urns nos. 1224 and 1564, and in the case of no.1224, they were also placed at a 90-degree angle. This means that, when viewing the stamp with the urn upright, the runic stamp impression runs in different directions, such as both right to left and left to right, as well as diagonally, sometimes in multiple directions on the same urn, such as is the case on no.1224.



Figure 22 The *alu* stamp. Image: Norwich Castle Museum. Edits: JH.

<i>Table 23 Spong Hill autopsy</i>		
Autopsy date	Transliteration	Interpretation
July 2024, Norwich	<b>alu</b> (->)	-
Castle Museum	<b>ula</b> (<-)	

Each graph is a mirror-rune, meaning it can be read both right to left and left to right. This dual orientation allows for two potential readings: **alu** and **ula**. If the mirror-runes are interpreted as individually mirrored runes of *alu* running left to right and right to left, the inscriptions could alternatively read **aalluu** or **uullaa**. These mirror-runes are the only known attestation of their kind within the ProERC corpus, and

their function remains a subject of debate. Schwab (1998: 418) suggests that the mirror-runes may have been intended to amplify the inscription's meaning through reduplication. Similarly, Hagland (2017: 63), in his discussion of the Horvnes comb fragments inscribed with **aallu**], proposes that the doubled runes represent an 'intertwined alu, alu'. I argue, however, that this interpretation rests heavily on the presumed association between runic script and cryptic or magical functions. Since no other examples of mirror-runes are available for comparison with the Spong Hill texts, their purpose—or whether they served a specific purpose at all—remains unclear.

R.1 **a**: This mirror-rune is composed of a central stave with two twigs symmetrically positioned on either side.

R.2 **l**: Another mirror-rune, this graph features a central stave with a single twig on each side.

R.3 **u**: The final mirror-rune also consists of a central stave, with one twig on each side forming a curved shape.

The overall text reads **alu** or **ula**, each of which carries a range of potential meanings. However, it remains challenging to determine the precise significance of the word in the context of the Spong Hill urns.

### 3.3.2 Loveden Hill (Wax. OERC54)



*Figure 23 The Loveden Hill Urn. Image: The British Museum.*

#### **The object.**

The urn A11/251 was uncovered during the excavation of the Loveden Hill cemetery in Lincolnshire, UK. This small blackware, angular biconical cremation urn (Fennell 1964: 361–368; Odenstedt 1980: 24) measures 160 mm in height and 95–100 mm in diameter. Its dating is broadly assigned to the fifth or sixth century (Hines 1990: 443; Hills 1991: 54), with some scholars preferring a more specific attribution. Odenstedt (1990: 76) places the urn within the sixth century, while Hines (1991: 65) accounts for the late fifth century but ultimately concludes that "the balance of probability [for Loveden] must lie in the sixth." Hills (1991: 54) initially suggests both the fifth and

sixth centuries but later expresses a preference for the fifth (Hills in Breay and Story 2018: 67).

Regarding provenance, Fennell (1964: 215, 365) observes that, while most urns at the Loveden Hill cemetery were crafted from local clay, this particular urn was not. Fennell (1964: 367) further speculates that the urn may have originated from the Schleswig region. Conversely, Hills (1991: 54) advocates for a local origin, although this preference is not substantiated with evidence. Findell and Kopár (2017: 118) note that determining the urn's origin is challenging, and they assert that 'we cannot rule out a Continental origin on either epigraphic or linguistic grounds, nor can we prove an insular provenance'.

#### Previous interpretations.

<i>Table 24 Previous interpretations of Loveden Hill</i>		
<b>Author</b>	<b>Transliteration</b>	<b>Interpretation</b>
Bammesberger (1991: 128, 1994)	<b>sīpabad  piuw  hlæ</b>	'Sīpabad.female servant.tomb'
Hines (1991: 81, 1998: 189)	<b>sīpabad  picp  hlaf</b>	'Sīpæbad gets a loaf'
Looijenga (2003: 282)	<b>sīpæb{æ/l}d  pic{w/p}  hlaw</b>	Gives three possible interpretations: 'Sīpæbald or Sīpæbæd (henceforth S.) gets a grave'; 'S. (the) maid (her) grave'; 'grave (of) S. (the) good',



		alternatively ‘S., (a) good grave’.
Nedoma (2004: 435; 2016: 20)	<b>sīpæbad  pi{u/k}w  hla(.)</b>	<i>Sīpæbad</i> ; ?female servant; ?burial mound'.
Odenstedt (1980: 30; 1983: 18)	<b>sīpæbad  picp  hlaf</b>	‘Sīpæbad gets bread’
Page (1973: 184, 1999: 180)	<b>sīpæbld  picw  hlæ(.)</b>	-
Parsons (1999: 55)	<b>sīpabad  pikw  *hla*</b>	-
Waxenberger (2010: 78-80; 2013: 44)	<b>sīpfb/d 2 pi{c/u}w 2 hl̥f[.]</b>	NB. 2 is double line word divider, where the 2 did not convert in publication

Pivotal to the reading of the inscription is the dating of the urn. If an early date is assumed, then the **a**-rune denotes both /a(:)/ and /æ(:)/, rendering the sequences of rr.1-7 and rr.12-15 challenging to decipher, even, according to Waxenberger (2010: 158), ‘undecipherable because there are too many variables involved’. Waxenberger (2013: 44) also notes that the text may have been cut by a double-pointed tool, resulting in many of the graphs being difficult to decipher.

Rr.1-7 are generally interpreted a personal name in its masculine or feminine form. Nedoma (2004: 436) traces the development of the first part of the dithematic personal name as *\*senpa-* > *\*sinpa-* > *\*siþ-*; Waxenberger (2010: 157) discusses r.2 and states that the graph represents the intermediary stage (/i>/i:/, possibly

nasalised) brought about by Anglo-Frisian compensatory lengthening. Hines (2019: 33) prefers a male personal name; reading **sīpabad**, the second element in the name is P-Gmc. *\*-bad(u)*, which is a well attested second element of dithematic masc. personal names (Nedoma 2004: 434-438). Discussing the relationship between the personal name and the contents on the urn, he expresses doubt that the objects found inside the urn indicate that the urn held the cremains of a woman. Hines notes that ‘the vessel need not have been made specifically as a cinerary urn, so that the name inscribed on it and the individual whose remains were buried in it could have been different people’. Furthermore, he claims that there is ‘no real linguistic or archaeology case for the name on the Loveden Hill urn to be identified as a unique feminine variant’. Findell (2014: 84-87) claims that the name is ‘(probably) feminine’, and Findell and Kopár (2017: 115-119) note that the name could ‘hypothetically be feminine’. For discussions on the etymology of the name, cf. Odenstedt (1980: 29, 1983: 18, 1990: 76, 1991: 373), Looijenga (2003: 281) and Parsons (1999: 55), though Bammesberger (1991: 128) states that the ‘precise shape of the name can hardly be determined’.

Rr.8-11 have been read variously. Some scholars interpret rr.8-11 as the verb *\*pigip* from *picgan* ‘to receive’ (Odenstedt 1980: 30, 1983: 18; Parsons 1999: 55-59); alternatively, others read rr.8-11 as the noun *piuw* (>*pēow(u)* ‘female servant’) (Bammesberger 1990: 128; Nedoma 2004: 435). Hines (2019: 32) notes that whilst rr.8-9 read **pi**, the rest is uncertain; he claims *pēow* ‘servant, slave’ could be viable, as well as **picp** as a third person singular present indicative form of the verb *picgan* ‘to accept, to receive’.

Rr.12-15 has been identified as *hlāf* ‘bread’ (Odenstedt 1980: 30, 1983: 18), *hlæ* ‘grave, tomb’ (Bammesberger 1990: 128), and *hlāw* ‘tomb, mound’ (Nedoma

2004: 435). Waxenberger (2013: 44) notes the importance of assigning the **a**-rune the correct allophone, which means rr.12-15 could be rendered *hlāw* or *hlæw*. Hines (2019: 33) prefers the reading **hlaf** to **hlaw** on both runological and archaeological grounds. He rejects **hlaw** by noting that the only evidence for a burial mound at the Loveden Hill site was a possible burial mound of either early medieval or prehistoric origins which attracted archaeologist's attention in the 1920s (Fennell 1964: 78-80).

### **Personal reading.**

Findell and Kopár (2017: 116) note that whether the text was produced with the rest of the decorative features is uncertain; the three lines incised below the text appear to dip to mirror the curve of the text, but it is not possible to discern whether the text follows this dip, or whether the dip was made in the lines to follow the dip in the text. Nedoma (2016: 5) states that the 'ornaments are arranged in such a way as to avoid the text bar', suggesting that the lines below the text were added after the text was completed. It is also possible that the clay was in the drying process when the text was inscribed; this could explain the difficulties with r.15, where it appears some of the cuts were scratched over the other in an attempt at correcting previous cuts but the writing surface, the clay, could not be smoothed over.

The urn is decorated with three incised grooves under the neckline. Below the neckline is a row of cross-in-circle stamps; then comes the runic inscription, and then another three grooves below. The second set of lines follows the lineation of the text, dipping when the text does.

<i>Table 25 Loveden Hill autopsy</i>		
<b>Autopsy date</b>	<b>Transliteration</b>	<b>Interpretation</b>

January 2022	<b>siþ{a/æ}b{a/æ}d.{þ/w}i{u/k}w.hl{a/æ}(.)</b>	Siþ{a/æ}b{a/æ}d...
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Between r.7 and 8 and 11 and 12 are dividers formed by cutting two diagonal lines between the graphs.

R.1 **s**: formed using three cuts, all roughly equal length.

R.2 **ī**: again this graph is formed of three cuts, this time with a straight stave and two equal length twigs, with the top twig coming out from lower down the stave.

R.3 **þ**: a stave with an angular bow.

R.4 **a/æ**: a single cut stave with two twigs. The bottom twig is more deeply cut than the top twig.

R.5 **b**: formed with two bows of different sizes and a straight stave. The bottom bow's top cut is overcut and extends beyond the bow.

R.6 **a/æ**: the graph is double cut, both the stave and the twig.

R.7 **d**: This graph is smaller than the rest in the inscription and is positioned slightly lower. Most of the joins do not meet.

R.8 **þ/w**: it is difficult to determine whether this is a þ-rune or a w-rune.

Formed with a shorter stave than r.3, the bow is positioned higher up the stave. Since there is little stave above the bow, this causes a reading of the **w**-rune; nonetheless, since there is a little bit of the stave above the top of the bow, it could also be a **þ**-rune.

R.9 **i**: a single cut, slanted towards the left.

R.10 **u/k**: There has been some controversy about which rune it depicts.

Though preference could be given to reading **u**-rune simply because

the direction of writing (left to right) would require a **k** reading to not be in retrograde, it is also possible that this is a tilted, retrograde roof-**k** graph.

R.11 **w**: formed of a stave and bow; the bow is more prominent than those of the thorns earlier in the inscription and positioned higher up on the stave, though some scholars do take this as a **þ** (Parsons 1999: 55, Odenstedt 1980: 30; 1983: 18).

R.12 **h**: The inscription has dipped downwards, notably at this point. The graph is formed of three cuts, two parallel to each other and running vertically, with a third cut between the two at an angle.

R.13 **l**: two cuts, one stave, and one twig, neither joined. The graph is slanted to the right.

R.14 **a/æ**: again, the graph is slanted to the right, with the stave double cut and the two twigs singularly cut.

R.15 **?**: the final graph cannot be assigned to a rune. It is formed using three cuts.

Concerning rr.1-7, I read **siþ{a/æ}b{a/æ}d**, a personal name. I admit uncertainty over the rendering of r.4 due to the **a**-rune denoting multiple allophones at the time of text production. Readings differ on whether r.4 is the **a**-rune or the **l**-rune due to the double-cutting production style. The stave may be doubled with the two cuts overlapping each other, but the cut does not appear to be deep, and therefore, it seems unlikely that that is the case, ruling out an **l**. Consequently, it can be assumed that the twigs are two individual lines and the stave a singular one, reading the **a**-rune. Again, r.6 is contentious for the same reasons: there are double cuts on both the

twig and stave. Parsons (1999: 56) highlights that even when the staves appear double-cut, as r.3, r.6, and r.14 are, the twigs are not, implying we should prefer a reading of the **a**-rune. I agree with this, noting similarities between r.6 and r.14 in form.

I read rr.8-11 as **{p/w}i{u/k}w**; issues arise more so with r.10.

Bammesberger (1991: 127) highlights that the angle of the graph would mean that if r.10 was a **k** it would be retrograde and the only one in the text. Parsons (1999: 56) states that it is ‘a slightly tilted **k** rather than a much-tilted **u**’, further noting that if it was meant to be a **u**, it was ‘out of proportion’ with the other graphs in size.

Alongside sizing, the angle of the inscription further complicates the matter. The angle of the inscription dips downwards at this point and both rr.9 and 11 are also tilted in the same direction. Due to the uncertainties in the rendering, I can provide no firm interpretation for rr.8-11.

The final graphs, rr.12-15, are read as **hl{a/æ}?**. R.15 is difficult to determine. Three lines are deeply incised over fainter scratches. Odenstedt (1980: 26-17) claims an **f** with an accidental overcut, reading *hlāf* ‘bread’, and Bammesberger (1991: 127-128) favours **w**, reading *hlæw* or alternatively with no ending, *hlæ* ‘tomb’. Neither of these suggestions explains the form of the graph since all consider at least one of the deeper cuts accidental. Whereas difficulties in interpretation earlier in the inscription can be due to deciphering double cuts or issues of orientation and tilting, r.15 is also difficult to interpret since the form is unattested. Though Parsons (1999: 58-59) highlights that interpreting difficult inscriptions as corrupt forms of graphs copied from another source is methodologically unsatisfactory, he claims that in r.15’s case, this could be likely. I am inclined to leave the final graph uninterpreted.

Therefore, due to the difficulties in reading the entire text, I leave the text as only partially interpreted, reading ‘Sīþ{a/æ}b{a/æ}d...’.

### 3.3.3 Discussion

There are two types of text production concerning the runic urns: inscription, in the case of Loveden Hill, and stamping, in the case of the Spong Hill urns.

For the Spong Hill urns, the method of text producing involved a stamp. The Spong Hill texts were produced by a stamp, which means that the runic text was inscribed in relief into antler or wood as part of the stamp-making process. The texts were stamped with the use of a die, which is a carved or engraved object used to press a design onto another surface—in this case, the wet clay of the urn. The absence of the stamp die from the excavation site at Spong Hill makes it difficult to directly study the tool itself, but from finds from other sites it can be inferred that the Spong Hill die was probably crafted from a perishable material, such as antler or wood (Hills and Lucy 2013: 166). Hills and Lucy (2013: 164) note that the more distinctive stamps, like the runic stamp, could have been objects of inheritance or exchange. This could then suggest that the stamp was being used to produce multiple texts at different periods of time by different people. However, Hills and Lucy (2013: 164, 166) think that the urns that share the same runic stamp also have notable similarities in other design features, which rules out the idea that the **alu**-stamped urns were produced at different times. The die would have been used repeatedly to create consistent, repeated designs on three different urns. The use of the stamp would also indicate a practical purpose, perhaps to mark or identify a particular set of the urns in some way. The stamping process was integral to the broader pottery-making process. After the urn's shape was formed, the wet clay

would have been impressed with the stamp, which would have left an indented impression of the runic characters on the surface. The repeated use of the same die across several urns suggests that the design was meant to be consistent, indicating a mass-production approach to text creation. This suggests a more standardised approach to text production, where the focus was on efficiently creating a repeated text. In contrast, the Loveden Hill inscription involves a different method of text production, where the runes were carved into the surface of the urn. This was likely done with a thin, sharp tool, similar in size to the tools used to create the circular grooves around the neck and shoulders of the urn. Additionally, the double cutting likely indicates that the text producer revisited certain cuts, either to reinforce the clarity of the graphs or correct mistakes made during the original inscribing. It is possible that the Loveden Hill text was produced later in the production period of the urn, after the clay had time to dry, due to the ‘scratched’ nature of some of the individual cuts; nonetheless, the clay was wet enough for the text to be inscribed, and therefore was done at a similar time to the production of the urn itself, perhaps when the drying process had started. It is likely that both texts were placed on the urns by potters who were making the urns. The tools used for inscribing the texts are not different from those already used to decorate the urns with non-script decoration: for example, thin inscribing tools, likely made of metal or bone, would have been used to make concentric lines around the necks of urns that can commonly be found, and stamps are a frequent part of urn decoration also. Therefore, the production of the text would have been, to a greater and lesser extent, familiar to the potters based on the previous urn decorations.

In addition to their differences in text production, the two inscriptions also diverge significantly in content. While the text from Spong Hill was created using a



pre-made stamp, the Loveden Hill inscription was specifically crafted for the urn itself, being inscribed freehand. Furthermore, the Loveden Hill text may reference the cremated individual, as it features the personal name *Sipæbæd/Sipabad*. In this way, the Loveden Hill inscription is part of a personalised urn, whereas the situation at Spong Hill is less clear, since the stamps were used on several urns that share similar designs. The Spong Hill inscription is easy to read, but its meaning remains uncertain. Various interpretations have been proposed in the literature, including: 'repulse' or 'protection,' 'thriving,' 'good luck,' or 'success,' as well as a possible reference to ale or 'intoxicating drink, beer.' Another suggestion is that it could be a first-person singular present tense form, meaning 'I nourish,' derived from P-Gmc. \**alan*. Linguistically, each of these interpretations would assign a different meaning or formula to the Spong Hill urns. In contrast, Bammesberger (1991:128) suggests that the sequence of names on the Loveden Hill inscription represents nominatives used 'in a kind of inventory', proposing that the household of *Sipæbæd* may have 'commissioned a number of urns for holding the ashes of deceased members'. This interpretation implies a personal connection to the Loveden Hill urn, highlighting the possibility that these urns were specifically made for individuals within a particular family or household. Nonetheless, this could be said for the Spong Hill urns also; Hills and Lucy (2013: 164) suggest that the stamps are indicating family or kin groups, and therefore we have multiple members of the same family being marked by the same runic stamp.

The text reception of the rune-bearing urns must consider that the urns were either made as urns or were used as urns and recycled from existing pottery. It is possible that in the cases of Spong Hill and Loveden Hill, either initial function was plausible, especially when considering the stamped runic text **alu** on the Spong Hill

urns, which may perhaps refer to beer. Indeed, Hines (2019: 33) and Waxenberger (2018: 614) note that the rune-bearing urns were not necessarily explicitly made as cinerary urns and were perhaps pots before their re-use. In the case of Spong Hill, Waxenberger (2018: 610) suggests that ‘these pots were used as containers holding **alu** prior to their use as funeral urns’. Research by Perry (2013: 411) indicates that some urns were previously pottery used in the production and storing of dairy or other goods. Furthermore, he finds in his thesis that decoration on the pots often correlated to the pre-burial function of the pot. It is not surprising that from this research has come the assumption C1224, C1564, and C2167 are re-used domestic pots; perhaps the pots refer to ale itself? Furthermore, to explain the use of pottery as urns when there were specifically designed urns also available, Williams (2014: 108) suggests that perhaps pottery were ‘gifts brought by mourners to the funeral containing food and drink’ and then re-used in the funerary process.

However, there are challenges to this. Hills & Lucy (2013:167) point out more than 80% of the pots were decorated whereas at settlement sites the proportion of decorated pottery is much lower. They argue that if cremation pots had been reused domestic pottery, this difference would have been smaller. Hills & Lucy (2013: 167) imply that the decoration had significance in relation to the urns holding the cremains of certain people, and perhaps the choice of stamp motif relates to family membership. Therefore, it is unlikely that the runic urns were pots before their use as urns and were instead made as urns.

We cannot know the time frame between urn production and funerary deposition, and thus, the object may have been above ground for ‘days, weeks, months or even years’ (Williams 2014: 108). Furthermore, the pot would not have been a static item: it was stored, carried, and handled, both pre- and during the

funerary rites; indeed, Nugent and Williams (2012: 190) note that urn decoration was unlikely to have ever been ‘experienced from a single vantage point’, and urns would have been handled in multiple ways pre-and during the cremation process.

Assuming that the urns were made as urns and not pots, the urns would have first seen use as part of the funerary process, when the individual was being prepared for cremation.



Figure 24 Images showing the 'sightways' of the urns. Image: JH.  
Edits: JH.

Concerning funerary rites, we should also consider that the urns were being handled as part of the funerary rites and not just viewed with the eyes. Being handled in the funerary process would involve the cremains being placed into the urn from the pyre, and constant handling of the urn would be part of this process. A mourner would have to carry the urn to the pyre area, where they would collect the cremains, handling the urn by placing it on the ground upright, or perhaps on its side, to scoop the cremains into it. Williams and Nugent (2012: 187-8) discuss the sensory engagement of handling the urns during the funerary process, which may apply to other processes too. They state that the decorative elements ‘held sensory agency to

render them memorable and animated surfaces when handled, displayed and interred with cremains', which 'affected the senses of the mourners'. The way in which the texts are produced appears to aid in the sensory engagement aspect. In the case of the stamps on the Spong Hill urns, the runes are raised above their surrounding area due to being cut into the stamp, which puts them in relief on the clay. In the case of Loveden Hill, the double cutting of most of the graphs created deeper incisions into the clay. This means that the runic texts on the urns provide a multi-sensory experience for those handling them, both visually drawing attention through the deepness of the stamp and double cuts, as well as providing haptic engagement through the varying depths of the text and additional decorative features. Possibly, when handling the urn when placing the cremains into the urn, those holding the urn would be able to feel the runes with their own hands and fingers. Nugent and Williams (2012: 191) note that the touching of the urns is encouraged through what they call 'sightways', which are visual and haptic paths created by lines and combinations of decorations, which lead the eyes and hands around the circumference of the urn. They note the evidence for the potter sensorily engaging with the urn in the making process, perhaps testing out the 'sightways'- there are repeated fingernails and finger and thumb imprints on many urns. It is possible to see 'sightways' on the Spong Hill urns; for example, Figure 25 has edits to highlight the visual and haptic pathway created through the grooves and stamps which frame three sides of the **alu**-stamps. It is plausible, then, that the positioning of the **alu** stamp in relation to the rest of the decoration on the Spong Hill urns reinforces the multi-sensory element of text reception.

