

## II.

### NOTICE OF A HARP-SHAPED FIBULA FOUND ON THE ESTATE OF POLMAISE, STIRLINGSHIRE, AND OF ANOTHER IN THE PERTH MUSEUM. BY J. GRAHAM CALLANDER, SECRETARY.

#### THE POLMAISE BROOCH.

Through the courtesy of Major A. B. Murray, of Polmaise, I am able to illustrate here a harp-shaped fibula which was found in 1850, in digging a drain in that part of the field of Bannockburn which is now incorporated in the farm of Newpark, on the estate of Polmaise, a short distance from Stirling. It was handed over to the Murray family, in whose possession it has remained.

The brooch (figs. 1 and 2) measures  $3\frac{3}{4}$  inches in length and  $1\frac{1}{4}$  inch across the top, and is made of brass. As it was found in boggy ground, where it had remained under constant damp conditions, it is in an unusually good state of preservation, and in working order. But, apparently, the pin of the hinge having been broken or worn through, the original pin has been replaced by one made of copper.

The bow of the brooch rises higher than the cross-piece, and the top is surmounted by a ridge or crest placed slightly to the rear of the highest point, and bordered laterally by incised converging lines. In front of and below the crest is a rounded moulding, which, gradually increasing in width, extends down the front of the bow for rather more than one-third of its length, and terminates in a rounded curve. A small round knob, connected with the bow by a collar ornamented with a wavy line between single, straight, marginal mouldings on either side, forms

the terminal at the foot of the brooch. Between the bow and the catch for the pin there is a catch-plate bordered on the back with a trumpet-shaped moulding, and pierced with intersecting circles, and trumpet-shaped and crescentic openings, for the greater part bordered by a single, graved line, a feature occurring only on one side of the plate.

In this brooch there is no top ring, the cross-piece is solid, and the pin, instead of being supplied with a spiral spring, is hinged. The out-

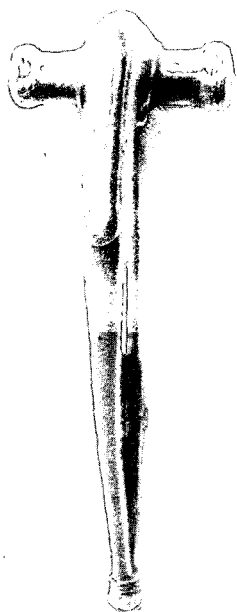


Fig. 1. Fibula at Polmaise. (i.)

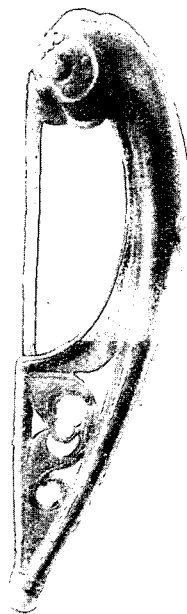


Fig. 2. Fibula at Polmaise (side view). (i.)

line of the section of the cross-piece exhibits no circular curves, but instead presents two conchoidal curves of different sizes placed face to face. The spring action of the pin is achieved by a shoulder below the hinge pressing against the inner side of the top of the bow. At either extremity of the cross-piece is a rounded flange decorated with a wavy pattern bordered with straight mouldings round the circumference, and there are three small incised circles on the ends, the riveted ends of the hinge pin forming a fourth circle.

Two brooches of very similar shape, with hinged pin and solid cross-

piece, were found during the excavations of 1914 in the fort of Dunder, on Traprain Law, in East Lothian, in the lowest and highest levels of occupation. From the associated relics recovered from these layers it was considered that they dated to about the beginning of the second and possibly the beginning of the fourth centuries A.D., respectively.<sup>1</sup> Both of these fibulæ were inlaid with enamel, and bore a socket for a stud on the upper part of the bow, forms of ornamentation not present on the brooch described. The ornamental *motif* of a wavy line between single marginal mouldings seen on the extremities of the head, and on the terminal at the foot, occurs on a brooch found in the Roman fort at Newstead, but in this case it is displayed longitudinally along the front of the bow.<sup>2</sup> The general shape of this brooch is very like that of the Polmaise example, but the pin has a covered coiled spring. Its date is placed provisionally in the second century. A brooch bearing a very strong resemblance in general outline to the brooch under review, but supplied with a spring pin, was found with a hoard of late-Celtic objects at Polden Hill, Somerset.

