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Medieval Britain and Ireland in 2025

General Editor: KATIE A. HEMER

This section of the journal usually comprises two core sets of reports linked to work in the preceding year (2025): finds and analyses relating to the Portable Antiquities Scheme (PAS), and a selection of Fieldwork Highlights submitted by field units, museums, and researchers. Unfortunately, we have received no submissions for Fieldwork Highlights for 2025, so MB&I this year consists of the PAS summary only.

PORTABLE ANTIQUITIES SCHEME REPORT

JOHN NAYLOR[1] *with a contribution by* LISA BRUNDLE[2] *and* ROBERT WEBLEY[3]

The Portable Antiquities Scheme (PAS) records archaeological finds discovered by members of the public in England and Wales.[4] Many come from places that have been damaged or eroded, usually by agriculture, leaving the objects as the only evidence of past activity; others are of interest in their own right. By the end of 2025, the PAS database contained 48,969 records (71,288 finds) of early-medieval date (c 410–c 1066) and 290,008 records (344,062 finds) of high and later medieval date (c 1066–c 1500).[5] A proportion of these are subject to the Treasure Act 1996 which gives museums the right to acquire them; in 2025, there were 1,780 Treasure cases in total from England, Wales and Northern Ireland.[6]

In 2025, 74,267 finds (53,591 records) were recorded,[7] of which 18,821 were of medieval date including 2,418 pre-Conquest finds and 16,403 post-Conquest finds. Stray finds of coinage accounted for 6,230 finds, 334 of pre-Conquest date, and 5,896 post-Conquest coins.[8]

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[4] Full details of all finds recorded by PAS can be found at: <*https://finds.org.uk*>.
[5] Date accessed: 29 July 2026.
[6] Finds reported via the Treasure Act 1996 are now included on the Portable Antiquities Scheme Database (PASD). PAS and Treasure Annual Reports are free to download (<*https://finds.org.uk/about-us/pas-annual-reports*>).
[7] As of 31 December 2025 (data correct as of 29 July 2026). Figures include finds reported under the Treasure Act 1996.
[8] Coin finds include all medieval rulers up to and including Henry VII (1485–1509). [accessed 29 July 2026].

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This round-up of finds and research from the last year includes summaries of interesting and important finds plus a short research note by Lisa Brundle and Robert Webley.[9] The research note discusses an openwork strap-end of late-medieval date incorporating a human figure in *orans* pose.

FOCUS ON COINAGE IN 2025

Early medieval

Eight gold coins of the 5th–7th centuries were recorded last year, five continental and three Anglo-Saxon. The former includes a Visigothic *tremissis* of pseudo-Imperial type found at Tellisford (Somerset; WILT-F7F1F4; Fig 1a). Struck in the name of Libius Severus (461–5), it copies the design seen on Imperial *solidi* of Constantinople with its reverse showing a standing Victory holding a long, jewelled cross (Grierson and Blackburn 1986, 46). Five other stray finds of gold coins naming Libius Severus have been recorded by the PAS, all found within the coastal zone from the Solent to Kent and including both modified and unmodified examples.[10] Other finds include a number of *solidi*, two from hoards—one converted into a pendant in the Oxborough Hoard (Norfolk), another in the Patching Hoard (West Sussex), dating its deposition to c 461–70—and three stray finds from Kent (Abdy and Williams 2006, 13–14; Bland and Loriot 2010, nos 262, 279 and 327). All of these finds are also Visigothic pseudo-Imperial issues struck in southern Gaul. The new find is located away from the core circulation of 5th and 6th-century gold coinage although a 6th-century *semissis* of Justin II (565–78) was found c 15 km to the north-east at Kelston (Bath and North East Somerset; GLO-A8A3F5) in an area forming the approximate western edge for the circulation of later 6th and 7th-century gold coinage.

Early silver pennies (*sceattas*) were again the most substantive group with 143 recorded last year. These discoveries include the first PAS-recorded early silver penny from Northumberland, a Secondary Phase Series E struck in the Netherlands c 720–40 and found at Walton (NCL-0625D0; Fig 1b). Coins of Series E are the most commonly found early silver pennies, but all 8th-century coinage is extremely rare north of the River Tyne and so this is an important find. A small number of contemporary coins have been found in coastal locations, often during excavations at or near monastic sites, including three Northumbrian coins and two southern English early silver pennies from Jarrow, a Northumbrian coin of Eadberht of Northumbria (737–58) from Holy Island and an East Anglian Series R from Berwick-upon-Tweed (Archibald 2006; O'Sullivan 1985; EMC2008.0431).[11]

A second early silver penny of interest was found at Overton (Hampshire; BERK-6C2624; Fig 1c) which belongs to the rare 'fledgling type' and is only the second example with both wolf/lion and bird facing left (cf EMC2019.0184). Dating to c 720–35, the coin is part of the Secondary Phase of production, a period when many types exhibit vibrant and innovative designs, often related to related to contemporary art styles seen in

[9] Thanks to all PAS staff, volunteers and other specialists (both within and outside of the PAS) for their work in identifying and recording the thousands of medieval objects brought to the PAS every year, as well as providing broader context for many of our finds, and to the finders who offer their discoveries for recording. This round-up would not have been possible without their expertise and input into the individual records that are discussed. These records form the basis for the discussion of the items included. Any errors remain the responsibility of individual authors.

