

## AN EIGHTH-CENTURY BRONZE ORNAMENT FROM CANTERBURY AND RELATED WORKS

M. BUDNY and J. GRAHAM-CAMPBELL

The decorated bronze object that forms the subject of this paper was found in 1978 in Canterbury, Kent, during excavations by the Canterbury Archaeological Trust at 77–79 Castle Street.<sup>1</sup> It was recovered from the upper levels of the fill of an irregularly shaped pit dug for clay extraction, in the same general context as two eighth-century *sceattas* (one somewhat worn) of the secondary series, in circulation apparently from the 730s to the 760s,<sup>2</sup> as well as Anglo-Saxon weaving implements, bone comb fragments, and redeposited Roman jewellery.

### DESCRIPTION

Drop-shaped object (Pl. I and Fig. 1) of cast bronze, L. 2.4 cm., with plain reverse and zoomorphic decoration on the front. The reverse is flat and shows no obvious traces of solder or any other means of attachment. The sides are plain and incline inwards; the upper surface is slightly convex giving a maximum thickness of 0.35 cm. There are no traces of gilding or inlay apparent from microscopic examination.<sup>3</sup>

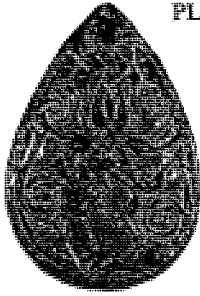
The decoration consists of a single field, within a plain narrow border, containing a pair of confronted animals with interlaced

<sup>1</sup> For the interim excavation report, see *Arch. Cant.*, xciv (1978), 275–7, where the ornament is illustrated by an enlarged photograph (Pl. V). We are most grateful to Mr. Tim Tatton-Brown, Director of the Trust, for the invitation to discuss this find, and for the drawings (Fig. 1) by Gill Hulse. The comparative drawings (Figs. 2–3) were prepared for us (from photographs) by Eva Wilson.

<sup>2</sup> Identifications by the late Mr. Stuart Rigold, who kindly discussed them with us.

<sup>3</sup> This examination was kindly undertaken by Mr. Andrew Oddy, of the British Museum Research Laboratory.

PLATE I



Eighth-century Bronze Ornament from Canterbury (Scale: approx. 3:2)

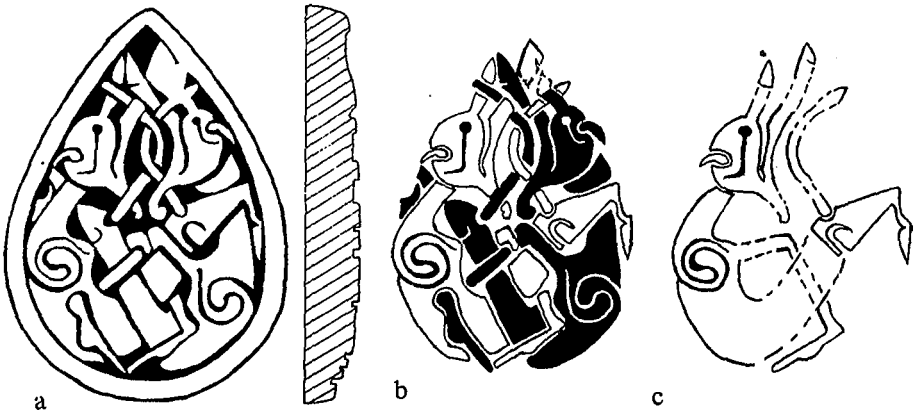


Fig. 1. Canterbury Bronze Ornament (Scale: 2:1):  
(a) Ornamented face and section  
(b) The two paired animals  
(c) The left-hand animal in the pair

bodies organised along a more or less vertical axis of symmetry; an area on the right-hand side at the top is concealed by corrosion which has also affected a small part of the left-hand edge. The two animal heads are placed at the top of the field, facing each other with wide open jaws (intertwined with their tails). The top of the upper jaw is expanded to suggest the snout, whereas the lower jaw ends in a rounded tip. A short lappet with an expanded terminal ending in a pointed tip extends upwards from the top of the head; the comma-shaped ear is inserted into an indentation in the contour of the back of the head. The eye consists of a circular pit with a curving line that extends downwards. At the base of the head, a slightly curved line forms a collar on the thick neck. The neck and body of each animal are bent into a U-shape, with single front and

back legs, and a ribbon-shaped tail that curves upwards from an indentation in the contour of the hindquarters. The two diagonal bodies cross right over left, close to the bottom of the field (and the base of the U); the underside of the body is turned to the inside of the U before the crossing and to the outside after the crossing, producing a double-jointed effect. The shoulder is marked by a spiral: a curvilinear whorl of two converging, comma-like, open-ended sections. The single line which describes the spiral curves in from the back and ends at the base of the foreleg. The rotation of the spiral is counter-clockwise in both animals, with the two sections of the spiral aligned one above the other on the left-hand animal and side by side on the right-hand animal. The front leg and foot are bent twice to form three sides of a rectangle, with the foot consisting of a rounded heel and pad, and a long pointed toe that touches the bottom edge of the field. The crossing of the forelegs serves to bind the two animals together at the central crossing-point of their bodies. The foreleg of the right-hand animal penetrates the other's body, whereas that of the latter lies over the body of the former. The hindquarters are marked by an open hook which rises from the underside of the body. The hindleg, which has a wedge-like foot, is bent sharply so as to lie along the outer edge of the field.

