

## Norse Man's Belt

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When my days as an apprentice and then a journeyman ended, I decided it was time to make myself a proper Norseman's belt. There is a lot of great archeological information available now available in Dan Carlsson's CD-ROM, which contains many excellent photographs of belt artifacts. You can see some of these photos in my earlier research work, notably the knife project: [http://www.willadsenfamilly.org/sca/danr\\_as/knife2/knife2.htm](http://www.willadsenfamilly.org/sca/danr_as/knife2/knife2.htm)

For this project, I decided to create a belt with two belt separators, since I tend to carry more stuff around than a Norseman in period might have done. I also decided to create decorative belt mounts that matched the buckle and belt tip, for a unified appearance.

You can read about the sand-casting technique I used in this project on my web page, linked at the bottom of this article, in this article and others found there: [http://www.willadsenfamilly.org/sca/danr\\_as/neck-hooks2/neck-hooks2.htm](http://www.willadsenfamilly.org/sca/danr_as/neck-hooks2/neck-hooks2.htm)

This was my first attempt at the Borre style, and I do not have a good "feel" for this style yet. Nevertheless, the resulting designs resemble Borre style more than they do other Norse art styles. The loop portion of the belt has a ring-chain motif and the plates have a zoomorphic motif with cross-hatched background. I drew a set of concept drawings, then sculpted those designs into clay. I decided on a 3-lobed belt separator, like the period ones, and I went with the plate and tongue cast in one piece. Here is a photo of the sculpting in progress, atop my original concept drawing.





After curing the clay in an oven, I sand-cast my belt parts, first making a copy of the clay in pewter, cleaning up the pewter masters, then casting bronze copies from the pewter masters. Here are some of the rough castings, fresh off the sprue. Part of the sand-casting mold frame is visible behind them.

I lost a lot of detail from the clay original to the bronze final product. That is one of the down sides of sand-casting bronze. A detailed study of this picture will show that I am using one of my

signature shortcuts: cast lugs on the bottom of the plates will be bent around the 3-way separator. On the far right edge of the photo, you can see one of the rectangular lugs extending down from the decorative plate; these will be bent to fit around the belt separator to connect the belt to the separator. It is similar to the pin holder on the back of a turtle brooch, easy to do, and is not visible when the item is being worn. I used a similar system to attach the belt plate to the loop.

All the parts have round rivet lugs cast in where needed, four for the decorative mounts and three for the belt plate, belt tip, and separator-attachment plates. Each rivet lug is set beneath a corresponding false rivet head on the top surface, the rounded portions visible in the photo. The false rivets look nice, help prevent me from polishing away the intricate designs, and provide the equivalent mass of a real rivet head when peening over the rivets from the back.

Here are all the parts, including the structural parts and the decorative mounts, after polishing. In accord with my desire for a unified art design, I used the same shape for the belt tip.



To assemble the belt, I first cut the straps to length. I used an old belt made of 9 oz leather; in retrospect I should have used something thinner for a more period result. Then, one item at a time, I punched holes just big enough for the rivet lugs, pushed them through, and peened them over on the back. I started with the buckle, then did the belt-separator attachment plates, then finished with the decorative mounts. This allowed me to make the mounts' spacing as uniform as possible.



To the right is the assembly in progress. I took this picture after the buckle and separators were in place, but before adding the decorative mounts.

Below is the almost-finished belt. When this photo was taken, I still had some leather edges to clean up and re-dye.



There is little evidence to support any particular way of wearing the belt. Virtually all the decorated belt buckles had as much or more decoration on the plate as they did on the loop. Yet the modern "reenactor knot" covers the buckle plate. It seems odd to decorate what will not be visible. Perhaps the belt simply dangled off the tongue, but that could be painful if you have a heavy strap end. Also, some grave finds have the strap end positioned nearly horizontal with the belt line and very near the buckle. My approach is to run the tongue through 2 belt holes, in the same way as an annular or pennanular brooch. The loose end of the strap routes behind the buckle, dangling at an angle to show the nice strap end without it flopping excessively. The photo below shows the completed belt being worn in this way.



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