



: the art gallery in a shoebox

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Coming of Age by John Shapter

Saturday 29th July - Friday 29th September 2006 . Orkney Museum, Kirkwall

Three found-objects are displayed in the Peedie Gallery. These have been discovered, as a group, on an Orkney shoreline. Historically, they have been attributed to a mysterious and mythical society, known as the `Bay People`, which flourished on the coast sometime in the past. A description and explanation of each artefact is included in the display.

‘Coincidentally, the shape of each object forms a symbol, three of the twenty eight used in the language of the Bay People. These symbols spell a word, the closest meaning of which is `coming of age` or `reaching maturity`. It is a matter of conjecture, whether these objects were placed in this pattern deliberately as part of a ritual.’

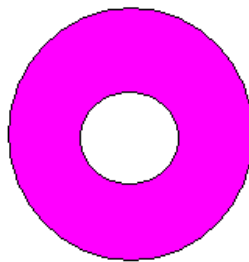
John Shapter 2006



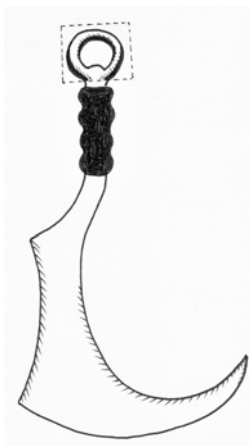
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Object 1a



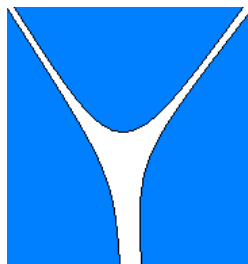
This ring is thought to be part of the hilt of a `Schlauer` (as reconstructed from this artefact in the illustration below). A fearful weapon which hung from the belt of a Bay-soldier, when not being used in battle or the mandatory castration of prisoners.



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Object 1b



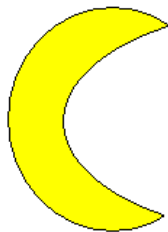
We believe this possible surgical instrument to be one of the first means of treating infected wounds. The carefully carved ends were inserted into the wound and then rotated 90 degrees, so widening the opening and allowing pus and debris to drain out (see below). This would have given enormous relief to the sufferer and helped in the healing process.



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Object 1c



This handle belongs to a drinking vessel. So many of these are found at village sites, that we surmise each vessel was multi-handled. Designed to be held by quite a number of people, it was probably used for drinking locally brewed beer prior to ritualistic orgies.