Viewing and handling the urn when collecting the cremains would not be the only time that the texts could be viewed. The texts have a range of viewing

opportunities depending on how the viewer interacts with the urn. Some positionings of the urns concerning the viewer result in immediate, close contact text reception opportunities, for example, those carrying the pot or those viewing them from above. For the Spong Hill urns, C1124's stamps would be seen from above due to their positioning. Waxenberger (2018: 614) notes that 'it should not go unmentioned that the runes can only be read if the beholder stands behind the pot looking down at it, or if (s)he carries the pot', which may indicate 'who was intended to see the inscription and when'. I agree with Waxenberger (2018) that the interaction with the urn by carrying or standing over it does restrict the viewer and dictates the time and place when the text can be seen. This perhaps explains why, in the case of the upside-down stamps on C1224, they are only upside down at a particular angle and would not be upside down if viewed from above; perhaps the pot producer considered this when deciding which way to stamp the runic texts. It is possible that Spong Hill texts were viewed when being carried, perhaps when carrying the cremains to the urn field, due to their positioning on the urn. When being carried and the text receiver viewing the urn from above, the text are able to be read without being upside down. In the case of the Loveden Hill urn, only part of the inscription is able to be seen if the urn is being carried and looked down upon: specifically, the personal name is most visible.

The texts have further text reception opportunities in the funerary context of cremation fields, where it is possible more than one person was viewing the urns from above. The urns would have been positioned in the ground, where a small hole would have been dug for the urn to be placed in. Richards (1992: 140) observes that most of the decoration on cremation urns are on the upper half of the urn, leading them to suggest that the decoration was observed from above once the urn was in the

ground. Indeed, this is like the text reception of the urns being carried. The viewability of the text is restricted by hole depth and urn placement in the hole. Loveden Hill was found tilted in the hole when being excavated. According to Fennell (1964: 96), this was so that the text was concealed from view. Fennell saw the tilting of other urns at the site as accidental, but in the case of the inscribed urn, he assumed that this was a deliberate choice so that the text was concealed from view when standing over the hole. Certain parts of the decoration, especially around the neck and shoulders of the urns, would be more viewable on the ground with the viewer standing over or near the hole, but not with the urn tilted. For Loveden Hill, if found tilted, the text cannot be seen. Nonetheless, it should be noted that there is no justification for the view that the Loveden Hill urn was deliberately tilted when deposited in the urn field beyond perhaps Fennell (1964: 96)'s ideas around the connection between runes and secrecy. It is possible that the urn was moved into a



Figure 25 Image highlighting the inscriptions on both Loveden Hill (l) and Spong Hill (r) from above. Images: Sketchfab and JH. Edits: JH.

tilted position due to shifting of soil, or for any other reason other than the need to conceal the urn's text.

### 3.3.4 Conclusions

The runic urns from Spong Hill and Loveden Hill feature two different methods of text production: stamping at Spong Hill and freehand inscription at Loveden Hill. The Spong Hill urns were marked with stamps which were reused across three urns, potentially indicating kin groups, though the exact meaning of the text remains uncertain. In contrast, the Loveden Hill urn bears a personalised inscription, possibly linked to an individual named *Sipæbæd/Sipabad*. Both urns were likely inscribed by potters using familiar tools, but while some argue the urns were repurposed domestic pots, others believe they were specifically made as urns. It does appear that the Spong Hill and Loveden Hill urns were made as urns, and therefore the texts were made as part of the urn-producing process. The urns' function and engagement with their users were multisensory, with inscriptions viewed and handled during funerary rites. The placement and positioning of the text on these urns highlight the dynamic interaction between the urns, their inscriptions, and their social context. Furthermore, Loveden Hill's interpretation of the text, featuring for certain a personal name, could refer to the commissioner of the urn who was perhaps the deceased whose cremains it held. Furthermore, the stamped **alu** inscription perhaps also referred to the cremated individuals inside these urns, connecting them through repeated designs. It is probable that the texts on the urns formed part of the decorative features of the urns, being part of the multisensory experience of commemorating the deceased.

### 3.4 Swords and Sword Fittings.

A sword is a weapon with a long blade and a hilt, designed primarily for cutting, thrusting, or both. Swords have been used in various cultural contexts, serving not only as tools of combat but also as symbols of power, status, and ceremony. They contain many parts that make the whole: this includes pommels, where the hand rests at the top of the sword, the guard, where the hands grip the sword, and the blade itself. Swords came with accessories also; a scabbard, which is a sheath for holding the sword, would have been attached to the owner at the hip area, and a scabbard mouthpiece was the decorative feature at the top of the scabbard, where the sword was slotted into the scabbard.

Three inscriptions on parts of swords have been found in Britain: Ash Gilton and Faversham are inscribed pommels, whilst Chessell Down is a scabbard mouthpiece. Another inscription perhaps existed on the pommel of Sarre, a sword from Sarre grave 91 in Kent (cf. Chadwick Hawkes and Page 1967: 1-3). Sadly, only traces of this inscription remain, having been inscribed into the outer surface of the gilding that is now gone, leaving only light indents on the bronze material underneath. Therefore, since no inscription is left to examine, the Sarre pommel is not included in this study.

It should also be noted that there is another Faversham sword pommel, supposedly also inscribed with runes, being either the **t**-rune or a short inscription of **iti**. This pommel, not the entry found here, is mentioned in Chadwick Hawkes and Page (1967) and Page (1979, 1999), but the one discussed here is not mentioned. The second Faversham sword pommel was not included due to my not being able to inspect the possible runic inscription and confirm its authenticity.

It is concluded that the inscriptions on the different parts of the sword and its fittings were part of a personalisation process for the newly deceased, primarily



based on the lateness of the production of the text in the object's biography and the chosen surfaces of the inscription.

### 3.4.1 Ash Gilton (Wax. OERC2)

#### **The object.**



*Figure 26 The Ash Gilton Pommel. Image: JH.*

The object is a silver-gilt pyramidal sword pommel (Parsons 1999: 43), originally part of a ring-sword, with the rings removed before burial (Brunning 2019: 78). It is dated broadly to the sixth century (Looijenga 2003: 276), with more precise estimates ranging from the mid-sixth century (Evison 1967: 97; Chadwick Hawkes and Page 1967: 10, 17; Page 1999: 167) to the later sixth century, as suggested by Hines (2006: 194). Hines (2023: 68) places the pommel's manufacture at the early to mid-sixth century.

The pommel in question is reportedly from the early Anglo-Saxon cemetery at Gilton, Kent, though its precise provenance cannot be verified due to the lack of early documentation. Hawkes and Page (1967: 1) note that the finds from Gilton are 'imperfectly recorded', making it impossible to confirm the archaeological context of the pommel. It is notably absent from earlier inventories of graves excavated in the mid-eighteenth century (cf. Roach Smith 1856) and only appears in the literature by the mid-nineteenth century in works such as Wright (1845) and Akerman (1855). Consequently, it remains uncertain from which grave pommel originated or whether

it was found in the Ash Gilton cemetery at all (Chadwick Hawkes and Page 1967: 2).

It is ‘generally agreed’ that the pommel was produced in Kent (Parsons 1999: 43).

Hines (2006: 193) identifies it as a local type, emphasising that the decoration on the Gilton pommel finds its closest parallels on other sword pommels discovered in the same cemetery. This strongly suggests that its place of manufacture was close to its reported find-spot.

### Previous transliterations and interpretations.

<i>Table 26 Previous interpretations of Ash Gilton</i>		
<b>Author</b>	<b>Transliteration</b>	<b>Interpretation</b>
Chadwick Hawkes and Page (1967: 4).	-	‘personal name, presumably that of the sword’s owner, with the first element Sigi-‘
Evison (1967: 98)	..eicsi{d/g}imernem{d/e}{e/d}..	-
Hines (2006: 193)	?cehsigimeusnemhiui	-
Looijenga (2003: 276)	..emsigimer..	<i>em sigimer</i> ‘I am Sigimer’
Odenstedt (1981: 37-48)	sigi m(ic) ah	‘Sigi has me’
Parsons (1999: 43-45),	...sigim...	-

Waxenberger (2010: 27, 2014: 27)	... <b>sigim</b> ...	-
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Waxenberger (2014: 27), Page (1999: 167), Looijenga (2003: 276), and Parsons (1999: 43) note that the inscription is partly illegible and has some unidentified characters on both sides of the legible text. Ash Gilton's text has been judged as 'incompetent' (Odenstedt 1981: 38) and amateur (Evison 1967: 98), with Parsons (1999: 44) suggesting that the text was made as a copy from an exemplar.

The majority interpretation is of a personal name with the element *sige* 'victory', Looijenga (2003: 276) and Elliot (1989: 50) suggesting *Sigimer*. Some scholars say very little about the pommel. Chadwick Hawkes and Page (1967: 4) primarily dispute Elliott's (1959: 142, 144) reading whilst stating that they believe the inscription contains a 'personal name, presumably that of the sword's owner, with the first element *Sigi-*'. Page (1973: 170, 1999: 167) provides a drawing of the inscription and notes the 'high proportion of unidentified symbols, some of which may be only rune-like patterns added as space fillers'. He states it is not plausible to go beyond a reading of a personal name. Evison (1967: 98) suggests that the 'runes were not copied from a supplied script by the craftsman who made the sword. They were scratched onto the surface in an amateur fashion by someone unused to working in this medium, who had to make more than one attempt at some of the lines'. She otherwise provides no interpretation of the inscription, though provides multiple readings of the text.

Others provide more in-depth readings. Odenstedt (1981: 37-48) reads **sigim(ic) ah** 'Sigi has me'. He suggests that the characters on either side of **sigim** are

challenging to read because they are worn and that the characters were perhaps added later to fill the space. He suggests three possibilities for the quality of the text production: the inscriber was ‘incompetent’; there is wear on the pommel that has resulted in the graphs being difficult to read; or, finally, the beginning and end of the inscription feature decorative marks that mimic runic graphs.

Parsons (1999: 43-45) suggests **...sigim...**, stating it is ‘probably fruitless to speculate on the content of the inscription or to hope to identify characters other than **...sigim...**’, noting that **...sigim...** bears a resemblance to *sige* ‘victory’, a common personal name element. He also notes that, in his opinion, a combination of wear and technical incompetence does not provide a satisfactory explanation for the characters on the pommel; he notes that the runes towards the edges are not more faded at their tops than the central ones. Parsons (1999: 45) does state that ‘some distortion in the runes could, perhaps, arise from unfamiliarity with the medium’ but does then note the comparative ease with which soft silver can be inscribed; he suggests, instead, that the ‘inscription is an illiterate’s copy of a (presumably) once meaningful text... may have been working from an exemplar’ which may have been damaged or worn. Parsons (1999: 45) suggests that the text producer could have reproduced flaws or wear from the original exemplar, which may explain the difficulties with the tops of the graphs.

Looijenga (2003: 276) reads **emsigimer** ‘I am Sigimer’; *Sigimer* is an i-stem masculine personal name made of two Old English elements, *sige* ‘victory’ and *mǣr* ‘famous’. In her opinion, ‘only the part **emsigimer** stands out clearly’.

Hines (2006: 193) discusses the ‘experimental restoration’ of the graphs due to supposed wear on the pommel. His restoration assumes that the top of each graph has been worn away by handling the pommel, thus hypothesising the top of each

graph. Subsequently, he reads **?cehsigimeusnemhiui**. He further suggests this is 'tantalisingly readable'. Still, he notes that he does not put forward this reading because it suggests a more 'plausibly legible text' but because one can then analyse them at a 'strictly graphemic level'. In Hines (2019: 59), he provides a similar reading **-kehsigime(r)snemhiui** with no further comment.

### **Personal reading.**

The inscription is incised onto one triangular face of the pommel, occupying a small area of just over an inch. This confined surface, Page (1973: 170; 1999: 168) believes, likely presented challenges for the carver, potentially influencing the peculiar forms of some runes. The text follows a linear arrangement along the triangular face, running left-to-right, with the runes' bases aligned towards the pommel's flat bottom edge. The incision of the inscription displays noticeable variations in technique and depth. The initial markings preceding the recognisable runes are more deeply incised, while the middle section of the text is cut with a more uniform depth. Some lines appear to have been re-cut or double-incised to enhance their visibility, a feature particularly evident in the top curve of r.7 and at the junction of the staves in r.3. The graphs are aligned left-to-right, with all runes upright except for r.1, which is retrograde. The height of the runes reflects the shape of the triangular surface, increasing towards the centre, where the largest runes reach 8mm in height, while those near the edges are as small as 1.5 mm (Parsons 1999: 43). Despite the variation in height, the width of the runes remains relatively consistent, though slight narrowing can be observed towards the ends of the pommel face. The spacing between runes is uniform throughout, with no dividers or interruptions. The presence of an intrusive mark near rr.6–7 appears to have predated

the inscription: this conclusion is based on the observation that the graph lines extend over the top of the mark, indicating that it was already present on the surface when the text was inscribed.

Table 27 Ash Gilton autopsy		
Autopsy date	Transliteration	Interpretation
August 2024, World Museum Liverpool	...(e)[.]sigim(e)r[.](e)...	masculine personal name ‘Sigimer’

Seven runes towards the middle are readily legible, with the markings before and after these difficult to identify as runic graphs, though Hines (2006: 193) has tried to read them as such. Graf (2010: 27-28) discusses more generally the desire of the artistic creator of the text to fill blank space; the personal name could have been flanked by unadorned space on either side of the first and last runes. The function of

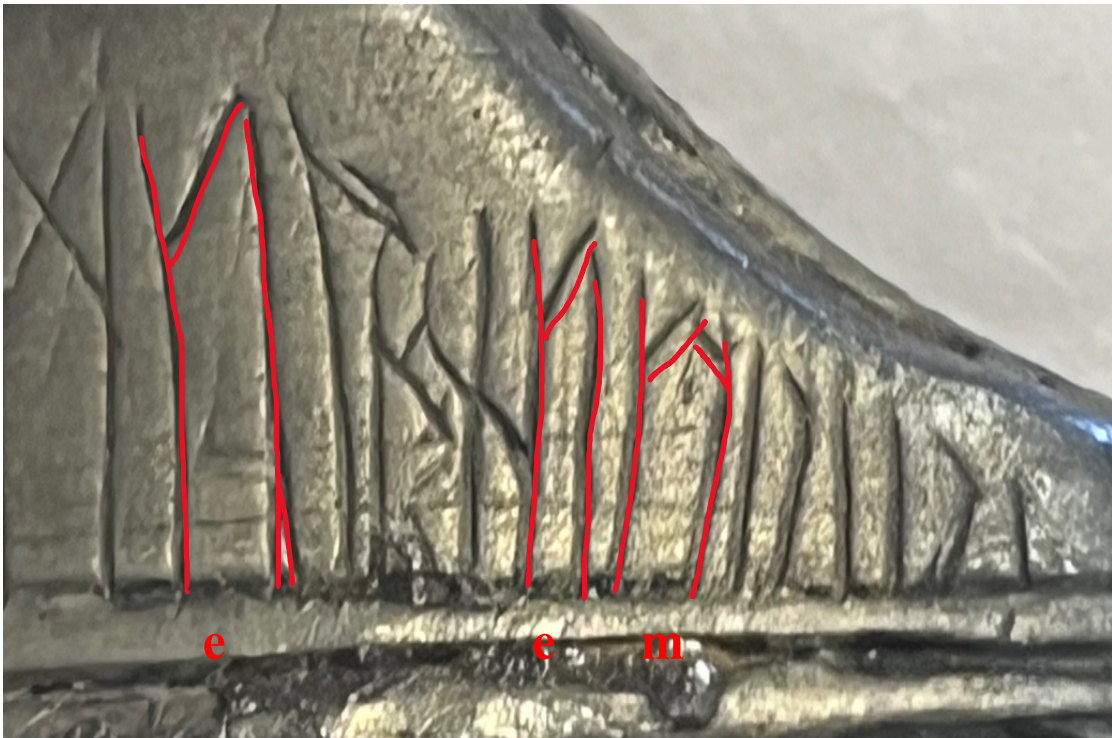


Figure 27 Ash Gilton inscription showing repeated e-rune and an m-rune. Edits: JH.

the markings is unclear; however, due to most identifiable graphs in the sequence being placed in the middle of the pommel, I suggest that the markings on either side of the personal name could be decorative pseudo-runic markings. Alternatively, I read several identifiable runes in these sequences before and after the personal name. For example, there are several **e**-runes which are formed the same way as r.6 in the personal name sequence, making them easily identifiable. Furthermore, there is perhaps an **m**-runes with the top half of the graph incomplete, likely due to the slight curve of the writing surface as it leads into the top of the pommel, though I am not certain enough of this to class this as a runic graph. It is possible to say, however, that either side of the personal name does feature at least one identifiable rune, and perhaps the name is part of a longer, now unknowable, sequence of text.

R.1 **s**: retrograde (if the text is l-r) four-stroke variant **s**, with the join of strokes 3 and 4 overcut and the join of strokes 1 and 2 being cut several times over, leaving a scratched and thick join. The graph is more deeply inscribed towards the bottom of the graph.

R.2 **i**: single stave bent towards the middle.

R.3 **g**: the lines that form the graph are not straight and appear to be double-cut.

R.4 **i**: single stave.

R.5 **m**: is a clearly formed **m**, with flush joins and slight overcuts on the right-hand side of the graph where the right-hand stave is longer than the left.

R.6 (**e**): There are two equally cut staves with a single bar running at an angle from the top right to the left. The right join is not flush. The bottom



right stave appears to be double-cut, with the cut veering to the right being deeper than the left.

R.7 **r**: the bow is angular, the bottom cut does not reach the stave, and the top of the bow is made of two lines running parallel, with one line overcut. The right twig runs almost parallel to the stave, and the gap between the stave and twig narrows as it drops.

I read the nom.sg. masculine personal name *Sigimer*, with possible runic graphs either side of the personal name, especially the **e**- and **m**-runes.

### 3.4.2 Chessell Down (Wax. OERC17)

#### **The object.**



*Figure 28 The Chessell Down Scabbard Mouthpiece. Image: The British Museum.*

The mouthpiece was excavated from grave 76 of a large inhumation cemetery at Chessell Down, Isle of Wight, in 1855 (Arnold 1982: 32-33). According to Hines (1990: 438), the grave was the richest male burial in the cemetery and included a shield boss, spearheads, an iron knife, and a buckle, as well as the sword and scabbard mouthpiece.

The rune-bearing object is a silver plate attached to a scabbard mouthpiece of a ring-sword. The mouthpiece is highly decorated; along the top is a narrow, ribbed band, enclosed between borders decorated with nielloed triangles. There is an openwork design on the lower part of the mount. In profile at the sides are a pair of human heads with contorted bodies, which are joined in the middle by a motive of an eye beneath a helmet. Hawkes and Page (1967: 13) state the ornament is one of the ‘earliest and clearest examples of the anthropomorphic variant of Salin’s Style I’.

The provenance is uncertain. The sword and scabbard mouthpiece from grave 76 may be Scandinavian in origin; the sword-pommel, a small plate of gold filigree

that seems originally to be attached to the hilt, and the chip-carving and openwork of the scabbard mouthpiece are 'distinctly Scandinavian in style' (Chadwick Hawkes and Page 1967: 13, Evison 1967: 74-75). Chadwick Hawkes and Page (1967: 11-18) and Evison (1967: 74-75) both agree that the sword-related items probably came together at different times, though Evison thinks this was done in Scandinavia before it was taken to England, whilst Chadwick Hawkes (Chadwick Hawkes and Page 1967: 14) suggests that the scabbard-mouthpiece may not be genuinely Scandinavian and may instead be a copy made in Kent. She thinks this because the mouthpiece is close to those found in Denmark, Norway and Sweden but not in England; however, the Style I anthropomorphic ornaments are 'more wooden and less intelligent, and the reduction of its 'bodies' to formal patterns of meaning-less loops is uncharacteristic of these... Scandinavian craftsmen', suggesting a Scandinavian copy made by craftsmen in England.

Whether the runes were inscribed in England is debated. For Evison (1967: 75) it is probable that the blade, which may have been produced in the Rhineland, was first fitted with a bronze pommel in Scandinavia. About 500AD it was given a scabbard with a silver-gilt mouth fitting of Scandinavian apron design and a pattern in a Style I of international type. At some point the sword came to England and it may have been before or after this event that a new back had to be fitted to the scabbard mouth. The runes may have been on this part of the mount when it was added at this time, or they could have been scratched on some subsequent occasion. In the sixth century silver-gilt guard plates in the current English style were fitted.

The dating is also complicated due to the sword's parts likely being of different periods. Chadwick Hawkes and Page (1967: 13) note that the mouthpiece shares the 'distinguishing characteristic of the work of a school of jewellers in south

Scandinavia in the late fifth and early sixth centuries, who produced such fine square-headed brooches as those from Galsted in Schleswig, Hardenberg on Lolland, Gummersmark on Sjælland, and Grönby in Skåne’. More generally, Hines (1990: 439) suggests the dating of the object is between 525-550CE, 450-550 (Hines 2019: 58), and Hines' (2023:69) most recent dating for Chessell Down is 475–525AD.

### Previous transliterations and interpretations.

<i>Table 28 Previous interpretations of Chessell Down (scabbard mouthpiece)</i>		
<b>Author</b>	<b>Transliteration</b>	<b>Interpretation</b>
Bammesberger (1991: 401-402)	<b>æco(s)æri</b>	‘Ækan wrought’, or ‘this sword is/was made by/for Æcca’
Elliott (1959: 80)	<b>æco:særi</b>	‘increase to pain’, ‘augments of pain’; sword name
Chadwick Hawkes and Page (1967: 6)	<b>æko:særi</b>	Personal name ‘Æco’; <i>særi</i> is ‘quite baffling’
Looijenga (2003: 277)	<b>æko:lori</b>	‘Aka: loss’
Odenstedt (1984: 117)	<b>acopori</b>	‘To Thor, the charioteer’
Page (1973: 185, 1999: 181)	<b>ako:særi</b>	<b>æco</b> to be a personal name
Parsons (1999: 50)	<b>æko:færi</b>	‘Aka: ready’
Waxenberger (2010: 54, 2013: 49; 2014: 53-55)	<b>ako:cæri</b>  <b>fkF:kŕri</b>	‘Aka: sword’

Waxenberger (2019: 63)	<b>ako(1):ko(2)ri</b>	
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Though most of the runological literature supports the interpretation of rr.1-3 being a personal name, the nature of the personal name is still debated. Chadwick Hawkes and Page (1967: 6) suggest that the personal name could be cognate with continental Germanic *Aico*, *Aicho*, *Aiko* which could explain the final -o. Others such as Looijenga (2003), Parsons (1999), and Waxenberger (2014, 2019) suggest variations of the personal name *Acca*.

According to Bammesberger (1990: 167), the P-Gmc. an-stem nom.sg. ending \*/-ô/ could be plausible for early OE weak noun nom.sg ending /-a/; Nielsen (2006: 211) too assumes that the unstressed vowels in the text on the Undley bracteate's **maga** are \*/-o/ instead of -a and notes a comment by Hines who states that 'the unaccented final vowel of **ako**... in the legend of the sixth-century Chessell Down scabbard plate... might bear out this point'. Though now retracted by the author (cf. Page 1999: 11), an alternative to the personal name readings is Odenstedt (1984: 117), who views rr.1-3 as a form of the ON verb *aka* 'drive, travel in a chariot', translating to 'the charioteer' as a reference to the epithet Old Icelandic *ǫku-þórr*.

