

XVI.—ROMAN HORSE TRAPPINGS,

COMPARED WITH MODERN EXAMPLES, WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO
 ROMAN BRONZES LATELY FOUND AT SOUTH SHIELDS AND CHESTERS
 (*Cilurnum*).

BY JOHN PHILIPSON, M.I.M.E.

[Read on the 26th November, 1885.]

SOME time ago Mr. Robert Blair, F.S.A., one of our secretaries, brought under my notice some objects that had been discovered within the eastern rampart of the Roman Castrum at South Shields and which he believed were Roman horse trappings. Mr. Blair asked me to describe their uses, and determine their proper positions in the accoutrements of a horse. This I have attempted, but being sensible of the acquirements that are necessary to do justice to such a subject, I have some diffidence in submitting my opinions to the members, and I therefore claim their indulgence for my communication, as, although an old member of the Society, I prefer rather to listen than to take an active part in the discussions. I am, moreover, actuated by a desire to create an interest in the harness of the ancients; a subject that antiquaries seem to have passed over for more ambitious studies.

Such relics as those possess an unfailing fund of interest for me, inasmuch as, in one of my own particular branches of manufacture, I am enabled by their means to institute a comparison between the workmanship of the Romans and that of the age in which we live, and to judge whether our progress in some arts, is not more seeming than real.

If the identity of such objects as horse trappings could be established with sufficient certainty, an expert would be able to designate exactly how the horses of the Romans were harnessed, as

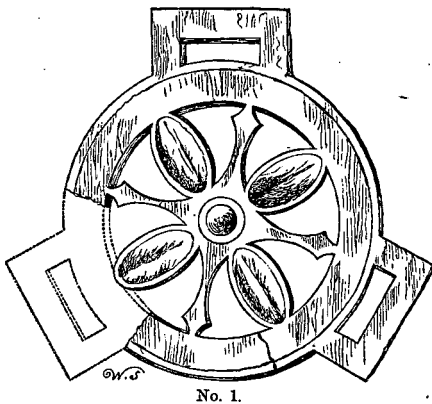
their form would show him how and where the component parts had been connected. But it is necessary to approach the subject with caution, seeing that so many objects of bronze, for which no other use can be assigned, are without hesitation, described as horse trappings. This is to be regretted as it causes confusion.

On the other hand, it frequently occurs that conjecture specifies quite a different use for such antiquities, while, if they were carefully examined, and it was remembered that bronze was the favourite metal of the Romans for making such objects, and if due allowance was made for the decay after so many centuries of concealment, they would be found almost identical with modern horse furniture.

The antiquities submitted by Mr. Blair are six in number (see Nos. 1—4), two of them (3 and 4) being in duplicate.

These objects have been lent, with other remains from South Shields, to the Black Gate Museum, which it is hoped will soon become the repository of all our chief local antiquities.

No. 1, which evidences high class workmanship, is an ornamental boss or shield of circular form, with raised perforated centre of wheel pattern. On the circumference there are three square loops. This I believe to be the breast ornament of a horse, one of those decorations termed *phalerae*—bosses, discs, or crescents of metal—



which are seldom mentioned in the singular number. There is a note in the *Journal of the British Archaeological Association*¹ drawing attention to the fact that it resembled very closely an object found at Bologna, and described by the Count G. Gozzadini² (see No. 5, p. 207). This similarity gave rise to the remark that it seemed singular that this remote castrum should be connected, by the discovery of similar objects, with an Etruscan burial place in Italy. Now, in my opinion, this similarity tends to con-

¹ Vol. XXXVI., pp. 109 and 110.

² *Di Sepolcreto Etrusco scoperto presso Bologna*, p. 25.

firm the correctness of my views, as the Romans borrowed the use of phalerae from the Etruscans. Although these ornaments were worn as marks of distinction by Roman soldiers, and even by the Negro slaves of the more opulent, they are more commonly referred to as being attached to the horse's bridle, where they were worn as pendants, according to Dr. Smith, so as to produce a terrific effect when shaken by the motion of the horse; but if phalerae were often strapped down, as is evident by the loops projecting from the rim, how could they be shaken so as to produce noise?

We find phalerae often mentioned by the Latin writers. We are told that the phalerae hung down the breast. Ramsay in his *Roman Antiquities*, tells us that they were ornaments attached to horse furniture or to the accoutrements of the rider.

The number of loops projecting from the rim of the Shields specimen, enables us to determine the manner of its use, *i.e.*, whether it belonged to the *horse* or its *rider*. If it had been worn on the breast of the man there would have been four loops, whereas there are only three, and these loops indicate that its position was the breast of the horse. Two of the loops would hold the straps which are shown by numberless examples to have passed over the shoulders of the horse, from the breast to the saddle, and the third would have served as a means of attachment for the strap passing from the breast between the fore-legs to the girths. Thus the ornament would be held in position and would serve for defence as well as decoration.



