



Basket-hilted Sword from Walton Moor, Somerset

BY H. ST. GEORGE GRAY, F.S.A.

THE accompanying photograph (Plate XIII) illustrates a basket-hilted sword, or back-sword, of the type sometimes, but erroneously, called a claymore. Its total length is $39\frac{1}{4}$ inches. The ornamentation of the hilt may be seen in the photograph. The leather lining, in the fore part of the hilt, still remains in good condition; the wooden hand-grip is also well preserved. These materials, perishable in most deposits, owe their survival to the peat water in which the sword was immersed.

This sword, together with a helmet (now lost, from the rim of which there is said to have been a piece of pendent mail) and a deer's antler, were found on the south side of the Polden Hills, in the N.W. corner of the middle of the three Decoy Ponds on Walton Moor in the parish of Walton, near Street, Somerset, about 15 furlongs as the crow flies to the W.S.W. of Marshall's Elm—the five-ways road junction.

Mr. H. N. Hickley, of Rowford House, near Taunton, to whom the sword belongs, says it was found about 1875 when he was a boy, at a time when his father was working the decoys in this neighbourhood, and when the ponds were being cleared of peaty deposits. Joseph Everdell and his sons, Lonsdale and Elias, were employed during the fighting season and had the Walton manor shooting to look after; one of the sons was the actual finder of the weapon.

It is a mere coincidence that the sword was found within a short distance of the site of the Marshall's Elm skirmish at the beginning of the Civil Wars (*see* 'Bellum Civile: Hopton's Narrative of his Campaign in the West, 1642-44', *Som. Record Society*, xviii, pp. 7ff.).

On cleaning, the blade was found to be stamped with the outline of an animal of lamb-like form. On one face, viewed with the cutting-edge towards the observer, the upper half of

the animal is clearly defined, the rest having been worn away by the sharpening of the blade. On the other face the animal is stamped upside-down as viewed from the cutting-edge, so that on this face the extremities of the animal are well seen. On both faces 'S H' is stamped within the outline of the animal's body.

The sword is of the type used by mounted men, such as dragoons and yeomanry, both in England and Scotland during the eighteenth century.

Mr. Charles E. Whitelaw, of 22, Midmar Gardens, Morning-side, Edinburgh, informs us that the only evidence of date is the mark on the blade which is that adopted by the colony of German blade-smiths settled at Shotley Bridge, co. Durham, and used by them after 1703.

This sword should therefore be regarded as of English manufacture, dating from early in the eighteenth century.¹ The mark, Mr. Whitelaw tells us, is a new rendering of the Solingen wolf-mark (of lamb-like form), stamped 'S H',—a contraction for Shotley. 'This contracted mark is found occasionally on Scottish sword and dirk blades of the same century.'

Mr. Rhys Jenkins, past president of the Newcomen Society of Newcastle-on-Tyne, read a paper before the North of England Institute of Mining and Mechanical Engineers, in that city, 13 June 1935, on the subject of 'The Hollow Sword (hollow ground) Blade Company, and sword-making at Shotley Bridge'.

Mr. Whitelaw further writes, 'The origin of the industry was that one or more London merchants went over to Solingen in Westphalia and brought over some twenty qualified blade-smiths and their families at the end of 1687 or early in 1688. They also brought with them new mills for hollow grinding the sword blades'. Mr. Whitelaw knows of one specimen of these blades,—a late seventeenth-century small-sword, signed SHOTLEY BRIDGE and stamped with a running wolf. The company closed down about the end of 1702, but renewed its activities about August 1703, continuing in existence till shortly after 1831. 'I consider the mark on your sword-blade was adopted in or about 1703.'

¹ There is no evidence as to whether the hilt of this sword is contemporary with the blade or whether it had been re-used.