

A MEDIEVAL TALE: SAXONS, NORMANS AND
THE TELSCOMBE RING

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A MEDIEVAL TALE: SAXONS, NORMANS AND
THE TELSCOMBE RING

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ABSTRACT

A medieval silver-gilt finger ring was found in July, 2010 using a metal detector near the village of Telscombe, in the Lewes District of East Sussex, England. The object, hereto referred to as the *Telscombe Ring*, was reported and documented per the Treasure Act (1996). In 2012, it was disclaimed as treasure, returned to the finder and sold to a private collector.

The object is unusual, combining multiple motifs on the same ring: first, clasped hands, traditionally symbolic of a love token and belonging to a classification of rings known as the *fede*; second, a series of crosses or saltires that runs down each side of the hoop; third, forming a second bezel opposite the clasped hands, an arcing arrangement representative of *stirrup* rings; fourth, the heads of two distinctly different beasts positioned at each shoulder of the *stirrup* bezel.

The objective of this research is twofold: first, complete detailed visual and metallurgical analysis to shed light on its use, composition and construction and to identify the makers design intent and production method; second, a comparative stylistic review within a compendium of medieval rings found in England and an array of other objects discovered near the find location to establish the ring's likely geographic origin and approximate creation date.

The complexity of the *Telscombe Ring* provides the additional chance to offer thoughts about the ring's meaning. Since its stylistic variety necessitates the review and discussion of so many other examples featuring one or more of its characteristics, it also presents the more ambitious opportunity to expand upon the broader art history of medieval rings in England.

APPROVAL PAGE

The faculty listed below, appointed by the Dean of the College of Arts and Science, have examined a thesis titled “A Medieval Tale: Saxons, Normans and the Telscombe Ring” presented by candidate for the Master of Arts degree, and certify that in their opinion it is worthy of acceptance.

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CONTENTS

ABSTRACT	iii
LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS	viii
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS	xi
Chapter	
1. INTRODUCTION	1
2. CONTEXTUAL OVERVIEW	4
Find Location Archaeology	4
Medieval Telscombe and Lewes	5
3. TECHNICAL EVALUATION	8
Documentation	8
Condition	9
Organization and Construction	11
Metallurgy	13
4. STYLISTIC EVALUATION	18
Compendium	18
Stirrup	19
Clasped Hands	23
Crosses	24
Animal Heads	28
5. THE TELSCOMBE TALES	33
A Goldsmith's Tale	33
A Bridegroom's Tale	37

6. CONCLUSIONS.....	41
ILLUSTRATIONS	48
BIBLIOGRAPHY.....	85
VITA.....	87

LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

Figure	Page
1-1. The Telscombe Ring.....	48
1-2. Map of East Sussex, England.....	49
2-1 Aerial view of Telscombe Village, Church of St. Lawrence and find location, East Sussex, England.....	50
2-2 The Church of St. Lawrence (view from the south), Telscombe, East Sussex, England.....	51
3-1. The Telscombe Ring. Detail of lozenge-set cross	52
3-2. The Telscombe Ring. Detail of <i>stirrup</i> lateral surface	53
3-3. The Telscombe Ring. Detail of “wrist” seam	54
3-4. The Telscombe Ring. Design organization.....	55
3-5. The Telscombe Ring. Animal head comparison.....	56
3-6. The Telscombe Ring. Detail of <i>stirrup</i> bevel	57
3-7. The Telscombe Ring. Detail of layers at area of clasped hands. (backscatter image @ 172x magnification)	58
3-8. The Telscombe Ring. Detail of seam at outer surface. (standard image @ 24.6x magnification).....	59
3-9. The Telscombe ring. Detail of seam at inner surface. (standard image @ 32.4x magnification).....	60
3-10. The Telscombe Ring. Detail of “liner” at area of square-set cross side a. (standard image @ 29.4x magnification).....	61
3-11. The Telscombe Ring. Detail of “liner” at area of lozenge-set cross side a. (standard image @ 214x magnification).....	62
3-12. The Telscombe Ring. Detail of non-seam “wrist” at inner surface. (standard image @ 34.2x magnification).....	63
3-13. The Telscombe Ring. Graph of relative elemental distribution showing fluctuations through areas of seam and “blob”	64

4-1.	Basilica of St. Denis, France and the Telscombe Ring (inset).....	65
4-2.	Anglo-Saxon Gold Ring, c800-900. Victoria and Albert Museum, London. The Telscombe Ring (right).....	66
4-3.	Silver Stirrup Finger Ring, 13-14 th Century, Found in Kelsall, Cheshire, England. Portable Antiquities Scheme	67
4-4.	Silver Stirrup Finger Ring, 14 th century, found in New Romney, Kent, England. Portable Antiquities Scheme.....	68
4-5.	The Becket Casket (front and back), c. 1180-1190, Limoges, France. Victoria and Albert Museum, London	69
4-6.	Decretales, with the Glossa ordinaria, Gregory IX, glossed by Bernard of Parma c. 1300-1325, England. Catalogue of Illuminated Manuscripts, British Library	70
4-7.	Find locations for the Telscombe Ring (top), Firlie ring (center) and East Clandon ring (bottom). Portable Antiquities Scheme	71
4-8.	Silver-gilt finger ring. 12 th century, Found in Sutterton, Lincolnshire, England. Portable Antiquities Scheme	72
4-9.	Drawing to suggest original cross design intent for hoop sides.....	72
4-10.	Cross on column said to be carved by a crusader, Church of St. Lawrence, Telscombe, East Sussex, England	73
4-11.	Cross style comparison of the Telscombe Ring and Becket Casket (right)	74
4-12.	Silver finger ring fragment, 13 th -14 th century, found in Thrussington, Leicestershire, England. The Telscombe Ring (inset) with similar cross type. Portable Antiquities Scheme.....	74
4-13.	Silver finger ring fragment. 14 th -15 th century, Found in Newchurch, Kent, England. Portable Antiquities Scheme	75
4-14.	(Top) Silver finger ring, 12 th century, Lark Hill Hoard, Worcester, Worcestershire, England. (Bottom) Silver finger ring, 12 th century, found in Scrayingham, North Yorkshire, England. Portable Antiquities Scheme.....	76
4-15.	Canterbury Cathedral. Detail of crypt capital, Canterbury, East Sussex, England. The Telscombe Ring (inset).....	77

4-16.	Spur neck, first half of the 11 th century, found in Race Hill, Lewes, East Sussex, England. David Williams article.....	78
4-17.	Incomplete copper alloy <i>stirrup</i> terminal, second half of the 11 th century, found in Southease, East Sussex, England. The Telscombe Ring. Detail of heads (insets). Portable Antiquities Scheme.....	79
4-18.	Anglo-Saxon sculpture of beast's head, 9 th century, The Priory Church of St. Mary at Deerhurst, Gloucestershire, England. The Telscombe Ring. Detail of heads (insets).....	79
4-19.	Life of St. Dunstan, Osbern, Canterbury, England, c. 1075-1125 The Telscombe Ring. Detail of heads (inset). Catalogue of Illuminated Manuscripts, British Library.....	80
4-20.	Gold finger ring, 13 th century. Victoria and Albert Museum, London, England.....	81
4-21.	Gold finger ring, 13 th century. Victoria and Albert Museum, London, England.....	81
4-22.	Gold finger ring, 14 th century. Victoria and Albert Museum, London, England.....	82
4-23.	Gold finger ring, 13 th century. British Museum, London, England.....	82
4-24.	Gold <i>stirrup/fede</i> finger ring, 14 th century, found near Eye, Suffolk, England. Portable Antiquities Scheme	83
4-25.	Silver-gilt finger ring, 14 th -15 th century, found in Tattenhoe, Buckinghamshire, England. Portable Antiquities Scheme	84

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Imposing castles, gallant knights in shining armor and majestic kings and queens at court are emblematic of the Middle Ages for most. A smaller, more thoughtful segment of those questioned might include in their description the Black Death, peasants laboring in the field or even the odd reference to Geoffrey Chaucer's magnum opus, *The Canterbury Tales*. The impetus for our expectations, predominantly idyllic in this case, is the same regardless of the subject, a perception formed over time through personal experience.

Exposure to the Middle Ages begins early, starting with the toys and games of childhood and reinforced throughout our lives in the form of movies, books and festivals. Britain, through shared language and a legacy of institutions, customs and tradition, provides the developmental foundation for many of our western interpretations, perhaps nowhere more profoundly than with this topic.

I too succumbed to the allure of the Middle Ages at a relatively young age, the product of a western tradition which fostered a glorified medieval ideal. However, this artificial conditioning also provided the catalyst for a personal life-long fascination and desire to understand the period at a deeper, more factual level. A primary means for evaluating, recording and understanding the past involves direct exposure to a period's material legacy, which for me includes multiple castles, cathedrals, monasteries, museums and ultimately the selection of my research topic: a medieval ring.

In July, 2010, a medieval silver-gilt finger ring (Fig. 1-1) was found using a metal detector near the small village of Telscombe, in the Lewes District of East Sussex, England (Fig. 1-2). The object, hereto referred to as the *Telscombe Ring*, was reported per the

Treasure Act of 1996 and documented by the Portable Antiquities Scheme. As noted in the report, it was disclaimed as treasure in 2012 and returned to the finder who sold the ring to a private collector.

The finger ring has been in use for about four thousand years. It is arguably the most intimate object a person can possess often rich with personal meaning and importance.¹ Rings can symbolize and communicate love, marriage, fashion, wealth, hope, devotion, remembrance, status, office and title. Their prominent location on the hand is a constant reminder to the wearer and a visual communicator to those who come into close personal contact. Medieval rings were worn on every finger including the thumb, sometimes just above a finger joint and even over gloves², which explains the wide range of sizes in survivors. Their span of meaning, varied compositional and stylistic characteristics and extensive use make them an invaluable lens for viewing values of the past.

The *Telscombe Ring* is unusual, combining multiple motifs often found on separate rings, including clasped hands, crosses, animal heads and a *stirrup* bezel, so named for its similarity to a horse *stirrup*.³ Per Laura Burnett, Finds Liaison Officer-Portable Antiquities Scheme, its stylistic characteristics cumulatively suggest an 1150 to 1300 date.⁴ Although archaeological information is limited, there is an identified finder and documented find site. When coupled with a presumed creation date based on stylistic evidence, an historical framework can reasonably be offered. From an art historical perspective, the unusual

¹ Diana Scarisbrick, *Rings: Jewelry of Power, Love and Loyalty* (London: Thames & Hudson Ltd, 2007), 7.

² Victoria & Albert Museum, *Online Database Collection*.
<http://collections.vam.ac.uk/item/O121946/ring-unknown/>

³ Sandra Hindman, *Toward an Art History of Medieval Rings: A Private Collection* (London: Paul Holberton Publishing, 2007), 102.

⁴ Portable Antiquities Scheme, *Online Database Collection*.
<http://finds.org.uk/database/artefacts/record/id/398482>

blending of decorative, love token, personal devotion and zoomorphic elements into a single, highly sculptural presentation is noteworthy.

The *Telscombe Ring* also presents an opportunity to expand upon the broader art history of medieval rings since the stylistic complexity necessitates the review of so many other examples featuring one or more of its characteristics. This study therefore intends to subject the ring to further scientific and stylistic evaluation, position it within a logical local and regional historical context and offer informed theories about the maker's design influence, production method and skill level, as well as the and the wearer's status, occupation and use. From an art historical perspective, the goal is to better understand the complex questions concerning the dating, style and materials used in the fabrication of this intriguing relic.

To achieve this goal, a preliminary context will first be established through an archaeological and historical review of the find area. Next, visual and scientific analysis will be conducted to include a discussion of object documentation, condition, motif organization, construction and metallurgical composition. Focus will then shift to a stylistic review for each of the ring's individual traits using a significant compendium of medieval rings and other objects found in England, with special attention to East Sussex and locations in and around Telscombe. Last, thoughts regarding the maker and original wearer will be offered, along with other key conclusions and recommendations for further research.

CHAPTER 2

CONTEXTUAL OVERVIEW

Find Location Archaeology

The ring was unearthed near the ancient village of Telscombe, less than two miles from England's southern coast. As there was no formal excavation, detailed archaeological data is lacking. According to the finder, it was approximately seven inches below surface level at the highest point of a hill to the east, a few hundred yards from the village and its historic *Church of St. Lawrence* (Fig. 2-1). Although it cannot be definitively said when the ring was lost or by whom, it is nonetheless appropriate, and by default necessary, to focus on Telscombe and the surrounding area when searching for additional evidence and formulating a geographically relevant setting. Considering the estimated ground retrieval depth of seven inches, it is tempting to accept the ring's loss as occurring many centuries ago, maybe less than a hundred years after its creation, although an uninterrupted history of land use for the find location is necessary to build such a case.

In addition to how the land may have changed at surface level by natural or man-made forces, a phenomenon known as "frost-heaving" may also have contributed to the ring's soil depth when discovered. Frost-heaving can move underground objects through the soil over time through repeated freezing and thawing. As Michael R. Hilton notes, "Archaeologists regularly cite frost-related mechanisms as potential transport agents capable of redistributing the archaeological record."¹ Consequently, attempting to establish a deposit date range requires not only a review of land use for the last eight hundred years, but an

¹ Michael R. Hilton, "Quantifying Postdepositional Redistribution of the Archaeological Record Produced by Freeze-Thaw and Other Mechanisms: An Experimental Approach," *Journal of Archaeological Method and Theory* 10 No. 3 (2003): 165.

analysis of various natural forces at and below the surface which may have contributed to its position when located. However, incomplete information, such as having only a surface depth estimate by the finder, renders this effort inconclusive.

A search of the Portable Antiquities Scheme database for additional objects found near Telscombe produced records for artifacts which vary in format and date. While most are considerably earlier or later, two are noteworthy: first, part of a cast copper alloy Limoges figurine, potentially relevant due to its apparent French origins and twelfth- or thirteenth-century creation; second, an eleventh-century cast copper alloy strap end featuring an animal head executed in the Anglo-Scandinavian Urnes style.² During a 1964 mechanical excavation in Telscombe for the construction of a barn one hundred yards West of the *Church of St. Lawrence*, clay loom-weights, pottery and animal bones dating to the eleventh or twelfth century were also unearthed. Known as the Stud Farm, the site produced building material and signs of a hearth, establishing the location of a Late Dark Age or Early Medieval hut.³

Medieval Telscombe and Lewes

Telscombe is an Anglo-Saxon place name which, when deconstructed, translates to “Titel’s valley.” The first half is derived from the personal name “Titel” and the second half from the word “cumb,” which refers to a coomb or valley.⁴ The great Domesday Book, completed in 1085 by order of William the Conqueror, references the village and surrounding

² Portable Antiquities Scheme, *Online Database Collection*.

<http://finds.org.uk/database/artefacts/record/id/229803>

³ Heritage Gateway, *Online Archaeological Database*.

http://www.heritagegateway.org.uk/Gateway/Results_Single.aspx?uid=MES2049&resourceID=1026

⁴ University of Nottingham, *Institute for Name-Studies*.

<http://kep.notttingham.ac.uk/map/place/Sussex/Telscombe>

area of 1,350 acres, though identifies it as Laneswice, a renaming of the Saxon term which ultimately proved to be temporary.⁵

The *Church of St. Lawrence* (Fig. 2-2), with its tenth-century foundation, predates the Norman invasion at Hastings by over one hundred years. Chancel and nave, though decorated with fourteenth-, fifteenth- and nineteenth-century windows, date to the twelfth century. The tower and north chancel were added in the late twelfth century, but the north wall, vestry, porch and roof are all Victorian additions.⁶

The county town of Lewes, also steeped in history, lies near the River Ouse just three miles north of Telscombe. Following his victory at Hastings, William established Lewes as the seat for one of four original *rapes*, organized to monitor and control the former Saxon stronghold of East Sussex. Leadership for the newly created *rapes*, each including a harbor and castle, naturally went to those loyal to conqueror. William of Warrene was rewarded for his long standing support with the strategically important Lewes *rape*, which extended south beyond Telscombe to the English Channel.⁷

Another avenue employed by the Conqueror to subjugate his Saxon populace was the restructuring of the English church. Leadership fell to Lanfranc, a scholar, teacher and abbot appointed Archbishop of Canterbury in 1070. Tactics included not only the creation of Norman prelates to monitor the Saxon clergy, but monks introduced from the continent entrusted with the spiritual well-being of England's newly ordained Norman overlords. A Southover Priory charter, transcribed in 1444, suggests that Lanfranc himself encouraged William of Warenne to sponsor a colony of Cluniacs within his *rape*. Regardless of

⁵ David Hardman, *Telscombe: A Village in Sussex* (London: Printman Ltd., 1964), 11.

