

### 3. A BRONZE BULL'S HEAD IN GLASGOW AND ITS AFFILIATIONS.

In the collections of the Glasgow Art Gallery and Museum, Kelvingrove, is a small bronze head of a bull (Pl. XXVII *a, b*). Between the horns rises a ring, while projecting from the flat rim of the slightly hollowed reverse is a curved bar of sub-rectangular cross-section. The head measures 58 mm. from tip to tip of the upswept horns and 61 mm. from the top of the ring to the end of the muzzle; it appears to have been made as a one-piece casting and bears no indication of subsequent elaboration with a graver. There is nothing known as to the provenance of this piece, which was passed over to the Museum by the Glasgow and West of Scotland Technical College in 1902, as part of a miscellaneous collection of archaeological and historical objects.<sup>4</sup>

In examining this head four questions need to be answered; these concern its use, its affiliations, its date, and its place of manufacture. Now, Miss Anne Roes in writing on the prophylactic implications of antler horn and representations of bulls in Roman Gaul<sup>5</sup> refers to a series of some dozen unprovenanced bronze pendants mainly from the Meyrick Collection in the Greek and Roman Department of the British Museum. Some of these pendants—many of which have a similar ring and bar attachment to our Glasgow head—are adorned with phallic emblems and have close affiliations with specimens in the Louvre and Holland. More important, however, for our present purpose is the example here illustrated (Pl. XXVII *c, d*).<sup>6</sup> As can be seen it offers a more or less exact parallel to the Glasgow bull's head. It is perhaps slightly less "Highland" in aspect, but otherwise is clearly the product

<sup>1</sup> *P.P.S.*, iv (1938), 298, 299, 301.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, 278.

<sup>3</sup> *P.P.S.*, xvii (1951), 35, "The Colonisation of Scotland in the Second Millennium B.C."

<sup>4</sup> My thanks are due to Professors Stuart Piggott and R. J. C. Atkinson who first drew my attention to this piece and to Mr J. G. Scott of the Kelvingrove Museum for rendering me every facility to study and photograph it. The registered number is 02—73jy.

<sup>5</sup> *Revue Archéologique de l'Est et du Centre-Est*, vii (1956), 57—63.

<sup>6</sup> I am grateful to Mr D. E. L. Haynes, Keeper of the Department, for his kind assistance and permission to photograph the head. It should be added that this collection also contains a somewhat smaller head of otherwise very similar type—museum reg. no. 78, 10—19, 84.

of one and the same workshop. One may also note that the date of presentation of the Glasgow bronze was some 14 years after the bequest of the Meyrick Collection. It is therefore not impossible that it may be a "stray" from the same source. With the scanty evidence at our disposal concerning the place of origin of the two pieces—it is not even certain that all the objects in the Meyrick Collection have a continental source—we must consider the wider implications of stylistic treatment.

Representations of bulls in metal work have of course a long history; a Late Bronze Age pair from Châtillon-sur-Seiche<sup>1</sup> have the long swept-up horns and ovoid eyes which are the basic components of most of the series which runs through to two gold heads from the tomb of Childeric (d. A.D. 481).<sup>2</sup> The idea of bull's head *protomai* can best be seen as emanating from the bronze smiths of Urartu whose cauldrons were exported to and copied in 8th century B.C. Greece and Etruria. The finest bull's head attachments in Northern Europe are undoubtedly the five of the bronze cauldron from Braa, Jutland, a product of the La Tène II "plastic" style of Central Europe.<sup>3</sup> The almond eyes, cow-lick, and horns become in the hands of the Celtic craftsman something more than a mere delineation of nature. The bull appears too on the coinage of the Nervi and Remi where the motif seems to have been raised to the status of a tribal totem. A second Northern piece from a peat-bog near Roskilde in Zealand<sup>4</sup> is decorated in incised and moulded curves—a Scandinavian attempt at the fullness of the true "plastic" style. Nearer to our heads is a cauldron mounting from Sophienborg, N. Zealand;<sup>5</sup> although it bears straight horns, to be noted are its simple oval eyes delineated by incised lines and its drooping ears.

