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MUSEUM NOTES, 1980*

Lindsay Allason-Jones and Margaret Ellison

1. A ZOOMORPHIC SPOUT FROM HALTON CHESTERS (figs. 1, 2)

Amongst the accessions to the Museum of Antiquities in 1979 was an unusual bronze spout in the form of a bull's head (fig. 1) discovered by Mr. R. D. Moorwood whilst walking on the site of the Roman fort at Halton Chesters (Acc. No. 1979.25). The spout consists of a rectangular plate, 44 × 39 mm, shaped to fit a rounded vessel. The bull's head, which protrudes from the plate, has well formed ears and horns, one of which is missing. Across the top of the plate and horns runs a shallow groove pierced by

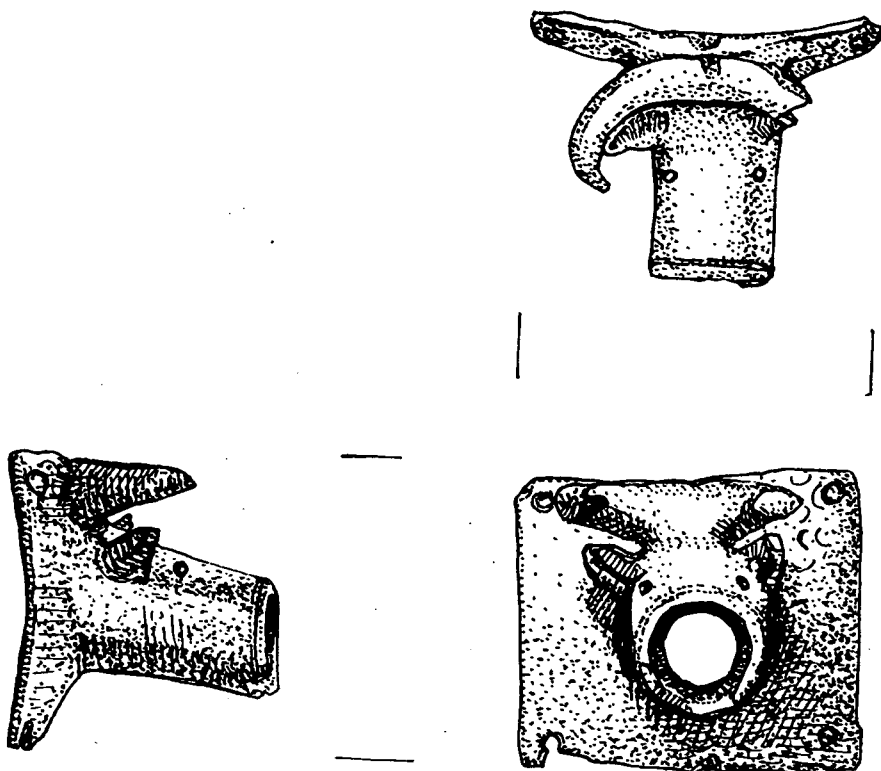


Fig. 1. Bull's-head spout from Halton Chesters. (1 : 1). See Note 1. Drawn by Mary M. Hurrell

a small central hole. The face and the mouth form a circular-sectioned funnel with an internal diameter of 12 mm, the rim having a single incised line as decoration. The eyes are two circles punched after manufacture and are very small in proportion to the rest of the head. Behind the horns punched crescent shapes indicate the bull's curly hair. The plate is pierced at each of the four corners by a circular hole, three of which still contain iron rivets. There is no trace of gilding.

Bronze spouts are unusual finds amongst Romano-British material. From Felmersham-on-Ouse, however, there is a fish-head spout of a pronounced Celtic type¹ which was found in association with two of the more common bull's-head bucket-mounts.² These latter are very similar to the Halton Chesters spout, particularly in the ears, horns and small circular eyes. Other examples of this type of bucket-mount are known from Corbridge,³ Kirkby Lonsdale⁴ and Burrow, Lancashire,⁵ and the Halton Chesters spout bears a stronger relationship to these Celtic examples than to the more naturalistic bull's head from Northumberland in the Museum of Antiquities⁶ which also protrudes from a square plate. The bucket-mounts have a long period of popularity, examples being known from the early first century A.D. to the fourth century.