⁶ L. F. Salzman, "The Rape of Lewes," *A History of the County of Sussex* 7 (1940): 76.

⁷ Colin Brent, *Pre-Georgian Lewes c890-1714: The Emergence of a County Town* (Colin Brent Books, 2004), 48.

motivation, Warenne founded the Lewes priory in 1081 at the site of a Saxon church, to include funding a staff of Cluniac monks, which he dedicated to St. Pancrus.⁸

Judging by its long list of endowments, the Cluniac priory at Lewes was substantial. Its founder gave tithes from all his lands, including special rights associated with his fisheries and the Lewes market, later adding the church and manor of Castle Acre in Norfolk. The priory's jurisdiction expanded further under Warenne's successors, receiving all nine churches in Lewes, nine or ten in Sussex, eleven in Yorkshire, seven in Norfolk and a further five in Sussex at the dedication of the priory church (c. 1095). By 1291, the combined worth of all properties stood at £788 4s 10d.⁹

Lewes was also a prominent location for Late Saxon coin mints, as further noted in the great Domesday Book. Not long after the turmoil resulting from the conqueror's arrival in 1066 began to subside, Saxon moneyers Winraed, Oswald and Aelfric were back in business in Lewes. By the 1090s so too were Winraed, Brihtmaer and Aelfwine. However, as the need for their services steadily declined over the following decades, by 1133 only Edmund is recorded as operating in Lewes. After about 1170, the only minting operation in Sussex was at Chichester.¹⁰ Most moneyers continued to operate their own workshops up to 1180.¹¹

⁸ Ibid., 74.

⁹ William Page, "Houses of Cluniac Monks: Priory of Lewes," *A History of the County of Sussex* 2 (1973): 64.

¹⁰ Brent, 118.

¹¹ Martin Allen, "Mints and Money in Norman England," *Anglo-Norman Studies* 34 (2012): 12.

CHAPTER 3
TECHNICAL EVALUATION

Documentation

The *Telscombe Ring* weighs 7.23 grams and measures 30.8 by 26.0mm externally and varies from 21.3 to 20.9mm internally. The widest and thinnest points are at the clasped hands, which are 8.6mm wide by 1.8mm thick. The *stirrup* end is 3.6mm wide by 8.2mm thick.¹ The Portable Antiquities Scheme report further describes the ring as follows:

Silver gilt finger ring with a bezel projecting outwards in a triangular “stirrup shape” topped by a rounded knob and multiple motifs on the hoop. On the side opposite the bezel are molded clasped hands with the fingers and thumb finely picked out. The hands are flanked by raised squares with indented saltires on them. These squares start at slightly different points around the loops. Beyond the squares, mid-way between the hands and bezel are raised lozenge shapes created by faceting on the outer side of the hoop. The lozenges are each topped with a raised cross with expanded lozenge shaped arms; the arms running down the length of the hoop are equal in length to each other but longer than the transverse arms.

Beyond these crosses is a second raised square with indented saltire on each side and beyond these are two animal heads clasping the bezel in their mouths. Both heads have molded brow ridges and muzzles with nostrils and incised lines marking the eyes. On one the top of the head is slightly longer and is decorated by two raised chevrons in a recessed panel, perhaps representing ears. This longer head corrects the imbalance created by the slightly uneven positioning of the other molded decoration. The inner side of the loop is plain and smooth and there are extensive traces of gilding. There is a slight roughness on the inner side behind the “wrist” of one of the hands, perhaps where the loop was originally joined or a repair.²

For technical evaluation beyond that provided by the Portable Antiquities Scheme, others with specific expertise were consulted. The following individuals graciously and enthusiastically lent vital support well beyond all reasonable expectations:

¹ Portable Antiquities Scheme, *Online Database Collection*.
<http://finds.org.uk/database/artefacts/record/id/398482>

² Ibid.

Paul Benson, Conservator, Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art, Kansas City, Missouri, offered his personal time and access to museum equipment in order to conduct initial microscopic visual analysis and photography. A Leica M10 microscope and Nikon D7000 camera was used to capture dozens of images ranging from 24x to 80x magnification.

Marsha Loveland, Master Jeweler, Richard Dolgin Private Jeweler, Overland Park, Kansas, provided observations on wear patterns and possible production method, discussed in more detail in the *Condition, Organization and Construction* sections. She believes the general shape was achieved using a cast, though not certain if by a sand cast or the lost wax method, processes which will be further detailed later. She suggests it was then “chip-carved” using a chisel, possibly while held in place with a bench pin. Loveland also captured several images using an ImageDome, designed especially for jewelry.

Barbara J. Kinzig, Ph.D, President and CEO of Surfaces Research in Lenexa, Kansas dedicated a very significant amount of her time to conduct detailed metallurgical analysis. An Amray 1820 Scanning Electron Microscope attached to a Thermo-Noran X-ray analyzer was used to acquire information relating to elemental composition, morphology and topology. Findings are summarized in the *Metallurgy* section. Contrary to Loveland, Kinzig is inclined to believe all of the carving occurred as part of the lost wax process, pointing to the relative ease of carving wax versus metal.

Condition

The *Telscombe Ring* is in a very good state of preservation. The surface is not severely pitted or corroded, edges are relatively crisp and much of the gold gilding remains (Fig. 3-1). As noted, the ring was found near the top of a gradually sloping hill. Consequently, effective drainage may help account for this condition by limiting the adverse

effects of prolonged exposure to water in the soil.³ The ring is complete, relatively round and without significant damage. Magnification reveals no evidence of abnormal wear patterns. For instance, two rings worn adjacent to each other will gradually grind each other down over time as they come in contact. The surfaces of the lozenge-set crosses on either side are the most likely location to show this wear and both retain their gold finish.

Loveland feels strongly the ring was made for a man given its size and speculates the gold was applied using a mercury amalgam as opposed to gold leaf, pointing to what she sees as a heavy application of gilding. She agrees there is no evidence it was worn adjacent to other rings, but notes the loss of gold atop the *stirrup* ball, expected given this constitutes the top or primary bezel and the spot most expected to show wear. She further believes the amount of wear indicates the ring was worn for many years.

The most obvious sign the ring came into contact with another hard surface during its life are various scratches (Fig. 3-2), most notably a series of parallel grooves located along one side of the *stirrup* bezel. These run from the inner hoop to the top of the knob and are clearly the result of the same impact. The metallic glimmer of these scratches when compared to other areas suggests they are more recent, perhaps inflicted by the finder during excavation. In summary, the overall good condition and lack of significant damage or abnormal wear patterns suggest it was worn regularly and for many years, but with some care and not routinely in-line with or alongside other rings.

³ Cathy Daly, "Garnets and Gold: The Technical Examination of a Medieval Ring-brooch," *Archaeology Ireland* 19 No. 3 (2005): 37.

Organization and Construction

As noted by the recorder, “there is a slight roughness on the inner side behind the “wrist” of one of the hands, perhaps where the loop was originally joined or repaired.” Although it is not specifically called out which “wrist” this refers to, magnification clearly shows an area which fits the description. Upon close inspection, anomalies are visible in the form of the previously noted roughness or residue and a thin gold strip running the width of the inner hoop where one of the “wrists” meets its bordering square-set cross (Fig. 3-3). Also, the section looks as if the two hoop ends were manipulated to line up prior to joining. Perhaps the gold strip, which stands out from the otherwise bare area of silver, fills a depression created when joining two ends.

Loveland identified a possible second, though less convincing, area on the opposite “wrist” and wonders if the entire clasped hand section were added at once. Regardless of whether there is one seam or two, attachment occurred prior to gilding as gold on the external ring surface covers the joint. Since it was completed prior to gilding, the work is likely not the result of a repair from use, but part of the construction process, possibly a result of fitting the ring to its new owner. There is significant evidence for sizing, especially to a smaller size, at the point of the seam. First, this “wrist” section is shorter when compared to the opposite hand. Second, the band widths do not match at the seam. Third, there is only one seam on this “wrist.” If the ring were made larger, there would be a second nearby where the other end of the added section was attached. Fourth, the ring bends inward at the seam, disrupting the natural arc of the lateral surface. Cumulatively, evidence suggests a larger-sized ring which probably came from its mold as a complete, unbroken circle. It was then cut, a section of “wrist” removed from one side, the two ends pressed together, attached and

finally gilded. A slightly diagonal crease on the inner surface of the opposite “wrist,” undoubtedly what Loveland referred to, was found to be a slight bend, probably created when forcing the two ends back together. Alternatively, the mold may have been flat and the ring somehow rounded and joined, a production variance that does not negate the sizing theory.

Close examination reveals another interesting spatial characteristic further contributing to the ring’s asymmetry (Fig. 3-4); its two animal heads are significantly different lengths (Fig. 3-5), one (approximately 9mm) is half again as long as the other (approximately 6mm). There are three possible explanations for this. First, the result of poor planning; the maker started carving at one point and ended up with either more or less space than anticipated, necessitating an adjustment. Second, the heads were intended to be essentially the same, but their execution is highly inconsistent. Third, they are intentionally different.

Although the ring is not perfectly round, the overall length of the cross motifs on each side are relatively consistent, both approximately 16mm. The distance from the base of the *stirrup* knob to each animal snout is similarly consistent with less than 1mm variance. However, drawing a line from the center of the *stirrup* to the clasped hands shows the two bezels are offset by approximately 3mm, roughly the same amount as the difference in head lengths. In addition to being different lengths, the head patterns are completely incompatible. Also, a lower jaw is visible on both sides of the shorter head, but absent on both sides of the larger. Clearly, the heads are intentionally different and not the result of poor planning or execution. Interestingly, if approximately 3mm of material were added back to the shorter “wrist” at the seam, it would essentially bring the *stirrup* and clasped hands sections in line

with each other; further supporting the notion the ring was originally more symmetrical before being sized down.

Finally, the inner surface directly beneath the *stirrup* bezel is chamfered on both sides (Fig 3-6). Given the uniformity of the edges and surviving gold, this too was completed prior to gilding and intentional. One explanation is for aesthetic effect, to heighten its three-dimensional polygonal character. There are other examples of chamfering on *stirrup* rings as intentional design incorporation, but this example is beveled only a small amount at the extreme base, making it barely discernible to the naked eye. A second explanation offered by Loveland is the medieval version of “comfort fit,” a term used in the jewelry industry to describe a ring with characteristics designed to provide the wearer greater comfort. Regardless of whether for aesthetic, comfort or some unknown reason, it is noteworthy the maker sought this level of detail.

Metallurgy

A scanning electron microscope and x-ray analyzer provided additional information about the *Telscombe Ring* in three formats: first, standard images to better understand morphology and topology; second, backscatter images to visually establish elemental discrimination (in a backscatter (BS), elements with a heavier atomic weight appear brighter, while those with a lighter weight are darker); third, x-rays at predetermined locations to establish specific relative elemental composition. The analyzer uses energy dispersive x-ray spectroscopy (EDS) and when combined with the scanning electron microscope, describes a technique known as SEM/EDS. Using this method, readings can be taken at various surface depths by adjusting kilo voltage (KV). Values for magnification and kilo voltage are displayed within the following standard and backscatter images.

The majority of metallurgical analysis focused on five key areas. First, a series of x-rays were taken at various points, including the *stirrup* and clasped hands sections to gather primary compositional data. For gold (Au), locations naturally included areas with surviving gilt, while areas of exposed base metal were a focus for silver (Ag). Gold purity readings of as high as 74.88% were recorded, which is nearly the precise equivalent of the 18-karat standard of 75%. Silver purity calculation proved problematic due to the significant presence of aluminum (Al), which is difficult to extract accurately from a calculation standpoint. As Kinzig notes, the x-ray proximity for one of the L- x-ray energies of silver is very near the K-energy value for aluminum, even though their atomic numbers of 13(Al) and 47 (Ag) are fairly different. Without further complexity of explanation, suffice it to say that silver purity cannot be stated with reasonable confidence, unfortunate as a comparison with medieval coinage standards may have proven useful. Backscatter images effectively demonstrate the relative thickness of the gold top layer, which lies upon a middle layer of approximately one micron in thickness (Fig. 3-7). However, this middle layer produced no significant elemental variance from the base silver.

Mercury (Hg), or quicksilver as it is otherwise known, is a heavy and unique metal that is liquid at room temperature. It is particularly effective in gilding due to its ability to readily unite with other metals, a union referred to as an *amalgam*. Mercury unites directly with several metals including gold and silver and less effectively with others such as aluminum (Al) and copper (Cu). Through gilding, that is the application of gold over another base metal such as silver, the mercury can either be applied to the silver base or mixed with the gold prior to application. Mercury was found at locations of the *Telscombe Ring* where there is also gold, but not in areas of silver only, suggesting a gold-mercury amalgam. This

type of amalgam makes a particularly strong bond with its base metal which is extremely long lasting,⁴ accounting for the significant amount of surviving gold as noted by Loveland.

Second, a close inspection of the “wrist” believed to include a seam where two ends were joined prior to gilding was made. Visual and relative elemental analysis of the seam area occurred at both the outer (Fig. 3-8) and inner (Fig. 3-9) surfaces of the ring. In addition to evidence presented in the *Organization and Construction* section, residue at the inner surface, undoubtedly contributing to the “slight roughness” referred to by Burnett, provides further cause to suspect a location which underwent special handling.

Most prominent is a single raised spot at the inner surface affectionately termed the “blob.” Possibly solder or filler rod material, the anomaly is also topped with gold, suggesting it was deposited prior to gilding. However, x-rays at the side of the “blob,” where a portion of base metal is exposed, are distinguishable only by elevated aluminum levels. As Kinzig notes, aluminum is difficult to work, thus it probably played no specific role in production. Examination at multiple locations within the seam valley of the outer surface show a relatively even distribution of gold plating, which provides evidence for a single application, thus corroborating the explanation that seam work occurred prior to gilding. Analysis at the shallower seam valley of the inner surface produced relatively high copper (Cu) readings.

Third, further consideration was given to a puzzling line that circles each side of the band where the lateral surface meets the inner surface (Fig. 3-10). For identification purposes, the feature is deemed the “liner.” Given its uniformity (Fig. 3-11), the “liner” seems most logically the result of the ring’s production process, though presently unclear

⁴ Oppi Untracht, *Jewelry: Concepts and Technology* (New York: Doubleday, 1985), 666.

how. The “liner” is a near continuous recession that, probably by no coincidence, interrupts directly at the spot of the seam as seen on the seam inner surface image.

For comparative purposes, the equivalent location on the opposite “wrist” was examined along its inner surface (Fig. 3-12). As suspected, the area does not display the same roughness or residue, nor is the “liner” interrupted where a second seam might exist. Therefore, it can be said with confidence there is only one seam and that the entire clasped hands section was not added, a position further bolstered by the lack of significant discrepancies in composition for the clasped hands section versus other areas, with the exception of one side of the *stirrup*'s lateral surface which registered chlorine (Cl) and the particularly baffling occurrence of titanium (Ti), an element not discovered until the late eighteenth century. X-rays within the “liner” show the presence of copper (Cu), zinc (Zn) and iron (Fe).

Fourth, a location deep within one of the lozenge-set cross crevices was sought for any evidence to suggest the ring was once enameled, a process where various colors of material are fused with the surface for heightened visual impact. No visual traces of enameling were apparent using a traditional microscope, although relatively high levels of iron (Fe) and copper (Cu) were found. Analysis within one of the crevices of a square set cross also shows an elevation of silicon (Si), which could hypothetically be indicative of enameling.

Prior to work with Kinzig, the Missouri University of Science and Technology was solicited for metallurgical analysis support. Although referencing two separate testing sources is thought to be potentially problematic, it is important to acknowledge and document the work of Clarissa Wisner, Doctoral Candidate, Missouri University of Science

and Technology, Rolla, Missouri. Wisner used an FEI Helios Nanolab 600, which features a focused ion beam and scanning electron microscope to capture element distribution data and high resolution images. Consequently, a multitude of excellent images and color graphs not featured in this review are retained for future reference.