[10] These finds are: LON-1C22F5 (*tremissis*, Dover area, Kent with multiple piercings), IOW-7D7783 (*tremissis*, Calbourne, Isle of Wight, unmodified); OXON-5E3E68 (*solidus*, Rettendon, Essex, unmodified); SUR-5B13A4 (*solidus*, Southease, East Sussex, plated version on a base metal core).

[11] EMC (Corpus of Early Medieval Coin Finds), <*https://emc.fitzmuseum.cam.ac.uk/*>. [accessed 16 July 2026].



FIG 1
Early medieval coins (a) WILT-F7F1F4—pseudo-Imperial Visigothic *tremissis*. (b) NCL-0625D0—early silver penny of Series E. (c) BERK-6C2624—early silver penny of 'fledgling' type. (d) SUSS-76AE6E—penny of Offa of Mercia and Bishop Eadberht of London. (e) ESS-7B3362—penny of Offa of Mercia and Archbishop Jænberht of Canterbury. (f) NMGW-83F35E—penny of Alfred of Wessex. (g) LIN-A545FA—penny of Edward the Martyr. (h) SUR-93ED32—penny of Edward the Confessor. (i) ESS-4323EE—Carolingian *obol* of Louis the Pious. (j) NARC-86D965—Carolingian *denier* of Louis the Pious. Scale 1:1. *Images: © The Portable Antiquities Scheme (a, b. c), © Sussex Archaeological Society (d), © Colchester and Ipswich Museum Service (e, i), © National Museum Wales (f), © Lincolnshire County Council (g), © Surrey County Council (h) and © Northamptonshire County Council (j). Images used courtesy of the Portable Antiquities Scheme under a CC-BY licence.*

manuscripts and sculpture (Gannon 2003). The 'fledgling type' shows a long-tongued wolf's (or lion's) head on its obverse, highly influenced by those seen on Series K (type 33) coins, and a fledgling bird with large clawed feet and a fish in its mouth on the reverse.

A penny issued jointly by Offa of Mercia (757–96) and Bishop Eadberht of London (772/82–787/89) found at Adisham (Kent; SUSS-76AE6E; Fig 1d) is one of only 18 pennies of the kingdom of Mercia recorded last year. Belonging to the substantive 'Light Coinage' of c 780/85–92, the coin is the only issue to name a bishop of London unlike the archbishops of Canterbury and York who continued to issue coinage in their own names into the 10th and 9th centuries respectively. Two coins of the archbishops of Canterbury were recorded last year including another penny jointly issued with Offa, this time for Archbishop Jænberht (766–92) from 'near St Osyth' (Essex; ESS-7B3362; Fig 1e), one of only five recorded by the PAS.

A 'Two-Line/Horizontal' type penny of Alfred of Wessex (871–99) found at 'Llandow community' (Vale of Glamorgan; NMGW-83F35E; Fig 1f) is the first coin of Alfred recorded from Wales. Struck by the moneyer Dudig, its style has been attributed to coins probably struck at mints in West Mercia, although the actual location remains uncertain as no mint is named (Naismith 2017, 171–2). Mark Redknap (2022, 80–4) has noted a number of finds of metalwork and coinage from the local area. This includes objects ranging in date from the 6th/7th to 10th/11th centuries originating from both west in the Irish Sea region and east in Anglo-Saxon

England, a thin but expansive spread of material highlighting the importance of this area across the early-medieval period.

Seventy-nine coins dating after the Edgar's reforms of the early 970s until Harold II's death in 1066 were recorded last year, comprising 41 pennies, 25 cut halfpennies, 12 cut farthings and one coin of uncertain denomination. One result of the reforms was that all coins named the issuing mint and the moneyer under whose authority they were struck. A penny of Edward the Martyr (975–8) found 'near Raithby cum Maltby' (Lincolnshire; LIN-A545FA; Fig 1g) names the moneyer Thorketill at the Torksey mint. It is the first full penny of Edward the Martyr from this mint where previously only a cut halfpenny was known (Gunstone 1971, no 180). Another penny of interest is a 'bust facing/small cross' type of Edward the Confessor (1042–66) found at Caldecote (Hertfordshire; SUR-93ED32; Fig 1h) which is only the ninth find from the Huntingdon mint to be recorded by the PAS. Their distribution is focused, encompassing only Hertfordshire, Cambridgeshire and parts of East Anglia.

