



ART, FAITH AND PLACE IN EAST ANGLIA

— From Prehistory to the Present —



Arts & Humanities
Research Council





ART, FAITH AND PLACE IN EAST ANGLIA

— From Prehistory to the Present —

Edited by T. A. Heslop, Elizabeth Mellings and Margit Thøfner



THE BOYDELL PRESS



© Contributors 2012

All Rights Reserved. Except as permitted under current legislation
no part of this work may be photocopied, stored in a retrieval system,
published, performed in public, adapted, broadcast,
transmitted, recorded or reproduced in any form or by any means,
without the prior permission of the copyright owner

First published 2012
The Boydell Press, Woodbridge

ISBN 978 1 84383 744 2

The Boydell Press is an imprint of Boydell & Brewer Ltd
PO Box 9, Woodbridge, Suffolk IP12 3DE, UK
and of Boydell & Brewer Inc.
668 Mount Hope Ave, Rochester, NY 14620-2731, USA
website: www.boydellandbrewer.com

A catalogue record for this book is available
from the British Library

The publisher has no responsibility for the continued existence or accuracy of URLs for external
or third-party internet websites referred to in this book, and does not guarantee that any content
on such websites is, or will remain, accurate or appropriate

Papers used by Boydell & Brewer Ltd are natural, recyclable products
made from wood grown in sustainable forests



Designed and Typeset by Tina Ranft, Woodbridge
Printed and bound in Great Britain by
CPI Group (UK) Ltd, Croydon CR0 4YY

CONTENTS

<i>Acknowledgements</i>	vii
<i>List of illustrations</i>	ix
 CHAPTER 1	
Sandy Heslop and Margit Thøfner: 'Introduction: On Faith, Objects and Locality'	1
 CHAPTER 2	
Elisabeth de Bièvre, 'But where is Norfolk?'	19
 CHAPTER 3	
Daphne Nash Briggs, 'Sacred Image and Regional Identity in Late-Prehistoric Norfolk'	30
 CHAPTER 4	
Adrian Marsden, 'Piety from the Ploughsoil: Religion in Roman Norfolk through Recent Metal-Detector Finds'	50
 CHAPTER 5	
Tim Pestell, 'Paganism in Early-Anglo-Saxon East Anglia'	66
 CHAPTER 6	
Matthew Champion, 'Devotion, Pestilence and Conflict: The Medieval Wall Paintings of St Mary the Virgin, Lakenheath'	88
 CHAPTER 7	
Carole Hill, 'Here Be Dragons: The Cult of St Margaret of Antioch and Strategies for Survival'	105
 CHAPTER 8	
Elizabeth Rutledge, 'The Medieval Jews of Norwich and their Legacy'	117
 CHAPTER 9	
David King, 'Late-Medieval Glass-Painting in Norfolk: Developments in Iconography and Craft c.1250–1540'	130
 CHAPTER 10	
John Peake, 'Graffiti and Devotion in Three Maritime Churches'	148
 CHAPTER 11	
Nicola Whyte, 'Norfolk Wayside Crosses: Biographies of Landscape and Place'	163
 CHAPTER 12	
Chris King, 'Landscapes of Faith and Politics in Early-Modern Norwich'	179

CHAPTER 13	
Francesca Vanke, 'Practice and Belief: Manifestations of Witchcraft, Magic and Paganism in East Anglia from the Seventeenth Century to the Present Day'	194
CHAPTER 14	
Stefan Muthesius, 'Provinciality and the Victorians: Church Design in Nineteenth-Century East Anglia'	209
CHAPTER 15	
Catherine Hesketh-Harvey, 'Maharajah Duleep Singh, Elveden and Sikh Pilgrimage'	223
CHAPTER 16	
Karl Bell, 'Supernatural Folklore and the Popular Imagination: Re-reading Object and Locality in Mid-Nineteenth-Century Norfolk'	240
CHAPTER 17	
Elizabeth A. Mellings, ' <i>Pro Patria Mori</i> : Christian Rallies and War Memorials of Early-Twentieth-Century Norfolk'	253
CHAPTER 18	
Robert J. Wallis, 'Pagans in Place, from Stonehenge to Seahenge: "Sacred" Archaeological Monuments and Artefacts in Britain'	273
CHAPTER 19	
Trevor Ashwin, 'Art, Spirit and Ancient Places in Norfolk'	287
CHAPTER 20	
Elizabeth A. Mellings, 'Sacred Sites and Blessed Objects: Art and Religion in Contemporary Norfolk'	298
<i>Bibliography</i>	315
<i>Index</i>	349

LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

FIGURES

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

- Fig. 1.1. Happisburgh church and cliffs. Photograph courtesy of © Andrew Stacey 2
- Fig. 1.2. Bronze Age Ceremonial Dirk, c.1500–1350 BC, copper alloy, 71 x 18.1 cm. Oxborough, Norfolk (BM: P&EE 1994 10-3 1). Reproduced by permission of © The Trustees of the British Museum 3
- Fig. 1.3. Hammerbeam roof (lead-covered oak) with carved angels in chestnut wood, church of St Peter and St Paul, Swaffham, c.1470. Photograph by Sandy Heslop. 10
- Fig. 1.4. Artist unknown, Bedingfeld Chalice and Paten, 1518–19 (London), silver-gilt, enamel, chalice height: 15.2 cm; paten diameter: 13.1 cm (V&A: M.76&A-1947). Reproduced by permission of the © Victoria and Albert Museum 13
- Fig. 1.5. The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints, Eaton. Photograph by Liz Mellings, 2012. 17

CHAPTER 2

- Fig. 2.1. Fish-tailed, copper alloy plaque, inscribed with 'DEO HER' (To the God Hercules) on reverse, found at Roman Brancaster (Branodunum) (NWHCM: 1974.323.1: A). © Norwich Castle Museum and Art Gallery 24
- Fig. 2.2. The Mildenhall Great Dish, silver, fourth century Roman, from Mildenhall, with a central image of the deity, *Oceanus* (BM: P&EE 1946 10-7 1). Reproduced by permission of © The Trustees of The British Museum 25
- Fig. 2.3. Juliet Wimhurst, 'Christ, the second person, embodies the motherhood of God' (2010), ink on scraper-board, 38 x 27 cm. Courtesy of Juliet Wimhurst 27

CHAPTER 3

- Fig. 3.1. Icenian lands and tribal emblems. Coin photographs courtesy of © Chris Rudd 31
- Fig. 3.2. Fison Way monument phase I: second–first century BC–c.40s AD. Coin photographs courtesy of © Chris Rudd; line drawings by Daphne Nash Briggs (site plan after Gregory, 'Excavations in Thetford' and Bradley, *Ritual and Domestic Life*, fig. 6.9) 33
- Fig. 3.3. Fison Way monument phase II: 40s–50s AD. Coin photographs courtesy of © Chris Rudd; line drawings by Daphne Nash Briggs (site plan after Gregory, 'Excavations in Thetford' and Bradley, *Ritual and Domestic Life*, fig. 6.10) 34
- Fig. 3.4. Fison Way monument phase III: 50s–c.61 AD. Site plan drawings by Daphne Nash Briggs (after Gregory, 'Excavations in Thetford' and Bradley, *Ritual and Domestic Life*, 2005, fig. 6.11). Coin photographs courtesy of © Chris Rudd 38

- Fig. 3.5. The Norfolk God. Coin photographs courtesy of Chris Rudd: 50.42, 50.39, 78.37, 50.31, 82.33, 53.51. Thetford Treasure drawings after Johns and Potter, *Thetford Treasure*. Bronze buckle: D. Nash Briggs 40

CHAPTER 4

- Fig. 4.1. *Defixio* from Caistor St Edmund (HER: 9819, NCM: 2005.600). © Norwich Castle Museum 52
- Fig. 4.2. *Lamella* found at Billingford (NCM: 2005.297). Tomlin, 'A Bilingual Roman Charm'. © Norwich Castle Museum 53
- Fig. 4.3. Pan head mount from Elsing (NCM: L1993.7). © Norwich Castle Museum 55
- Fig. 4.4. Strap fitting recently found at Bracon Ash (HER: 29308). © Norfolk Historic Environment Service 55
- Fig. 4.5. Drawing of a figurine discovered at Banham (HER: 32136). © Norfolk Historic Environment Service 57
- Fig. 4.6. A strange figure from Acle (HER: 50193) perhaps represents another native Celtic deity. © Norfolk Historic Environment Service 58
- Fig. 4.7. A copper alloy figurine of a goat from Walsingham (HER: 2024). © Norwich Castle Museum 59
- Fig. 4.8. Drawing of cockerel (or hen) from Hockwold (HER: 52672). © Norfolk Historic Environment Service 60
- Fig. 4.9. A miniature silver sword from Bracon Ash (HER: 29308, NCM: 2009.250). © Norwich Castle Museum 62
- Fig. 4.10. Intaglio in nicolo glass set into the fragmentary remains of a bronze ring found at Wacton (HER: 42714). © Norfolk Historic Environment Service 63

