



GLASS URN FROM NIJMEGEN, HOLLAND

(height 11 in.)

AN ENGRAVED BRONZE MIRROR FROM NIJMEGEN,
HOLLAND; WITH A NOTE ON THE ORIGIN AND
DISTRIBUTION OF THE TYPE

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The bronze mirror here illustrated (Fig. 1) was found at Nijmegen, Holland, in 1928, accompanied by a vessel of blue-green glass with M-shaped handles and a cover with round knob (Pl. i). This type of glass vessel is frequently found in the Rhineland in deposits of the late first and early second century,¹ and the Nijmegen mirror may thus be dated about 100 A.D.²

Description of the Mirror. The mirror is kidney-shaped, measures 11.55 in. in breadth and 10.1 in. high outside the tubular binding; these measurements are $\frac{7}{8}$ in. and $\frac{3}{8}$ in. greater than those of the Birdlip mirror, the largest hitherto known. The back is engraved with circles and trumpet-scrolls, with the characteristic basket-pattern filling. The plate on both sides of the disc, in one piece with the handle, has scrolls in high relief, enclosing three grey paste buttons (not coral) arranged in a triangle, the spaces filled with red enamel in the *champlevé* process. The enamel design consists of a central pillar and lateral scrolls, and closely resembles the ornamentation below the handle of the Aylesford flagon,³ and both are derived from the classical palmette. The handle is broken, but evidently consisted of two heavy loops with red enamel, connected by a collar, and terminal ring, perhaps enclosing a disc with paste button. Inside the loop are raised scrolls and a bronze button with radial grooves filled with red enamel, similar to buttons from Mont Beuvray,⁴ La Tène,⁵ and Stradonitz.⁶

The mirror is the largest known, the earlier examples

¹ G. Behrens, *Römische Gläser aus Deutschland*, 1925, p. 27, with Fig. 5, notes examples found with coins of Vespasian and Domitian.

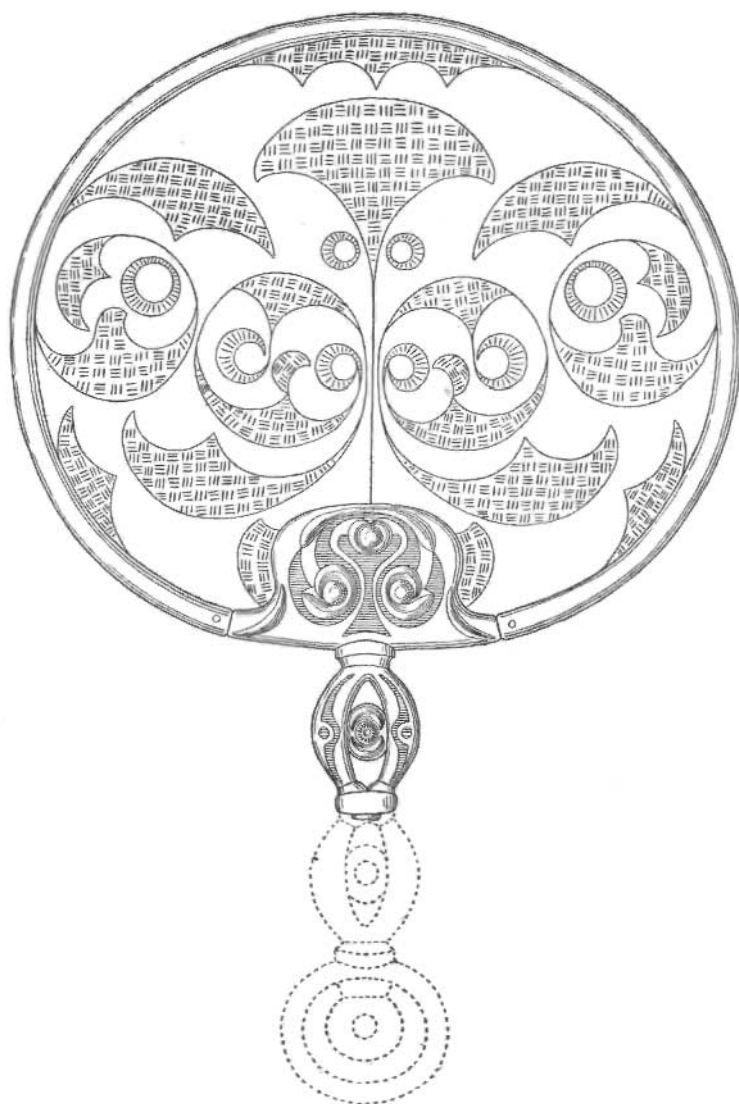
² Dr. M. A. Evelein has published a short account of the find in the *Verslag van den Directeur van het Rijksmuseum G. M. Kam*, 1928. I am greatly indebted to him for the photograph of the glass urn (Pl. i).