However, one particular test completed by Wisner (Fig. 3-13) has been included as it takes the insightful approach of analyzing a continuous segment of the ring's inner surface. The analysis begins at what is thought to represent a relatively typical area and extends through the "wrist" seam and "blob" as it works from left to right. A fluctuating relative elemental distribution is demonstrated graphically in the form of separate lines, uniquely colored to represent individual elements.

CHAPTER 4
STYLISTIC EVALUATION

Compendium

The Portable Antiquities Scheme database contains hundreds of thousands of artifact records, ranging from Mesolithic to post medieval. Although other early medieval and medieval objects, such as buckles, strap fittings, spur fragments and brooches warrant further research, the significant number of finger rings provides a substantial primary compendium.

Their base material distribution includes:

- Copper alloy (568)
- Silver (321)
- Gold (223)
- Lead Alloy (9)
- Pewter (3)
- Animal skeletal material (2)
- Tin or tin alloy (2)
- White metal (2)
- Base Silver (1)
- Copper (1)
- Total Medieval Rings (1,132)

Records for all gold and silver medieval rings, along with examples from the British Museum and Victoria & Albert Museum, were compared in terms of style, find location and presumed creation date. Rings of lesser valued material are also often of relatively inferior craftsmanship and limited complexity and therefore rarely used for research. All referenced Portable Antiquities Scheme objects include database identification numbers.

High level results suggest the *Telscombe Ring* (ID: SUSS-C34F64) is a relatively uncommon type within the previously noted sample of medieval rings discovered in England. As noted in the Portable Antiquities Report, “This ring is unusual in combining several decorative effects normally found on separate rings.” The use of decorative elements,

symbols of love and personal devotion and curious zoomorphic images (the two animal heads being unique on the same ring) further suggests comparatively significant symbolic complexity and importance to its wearer.

Stirrup

The top or primary bezel of the *Telscombe Ring* features characteristics found on early *stirrup* rings, so named for their similarity to an inverted horse *stirrup*. In *Toward an Art History of Medieval Rings: A Private Collection*, Sandra Hindman references archaeological evidence to help establish chronology for the *stirrup* design, noting that the earliest surviving English example is believed to have originated from the tomb of Bishop Hilary of Chichester, who died in 1169.¹ Worth mentioning is that the cathedral city of Chichester is located in neighboring West Sussex, about twenty-five miles west of Telscombe.

A second example, referenced by the Benedictine monk and goldsmith Matthew Paris in his *Liber Additamentorum*, was part of a collection of jewels at the Abbey of St. Albans and said to have been a gift of Richard “the Animal” to his famous childhood friend Eleanor of Aquitaine (c. 1122-1204). As Mathew Paris notes, the ring features a “deep-colored oriental sapphire.”² The presumed date for Eleanor’s ring (c. 1140) marks what Hindman believes could be the starting point for this style, potentially originating in France and spreading to England within the next few decades.

She further asserts the style owes its design inspiration not to a horse *stirrup*, but the ribbed vaulting of the first Gothic churches, namely Abbot Suger’s undertaking of the *Basilica of St. Denis* (1144) (Fig. 4-1), suggesting “the *stirrup* ring is thus the equivalent in

¹ Hindman, 102.

² Ibid.

the decorative arts as the Gothic cathedral in the monumental arts.” Useful to her case is that this “first Gothic” architecture coincides with the previously established date for Eleanor of Aquitaine’s ring. It is certainly reasonable to think that a gift to someone of such great status was on the cutting edge of mid twelfth-century fashion, regardless of its stylistic influence. Hindman also finds the progression of Gothic vaulting reflected in the *stirrup* ring through its increasingly articulated nature, citing two examples dating to c. 1200.³ This is potentially chronologically relevant given the articulation of the *Telscombe Ring*.

Surmounting the *Telscombe Ring*’s *stirrup* bezel is a ball of gilt-silver, rounded on top, but with flattened sides. By contrast, the majority of extant gold *stirrup* rings include an uncut stone at this location for their particular amuletic properties. It is therefore tempting to first consider this metal ball as the poor man’s version of a semi-precious or precious stone such as the frequently used blue sapphire, thought to cure eye conditions and preserve chastity.⁴ Alternatively, if the *stirrup* form can be considered a reflection of Gothic vaulting, as proposed by Hindman, maybe there is a theoretically congruent explanation. Depending on how one might miry the lines of each, the ball might be the architectural equivalent of a ceiling boss, where the ribbing intersects at its apex.

Architectural mimicry aside, a ball of metal at a ring’s bezel is not without precedent. The Victoria & Albert Museum counts within its medieval collection an Anglo-Saxon gold ring (c. 800-900) (Fig. 4-2) found in the moat at Meaux Abbey and featuring a beautifully formed gold ball, or pellet. Late Saxon rings such as this were only worn by those of high status and are almost always made of gold.⁵ Additionally, English rings from the ninth to

³ Ibid., 104.

⁴ Scarisbrick, 148.

⁵ Charles Oman, *British Rings: 800-1914* (London: B.T. Batsford Ltd, 1974), 6.

eleventh centuries rarely contained gems.⁶ Given the high skill level of elite Anglo-Saxon goldsmiths, their propensity for working solely with gold, at least in terms of finger rings, and the level of craftsmanship of this example, the pellet may well not have been a direct substitute for a stone, regardless of their availability at the time. In addition to its similar use of a pellet, the Anglo-Saxon example is further reminiscent in design to the *Telscombe Ring* with its *stirrup*-shaped bezel and similarly positioned stylized animal heads.

Although the *Telscombe Ring* may post date this particular example by around three hundred years, its characteristic may have found inspiration, or at minimum acceptance, from similar Saxo-Scandinavian designs produced solely through goldsmith's work up to at least the eleventh century. Although subjected to periodic incursion by Danish raiders, the burgh of Lewes functioned as a Saxon stronghold during the centuries prior to 1066, as originally intended by Alfred the Great.⁷ Consequently, it seems unlikely the area's well-established indigenous aesthetic inclinations would have been completely eradicated or replaced by the conquering Normans in the course of only a few generations.

The Portable Antiquities Scheme database contains several records for medieval *stirrup* rings, three of which are particularly notable. Discovered in Cheshire (ID: LVPL-2061) (Fig. 4-3), the first is said to date from the thirteenth or fourteenth century and, along with its animal heads and text, includes two additional bezel pellets on either side of a larger, central one. Based on how one views the arrangement of certain Gothic vaulting systems, such as the nave of Hereford Cathedral (1250), it is possible to find similarities between the positioning of its ceiling bosses and the three pellets.

⁶ Ibid., 15.

⁷ Brent, 17.

Very similar in terms of its articulated ball-topped *stirrup* design, a Wiltshire ring (ID: WILT-A19293) is broadly dated to between 1150 and 1450 and displays the same curious beveling as the *Telscombe Ring*. Found in Kent, the third example is listed as fourteenth century and of a less obvious *stirrup* type (ID: KENT-5289) (Fig. 4-4). Its peculiar pyramidal configuration features five pellets, further pointing towards a design element for its own sake versus simply a stone replacement. Even if the pellet was once intended as a stone substitute, this simple form seems to have ultimately taken on a life of its own. (note: the last example may inadvertently be listed twice by the Portable Antiquities Scheme, also as ID: KENT-75CEE5).

The use of a pellet or ball of material in twelfth- and thirteenth-century western European decorative arts is not limited to rings or even jewelry. The *Becket Casket* (Fig. 4-5) is a reliquary which recounts the murder of Thomas Becket, Archbishop of Canterbury, at the hands of Henry II's knights. The casket, which may have once contained the bones or other physical matter of the deceased, is known to have been produced in Limoges, France c. 1180-90, within twenty years of the event it commemorates.⁸ As with many French reliquaries of the late twelfth and early thirteenth centuries, a round copper ball rests atop a post at the center of the casket, its profile recalled in the decorative cookie-cutter pattern just below. The use of a sphere, particularly as in this and other Limoges reliquaries, is perhaps most easily explained as a regurgitation of other circular patterns, with the saint's round halo possibly providing the primary inspiration.⁹

⁸ Victoria and Albert Museum, *Online Collection Database*.
<http://collections.vam.ac.uk/item/O80222/the-becket-casket-casket-unknown/>

⁹ Art Institute of Chicago, "The Thirteenth Century," *Art Institute of Chicago Museum Studies* 30 No. 2 (2004): 40.

Clasped Hands

Opposite the *stirrup*, a secondary bezel of joined hands forms a lower shank which is unconventionally wider than its primary bezel. Rings as love tokens originate in ancient Greece and sometimes include representations of Aphrodite, goddess of love, or other motifs such as the Hercules knot, representing the untying of the bride's garments by the groom.¹⁰ The earliest examples of clasped hands are from Rome. Known as the *dextrarum iunctio*, meaning to join right hands (Fig. 4-6), these rings signify a pledge of marriage recognized by the early Christian church. *Fede*, the Italian word for "faith," is a Victorian designation still in use to describe this type.¹¹ The *fede* resurfaced in England by the twelfth century, with the earliest datable English example coming from the Lark Hill hoard (deposited c. 1173-4).¹² Like its Roman predecessors, the motif is thought to signify love or a commitment towards marriage. Medieval *fede* rings sometimes include secular poetic inscriptions or posies to express affection. Though seemingly in fewer numbers, some include sacred inscriptions of personal devotion.¹³ The *Telscombe Ring* is further unique within the *fede* genre as its sacred component is not textual, but visual with its Christian cross imagery.

While major museum pieces tend to be of the highest quality, review of Portable Antiquities Scheme records for gold and silver medieval *fede* rings reveals a significant range of style and skill. Some are very crude, little more than flat, barely distinguishable shapes with awkwardly incised lines for fingers. Others are more modeled and anatomically correct. Based on an informal evaluation of clasped hands motifs, the *Telscombe Ring* falls somewhere within the more refined half. The first of two examples which most closely

¹⁰ Scarisbrick, 59.

¹¹ Hindman, 136.

¹² Roberta Gilchrist, *Medieval Life: Archaeology and the Life Course* (Woodbridge: The Boydell Press, 2012), 95.

¹³ Scarisbrick, 66.

resemble the hands of the *Telscombe Ring* in terms of style and execution is a silver band found in Firle, East Sussex (ID: SUSS-02A804) (Fig. 4-7), only about five miles northeast of Telscombe. The second, an incomplete silver ring (ID: SUR-185BB8), was found approximately thirty miles northwest of Telscombe in East Clandon, Surrey.

Stylistic similarities and tight find location proximity make these three examples particularly noteworthy, conceivably pointing to a preferred style which developed in the area over time through multiple artisans or the even more intriguing, although remote, possibility of individual rings carved by the same hand. What does not support this hypothesis are the dates offered by the Portable Antiquities Scheme, which suggest fourteenth to sixteenth century for the Firle ring and fifteenth to sixteenth century for the East Clandon example. The wide date ranges, particularly for the Firle ring, suggests a degree of creation date uncertainty and perhaps an opportunity for re-evaluation.

Crosses

The description by Finds Liaison Officer Laura Burnett is well written and thorough. However, it only partially reflects design intent for the series of crosses on either side of the hoop. She describes the square sections above and below each lozenge-set cross as containing “indented saltires.” This observation is a logical first impression, but may not give adequate credit for a more thoughtful, cohesive design. Saltires and quatrefoils were popular Gothic motifs, but those referenced by Burnett probably served a secondary or at most, dual design function within their respective square boundaries. In an etching or carving, the visual focus is less about the void created by what is removed than what remains. For instance, by removing material around the central lozenge-set crosses on either side of

the hoop, the artist directs the viewer's attention not to the negative space, but the resulting cross left at surface level.

A twelfth-century medieval silver-gilt ring found in Sutterton, Lincolnshire (ID: LIN-5465E1) (Fig. 4-8) effectively demonstrates this point. The ring clearly features a square-set cross known as the *cross pattée*, derived from the French *la croix pattée* or “footed cross” at its bezel. Like the *Telscombe Ring*, four grooves, tapered at each end, are cut at roughly right angles. By choosing to focus on the saltire formed by the recessions (the negative image), the viewer is disregarding the intended *cross pattée* formed by what remains at the surface (the positive image). A second design on the shoulder of the same ring further validates the artist's intent. It too consists of four grooves but, unlike the bezel, the grooves overlap at the center leaving nothing at surface level; a result which can only be viewed as a recessed saltire or quatrefoil. Given the similarity between the Sutterton's bezel cross and the *Telscombe Ring's* square-set crosses, design intent is clear: a smaller and consequently more executionally challenging *cross pattée*, made more difficult to discern now due to the long term effects of weathering.

When viewed in this light, an integrated design emerges (Fig. 4-9) where the end of each elongated North/South arm of the lozenge-set cross completes the design of the square-set crosses above and below it. The hoop is therefore comprised of three crosses per side, each ingeniously blending into the one it borders, forming a vertical triptych. Further proof is in the East/West arms of the central lozenge-set crosses, which terminate in the same spade-like shape as their North/South counterparts which, as described, morph into one arm of the flanking square-set crosses. Another example of the *cross pattée* can be found in the *Church of St. Lawrence* (Fig. 4-10). Carved into one of the late twelfth-century columns that

divide the nave from the north aisle, the cross is said to have been made by a Crusader upon returning from the Second Crusade (1145-1149).¹⁴

Like the *cross pattée*, the arms of the central lozenge-set cross taper towards the center before intersecting. However, their spade-like ends are of a style not found in particularly great numbers when exploring medieval cross imagery. The closest match of the lozenge-set crosses thus far to a named design is the *occitan* cross, found on some French coats of arms. The only difference is that the *occitan* design includes a small circle at the end of each cross arm. The *Becket Casket* features a pattern of crosses on its reverse (Fig. 4-11) that are strikingly similar to the lozenge-set crosses of the *Telscombe Ring*. Though not elongated, they are certainly reminiscent in terms of their shape and the character with which they are expressed. Given this stylistic relationship between the *Telscombe Ring* and highly important *Becket Casket*, it is reasonable to loosely group the two as both featuring what must have been a fairly prominent cross design during the twelfth and thirteenth century. This style continued to find use at least until the mid thirteenth century, as the same type fills the border of one of the *Scenes from the Story of Noah and the Ark*, comprising the pictorial preface to a psalter from Northern France or Flanders (c. 1250).¹⁵

There are a handful of other medieval rings in the Portable Antiquities Scheme database featuring crosses with comparable spade-like terminations, although the two most similar are fragmentary. The first, found in Thrussington, Leicestershire (LEIC-C4F333) (Fig. 4-12), is made of silver and said to date from the thirteenth or fourteenth century. Each of the two surviving pieces has lozenge-set crosses very similar to those of the *Telscombe Ring*. The top image effectively shows their resemblance, while the bottom, inadvertently

¹⁴ Hardman, 39.

¹⁵ Art Institute of Chicago, 43.

due to photographic lighting, reveals the clever way in which the artist achieved this, best explained using the analogy of a tree branch. The two main branches start at opposite ends, slightly offset from each other. Each branch splits into two, then each remaining branch splits again resulting in the form of a complete cross with spade-like terminations. The lozenge-set crosses of the *Telscombe Ring* are executed in nearly identical fashion.

A second example, found in Newchurch, Kent (KENT-A52BD1) (Fig. 4-13), is a single small portion of what was once a complete silver ring thought to originate from the fourteenth or fifteenth century. This lozenge-set cross is executed in the same manner as the Thrussington example and with similar results. Therefore, it is difficult to find logic in dating the two finds differently. Although the Thrussington fragments were found in central England, quite a distance from the village of Telscombe, the Newchurch example was unearthed about thirty-five miles to the east.

Hoards, which are the intentional burials of wealth as a means of safekeeping during periods of political unrest or military conflict, are central to establishing a chronology for medieval rings. When something is included with a coin hoard, it is nearly as helpful had the object itself been date-stamped. The Lark Hill Hoard consists of 169 silver pennies, first mintages of Henry II (1154-89), 6 halves and 7 quarters. The cache also includes 5 silver rings,¹⁶ one (Fig. 4-14 top) being particularly useful towards placing the *Telscombe Ring* and others within a logical developmental sequence.

