

X.—PRE-CONQUEST SCULPTURES AND THE COMMON SEAL OF HARTLEPOOL.

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The design on the common seal of Hartlepool Corporation (plate XXXIX, 1) must have been chosen because of the pun on the name of the borough: it shows a *hart* standing in a *pool*. The original meaning of the modern form of the town's name was probably "Hart by the harbour", distinguishing it from the village of Hart three miles to the north-west.¹ The seal bears the inscription "S(IGILLVM) COMMVNITATIS : DE : HERTERPOL" and the form of the letters, like those on the counter-seal,² suggests a date in the first half of the thirteenth century. Since a charter was granted to the borough by John in 1201 the seal is in all probability to be associated with this date or with the period immediately following. It was during this period that Hartlepool became the chief port of the bishopric of Durham, though by virtue of the charter the borough itself claimed to remain outside the bishop's jurisdiction.

However, the particular design of hart used is much older than the seal, as it occurs several times in the stone carving of the later Anglo-Saxon period. The connection is shown by the presence on the seal of a hound pouncing on the back of the hart, a feature not called for by the pun. This "hart and hound" combination occurs for example on cross fragments at Lancaster (fig. 1), at Dacre near Penrith (fig. 2), and in the North Riding at Kirk Leavington near Yarm (plate XXXIX, 2).³ The seal design was probably copied from some

¹ The *pool* element of the name is not recorded before the twelfth century. Bede's form is *Heruteu*, "id est insula cervi", "stag island" (HE III, 24).

² AA 4, xxvi, pl. IV 3 and pp. 83f.

³ There are also more doubtful North Riding examples at Stanwick and Melsonby near Darlington, Wath in Wensleydale, and Lythe near Whitby (W. G. Collingwood, Y.A.J., xix, 394, 368, 406; xxi, 920).

such exemplar in existence in the thirteenth century. What makes this supposition almost certain is the presence on the seal in front of the hart of a scroll design looking like a conventional tree; it is in fact a copy of a piece of vine scroll decoration, a motif very common in Anglo-Saxon sculpture. A similar strip of vine follows the seal's inscription. The original of this twice used feature must have been present on one of the faces of the cross shaft that was used for a model.

The hart and hound became a favourite device of the people of Norwegian ancestry⁴ who left their temporary home in Ireland about the beginning of the tenth century and settled in the north-west counties of England and on the Isle of Man. Some of them passed further east into Yorkshire, particularly into the North Riding, and they are responsible for most of the Scandinavian place names in the north and west of the Riding, such as Normanby, "village of the Norwegians", and for some names with Irish elements, such as Eryholme, "the shielings".⁵ This area of settlement contrasts with the earlier one of the Danes in the more fertile land in the east and south of the Riding. It was for such groups of Norwegian colonists that the crosses to which the Kirk Leavington and other fragments belong were carved.⁶

Although place-name evidence suggests that Scandinavian settlement north of the Tees was not extensive, the Hartlepool area would seem to be one of the exceptional regions occupied to some extent by Scandinavians. Sir Allen Mawer⁷ listed Throston, Claxton, Amerston and Bruntoft, in this area, as probable Scandinavian names. As additional

⁴ W. G. Collingwood: *Northumbrian Crosses of the Pre-Norman Age* (1927), p. 150.

⁵ A. H. Smith: *Place-Names of the North Riding of Yorkshire* (EPNS), xxiv ff.

⁶ Lancaster and Kirk Leavington are further linked in that both have stones where monster-headed men take the place of soldiers by the Cross. H. R. Ellis Davidson: "Gods and Heroes in Stone" (*Early Cultures of North-west Europe*, ed. Bruce Dickins and Cyril Fox, 1950), p. 137. Also Helen M. Roe: *Journ. R.S.A. Ireland*, lxxv, 15f.

⁷ AA 3, xviii, 16.



FIG. 1. LANCASTER.