³ *Archaeologia*, lii, 377, Figs. 14-15.

⁴ J. Déchelette, *Manuel*, II, 1553, Fig. 717.

⁵ P. Vouga, *La Tène*, Pls. xxxvii-xxxviii.

⁶ Déchelette, *ibid.* II, 1553, Fig. 717. Pic-Dechelette, *Le Hradischt de Stradonitz en Bohême*, 48, Pl. ix.



0 1 2 3 4 in.

G. C. D. 1928.

FIG. I.

MIRROR FROM NIJMEGEN, HOLLAND (1/3)

being seldom greater than 8 in. in diameter. The use of enamel-decoration it shares with only two others—from Old Warden and Birdlip, the latter dated to about 50 A.D. The handle is a heavy casting, clumsy compared with the delicate loops of most of the series. These are possibly symptoms of late date, but, apart from the associated evidence, the clearest indication of lateness is given by the nature of the design on the back. This, on analysis, is seen to combine the elements of decoration of the Birdlip and Desborough mirrors, but without the sense of artistic structure manifest in them. In particular, the Nijmegen design shows an unintelligent use of patches of basket-work background abstracted from their place in the design (for which see the Desborough mirror, Fig. 4), and used as isolated and incongruous units. In other words, the artistic motifs typical of the earlier examples of the group are here seen in a process of disintegration, and the design, though retaining something of the quality of its prototypes, shows clear evidence of decadence.

Origin of British Mirrors. Late Celtic mirrors have been discussed by Mr. Reginald Smith,¹ who suggested an Etruscan origin. On the other hand, no Etruscan mirror has been found north of the Alps,² whilst two mirrors identified as of Greek origin are recorded from Celtic graves. One of these, from northern France, published since the appearance of Mr. Smith's paper, is especially important as a link with the British series. The tumulus of La Motte Saint-Valentin, Courcelles-en-Montagne, Haute-Marne, was excavated by M. Millon, and the objects were described by Déchelette.³ The central grave contained a bronze *stamnos* (vessel for storing wine) with cremation, an iron sword, and a red-figure Greek vase. Elsewhere in the mound was a burial by inhumation with a bronze mirror.

The two groups are considered to be practically contemporary, and represent the belongings of a rich Celtic warrior, buried with vessels of bronze and pottery imported from the south. The *stamnos* and red-figure vase belong to a small group found in eastern France, Switzerland, and south-west Germany, imported by the wine-loving Celts during the latter half of the sixth and early part of the

¹ *Archaeologia*, lxi, 329.

² Déchelette, *Manuel*, II, 1288, footnote.

³ Déchelette, *La Collection Millon*, 1913, pp. 101-151.

fifth century, B.C. The place of manufacture of these bronze vessels is not yet accurately determined, but they were ultimately of Greek or Italo-Greek origin,¹ and are now thought to have reached the Celts along a trade route passing up the Rhône valley from Massilia (the modern Marseilles), a Greek colony founded about 600 B.C.²

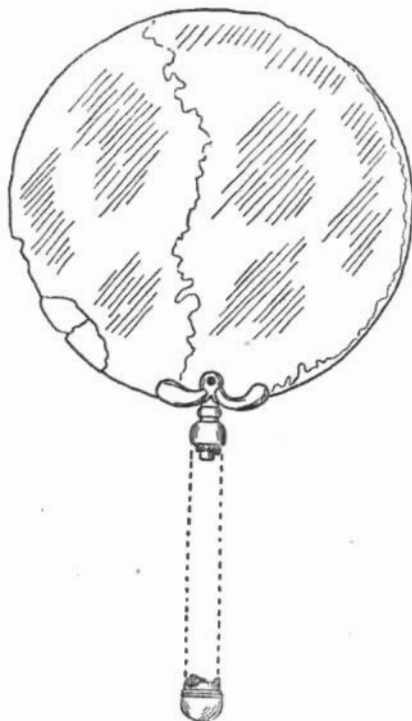


FIG. 2.