Continental coins are rare finds in Britain after the end of the *sceattas*, and seem to have been rigorously excluded from the circulating currency, the silver re-minted into local issues (Kershaw et al 2024, 512–13). Only two Carolingian coins were recorded last year, one an *obol* of Louis the Pious (814–40) belonging to the extensive 'temple' type struck across the empire without a mint name from c 822–40 (Grierson and Blackburn 1986, 216). Found at Mersea Island (Essex; ESS-4323EE; Fig 1i), it may be the first stray find of an *obol* of Louis the Pious recorded from Britain with other examples all of the larger *denier* (cf Naismith 2011, 156–7; none are recorded by the EMC). The other, a damaged *denier* of Louis the Pious found 'near Towcester' (Northamptonshire; NARC-86D965; Fig 1j) is also an important find. The coin's reverse gives the mint name as Pavia, Italy (PAP.IA on the coin), northern Italian regions being conquered by Charlemagne (768–814) in 773–4, and it appears to be the first stray find of an Italian-minted coin of Louis the Pious recorded from Britain, joining a small number struck during Charlemagne's reign (although cf Naismith 2011, 161 for a joint Papal issue between Pope Steven IV (816–17) and Louis).

High and Later medieval

Post-Conquest coinage dating 1066–1180 accounted for 151 finds recorded last year. A 'sword' type of William I (1066–87) found at Mostyn (Flintshire; WREX-AC7642; Fig 2a) is significant. It is the first PAS-recorded example of this ruler from North Wales and outside of the core area of their circulation, finds recorded by the PAS are predominantly found south and east of the area bounded by the Rivers Severn and Trent. The coin is also of numismatic interest. The coin was struck by the moneyer Frithegist at either Chester or Leicester, the mint name on the coin is ambiguous although the former is considered most likely (Allen 2012, 55; North 1994, 193). Regardless the 'sword' type was not listed for either mint previously and so this is an important find.

Two coins found last year which were issued during Stephen's (1135–54) tumultuous reign expand our knowledge of the coinage of the period, and highlight its complexities. A penny in Stephen's name found at Yapton (West Sussex; SUSS-01D7A8; Fig 2b) shares the reverse of a type from Southampton (North 1994, 209, no 905) but its inscription, which lists the moneyer and mint place, is readable only as '[ ] ERN ON P [ ] ', suggesting that the mint may be Winchester (the city's name on coins often PIN or PINC). Such an attribution is also made partly on the grounds that the Southampton coins appear to have been struck by Winchester moneyers (Blackburn 1994, 191). The other was struck by Robert III de Stuteville,



FIG 2
High and Later medieval coins (a) WREX-AC7642—penny of William I. (b) SUSS-01D7A8—penny of Stephen. (c) LVPL-EE2868—penny of Robert III de Stuteville. (d) OXON-1B10AF—penny of Edward I. (e) LVPL-17A6E2—quarter noble of Edward III. (f) LANCUM-99BB9A—*denier* of the Abbey of St-Martin of Tours. (g) SUR-8E4751—*soldino* of Doge Pietro Mocenigo. Scale 1:1. *Images: © National Museum Wales (a), © Sussex Archaeological Society (b), © National Museums Liverpool (c, e), © The Portable Antiquities Scheme (d, f) and © Surrey County Council (g). Images used courtesy of the Portable Antiquities Scheme under a CC-BY licence.*

a Yorkshire baron with estates in the East Riding (Allen 2016, 291). Found at Buttercrambe with Bossal (North Yorkshire; LVPL-EE2868; Fig 2c), the coin shows an armoured horseman holding a sword aloft and names Robert rather than the king. It belongs to a larger group of coins the 'York local coinage', Martin Allen (2016, 291) placing it in his Phase 4 of the coinage, dating to c 1149–50. This coinage was struck in the name of Stephen and local barons, probably under the auspices of William of Aumale who was consolidating his own interests in the

region at this time and would have needed the support of powerful local nobility like Robert III de Stuteville (Allen 2016, 297; see also Naylor 2025, 376).

The expansion of minting post-1180 with the short and long cross coinages is highlighted in the 2,138 examples recorded last year. The final type of the long cross coinage, Class 7, was struck during the early years of Edward I's reign (1272–1307), prior to the major reforms of 1279. Very few of these coins survive, fewer than 20 have been recorded by the PAS to date, so the discovery of an example at Nuffield (Oxfordshire; OXON-1B10AF; Fig 2d) is significant. Struck in London by the moneyer Phelip, its production reflects a notorious moment in English history. Phelip was Philip de Cambio, who came into office as moneyer in May 1278 and probably struck most of the £60,000 of silver which went through the mint between June 1275 and Nov 1278. However, he and his assayer were executed in 1279 for allegedly producing coins with too low a silver content, contemporary with Edward's persecution and execution of Jews, accused of illegal coin clipping. Analyses of Phelip's coins indicate that their silver reached the required 92.5% fineness, suggesting all of these measures were simply devices to justify wholesale recoinage (Stewartby 2009, 96).

