

first place, in his capacity as Curator of the old Cardiff Museum; and since at the same or a similar time several Roman pots with London proveniences were also bought, there is much more than a suspicion that the vessel here illustrated is actually that shown by Ward in his book; in which case the London origin given must be an unnoticed slip of the pen. Dr. Myres agrees with this view, and it is on his suggestion that I publish it.

GEORGE C. BOON

THE DERBY BONE PIECE (FIG. 79)

The first antiquary to come into contact with the Derby bone piece was Llewellynn Jewitt, who applied to George Stephens for a reading of the runes in 1884. A few years

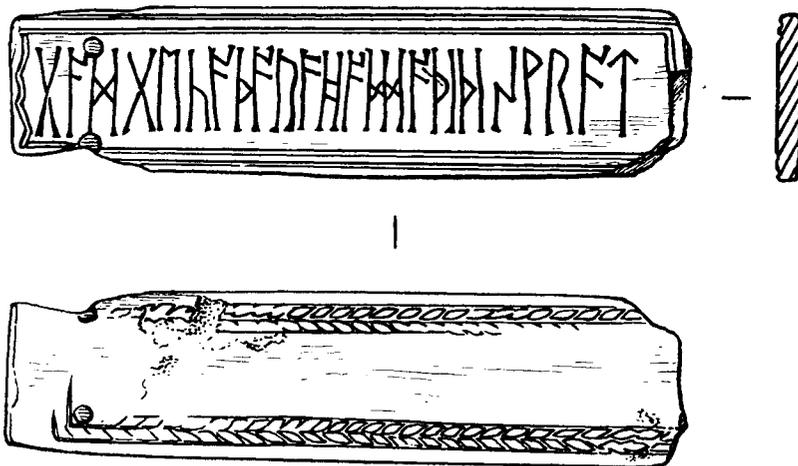


FIG. 79

THE DERBY BONE PIECE WITH RUNIC INSCRIPTION. Sc. $\frac{1}{4}$

later it was acquired for the British Museum.⁴ The only information on its place of origin is that it was obtained through Mr. Gunston from Mr. Bemrose of Derby. It was published by Stephens, but since then has not been given much attention by runologists,⁵ and in two English works a translation only has been given, without explanation.⁶ The only easily accessible drawing copies the runes inaccurately. As this is one of the very few clear and genuine Anglo-Saxon inscriptions which seem to make sense, it seems desirable to present a new drawing and full discussion.

The object is a rectangular strip of bone, 9 cm. \times 2.3 cm. \times 0.3 cm., flat on all surfaces. What appear to be two small rivet-holes filled with rust are visible at either end of the first upright stroke of the third rune, and they show also on the reverse. A double incised border runs along both the long sides, and although the right end is broken, it can be seen that the border turns the corner without a break. At the left end the outer line is discontinued but the inner line turns and goes on as an irregular, wavy line. The panel is filled with a runic inscription which begins near the left edge and stops well short of the other end, although halfway through the writer compressed the characters more, even resorting to a bind-rune to save space.

⁴ B.M. Reg. No. 90 8-10 8.

⁵ George Stephens, *The Old Northern Runic Monuments*, iv (1901), 47-49; T. von Grienberger and F. Holthausen in *Zeitschr. f. deutsche Philologie*, xli, 419; xlii, 331 f.; xliii, 377-8.

⁶ B.M. *Anglo-Saxon Guide* (1923), p. 118, fig. 151; R. W. V. Elliott, *Runes* (1959), p. 73, fig. 25.

The reverse bears a decorative border of a plait along the two long sides which is turned at right-angles at the end by the rivets, but here it is sketchy and left uncompleted. At the other end there is no turn and the borders run off the edge, so implying that the piece originally extended further.