DACRE

FIG. 2.

evidence there appears to be a dialect boundary just north of the village of Hart; to the south of this line speech is more like that of North Yorkshire than that of the rest of Durham. And on one occasion at least the Hartlepool area is known to have been overrun by the Scandinavian invaders. The leader of the movement, Raegnald, is said to have landed with his men on the east coast; he made common cause with vikings from the west and with their help overran Northumbria and captured York in 919.⁸ To his supporter Scula (Old Norse Skúli) he gave land between (Castle) Eden and Billingham; this area includes Hartlepool and may possibly be identified with the district known elsewhere as Heorternesse.⁹ It is interesting that Symeon of Durham, writing in the twelfth century, records that Skúli's lands, as distinct from the rest of Durham, were in his day unlawfully claimed as part of Yorkshire.¹⁰ This would seem to suggest that the Hartlepool area represents the north eastern limit of the Norwegian movement.

This being so, it would seem possible that the *er* in the early name form "Herterpōl" represents the genitive singular inflexion in a Norse side form "Hjartarpoll(r)" rather than the result of analogy with Heorternesse as Ekwall has it. Indeed the *pool* element itself may be of Norse origin; *pollr*, though not a common element, does occur in Scandinavian, as Brákarpollr in Western Iceland. The form "Hiartarpoll" is actually recorded, in Icelandic sources; it occurs in a skaldic poem by Einarr Skúlason which describes the raids on the east coast of Britain in Stephen's reign by Eysteinn Haraldsson, king of Norway, whose court poet Einarr was. If it can be assumed that Einarr wrote his poem not long after the event, which seems most likely, this becomes the earliest recorded occurrence of the *pool* form. It is quoted in two

⁸ See Sir Frank Stenton: *Anglo-Saxon England* (1943 etc.), p. 327.

⁹ According to E. Ekwall (*Oxford Dictionary of English Place-Names*, 1936, s.v. *Hart*) this form represents *Heorot-eg-hernyss, becoming Heorternesse, etc., "district subject to Hart". The alternative explanation "Hart headland", through a Norse form *Hjartarnes, would not, however, appear to be impossible; cf. next paragraph.

¹⁰ Symeon of Durham (75 Rolls Series) I, 73.

histories of the Norwegian kings, *Morkinskinna*¹¹ and Snorri's *Heimskringla*.¹²

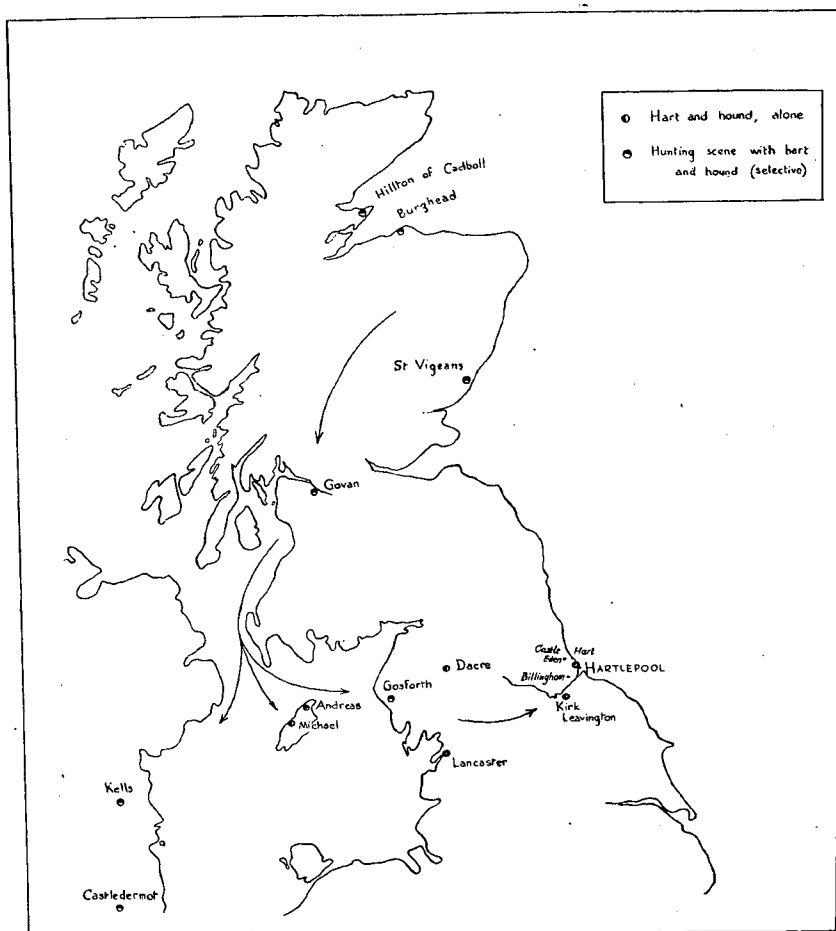


FIG. 3. DISTRIBUTION OF HART AND HOUND THEME.