No. 2.



No. 3.

No. 2 is another well-designed ornament of similar character. Although there is only provision for two straps it might have been used for the same purpose as No. 1, because the breast straps of a horse may be variously arranged, and it is evident that the Romans had several methods. It is surprising to find a remnant of leather attached to the smaller hole.

There were two bronzes like No. 3 found. They have undoubtedly been used with a strap, but I believe at one end only, and I conjecture them to have been employed in fastening the ends of a belt, as the circular extremity appears shaped to receive and hold a knob. (See No. 124, Plate XXI., for a modern example.)

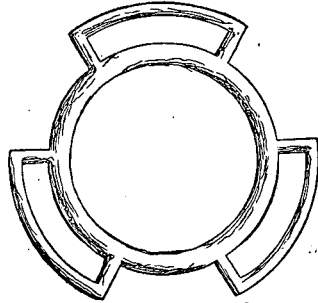
There were also two specimens found exactly similar to No. 4. It is a very interesting device and has probably been used for ornamenting harness, as three pins project at the back. It somewhat resembles one of late Celtic style in the Duke of Northumberland's collection. (See Catalogue,¹ No. 731, p. 146, and also Plate XVIII, No. 55.)



No. 4.

No. 7 (Plate XVIII.) is, without doubt, a rosette belonging to a horse's bridle, and closely resembles one found at Cilurnum. (See No. 15, Plate XIX.)

The Romans used these decorations in abundance. On all the horses seen on ancient monuments which a learned writer has designated "irresistible evidence, which no future historian can controvert, because they are not liable



No. 5.

to the corruptions and uncertainties introduced by copyists into manuscripts," we find a profusion of these objects; as many as four being used on a single bridle, one on each side as is our present custom, one on the forehead and one on the lower part of the face.

No. 6 is the remains of a spur. The similarity in form, particularly at the ends, between this and some modern spurs is very marked.

No. 6a is a large ornament resembling a solitaire. The front has been enamelled, of which some portions remain. There is a distinguishing feature in the design of this and of Nos. 2 and 4. The centre lines of each terminate in three points. This has likely been used to decorate or secure some portion of wearing apparel, although there are many parts of harness in which it could have been utilized.

When examining Mr. Blair's bronzes it occurred to me that I had seen some of a very similar kind amongst the antiquities at Chesters, and by the kindness of John Clayton, Esq., F.S.A., I am permitted to produce drawings of these relics which were discovered at Cilurnum (Chesters), and which have not, to my knowledge, been previously described. There is a striking similarity between some of them and those belonging to Mr. Blair which cannot fail to be observed. No. 8

¹ *A Descriptive Catalogue of Antiquities, chiefly British, at Alnwick Castle*, edited by J. C. Bruce, LL.D.

is presumably a spoon, and is very well preserved. It does not, however, concern us at present; but being a part of the same find is included on this sheet. Very similar to No. 792 in the Alnwick Catalogue, page 146.

Nos. 9, 10, and 11 are pendent ornaments similar to the modern forehead or face-drops, and those which are occasionally used on the *quarters* and *neck* of a horse. Both the backs and fronts are shown in the plate. These relics have suffered but little by seventeen centuries of concealment, all being in excellent condition. Nos. 10 and 11 are remarkable for the designs on their face-sides. No. 11 appears to have been inlaid or enamelled. The monogram S is plainly discernible, and as the surface has been enamelled or inlaid it has evidently appertained to the appointments of some distinguished person.

It is remarkable that a Greek sophist in the household of Severus's wife should be the only classical author who speaks of the art of enamelling horse trappings. He said, "The barbarians who live in the ocean pour such colours on heated brass, and they adhere to it and become as hard as stone, and thus preserve the designs that are made in them."

No. 12 (Plate XIX.) is a portion of a rosette.

