

NOTICE OF A FRAGMENT OF A SILVER PENANNULAR BROOCH, ORNAMENTED WITH GOLD FILIGREE WORK AND AMBER SETTINGS, FOUND AT ACHAVROLE, DUNBEATH, CAITHNESS, IN 1860; AND OF TWO SILVER BROOCHES, THE PROPERTY OF ANDREW HEITON, F.S.A. Scot., SAID TO HAVE BEEN FOUND IN THE NEIGHBOURHOOD OF PERTH. BY JOSEPH ANDERSON, ASSISTANT-SECRETARY AND KEEPER OF THE MUSEUM.

The fragment of a brooch which forms the subject of this notice was brought to me by Mr John Marshall, of Messrs William Marshall & Co., jewellers, &c., Princes Street. It had been shown to Mr Marshall as a curious specimen of ancient work, and he kindly offered his services in securing it for the Museum on my representing the desirability of such an acquisition. Having been placed in communication with the owner of the fragment, I learned to my great regret that it had been found so long ago as 1860, and that he was only the casual possessor of one of the fragments into which the brooch had been broken. From him, however, I learned the time and place of the discovery, and on communicating with the actual finder I learned that this fragment is all that is now known to exist. The person by whom it has been preserved has long been removed from the locality and resident in Edinburgh, and the bit of the brooch which he got from the finder at the time when it was found, though at first regarded as a curiosity, had long been forgotten. It was only the other day, in searching for something among some loose papers in the bottom of a trunk that he came upon it accidentally, and showing it as a curious thing to a friend who knew something of silversmiths' work the latter suggested that it should be shown to a jeweller, and thus it found its way to Mr Marshall, and through him to me.

The interesting specimen thus brought to light eighteen years after the date of its original discovery (fig. 1), is the terminal part of one side of a penannular brooch of silver of the form prevalent in the Celtic period

subsequent to the introduction of Christianity. It is  $2\frac{3}{4}$  inches in length, and consists of the expanding end of one half of the penannular ring on which the long pin of these brooches was loosely hung by a loop. This loop allowed free motion of the pin round the upper part of the ring, and the expanded ends prevented its coming off the brooch. The ring of the brooch, of which there is only about an inch in length remaining beyond the expansion, is nearly half an inch wide, and its upper surface has been

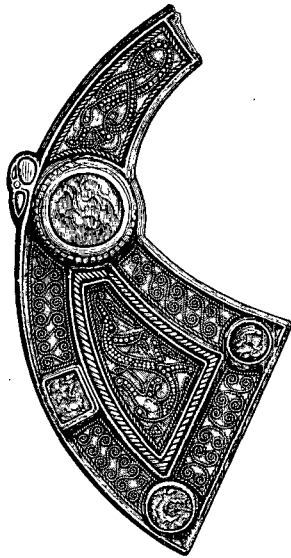


Fig. 1. Fragment of Penannular Silver Brooch found at Dunbeath, Caithness (actual size).

adorned with plates of thin gold inserted in panels. Only one of these panels remains. It is nearly an inch in length by  $\frac{3}{8}$  inch in width, and is beautifully ornamented with the representation of a serpentine or lacertine creature twisted in the shape of a figure of eight. The animal's figure is formed of beadwork of rounded grains of gold soldered on the surface of the plate to represent scales, the outlines of the body being formed of thin twisted gold wire similarly fastened down. The mouth is represented as wide open, displaying two large fangs, and the tongue protrudes in a curve backwards under the throat. The eye is represented by an oval formed round one of the larger grains of gold. The panel is bordered by a raised rim of thicker twisted gold wire.

At the junction of the ring of the brooch with the expanding end there is a large socket enclosing a round setting of amber, and opposite to it, on the outside rim of the ring, is a beast's head in relief.

The triangular-shaped ending expands from half an inch in width at its junction with the ring of the brooch to  $1\frac{5}{8}$  inch in width at its termination. It is divided into a central panel of sub-triangular form, having round it a border nearly a quarter of an inch in width, which is

divided into four different panels by three small sockets containing settings of amber, two of which are circular and the third a rectangular oblong. These panels are filled with a very peculiar ornament formed of thin twisted gold wire soldered on the surface of thin gold plates fitted into each panel. In two of the panels on the lower and outer side of the centre panel the ornamentation consists of six S-shaped scrolls, not all turned the same way, but sometimes reversed, so as to produce a pleasing variety in the pattern. The panel on the inner side of the centre is also filled with S-shaped scrolls placed regularly without any reversal. The panel across the end of the expanding triangular termination of the penannular ring of the brooch is filled with C-shaped scrolls placed back to back.

