

# Nuffield Primary History: Viking burial mound Resources

## Resource 1 Introduction

You belong to a team of archaeologists who are about to dig up a mound.

The mound, know as Cronk Keeilleig, is in the disused yard of a farm.

The mound lies on a slight rise about 500 metres east of the sea. To the south the ground slopes gently down to the Killane river. The river is less than half a mile away in a wide marshy valley. To the north and east the ground is flat. From the site there is a wide view over the sea, the distant mountains to the south and the plain to the north.

The mound is about 12 metres in diameter and 2 metres high. It was probably once circular, but the edges are now ragged.

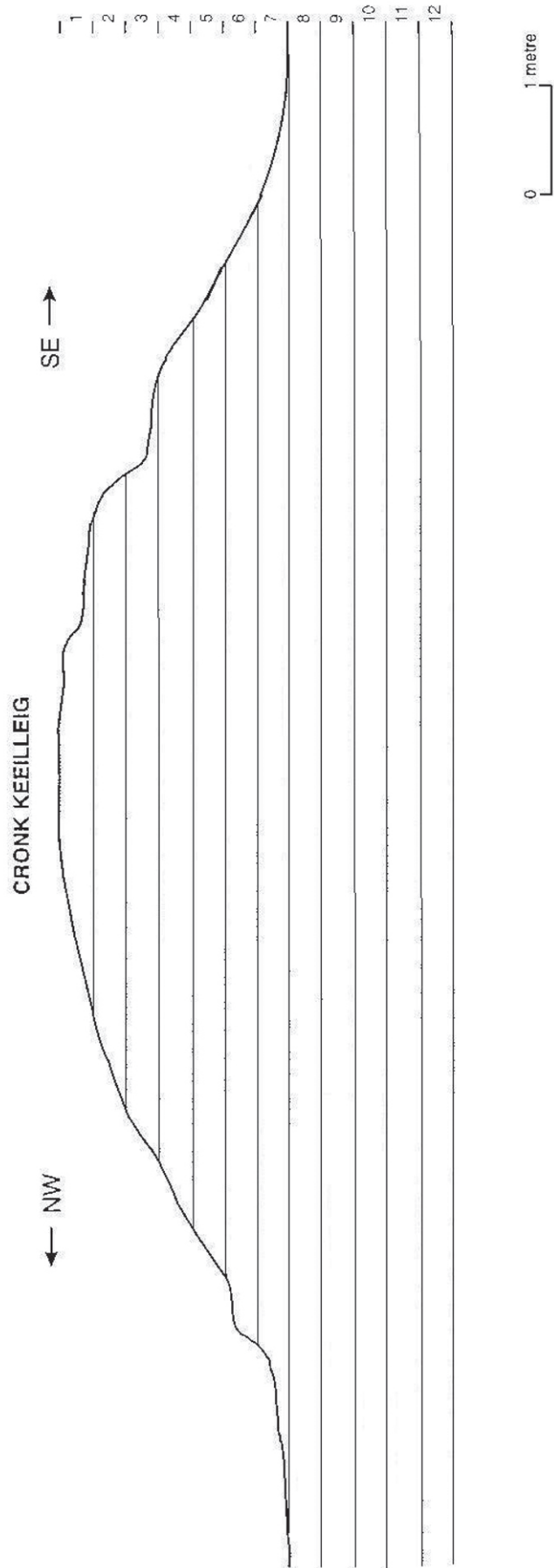
Local legend says that the mound is a burial mound, and that anyone who digs into it will suffer a terrible punishment. Today no-one believes this, and the mound is such a nuisance that the farmer wants it removed.

The farmer has asked your team of archaeologists to dig up the mound before he levels the area.

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## Resource 2

### Outline of the mound



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## Resource 3 List of finds

Note that the entire mound is made up of turves - lumps of turf (a bit like squares of instant lawn, only rougher and much thicker). These have been cut and stacked up to form the mound.

Here is a list of things found in each level.

### Level 1

In the centre, a round hole, 70 cm in diameter.

### Level 2

The pointed bottom of the hole, lined with packing stones.

A thin layer of burnt animal bones (of ox, horse, sheep, dog). This layer is approx. 7.5 cm deep and is spread over almost the whole of Level 2. The bones are mixed with charcoal and black earth. There is no sign of a fire.

### Level 3

A skeleton, aligned north-south, lying on its back. The arms are stretched towards the sky.

### Level 4 Turves

### Level 5 Turves

### Level 6 Turves

### Level 7 Turves

### Level 8

The original ground level.

In the centre is a rectangle of subsoil, aligned east-west. It measures 2.10 m x 0.7 m. Beneath the rectangle, the walls of a pit go down vertically.

### Level 9

The pit walls continue.

### Level 10

The pit walls continue.