MIRROR FROM LA MOTTE SAINT-VALENTIN, HAUTE-MARNE (1/3)

Déchelette recognised the La Motte Saint-Valentin mirror as a Greek import of the fifth century B.C., and as such it is unique among La Tène I finds north of the Alps. The mirror consists of a disc of polished bronze, 7.15 in. diameter, engraved on the back with concentric circles, with separate bar-handle of bone or ivory and bronze terminals, the upper having splayed ends fixed to the mirror by three rivets (Fig. 2).

¹ Déchelette, *Manuel*, II, 1428.

² J. M. de Navarro, 'Massilia and Early Celtic Culture,' *Antiquity*, II, 423.

Dr. Schumacher¹ has discussed another bronze mirror of Greek origin, found in a rich burial of La Tène II (third century B.C.), at Dühren, near Heidelberg, Baden. It belongs to a type with broad flat handle, diffused in the region north of the Black Sea and the Caucasus and copied by the Scythians, but this type does not seem to have

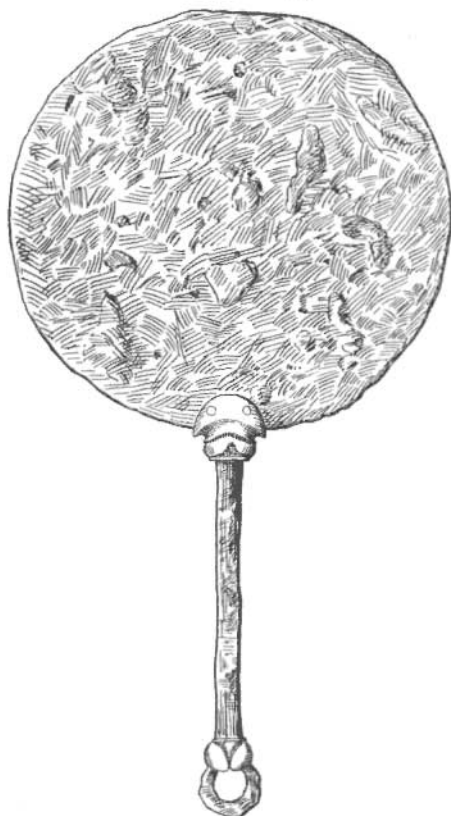


FIG. 3.

MIRROR FROM ARRAS, YORKS. (3)

been copied by the Celts or to enter into the ancestry of British mirrors.

The Iron Age burial mounds of the E. Riding of Yorkshire, clustering to the number of over 500 in the neighbourhood of Arras and Kilham, are generally considered

¹ 'Barbarische und griechische Spiegel,' 71, Pl. 15. Summary in Ebert's *Reallexikon*, *Zeitsch. für Ethnol.*, 1891, 81. *Altentümer*, v, XII, 340; article 'Spiegel.'

to have been raised over the Parisii, who migrated from northern Gaul. The group includes chariot-burials, and one of these provides the connection between the Greek importation at La Motte Saint-Valentin and the later series of British mirrors. This barrow contained the remains of a chariot, bridle-bits, and the extended skeleton of a woman with an iron mirror beneath the head.¹

Chariot-burials are well known in the Celtic zone, more than fifty occurring in the Marne alone, and Déchelette observes that nearly all belong to the La Tène I period, the majority to the fifth century B.C.² The bridle-bits are important in dating the Arras mirror, as they belong to a well-defined but scarce type with central 8-shaped link between the bars of the bit,³ as in the rich chariot-burial at La Gorge Meillet, Marne,⁴ which contained an important bronze flagon or *œnochoë* of fifth century date.

The Arras mirror (Fig. 3) has a plain disc, $6\frac{1}{4}$ in. diameter, with bar-handle, length $6\frac{1}{8}$ in., bronze mounts at each end and small terminal ring. This mirror is clearly separate from the more typical decorated mirrors, such as that from Desborough (Fig. 4), and is evidently a copy by a Gaulish craftsman of the Greek importation represented by the La Motte Saint-Valentin mirror, but the bronze mounts are shaped more in the style of the Celtic 'lip-ornament' common on horse-trappings.