Large numbers of coins issued from Edward's 1279 reforms until the end of Henry VII's reign in 1509 continue to be recorded, with 2,815 added last year although this includes just 32 gold coins. These were only introduced as a regular part of the English currency during Edward III's (1327–77) reign, and not successfully until 1351, with three denominations issued (the noble, half noble and quarter noble) which continued into Edward IV's first reign (1461–70) when further reforms replaced them. The most commonly found are the smaller quarter nobles, the PAS having recorded around 350 with widespread distribution across England. However, only seven are so far reported from Wales. As such, a quarter noble of Edward III recorded last year from Penmynydd (Isle of Anglesey; LVPL-17A6E2; Fig 2e) is noteworthy and joins just two others from North Wales, one a coastal find from Aber (Gwynedd; GAT-CF592B) around 15km east of the new discovery, the other from Gresford (Wrexham; CPAT-360756) which is close to the English border and fits well as part of a broader group focused on the area between the River Mersey and Shrewsbury.

Finds of non-English coinage continue to be recorded regularly and a number of interesting and significant finds were discovered last year. A damaged and incomplete 12th-century silver anonymous *denier* of the Abbey of St-Martin of Tours found 'near Wigton' (Cumbria; LANCUM-99BB9A; Fig 2f) is the first of its type to be recorded by the PAS, with only three other UK finds listed (Cook 1999, nos 85–7). It is also the only later medieval French coin recorded by the PAS from NW England with the majority of finds from central southern England and East Anglia. Venetian coins are found far more frequently with nearly 100 dating broadly to the 14th–16th centuries recorded in 2025, the vast majority low-value *soldini*. One of these is a significant find, a *soldino* of Doge Pietro Mocenigo (1474–6) found at Wherwell (Hampshire; SUR-8E4751; Fig 2g). Previously, *soldini* in his name were only known with the letters NV behind the standing figure of the doge, representing the initials of an unknown mint-master (eg see Day et al 2016, no 1355). The newly discovered coin instead has the letters FB for mint-master Francesco Baffo, adding the low-value *soldino* to the other larger denominations issued under his administration of the mint.

FOCUS ON NON-NUMISMATIC FINDS IN 2025

In 2025, the PAS recorded 11,676 medieval objects (excluding stray and hoard finds of coinage), encompassing a wide variety of object types and materials that shed light on everyday life. Some highlights and insights into our dataset are outlined below.

Early medieval

A copper-alloy strap end found at Shorne (Kent; KENT-A8F183; Fig 3a) can be paralleled by a small group of objects in the Quoit Brooch Style (QBS) fitting well within their general distribution in the area south of the rivers Thames and Kennet from Kent to the Solent (Swift 2019, 45, figs 21–4). The main body of the strap end is rectangular in shape with three projections at its base and three lobes at the terminal end. The main field contains a rosette with pellet centre above three motifs of a triangle topped with a small crescent within a beaded border. This curves inwards ending in a triangular shape either side of which are curving decorative motifs, versions of the animal heads seen on other objects. Its closest parallel is a strap end from grave 48 at Blackall Field, Pewsey (Wiltshire) of late-5th–mid-6th-century date, although the decorative features on the Shorne find, especially the animal heads, are more devolved and comparable to an example from Croydon (Surrey; Suzuki 2000, nos 18 and 19). Three other finds belong to this group of strap ends, one from an early–mid-6th-century grave at Chessell Down (Isle of Wight), while the others are stray finds from Exton (Hampshire; HAMP2158) and Corhampton and Meonstoke (Hampshire; HAMP1966); the latter is incomplete, missing the terminal end. Ellen Swift (2019, 48–9) has highlighted the complexity and diversity within the overall corpus and its importance to our understanding of the early post-Roman period, including their long-term curation which considerably prolongs the circulation of such material before deposition.

A Frankish scabbard chape of Menghin's Type 3a (*Typ* Samson) found at Church Lawford (Warwickshire; WAW-00E073; Fig 3b) highlights the benefits of long-term recording of stray finds. It is a copper-alloy openwork object showing a human head with ring-and-dot eyes, probably wearing a helmet, which is flanked by two curving bird heads. These meet at a narrow bar beneath the human head separated from them by lines of beading; a backplate follows the same shape as the moulded front piece. Wilfrid Menghin (1983) listed only a single English find, within grave 42 at Abingdon (Oxfordshire; Leeds and Harden 1936, 38–9, 59–60, pl IXd), but this new find is the eleventh recorded by the PAS.[12] Their distribution is widespread across two broad areas, comprising a group of four finds from Hampshire, and another more dispersed one which includes six finds from the East Midlands and East Anglia, and one from the Yorkshire Wolds; Abingdon lies between these two areas. While Menghin (1983, 126–8, 351–3) dates the continental material to the 5th century, David Williams and Helen Geake (2008) suggested that the chronology of the English finds may well extend into the 6th.

