

## VICTORIA CLARKE: MEDIEVAL BRIDLE BOSS

### INTRODUCTION

During this course I selected the medieval bridle boss to research. I chose this because I was fascinated by it: the thought that it had once been on a horse of someone important is something else. I found that the boss gave me a glimpse in to the way people of means liked to show off during this time period. While I was researching the bridle boss the most interesting thing I discovered was that finding medieval bridle bosses was so rare - because of this, it made the bridle boss more special to me.

As a class we chose to display our work in two ways the first is a board that will go on a wall which will give a snapshot of a time period. My board looks at the medieval period. The second is in an information booklet where we display our more in-depth work. When it come to looking at my information for the booklet I decided to look at three main points. The first was to look at what a bridle boss was and where about on the horse's bridle it went. The second part I looked at was the fleur-de-lys, This was interesting because I learned that the fleur-de-lys was worn by the Norman lords which showed me that this boss had been important to them. The final point I looked at was haw the bridle boss could be linked back to the community that it come from.

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### INFORMATION: THE MEDIEVAL BRIDLE BOSS



What is a Bridle Boss and why is the Caerau bridle boss so interesting?

Medieval Bridle Bosses are a rare find and the one found at Caerau is an example of a copper alloy but iron ones have also been found in other parts of the UK .<sup>1</sup>

We can see that the Caerau boss is of a copper alloy because of the green color it has. When you look closely at the Boss you can see that it has a Fleur-de-lys embossed into it. This shows that the owner of this Boss was possibly a local Norman lord. The Bridle Boss was commonly found on a horse's curb bite, which is the metal piece that goes in the horse's mouth. The Bosses decorated the ends of the bite.<sup>2</sup>

### The Fleur-de-lys



In the medieval period the Fleur-de-lys symbol could be found in most of Europe but it was most commonly found in France and especially in Normandy.<sup>3</sup> When the Normans invaded Britain a lot of the Norman lords brought over their own family seals, some of which contained a form of a Fleur-de-lys.<sup>4</sup>

Over time the Welsh rulers wanted to follow in the Norman's footsteps. Many of the Norman lords also started to change or alter the imagery on their own family seals to also show the Fleur-de-lys to show they were sophisticated and reflect royal use of the symbol.

### What does the Caerau Bridle Boss show us?



This Bridle Boss shows us that someone of some status visited or lived close to Caerau during the medieval period due to the fact that his Bridle Bosses found in the area shows the symbol of the Fleur-de-lys.

This symbol was used by many families of status so it is difficult to pinpoint which family this bridle boss belongs to, but it is a possibility that it belonged to Gilbert de Costentin who had land between the river Taff and the river Ely.<sup>5</sup>

It could also have belonged to Walter de Regny who was the lord of Lan Leuder near to Caerau.<sup>6</sup>

The other local noble families were the lords of Michaelstone-super-Ely, and included the Flemings and the Malefants. Given that this bridle boss is of a copper alloy and that it is dish shaped it could possibly be from c. 1350-1450.<sup>7</sup>

Going on all this information it is more than likely that this Bridle Boss came from one of the horses that belongs to the Norman lords that I have mentioned above.

*Drawings of the horse and of the bridle boss are by Victoria Clarke and the photographer of the bridle boss are by Dennis Simmons/Melissa Julian-Jones.*

#### REFERENCES

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