CHAPTER 5

- Fig. 5.1. The distribution of English place-names with possible pagan Anglo-Saxon elements. Map by Tim Pestell, after Gelling, *Signposts to the Past* 70
- Fig. 5.2. Cremation urn fragment R9/10 from Caistor St Edmund, inscribed with a ship and wolf motif (Norwich Castle Museum and Art Gallery). © Norwich Castle Museum 77
- Fig. 5.3. The distribution of bracteate finds in East Anglia. Map by Tim Pestell 79
- Fig. 5.4. The distribution of objects with horn-headed figures (grey dots) and figurines (black dots). Map by Tim Pestell 80
- Fig. 5.5. Examples of horn-helmeted figures from East Anglia: (a) Pendant from Attleborough (top) and mounts from Saxlingham Nethergate (left) and Reepham (right) (Norwich Castle Museum and Art Gallery). © Norwich Castle Museum; (b) Helmet plate from Sutton Hoo Mound One. After Bruce-Mitford, *The Sutton-Hoo Ship Burial Vol. 2*); (c) Patrix die converted to a pendant from Hethel. Courtesy of Mr S. Clarkson 82
- Fig. 5.6. Possible Anglo-Saxon figurines from Suffolk: (a) Carlton Colville (BM: P&E 2001, 0902.1). Reproduced by permission of © The Trustees of The British Museum; (b) Friston (PAS: SF-01ACA7). Reproduced by permission of the © Portable Antiquities Scheme; (c) Unknown, possibly Halesworth area; (d) Eyke. Courtesy of Mr B. Hammond 85

CHAPTER 6

- Fig. 6.1. Tentative reconstruction of the first scheme on the north arcade, c.1220–30. The angels sit upon high with their hands raised in stylised debate. © Matthew Champion, 2009 93
- Fig. 6.2. Reconstruction of the second scheme on the central pier of the north arcade, c.1250–60. © S. Cale, 2009 95
- Fig. 6.3. Suggested reconstruction of the Passion Cycle on the central pier of the north arcade, c.1350. © Matthew Champion, 2009 97
- Fig. 6.4. Detail of the image of St Edmund, c.1350. © Perry Lithgow Partnership, 2009 98
- Fig. 6.5. Pickering, Harrowing of Hell. © Roger Rosewell 99

CHAPTER 7

- Fig. 7.1. Panel of regal St Margaret from an altar retable, 1420–30, St Michael-at-Plea, currently stored in Norwich Cathedral vestry. Photograph courtesy of Fi Hitchcock 108
- Fig. 7.2. Late-medieval pew-end carving of St Margaret in St Helen's church, Great Hospital, Norwich, showing initials of John Hecker (commissioner), hospital master (1519–32). Photograph by Margit Thøfner 110
- Fig. 7.3. Crowned St Margaret with the Holy Kin, south screen/retable by the Lady altar at St Helen's church, Ranworth. Photograph and copyright: Paul Hurst ARPS 111
- Fig. 7.4. Large wall painting of St George, north-west wall of St Gregory's parish church, Norwich. Photograph by Carole Hill 113

CHAPTER 8

- Fig. 8.1. Map of Norfolk and Suffolk, showing the position of the known Jewish communities. Original drawing courtesy of © Phillip Judge 118
- Fig. 8.2. Caricature of prominent Norwich Jews from the Exchequer Roll, 1232–3. Reproduced by permission of © The National Archives 125
- Fig. 8.3. The Bodleian Bowl. Reproduced by permission of the © Ashmolean Museum, University of Oxford 126
- Fig. 8.4. A photograph of the interior of the Music House (Wensum Lodge) in King Street. Photograph by Margit Thøfner 127
- Fig. 8.5. Late-medieval Norwich. Original drawing courtesy of © Phillip Judge 128

CHAPTER 9

- Fig. 9.1. Figure playing a vielle, late thirteenth century. Parish church of All Saints, Carleton Rode. Photograph courtesy of Gordon Plumb 132
- Fig. 9.2. Angel playing psaltery, c.1325–c.1335. Parish church of St Mary the Virgin, North Elmham. Photograph courtesy of Mike Dixon 133
- Fig. 9.3. The sacrament of Penance, c.1450. Parish church of St Mary, North Tuddenham. Photograph courtesy of Mike Dixon 135
- Fig. 9.4. St George and the Dragon, c.1420–c.1430. Parish church of St Mary, North Tuddenham, originally from the parish church of St Peter, Wiggshall St Peter. Photograph courtesy of Mike Dixon 136
- Fig. 9.5. St Callixtus, c.1420–c.1440. Parish church of St Mary Magdalen, Wiggshall St Mary Magdalen. Photograph courtesy of Mike Dixon 138

Fig. 9.6. St Remigius and the Prioress of Flixton, 1288–c.1300. Parish church of St Remigius. Photograph by David King	141
Fig. 9.7. Coronation of the Virgin, c.1340–c.1360. Parish church of St Peter, Great Walsingham. Photograph courtesy of Mike Dixon	143
Fig. 9.8. God the Father from the Coronation of the Virgin, and St Faith, c.1515–c.1525. Parish church of St Clement, Outwell. Photograph by David King	146
CHAPTER 10	
Fig. 10. 1. Wiveton church: ship graffito on chancel arch. Photograph by John Peake	151
Fig. 10.2. Blakeney church: merchant mark at base of tower. Photograph by John Peake	153
Fig. 10.3. Blakeney church: base of pier at eastern end of the southern arcade of piers, nearest the chancel. Photograph by John Peake	155
Fig. 10.4. Blakeney church: ship graffito drawn on the flat surface of the pier and extending onto the domed area above. Photograph by John Peake	156
Fig. 10.5. Blakeney church: two faces of the pier illustrated in fig. 10.3 showing ship symbol left and a simple ship right. Photograph by John Peake	157
CHAPTER 11	
Fig. 11.1. Seventeenth-century estate map of Langley, depicting a cross located on the green adjacent to the site of Langley Abbey (NRO: NRS 21407). Reproduced by permission of the © Norfolk Record Office	166
Fig. 11.2. The site of Maidens Cross, Marham, revealed in field-name evidence c.1734 (NRO: HARE 6814). Reproduced by permission of the © Norfolk Record Office	167
Fig. 11.3. 'Fringe Crosse', depicted on a map of Sedgeford, 1631 (NRO: LEST/OC 1). Reproduced by permission of the © Norfolk Record Office	172
Fig. 11.4. Map of Methwold Warren, c.1580, showing Wormald Cross and the 'Two Crosses' (NRO: MC556/2). Reproduced by permission of the © Norfolk Record Office	173
Fig. 11.5. 'Weeting Crosses', 1774 (NRO: C/Sca 2/318). Reproduced by permission of the © Norfolk Record Office	173
Fig. 11.6. 'Coldham Cross', Holkham in c.1590 (NRO: MS4535). Reproduced by permission of the © Norfolk Record Office	177
CHAPTER 12	
Fig. 12.1. Early modern religious and civic spaces in St Andrew's parish. Drawing by Debbie Miles Williams (after Ordnance Survey)	182
Fig. 12.2. Interior of Blackfriars Hall, Norwich, formerly the chancel of the Dominican Friary and the Dutch Church. Photograph by Chris King	184
Fig. 12.3. Silver-gilt beaker made by William Cobbold of Norwich (c.1570–95). © Norwich Castle Museum	185
Fig. 12.4. Drawing of the south side of the cathedral choir, c.1630. © Norwich Castle Museum	187
Fig. 12.5. The Old Meeting House (Independent), Colegate, Norwich, 1693. Photograph by Margit Thøfner	191
Fig. 12.6. The Quaker Meeting House, Gildencroft, Norwich (built in 1699). Photograph courtesy of © George A. F. Plunkett	193

CHAPTER 13

- Fig. 13.1. Frontispiece to Matthew Hopkins, *The Discovery of Witches* (R. Royston, London, 1647) (BL: Gen Ref colln, E.388.2.). Reproduced by permission of the © British Library Board 196
- Fig. 13.2. Frontispiece to James Primrose, *Popular Errours: or the Errours of the People in Matter of Physic* ([Robert Witty], London, 1651) (BM: BPI1700 website, no. bpi2282). Reproduced by permission of © The Trustees of the British Museum 199
- Fig. 13.3. The anti-witchcraft amulet of Christopher Hill – From County Court Session Papers of Christopher Hill's trial, 1654 (NRO: C/S 3, Box 41A). Reproduced by permission of © Norfolk Record Office 200
- Fig. 13.4. Cow's Horn inscribed 'Baal' in Theban script, nineteenth–twentieth century, provenance unknown. Courtesy of Michael Clarke, Norfolk 204
- Fig. 13.5. Monica English, *The Night Rider*, oil on canvas, c.1963, reproduced from pamphlet advertising exhibition in St Martin's Gallery, London, 1963 (NMAS archives). © Norwich Castle Museum 205
- Fig. 13.6. Anon., *The God and Goddess*, watercolour on paper, 2011, Norfolk. Private Collection, Norfolk 208