#### FUNCTION

The fine quality of the decoration on this Canterbury object suggests that its purpose was purely ornamental – an interpretation supported by the absence of any feature indicative of another function. It was clearly intended that it should be seen only from the front and must therefore have been mounted in a frame or setting, either in its own right to form a pendant or to embellish some other object, such as a box or a book-cover. No close parallel is known in Anglo-Saxon metalwork for its form, although it is clearly of eighth-century date on the basis of its context and its zoomorphic decoration (see below). Its form is, however, strongly reminiscent of that of some of the variously-shaped pendants that were a popular feature of Anglo-Saxon necklaces during the latter part of the seventh century.<sup>4</sup> All too little is known of such personal jewellery

<sup>4</sup> See, for example, A. Meaney and S.C. Hawkes, *Two Anglo-Saxon Cemeteries at Winnall, Winchester, Hampshire* (Soc. Med. Archaeol., monograph series, no. 4, 1970), Pls. V–VI.

in the eighth century,<sup>5</sup> but if the Canterbury ornament had been mounted as a pendant in a manner similar to those of seventh-century date, in a frame with a loop attached to its top, it would not need to have been made with its own means of suspension. Finally, it should be noted that its gently sloping sides are well suited for being mounted in such a manner, whilst it lacks the rivet-holes that might generally be expected on a mount.

#### DECORATION

No exact or complete parallel is known within the existing corpus of Anglo-Saxon art for the animal ornament on the front of the Canterbury object. The motif – a more or less symmetrical pair of stylized, overlapping animals seen in profile, with strand-like extremities which form a mesh of interlace – occurs frequently, usually enclosed within a frame, in Hiberno-Saxon art of the seventh to ninth centuries. There are many variations upon this theme,<sup>6</sup> as the creatures are stylized to various degrees and take up various poses. Usually they are seen in profile, often with only the near-side legs represented. The frequently elongated bodies and/or necks may curve in U-shaped, looped, or other geometric configurations. The creatures often have collars, lappets, or ears; sometimes the bodies and necks have double contours and/or some sort of surface embellishment, such as stippling or hatching which serve to distinguish the creatures from the network of the interlace. The creatures engage in the interlace to various extents, sometimes with one or the other dominating the design; the strands, narrower or wider, interlace either in more or less symmetrical patterns like the creatures or in freer, even haphazard constructions.

Some aspects of the animal ornament on the Canterbury object, such as the representation of only the near-side legs, the elongated neck and body, the opened jaws, the collar, the muzzle outline, and

<sup>5</sup> The few decorated Anglo-Saxon pendants that survive are mostly from the seventh and tenth centuries; see D.M. Wilson, *Anglo-Saxon Ornamental Metalwork, 700–1100*, in the *British Museum*, London 1964, 59.

<sup>6</sup> See, for example, the pairs within two semicircular fields within an initial P on folio 2 in *Corpus Christi College*, Cambridge, MS.197, and within the rectangular ends of a cross on a single surviving leaf in Saint Gallen Stiftsbibliothek, MS.1395, fasc. 5 [p. 422]; see J.J.G. Alexander, *Insular Manuscripts, 6th to the 9th Century*. A Survey of Manuscripts Illuminated in the British Isles, I, London 1978, nos. 12 and 58 (Figs. 49 and 282). One of the closest approximations to the drop-shaped field on the Canterbury object occurs within the initial E on folio 13r in the *Book of Kells*, where the tilted oval field extends in a pointed tip at the upper left. But in this case the alignment of the animals, one above the other with only the legs overlapping, is quite different. See Françoise Henry, *The Book of Kells*, London 1974, Pl. 12.

the device of 'piercing' the body with an interlacing strand, thus fit within a standard range. Some features in the treatment of both the motif and the animals themselves place the ornament within the mainstream of mid- to late-eighth century southern English art (much of it associated with Canterbury), at a stage in the development of Anglo-Saxon art before the spiral had dropped out of use (by the early ninth century) and foliate elements had come into general use (by the late eighth century). Several features, such as the spiral at one hip and simpler hook at another hip, the representation of both lappet and ear, the peculiar double-jointed or dislocated effect in which the body and ankle seem to have rotated through 180° around the surface of the field, and the shape of the eye with a simple rounded centre and a long curved line extending from it, are quite unusual. Some of these unusual features are paralleled in other works, and others might have arisen through the invention or improvisation of the craftsman or designer of the piece.

In certain respects the paired, interlaced animals on this object show some resemblances to a few surviving eighth-century pieces of Anglo-Saxon metalwork and carving, in bone and ivory, similarly executed in low relief on a compact scale. In metalwork the nearest parallels occur on the middle pin of the set of three silver-gilt pins found in the River Witham,<sup>7</sup> the gilt-bronze Mavourne disc found in Bedfordshire,<sup>8</sup> and in arched fields, enclosed as on the Canterbury object by a narrow band-like edge or frame, on opposite sides of the silver-gilt pommel and one of the conical mounts in the St. Ninian's Isle treasure.<sup>9</sup> More naturalistically rendered pairs of birds or animals in interlace also occur within framed rectangular or sub-rectangular fields on the front of an ivory plaque now in the Victoria and Albert Museum and on the back of the bone casket now in Brunswick, formerly in Gandersheim,<sup>10</sup> both probably southern English works of the late eighth century.