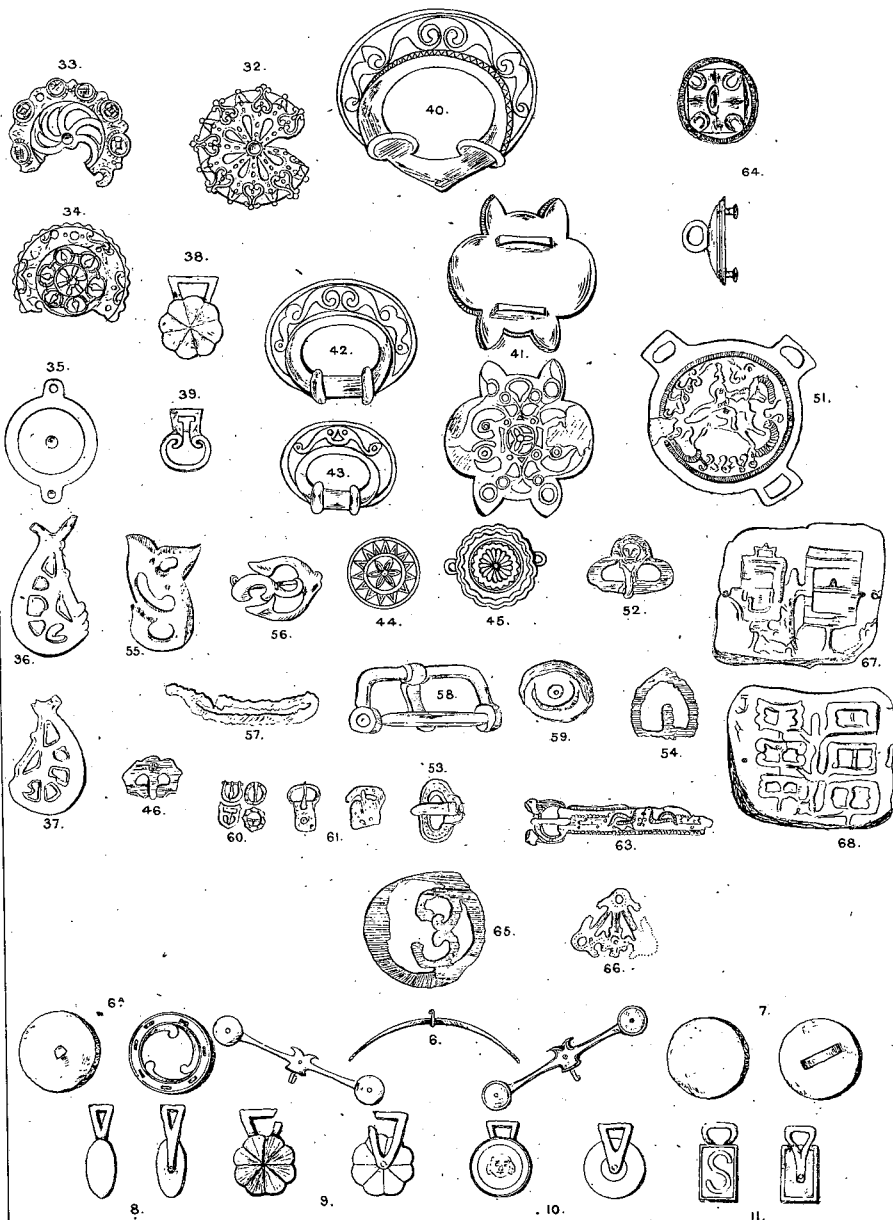
Nos. 13, 14, and 15 are rosettes. The back views show the loops for straps on the two latter. They differ from the modern rosette in having the loops cast solid. A portion of a bronze stud adheres to the back of No. 15, which, in design, somewhat resembles the rosette in Mr. Blair's collection. No. 13 has been fastened with a stud or pin, and may have been used to decorate a breast strap.

No. 16*a* and *b* is a circular case $1\frac{1}{2}$ inches diameter, with two apertures measuring $\frac{5}{8}$ inch by $\frac{1}{4}$ inch. The most probable use of this would be to hold in position two straps that crossed each other.

Nos. 17 and 24 are ornamental nails or rivets, resembling No. 113 (Plate XXI.). These are largely used in modern harness.

Though much corroded, No. 18¹ is one of the most pleasing specimens in the collection. This bit, which is almost intact, of which each side is shown, is a facsimile of the snaffle bit, the simplest and most humane that can be placed in a horse's mouth. It is agreeable to find that in the time of Antoninus Pius the Romans treated their horses kindly, and knew how to cultivate that vigour and activity which is everywhere portrayed in the horses depicted on ancient monuments.

¹ The same bit is again shown at No. 69, before the mud and rust came off.



J. Philpson del.

ANCIENT HORSE TRAPPINGS.



No. 19 has the appearance of a double stud, but by the loop at the back it would serve as a rosette. To me, however, this relic, which shows no signs of decay, does not appear so suitable for harness as it would be for securing some portion of wearing apparel, such as the toga.

No. 20 is a large ornament that has either been used on the breast or quarter-cloth of a horse, and of remarkable beauty in design.