Rr.4 affects the reading of rr.4-7. Bammesberger (1991: 402) considers r.4 as an incomplete **w**, reading rr.4-6 as an abbreviation for *worht* 'wrought', following Eichner (1990: 329). Elliot (1959: 80) considers r.4 to correspond to a form of a rune on St Cuthbert's coffin, like 'book hand s', though this is criticised by both Page (1973: 50) and Looijenga (2003: 277) since the early sixth century is too early for

the ‘book hand s’ influence. Looijenga 2003:277) notes that rr.1-3 ‘reminds one of Akaz’ from the Åsum-C bracteate, whilst highlighting r.4 being like the form of an l-rune on bracteates, parsing **lori** as the dat.sig a-stem *lori* ‘loss’, despite the expectation being \*/-ai/ > \*/-æ/ instead of /-i/. Looijenga rejects the idea of r.4 being **k** since r.2 shows a different form of **k** and suggests that two variations of **k** would be unlikely. Parsons (1999: 50) notes that r.4 could be an incomplete f rune, making rr.4-5 a form of the OE *fēre*, ‘able, ready’, with the personal name being a ‘suitable by-name’ if the sequence is a personal name. Waxenberger (2013: 48049, 2014: 54) considers r.4 to be **k**, ‘analysing it as a variation (‘inverted rune’) of type 3 or type 4’ from her grapheme inventory. She further states that since r.5 is used in an i-umlaut environment, she assumes that **k** was palatal. R.3 is in a non-i-umlaut environment, whilst r.5 is in an i-umlaut environment; i-umlaut is in its allophonic phase, resulting in ‘two o’s of different quality’ existing (Waxenberger 2019: 66). This results in reading rr.4-7 as **cœri/kori** ‘sword’, from ON *val-keri* ‘a tent, probe’, in poetry ‘a sword’ (Cleasby and Vigfusson 1957: 675). Again, an alternative reading is **pori**, for the god Thor (Odenstedt 1984: 118). This interpretation has significant phonological issues regarding the development of \*-unr- > -or- during the fifth century, implying a runological omission of <n> or possibly a bind-rune for r.4, **n^r**.

### Personal reading.

The text is positioned on the silver plate which is attached to a scabbard mouthpiece. The text runs along the length of the undecorated side of the back of the plate. The orientation of individual graphs is left to right; all graphs are upright; the exception may be r.4 if following Waxenberger (2014: 54). The graph height and width are relatively uniform throughout; rr.5-6 are slightly shorter in height than the preceding

graphs since they do not meet the full height of the silver plate. The writing surface is heavily scratched; there are also some markings that cut through the individual cuts of the graphs, which could suggest that the text was produced sometime after the mouthpiece was created but not right before deposition since the scratches over the top indicate continued use of the piece.

The spacing between graphs is uniform throughout. A divider between r.3 and r.4 is made of two deeply incised marks running vertically between the graphs. Many light intrusive marks are present, showing signs of wear and tear; these marks are on the writing surface. The front of the silver plate is heavily decorated, but there are no additional images or decorations on the inscribed side of the plate.

<i>Table 29 Chessell Down (scabbard mouthpiece) autopsy</i>		
<b>Autopsy date</b>	<b>Transliteration</b>	<b>Interpretation</b>
January 2022, British Museum	<b>ako: (k)œri</b>	‘Acca: ?’

R1 **a**: Single-cut stave with two roughly equal arms at the right-hand side of the stave.

R.2 **k**. A single stave diverges in two mid-way down, creating a tent shape with two arms. The left-hand twig appears to be a continuation of the stave, with the right-hand twig being cut second.

R.3 **o**. A single stave with two arms shaped like angled chevrons coming from the right-hand side; the top arm’s join where the two cuts that form the twig are flush, whilst the second arm’s join is not flush, with the second cut of the twig being longer than the first.

R.4 (**k**): A single stave with a curved twig coming from the right-hand side.

This is the single instance of a curved cut in the inscription.

R.5 **œ**. Formed with four cuts, the joins are not flush.

R.6 **r**. The bow is angular, with unequal pressure on the bottom cut of the bow. The top join of the bow and stave is over-cut; the bottom of the bow does not meet the stave.

R.7 **i**. A single stave.

I read the text ‘Acca:?’ , an OE masculine personal name *Acca* with a following sequence which I read as possibly lexical but currently a non-determinable word. R.4 has been transliterated as **s**, **f**, **w**, **l** and **k**. I reject reading r.4 as an **s**, since the Chessell Down scabbard mouthpiece is too early to show the influence of a book-hand **s** in the inscription. I follow Waxenberger’s (2013, 2014) suggestion of r.4 being a variant, specifically an inverted type, of **k**, though I note this with some uncertainty, especially since the right-hand twig is curved instead of straight as expected in her grapheme inventory.

Though I read **kœri**, there are issues, also, with Waxenberger’s (2014) interpretation of rr.4-7 as ‘sword’ or ‘chooser’ coming from the poetic use of the ON word *keri* as found in the sword-kenning *val-keri* ‘the prober of the slain, ie. a sword’, ‘chooser of the slain’ (Cleasby Vigfusson s.v *val-keri*). Jesch (personal communication, 30/09/22) notes difficulties with reading rr.4-7 as meaning ‘sword’ from the ON compound. She thinks it ‘noteworthy that... *keri* does not by itself mean ‘sword’ but is only the base word in the sword-kenning... without the determinant, it cannot mean ‘sword’’. *val-keri* has been interpreted by Whaley (2012: 395) alternatively as a name denoting the inhabitants of Walcheren in the



Netherlands, which, according to Jesch ‘is now the commonly accepted meaning’.

Though I agree that r.4 is likely **k**, I tentatively read ‘Acca: ?’, with no rr.4-7 translation.

### 3.4.3 Faversham



*Figure 29 The Faversham Pommel. Image: The British Museum.*

#### **The object.**

The sword was excavated as part of the sporadic excavation of King's Field, Faversham, Kent, sometime between 1856 and 1895 (Richardson 2005: 34-35). Due to the poorly recorded nature of the excavation, nothing further can be said about the find-spot information regarding the sword.

The inscribed object is an iron pattern-welded sword with silver-gilt pommel of cocked-hat form; the pommel is 48mm in length and 17mm in height (Fischer 2007: 56). A line of beaded ornament runs along the bottom of the sides of the pommel; there is no other decoration (Fischer 2007: 57).

Evison (1967: 73) proposes 575-625AD. However, this dating by Evison (1967) may be problematic; the dating was done on the resemblance of a ring on the Faversham sword to a ring attached to a sword from grave 5 at Snartemo, Norway (Brunning 2014: 137), and Fischer (2007: 2) warns against dating this way because some rings were manufactured in a way to make them appear older than they were.

#### **Previous transliterations and interpretations.**

<i>Table 30 Previous interpretations of Faversham</i>		
<b>Author</b>	<b>Transliteration</b>	<b>Interpretation</b>
Brunning (2019: 75-76)	æ	‘ash tree’; ideogram for warrior
Fischer (2007: 58)	æ	‘ash tree’; persn.n. Æsc; ideogram

Fischer (2007: 57) notes three possible interpretations. The first is that the single rune is a grapheme that denotes a phoneme. The second is an ideogram, either reading OE *æsc* ‘ash tree’ or denoting a Germanic pagan god. The third interpretation is that the rune represents the number four, being in the fourth position in the elder *futhorc*. Fischer (2007: 57) believes that options one and three should be ruled out and thus favours the ideogram interpretation. He suggests that instead of denoting an actual ash tree, it could denote a personal name, and gives the example of the legendary founder of the Æscingas dynasty, Asc. However, Fischer (2007: 58) doubts that the sword is being attributed to the Æscingas, and instead quotes Page (1999: 91), who thought that the Willoughby-on-the-Wold single rune *æsc* could mark the property of a person called Æsc. Brunning (2019: 75), like Fischer (2007), discusses the Old English *Rune Poem* concerning the *æsc* rune, where it states:

*Æsc biþ oferheah, eldum dyre  
stip on staþule, stede rihte hylt,  
ðeah him feohtan on firas monige*

The ash is extremely tall, precious to mankind,  
Strong on its base, it holds its ground as it should  
Although many men attack it  
(Halsall 1981: 29, 92-93)

She rightly notes that the poem was written down in the tenth century, long after the sword was buried, but there is a possibility that the ideographic meaning of the rune could have been present before the tenth century, though the evidence for this is scant (cf. Nedoma 2004: 556-562 for a survey of rune-names in scholarly literature). Brunning (2019: 76) states that the ‘relevance to a warrior could not be clearer’ and that the rune could have been inscribed perhaps for ‘inspiration, comfort in battle, or protection’.

### **Personal reading.**

The text is positioned on one side of the face of the sword pommel. The execution of the text is irregular; there is medium depth to both arms, but the stave is cut deeper. The joins appear flush. The single rune is orientated from l-r. Fischer (2007: 58) suggests that the rune was inscribed into the pommel’s face sometime after the pommel was made. Indeed, whilst there is scratching on the writing surface, there is little to no scratching over the top of the single rune, suggesting that the text was inscribed sometime after the pommel was made.

The pommel has significant wear, but the graph appears to be cut over the top of this. There are no other additional marks, images, or decorative features.

<i>Table 31 Faversham autopsy</i>		
<b>Autopsy date</b>	<b>Transliteration</b>	<b>Interpretation</b>
January 2022; British Museum	æ	-

R.1 æ: The arms are equal in length, and there is a slight curve to the bottom of the stave. The stave almost touches the beaded ornament at the bottom of the face.

I read a single æ-rune. I read this as an æ because of the dating of the inscription; the sword is dated according to Evison (1967) to the late sixth or early seventh century, and thus it is possible that the allophones of the a-rune had been phonemecised at that stage, resulting in the old a-rune referring to /æ/. Nonetheless, I do cast my doubts on this, since the dating of the sword pommel and thus the inscription are uncertain; Fischer (2007: 2) warns against the dating of the Faversham pommel to 575-625 because the rings, which were used for the dating, were sometimes manufactured in a way to make them appear older than they were, giving the sword an older appearance. However, this could mean that the inscription is even later than the supposed date, which cements the possibility of the reading the æ-rune.

#### 3.4.4 Discussions

The text inscriptions appear to have been created using fine, thin-tipped tools, with no evidence of additional implements, such as guiding lines or templates, used to aid the production process. This is particularly evident in the cases of the Faversham and Ash Gilton swords, where the tools employed had exceptionally narrow tips, appropriate for the limited writing space available. The inscribed surfaces on these swords were small, measuring only a few inches in length, with the texts themselves standing just a few millimetres high.

The inscriptions were likely added during a later stage of the sword's lifecycle, close to the time of their deposition. This hypothesis is supported by an analysis of the wear patterns on the writing surfaces and the inscriptions themselves. For instance, on the Chessell Down sword, the writing surface shows evidence of light scratches consistent with prolonged contact between the scabbard and clothing. These lightly etched scratches cover the entire surface and predate the inscription, as the runes are cleanly cut and unaffected by the underlying marks. Furthermore, there are minimal signs of wear or scratches overlaying the text, suggesting the sword experienced little additional handling after the inscription was completed but before it was deposited. A similar pattern is observable with the Faversham sword. The face of the pommel shows heavy scratching indicative of regular use, yet the text remains sharply defined and free from post-production damage. The Ash Gilton sword follows this trend: the pommel surface is worn and scratched, but the inscribed text is unmarred, pointing to a late-stage addition of the inscription. It should be noted that this type of writing surface wear is across the entire face of the writing surface, but there can also be localised wear on sword fittings and pommels due to the owner handling the pommel. This would not create scratches but instead wear down the surface of the pommel or other areas regularly touched. In the case of Ash Gilton,

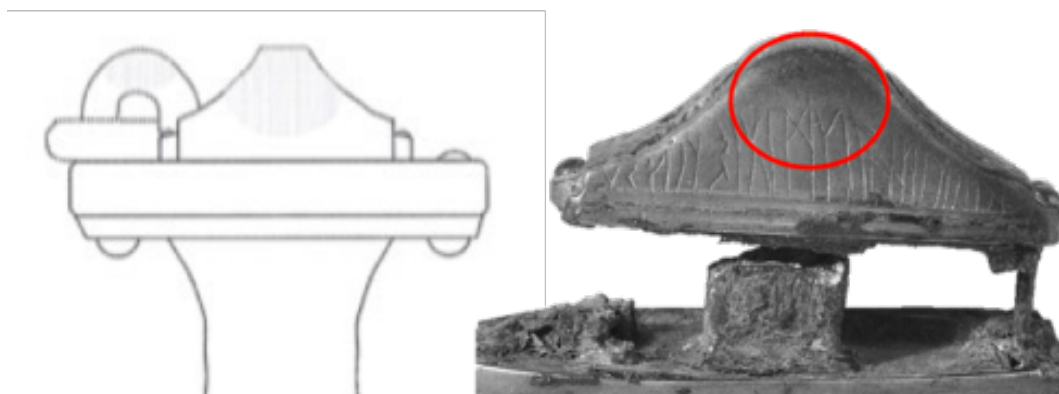


Figure 30 Image of expected wear on a pommel from Brunning (2019) (l), and the Ash Gilton pommel (r). Images: Brunning (2019) and National Museums Liverpool. Edits: JH.

Hines (2006: 193) sees notable wear along the top of the face of the pommel which could have worn away the tops of the runic graphs, which would indicate a longer time between text production and deposition. The extent of wear is disputed by Parsons (1999: 44), and comparing the supposed touch-related wear of the Ash Gilton pommel with Brunning's (2019: 63) study on pommel wear, it does not appear that the Ash Gilton pommel has extensive enough wear to have worn down the top of the pommel since the wear pattern does not match the supposed wear of Ash Gilton. Therefore, after examining the extent of wear on the writing surfaces, I suggest that all three texts were produced sometime close to deposition time. In all three cases, the evidence suggests that the inscriptions were added after the surfaces had already accumulated small scratches and wear from use. However, the absence of significant marks overlying the texts implies that these rune-bearing surfaces were not heavily handled or exposed to situations that would create marks for long after the inscriptions were produced. This timing aligns with the swords' final preparation before deposition, underlining the importance of the texts in marking a significant transitional moment in their lifecycle.

In the case of the inscribed sword pommels, the writing surface for these inscriptions is restricted to one side of the pommel area, with the texts positioned on a single face. For the inscriptions to be visible to onlookers, the inscribed side of the pommel would have needed to face outward, away from the sword's wielder.

Brunning (2019: 76) highlights in her discussion of the Faversham sword and other swords that the hilts of swords often exhibit asymmetrical wear, with one side being more degraded than the other. This asymmetry, she suggests, could result from a consistent practice of sheathing the sword in the same orientation, a deliberate choice by the wielder. Brunning proposes that this consistent wear pattern implies the

existence of a ‘public face’ on sword pommels, where one side—presumably the outward-facing one—was intentionally displayed, whilst the other side of the pommel was close to the wearer. In the case of the Faversham sword, the positioning of the inscription on the outward-facing side of the pommel aligns with this concept of a ‘public face’. Notably, the opposing, non-inscribed face of the pommel shows significant wear, consistent with prolonged contact against the wielder’s clothing or scabbard. However, there is a potential logical flaw in this argument. If the outward-facing side of the pommel is intended to be seen by others and is not in contact with clothing or the scabbard, how could it also show evidence of wear? One possibility is that the wear on the inscribed surface may have occurred prior to the inscription being added, during the sword’s earlier life when it may not yet have been designated as the ‘public’ side. The Ash Gilton pommel, on inspection, did not seem to have as significant wear on one side than the other, like in the case of Faversham. The Chessell Down scabbard mouthpiece would not have experienced wear and tear in the same way as the pommels, because the mouthpiece is an item attached to the top of the scabbard, and would not have received wear and tear from handling, since the scabbard would not have necessarily been handled near the top of the scabbard opening. Nonetheless, some wear would be expected from the back of the scabbard mouthpiece, since this is the area that would have been close to clothing. The Chessell Down scabbard mouthpiece has heavy wear and tear in the form of scratches and intrusive marks, both on the writing surface and ones that cut over the top of the inscription. This, unlike the pommels, means that the scabbard mouthpiece experienced handling and use both before and after the production of the text, meaning the text was unlikely to have been inscribed close to deposition.



Evidence suggests that the inscriptions on pommels were created late in the sword's life, possibly close to its deposition. This late-stage addition raises the question of who inscribed the texts. It is plausible that the inscriptions were made by individuals participating in the funerary rites, as mourners often played active roles in such ceremonies. The group involved in these rites might have included people from various social or professional backgrounds, such as family members or even metalsmiths. However, the idea that the inscriptions were created specifically for the funeral does not preclude other possibilities. It is entirely feasible that the texts were added by metalsmiths at an earlier stage, albeit late in the sword's functional life. Swords often underwent modifications, with parts such as pommels or hilts being replaced or altered. In such cases, the inscribed swords and related parts could have been a later addition, attached shortly before deposition. This scenario allows for the possibility that the inscription was made by a professional craftsman rather than a mourner. With Chessell Down, the inscription was not done near to the time of deposition, and instead beforehand, with enough time to have caused wear and tear. If the mouthpiece was inscribed during its manufacture, the inscription might reflect the maker's mark or the initial owner's identity. Alternatively, as with swords, scabbards and their components could be modified or replaced. An inscription might be added during such alterations, reflecting new ownership or new parts for the scabbard.

The inscriptions on the sword fittings from Ash Gilton, Chessell Down, and Faversham demonstrate distinct functions, as indicated by textual analysis. Both the Ash Gilton and Chessell Down inscriptions appear to contain personal names: *Sigimer* and *Akko*, respectively. These names could serve a variety of purposes, such as indicating the sword's owner or the text producer. If the names represent

ownership, they function as labels that personalise and claim the sword as an individual's property. Alternatively, if the names are those of the text producers—likely smiths—they may serve as a mark of craftsmanship. In contrast, the Faversham inscription consists of a single rune that does not have a recoverable linguistic meaning.

Swords were typically positioned at the hip, allowing for both ease of access and frequent interaction between the weapon and its owner. The extent of this handling is evidenced through patterns of wear and tear on surviving examples (cf. Brunning 2019: 63). Notably, wear on sword pommels tends to concentrate on the central raised area and the tops of the faces (Brunning 2019: 62). These areas, along with protruding features such as ring-fittings, were particularly susceptible to abrasion due to their exposure. This vulnerability resulted from two primary factors: accessibility by hand and contact with clothing while the sword was sheathed at the hip (Brunning 2019: 70). Brunning (2019: 70) reconstructs the relationship between sword and owner based on these wear patterns, suggesting that owners frequently rested their hands on the pommel of their sword. Such habitual contact would have needed to occur regularly to create the noticeable wear observed on the surfaces. Brunning (2019: 72) argues that these swords were not simply ceremonial items, paraded only on special occasions. Instead, they played a more integrated role in society, necessitating their frequent presence at the hip and contributing to their consistent public visibility. The frequent wear on the pommel suggests that it was not obstructed by clothing or other barriers, leaving it relatively exposed. This implies that the hilt area, including the pommel, would have been readily visible to others, facilitating social display and interaction. While the sword's primary position at the hip allowed for consistent reception opportunities, the sword was not a static

object. Its social function and visibility extended beyond this positioning. Literary sources, such as *Beowulf*, provide glimpses into the symbolic and ceremonial use of swords. For instance, in *Beowulf* (ll. 1142–1143), the ceremonial act of laying a sword across Hengest's lap signifies the breaking of sworn peace between Hengest and Finn. Although such depictions may not fully reflect historical practices, they suggest that swords were displayed in various contexts, offering occasions for closer viewing of the hilt area.

Another significant period of interaction with swords, both for viewing and possible inscription, occurred during their modification. The Ash Gilton and Chessell Down examples are ring-swords—a distinctive type of Migration Period sword characterised by the presence of a small ring attached to the hilt. These swords

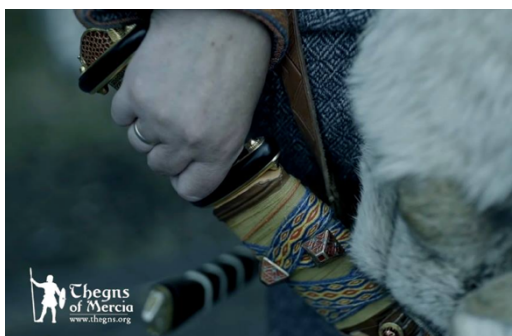


Figure 31 Images showing the positioning of a sword on the body. Images: Thegns of Mercia. Edits: JH.

were in use during the sixth and seventh centuries across Scandinavia, Finland, Britain, and the Continent (Steuer 1987: 22). Ring-swords are often interpreted as having symbolic rather than purely practical or ornamental functions. Fischer (2007: 25) summarises prior scholarship, noting that the rings were likely associated with deep symbolic meaning. Brunning (2019: 81) emphasises that the irreversible removal or modification of such costly features suggests motivations beyond simple aesthetic enhancement. The rings may have been tied to social and ceremonial practices,

serving as gifts for loyal service (Fischer 2007: 26), tools for oath-swearing (Ambrosiani 1983: 24; Underwood 2000: 57–58), or markers of rank and status (Solberg 1995: 719). Further interpretations suggest a direct connection between rings and hierarchical authority. Ellis Davidson (1962: 76–77) argues that the rings symbolised rank and were physically touched during oath-swearing ceremonies, reinforcing their importance in maintaining social bonds. Evison (1967: 63) and Steuer (1987: 32), however, propose that the rings primarily indicated the rank of the sword's bearer. In the case of the Ash Gilton and Chessell Down swords, the rings were removed prior to burial, as evidenced by markings left on the hilt. This modification introduces another point in the lifecycle of the sword during which it was handled and viewed. The removal of the rings—likely a deliberate act—could have coincided with ceremonies such as oath-swearing or other rituals. This process would have required intimate interaction with the hilt area, providing opportunities for additional scrutiny or even textual inscription.

### 3.4.5 Conclusions

The function of inscribing texts on swords likely served as a means of personalisation, symbolising ownership or identity through the inclusion of a personal name or a single rune. This form of textual addition would reflect the social and personal significance of the sword as a highly valued and often individualistic object. Swords were not static items; they were extensively personalised and modified throughout their lifespans, undergoing wear and tear from regular use and deliberate alterations for functional or symbolic purposes. The modifications themselves—whether practical or aesthetic—suggest that swords were objects of ongoing interaction.