A near-complete, albeit pinless, gilded copper-alloy great square-headed brooch of mid-6th-century date found at Hannington (Swindon; WILT-CB475D; Fig 3c) can be considered a variant of John Hines's (1997, 17–32) Group I, and probably belongs in a late phase of production. Somewhat idiosyncratic, the rectangular headplate comprises three main panels, the outer two with foliate and zig-zag decoration around a larger panel enclosing poorly executed interlace and two spiral motifs. Protruding from the top of the plate is a curving, stylised bird's head facing outwards, originally one of a pair with the other now broken away. The headplate is joined to the foot by a short, raised bow with a prominent median bridge. The foot is broken but complete and of unusual form comprising three axed-shaped lobes, rather than the typical oval-like shape seen on most Group I and II examples. Each includes a facemask and other elements often seen on these brooches. It is best paralleled by an example found nearby in grave 20 at Fairford (Gloucestershire; Hines 1997, pl 8a), and is also comparable to another from

[12] See PAS records: WAW-00E073, NMS-805A2A, WILT-E6FCB4, NCL-B0C444, HAMP-4CBF82, LVPL-917677, DENO-061D23, SUR-72CF23, LEIC-7F2E18, HAMP-ABA5F3 and SF2799.



FIG 3
Early medieval objects (a) KENT-A8F183—strap end. (b) WAW-00E073—scabbard chape. (c) WILT-CB475D—great square-headed brooch. (d) KENT-23D64B—*Pressblech* die. (e) SUSS-12DB7B—papal bulla. Scale 1:1. *Images: © Kent County Council (a), © Birmingham Museums Trust (b), © Salisbury and South Wiltshire Museum (c), © The Portable Antiquities Scheme (d) and © Sussex Archaeological Society (e). Images used courtesy of the Portable Antiquities Scheme under a CC-BY licence.*

Brighthampton (Oxfordshire; MacGregor and Bolick 1993, 113, no 13.4) suggesting local production. The main focus of Group I brooches is in the cemeteries in and around the Upper Thames Valley (Hines 1997, fig 6a), and this new discovery fits well into this pattern.

A copper-alloy *Pressblech* die found at Lynsted with Kingsdown (Kent; KENT-23D64B; Fig 3d) is a nationally-important discovery. Such dies were used to produce decorative *appliqués* in thin foil which adorned a range of objects from jewellery and dress accessories to helmets (Leahy 2003, 157). This find comprises a rectangular die, measuring 42.1 x 32.8 mm, showing a human figure holding two spears in its right hand and a sheathed sword in its left. The figure wears a belt at the waist and a headdress from which inward curving horn-like extensions protrude, each ending in a bird's head with triangular projections beneath at either side of the head; its legs are bent, possibly intended to represent movement. Parallels for figures with this distinctive headdress include other finds from England, such as the decorative elements on helmets, eg from the Staffordshire Hoard or the pairs of figures on some of the Sutton Hoo helmet panels, and other objects including the gold buckle from Finglesham (Kent) grave 95 (Speake 2019, fig 5.19, no 238; Bruce-Mitford 1978, 149, 186–9, figs 110a, 140–2; Chadwick Hawkes and Grainger 2006, 80, fig 2.102). Other examples of die stamps with comparable designs to this, and to the horseman seen on the Sutton Hoo helmet, have been found in Scandinavia, at Torslunda (Öland, Sweden), Rødby Fjord (Sydlolland, Denmark) and Tåsinge (Denmark), suggesting this to be an area central to their production (Petersen and Rasmussen 2016; Helmbrecht 2008, fig 1a; Kuta 2025). However, the Lynsted with Kingsdown find is important in highlighting that such high-status military objects also may have been produced elsewhere, including Britain.

A lead papal bulla found 'near Lewes' (East Sussex; SUSS-12DB7B; Fig 3e) is a significant discovery. One of very few pre-Conquest bullae found in Britain it has been reported as potential treasure, the bulla reading BENEDICTI on one side and PAPAE on the other, the form of the quatrefoil in the middle of the former suggesting it belongs to the office of Benedict IX (1032–45). The PAS has recorded only two other certain early-medieval bullae, both earlier than the 'near Lewes' find, one of Leo III (795–816; KENT-01AD9F), the other of Paschal I (817–24; HESH-ADE183), and relatively few prior to Alexander III (1159–81).

High and Later medieval

A copper-alloy buckle from Ston Easton (Somerset; SOM-8CAD11; Fig 4a) is a rare example of an openwork buckle with zoomorphic design to survive as a near complete object including its pin; in this case it is only missing a small part of the fleur-de-lis terminal on the plate. The main decoration shows a *lion passant guardant*. Such depictions appear to have been popular in the 13th century although the use of lions in various heraldic poses highlights that this was a broad series produced over a longer period (Margeson 1985, 204–5; Egan and Pritchard 1991, 112). Mark Hall (2021, 480) discusses a mount discovered at Billingsgate (London) where a crowned lion and fleur-de-lis are used, combining elements from the English and French coats of arms and seen together on the English arms from 1340 under Edward III. This suggests a potential mid-14th-century date and may be useful comparanda for the Ston Easton find. He also suggests that the use of the lion on 'standing animal' buckles, where the animal itself forms the buckle frame, may come from 'an aspiration to derive status from the symbolic value of the lion' (Hall 2021, 474). A number of finds recorded by the PAS are closely comparable to the Ston Easton find, including two incomplete objects which may have been



