AN ILLUSTRATED

Cultural History of England

F.E. Halliday

Edited with Notes
by

Yasuo Nakamura

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Preface and Eight Chapters
from

An Illustrated Cultural History of England

by F.E. Halliday

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はしがき

本書は，イギリスの博学な文筆家であり，シェイクスピア研究家としてもその名を広く知られている Frank Ernest Halliday (1903–) の著書である *An Illustrated Cultural History of England* (1967) の中から，ブリテン島の先史時代にまで遡り，イギリスの歴史とその文化の土台を築いたチューダー朝のエリザベス時代までの部分を，テキスト版に編纂したものである．本書は原書の前半部分をほぼ収めることができたが，本書の性質上，紙数に制限があり，本文及び図版の一部を割愛していることをお断りしておきたい．

歴史には大きく分けて三つの分野があると言える．即ち，人間の愚かな破壊的な活動の歴史である「政治史」，人間の物質的な面での生活をより良いものにするための建設的な活動の歴史である「経済史」，そしてある固有の社会の中から生まれ育まれてきた宗教，文学，音楽，建築，学問，思想などで表現できるような，それぞれの時代が生み出した，人間のより高度な精神的な活動の歴史である「文化史」である．

原著者 Halliday は，その「まえがき」で述べているように，人間の物質的な目的にはほとんど役に立たないが，その精神的な必要を満たすのに役に立つ働きをする，「建設的な活動」を越えた，人間の「真に創造的な活動」が生み出した “the most creative achievements of man” を「文化」(culture) と解している．ある民族の「文化史」は，いわゆる「社会史」とはひと味違ったものであり，強調点が大いに違っているのである．Halliday の言葉を借りれば，次のように表現できるものである．

> it is little concerned with their ‘general conditions of life’, but is almost a spiritual odyssey, a history of their art and thought, with some account of the forces, political, religious, economic, and social, that have determined or modified them.

原著者 Halliday は，人間は本質的には創造的な活動をする存在であり，人間の最も高度な活動は秩序の創造であると信じており，この本質的な潜

在的能力を発揮させることによって，人間はその壮大な歴史を前進させ続けていくことができると楽観的に信じている．イギリスの宝であるその素晴らしい「文化」の歴史を辿ることによって，原著者は，不安と暴力と無秩序と破壊が存在し続ける時代の中にあって，ほのかな期待と希望を抱いて，いわば「光」を高く掲げる目的で，この著書を著しているといえる．

Halliday 氏は 1903 年に Yorkshire 東部 (East Riding) の港町で，その名を "The Sound of Silence" の中に歌われている Scarborough Fair で有名な，美しい海浜の町 Scarborough に生まれ，Cambridge 大学で学び，1927 年から 1948 年まで Cheltenham College で教え，Assistant Master を勤めていた．それ以後は景色が大変美しい海辺の保養地であり，芸術家が好んで住む静かな町である Cornwall の西北端に位置する St. Ives に住んで，文筆活動を続けてきた．彼の著作には Geoffrey Chaucer や William Shakespeare に関するものを中心に夥しいものがあるが，主なものに次のようなものがある．

Shakespeare and His Critics (1949)
A Shakespeare Companion (1952)
The Poetry of Shakespeare's Plays (1954)
The Legend of the Rood (1955)
Shakespeare in His Age (1956)
The Cult of Shakespeare (1957)
A History of Cornwall (1959)
The Life of Shakespeare (1961)
Unfamiliar Shakespeare (1962)
A Concise History of England (1964)
An Illustrated Cultural History of England (1967)
Dr Johnson and His World (1968)
Chaucer and His World (1968)
Wordsworth and His World (1969)
Thomas Hardy: His Life and World (1972)
Robert Browning (1976)

イギリスの歴史と文化を考えるうえで最も重要なことの一つは，その複雑な人種の多様な混淆・融合であり，それぞれの人種や民族がイギリスに

もたらした文化である．イギリスは海に囲まれた島国であるが，海はイギリスを孤立させるように働いたというより，海路を通して人々を移動させ，交流・交易する道を広く開いてきたのである．古くはイベリア人の渡来に始まり，ビーカー人やピクト人の渡来，それに続いて三波に分かれてのケルト人の移住・定着，ローマ人による遠征と征服，それに続くアングロ・サクソン人の侵入と征服・定住，北欧人であるデーン人の来冠・征服・移住，そしてノルマン人の征服・支配へと続いたのである．それぞれの人種・民族は，それぞれ独自の文化をイギリスにもたらし，多種多様な文化の融合を通じて，イギリスはその文化を開花させていったのである．イギリスの文化の特徴を考える場合に重要なことは，大まかに言えば北方のゲルマン文化（ノルマン・フランス文化をその中に含む）の影響と，南方から流入してきた地中海・ラテン文化（ヘブライ・キリスト教文化をその中に含む)の影響であり，その長年にわたる熟成・融合によってキリスト教的な香り高いイギリス独特の文化を形成してきたことである．

Halliday 氏の手になるこの書物は，このような多岐にわたる複雑で華麗なイギリスの文化の遺産を，簡潔要を得た筆致で記述してくれており，また豊富な図版を通して目で理解し楽しめるようにしてくれている．本書を読む学生諸君や読者の皆さんが，今後イギリスの文学のみならず，イギリスの文化と歴史に広く目を向けるようになってくれることを心から希望している．

終わりに当たり，本書出版のために協力してくださった英宝社編集部の方々，とりわけ宇治正夫氏のご尽力に心から感謝するものである．

1997 年 9 月 12 日

中 村 保 夫

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Preface

Culture is a concept too elusive to be pinned down by the lexicographer, and has never been, perhaps never can be, definitively defined. For Matthew Arnold it was 'The acquainting ourselves with the best that has been known and said in the world', a characteristically English literary interpretation that ignores, apparently, the world of music and the visual arts. Arnold was an Oxford man, and the *Oxford English Dictionary* echoes him: 'The intellectual side of civilization.' My copy of the American *Webster* is more catholic: 'The characteristic attainments of a people', which suggests that a cultural history of England should include Parliamentary democracy, cricket, and fish and chips: that cultural history is much the same thing as social history.

There are three main branches of history. Best known, because the only one normally taught in schools, is political history, largely a record of man's destructive activities, or, as Gibbon put it, 'little more than the register of the crimes, follies and misfortunes of mankind'. Then, there is economic history, an account of man's constructive activities, his discoveries and inventions, and organization for the production of useful commodities. Social history is also much concerned with these things, and the constructive use of material goods, for social conditions are mainly determined by economic conditions.