Personalization through inscription fits within the broader framework of a sword's social role. Swords were not only tools of war but also markers of identity, status, and allegiance, often displayed in both life and death. The modifications, including inscriptions, would have been visible in the sword's day-to-day wear at the hip, positioning the weapon as an item of public display. Such display was often at the discretion of the owner and served to reinforce their social presence and authority. However, the study of wear patterns and text placement challenges the idea that inscriptions had a long life of visibility before the sword's eventual deposition. Instead, the evidence suggests that inscribed texts may have been added late in the sword's functional life. Public display of swords and their inscriptions did not cease with the death of the owner. In many cases, swords were included in funerary tableaux, extending their role as objects of display into the realm of death. Their presence in burials reflected both the social standing of the deceased and the continuing symbolic significance of the weapon. The inclusion of an inscribed sword in a grave could convey messages of personalisation to the living audience witnessing the funeral. It is plausible that some inscriptions were added specifically for these funerary contexts. In this case, the placement of the text may intentionally mimic what had been the public face of the sword during its owner's life. Additionally, the act of inscribing a sword shortly before its burial may have had ritual or commemorative significance. It is possible that the inscription process was a part of the funerary rites, involving the mourners or skilled artisans who sought to mark the sword with a final expression of its owner's identity. This moment of text production would serve to imbue the weapon with an enduring message that would also be visible during the burial ceremony.

Nonetheless, the Chessell Down inscription was unlikely to have been made as a commemorative personalisation inscription before deposition, and instead was inscribed earlier in the scabbard's life. Due to the consistent replacement and modification of sword parts, including the scabbard, the text could have been produced during the modification process, and would not have been seen regularly due to facing the owner. Therefore, this text was likely functioning as either personalisation for the scabbard's owner or referring to the text producer.

### 3.5 Miscellaneous Items

#### 3.5.1 Caistor by Norwich Astragalus (Wax. OERC13)



Figure 32 The Caistor-by-Norwich Astragalus. Image: Norwich Castle Museum.

#### **The object.**

The gaming piece was found in cremation urn no. N59 from the early Anglo-Saxon cemetery excavated at Caistor-by-Norwich, Norfolk, between 1932-1937. It was found alongside thirty-three plano-convex gaming pieces, and thirty-five or more smaller astragali of sheep and roe (Myers and Green 1973: 98).

An astragalus is a small bone in the ankle; this astragalus is from a roe deer. The bone measurements are between 26-28mm in length (Myers and Green 1973: 160). The object itself is likely a gaming piece; it was found alongside a mixture of black and white plano-convex pieces, with the proportion of pieces suggests a board-game like *hnefatafl* known from later sources (Parsons 1999: 47). Page (Myers and Green 1973: 117) notes that *hnefatafl* involved a king-piece which was different in



some way than others, and it may be that the inscribed astragalus was used as the king-piece. Page (1973:183) suggests that the astragali could be pieces in a game played on a chequered board, suggesting a hunt game, in which the pieces have animal names, e.g., 'fox', 'geese', 'wolf', 'sheep'.



*Figure 33 A roe-deer, with ankle area highlighted. Image: Britannica.*

The consensus is that the astragalus can be placed in the fifth century. There are some that date the object and the inscription at c.400 AD (Myers 1969: 71; Odenstedt 1990: 59, 76, with reviewed date 1991: 54), though Hines (2006: 118) calls the dating of c.400 a ‘misconception’, highlighting that the dating of the astragalus is reliant on the dating of the urn it was found in, which in turn needs to be dated with the ‘review of the dating of the earliest Anglo-Saxon contexts as a whole’ in mind (Hines 1990: 42). Page (1973: 21) states ‘the runes are placed on archaeological grounds in the fourth or early fifth century’, and Hines (1990: 442) notes that the inscription could be dated to the second half of the fifth century. In his latest dating, Hines (2023:70) argues that the urn N59 at Caistor by Norwich is decorated in a style typical of Phase A at Spong Hill, and so to be assigned to around the second quarter of the 5th cent.


Concerning the provenance, some of the earlier literature regarded the object and its text as Scandinavian, especially regarding the single-barred **h** supposedly indicating a non-English text (Chadwick Hawkes and Page 1967: 22, Page 1973:



115). Furthermore, Hills (1991:54) states that the astragalus ‘could have been an imported heirloom but there is no reason why it should not have been local and contemporary with the pot it was buried in. In either case, it is likely to belong within the Anglian cultural tradition’, highlighting the dominantly ‘Anglian’ elements in the Caistor-by-Norwich cemetery. Nonetheless, it is now thought that with the diagnostically English runes present in the inscription, the inscription, and therefore possibly the object, are of English origin.

### Previous transliterations and interpretations.

<i>Table 32 Previous interpretation of Caistor-by-Norwich</i>		
<b>Author</b>	<b>Transliteration</b>	<b>Interpretation</b>
Bammesberger (1991: 402-33 1994: 13)	<b>ra?han</b>	‘a case form of the n-stem P-Gmc. <i>*raih-an-</i> (>OE <i>rāha</i> , <i>rā</i> ‘roe’), reading ‘(this is) Raiha’s (possession)’
Hines (1990: 441; 2019: 58)	<b>raïhan</b>	-
Looijenga (2003: 284-5)	<b>raïhan</b>	‘roe’, ‘of a roe’
Nedoma (2004: 433)	<b>raihan</b>	-
Odenstedt (1991: 58)	<b>raïhan</b>	‘roe’
Page (1968: 132, 1973: 183, 1990: 180)	<b>raihan</b>	‘an animal name related to P-Gmc. <i>*raiho</i> , whence OE <i>raha</i> , <i>ra</i> ‘roebuck’
Parsons (1999: 48)	<b>raïhan</b>	‘of a roe deer’ ‘from a roe deer’

Waxenberger (2010: 46-47, 159, 2013: 45, 2020: 54-55)		‘(this is) Raiha’s (piece)’ ‘(this is/I am) from a roe-deer’
---	---	---

The earliest readings and interpretations (Wrenn 1962; Page 1968) did not consider the object- a roe deer bone- in their analysis because it was believed the bone belonged to a sheep instead. For this reason, the interpretations of **raīhan** relating to a roe-deer was only taken into account once it was clear that the bone was in fact from a roe-deer after Page’s (1973: 183) initial realisation that the material was of a roe-deer. Once the object was considered in the interpretation, the interpretations of the text revolved around it being carved into a roe-deer bone. The earlier literature also considered the **a**-, **i**- and **h**-runes in the inscription as indicative of a non-English provenance (cf. Chadwick Hawkes and Page 1967: 22, Page 1973: 115). Nonetheless, with the expansion of the early runic corpus in Britain, both Odenstedt (1990: 59; 1992: 246) and Hines (1990: 441) correct the statement that the single-barred **h** is indicative of Scandinavian origin, instead noting that that the single-bar **h** is as typical of fifth and sixth century inscriptions from England, and Page (1999: 18) retracts his statement from his 1973 edition.

Aside from the earliest reading from Wren (1962: 308-311), who viewed the text as a ‘symbolic cult-signs’, Page (1968) is the first reading. Page (1968:132) interprets the inscription as meaning ‘scratcher, cutter,’ deriving it from the root *rei-* (‘to scratch, cut, or tear’) combined with a *-k(h)-* suffix. From this stem, he proposes *raiho*, which could function as a common noun meaning ‘inscriber,’ ‘rune-master,’ or possibly ‘one who sets things out in rows.’ In addition to this reading, Page also considers the possibility of *raiho* as a personal name, drawing comparisons to OE

names such as *Bēta*, *Wealda*, *Hunta*, and *Ridda*. He also entertains the notion of a Proto-Onomastic (PrON) oblique form *raihan*, which could indicate possessive meanings such as ‘(this belongs) to *Raiho*’ or ‘(the property) of *Raiho*.’ Another interpretation offered by Page is that *raiho* could denote ‘the object which marks,’ potentially referring to the bone itself. In the oblique case, this could extend to mean ‘(acting as) marker.’ Later, Page (1973: 114) notes difficulties with determining the phonological value of rr.2 and 3, stating that r.3 represents a ‘high front vowel in the region of *i*’. Page (1973: 183, 1999: 180) prefers the reading **raihan**, from P-Gmc. *\*raiho* > OE *raha* ‘roe-deer’.

Bammesberger (1991: 402) sees the sequence as a genitive form of the n-stem P-Gmc. *\*raih-an*, reading ‘(this is) Raiha’s (piece)’, noting that r.3 is ‘hard to determine’ concerning the sound value. He considers the inscription in line with the object, believing that since the bone was probably a gaming piece, the text could be in the genitive, suggesting the underlining form as *\*raih-an-az*, with the loss of the final syllable. Bammesberger (2006: 178) further discusses r.3, suggesting that rr.2-3 represent the diphthong P-Gmc. *\*/ai/* in its developmental stage.

Odenstedt (1991: 58) reads the sequence as ‘roe’ from *\*raihan*, OE *rā*, and follows Campbell (1959: 132) that the diphthong P-Gmc. *\*/ai/* was not fronted to *\*/æi/* as the rendering rr.2-3 as *\*/ai/*, with r.3 as the sound value */i/*.

Parsons (1999: 48) considers r.3 as a ‘vowel seemingly identical to *i*’, and interprets the text as an oblique form of the n-stem P-Gmc. *\*raih-an-* (>OE *rāha*, *rā* ‘roe deer’), either in the genitive, ‘of a roe deer’, or in the dative, ‘from a roe deer’.

Looijenga (2003: 284-5) reads the text as ‘roe, of a roe’, from the masc. n-stem noun in the oblique case; she states that it seems to her that the text belongs to a group of ‘inscriptions in which the naming of the material or the object plays an

important role, cf. the combs reading ‘comb’’. She then cites several self-referential inscriptions. She prefers r.2 as **a** instead of **æ**, since the ‘a in **aī** is not fronted, as monophthongisation of **ai** > **ā** preceded the fronting of **a** > **æ**’. Looijenga (2003: 284) notes that the same orthography is found in the Pforzen buckle (SG97), **aīlrun**, from the sixth century.

Nedoma (2004: 433) examines **raīhan** as a personal name or by-name: he claims that onomastic word formation patterns allowing for the rendering **raīhan** are not attested in the Germanic languages, and excludes the text as either a personal name or as the by-name ‘roe-deer’.

Waxenberger (2010: 46-47, 2013: 45) initially agrees with Bammesberger (2006) on his reading. Later, Waxenberger (2020: 54-5) discusses the phonological implications of rr.2-3 (2020: 54; cf. Bammesberger 2006: 178); she further considers the text as a ‘compact formula’ meaning that a single word stands for a whole phrase, reading ‘(this is) Raiha’s piece’ or ‘(this is) Raiha’s (possession)’, likely functioning as an owner’s mark though notes that the ‘communicative function... cannot be determined with certainty’.

### **Personal reading.**

The text is positioned onto one of the broad faces of the astragalus bone. The text takes up a large proportion of the broad face but is positioned slightly more to the left than centrally. The graphs were inscribed onto the astragalus sometime after the object was gathered to be used as a gaming piece; the writing surface seems relatively smooth and undamaged, suggesting little use of the astragalus piece before the inscribing took place. There are few to no intrusive scratches over the top of the inscription. This suggests that the text was inscribed onto the object relatively early

into its use as a gaming piece. There are no additional framing lines, marks, or images.

<i>Table 33 Caistor-by-Norwich autopsy</i>		
<b>Autopsy date</b>	<b>Transliteration</b>	<b>Interpretation</b>
July 2024, Norwich Castle Museum, Norfolk	<b>raïhan</b>	‘(this is) the roe-deer’s (bone)’  ‘(this is) (a bone) from the roe-deer’

R.1 **r**: The stave is slightly curved; the bow does not meet the stave.

R.2 **a**: Stave with two twigs; the top twig does not meet the stave, leaving a small gap.

R.3 **ī**: Formed with three cuts, the top right cut is longer than the bottom left.

R.4 **h**: the single-barred **h**,

R.5 **a**: The two twigs do not run parallel, since they come closer together.

R.6 **n**: Formed with a long stave that slants slightly left to right, and the twig intersecting the stave in the middle, which is orientated from left to right.

The inscription on the Caistor-by-Norwich astragalus can be interpreted in two equally plausible ways, both rooted in the Old English masculine n-stem noun *rāha*, *rā*, meaning ‘roe-deer.’ The text could represent the genitive singular, translating as ‘(this is) the roe-deer’s (bone),’ or the dative singular, meaning ‘(this is) (a bone) from the roe-deer.’ Both interpretations are equally valid due to the morphological

ambiguity of the Old English ending *-an*, which is identical in form for the genitive and dative cases. As the text provides no additional syntactic or contextual markers to distinguish between these cases, the intended meaning remains unknown. The inscription can also be classified as an example of a ‘compact formula’, a term used to describe instances where a single lexical item encapsulates the meaning of an entire phrase (cf. Waxenberger 2020). More specifically, it functions as an object designation formula—a text which identifies the material of an object without explicitly naming the object itself. The astragalus, originally part of a set of gaming pieces, stands out from the other pieces in terms of its material. While most of the pieces in the set are fashioned from sheep bone, the astragalus in question is made of roe-deer bone. This material distinction is highlighted in the inscription, suggesting that the text's primary function was to draw attention to this difference.

### 3.5.2 Cleatham Hanging Bowl (Wax. OERC18)



*Figure 34 The Cleatham Hanging-Bowl. Image: JH.*

#### **The object.**

The hanging bowl was found in grave 20 as part of the major cremation cemetery at Cleatham in Lincolnshire (Leahy 2007: 31), thought to be the grave of a female adolescent (Leahy 2007: 234). Accompanying the hanging bowl was a ‘small and fine copper-alloy, possibly base silver, annular brooch’ (Hines 1989: 14).

The Cleatham bowl is a complete, copper-alloy hanging bowl, described as an ‘exceptionally small globular vessel’ of 145mm in diameter and 97mm in height (Bruce-Mitford 1993: 51), which had all the fittings usually associated with a hanging bowl such as escutcheons and hooks, removed before burial (Leahy 2007: 222). It is thought by Leahy (2007: 222) and Bruce-Mitford (2005: 141) that the bowl is of atypical shape, leading Bruce-Mitford to suggest that the bowl was adapted to be a hanging bowl and was not originally intended to be used in this way.

The dating of the bowl is to the seventh century; Hines (1990: 444) states that he would ‘prefer to assign’ the Cleatham bowl to the seventh century due to the cemetery continuing to be in use until then, noting that the fine annular brooch also in the grave was ‘readily datable to the very late 6<sup>th</sup> or 7<sup>th</sup> centuries’.

Concerning its provenance, the Cleatham bowl is thought to be a local product. Bruce-Mitford (2005: 474) comments that Lincolnshire hanging bowls are often non-hanging bowls that have been adapted and made into a hanging-bowl, and thus Cleatham, being the same, is likely a local Lincolnshire product.

### Previous interpretations.

<i>Table 34 Previous interpretations of Cleatham</i>		
<b>Author</b>	<b>Transliteration</b>	<b>Interpretation</b>
Hines (1989: 14, 1990: 444, 2019: 58)	<b>-edih</b>	-
Looijenga (2003: 291)	<b>?edih ide?</b>	Object’s name or owner’s mark.
Page (1999: 29)	<b>?edih</b>	-
Parsons (1999: 52)	<b>...edih</b>	-
Waxenberger (2010: 56)	<b>[..]edih</b>	-

For much of the literature, the Cleatham inscription lacks interpretation, with only a transliteration given (cf. Hines (1989: 14; 1990: 444; 2019: 58), Parsons 1999: 52), Waxenberger (2010: 56)) with comments such as ‘no satisfactory interpretation can be proposed for the text’ (Parsons 1999: 52) and ‘until now the text has not yet been deciphered satisfactorily’ (Waxenberger 2010: 56). Looijenga (2003: 291), alongside



considering both right-to-left and left-to-right readings of the text, does provide an interpretation, noting that ‘one might consider an object’s name, or an owner’s mark’.

### **Personal reading.**

The text is arranged on the side of the bowl, several centimetres below the rim. The text is small, being only 20mm in length and at its tallest point only 15mm in height; the graph width varies between rr.1-2 and rr.3-5, with rr.3-5 being almost twice the height and width of the previous graphs. The size of the text suggests that it was produced by a thin, sharp, pointed object; the production was done sometime after the creation of the bowl, but not necessarily towards the end of the object’s life before deposition, due to the notable intrusive scratches around and over the text. Elsewhere on the exterior of the bowl are pairs of vertical lines set 30mm apart (Bruce-Mitford 2005: 141).



*Figure 35 The Cleatham Hanging-Bowl close-up, showing the text. Image: JH. Edits: JH.*

<i>Table 35 Cleatham autopsy</i>		
<b>Date of viewing</b>	<b>Transliteration</b>	<b>Interpretation</b>
26 <sup>th</sup> July 2021, at North Lincolnshire Museum, Scunthorpe, Lincolnshire, UK.	<b>jedih</b>	Element of a personal name

To the left-hand side of the inscription, there are two parallel lines, the right stave being longer than the left, that are inscribed with equal force to the rest of the text and of similar sizing to r.2, indicating that they were deliberately made alongside the inscription and are not intrusive scratches, though Hines (1989: 14) notes that ‘they defy interpretation as any known rune’. Hines (1989: 14) also considers the two parallel lines to be ‘joined at the top’, and this join is reproduced later in Leahy (2007: 180), but Looijenga (2003: 291) does not reflect this in her drawing and on viewing the inscription, I cannot see that the two staves are joined. I suggest two options:

- 1) that a runic graph was meant, especially since r.1 is of similar height and width to r.2 and several graph options include two parallel staves
- 2) a mark to test the depth of the incision before the inscriber continued the mark or a way to signal the start of the inscription.

Similarly, Bezenye II is thought to have an ingress sign (Nedoma 2004: 203-204) in the form of a rotated roof-**k**; though the two staves join, it should be noted that the right-hand stave is about three times as long as the left (Düwel et al 2020: 89).

R.1 **e e**: The staves come closer together towards the bottom and so do not run parallel to each other. The left-hand bar, which joins the right-hand in a v-shape, is overcut and the joins are not flush.

R.2 **d d**: The left-hand stave is shorter than the right-hand stave. The join to the top of the right-hand stave does not meet the top of the stave and the right-hand bow of the rune is much wider than the left-hand. The inscription is obscured by intrusive scratches from r.2 onwards: an

intrusive scratch of near-similar depth to the text runs parallel close to the left stave of r.2.

R.3 i **i**: The rune is formed of one stave that is broken into two lines; the top of the second line is curved slightly to the right. A further intrusive scratch runs between rr.2-3, another at the top of the stave of r.3.

R.4 h **h**: The rune form is identifiable. Both staves are roughly equal in length, and the joins of the bar are not flush. The right-hand stave appears to have been cut twice, mostly overlapping with each other except for the top of the stave, where the two cuts can be seen.

Another intrusive scratch runs across the bottom of both staves of r.4.

Reading **hide**l, there is a possibility that the inscription is a personal name element such as *-hild*, with a missing <l>. Indeed, there is a single runic parallel in the SGRC inscription Bezenye I. Bezenye I has the inscription **godahid**, which is a possible dithematic female personal name (cf. Düwel 2020: 94; Findell 2012: 201; Nedoma 2004: LNr. 42) with the element *-hild*, OE *hild* ‘battle’ < \**xeldiz*/\**xeldjo* (Orel 2003: 168), like that of the Cleatham reading. Other personal names attested with a missing <l> include **hagustadaz** from the Kjøllevik inscription (KJ 75) which perhaps reads the personal name *Haugusta*[l]*daz* (Düwel et al 2020: 94). Non-runic personal names are also attested with *hid*, for example, a nun by the name Hidburg was mentioned in Aldhem’s *De Virginitate* (Lapidge and Herren 1979: 59-132). As with the personal names attested in other runic inscriptions that are missing an <l>, Düwel et al. (2020: 93) neatly summarise the missing <l> issue as ambiguous, stating ‘ob etwa phonetische Gründe... oder Fehlschreibung.... Verantwortlich zu machen sind, lässt sich nicht entscheiden’ (= it is impossible to decide whether phonetic reasons or

incorrect spelling are to blame, trans. JH). Krause (1966: 309) suggests that the omission of the <l> might be motivated by the articulatory similarity between the two consonants, /l/ and /d/; Findell (2012: 330) discusses the possibility of velarised realisation of /l/ in the Bezenye I inscription, which perhaps is a possibility in the Cleatham inscription also.

### 3.5.3 Chessell Down (Wax. OERC16)



Figure 36 The Chessell Down Pail close-up, showing the text. Image: The British Museum. Edits: JH.

#### **The object.**

The Chessell Down pail is a bronze bucket, measuring 177mm in diameter and 115mm in height; around the pail, the surface is decorated with a punched frieze of a deer-hunt, alongside a depiction of a leopard and some trees. The surface is eroded extensively. The pail was excavated from grave 45 of a cemetery on the Isle of Wight; the grave had extensive grave goods with their origins mostly in Kent and Frankia, including multiple brooches, a weaving batten, a spoon, a crystal ball, two silver cup-rims, an iron knife, a buckle, fragments of gold braid, a bead necklace, and two rings (Harrington in Langlands and Lavelle 2020: 107)

The latest dating of the pail is to the sixth century, based on the deposition date; Hines (1990: 438), using the accompanying brooch to date the burial, states that it ‘consistently points to a period circa 520-570 as that in which they were likely to have been in use’. Later, Hines (2019: 59) gives the dating as c.500-575AD. Similarly, Page (1987: 192) and Odenstedt (1991: 54) prefer the sixth century for the pail, and Looijenga (2003: 280), referring specifically to the inscription, dates it to the latter half of the sixth century also.

Concerning the provenance, the pail is not of local origin. Hills (1991: 46) identifies it as ‘Byzantine metal work’. Hines (1990:438) arrives at the conclusion that although ‘not precisely provenanced, this pail seems to be an import from the eastern Mediterranean’. Furthermore, Parsons (1999: 51) notes that the pail was probably manufactured after 500 AD in the eastern Mediterranean, and forms one of a closely related group of eight known from around Europe, four of which are in England.

### Previous interpretations.

<i>Table 36 Previous interpretations of Chessell Down (pail)</i>		
<b>Author</b>	<b>Transliteration</b>	<b>Interpretation</b>
Hines (1990: 437, 1991: 83)  (2019: 59)	<b>](r)(b)ws(e)(e)ekkkaaa</b>  <b>-rbwseeekkkaaa</b>	-  -
Looijenga (2003: 280)	<b>???bwseeeccaaaa</b>	A charm using personal names.
Page (1987: 194, 1999: 157)	<b>bw(.)seccæææ</b>	The inscription may feature the enclitic first person personal pronoun -eka
Parsons (1999: 51)	<b>[...]bws..ekkkaaa</b>	It is not a representation of ‘plain language’
Waxenberger (2010: 52)	<b>[...]iiikkk</b>	-

The literature on the runic inscription is sparse, since the text remains difficult to interpret due to the beginning runes not being able to be identified due to the erosion on the bucket. Several interpretations take the triple occurrence of part of the inscription, **-kkkaaa**, as the basis for interpreting the inscription as a variant of the Scandinavian *pistil*, *mistil*, *kistil* formula.