A bull's head from the *oppidum* of Mont Beuvray<sup>6</sup> has again the oval eyes although its upswept horns, open mouth, and lolling tongue return us to Britain and a group of bucket mounts of the later Iron Age and sub-Roman periods first studied by Professor Hawkes.<sup>7</sup> To this group we may add the simple little bull from Traprain Law recently republished by Mrs Fowler, which may well be a pendant and represents a last reflection of "the pre-Roman animal style coming through to the Dark Ages."<sup>8</sup> Closest in style to our pair is the mounting from the main entrance to the late Iron Age hill-fort of Dinorben, Denbs., found with 3rd/4th century A.D. Roman coins.<sup>9</sup> As Sir Cyril Fox has recently demonstrated, this piece with its simple oval eyes and formalised pricked-out cow-lick looks back to the greater "baroque" freedom of the knobbed horned and fully "plastic" bull's head from the fort of Ham Hill in Somerset.<sup>10</sup> But a second recently discovered bull also from Dinorben and of presumably similar date is a much simpler piece in a purely local vernacular<sup>11</sup> as displayed by a pair of mountings from Felmersham, Beds.; one of these has the lolling tongue of the Mont Beuvray head.<sup>12</sup>

<sup>1</sup> J. Déchelette *Manuel d'Archéologie* . . . II, 1 (1910), fig. 198, 2, 3.

<sup>2</sup> Abbé Cochet *Le Tombeau de Childéric* (1859), 293.

<sup>3</sup> O. Klindt-Jensen *Bronzekedelen fra Braa* Jysk Arkæologisk Selskabs Skrifter, Bind III (1953); esp. pl. ii.

<sup>4</sup> *Op. cit.*, pl. viii, top and centre left.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, *Acta Archaeologica*, xx (1949), 112-4 and fig. 70c.

<sup>6</sup> In the Musée des Antiquités Nationales, St Germain; reg. no. 19498.

<sup>7</sup> "Bronze Workers, Cauldrons, and Bucket-Animals," in *Aspects of Archaeology* . . . , ed. W. F. Grimes, (1951); esp. 191-9.

<sup>8</sup> *P.S.A.S.*, LXXXIX (1955-6), 185 (No. 264) and fig. 5.

<sup>9</sup> W. Gardiner, *Arch. Camb.*, XIII (1913), 194-5 and fig. 2; also Hawkes *op. cit.*, pl. vii, 2.

<sup>10</sup> *Pattern and Purpose: Early Celtic Art in Britain* (1958), 73-6.

<sup>11</sup> H. N. Savory, *Bulletin of the Board of Celtic Studies*, xv (1958) iv, 306-7 and pl. ii, 8a, b.

<sup>12</sup> Fox, *op. cit.*, 73 and pl. 43 a.

A final British piece which is also in the La Tène "plastic" tradition is a terret from the Brigantian site of Aldborough in Yorkshire. The bovine horns of this strange anthropomorphic mask make one wonder at the "Cernunnos" attribution of Fox.<sup>1</sup> The flowing moulded decoration on the curved frontal panel might even be seen as schematised fore-feet—if this should seem mere wild surmise reference may be made to just such a representation, the Scandinavian bulls' heads on the La Tène III cauldron from Rynkeby, Funen.<sup>2</sup> Indeed, it is interesting to note the rear "leaf-crowns" curving outwards from the back of the Aldborough head are reminiscent of not only Braa but in their projection the sideways extending brows of the Glasgow piece.