CHAPTER 14

- Fig. 14.1. Transept, St John's Roman Catholic cathedral, Norwich. Photograph courtesy of © Simon Knott 211
- Fig. 14.2. St Mary's church, Braiseworth, Suffolk (des. Edward Buckton Lamb, 1857). Photograph courtesy of © Simon Knott 216
- Fig. 14.3. St Margaret's church, Hopton on Sea, Norfolk (des. Samuel Saunders Teulon, 1866). Photograph courtesy of © Simon Knott 217
- Fig. 14.4. Methodist chapel, Holt, Norfolk (des. Thomas Jekyll, 1862–3). Photograph courtesy of Margit Thøfner 218
- Fig. 14.5. St Mary's Roman Catholic church, Great Yarmouth, Norfolk (des. Joseph John Scoles, 1848), (CC) stargazer 219
- Fig. 14.6. St Benet's church, Beccles, Suffolk (des. F. E. Banham, 1889). Photograph and copyright Eric Johnstone 220

CHAPTER 15

- Fig. 15.1. Guler, *Guru Gobind Singh on Horseback*, c.1830, gouache on paper, 32.6 x 23.5 cm. Courtesy of the collection of Gursharan and Elvira Sidhu (reproduced in Strong, *Sikh Art and Literature*, p. 36). Original from the University of California 224
- Fig. 15.2. *The Maharajah with close sporting shooting companions*, 1876, cabinet card photograph, 17.4 x 24.8 cm, Peter Bance colln. J. W. Clarke, Bury St Edmunds. Peter Bance © www.duleepsingh.com 229
- Fig. 15.3. *Elveden Hall*, Suffolk, c.1877, albumen print, 22 x 28 cm. Courtesy of © Norfolk County Council 232
- Fig. 15.4. *The Drawing Room, Elveden, Suffolk*, c.1877, albumen print, 22.3 x 27.5 cm (Peter Bance colln). Courtesy of Peter Bance © www.duleepsingh.com 233
- Fig. 15.5. Pugin's Gothic Furniture, no. 58, plate 23, vol. 10; *Ackermann's Repository of Arts* (R. Ackermann, 96 Strand, [London: 1811–28]) (Glasgow Library: Sp Coll Hepburn q3). Reproduced by permission of University of Glasgow Library, Special Collections 235

CHAPTER 16

- Fig. 16.1. Hex bottle, seventeenth century, bottle: 21.2 x 11 cm; cloth heart: 5.5 x 4.5 cm (NWHCM: 1932.19: A). © Norwich Castle Museum 245
- Fig. 16.2. Tomb and effigy of Sir William Gerbygge, which holds a stone heart in its hand (c.1280). Photograph courtesy of © John Salmon 248
- Fig. 16.3. Canon Richard Capper and Rev. Darleen Plattin take prayers around St Walstan's Well. Photograph courtesy of © David Goodman 249
- Fig. 16.4. Heart-shaped 'witch's symbol', Tuesday Market Place, King's Lynn. Photograph courtesy of Martin Pearman, Geograph Project (CC) 250

CHAPTER 17

- Fig. 17.1. St Michael and the Dragon Roll of Honour for the Great War, Church of St Andrew, East Lexham, Norfolk. Photograph courtesy of © Simon Knott 257
- Fig. 17.2. Early-twentieth-century triptych, now in All Saints Church, East Tuddenham, Norfolk. Photograph by Margit Thøfner 258
- Fig. 17.3. 'Mons', panel from First World War memorial window, by William Morris & Co., 1922, Church of St Peter and St Paul, Swaffham, Norfolk. Photograph courtesy of © Simon Knott 261
- Fig. 17.4. Artist unknown, *Scout and Guide Altarpiece*, c.1900–30 (GRSRM: 1983.126.4). © Norwich Castle Museum 264
- Fig. 17.5. Tito Corbella, '*Kultur*' and *Nurse Cavell* commemorating Cavell's execution in October 1915, 1 of postcard series of 6, 1915/16 (George Metcalf archival colln, CWM: 19710240-010). Reproduced by permission of the © Canadian War Museum 266

CHAPTER 18

- Fig. 18.1. Buster Nolan, a Druid protestor, and Bill Boismeyer, project manager of the controversial excavations, engage in a heated confrontation at 'Seahenge'. Photograph courtesy of © Archant media group/Eastern Daily Press 278
- Fig. 18.2. Some of the 'Seahenge' timbers on permanent display at Lynn Museum (since April 2008). © Lynn Museum 280
- Fig. 18.3. Mound 2 of the Anglo-Saxon cemetery at Sutton Hoo, Suffolk, the only mound restored to around its original height. Photograph by Robert Wallis 282
- Fig. 18.4. The Sutton Hoo belt buckle, gold, early seventh century CE, from Mound 1. Reproduced by permission of © The Trustees of The British Museum 282
- Fig. 18.5. A reproduction of a Thor's hammer pendant. Photograph by Robert Wallis 283

CHAPTER 19

- Fig. 19.1. Trevor Ashwin, 'TG 221 043: Caistor St Edmund, prehistoric barrow ditch – Shall we travel down the scars – or seek out the cracks and threads?' (digitised photograph, 5 March 1990). Photograph by © Trevor Ashwin 289
- Fig. 19.2. Trevor Ashwin, 'TG 075 432: Salthouse Heath – The cold, dry pinewoods resound' (digital photograph, 27 November 2005). Photograph by © Trevor Ashwin 294
- Fig. 19.3. Trevor Ashwin, 'TF 8103 2533: West Rudham, Neolithic long barrow – Tonight the waves fall silent' (digital photograph, 2 June 2007). Photograph by © Trevor Ashwin 294

- Fig. 19.4. Trevor Ashwin, 'TG 071 416: Salthouse, Neolithic causewayed enclosure – Things still happen here today'. Based upon photograph by Derek A. Edwards (28 June 1996, ref TG0741/ADBJ/JFQ10) © Norfolk County Council 296

CHAPTER 20

- Fig. 20.1. Martin Mitchell, *St Benet's Abbey*, 2004. Mezzotint, 12 x 18 cm, edition 15. Courtesy of © Martin Mitchell 301
- Fig. 20.2. Sarah Ollerenshaw, *Cross*, 2008, triptych, casein on prepared canvas with gold leaf (Wymondham Abbey residency). Photograph courtesy of © Sarah Ollerenshaw 303
- Fig. 20.3. Rachael Long, *Flight*, 2007, recycled steel (Wymondham residency), shown in artist's studio (artist's colln). Photograph by Liz Mellings, 2009 304
- Fig. 20.4. Rebecca Kemp, *Wing*, 2002, steel gate, welded sheet steel, painted. In situ (accompanied by the artist!), St Elizabeth Reformed Church, Earlham, Norwich. Photograph courtesy of © Martin Kentish 305
- Fig. 20.5. Aloka, abstract painting (detail), 2009. Photograph by Liz Mellings, 2009
- Fig. 20.6. Nicky Loutit, *Fallen Angel*, c.1986, watercolour on paper, 122 x 152.4 cm. Photograph courtesy of © Nicky Loutit 311

LIST OF PLATES

between pages 208 and 209

- Plate I. Artist unknown, 'Risen Christ, or Man of Sorrows' (detail), Binham rood screen panel, 1540–53, oil on panel 106.5 x 45.8 cm. Priory Church of St Mary & the Holy Cross, Binham, Norfolk. Photograph courtesy of © Simon Knott
- Plate II. King's Lynn coat of arms, painted wooden plaque, St Margaret's church, King's Lynn. Photograph and copyright: John Salmon
- Plate III. Runic-inscribed gold bracteate with a possible depiction of Tīw, from Binham, Norfolk (Norwich Castle Museum and Art Gallery). © Norwich Castle Museum
- Plate IV. Central pier from the North Arcade, St Mary the Virgin, Lakenheath. This pier acts as the focus for most of the paint schemes within the church. © Perry Lithgow Partnership, 2009
- Plate V. Painted rood screen at St Andrew's church, Wellingham. Photograph and copyright Paul Hurst ARPS
- Plate VI. Annunciation, originally from east window of Lady Chapel, c.1461–7. Parish church of East Harling. Photograph courtesy of Mike Dixon
- Plate VII. The Sacrifice of Isaac, c.1510–c.1520. Parish church of St Andrew, Norwich. Photograph courtesy of Mike Dixon
- Plate VIII. Old Mother Fyson's Charm, eighteenth century (NWHCM: 1947.133 : S). © Norwich Castle Museum
- Plate IX. Adam Bear, *The Horned One/Wild Man*, oil on panel, 2007, Norfolk. Courtesy of Adam Bear, Norfolk
- Plate X. St Michael and All Angels' church, Booton, Norfolk. Photograph by Margit Thøfner

