

somewhat freer form. Although the enamelled decoration is clear in the reproduced photograph, the gilt pattern is not easily visible, but a band of gilding separates the lettering from the repeating pattern. Gilding also provides a background of fine lines to the lettering. Lamm also illustrates other fragments with similar, repetitive leaf-like shapes. These similarities seem sufficient to put the identification of fragment A beyond dispute. B, which lacks the enamelled design, is probably part of the same vessel.

Both these pieces, then, may come from a vessel similar to that illustrated in Fig. 3. The concave profile and diameter of fragment A certainly suggest such a shape, although it is possible that both may come from the characteristic beaker shape such as the well-known 'Luck of Edenhall'.<sup>5</sup> Owing to its small size, the angle of fragment B is uncertain.

The remaining pieces, C-E, cannot be reconciled with the above fragments. Their diameter is much greater; they may represent a second vessel. What this vessel may have been is unclear at present.

### Conclusion

These five pieces of Syrian glass from Reigate add to the meagre archaeological evidence at present existing for the importation of glass from the Near East into England in the Middle Ages. No attempt will here be made to suggest how the vessel(s) arrived in this country (although the Crusades or pilgrimages must be prime possibilities), but that the glass found its way at all to a small Surrey town is a matter of considerable interest.

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### NOTES

<sup>1</sup> The colour of the metal is in fact a deep red, shading to purple.

<sup>2</sup> The excavation, 1976-80, was carried out by the Archaeological Group of the Holmesdale Natural History Club on behalf of the Reigate and Banstead Archaeological Coordination Committee. See e.g. D. Williams, 'The Reigate Vicarage Excavation', *Popular Archaeol.*, Vol. 3, No. 4 (October 1981); *Bulletin of the CBA Churches Committee*, No. 15 (December 1981).

<sup>3</sup> I would like to acknowledge Mr Charleston's help in the preparation of this note.

<sup>4</sup> R. J. Charleston, 'A 13th-century Syrian glass beaker excavated in Lübeck', *Lübeck 1226: Reichsfreiheit und Frühe Stadt* (Lübeck, 1976), 321-37.

<sup>5</sup> D. B. Harden, 'Glass Vessels in Britain, A.D. 400-1000' in D. B. Harden (ed.), *Dark-Age Britain* (London, 1956), 154-56) also cites two small flasks and a further fragment thought to be of Dark Age date but which may equally belong to the 13th century. Additionally the well-known beaker, 'The Luck of Edenhall', has been in the possession of the Musgrave family of Edenhall, Cumberland since at least 1729 (R. J. Charleston, 'The Luck of Edenhall: A Notable Acquisition for the Nation', *The Connoisseur* (February 1959). Charleston, op. cit. in note 4, 329 and 336, n. 15 also mentions glass vessels in the inventories of Kings Edward III and Henry IV which may have been of Near Eastern origin.

<sup>6</sup> London Museum, *Medieval Catalogue* (London, revised ed. 1967), 293 and pl. LXXXIV.

<sup>7</sup> C. J. Lamm, *Mittelalterliche Gläser und Steinschnitarbeiten aus dem Nahen Osten* (Berlin, 1929/30), pl. 109:1. This bottle is cited as being in Bologna. Judging from the illustration, the neck is a later restoration.

## A MEDIEVAL KNIFE HANDLE FROM CROWLAND, LINCOLNSHIRE (Figs. 4 and 5)

Amongst the collections in the Peterborough City Museum and Art Gallery is displayed the carved figure of a man who has a hawk perched on his left hand. This object, donated in 1932, was discovered at Crowland Abbey, Lincolnshire (TF 2415 1040) but no further details of the find are known.

### DESCRIPTION

The figure (acc. no. L594) is made of bone and is 94.5 mm long and 19 mm wide. In places the cancellous tissue of the bone breaks through the carved surface showing that a longbone, possibly sheep, was used.