Two small stones in the pit.

Two iron spear heads.

### Level 11

The pit walls continue.

Thin lines of decayed wood lie horizontally across the pit

### Level 12

The pit bottom, with shapes of many objects visible.

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## Resource 4 Recording table for finds: page 1

Level	Found there	What it could mean
1		
2		
3		
4		
5		
6		
7		
8		
9		
10		
11		

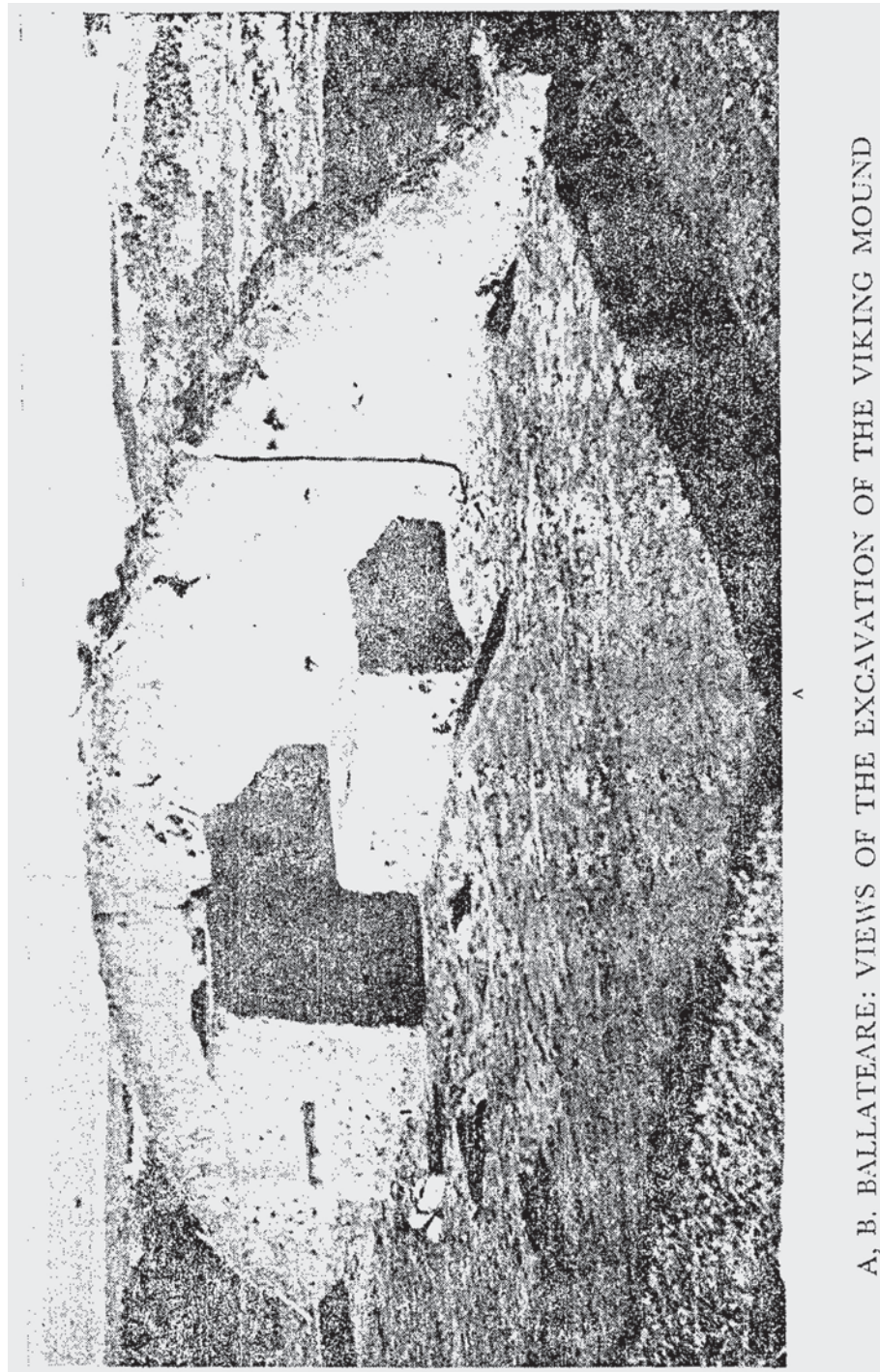
# Nuffield Primary History: Viking burial mound Resources

