

## Notes and News

### TWO 10TH-CENTURY BRONZE OBJECTS (FIG. 29, *a, b*)

A strap-end and an object of indeterminate use, both bronze and closely related to each other in style and date, were found recently, the one at York (FIG. 29, *a*) and the other at Canterbury (FIG. 29, *b*). Although made in England, they both reflect the Scandinavian Borre style of the late 9th and the 10th century.

The *York* strap-end (4.4 cm. long) has a split end pierced by two rivet-holes, part of the shank of one of which survives. The terminal is rounded and the whole of the face is covered with an interlace ribbon-pattern of complicated, but symmetrical, form. The surface is slightly corroded and the pattern, which is reserved against a sunken background, can best be seen in a line drawing (FIG. 29, *a*). The pattern is made up of a pair of normally contiguous ribbons which separate from each other occasionally to interlace with themselves, or with a free ring (consisting of two bands) near the split end and with another free ring (consisting of a single band and three-quarters of a circle) at the terminal. In the centre of this triangular element, and above it, are pellets, while two similar pellets at the terminal perhaps suggest the nostrils of the animal head which is frequently found in this position on 9th-century strap-ends in England<sup>1</sup> and Scandinavia.<sup>2</sup> The bands are interrupted by a pair of billets at the edges of the field just above the terminal circle. On the back of the object a series of 'ring and dot' motifs cover the main body of the strap-end in a symmetrical fashion save behind the split end, where they are more irregularly placed. The ornament back and front is bounded by an incised border. The split end is unusual in that the bulge at the back where the metal has been forced apart has been given an angular contour at the base of the cut (see profile, FIG. 29, *a*).

The strap-end was found during excavations on a Roman site in the summer of 1964 at the church of St. Mary, Bishopshill Senior, York. It occurred in a disturbed Romano-British, 4th-century destruction-level, a short distance from the site of an Anglo-Saxon church.<sup>3</sup>

The *Canterbury* piece (FIG. 29, *b*), of simpler design, is an irregularly oval plaque of bronze, 2.3 cm. long, with a much worn and pitted, but otherwise featureless, back. The face is decorated, within a plain reserved border (broken in one place), with an interlace pattern reserved against a sunken background. The pattern consists of double ribbons which emerge from the corners of a concave-sided central square to interlace with themselves in a single loop, thus producing a cruciform element which divides the object. At the terminal of each of the 'arms' of this element is a small reserved pellet.

This plaque was found during building work at 14 Mercery Lane, Canterbury, a few yards from the cathedral gate, during the summer of 1964.<sup>4</sup> The site was immediately filled in, but a number of skulls and what were possibly a few fragments of bronze were apparently seen by the workmen on the site.

The ornament on these objects is extremely interesting. The fact that the back of the strap-end is decorated is incidental (the motif is common and undatable), but the

<sup>1</sup> E.g. D. M. Wilson, *Anglo-Saxon Ornamental Metalwork, 700-1100, in the British Museum* (London, 1964), pl. xxx, 71 and 82.

<sup>2</sup> D. M. Wilson and O. Klindt-Jensen, *Viking Art* (London, 1965), pl. xxvii, *h*.

<sup>3</sup> I am grateful to the excavator, Mr. H. G. Ramm, for allowing me to examine and publish the object.

<sup>4</sup> I am grateful to Miss H. Waugh for drawing my attention to the plaque and for allowing me to publish it.

carved pattern on the front of both objects is of some importance in the history of English applied art in that it shows a close connexion with the art of the Scandinavian Borre style.

The closest parallels to the ornament of the Canterbury bronze are a series of roundels of similar form and manufacture from a number of English find-spots.<sup>5</sup> Their decoration is slightly more elaborate than that of the Canterbury example, and, on the basis of the broken back of the curve in the example from Oxshott Wood (together with the floriated characteristics of a pendant from Saffron Walden, Essex<sup>6</sup>), I have dated them, with some hesitation, late 10th or early 11th century.<sup>7</sup> The discovery of the York strap-end, while not substantially affecting the date of these pieces, helps us

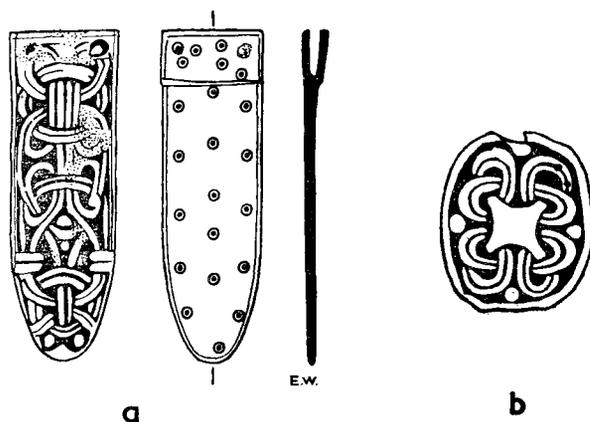


FIG. 29

10TH-CENTURY BRONZE OBJECTS (pp. 154 ff.) Sc.  $\frac{1}{4}$   
*a*, strap-end from York; *b*, object of indeterminate use from Canterbury

to understand the origin of their design and also enables us to estimate the date of the Canterbury plaque.