The carving represents a standing man dressed in a plain collarless robe which covers his arms and feet (Fig. 4a). The garment is without a belt and hangs in clearly marked folds. Carving at the foot suggests that this garment is a tunic. The arms are carved in a very stylized manner. The index and middle fingers of the right hand are elongated, the annular and little fingers being turned downwards so that the hand may be gripping something in between the first and second fingers. The left hand is less contorted and is partly covered by the now headless hawk which perches on it. The feathers of the bird are clearly shown and the sweep of its wings and tail leave no doubt that it is a hawk which is represented.

The man's face is well executed in deep carving. The nose is well formed and the mouth is small and smiling. The hair is shoulder length and wavy, cut in a 'page-boy' style with an incised line running across the top of the head suggesting a headband. Two bulbous eyes complete the face.

The reverse of the carving (Fig. 4c) is flatter than the front which has a marked median ridge. At the base of the reverse is an incision 20 mm in length which has a rectangular section and retains iron staining showing that it once held the rectangular tang of a small knife blade. However, even the strain exerted by a small blade was too much for the handle, as it split. Subsequently the split was squared-off with a saw (the blade-marks of which are still visible), a hole bored in the back and the carving reused.<sup>1</sup> Whether this reuse took place in medieval times is impossible to ascertain. However, the high polish over much of the figurine was probably caused by use and suggests that it served as a handle for some time before the split occurred.

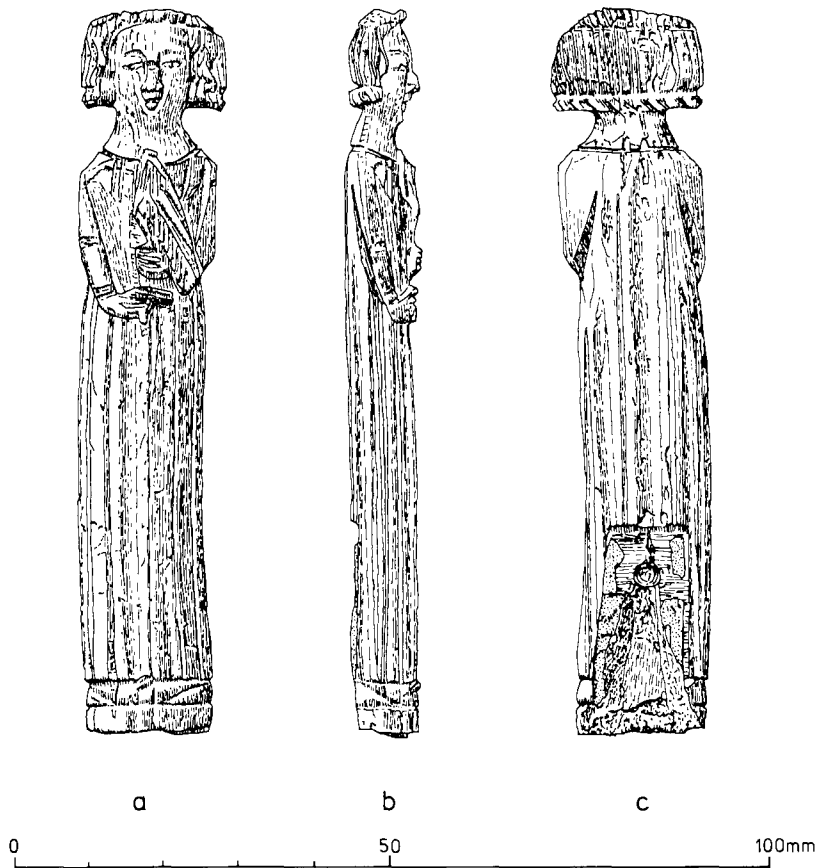


FIG. 4

THE CROWLAND KNIFE HANDLE. a, Front view; b, Side view; c, Back view. Scale 1 : 1

The bone of the handle is dark brown either from hard use or possibly from prolonged immersion in the iron-rich water of nearby marshland.

#### DISCUSSION AND DATING

The Crowland handle belongs to a small number of bone and ivory knife handles which were first studied as a group by Mogens Bencard.<sup>2</sup> He discussed 24 examples in his paper, to which must now be added an example in the collections of the Boymans van-Beuningen Museum in Rotterdam and the Crowland example. Since Bencard's article is not available in English and seems to be difficult to obtain outside Denmark, it is appropriate that some space be given here to a detailed consideration of his discussion before considering the Crowland piece.