In the Introduction to his *English Social History*, G.M. Trevelyan defined the scope of social history as 'the daily life of the inhabitants of the land in past ages: this includes the human as well as the economic relation of different classes to one another, the character of family and household life, the conditions of labour and of leisure, the attitude of man to nature'. All these, but in addition, 'the culture of each age as it arose out of these general conditions of life, and took ever changing forms in religion, literature and music, architecture, learning and thought'. Here are other and higher activities of man, more than merely constructive, the truly creative: for these are the self-begotten issue of his spirit, serving little or no material purpose, but ministering to his spiritual needs.

It is in this sense that I understand culture: as the most creative achievements of man, and the cultural history of a people is their social history with a difference, a quite different emphasis; for it is little concerned with their 'general conditions of life', but is almost a spiritual odyssey, a history of their art and thought, with some account of the forces, political, religious, economic, and social, that have determined or modified them.

This book, therefore, is both a variation on the theme of my *Five Arts*, and the complement of my *Concise History of England*, a political history in which I tried to emphasize the creative activities of man, and in the Preface wrote: ' . . . man is essentially creative, or he would not be here, and his destructive follies are merely aberrations in the grand design of his evolution. His highest activities . . . are all a creation of order, and . . . by giving a proper emphasis to man's creative achievements and potentialities, history can help to hasten

the process.' In this age of anxiety, violence, disorder, and threatened destruction, a history devoted to England's creative achievements, as opposed to its crimes and follies, is not irrelevant.

AN ILLUSTRATED

Cultural History of England

1 *Prehistoric Beginnings*

Some three-quarters of a million years ago primitive man reached north-west Europe, and for nearly three-quarters of a million years countless generations of these slow-witted, shambling creatures spent their lives, like the lower animals, gathering food and hunting, their greatest creative achievement being the stone tools and weapons that they made to help them in their struggle for existence. Then, about forty thousand years ago, during the last phase of the Ice Age, a new stock appeared, men not unlike ourselves, the big-brained nimble hunters of the final period of the Old Stone Age.

It is with these new men of Aurignacian and Magdalenian times that the history of art begins. The cold winds blowing off the ice-cap drove them to seek shelter in caves, and on their walls the hunters of southern France and northern Spain splendidly portrayed the animals they hoped to kill: the mammoth, bison, deer, and horses that roamed the steppeland to which Europe had been reduced. The primary purpose of their paintings was magical, as was that of the small figures that they carved and modelled, or engraved on stone and bone, but many of them are also records of an artist's spiritual experience.

Southern France was a favoured region in comparison with Britain, and it may be that the struggle for existence in its

arctic climate exhausted the energies of these northern hunters and withered their artistic impulse. Although for innumerable centuries they inhabited caves, from Kent's Cavern in Devon to the north of Yorkshire, they left no graphic records on their walls, and the only remains of their art are a few engravings on bone, such as those of a horse's head and a masked man engaged in some magic ritual, found at Creswell Crags in Derbyshire. They are poor things compared to the work of the artists of Lascaux and Altamira, yet the line is sure and precise, and they are among the first works of art to be produced in Britain, some fifteen thousand years ago.

The story of man's early evolution as an artist is of necessity confined to the graphic arts and sculpture, for these were the only enduring forms of self-expression within his capacity. Moreover, they are basically the simplest, and the complexities of the other arts were beyond him. Dance and song of a sort there must have been, but it would be noise rather than music; he must have invented a mythology, but his tales of another world of gods and spirits, even if he had been able to record them, would be scarcely literature; so too, he must have had buildings of a sort, rude huts and shelters, but nothing that could be called architecture. And even this great age of painting, which for vigour and economy of execution has never been surpassed, came to an end twelve thousand years ago.

There followed the long barren centuries of Mesolithic times until, shortly before 2000 B C, men of the New Stone Age, bringing a Mediterranean tradition, arrived in Britain, and with them begins the real history of art in these islands. They

were the builders of the great stone tombs which they covered with a mound of earth, long since washed away to reveal the huge uprights that form the walls of the chamber, and the great capstone that covers it. These tombs have some pretence to architecture, and some of the rather later chambered tombs in Ireland, of which the best known is New Grange, have elaborate designs carved on their stones, notably spirals and circles. But the noblest monument of the Neolithic and succeeding Early Bronze Age is Stonehenge.

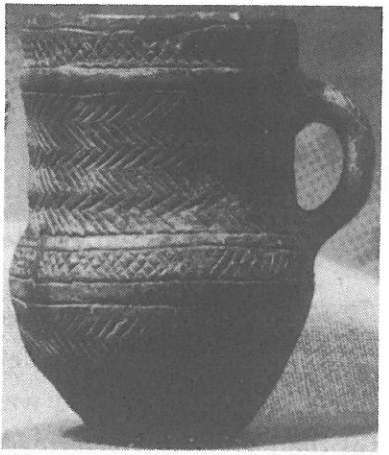
Carving from the tomb at New Grange, Ireland, *c.* 1800 B C.

Its construction covered four centuries, approximately 1800–1400 B C, for it was constantly altered and added to, and nowhere else is there anything like it: an outer circle of stones nearly fourteen feet high, pillars that support a continuous lintel, and within it a horseshoe of ten even huger stones, set in pairs, each pair with its separate lintel. An inner circle and inner horseshoe of smaller free-standing bluestones repeat the pattern of the major members. These great blocks of sandstone, or sarsens, some of them weighing fifty tons, were dragged more than twenty miles from the chalk downs, and the bluestones were somehow transported from the mountains of West Wales. They are not merely natural blocks of approximately the right size and shape, but each was carefully dressed to fit it for its function, and the ripples of the tooling, where they remain, are the most delicate detail of the building. Then, the uprights taper and curve towards the top,

where tenons fit into the mortices of the lintels, which are carved to form an arc of the great circle. Moreover, the sides of the lintels of the horseshoe trilithons slope slightly outwards to correct the illusion of recession, the kind of refinement that makes the perfection of the Parthenon. These subtleties, indeed, suggest the influence of Greece of Mycenean times, as do the recently discovered carvings of bronze axeheads and a dagger on one of the stones.

Before it fell into ruin Stonehenge must have had much of the grandeur of an Egyptian temple, which, despite its circular shape, in some ways it resembles, and that it was a temple there can be little doubt. Surrounded by a ditch and bank, it stood, as it were, upon a plinth, complete, classical in its isolation, and Neolithic worshippers on its perimeter would watch the procession of priests about the ambulatory, and the celebration of mysteries within the sanctuary of the great trilithons. It would be not unlike watching the performance of a play, and perhaps Stonehenge is the prototype of the 'rounds' in which medieval miracle plays were presented, and ultimately of the 'wooden O' for which Shakespeare wrote.