From the presence of decorative borders on both sides, and the similar state of preservation of both surfaces, it seems that both faces must have been exposed to view. A straight and flat piece of bone of this thickness is hardly likely to have been part of a comb, for the decorative parts of these are usually curved on one side with the other side flat to facilitate assembly by rivets. Only two holes are visible and these are most likely to have been used for suspension. Application on a box or some other surface for the purpose of ornament is also out of the question because of its double-sided character and the small number of rivet-holes. As the object seems to have been longer originally, it may have been a ruler or spatulate implement for turning pages of manuscripts or indicating the place. The two holes would enable it to be fastened to a ribbon or strap like a bookmarker (the unfinished part of the plait border so being hidden) and the bone piece would be suspended from the codex like an ornamental strap-end.

Connexion with *scriptoria* is also suggested by the shape of the runes themselves. These are carved in the bone with a sharp instrument which at the terminals of many of the strokes has been tipped forward at an angle so that slight serifs result.⁷ This, of course, is a characteristic alien to runic inscriptions in wood, stone or metal, and began only when pen and vellum were pressed into use to write characters originally conceived for carving in wood against the grain. A comparison of the inscription on the Chessel Down sword⁸ with those of the manuscripts⁹ will show the difference. An exception may be seen in the lead sheet found at the abbey of Bury St. Edmunds, Suffolk, but this metal sheet does in fact constitute the first page of a manuscript of Aelfric's Homilies,¹⁰ although the material is unusual.

Apart from this peculiarity, the runes follow the normal forms of the Anglo-Saxon fuþark and can be transcribed as follows:

g o d g e c a þ a r æ h a d d a þ i þ i s w r a t
 5 10 15 20 25

2 looks at first like an *a*, but the lower diagonal stroke has the beginnings of an ascent and the rest of it appears to be obscured by the action of rust from the near-by rivet.

11 has been read as *a* (see below), but the mark interpreted as an ascender on the upper stroke is very short and can only be a serif.

14 and 15 constitute a bind-rune, for they are both *d* and the second upright of 14 is used also as the first upright of 15.

17 þ. On this a diagonal stroke is visible slanting down across the upright; it is not as deeply or as sharply cut as the lines of the þ, but because of its precise positioning—an equal length extends on each side of the upright—and because of its consistent firmness and definite ends, it might be considered to be intentional. If this is so, it must represent the bind-rune *n*. It was not, however, scored with the same tool as the rest of the inscription, and could either be accidental or a more modern addition.

6 has also been read as a bind-rune *cn* but here the diagonal is even fainter, projects an unequal distance on either side of the vertical stroke, and becomes weaker at the ends. It does not seem to have been an intentional mark on the part of the rune-master.

⁷ Mrs. E. M. Fry-Stone, who made the drawing, FIG. 79, suggests that a tool of triangular section, similar to one used in modern woodwork, would produce this effect.

⁸ R. V. W. Elliott, *op. cit.* in note 6, fig. 10.

⁹ R. Derolez, *Runica Manuscripta* (1954), pls. i, iii, iv.

¹⁰ *Miscellanea Graphica*, 12; *Proc. Soc. Antiq.*, 1 ser. II, 105; *Archaeol.*, xxxiv, 438, pl. xxxvi; *V.C.H. Suffolk*, 1, 353.

Interpretation

The following readings have been suggested for the inscription:

- (1) *God gecnaþ aræ Hadda þi þis wrat* 'God knoweth (showeth) are (favor) to Hadda, the (who) wrote this'.¹¹
- (2) *Gad gecnaþ au ah, Adda þi þis wrat* 'egestas semper cognitionem affert; ideo (ego) Adda hoc scripsi'.¹²
- (3) *God gecap aræ Hadda þi þis wrat* 'God increases honour for Hadda who wrote this'¹³ or 'God saves by his mercy Hadda, who wrote this'.¹⁴

To these should perhaps be added a fourth: *God gecap aræ Haddan þi þis wrat*, the interpretation of which will be considered below.