## Resource 4 Recording table for finds: page 2

Level	Found there	What it could mean
12		

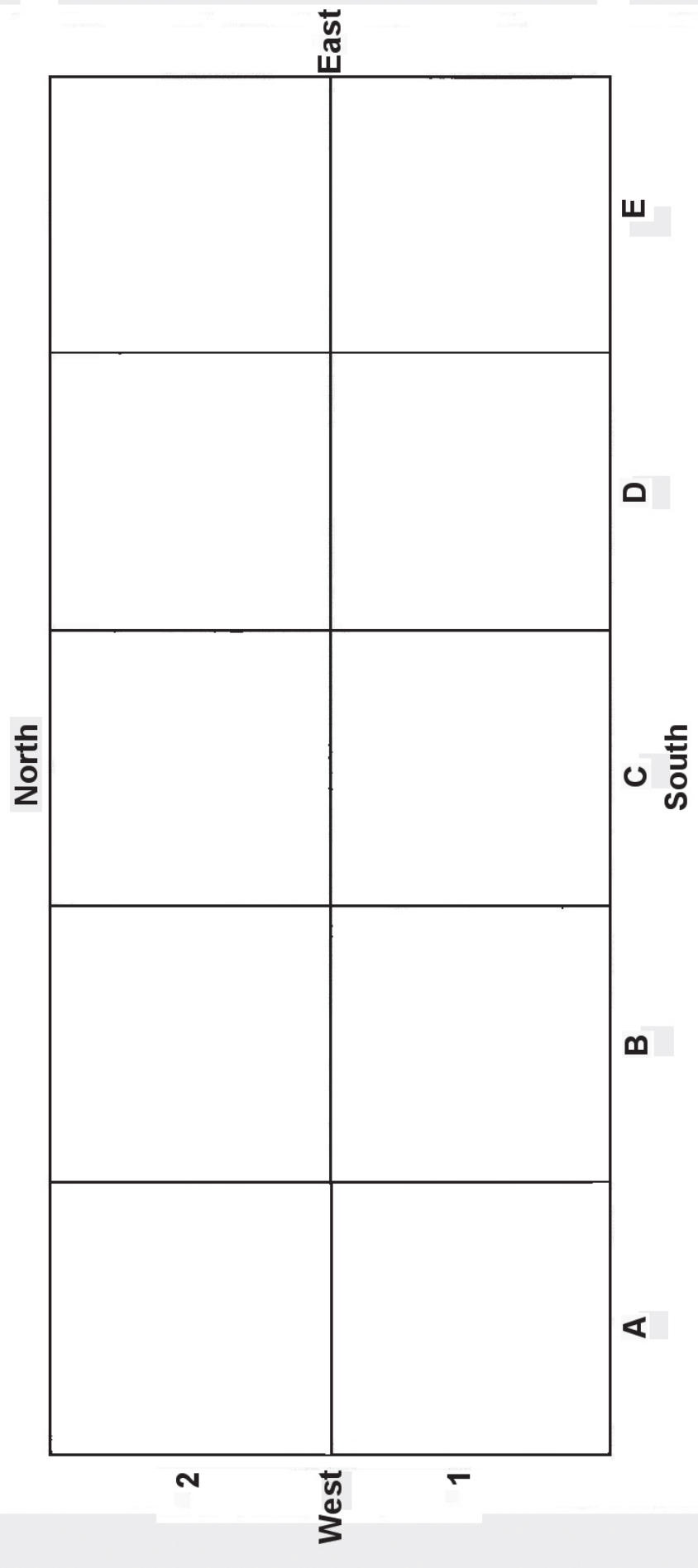
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## Resource 5 Burial mound photo, taken in 1946



