

III.

NOTICE OF A LARGE CRUCIFORM FIBULA OR BROOCH OF BRONZE,
OVERLAID WITH GOLD, FOUND IN PETERBOROUGH IN 1878.
- BY DR THOMAS J. WALKER. COMMUNICATED BY J. T. IRVINE, F.S.A.
SCOT.

The accompanying drawing is an accurate representation by Mr J. T. Irvine of a brooch in my possession, which at once arrested his attention, from the occurrence in its ornamentation of a face like that of the god Thor, with spectacled eyes, curvilinear nose, and hirsute visage, to which, as a characteristic Scandinavian design, the attention of the Society was specially directed by Dr Joseph Anderson in a paper published in the *Proceedings* for 1880-1881.

This fibula was found in that part of the borough of Peterborough situated on the south side of the river Nene. A very short distance below this point the river enters the fen district, and through all the ages that the fens were in their original wild and undrained condition the neighbourhood of Peterborough would, from the conformation of the country, be the point to which those who were following the various tracts which skirted or tended to the fens must converge to cross the river. It is therefore probable that, from the earliest times, there would be human settlement here. About four miles above the town, the foundations of the bridge by which the Roman road crossed the river still exist, and within half a mile of the spot where this fibula was found a large number of Roman coins and ornaments have recently been discovered. The chronicled history of the town commences with the founding of the monastery in the seventh century; after this period it is known that the Danes more than once possessed themselves of the monastery, and in the names of the villages, &c., evidence of their settlement in the district still exists.

These brief notes of the earliest history of the locality are not, I think, irrelevant to the subject of Mr Irvine's sketch.

At intervals during the last seventy or eighty years ornaments and

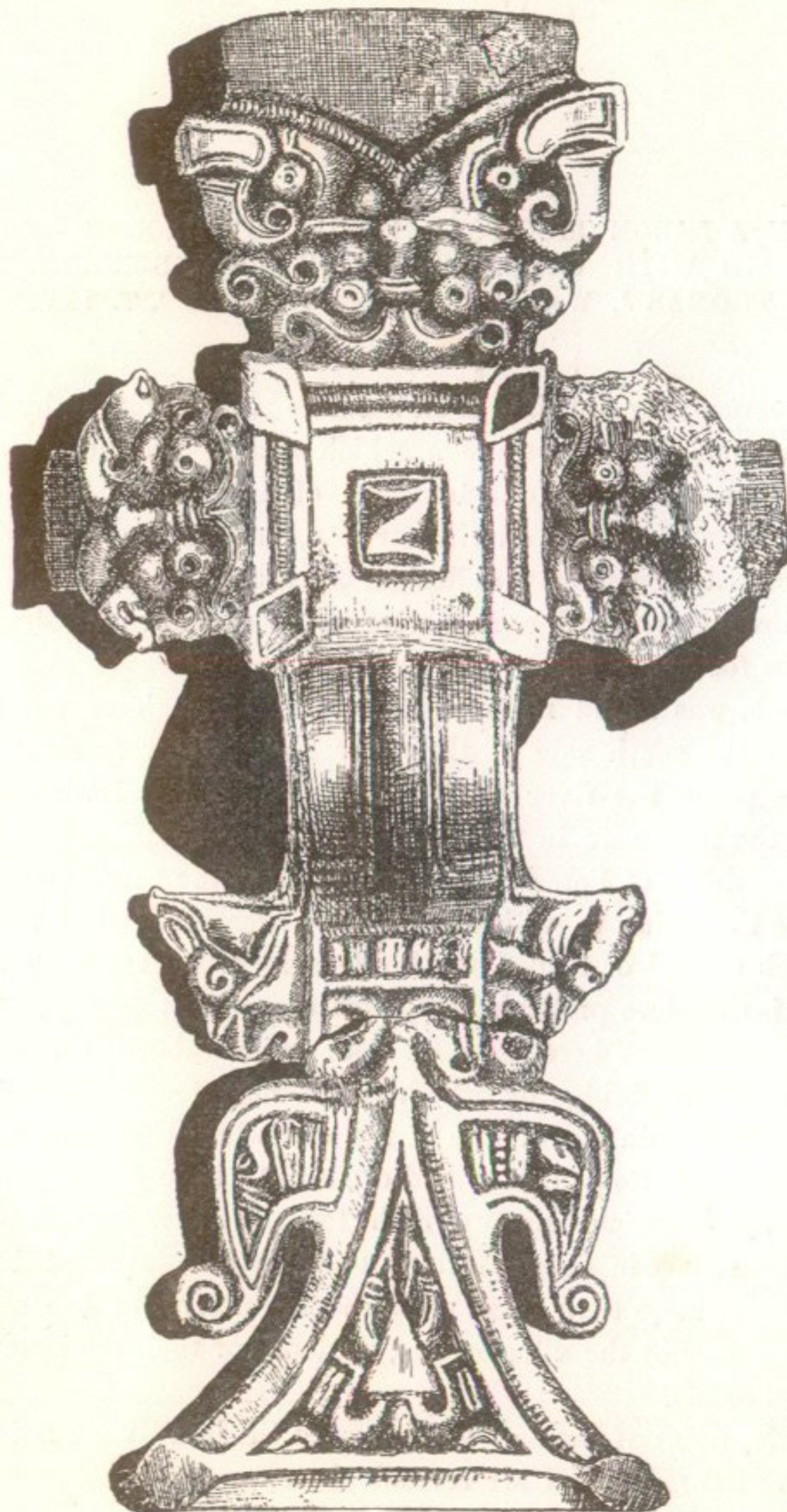


Fig. 1. Brooch found at Peterborough.

other objects of Saxon type have been found in a field on the south bank of the river a mile higher up than that in which recently, in the progress of excavations undertaken for obtaining gravel, this brooch, together with numerous skeletons, cinerary urns, brooches, buckles, beads, shuttles, spear-heads, shield bosses, have been exposed. The character of almost all these relics is that of similar articles found in Anglo-Saxon cemeteries, but one or two of the ornaments are peculiar. The brooch (fig. 1) in connection with which, at Mr Irvine's request, I write these notes, is bronze, gilt, and measures 6 inches in length and 3 inches across; the details of the ornamentation are so faithfully given in the accompanying drawing, that no description on my part is required.

If the face with "spectacled" eyes, &c., which occurs three times in the general design, taken with the other details, absolutely fixes its Scandinavian origin, this brooch, and all the other articles found in these gravel pits, are probably relics of the Danes who attacked and destroyed the monastery of Peterborough in the ninth century; but, on the other hand, the general type of the bulk of the ornaments would rather indicate that they were Early Saxon, and that they are the traces left behind by the heathen inhabitants who lived and died here during the latter portion of the 300 years which elapsed between the departure of the Romans and the founding of the Christian monastery.