There can be very little doubt that the hollow-sided triangle in the centre of the strap-end is a reflection of the similar feature which occurs on certain bronze objects of the Scandinavian Borre style<sup>8</sup> (dated between 870 and 970). The same feature also occurs in England, for example on the Gosforth cross<sup>9</sup> and on that from Penmon in Anglesey,<sup>10</sup> but its origin is undoubtedly Scandinavian. The free rings at either end of the face of the strap-end are also a feature of early 10th-century art in this country and in Scandinavia,<sup>11</sup> although no real chronological weight can be given to such a common motif. There can be little doubt that this object was made in England under the influence of Scandinavian taste in the early 10th century.

There are certain unparalleled features in the ornament on this strap-end. The double ribbon, which divides in a number of places to form loops and interlaces with other elements of the pattern, is a feature not, to my knowledge, normally encountered in English interlace in the sculpture of the Anglo-Saxon period. The pellets which occur in the centre of the interlace (but possibly not those at the terminal, which might be zoomorphic) are reasonably common in 10th-century English sculpture; they can be

<sup>5</sup> Wilson, *op. cit.* in note 1, p. 48. <sup>6</sup> T. D. Kendrick, *Late Saxon and Viking Art* (London, 1949), pl. 83, no. 2.

<sup>7</sup> Wilson, *op. cit.* in note 1, p. 49.

<sup>8</sup> Wilson and Klindt-Jensen, *op. cit.* in note 2, fig. 49.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, pl. xl.

<sup>10</sup> W. G. Collingwood, *Northumbrian Crosses* (London, 1927), fig. 158.

<sup>11</sup> Wilson, *op. cit.* in note 1, p. 41 f.

seen, in their most extreme form, on the cross-shaft from St. Bees<sup>12</sup> and, in a regular and restrained form, on one of the Lancaster carvings.<sup>13</sup>

The Canterbury plaque cannot be exactly paralleled in English metal-work of the 10th century, but it is in many respects very close in design to the series of bronzes quoted above. Like the York strap-end, it has its roots in the art of Scandinavia. The basic design is very similar to that on a gold filigree mount from a grave at Lackalänge, Skåne, Sweden,<sup>14</sup> which only differs in that it has an encircling, interlacing ring through the whole pattern. A gold Borre object of this sort may well have provided some sort of prototype for the Canterbury disc.

The Canterbury piece belongs to a growing group of 10th-century finds from that city. I have mentioned these finds elsewhere<sup>15</sup> and suggested that they may be associated with the sack of Canterbury in 1011. The large number of well-known objects of a similar date from York naturally reflects the very troubled history of that Viking town in the last few centuries before the Norman conquest. DAVID M. WILSON

### TWO LEVELS OF THE MERE AT KENILWORTH CASTLE, WARWICKSHIRE (PLS. XVIII-XIX ; FIGS. 30-31)

The artificial lake known as the mere that lay to the west of Kenilworth Castle in medieval times was described by a Tudor surveyor as half a mile long and 500 ft. wide.<sup>16</sup> It was therefore one of the largest expanses of water in medieval England that was artificially created for defence. It was the highest of a number of ponds, formed in the valley from the streams entering from the west, that served the castle and the abbey lower downstream. Numerous traces survive on the ground of these waterworks, but the abbey pond, flooded annually for winter skating, is the only part of these elaborate works that can still be said to be in use.

The accompanying sketch-map (FIG. 30) shows the castle proper on a bluff on the N. side of the valley linked by a massive causeway, known as the tiltyard, to an area of irregular shape defended by a substantial bank and ditch, known as the Brays, on the south. The 'tiltyard' was in fact the dam that ponded back the water that formed the mere on its W. side. Both castle and abbey (at first, 'priory') were founded by Geoffrey de Clinton in the reign of Henry I. In his foundation-charter Geoffrey excluded from the grant the land he was using for his park and castle,<sup>17</sup> but as an early confirmation-charter by Geoffrey to the abbey allowed the monks to fish 'with boat and nets' in his pool on Thursdays,<sup>18</sup> it is likely that the mere was created at the same time as the castle. Indeed the conformation of the valley, a narrow gap with high ground jutting out on either side, perhaps suggested the idea of creating the mere and determined the site of the castle at the same time.

In medieval times entry to the castle was through the E. side of the Brays, across a bridge at the S. end of the tiltyard, along the causeway and so through the gate known as Mortimer's Tower at the N. end into the castle. Late in the 16th century the earl of Leicester built the existing gatehouse at the N. end of the castle 'where formerly having been the backside of the castle, he made the Front'.<sup>19</sup> After the Civil War Colonel Hawkesworth as part of the 'slighting' of the castle made a great breach in the tiltyard

<sup>12</sup> Collingwood, *op. cit.* in note 10, fig. 165.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, fig. 171.

<sup>14</sup> Wilson and Klindt-Jensen, *op. cit.* in note 2, pl. xxix, j.

<sup>15</sup> D. M. Wilson, 'The King's School, Canterbury, disc brooch,' *Med. Archaeol.*, iv (1960), 28.

<sup>16</sup> SC. 12/16/22 at the P.R.O.

<sup>17</sup> Sir W. Dugdale, *Monasticon Anglicanum* (1846 ed.), pp. 220-23. The foundation-charter speaks of castle and park, but a royal confirmation-charter by Henry I speaks of castle, burgus, fish pool (*vivarium*) and park.

<sup>18</sup> Sir W. Dugdale, *The Antiquities of Warwickshire* (2 ed., 1730) 1, 238b. The first edition appeared in 1656 and Dugdale appears to have written the text in c. 1640 before the Parliamentary 'slighting'.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 249a.