Readings 1 and 2 can, in our opinion, be dismissed as without justification. Not only do they depend on an acceptance of the scratch across the upright of rune 6 as a deliberate cut forming part of the inscription, but what is more, the explanations so far given for them are linguistically not plausible. Stephens is forced to assume the existence in Old English of a variant *gecnaþ* for the third person singular present indicative of the verb *gecnawan*,¹⁵ with the meaning 'shows';¹⁶ von Grienberger, whose incorrect or dubious readings of runes 2, 10 and 11 lead him into still deeper waters,¹⁷ takes *gecnaþ* to be a noun, and has to postulate a hypothetical and highly unconvincing abstract noun in þ, formed from the verb *gecnawan*.¹⁸ Readings 3 and 4, on the other hand, are capable of explanation that is linguistically plausible and at the same time seem to represent faithfully the runic text.

For the sake of clarity, the individual words of the inscription are set down in tabulated form together with their possible interpretations.

1. *God*: *a.* nominative singular of the proper noun 'God'; or *b.* nominative plural of the common noun *gōd* (strong neuter) 'good things', 'goods'.¹⁹
2. *gecap*: *a.* Anglian form of *gēocap*, the third person singular present indicative of the second class weak verb *gēocian* 'preserve', 'save'; *b.* non-West-Saxon form of *ge-īecap*, the third person plural present indicative of the first class weak verb *ge-īecan*

¹¹ So George Stephens, *op. cit.* in note 5, p. 47. Stephens did not see the bone-piece himself, but relied on a squeeze and rubbings made for him by Sir Wollaston Franks and Mr. (later Sir) Hercules Read.

¹² So T. von Grienberger, *op. cit.* in note 5, p. 431. Like Stephens, von Grienberger based his reading on second-hand information, in this case a photograph and written comments provided by the British Museum. Holthausen, *op. cit.* in note 5, agrees with von Grienberger in reading *gād* not *God* and *aua* not *arx* (*sic*), but divides as follows: *Gād gecnāþ āya Hadda, þi þis wrāt*, translating it 'mangel kennt immer Hatto der dies schrieb'.

¹³ So Stephens, *op. cit.* in note 5 p. 48, note 1.

¹⁴ So Bruce Dickins, in the *B.M. Guide*, p. 118, without comment.

¹⁵ The normal development of Pr. O. E. **gicnāwip* is *gecnāwip*, or, as in the Vespasian Psalter and other Anglian texts *gecnāweþ* with levelling away of the mutation of the root vowel. Loss of *w* before *-i-* might indeed be expected, as in *Cura Pastoralis* 29.1 *gecnāþ* (cf. A. Campbell, *Old English Grammar* (1959), paragraphs 272 and 406), but normally it is restored by analogy with other parts of the verb. Contracted forms without mutation are also of considerable rarity, though cf. *Cura Pastoralis* *weaxð*. There is no parallel for a form *gecnāþ*, with restoration of the unmutated root vowel but not of the lost consonant.

¹⁶ The usual meaning of *gecnāwan* is 'know', 'perceive', 'understand'; Bosworth and Toller, *An Anglo-Saxon Dictionary: Supplement* (1921) does, however, also record one example from Kemble's *Codex Diplomaticus* where *gecnāwan* has the apparent meaning 'make known, declare'.

¹⁷ For instance, reading 10 as *u*, he equates *au* with O.E. 'ā', 'ever', 'always'. There is, however, no justification for his assumption of the sporadic survival of Gc. *w* in this word.

¹⁸ He gives as parallels O.H.G. *urchnāti* and *bechnādo*. These words, however, have the I.E. suffix *-ti* and this might be expected to cause *i*-mutation in O.E. (cf. Kluge, *Nominale Stammbildungslehre der Algermanischen Dialekte*, Halle, 1926, para. 128). The *t* also normally appears as *d* in O.E.: thus, to cite a few examples of abstracts in I.E. *-ti* formed from other verbs of this sub-class, O.E. *blāed* corresponds to the verb *blāwan*, *-cred*, (earlier *-cred*) in the compound *hancred*, to *crāwan*. The O.H.G. nominal equivalent of the latter is *hanakrāt*. One would thus expect the abstract noun formed from *cnāwan* to be **gecned*. There is no parallel that we know of for an O.E. form *gecnāþ* based on the strong verb *cnāwan*.

