

15. A LATE BRONZE AGE BURIAL FROM ORROCK, NEAR BURNTISLAND.

The purpose of this note is to draw attention to a Late Bronze Age burial discovered and published in the early eighteenth century, and which has since been overlooked.

The discovery of a collection of bronze objects in a cairn, and thus evidently associated with a burial, was published as early as 1710 by Sir Robert Sibbald in a book entitled *Miscellanea Quaedam Eruditae Antiquitatis quae ad Borealem Britanniae majoris Partem pertinent*.

The cairn was in a field at Orrock, on the hills a mile or so to the north of Burntisland, and where a farm of that name still exists to-day. No report was made of any burial having been found, and it is therefore probable that this was originally an inhumation rather than a cremation. All trace of unburnt bones would be likely to vanish in an acid soil.

The find is carefully described by Sibbald, who illustrates the more important objects in an engraved plate (Tab. I) at approximately their full size (as can be deduced from comparison with the measurements given by Sibbald in the text). The following types were included:

Sunflower pin of bronze with swan's neck. This was called a stylus by Sibbald, after whose careful engraving the figure is redrawn (fig. 7, no. 1).

Amber bead, spherical and broken in half. "*Ex hoc etiam lapidum acervo erutus fuit ex succino globulus in medio perforatus, et in partes duas aequales fractus.*"

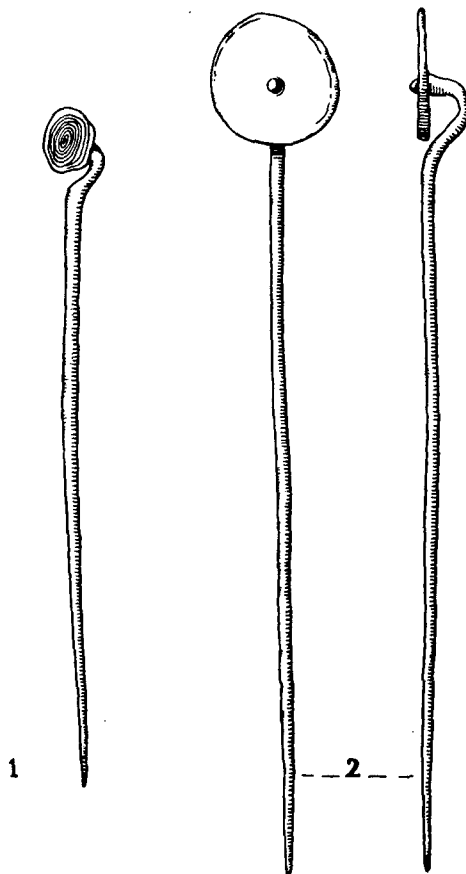


Fig. 1. (1) Bronze pin from Orrock find (after Sibbald); (2) Bronze pin from Tarves, Aberdeenshire ($\frac{1}{2}$).

If the illustration is full size the bead should measure just under 2 cm. in diameter, and with a perforation $\frac{1}{2}$ cm. across.

Three penannular bronze armlets, almost similar, and all missing one terminal. The illustrated example shows that the terminals were thickened, and can therefore be compared with the armlets from the Beachy Head hoard, illustrated in the *British Museum Bronze Age Guide*, pl. iv. From Sibbald's illustration these armlets may have been about 5.5 cm. in external diameter.

Shale armlet (?) in two fragments, not illustrated. Described as "*ex gummatibus quibusdam odoriferis artificiose compositi.*" It was evidently originally a complete circle, and was compared by Sibbald to an example then in the

Advocates' Library in Edinburgh, and which from the engraving was approximately 7.3 cm. in external diameter. Shale or lignite seem the only likely substances that could be so described.

Four smaller bronze rings, of which two were pierced by a rectangular hole at the side of the rim. These two were evidently $\frac{3}{4}$ inch in diameter ("*duorum diametri tres pollicis partes fere aequabant et hi in circulo oblonga rimula perforati erant*"). As the engraving shows, the piercing was on the side and not on the outer edge of the rim, and the rings could not have been intended for use with the pin. As drawn, the perforation was 1 cm. long. The other two rings were evidently $1\frac{1}{4}$ inches and about 1 inch in diameter respectively.

The most interesting object from this group is the bronze pin. This type, only two other examples of which are known from the British Isles, has an interesting history, and has recently been discussed by Professor Hawkes when describing an example from Fengate, near Peterborough.¹ As he points out, pins of this type combine characteristics of two groups of pins: those with "sun-flower" heads, normally with simple angular stems, and those with crooked neck proper to pins of the swan's neck group.² These hybrid pins became widespread in East and North-Central Germany in the sixth and fifth centuries, and have also been found in Denmark. As the other British example (fig. 1, no. 2) comes from Tarves in Aberdeenshire (illustrated here for comparison with the Orrock pin), where it was found with two leaf-shaped bronze swords,³ it is clear that their distribution in the east of Britain is in accord with their northern origin.

All these objects from Orrock would agree with a date in approximately the century 500-400 B.C., and should be placed in the third phase of the Late Bronze Age as defined by Hawkes in 1948.⁴

[Since writing the above, my attention has been drawn to an unlocated bronze pin in the Perth Museum, which so closely resembles Sibbald's illustration of the Orrock pin, that it seems likely that they are, in fact, the same.]

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¹ *Arch. Journ.*, vol. c. (1945), pp. 197-9.

² See G. C. Dunning, "The Swan's Neck and Ring-headed Pins of the Early Iron Age in Britain," in *Arch. Journ.*, vol. xci. (1935), pp. 269-95.

³ *B.M. Bronze Age Guide* (1920), p.101. Fig. 105.

⁴ Council for British Archaeology, *Survey and Policy of Field Research*, vol. i. (1948), p. 37.