

PROCEEDINGS  
OF THE  
CAMBRIDGE ANTIQUARIAN  
SOCIETY

(INCORPORATING THE CAMBS & HUNTS  
ARCHAEOLOGICAL SOCIETY)



VOLUME LXXIII

for 1984

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# ANTLER CHEEKPIECES FROM EDMUNDSOLES, HASLINGFIELD, CAMBS

WILLIAM J. BRITNELL

This short note is intended to draw attention to the very close similarity between the pair of antler cheekpieces recently published in these *Proceedings* (Miller and Miller 1982, p. 58, fig. 15, said to be 'of early Iron Age pattern'),<sup>1</sup> with the small number of single examples from Britain published several years ago which it was argued were of later Bronze Age date (Britnell 1976, fig. 1). The Edmundsoles examples would seem to be the only *pair* from Britain, and it is unfortunate that, like so many of the British examples, independent dating evidence is so poor. The only other recent finds of this type in Britain that are known to me are one complete and one fragmentary example from a Late Bronze Age occupation site at Runnymede Bridge, Egham, Surrey (Longley 1980, 27, 29–30, fig. 14, nos. 37–8).

The central perforation of the Edmundsoles examples would have been intended to hold a mouthpiece; the upper and lower slots would have held the leather cheek-straps of the bridle (Britnell 1976, fig. 3; Longley 1980, fig. 15). It is interesting to note the close similarity in the decoration of the pair from Edmundsoles with that on the single example from Washingborough Fen, Lincs. (Britnell 1976, fig. 1, no. 7). In each case this appears as a decorative band to either side of the point where the cheek-straps would have joined the cheekpiece. In the case of the Edmundsoles pieces there is some difficulty in envisaging how the cheek-straps could have been fixed to the antler tines. Other British examples of this type seem to have secured the cheek-straps by one to three lateral peg-holes, or by allowing the strap to pass right through the tine, or by securing it with pegs driven into each end. Only one of the Edmundsoles cheekpieces is said to have a longitudinal perforation, but it is not stated whether this extended as far as the adjacent strap socket. Possibly the pair is unfinished, and they may indeed have been found with antler manufacturing debris (Miller and Miller 1982, 58). To be certain of this, however, it would be necessary to look for the absence of any wear caused by the bit around the central perforations; this is a distinctive feature of the other British examples which were discarded after having been used.

## REFERENCES

- Britnell, W. J. (1976). 'Antler cheek-pieces of the British Late Bronze Age.' *Antiquaries Journal* LVI, 24–34.
- Longley, D. (1980). 'Runnymede Bridge 1976: excavations on the site of a Late Bronze Age settlement'. *Research Volume of the Surrey Archaeological Society*, no. 6.
- Miller, T. E. and Miller, M. (1982). 'Edmundsoles, Haslingfield.' *PCAS* LXXI, 41–73.

## NOTE

- 1 The captions of the four illustrated views would seem to have become transposed during publication: the caption for top right should be 'inside view'; that for bottom left should be 'convex view'; that for lower right should be 'concave view'.