Nos. 21, 22, 29, and 31 are specimens of the *turret* which, at the present day, is fixed in the saddle and through which the reins pass, but which, in Roman harness, was secured in the straps that passed round the body or the neck of the horse. No. 31 is slightly ornamented. The inside of the ring of No. 29 is considerably worn by the rubbing of the reins. These turrets were probably fastened to the saddle or backband by a loop of leather.

No. 23 is a mass of studs and other things intermingled and adhering together. In one part we observe a broken piece corrugated like the hilt of a sword, and suggesting the idea that the whole of these metallic objects had appertained to the sword belt of a Roman soldier.

Nos. 25, 26, and 28. The two former rings are bronze, but 28 is stone; 25 is similar in shape and size to the ivory and metal rings now commonly used for coupling the reins of a pair of horses. It may be added, however, that in harness, rings of this form are used for breast straps and for various other purposes.

No. 27 appears to be a portion of some ornamental device like No. 20.

No. 30 is another fanciful ornament somewhat resembling a dolphin. It also possesses pins at the back for fixing it in position.

Nos. 8 to 31 were discovered during the excavations at CILURNUM, carried on so diligently and with such liberality by Mr. Clayton. No. 16, 18, 19, 20, 29 and 31 have been found within the last three months.

Some interesting specimens in very perfect preservation have several times attracted my attention in the Black Gate Museum. The precise locality of their discovery does not appear to be known, nor can I find that they have ever been brought under notice at any of our meetings. They are Roman horse trappings of bronze, and are represented on Plate XVIII.

Nos. 32, 33, and 34 are rosettes of chaste design, all exceedingly well executed.

No. 35 is a boss suitable for decorating the face-drop of a bridle.

Although Nos. 36 and 37 may have been used for harness; they are more probably the remains of fibulae.

Nos. 38 and 39 are two pendent ornaments that have, in all probability, been employed as face-drops.

It is to be observed that these specimens lack that pleasant aeruginous appearance to be found in the majority of bronzes, and which is so distinguishable in the South Shields and Chesters antiquities. I suppose, however, that they have been coated with a lacquer, or varnished, doubtless with a view of protecting them from the air.

On the same sheet are shown four objects described by Henry Harrod, Esq., F.S.A., in a letter to Mr. Akerman, Secretary of the Society of Antiquaries of London. Mr. Harrod supposed these remains, which were found at Westhall, a small village about three miles north-east of Halesworth, to be horse trappings, and his surmise was correct. Nos. 40, 42, and 43 are *turrets*. The designs evince considerable artistic skill. The provision for the leather loops is very plain. No. 41 is a rosette, of which two views are shown.

There are also two rosettes and a buckle, all Roman bronzes, mentioned in the third volume of Montfaucon's work. They are numbered 44, 45, and 46.