For Page (1985: 46), the final part of the inscription **-ekkkaaa** might be ‘an echo’ of the **-eka** found in several Scandinavian inscriptions, and notes that ‘the repetition at the end of makes it clear that this is not plain language’ (Page 1987: 194). In his later work (1999: 157), he adds that the repetition would perhaps lead ‘runologists to believe it must be the remains of a magical or cryptic text’.

Hines (1990: 438) reads certain runes in the inscription as certain, whereas the remainder are ‘conjectural’. He does not appear to consider the inscription lexical and provides no interpretation. In his 2019 work, this remains the same.

Parsons (1999: 51) thinks that the inscription was not meant to be a representation of ‘plain language’, and instead considers the repetition of characters in Scandinavian inscriptions such as the Lindholmen amulet (SK 69), but also emphasises that the final **-eka** is not ‘magical’, but instead an enclitic first-person personal pronoun, which would be unusual if the pail was inscribed in England.

Looijenga (2003: 280) takes the sequence as a charm using personal names; she notes that ‘the layout and the sequence of the runes recalls the medieval Scandinavian runic *‘pistil, mistil, kistil ...generally interpreted as thistle, mistle(toe), kistle (small chest)’. She further stipulates that ‘when operating in the same way’, the inscription could be three personal names, two of which are known from the Old English travelogue *Widsith* 115: *Seccan sohte ic ond Beccan*.*

Waxenberger (2010: 53), whilst summarising previous literature, states that the inscription cannot be deciphered and therefore cannot be assigned a text-type either.

### **Personal reading.**

The text is positioned along the exterior of the pail, with the graphs cut over the top of the hunting frieze. Not only is the text lightly inscribed, but there is significant erosion over the surface of the pail, meaning that the text is hard to view.

It is likely that the text was inscribed somewhere along the route between the east and reaching England; Hines (1990: 438) suggests that the ‘runes might...have been added to it *en route* through Germanic Europe to the British Isles, although there is no need to be especially sceptical about the likelihood of a local inscription’. Hills (1991: 46) states that if the pail’s route ‘lay through the Frankish Rhineland the addition of a runic inscription on the continent cannot be ruled out’, however if the bucket ‘could be shown to have arrived as part of a direct consignment from the Mediterranean, a gift to an English ruler from Byzantium, the inscription must have been added in England’.

The text being produced outside of England is also a possibility, with Hines (1991: 63) stating that due to the grapheme variant of the **k**, the inscription would likely have been produced in Denmark, Norway or England. Other attestations of the Waxenberger ‘type 4 **k**’ rune can be found on Hantum (OFRC15), Skanomodu (OFRC8) and the Chessell Down scabbard, as well as being one of the cipher runes on the Franks Casket (cf. Waxenberger 2010). Kaiser (2021: 389) notes concerning the Hantum inscription, graphemically the ‘**k**-rune allows placement with the Ingvaemonic area (England and ‘Ingvaemonic Germany’)’. Parsons (1999: 51) states



that this and the next two graphs are ‘the rare **k**’, which he states is also found on Chessell Down I, suggesting that it is a local variation. Hines (1991: 63) notes that he thinks that ‘with very few possible exceptions- no more, in my view, than the Undley bracteate and the Watchfield case fitting- the case is generally a strong one that the runes on these objects were inscribed in the general locality of the deposition of the artefact’, and further that in regards to the Chessell Down finds, both pail and scabbard mouth piece, they are ‘evidence for the knowledge and use of runes at certain dates in parts of... the Isle of Wight’.

The text is set between two parallel horizontal framing lines which are drawn free hand. As mentioned in I.1, the pail is decorated with a frieze.

<i>Table 37 Chessell Down (pail) autopsy</i>		
<b>Date of viewing</b>	<b>Transliteration</b>	<b>Interpretation</b>
January 2022, The British Museum, London, UK.	<b>](b)wseeekkkaa</b>	A non-lexical inscription.

Before r.1, there are at least four vertical lines set between the framing lines, of similar depth to the rest of the text. Like Cleatham, these may be attempts at a graph or an ingress sign.

**R.1 b:** The graph is two-bowed, both angular, with the lower bow almost entirely obscured by corrosion of the writing surface, with only a small part of the stave visible. Running through the middle of the top bow is a deep intrusive mark.

R.2 **w**: The stave is relatively straight, accompanied by a small, angular bow.

R.3 **s**: The **s** is formed of three strokes, like that of Loveden Hill.

R.4 **e**: The right-hand side of the graph is obscured by corrosion.

R.5 **e**: Only the bottom of the left-hand stave and the entire right-hand stave are visible; the middle of the graph is difficult to make out due to corrosion, though two faint cuts that form a v-shape can be made out.

R.6 **e**: This is, arguably, the clearest **e** graph of the text; the graph is narrower at the top than the bottom, and is made of four cuts, with the middle v-shape overcut on the right-hand side.

R.7 **k**: Formed with a stave and v-shaped lower half, this is Waxenberger's (2017: 117-118) type 4, also featured on Chessell Down I, and Skanomodu and Hantum from the OFRC (Kaiser 2021: 109). According to Waxenberger (2017: 117-118), this represents a velar allophone, certainly in the case of Chessell Down I.

R.8 **k**: As above, with no variation.

R.9 **k**: As above, with no variation.

R.10 **a**: Formed with a stave and two twigs angled downwards coming from the right-hand side of the stave, these are relatively unobscured by corrosion of the writing surface.

R.11 **a**: As above, with some variation in the length of the twigs and the distance between them both.

R.12 **a**: As above.

There are several suggestions that the final **-eeekkkaaa** is an attempt at rendering the enclitic first-person **-eka** as found in inscriptions such as the Nedre Hov scraper (N

KJ39) which reads **jekad**], the rock face Kårstad (N KJ53) reading **ekalja(m)ar(ki)z** | **baij**, and the Lindholmen amulet, reading, in part, **ekerilazsa(wil)agazhateka**. It is notable that in all the examples, the enclitic first person pronoun is at the start of the text, whereas in Chessell Down it finalises the text; though I do not deny the similarity as suggested by Page (1985), Parsons (1999) and Looijenga (2003), I read this text as **bwseeekkkaaa**, being a non-lexical inscription with no linguistic function.

### 3.5.4 Eye Fragment (Wax. OERC28)



*Figure 37 The Eye Fragment. Image: Suffolk Archaeological Services.*

#### **The object.**

The object was found as part of the archaeological excavation of the playing field near Hartismere High School, Eye, Suffolk (Caruth and Goffin 2012: 106).

The strip of copper alloy is from an unknown item, possibly from a belt plate (Caruth and Goffin 2012: 106). It measures around 16mm long and 12mm in width (Waxenberger forthc.). It appears that the piece of metal is a fragment of a once larger item; the left and right edges of the object appear ragged, more so with the left-hand edge.

The dating of the object is to the fifth to seventh centuries: this dating comes from the find context, that of the Hartismere settlement, with the early medieval dating of that settlement being between the fifth to seventh centuries. Indeed, Caruth and Goffin (2012: 3) state that ‘the main dating evidence comes from the Anglo-Saxon small finds and pottery, often difficult to date accurately, which suggests occupation from the fifth to seventh centuries, but with the most intense activity in

the fifth and sixth centuries'. Hines (2019: 59) follows suit, dating the object between the fifth and seventh centuries.

### Previous transliterations and interpretations.

<i>Table 38 Previous interpretations of Eye</i>		
<b>Author</b>	<b>Transliteration</b>	<b>Interpretation</b>
Hines (2019: 59)	<b>gub[</b>	-
Waxenberger (forthc.)	<b>lgub[</b>	'hostile encounter', tribe name, element of personal name

According to Hines (email to Goffin, 03.06.2011), he reads **gub**, stating that it could be 'the beginning of the masculine personal name (for instance like Guthlac), although the syllable can occur in the middle of a few words, and the word 'gub' exists as a simple noun, meaning 'battle''. According to Waxenberger (forthc.), the text can be read *gūþ* 'hostile encounter', which can also be an element in a personal name and tribal name. In the case of the bind-rune, it is - *gubi* < \**gunþjō*, but the umlaut-inducing **i** would still be there and the spelling for allophonic [y] would be <u>, suggesting a dating before 650AD.

### Personal reading.

The text is positioned across the length of the copper alloy strip. It appears the text has been cut with an angle-tipped instrument, creating a variation of thicker and thinner lines depending on the angle of the instrument's tip on the metal. There are slightly raised edges along the left-to-right cut of r.1, suggesting deep pressure being

applied; this is also the case for the top of the bow or r.3. The writing surface has light scratching, showing some use of the strip of metal before the text was inscribed; there are little to no additional scratches over the top of the text. This suggests that the text was affixed to the object sometime into the use of the object and was likely not inscribed at the time of object creation. There are no framing lines, additional marks, or images.

<i>Table 39 Eye autopsy</i>		
<b>Autopsy Date</b>	<b>Transliteration</b>	<b>Interpretation</b>
N/A	<b>lgubl</b>	An element of a compound pers.n. meaning ‘battle, hostile encounter’

R.1 **g**: two cuts cross, with the stave running left to right being cut on top and slightly deeper than with stave running right to left. Both staves are equal in length and height.

R.2 **u**: two cuts; the left-hand cut runs vertical and straight, with a slight curve to the left of the top of the line. The second cut, straight and of equal depth, runs at an angle to the left. The two cuts do not meet at the top.

R.3 **p**: Formed of a stave and angular bow; the stave is tilted at the bottom towards the left; the join at the top of the bow is overcut with the stave. There is a mark, possibly an intrusive scratch, to the left of the top of the stave. This has resulted in the possibility of a bind-rune being raised by Waxenberger (forthc.), who states ‘possibly the last rune is actually a bind-rune, consisting of a **p** + **i**, with the latter being

marked by a descender to the left of the main stave of **p**'. It is difficult to determine whether the mark is indeed a descender; it appears of similar depth and width to the rest of the inscription, which would suggest they were produced at the same time.

I read **gub** and suggest that this text is an element of a compound persn.n, meaning that the surviving text is only a fragment. It does appear that the object is only a fragment of metal and not a complete strip, since the left-hand edge of the fragment appear ragged which could suggest a break in the metal. This means that there could have been more text, meaning that **gub** could be the second element in a dithematic personal name. Indeed, *-gu(n)b* as a final element in personal name is attested frequently in the SGRC, for example, and was a relatively common element in feminine personal name (Nedoma 2004: 527). Often being attested as **gub** because the <n> 'ist der Nasal vor homorganem Obstruenten nicht realisiert... *-gu(n)b* < \*-*gunbijō*' (is the nasal that is not realised before the homorganic obstruent, trans. JH, Duwel et al. 2020: 565), and attested in Schretzheim II (SG105), Neudingen I (SG85) and Weingarten I (SG128). It should be noted that whilst in the SGRC examples the <n> is perhaps missing because of orthographic reasons, the pre-Old English example here is a case where the nasal has been assimilated into the dental fricative (cf. Ringe and Taylor 2014: 139-141).

### 3.5.5 Selsey Fragments (Wax. OERC79)



*Figure 38 The Selsey Fragments. Image: The British Museum.*

#### **The object.**

The fragments were found on the beach between Selsey and Bognor (Hines 1990: 448). The two gold fragments are 'apparently part of the same object... [they are] broken off at each end and corrugated into zigzag shape', and they are they are 18mm and 19mm long (Page 1999: 157). I suggest they may be a part of a finger ring; the circumference would be 12mm, which, when compared to some other finger-rings from between the fifth and eight centuries (ex. Ring from Buckland 1995,0102.349 being 22mm in diameter; Faversham OA.5342 being 20mm in diameter; Frilford 1867,0204.14 15mm in diameter), is very small. Nonetheless, it should be noted that the two edges of the fragments do not match with each other, and therefore there could be another fragment that made up a part of the ring that has not been found. If they were part of a finger ring, the object has been broken into two



(or more) pieces and unbent to be flat pieces of metal instead of curved; I tentatively suggest that the ring may have been repurposed, being broken and flattened out, though I have no suggestions for what the repurposing was.

Concerning the dating, Hines (1990: 448) prefers the late sixth to eighth centuries; he comments that a settlement site dated to the eighth century has been excavated at Selsey and a variety of items have been found on the beach between Selsey and Bognor that date from the sixth to eighth centuries, and thus this is a practical date range. Parsons (1999: 71), on the other hand, is not convinced of the early dating of the fragments, stating that the ‘positive evidence for such a date is very weak’.

#### Previous transliterations and interpretations.

<i>Table 40 Previous interpretations of Selsey</i>		
<b>Author</b>	<b>Transliteration</b>	<b>Interpretation</b>
Hines (1990: 447-8)	<b>brnrn</b>  <b>anmu</b>	-
Looijenga (2003: 292)	<b>brnrn</b>  <b>anmu</b>	‘no interpretation’
Page (1999: 157)	<b>]brnrn[</b>  <b>]anm^æ or ]anmu[</b> or <b>]anml[</b>	-

Waxenberger (2010: 105)	<b>]b(r)n?r?n[</b>  <b>]æ/an?m?u/l</b>	-
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The literature on the Selsey fragments is sparse; Waxenberger (2010: 105) and Page (1999: 157) have little to no discussion beyond a transliteration, and Looijenga (2003: 292) appears to agree with Hines' (1990: 448) reading, stating only that she has 'no interpretation'. Hines (1990: 448) believes that the function of the fragments is unclear; he notes that there are 'outer ends' of the fragments which are much smoother than the other ends, suggesting that there is a 'start' and 'finish' to the inscription. He also notes that there may have been runes where there are now gaps in the inscription, having worn away at the raised surfaces.

### **Personal reading.**

The graphs are positioned along the lengths of both strips. The space between the runes is variable on both strips; rr.I.1-2 are close together, whilst the rest are spaced further apart. Again rr.II.1-2 are closer together, with the rest further apart. The graphs are uniform in cut width and quality, suggesting the same tool has been used throughout the inscription. The writing surface appears relatively smooth with few scratches; post-inscribing, there are few intrusive marks, though there is some wear on the metal at equal intervals which suggests the metal may have been unbent. The stressed metal appears after the text was inscribed, since the stress distorts the clarity of the inscription.

There are no framing lines or additional images; there are some marks where the metal has been bent and unbent, causing some stress in the metal, as shown on the left-hand side of the second strip near r.1.

<i>Table 41 Selsey autopsy</i>		
<b>Autopsy Date</b>	<b>Transliteration</b>	<b>Interpretation</b>
January 2021	]brnrn[	-
	](a/æ)nmu[	-

### **Inscription A.**

R.1 **b**: The bows are angular and similarly formed, with the descending part of the bow longer than the top bow. There is a space between the bows. No joins are flush.

R.2 **r**: This is very lightly inscribed; the cuts are faint. The bow is angular, and the join of the bow and descending twig does not touch the stave.

R.3 **n**: Again, the graph is very lightly inscribed. The bottom half of the stave is tilted to the left. The twig intersecting the stave is slightly less deeply inscribed than the stave.

R.4 **r**: This graph is more deeply inscribed than the previous graph and much wider than r.2, but again the join of the bow and descending twig does not touch the stave.

R.5 **n**: This graph again is more deeply cut; there is a slight tilt to the stave as with r.3.

**Inscription B.**

R.1 (**a/æ**): The stave is straight, and the arms both equal; their joins are not flush. It is uncertain whether the top twig is two cuts at an angle, making the graph A.

R.2 **n**: The bottom of the stave is tilted slightly to the left.

R.3 **m**: Both staves tilt inwards slightly towards the bottom of the graph; the joins are flush.

R.4 **u**: The descending twig is angular, forming a sharp curve where the descender hangs downwards, being Odenstedt's (1990:27) 'angular type'.

The text, though split above as two texts, was likely one single text since it is likely that these two fragments were once part of a single item, perhaps a finger ring. The texts are non-lexical, and therefore no lexical analysis can be provided.

### 3.5.6 Watchfield Fitting (Wax. OERC86)

#### **The Object.**

The object is a copper-alloy fitting, likely belonging to a leather case for balance and weights, according to Page (1986: 192). Excavated in 1983 from grave 67, a young adult male inhumation, of a cemetery at Watchfield, Oxfordshire, it was found with remains of a case containing a balance and weights (Scull 1992: 173-178).

Additional grave goods include a belt, knife, and shield (Scull 1986: 261).

The dating is not contentious; most date the object to the sixth century (Page 1986: 192; Odenstedt 1990: 29, 1991: 54, 60; Hines 1990: 439). Hines (2019: 59) dates it to the early or mid-sixth century. Scull (1986: 127) gives the date as 500-550AD.

Concerning the provenance of the inscription, Hines (1990: 439) states that 'it appears possible for the item and the inscription to have been made locally, although an origin as far afield as the Rhineland is also possible'. Hills (1991: 47) following Scull (1986), suggesting that there are Frankish or Kentish parallels for the grave and its contents, and would see it as 'probably not the burial of a local West Saxon', but notes about the inscription that she is not sure 'if there is any way of establishing whether the inscription was part of the original design for the case'. Looijenga (2003: 125) notes possible 'Merovingian connotations'. Concerning the runes, Page (1986: 125) states that the inscription has 'no rune-forms which are diagnostic of Anglo-Saxon provenance'; nonetheless, Waxenberger (2010: 120) points out that the lack of diagnostic runes is 'absolutely in keeping with the situation at the time as the OE *futhorc* was only in the making in this period'. She further suggests that if Parsons' (1999: 68) hypothesis of the small open triangles on r.3 are a distinguishing feature to distinguish r.3 from r.12, then such a differentiation between these two runes

could mean that the allophones were about to become phonemes, which is specific to the early OE *fūþorc* and thus, Waxenberger alludes to a local provenance for the fitting's inscription. Scull (1989: 261) suggests 'an insular rather than a Continental' origin of the items in grave 67, noting that though the belt appears to be Frankish and the shield-type is better known from Kent and the Continent, all these items would have been available to 'higher-status individuals in the Upper Thames through exchange or other contacts' (Scull 1986: 261).

### Previous transliterations and interpretations.

<i>Table 42 Previous interpretations of Watchfield</i>		
<b>Author</b>	<b>Transliteration</b>	<b>Interpretation</b>
Hines (1991: 81, 2019: 59)	<b>haribœki:wusa</b>	-
Looijenga (2003: 288)	<b>hariboki:wusa</b>	'Hariboki's (possession), this one'; 'Hariboki's bag'; 'for Hariboki, from Wusa'
Nedoma (2016: 22)	<b>hariboki:wusa</b>	'?: Wusa'
Odenstedt (Scull 1986: 123- 125)	<b>hæriboki:pusæ</b>	'the bag accompanying (belonging to) the army account 'book''
(1991: 62)	<b>hæriboki:pusæ</b>	-
(1992: 246)	-	'Army accounts. Wusa (keeps them)'
Page (Scull 1986: 125- 126, 1992: 250)	<b>hariboki:wusa</b>	'To Haribok, Wusa (gave this)'
	-	

(1999 182)	<b>haribo*i:wusa</b>	
Parsons (1999: 68-70)	<b>hariboki:wusa</b>	‘Wusa (gave) to Haribok’
Waxenberger (2010: 120; 2013: 49)	<b>h̥fribŌki:Pusf</b>	‘To Heribœk: Wusæ’; ‘may be two OE personal names’

The first two interpretations were provided by Odenstedt (1986) and Page (1986) in Scull's (1986) article.

Odenstedt (Scull 1986: 123) reads r.9 as p instead a w for two reasons: 1) that **wusa** is ‘meaningless’, and 2) **pusa** ‘bag’ makes ‘excellent sense’, where the **p**-rune was ‘never used in early inscriptions to indicate the rare Germanic p’, and instead **b** was used in the single-bow form. Odenstedt claims that r.9, with the bow at the top of the stave, may have been a ‘substitution’ for the **b**-rune, and thus claims the **pusa** ‘seems the only possible transliteration’. Concerning the reading of the inscription, Odenstedt (Scull 1986: 124) claims **hæriboki** is a compound, the elements being OE *here* ‘army’ and OE *bōc* ‘book’; he suggests that since the balance and weights found in the grave may be currency-scales, **hæriboki** means ‘the account ‘book’ of the army’, referring to one or more slabs on which accounts were kept. He extends this interpretation to rr.9-12, with **pusa** being the bag that the accounts were kept in. Odenstedt (Scull 1986: 125) therefore claims that the inscription indicated the function of the object, and that ‘a prosaic label of this kind has few, if any, equivalents amount the older inscriptions’.

Page (Scull 1986: 125) believes that the inscription was not produced in England, possibly inscribed on the Continent. He notes the lack of diagnostic Anglo-Saxon rune-forms, and further highlights some runes that may indicate a foreign

provenance: r.1 is single-barred, where a two-barred form is expected, though he does then discuss the possible early single-barred forms from England; r.7, where he notes the similarities to that rune form with ‘a few Continental West Germanic examples’ such as Breza (SG19), Bezenye B (SG13), and Dischingen A (SG23). Page (Scull 1986: 126) then discusses his reading; the first element, *hari-*, citing names such as **haribrig** on SG125 Weimar Brooch (cf. Düwel et al. 2020: 892-902), **hariso** on the Himlingøje fibula (SJ73), and **hariuha** on the Sjøælland II bracteate (IK 98), whereas the second element, *-bok*, ‘seems unrecorded in Germanic languages’. Nonetheless, Page (Scull 1986: 126) notes that rr.1-8 could mean ‘beech-tree’, and since tree-names are used as personal name elements, he reads it as such. Furthermore, rr.9-12 are ‘tempting to take... as a corresponding personal name in the nominative’; he reads the text was ‘To Haribok: Wusa (gave this)’, noting parallels with the Schretzheim brooch (SG104), though notes that his own interpretation of Watchfield is ‘tentative, perhaps, not very satisfactory’.

Later, Odenstedt (1991, 1992) and Page (1992, 1999) comment further on the reading. Odenstedt (1991: 61) rejects Page's interpretation of **hariboki** as a masculine personal name in the dat.sg. because he claims that the names of trees only occur as the first element in names. Instead, he takes **hariboki** as the nominative plural and translates the inscription as ‘Army accounts. Wusa (keeps them)’. Page (1992) and Odenstedt (1992) continue to disagree; whilst Odenstedt reaffirms his reading from 1991, Page (1992: 250) admits his own doubts on his personal name interpretation, but focuses on criticising Odenstedt’s (1992) reading for focusing too much on the idea of an ‘army’ being so well-trained that they would have someone acting as an accountant. In his 1999 edition, Page (1999: 182) notes that the first personal name certainly features the element *here* ‘army’, whilst the



second personal name rendered as **wusa**, perhaps derives from the element *wulf-* being a text that indicates ‘giver and recipient’.

Hines (1991: 81) discusses the phonology of the inscription, considering whether the inscription is either English or from elsewhere. He notes the serifs of r.2 could be a distinction between /a/ and /æ/.