This ornamentation, consisting of S- and C-shaped scrolls of twisted wire, is not uncommon in Anglo-Saxon work. Beautiful examples of its occurrence on Anglo-Saxon fibulæ of the round form, in which it is associated with coloured glass settings, are seen in the splendid fibula from Wingham, near Canterbury, now in the collection of Lord Londesborough.<sup>1</sup> Another example of equally beautiful workmanship is seen in the splendid fibula found at Kingston, also in Kent.<sup>2</sup> It occurs frequently in Frankish work, as may be seen on the circular fibulæ and other objects from Frankish graves figured by Lindenschmidt<sup>3</sup> and others. It is found also in the larger form of bracteates in Denmark and Sweden,<sup>4</sup> principally as a decoration of the loop or fastening. These bracteates, from their relations to the coinage of Byzantium and for other reasons, are assigned to the period ranging from A.D. 458 to A.D. 600, a period nearly synchronous with that which might be assigned to the earlier Anglo-Saxon and Frankish specimens of this peculiar ornamentation of filigree work.

But on the other hand such scrolls occur in connection with Celtic

<sup>1</sup> *Miscellanea Graphica*, plate xxxiii.

<sup>2</sup> *Inventorium Sepulchrale*, plate i.

<sup>3</sup> Lindenschmidt's "*Alterthümer*," vol. i. heft 1 plate 8, heft 8 plate 2, and heft 12 plate 8.

<sup>4</sup> *Atlas for Nordisk Oldkindighed*, plates 7, 8, 9, and 10.

work which cannot be assigned to such an early period, as, for instance, on sculptured monuments and on metal work of ecclesiastical use such as the Cross of Cong and the Monymusk Reliquary.<sup>1</sup> It may be safely assumed, however, that their use in metal-work was earlier on the Continent and in England, where it is more common, than in Scotland and Ireland, where it is rare and exceptional. I know no other example of the use of these S and C scrolls in gold filigree work of distinctively Celtic character, unless it be on the acus of Mr Héiton's brooch, to be subsequently described. It is on this account the more to be regretted that the larger portion of the Dunbeath brooch should have perished through simple want of care, and ignorance of its value.

On receiving the necessary information from Mr Christie, the possessor of the fragment, I wrote to the original finder asking him to ascertain whether the remainder of the brooch might possibly be yet in existence, and I here annex his reply, which, though characteristic, is quite decisive:—

“ACHAVROAL, DUNBEATH,  
CAITHNESS, *January 28th*, 1879.

“DEAR SIR,—I received your letter concerning the old brooch that was found here this long time back. I have to inform you that I have got none of this old brooch; or I don't know of any one in this place that has got any of this old stuff you speak about. The time is so long since it was got that everything about it is out of sight and mind here.

“As far as I recollect I will give you all the information I can about the way this old brooch was got. I got it in a drain or sink that I was making out from the house. The pick that I had working the drain came at it and disfigured the whole apparatus out of its form. The brooch looked to me as it was placed on a fine sash of leather or cloth, because I got an imitation of this about it. All the dices in the circle, there was a fine stone in the heart of them all, of every colour. As soon as it was touched they all fell out of their sockets and places. There was

<sup>1</sup> See the Proceedings, vol. xii. page 33, and plate 2; also *ante*, p. 433, fig. 2.

something similar to a Roman Catholic cross in the middle of this old brooch, and a great deal of other articles attached to it. The whole of it was watered with gold, or some stuff or other. The whole of it was made up as this corner you have got, only there was a cross coming through the centre of it, and all the dices a fine stone of every colour in every one of them.

“This is all the information I can give about this old brooch.—I am,  
yours truly, “WILLIAM SUTHERLAND.”

The brooch (fig. 2) exhibited by Andrew Heiton, Esq., architect, Perth, a Fellow of the Society, is in the same style of Celtic art and of the same period. It is of silver and penannular, the ends terminating in circular expansions. The ring of the brooch is a flat band of silver half an inch wide, ornamented by two rows of gilt bosses in a sunk panel, between which is a raised band of semi-cylindrical form. The middle part of the ring is occupied by an oval panel surrounded by a raised margin. This panel contained a gold plate ornamented with filigree work, which was unfortunately extracted and melted before the brooch came into Mr Heiton's possession. Similar half-oval panels occur at the terminations of the penannular ring, where they join with the discs which form the expanded circular ends. From one of these half-oval panels the gold plate had also been extracted, but it remains in the other, and presents the figure of a serpent-like creature twisted into a double figure of eight, formed by fine filigree work of beaded or notched wire. The circular discs have a chased border of S-shaped scrollwork, on which rest the heads of three dog-like animals placed with their muzzles projecting towards the centre, and dividing the circular space into three sections. The centre is occupied by a setting of red glass fixed in a thin plate of gold  $\frac{3}{4}$  inch in diameter, ornamented with a figure of eight pattern in filigree work of beaded wire. Surrounding this central plate is a border  $\frac{3}{16}$ ths of an inch wide enclosed between two raised and concentric margins of silver, and divided into three panels of equal length by the heads of the dog-like animals before mentioned, whose muzzles extend across the

sunk space of the border to the inner raised margin. These panels are filled with thin plates of gold decorated with an interlaced pattern in plain raised lines. The acus, which is  $5\frac{1}{2}$  inches in length, is loosely attached