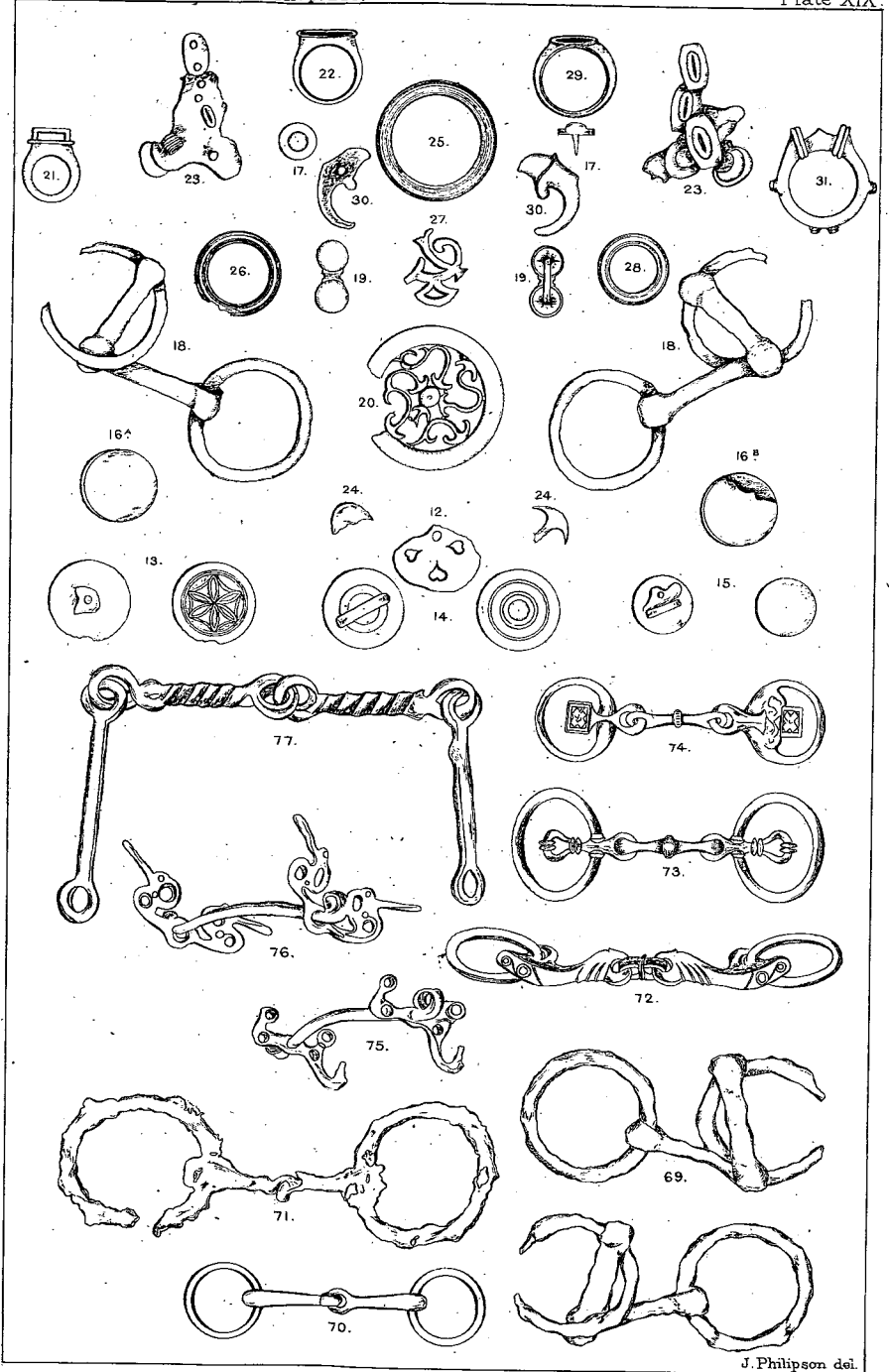
I have also reproduced some equestrian figures in order that I may indicate in what part of the accoutrements of the horse and his rider such ornaments as I have described would be used. (Plate XX.)

By No. 47, an equestrian figure of Alexander, we obtain a very clear idea of the arrangement of rosettes on the bridle, and of the *phalerae* on the horse.

The decoration of the horse's head is also clearly distinguished in No. 48, taken from a drawing of a statue of Nonius Balbus.

No. 49, a sketch taken from Dr. Overbeck's *Pompeii*, shows the rein turrets and the ornaments that were used on the bridle.

In Professor Duncan's *Cæsar* are shown two horses, each having four broad straps connected by a circular ornament on the breast. These ornaments, shown by Figure 50, would have four loops instead of three as in the Shields specimen.



J. Philipson del.

EXAMPLES OF ANCIENT BITS, &c.



For confirmation of the opinions I had formed and which I have ventured to submit to this meeting, I have referred to various authorities for examples of similar or nearly similar bronzes, some of which are shown on Plate XVIII.

No. 51 was obtained from an Alemannic grave at Seengen on the lake of Hallwyl, Canton Aargau, Switzerland, and is described in the *Archæologia*.¹ This disc, though more costly and elaborate in workmanship, has evidently been used for a similar purpose to that discovered at South Shields. The framework is of bronze, with a raised outer rim projecting, and a central plate of silver exhibiting in *repoussé* work an armed knight on his steed, but owing to the damaged condition of the plate, it was not altogether easy to determine details. Unlike the Shields disc, the one under notice had originally had four square loops projecting from the rim but only three remained. Although it might have been worn on the breast of the rider serving as a kind of thorax, Mr. Wylie believed, and with apparent good reason, that it was just such an ornament as I have mentioned, but he said the chief argument against it having been used as a frontlet or breast ornament of the horse was, that they should have expected to have found the remains of the horse, which was not the case.

Nos. 52 and 53, are two bronze buckles, apparently Saxon, found near Dieppe. The designs are remarkable, particularly that of the larger. The upper part of the tongue bears a grotesque head within a zig-zag border.

No. 54, is described in Vol. XLVII of the *Archæologia*. It was found 15 feet 2 inches deep, during the excavations at Cæsar's Camp, as was 57.

No. 55, is the ornament of late Celtic style, found in the Roman station of Bremenium, and which I referred to as somewhat resembling in design one of Mr. Blair's.²

Nos. 58 and 59 are taken from Montfaucon. The learned author surmises that the buckle has been used in connection with a chariot. It is larger than an ordinary buckle for personal wear, and has probably been employed at the ends of the traces or on other large straps. No. 59 is the head of a large nail supposed to have been used in some

¹ Vol. XLIV., p. 100, "An example of Phaleræ and other Antiquities from Switzerland," by W. M. Wylie, F.S.A.