Stonehenge, on Salisbury Plain. A unique temple of *c.* 1800–1400 B C. Unlike a fort, a 'henge' had a ditch inside, not outside, its surrounding bank.



The first British pottery. Early Bronze Age beakers, *c.* 1700 B C.

The Neolithic immigration involved a momentous agricultural and industrial revolution, for these new men were not nomadic hunters like the natives, but farmers who settled in villages and practised the crafts of pottery and metalworking. The period of the building of Stonehenge, therefore, is that of the making of the first British pots: bowls, drinking-mugs, beakers, the last characteristically decorated with bands of lozenges and chevrons. A similar design was engraved on the jet bead necklaces of the period, and on the delicate gold *lunulae*, or neck ornaments, beaten almost paper-fine to spread the precious metal into the same crescent-like shape, for gold was scarce and its source virtually confined to Ireland and Scotland. This rectilinear ornament seems to have come from Central Europe with the Beaker Folk, and is in strong contrast to the spiral designs brought from the Mediterranean by the megalith builders. A combination of the two traditions is found on the strange little chalk cylinders from Yorkshire, one of which has a concentric horseshoe pattern that resembles the round eyes and face of an owl. A few wooden figures of men, some of them four or five feet high and probably of the sixth century B C, have survived, but the art of the Bronze Age people was essentially abstract and ornamental, unlike the naturalistic painting and sculp-

Top of small chalk cylinder, possibly an idol, *c.* 1500 B C.

ture of their remote ancestors, the Palaeolithic hunters.

A new era began when the La Tène Celts invaded Britain in the fifth century B C and, armed with iron swords against which the soft bronze weapons of the natives were useless, established themselves as a feudal aristocracy. Iron, however, although it revolutionized warfare and industry, is less beautiful than gold and bronze, and for ornaments these were the metals they mainly demanded of their craftsmen. It was an age of domestic squalor and barbaric splendour, for these Celtic warriors cared little for their homes and lavished their wealth on personal adornment: bronze scabbards, helmets, and shields, necklaces of twisted gold, bronze mirrors for their women, bronze masks and trappings for their horses. They enriched the geometric design of the Bronze Age with new motifs derived from Italy, in particular the tendril and anthemion, the formalized honeysuckle ornament of classical Greece, and developed a flowing curvilinear form that has the coiled energy of a spring.

There were two main schools of Celtic craftsmen. In north-east England their work was generally repoussé bronze, as in the splendid horse-masks with intricate design of plant-like forms, and more stylized and symmetrical shields, a fashion that was carried into Ireland, where it was magnificently applied to gold ornaments. The characteristic work of the south-west is best seen in the engraving of their bronze mirrors, the finest of which are those found at Desborough and Birdlip.

Both are variations on the theme of three, a favourite motif, and the circular back of the Birdlip mirror is a series of circles within circles, three within one, and again three within one, each flowing into the others as the labyrinthine line expands into floral scrolls of hatched basket-work design.

These Celtic craftsmen were not interested in realism. Their art, like that of the Bronze Age, was essentially an abstract one, dependent on the beauty of its line, but with the Roman occupation of France in the first century B C, and the peaceful penetration of England by Roman merchants, classical naturalism inevitably had its effect, particularly on the newly arrived Belgic tribes of the south-east. Yet, although the Britons began to make small figures of animals, these were characteristically stylized to form a pattern: a horse's head was simplified into little more than a flowing linear design in repoussé bronze, while on a vastly larger scale the White Horse cut in the turf of the chalk downs at Uffington is an attenuated figure reduced to a few light springing lines. The human heads

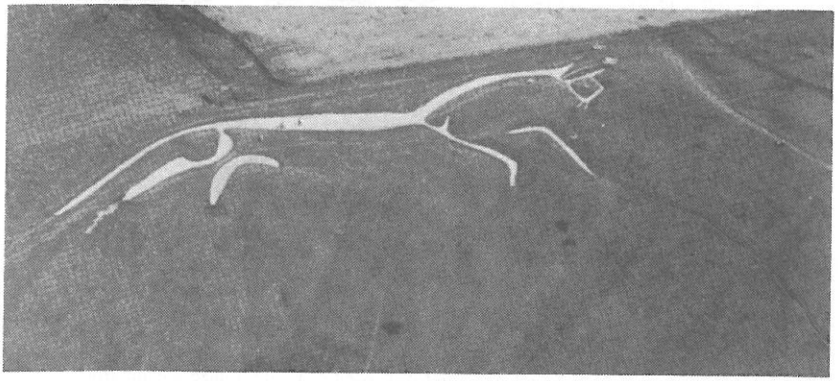
Engraved back of Celtic bronze mirror, from Birdlip in the Cotswolds. The front was polished bronze. First century A D.

Repoussé bronze from northern Britain: Stylized horse's head from north Yorkshire. First century A D.

on their coins are more realistic, but even here the hair becomes a wave-like pattern that bears little resemblance to the naturalism of its Roman original.

Julius Caesar described the Britons as long-haired, woad-stained, blue-bodied barbarians, and this unflattering picture is still the popularly accepted one. But Caesar was in Britain for only a few days, and even if he saw any of its art probably dismissed it as equally barbaric, so very different from the realism and grandeur to which he was accustomed in Rome.

Celtic gold coin. First century B C.



The White Horse of Uffington, Berkshire: possibly a British tribal emblem of the first century B C.

2 *Roman Britain 50–450*

It is difficult to realize, so little of its work remains, that from the middle of the first century for almost four hundred years, nearly a fifth of our recorded history, Britain was a province of the Roman Empire. England rather than Britain, however, for the Romans did not occupy Scotland or invade Ireland, while Wales and Cornwall were too remote and wild for civilian settlement, and in these northern and western parts the old Celtic way of life went on much as before.

The southern Celts were soon introduced to the civilization and art of Rome, and, if we exclude Stonehenge, Avebury, and the monuments of the megalith builders, architecture for the first time modified the appearance of England. The Britons had their wooden huts and villages, but now they saw the erection of stone and brick buildings that were designed not only for their function but also for their appearance. In the north the architecture was primarily military: Hadrian's Wall from Tyne to Solway was built to contain the Celts of Scotland, and York founded as a fortress and headquarters of a legion. Chester and Caerleon, commanding the north and south of the Welsh border, were also legionary fortresses, and it was mainly in the Midlands and south that towns were built as mercantile and residential centres.