Although the bull as a symbol of ferocity and invincibility is a common motif in Roman military decoration, three-dimensional representations are rare in the area of Hadrian's Wall. It is therefore worth noting as a parallel the heads on two fragments of coarse grey ware from Corbridge which are related in type to the Jupiter Taranis appliqué⁷ (fig. 2).

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2. ANTLER MACEHEAD FROM NEWSHAM, BLYTH⁸ (fig. 3)

Late in 1979 Mr. J. C. Hall discovered a perforated antler macehead 3–4 feet down in boulder clay whilst digging a manhole on the Benridge Park Estate at Newsham near Blyth. The macehead, measuring 92 × 70 × 52 mm, had been slightly mineralized by its prolonged burial, and soil erosion had flaked the surface, removing the coronet in the same process. It had been manufactured from a large left antler, probably from a red deer. The brow and bez tines had been roughly cut and the latter shows signs of wear. The beam had been facet-chopped, possibly for decoration. The haft-hole is not circular, is larger at one end than the other (27–8 as opposed to 24–6 mm) and shows gouge-marks indicating that it has not been drilled but cut. The edges of the haft-hole are highly polished and very resinous, suggesting that the haft was made of a material with a high degree of moisture, e.g. wood, and that this had been screwed hard into the hole.

Antler maceheads have a number of Late Neolithic burial associations and one has also been found in an Early Bronze Age association at Lambourn, Berks.,⁹ but so far this is the only example from Northumberland. In type it bears a strong resemblance to the example from Liff's Low, Derbyshire,¹⁰ the cut end of which also has diamond-shaped facets, and to those from Howe Hill, Duggleby (Yorkshire)¹¹ and Watnall in Nottinghamshire.¹² These, and other examples, are discussed in Piggott 1954, p. 360,

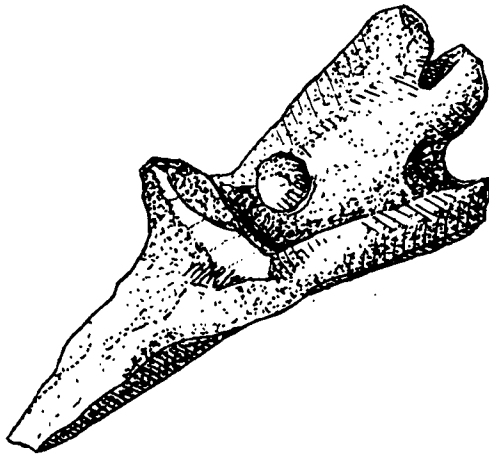
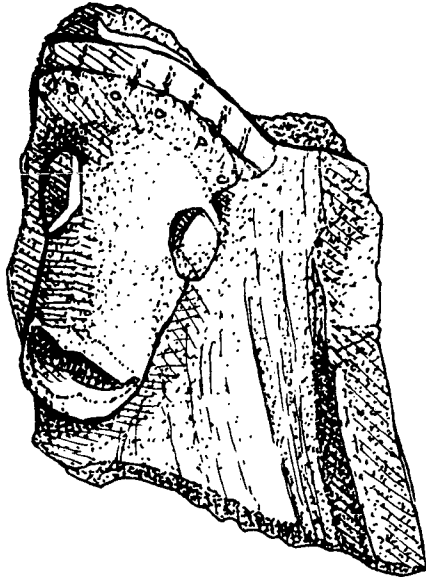


Fig. 2. Two appliqué animal heads from Corbridge (1:1). See Note 1. Drawn by Mary M. Hurrell