The previously referenced Sutterton ring (LIN-5465E1) and a second found in Scrayingham, North Yorkshire (LVPL-EAE971) (Fig. 4-14 bottom), are strikingly similar to

¹⁶ British Museum, *Online Collection Database*.
http://www.britishmuseum.org/research/collection_online/collection_object_details.aspx?objectId=50164&partId=1&searchText=lark+hill+hoard&page=1

the Lark Hill example and thus also appropriately dated to the twelfth century by the Portable Antiquities Scheme. All are made of silver and have the same general format consisting of an elongated rectangular bezel partitioned into decorative panels. The central panels of the Scrayingham and Lark Hill examples are near duplicates with their relief patterns of four crosses with spade-like terminations, and are in turn similar to those of the twelfth-century *Becket Casket* and *Telscombe Ring*. Another link between the Sutterton and Lark Hill finds and the *Telscombe Ring* is the *cross pattée*. This is not to suggest that any medieval ring featuring the *cross pattée* must therefore be twelfth century, only that when combined with the *occitan*-like cross and an organization of decorative motifs within panels, it is acceptable to establish a stylistic and therefore chronological relationship.

Animal Heads

Stylized heads of actual or imagined beasts are positioned at each shoulder of the *Telscombe Ring*. From their mouths spring the *stirrup* bezel, architecturally similar to a corbel stone supporting the base of an arch. Many excellent examples of Norman architecture with zoomorphic sculptural adornment can be found in the southeast English counties of Kent and Sussex, not surprising given their proximity with Hastings and the English Channel. Deeply carved stone capitals supporting arched vaulting in the twelfth-century crypt of Canterbury Cathedral are rich with narrative. One carving in *The Chapel of St. Gabriel* (Fig. 4-15) is particularly reminiscent. Instead of a ring bezel, a flute sprouts from the animal's mouth, the resemblance with the *Telscombe ring* increased by the curvature of the musical instrument.

Zoomorphic characteristics are also prevalent in other small early medieval and medieval objects including riding spurs. One Late Saxon fragment (Fig. 4-16) is not only

stylistically noteworthy, but also because it was found at Race Hill, Lewes, East Sussex, only a few miles north of Telscombe. With a creation date thought to fall within the first half of the eleventh century, the beast's head is representative of Late Viking art of the Urnes Style.¹⁷ Just as a *stirrup* bezel protrudes from the mouths of the *Telscombe Ring* beasts, an iron rod runs through the length and out the mouth of the highly modeled copper alloy spur head. Although they do not share the bulging, convex eyes or delicate tendrils of the Lewes example, upturned snouts and nostrils find some compare. Also moderately similar is the dorsal surface of each, which widens along the neck line of the Lewes beast as it moves away from the snout before terminating in chevrons, a bit like the longer of the two *Telscombe Ring* heads. Lastly, crevices representing the lower jaw on either side of the ring's shorter head are not unlike those of the Lewes example, though unclear if for the same purpose.¹⁸

Also Anglo-Scandinavian, but far more stylistically akin to the *Telscombe Ring*, is an incomplete copper alloy horse stirrup terminal (SUSS-FE80C6) (Fig. 4-17) dating to the second half of the eleventh century. The head features an upturned snout with flaring nostrils, prominent brow, almond-shaped eyes and diagonal lines crossing the lateral surface of the snout, traits which are echoed in the *Telscombe Ring* beasts. Equally compelling is its discovery in Southease, only about one mile northeast of Telscombe. Although a pronounced Urnes Style influence is apparent on the Race Hill spur from the first half of the eleventh century, the horse stirrup terminal from the second half of the eleventh century aligns far more closely with the *Telscombe Ring* heads.

The Anglo-Saxon *Priory Church of St. Mary* at Deerhurst, Gloucestershire includes sculpture worth noting. Beast heads (Fig. 4-18), with carved tendrils visually comparable to

¹⁷ David Williams, "Two Late Saxon Spur Fragments from Sussex and Hampshire," *Medieval Archaeology* 46 (2002): 118.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 116.

those found on the early eleventh-century Race Hill spur neck demonstrate Scandinavian influence, although the snout and more robust head align more closely with the late eleventh-century Southeast horse stirrup terminal. Interestingly, the Deerhurst beasts are thought to date to the ninth century, considerably earlier than either. In addition to the overall form of the Deerhurst heads, the gaping mouth, incised lines angling down the side of the snout and inverted V-pattern atop its skull all find comparability with traits cumulatively possessed by the two *Telscombe Ring* heads.

Also worthy of scrutiny for its use of animal heads and Southeast England origin is a late Saxon illuminated page from the *Epistola de vita S. Dunstani; Life of St. Dunstan* (Fig. 4-19). Dating from the last quarter of the eleventh century to the first quarter of the twelfth century, a highly embellished initial ‘R’ includes a censuring monk, seated scribe identified as “OSBEARNVS” and a multitude of strange beasts in various pose. Of particular note are two facing horned beasts, possibly dragons, which flank a ball where the arc of the letter reaches its apex. The similarity of the image with the *Telscombe Ring* is further enhanced by their gaping mouths, which swallow a segment of the letter.

Animal heads are featured in other extant medieval rings within the Portable Antiquities Scheme database, though not in great numbers. The Victoria and Albert Museum has at least three, all beautifully executed in gold. The first (Fig. 4-20) is listed as thirteenth century, includes a cabochon blue sapphire, Latin text translating to “Hail Mary, full of Grace” and two lion-mask heads symbolizing love.¹⁹ The second (Fig. 4-21), also thirteenth century and with an uncut blue sapphire, has chased foliage and dragon heads. The third (Fig. 4-22) displays a blue sapphire and dragon heads, but originates in the fourteenth

¹⁹ Victoria and Albert Museum, *Online Collection Database*.
<http://collections.vam.ac.uk/item/O121863/ring-unknown/>

century. A thirteenth-century gold ring from the British Museum (Fig. 4-23) not only has dragons and a sapphire-set *stirrup* bezel, but also clasped hands at its base. Unlike the *Telscombe Ring*, there is no sacred reference, but instead a secular inscription along its hoop in Lombardic script leaving no doubt as to its purpose “+ IE . SUI . DE . DRUE . RIE . E . SI . NE . ME . DO . NEI . MIE” (I am a love token, do not give me away).²⁰

As noted, the *Telscombe Ring* deviates from the Victoria & Albert and British Museum examples with its two animal heads which are distinctly different, a feature thus far not witnessed elsewhere. While conceivable the heads are simply decorative, the special effort to create two suggests varied iconography. In order to understand it, identification must first be made, a difficult and as yet inconclusive task. Possible explanations include male and female or adult and juvenile, although the degree of differentiation seems more appropriately interpreted as two completely different types of beast. All but one of the four zoomorphic rings previously discussed are identified as dragons; a reasonable candidate for at least one head and perhaps a dog or biting wolf for the other.

Two final rings recorded by the Portable Antiquities Scheme are important for their unique similarities with the *Telscombe Ring*. The first, a gold ring (SF-C864C6) (Fig. 4-24) found near Eye, Suffolk, is listed as fourteenth century and features a rare double or split *stirrup* bezel, each set with a blue sapphire. Opposite the bezel are clasped hands and along the hoop a sacred reference of “Ave Maria” (Hail Mary). However, decorative four-petal flowers take the place of missing animal heads. The last example (BUC-910AB2) (Fig. 4-25) is important not necessarily for its motifs or categories of meaning, but the overall character in which it is executed. The object, also silver-gilt, was found in Tattenhoe,

²⁰ British Museum, *Online Collection Database*.
http://www.britishmuseum.org/research/collection_online/collection_object_details.aspx?objectId=43722&partId=1&searchText=medieval+gold+finger+ring&page=1

Buckinghamshire and is listed as fourteenth to fifteenth century. The ring features an oval bezel holding a stone, most likely an amethyst, and similar lozenge-set crosses. Of particular interest is the distinct sculptural quality it shares with the *Telscombe Ring*, possibly also achieved through chip-carving.²¹

In her book *Medieval Art*, Marilyn Stokstad provides potentially valuable insights about early medieval Vendel and Viking metalworking methods, noting that:

Norse jewelers like their Germanic cousins, adopted and transformed simple Roman “safety pins” into magnificent fibulae. Instead of using polychrome garnet inlays and cloisonné enamel, however, the northern artists covered the surface of their jewelry with chip-carving, a faceting technique derived from wood carving and designed to catch and refract light.²²

Consequently, the extensive chip-carving and sculptural nature of the *Telscombe Ring* could itself be a clue to stylistic origin. This particular characteristic, by no means considered widespread within the sampling of medieval rings, may further signal a long, but conceivably traceable Scandinavian influence.

²¹ Portable Antiquities Scheme, *Online Collection Database*.
<http://finds.org.uk/database/artefacts/record/id/154812>

²² Marilyn Stokstad, *Medieval Art* (Boulder: Westview Press, 2004), 86.

CHAPTER 5

THE TELSCOMBE TALES

A Goldsmith's Tale

*“With these three teines which that we have wrought,
To some goldsmith, and weet if they be aught.”*

(Chaucer, “The Clerk’s Tale,” *The Canterbury Tales*)

The *Telscombe Ring* is complex, featuring multiple motifs spanning its entire circumference. Their variety, arrangement and execution suggest its maker possessed a relatively high level of knowledge, experience and skill. The result is not a series of rudimentary marks on a flat bezel surface like many examples, but a relief carving of morphing crosses, well executed clasped hands and modeled animal heads. Furthermore, the execution of its articulated *stirrup* bezel equals or surpasses many of its gold counterparts.

There are also clues about the goldsmith’s production methods. As outlined, the ring was joined prior to gilding with evidence supporting an originally larger sized ring made smaller, probably to fit its new owner. This suggests its design is based on the jeweler’s speculation of salability versus an individually commissioned piece, which presumably would have been made in the correct size to begin with. In other words, the *Telscombe Ring* mold may have been designed and fabricated with a predetermined set of motifs, though perhaps still retaining some flexibility for relatively minor variances to satisfy specific customer requests.

It is certainly most efficient to produce more than one ring from the same mold or pattern and the different animal head lengths may be purposeful, providing a longer, linear section of “wrist” on one side as the designated location for material to be added or removed

based on sizing requirements. It is further logical to make the standard version large so that most sizing is down, thus requiring only one joint instead of two. On a less savory note, it could have also provided the jeweler with an opportunity to increase his profits at the expense of unsuspecting customers by pricing the ring at its pre-sizing weight, but still retaining any removed material after sizing.

As identified, Lewes became home to a Cluniac priory following the conquest. Monasteries were central to cultural dispersion in the wake of devastation inflicted by Viking raiders in the eighth and ninth centuries. As further outlined by John Cherry, these establishments were also responsible for much of the total gold and silver works production as necessitated by the church's demand for such items as reliquaries, chalices, book covers and altar pieces. Consequently, goldsmith workshops were sometimes positioned within monastic grounds as indicated by a ninth-century document which suggests the optimum building layout. The plan, housed at the Benedictine Abbey of St. Gall in Switzerland, shows a group of workshops with the goldsmith adjacent to the blacksmith, probably due to their comparatively similar craft processes and propensity for causing deadly fires.¹

The inclusion of goldsmith shops within monasteries is relevant when considering possible production locations for the *Telscombe Ring*. The Lewes Priory, with its sizable assets, seems a reasonable candidate to support such a workshop through a steady stream of church commissions. However, as Cherry notes, “[...] during the Middle Ages most of what the goldsmith produced were secular objects such as silver bowls, beakers, cups, fittings for knives and horns, belts, and silver and gold rings.”² These everyday items were typically not

¹ John Cherry, *Goldsmiths: Medieval Craftsmen* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1992), 7.

² *Ibid.*, 36.

produced under contract, but as stock items which were then sold through shops,³ like those that would have lined the streets of medieval Lewes. As discussed, technical analysis of the *Telscombe Ring* further supports the case for an object which was not produced under contract, at least not for a specific wearer.

The maker of the *Telscombe Ring* may have been an independent craftsman or perhaps even a monk as it was not uncommon for the former to transition to the latter. Goldsmith's Mathew Paris and Walter of Colchester, also a painter and sculptor, each underwent this transformation at the Benedictine monastery of St. Albans, Hertfordshire in the early thirteenth century. Artists like these attained notoriety due in large part to their advanced metalworking proficiency and were thus responsible for executing some of the highest profile and most elaborate sacred creations. By contrast, secular craftsmen of comparable skill often worked in London in the service of kings and nobles in royal and aristocratic courts.⁴

Guilds oversaw and controlled the various activities and standards of medieval English goldsmiths under the banner of their patron saint, St. Dunstan. For example, goldsmiths were forbidden from producing silver goods inferior to coinage, effectively making the two interchangeable in terms of their relative value. Although the precise silver purity of the *Telscombe Ring* unfortunately could not be determined, its gold purity could. By 1300, the Paris standard was enforced in England, which required a gold purity of 19.2-karat.⁵ However, the gold of the *Telscombe Ring* was calculated at slightly under 18-karat, a difference of about 1.2-karats.

³ Ibid., 67.

⁴ Ibid., 9-11.

⁵ Ibid., 52-55.

When compared to similarly dated medieval rings found in England, the *Telscombe Ring*'s characteristics suggests that while it may surpass many in terms of its organizational complexity and the level of skill required to execute its various motifs, it is not at the very highest echelons of craftsmanship nor is it constructed of solid gold as would befit a consumer of prestige and means. Therefore, it was probably the work of an apprentice or one of the rising numbers of urban goldsmiths needed to meet the demands of towns which grew larger in the eleventh and twelfth centuries from increased trade.⁶

Fortunately, detailed technical information about various medieval metalworking processes and requirements survives through the writings of Theophilus, a monk who sometime between 1110 and 1140 authored a treatise concerning *De Diversis Artibus* (The Various Arts). Jewelry was typically produced using a cast during the Middle Ages. Cherry outlines the lost wax, or *cire perdue* casting technique using documentation provided by Theophilus, which explains the:

[...] manufacture of the handles for the chalice by forming the handles in wax and sculpting on them decoration in the form of dragons, animals or birds. A little finger of wax called the *sprue* is left at the top. The wax is then covered in kneaded clay so that all the hollows of the moulding are filled. The mould is warmed so that the wax runs out through the holes created by the *sprues*. The molten silver is then poured into the moulds through the same holes. The whole then cools, the moulds are broken and the handles removed.

Molds of other material, such as metal or fine grained stone, were used when objects were produced in large quantities, which may have been the case with the *Telscombe Ring*. After casting, two types of solder might be employed in the production of jewelry, either lead tin with a melting point below 250° C or copper alloyed with gold or silver with a melting

⁶ Ibid., 11.

point of over 700° C.⁷ Metallurgical analysis along the inner surface at the seam of the *Telscombe Ring* points in the direction of a copper alloy.

Cherry suggests that medieval goldsmiths needed to have “patience and precision” and that they “had often to possess the modeling qualities of a sculptor.” Regardless of specifically where or how it was produced, given its qualities and level of detail, the creator of the *Telscombe Ring* possessed the same traits and abilities.

A Bridegroom’s Tale

*“And here again your clothing I restore,
And eke your wedding ring for evermore.”*

(Chaucer, “The Canon’s Yeoman’s Tale,” *The Canterbury Tales*)

Despite the variety in which medieval rings were worn, the substantial weight and large size of the *Telscombe Ring* suggests it belonged to a man. Per the find report, it has an internal diameter of between 20.9 and 21.3mm. For perspective, an internal diameter of 20.94 equates to a ring size of 11 3/8 American or W ½ British, quite large, regardless of how or on which finger it was worn. Its gilt silver profiles a wearer in the upper half of society, although sumptuary laws would likely not have played a role until the fourteenth century.⁸ Only those of high status could afford gold, especially when set with stones. However, the frequency of rings in Portable Antiquities Scheme database identified as gold indicates their numbers may be higher than expected; those on the less fortunate end of the social spectrum, probably only bronze or similar. The time and energy required to create the *Telscombe Ring* likely only added to its value, as did its gilding.

⁷ Ibid., 30.

⁸ Michael Camille, *The Medieval Art of Love* (London: Laurence King Publishing, 1998), 53.