FIG 4
High and Later medieval objects (a) SOM-8CAD11—openwork buckle. (b) NMGW-FB2FD4—harness pendant. (c) SUSS-4800A4—seal matrix. (d) DOR-480761—seal matrix. (e) ESS-4CF94D—capsule pendant. Scale 1:1. *Images: © The Portable Antiquities Scheme (a,d), © National Museum Wales (b), © Sussex Archaeological Society (c) and © Colchester and Ipswich Museum Service (e). Images used courtesy of the Portable Antiquities Scheme under a CC-BY licence.*

strap-ends rather than buckles (SWYOR-741853 and SWYOR-9352F4) but which include not only the moulded *lion passant guardant* but also the plate's fleur-de-lis terminal shape.

A lead-alloy pilgrim badge found at Brayton (North Yorkshire; YORYM-E3CE8E; Fig 4b) appears to belong to a rare group of badges depicting St John of Bridlington. Showing a standing figure wearing clerical dress and holding an object, probably a book, the design can be paralleled by at least two finds from London, both of which are more certainly attributed: one shows the figure within a large letter B, the other names Bridlington (Kunera numbers 03363 and 02547).[13] The new find is also inscribed, albeit damaged and difficult to read but the name John ('Iohn') is clearly visible. A healer and holy man, John of Bridlington was canonised in 1404, and was a popular saint in the 15th century, with both Henry IV (1399–1413) and Henry V (1413–22) patrons of the shrine, the latter attributing victory at Agincourt to his and John of Beverley's intercessions in heaven (Spencer 1998, 195).

Around 350 seal matrices were recorded last year, a diverse group incorporating many generic and impersonal types as well as others containing personal or official information. An incomplete copper-alloy pointed oval example found at Icklesham (East Sussex; SUSS-4800A4; Fig 4c) appears to belong to a traceable individual. The design shows the Virgin Mary with the body of Christ in her arms above a pair of crossed banners and a flat-topped shield enclosing a boar, although its meaning here is uncertain. An inscription runs around the outside reading S'hVGO[N D'] BERBIREYO RECTOR DE OFFORD CLVNY (*'Seal of Hugo of Berbireyo, Rector of Offord Cluny'*) identifying its owner, Hugh de Berbyreis. He is listed as rector of Offord Cluny from 1304–40, the parish held by the abbey at Cluny (France) from before 1086 until the mid-15th century (Noble 1909, 158; Page et al 1932, 319–22). The village of Berbireyo (now Barizey) lies around 50 km north of Cluny (Rigault 2008, 848). A likely occupational seal of 13th–14th-century date was found at Owermoigne (Dorset; DOR-480761; Fig 4d), a pointed oval seal showing a pair of scissors and comb and the inscription + S' GALFRIDI. LE. BARBER (*Seal of Geoffrey the Barber*). Only six other PAS-recorded finds include scissors as a design motif,[14] none of which give an indication of the seal owner's trade. A 14th-century French seal matrix for a vestment maker found in the River Seine shows a pair of scissors,[15] as does another find, a silver example from Speen Moors, Newbury (West Berkshire), which is perhaps of most interest here as it also names a 'Geoffrey the Barber' (Anon, nd, 24–5).

An incomplete cross-shaped gold capsule pendant, probably of late 15th-century date, found 'near Chelmsford' (Essex; ESS-4CF94D; Fig 4e) is an example of the hollow pendants, which were likely intended to hold relics or other apotropaic materials. Only the front part of the capsule survives, its backplate missing and suspension loop broken; two holes on either side of lower cross arm probably held a pin which would have secured the backplate to the surviving frontplate. The object is highly decorated, engraved with a central scene showing the haloed figures of Virgin Mary, seated, holding the body of Christ surrounded by foliate decoration with blossoms and, possibly, fruit. A number of comparable objects have been reported under the Treasure Act 1996, including cross-shaped pendants from Farnham (Essex; ESS-8F991E) and Harlaston (Staffordshire; WMID-115B76), although neither is as richly decorated as the 'near Chelmsford' find, which is more closely paralleled by an example in the shape of a Tau cross from the Charnwood district of Leicestershire (LEIC-9870DA). The contents of such capsule pendants were probably varied: the Tau-shaped examples are associated with St Anthony

[13] Kunera <*https://database.kunera.nl/en*>. [accessed 29 July 2026].
[14] Database records SF-4FB8E3, NMS-F81203, SF-A9DA84, SF-2E1466, IHS-90AAA5 and WAW-B46387.
[15] BM1867,1001.3, <*https://www.britishmuseum.org/collection/object/H_1867-1001-3*>. [accessed 29 July 2026].