Plate XI. George Beechey, *Maharajah Duleep Singh*, 1852, oil on canvas, 91.5 x 74cm
(THEHM: loan 1 (MDS). © Ancient House Museum, Thetford

Plate XII. Lower left-hand panel from early-twentieth-century reredos, St Lawrence church. Photograph courtesy of © Sue White

Plate XIII. Lower right-hand panel from early-twentieth-century reredos, St Lawrence church. Photograph courtesy of © Sue White

Plate XIV. Holme I, dubbed 'Seahenge', Holme-next-the-Sea, Norfolk. Photograph courtesy of © Archant media group/Eastern Daily Press

Plate XV. Trevor Ashwin, 'TG 060 277: Guestwick, site of prehistoric barrow – Reality check' (13 August 2006). Photograph by © Trevor Ashwin

Plate XVI. Colin Yorke, *The Outcasts*, 2009, carved wood, dim. var. In-situ in farmer's field beyond St Nicholas church wall, Salthouse. Photograph by Liz Mellings, 2009

Plate XVII. Aloka, *Bliss in the City*, 2005, Thangka triptych, in situ, Shrine Room, Norwich Buddhist Centre. Photograph courtesy of © Lokabandhu

— CHAPTER 4 —

PIETY FROM THE PLOUGHSOIL:
RELIGION IN ROMAN NORFOLK
THROUGH RECENT METAL-
DETECTOR FINDS

ADRIAN MARSDEN

INTRODUCTION

The religious practices of Roman Britain and the Roman Empire in general have been the subject of many learned books and papers. It is not the intention of this small study to do anything more than consider some of the various categories of material recovered from Norfolk in the last three decades or so, and what that material may tell us about the various gods and goddesses worshipped in Roman Norfolk and the way in which they were revered.¹

There are practically no inscriptions on stone from the county, which is not surprising given the paucity of anything but flint in the area, and so artefacts recovered with the aid of metal detectors are of particular importance. The objects with which this paper is concerned, discovered as they have been in ploughsoil, have no archaeological context. Thus, there is no evidence for the way in which they were deposited. Nonetheless, these objects can in themselves tell a great deal about religious beliefs in Norfolk during the period of the Roman Empire. Since it stands to reason that objects with a religious function would have been used at religious sites, their discovery can also be used to answer the question of how many such sites existed in Roman Norfolk. It is very unlikely that these objects were casually lost or thrown away. Rather their context is, in the vast majority of cases, votive in nature; these were gifts to the gods that remain to offer mute testimony to the religious beliefs of the people who offered them.

The question of context is an interesting one. Important temple sites have been recognised at Great Walsingham² and Hockwold-cum-Wilton.³ It is likely that many more existed in the Roman period, both large temples attracting visitors from across the region and also many smaller shrines of lesser importance.

¹ In every case where a site is mentioned, the parish name will be footnoted by the relevant Historic Environment Record (HER) number; all details may be consulted at Norfolk's Historic Environment Record, based at Gressenhall. Where objects have subsequently been acquired by Norwich Castle Museum, the accession number is also listed.

² HER 2024.

³ HER 5587.

Here, what is recorded with Norfolk Landscape Archaeology's Identification and Recording Service (I & RS) is of crucial importance. Do what the I & RS see and record represent a significant percentage of the artefacts recovered by metal-detectorists in Norfolk, or do they merely form the tip of a much larger iceberg? There is no way of knowing the answer. There is no legal obligation to report finds apart from the several dozen or so Treasure items which are found every year. Some detectorists, for various reasons, choose not to do so. Even Treasure items are not always reported, whether through ignorance on the part of the finders or through other, less honest, motives. Without being unduly pessimistic, it is possible that what Norfolk's Recording Service is seeing represents a small fraction of what is being found. If this is the case, it is probable that a number of important religious centres, not to mention smaller ones, are not on the record because the objects recovered from them are slipping through the net. Add to this the high level of so-called 'nighthawking' in Norfolk – the theft of objects using a metal detector under cover of darkness – and the picture looks bleaker still.⁴

Nonetheless, the diligent reporting of material is still providing a wealth of information. Detectorists from across the county have added significantly to the evidence for Roman religious sites. In other counties, hugely significant discoveries have also been made. For example, metal-detecting at a site near Baldock in Hertfordshire retrieved votive plaques and a statuette dedicated to a hitherto unknown goddess, Senua, probably the deity associated with a local spring.⁵ Without similar, mutually beneficial co-operation in Norfolk, this article could not have been written.

THE EPIGRAPHIC EVIDENCE

Epigraphically, as mentioned above, we have little to work with. In view of this, it is fortunate that three inscriptions on metal have been recorded: a *lamella* in gold and two *defixiones*, so-called curse tablets, in lead. One of the *defixiones*, from Hockwold-cum-Wilton,⁶ is almost illegible but the other two objects are more illuminating.

The *defixio* from Caistor St Edmund (fig. 4.1)⁷ has been fully published elsewhere.⁸ The subject of the text is an invocation to Neptune to punish a thief who had made off with a long list of objects, including bracelets, pewter vessels and clothing. The choice of deity is interesting. The appeal to Neptune, god of the Ocean, implies that there was, as has long been believed, a great estuary in Roman Norfolk

⁴ The question of the extent of night-hawking remains difficult to answer. Given the illegal and illicit nature of this practice, answers can never be readily forthcoming. Suffice to say, there is much evidence, in the form of footprints and holes dug in the earth of newly-rolled fields, to attest to this ongoing problem.

⁵ Ralph P. J. Jackson, 'Baldock Area, Hertfordshire: About 25 Votive

Finds, including Statuette, 19 Plaques and Jewellery', *Treasure Annual Report*, eds Anna Gannon, Lisa Voden-Decker and Roger Bland (Department for Culture, Media and Sport, London, 2002), no. 27, pp. 38–43.

⁶ HER 5587.

⁷ HER 9819, NCM 2005.600.

⁸ Mark W. C. Hassall and Roger S. O. Tomlin, 'Roman Britain in 1981, Caistor St Edmund', *Britannia*, vol. 13 (1982), pp. 408–9.

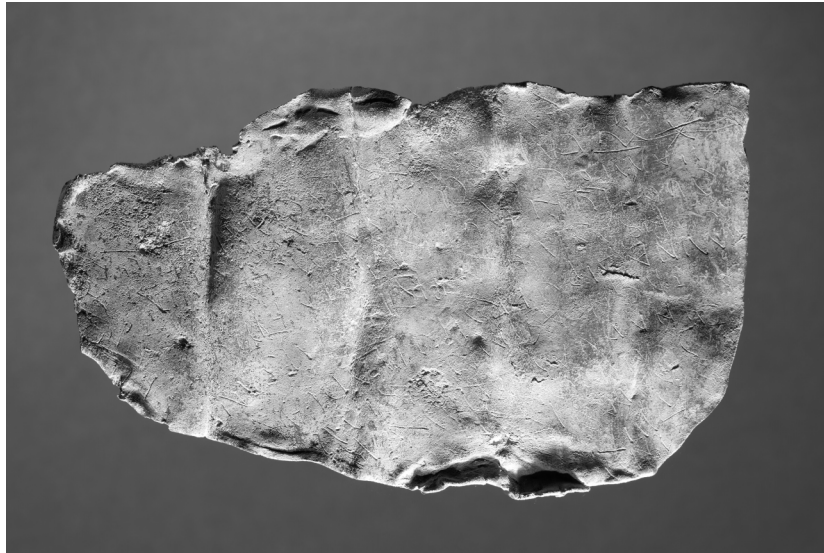


Fig. 4.1. *Defixio* from Caistor St Edmund.

and that its upper reaches spanned to Venta Icenorum, thus placing the people who lived there somehow under the god's protection. *Defixiones* invariably appealed to local gods and the choice of Neptune otherwise would be a very strange one.

It is the main text of the document that is of interest here, however. It is, on one level, evidence that the inhabitants of Roman Norfolk were not doing things differently. The businesslike way in which the appellant promises Neptune the gift of a pair of leggings in return for the restoration of the remainder of his or her stolen goods may seem absurd to a modern audience. Nonetheless, it is perfectly in keeping with the often very contractual nature of Roman religion. Men and women generally entered into what are best described as contracts with their gods, offering gifts and monuments in return for the granting of their request.⁹

The *lamella* was found at Billingford but not in the area of the Roman town site there (fig. 4.2).¹⁰ In any case, it lay in topsoil brought in from an uncertain Norfolk location. It remains interesting, however, since it represents the only example of this type of object so far recovered in Norfolk. The text, with the upper registers in Greek and the two lowest in Latin, asks the god Abrasax – an Eastern deity of bizarre appearance with a cockerel's head and snakes for legs – for 'Health and Victory'. The appellant's name is Tiberius Claudius Similis, son of Herennia Marcellina. The tracing of one's lineage through one's mother rather than one's father – at odds with the mainstream of Roman epigraphy, where the reverse is the standard – is usual in these magical inscriptions. The man's names enable a reasonably confident placing

⁹ Guy de la Bédoyère, *Gods with Thunderbolts; Religion in Roman Britain* (Tempus, Stroud, 2002), p. 32.