London, owing to its position on the Thames, soon became

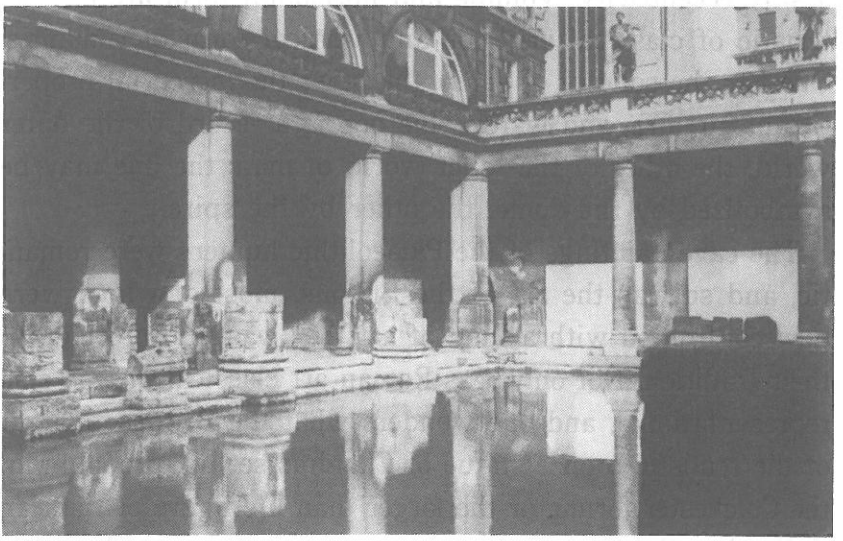
the commercial capital and one of the biggest towns in western Europe, its walls enclosing an area of three hundred and twenty-five acres. Colchester, however, was chosen as the centre of Emperor worship, and within a few years a temple of Claudius was built, as well as a senate house and theatre. Verulamium (St Albans) also had its theatre, its market hall, and forum, and in its walls were four great gateways flanked by impressive semicircular towers. Bath was a small town, but architecturally one of the finest, for it contained the temple of the Celtic goddess, Sulis-Minerva, and curative baths with a European reputation, the largest of them, and no doubt the smaller ones as well, flanked by handsome colonnades. Cirencester and Wroxeter were large towns of some two hundred acres, but most of the others, Leicester, Silchester, and Winchester, for example, were only half the size, with a population, perhaps, of four or five thousand.

The towns were small because the Britons were countrymen and did not take easily to urban life, and, though landowners might also have their town-houses — there were twenty-five very big houses in Silchester — they generally preferred to live most of the year in their farmhouses, or villas as they came to be called. They soon adopted the Roman style of building, adding new rooms, above all a dining-room and bath-house, signs of social status, and a front corridor to connect them. This might then expand, as at Northleigh Villa in Oxfordshire, into a great house with four wings surrounding a courtyard, though, as little remains of these villas but foundations, it is easy to exaggerate their grandeur, for most of the rooms were on the ground floor, and superstructures might have been half-timber. The vast mansion at Fishbourne,

near Chichester, is exceptional: begun about thirty years after the Roman occupation, it was five hundred feet square, and the four wings enclosing the courtyard had nearly a hundred rooms, almost all of them with mosaic floors.

And so Roman architecture came to Britain: country-house and town-house, senate house and forum, temples, theatres, amphitheatres, and public baths, and with them the classical form and detail of column and colonnade, architrave, pediment, and arch. Then, these new Romano-British public buildings and private houses were adorned with carvings and other works of art that were a strange contrast to native Celtic forms.

All art is a creation of harmony, of order out of confusion, the more or less conscious selection and co-ordination of the chaotic product of the imagination. The degree to which the



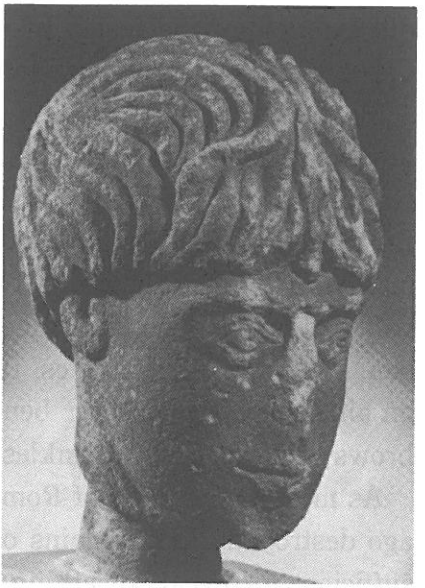
Classical architecture comes to Britain. The Great Roman Bath at Aquae Sulis (Bath). The colonnade is restored, but the floor of the bath is still covered with the original Roman lead from the Mendip Hills.

conscious mind, or reason, modifies the imagination may vary enormously, yet most works of art and periods of artistic production can be assigned with some confidence to one or other of the two great schools, classical or romantic, according to the extent of this modification. Thus, the ideals of classical art are order, restraint, symmetry, balance, simplicity, clarity, regularity, the parts subordinated to the whole; romantic art is less rational and more emotional, varied, irregular, mysterious, complex, restless, given to excess, impatient of rules and restraint, and as much interested in the parts as in the whole. Classical art tends to be that of a long-established and settled urban civilization, romantic of an age of transition; the one has the virtue of age, serenity, which, however, may decline into pedantry and senility; the other the vigour and elasticity of youth, which may become merely a silly eccentricity. Volume and horizontal form are characteristic of classical art; line and vertical form of romantic. One has the solidity of earth, the other the mercurial properties of air, fire, and water. The one is a record of the outer world, the other of the inner world of man; the one may be symbolized by the dome, the other by the spire.

The cave paintings of the Palaeolithic hunters were romantic, and so was the art of the Britons, most of whom were now confronted with a kind of art that was quite foreign to their tradition. Not only was Roman art classical, it was also representational, and one wonders what the Britons thought of the realistic bronze statue of Claudius set up, probably, in the Colchester forum, or the larger than life figure of Hadrian in London. But these at least were bronze, the favourite metal of the Celts, and even more foreign to their eyes would be the

marble portrait busts that graced the public buildings and houses of the invaders, for to the Britons sculpture in stone was an unknown art.

It is all the more interesting, therefore, to see what they made of the new medium, and a fine example is the limestone head from Gloucester, carved by a British sculptor soon after the Roman occupation. The forehead might be Roman, but not the long melancholy face, all the features of which are seized upon to form a pattern: the shape of the prominent, serrated locks of hair is repeated in the great bulging eyes and narrow nose, the thin mouth repeats the line of the brows, their light and shade, and the ears make a characteristic



British variations on a Roman theme, *c.* A D 200.
(*Left*) Stone head of a man, from Gloucester.
(*Below*) Stone head of a god, from Northumberland.

