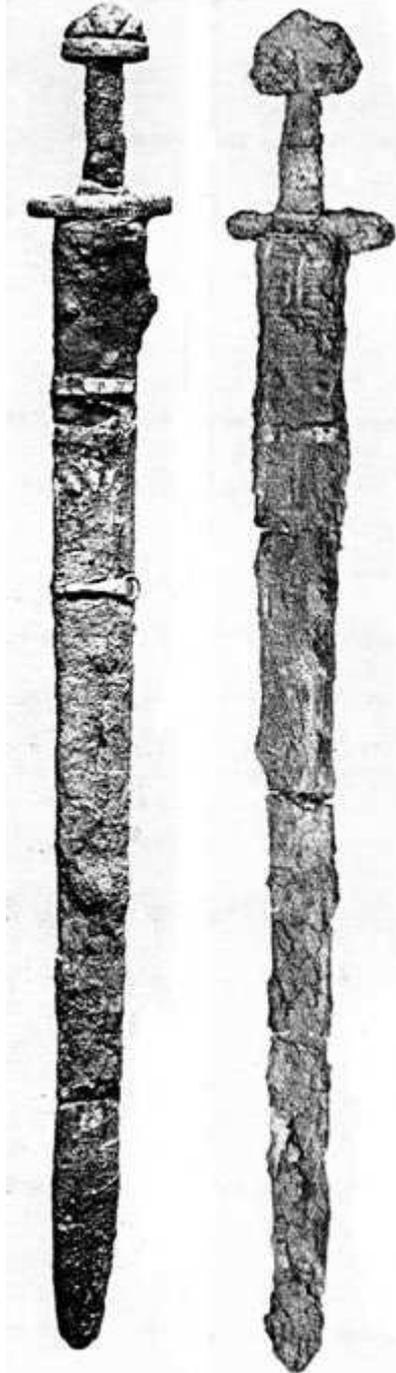


Scabbards 8– Ballateare & Cronk Moar in the Isle of Man



Probably the best known scabbards from the period under study are the two from the Isle of Man. These were excavated primarily by the German archaeologist Gerhard Bersu who was interred in the Isle of Man during the second world war. The excavations were carried out at Ballateare and Cronk Moar. These were excavated after the war and up to 1947. In 1963, Bersu returned to the Island to complete his notes, but died in November 1964, before they could be published.

The project was then taken over by David M. Wilson and completed in 1966. However as Wilson himself states, ‘although Bersu’s work was meticulous in describing the find objects there are some areas where they are rough descriptions in note form which are incomplete and in need of overhaul.’

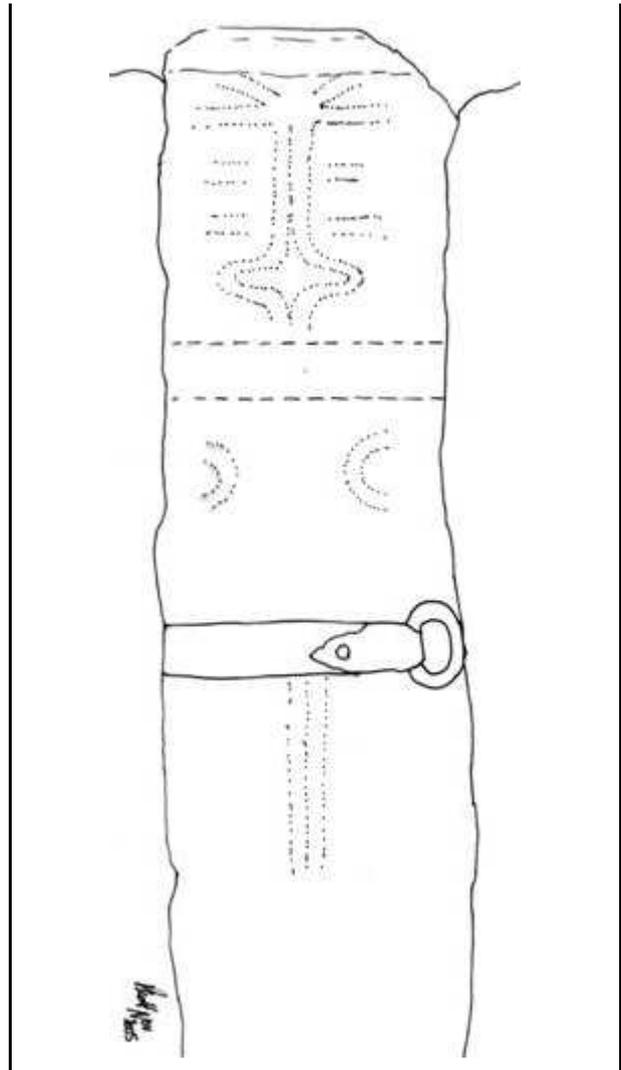
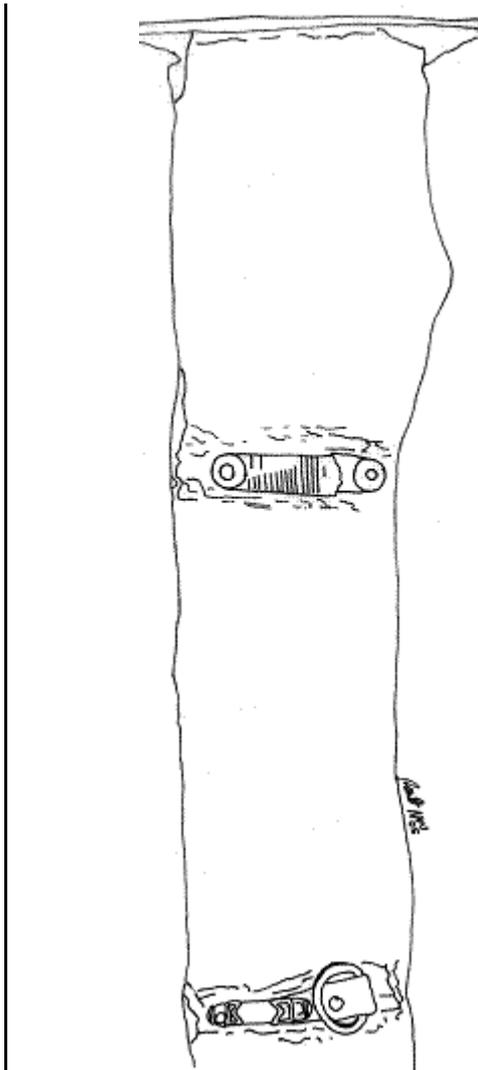
As a result the present author has obtained a set of his own dimensions, drawings and photographs from the finds in the museum and will use these in this work wherever possible.