The supersession of the pin with a spiral spring by one with a simple hinge, in the case of the Polmaise brooch, points to a late date in the development of this class of ornament, but the decoration is characteristically late-Celtic.

#### THE PERTH BROOCH.

In the Museum at Perth there are several important relics dating to the Romano-British period, among which is a particularly fine harp-shaped fibula of bronze or brass. It has been referred to in the *Proceedings*, vol. xxii. p. 340; but, as it is an outstanding example of its class and exhibits features not seen, so far as I am aware, in any other Scottish brooch, I have had a photograph taken and reproduced in fig. 3.

Unfortunately, the localities where the brooch and the other relics were found are not known, but it is quite probable that they were discovered near Perth, on some of the Roman sites in the neighbourhood such as the fort of Orrea at Bertha, the forts in Strathearn, or even the fort at Ardoch. It is known that a number of relics have been found at the first-mentioned place; and as it lies within two miles of the town, it is not unlikely that some of the objects discovered would find their way into the collection of the local Antiquarian Society, which was founded in the end of the eighteenth century, though no record of any such donations is known to exist.

Of unusually massive dimensions, the brooch measures  $6\frac{1}{2}$  inches in

<sup>1</sup> *Proc. Soc. Antiq. Scot.*, vol. xlix. pp. 166 and 169, fig. 23, No. 7, and fig. 24, No. 3.

<sup>2</sup> James Curle, *A Roman Frontier Post—Newstead*, p. 318, pl. lxxxv., No. 5.

length and  $1\frac{7}{8}$  inch in breadth across the top. Encircling the bow at its extreme forward projection is a pronounced collar or moulding of geometrical design, consisting of a transverse row of spikelets of pyramidal form, but with hollow sides, rising from a base shaped like a four-rayed star, bordered on either margin by half pellets with their bisecting lines following the line of the outer edges of the collar.

The top portion of the bow expands and so forms the cross-piece. By bending back the edges and ends of the cross-piece a box of semicircular section was formed, within which was placed the coiled spring of the pin. The expanded top is decorated with a series of typical trumpet-shaped designs in low relief, certain of the divisional lines in the hollows being milled. The slight expansions at the ends of the cross-piece are ornamented with a milled line between single, plain, marginal beadings. The back of the cross-piece, which consists of a rectangular plate, is maintained in position by the lapping over of the edges and ends of the cross-piece, and it is pierced at the centre by an oval perforation through which the pin was connected with its spiral spring. There are indications of the head of a rivet on either end of the cross-piece, which look like the

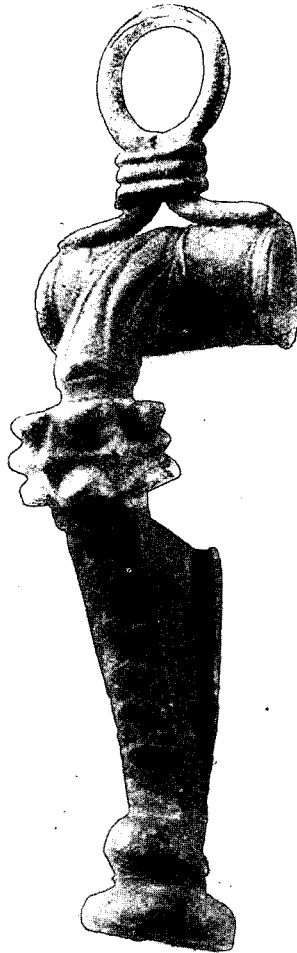


Fig. 3. Fibula in Perth Museum. (½.)

terminations of an axial wire that had passed through the coil of the spring for the purpose of keeping it in position. The pin, spring, and axial wire have been broken off and are amissing.