¹⁰ NCM 2005.297. See Roger Tomlin, 'A Bilingual Roman Charm for Health and Victory', *Zeitschrift für Papyrologie und Epigraphik*, vol. 149 (Bonn, 2004), pp. 259–66.

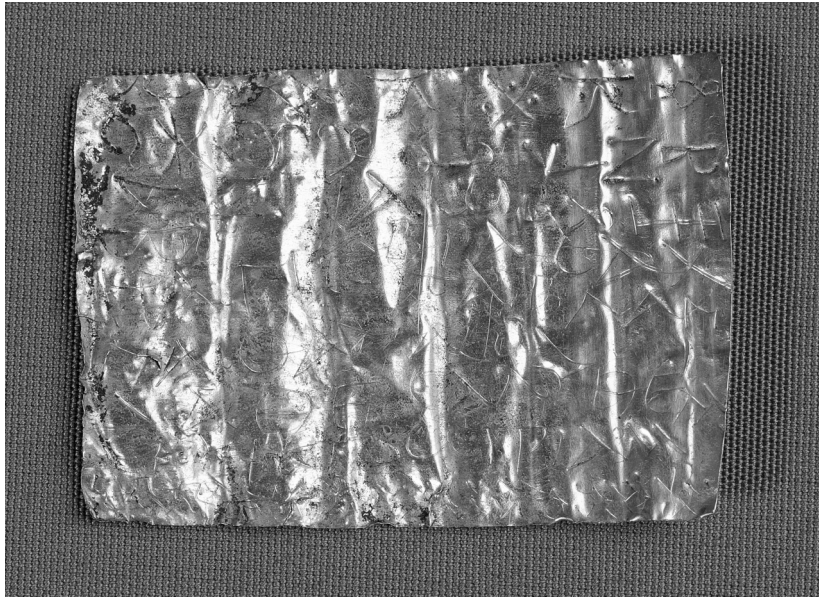


Fig. 4.2. *Lamella* found at Billingford.

of his origins in the Rhineland area. The finding of a prayer, inscribed to a Persian god on behalf of a man from the Rhineland, is eloquent evidence for a cosmopolitan mix of people and religious belief in late first- or early second-century Norfolk.

Votive altars were an alternative to full-sized versions in stone. Given Norfolk's lack of any native stone, these would have been particularly suited for use in the county. Such altars are often enamelled and, when new, must have been impressive in their appearance. However, their usual lack of inscriptions makes them difficult to interpret. Not carrying any dedication to a particular god or goddess means they cannot tell us which deities were being so honoured. Nonetheless, they are important evidence for religious practices and examples are known from a number of sites, including Binham, Carleton Rode, Fincham, Great Walsingham, North Creak and a fragment from Saham Toney.¹¹ Of course, wood would also have furnished an alternative material from which to make full-sized altars; these would only survive in exceptional conditions.

Inscriptions may also be found on objects such as jewellery, and such items allow one to interpret personal faith in Roman Norfolk. Finger rings sometimes carry abbreviated inscriptions in honour of certain gods. Examples with the letters MER from Great Walsingham,¹² MERC from North Creak¹³ and DEO MER from Saham Toney¹⁴ all attest to worship of the god Mercury. The *Matres Transmarini*, a

¹¹ HER 18849; HER 34589; HER 18849; HER 2024; HER 1913; HER 8747, respectively.

¹² HER 2024. See Jean Bagnall Smith, 'Votive Objects and Objects of Votive Significance from Great Walsingham', *Britannia*, vol. 30 (1999), p. 32.

¹³ HER 13698.

¹⁴ HER 4697.

triad of Mother goddesses who were particularly honoured on the continent, are mentioned on a ring from the Great Walsingham site.¹⁵ Other gods are also invoked on rings. An interesting study by Adam Daubney has placed the occurrence of the series of so-called 'TOT' rings – which bear an abbreviated dedication to the Celtic god Toutatis – in an area centred on Lincolnshire, the territory of the Corieltavian tribe.¹⁶ Examples are known, of course, from further afield and it comes as no surprise, given its geographic proximity to Lincolnshire, that a number of these rings have also been recorded in Norfolk.

Toutatis may well have had his adherents in Roman Norfolk. However, the evidence supplied by a hoard of jewellery and silver spoons, as well as other stray finds from the county, implies that other gods were dearer to the hearts of the men and women living south of the Wash.

THE THETFORD TREASURE, AND OBJECTS DEPICTING FAUNUS AND SATYRS

The Thetford Treasure, discovered in 1979, raised interesting questions about religious belief in late-Roman East Anglia.¹⁷ The objects from the hoard, including a gold belt buckle in the form of a prancing satyr and silver spoons with dedicatory inscriptions to Faunus, bespeak strong affiliations to the cult of that god (also identified with Pan) and the related Bacchic mysteries. As well as the many spoons with inscriptions beginning 'DEI FAVNI' ('To the God Faunus'), there was another engraved with the words 'SILVIOLA VIVAS' ('Long life to you, Silviola'). Silviola ('little lady of the woods') was most likely the cult name of one of the god's female worshippers and the spoons were presumably used by the sect's members during dining and drinking rituals connected with the worship of Faunus. The names on the other spoons are also likely to have been cult names. Two of the rings are equally of interest. One has a bezel in the form of a Pan-like mask. The other, with a bezel upheld by two woodpeckers, must refer to Picus, the woodpecker god, who was, in some versions of Roman mythology, the father of Faunus.¹⁸

For all these reasons, it seems likely that the assemblage represents a group of objects produced for the celebration of the cult of Faunus. The spoons appear to have seen use whilst some of the jewellery has not been finished. An interesting and persuasive interpretation places the treasure's deposition in the context of Theodosius' harsh, anti-pagan legislation, issued in AD 391 and 392. At this point, first public and then private worship of the old gods was forbidden under threat of heavy penalties.¹⁹

The popularity of objects figuring satyrs and Pan is well-attested in Roman Norfolk. In particular, vessel mounts – figurative masks that were attached to bronze ewers and other items of tableware – have been found in some numbers. John

¹⁵ HER 2024. See Bagnall Smith, 'Votive Objects', p. 32.

¹⁶ Adam Daubney (forthcoming).

¹⁷ Catherine Johns and Timothy Potter, *The Thetford Treasure: Roman Jewellery and Silver* (British Museum Publications, London, 1983).

¹⁸ Pierre Grimal, *The Dictionary of Classical Mythology* (Blackwell, Oxford, 1986), p. 373.

¹⁹ Johns and Potter, *The Thetford Treasure*, p. 73.



LEFT Fig. 4.3. Pan head mount from Elsing.

ABOVE Fig. 4.4. Strap fitting recently found at Bracon Ash .

Davies has drawn attention to a Pan-headed mount from Elsing (fig. 4.3),²⁰ whilst a fine Pan mask from the Thetford area, also published by Davies, is on display in the Castle Museum, Norwich.²¹

A vessel mount from Kenninghall,²² published as representing a goat's head, is surely a somewhat bestial depiction of the god Pan.²³ Another Pan mask was recently recovered from Cawston and is now in Norwich Castle Museum.²⁴ A mount showing a satyr head in profile was recovered from Great Walsingham,²⁵ together with a strap fitting of similar appearance.²⁶ Another strap fitting was recently found at Bracon Ash (fig. 4.4).²⁷

²⁰ NCM L1993.7.

²¹ John A. Davies, 'Romano-British Cult Objects from Norfolk – Some Recent Finds', *Norfolk Archaeology*, vol. 42 (1996), pp. 380–4.

²² HER 35131.

²³ David Gurney, ed., 'Archaeological Finds in Norfolk, 2002', *Norfolk Archaeology*, vol. 44 (2003), pp. 360–1.

²⁴ HER 30455, NCM 2008.254. See Andrew Rogerson and Steven Ashley, 'A Selection of Finds from Norfolk Recorded Between 2006–8', *Norfolk Archaeology*, vol. 45 (2008), pp. 429–32.

²⁵ HER 2024.

²⁶ Bagnall Smith, 'Votive Objects', p. 30.

²⁷ HER 29308.

Several mounts are known which seem to depict Silenus, companion in the revels of Bacchus. Silenus is the principal attendant of the god whose train also includes satyrs or, as they are sometimes called, *Panisci*. There must surely have been much cross-fertilisation between the rites of Faunus and those of Bacchus. Silenus's own satyr-like visage at once puts one in mind of *Panisci* and thus of Faunus himself. Examples from Besthorpe and Brampton,²⁸ together with an object interpreted as a bucket escutcheon from Hockwold,²⁹ all appear to represent Silenus. At the very least these objects offer food for thought; clearly they imply that Faunus was a popular deity in Roman Norfolk. This theme will be returned to later in this chapter.