A British sculptor's interpretation of a classical legend. The head of Medusa on the pediment of the temple of Sulis-Minerva, Bath.

curvilinear design. A more accomplished work of art is a stone head of the British god Antenociticus, found in his temple at Benwell, Northumberland. Here the features are less stylized, though the eyes are emphasized by the double scroll of the lids, and the hair is a snake-like pattern of locks, writhing symmetrically about the heavy fringe that falls over the forehead. The elusive, enigmatic smile is something very different from the standard expressionless portraits of Imperial Rome, and this is a splendid example of the fusion of romantic and classical, a lively Celtic variation on an uninspired Roman theme.

Most famous of all British carvings of the Roman period, however, is the stone relief of Medusa that formed the central feature of the pediment on the temple of Sulis-Minerva at Bath. Although Medusa was a woman, the head is that of a man with locks of hair intertwined with snakes that radiate wildly from the face like flames in a formalized picture of the sun. The huge glaring eyes, their pupils deeply drilled, have an almost hypnotic power beneath the inverted curves of the brows and patterned wrinkles of the forehead.

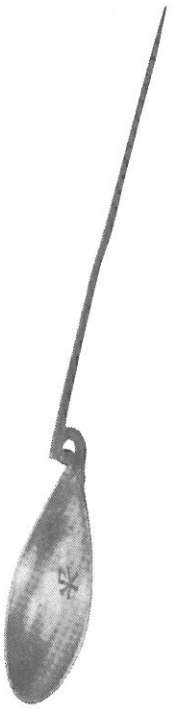
As most of the walls of Romano-British buildings were long ago destroyed, little remains of their fresco-paintings, though sufficient to reveal something of the elegance of life in those

times. Fragments of hundreds of square feet of painted wall plaster have recently been found at Fishbourne, and at Verulamium a few pieces of the paintings have survived. On one wall was a rather dull architectural design of a colonnade and marbled panels, on another a yellow frieze and floral scroll, within which were pheasants, a bird brought to Britain, apparently, by the Romans. There was another bird painting on one of the ceilings, of yellow doves on a purple ground, set in a complex geometrical design. These are all of the second century, and almost certainly the work of foreign artists.

So too were the mosaics with which the Romans and wealthier Britons covered their floors, for this to the native Celts was the strangest art of all. Greek in origin, it was developed by the Romans, who set small cubes of coloured stone in cement to form geometrical or more complex realistic designs. These were the property of the firm that laid the pavement, though they might be modified to suit a client, and colours varied, for they normally used the stone of the region in which they worked, and as England is particularly rich in the variety of its stone they had a wide range of colours: white and black, and innumerable shades of grey, blue, red, yellow, and brown. As the Britons were unaccustomed to representational art, we should expect many of the early pavements to be abstract patterns, as were some of the very early ones at Fishbourne, either black and white or polychrome geometrical designs. These abstract patterns, reminiscent of woven rugs, from which mosaics originally derived, were popular throughout the Roman occupation.

As the British gentry became more sophisticated and edu-

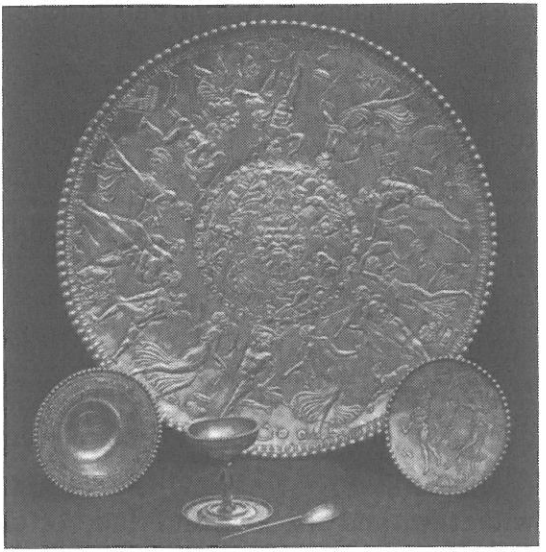
cated in Roman art and literature, they demanded more complex and vivid figured mosaics for their villas. One of the most ambitious of these is a brightly coloured pavement from Low Ham in Somerset, illustrating episodes from the *Aeneid*. In one panel is the arrival of the Trojan fleet at Carthage, represented by three ships, not unlike those in the Bayeux Tapestry. Then there are scenes depicting Venus, the matchmaker, introducing the lovers, the famous hunt in Book IV, and finally Aeneas embracing a naked Dido in the cave. It does not follow that the British grandee who commissioned the pavement was a devotee of Virgil, for the design was probably a stock one from a North African pattern-book, but it is interesting as showing some acquaintance with classical mythology, and that by the fourth century (and even earlier) local craftsmen were trying their hand at mosaics, for the work is insufficiently accomplished to be that of a foreign specialist. How crude was some of the works of British craftsmen who imitated Roman models may be illustrated by the pavement at Rudston in the East Riding of Yorkshire. Yet, although Venus in the central medallion is a grotesquely distorted figure, her wildly waving hair and the obvious delight taken in the pattern of circles and semicircles show that the Celtic feeling for vigorous abstract design was by no means dead in the fourth century.



Silver spoon with the Christian Chi-Rho symbol.

This was the century in which Constan-

tine made Christianity the official religion of the Empire. At York in 306 he was proclaimed Augustus by the army, and at York was carved, though not by a Briton, the colossal stone head that was set up in one of the public buildings of the legionary fortress. A few years later came his conversion, when he adopted the sacred Chi-Rho monogram (☧) as his device. Some of the Britons accepted the new religion, and at Silchester are the remains of a fourth-century church. It was built in the form of a Roman basilica, or hall of justice, with a nave thirty feet long, flanked by aisles ending in rudimentary transepts, a porch across the east end, and at the east end of the nave an apse with a mosaic panel in white, black, and red. This is the earliest church to be found in Britain, but other relics of Romano-British Christianity are the recently discovered silver spoon with a Chi-Rho monogram near Canterbury, and the wall-paintings at the neighbouring Lullingstone Villa. These are fragmentary, but the head of a red-haired young man has been preserved, presumably a Celt and a Christian, for there



Part of the buried Mildenhall Treasure of silver dishes, bowls and spoons. The work is probably Roman, not British.

are also remains of two large Chi-Rho monograms painted in red on a white background.

Christianity was also responsible for the first extant work to be written by a native of Britain, the Latin Commentary on St Paul's Epistles of the Irish monk and heretic, Pelagius. He wrote at the end of the fourth century, when the heathen English were raiding the east coast of Britain, and the Britons were burying their treasures, among them the hoard of silver at Mildenhall, Suffolk, with the great round dish, two feet across, and its head of Oceanus, sprouting flaming hair, dolphins, and seaweed, and reminiscent of the Bath Medusa. At the beginning of the fifth century the Roman garrisons withdrew, and the long interlude of classical art was over.

