

<sup>3</sup> There are some inconsistencies: the N, for example, is composed of two double incisions and one single incision.

<sup>4</sup> The term 'rather deteriorated' and the system of transliteration used are fully explained in, E. Okasha, *Hand-list of Anglo-Saxon Non-runic Inscriptions* (Cambridge, 1971), 44–45. Briefly: A indicates a legible letter; *A* indicates a letter damaged but legible; [A] indicates a damaged letter where the restoration is fairly certain; [·] indicates one lost letter; [·:·/3] indicates around two or three lost letters; | indicates the end of a line of text.

<sup>5</sup> E. Okasha, 'A supplement to *Hand-List of Anglo-Saxon Non-Runic Inscriptions*', *Anglo-Saxon England*, xi (Cambridge, 1983), 90 and fig.

<sup>6</sup> Okasha, op. cit. in note 4, 58–59 and fig.; see also p. 8.

<sup>7</sup> C. J. Becker, 'Studies in the Danish coinage at Lund during the period c. 1030–1046', in M. A. S. Blackburn and D. M. Metcalf (eds.), *Viking-Age Coinage in the Northern Lands* (Oxford, Brit. Archaeol. Rep. Int. Ser. 122 (ii), 1981), 449–77, esp. 471. I am most grateful to Dr Veronica Smart, University of St Andrews, for her help with the coin material.

<sup>8</sup> Blomqvist and Mårtensson (1963), 214–16. See also the other works listed in the Bibliography above.

<sup>9</sup> Roesdahl *et al.* (1981), 180.

<sup>10</sup> I am most grateful to Dr Jennifer O'Reilly, University College, Cork, for bringing these examples to my attention.

<sup>11</sup> J. Beckwith, *Ivory Carvings in Early Medieval England* (London, 1972), no. 29, p. 124 and figs.

<sup>12</sup> Illustrated in E. Temple, *Anglo-Saxon Manuscripts 900–1066. A Survey of Manuscripts illuminated in the British Isles*, II (London, 1976), respectively no. 66, pl. 216 and no. 99, pl. 296.

<sup>13</sup> Beckwith, op. cit. in note 11, no. 46, p. 128 and figs.

<sup>14</sup> Graham-Campbell (1980), no. 34, p. 15 and figs.

<sup>15</sup> Blomqvist and Mårtensson (1963), 213.

<sup>16</sup> Illustrated in J. Backhouse, *The Lindisfarne Gospels* (Oxford, 1981), 31. She also discusses in general the use of wax writing tablets in Anglo-Saxon England.

<sup>17</sup> Trier, Stadtbibliothek MS 1711, c. 983–96, illustrated in M. Backes and R. Dölling, *Art of the Dark Ages* (Baden Baden, 1969), 160 and fig.

<sup>18</sup> Mårtensson (1976), 357–58.

<sup>19</sup> Mårtensson (1976), 358–59.

<sup>20</sup> Blomqvist and Mårtensson (1963), 216.

<sup>21</sup> Roesdahl *et al.* (1981), 180.

## A RUNESTONE FROM SKARA BRAE, ORKNEY (Fig. 5)

In 1963 an Ancient Monuments works squad was rebuilding the sea wall at Skara Brae (Long. 3 31' W, Lat. 59 3' N, HY 232 187) on Orkney. Cartloads of slabs were brought from quarries below high water mark W. and NW. of the settlement. They were supplemented by slabs which had weathered out of the sands around and covering Skara Brae. A member of the work squad noticed that a slab had markings on one face; but the slab was split and both halves were inadvertently used face down as paving on the path which runs by the sea wall.

In 1982 Mr J. Drever of the Ancient Monuments Division sought and refound it. Realizing that the marks were runes he had the slab transported for safe keeping to the new Ancient Monuments Depot at Hatston, Kirkwall. Its final disposition has not yet been decided.

The original finder, M. S. Firth, died before details of the stone's discovery could be recorded; although no-one now survives of those working on the sea wall in 1963 another member of the work squad, Mr E. Harrauld, has provided information about the origins of the slabs used. The runestone is unlikely to have come from below high water mark: it is little weathered. It may have come from a Viking site in the upper levels of the sand cliff some 200 m W. of Skara Brae and close to where a Viking cist was discovered in 1888.<sup>1</sup> But it seems most likely to have been one of those which eroded out of the sands around Skara Brae during the storm which necessitated rebuilding of the sea wall. That is the opinion of Mr Harrauld, who thinks it improbable that the squad would have sought slabs along the base of the sand cliff.