The various figurines of gods and goddesses discovered in the county over the last few years represent, in the main, a fairly typical Romano-British assemblage. These may have stood in household shrines but their usual places of discovery are known religious centres. They must usually have been votive gifts to the deities in whose form they were produced, offerings to the gods in their own image. The finding of statuettes of different deities at the same site is compelling evidence that certain religious centres had a number of shrines, at each one of which worshippers may have paid their respects to a particular deity. This has a very modern counterpart in India, where many different gods are honoured in the same building.

The popularity of Pan and Bacchus implied by the Thetford treasure and by the series of vessel-mounts with Pan or Satyr heads is given further testimony by a fine statuette of a satyr from Ashby-with-Oby,³⁰ undoubtedly an import from the Continent. The young satyr, elegantly prancing forward, is of a quality that suggests an Italian origin and a first-century date; its subject-matter echoes the large number of satyr-related objects recorded from Norfolk.

STATUETTES: THE ASSIMILATION OF NATIVE AND MIGRANT DEITIES

Given the god's popularity in the north-western provinces, it comes as no surprise that statuettes of Mercury dominate the corpus of Roman figurines depicting gods that have been recovered from Norfolk. It is true that here we are dealing with relatively intensive metal-detecting at sites that appear to have contained shrines devoted, in the main, to this god, but evidence from other, less well-known sites seems to corroborate the picture. Mercury was very often assimilated with local Celtic gods who appeared as youthful males and this syncretism is probably the main reason why figurines in his image are so numerous relative to others.

An unusual example from Hockwold³¹ has a flat back, implying that it was mounted on a wall or other even surface, whilst an assemblage of three figurines from Great Walsingham³² provides a particularly interesting range in terms of the

²⁸ HER 29171 and HER 1124.

²⁹ HER 5351.

³⁰ HER 39918.

³¹ HER 5587, NCM 2007.419.2.

³² HER 2024.

competency with which they were produced.³³ Other examples have been recorded from a number of Norfolk sites.³⁴

Mars is represented by two statuettes found recently: a large, if ill-proportioned example from Beighton³⁵ and a smaller figurine from Ingoldisthorpe.³⁶ Both wear cuirasses and high-crested helmets. Mars is not, however, well-represented as a whole; Norfolk was not generally heavily garrisoned in the Roman period and figurines of Mars are correspondingly not numerous.

A few examples are known of figurines depicting other gods. Jupiter is represented on a statuette from Great Ryburgh³⁷ and another from Tacolneston,³⁸ whilst Minerva appears at Wighton.³⁹

Pipe-clay Venus figurines from Brampton, Hockwold, North Wootton and Scole⁴⁰ are of a type well known from the north-western provinces and it is no surprise to find these mass-produced versions reaching Norfolk. A copper-alloy statuette from Burgh Castle⁴¹ represents a more expensive image of the goddess. Finally, a pipe-clay figurine of the Dea Nutrix was found at Denver.⁴²

Some figurines, however, are not so easy to identify and here we may be dealing with native deities. A figurine discovered at Banham (fig. 4.5)⁴³ falls into this category. This curious creature, with its disproportionately large head, strange, sleeveless garment resembling a tank top and pincer-like hand, is not immediately recognisable. His dress and attributes do not readily conform to those of any Roman deity. Perhaps the 'tank top' is a stylised version of a

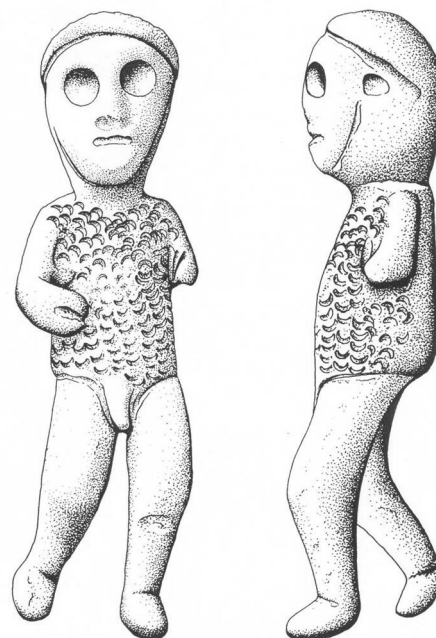


Fig. 4.5. Drawing of a figurine discovered at Banham.

³³ Many of these are now on display in Norwich Castle Museum, including NCM 1985.379.1 and 2. See Bagnall Smith, 'Votive Objects', pp. 24–5.

³⁴ Including Diss (no HER number), Gimingham (HER 52909), Great Dunham (HER 4188), Roudham (HER 28205), Sculthorpe (HER 31838), South Lopham (HER 29680), Tuttington (HER 30474), West Winch (HER 28120) and Wicklewood (HER 18111, NCM 1993.6.1).

³⁵ HER 51861.

³⁶ HER 1553.

³⁷ HER 11360.

³⁸ HER 35831.

³⁹ HER 1113.

⁴⁰ Respectively: HER 1006, NCM L1975.16; NCM 1958.380 and 1961.199.54; HER 29076; NCM 1962.590.1.

⁴¹ HER 29076.

⁴² NCM 1967.587.

⁴³ HER 32136.

nebris, the fawn skin worn by satyrs, indicating that this statuette is a native depiction of such. The garment does not really bear any resemblance to a *nebris*, however, and it is probably more likely that the statuette was intended to represent a Celtic god or hero figure. If this is the case then his identity may never be known.

It is likely that the traces of many more local gods and goddesses have vanished utterly. The foundation myths of the cities of Roman Britain would have been every bit as complex as those of the Mediterranean; a traveller through the British provinces in the Roman period would have been able to listen to numerous stories of the history of the places in which he or she stayed, tales involving various gods, goddesses and heroes, some of them perhaps Romanised but many probably not. This nameless figurine may have represented such a lost god.



Fig. 4.6. A strange figure from Acle perhaps represents another native Celtic deity.

A strange figure from Acle (fig. 4.6)⁴⁴ perhaps represents another native Celtic deity. The standing, male figure is stiff in its posture and crudely produced; indeed, it seems most likely that it was awaiting further work prior to being lost or given as a votive gift. Its presumably unfinished state makes any attribution uncertain but the vertical position of the arms, assuming they were not intended to be bent into another position, with the fists pointing forwards, does not equate with the usual posture encountered on figurines of Roman deities. Its long hair is also suggestive of a native god. Whether it was intended to represent an East Anglian version of a Roman god

or something very different remains uncertain. Such questions are not made easier to answer by a more recent discovery made in the immediate area.

An intriguing bronze leg, from a findspot very close to that of the Acle figurine,⁴⁵ is very probably of some importance, strongly implying that there was a temple site in the immediate vicinity. The quality of the piece is in stark contrast to the crude little statuette from close by. The fragment is broken at the knee but the modelling of toes, toenails and musculature, down to the rendering of individual arteries, bespeaks the highest level of workmanship. The figure, of which this leg was once a part, would also have been of a relatively large size, at least a foot in height, and this, together with the fine style, sets it outside the mainstream of Romano-British bronze figurines. It therefore stands apart from the other statuettes mentioned in this study and raises further questions, as yet unanswered, about the nature of the site where it was discovered.

ZOOMORPHIC OBJECTS OF RELIGIOUS SIGNIFICANCE

Animal figurines also have a religious significance. These were most likely votive in nature and probably served as an alternative to the sacrifice of real animals, most gods having at least one species of animal or bird that was associated with them. Alternatively, the animals may have represented the gods themselves.⁴⁶ They occur

⁴⁴ HER 50193.

⁴⁵ HER 42032.

⁴⁶ Miranda Green, 'Theriomorphism, and the Role of Divine Animals in Romano-British Cult Art', *Roman Life and Art in Britain*, eds Julian Munby and Martin Henig, British Archaeological Reports, vol. 41 (1977), p. 305.

in some numbers and, whilst it is not the aim of this chapter to produce an exhaustive catalogue of such objects, the noting of a few representative examples is instructive.

Goats, rams and, in particular, cockerels are particularly common and, since all these creatures feature as companions of Mercury, further attest to the popularity of this god in Roman Norfolk; although goats may also have been associated with Faunus. A charming copper alloy figurine of a goat from South Walsham,⁴⁷ with outsized head and horns, perhaps implies that Mercury was honoured at the site. Another figurine, of a rather indeterminate species of bird, further suggests the important nature of the settlement.



Fig. 4.7. A copper alloy figurine of a goat from Walsingham.

Many other animal figurines have been recovered in the last two or three decades. Walsingham,⁴⁸ as might be expected, has produced a number (fig. 4.7); again, horned animals and cockerels predominate. Examples of goats or rams have also been discovered at two Caistor St Edmund sites,⁴⁹ as well as at other locales,⁵⁰ and cockerels have been found across the county.⁵¹

Some of the smaller cockerel figurines have suspension loops. One possibility is that they were worn as pendants and, if this were the case, they presumably had an amuletic function. Such examples are known from Beeston-with-Bittering and Scole.⁵²

A figurine of a large feline, probably a panther or leopard, from Hainford⁵³ again implies the worship of Bacchus, as large cats featured in the god's entourage. A significant number of other votive figurines have been recorded, which we hope to publish fully elsewhere and which may add to our understanding of local religious practice.