The ultimate source of this hart and hound group seems to have been the east of Scotland. Both creatures are found in the hunting groups common in Pictish sculpture in the late

¹¹ Ed. Finnur Jónsson (1928-32), V, 444.

¹² Ed. Bjarni Aðalbjarnarson (1951), III, 328.

eighth and the ninth centuries,¹³ as at Hillton of Cadboll, on the Moray Firth (plate XL, 1), and Burghead, Elgin (fig. 4). At a later period the hunting scene, according to the hypothesis of R. B. K. Stevenson,¹⁴ spread to the west coast of Scotland, as at Govan on Clydeside (plate XLI, 2), and thence to the Isle of Man¹⁵ and Ireland¹⁶ and north-west England.¹⁷ In such scenes a hound is often shown leaping upon a stag and as the resulting combination of animals is artistically particularly satisfying, suggesting at once grace and speed, it came to appear alone, separated from the rest of the scene. In the Isle of Man, though the hunting group is quite common, as on the slab Kermode 103 from Andreas (plate XL, 2), the hart and hound also appear alone on a slab from Michael, Kermode 104.

There is no surviving stone known to me which is likely to have provided the designer of the Hartlepool seal with both hart and hound and vine scroll. One of the Scottish versions of the hunting scene, a stone from St. Vigean's, Angus, does show a vine on the side (plate XLI, 1 and 3), but it is most improbable that this could have been the direct source. There would in fact seem to be a strong possibility that a

¹³ The earliest Pictish Christian monuments are incised stones bearing very distinctive symbols. The practice of carving stone in relief probably arose through the influence of (eighth century) Northumbrian sculpture. The Pictish type hunting scenes, which do not occur in Northumbria, may even have been originally derived from late Roman prototypes. See R. B. K. Stevenson in *The Problem of the Picts* (ed. F. T. Wainwright, 1954), cap. V.

¹⁴ See *The Problem of the Picts*, p. 125.

¹⁵ E.g. P. M. C. Kermode: *Manx Crosses* (1907), nos. 72, 97, 103, 105. The Norsemen of the Isle of Man seem to have acquired their knowledge of Celtic art from Ireland and Scotland, but especially the latter. To it they added features from their own artistic tradition. See H. Shetelig: "Manx Crosses—Great Britain and Norway" (*Saga-Book of the Viking Society*, ix, 253ff.) and B. R. S. and E. M. Megaw: "The Norse Heritage in the Isle of Man" (*Early Cultures of North-west Europe*, 143ff.).

¹⁶ As at Kells and Castledermot (J. Romilly Allen: *Early Christian Symbolism*, 1887, fig. 77 and frontispiece). At Bealin a hound bites a stag's leg; see Françoise Henry: *Irish Art* (1940), p. 106, where, however, it is assumed that the hunting scenes are of Irish origin. The superior artistry of most of the eastern Scottish animals would appear to support the theory of Pictish origin; even so, however, Irish exemplars may well have exerted additional influence on Man and the north-west of England.

¹⁷ As at Gosforth, Cumberland (Collingwood: *Northumbrian Crosses*, fig. 184).

stone cross or fragment bearing the hart and hound group and having vine scroll decoration was in existence somewhere near Hartlepool in the thirteenth century.