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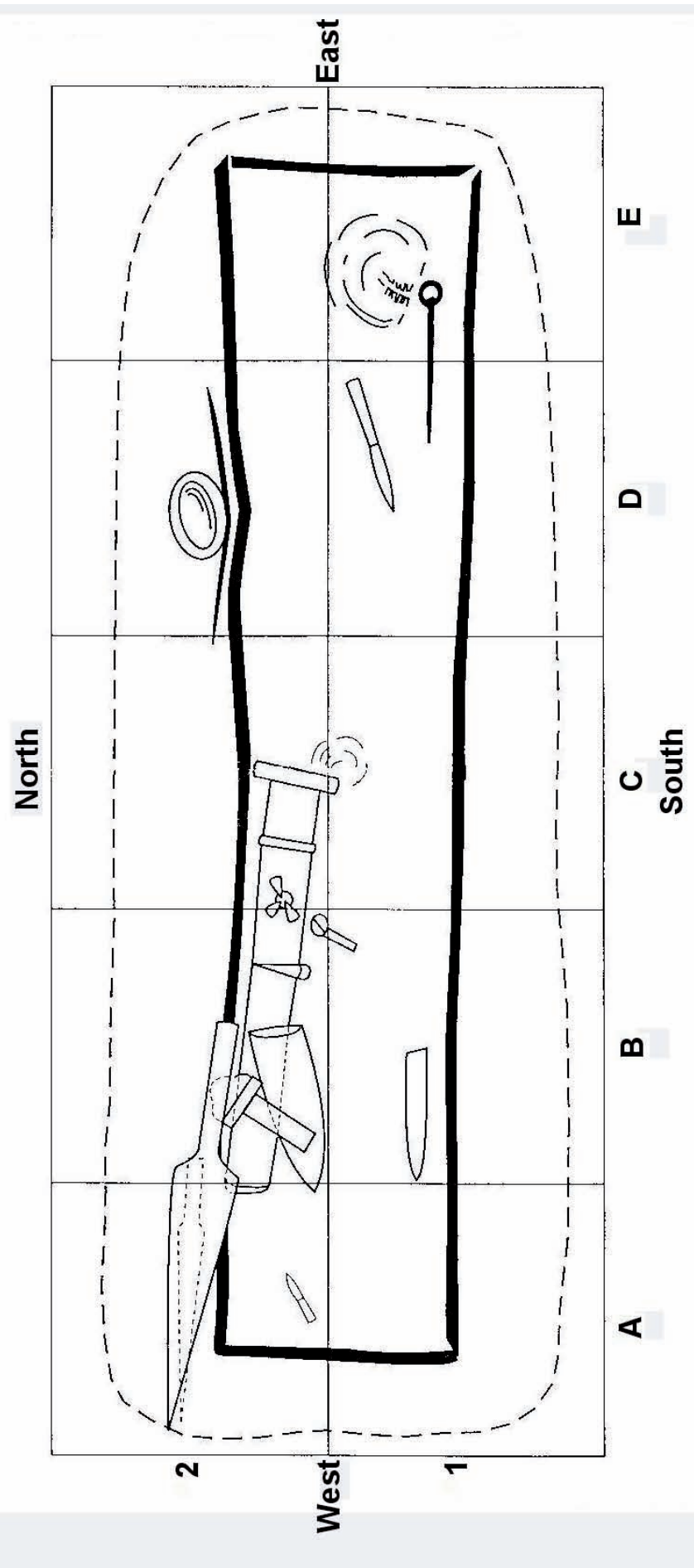
## Resource 6 Blank grid of level 12





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## Resource 7 Grid with outline of objects in level 12



Downloaded from [www.primaryhistory.org](http://www.primaryhistory.org)  
from Bersu, G and Wilson, David M (1966) *Three Viking Graves in the Isle of Man*, Society for Medieval Archaeology, monograph series no. 1.  
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## Resource 8 Description of objects found

### **Skeleton**

Found at Level 3.

It is of a young woman, aged between 20 and 30 years old.

At the top of her skull is a large hole, made by a heavy implement.

### **Turves**

Each turf is more than 20 cm thick.

The turves have not been taken from the soil around the mound.

The nearest matching soil is almost 100 metres away.

More than 500 square metres of ground must have been stripped of turf to provide the turves for the mound.

### **Sword**

Made of iron, two-edged, in bad condition.

Viking type, 10th century.

The pommel (knob at the top of the hilt) is inlaid with silver and copper wire.

It has been deliberately broken in four places.

The sword blade is in a scabbard, which is made of several layers:

• leather (on the outside) • textile (cloth) • thin wood • textile (on the inside)

### **Mounts, strap-end and strap-holder**

Made of bronze (a mixture of copper and tin). The mounts are lying on the sword's scabbard.

They probably fixed a sling-shaped sword-holder to the sword.

The sling would go over the shoulder.

### **Bronze pin**

Celtic type, 13.3 cm long. It has a ring head and probably fastened a cloak.

Some fragments of cloth were found nearby.

### **Knife**

The blade is of iron. The handle was made of wood. Its total length was 18.8 cm.

It has a leather sheath, which covers the blade and half of the handle too.

### **Shield remains**

Found just outside the coffin. The remains consist of:

- Shield boss (metal piece in the centre). It has two deep indentations, made by a sword or axe.
- Wooden bits of the main part of the shield, very decayed.
- Fragments of red, black and white paint on leather.

### **Three spear heads**

The slender spear head is of Norwegian (Viking) type. The others show Celtic influence in their design. They once had wooden shafts (handles).

### **Skull**

It is very decayed - there are only traces of it left.

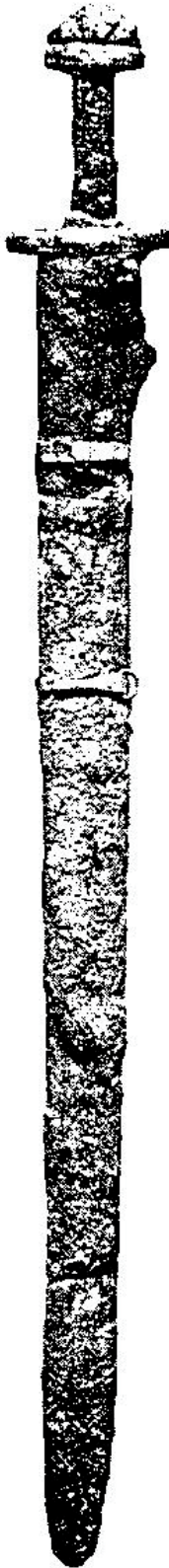
The enamel of the teeth has survived.