⁴⁷ HER 39988.

⁴⁸ HER 2024.

⁴⁹ HER 9815 and 12872.

⁵⁰ Newton Flotman (HER 40445), Postwick (HER 13603) and Wymondham (HER 33069).

⁵¹ Ashwellthorpe (HER 30205), Binham (HER 24150), Costessey (HER 25624), Quidenham (HER 10792), Shouldham (no HER number recorded), Weybourne (HER 29097) and Wicklewood (HER 8897).

⁵² HER 4084 and HER 39960.

⁵³ HER 42543.

ZOOMORPHIC BROOCHES: MERE DECORATION OR VOTIVE OBJECTS?

Zoomorphic brooches are a well-known and highly decorative form of dress accessory. Their function is uncertain. They could represent nothing more than an attractive means of fixing clothing. Alternatively, they could be badges of affiliation to a particular god or goddess. Following this theory, adherents of Mercury might have favoured cockerel brooches, those of Epona might have preferred horse-shaped versions, whilst men and women following Venus may have worn brooches in the form of hares. Another explanation, and a particularly interesting one given the ritual use of both animal figurines and brooches as votive objects, is that the zoomorphic brooches may have been intended to stand in for the sacrifice of a particular animal to a particular deity. A golden-coloured bronze brooch, decorated with brightly coloured enamels, would have made an attractive gift to the gods and would be typical of third-century tastes for bright colours.⁵⁴ In the case of larger animals, such as horses, these offerings would also have been a good deal cheaper than the real beast. Their 'sacrifice' would also, of course, have been much less messy.

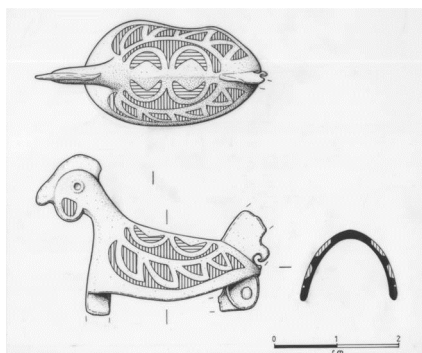


Fig. 4.8. Drawing of cockerel (or hen) from Hockwold.

Cockerels (or hens) are known from several local areas, such as that found at Hockwold (fig. 4.8)⁵⁵ and a flat, one-dimensional version from Warham.⁵⁶ As is the case with figurines of gods, goddesses and animals, different types of animal brooch are often found at the same site or in the same area.

However, it is duck brooches that are the most popular version amongst bird-shaped brooches. The three-dimensional versions, particularly those with enamelling, appear to be Romano-British in origin. These enamelled examples have been noted from numerous local findspots.⁵⁷ Many more, representing either ducks without enamel or, less obviously, duck-like birds have been recorded from other sites.

Why are these enamelled ducks so common?

Although they are known from sites across Britain, their distribution appears to be more concentrated in eastern counties than anywhere else. Images of ducks are found on many other objects, particularly those connected with drinking or dining. Interestingly, they also feature as terminals on the spoons from the Thetford treasure. Was the duck connected with Faunus in some way? These

⁵⁴ Martin Henig, *The Art of Roman Britain* (Batsford, London, 1995).

⁵⁵ HER 52672. Others include those from Ashwellthorpe (HER 30205), Brettenham (no HER number recorded), Caistor-St-Edmund (HER 12575), Cranwich (HER 25479), Marsham (HER 33240), Thetford (no HER number recorded), Weybourne (HER 29806).

⁵⁶ HER 1826.

⁵⁷ Notably, those from Ashwellthorpe (HER 30205), Besthorpe (HER 29171), East Walton (HER 34888), Feltwell (HER 21137), Fincham (HER 41327), Great Walsingham (HER 21106), Lynford (HER 40854), Marham (HER 29262), Newton Flotman (HER 32289), Scole (HER 37706) and Great Walsingham (HER 2024).

brightly-coloured Romano-British brooches are certainly thought-provoking but at present any religious significance remains speculative.

Hares are also particularly common, examples being known from various local sites.⁵⁸ Flat mounts in the shape of hares have been recorded from Shipdham and Tattersett.⁵⁹ Given the fact that the hare was sacred to Venus, these objects may attest concern over affairs of the heart and the giving of gifts to the goddess to ensure success in love.

A brooch which appears to depict a leopard, panther or similar big cat from Bunwell⁶⁰ is interesting, given the association of these creatures with Bacchus. Another, with a spotted pelt appropriate to a leopard, occurred at Great Walsingham.⁶¹

The so-called 'horse and rider' brooches form an important sub-category of the zoomorphic group. A large number were recovered from the Hockwold-cum-Wilton site,⁶² whilst other examples have also been found locally.⁶³ What does the horse and rider signify? Statuettes depicting a horse and rider are known from Roman Britain and these may be connected to the same cult. They are generally found in an area running north from Cambridgeshire into south Lincolnshire. Hockwold is on the border of Cambridgeshire, on the edge of the area where the horse and rider cult was centred. This opens an interesting window on the nature of one of the shrines at Hockwold. It is also possible that the image symbolises Epona, the Romano-Celtic goddess of horses. The Iceni were great horse breeders and Epona would have been a suitable choice for a deity. Alternatively, the brooches may signify another deity, perhaps a Romano-Celtic version of Mars in the guise of a rider god.⁶⁴

Brooches in the form of many other animals are known, such as hounds, lions, boars, horses, stags and fishes, but there is not space to discuss them here.

OTHER BROOCHES AND MINIATURE VOTIVE OBJECTS

Two final categories of brooches that should be mentioned are those representing miniature tools, such as axes, and another group in the form of sandals. An axe brooch was found at Wicklewood.⁶⁵ Sandal brooches are rare but examples have been recovered at Long Stratton and Wacton.⁶⁶ It has been convincingly argued that

⁵⁸ Including those from Aldeby (HER 52672), Binham (HER 24150), Bracon Ash (HER 28732), Brettenham (no HER number recorded), East Walton (HER 30884) Fincham (HER 25093), Great Walsingham (HER 2024), Hindringham (HER 29133), Hockwold (HER 5587), Kenninghall (HER 37284), Kirstead (HER 51672), and Weybourne (HER 29168).

⁵⁹ HER 35800 and HER 31569.

⁶⁰ HER 24456.

⁶¹ HER 3980.

⁶² HER 5587, NCM 1961.199.18,19, 47, 81, 82 and 84.

⁶³ Beeston-with-Bittering (HER 4084), Brampton (HER 1124), Brettenham (no HER number recorded), Burgh Castle (HER 24659), Cawston (HER 33889), Great Walsingham (HER 28254), Quidenham (HER 31405), Stoke Ferry (HER 53725) and Wicklewood (HER 18111).

⁶⁴ Henig, *Art of Roman Britain*, p. 306.

⁶⁵ NCM 1985.380.1.

⁶⁶ HER 25916; HER 42714.

sandal brooches were connected with Mercury, sandals being included as grave goods to be worn on the journey to the next life.⁶⁷

As well as brooches in the shape of miniature tools there are also miniature tools which are simply that. These are certainly votive in nature: they are far too small for any practical use and they occur throughout the north-western provinces of the Roman Empire.⁶⁸ Axes are particularly common, specimens being known from across East Anglia⁶⁹ and including some in lead from Saham Toney and Wicklewood.⁷⁰ The example from Shouldham is of exceptional interest, since it replicates a palstave of Middle Bronze Age date. Here, we must surely have an example of a chance Roman discovery of an object which was identified as being of considerable age and was thus invested, in the minds of the discoverers, with some particular religious power. Its replication in miniature as a votive object reflects that belief.

Many other votive tools and weapons have been recorded. Amongst the numerous varieties, representative examples are furnished by a hammer from Lyng,⁷¹ spearheads from Beachamwell and Bradenham⁷² and a miniature silver sword from Bracon Ash (fig. 4.9).⁷³

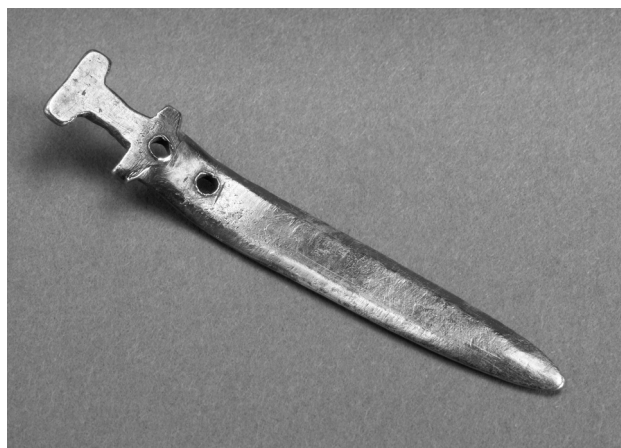


Fig. 4.9. A miniature silver sword from Bracon Ash.