Of all of these instances the Mavourne disc presents the closest parallel to the Canterbury object and must be close to it in date. On

<sup>7</sup> Wilson, *op. cit.* in note 5, no. 19. See pp. 11–14, 57f., 132–4, and Pl. XVIII.

<sup>8</sup> A. Smallridge, 'A Late Eighth Century Disc from Mavourne Farm, Bolnhurst, Bedfordshire', *Bedfordshire Archaeological Journal*, iv (1969), 13–15 and Pl. 1a.

<sup>9</sup> See D.M. Wilson, in A. Small *et al.*, *St. Ninian's Isle and its Treasure*, Aberdeen University Studies, 152; Oxford 1973, 45–148, esp. 125–34 and 137–48, Fig. 31, Pls. XXVib and d, and XXVIIIa and b. Individual details, such as gaping jaws and confronted heads, resembling those on the Canterbury object can be seen on other pieces in this Shetland treasure.

<sup>10</sup> J. Beckwith, *Ivory Carvings in early medieval England*, London 1974, nos. 2 and 8, pp. 118ff., and figs. 13 and 23. Cf. also the pairs on the front side of the top of the casket (Fig. 10).



Fig. 2. Eighth-century Animal Ornament (not to scale):

- (a) Mavourne disc, one quadrant.
- (b) Leningrad Gospels, folio 15r, base 1.
- (c) Book of Kells, folio 5r, capital S.
- (d) Cuthbert Gospels, folio 111r, centre of initial Q.
- (e) Blickling Psalter, folio 40r, letter A.
- (f) Blickling Psalter, folio 27r, initial S.
- (g) Barberini Gospels, folio 11v, panel at top of frame.
- (h) Leningrad Gospels, folio 12r, top of left-hand arch.

this disc two diagonally opposed quadrants contain more or less symmetrical pairs of animals which in part form U-bends. One of the quadrants contains animals with crossed necks and opposed heads; the opposite quadrant (Fig. 2a) contains backward-looking animals with crossed bodies and confronted heads. In this quadrant, as on the Canterbury object, the extended neck and the body form the sides of a U-shaped bend and the hind hip stretches straight back from the body to rest the bent joint against the side of the field. Further correspondences between the two pieces include the shape of the Mavourne feet and the Canterbury forefeet, and the tails which on both objects interlock with each other in a twist.

On the other works (most or all of which date probably from the late eighth century) the creatures, although overlapping to a certain extent, remain clearly distinct from each other and from the network of interlace. The quadrupeds on the St. Ninian's Isle pieces display characteristically Northumbrian and Pictish features, such as scrolled hindquarters. The plentiful use of foliate elements on the Witham pins, the ivory plaque, and the bone casket indicate a different stage in the Anglo-Saxon treatment of animal ornament, although the possible foliate character of the lappets on the Canterbury animals may be a step in this direction. A distinct characteristic of the ornament on the Canterbury object is that the animals themselves engage in the interlace, as an integral whole, rather than remaining essentially distinct by virtue of their size, decoration or position. In the overall interlace of jaws, necks, bodies, legs, and tails, the distinction between elements of the Canterbury animals is made principally between widths (slender strand-like appendages; wider neck and body; head and chest widest of all), with the addition of a few distinguishing anatomical features.

One of the closest parallels to this overall effect can be seen on the mid-to-late eighth-century Anglo-Saxon, probably southern English, embroideries preserved at Maeseycck in Belgium and formerly kept as relics at nearby Aldeneyck along with eighth-century Anglo-Saxon gospels (of which only fragments survive).<sup>11</sup> These luxurious embroideries have two interlaced pairs of animals in arched fields, one on each of the two strips mounted at present along the sides of the so-called *casula*.<sup>12</sup> Rendered in gold thread

<sup>11</sup> See M. Calberg, 'Tissus et Broderies attribués aux saintes Harlinde et Relinde', *Bulletin de la Société royale d'Archéologie de Bruxelles*, Brussels, Oct. 1951, 1-26. Alain Dierkins, who has embarked upon a study of the history of the abbey of Aldeneyck and its relics, has generously allowed consultation of his work. Dominic Tweddle and Mildred Budny are working on a detailed study of the embroideries.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, Figs. 3, 6 (the middle field), and 9 (the field at the right).

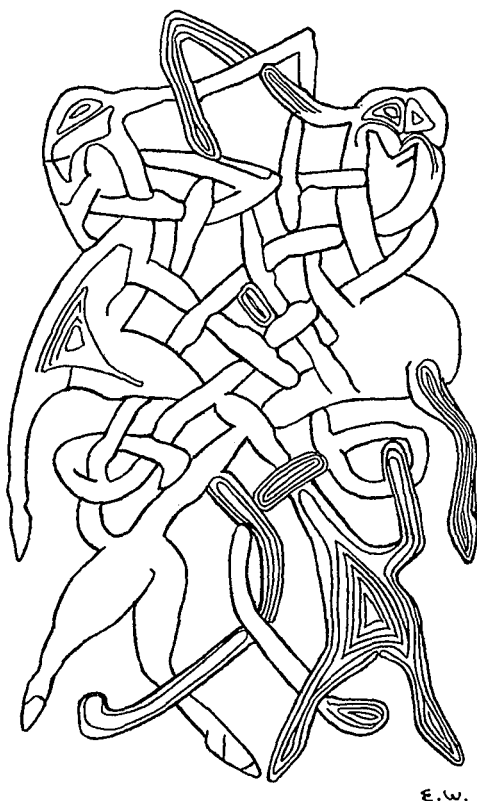


Fig. 3. Maeseyck Embroideries (provisional drawing).  
Fifth arcade on left-hand strip, showing the red-thread contour of the decoration and the infill of gold thread where it remains *in situ*. (Scale: approx. 3:2)