The rest of the body has rotted away.

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## Resource 9 Objects found page 1

Sword



Bronze pin



knife blade

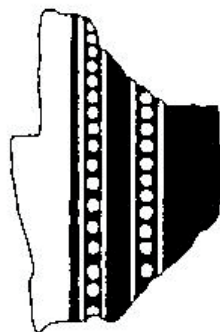
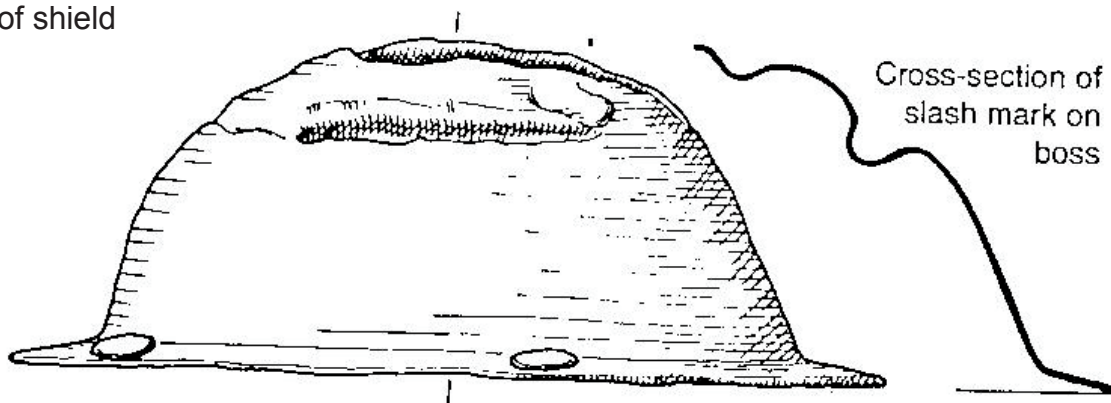
Sword hilt