The scabbards themselves are in a reasonable state of preservation, with some metal strap fittings and raised linear decoration surviving. They are currently on display in the National Museum in Douglas in the Isle of Man.

Ballateare

Cronk Moar

G. Bersu & D. Wilson. Three Viking Graves in the Isle of Man, London 1966
The Society for Medieval Archaeology Monograph Series: No. I



Ballatear scabbard.

Fixing Plates
 distance below mouth piece ; -
 Upper fixing plate = 129mm*
 Lower fixing plate = 287mm*
 Fixing Plates dimensions; -
 Upper Plate = 52 x 12mm*
 Lower Plate = 50 x 13mm*
 Lower Plate & Ring = 62 x 21mm*

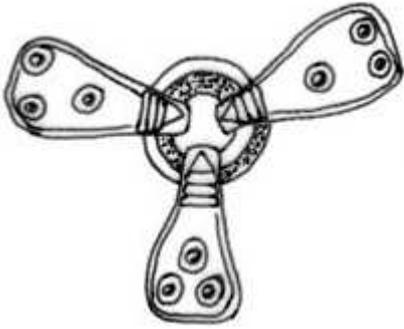
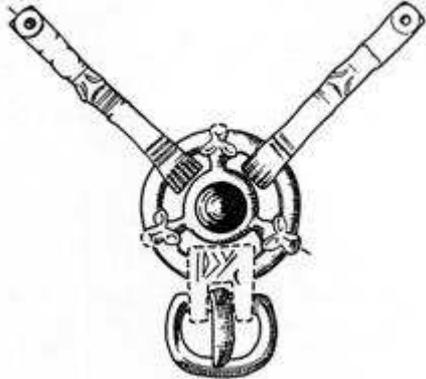
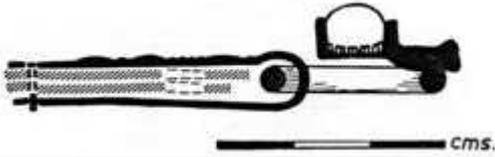
Cronk Moar Scabbard

Fixing Bands
 distance below mouth piece;
 -
 Upper fixing band = 81mm”
 Lower fixing band = 148mm*
 Fixing Bands dimensions; -
 Upper Band ~ 51 x 10.5mm^
 Lower Band = 60 x 12mm*
 Lower Plate & Ring = 69 x 21mm*

* Authors measurements June 2005. All Distances are measured from the mouthpiece to the centre of the fitting.

^ Indicates a measurement taken by Bersu & Wilson.

“ Interpolated from the Authors measurements & Bersu & Wilson’s Drawings.

