

TWO ADDITIONS TO THE LONDON MUSEUM

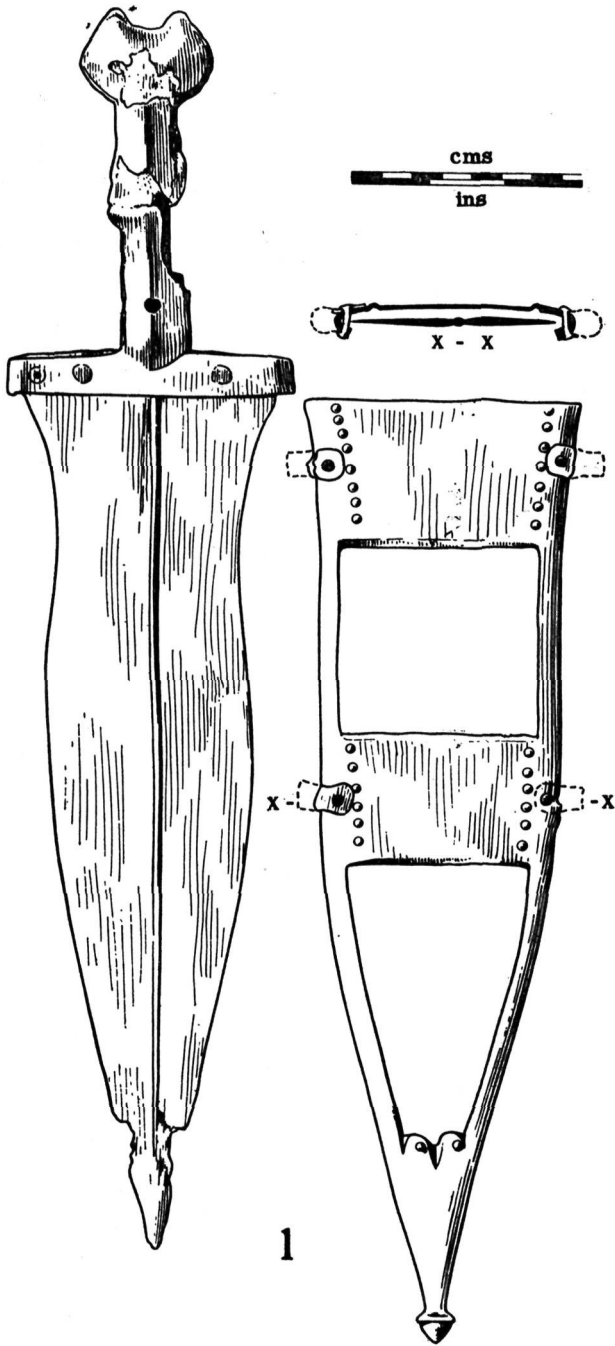
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London Museum