¹⁹ *Gād*, if accepted as a possible reading, would be the nominative singular of either the strong feminine noun 'point of weapon', 'goad', or the strong neuter (?) 'lack' 'want', 'desire'.

- 'increase', rune 6 thus being an example of one rune being used for two successive identical sounds (*ge-ēcaþ*); *c*. a variant of non-West Saxon *ge-ēceþ*, West Saxon *ge-īecþ*, the third person singular present indicative of *ge-īecan*.
3. *aræ*: early or dialect spelling for *āræ*, oblique singular form of *ār*, 'honour', 'rank', 'respect', 'property', 'kindness', 'mercy', etc.
 4. *Hadda*: *a*. nominative singular, or *b*. a Northern form of *Haddan*, oblique case of the personal name *Hadda*. If rune 17 is in fact a bind-rune, then of course only *b* applies.
 5. *þi*: *a*. a form of the relative particle *þe*, or *b*. a rare spelling of *þȳ* 'therefore', adverbial use of the instrumental of the demonstrative *se*.
 6. *pis* and 7. *wrat* call for no particular linguistic comment, though *wrat* is of interest in that it may have here the primary meaning 'cut'.²⁰

From the above brief discussion it can be seen that the keyword in the inscription is the second, *gecaþ*. If it is identified with the third person singular present indicative of *gēocian*, then the first word must be singular (*1a*), *aræ* an instrumental usage and *Hadda(n)* either genitive or dative²¹ followed by a relative particle:²² 'God saves by his mercy Hadda who wrote this.' If it is identified with the third person singular present indicative of *ge-īecan*, then the subject is again singular, but *aræ* must be accusative²³ and *Hadda(n)* either subject of the following clause with *þi* in sense *b* or dative acting as antecedent to *þi* in sense *a*: 'God increases (or "will increase") his mercy; Hadda therefore wrote this' or 'God increases his mercy to Hadda who wrote this'.²⁴ On the other hand it is also possible to take *gecaþ* as the third person plural present indicative, in which case *god*, the subject, must be plural, (*1b*) *aræ* again accusative and *Hadda(n)* either dative or nominative according to whether *þi* is interpreted in sense *a* or sense *b*: 'Goods (possessions) increase (will increase) respect for Hadda, who wrote this' or 'Goods increase respect: Hadda therefore wrote this'. Which of the alternatives is the correct one it is impossible to say. It seems a little odd to the modern reader that a reference to God's mercy to Hadda should be made as a statement in the present tense: a prayer 'may God save' or 'may God increase' or at least a reference to past time: 'God has saved', etc., would appear less strange. The association of possessions with status, on the other hand, does tally with what we know from other sources of Germanic and Anglo-Saxon society.²⁵

The Language of the Inscription

Since none of the interpretations so far put forward can be said to be the only possible one, any discussion of the language of the inscription must deal with each variant in turn.²⁶

- (a) *gecaþ* appears to be a non-West-Saxon form, showing either smoothing of O.E. *ēo* before the back consonant *c*, a feature of Anglian texts,²⁷ or i-mutation of O.E. *ēa* to *ē*, a development found not only in Anglian but also in Kentish.²⁸ If it should

²⁰ Cf. the Norse runic inscription on the stone from Istaby: *AfatR hAriwulafa hAþuulafR hAeriwulafiR warAit run.Ar þAiAR*. In O.E. *writan* is used in the senses 'cut' (a loaf), 'cut, carve' (letters or symbols) and 'write'.

²¹ Cf. the constructions *gēoca mines gæstes* and *gēoca us*. This verb is of rare occurrence in surviving O.E. documents.

²² There is no evidence for the absolute use of the verb *gēocian* and so the possibility of *þi* standing for adverbial *þȳ* here is not considered.

²³ The use of *Hadda(n)* here as object cannot be completely ruled out: cf. *ge-thle* 'endowed' and the related form 'ēacen'.