Abbot, in whose name hospitals were founded that engaged in the treatment of the skin disease *ignis sacer* (now known as ergotism, a reaction to mould-contaminated grain), and these appear most likely to have contained organic matter intended to alleviate symptoms or provide protection (Husband 1992); other capsule pendants may have been more varied, with known items including silk within the Middleham jewel and, in the Clare reliquary cross, small pieces of wood, perhaps considered relics of the True Cross (Husband 1992, 19, 32–3; Hinton 2005, 245). Like the Middleham jewel, the iconography of the 'near Chelmsford' pendant can be related to Christ's sacrifice, and this may help us to understand its possible contents. Timothy Husband (1992, 21–2) suggested that the Middleham jewel may have been intended to contain fragments of the True Cross or Eucharistic items such as wax wafers made from the paschal candle.

RESEARCH REPORTS

Praying in miniature: an orans *motif on a medieval strap-end* by Lisa Brundle and Robert Webley

The cast copper-alloy object which forms the subject of this note is a sub-rectangular openwork strap-end that frames a full-bodied human figure (Figs 5, 6a). Found 'south of Lincoln' in August 2025 (LIN-82C48F; full findspot details are available via the PAS database to registered research users), the figure's interesting pose will be examined and parallels discussed. The fitting was once attached to a strap via a worn, broken transverse sub-rectangular recess or socket, 22 mm long. At the opposite end, it terminates in a thickened sub-rectangular



FIG 5
Medieval strap-end with figure presented in the *orans* gesture found south of Lincoln, kindly conserved by Lincoln University, Conservation of Cultural Heritage. Scale 1:1. *Image by L Brundle, with thanks to R Trevaskus for help in preparation. © Lincolnshire County Council. Image used courtesy of the Portable Antiquities Scheme under a CC-BY licence.*

bar, 22.4 mm long; the two are connected by thin side strips. Standing on the thickened bar is a male figure, rendered in openwork and convex in cross-section. He wears a flared, knee-length tunic decorated with a double incised chevron and several small oval recesses below. The semicircular head sits directly on broad shoulders, with elongated facial recesses, a raised nose, and an eye that merges into a short, slightly upturned mouth. Most strikingly, both arms are raised in the *orans* pose, bent at the elbows, with disproportionately large, splayed hands—each showing four fingers and a prominent thumb—projecting slightly above the attachment edge.

In its overall form the fitting is reminiscent of so-called 'blunt-ended Romanesque' rectangular strap-ends, dated on art-historical grounds to the 12th century (Rogerson and Ashley 2021; Fig 6b). They share the thickened or rodlike terminal and, in their Type 2 form, the socketed attachment end (Fig 6b). As Andrew Rogerson and Steven Ashley (2021, 588–92, figs 2–4) note, and as on some continental examples, such openwork compositions can broadly evoke a saint's throne, with windowlike apertures and a cushion, here the thickened terminal, upon which the saint's feet rest. None of the published examples, however, provide an exact parallel for the present strap-end. Nevertheless, the formal affinity is a useful point of departure for considering its date.

The figure's raised hands correspond to the *orans* posture (Fig 6a), a gesture conventionally associated with prayer and piety. While originating within religious contexts, this pose may also have been appropriated by secular elites as a form of spiritual self-protection or apotropaic display (Young 2009, 351). In the Latin West, the *orans* posture gradually lost prominence after the 12th century, when folded hands became the dominant mode of prayer (Barasch 1990, 57–9), suggesting that the gesture on the present object belongs to an earlier visual tradition. The *orans* posture has pre-Christian antecedents as an allegory of piety and appears widely in both early-medieval Christian art and Anglo-Saxon metalwork (Brundle 2019, 135–6). Merovingian buckle plates and fittings of the 6th and 7th centuries, for instance, frequently depict full-length figures with raised arms—rendered in either incised or openwork form—often clothed in long tunics or apron-like garments and occasionally bearded (Salin 1959, 301, 304, 323, figs 109, 123; pl V, nos 1–2; pl VII, no 2). These early representations establish a long-standing iconographic tradition linking the human figure, raised arms, and protective or devotional meanings. Despite this long lineage, the present strap-end cannot be assigned to this early horizon. While Anglo-Saxon metalwork includes three-dimensional full-bodied figurines from the 7th century onwards (Brundle 2013), the formal and technological characteristics of the current piece—most notably its openwork execution, rectilinear outline, and structured composition—argue for a later date.

More compelling parallels lie in later Western European material, where both the motif and its meaning continue, albeit in transformed form. Continental disc brooches of the late 8th to mid-9th century show half-length figures with raised hands in gestures of benediction (Bos 2008, 770, figs 4a–i, type 2.7.2.3). In the 11th century, comparable gestures appear on Class B stirrup-strap mounts, including an example from Montcy-Notre-Dame, France (Serdon-Provost 2016, 153–4, figs 3.73–4, no 95). The closest stylistic parallel is provided by 9th- to 10th-century Thomas Class E, Type 2 strap-ends, which depict naked figures in an *orans* posture with hands raised towards the attachment end (Thomas 2004, fig 4, nos 25–7; Figs 6c-d). These echo earlier Class A, Type 3 examples, such as a 9th-century strap-end from Brandon, Suffolk (Thomas 2003, 3, fig 1, no 8), demonstrating a recurring motif across different object types and media. Significant distinctions nevertheless separate these parallels from the present example. The earlier strap-ends are typically tapered and sub-rectangular, terminating in rounded ends, whereas the present piece is fully rectangular. The present figure is rendered in openwork and stands upon a transverse bar, features that are both technologically and compositionally distinct. In these respects, the object