against a background of varied colours, these stylized animals, arranged with their heads at the top of the fields, have extended necks and bodies which taper to about the same width as the interlacing strand-like lappets, tongues and tails. In the pair on the left-hand strip (Fig. 3), the diagonal bodies cross each other in about the middle of the field, so that the hindquarters of the two animals are confronted and the forequarters are opposed. In the pair on the right-hand strip, both the diagonal bodies and the diagonal necks are crossed, so that the forequarters are opposed and the heads are confronted. Executed as a continuous mass of gold thread, with the use of differently-coloured threads to pick out some features such as the eyes, the animals enter into the overall pattern of interlace to a



degree comparable to those on the Canterbury object. The twist in the interlacing strands (possibly in this case the animal's tongues, although it is difficult to tell) framed by the two animals' hind-quarters in the pair on the left-hand strip is the closest extant parallel to the twist in the tails framed by the open mouths on the Canterbury object.

In spite of the differences in media, many of the closest as well as the most extensive parallels for the Canterbury ornament, with respect to both the general design and some of its specific features, occur in decorated manuscripts of the mid- to late-eighth century. Besides the Book of Kells<sup>13</sup> and the Durham Cassiodorus, a mid-eighth century manuscript probably made in Northumbria,<sup>14</sup> most of these manuscripts were made (or probably made) in southern England and the Midlands. These manuscripts, belonging to what E.H. Zimmermann (who first grouped them together on the basis of stylistic affinities) called the Canterbury School and the Southern English Group,<sup>15</sup> either come from Canterbury itself or show strong links with manuscripts produced at Canterbury, notably:

the Vespasian Psalter, a luxurious manuscript produced in the second quarter of the eighth century probably at Canterbury where it was kept at St. Augustine's Abbey and displayed on the high altar, at least by the fifteenth century;<sup>16</sup>

the *Codex Aureus*, a luxurious gospel book probably made at Canterbury in the mid-eighth century, and certainly there by the mid-ninth century when it was given (or returned) to Christ Church and inscribed to this effect;<sup>17</sup>

the Blickling or Morgan Psalter, a provincial mid-eighth century manuscript dependent partly on Canterbury, partly on Northumbria, and made probably not far south of the Humber,

<sup>13</sup> Dublin, Trinity College MS. A.I.6; Alexander, no. 52. The date and origin of this manuscript remain a vexed question.

<sup>14</sup> Durham Cathedral Library MS.B.II.30; Alexander, no. 17.

<sup>15</sup> See his *Vorkarolingische Miniaturen*, Denkmäler deutscher Kunst, III: Malerei, 1, Berlin 1916, 131-45 and 286-305, although a number of revisions and refinements in the attributions have been made since then and are still being made. As the literature dealing with most of the manuscripts is extensive, references here are made principally to the catalogue numbers and the reproductions in Alexander, *op. cit.* in note 6.

<sup>16</sup> London, British Library MS. Cotton Vespasian A.i; Alexander, no. 29. See the facsimile, D.H. Wright (Ed.), *The Vespasian Psalter (B.M. Cotton Vespasian A.i)* (Early English Manuscripts in Facsimile, xiv; Copenhagen, 1967).

<sup>17</sup> Stockholm, Kungliga Bibliotheket MS.A.135; Alexander, no. 30.

possibly in the area of Lincoln where it was kept at least by the fifteenth century;<sup>18</sup>

the Maeseck gospel fragments, Anglo-Saxon work of the mid- or late-eighth century, kept at Aldeneyck along with the Anglo-Saxon embroideries from at least the ninth century;<sup>19</sup>

the Leningrad Gospels, a manuscript showing both northern and southern English influences, possibly made in the Midlands or southern England in the mid-to-late eighth century, and kept at Corbie by at least the twelfth century;<sup>20</sup>

the Cuthbert Gospels, a late eighth-century manuscript partly written and decorated by an Anglo-Saxon scribe named Cuthbert working evidently in the Salzburg area, and showing mixed Anglo-Saxon (mostly southern English) and local Continental influences;<sup>21</sup>

and the Barberini Gospels, a southern English manuscript of the eighth or early ninth century.<sup>22</sup>

Unlike the manuscript renditions, in which the animals in a pair are often differentiated from each other and the interlace, as well as from the background, by the juxtaposition in various combinations of ink, bare vellum, and coloured pigments (much as by the use of differently-coloured threads on the embroideries), the decoration on the Canterbury object is in monochrome low relief and depends upon an interplay of light on the raised surfaces and shadow on the incised or carved surfaces. In spite of these and other differences, the Canterbury object represents a metallic version of certain eighth-century calligraphic styles of animal ornament, produced in manuscripts from southern England and Canterbury in particular.

In the Leningrad Gospels many more or less symmetrical pairs of stylized animals enmeshed in interlace are enclosed within fields of various shapes, often with narrow band-like frames, in the canon arcades (folios 12r–17v) and on the decorative initial pages (folios

<sup>18</sup> New York, Pierpont Morgan Library MS.M.776; Alexander, no. 31.