The *Sarum Missal*, first put to use in the diocese of Salisbury during the first half of the thirteenth century, defines the liturgy of the English medieval church.⁹ Assuming for a moment its ultimate purpose was to signify the bonds of marriage, we can envision how the *Telscombe Ring* may have featured in a medieval wedding ceremony with the aid of an English translation of its *Liturgy of Marriage*. We join the ceremony where it instructs:

Then, let the woman say after the priest:

“I, N. take you N. as my wedded husband, to have and to hold, for better, for worse, for richer, for poorer, in sickness and in health, to be bonnie and buxom, in bed and at board, till death us do part; and thereto I pledge you my faith” (withdrawing her hand).

Then, the man shall place gold or silver and a ring on the plate or book. And then the priest shall ask whether or not the ring had been blessed before. If it is answered no, then the priest shall bless the ring in this way:

Celebrant: “The Lord be with you.”

Response: “And with your spirit.”

“Let us pray. Creator and preserver of the human race, giver of spiritual grace, bestower of eternal salvation, you, Lord, send your blessing on this ring, so that she who will wear it may be armed with the strength of heavenly defense and it help her to eternal salvation. Through Christ our Lord.”

Response: “Amen.”

“Let us pray.”

“Bless, Lord, this ring which we bless in your holy name, that whoever shall wear it, may abide in your peace and remain in your will, and live, and prosper, and grow old in your love, and let the length of her days be multiplied.”

Then let holy water be sprinkled on the ring. If, however, the ring had been blessed before, then immediately after the man has placed the ring on the book, the priest, having received the ring, shall give it to the man. The man shall take it in his right hand with his three principal fingers, holding the bride’s right hand with his left, and shall say after the priest:

“With this ring I you wed and this gold and silver I you give and with my body I you worship, and with all my worldly goods I you honor.”

⁹ Jacqueline Murray, *Love, Marriage, and Family in the Middle Ages* (Peterborough: Broadview Press Ltd., 2001), 261.

Then the groom shall put the ring on the bride's thumb saying, "In the name of the Father;" then on the second finger, saying, "and of the Son;" then on the third finger, saying, "and of the Holy Spirit;" and then on the fourth finger, saying "Amen." And let him leave the ring there because according to the *Decretum* c. 30, in that finger there is a certain vein running up to the heart, and inner love, which should always be fresh between them, is signified by the silver ring. Then, with their heads bowed, the priest shall pronounce the blessing over them [...]¹⁰

A mid twelfth-century liturgical reference derived from a now lost pontifical from Lyre (dioc. Evreux) similarly recounts the act of placing the ring on the bride's fingers. However, unlike the *Sarum Missal* account, it includes the direct, physical involvement of the priest stating:

[...] Deinde benedicat sacerdos anulum dicens [...] Hic accipiat sponsus anulum, et una cum sacerdote in ribus digitis dextrae manus sponsae imponat, dicens [...] Et sic imponat in uno digito sinistrae manus eumdem anulum: et ibi relinquat, ut eum deinceps in sinistra ferat [...]

[...] Then the priest blessed the ring, saying [...] Let the husband (sponsus) take the ring and, together with the priest place it on three fingers of the right hand of his spouse in turn [...] and then place the ring on one finger of the left hand, and leave it there, so that it is thereafter worn on the left hand [...]¹¹

Charles Oman, who authored the important survey *British Rings 800-1914*, suggests uncertainty as to whether the ring ultimately resided on the left or right hand,¹² a point which seems to be resolved at least in terms of the twelfth-century Lyre application. Curiously, both accounts reference only the bride's ring saying nothing about whether the same procedure was followed using a groom's ring. A fifteenth-century French carving at least offers the possibility that it was. The carving depicts the hands of a bride and groom, including a wedding ring upon the groom's thumb.¹³

¹⁰ Ibid., 264-265.

¹¹ Anne J. Duggan, "The Effect of Alexander III's 'Rules on the Formation of Marriage' in Angevin England," *Anglo-Norman Studies* 33 (2010): 8.

¹² Oman, 36.

¹³ Priscilla Heath Barnum, *Dives and Pauper II* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2004), 194-195.

Although the sacred component of the *Telscombe Ring* is not textual like other examples, raising the question of literacy of the goldsmith and/or wearer, the use of cross imagery is nonetheless fitting. Before 1215, a variety of approaches were sought to promote lay piety, including within the arts.¹⁴ Naturally, encouraging personal devotion through imagery extended to the most important and recognizable Christian symbol of all, the crucifix.¹⁵ Consequently, it is not surprising to see it featured on a finger ring, whether or not it was used for the purposes of marriage; its highly visible and intimate location on the hand serving as a constant reminder to its medieval wearer of Christ's suffering and the promise of salvation.

The finder of the *Telscombe Ring* stated that it was approximately seven inches underground when located. Although singularly inconclusive in terms of when the item may have gone missing, additional evidence regarding medieval practices, combined with condition and wear analysis, may help point towards a ring which was lost within a few decades of its creation. Objects which were consecrated, such as gold wedding rings, were either destroyed or relinquished to the church after serving their originally intended purpose, versus buried with the deceased or handed down within the family as heirlooms. If the *Telscombe Ring* was used in a sacred capacity; the fact that it survives could suggest it was separated from its original owner during his lifetime or perhaps even intentionally buried to avoid a similar fate.¹⁶

¹⁴ Hugh M. Thomas, "Lay Piety in England from 1066 to 1215," *Anglo-Norman Studies* 29 (2006): 180.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 186.

¹⁶ Gilchrist, 250.

CHAPTER 6

CONCLUSIONS

We will of course never know the individual identities of those whose hands made and wore the *Telscombe Ring* so many centuries ago. However, the goal of this humanistic endeavor was to give this find the analysis and research it deserves, thus providing these nameless, forgotten figures with a voice to at least tell us a few brief stories about their individual lives and culture as revealed through the technical details and stylistic nuances of a single medieval finger ring.

Viewed through a modern lens, the ring's meaning seems complex and conflicting, simultaneously secular and sacred, pagan and Christian. Its purpose is at once decorative and symbolic and its form both geometric and sculptural. Comparative stylistic evaluation reveals characteristics potentially attributable to Saxon, Scandinavian, Norman and more generically, French culture. From an art historical categorization, there are cursory arguments for Romanesque and Gothic.

Initially, the *Telscombe Ring* felt most appropriately described as transitional, possessing both Romanesque and Gothic characteristics; continentally influenced, if not produced, in a Norman-French style and dating to the mid thirteenth century. However, research suggests an alternative. Its *occitan*-like crosses, most similar in style to those found on objects of French origin like the late twelfth-century *Becket Casket*, suggest a continental connection. However, certain other characteristics, namely its animal heads, find stylistic and geographic congruence with early medieval Anglo-Scandinavian objects like the eleventh-century zoomorphic *stirrup* terminal fragment found in Southease, just a mile northeast of Telscombe.

Evidence thus far supports an Anglo-Norman, or perhaps more appropriately stated, Saxo-Norman cultural categorization, with apparent Scandinavian influence and a creation date at the early end of the 1150-1300 range offered by the Portable Antiquities Scheme. Consequently, it is now also believed to originate from England, probably in the southeast and quite possibly in or near Lewes.

Five observations cumulatively suggest a mid twelfth- to very early thirteenth-century origination in Southeast England: first, its relatively close stylistic and geographic ties with two other *fede* rings; second, its degree of articulation relative to other *stirrup* rings dated to c. 1200; third, the *occitan*-like crosses it shares with the *Becket Casket* (c. 1180-90) and other twelfth-century rings that use a “tree branch” method of design execution and which in turn closely link in style with the well established twelfth-century Lark Hill hoard ring; fourth, the apparent last vestiges of a once flourishing regional Scandinavian stylistic influence lingering in the heads of its two beasts, a cultural interaction further demonstrated by the 97 coins minted at Lewes under Aethelred II (979-1013) discovered in Scandinavian hoards,¹ its extensive use of chip-carving and similarities with the ninth-century Saxon ring with a pellet atop a *stirrup*-shaped bezel flanked by two heads; fifth, through the various other culturally and stylistically relevant early medieval and medieval objects excavated in and around Telscombe, including those at the Stud Farm. Also fitting is the *Telscombe Ring's* gold purity, which falls below the Paris standard adopted in England by 1300.

If the *Telscombe Ring* dates to the second half of the twelfth century as now thought, it may represent an early English example of both the *fede* and *stirrup* types, with its metal ball possibly being transitional from earlier Saxon *stirrup*-types never intended to hold stones to later Gothic examples which were. The profile of the *Telscombe Ring stirrup* bezel aligns

¹ Brent, 22.

more closely with the Saxon ring than later stone-set examples like the British Museum ring, whose sapphire is more of a continuation of the *stirrup* shape. Alternatively, even if both the *occitan*-like cross and *stirrup* designs are continental in origin, it is important to remember the French had a significant presence in England even before 1066, including at the court of Edward the Confessor.² Since the primary cluster of pre-Conquest French land holders were in southern England,³ a regional Saxo-French/Norman, stylistic blend may have been firmly established by the dawn of the twelfth century, along with the artisans necessary to employ it.

With the ring's multiple motifs and a limited body of work for this subject, offering an art historical classification remains a slippery slope. The individual who created the *Telscombe Ring* of course never considered himself as working in a particular style or period; these being modern distinctions offered with the luxury of hindsight. Furthermore, he probably viewed his creations more as goods for sale rather than art. We are left only with an object whose physical form remains intact, but whose meaning remains behind, buried with those who assigned it. Since it was not found with a hoard and there are no identifying hallmarks as to when or where it was made, establishing clear lines of stylistic influence and chronology present a challenging, though interesting art historical problem, heightened by the ring's complexity and the evolving cultural diversity of Southeast England during the eleventh and twelfth centuries. Also problematic are the wide-ranging and seemingly inconsistent creation dates assigned to the medieval rings of England, which do not universally reconcile with the *Telscombe Ring* or each other.

As demonstrated, acceptance of a cause/effect relationship between Gothic architecture and the *stirrup* ring, and even its status as a love or marriage token, cannot be

² Lewis, 123.

³ *Ibid.*, 135.

assumed. Although a pledge of fidelity as the iconographic derivative of clasped hands is not necessarily in dispute, was it limited to an individual of the opposite sex or is there evidence of its use in conjunction with institutional oaths of fealty such as to a military or religious order or as a gift from lord to vassal in association with a knighting ceremony?

Alternatively, might there be a memorial or mourning component to consider? Freemasons, for instance, have a history of using the device outside the traditional male/female paradigm. If a marriage ring, how do we best interpret the twelfth-century liturgical accounts of first placing the ring on three other fingers, beginning with the thumb, before arriving at its final location; does this support a need to size and, if so, should we expect to see evidence of sizing on other period *fede* rings? Also, why was it acceptable to include a *stirrup* bezel on some examples, forcing the *fede* to the palm where it was not visible?

Two of the ring's four motif categories, the *fede* and crosses, are apparently devotional with sacred overtones. By modern expectations, they appear in conflict with seemingly barbaric zoomorphic images. However, this is by no means an uncommon juxtaposition in medieval art as Celtic and Germanic artists continued to use pagan devices even after accepting Christianity.⁴ Furthermore, while its heads may be secular in form, perhaps they are sacred in meaning. The Old Testament tells of Daniel killing a dragon and surviving a den of lions,⁵ one possible narrative accounting for two beasts on one ring. Canterbury Cathedral features the prophet in its North rose window. Dating to c. 1170, the glass is likely near-contemporaneous with the *Telscombe Ring*.

As intended, this undertaking proved worthwhile in two respects. First, detailed visual and technical analysis revealed unique characteristics of the *Telscombe Ring*

⁴ Stokstad, 78.

⁵ T. A. Heslop, "St. Anselm, Church Reform, and the Politics of Art," *Anglo-Norman Studies* 33 (2010): 111.

attributable to the maker and wearer. Second, by positioning it stylistically within a preliminary, but significant compendium of gold and silver medieval rings discovered in England and archaeologically using other locally excavated objects, several correlations offer possibilities as to geographic origin and chronology. Still, evaluation has also prompted the need for additional research in three key areas.

First, while metallurgical analysis proved very worthwhile, it left some questions unanswered. For instance, although it helped validate the existence of just one seam and produced useful data regarding composition and purity, there is still no definitive explanation as to how the ring was produced or the reason for the mysterious “liner,” a characteristic which may ultimately prove key to identifying the type of casting process used. Additionally, questions persist surrounding the existence of certain elements, namely the previously noted occurrence of titanium at one side of the *stirrup* bezel. At least some of these questions might readily be answered by consulting with individuals possessing expertise in medieval metal working techniques, particularly for jewelry.

Second, review of a larger, more diverse compendium is appropriate. Focus must turn to the continent, particularly for a review of French and other northern and western European medieval ring examples in order to evaluate the use and frequency of various motifs. This should be followed by a more detailed evaluation of other jewelry formats and finally non-jewelry decorative objects in and beyond the British Isles which may offer new insights. Of prime importance is the review of other hoards and additional archaeological research, particularly within East Sussex, including the evaluation of evidence for possible medieval goldsmith sites.

Third, further local and regional historiographical research is warranted. This effort focused first on establishing a sense of geographic origin and chronology as a contextual prerequisite for further historical research. More work now needs to be completed in tandem with a compendium of greater breadth and depth. For instance, additional literary sources describing various social and organizational affiliations, particularly within Southeast England and East Sussex, which might establish a regional or local link with one or more of the ring's motifs should be sought.

In the end, the *occitan*-like crosses and the animal heads, which are different from each other and arguably stylistically different from other ring examples discussed, may be pivotal to validating the geographic origin and creation date of the *Telscombe Ring*. As Cherry notes when discussing the residual effects of medieval values about jewelry into the Renaissance, there is documentation in the form of wills to consider that the *tau* cross type may have enjoyed regional English favor in the late fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries. He notes the evidence “[...] suggests that there may have been an East Anglian fashion for wearing this type of cross.”⁶

And as Oman notes when discussing the chronology of zoomorphic motifs in English medieval rings that:

[...] fashions in dragons changed in the course of the centuries. Some heads resemble those which are found adorning the doorways and chancel arches of the Norman period, so that we need have no scruple in attributing these to the twelfth century, but a gradual change of treatment is visible so that we have others which have to be dated to the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries.⁷

⁶ John Cherry, “Healing Through Faith: The Continuation of Medieval Attitudes to Jewellery into the Renaissance,” *Renaissance Studies* 15 No. 2 (2007): 162.

⁷ Oman, 19.

However, in his preface he somewhat conversely acknowledges, “It is not possible to deal with this subject in a completely logical manner. A strictly chronological arrangement is unsuitable since few rings can be dated accurately.”⁸

Most exciting about the prospect of further research is that the *Telscombe Ring* and others like it have the potential of being a kind of Rosetta Stone for medieval rings. Just as the Rosetta Stone provided crucial insights into the meaning of Egyptian hieroglyphics through its use of multiple scripts on the same tablet, perhaps the *Telscombe Ring* can serve a similar purpose through its use of multiple motifs on the same ring. This is of course not an attempt to equate these types of rings in terms of their cultural significance to the actual Rosetta Stone, only to suggest that a similar process might be used to help decipher the origin and chronology of medieval rings found in England.

Instead of inscriptions, the style of art is leveraged as the primary means to decode. For example, if two of an object's distinct motifs or characteristics can be shown through documentary and archaeological evidence to suggest strong favoritism within a particular region or through stylistic and technical analysis to align chronologically better with earlier objects, it could logically suggest that a third motif or characteristic on the same ring may have originated elsewhere or sooner than previously thought. If successful, results of this multi-disciplinary approach, based fundamentally on style, could potentially be extrapolated across other objects and media to enhance our understanding of stylistic relationships and sequence and perhaps even provide additional insights into developing cultural beliefs, values and thought processes in medieval England.

⁸ Ibid., preface.

ILLUSTRATIONS



Figure 1-1. The Telscombe Ring.



Figure 1-2. Map of East Sussex, England.



Figure 2-1. Aerial view of Telscombe Village, Church of St. Lawrence and find location, East Sussex, England.



**Figure 2-2. The Church of St. Lawrence (view from the south),
Telscombe, East Sussex, England.**



Figure 3-1. The Telscombe Ring. Detail of lozenge-set cross.