3 *The Anglo-Saxons 450–1066*

By the beginning of the sixth century England must have looked very much as it did five hundred years before. The towns were down, temples and theatres in ruin, the statues fallen, columns broken, and the rubble of villas, pavements, frescoes, pottery, and glass lay under the roots of the returning forest. The heathen Angles and Saxons, the English, had destroyed Romano-British civilization, and little or nothing remained but the indestructible roads, the Latin language, and British Christianity.

It was one of these British Christians, St Patrick, who converted the Irish, whose monasteries, such as Kells and Durrow, became centres of light and learning in the European darkness that followed the eclipse of the Roman Empire. Their monks proved indefatigable missionaries: in 563 St Columba founded a monastery on the island of Iona, off the west coast of Scotland, and at the same time innumerable 'saints' crossed into the other Celtic countries of Wales and Cornwall. There the natives cherished the legends and sang the exploits of the heroic British leader who defended the Christian west against the pagan English. He is first mentioned briefly as Ambrosius Aurelianus by Gildas, a sixth-century monk and the first British historian, but two centuries later the Welsh historian Nennius called him Arthur, victor of twelve great battles against the Saxons.

These histories were written in Latin, a language unknown to the early English invaders, but they also had their heroes, and in their chieftains' halls minstrels celebrated the feats of warriors in the lands they had recently left, above all the adventures of Beowulf. There was adventure enough. Young Beowulf sails to Denmark to rid King Hrothgar of a monster, Grendel, who nightly enters his hall and slaughters his subjects. He wrestles with Grendel and tears off his arm, though the monster escapes to his den in a mere, where his blood makes the water boil as he dies. But the next night another noble is carried off, this time by Grendel's mother. Beowulf follows her to the mere, plunges in, and after a great fight cuts off her head, as well as Grendel's, before his sword melts in their venomous blood. Full of honour he returns to his native land, of which he becomes king, and reigns for fifty years. But the country is ravaged by a dragon, whose fiery breath consumes the wooden houses of his people. In a last great battle the old hero kills the dragon, but is himself mortally wounded.

Beowulf is the poem of a primitive people, but it has the primitive virtues of vigour and simplicity, and is in every way on an epic scale. It is indeed the first great poem in the English language, or in any modern language, and with it English literature may be said to begin. The manuscript of *Beowulf* was written in about the year 1000, but in its first form, when recounted by bards some four centuries earlier, the language would be even more incomprehensible to modern ears. Unqualified by the music of long Latin vowels, Old English, harsh, guttural, costive with consonants, was by nature alliterative. Instead of rhyme or assonance, therefore,

poets used the convention of alliteration and the repetition of consonants; the normal line of Saxon verse is one in which there are four stresses, two in the first half, on words beginning with the same consonant, and two in the second, with a repetition of the alliteration.

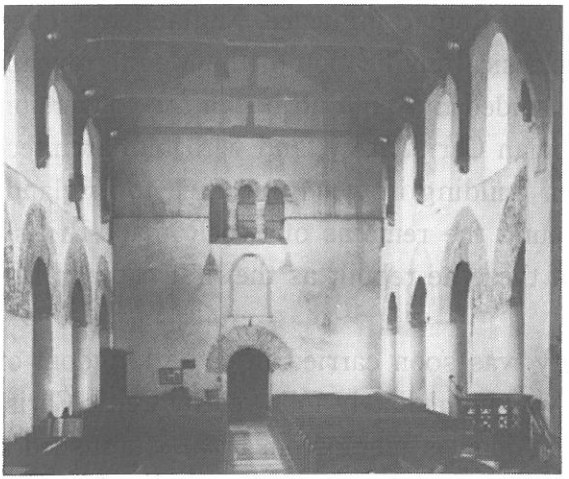
The consonant has the plucked quality of lute and virginal, the vowel, the long vowel at least, the orotundity of the organ; or in terms of graphic art, the consonant has the two-dimensional quality of line drawing, the vowel the three-dimensional quality of chiaroscuro; the one is essentially romantic, the other classical. As the English language has always been rich in consonants, it may be no accident that much of its greatest music has been written for stringed instruments, that most of its greatest poetry is romantic, that its painting is characteristically linear, and even its sculpture and architecture almost as much concerned with line as with volume.

At the end of the sixth century, after a severance of nearly two hundred years from Roman influence, England was once again linked to the classical civilization of the Mediterranean. In 597 St Augustine landed in Kent and began the conversion of the English to Roman Christianity, and with him architecture, as distinct from building in wood, returned to England. At Canterbury he found the remains of two Romano-British churches, and one of these he rebuilt as the first cathedral of Canterbury.

Roman Christianity was soon carried into the kingdom of Northumbria, but it was immediately followed by Celtic Christianity when, in 635, Aidan, a monk from Iona, established a monastery on Lindisfarne, or Holy Island, just south of the River Tweed. As Celtic Christianity had been for so long out

of touch with Rome, it differed in detail from that recently reintroduced by Augustine, and when they met in Northumbria they inevitably came into conflict. This was given visual expression in their architecture, for instead of the modified Roman basilican form of Kent, the first Northumbrian churches, as at Escomb in County Durham, were built in the austere Irish style of an unaisled nave with a simple rectangular chancel. When, however, Northumbria adopted the Roman form of Christianity after the Synod of Whitby in 664, Bishop Wilfrid of York built churches at Hexham, Ripon, and York, which appear to have had nave arcades and aisles in the basilican manner. Yet the monastic churches of Monkwearmouth and Jarrow, founded by Benedict Biscop in 674 and 682, had high, narrow, unaisled naves leading into a small square-ended chancel.

Half-way between these southern and northern groups is Brixworth in Northamptonshire, the only Early Saxon church of any size to have survived. Nearly a hundred feet long, nave and choir were originally separated by an arcade, and at the east end an arch opened into a



The late seventh-century church at Brixworth, Northamptonshire: the finest example of Early Saxon architecture.

polygonal apse. The aisles have been destroyed, and the openings of the arcades walled in, but the four arches on each side remain, made of Roman tiles springing from stone piers. If the work is that of English masons, it was a remarkable achievement for so early a date.

