

A lost Pictish treasure (and two Viking-age gold arm-rings) from the Broch of Burgar, Orkney

James Graham-Campbell*

ABSTRACT

This paper presents the first full discussion of the provenance, composition and affinities of the remarkable hoard of silver vessels and ornaments and amber which was found in 1840 and since lost. The Viking-age gold arm-rings and burials from elsewhere on the same site are also discussed.

INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this paper is to discuss as fully as is now possible two lost finds which were discovered in the 19th century at the Broch of Burgar, Evie, Mainland, Orkney, one (it is argued) being of Pictish silver and amber, and the other of Viking-age gold. Important though these finds undoubtedly are neither of them has found a place in recent surveys and discussions of Pictish and Norse hoards in Scotland (Wilson 1973; Stevenson 1976; Graham-Campbell 1976a). The only account of the treasure generally available is that in the *Orkney and Shetland* inventory (Vol II, 74, no 261), published by the Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical Monuments of Scotland in 1946, although it was earlier described in print by George Petrie (1874, 89).

The basis for the following account of these finds is derived from the few published references and more extensive manuscript sources collected in part by Dr Raymond Lamb, Orkney Archaeologist, who kindly brought them to my attention and suggested that I might pursue them further.¹

THE BROCH OF BURGAR AND ITS VIKING-AGE BURIALS

The Broch of Burgar is contained within a substantial mound on the coastal edge and is suffering from marine erosion. The RCAMS visited the site in 1928 and reported (RCAMS 1946, II, 74, no 261) that the only structure visible was a portion of the outer face of the broch on the north side, traceable for about 50 ft (15.24 m) and reaching a height of about 9 ft (2.74 m); slight surface indications suggested the existence of mural cells or galleries. Following a visit in 1967, the Ordnance Survey recorded that the site was as described by the RCAMS, but was in danger of erosion. By the time of Dr Lamb's visit in 1981, for the *Orkney Archaeological Record* (OR 639), this erosion of the cliff-face had exposed flagstone floors and wall structures not previously reported. However, more of the broch had been standing when Capt (then Lieut) F W L Thomas visited it in 1849. His account of the site, written in 1850, was published with a plan in 1852.

*University College London

The Brough of Burgher is, as usual, of a circular form, and sixty feet in diameter; upon one side the wall is still fourteen feet high, and is about five feet thick: the inner concentric wall is of the same thickness, and separated from the outer by a distance of seven feet, the interspace being formed into numerous chambers, as may be seen by reference to the Plan (Thomas 1852, 122–3, pl xvii; see *illus 1*).

Thomas had the advantage of seeing the site not very long after it had been dug into several times during the first half of the 19th century, when two skeletons were discovered, one at least of which was apparently accompanied by grave-goods.

In 1825, Mr. Peterkin sent a comb, part of a deer's horn, and some fragments of a skull, from a Pictish brough, which had given the name of Burgher to a property in Evie; and some years afterwards Mr. Gordon, the late proprietor, made considerable excavations, and found a skeleton, with some bracelets, etc. [Footnote: In the possession of the Earl of Zetland.] This must have been the second grave situated among the ruins of the brough; but there is no reason to suppose them to have had any other than an accidental relation to the place. I had some conversation with the man employed by Mr. Gordon, and who was present when the second skeleton was found; he assured me the grave was placed promiscuously among the ruins. There must have been some fancy among the early Northmen for burying in the Pictish broughs (which, if in ruins, would be ready-made tumuli), for in Caithness, articles of the Scandinavian period have been frequently taken from them (*ibid*, 122).

Peterkin's own description of the discovery of the first skeleton is contained in a letter to Dr Hibbert, dated 31 March 1825, accompanying 'the fragments of a human skull and a comb, which were lately dug out of a Picts' house at Burgar, in the parish of Evie, Orkney'. It continues:

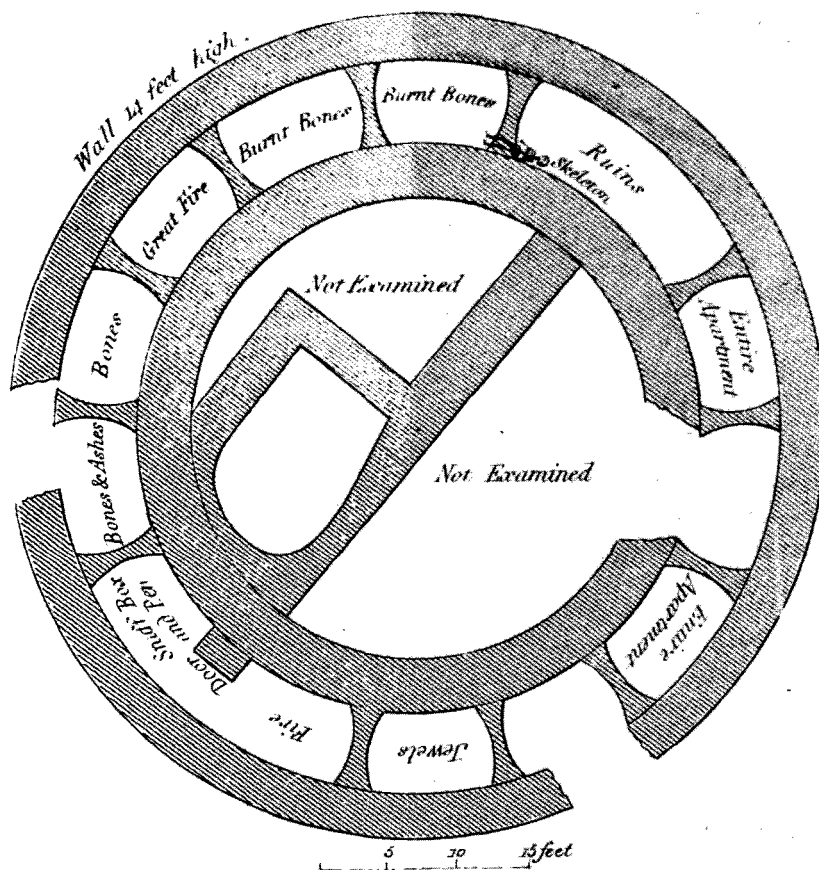
The clergyman's son of the parish, however, lately renewed the task of exploring it; and, after digging out the earth and rubbish in an opening on the top of the ruin, he found a human skeleton, a comb of very antique fashion (*See Plate 5, Fig. 3*) and part of a deer's horn. He took out the fragments of the head, and re-interred the rest of the bones (Peterkin 1831, 44).

It is clear from this account that there is no evidence to support the statement by Daniel Wilson (1851, 424), based on this letter, that 'the rude bone comb represented here' was actually found 'beside' the skeleton. It seems probable that the antler fragment and bone comb (an Iron-age weaving-comb)² were derived from occupation-levels, perhaps disturbed by the burial of the skeleton, and had not been deposited as grave-goods as Wilson implied. Wilson was convinced that the deposition of the skeleton 'did not take place till the abandonment of the burgh, perhaps not till it had been long in ruins', although we must agree with his reservation that 'the letter is not quite explicit' (*ibid*).

There can be little doubt, however, as to the secondary nature of the second skeleton reported by Thomas, for the description he gives of its location in the broch – 'placed promiscuously among the ruins' – is supported by his plan which shows it lying across the walls (*illus 1*). The whereabouts of the 'bracelets, etc.' found with it are not now known (see below), but it seems probable that Thomas was correct in his conclusion that both the burials represent Viking-age graves, although such cannot now be proved from the evidence available (cf the broch of Oxtro, Orkney: Graham-Campbell 1984, 299).

THE VIKING-AGE GOLD ARM-RINGS

The first published reference to the discovery of gold or silver objects at the Broch of Burgar is by Daniel Wilson in 1851 (p 424), who mentions 'extensive excavations' that 'led to the discovery of some very valuable relics, including two fine gold armillæ now in the possession of the Earl of Zetland'. The probability is that these 'gold armillæ' are to be equated with the 'bracelets' said by Thomas to have been excavated by Gordon since both Wilson and Thomas



*Ground Plan of a Pict's Castle at Burgher in Erie,
Partially Excavated by Mr Gordon of Burgher.*

J. Basire sc.

ILLUS 1 Plan of the Broch of Burgar, Orkney (from Thomas 1852)

(writing in the same year) refer to more than one 'arm ring', both describe them as 'excavated', and both state that they were in the possession of the Earl of Zetland. It would thus appear that these gold arm-rings are likely to have been Norse grave-goods. I am not, however, aware of any unrobbed Scandinavian Viking-age grave known to have contained a gold arm-ring, although a gold finger-ring formed part of the grave-goods in the Ile de Groix, Brittany, ship-burial (VA IV, 112, fig 74; Müller-Wille 1978, 53, 61, fig 6, 2), and silver arm-rings have occasionally been discovered in Norse graves, such as the female burial at Clibberswick, Unst (VA II, 103-5; Graham-Campbell 1976a, 124, 131).

There exists therefore the possibility that the gold arm-rings were not grave-goods, but formed a small hoard buried either deliberately or by chance in the grave in question. The

circumstances of their deposition bring to mind the description of the Viking-age silver hoard found near Mullingar, Co Westmeath, which was said to have been 'on or within' a skeleton, although the association was almost certainly fortuitous given that the green island in the bog, in which the hoard was buried, was literally imbedded with human bones (Graham-Campbell 1976b, 61). An instance of two Viking-age gold arm-rings being buried together is provided by a find from the Dublin excavations (Graham-Campbell 1980, no 220). Two such gold rings are known from Scotland, but both are single-finds: that from Oxna, Shetland (VA II, 141–2, fig 65), and that recently found in the Sound of Jura (Graham-Campbell 1983).

