

7. PICTISH CHAIN, ROMAN SILVER AND BAUXITE BEADS.

1. *Chain from Walston* (Pl. XLVI, 1).—Much the most important item in the collection of antiquities formed by the late Peter F. Dunlop, mason at Dolphinton, and acquired as noted on p. 241, is the tenth Pictish silver chain to be recorded in Scotland. According to a note made by Dr Graham Callander in 1925 shortly before Mr Dunlop's death, it was found thirty years before at Walston Borland Farm (between Walston and Dunsyre in the valley that forms the southern border of the Pentlands).¹

The chain, like all the rest, is incomplete. There remain 19 pairs of rings, each 1.2–1.25 ins. in diameter, and two rings of the same size which, like the others, are flattened on one side, thus showing that they too had been part of double links; in all this gives a length of 15.6 ins. The rings are very slightly oval and have been considerably worn at their interior "ends," no doubt in antiquity. There is also a penannular terminal (subsequently closed up) about 1.5 ins. in diameter and .6 in. wide, resembling a napkin-ring. Like the four other known terminals its outer edges are flanged; the space between is here plain, though decorated with Pictish symbols in the Whitecleugh and Parkhill chains. A unique feature is that the inner face of the napkin-ring also has flanges, though less pronounced, and that the space between them is all covered with hammer-marks.

The chain, with terminal, weighs 30.3 oz. troy. This is a lower medium weight for such chains, which, as the seven now in the Museum show, varied greatly in bulk if not in length. The lightest, 22.1 oz., has links only .9 in. in diameter (Haddington), while the heaviest is 92.5 oz. and has 1.8-in. links with links at the ends about 2.2 ins. (Caledonian Canal). The chains from Whitecleugh, Traprain and Parkhill weigh respectively 59.93, 53.32 and 39.65 oz.

2. *Roman and Pictish Silver*.—The source from which the Picts got the silver to make their chains, unparalleled elsewhere, and other objects too, has long been

¹ This is the chain referred to in Mr Edwards' note on such chains in *P.S.A.S.*, LXXIII, 326–7, as coming from the neighbourhood of West Linton. By a slip, pl. xcvi, 2 in that note is said to be the Greenlaw chain, which is, however, lost (*ibid.*, xv, 69), instead of the Hordwheel chain.

a matter of interest. The analysis in 1880 of the Hordwheel chain (76.5 per cent. silver, 4.24 gold, 19.2 copper) was considered to show, by the large proportion of gold, the roughness of the metallurgical extraction,¹ and has seemed to counter the suggestion that Roman silver might have been reused. Dr James Curle pointed out, however, that the Norrie's Law hoard contained, as well as undoubted Pictish items, fragments that might have come from a Late Roman dish.² Further, the percentage of gold might be explained by the fact that much Late Roman plate was gilt. Clear proof that unmelted pieces of Roman plate were in circulation in Scotland some 300 years after they were made has only recently come with the cleaning of the smaller fragments in the Norrie's Law hoard,³ one of which has been found to be a cut and folded portion of a spoon with an inscription up the centre of the bowl (fig. 1). Though it seems to have been blunter and broader (perhaps 2 ins. wide, 1 in. from the tip) than the spoons in the Mildenhall Treasure,⁴ a similar date in the 4th century A.D. is evident from the lettering; the completion and sense of this unfortunately remain uncertain—it begins IVMV.

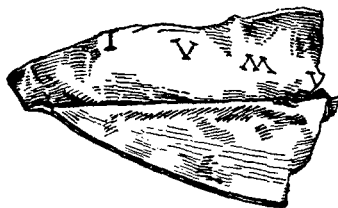


Fig. 1. Fragment of spoon.

One may conclude that the lavish use of silver by the 7th-8th-century Picts may well have been the result of their ancestors' successful raids, and that the silver continued to be reused is probably shown by the relatively greater frequency in Scotland of silver brooches (8th-9th century) compared with Ireland.⁵ Viking silver represents, on the other hand, a further influx of the metal.

3. *Romano-British Beads of Bauxite*.—A minor object in the Dunlop Collection also worth comment is an unlocalised polished stone bead 1.3 × .45 ins., coloured various shades of pink, mottled and marbled with dark red-brown, maroon, purple and cream (Pl. XLVI, 2). Dr J. Phemister of the Geological Survey has kindly examined it, and identified it as Antrim bauxite. There are in the Museum other beads, of various sizes, of the same material, though attention has never been drawn to them as a group. Several have no satisfactory associations,⁶ but two come from the Roman forts at Camelon⁷ and Newstead.⁸ Two others were found at Roman sites in Northumberland, Corbridge and Housesteads, while an imperforate olive-like object 1 in. long of the same material also comes from

¹ *P.S.A.S.*, xv, 69-70.

² *Ibid.*, LXVI, 385.

³ For the approximation of a symbol in the hoard to an animal in the Lindisfarne Gospels, circa 700 A.D., see *Problem of the Picts* (1955), ed. F. T. Wainwright, p. 110.

⁴ *B.M. Provisional Handbook* (1947), 23 and pl. 8.

⁵ F. Henry, *Irish Art* (1940), 122.

⁶ FN 18, Fortingall and FN 19, near Inverness (Catalogue, 1892); FN 165, Oronsay (colours rather different from the others), *P.S.A.S.*, LXVI, 20, fig. 4.

⁷ *P.S.A.S.*, xxxv, 396, fig. 27.

⁸ J. Curle, *A Roman Frontier Post*, p. 337, pl. xci, 32 (2nd century).

Housesteads.¹ A thick flat piece 1.1 ins. in diameter, a whorl rather than a bead, from Rainton Gatehouse of Fleet, is in the Dumfries Museum. Mr H. W. M. Hodges has kindly examined the bauxite beads in Belfast Museum and reports that there are two, both unlocalised, which he considers different from the Scottish specimens in being blotchy rather than marbled.

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1. Pictish Chain from Walston. 2. Bauxite Bead. 3. Beaker from Knockando.
4. Seal-Matrix of the Earl of Arran. 5. Seventeenth-century Arm-chair.

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