

III.

NOTICE OF A BRONZE PENANNULAR BROOCH FROM THE ISLAND
OF MULL. By PROFESSOR DUNS, D.D., VICE-PRESIDENT.

This brooch was recently found by me in an out-of-the-way corner of the New College Museum, among some common minerals and other things of no value. On examining some old memoranda, which, fortunately, are preserved, of gifts made to the Museum in 1845–46, I discovered the following entry in a list of articles presented by the late Mrs Macfie of Langhouse—

“Mrs M'Lean, } 1 Ancient Broach.
Mull, } 1 Ancient Pin.”

The acus, or pin, was in the same box, but not attached to the brooch. The Mrs M'Lean here referred to still survives. In answer to a communication from me, she says she remembers having sent a number “of odds and ends” to Mrs Macfie for the Museum at that time, but cannot say anything about the brooch; its presence among the articles sent seems to have fallen out of memory.

I. FORM AND SIZE.—The brooch (see fig. 1), which is of much interest, because it is rare and highly-finished, is penannular—that is, the hoop is separated below to allow the pin, or acus, to pass through it. It measures from the top of the hoop to the outer edge of the ring at the opening, 4 inches; and in the line of the larger axis, close on the bar which lies across the hoop at the top of the broadest part of it, $4\frac{3}{8}$ inches, giving an imperfect oval. The whole length of the acus is 7 inches. At the head, in front, it has a broad quadrangular plate, 1 inch long and $\frac{7}{8}$ ths of an inch broad, concealing the loop which clasps the ring.

II. ORNAMENTATION.—1. *Gilding*.—On making a cast of the head of the acus, traces of gilding appeared, some of the rust having adhered to the plaster. The application of a little vinegar to the brooch itself made

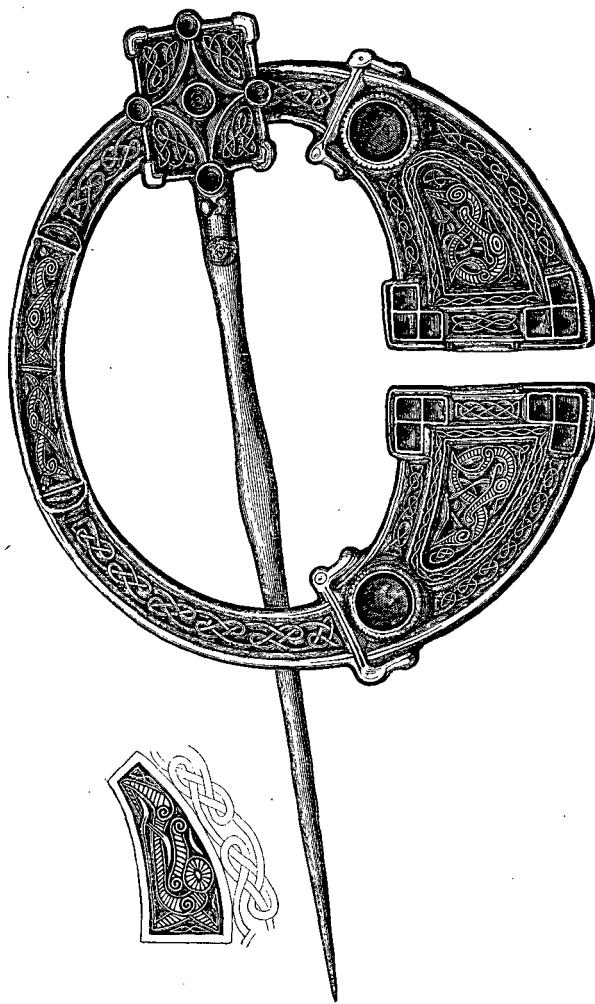


Fig. 1. Brooch found in Mull. (pin 7 inches in length).

it clear that the whole of the ornamental work had been gilded by a gold wash. Evidently, too, the large settings in the broadest part of the hoop are surrounded at the base with a thin plate of gold. 2. *Jewelling*.—Dr Wilde says, with reference to the specimens found in Ireland, "In some instances there were as many as eight studs in front of the brooch." But in this Mull specimen there are settings for twenty-one studs—sixteen on the hoop and five on the acus. Those on the hoop are of various forms. Two, between which the head of the pin is placed, are fragments of a circle; twelve, arranged in clusters of three at each end of the opening, are square; and the two largest, which are close to the double band which crosses the hoop at the top of its broadest part, are circular; as are also those on the plate-head of the pin. The studs, as we know from other instances, were generally of amber or of glass. 3. *Other decorative devices*.—There are representatives of six complete, grotesque, fabulous reptilian forms, and of five heads of the same. Four occur on the obverse of the ring and two on the reverse (one of which is shown in the figure under the brooch, fig. 1), the twisting of the latter being less complicated than that of the former. The simple lines which bring out these forms are clean, clear, distinct, and exceedingly graceful and effective. The separate heads bear a strong resemblance, if the comparison may be allowed, to the gavial rather than to the crocodilian head. The eyes are more to the side, and the broadening of the snout is less abrupt than in the crocodile. The double bands, referred to as crossing the front of the hoop, have one of these heads at each edge. All the heads have some resemblance to that which occurs at the bend of the Lismore Crosier, figured by Miss Stokes in her work, "Christian Inscriptions in the Irish Language," and by O'Neill in his "Fine Arts and Civilisation of Ireland." The date of the crosier is generally held to be about the beginning of the twelfth century.