Looijenga (2003: 289) regards the inscription as an owner’s formula or ‘designation of the object in combination with the owner’s name’. After reading rr.1-8 as the personal name **hariboki**, likely a compound name meaning ‘army beech’ or ‘battle tree’, Looijenga (2003: 288-289) highlights the difficulty of reading r.9, giving multiple readings. Rr.9-12 may read **pusa** ‘this one’, the acc. demonstrative pronoun. Alternatively, the reading **wusa** gives a second personal name; finally, Looijenga (2003: 288) suggests that r.9 is incompletely carved, and a **b** was meant, reading **būsæ** with a further missing *r*, supposedly rendering *bursæ* ‘purse’. She cited the single bow **b** in the Bezenye B inscription as an example.

Parsons (1999: 68), like Hines (1991), notes the serifs on r.2, stating that it is ‘tempting to speculate; their purpose, perhaps to differentiate between the emerging sound values of the **a**-rune in the process of phonemecisation. Parsons (1999:69) compares Odenstedt’s (1986, 1992) and Page’s (1986) interpretations, arriving at the conclusion that Page’s interpretation is likely correct. On the one hand, he finds hypocoristic *Wusa* unusual as the attested forms are *Wulfa* and *Wuffa*.

Nedoma (2016: 22) reads **hariboki:wusa**, noting that r.2 is an ‘ornamental’ form of a with small angles at the ends of the arms; he states that ‘it does not seem that this serif rune would designate a special sound value on account of them’. He claims that if the author of the text wishes to signify an umlaut vowel, then they would have ‘certainly... used an e-rune’, noting that Looijenga (2003: 288) points

out that serif ornamenting is usual for insular half uncial and minuscule writing, though Nedoma (2016: 22) does also state that insular script did not develop in Ireland until the seventh century and therefore is irrelevant to the Watchfield inscription. Concerning the personal name *Wusa*, Nedoma (2016: 24-27) suggests that it may be a byname meaning ‘the one who bustles about’. However, Nedoma (2016: 27-28) does not take **hariboki** as a personal name, stating that ‘such an interpretation is not valid, since **hariboki** is by no means... a personal name due to the fact that the root noun P-Gmc. *\*bok-*... is never used as a second element in Germanic dithematic anthroponyms’.

Waxenberger (2010: 121, 2013: 49) regards the rr.1-8 as a personal name, made from the elements OE *here* ‘army’ and OE *bōc* ‘beech-tree’; she suggests that the gender of the name is indeterminate due to the gender of the second element being undetermined. She notes later (2019: 71) that the first element, from Gmc *\*harja-* became **\*hærja-** by fronting, and the vowel developed into [ɛ] by allophonic i-umlaut, making her reading start as **h[ɛ]ri-**. The */-æ/* ending of the personal name **wusæ** indicates a nom.sg. fem n-stem, being a woman’s name, in comparison to the nom.sg. masc. n-stem personal name **ako** on Chessell Down, which has the */-o/* ending, being expected for the West Gmc. Personal name ending.

### **Personal reading.**

The text is positioned across the length of the copper alloy fitting, running across the entire flat surface. Hills (1991: 48) notes that the case and inscription ‘seems to have become worn with use, so it must have been added sometime before burial if not when the case was first made’. Scull (1986: 127) notes that the degree of abrasion on

the case fittings indicates that they were likely manufactured, and the runes inscribed, 'some years before burial'.

There are two parallel framing lines that run horizontally across the fitting; they appear fainter than the inscription. The framing lines finish, and a line runs vertically to join them after r.11, creating a boxed end. There is a divider, made of four circular marks, between rr.7 and 8. There are no further marks or images.



Figure 39 The Watchfield Mount close-up, showing the text. Image: Oxfordshire Museum.

Table 43 Watchfield autopsy		
Autopsy date	Transliteration	Interpretation
N/A	hariboki:wusæ	‘to Haribok: Wusæ’

R.1 **h**: single-barred.

R.2 **a**: The graph is formed as expected, except for featuring two small open triangles, one at the end of each arm. Both Waxenberger (2010: 120) and Parsons (1999: 68) note that these may serve to distinguish r.2 and r.12, where r.2 may have been affected by i-mutation, whereas r.12 is a back-vowel. This would mean there is an attempt to distinguish the sounds that gave rise to ƿ and ƿ̃. Nonetheless, Parsons (1999: 69) notes that they could be ‘without meaning, simply inconsequential flourishes’.

R.3 **r**: The top of the bow is formed with two strokes, creating a zig-zag form; the bow does not meet the stave, and the descender is slightly curved.

R.4 **i**: A single stave.

R.5 **b**: Formed with a stave and two unequally sized bows which are separated.

R.6 **o**: Formed with four cuts.

R.7 **k**: roof-type, formed with two cuts.

R.8 **i**: A single stave.

R.9 **w**: A stave and bow; the bow is placed at the top of the stave.

R.10 **u**: Formed with two cuts; the stave is straight whilst the descending twig is curved, and slightly shorter than the stave.

R.11 **s**: Three-cut zig-zag **s**; like r.3, there is a line with a bend in it, with the first cut having a bend.

R.12 **æ**: The bottom of the stave is tilted to the left; the second twig is overcutting the stave.

I read **hariboki:wusæ**, ‘to Haribok: Wusæ’. I regard rr.1-8 **hariboki** as personal, made from the elements OE *here* ‘army’ and OE *bōc* ‘beech-tree’, where the second element, as it appears as *boki*, must be dat. sing (<\**bōki*), where the final /-i/ had not fronted the vowel in the sixth century. I agree with Waxenbenger (2010: 120) on the determination of the gender of the two names; that the gender of the first name is indeterminate, and that the -æ ending of the second personal name indicates a nom.sg. fem n-stem, thus a woman’s name. These two personal names make a complex donor’s formula, the first name being the benefactor of the object, perhaps

the case itself, with the second likely being the donor of the object to the benefactor.

The text, therefore, signifies a gift-giving relationship.

## 4 Discussion

### 4.1 Text production

#### 4.1.1 Summaries

The concept of text production, as applied to runic inscriptions, is understood in this thesis through the application of pragmatology, which sees text production as a communicative act shaped by social and material conditions. Text production refers to the process of creating a text: specifically, how, when, and by whom the inscription was made. In this study, production has been analysed primarily according to object groups, such as bracteates, brooches, urns, and sword-related items. Following Jacobs and Jucker's (1995: 11) pragmatological framework, text production involves not only the act of carving runes but also the broader social and physical context in which that act took place. Zimmermann (2010: 91–92) highlights the role of functional objects in carrying these messages, and Kaiser's (2021: 122–123) concept of the locomobile text further emphasises the variability of producers and contexts over time. In this way, text production in the PrOERC is understood not as a simple act of inscription but as a socially and historically situated process involving the inscriber and the object, and their social connection to each other. The analysis shows that within each object group, the conditions of text production—how, when, and by whom—were generally consistent, with similar patterns also observed in individually attested items across the corpus.

Text production on bracteates is part of the preparation of their dies.

Understanding the die-making process provides insight into how the inscriptions were created. Making a die involved carving a sunken-relief model into clay, creating a mould from it, and casting a bronze die. The gold flan was then hammered into the die to stamp the design. After stamping, additional ornamentation, such as

edges and loops, was added. Runic inscriptions were incorporated during the die model stage, often requiring retrograde carving to produce a final orientation of right-to-left. Mistakes likely stemmed from the challenges of working in reverse on small surfaces. For instance, the Welbeck Hill and Undley bracteates show retrograde inscriptions, while variations in depth, such as on Binham, may reflect uneven striking. The same tools and methods used for other motifs were employed for inscriptions, as seen in the consistent line quality across the designs. Inscriptions were engraved by the same metalsmith at the same stage as the rest of the motifs, with no time gap between object creation and inscription. Metalsmiths produced these texts; likely handled both the die creation and the engraving of inscriptions as part of the same process.

Concerning the brooches, all the texts were created using thin inscribing tools, though in some cases, additional tools may have been used. For example, the curved line above the text on Harford Farm A likely required a specialised tool for drawing curves, while other framing lines, such as those on Boarley, Dover, and Wakerley, were done freehand. On Harford Farm A, the inscription references the craftsman, *Luda*, who repaired the brooch, suggesting the text was created during the repair process to highlight the craftsman's work. In other cases, like Boarley and Wakerley, it is less clear whether the names on the brooches refer to the craftsman, owner, or donor of the brooch. Non-lexical texts, however, cannot linguistically indicate their creator. Evidence of repairs on brooches like Harford Farm, Boarley, Wakerley, and West Heslerton could suggest their inscriptions were added during the repair period (Martin 2015). Since brooches were not functional while being repaired, the backplates—typically the writing surface—would have been accessible for text production. This supports the idea that metalsmiths performing the repairs

also created the inscriptions, particularly in cases like Harford Farm A. However, other scenarios are possible. For example, the female name *Liota* on Boarley could suggest a woman inscribed her own name, though the gender roles of metalsmiths remain uncertain. Alternatively, the metalsmith might have inscribed the name of the owner, or the brooch's owner could have added the text at a different time. Similarly, the male name on Wakerley could represent a donor rather than the text's creator. This aligns with SGRC examples, like Weimar I, where male names on brooches are believed to follow a donor formula (Düwel et al. 2020).

Text production on urns can be categorised as either stamping, as seen on the Spong Hill urns, or inscribing, as seen on the Loveden Hill urn. At Spong Hill, the text was created using a stamp, likely made from antler or wood, which was carved in relief. This stamp (or die) was pressed into the wet clay of the urns, leaving an indented impression of the runic characters. Though the stamp itself has not been found, its use across multiple urns suggests it was designed for repeated, consistent application. In contrast, the Loveden Hill inscription was carved directly into the surface of the urn using a thin, sharp tool, similar to those used for other decorative grooves on urns. Double cutting on some runes suggests the inscriber revisited the text to clarify or correct it. The 'scratched' appearance of some cuts implies that the text was added when the clay was still workable but had begun to dry, likely during the later stages of production. Both methods were likely carried out by potters familiar with urn decoration. The tools and techniques used for text production were similar to those employed for non-script decoration, such as creating concentric lines or applying stamps. This familiarity suggests that text production was a natural extension of the potters' existing skills.



The inscriptions on the sword-related items, the two pommels Faversham and Ash Gilton, and the scabbard mouthpiece Chessell Down, were created using fine, thin-tipped tools, with no evidence of guiding aids like templates or lines. The inscriptions were likely added late in the swords' lifecycles, close to the time of their deposition. This is evidenced by wear patterns on the writing surfaces, which show earlier light scratches unrelated to the inscriptions. For example, the Chessell Down scabbard mouthpiece has pre-existing surface scratches on the writing surface which is consistent with regular use, yet the runes are cut over the top, indicating the text was added sometime afterward. Similarly, the Faversham sword's pommel shows signs of heavy use, but the text is again cut over the top of the pre-existing scratches. The Ash Gilton sword pommel also shows wear on the pommel, but the inscription is unaffected, supporting the theory that the text was added shortly before deposition. Localised wear patterns, such as touch-related wear, have been debated. For instance, while Hines (2006) suggests wear along the top of the Ash Gilton pommel may have affected the runes over time, I dispute this, arguing that the wear does not match typical handling patterns. Overall, the lack of significant post-inscription marks on all three sword-related writing surfaces supports the conclusion that the texts were created during a final stage of the swords' lives.

For the singly attested objects, there are no different text production styles than the other items. The Caistor by Norwich astragalus, the Cleatham hanging-bowl, the Chessell Down pail, the Eye fragment, the Selsey fragments, and the Watchfield fitting were all produced using a thin inscribing tool. They all appear to have been produced later into the objects' lives, but not immediately before deposition. This can be said because the texts appear to have wear and tear over the

top of them. For example, the Selsey fragments appear worn: the writing surface has many scratches and marks, whilst the text itself is worn down in many places, suggesting the text was present on the object for some while before it was found. Cleatham is another example of this; the text is very lightly inscribed over an already worn surface and it has multiple intrusive scratches that run over it, sometimes obscuring the runes themselves. This suggests, then, that the object was used for some time before deposition, meaning the runes were inscribed sometime into the object's biography, but not immediately at object production and not near deposition either. In contrast, I can narrow down the text production period for the Chessell Down pail more specifically. Since I believe that the object was inscribed with the runic text when brought to England, or perhaps even as specifically as the Isle of Wight, it can be said with some certainty that the text was produced at this time period, not before whilst the object was still in the Mediterranean, or when the object was travelling.

#### 4.1.2 Findings

Uniformity characterises the materials of the writing surfaces in the PrOERC. Over 85% of the corpus is inscribed on metal objects, with only two inscriptions found on clay, the Spong Hill urns and the Loveden Hill urn, and a single inscription on bone, the Caistor-by-Norwich astragalus. The objects within the PrOERC are generally categorised as portable items, most of which are personal adornments such as brooches, bracteates, and possibly a finger ring. Other inscribed items that are worn on the body include sword fittings and a case fitting.

There are two primary modes of text production in the PrOERC: direct inscription onto the writing surface and inscription via a tool designed for repeated

use, such as a stamp or die. The direct inscription method is by far the most common, and includes the majority of the texts found on brooches, bowls, sword fittings, and singly attested items like those from Caistor-by-Norwich, Selsey, Watchfield, and Loveden Hill. These texts are inscribed using a thin, unspecified tool, which leaves a shallow cut on the surface of the material. In most cases, the inscribing tool appears to have been applied with moderate pressure, particularly on metal surfaces. However, many inscriptions are faint, such as those from Dover and Cleatham, indicating lighter application. It is plausible that metalsmiths' tools were used for these inscriptions, as suggested by tool marks visible on the backplate of Harford Farm, where semi-circular lines were employed to plan the design, which incorporates both text and imagery. These tool marks bear similarity to those used in metalworking, suggesting that metalsmiths may have been responsible not only for creating the objects but also for inscribing the texts. Metalsmiths are certainly responsible for producing the texts on bracteates, since the texts are made as part of the production of the object; furthermore, it could be suggested that metalsmiths made the texts at times of object repair for the brooches also. Potters could have produced the texts on the urns: the same tools used to make decorative features on the urns also make the texts.

While direct inscription remains the dominant form of text production, production via stamp or die is also evident in the PrOERC. This method is responsible for the inscriptions found on objects such as the bracteates from Binham, Undley, and Welbeck Hill, as well as the Spong Hill urns. In these cases, texts are produced by pressing a die or using a stamp into another material such as clay or a thin metal disc. This process results in multiple attestations of the same text across several similar objects, as seen on Spong Hill urns and the Binham bracteates. The

Undley and Welbeck Hill inscriptions do not have multiple attestations but could have done. Currently these bracteates are the only ones of their kind. The use of a stamp or die means that the production of these texts is part of initial creation of the object. For example, the urns at Spong Hill must have been wet during the inscription process, indicating that the text was formed during the creation of the urn itself. Similarly, the texts on the Binham bracteates were pressed into the metal disc during its production, rather than being scratched into an already-decorated surface. Most of the corpus, however, consists of texts that were inscribed onto objects after their initial creation. In these instances, an object's biography becomes essential for understanding the chronology of text production. By examining wear patterns on the writing surface, particularly scratches and markings beneath the inscription, it is possible to infer whether the text was produced early or late in the object's life. If the text is inscribed over pre-existing wear, this suggests that the text was produced after some period of use of the object, while if wear appears above the text, it suggests a later inscription in the object's life.

In the case of Harford Farm, it is possible to narrow down the producer of the text somewhat: perhaps the producer was a man named *Luda*, which is evident through both textual analysis and an examination of the object's biography. However, for many other objects in the PrOERC, the identity of the text producer remains uncertain. In some cases, tool marks suggest specialised trades such as metalworking or pottery, where the text production is inseparable from the object's creation. We do not have to assume that the metalsmiths or potters were the ones creating the texts. Parsons (1999) suggests that a metalsmith was working from an exemplar when producing the text of Ash Gilton. However, although it is possible that a second individual was responsible for the text, it is equally plausible that the

same person who created the object also produced the inscription, especially in cases like the bracteates from Undley and Welbeck Hill, where the text and decorative features share similar depths and widths. The role of the object's owner as a potential text producer should also not be disregarded. This does not apply to urns or bracteates, but it is plausible that some other inscriptions were made by the owner of the object, or perhaps commissioned by them. For example, the female personal name *Liota* on the Boarley brooch could, as a simple-name formula, refer to the owner of the brooch; this is also the case for the personal name, or elements of a personal name, on other items such as the Cleatham hanging-bowl or the Eye fragment.

Aside from the production of the text itself, there are additions to the text such as word dividers or framing lines. Word dividers do as expected: they divide a word from another using a specific mark. Some texts in the PrOERC are produced with word dividers which can be catalogued thus:

- Diagonal lines (Loveden Hill)
- Single dot (Undley)
- Multiple dots (Harford Farm, Chessell Down II, Watchfield)

Furthermore, some texts in the PrOERC have framing lines. Framing lines are lines present around the text which have been created to aid in the arrangement of the text within the lines. These appear as:

- The single straight top line (Wakerley)
- Double straight lines (Watchfield)
- Single curved top line (Harford Farm I)
- Double curved line (Boarley, Undley)
- Boxed (Dover I and II)

These elements likely aided in the reception of the text. In the case of the word dividers, the dividers either separated words for ease of reading or to highlight them and draw the eye to their presence, such as in the case of Harford Farm. In the case of framing lines, they aided in the production of the text to encase the text in a particular area; furthermore, this would perhaps also draw the eye to the area on the writing surface, aiding in the text reception of the text, especially in the case when the texts are very faint, such as Dover.

#### 4.1.3 Challenging Assumptions in Runological Literature

The findings concerning text production from the PrOERC challenge two long-standing assumptions in runological scholarship: the literacy of text producers and the judgment of the quality inscriptions.

One prominent assumption concerns the literacy—or lack thereof—of the craftsmen who produced inscriptions. Scholars such as Odenstedt (1993: 7) have disparaged bracteate inscriptions as ‘scribblings of a monkey’, suggesting that their creators, likely metalsmiths, were illiterate. Similarly, Moltke (1985: 114, 124) argued that metalsmiths lacked the ability to read or write, characterising their inscriptions as technically flawed imitations. This perspective creates a tension when interpreting the PrOERC, as evidence suggests that some inscriptions, including lexical and non-lexical texts, were indeed produced by metalsmiths or other craftspeople. For example, both the bracteates and certain brooches in the corpus exhibit characteristics indicative of production by artisans skilled in metalwork. The presence of such inscriptions complicates the assumption of universal illiteracy among metalsmiths. While it is plausible that some producers relied on exemplars, others may have possessed sufficient literacy to craft runic inscriptions intentionally.

Another prevalent issue in runological literature is the judgment of the technical quality of inscriptions. Scholars have frequently critiqued inscriptions based on perceived deficiencies in the skill or literacy of the text producer. For example, Parsons (1999:43) described the producer of the Ash Gilton pommel inscription as demonstrating ‘technical incompetence’ and ‘unfamiliarity with the medium’, suggesting that the text was a flawed copy of an exemplar created by a literate individual. Similarly, Odenstedt (1980:25) deemed the Loveden Hill inscription the work of a non-skilled rune-master, while others have criticised the unevenness, alignment, or faintness of certain texts (Page 1973: 184; Parsons 1999: 55). These judgments often reflect modern expectations of textual precision, where inscriptions are evaluated against anachronistic standards of legibility and orthographic consistency. For instance, while Odenstedt (1984:116) praised the Chessell Down scabbard mouthpiece inscription as ‘neat, even elegant’, Page (1973: 116; 1999: 114) dismissed the same text as ‘roughly scratched’. Such discrepancies reveal the subjectivity inherent in these evaluations, which often fail to consider the practical constraints of early runic text production.

Examining the inscriptions in the ProERC corpus suggests that modern expectations of text production are often misapplied to the inscriptions. Many inscriptions were created under conditions that inherently complicated the production process. For example, the small writing surfaces of objects like the Ash Gilton pommel (45 mm in width) and the Undley bracteate (23 mm in diameter) naturally limited the clarity of runes. Inscriptions produced using stamps or dies, such as those at Spong Hill, Binham, Undley, and Welbeck Hill, further complicate this. These texts were inscribed in reverse orientation onto the stamps, with the intended orientation only visible after the stamping process. The retrograde texts at

Undley and Welbeck Hill can thus be attributed to the inherent challenges of producing reversed inscriptions rather than to errors or incompetence. Similarly, inscriptions on wet or curved surfaces, such as those on the Spong Hill urns or the Chessell Down pail, often resulted in faint or uneven cuts. These practical constraints underscore that text production in the PrOERC was shaped by the physical and material contexts of the objects rather than by any intrinsic deficiency in the skill or literacy of the producers.

The implicit expectation of an ideal standard—of straight lines, perfectly formed graphs, and evenly inscribed texts—hinders the study of the PrOERC. By evaluating inscriptions based on what they are not, rather than what they are, previous scholarship has overlooked the functional and contextual factors that shaped their production. Moreover, assumptions of illiteracy or incompetence risk dismissing deliberate choices in text design; for example, dismissing non-lexical texts as incompetent productions of lexical texts undervalues their possible functions. Instead, the study of text production in the PrOERC emphasises the importance of understanding inscriptions within their specific material contexts. The variability in production methods, the challenges posed by object surfaces, and the diversity of producers all point to a complex and nuanced tradition of runic inscription. These insights challenge reductive narratives of incompetence and underscore the need to approach runic texts on their own terms, acknowledging the practical conditions that informed their creation. By reassessing these inscriptions without imposing modern standards of literacy and textual precision, my research illuminates the complexities of text production of the PrOERC.



## 4.2 Text Reception

### 4.2.1 Summaries

Text reception refers to how, when, and by whom a runic inscription was viewed, interpreted, or engaged with. Drawing on Jacobs and Jucker's (1995: 11) pragmatology, text reception is not limited to a single moment of reading a text but also encompasses the broader context in which an inscription was viewed or used. This includes the intended audience at the time of inscription, as well as later viewers who may have interacted with the object in different ways. As Kaiser (2021: 122) argues, the portable nature of many inscribed objects—what she terms 'locomobile'—means that inscriptions were often received in multiple contexts over time and space, creating shifting possibilities for interpretation. Zimmermann (2010: 92) similarly stresses that the communicative role of these texts relies heavily on the objects themselves, which carry social and functional meaning beyond the text alone. In this thesis, I found that while text reception varied depending on object type, the same kinds of social and material factors—such as visibility, ownership, and usage—shaped reception patterns across the PrOERC.