Bencard begins with a description of a knife handle found in Ribe (cat. no. 1). This handle is very similar to the Crowland example and is carved to show a bare-headed man in a tunic with a hawk perched on his left arm. His right hand is clasping a stick which acts as a support to the left arm. The right hand has an extension of its first and second fingers similar to that on the Crowland handle, suggesting that the latter was also originally intended to grasp a stick. The falconer's heavy leather glove is clearly shown on the Ribe handle but the hawk is three-dimensional and stiff when compared with the Crowland bird.

The Ribe example confirms that these objects were knife handles as the remains of a blade are still *in situ*. A further feature worthy of note is a silver band 10 mm wide,<sup>3</sup> decorated with rectangular fields and leaf ornament. None of the other examples retains this band but such decorated rings may have been fitted to many of them. The details of the feet are normally missing from the figures, which usually terminate with incised horizontal lines perhaps intended to hold similar metal mounts. Such rich embellishment on what would initially appear to be everyday objects also suggests that these knives were, as Bencard suggests '*et eksklusivt arbejde, udfort i eksklusive materialer*' and intended for a wealthy clientèle, a point which will be discussed further below.

All the knife handles, with the exception of those from Ringkloster and Szczecin, were recovered under circumstances which precluded the recording of any stratigraphical sequence and thus the dating of these objects largely depends on a stylistic analysis of the clothing of the figure. Bencard suggests<sup>4</sup> that the long tunic, uniform to the male figures, was in fashion from c. 1250 to c. 1350 and assigns this blanket date to the knife handles. Unfortunately even the two excavated examples, from Ringkloster and Szczecin, cannot give any greater dating precision. The Ringkloster piece was sealed below a layer of burning dated to c. 1430. However, no further evidence appears to have been found with it and thus its context date lies between c. 1200, the approximate date of the foundation of the monastery, and c. 1430. The second excavated handle comes from the fortress bank at Szczecin but was found in an occupation layer which was dated to the 10th century,<sup>5</sup> and must have been intrusive, deriving from the remains of a later pit noted as being in association. It is thus also impossible to date the Szczecin example by context.

As shown by the general dimensions of all the knife handles studied these objects were intended for light general use. The split on the reverse of the Crowland handle and similar damage on a handle from Kalmar (cat. no. 7) demonstrate that heavy usage was fatal to the knife. It is of interest that the Kalmar example was also reused after it had ceased to function as a knife handle. This suggests that these objects were valued enough not to be discarded when they could no longer perform their primary function.

The clothing depicted on the handles is in the fashion of aristocratic garments. In many cases the figures are wearing headbands and one example from Roskilde<sup>6</sup> wears a crown. Bencard states that the Ribe example shows '*en lille hofmand fra højmiddelalderen*'<sup>7</sup> and he then discusses the significance of the hawk as the hunting bird of the monarchy and the aristocracy. Although the majority of the handles are single figures, three examples, from Roskilde (cat. no. 3), (?) Paris (cat. no. 19) and Leningrad (cat. no. 24), are decorated with a man and a woman. The man has the customary hawk on his arm and the woman on the

(?)Paris and Leningrad examples is holding a dog in her right arm, another aristocratic symbol. The falcon is a symbol of the privileged hunter and occurs regularly from 1200 onwards. If an artist wished to indicate that the person he was depicting was of high social position he would place a hawk on the arm of the figure.