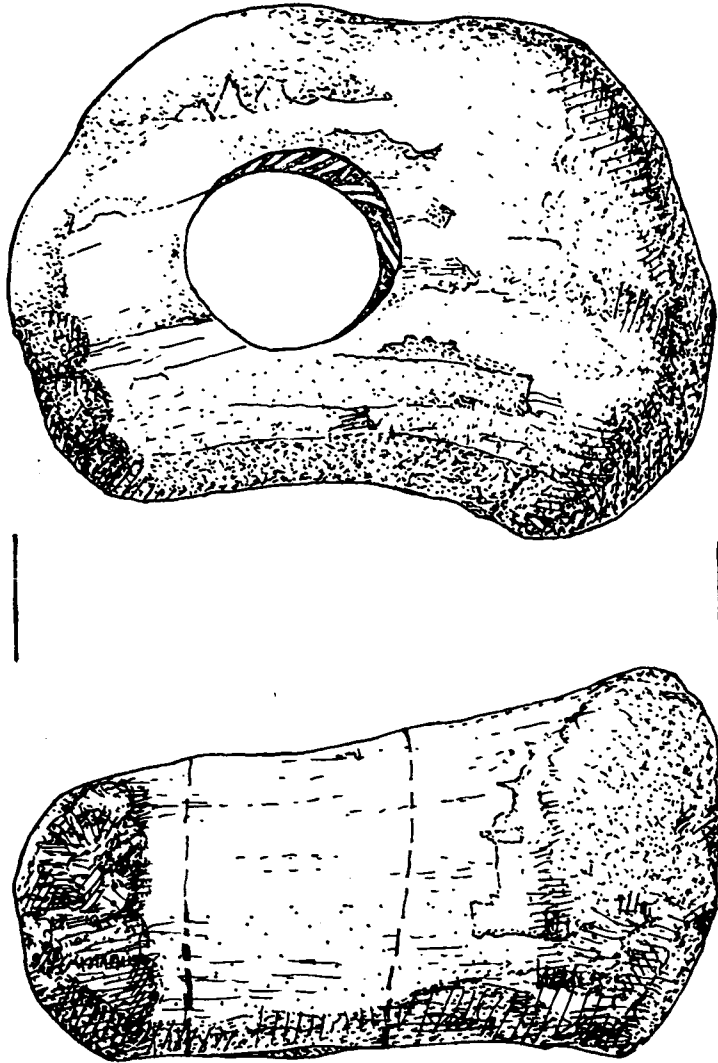


Fig. 3. Antler macehead from Newsham, Blyth (1 : 1). See Note 2. Drawn by Mary M. Hurrell

and by Roe¹³ who points out that this antler series seems to predate the ovoid stone maceheads known from Wolsingham, Kirkwhelpington, Netherwitton and Twisel.¹⁴ The faceting on the Blyth and Liff's Low examples when compared to the ornamentation on the Maesmore group of stone maceheads¹⁵ seems to strengthen this link.

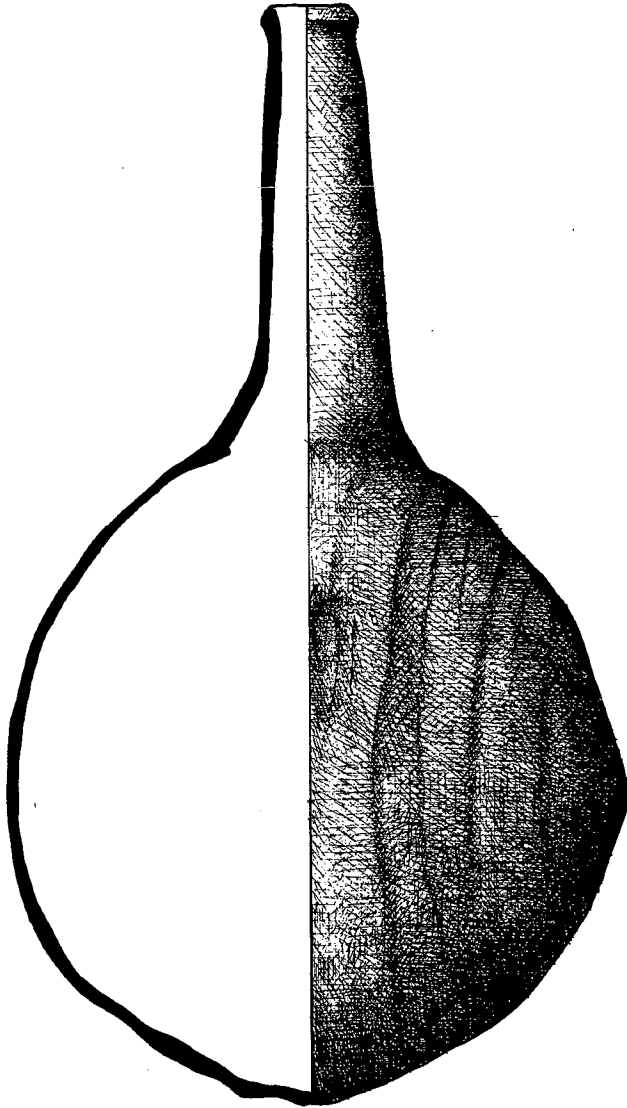


Fig. 4. 16th-Century stoneware flask from Newcastle (1 : 2). See Note 3. Drawn by Margaret Finch