² See No. 791 in the Catalogue of the Alnwick Castle Collection, page 146, and described as a bronze ornament.

part of a chariot. It may have been, however, that it was used as an ornamental nail in a harness pad or saddle, in the same manner as the rivets that are used at the present time.

No. 60 is a collection of buckles of different sizes and designs from Dr. Smith's *Dictionary of Greek and Roman Antiquities*. These would be used for the smaller straps of harness.

For those numbered 61, I am indebted to the *Collectanea Antiqua* of Mr. Roach Smith, F.S.A.

Fig. 63 is taken from the catalogue of antiquities at Alnwick Castle. This is an excellent example of horse furniture belonging to the late Celtic period. The design of the buckle is rare. The horse's head on either side of the outer rim leaves little room for uncertainty as to its use.

Figs. 62 and 65 having some bearing on our subject, I am induced to reproduce them although they were found in an Anglo-Saxon Cemetery at Stowling, in Kent, by John Brent, Esq., F.S.A. No. 62 is a bronze buckle, and No. 65, a large circular bronze ornament with a design in the centre like the Arabic numeral 3. Mr. Brent believed this ornament to belong to the girdle.

No. 64 is described by Mr. Roach Smith, in Vol. IV. *Collectanea Antiqua*. Both the plan and section of this relic are shown. Mr. Smith draws attention to the remarkable cross upon it. He also adds that the inside of the ring is much worn, as if by the constant attrition of a chain or thong. This has evidently served the same end as the modern turret which is attached to the pad or saddle and through which the reins pass.

Fig. 66 represents a bronze ornament found at Carnac, and described by Mr. James Miln at page 95 of *Archæological Researches*. This specimen of fine workmanship forms an equilateral triangle, and has probably been used as an ornament for the side of a pad or saddle.

The horse bit found at *Cilurnum*, Nos. 18 and 69 (Plate XIX.), being such a truly remarkable specimen, has led me to search through the works of our greatest authorities, for antiquities of a like nature.

I have been successful in finding a great variety discovered at different times and places, but so far as my experience goes, there is only one that bears any similitude to this interesting relic, and that is the ancient British horse bit, No. 71.¹ It was found at Hamden Hill,

¹ See page 89 of the Duke of Northumberland's Catalogue.



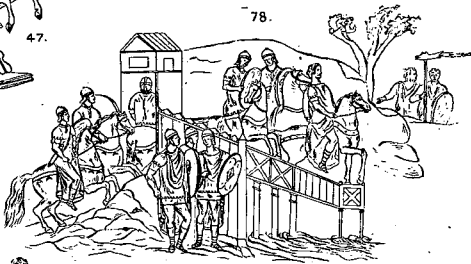
47.



49.



48.



78.



50.



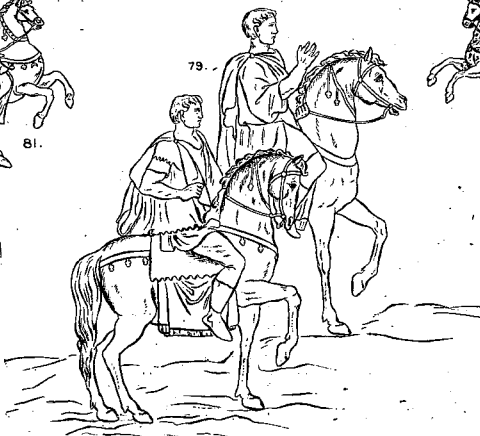
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80.



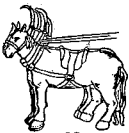
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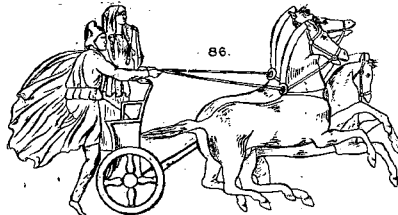
79.



84.



83.



86.



85.

J. Philipsen. del.

EXAMPLES OF THE ANCIENT USE OF HORSE TRAPPINGS.

(THIS PLATE CONTRIBUTED BY M^{rs} JOHN PHILIPSON.)



near the village of Stoke-under-Hamden, with fragments of British chariots by Sir Richard Colt Hoare, Bart., F.R.S. The ancients do not appear to have progressed so far in the art of cruelty to animals as we have. Their bits display a great diversity in shape and size, but, none of them possess that modern instrument of exquisite torture, the "high port." For the sake of comparison with the *Cilurnum* bit, No. 69, I have represented the modern snaffle, No. 70. I need not comment upon the resemblance, one is almost a facsimile of the other.