There is some doubt as to the cultural relationship of the Parisii in the north with the inhabitants of the south of Britain. There is furthermore a gap of nearly three centuries between the Arras mirror and the plain mirror from Glastonbury,⁵ which appears to be next in the series. This in turn fails to anticipate the striking artistic development of the later examples, such as those from Birdlip or Desborough (Fig. 4), which have elaborate scroll decoration and moulded loop handles, and are essentially a product of La Tène IV (first century A.D.).⁶ These late mirrors are justly regarded as masterpieces of Celtic art.

¹ *Archæologia*, lx, 284.

² *Manuel*, II, 1024.

³ Déchelette, *ibid.*, 1199. A bit of this type formed part of the Hagbourn Hill find (*Arch.* xvi, 348, Pl. I), associated with a ring-headed pin of La Tène I type (*Proc. Soc.*

Antiq., xx, 344); there are several from Ireland (British Mus.), and Walthamstow (London Mus.).

⁴ Fourdrignier, *Double sépulture gauloise de La Gorge-Meillet*, 18, Pl. iii, 1, 2.

⁵ *Glastonbury Lake Village*, i, 223, Pl. xlii.

⁶ *Archæologia*, lxi, 345.

A comparison of Figs. 4 and 1 suffices to show that by about 100 A.D. the art of engraving mirror-backs was on the decline; the fashion had changed, and it is evident that the large native mirrors were superseded by the much



FIG. 4.

MIRROR FROM DESBOROUGH, NORTHANTS. ($\frac{1}{8}$)

smaller Roman mirrors of speculum-metal (white bronze), decorated with holes round the edge, and fitted with single-looped handles,¹ as in several burial-groups at Colchester.

¹ *British Museum Guide to Roman Britain*, 1922, p. 68, Fig. 88.

Distribution. On the map (Fig. 5) are plotted all the Early Iron Age mirrors of known provenance, and two (nos. 15 and 16) of doubtful origin. The mirrors are practically confined to the south of England, which was the area of early La Tène culture, with groups in Essex and Dorset. The distribution agrees fairly closely with that of La Tène I brooches published by Dr. Cyril Fox.¹

The mirrors from Arras, Desborough, and Old Warden emphasise the significance of the belt of open country

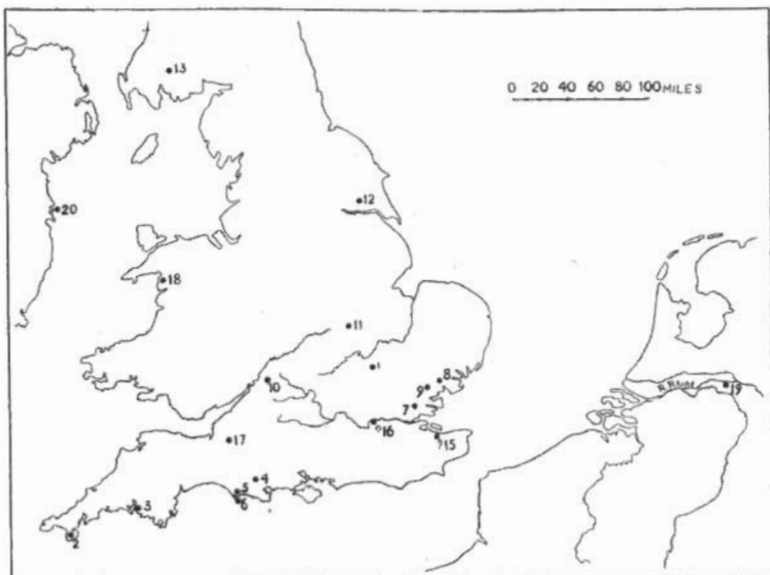


FIG. 5.

DISTRIBUTION-MAP OF IRON AGE MIRRORS

known as the 'Jurassic Zone,' which formed a link between cultures in the north and south during the Early Iron Age. The only mirror from Ireland (no. 20) was perhaps on a trade-route passing through North Wales (no. 18).

The occurrence of the only mirror found abroad at Nijmegen, 55 miles from the mouth of the Rhine, is to be explained on the lines indicated by Dr. R. E. M. Wheeler.² During the Roman period, South Britain and North-east

¹ *Archaeologia Cambrensis*, 1927, 68.

² Roy. Com. Hist. Mon., *Huntingdonsbire*, p. xxxiv.