# Nuffield Primary History: Viking burial mound Resources

## Resource 9 Objects found page 2

Shield boss and  
remains of shield

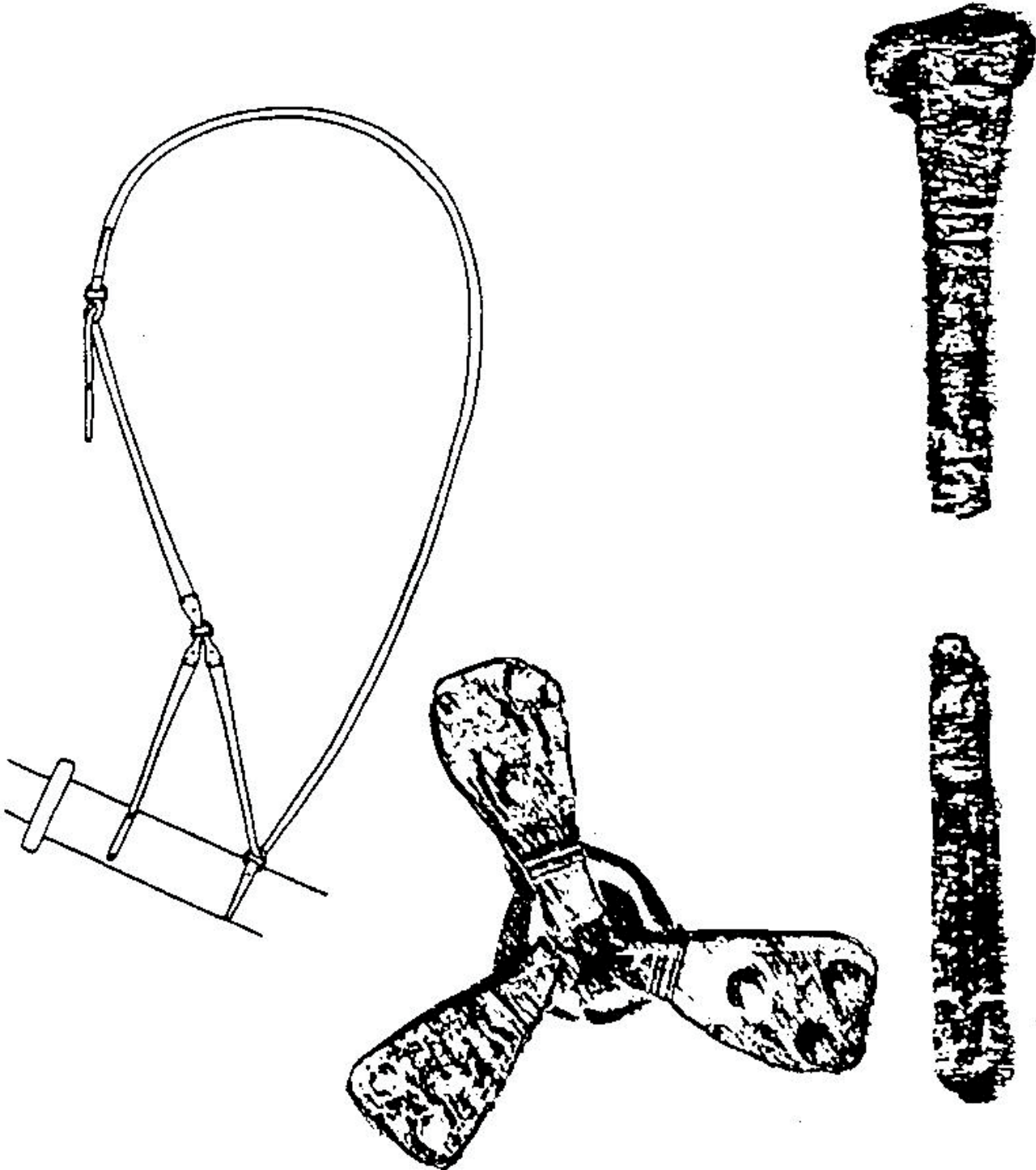


Painted pattern on the board of  
the shield from Ballateare

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## Resource 9 Objects found page 3

Sling mounts and suggested sling for the sword





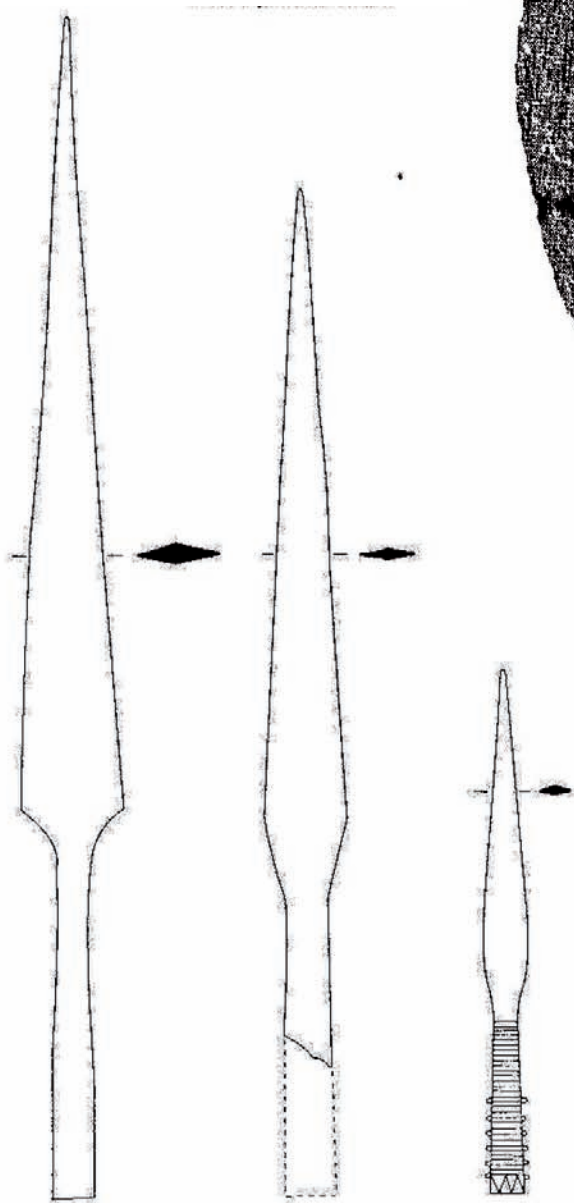
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## Resource 9 Objects found page 4