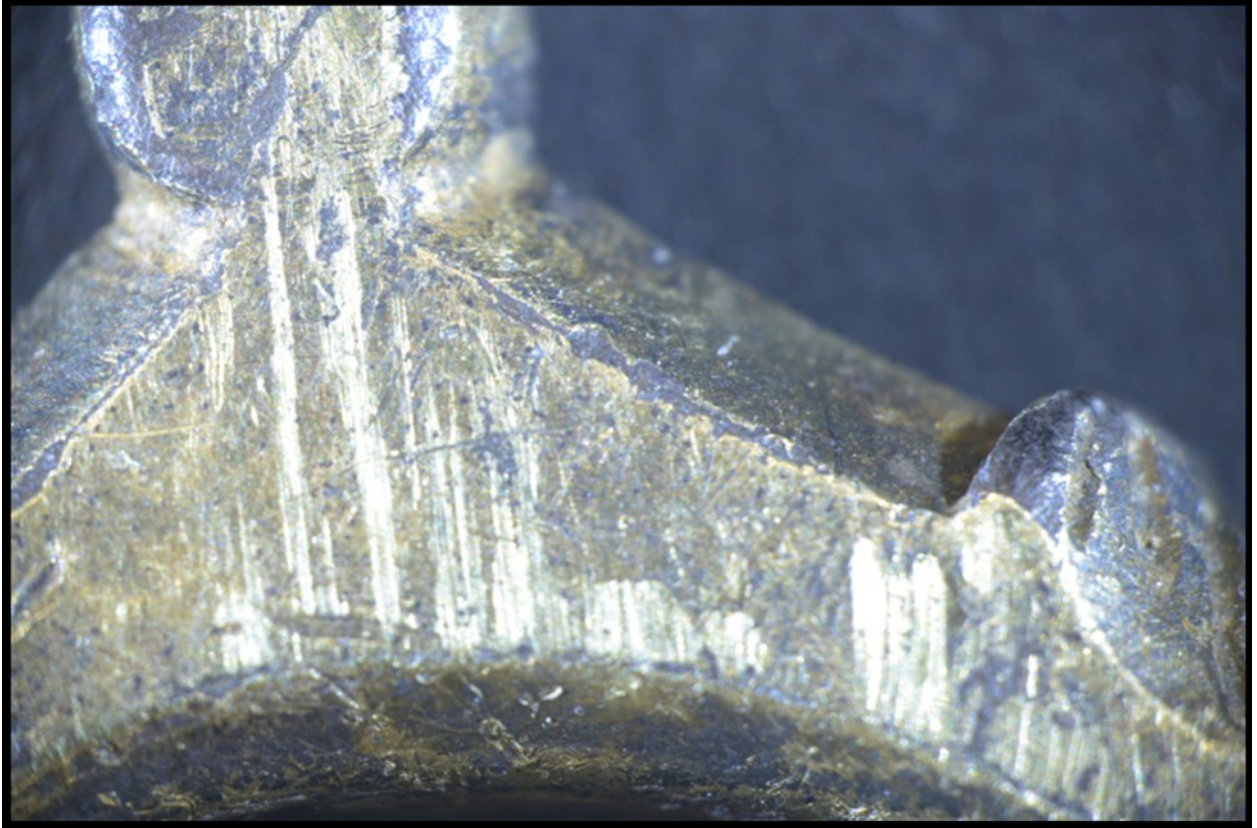


Figure 3-2. The Telscombe Ring. Detail of *stirrup* lateral surface.



Figure 3-3. The Telscombe Ring. Detail of “wrist” seam.

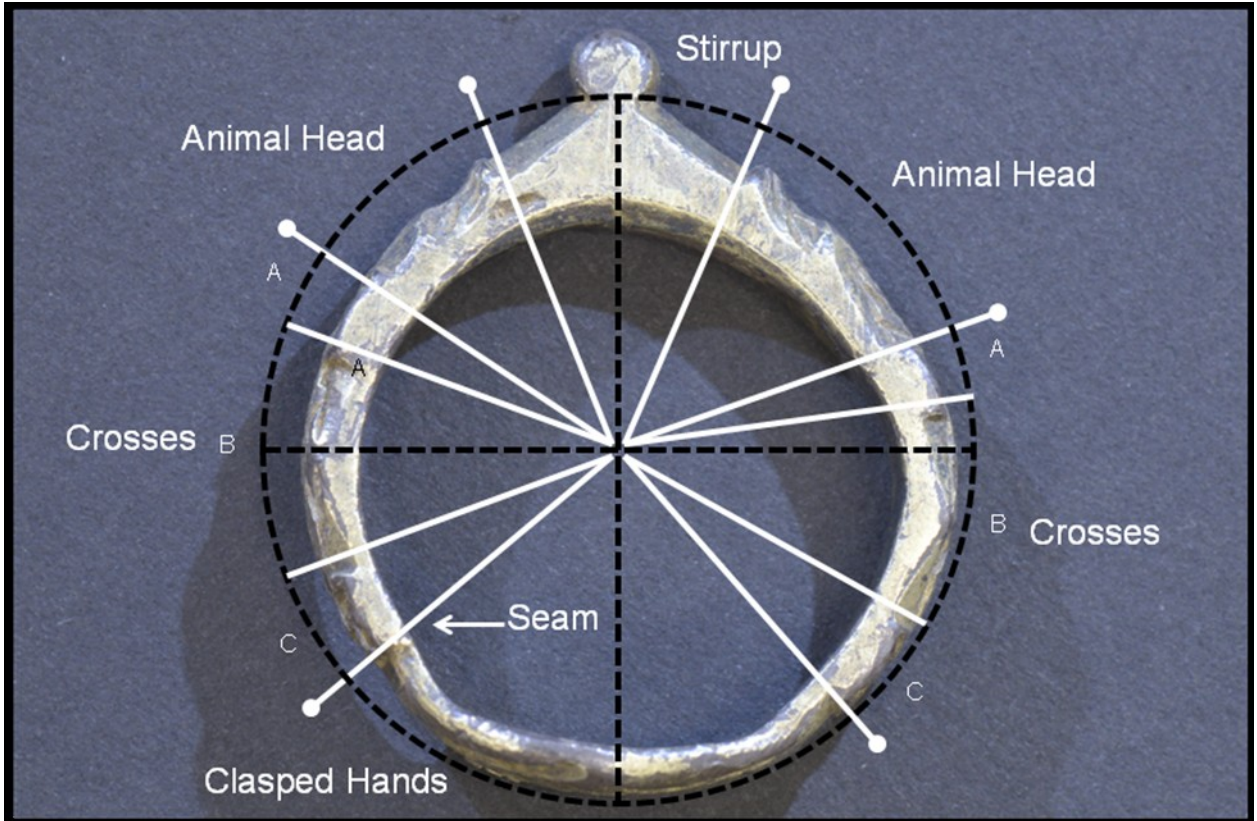


Figure 3-4. The Telscombe Ring. Design organization.



**Figure 3-5. The Telscombe Ring. Animal head comparison.
Multiple views of short head (left) and long head (right).**

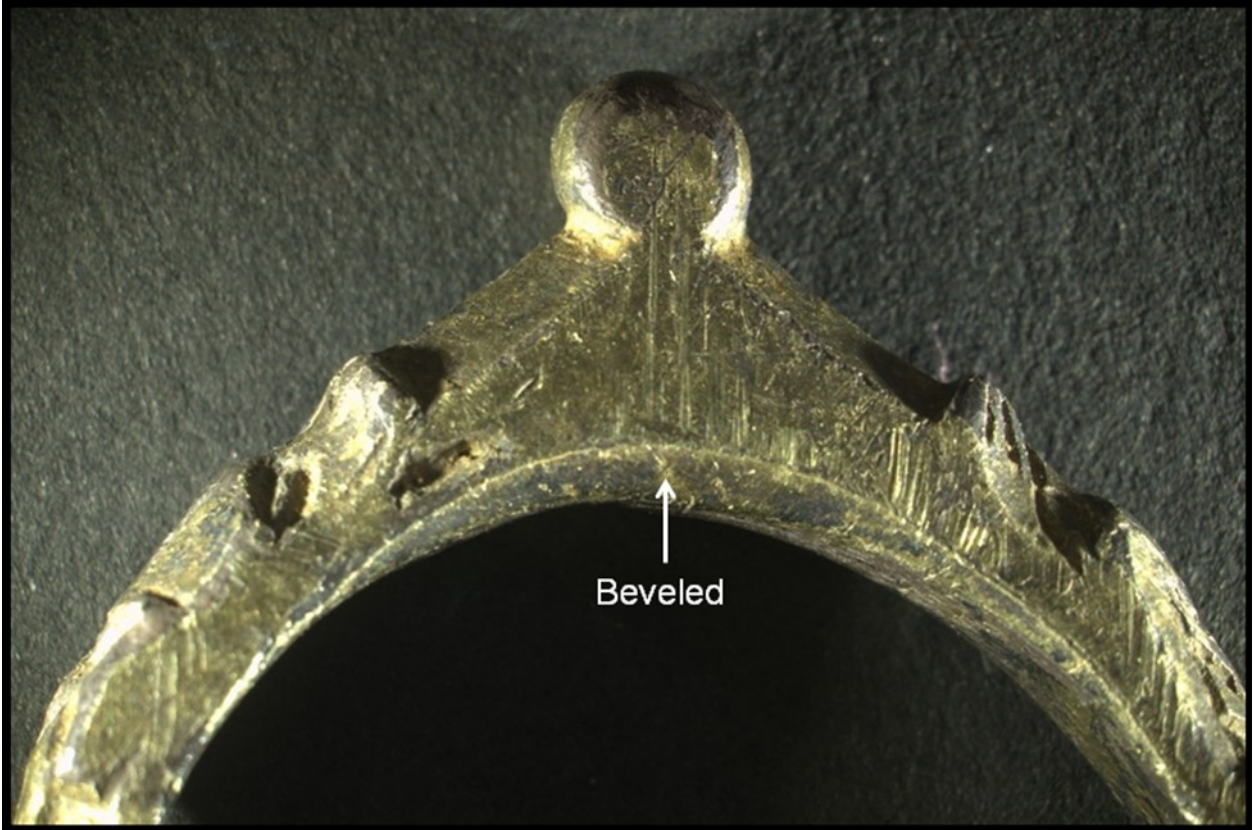
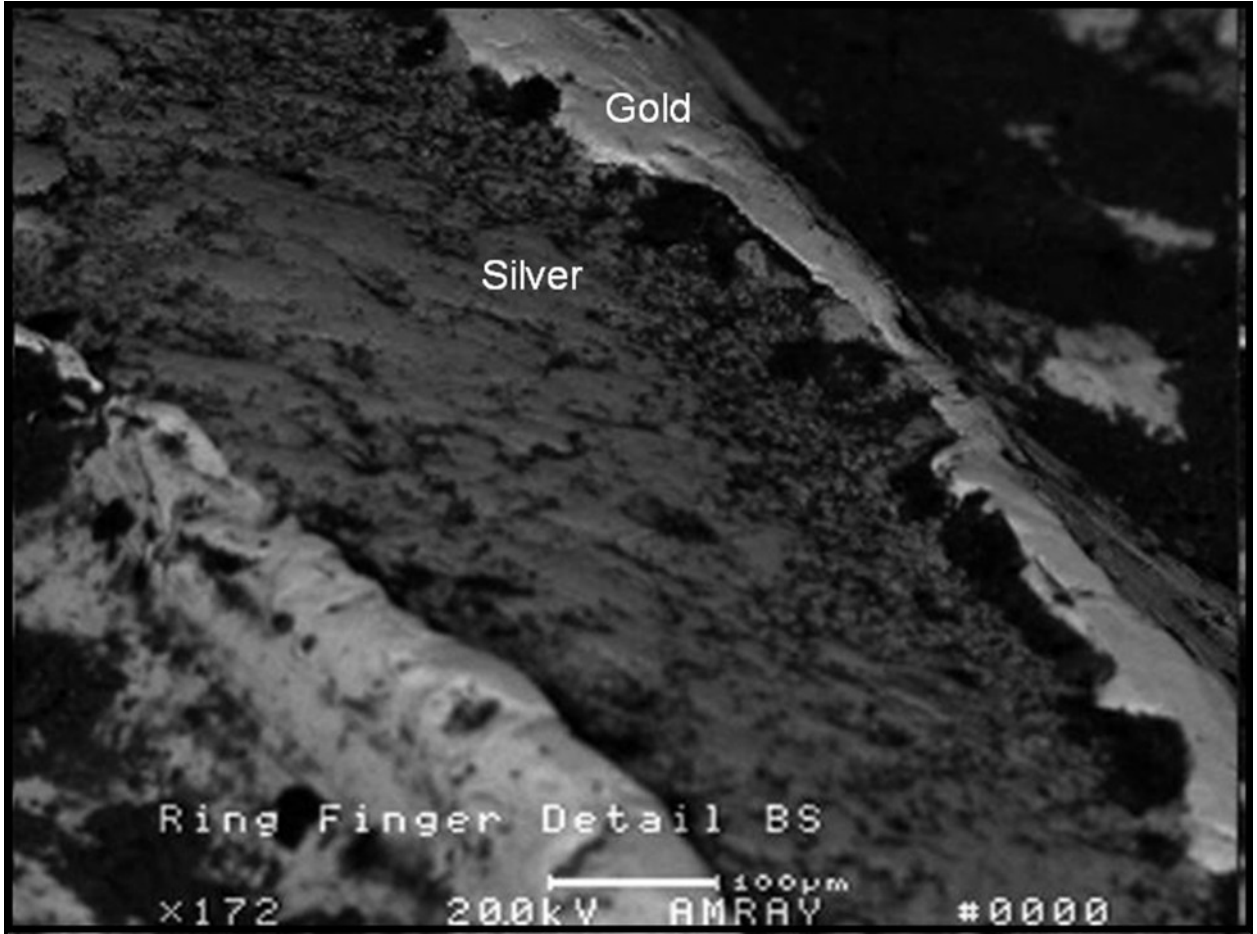
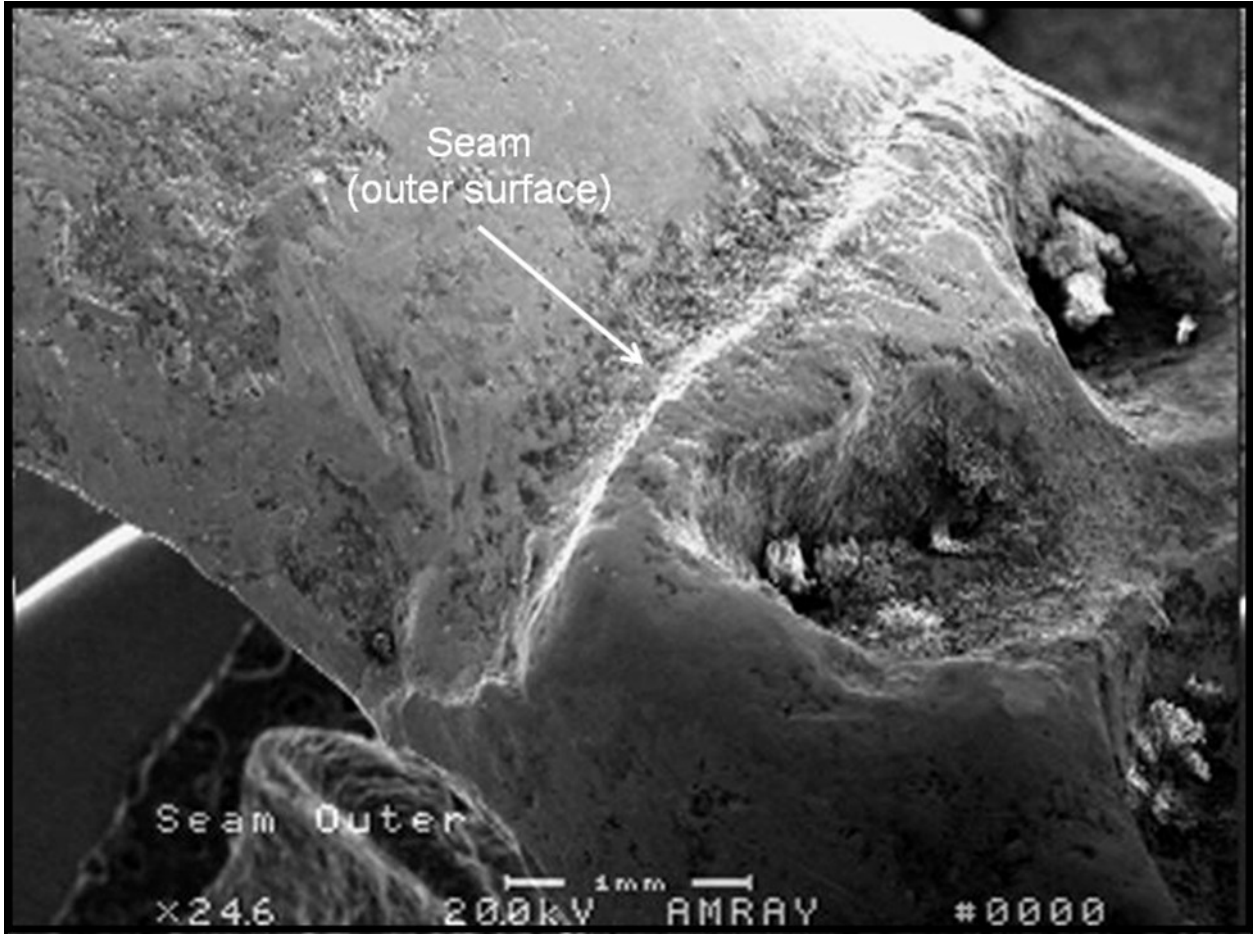