No. 72 is an elegant specimen belonging to the late Celtic or early iron period. It was found in Ireland, and is numbered 470 in the Duke of Northumberland's catalogue. Though elaborate in design, it would not prove very hurtful to the mouth of a horse.

Fig. 73 represents a bronze bit that was found in fragments on the Duke of Northumberland's Stanwick Estate. It is now in the British Museum. A turret was also found, something like No. 31.

No. 74 is a bronze bit, presumed to have belonged to Celtic horse trappings. It is described by Dr. Smith in Volume XV. of the *Proceedings* of the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland, but I find that in *The Rhind Lectures in Archæology* for 1881, Dr. Anderson, in speaking of the Celtic art, refers to this bit as exhibiting that art in a very striking manner. There is a marked peculiarity about it, which is that the loops of the cheek rings have been cast with the loops of the mouthpiece, an operation implying technical skill and great experience of complicated moulding.

Nos. 75 and 76, are bronzes taken from ancient graves at *Palestrina* and *Cervetra*.

No. 77, although simple in form, is cumbrous, and the most primitive looking of the whole. It was found in France, and is described in Vol. XXXV. of the *Archæologia*. From the large size of this bit it is inferred that it was not only used for a large horse but by a very powerful man. The plan of twisting the mouthpiece is practised at the present day.

On Plate XX. I have reproduced some drawings of figures taken from Trajan's Column,

In No. 78 we are able to discern the position occupied by the sword of the cavalry soldier, and it may justly be inferred that such studs as were found at *Cilurnum*, would be employed to secure the belt and straps by which it was suspended.

In No. 79, the pendent ornaments of a trichotomous form attached to the neck-straps and breast-bands are very plainly seen.

No. 80 shows us one of those split neck-straps, that would require an ornament with four loops to secure it.

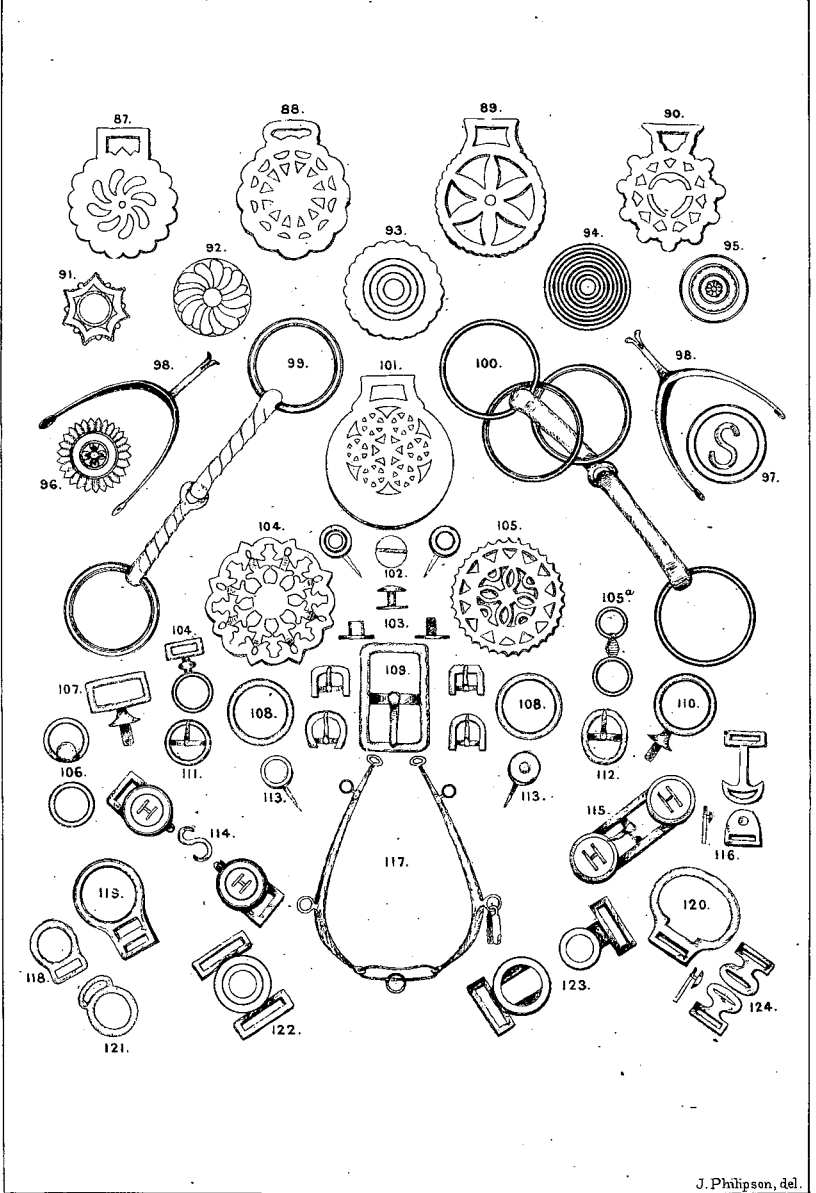
In the sketch No. 81, the decorations of the bridle, breast, and quarter-straps are clearly shown.