FIG 6
(a) Front view of strap-end, AI-enhanced with Topaz and Photoshop to reveal greater detail. (b) Type 2 'blunt-ended Romanesque' medieval strap-end from Attleborough (Norfolk; NMS-86F6F5). (c) early-medieval strap-end of Thomas Class E, Type 2 from Seething (Norfolk; NMS-DEAC84). (d) early-medieval strap-end of Thomas Class E, Type 2 from Sutton (Suffolk; SF-04B9E1). Scale 1:1. *Images: © Lincolnshire County Council by L Brundle, with thanks to R Trevaskus for the image enhancement (a) © Norfolk County Council (b, c) and © Suffolk County Council Archaeology Service (d). Images courtesy of the Portable Antiquities Scheme under a CC-BY licence.*

aligns more closely with Romanesque strap-end forms than with earlier Saxon precedents. Rather than indicating direct copying, the evidence points to the selective reuse of a long-lived iconographic motif within a later formal and stylistic framework.

The treatment of the figure's torso further complicates interpretation. The markings on the chest may be read as stylised wounds, evoking the Passion, while the paired chevrons could alternatively represent ribs or elements of drapery. Robed depictions of the crucified Christ are well attested in early-medieval art before being largely replaced by loincloth imagery after the 9th century, only to re-emerge in Romanesque contexts, including Limoges enamels of the late 12th and 13th centuries (O'Neill 1996, 184–5; Coatsworth 2000, 155, 163). Although the figure is not shown on a cross, a latent Christological reference remains plausible. Clothing alone does not provide a secure chronological indicator; however, the absence of interlace, combined with the use of full-bodied openwork figuration, supports a later rather than early medieval date. The exaggerated and extended thumbs likewise resonate with broader medieval conventions of gestural emphasis in both secular and religious imagery, particularly within manuscript traditions. Taken together, the evidence suggests that the figure is best understood within a devotional framework, possibly representing a stylised Christ or a liturgical celebrant. A secular self-referential interpretation cannot be excluded, but the combination of posture, iconographic lineage, and visual emphasis on gesture favours a primarily religious reading.

Dress fittings belong to the category of 'personal belongings' discussed by Stina Sundmark (2023) in her study of instruments of devotion. They are portable, visible and tactile. Although often understood as functional, they can carry iconography with protective or intercessory value, particularly when worn on the belt or girdle, a key locus of identity and display in the medieval body ecology (Bynum 2011, 98; Sundmark 2023). The small size of the present piece and its position at the belt's end suggest a private object that could be touched and turned without necessarily inviting public viewing. This aligns with Sundmark's (2023) concept of 'micro devotional' artefacts that trigger short, situational prayers during daily routines. As Jean-Claude Schmitt (1992, 80) observes, salvation was reached through the body and especially by means of ritual gestures of charity, penance and piety. A strap-end that miniaturises a prayer gesture might therefore have served as a haptic prompt to pray. It may also be germane that medieval vesting prayers attach symbolic significance to the cincture and the loins (Miller 2011, 94). The belt, as a symbolically charged item of self-discipline, offered an apt site for an image concerned with prayer, purity and the governance of the body.

This fitting currently stands as a singular recorded example and probably represents a commissioned, possibly bespoke, object. A 12th-century date is the most plausible, placing it within a period of sustained ecclesiastical investment and an increasingly deliberate use of figural imagery for both instructional and devotional purposes. In the Lincoln area, as elsewhere, church building expanded markedly from the 11th century onwards, reflecting demographic growth and the consolidation of urban parochial structures (Stocker and Everson 2006). This broader context is underscored by the sculpture of Lincoln Cathedral: the Romanesque narrative frieze on the west front, although carved into masonry integral to the original late 11th-century fabric, was refashioned in the 12th century to display explicitly figural scenes from the Old and New Testaments, including the Last Judgement (Butler and Clark 2015). Although relatively few small finds are recorded from the immediate findspot, the surrounding landscape is demonstrably significant: nearby medieval villages formed part of one of the largest and most important settlements recorded in the Domesday Survey (1086), and a network of 11th- to 12th-century churches was established across the area. The object therefore sits convincingly within a wider archaeological framework characterised by ecclesiastical expansion and the growing prominence of carved figural imagery. Alongside the emergence of monumental religious sculpture in stone, there developed a parallel tradition of smaller-scale, more personal devotional metalwork. This included wearable objects and reliquaries bearing figural designs, which translated monumental iconography into more intimate contexts and were likely to have been restricted to individuals or institutions of relatively elevated status.

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