Miniature vessels may also have been votive in nature, although the identification of these, both in terms of their function and date, often can be somewhat awkward. A curious object from Caistor St Edmund,⁷⁴ consisting of three tiny cauldrons, each attached to the others, has been dated as post-medieval, on account of its lead alloy composition and its similarity to examples from stratified contexts from the Thames foreshore in London. This clearly has implications for an almost

⁶⁷ Nina Crummy, 'Brooches and the Cult of Mercury', *Britannia*, vol. 38 (2007), pp. 225–30.

⁶⁸ Philip Kiernan, *Miniature Votive Offerings in the Roman North-West* (Franz Philipp Rutzen Verlag, Wiesbaden, 2009).

⁶⁹ Blakeney (HER 33247), Caister-On-Sea (HER 12872), Caistor St Edmund (NCM 1894.76.721), Cranwich (HER 1039), Diss (HER 13704), Great Dunham (HER 21441), Great Walsingham (HER 2024), Hockwold (NCM 1962.396.492), Merton (HER 40116), Runcton Holme (HER 33872), Roudham (HER 30192), Runcton Holme (HER 33872), Scole (HER 30650), Sedgford (HER 51489), Shouldham (no HER number recorded), Swannington (HER 51590), Tibenham (HER 28632), Wortwell (HER 28209) and possible examples from Brinton (HER 28408), North Elmham (HER 25848).

⁷⁰ HER 4697 and NCM 1985.380.2.

⁷¹ HER 36614.

⁷² HER 2635 and HER 32260.

⁷³ HER 29308, NCM 2009.250.

⁷⁴ Previously on display in Norwich Castle Museum: NCM 1826.75.9.

identical example found recently at Acle.⁷⁵ Another item, in the shape of a miniature tankard, from Upwell⁷⁶ has some similarities to Iron Age toggles; although, on balance, it is probably a small, votive piece of Roman date. Two other miniatures, both two-handled vessels, have been recovered at Fulmodeston and Cley-next-the-Sea.⁷⁷ Once again, these have not received very much attention, probably because of doubts as to their period and function.

MISCELLANEOUS OBJECTS: GIFTS TO THE GODS?

Other categories of object are also relevant here. We have already considered rings carrying dedicatory inscriptions, and rings with intaglio settings provide another such source. Whilst the majority of these gems feature depictions moulded in so-called *nicolo* glass, they nonetheless may hint at the religious beliefs of their owners. It would be only natural for a person to pick a subject for use as a signet that reflected their affiliations to a particular god or goddess.

The so-called Snettisham Roman jeweller's hoard – a deposit of coins, rings, bracelets, ingots and engraved gemstones dating to the later part of the second century and the stock in trade of a jeweller and gem engraver from the area – forms an interesting assemblage.⁷⁸ Presumably, the subject matter of the gems offers some sort of window onto what would have been the most popular devices for signets. All were cornelians and, on the basis of stylistic similarities and other criteria, can be confidently taken to have been produced by the same workshop at roughly the same time.

Two of these intaglios depict satyrs. The creatures are also featured on a cornelian intaglio, set in a silver ring, from Weybourne⁷⁹ and an example in *nicolo* glass set into the fragmentary remains of a bronze ring found at Wacton (fig. 4.10)⁸⁰ and of the third century.

Mercury occurs on two intaglio gems recently found in the county. One, a cornelian reused as a setting in a medieval seal matrix from Leziate, cannot, given the gem's history, be used



Fig. 4.10. Intaglio in *nicolo* glass set into the fragmentary remains of a bronze ring found at Wacton.

⁷⁵ HER 50193. See Hazel Forsyth and Geoff Egan, *Toys, Trifles and Trinkets: Base-metal Miniatures from London 1200–1800* (Unicorn, London, 2005), pp. 111–15.

⁷⁶ HER 29193.

⁷⁷ HER 25990 and 28773.

⁷⁸ Catherine Johns, *The Snettisham Roman Jeweller's Hoard* (British Museum Press, London, 1997).

⁷⁹ HER 29423.

⁸⁰ HER 42714. See Adrian B. Marsden, 'Roman Intaglios and Sealings from Norfolk', *Norfolk Archaeology*, vol. 45 (2009), p. 535.

as evidence for Norfolk in the Roman period. Another, a nicolo glass gem from Grimston,⁸¹ features the god leaning on a ram.⁸² Two silver rings from Great Walsingham are inset with oval plaques depicting the god.⁸³

Hoirs of ironwork provide another intriguing group. It is unlikely that ironwork, since it rusts so quickly, would be buried with an intention to recover it and so we may infer that such hoards were buried as gifts to the gods. They would thus reflect the Iron Age practice of depositing weapons and other items in or near water. So often ironwork assemblages either do not survive or they are ignored, with many metal-detector users not bothering to retrieve them. These, in any case, are often so rusted or corroded as to be unrecognisable as particular items. Indeed, such was the case with an assemblage from Saham Toney,⁸⁴ placed within a much-repaired copper alloy bowl. When this was found, the iron objects were discarded and only later, when mention was made of their potential significance, were they retrieved. The hoard contained various items: a padlock, keys, a chisel, nails and many other objects. Another probable hoard, discovered at Hockwold-cum-Wilton⁸⁵ in 1999, was composed of a plough coulter, an adze or hoe, a lock, key and hippo sandal, and was also most likely votive in nature. At Kilverstone,⁸⁶ a hoard of iron tools, a sledgehammer head, a pair of tongs and a beak anvil, deposited with pewter vessels, may be connected to the worship of Vulcan.⁸⁷

CONCLUSION

The evidence discussed in this chapter has underlined the religious nature of several sites in the county. As well as the two recently discovered sites at Acle⁸⁸ and South Walsham⁸⁹ producing votive statuettes, there are many more where a range of religious objects have been discovered, implying that these sites were shrines of some importance in the Roman period. Given the range of recovered material, shrines must surely have existed at Ashwellthorpe, Carleton Rode, Fincham, North Creak, Saham Toney and Wicklewold.⁹⁰ Many other religious sites, both larger complexes and smaller shrines, must have existed and it is to be hoped that more of these will come to light in due course.

This brief survey has also highlighted the range of religious beliefs in Roman Norfolk and shown that, although in some ways, such as the popularity of Mercury, the county is no different to the rest of the north-western provinces of the Empire it is, in other respects, somewhat dissimilar. As regards the differences, the large

⁸¹ HER 3579.

⁸² Marsden, 'Roman Intaglios', pp. 530–1.

⁸³ HER 2024. See Bagnall Smith, 'Votive Objects', pp. 35–6.

⁸⁴ HER 4697.

⁸⁵ HER 33367.

⁸⁶ HER 34489, NCM 2006.391.

⁸⁷ Adrian Challard, 'The Blacksmith Hoard', in *Excavations at Kilverstone, Norfolk: An Episodic Landscape History*, East Anglian Archaeology, vol. 113 (2006), pp. 125–9.

⁸⁸ HER 42032 and 50193.

⁸⁹ HER 39988.

⁹⁰ HER 30205; HER 34589; HER 18849; HER 1913; HER 4697 and HER 18111 respectively.

number of objects depicting Faunus, satyrs and associated figures is most telling and implies that worship of Faunus was widespread in the region.

Why was this cult so popular in Roman Norfolk? Presumably, we are dealing with the assimilation of an older, Iron Age deity with a known Roman deity. This was, after all, common practice as, for example, at Bath where the native goddess Sul was equated with Minerva. Different areas of Roman Britain also seem to have worshipped different gods; as we have seen, in the tribal lands of the Corieltauvi to the north, the god Toutatis was particularly revered. Was Faunus a Romanisation of the tribal god of the Iceni? If so, he might appear to represent a strange choice: a very Roman but rather old-fashioned god, whose history goes back to the most ancient myths of Rome and Latium. He would, nonetheless, have made a very suitable reinterpretation of the god of a tribe which had risen up in bloody rebellion. By giving that god a new face in the aftermath of the Boudiccan revolt, old loyalties could in some ways have been placated whilst placing the Iceni firmly within the ambit of the new Roman rule, grafting the belief of the people of Norfolk onto the vine of Roman tradition.

The Thetford Treasure, with its clear religious dimension, attests to strong non-Christian beliefs surviving in Norfolk during the very last decades of Roman authority. It was probably the very type of people for whom the Thetford Treasure was created against whom Theodosius' edicts of AD 391 and 392 were directed; ardent believers in Faunus and the Bacchic mysteries, who saw their world being swept away in a welter of pro-Christian legislation. The strength of that belief is suggested by other sites in Norfolk, where other divinities were also worshipped; at both Great Walsingham and Hockwold the coin lists imply continued activity into the Theodosian period. Ironically, the last coins to be offered to the gods at those sites were struck in the name of an emperor who wished their temples to be torn down and their images destroyed.