<sup>19</sup> Maeseck, Église de Ste. Catherine, *s.n.*; Alexander, nos. 22 and 23.

<sup>20</sup> Leningrad, Saltikov Shchedrin State Public Library Cod. Lat. F. v. I. 8; Alexander, no. 39.

<sup>21</sup> Vienna, Nationalbibliothek Cod. 1224; Alexander, no. 37.

<sup>22</sup> Vatican City, Bibliotheca Apostolica, Vat. Barberini. Lat. 570; Alexander, no. 36. Mildred Budny wishes to thank Prof. Julian Brown for discussing with her his views on the script of the Dublin, Durham, Leningrad, Maeseck, New York and Vatican manuscripts. Dr. Heike Schröder generously allowed access to her unpublished work on the Leningrad Gospels.

18r, 78r, 119r, and 177r).<sup>23</sup> Some of the closest to the pair on the Canterbury object include the quadrupeds with crossed necks and bodies in U-shaped formation in capital 3 on folio 12v, the C-shaped animals in base 1 on folio 15r (Fig. 2b), and the winged bipeds with crossed bodies, confronted or opposed heads, and open jaws in capital 3 on folios 12r and 16r, and in the upper zoomorphic field in pillar 5 on folio 17r.

The Book of Kells contains a number of symmetrical pairs of overlapping creatures caught up in interlace and usually enclosed within fields (often framed): in some of the initials (for example folios 29r, 32v, 114v, 124r, and 130r), canon arcades (for example folios 1v–5r), and other decorative frames (for example folios 129v and 202r).<sup>24</sup> Some of these pairs closely resemble the pair of animals on the Canterbury object. Among the closest are the two pairs of overlapping U-shaped animals, which have only near-side legs, in square fields in capitals 1 and 5 of the canon arcade on folio 5r (Fig. 2c).<sup>25</sup>

The animal ornament on the Canterbury object (as well as the Mavourne disc) shares a number of features with the two symmetrical pairs of interlaced, S-shaped, double-contoured animals, on which only the near-side legs are represented, in rectangular fields on the sides of the decorative frame on folio 81v in the Durham Cassiodorus.<sup>26</sup> In these pairs the two bodies are crossed. The hind hip of each animal crosses the neck of the other animal and rests the bent joint against the side of the field. The confronted heads have open jaws and lappets which extend into interlace behind the head; collars occur at the base of the necks.

In the gospel fragments at Maeseyck, pairs of birds in interlace occupy the L-shaped corner panels on folio 1r,<sup>27</sup> and unframed pairs of quadrupeds, with double contours, collars, and interlacing lappets and tails, serve as the bases supporting the canon arcades on the recto and verso of folio 7.<sup>28</sup> The pairs supporting the outermost

<sup>23</sup> Alexander, frontispiece (folio 12r in colour) and Figs. 188–95 (folios 12v–13r, 16r, 17r, and the four initial pages).

<sup>24</sup> See Alexander, Figs. 232–40, 242–3, 245–7, and 253; Henry *op. cit.* in note 6, Pls. 2–9, 11–3, 23, 26, 46–7, 50–1, 67, 105, and 109.

<sup>25</sup> The right-hand pair is enlarged in F. Henry, *Irish Art during the Viking Invasions (800–1020 A.D.)*, London 1967, colour Pl. E.

<sup>26</sup> Alexander, Fig. 74, and C. Nordenfalk, *Celtic and Anglo-Saxon Painting. Book Illumination in the British Isles, 600–800*, New York 1977, Pl. 27 in colour.

<sup>27</sup> Alexander, Fig. 87.

<sup>28</sup> Alexander, figs. 98 and 99 show only the upper half of these arcades; the lower halves have not been published.

pillars in each arcade have crossed bodies and confronted heads with open jaws and muzzle outlines.

The *Codex Aureus* has a number of symmetrical pairs of birds or quadrupeds that fill several curved fields in the arches of the first five canon arcades (folios 5r–7r), and the V-shaped fields in the elaborate initial X (which stands for the Greek letter *chi*) on folio 11r.<sup>29</sup> The work of two different hands, one much more competent than the other (responsible only for folios 6v–7v in the manuscript),<sup>30</sup> these various pairs of creatures are enmeshed in asymmetrical interlacing strands drawn freehand.

The Cuthbert Gospels contains a pair of interlocked bipeds with bird-like heads in the lower left-hand rectangular panel of the decorative frame on folio 17v, and pairs of interlaced birds in the fields within two initials: an oval field within Q on folio 111r (Fig. 2d), and an arched field within N on folio 166r.<sup>31</sup> In each case the interlacing strands, drawn freehand, are asymmetrical. Of these three instances of the motif, the interlocked U-shaped birds in the Q come closest to the animals on the Canterbury object. These birds, with extended, arched necks have collars at the base of the head and interlock in such a way that the tail of each bird crosses the neck of the other bird and the jaws clamp on to the wing.

The Barberini manuscript contains several versions of the motif occurring in the rectangular fields in the decorative frame on folio 11v (as in Fig. 2g), and in various fields in some of the full-page initials: XPI on folio 18r, and Q on folio 80r.<sup>32</sup>

The pair of animals in the lower field in the Q most closely resembles the Canterbury pair. These blackened animals, like some single interlaced quadrupeds elsewhere in the manuscript (such as the looped animal in the field above them in the Q) are set against the bare vellum background and filled in with ink, leaving some bare vellum to designate the 'white' of the eye and the outlines of the muzzle, hip, base of the ear and tail, and so on, producing an effect like a photographic negative.

