

A BRONZE-GILT HARNESS MOUNTING FROM JARLSHOF.

By A. J. H. EDWARDS, F.S.A.Scot., DIRECTOR OF THE MUSEUM.

The relics of the Viking period discovered by His Majesty's Office of Works during recent campaigns will be described, together with the constructions exposed, by the Inspector of Ancient Monuments when

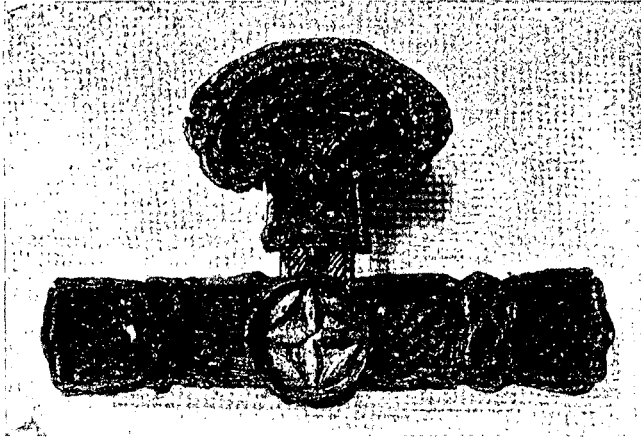


Fig. 1. Bronze-gilt Harness Mounting from Jarlshof.

further progress has been made. One object discovered this year, a mounting of bronze-gilt (fig. 1), is, however, of such intrinsic interest as to merit immediate publication and Mr Richardson has asked me to describe it here.

The object was found in pit 2, square 18, in the course of tracing out the boundary wall of the prehistoric settlement, mentioned in the

previous paper. This wall, it will be recalled, was crossed by the wall of a Viking house, the floor of which over the line of wall lay at 21.2 feet above O.D. Below the floor was a bed of discoloured sand containing bones and shells extending down to the level of the wall top, and it was in this layer at 19.5 feet above O.D.,  $6\frac{1}{4}$  feet north-west of the prehistoric wall, that the relic was found. As already mentioned, the object is made of bronze which has been gilded, although in the process of time the gilding has almost disappeared and the metallic bronze reduced to an advanced stage of decay.

A description of the object is unnecessary as the drawing (fig. 2) shows the detail of the ornamentation, which consists of a combination

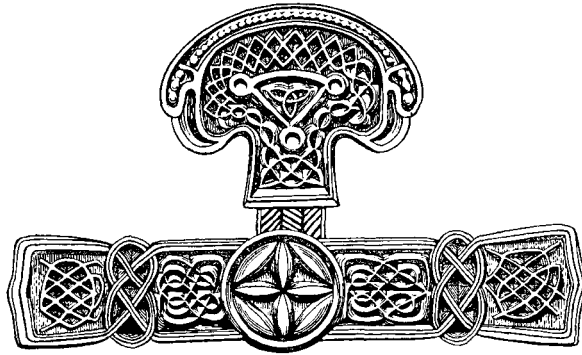


Fig. 2. Bronze-gilt Harness Mounting from Jarlshof.

of the so-called chip-carving and interlacing work, together with an enrichment of geometrical patterns, such as the sunk panel in the centre of the bar, and the pellets and globules on the outer edge of the upper portion of the object. The back of the bar is slightly concave and at either end are two metal loops with the remains of a pin in each. In the centre of the bar is a small stud. The loops have probably been passed through holes in a leather strap, the pins securing them in position, while the central stud would act as a button and prevent any sagging of the strap in the centre.

These mountings are now well known and their date and use have been discussed by Johs. Bøe of the Bergens Museum in a paper by him on "Celtic Objects found in Norway," published in the *Bergens Museum's Aarbok*, 1924-25, Hist.-Antikv. række nr. 4, pp. 20-34.

Although only one mounting was found at Jarlshof, three sets of similar objects have been recorded, one from Navan in Ireland and two from Rogaland in Norway, one of the two latter coming from the

farm of Gausel in the parish of Hetland and the other from the farm of Soma in the parish of Høyland. At Gausel the find was identified as part of the burial furniture of a woman's grave of the early ninth century, as in addition to the set of mountings which lay directly on and close to a horse's skull there was also found a number of personal relics and objects for domestic use. At Soma one of the objects associated with the discovery was a horse's bit. The Navan find was made in 1848 and a number of objects were found together, which are described in Sir William Wilde's *Catalogue of Bronze Antiquities*, 1861, p. 611, as chariot furniture. These included a bronze disc, probably an attachment for a trace, a bronze bridle-bit; iron rings plated with bronze; the skull of a horse, and seven ornamented gilt plaques. A glance at a recent illustration made by Armstrong in *The Antiquaries' Journal*, 1922, vol. ii. Plate II, and the illustrations in *Norske Oldsager*, Nos. 618-627, by Rygh, and in the *Bergens Aarbok*, pp. 32 and 33, by Bøe will be sufficient to identify the Jarlshof mounting as one of a similar series of objects. The resemblance between the objects is remarkable, especially in their form, although the details of ornamentation are slightly different. In two of the finds we have the significant appearance of the skull of a horse, and in each example a portion of the associated relics consisted of horse furniture. It is true that no other object was found with the plaque from Jarlshof which would assist in its identification as part of the trappings of a horse, but by the first half of the ninth century A.D. it was the fashion for Viking women to wear souvenirs presented to them by the warriors on their return journey from the West, so we may have in this solitary specimen from Jarlshof an object which was intended for use as an ornament for personal decoration.

A bronze mount <sup>1</sup> from the West of Scotland similar in form and decoration to one of those in each of the sets of mountings from Ireland and Norway has indubitably been used as a brooch. On the back are the remains of a hinge for a pin and the protective catch for its point.

<sup>1</sup> *Proceedings*, vol. lxi. p. 22, fig. 5.