Gaul and the Rhineland may be regarded as a single cultural area, defined by the importation of 'Belgic' pottery into this country in the first century A.D., and the exportation of 'Celtic' enamelled brooches, later of pottery of Castor type, also a revival of Celtic craftsmanship. It is notable that no less than five enamelled brooches of British origin occur at Nijmegen, which may be regarded as a commercial depôt for objects traded into the Rhineland.

Summary. In this paper the origin of British mirrors is traced from a Greek prototype imported into the Celtic area in the fifth century B.C., probably along a trade-route from Massilia. Their development fits into the scheme for Celtic coins and other objects summarised by Déchelette¹: (1) importation of Greek prototype along trade-route, (2) copy, at first exact, of this prototype by a native craftsman, (3) transformation into Celtic style, (4) degeneration.

Mirrors are illustrated of each of these four stages, their distribution is indicated and a Romano-Celtic cultural connexion shown between Britain and the Rhineland.

My grateful acknowledgments are due to Dr. M. A. Evelein, Director of the Rijksmuseum Kam, Nijmegen, for permission to draw and publish the mirror in his charge, and to the Council of the Society of Antiquaries for the loan of the block of the Desborough mirror. To Dr. R. E. M. Wheeler I am indebted for advice and help during the preparation of this paper.

LIST OF IRON AGE MIRRORS

The list given below is intended as a key to the distribution-map; it is based on the excellent list by Mr. H. St. George Gray in the *Glastonbury Lake Village*, vol. 1, pp. 221-223, summarising earlier references, and the numbers are the same as in that list.

1. Old Warden, Beds. Mirror engraved with scrolls, and red enamel discs on handle. Said to have been found with Roman coins and amphorae.

2. Trelan Bahow, St. Keverne, Cornwall. Mirror engraved with circles and scrolls, found in cist-grave with late La Tène III brooch.

¹ *Manuel*, II, 1560.

3. Stamford Hill, Plymouth, Devon. Mirror and two handles of different types, found in graves with enamelled bracelets, brooches, bronze cup, etc.

4. Belbury Camp, Dorset. Fragments of two handles, found with bronze animal figures, anchor, bronze mounts, etc.

5. Jordan Hill, Weymouth, Dorset. Handle, apparently found with brooches of about 100 A.D.

6. Isle of Portland. Plain mirror.

7. Billericay, Essex. Two mirrors, one engraved with scrolls, apparently found with pottery in a cremation burial.

8. Colchester, Essex. Mirror engraved with scrolls. Found with pottery of Aylesford type, jugs, and bronze cup with coral disc.

9. Rivenhall, Essex. Mirror engraved with scrolls. Found beside 'a passage of Roman pavement.'

10. Birdlip, Gloucester. Mirror engraved with scrolls, and red enamel discs on handle. Found in the middle of three cist-graves which contained bronze bowls, silver 'eye-brooch' plated with gold, beads of amber, jet, etc. Dated about 50 A.D.

11. Desborough, Northants. Mirror engraved with scrolls, found in the same field as a late La Tène III brooch.

12. Arras, E. Riding, Yorks. Two iron mirrors, one found beneath the head of a woman in a chariot-burial, the other found with a skeleton, both in barrows.

13. Balmaclellan, Kirkcudbright. Mirror decorated with scrolls and rosettes in relief. Found with a crescent-shaped bronze plate engraved with scrolls, etc., wrapped up in coarse linen cloth and deposited in four parcels below ground.

14. Locality unknown. Mirror engraved with scrolls.

15. Locality unknown. ? Faversham, Kent. Mirror engraved with scrolls.

16. Locality unknown. ? Thames at Barnes. Mirror engraved with circles and scrolls.

17. Glastonbury, Somerset. Plain mirror with iron handle, found with bronze tweezers and powdered galena.

18. Llechwedd du Bach, Merioneth. Plain mirror, found with platter of tinned bronze, dated about the end of first century A.D. *Antiquaries Journal*, v, 255.

19. Nijmegen, Holland.

20. Lambay Island, Co. Dublin, Ireland. Iron mirror found in cemetery of crouched inhumation burials. Other graves contained bronze brooches of the first century A.D., bronze bracelet, and an iron sword, but remains of very different periods have also been found on the site. In its present corroded condition the mirror is here included with all reserve. *Proc. Royal Irish Academy*, xxxviii, Section C, 244, Pl. xxv, Fig. 2.