What then of our bulls' heads and their place in this variegated herd? As to their use Dr Roes has suggested that the group she studied were pendant amulets—for animals rather than humans—suspension being by means of a loop doubled through the ring, round the bar, and back out of the ring again.<sup>3</sup> But while we may acknowledge that the frequent depiction of bulls within the Celtic world is due to something more than "the influence in everyday life . . . of dairy farming"<sup>4</sup>—consider the association with the ever-sacred cauldrons, the coinage, and even ritually deposited swords<sup>5</sup>—more uncertain is the question of the actual attachment of the bulls and to what. The use of so stout a means of attachment as the ring and bar for the comparatively simple method of suspension illustrated by Dr Roes does strike one as somewhat unnecessary let alone improbable. Indeed, two features are to be observed; the rings on both heads show slight signs of wear on the inside of their upper rims and secondly, as we have noted above, the bar stands out from an otherwise flat back. While one may dismiss any conception of the pieces as bucket mountings it would on the other hand be possible to fix one end of a leather strap to the bar, the ring being used to take a hook, and the whole offering a decorated terminal to some piece of harness or more warlike equipment. Bull's head clasps are a feature of the linked belts of late La Tène Gaul and Central Europe<sup>6</sup> which may indeed be baldrics rather than simple girdles, a feature which would render the clasps visible in a more normal upright position. Can we then see our two—if not three—bulls as adorning the chest of some latter-day Celtic warrior?

Be that as it may, the style of the bulls is late; we have noted their "Celtic" eyes, yet the realism of the hair is one stage too near nature to belong to the formalism of true La Tène art—it is more natural even than the great torc-wearing, torc-adorning bulls of Trichtingen which must come from just such an East European school as may have produced the bull of the Gundestrup cauldron.<sup>7</sup> On the other hand there is a life in our simple pieces which belongs neither to the slickness of the customer-dictated Belgic workshops, nor to the base provincialism of the poorer

<sup>1</sup> Klindt-Jensen, *op. cit.*, fig. 68a.

<sup>2</sup> W. Watson, *Ant. J.*, XXIX (1949), 36–61, pl. v c–d and fig. 2; this gives a list complete to the time of writing of bucrania in Britain and mention is made here of the Meyrick Collection heads, *q.v.* 49.

<sup>3</sup> Roes, *op. cit.* 60 and fig. 19.

<sup>4</sup> Fox, *op. cit.*, 76; he is writing of Britain. Indeed our pieces do have a look of *bos taurus longifrons* about them.

<sup>5</sup> For classical references to the Celts and cauldrons *v.* Strabon *Geography*, iv, 2, 1 and scholiast on Lucanus *Civil War*, i, 443; for swords *v.* R. Wyss, *Antiquity*, xxx (1956), 27–28 and pl. viii a.

<sup>6</sup> J. Filip, *Keltové ve Střední Evropě* (1956), 168–70; ob 37 tab. CII (men's belts), d., 51 and tab. XLIII (women's belts); I was started on this line of thought as a result of conversation with Professor C. F. C. Hawkes.

<sup>7</sup> For Trichtingen *v.* P. Goessler, *I.P.E.K.*, v. (1929), 46–52. The most recent study of the iconography of Gundestrup with argument for a N. Gaulish origin is O. Klindt-Jensen, *Antiquity*, xxxiii, (1959), 161–9; the eastern theory is noted in T. G. E. Powell *The Celts* (1958), 167–8.

and later British products, nor yet to the weak classicism of the art of Gallia Provincia. The continent offers the closest parallels, and on the basis of these analogies and Dr Roes' amulets we can but suggest a home in north or central France and a date not later than the 3rd century A.D. Thus, we may see the Glasgow and London heads as products of some native craftsman remembering enough of the vital art and beliefs of his La Tène fore-fathers to furnish a tangible expression of that close link between man and beast which lay at the roots of the Celtic world, a link which was not fully submerged even by the new society which sprang up in the wake of the Roman conquest.

J. V. S. MEGAW.



(a)



(c)



(b)



(d)

Bronze bulls' heads: (a, b), Glasgow Art Gallery and Museum.  
(c, d), British Museum.

Scale about 14:15.