Bracteates were multifunctional objects, often serving as high-status gifts exchanged among elites, symbols of Scandinavian identity, or as personal items like women's jewellery. Crafted by skilled goldsmiths for wealthy patrons, their creation and use were likely confined to elite social circles. Archaeological evidence indicates bracteates were primarily worn as pendants, suggesting their role as jewellery. They were typically adorned with loops, showing signs of prolonged wear, and sometimes incorporated into necklaces with beads. Text inscriptions on bracteates, visible only upon close inspection, contributed to their role within

intimate or ceremonial contexts. Some, like those found in hoards, reveal alternative functions. For instance, the Binham hoard's damaged bracteates suggest ritualistic deposition or recycling. However, the runic-inscribed pieces were less altered than others in the hoard, implying their distinct significance. Hoard contexts altered the objects' social roles, transitioning them from wearable items to curated artifacts, yet their reception remained limited to close contact due to their small size and intricate designs.

Brooches, pins, clasps, and buckles were integral to early medieval clothing for both genders, but ornate brooches were more commonly associated with feminine dress. Women's attire, especially the peplos dress, required pairs of brooches to fasten shoulder fabric, while additional brooches secured outer garments like cloaks or wrist sleeves. The ProERC brooches, predominantly associated with women's graves, illustrate these uses, with regional variations in styles such as Kentish disc brooches for vertical-opening garments. The inscriptions on brooches, mostly located on their back plates, faced inward and were concealed during wear, as evidenced by wear marks caused by contact with fabric. This limits their visibility and complicates interpretations of their communicative intent. For instance, texts like maker's marks or donor names seem incongruous with their hidden placement. However, brooches were not static objects; frequent handling during dressing or adjustment could create opportunities for text reception. These interactions, potentially involving others, align with Waldispühl's (2014) concept of brooch texts as stimuli for social actions or conversations, fostering 'textual communities'.

The urns played a dynamic role in funerary rites, serving as both visual and tactile focal points for the mourning process. Handling was intrinsic to their use: they were transported, positioned, and manipulated during the cremation process.

Nugent and Williams (2012) emphasise the multisensory engagement facilitated by the urns, with their inscriptions and decorations providing a ‘sightway’—paths that guided both eyes and hands around the object. For example, the raised **alu** stamps on Spong Hill urns, framed by grooves, enhance tactile interaction, while double-incised runes on Loveden Hill urn draws attention through visual and tactile depth. Text placement also influenced reception. On the Spong Hill urns, inscriptions are optimally positioned for viewing by individuals carrying the urns or standing above them. Waxenberger (2018) suggests this deliberate arrangement directed text visibility to specific moments in the funerary process, such as transporting cremains. In burial contexts, urn visibility was influenced by placement within the ground. Richards (1992) and Hills (1999) observe that urn decorations are typically concentrated on the upper half, likely intended for observation from above.

Positioned at the hip, swords were easily accessible and interacted with regularly by their owners. Brunning (2019) observes wear on sword pommels, concentrated on raised and exposed areas, caused by habitual contact and friction with clothing. This indicates that owners often rested their hands on the pommels, suggesting a routine familiarity with the weapon. Such wear patterns reveal that swords were not merely ceremonial items but everyday objects integrated into public life, emphasising their constant visibility and role in social display. Though needing to be physically close to the pommel to view the inscription, swords’ frequent displays would allow for viewing. However, the positioning of a text on the inward facing surface of a scabbard mouthpiece would result in much less viewing than the inscriptions on pommels. Nonetheless, physical alterations throughout the swords’ life such as the addition of rings to the hilt area, or changing worn out parts, would provide opportunities for viewing the inscription, as would the general display of the

sword by its owner, especially if being handled frequently. It must be said, however, that the close deposition time period for text production limits the likeliness that the text was seen before burial.

Like those frequently attested items, most of the singly attested items also require handling for the text to be received. An example of this is the Caistor-by-Norwich astragalus, which, though a small animal bone, functioned as a gaming piece. When stored as a gaming piece, the inscription would not have been viewed, but when being played, the inscription marks the piece out as different from the other gaming pieces it would have been with, either indicating its special role in the game or perhaps the owner of the piece. For the text to be seen, the gaming piece would have to have been handled. Similar are the Eye fragment and the Selsey fragments, since they too are very small objects. Both pieces would have had to be handled to be seen, especially if they were worn on the body, such as likely was the case for Selsey. The larger objects, the Chessell Down pail and the Cleatham hanging-bowl, are different. These objects would perhaps not need handling for the inscription to be seen; if functioning as a pail and hanging-bowl, perhaps the text would be seen when they were used to hold any kind of material, such as a liquid, food, etc. What complicates this for both items is the fact that both texts are inscribed very faintly on the outer surfaces, requiring close contact with the bowls to see the inscriptions. What the singly attested items indicate, then, is that close contact with the object, as well as handling the object, is key to receiving the text.

#### 4.2.2 Findings

The reception of runic texts depends on two key factors: the physical characteristics of the writing surface and the function of the inscribed object. These factors shape

how the text is viewed and whether it can fulfil its communicative purpose.

Importantly, text reception is closely tied to the physical object on which it is written, which both facilitates and constrains the opportunities for the text to be seen and interpreted.

Objects in the ProERC are portable, meaning they are small and designed to be moved or handled as part of their function. For example, brooches are portable because they are used to fasten fabric and must be manipulated by the wearer. These objects can exist in two primary states: static, where the object remains in a fixed position for extended periods, and non-static, where handling causes the object to move. These states significantly influence text reception, either limiting or facilitating opportunities for viewing.

When objects are static, their primary function as practical items often restricts or completely obscures the visibility of the text. For example, bracteates—small, ornamental medallions—may display text only when the wearer is in close proximity to the observer, and even then, the text may be hidden by clothing. Similarly, sword fittings worn at the hip are only visible in close contact. Some texts, such as those on bowls, are inscribed lightly or in very small sizes, further limiting visibility. In other cases, the text is entirely unreceivable in the static state, as with brooches, where inscriptions are often placed on the back plate. When the brooch is worn, the back plate faces the wearer's clothing, making the text invisible. In such cases, text reception is restricted to instances when the object is handled or removed, rather than when it performs its primary function.

While static states limit text reception, the non-static nature of most ProERC objects allows for greater opportunities for viewing. Handling these objects as part of their intended use exposes the writing surface, enabling the text to be seen. For

example, brooches must be manipulated to clasp or unclasp fabric, during which the inscribed back plate becomes visible. Similarly, most objects in the corpus are designed to be handled periodically, which facilitates text reception. The exception to this trend lies in bowls, such as hanging bowls, which are less frequently handled due to their design. Hanging bowls, for instance, lack flat bottoms, making them unsuitable for resting on surfaces. Instead, they are primarily displayed in a hanging position, limiting opportunities for interaction and text reception.

The timing of text reception also depends on the degree of mobility allowed by the object's design and the owner's interaction with it. For objects worn on the body, such as brooches, bracteates, or rings, the owner must actively stop the object's primary function to make the text visible. For instance, the back plate of a brooch can only be seen when the brooch is removed from the fabric it secures, and the full inscription on the Selsey ring fragments requires the ring to be taken off the finger. In some cases, the owner must bring the text close to the receiver, as with sword inscriptions, or allow the receiver to handle the object themselves, as with the Caistor-by-Norwich gaming piece. The latter represents a unique scenario in which the receiver engages with the object as part of its function, potentially viewing the inscription without direct involvement from the owner.

Certain objects were likely designed for reception during specific periods or events. For example, urns inscribed with runic texts were integral to the funerary process. While the duration for which urns remained above ground before interment is uncertain, they were undoubtedly viewed and handled during the process of filling them with cremated remains. This interaction ensured that the text was received during this ritual moment, highlighting a temporally specific context for text reception.

The relationship between the object's owner and the text's receiver is central to the reception process. For most objects in the PrOERC, the owner's actions directly influence whether and how the text is seen. Without the owner's intervention, many inscriptions remain hidden or inaccessible. This owner-receiver dynamic is particularly evident in personal adornments, where text visibility relies on the owner's decision to expose or present the writing surface. However, certain objects challenge this relationship. For example, urns and the Caistor-by-Norwich gaming piece do not necessarily require an owner to facilitate text reception. The urns, in particular, complicate notions of ownership, as it is unclear whether they were considered the property of the deceased or their surviving kin or community members. Regardless of ownership, the urns' inscriptions were integral to the memorialization process, with the placement of cremains acting as a catalyst for text reception. Similarly, sword inscriptions present a distinct case. Pragmaphilological analysis suggests that the period between the creation of the text and the deposition of the sword fittings in burial contexts was brief. This implies that opportunities for text reception were limited, possibly confined to the funerary process itself. Like the urns, the swords' inscriptions were tied to rituals of commemoration, emphasising the importance of specific temporal contexts in shaping text reception.

The durability of these inscriptions further extends their reception opportunities beyond their initial creation. Runic inscriptions on portable objects are designed to be permanent, enduring through time and space. The portability of these objects means that their immediate surroundings—and consequently their pragmatic contexts—can change. As a result, the inscriptions may be received in settings that differ significantly from their original intended context. This dynamic nature

underscores the adaptability of the texts' functions, which evolve alongside the objects' changing roles and environments.

In conclusion, the reception of runic texts in the PrOERC is intricately tied to the physical and functional characteristics of the inscribed objects. Static and non-static states, owner-receiver relationships, and specific temporal contexts all influence the visibility, and therefore the interpretability, of these inscriptions. While most texts rely on handling for their reception, exceptions such as certain situations with the urns highlight the diversity of interactions between objects and text receivers. Moreover, the permanence and portability of these inscriptions ensure their continued reception across time and space. These factors collectively demonstrate the complex interplay between materiality and textuality in shaping the reception of early runic inscriptions.



### 4.3 Textual analysis

#### 4.3.1 Lexical texts

In the context of this thesis, *lexical inscriptions* refer to runic texts that contain recognisable linguistic units—such as nouns or personal names—that allow for morphological and syntactic analysis. These inscriptions are central to the linguistic aspect of a pragmatics-based methodology, as they provide the necessary material to apply formulaic categorisation and infer communicative functions. Following the approach of Kaiser (2021) and Düwel et al. (2020), lexical inscriptions in the PrOERC have been analysed through the identification of lexical items and their formal structures, allowing for the assignment of formulae. While such inscriptions form only part of the corpus, they are critical for understanding how written language functioned.

The linguistic aspect of the analysis has focused on assigning the texts particular formulae based on the number and type of lexical units present. If the text is lexical, then the communicative functions of the script are assigned via formulae, but if the text is non-lexical, then such texts are not assigned formulae. 11 (45.83%) of the texts in the PrOERC can be assigned formulae because the texts are lexical.

The formulae are below:

<i>Table 44 The PrOERC formulae</i>			
<b>Name of formulae</b>	<b>Structure of the formula</b>	<b>Function of formulae</b>	<b>Examples in the PrOERC</b>

Simple-name formula	PN <sub>nom</sub>	Identifies the owner, maker, or donor of the object; marks possession	Ash Gilton, Cleatham, Boarley, Eye, Wakerley
Simple-noun formula a: designation of object	N <sub>acc/dat</sub>	Denoting object function or material of object	Caistor by Norwich
Simple-noun formula b: non- designation of object	N	States a common noun which does not identify the object material or function	Binham, Welbeck Hill, Spong Hill
Complex donor formula	PN <sub>dat</sub> + PN <sub>nom</sub>	Marks object as a gift, mentioning donor PN <sub>nom</sub> and benefactor PN <sub>dat</sub>	Watchfield
Complex maker's formula	PN <sub>nom</sub> + V + N <sub>acc</sub>	Emphasises the work of the craftsman PN <sub>nom</sub> alongside mentioning the product that has been worked on N <sub>acc</sub>	Harford Farm

There are 5 different formulae present. Firstly, there is the simple-name formula.

This formula is indicated by a personal name in the nominative case, and functions

as an identifier of the owner, maker, or donor of the object. Then there are two formulae based around nouns, the simple-noun a and simple-noun b formulae. The simple-noun a: designation of object formula contains a noun either in the accusative or dative case and denotes the function of the rune-bearing object or states the material of the object. The simple-noun b: non-designation of object formula also contains a noun in any case and states a noun that does not identify the material of the rune-bearing object or its function. Furthermore, there is the complex donor formula; this formula contains two personal names, one in the nominative, marking donor of the rune-bearing object, and one in the dative, marking the receiver of the object, and denotes the object as a gift between two people. Finally, there is a complex maker formula; this formula contains three lexical units, a personal name in the nominative denoting the craftsman (referring to the maker of the rune-bearing object such as a brooch maker, etc.), a verb, and a noun in the accusative which refers to the rune-bearing object itself. This formula emphasises the craftsman working on the object. Some formulae are only attested once in the corpus: simple-noun a: object designation, complex donor, and complex maker. The most common formula is the single-name formula, which is a result of the prevalence of personal names in the corpus, with five attestations.

Personal names are the most attested type of word in the entire PrOERC. There are eight personal names attested. The personal names evidenced in the simple-name formula are both male (*Sigimer*, Ash Gilton; *Buhu*, Wakerley), and female (*Liota*, Boarley), with the personal name elements in Cleatham and Eye being parts of names of unknown gender, though the element from Eye is often found in feminine names. The names are also both male and female in the other two formulae:

the complex donor's formula has both female, *Wusæ*, and male, *Haribok*, whilst the complex maker's formula has a male personal name, *Luda*.

When comparing the PrOERC to the OFRC and the SGRC, it is not a surprise that personal names are well-attested. The OFRC also has the simple-name formula as most attested, with around half of all inscriptions in the OFRC being of that formula (Kaiser 2021: 125-127). The second most common formula is the self-referential formula, which refers to, designates, and identifies the inscription-bearing object and its function. Kaiser (2021: 128) notes that this formula is very similar to the formula attested by the Caistor by Norwich astragalus, which she classes as a 'source formula' and I classify as an 'object designation formula'. The difference is the structure: whilst a self-referential formula is structured as NP [masc./femN<sub>nom</sub>], resulting in '(this is/I am) N', an object designation formula is structured as NP [proper noun<sub>dat/en</sub>] and reads '(this is from) N' or similar. A preliminary list of self-referential inscriptions across different runic corpora was compiled by Düwel (2002: 345-358). Düwel (2002) differentiates between two sub-categories: (1) inscription indicating the function of the object, which is Kaiser's self-referential formula; and (2) inscriptions indicating the material of the object independently of its function, which is the object designation formula.

Düwel et al. (2020: cxxi-cxxviii) note that the majority of the SGRC are single-word inscriptions, many being personal names. They highlight the difficulty of the open-endedness of the simple-name formula, using the example of the personal name *Leub* from Mayen (SG-77), **leub** , stating that this is 'eine Einwortinschrift, die insgesamt fünf verschiedene Textsortenbestimmungen zulässt!' ('a one-word inscription [that] allows a total of five different text types!', trans. JH). Instead, the SGRC corpus edition assigns the simple-name formula to an array of

different formulae, for example, *Handwerker<sub>nom</sub>* (trans. craftsman), *Schenker<sub>nom</sub>* (donor), *Runeritzer<sub>nom</sub>* (rune scribe) and *Besitzer<sub>nom</sub>* (owner).

This has not been done in the PrOERC. I want to allow for some ambiguity in the interpretation of the personal names, though the pragmatic analysis allows us to narrow down the possible referents and the functions of the simple-name formula in specific circumstances, such as that of the Wakerley brooch. The archaeological context establishes that the Wakerley brooch was a woman's brooch which fastened the front of a cloak, but the text on the brooch is a man's name. This rules out 'owner' as a designation of the simple-name formula, and leaves us with a potential designation of maker or donor. Since Wakerley has signs of repair, there is some plausibility of the repairer producing the text (Martin 2015: 35), with the personal name referring to the producer of the text, who is also the repairer of the brooch. There is some assumption that metalsmiths and those conducting repairs to metal items were men. This could explain the male personal name on the Wakerley brooch. Alternatively, the name could refer to the donor of the brooch, a man to a woman, as is often assumed about some inscriptions in the SGRC. Boarley shows evidence of a repair. However, this brooch features a woman's name, *Liota*, which could instead refer to the brooch's owner. The male personal name *Sigimer* on Ash Gilton could refer to its owner, especially as the pragmatic analysis indicates that the sword was probably inscribed as part of the deposition process, which means the sword was being buried with its latest owner. In short, we can narrow down the possibilities of the people referred to in the simple-name formula in certain circumstances.

*Table 45 Simple-name formula designation possibilities.*

Name	Inscription	Formulae	Function
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Ash Gilton	...(e)[.]sigim(e)r[.](e)...	Masc. PN <sub>nom</sub>	Owner
Boarley	at(o)(i)l <-	Fem. PN <sub>nom</sub>	Owner
Cleatham	jedih	Element of a fem. PN	Unknown
Eye	lgub[	Element of a fem. PN	Unknown
Wakerley	buh(u)i	Masc. PN <sub>nom</sub>	Maker/donor

Marking possession is not necessarily the only function of a simple-name formula. Hoffmann (1999: 213-227) notes that personal names can have a labelling function, meaning that the object's text 'stands in' for the person it refers to and brings the owner to mind when the receiver reads the text. The pragmaphilological analysis conducted throughout this thesis emphasises the importance of the object owner controlling the receivability of the text. In the majority of cases in the corpus, the text is hidden from view when the rune-bearing object is being worn or used; consequently, for the text to be seen, it must be shown by the wearer. Therefore, by being involved in this action, the owner of the rune-bearing object cannot be replaced by the text. Kaiser (2021: 128) notes that Hoffman's (1999) conclusions on the function of personal names are potentially anachronistic based on our modern function attribution to name tags, and the understanding of pragmatic context challenges such ideas.

Like with any classification system, there are issues with assigning formula to runic inscriptions. This is an experience also recognised by Kaiser (2021: 126-127). In the OFRC, uncertainty in the meaning of the texts results in difficulties in ascribing formula to the inscriptions. This is also an issue with the ProERC. For

example, there are partially lexical texts on the Chessell Down scabbard mouthpiece and the Loveden Hill urn. The personal names are the only decipherable part of the texts of Loveden Hill and Chessell Down, making it plausible to assign them to the simple-name formula. However, the formulae are dependent on certain slots being filled with certain lexical items; therefore, only single lexical unit texts can be assigned the simple-name formula. Therefore, Loveden Hill and Chessell Down are not assigned to the simple-name formula.

Furthermore, there are complications with assigning two of the texts, Eye and Cleatham, to the simple-name formula. I have assigned both to this formula because the texts are elements of personal names. These texts appear to be only one element of dithematic personal names. This classification assumes that the texts remain unfinished in some way, with the second elements of the names uninscribed to the objects. This is uncertain, and it is not possible to ascertain the rest of the texts, even hypothetically. Therefore, Eye and Cleatham have been assigned the simple-name formula based on the reading of a single element of a personal name, which perhaps is a part of a longer, now lost, name.

Personal names also feature in other formulae alongside the simple-name formula such as complex donor and complex maker. These formulae have additional words to modify the personal name, and the names do not function the same way as a personal name in the simple-name formula. For the majority of the formulae, the designation of the formula, ie. what the formula refers to, and also its communicative function, are clear. This is the case for the complex donor, complex maker, and simple-noun a: designation of object formulae. The texts have been assigned these formulae primarily based on both a semantic and morphological reason. For example, the personal name *Haribok* in the dative, and the personal name *Wusæ* in

the nominative, results in the personal names fitting into the complex donor formula without issue. It is the same, for example, for the complex maker's formula, where the craftsman, *Luda*, is referred to in the nominative, alongside mentioning the product being repaired, a brooch, in the accusative. There are discussions related to attributing certain cases to these lexical units in the individual corpus entries on Watchfield and Harford Farm respectively, but regardless to this, the communicative function of those formulae are clear. Furthermore, the relationship between the object and those referenced in the texts is stated in the formula themselves: for example, the complex maker's formula indicates that *Luda* was the repairer of the brooch which now contains the runic inscription. It is likely that the personal name in the nominative, *Wusæ*, gave the case, with fittings, to the recipient, *Haribok*. This is not the case with the simple-name formula, where the personal names are more ambiguous in who they refer to, either indicating donor, owner, or maker. The relationship between object and the person named in the simple-name formula is more ambiguous.

The second most common formula is the simple-noun formula b: non-designation of object. This categorisation is made up of nouns, or in the case of Binham, perhaps either a noun or adjective, and notes their lack of self-reference to the rune-bearing object on which they are inscribed. The texts that are assigned this formula are Binham, Welbeck Hill, and Spong Hill. This is a perplexing category of formula because it lacks reference to the relationship between object and text, unlike the previously discussed formula. This does not mean that the texts are entirely non-referential: it is possible, for example, that Binham refers to drinking in the hall as part of a lord-retinue relationship that bracteates supposedly reinforced. Perhaps Welbeck Hill is a mis-rendering of the well-attested **laþu**, reading 'invitation,



invocation’, and thus has apotropaic or magical function. Finally, Spong Hill’s repeated **alu** may have been intended as protection for those whose cremains were held in those urns. Nonetheless, these arguments do not hold up to scrutiny, both linguistically and pragmatically: I have shown the weakness in the argument of linking Binham’s text with the supposed corpus of drink-related runic inscriptions (cf. Behr, Pestell and Hines 2014: 50). Welbeck Hill’s text, though perhaps a mis-rendering, cannot be assumed to be so based on the incompetence of the text producer (cf. Page 1999: 180), and finally Spong Hill’s texts could reasonably have functioned like other stamps, with the meaning of **alu** ultimately also unknown. Therefore, only a comprehensive study across other runic traditions may clarify the communicative intent of the simple-noun **b** formula.

A striking characteristic of the formulae in the PrOERC is that most designate the relationship between object and the person named in the text. The simple-name formula states owner, donor, or maker in relation to the rune-bearing object. The complex donor’s formula states that the rune-bearing object was given by one person to another. Finally, the complex maker’s formula states that the object has been repaired by someone. The frequency of personal names in the formula attested in the PrOERC emphasises the importance of the relationship between the rune-bearing object and the people referred to in the texts.

#### 4.3.2 Non-lexical texts

Non-lexical inscriptions—those that do not contain recognisable linguistic units—make up a notable amount of the PrOERC. There are 9 texts (37.5%) of the PrOERC that are non-lexical. The non-lexical inscriptions are on brooches, a pail, a sword pommel, a bowl, and fragments of a finger ring. These texts are:

*Table 46 The non-lexical texts in the PrOERC.*



<b>Name</b>	<b>Object</b>	<b>Transliteration</b>
Chessell Down	Pail	<b>](r)bwseeekkkaaa</b>
Dover a and b	Brooch	<b>(s/b)li(.)i(s/b)</b>  <b>(i)w(d)</b>
Faversham	Sword pommel	<b>a</b>
Harford Farm b	Brooch	<b>æp(.)</b>
Hunstanton	Brooch	<b>(.)s(t)(u)usu[i^g/g^i]</b>
Selsey	Fragments, possibly a ring	<b>]brnrn[</b>  <b>](æ)nm[u/l][</b>
West Heslerton	Brooch	<b>neim</b>

These texts have not been considered lexical at any point in the previous runological literature. The exception to this Chessell Down, where Looijenga (2003: 280) takes the sequence as a charm using personal names. Page (1985: 46) and Parsons (1999: 51) think that the inscription perhaps shows an enclitic first-person personal pronoun, which would be unusual if the pail was inscribed in England, which I do suggest in 3.4.2. Though Cleatham, Eye, and Wakerley have been considered non-lexical, I have interpreted them as personal names, and therefore they are not included in this non-lexical list of inscriptions.