Although having foliate terminals and double contours (produced in this case by a hairline pen outline set at a slight distance outside the body), these animals correspond to the animals on the Canterbury object in a number of ways. For example, they similarly

<sup>29</sup> Alexander, Figs. 152 (f.11r) and 154 (f.5r); Nordenfalk, *op. cit.*, in note 26, Pls. 34 (f.5r), 35 (f.6v), and 38 (f.11r) in colour.

<sup>30</sup> Pace Nordenfalk, *op. cit.* in note 26, 98 and 105.

<sup>31</sup> Alexander, Figs. 181, 185, and 187.

<sup>32</sup> Alexander, Figs. 178 in colour, 170 and 171.

have open jaws (with the lower jaw ending in a rounded tip), curved muzzle line which does not reach the underside of the head, feet shaped with two rounded elements plus extended, pointed toe (or claw), and socket-like outlines at the base of both lappet and tail. They resemble the effect on the Canterbury object of a solid body set in relief against a few outlined features.

This calligraphic style of animal and animal-headed ornament occurs in a number of the Canterbury and Canterbury-influenced manuscripts, mostly in initials and display letters, from the *Vespasian Psalter*<sup>33</sup> to the *Barberini Gospels* where this type, along with spiral ornament, has one of its last occurrences in the transition to a different style. It can be seen for example in the *Codex Aureus* (in the S near the end of line 3 on folio 11r), the *Leningrad Gospels* (on folio 17v and the four decorative initial pages), and the *Corpus Glossary* (on folios 1r and 32r), a late eighth-century manuscript probably from Canterbury.<sup>34</sup>

The *Blickling Psalter* contains an unframed symmetrical pair of interlaced animals in this blackened or 'negative' style, as it might be called. Represented with sharply bent hindquarters, single foreleg, crossed diagonal bodies, strand-like necks, and bird-like heads, the animals stand for a decorative letter A (Fig. 2e) in the line of display letters on folio 40r. The initial S (Fig. 2f)<sup>35</sup> on folio 27r<sup>36</sup> terminates at one end in the neck and head and at the other end in the hindquarters of an animal in the same style, with the tail inserted socket-like into the rump. In the figure-of-eight course of the letter this animal undergoes a rotation comparable to that on the Canterbury object: the same outline which describes the underside of the neck also describes the upper side of the hindquarters. As on the Canterbury object, this reversal in the underside of the animal is not apparent at first sight.

A reversal of this kind can be seen in a number of other eighth-century animals. Some of these animals serve as initials or parts of initials, like the N on folio 51v in the *Barberini Gospels* and T on folio 122r in the *Book of Kells*.<sup>37</sup> Various paired or single animals in frames rotate in this way, like the lower animal in the asymmetrical

<sup>33</sup> See Wright, *op. cit.* in note 16, 61–3.

<sup>34</sup> Cambridge, *Corpus Christi College MS. 144*, not listed in Alexander's catalogue. See E.A. Lowe, *Codices Latini Antiquiores*, ii, Oxford, rev. 2nd ed., 1973, no. 122. See also Alexander, no. 41 and Fig. 137.

<sup>35</sup> Alexander, Fig. 150.

<sup>36</sup> Alexander, Fig. 148.

<sup>37</sup> Alexander, Figs. 175 and 253.

pair on the sides of the St. Ninian's Isle pommel and several animals in the Leningrad Gospels, for example the animals with scrolled hind-quarters in the upper zoomorphic fields in pillars 1 and 3 on folio 17v and the S-shaped creature in the uppermost field in pillar 2 on folio 16v directly opposite. Sometimes, not only in the case of backward-looking animals, the extended neck reverses in this way, as in the biped which serves as the middle of the initial N on folio 8r in the Barberini Gospels, and a number of animals in the Leningrad Gospels, for example the pairs of winged bipeds in the upper zoomorphic field in pillar 5 on folio 17r.

This reversal differs in kind from the double-jointed effect, involving not a twist around the surface but a curve or bend along it, as found in some other eighth-century creatures such as the pair with crossed necks on the Mavourne disc, some of the St. Ninian's Isle animals (for example on the inscribed silver chape),<sup>38</sup> and many of the gymnastic figures which populate the Book of Kells.<sup>39</sup> A rotation in the foreleg or ankle comparable to that on the Canterbury object can be seen in a few cases in the Leningrad Gospels, for example the single looped animal in capital 2 on folio 15r (the joint of the near-side foreleg) and the figure-of-eight animal in capital 2 on folio 15v (the ankle). Apparently, no parallel exists for the combination on the left-hand animal of the Canterbury object of this reversal and the effect of piercing.

The device of piercing, or 'penetration' as T.D. Kendrick called it,<sup>40</sup> in which an interlacing strand passes partway under another element and re-emerges partway across it, as if passing through it, affects numerous interlaced animals of the late seventh to the early ninth century, for example in many of the works already mentioned. The piercing sometimes occurs in both animals of a pair and sometimes, as on the Canterbury object, in only one of the pair. On folio 81v in the Durham Cassiodorus the strands pierce the bodies of the pair on the right-hand side of the frame, whilst on the left-hand side they interlace only with the double contour, treated thus as a strand itself. In the lower field in the X on folio 18r in the *Codex Aureus* the strands not only interlace with the double contours of both animals (as in a number of other pairs in the manuscript), but also pierce the body of the left-hand quadruped. The Barberini Gospels employs the device frequently, sometimes more than once on the same animal (for example the right-hand animal in the pair at

<sup>38</sup> Wilson, *op. cit.* in note 9, no. 16, 65ff., Fig. 30, and Pl. xxx.