3. A SIXTEENTH-CENTURY STONEWARE FLASK FROM NEWCASTLE (fig. 4)

An almost complete sixteenth-century flask was recovered by Mr. A. Nichols from fill under Dean Street at the foot of the Cathedral Stairs during the construction of a new sewer. After reconstructing the vessel he very kindly donated it to the Museum of Antiquities (1979.54). The flask, in a light grey stoneware with a globular body, can be identified as Type II in J. G. Hurst's typology.¹⁶ These flasks (both the earthenware

Types I and III and the stoneware Type II) are now thought to have been manufactured in Martincamp in Northern France.¹⁷ They were imported into this country fairly frequently in the late fifteenth century (Type I), the sixteenth century (Types I and II) and the seventeenth century (Type III), possibly containing wine or some other liquid product and encased in wicker baskets. Complete vessels, however, have only rarely been recovered. One complete example of a Type II flask was recovered in 1946 from the Butter Market, Ipswich, and is now in Ipswich Museum.

A complete example of a Type I (earthenware) flask was excavated at Finchale Priory, County Durham, and published by Jarrett and Edwards, who also describe the method of manufacture.¹⁸ This flask is now in the collection of the Tyne and Wear County Museum Service. We are now fortunate to have in this area complete flasks of both Type I and Type II. A number of fragments of Type I and Type II are included in the finds from the sixteenth-century rubbish tip at the Castle, also to be deposited in the Museum of Antiquities, and this complete example will therefore be a valuable aid to the interpretation and display of that material.

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NOTES

* Prepared for the press by Dr. D. J. Smith, with warmest thanks to the contributors.

¹ C. Fox, *Pattern and Purpose* (1958), 80; *Ant. J.* XXIX (1949), 37 ff.

² Fox (1958), 73, fig. 46.

³ M. MacGregor, *Early Celtic Art in North Britain* (1976), II, no. 315.

⁴ C. F. C. Hawkes, "Bronze Workers, Cauldrons and Bucket Animals in Iron Age and Roman Britain" in *Aspects of Archaeology in Britain and Beyond* (ed. W. F. Grimes, 1951, fig. 52).

⁵ MacGregor (1976), II, no. 313.

⁶ *Ibid.*, no. 319. Museum of Antiquities No. 1960.3.A.

⁷ Corstopitum Museum Nos. 75.43, 75.44.

⁸ I am indebted to T. Manby and D. J. Rackham for their help and advice in preparing this note.

⁹ *A Guide to the Antiquities of the Bronze Age* (British Museum, 1920), 90, fig. 93.

¹⁰ S. Piggott, *Neolithic Cultures of the British Isles* (1954), 356, fig. 62.2.

¹¹ S. Piggott (1954), 355, fig. 62.3.

¹² T. G. Manby, *Grooved Ware Sites in the North of England* (1974), 93, fig. 39.1.

¹³ F. Roe, "Stone Maceheads and the Latest Neolithic Cultures of the British Isles" in *Studies in Ancient Europe* (ed. J. M. Coles and D. D. A. Simpson, 1968), 145 ff.

¹⁴ Manby (1974), 124 ff.

¹⁵ Roe (1968), 162.

¹⁶ J. G. Hurst, "Imported Flasks" in C. V. Bellamy, "Kirkstall Abbey Excavations 1960-1964", *Publications of the Thoresby Society* LI (1966), 54-9.

¹⁷ J. G. Hurst, "Martincamp Flasks" in David S. Neal, "The Palace of Kings Langley", *Medieval Archaeology* XXI (1977), 156-7.

¹⁸ M. G. Jarrett and B. J. N. Edwards, "Medieval and other pottery from Finchale Priory, County Durham", *AA⁴*, XXXIX (1961), 163-4, 278, no. 137.