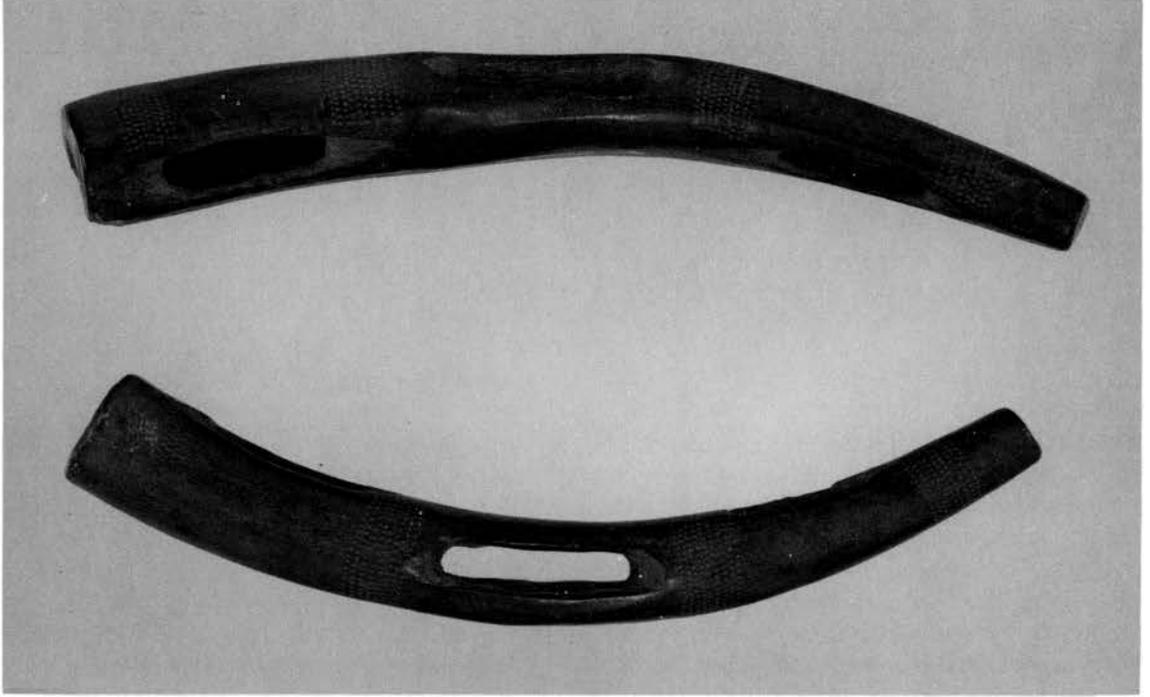


Fig. 1. Pair of antler bridle cheek-pieces from Edmundsoles, Lingey Fen, Haslingfield. Scale 5/6.

*Note by C. A. Shell and M. D. Cra'ster*

The longitudinal perforation in one of the pair of cheek-pieces does extend to the strap socket, but appears on the whole to be accidental, and in any case leaves the problem of the other sockets unresolved. A suggested method of attachment is sketched in Fig. 2. As the slot for the straps widens behind the opening, it would be possible to attach these quite firmly by first inserting a small peg or toggle, then passing the strap around it, so that the combined width of the peg and strap is greater than that of the opening. Soft leather, or leather softened in water could more easily be attached in this way. The pair of cheek-pieces is highly polished, well finished, and also shows definite signs of wear at the ends of the central perforations which held the bit and reins; this is particularly evident on the outer corners, i.e. on the decorated sides.

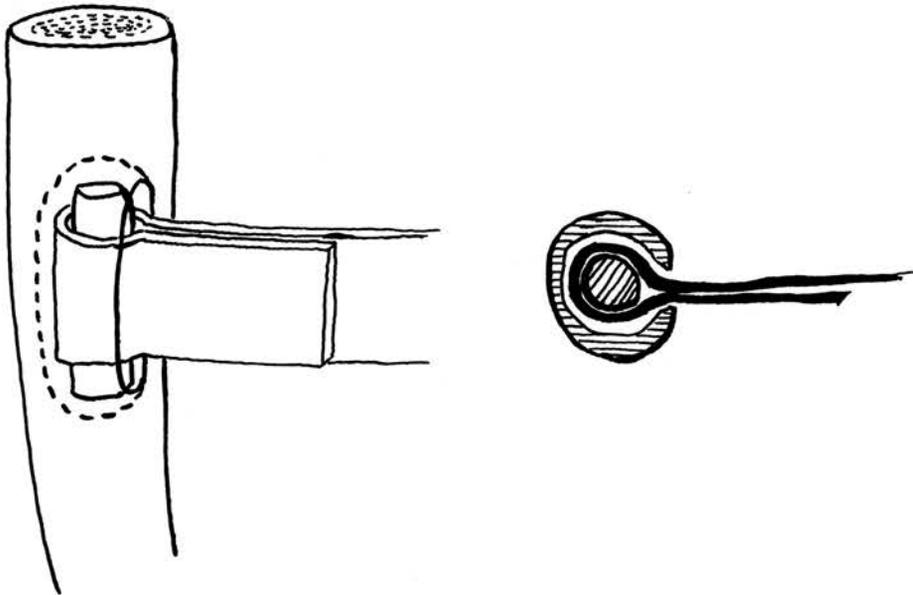


Fig. 2. A suggested method of attaching the two cheek straps of the bridle to the antler cheek-pieces by means of a toggle wedged in the slot.