This thesis has aimed to treat the non-lexical texts similarly to the rest of the PrOERC; one of the ways that they cannot be treated the same, however, is the

analysis of the text itself. This suggests, then, that there needs to be an alternative to the textual analysis undertaken with the other inscriptions.

The primary work on non-lexical runic inscriptions is Graf (2010, 2012) who reviewed and categorised the non-lexical texts in the SGRC and determined their functions. I have identified the non-lexical texts in the PrOERC and further categorised them according to Graf (2012), concluding that the texts are script imitation.

Graf (2012) outlines multiple categories of non-lexical inscriptions. Firstly, there are ornamental runes (Graf 2012: 108-109). Ornamental runes are often symmetrical such as |  ↑ and , and are sometimes ‘explizit in die ornamentierende oberflächengestaltung eines Gestands eingeflochten’ (explicitly woven into the ornamental surface design of the object, trans. JH), resulting in them functioning as a contribution to aesthetic design. These ornamental runes function as decorative patterns instead of script, and are therefore not considered runic inscriptions by most runologists. They have great similarity with decorative features like butterfly-shapes on brooches, and are sometimes classed as ornamental d-runes.

Graf (2012: 109) notes that the **d**-rune-shaped markings on the Harford Farm brooch could be considered an example of ornamental runes. There are other examples of these types of markings contemporary with the PrOERC such as the **d**-rune-shape on the Sleaford brooch (Hines 1990:450) and the Willoughby-on-the-Wolds brooch (Looijenga 2003: 295-296), as well as the possible **t**-rune-shape on a sword pommel from Sarre (Looijenga 2003: 296). There is a single rune which could be ornamental, the single **a**-rune on Faversham. However, because the shape of the rune is not symmetrical like Graf’s (2012) examples, it cannot be considered an ornamental rune; it is treated instead as text.

The second category is symbol runes (Graf 2012: 110-112). For a mark, which is often not a rune at all since Graf discusses ‘comb-like’ signs and swastikas also, to be classed as a symbol there must be evidence that the rune is ‘allgemeine Bekanntheit’ (general knowledge, trans. JH) and/or repeatedly used. It is rather hard to prove that a rune is ‘known’ as a symbol, but Graf (2012: 110-112) notes that this can often be guessed through examining the frequency of attestations of that mark. The assumption is that the repeated use of that mark suggests that the rune is ‘generally known’ and therefore a symbol. Again, the PrOERC features no such repeated symbols- there are no additional non-runic symbols present in any of the PrOERC inscriptions. A third category is the *fuparks* and runic crosses (Graf 2012: 115-117). These are inscriptions which either feature a cross-shape, or part or the entirety of the runic *fupark*; neither of these are featured in the PrOERC.

Script imitation (Graf 2012: 112-115) is the final category. Script imitation is the most common non-lexical inscription type in ‘young writing cultures’ according to Graf (2012: 112) and shows two things: 1) that the culture in which the imitation occurs knows writing as a medium of communication, and 2) that the text producer understands the ‘Wert von Shrift’ (value of writing, trans. JH) but not the logo- or phonographic realities of the script. Graf (2012: 113-115) identifies three types of script imitation:

- Type 1: individual runes or whole sequences are not identifiable as runic
- Type 2: distinguishable runes are recognisable but differ in their diagnostic features, such as extensions to the staves or additional decorative markings or flourishes

- Type 3: distinguishable runic sequences can be made out, which, when read together, do not create a discernible word; this category technically includes all non-deciphered and/or non-lexical inscriptions

The purpose behind script imitation is unknown. Some suggest that script imitation is part of the ‘performance of writing’ (Schwab 1998: 419; Düwel and Heizmann 2006: 23-30), and that the visual impression of writing is more important than the linguistic message itself (Schwab 1998: 426).

Graf’s (2012) categories give us an opportunity to thoroughly investigate this material for the first time. The majority of Graf’s (2012) categories do not apply to the PrOERC; there are no additional signs that could be classed as symbols or runic crosses, nor any futharks. That leaves us with ornamental runes and script imitation. Ornamental runes are often found singly; nonetheless, the single rune inscription a of Faversham does not fit Graf’s (2012) ornamental inscriptions since the rune is not symmetrical.

The non-lexical texts are considered Graf’s type 3 script imitation, with some instances of type 1 in an otherwise type 3 text. This is the case with Hunstanton, where the beginning of the text reads (.), an unidentifiable mark which bears no resemblance to a rune from the known *futharks*. Another example of an unknown rune is the final rune from the Loveden Hill text, which was possibly a mistake that was corrected by attempting to scrape over the rune with the damp clay, rendering the final result as an unknown rune variant. This, however, would not be classed as type 1 script imitation because the



Figure 40 The Hunstanton Brooch close-up, showing the non-runic character. Image: Norfolk Archaeological Services. Edits: JH.

rune was likely once formed and could be identified as a rune, but due to the correcting of the graph, the rune can no longer be recognised.

Also it is difficult to type 2 script imitation. There could be some instances of type 2, which feature individual runes with non-standard variations such as extended staves or additional decorative marks to the rune itself. An example would be r.2 of Watchfield; Nedoma (2016: 22) notes r.2 is an ‘ornamental’ form of the **a**-rune with small serifs at the ends of the arms, and Looijenga (2003: 288) and Parsons (1999: 69) deems the serifs ornamental also. Whilst the serifs could denote a sound value change to the **a**-rune (Waxenberger 2010: 120), this would be the only case of them denoting such phonetic differences in the PrOERC. Regardless, these are additions done by the text producer, placing r.2 of Watchfield as type 2 script imitation, though I am hesitant to argue this fully since ‘imitation’ seems an incorrect term to apply to a fully lexical inscription. Since the text itself is lexical, it is therefore not included in the list of non-lexical inscriptions.

Type 3 script imitation is the primary example of Graf’s (2012) categories found in the PrOERC as the non-lexical inscriptions are all distinguishable runic sequences which do not result in a discernible word. These texts include Chessell Down, Dover, Hunstanton, Harford Farm, Selsey and West Heslerton. Faversham too is considered non-lexical, with the single-rune’s function being unknown.

*Table 47 Graf’s (2012) script types applied to the non-lexical texts of the PrOERC.*

<b>Name</b>	<b>Object</b>	<b>Transliteration</b>	<b>Graf (2012) assignment</b>	<b>Notes</b>

Chessell Down	Pail	<b>](r)bwseeekkkaaa</b>	Type 3 script imitation	
Dover	Brooch	<b>(s/b)li(.)i(s/b)</b>  <b>(i)w(d)</b>	Type 3 script imitation	(.) marks rune difficult to determine due to wear and tear
Faversham	Sword pommel	<b>a</b>	-	
Hunstanton	Brooch	<b>(.)s(t)(u)usu[i^g/g^i]</b>	Type 3 script imitation with an instance of type 1	(.) marks unknown rune variant, an example of type 1 imitation
Harford Farm	Brooch	<b>æp(.)</b>	Type 3 script imitation	(.) marks rune difficult to determine due to the faintness of the

				inscribing technique
Selsey	Fragments, possibly a ring	<b>]brnrn[</b>  <b>](æ)nm[u/l]</b>	Type 3 script imitation	
West Heslerton	Brooch	<b>neim</b>	Type 3 script imitation	

The next stage of analysis is to determine the function of Graf's type 3 script imitation in the ProERC. Often the non-lexical texts are not assigned any functions at all depending on how they have been determined; for example, if the primary way of determining the functions of script is through textual analysis and subsequently assigning formulae, then the non-lexical texts, which cannot be assigned formulae, cannot be assigned functions either. Unlike previous examinations of the ProERC, the pragmaphilological analysis used throughout this thesis does not rely solely on the textual analysis to assign functions to text. It also uses pragmatic context to inform the meaning of the texts and assign them functions. This means that with the non-lexical texts, pragmatic context can still be used to inform meaning even if it is



not used in conjunction with formulae to assign functions. This is especially the case when the non-lexical texts are type 3 script imitation, which means that they are likely imitating the lexical texts that already have functions assigned through both their formula and the accompanying pragmatic analysis.

The text production and text reception of objects, regardless of whether they have a lexical or non-lexical text, remains the same. Therefore, it is possible to suggest that the non-lexical texts are imitating the function of the lexical ones.

The brooches in this study exhibit notable similarities in both text production and reception. All inscriptions were created using fine inscribing tools, though the identity of the text producer is not consistently discernible. While some brooches, such as Boarley and Wakerley, might reference their maker or another individual associated with the brooch—such as the owner or donor—non-lexical inscriptions inherently lack linguistic indicators of the text producer. By examining the biographical trajectories of the brooches, it is possible to propose production contexts. Evidence from Boarley, Wakerley, Harford Farm, and West Heslerton brooches shows signs of repair prior to burial, suggesting that the inscriptions may have been added during the repair process (Martin 2015: 35, 136). In terms of their practical function, all brooches except Hunstanton were likely used to fasten outer garments as singletons, positioning the writing surface against the wearer's clothing. The Kentish disc brooches, including Boarley, Dover, and Harford Farm, were pinned singly at the throat or chest, while the cruciform (West Heslerton) and square-headed (Wakerley) brooches functioned similarly. Scratches and wear on the backplates of all brooches suggest significant post-text-production usage, with many marks overlaying the text, indicating frequent contact with fabric and limited visual accessibility of the inscriptions during wear. Despite variation in inscription type, the

brooches share consistent text production and reception patterns. Pragmatic context appears central to the interpretation of these texts, with non-lexical inscriptions potentially imitating the communicative functions of lexical formulae. This implies that meaning derives not from only lexical content but from the broader contextual framework in which the brooch and its inscription were used. Therefore, it is possible that the lexical texts on brooches — simple-name formula and complex maker's formula — could be functions that the non-lexical script are imitating.

Faversham, too, provides another example of this. The inscriptions on the sword-related items—the pommels from Faversham and Ash Gilton, and the scabbard mouthpiece from Chessell Down—were engraved using fine, thin-tipped tools without the aid of templates or guiding lines. Evidence suggests these texts were added late in the swords' lifecycles, near the time of their deposition. Wear patterns on the writing surfaces indicate prior usage, with the inscriptions overlying pre-existing scratches. For instance, the Chessell Down scabbard mouthpiece exhibits surface wear consistent with prolonged use, yet the runes were inscribed afterward. Similarly, the Faversham pommel shows significant pre-inscription wear, with the text clearly added later. The Ash Gilton pommel also displays wear unrelated to the inscription, reinforcing the hypothesis of late-stage text addition. Debates surrounding localised wear, such as touch-related marks, remain unresolved. Hines (2006) argues that wear along the top of the Ash Gilton pommel might have affected the runes over time, but I contest this interpretation. The wear does not align with typical handling patterns. Overall, the minimal post-inscription damage on Ash Gilton and Faversham suggests that the inscriptions were created during the final phase of the swords' lives, likely shortly before their deposition. The texts on the lexical swords are a simple-name formula on Ash Gilton, rendering the personal

name Sigimer, and a partially deciphered text on Chessell Down, reading the personal name Akko with a second, unknown sequence. Both of these texts feature personal names, referring to the owner, donor, or maker of the sword. I have narrowed down the production time to near deposition. It could then be assumed that the text refers to the owner of the sword, and thus marks ownership over the object before being deposited in the grave with the body of the owner. Since there are no text production, or reception differences between any of the sword related inscribed objects, it could be assumed again that the single rune text on Faversham functioned similarly to that of the personal names on Ash Gilton and Chessell Down, once again marking the owner of the object not through a personal name, but through a single graph.

The texts are not produced or received differently between lexical and non-lexical texts. The pragmatic context used to inform the meaning of the texts remains the same across the objects. The rune-bearing object was a specific choice by the text producer, a specific medium which was used to convey the intention of the text. This suggests, then, that the way in which the text was produced and received is of importance in understanding the function of the texts themselves, both lexical and non-lexical. Consequently, it appears that the ProERC non-lexical texts are, like their lexical equivalents, expressing the relationship between object and person inferred in the text through the presence of a runic text.

#### 4.3.3 ‘Hidden’ inscriptions

There are assumptions made that runic texts are somehow ‘hidden’ from view deliberately, for a special purpose. This is clear in the case of the Loveden Hill urn, for example. According to Fennell (1964: 96), the urn was tilted when excavated so

was so that the text was concealed from view when viewed from above. Fennell saw the tilting of other urns at the site as accidental, but in this case, he assumed that this was a deliberate choice so that the text was concealed from view. This is challenged by the study of the text reception of the urns, noting that there were several opportunities for viewing the text in the funerary process and also that the texts were designed to be seen from above. Whether the urn was tilted for the purposes of hiding the inscription is unknown, but such a statement emphasises the assumptions made about the ProERC in that the texts, because they are not always readily viewable by the text receiver, must be ‘hidden’ deliberately.

As discussed in the brooches chapter, Waldispühl (2013) hypothesises that inscriptions visible only in certain circumstances are used as part of social interaction. Waldispühl (2014: 66) interpreted some inscriptions in the SGRC as ‘components of possible social actions’. This assumes that the rune-bearing object had a practical function in situations where people were interacting with each other. For example, a brooch’s practical function was to pin clothing together. Pinning or unpinning would not happen in a socially isolated experience, and this action would provide opportunity for the back of the brooch to be viewed and thus discussed. The stamp and inscription on urns function as part of the memorialisation process, contributing to the social actions of those involved in the funerary processes for the deceased. Consequently, it is possible that some runic inscriptions form part of oral and also social interaction.

Rather than being designed for permanent display, the inscriptions seem to have been deliberately placed in ways that controlled when and how they were visible. This suggests that the act of revealing the inscription was a core part of the text reception process. Examples might include weapons, where the inscriptions on

the pommel of a sword or the underside of a scabbard mouthpiece could be revealed only in moments of close contact combat or in a ritual function like that of funerals. Another example is that of jewellery like brooches, where the inscription is only revealed when the brooch is taken off clothing and handled. Urns, too, had inscriptions that were more easily seen from certain scenarios associated with the funerary rituals. This could mean that the text producer or object owner deliberately worked to integrate texts where they would be noticed only under certain contextual conditions. This suggests that runic literacy might have included an understanding of the physical and situational context of an inscription, emphasising the relationship between material culture and textual tradition.

#### 4.4 Establishment of a ‘writing community’: social relationships and the PrOERC

McDonald (2013: 5) rightly observes that the literate population in most ancient societies was typically a small subset of the larger population, often drawn from specific social groups while excluding others. These literate individuals were part of broader ‘speech communities’ a concept that encompasses groups of people who share linguistic norms and expectations regarding language use. However, defining a speech community is notoriously challenging, and its application in linguistic studies has been inconsistent. While it has been used to describe urban communities (Labov 1989), children (Romaine 1982), and women (Coates 1993), it has also been denied as applicable to larger settings, such as the city of London (Wardhaugh 1998). Moreover, historical sociolinguistics and historical pragmatics have not frequently engaged with the concept, likely due to the difficulties of reconstructing such communities in historical contexts. The central aim of sociolinguistic studies is often to investigate language use within a specific speech community, particularly

focusing on how external social factors—such as class, age, or gender—shape linguistic variation and change. However, this thesis does not primarily align with historical sociolinguistics, as it does not center on the influence of such external factors on the inscriptions being studied. While social factors remain relevant to historical pragmatics, the analysis often contends with incomplete or entirely absent data on the social characteristics of individuals. Furthermore, historical social structures and concepts, such as class, may differ significantly from modern understandings, as Brinton (2023: 14) highlights. These complexities underscore the challenges of conducting sociolinguistic studies in historical contexts.

Despite these difficulties, the study of the inscriptions in the PrOERC offers the opportunity to explore the notion of a distinct ‘writing community’ in fifth-, sixth-, and early seventh-century contexts. The term ‘writing community’ may be more appropriate than ‘speech community, as it reflects the group of individuals involved in the production, use, and reception of inscriptions, not certain speech. Through a combination of pragmatophilological and textual analysis, forming insights into text production and reception, the outlines of such a community have begun to emerge.

The analysis of text production in the PrOERC reveals patterns that may point to a community of artisans and craftspeople who were both literate and skilled in working with materials like metal and clay. For example, the use of similar tools for both decorative features and inscriptions, as seen in objects like the Harford Farm and Undley bracteates, suggests that writing was integrated into the broader practices of craftsmanship. These individuals may have been central to the dissemination of writing practices, as their work produced objects inscribed with runic texts that were portable and publicly visible in certain contexts. Other producers of texts appear to

be owners of objects themselves, or possibly those participating in the commemoration process of the funerary rites for the deceased. Those viewing the texts are the owner themselves, those involved in funerary rites, or the text receivers whom the rune-bearing object owner has decided to show the text to. Except for in the cases of the urns and swords, where the texts were likely part of the commemoration process and thus more public instances of text reception were done, the rest of the PrOERC was viewed under specific circumstances by specific people. Many of the objects in the PrOERC were personal items—brooches, bracteates, and sword fittings—intended to be worn or carried, indicating that the texts served purposes to their owner. They may have conveyed messages of ownership or identity or been part of the commemoration process for their owner. The roles of producer and recipient suggest that the writing community was not limited to the inscribers themselves but extended to those who commissioned, used, and interpreted the texts, but only in limited circumstances. This broader network of people played a critical role in shaping the function and reception of the inscriptions.

## 5 Conclusions

### 5.1 Findings

The aim of this thesis was to answer these two research questions:

- 1) what are the functions of the pre-Old English runic inscriptions?
- 2) how do we determine the functions of runic script?

Concerning the first question, this thesis has come to conclusions about the function of both lexical and non-lexical texts in the PrOERC. The lexical texts have a range of different functions as assigned by their formula; there is a clear preference towards the simple-name formula as the most attested text type in the PrOERC.

There are other formulae attested: the simple-noun formula a and simple-noun formula b, as well as the complex donor formula and complex maker formula. The dominant lexical unit in these formulae are personal names, and the formulae express the relationship between the rune-bearing object and the person(s) referred to in the text.

Nonetheless, there are issues with assigning formulae. There are some texts that are only partly lexical, whilst others are completely non-lexical and thus cannot be assigned formulae. Whilst determining that the non-lexical inscriptions are primarily script imitation, the pragmatic analysis of the texts indicates that both the lexical and non-lexical texts share similarities in their text production and reception, which is their immediate, 'local' pragmatic context. I have found that the presence of the text itself, alongside the immediate 'local' context, means the non-lexical texts are imitating the function of the lexical ones depending on the rune-bearing object. Indeed, the object owner is fundamental to realising the text's functions. The rune-bearing objects are at the whims of the owner and only then can the text be seen by receivers; the text does nothing without the owner allowing it to be so.



Concerning the second question, this thesis has concluded that to determine the functions of script in the PrOERC, a context-forward analysis must be undertaken for each individual runic inscription in the corpus. Though not all methodological areas of pragmatics are suitable for runological data, I have demonstrated that a pragmaphilological approach is particularly suitable for the PrOERC. By examining the pragmatic context of every inscription in the PrOERC, the scripts' functions have been shown to rely primarily on the rune-bearing object, which dictates its production and reception.

## 5.2 Importance of my research

### 5.2.1 In runology

Regarding the discipline of runology, my thesis challenges several long-held assumptions. Firstly, the study of runic corpora cannot be defined by ideas of 'pseudo-runic' without clear definitions of what pseudo-runic is; the inclusion of the Hunstanton brooch in this corpus shows that the brooch is not different from other, non-pseudo-runic inscriptions that are non-lexical or demonstrate different types of script imitation, such as Dover. This is not to say that there are no inscriptions which are difficult to identify as runic inscriptions but to improve our understanding of the functions of script, all runic inscriptions must be considered, and certain inscriptions therefore must be re-evaluated as to their place in the corpus based on their supposed 'runicity'. Ideas of incompetent text production has also been challenged, showing instead that the medium by which the text was produced affects the visual outcome of the inscription.

Secondly, pragmatics is a fruitful discipline to bring into runology; runology has been moving towards a more contextualised approach to studying runic data (cf.

Jesch 1998), and new methodologies from linguistics have been applied to different corpora such as sociolinguistics and speech act theory from pragmatics, and these areas rely on an understanding of the context surrounding the texts. Nonetheless, certain types of methodologies are not suitable for certain types of runological data; as exemplified in the literature review, areas such as speech act theory are not suitable for runic data that do not feature verbs in the texts. In the case of runology, when wanting to have a more context-forward methodological approach, then it is worth thinking through what type of context is important for research purposes to prevent the concept of contextualising runic inscriptions from being too nebulous.

### 5.2.2 In historical pragmatics

Regarding the discipline of historical pragmatics, my thesis also suggests, firstly that the ‘bad data’ problem is only as relevant as the researcher decides to make it, and certainly Labov’s ‘bad data’ idea is exemplified by runological data, but these are simply unavoidable facts of working with runological linguistic data and can be managed with clear expectations. Secondly, by deciding to work with imperfect data, then pragmaticians can start working with earlier instances of language than they have previously. Though OE is certainly being examined using pragmatic methodologies (Bergs and Brinton 2012: 325-340; Kohnen 2008, Lenker 2000), these approaches have primarily been using longer, less fragmentary texts in later Old English, and do not examine the earlier stages of the language period.

### 5.3 Future research.

My research has made headway into understanding the functions of the runic script in Britain c.400-650AD. Not only have I found that runic script in Britain has multiple functions, but that these functions are dependent on the rune-bearing object

alongside the lexicality of the text. Furthermore, I have found that the non-lexical texts can add value to our understanding of how the script functions: script imitation was an important part of the early runic writing culture, and the imitations appear to function similarly to the lexical texts themselves, being produced and received no differently. Furthermore, my thesis suggests a way in which runology and historical pragmatics, especially areas of historical sociopragmatics like pragmaphilology, can be combined into an effective research methodology. By understanding the limitations of linguistic data alongside clearly defining the boundaries of pragmatic context, the PrOERC's functions have been revealed.

There are numerous 'next steps' in the area of PrOERC research: any further work is welcome in the runological field, and perhaps the study of the smaller corpora, such as the OFRC as well as the PrOERC, should be more so encouraged both in runology and in other areas of historical linguistics. Further research concerning how pragmatic context influences the functions of the script would be useful in understanding the changes in the PrOERC leading to the later OERC; this would illuminate how objects continue to be carriers of script whilst informing their function, but with changes to material culture and runic script. Furthermore, a pragmatic analysis of non-lexical scripts in other runic corpora would perhaps provide a wider runological context for the non-lexical inscriptions in the PrOERC.

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