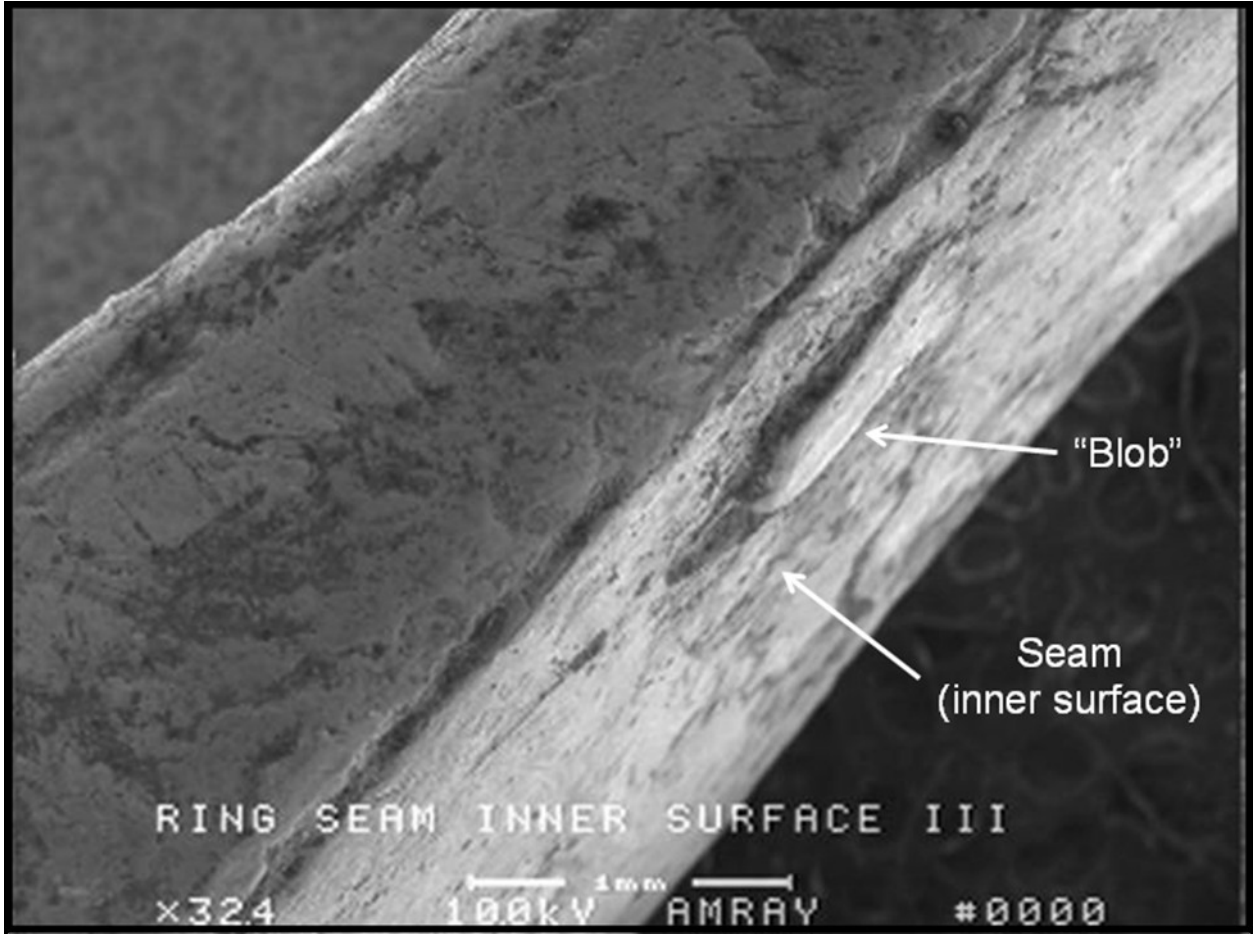
Figure 3-6. The Telscombe Ring. Detail of *stirrup* bevel.



**Figure 3-7. The Telscombe Ring. Detail of layers at area of clasped hands.
(backscatter image @ 172x magnification)**



**Figure 3-8. The Telscombe Ring. Detail of seam at outer surface.
(standard image @ 24.6x magnification)**



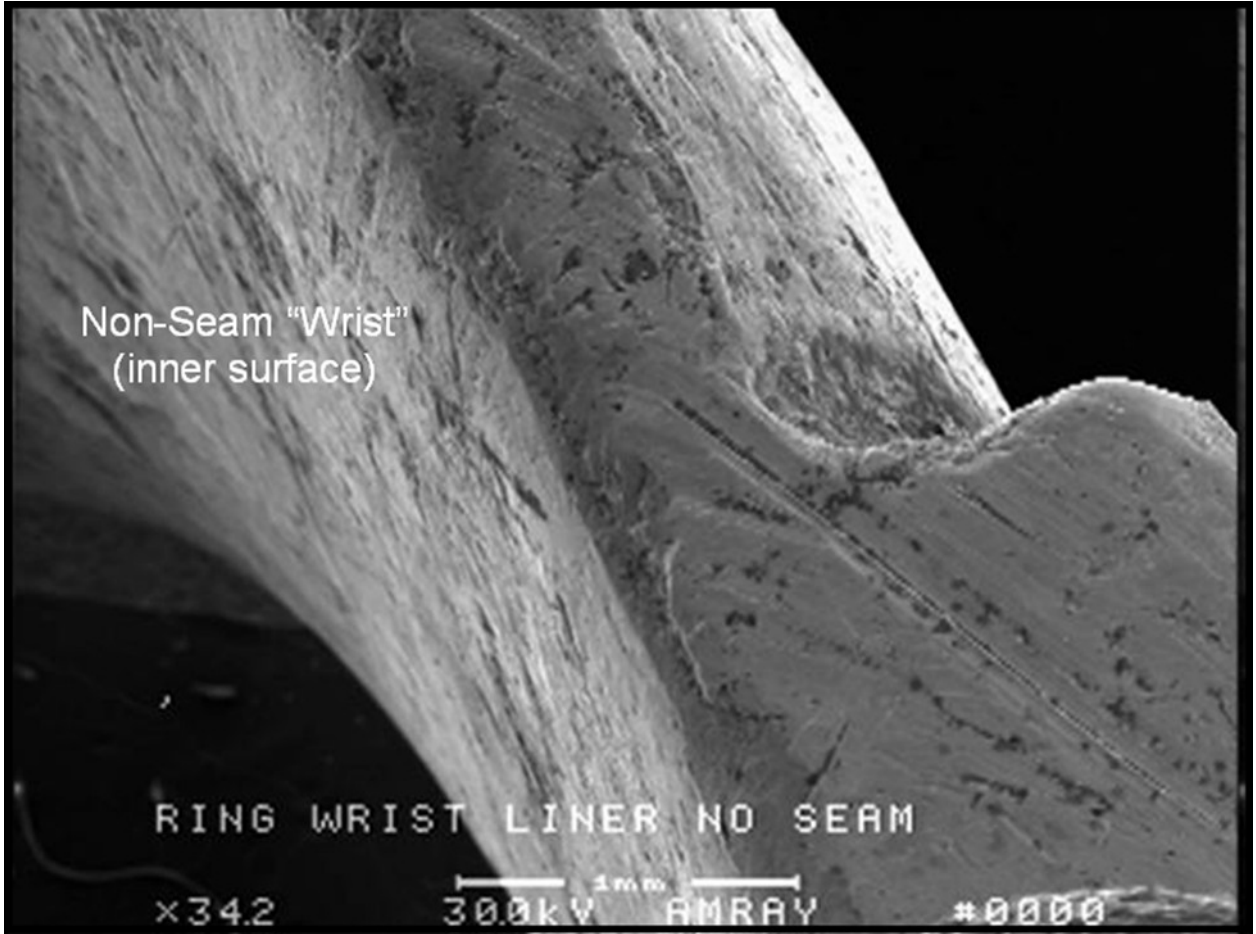
**Figure 3-9. The Telscombe Ring. Detail of seam at inner surface.
(standard image @ 32.4x magnification)**



**Figure 3-10. The Telscombe Ring. Detail of “liner” at area of square-set cross side a.
(standard image @ 29.4x magnification)**



**Figure 3-11. The Telscombe Ring. Detail of “liner” at area of lozenge-set cross side a.
(standard image @ 214x magnification)**



**Figure 3-12. The Telscombe Ring. Detail of non-seam “wrist” at inner surface.
(standard image @ 34.2x magnification)**

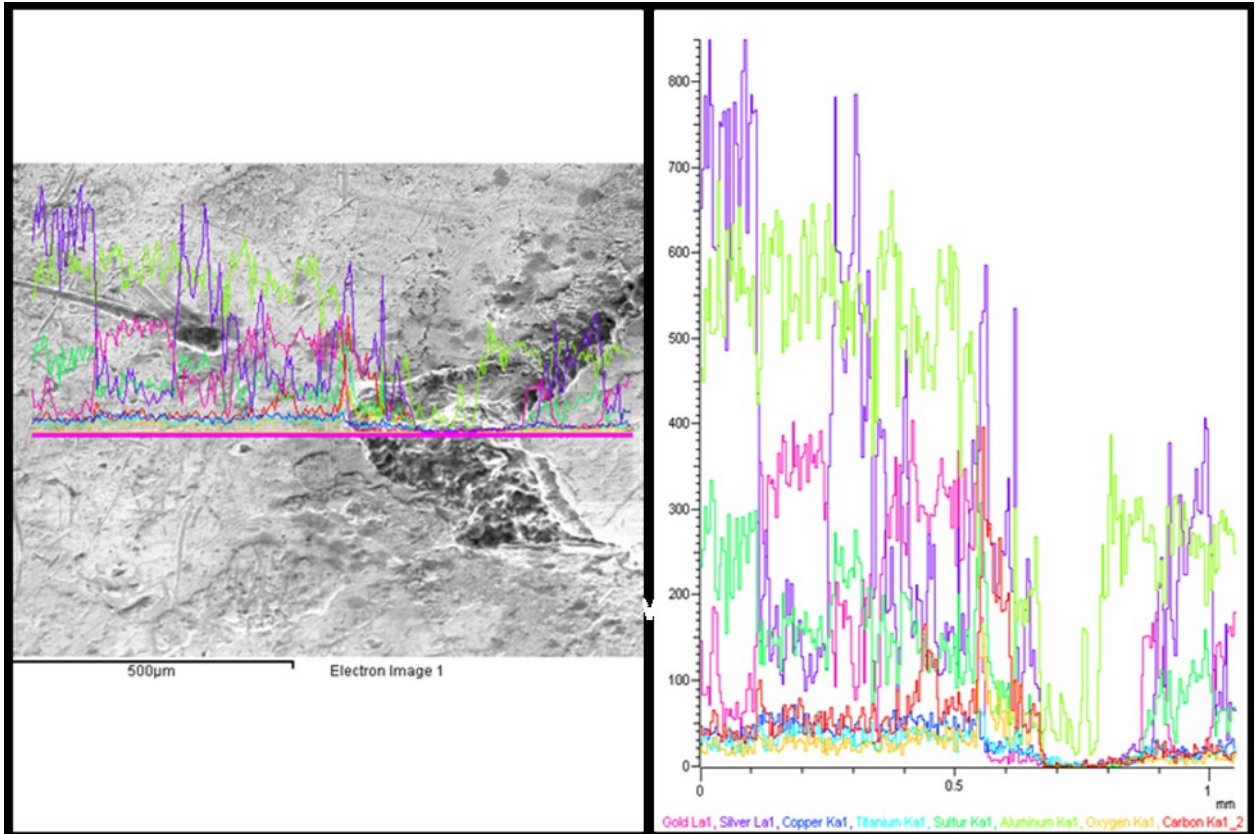


Figure 3-13. The Telscombe Ring. Graph of relative elemental distribution showing fluctuations through areas of “wrist” seam and “blob.”



Figure 4-1. Basilica of St. Denis, France and the Telscombe Ring (inset).



**Figure 4-2. Anglo-Saxon Gold Ring, c800-900. Victoria and Albert Museum, London.
The Telscombe Ring (right).**



Figure 4-3. Silver Stirrup Finger Ring, 13-14th Century, Found in Kelsall, Cheshire, England. Portable Antiquities Scheme.



Figure 4-4. Silver Stirrup Finger Ring, 14th century, found in New Romney, Kent, England. Portable Antiquities Scheme.



Figure 4-5. The Becket Casket (front and back), c. 1180-1190, Limoges, France. Victoria and Albert Museum, London, England.



Figure 4-6. Decretales, with the Glossa ordinaria, Gregory IX, glossed by Bernard of Parma c. 1300-1325, England. Catalogue of Illuminated Manuscripts, British Library.

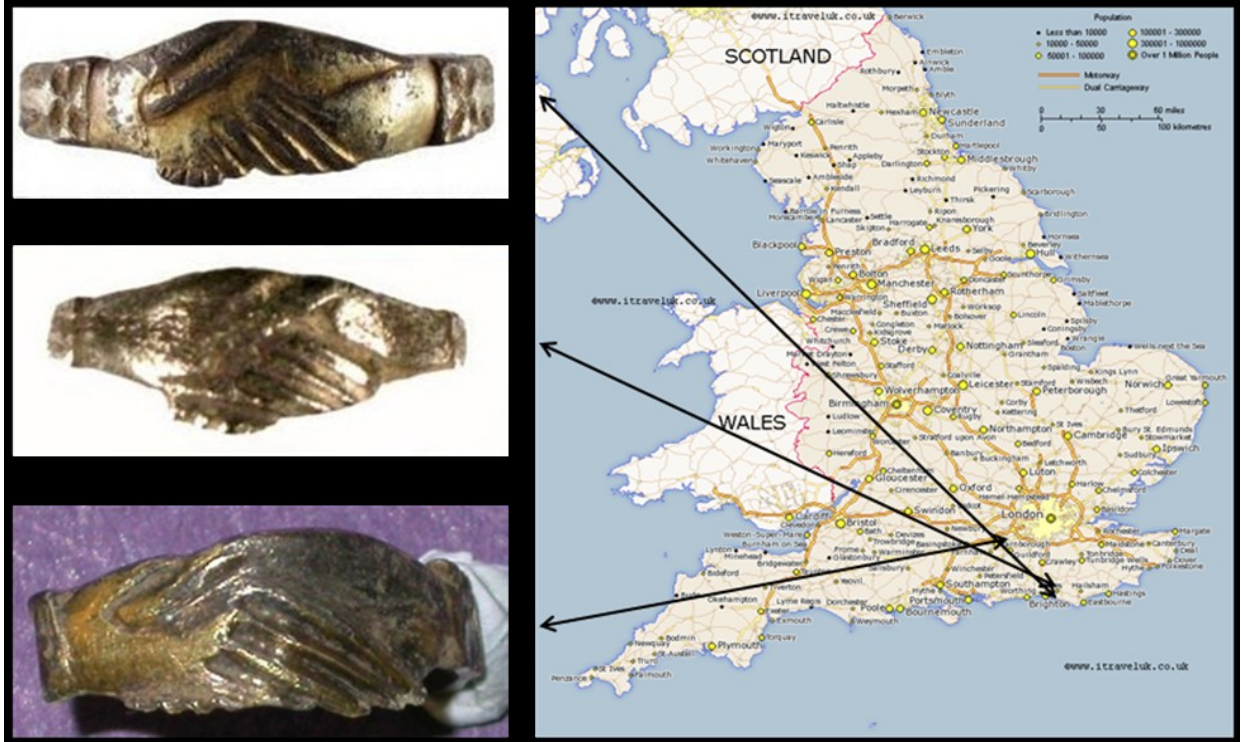


Figure 4-7. Find locations for the Telscombe Ring (top), Firl ring (center) and East Clanton ring (bottom). Portable Antiquities Scheme.