By this time, however, Northumbria could boast of even more remarkable achievements, for it was in this northern kingdom that English art first began to flourish. At the end of the seventh century Bede was a monk in the Monastery of Jarrow, collecting material for his great *History of the English Church and People*, which he finished in 731. As it was written in Latin, it cannot be claimed as a work of English literature, but it is the first English history, and one of the most valuable and delightful, for Bede generally managed to sift true history from legend, yet enlivened his story with anecdotes, preferably miraculous, and everywhere the goodness and compassion of the man shine through. To his book he also appended the first autobiography to be written by an Englishman: 'I was born on the lands of this monastery, and at the age of seven my family entrusted me to the reverend Abbot Benedict. . . . Since then I have spent all my life here, observing the discipline and singing the choir offices daily in church.' Here is the first, and tantalizingly brief, reference to English Church music.

Although musical instruments of all kinds, stringed, wind, and percussion, are immemorially old, we know little about the music that was played and sung in Britain, or even in Europe, before the time of Bede. But dancing must be far older than musical instruments, performed to the rhythmical clapping of hands, and when dance came to be accompanied

by music it too must have been rhythmical. Whether this early secular vocal and instrumental music had any form of harmony we do not know, though pictures of groups of people playing instruments of the same kind but different size, and therefore pitch, suggest that it had.

Early Church music, however, had neither harmony nor metrical beat, but was a measureless chanting by a number of voices in unison. This plainsong was introduced into England by St Augustine, but according to Bede it was nearly a hundred years before it spread to Northumbria, shortly before his own birth in 673, and it was Abbot John who taught him 'the chant for the liturgical year, as it was sung at St Peter's, Rome'.

One of the most charming of Bede's stories is that about Caedmon, at this time a cowherd in the Monastery of Whitby. He knew nothing of music or poetry, and when 'those present at a feast took it in turn to sing and entertain the company, he would get up from table and go home when he saw the harp approaching him'. On one of these occasions he went to the stable, where he fell asleep, and in a dream saw a man who said, 'Caedmon, sing me a song.' 'I cannot sing,' he replied. 'Nevertheless, you shall sing to me,' said the man: 'Sing about the Creation of all things.' So Caedmon, the ignorant cowherd, immediately began to sing about God and the creation of the world. It makes a good story, yet there is a poem of *Genesis* about this period, and it is just possible that this is Caedmon's. Bede added that 'others tried to compose religious poems in English, but none could compare with him, for he received his gift from God'. Yet so did Cynewulf, according to his own account in *Elene*, a poem that describes St

Helena's finding of the Cross. Although we know nothing about Cynewulf, he is the only Saxon poet to whom we can confidently assign his work, for he signed his name in runic characters in three more religious poems, and may have been the author of others, perhaps of the dramatic and triumphant *Judith*.

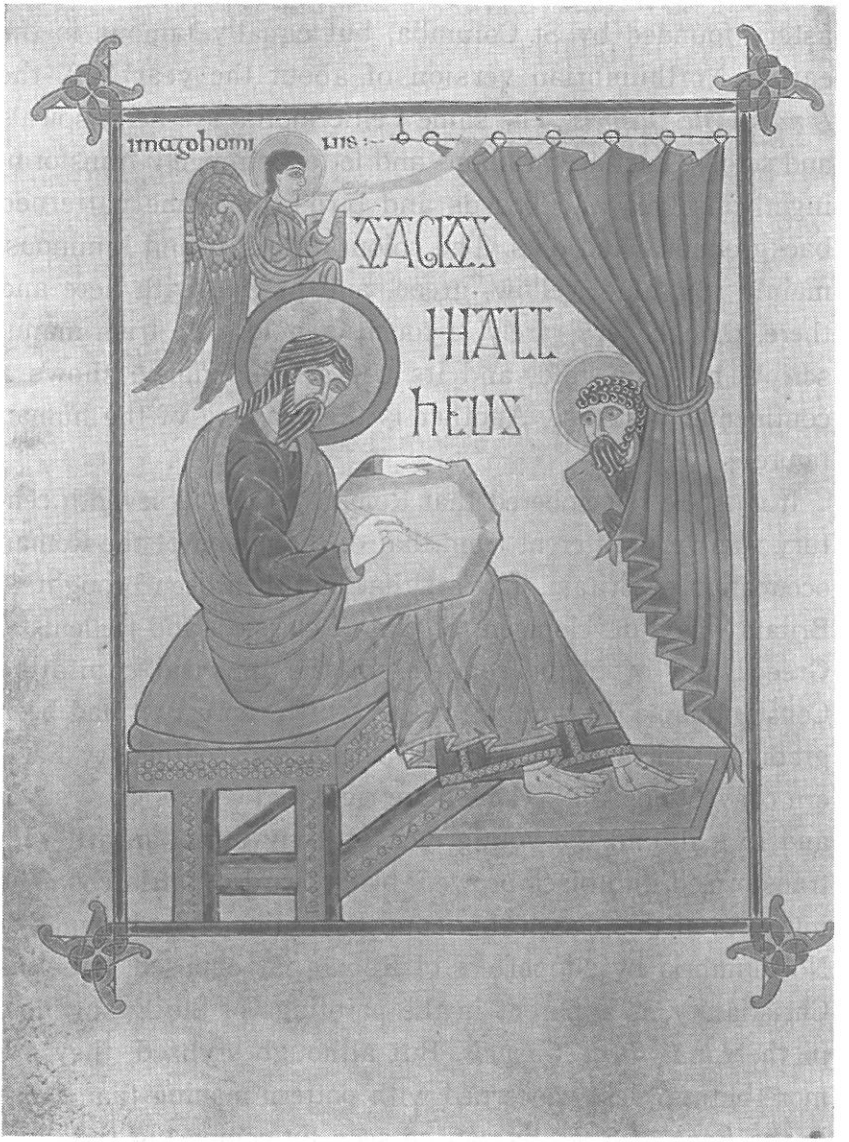
Nearly all this Saxon art was inspired by Christianity, yet the most interesting and moving poetry is that of unknown writers who gave expression to their own feelings. Most of them have a similar philosophy, a common theme being regret for what time has taken away, yet, though life is hard, fatalism is tempered by courage and a determination to endure. Thus, when Deor is supplanted by a younger singer, he recalls the good times past, but also remembers how heroes like Weland endured affliction, and ends each verse with the refrain: 'Thæs ofereode, thisses swa mæg !': 'He overcame that, so may I this !' Then there is the love-song of the wife whose husband has been taken away from her, and she thinks of him in exile: 'My beloved endures much sorrow of heart, remembering too often a happier home.' The Wanderer, musing on the ruins of a great city, asks, 'Where is the horse gone? Where is the man?' yet knows that 'it is noble in a man to bind fast the casket of his soul, to hold firm his heart, whatever he may think'. The theme of *The Ruin* is similar: an unknown Saxon meditates on the Roman remains of Bath and its temple of Sulis-Minerva, long ago destroyed by his ancestors: 'There stood the stone courts, there the bath-halls, and the stream flowed in hot waves; but now the roof is broken, the walls are down, the towers fallen.' Nostalgia was to be the inspiration of much English poetry of later times, but there

The Celtic love of pattern: St Matthew, from the Irish Book of Durrow (*Left*) and Book of Kells (*Centre*), seventh and eighth centuries. (*Right*) The beginning of St Matthew's Gospel in the Northumbrian Lindisfarne Gospels: 'Liber generationis...'

was no self-pity in these Saxons of the age of Bede.