	
<p><u>Distributor Ring with three Clasps.</u> Ring Ø = 21mm* Clasp (average size) = 31 x 16mm*</p>	<p><u>Distributor Ring, 2 Clasps & Buckle.</u> Ring Ø = 23mm^ Clasp (average size) = 38.5 x 5 mm^</p>
	
<p><u>Baldric Buckle Ring & Plate.</u> Plate = 49 x 13mm* Plate & Ring = 57 x 20mm*</p>	<p><u>Distributor Ring, section.</u> Buckle plate = 12.5 x 10mm^ Buckle plate & Ring = 21.5 x 18mm^</p>
	
<p><u>Baldric Strap end.</u> Size = 55 x 7mm*</p>	<p><u>Baldric Strap end.</u> Size = 52mm x 10.2mm*</p>
<p>The sword was broken into four pieces before internment but can be shown to be of the type known as 'Petersen Type V'.</p> <p>The re-assembled sword currently measures 866mm long whilst the Scabbard measures 721 x 75mm.</p> <p>The scabbard was constructed in the following way; next to the blade was a textile encased by two thin laths of wood. These laths completely covered the sword blade and were bound together by a finely woven textile and finally the whole affair was enclosed in leather.</p>	<p>The sword was excavated broken into five pieces, but this may have happened post burial; but can be shown to be of the type known as 'Petersen Type S'.</p> <p>The re-assembled sword currently measures 908mm long whilst the Scabbard measures 726 x 67mm.</p> <p>The scabbard was constructed in the following way; next to the blade was a textile encased by two laths of Oak between 2 to 3mm thick. These laths completely covered the sword blade and were bound together by linen. Finally the whole affair was enclosed in leather moulded into a pattern on the front.</p>

Two bronze scabbard fittings survive in situ, although the straps have long perished. The Upper fitting consists of a flat plate, chamfered on each end, giving the appearance of a flattened circular bar. In the centre of each circle and therefore at each end of the bar is a circular rivet head.

The Lower fitting consists of a tapered plate, which is folded back onto itself to retain a suspension ring. The plate features zoomorphic animal heads and is riveted to a leather band which was fastened to the scabbard in the same way as the upper fitting plate.

Fastened to the plates and suspension loop of the scabbard was a distributor ring. This in turn accommodated straps which terminated in a buckle ring and strap end. These are commonly located on the strap as it crosses the front of the chest.

The grip is so contaminated with iron oxides from the tang that it is impossible to tell of what it was constructed.

The sword is thought to be Norwegian and made in the 9th or 10th century. The scabbard is thought to be of insular origin and made in the British isles.

One bronze scabbard fitting has survived in situ, and although the straps have long since perished a witness mark endures on the back confirming the location of the upper fitting. What was fitted to this strap is now lost, however it would be reasonable to assume that it was similar to the Ballateare plate.

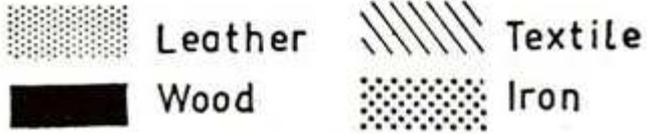
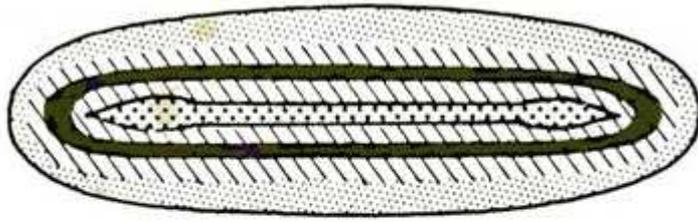
The lower fitting itself consists of a bronze band of sheet metal. Folded around the scabbard and a bronze suspension ring, and then is riveted onto a leather band which is in turn fitted to the scabbard.

Fastened to the plates and suspension loop of the scabbard was a distributor ring. Mounted in the centre of the ring is a cabochon of plain glass. Unusually this ring may have had a buckle connected to it rather than a third clasp. The distributor ring was commonly located on the left thigh close to the scabbard itself, if that was the case the baldric must have been fastened here also, terminating in a strap end which is thought to be a re-used book clasp. The buckle is of bronze with an iron pin. It was secured with a buckle plate of sheet bronze.

The grip was of Oak but is currently encrusted with rust. To this rust however is to be found adhered a considerable amount of cloth.

Around the mouthpiece was a band of leather which may have been a re-enforcement strip. This is known from a fragment on the back.

On the tip of the scabbard was a bone item (now perished) this may have been a chape.



Schematic section through the Ballateare and Cronk Moar scabbards.

Featuring;

The Iron/ Steel blade;

The textile lining -
(probably of wool)

The thin wooden laths -
(in one case of – Oak)

The inner sheath -

(probably Linen) and

The outer sheath of
leather.