No. 84 shows the bridle of a Roman cavalier's horse, on which the rosettes are plainly depicted. No. 82, although a mediæval example, will show the continuance of the custom. No. 83 is almost the only example I have been able to find where the horses are shown with neck collars and *hames*, which would necessitate the use of kidney links, such as No. 57 (Plate XVIII).

By No. 86, we find that in some instances the reins passed through or around a circular object at the top of the neck-strap instead of through turrets on the saddle. On ancient Egyptian monuments a precisely similar arrangement may frequently be observed.

For the sake of comparison, Plate XXI. shows modern horse trappings similar in size and shape to many of those found at Shields and at Chesters. Chief among those I would draw attention to the bit, to the various rosettes and hanging ornaments, and to the rein turrets. Their resemblance to the ancient examples is so great that it need not be dwelt upon. With the outline and design, however, the similarity ends, as under the same conditions the modern horse trappings would not exist more than a fractional part of the time that has elapsed since the Romans withdrew from Britain. That the ancients were far advanced in the art of moulding, and cunning in the composition of their bronzes, is testified by the statuary of Rhodes, Delphi, and Athens. The ancient method of casting buckles is evidenced by Figs. 67 and 68 (Plate XVIII.), which is a sketch of stone moulds, described at page 125, Vol. I., of the *Proceedings* of the Scottish Society. The metal from which such objects were formed would, I believe, be an alloy composed of about 90 per cent. copper and 10 per cent. tin, to which latter metal ancient bronzes owed their best properties.

In the foregoing remarks I have endeavoured to prove that the bronzes found at South Shields and at *Ciburnum* are horse trappings, and to indicate what their specific uses have been. The employment of such ornaments was not confined to the Romans.



J. Philipson, del.

MODERN EXAMPLES OF HARNESS TRAPPINGS.
(THIS PLATE CONTRIBUTED BY MR JOHN PHILIPSON.)



Similar decorations were used for horse trappings many centuries before the Christian era, from the time of Jehu, in fact. Jehu, the Son of Nimshi, ascended the throne about 885 B.C., and paid tribute to one of the Assyrian kings, and it is evident from the sculptures discovered by Mr. Austen Layard, M.P., Colonel Rawlinson, and others, that the Assyrians in the time of this king, whatever his name may have been, not only used rosettes in various parts of their harness, but used also ivory and mother-of-pearl studs in large numbers for decorating the trappings of their horses. The horse furniture of the Assyrians would appear to have been of the most elaborate and costly character, richly embroidered, and hung with a profusion of bells, rosettes, and tassels.

Mr. Layard gives in one of his works a very fine example from a bas-relief at Kouyunjik, from which we gather that, in addition to the rosettes that are invariably found on the bridles, the neck-bands and breast-plates or collars of Assyrian horses were profusely ornamented with these studs. Hanging from the neck-bands and reins, down by the shoulder of the horse, we frequently observe a pendent object, somewhat resembling the modern face-drop or trace-bearer, embellished by a large rosette, or star of metal, as Mr. Layard terms it.

Although a great deal more might be said upon the subject of Roman horse trappings, I will not pursue the subject further to-night.

My object in trespassing upon your good nature has been to give a little more prominence to those remains which have been found in such numbers, and I venture to express a hope that my humble effort may result in other communications regarding objects of a similar nature that have been discovered in this neighbourhood.

The modern examples (Plate XXI.) comprise Nos. 87, 88, 89, and 90, ornaments for the front of bridle, and at present used for dray cart harness, &c. ; 91, 92, 93, 94, 95, 96, and 97, designs of bridle rosettes ; 101, 104, and 105, falls or ornaments for the breast of a dray horse ; 98, a modern spur ; 99 and 100, modern snaffle and double ringed bit ; 102 and 103, saddle rivets or studs ; 104 and 105, swivels ; 106, 114, 116, 118, 120, 121, 122, 123, and 124, modern swivels for men's belts or straps ; 109, 111, and 112, buckles ; 108, rings ; 117, hames and kidney links ; 107 and 110, turrets for pads.