The turn of the century, about the year 700, was the climax of this fine flowering of Northumbrian art, yet it was not entirely Saxon, for at Lindisfarne, an Irish foundation, the Celtic tradition still lingered. The greatest achievement of Irish Christian art was its illuminated manuscripts, religious books transcribed and painted by monks. Inspired by the curvilinear designs of Early Celtic metalwork, these monastic artists applied them to their pages, making a coloured pattern of their texts and borders: a design composed of interwoven ribbons, spirals, knots, scrolls, trumpet shapes, and intricately entwined animals. These animals, however, are fantastic reptilian creatures of the imagination, details drawn to fit into the design, and when representing the human figure the Irish artists were again less interested in naturalism than in making a pattern.

The earliest of these Irish illuminated texts is the late-seventh-century *Book of Durrow*, the most famous the late-eighth-



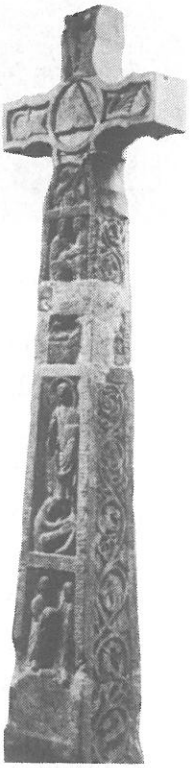
THE LINDISFARNE GOSPELS, 698–721. St Matthew: one of the four full-page paintings of the Evangelists. The tight drawing of the angel, and the heavy eyes, indicate Byzantine influence, but there is a characteristic English liveliness in the line and transparent colouring.

century *Book of Kells*, a copy of the Gospels from the monastery founded by St Columba, but equally famous is the earlier Northumbrian version of about the year 700, the *Lindisfarne Gospels*. The same Celtic motifs are here: spirals and scrolls, interlaced ribbons and letters strangely transforming themselves into lizards and birds, the same patterned background of red dots. The colours are soft and luminous, mainly red, blue, yellow, green, and purple, with here and there, though very rarely, a touch of gold. The Irish manuscripts have no gold, and its use at Lindisfarne shows a continental influence. Another is the drawing of the human figure.

It must be remembered that Roman art of the seventh century was very different from that of the period of the Roman occupation of Britain. The art that had then been brought to Britain was a development of that of classical and Hellenistic Greece, but after the removal of the Imperial capital to Constantinople (Byzantium) in the fourth century, it had been gradually orientalized, Western naturalism modified by Eastern conventions: all became more rigid and severe, more static and formal, and the young men of early Christian art were transformed into black-browed, black-bearded patriarchs. The influence of this classical-oriental Byzantine style, brought to Northumbria by supporters of Roman, as opposed to Celtic, Christianity, is apparent in the paintings of the Evangelists in the *Lindisfarne Gospels*. But although stylized, they are more natural, less concerned with pattern making than those in the *Book of Kells*, as can be seen by comparing the illustrations of St Matthew in the two manuscripts.

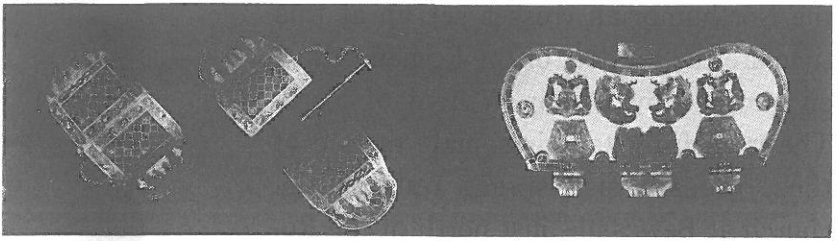
The *Lindisfarne Gospels*, however, are essentially Celtic, but

the Northumbrian crosses set up at this time are the product of the Roman school encouraged by Bishop Wilfrid of York. The gracefully tapering shaft of one of these crosses still stands outside the church at Bewcastle, just north of the Roman Wall. Carved in relief on the front, one below the other, are the figures of St John the Baptist, Christ Triumphant, and St John the Evangelist. The other sides are carved with foliage designs, an adaptation of the Syrian vine-scroll motif, though these are separated by strips of Celtic interlacing ribbon ornament. The cross at Ruthwell, near Dumfries, is more purely continental in inspiration: both front and back are carved with scenes from the life of Christ, and down the sides runs the flowing vine-scroll, within which animals and birds are feeding on the grapes, Christian symbol of the source of life. There is a similar ornament in repoussé-work on the small silver bowl found at Ormside in Westmorland.



Northumbrian art *c.* 700. The Ruthwell Cross.

Little remains of this Northumbrian art, though enough to show that by the end of the seventh century the English were by no means the barbarians they had been before the coming of Christianity a hundred years before. The Danes were to this nascent English civilization what the English themselves had been to that of Roman Britain, heathen destroyers of what they did not understand. Their depredations covered most of



Mercian art *c.* 700. Ornaments from the ship-burial at Sutton Hoo, Suffolk: gold clasps and a purse lid with cloisonné-work.

the ninth century, and as a result we know little about the art of the Midland kingdom of Mercia, which wrested the supremacy from Northumbria, apart from the late-seventh-century treasure of the ship-burial at Sutton Hoo in Suffolk. Apparently this was a cenotaph celebrating some great noble or king, for there was no body buried in the long wooden ship, and the treasure was of regal splendour, among the objects being buckles of solid gold, golden clasps, and a purse-lid with cloisonné-work of garnets and glass, Byzantine silver bowls and spoons, an iron helmet and visor inlaid with bronze and silver wire, Frankish gold coins, a small harp, and a circular shield of Swedish pattern. Evidently these East Anglians had contacts with all Europe, from Scandinavia to the eastern Mediterranean.

The century from about 750 to 850 is one of the darkest periods of the Dark Ages in Britain, when the Danes put an end to the great age of Celtic art in Ireland, and only with the accession of Alfred as King of Wessex, the southern kingdom that succeeded Mercia in the leadership of England, does light begin to return. On the Continent, however, the early ninth century was the age of the Carolingian renaissance, the revival of art under Charlemagne, and it was only natural