The other decorations consist of the twisted strap, or interlaced-work, and a chain-like ornament. The former is seen in the deep grooves on the outer and inner edges of the broadest parts of the hoop, and also in the grooves which run between the same parts and the settings between

which the head of the acus is placed. The chain ornament occurs on the flat face of the lines forming an irregular triangle, and bounding the dragons on each side of the opening of the hoop. It may be worth

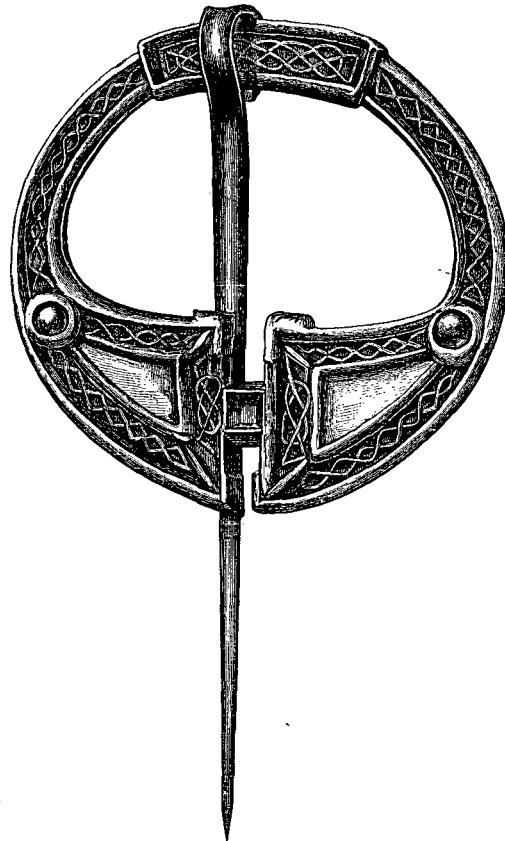


Fig. 2. Bronze Brooch found in Mull (actual size).

mentioning that, with one doubtful exception, neither of these forms of ornament occur among the numerous related specimens figured by Mr Cuming in his work on the "Runic and other Monumental Remains of

the Isle of Man;" nor have I found them in Dr Stuart's "Sculptured Stones." Dr Wilde says that "The spiral ornamentation and the twisted strap-work are believed to be of Celtic origin." This kind of tracery is common on Irish ornaments. It may also be seen on the large Cadboll Brooch described and figured in vol. viii. of our "Proceedings."

The only recorded specimen from Mull of which I have any knowledge is one figured in the third volume of the *Kilkenny Archaeological Journal*, 1854-55, and described by Mr Richardson Smith. Mr Smith says, "I unfortunately only know that it was found in the island of Mull," and adds, "I purchased the brooch with a large collection of Celtic antiquities in the village of Lochgilphead, Argyleshire." Mr Smith's specimen (fig. 2) is much smaller than that now noticed, its ornamentation is not nearly so rich, a characteristic figure on the present brooch is not represented, the part of the acus which plays on the ring consists simply of a plain loop, and the interlaced tracery is less complicated. Any other forms bearing closer resemblances to this one have been hitherto found in Ireland. Referring to these, Dr Wilde says—"In breadth of ring they vary from $1\frac{1}{8}$ to $4\frac{3}{8}$ inches." The acus of the largest in the Museum of the Royal Irish Academy is $7\frac{5}{8}$ inches long.

Fig. 3 represents another bronze brooch among the "odds and ends" referred to by Mrs M'Lean. It is penannular, and measures $2\frac{3}{4}$ inches in diameter. The pin, which is

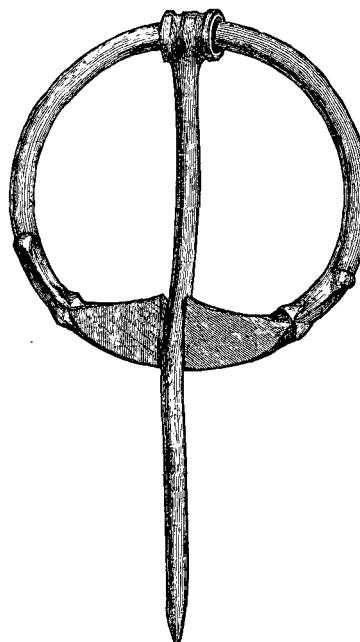


Fig. 3. Brooch found in Mull (5 inches in length).

5 inches long, is bent where it passes the narrow part of the hoop. The head consists of a broad ring slightly raised at the edges. This is clasped by a narrow band, an apparent extension of the pin itself, forming a double furrow on the broadest part of the head. The reverse of the brooch is destitute of ornament. The ornamentation of the obverse is of the simplest kind, but exceedingly neat. The snout-like knob at the termination of the broadest part of the hoop on each side of the cleft shows that the pin was fastened in the dress in a direction at right angles to the cleft—that is, crosswise—the knob affording a support for the clasp on the one side, and for the bent part of the shaft on the other side.

[These two brooches are now, with consent of the Senatus of the New College, deposited in the Museum.]
