



CEL TIC SW O RD P O M M E L F R O M B R O U G H (†).

Facing p. 67.

ART. X.—*A Celtic Sword-Pommel at Tullie House.* By
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IN working recently through the reserves of the collection at Tullie House it was my good fortune to come across a piece of outstanding interest. This is the bronze pommel of a Celtic sword. It comes from the prolific site at Brough, Westmorland, where, according to a faded note inked direct onto its surface, it was found in 1875. (*See Plate*).

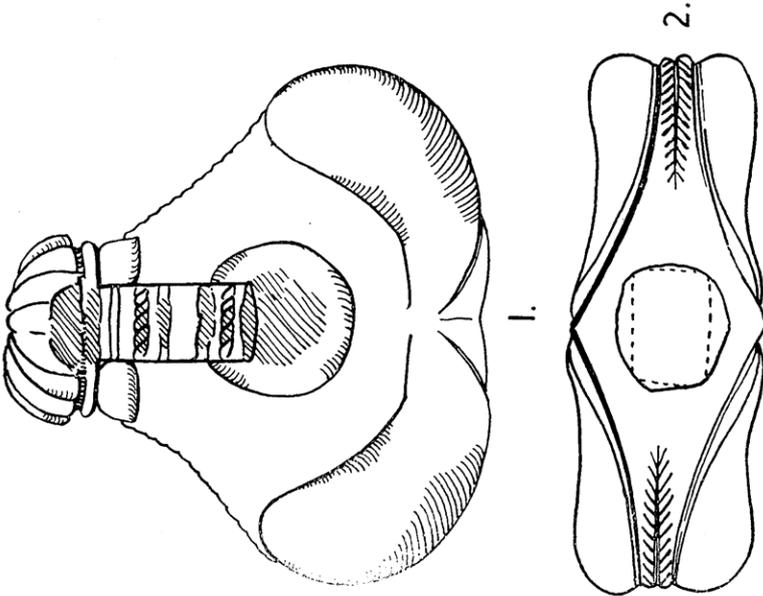
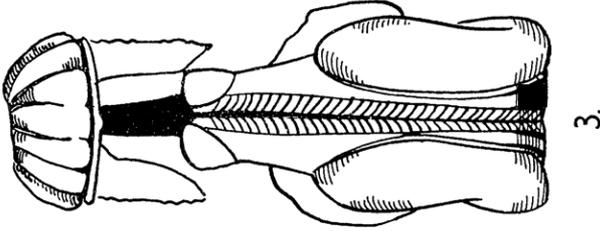
It consists of a solid bronze casting of sub-triangular form, bearing on each face a design of Celtic character, and pierced vertically by a perforation of rectangular section designed to accommodate the iron tang of the blade. (*Fig. 2*). The ornamentation, though satisfying, is not particularly notable for its elegance or originality. It consists of two heavy pear-shaped lobes on the lower edge which meet at the centre in a point. Below them the ground is brought up in two small facets, the intersection of which leaves a short medial line running from the junction of the lobes to the edge of the design, the whole arrangement being highly characteristic of Celtic feeling. Above the lobes is a plain flat surface in the centre of which rises a solid circular boss, and at each side of the top corner is a small knob. The edge is finished with a simple but effective herring-bone, or double-cable pattern, incised on either side of a central groove. (*Fig. 3*).

But the fragment before us shows more than this. It demonstrates remarkably clearly exactly how the pommel was fixed on the tang. Rusted into the upper part of the perforation remains the extreme end of the iron tang itself, and on the end of this is a further small bronze cap, circular on plan, and fluted on the rounded upper surface. From

it on each side project downwards two arms, or prongs, designed to grip the pommel, and on the top is a slight depression into which the tip of the tang has been hammered out, and which its splayed end clinches like a rivet. In its present condition the pommel has slipped about $\frac{3}{8}$ of an inch down the shank of the tang, and there, being held no doubt by the widening of the tang, it has stuck, the rusting of the iron now holding it fast. The piece should therefore be visualised with the two small knobs at the top of the pommel resting immediately under the edge of the terminal cap. (Fig. 1). That this is so is proved, if proof were needed, by the marks on the central boss of the pommel. About one third of the way between the upper and lower edge of each boss there can clearly be seen the traces of a rebate, to accommodate the ends of the two prongs of the cap. And what is more, both prongs and bosses bear the marks of the vigorous hammering which has been applied to knock in the ends of the prongs and make all secure. In this way the smooth rounded surface of both bosses, produced by the casting, has been knocked about and spoiled by the blows of the hammer. A further remarkable technical proof of the elaboration with which these two parts have been fitted together is to be found in a minute keystone, or dovetailed, rebate on the narrow upper surface of the pommel at either side, between the small knobs, which has been intended to lock into a similar arrangement on the under side of the cap. The whole piece has been most carefully thought out, and bears evidence of the most meticulously accurate planning.

Apart from its constructional interest the pommel is of the highest degree of rarity. It is indeed, if we care to insist on details, unique. One other, however, strikingly similar is known. This is the solid bronze sword hilt from Worton, Lancs., now in the British Museum. (*Guide to the Early Iron Age*, fig. 117). Of this piece the design is, in every detail, identical with the Tullie House pommel;

but the construction is different. In the Worton example the whole hilt has been formed of one casting, and thus is preserved *in toto*. It would seem that it had been cast



direct onto the tang. In the Tullie House example the remainder of the hilt, if it were of bronze, has been cast separately, and the several pieces have been kept on the

tang by the arrangement above described. Not the least interest of the present example is the way in which it explains certain features in the design of the Worton hilt. There the terminal cap and side prongs have been reproduced exactly, even to the transverse ribbing on the prongs. But they are no longer functional. They are vestigial, and without the explanation provided by the Tullie House pommel they are meaningless. It might even be suggested that the Worton hilt had been cast from a mould made directly on a complete composite hilt of the Brough type.

The Brough pommel therefore represents a stage typologically immediately precedent to Worton, and that consideration brings us to the subject of its date. There can be no question that it is not earlier than the Roman occupation. The uninspired character of the design represents a late stage in the development of pagan Celtic art, and its bossy appearance may link it onto the 'boss' style of the Wall district and the Scottish Lowlands recently recognised by Mr. Leeds, and dated to the second century. (Leeds, *Celtic Ornament*, 1933, pp. 110, 117). The more complete Worton hilt, with the cocked-hat mouth of the scabbard incorporated, and at this stage almost unrecognisable, in the guard, shows that typologically the sword of which the Brough pommel formed a part must fall late in the series of Celtic swords, at the very end of Déchelette's La Tène IV. While, further, the fluting and ribbing of the terminal cap is quite un-Celtic, and if found in isolation could unhesitatingly have been attributed to Roman craftsmanship. The somewhat classical character of the Worton grip seems to point in the same direction. So that a date somewhere in the second century would seem to be a safe inference.

Late Celtic swords with cast bronze hilts seem to be characteristic of the Cumbrian region. On the east coast they are not to be found. While in the west besides the

Worton hilt, there is also the well-known Embleton sword, and now the Brough pommel. Its appearance at Brough, however, cannot be used as evidence of manufacture at that undoubted centre of bronze working. The pommel has formed part of a completed sword, which, it would seem, has later been broken. It is more likely, therefore, that it was taken to Brough as scrap to be melted down again. That does not rule out the possibility of local manufacture. In any event its rarity and the remarkable condition in which it is preserved make it an object well worthy of extended notice.