<sup>39</sup> See, for example, Henry, *op. cit.* in note 6, Pls. 120-2.

<sup>40</sup> *Anglo-Saxon Art to 900 A.D.*, London 1938, for example 145 and 214.

the top of the frame on folio 11r). On the ivory plaque in the Victoria and Albert Museum the right-hand bird is pierced. In the Leningrad Gospels piercing occurs on the neck of the left-hand bird in the pair at the top of the left-hand arch (Fig. 2h) on folio 12r. The confronted heads of these backward-looking birds, which form part of a frieze of animals and scrolling stems, flank a vertical twist in the rising strand-like extensions of the wings, one of the closest parallels (along with the Maeseck embroideries) to the twist in the tails framed by the jaws of the animals on the Canterbury object.

On the object the piercing only of the left-hand animal preserves the basic symmetry of the design (otherwise on this side of the pattern the foot would seem to be lost behind the body, leaving an unbroken expanse between the spiral and the crossing of the bodies). At the same time it serves as one of the variations on either side of the axis of symmetry (which deviates towards the left at the bottom of the field). Such differences in paired counterparts are to be expected in a hand-made design on the model made for casting the piece, but they also constitute a fundamental component of the style, as the variations are introduced within a balanced scheme on a skilful piece of workmanship exhibiting an overall precision in design and execution. In this way the ornament differs from the more exact, even rigid symmetry in interlaced pairs of animals such as in the Book of Kells, the Blickling Psalter, the Gandersheim casket, and the Witham pins. It thus corresponds quite closely to the distinctive style of animal ornament in the Leningrad Gospels.

Many of the animals in this manuscript are related to the animals on the Canterbury object. They are frequently given extended necks and bodies, and many of the animals seen in profile have wide-open jaws (often with teeth or tongue or both) in which the lower jaw curves slightly downwards to end in a rounded tip. Often a line (usually curved) at the end of the snout indicates the nostril. The collars occur at the base of the head (or else close to it). As noted above, piercing occurs in the left-hand animal of a pair on folio 12r, and a number of the animals, either single or paired, have an apparently rotated neck, body, foreleg, or ankle. Some animals, as on the Canterbury object, reverse in this way more than once, for example the single quadruped with looped neck and scrolled hind-quarters in both pillar 3 on folio 17r and the right-hand side of the frame on folio 177r.

The animals in this manuscript and on the Canterbury object share some features difficult to parallel elsewhere. The device of a spiral at one hip or at the base of a wing occurs frequently in Hiberno-Saxon art up to the early ninth century; the double-sectioned spiral is one of several recurring types. It can be seen, for example, on the

asymmetrical pairs of animals along the sides of the St. Ninian's Isle pommel. The simpler hook on the hind hip on the Canterbury object also has some parallels, for example on the birds in the left-hand panel on the front of the Franks Casket, carved in whalebone, where the hooked line extends from the contour of the neck,<sup>41</sup> and on some of the quadrupeds drawn by the lesser of the two artists in the *Codex Aureus*: at the top of the arches on folios 6v (four animals in succession in the medallion), and 7r (a confronted pair) where the hooked line at the base of the hip is counterbalanced by a hooked line descending from the base of the neck or the tail, combining in the effect of a simplified spiral across the shoulder or hindquarters. But the combination of spiral at one hip (or wing) and hook at another hip can be seen both on the Canterbury object and in the Leningrad Gospels. In the manuscript it occurs frequently, for example on the winged animals in pillars 1 and 5 on folio 12r, with an enlarged spiral at the base of the wing and a simpler spiral or hook at the back of the forehip, continuing the line of the leg. The two sections of the spiral at the base of the wing are aligned side by side in pillar 1, and one above the other on the animal in pillar 5, these differences between left and right on the page in the alignment of the spirals correspond, in reverse, to the two spirals on the Canterbury object.

The shape of the lappet on the Canterbury object has its closest approximations in some of the ears in the Leningrad manuscript. Usually placed at the top of the head, some of the animals' ears similarly expand in width (although usually without a slender strand-like base) to a rounded or pointed terminal. Some of the closest to the Canterbury lappet occur on the pair of animals in pillar 3 on folio 12r, the lower S-shaped animal in the asymmetrical pair in pillar 5 on folio 12v, and the asymmetrical pair in the crossbar of the N on folio 177r.

The tilted U-shaped posture of the animals on the Canterbury object, although occurring nowhere else in precisely the same way, most closely resembles examples already cited: the Mavourne disc, the Durham Cassiodorus, the Cuthbert Gospels, the Book of Kells, and the Leningrad Gospels. In the Leningrad manuscript the two quadrupeds in capital 3 on folio 12v have extended arched necks and bodies (which taper before the hindquarters) as the sides of a U; the hind hip, not just the hind leg as on the Canterbury object, bends away from the U and the chest, with outstretched forelegs, serves as the outside of the curve. In the interlocked pairs of

<sup>41</sup> Beckwith, *op. cit.* in note 10, no. 1, Fig. 4.