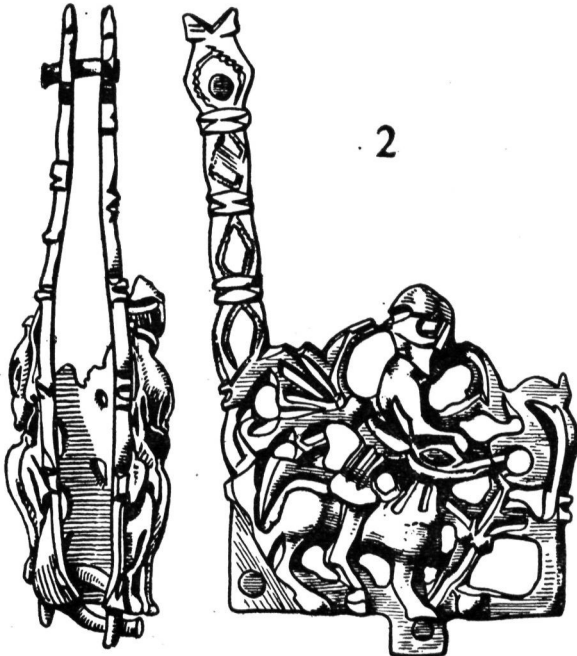
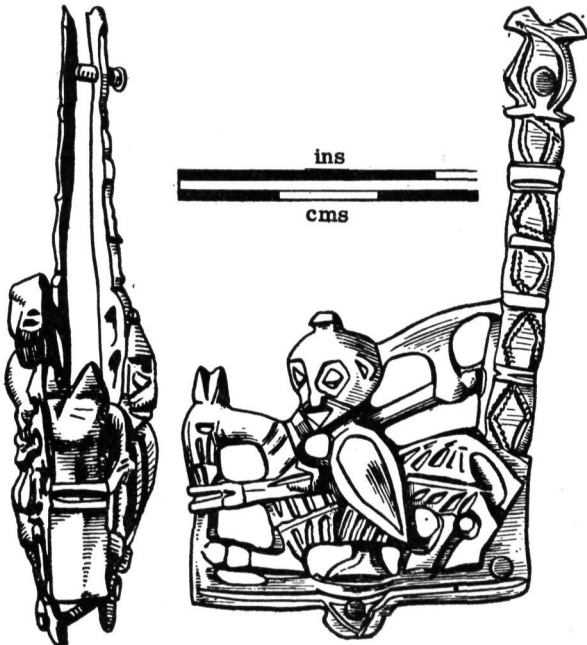
The London Museum has recently acquired two items of special interest; one, a dagger with its scabbard-fittings, found in Copthall Court, E.C.2 (1911), is a notable addition to the few Roman weapons from London, and the other, a bronze mount of the 12th century, discovered in the adjacent Angel Court (1912), provides a rare glimpse of popular decorative art of the Norman period.

The dagger (fig. 1, p. 215), which is remarkably well-preserved, probably belongs to the 1st century A.D. Its form is well-known though few complete specimens have survived in this country. The broad, double-edged blade is thin and almost flat in section, apart from a slender midrib. The guard is formed by a narrow band of iron wrapped round and riveted to the top of the blade. The iron grip, with a characteristic swelling at the middle and a heart-shaped pommel, is in two halves, fixed by rivets to the tang. The scabbard-mount is also of iron, unlike most other known examples which are usually bronze. Half-round binding follows the outline of the leather scabbard (traces of which remain), is linked at the top and centre by broad plates, each decorated with two vertical rows of repoussé dots, and meets at the base to form a chape. Iron loops riveted at the edges of the mount probably secured two pairs of rings, by means of which the scabbard was suspended from the belt or baldric. Evidence elsewhere suggests that this dagger and others like it were not designed primarily for use in the field; they were intended rather, perhaps, as items of town-dress, so that the legionary going about London, for example, could leave his more cumbersome equipment at his quarters in the Cripplegate Fort.

The openwork mount of bronze (fig. 2, p. 216), was designed to clasp the slightly tapering end of a slender object such as a single-edged comb or a comb-case; its decoration in considerable relief on both sides and its asymmetrical pier-like projections make its use as a belt-end or book-clasp unlikely. The mount was cast in a two-piece mould though a few features, such as the lozenges on the piers, were evidently cut after casting. On one side is depicted the squat figure of a man beside, or possibly astride, a caparisoned horse, the head of which is continued round the solid edge of the mount. On his left arm, the man carries a



Iron dagger and scabbard-mount, Roman, from Cophthall Court



Bronze mount, 12th century, from Angel Court.

round-topped, kite-shaped shield with a narrow border and, over his right shoulder, a massive battle-axe; he apparently wears the "Phrygian-cap" form of helm. The figure on the other side wrestles with a grotesque animal. He is dressed in a short tunic and stands on tiptoe astride the beast, grasping its muzzle with his right hand. The animal has long, rabbit-like ears, a huge eye, a long, curling tail and a ruff of vertical lines around its neck, and, though not perceptibly leonine, is nevertheless akin to an animal, generally described as a lion, on the early-12th century font at Topsham, Devon. The whole composition is reminiscent of the scenes of Sampson and the Lion on the mid-12th century tympana at Highworth, Wiltshire, and Stretton Sugwas, Herefordshire. The ornamented columns, the wide, owl-like eyes and the decoration of the horse with oblique, incised lines (*cf.* font, St. Mary's Luppitt, Devon) are also features consistent with a date in the first half of the 12th century, and although the shield, the axe and the helm are pre-Conquest forms, they all continued in use during the 12th century.