The slab measures 1.4 by 0.85 m. It is of Orkney flagstone and is half of an originally thicker slab. The other half was also used as a paving stone at Skara Brae; it has been checked and bears no carvings. The inscription is fairly fresh and can easily be distinguished from natural cracks, flake edges and abrasions. It is composed of ill-formed straggling single strokes varying in thickness from 0.8 to 0.5 mm. The vertical strokes have either a symmetrical blunt V-shaped cross-section or have the steeper side to the right. They are nearly as deep

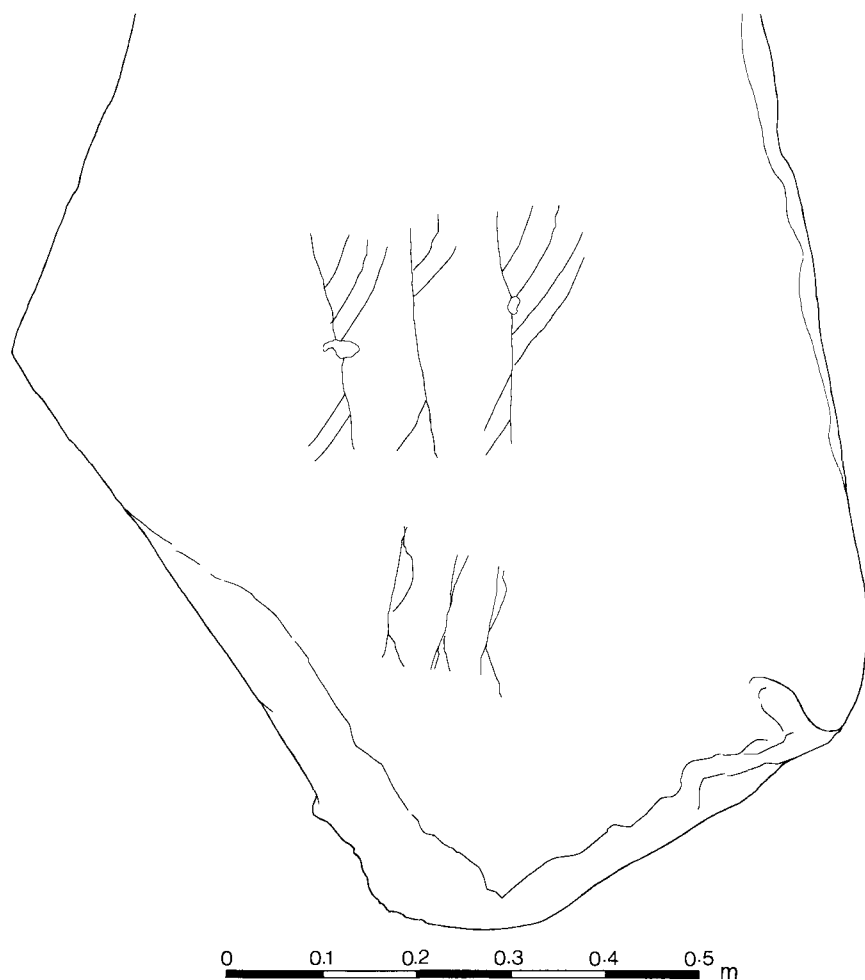


FIG. 5

Runestone from Skara Brae

as wide. The angled lines have a symmetrical blunt V-shaped cross-section. The most weakly drawn rune is the first code rune: its stem is shallower and less wide than that of the others. The most carelessly drawn rune is the middle ordinary rune. The runes are, however, all ill-formed despite the flat and texturally isotropic surface on which they were carved. The inscription proved too shallow for effective on-site photography; it was traced on light-weight tracing paper using a fibre-tip pen and Fig. 5 is a photographic reduction of that tracing.