Skull of woman



Iron spear-heads



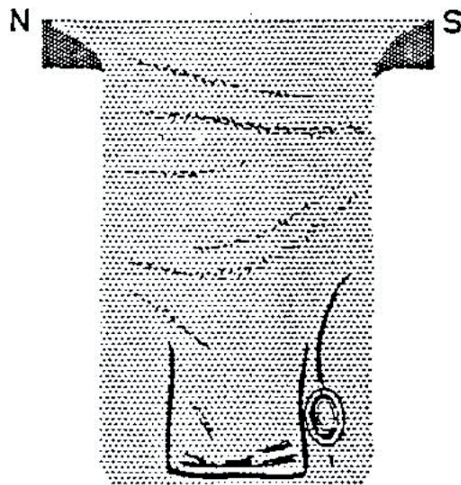
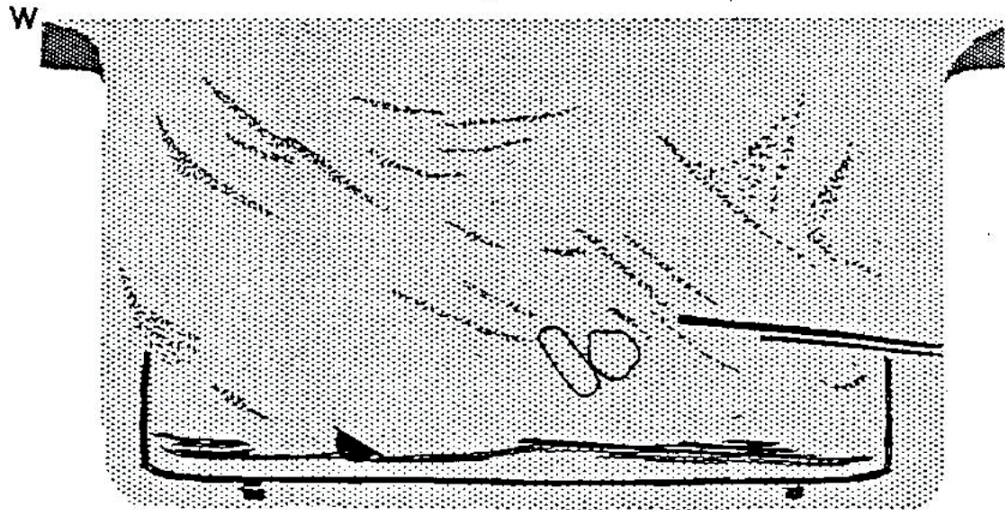
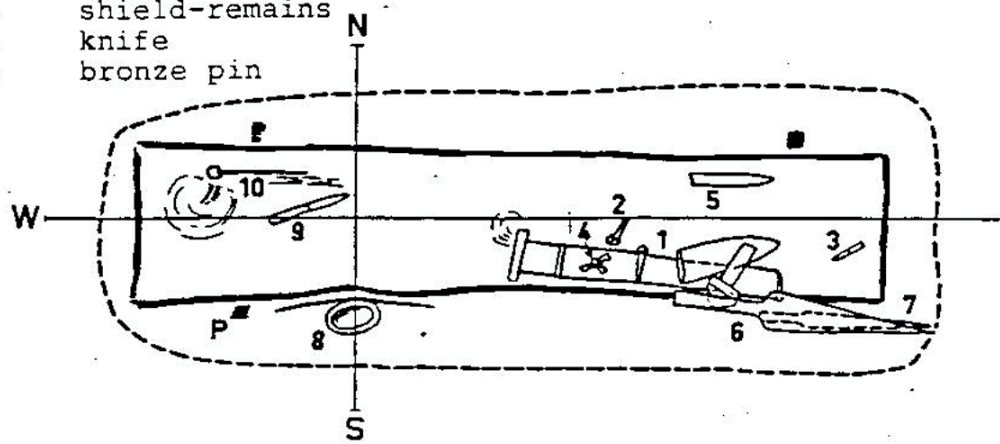
From Bersu and Wilson 1966

0 5cms

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## Resource 10 Plan of the grave pit

- |                 |   |     |  |
|-----------------|---|-----|--|
| sling<br>mounts | } | 1.  | iron sword in three pieces in its scabbard                                       |
|                 |   | 2.  | bronze mount with a loop the same size as<br>a loop on the mount of the scabbard |
|                 |   | 3.  | bronze strap end   |
|                 |   | 4.  | a strap holder   |
| spear<br>heads  | } | 5.  | an iron spear-head   |
|                 |   | 6.  | a spear-head   |
|                 |   | 7.  | a spear-head   |
|                 |   | 8.  | shield-remains   |
|                 |   | 9.  | knife  |
|                 |   | 10. | bronze pin   |