Figure 4-8. Silver-gilt finger ring. 12th century, Found in Sutterton, Lincolnshire, England. Portable Antiquities Scheme.

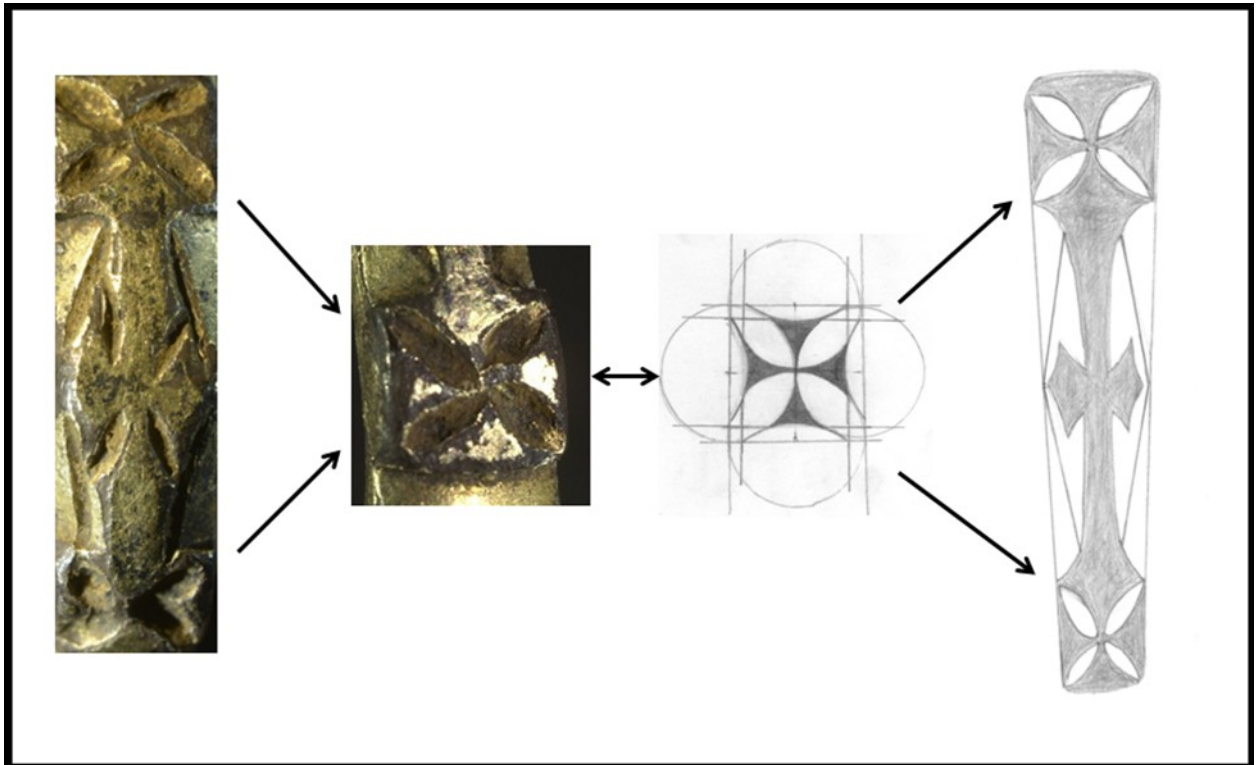


Figure 4-9. Drawing to suggest original cross design intent for hoop sides.



Figure 4-10. Cross on column said to be carved by a crusader, Church of St. Lawrence, Telscombe, East Sussex, England.



Figure 4-11. Cross style comparison of the Telscombe Ring and Becket Casket (right).

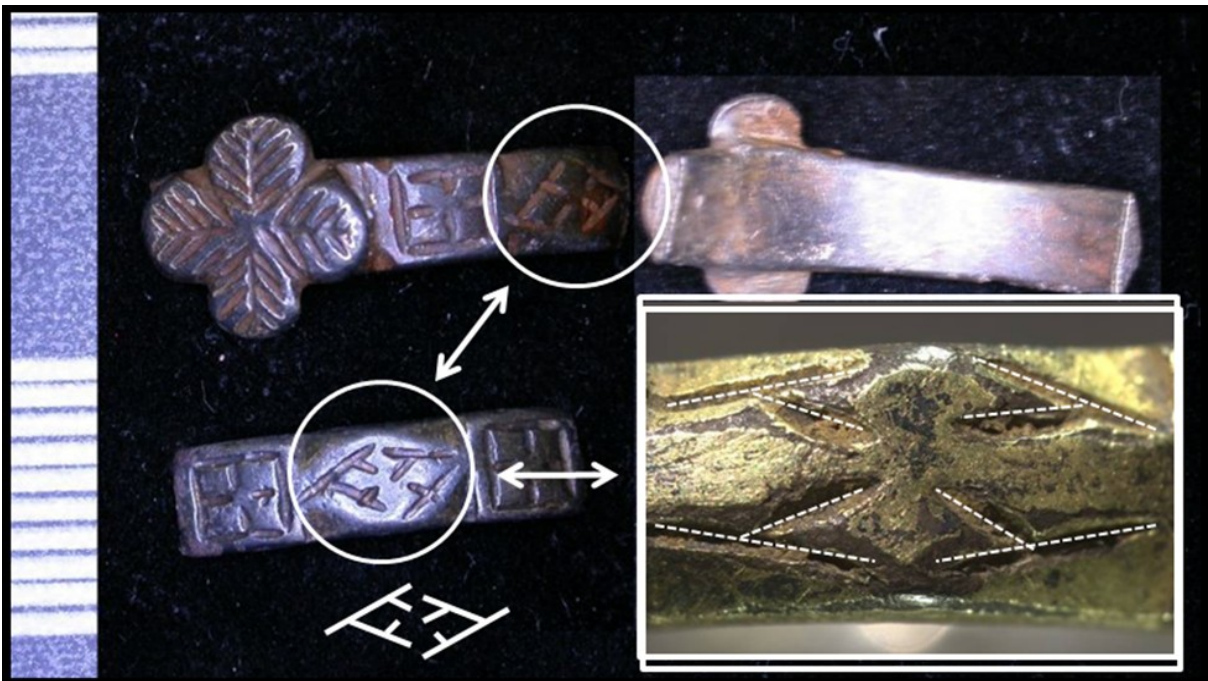


Figure 4-12. Silver finger ring fragment, 13th-14th century, found in Thrussington, Leicestershire, England. The Telscombe Ring (inset) with similar cross type. PAS.

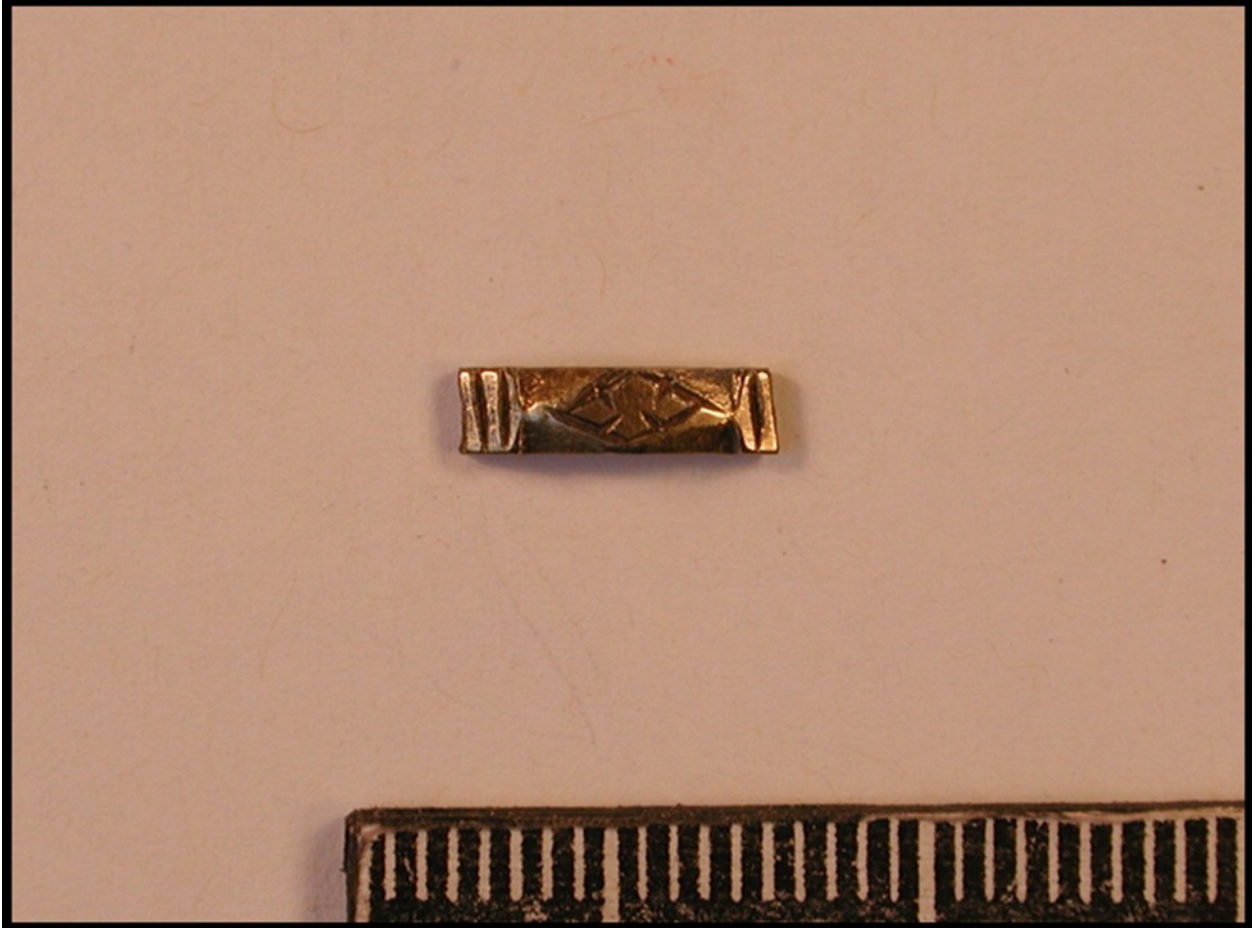


Figure 4-13. Silver finger ring fragment. 14th-15th century, Found in Newchurch, Kent, England. Portable Antiquities Scheme.



Figure 4-14. (Top) Silver finger ring, 12th century, Lark Hill Hoard, Worcester, Worcestershire, England (Bottom) Silver finger ring, 12th century, found in Scrayingham, North Yorkshire, England. Portable Antiquities Scheme.



Figure 4-15. Canterbury Cathedral. Detail of crypt capital, Canterbury, East Sussex, England. The Telscombe Ring (inset).

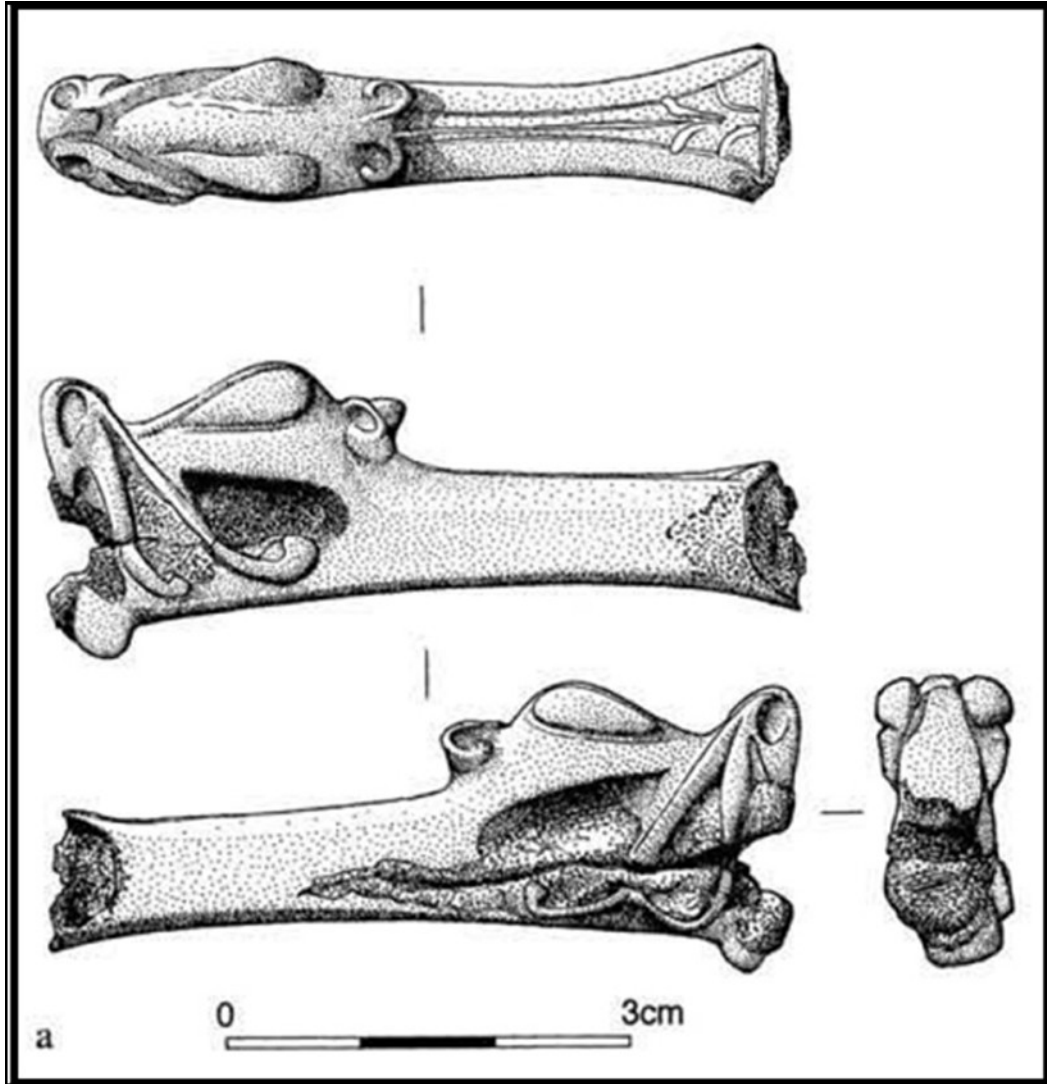


Figure 4-16. Spur neck, first half of the 11th century, found in Race Hill, Lewes, East Sussex, England. David Williams article.



Figure 4-17. Incomplete copper alloy *stirrup* terminal, second half of the 11th century, found in Southease, East Sussex, England. The Telscombe Ring. Detail of heads (insets).
Portable Antiquities Scheme.



Figure 4-18. Anglo-Saxon sculpture of beast's head, 9th century, The Priory Church of St. Mary at Deerhurst, Gloucestershire, England. The Telscombe Ring. Detail of heads (insets).



Figure 4-19. Life of St. Dunstan, Osborn, Canterbury, England, c. 1075-1125.
Catalogue of Illuminated Manuscripts, British Library.
The Telscombe Ring. Detail of heads (inset).



**Figure 4-20. Gold finger ring, 13th century.
Victoria and Albert Museum, London, England.**



**Figure 4-21. Gold finger ring, 13th century.
Victoria and Albert Museum, London, England.**



**Figure 4-22. Gold finger ring, 14th century.
Victoria and Albert Museum, London, England.**



**Figure 4-23. Gold finger ring, 13th century.
British Museum, London, England.**



Figure 4-24. Gold *stirrup/fede* finger ring, 14th century, found near Eye, Suffolk, England. Portable Antiquities Scheme.



Figure 4-25. Silver-gilt finger ring, 14th-15th century, found in Tattenhoe, Buckinghamshire, England. Portable Antiquities Scheme.

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