Bencard maintains that the figures represent the ideal aristocrats of medieval myth as celebrated in the songs of the troubadours. He sums this ideal up by labelling the male figure as '*Prinsen i Eventyret*', the Fairy-tale Prince. Although Bencard also considers the possibility of the single male figure being the depiction of a saint with whom the hawk is associated,<sup>8</sup> various possibilities are dismissed, the little figures being altogether too '*galant*' to be saints. Nor would holy men appear in the company of smartly dressed women as they do on the double handles.<sup>9</sup>

Bencard relates the production of these handles to the school of ivory carving which flourished in Paris, from c. 1250 to c. 1400. He maintains that the influence of this school was so strong that it dictated the style of the products manufactured in the urban workshops of Germany, Flanders, and England. Bencard dismisses the possibility that Denmark could be a centre of production<sup>10</sup> because the material from which the handles are carved makes a Danish origin unlikely. However, the catalogue shows that ten examples are of bone, seven of ivory (including one from Gamlebyen in Oslo definitely made of morse ivory) and the

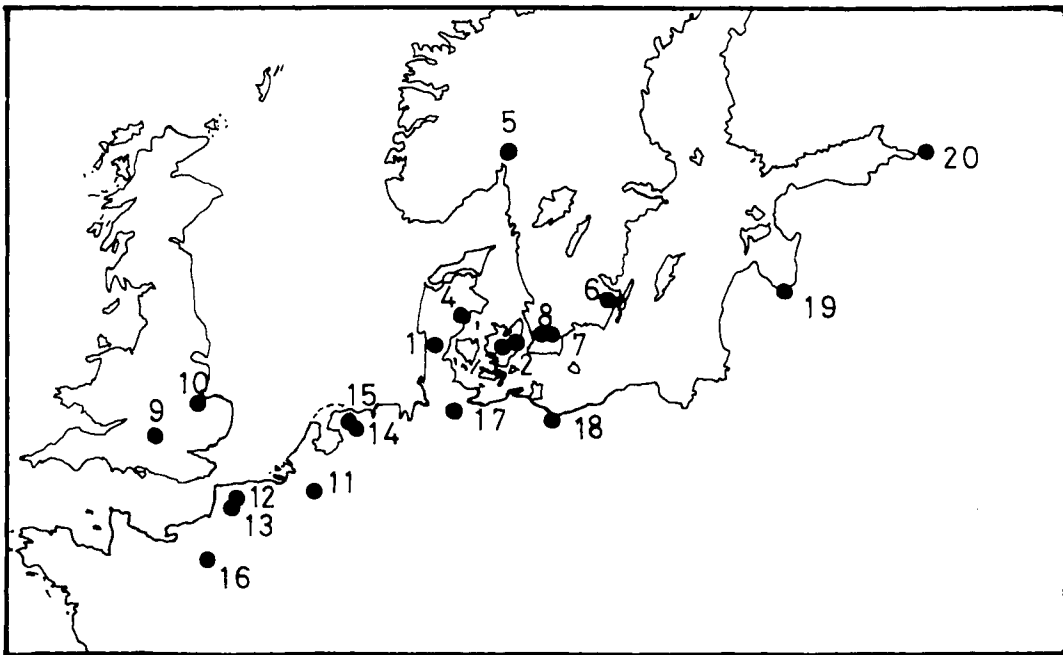


FIG. 5

## THE DISTRIBUTION OF CARVED KNIFE HANDLES

- Catalogue: 1: Ribe; two examples (Den Antikvariske Samling; Ribe). 2: Roskilde; Double figure (Danish Nat. Mus.). 3: Herlufsholm (Danish Nat. Mus.). 4: Ringkloster (Århus Univ. Coll.). 5: Oslo/Gamlebyen (Oldsaksamling). 6: Kalmar; two examples (Statens. Hist. Mus.). 7: Skåne; (Statens. Hist. Mus.). 8: Lund; three examples (Lund Mus.). 9: Oxford, Shire Ditch (Ashmolean Mus.). 10: Crowland (Peterborough Mus.). 11: ?Liege (Musée Curtius). 12: Lille (E. Theodore Coll.). 13: Arras (Lille; Musée d'Archacologie). 14: Friesland (Fries. Mus.). 15: Njeklooster (Fries. Mus.). 16: ?Paris; Double figure (Musée de Cluny). 17: Hamburg (Hamburgische Geschichte Mus.). 18: Szczecin (provenance unknown). 19: Riga; two examples (provenance unknown). 20: Leningrad; Double figure (The Hermitage)

remainder are unidentified. These materials were all readily available anywhere in Europe at this time and thus any large city could have been a production centre.