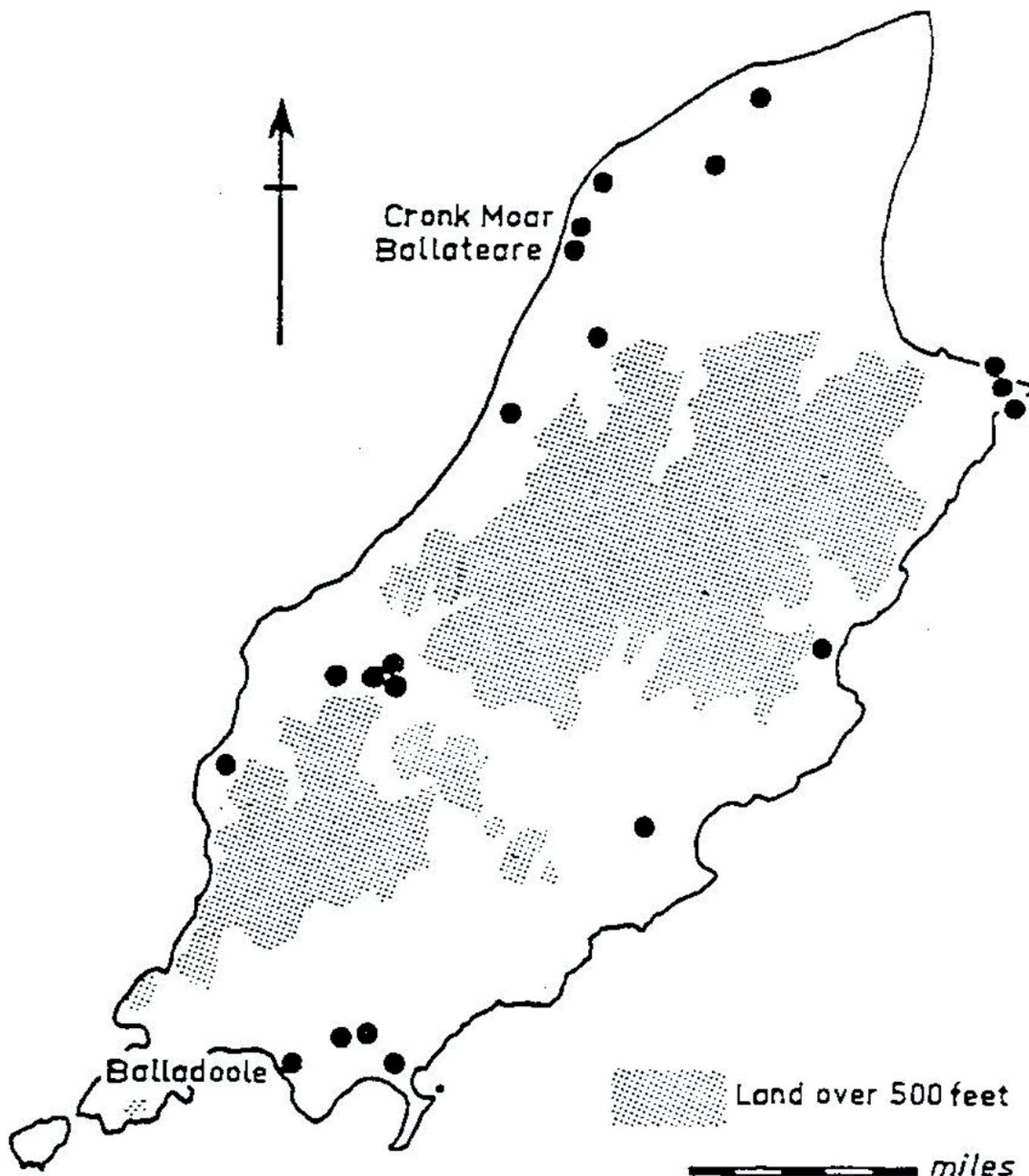
- Outline of burial pit
- Fill of burial pit
- Old ground surface

50 cms.



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## Resource 11 Viking burials on the Isle of Man: map





# Nuffield Primary History: Viking burial mound Resources

## Resource 12 Glossary

### **Bemused**

Confused, puzzled, dazed.

### **Bier**

A wooden frame for a dead person to lie on.

### **Boss**

The disc at the centre of a shield. Often made of metal.

### **Brocade**

Rich, heavy silk cloth with a raised design on it.

### **Byzantine**

From Byzantium – the Greek name for the modern city of Istanbul.

### **Loin cloth**

A cloth wound around a person's private parts.

### **Mantle**

A cloak.

### **Mount**

In this case, a metal fastening to which leather is attached. Often joins together different pieces of leather.

### **Pyre**

Wood placed under a dead body and then set on fire.

### **Rivet**

Metal nail - its point is hammered flat to fasten two objects together.

### **Sable**

The shining dark brown fur of a marten (an animal living in cold northern regions. It belongs to the weasel family).

### **Socket**

In this case, hollow part of spear head into which the spear's shaft (handle) is pushed.

### **Staves**

Wooden sticks.

### **Strap-end**

In this case, metal end of a strap of leather or cloth.

### **Subsoil**

Soil below the topsoil. Topsoil is what is nearest the surface. Subsoil is less good soil lower down.

### **Tapestries**

Large woven cloths hung on walls. They usually show pictures or rich patterns.

### **Turves**

Thick chunks or squares of turf cut from the ground. Today very thin turves are used to make instant lawns.