Introduction
The brooch represents the most iconic form of Anglo-Saxon jewellery. A great deal of study has been devoted to the brooches of the 5th to 7th centuries found in furnished ‘pagan’ graves, but the corpus of material from the Late Saxon period (8th to 11th centuries) has been seriously neglected.

This research seeks to redress this situation by assembling and classifying the first nationwide corpus of brooches from the Late Saxon Period. This corpus will take advantage of the massive increase in the number of finds fuelled by metal-detecting which are documented by the Portable Antiquities Scheme.

Research aims and objectives
• To compile a comprehensive, nationwide database of the full range of brooches from late Saxon England, and formulate classifications and date ranges for the material.
• To establish how these brooches were made by examining production techniques, systems and groups.
• To examine the extent to which cultural impulses assimilated from the Continent played a part in the projection of Anglo-Saxon identities, by making extensive comparisons to continental corpus to define the source and cultural context of these imported fashions.
• To examine the extent to which the Danelaw boundary represents a significant cultural barrier in Late Anglo-England. Can one discern clear differences in the style and repertoire of brooches made and circulated on either side of the Danelaw boundary?

Dress and social identity
During 8th-11th centuries there were massive changes to the fabric of Anglo-Saxon society, including the Christian conversion, the rise of urbanism and Scandinavian migration. These kind of changes would have had a significant effect on how the identities held by individuals and groups were perceived and manifested.

Personal dress items embody deliberate decisions, on the part of the wearer, used to actively proclaim aspects of personal identity and cultural affiliation. This understanding of material culture means that this research can examine how the practice and distribution of brooch wearing responded to these changes.

Brooches From Suffolk
Some preliminary results
An initial regional pilot study of the brooches from Suffolk has produced c.300 examples. Combining information from PAS, HER records, publications and museum collections has revealed that there is a great number and variability in late Saxon brooches.

These brooches are already flagging up interesting questions. The number of nummular, enamelled, ansate and rectangular brooches reveal that we have underestimated the strength of ‘Carolingian’ impulses circulating in Late Anglo-Saxon England. Looking at the work done on Carolingian brooches (by Wamers, Thörle, Hübener for example) will enable us to establish the proportion of direct imports compared to insular copies, and place the material in its wider Continental context.

This initial work on Suffolk hints at a potentially very large and fascinating national dataset, which will enable new insights into the creation and projection of identities at a time of social and cultural change in England.

brooch types from Suffolk
Where more than one example exists

Acknowledgements
• Gabor Thomas and Hella Eckardt for supervision at the University of Reading
• Arts and Humanities Research Council for Funding
• Masque Arts for providing me with a database and technical support (www.masque-arts.com/artefact.html)
• All images are from the Portable Antiquities Scheme Database

Contact information
• Department of Archaeology, University of Reading, Whiteknights, RG6 6UR.
• Email: r.weetch@student.reading.ac.uk