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animals in base 5 on folio 12r and base 2 on folio 15v, the curved backs are directed outwards, as on the Canterbury object, with the animals' wings in the lower corners of the field. The pairs of band-like animals in the outermost capitals 1 and 5 (Fig. 2c) on folio 5r in the Book of Kells have curved backs in the lower corners of the field, but it is the extended hind leg (rather than the body as on the Canterbury object) which forms one of the sides of the U opposite the extended neck. With both the hind legs and the necks crossed, the heads of these animals are opposed, with closed mouths and muzzle lines; the forelegs bend before rather than after crossing the other animal.

The variation in width between the chest, the slender foreleg, and the extended neck and body on the Canterbury object closely resembles that of a number of animals in the Leningrad manuscript, for example the pair of opposed, looped, winged bipeds in pillar 3 on folios 12r-v and in pillar 4 on folio 17r. In a configuration very close to the Canterbury animals, the neck and body have approximately the same width and the chest is wider, with the strand-like foreleg or forelegs extending from it into the interlace. Even though painted with pigments of various colours, most of the stylized animals in this manuscript remain essentially band-like in several alternating widths, as on the Canterbury object, with the addition of a few summary features.

The instances of animal ornament, usually animal-headed terminals, in the blackened or 'negative' style in the Leningrad manuscript closely resemble the animals on the Canterbury object in having gaping jaws, usually with the upper jaw extended and the lower jaw ending in a rounded tip, a muzzle outline, and sometimes also an ear at the top of the head not unlike the lappet on the Canterbury object (as on the heads on the right-hand side of the frame on folio 18r), a curved outline extending behind the rounded eye (as in line 3 on the same page), or a curved collar (as at the bases of the arcade on folio 17v). In an amalgam of the 'negative' and the painted styles, the arched quadrupeds serving as the bases of the arcade on folio 16r and the upright quadruped standing between the first two initials on folio 18r have tails inserted socket-like into the rump with a gap of bare vellum; on the quadruped on folio 18r the tail which interlaces with the animal interrupts the course of the neck as it cuts across it (a frequent device in pen-line interlace), corresponding to the effect of the interlacing elements on the Canterbury object.

The Leningrad manuscript offers in its animal ornament one of the closest parallels to the Canterbury object. On account of its highly distinctive and inventive, even idiosyncratic style of drawing,

this manuscript is particularly difficult to localize and so far has defied attribution to a known scriptorium.

The tradition of the motif which decorates the Canterbury object extends into mid-ninth century southern English and Canterbury manuscripts. A symmetrical interlaced pair of snake-like creatures, with their open-mouthed, confronted heads at the top of the arched field, occurs within the initial A on folio 22r in the Book of Cerne, a prayer-book possibly from Mercia.<sup>42</sup> The Canterbury Bible, of which only part of the gospels survives (a luxurious manuscript probably produced at Canterbury and belonging to St. Augustine's Abbey by at least the fourteenth century and probably long before that), contains several more or less symmetrical pairs of stylized animals, confronted or opposed, with single forelegs and bodies which taper into interlacing (sometimes also foliate) tails, in various fields in the canon arcades on folios 4r and 5r.<sup>43</sup> They usually have crossed diagonal bodies and heads placed at the top of the field, sometimes with open jaws.

Lacking explicit internal evidence of date and place of origin, the manuscripts most closely related to the Canterbury object can be positioned only approximately, on the basis of stylistic and typological considerations of the script and decoration. The task of attribution is made doubly difficult at this stage on account of the many gaps in our knowledge of manuscript production during the period, given the extensive loss and destruction of most of the evidence over the centuries, and on account of the few studies that have been completed on individual manuscripts to allow for comprehensive typological arrangement of the surviving examples. Future investigation may well produce a more precise context for the ornament under consideration here.

## CONCLUSION

The date of the Canterbury ornament rests partly upon its stylistic affinities – which reveal its artistic context and its importance as evidence of close links between the media – and partly upon the context in which it was found – in very good condition, showing no certain evidence of use, in the same general context as two mid-eighth century *sceattas*. Given the uncertainties in dating the loss of

<sup>42</sup> Cambridge, University Library Ll.I.10; Alexander, no. 66; Henry, *op. cit.* in note 6, Fig. 22.

<sup>43</sup> London, British Library MS. Royal 1 E vi; Alexander, no. 32, Fig. 162 (f.4r).

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these *sceattas*, their discovery provides only an indication of the likely period of deposition of the ornament. Its place of origin must depend upon stylistic evaluation and thus must remain approximate, unless further evidence comes to light. Although it could easily have been brought to Canterbury from elsewhere, it is not necessary to presuppose such a transfer, and certainly not one of any great distance, given our knowledge of the styles of animal ornament produced at Canterbury and either diffused from or received there. In view of the close rapport between the object and some manuscript decoration, it is tempting to think of them both as having been juxtaposed in some way before the deposition of the bronze ornament. It might have adorned the binding of a manuscript decorated with similarly interlaced animal ornament, so that the book and its cover displayed a consistent style, or been worn by the owner or user of such a manuscript. On the other hand the presumed early deposition of the object, not long after its production probably in the mid-eighth century, might indicate that it was not finished (which would argue for a workshop not far away), for it is strange that it has not apparently been gilded, like most of its closest parallels in eighth-century Anglo-Saxon ornamented metalwork.

