

WIRRALH SKIP FELAGR



WVSF Viking & Anglo Saxon Living History

The Huxley hoard.

The Huxley hoard is comprised of one ingot and 21 flattened bracelets or arm-rings of Viking silver discovered near Huxley in Cheshire in November 2004. The hoard was discovered by metal detectorist Steve Reynoldson during a weekend rally organised by the Lune Valley Metal Detecting Club. In all the 22 silver items weighed approx 1.5kg and were found with 39 lead fragments. The presence of the lead suggests that the hoard could have been buried in lead lined wooden box.

The arm-rings are of a type associated with Norse settlers in Dublin, and similar types dating to the late ninth and early tenth centuries have been found around North West England, North Wales and parts of Scotland. Perhaps the most famous being the massive hoard of Viking silver discovered on the banks of the River Ribble at Cuerdale, Lancashire in 1840. Why these hoards were buried and not retrieved we will never know but this was a time of uncertainty for the Hiberno Norse Vikings with many being expelled from Dublin, crossing the Irish sea looking for new lands to call home.

The Vikings operated a bullion economy based upon the weight of silver, with most silver finds being of a standard roughly equal to or exceeding modern 925 sterling standard. It is curious to note that many of these Hiberno Norse arm-rings were made to fixed weights roughly equal to multiples of twenty silver pennies. In this respect it is probably best to think of them not as jewellery but more the Viking equivalent of bank notes: That is a higher denomination system of currency operating in conjunction with low denomination coinage. This is a point strikingly reinforced by one of the underweight Huxley arm-rings having the end hammered over to trap an additional scrap of silver used to bring it back up to the desired target weight.

The significance of the different patterns of punched decoration on these broad arm-rings is not fully understood but a central cross is very common on those that are calibrated to multiples of twenty pennies. The cross is much less common on those of purely random weights, thereby distinguishing between those bracelets or arm-rings of known weight and value and those which needed to be weighed. Some of the bracelets in the Huxley hoard remain un-punched and one shows incomplete and "amateurish" designs which some have interpreted as meaning this hoard represents the contents of a master and his apprentice's workshop rather than finished "goods" already in circulation as a form of money.



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