²⁴ If we take the second rune as *a*, then 'want' or 'a goad' must be substituted for 'God' in these sentences. Neither of these meanings, however, seems to make good sense.

²⁵ E.g. *Beowulf*, l. 1902 (ed. F. Klaeber, 1950). 'He syþþan wæs On meodubence maþme þy weorþra, Yrfe lafe.'

²⁶ Forms without support from the inscription as we read it are not considered here.

²⁷ Cf. Campbell, *op. cit.* in note 15, §227.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, §200.

happen to represent the third person singular present indicative of the first class weak verb *ge-īecan*, then it also shows the absence of syncope typical of Anglian, though not unknown in West Saxon and early Kentish²⁹ and, a feature of Northumbrian and the Mercian dialect of Rushworth 1,³⁰ confusion of the vowels of the present tense inflectional endings.³¹

- (b) *aræ*: The accusative, genitive, and dative singular of *ō*-stem nouns all occur in early texts with *æ*; however, this spelling is not necessarily a guide to date, since in Rushworth 1 unaccented *æ* often appears as a variant for *e* and similar spellings are found in late Northumbrian.³²
- (c) *Hadda*: If we accept this as the reading of the inscription and interpret it as a variant of *Haddan*, then this form again is typical of Northumbrian and the Rushworth 1 dialect. Loss of final *-n* in inflections occurs already in the earliest Northumbrian texts and is general in late Northumbrian, usual in Rushworth 1.³³
- (d) *þi*: This is an unusual form, whether we identify it with O.E. *þe* or *þy*. It is tempting to explain the *i* as influenced by the following *i* of *þis*, although *thi* for *þy* is recorded in a proverb quoted in a letter to Boniface³⁴ and *þi* for *þe* in the Leiden Riddle, both early texts with Northumbrian connexions.

Whatever the interpretation, therefore, the inscription would seem to be non-West-Saxon in dialect. Only the version taking *gecap* as a plural form cannot be localized more nearly than this, the two others both having features suggesting either a Northumbrian dialect or one resembling that of the Mercian Rushworth 1. The latter possibility may be supported by the fact that the bone piece first came to light in Derby, but this apparent connexion with Mercia may be quite fortuitous. As for dating, since the rune forms show developments influenced by manuscript writing, the inscription must be post-pagan. However, those linguistic features that might be taken as 'early' have parallels in texts of the tenth century and do not allow a more precise dating than between about A.D. 700 and 1000.

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MOTTE SUBSTRUCTURES

In the last number of this Journal (p. 90) I wrote of the mound and foundation in Farnham castle keep that: 'The construction must imply some traditional prototype of timber and soil, for it is an absurd method of building in stone.' The words had hardly been written before J. P. C. Kent found such a prototype in the motte at South Mimms, Middlesex.³⁵ The interior of the mound has been found to contain the collapsed cellar of a square tower, whose timber walls had rested on a flint sill. The site is a castle dated early within the Anarchy period.

The discovery, following upon that of Farnham, is another vindication of Hope-Taylor's views on the importance of the superstructure in the motte construction.³⁶

²⁹ *Ibid.*, §751.

³⁰ Tenth-century interlinear gloss on the Rushworth Gospels (Matthew: Mark i-ii, 15; John xviii, 1-3), Bodleian MS, Auct. D. 2. 19 (3946).

³¹ Cf. Campbell, *op. cit.* in note 15, §752.

³² Cf. *ibid.*, §587 and 369, note 3.

³³ Cf. *ibid.*, § 617.

³⁴ *The Oldest English Texts* (ed. Sweet, 1885), p. 152, from Vienna Nationalbibl. MS. Lat. 751, f. 34, written in a ninth-century continental hand.

³⁵ Apart from the radio programme I have been able to visit the site and discuss the excavation with Dr. Kent with whose permission it is mentioned here. See also p. 318 below.

³⁶ There is no need to repeat the references given in *Antiq. J.*, xxxix (1959), 219-73, by Jope and in *Med. Archaeol.*, iv (1960), 81-94 by myself.