It is always difficult to know when a mediæval artist was portraying an animal purely as a picture, when he was using it as a theme in a design, and when he was intending to use symbolism. It is quite possible that in these particular



FIG. 4. BURGHEAD.

representations symbolism was *sometimes* intended. In the mediæval bestiaries the hart has two prominent characteristics: its thirst and its enmity towards serpents. The thirst is of course an allusion to *Ps. xlii 1*: "As the hart panteth after the water brooks . . ." In some versions the hart snuffs up serpents from their hiding-places in the rocks and then drinks copiously to quench the venom it has swallowed;¹⁸ in others

¹⁸ M. Goldstaub and R. Wendriner: *Ein Tosco-Venezianischer Bestiarius* (1892), pp. 62, 464.

it drinks water in order to squirt it into the serpent's hole and drive it out.¹⁹ In these actions the stag appears to be a symbolic representation of Christ while the Serpent is the Devil whom He overcomes through the water of baptism. This latter concept is influenced by several texts, e.g., *Rev.* xx 2: "And he laid hold on the dragon, that old serpent, which is the Devil and Satan, and bound him a thousand years"; *Mark* xvi 18: "They shall take up serpents; and if they drink any deadly thing, it shall not hurt them . . ."; and *Luke* x 19: "Behold I give unto you power to tread on serpents and scorpions . . ." Considering how mediæval men could understand a text or story in several ways at once it may even be that this interpretation of the thirsty stag could be read into our *hart* in a *pool*.

There are no serpents on the Hartlepool seal, though they do occur in the Great Knot which appears on the Lancaster hart and hound stone. A carving of a stag, who with head turned back is struggling with two serpents, appears on a stone from St. Paul's Churchyard (now in the Guildhall Museum) described by Sir Thomas Kendrick as "beyond doubt the finest Viking antiquity in the country".²⁰ As for the hound, he may possibly—though this is very conjectural—be related to the dog in *Ps.* xxii: "For dogs have compassed me" (v. 16) and "Deliver my soul from the sword and my darling from the power of the dog" (v. 20). This was considered a particularly prophetic psalm and the psalmist was identified with Christ. The dog concept, with a definite reference to this psalm, was worked up by the author of the *Ancrene Riwe* (c. 1200) into a most vivid passage where evil is personified in the shape of a dog from hell.²¹

On the seal of the mayoralty of Hartlepool another hart is depicted, this time crouching at the feet of St. Hilda who

¹⁹ *Le Bestiaire de Philippe de Thäün*, ed. Walberg (1900), pp. 27f.; F. Lauchert: *Geschichte des Physiologus* (1889), p. 27 and n.

²⁰ This quadruped is called by Kendrick a lion; the identification as a stag (which Collingwood adopts) would seem more plausible (*Late Saxon and Viking Art*, 1949, pl. LXVII and p. 99).

²¹ Ed. J. Morton (Camden Society LVII, 1852), pp. 288f.



1. COMMON SEAL OF HARTLEPOOL.



2. FRAGMENT FROM KIRK LEAVINGTON. Photograph *Northern Echo*.



1. STONE FROM HILLTON OF CADBOLL.



2. SANDULF CROSS, KIRK ANDREAS. Photograph by courtesy of the Manx Museum.



1 and 3. FRAGMENT FROM ST. VIGEAN'S.
2. STONE FROM GOVAN.

is supported by two bishops. The Corporation's counterseal also shows St. Hilda, with the inscription: "SVBVENIAT : FAMVL(IS) : NOBILI(IS) : HILDA : SVIS", "May the noble Hilda come to the aid of her servants."²² Perhaps these designs, as well as the one that has been the chief consideration of this paper, reflect the conscious pride of the thirteenth-century borough in its pre-Conquest past.²³ If so, this pride is perpetuated in Hartlepool Corporation's regular use—as for example on its buses—of the hart and hound device at the present day.²⁴

²² AA 4, xxvi, pl. IV 2.

²³ There was presumably a continuous tradition about the monastery of which St. Hilda had been an abbess. The present church, dedicated to St. Hilda, was probably begun c. 1200, about the same time as the seal was made. It was certainly preceded by another church on the site, of which the dedication is not known.

²⁴ For permission to reproduce photographs I am indebted to the Manx Museum Trustees in connection with pl. XL, 2, *The Northern Echo* pl. XXXIX, 2 and Messrs. Faber and Faber figs. 1 and 2. I wish to record appreciation of the courtesy of the Vicar of Kirk Leavington and the staff of the Town Clerk of Hartlepool.