Surmounting the top of the fibula is a heavy, rigid loop, clasped in between the ring portion of the loop and the top of the brooch by a flat

collar which is ornamented with a band of short, vertical, straight lines between narrow, flat margins; the joint of the collar, which is at the back, is open and not brazed or soldered. After emerging from below the collar, the ends of the thick wire forming the loop are carried transversely across the top of the brooch and then vertically down the ends, into which they are countersunk.

Quite a different design and class of ornamentation appear on the lower portion of the bow. Immediately below the heavy moulding with which it is encircled is a flat, oblong space bearing four milled lines placed transversely, under which is a long, narrow, flat panel occupied with transverse lozenges alternating with triangular spaces, both filled with enamel, the colour of the enamel in the lozenges being yellow and in the triangles red. The yellow enamel is well preserved, but the red enamel is more or less cracked, and small portions have fallen out.

The terminal at the foot of the brooch consists of a large, shallow cup, with the mouth pointing downwards but slightly inclined to the front. Above the cup, but separated from it by a milled line, is a bulbous protuberance ornamented with divergent curves. Apparently the cup had been filled with enamel, possibly red in colour, as the hollow contains a quantity of rusty-looking material of granular texture.

Behind the lower part of the bow is a solid catch-plate, with the edge turned up at the back to form the catch.

The surface of the metal of the brooch is generally in good condition, and in some places is covered with a smooth, lustrous, green patina.

The fibula exhibits in a marked degree the special characteristics of one of the varieties of the La Tène brooch as it was developed in Britain, the large box foot, the pronounced moulding round the bow, the top ring, and the enamelling being typical of the harp-shaped brooches found in this country.

Evidently this ornament belongs to a late part of the period during which harp-shaped fibulae were fashioned in Britain. The ornamentation of the moulding round the bow has become debased, because, though curvilinear, it is geometrical, the earlier examples showing designs on this part of the brooch formed by divergent curves which might be called floriated. Though the loop at the top has not yet become an integral part of the brooch, it is rigid instead of free, and marks a more advanced stage of development than a somewhat similar fibula, with heavy moulding round the bow, found in the lowest level of occupation at Traprain, in which the loop, formed by an extension of an axial wire through the coils of the spring which was exposed at the back, was kept in position by a spike extending from the top of the brooch through the collar round the loop.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Proceedings*, vol. 1, p. 98, fig. 22, No. 1.

The date of the layer in which it was found was considered to be about the end of the first or beginning of the second century A.D. On the other hand, it is earlier than another brooch with a heavy bow collar found at the same site but in the second layer. In this example the ring formed an integral part of the brooch, which had also a solid cross-piece and a hinged pin.<sup>1</sup> The date provisionally given to this deposit was the Antonine period, 140 to 180 A.D. If we could be certain that the dates suggested for the brooches found at Traprain were correct, we might assign the Perth fibula to the first half of the second century A.D. Whatever be its exact date, the brooch supplies a link in the evolution of the looped fibulæ, as it shows the penultimate stage in the development of the loop, just before it was cast in one piece along with the rest of the ornament. When its enamelling is compared with that found on other brooches it will be noted that lozenge designs on flat panels in front of the bow occur on other three fibulæ found in Scotland, but these are of a rather different type, as the entire front of the bow is flat, there is no encircling collar on the bow, and the pins are hinged.<sup>2</sup> They were found at Newstead, near the surface, and were tentatively assigned to the Antonine period.

<sup>1</sup> *Proceedings*, vol. xlix. p. 168, fig. 23, No. 2.

<sup>2</sup> *A Roman Frontier Post—Newstead*, p. 324, pl. lxxxvi. figs. 19, 20, and 23.