The inscription consists of the two rows of signs, three in each row. Only the lower line has normal runes, of a type with an uncovered part of the stem between the two side branches. The first and third runes can be transliterated *r* and the second rune *P*, the form of the latter rune *K* being a variant of *B*, both used in Norwegian inscriptions from the end of the 12th century and later. This will give a dating *post quem* to the Skara Brae inscription. Both graphemes were apparently developed from the rune *B* b: *B* by adding points and *K* through *B* with top and base lost. The younger *fupark* (originally 16 runes) had earlier made no graphic distinction between voiced and unvoiced labial stops. It must be mentioned however that *K*

instead of the usual  $\text{ᚕ}$  is found in three (as far as I know) late medieval inscriptions though two of those also use the normal form of the rune. This must probably be due to influence from Latin script, the majuscule K occasionally being used as an allograph by some literate persons. The three signs could alternatively be read as Latin characters but this seems a less convincing hypothesis as there must be a connection with the signs in the upper row.

These are code runes of a cryptographic system based on the Viking-Age *fupark*, which consisted of sixteen runes divided into three groups (O.N. *ættir*): *fupark* *hnias* *tblmy* (sometimes *tblmy* under influence from the order *lm* in the Latin alphabet). Several different methods were used for such coding. The code runes of the present inscription are so-called twig runes: on one side of a vertical stem are between one and three side strokes, or twigs, which give the number of the *ætt*; on the opposite side the twigs give the number of the rune within the *ætt*. As the third rune in the present inscription has four twigs on the right side it is certain that this side gives the rune number and the left side gives the number of the *ætt*. But often the order of the *ættir* is reversed: the third group is reckoned as the first and the first as the third. Thus the coded runes here may be read either  $2/3 \ 1/2 \ 2/4 \ iua$  or  $2/3 \ 3/2 \ 2/4 \ iba$ . Further the runes are sometimes to be read from right to left (see Brodgar I below).

Twig runes, as well as other systems of code runes, are sometimes used in conjunction with ordinary runes. Examples are found in some Norwegian inscriptions: N360 Borgund XIII in Sogn and N443 Rodven I in Romsdal.<sup>2</sup> In Orkney the well-known metric inscription from Maes Howe, No. XVIII, starts with the words 'þisar runar' ('these runes'), in twig runes, while the rest of the text is carved in ordinary runes. Twig runes are found elsewhere in Orkney; of particular interest are those on three of the standing stones in the Ring of Brodgar. Two of the stones bear a single twig rune but the other, Brodgar I, has five runes of which four are twig runes. A reading from right to left gives the sequence *niorn*, which has not been convincingly interpreted. Olsen suggested that an extra twig had been added by mistake to the first rune and that accordingly it might be read *h*.<sup>3</sup> The inscription would then give the personal name *Bjorn*, not unexpected on a monolith. Strid mentions, in connection with the Brodgar inscription, a goddess *Njorn* or *Njorun* who is met with in old poetry.<sup>4</sup> An interpretation on this basis seems very unlikely.

The inscription on the stone found at Skara Brae is an interesting addition to the short inscriptions with twig runes from Orkney mentioned above. No interpretation is suggested for the two groups if they are separate from one another. If, however, they can be regarded as forming one sequence they may be read consecutively *iuarpr* (or *iuarkr*) and this may give a basis, though very vague, for a suggestion. As mentioned above, ordinary and coded runes are found intermingled within words and sentences. The inscription may contain the common name Ivarr followed by two unintelligible runes which are shortenings of one or two words. It must be stressed, however, that this hypothesis is put forward only for lack of a better one.

P. J. ASHMORE and I. S. JOHNSEN

#### NOTES

<sup>1</sup> W. G. T. Watt, 'Notice of the discovery of a stone cist . . .', *Proc. Soc. Antiq. Scotland*, xxii (1888), 283–85; Royal Commission on Ancient and Historical Monuments of Scotland, *Inventory of Orkney* (Edinburgh, 1946), 273.

<sup>2</sup> N = Olsen, M. (ed.), *Norges innskrifter med de yngre runer*, vol. iv (Oslo, 1957).

<sup>3</sup> M. Olsen, 'Runic inscriptions in Great Britain, Ireland and the Isle of Man', in H. Shetelig (ed.), *Viking Antiquities in Great Britain and Ireland*, Pt. iv (Oslo, 1954), 164 ff.

<sup>4</sup> T. S. Brink and J. P. Strid, 'Runfynd 1981', *Fornvannen*, 77 (1982), 250, n. 5.

#### AN 11TH-CENTURY BONE *TABULA SET* FROM GLOUCESTER (Fig. 6; Pls. xiv and xv)

Excavations by Western Archaeological Trust<sup>1</sup> under the direction of Ian J. Stewart and on behalf of the Gloucester City Museum Excavation Unit have recently been conducted on