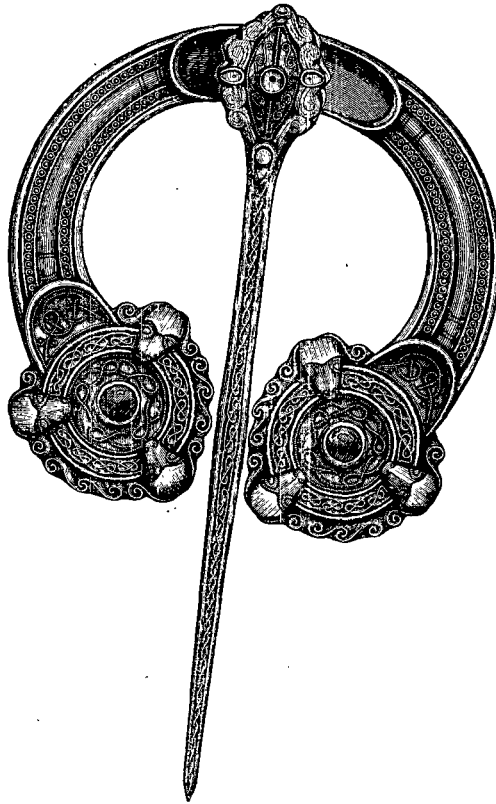


Fig. 2. Penannular Silver Brooch ( $5\frac{1}{2}$  inches in length).

to the body of the brooch by a loop which gives it free play. The head of the acus expands into a convex oval, which has been decorated by three settings, the enclosures of which are gone. The central part of

this oval expansion is formed into a sunk panel filled with a thin gold plate ornamented with S-shaped scrolls in filigree work of beaded wire. A pattern of interlaced work extends the whole length of the acus.

This brooch was obtained in Perth by Mr Heiton, and was said to have been found in that neighbourhood along with another silver brooch (fig. 3) of the same form but of coarser workmanship, and in a ruder style of ornamentation. In its general character the first of these brooches resembles those exhibited by Macleod of Cadboll, which have been figured and

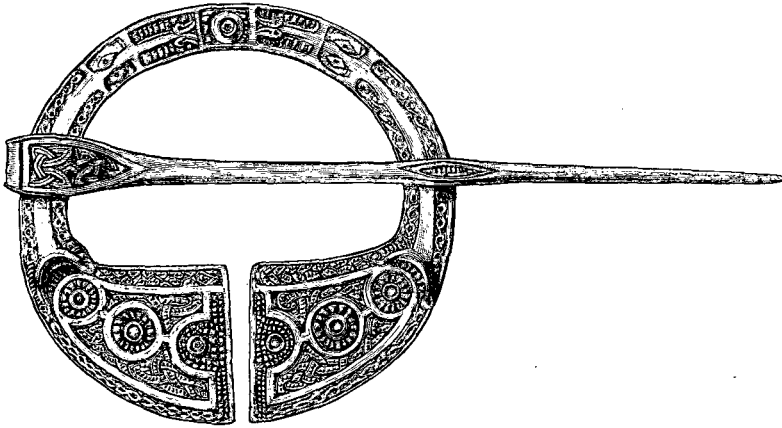


Fig. 3. Penannular Silver Brooch ( $8\frac{1}{2}$  inches in length).

described in the Proceedings. The special feature in which it most resembles the largest of the Cadboll brooches is the use of animals' heads as an ornament on the expanded ends of the penannular ring of the brooch. This is a very rare feature, only occurring, so far as I know, in two other instances, both of which are in Ireland, viz., on the small brooch found near Galway,<sup>1</sup> in which the circular terminations of the penannular ring are divided into three sections in the same manner by animals' heads, and the large brooch found in the Rath at Reerasta, along with the mag-

<sup>1</sup> "Kilkenny Journal," vol. iii. p. 10.

nificent chalice now in the Museum of the Royal Irish Academy.<sup>1</sup> No drawing has yet appeared of this magnificent brooch, which is described as being  $5\frac{3}{4}$  inches in breadth with an acus  $13\frac{1}{2}$  inches in length. The face of the brooch is divided into forty-six compartments, forty-four of which are filled with interlaced patterns of various forms. The front of the acus has seven panels also filled with interlacings, and both from its great size and from the rich ornament with which it is covered, it must be one of the very finest specimens of this peculiar phase of Celtic art now extant.

<sup>1</sup> "Transactions Royal Irish Academy," vol. xxiv. p. 452.