The distribution of these objects is also of interest although too much reliance cannot be placed on a small number. The 26 examples show a marked concentration in Scandinavia (Fig. 5). Denmark has produced five examples, Norway one and Sweden six. This distribution may only reflect the countries where most urban archaeological investigation has taken place but, even taking this into account, it is strange that England has only so far produced two examples (Crowland and Shire Ditch, Oxford) in spite of extensive urban excavation in recent years. The remaining examples are distributed as follows: Belgium three examples, Holland three, France one, Germany one, Poland one and the Soviet Union three. When discussing one of the handles from Lund (cat. no. 12) Monica Rydbeck considered it to be English work but based on a French original.<sup>11</sup> Wherever the main production area lies, it is remarkable that no examples are cited from southern Europe. The distribution map shows that all lie within the commercial sphere of the northern European countries. The finds from Poland and the Soviet Union are of particular interest as they seem to show a continuity of the traditional E.-W. Baltic trading route which was certainly flourishing by Viking times.

A consideration of the find spots shows the following pattern: two examples (from Lille and Szczecin) come from fortress sites, four are from monastery sites (Herlufsholm, Ringkloster, Crowland and Njeklooster), sixteen from urban sites and the remainder do not have sure provenances. It becomes evident that these objects were traded widely, were limited to centres of wealth and, in two cases, were thought worthy of reuse.

The Crowland handle conforms to this pattern. Crowland Abbey rose from being a hermitage to one of the great Benedictine houses of the Fenland. By the 13th century the abbey of Peterborough and Crowland farmed over 16,000 head of sheep between them.<sup>12</sup> Crowland produced over twenty sacks (c. 60 cwt) of wool *p.a.* which were exported to Scandinavia, the Low Countries and beyond. Cloth, linen, timber, oil, madder and furs were received in return and, with the Crowland handle in mind, it is pleasing to note that hunting falcons from Iceland and Norway were the most prestigious of these articles of trade.<sup>13</sup> Thus, when viewed against this background of international trade, the presence at Crowland of a knife handle of possible NW. European manufacture is not surprising and is tangible evidence of the prosperity of the medieval fenland.

#### Acknowledgements

The writer wishes to thank the following for their help in the preparation of this note: Mr A. MacGregor and Mr J. Cherry, and Mr D. F. Mackreth for the drawing of the knife handle.

M. D. HOWE

#### NOTES

<sup>1</sup> The incision for the tang was filled during this process. The writer removed this filling in order to examine the incision but the filling has been saved for future examination.

<sup>2</sup> M. Bencard, 'Om Et Middelalderligt Knivskæft Fra Ribe', *Saertryk fra Ribe Amt 1975 Festskrift til H. K. Kristensen*, 35-61.

<sup>3</sup> Bencard, op. cit. in note 2, 41.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid., 39.

<sup>5</sup> L. Leciejewicz, 'O Pochodzeniu Rogowej Rzeźby ze Wzgórza Zamkowego W Szczecinie (Über den Ursprung der Geweihsulptur aus den Schlossberg (Wzgorze Zamkowe) in Szczecin)', *Studia Archaeologica Pomeranica* (Kozalin, 1974), 177 ff., fig. 6.

<sup>6</sup> Bencard, op. cit. in note 1, 43.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid., 39.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid., 36.

<sup>9</sup> Bencard supports his case by quoting from R. Van Marle, *Iconographie de l'Art Profane au Moyen-Age et à la Renaissance* (New York, 1971), 26 ff., pl. 1.

<sup>10</sup> Bencard, op. cit. in note 1, 40.

<sup>11</sup> M. Rydbeck, *Medeltida elfenbensskulpturer i Lunds univ. historiska museum* (Lund, 1930), 97 ff.

<sup>12</sup> E. Carus-Wilson, 'The Medieval Trade of the Ports of the Wash', *Medieval Archaeol.*, vi-vii (1962-63), 185.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid., 192-93.