The only other possible interpretation of the original context of Wilson's 'two fine gold armillæ' is that they were nothing to do with the 'bracelets' found in the grave, but formed part of the treasure of silver and amber that was also found by Gordon in the Broch of Burgar, in 1840, which was certainly sent to the Earl of Zetland. This hypothesis is discounted here because the enquiries made by George Petrie in 1859, and subsequently, about the contents of this treasure resulted in the testimony of at least two eye-witnesses of the hoard that they could recollect nothing about 'gold armillæ' (see below). Indeed, if the case presented below for the hoard being a Pictish treasure is correct, it is unlikely that gold arm-rings would have formed part of it, for there is no evidence that the Picts had access to sufficient quantities of gold for the purpose of making such ostentatious ornaments, unlike the Vikings. The silver hoard did not even contain any silver arm-rings, so that there is little scope for confusion in that direction.

It seems preferable therefore to maintain the identification of Wilson's 'gold armillæ' with Thomas's 'bracelets'. What might be thought to be curious in all this is Thomas's failure to mention something as remarkable as the fact that the 'bracelets' were made of gold, but then he omits any reference to the hoard, despite the fact that he seems to have been aware of its discovery for one of the mural cells on his plan of the broch is labelled as having contained 'Jewels' (illus 1).

THE TREASURE TROVE ENQUIRIES: 1840/41

In August 1840 the Procurator Fiscal for Orkney, B M Rankin, heard that Gordon 'had lately found upon the property of Outer Evie . . . a hidden treasure consisting of ancient silver and gold Chains, and various other articles of Gold and silver'. He wrote on 17 August requesting Gordon to transmit to him the articles as treasure belonging to Her Majesty the Queen. Rankin received no answer and so requested the Sheriff Depute for a 'Petition' which was served on Gordon on 26 August. This required him to deliver up 'the hidden treasure' (under the threat of a search warrant) or 'to lodge answers if he any have' within 48 hours; he was also made 'liable in the expenses of this application'.

The 'Answers' submitted by Gordon to this 'Petition' represent the earliest surviving account of the treasure and the circumstances of its discovery, as well as offering a determined defence of his rights to dispose as he wished of such articles found on his own property at his own expense, in this case to the Earl of Zetland (see below the Appendix where this document is printed in full). On 28 November the Sheriff Substitute considered the case and found the articles to be treasure trove and ordered Gordon to deliver them up within a month. The above details of the case are included in the 'Copy Process' (attested by John Fraser, NP, in Kirkwall on 1 December) which was ordered to be sent to the Queen's and Lord Treasurer's Remembrancer in Edinburgh.³ Following its receipt the QLTR, John Henderson, wrote to Gordon on 8 December ordaining him to deliver over the articles to Rankin, and also to Rankin requesting him to forward them along with an inventory.⁴ At the same time the case was receiving attention in

London for there is a Treasury minute, dated 8 December,⁵ which forms the basis for the following letter sent to the QLTR on 11 December:⁶

Sir,

I am commanded by the Lords etc. to transmit herewith the accompanying Paper respecting some Curiosities which have been found in the Estate of Wm. Gordon Esq. at Outer Evie Orkney, and I am to desire that you will obtain the necessary Information, and report to My Lords all the particulars of the transaction. – I am also to desire that you will issue the requisite directions for the staying of all further proceedings until their Lords are in possession of your Report and shall have given directions upon the subject it appearing from Information which my Lords have received, that the Curiosities in question have most of them been sent to, and are now in the possession of the Earl of Zetland in London.

Henderson wrote accordingly to Rankin on 4 January 1841 to delay proceedings and then on 25 January to find out what had been done ‘before the receipt of the letter of Jan 4 and how the matter stands’.⁷

When he learnt that no further steps had in fact been taken, he reported this to the Treasury on 9 February: His letter⁸ is marked ‘Read 5th March 1841’ and was answered as follows (on 11 March):⁹

With Reference to your Lre of the 9th ulto respecting some Curiosities which had been found on the Estate of Mr. Gordon of Outer Evie Orkney, I am commanded by the Lords etc to desire that you will ascertain and report the particulars and quantity of the Articles found, and their supposed nominal value – Also that you will state the amount of Costs which have been incurred by the Proceedings already taken.

Henderson wrote to the Sheriff-Clerk of Orkney (on 13 March) asking him to obtain an inventory from Gordon, if he did not already have one, and for a statement of costs.¹⁰ The Sheriff-Clerk Depute, Ralph Fotheringhame, then wrote in accordance with Henderson’s instructions (on 17 March) to Rankin for an account of the expenses and to Gordon requesting ‘without the least delay a complete list and description of the articles’.¹¹ A copy of Gordon’s reply, dated 7 April, is preserved amongst the Treasury papers having been provided by Henderson in a letter of 14 April (see below).¹² Gordon’s letter ends with this comment, ‘As to the intrinsic value of the whole articles I do not think, were they sold to a Jew, it would amount to more than a *Groat* of Scottish money’. Henderson’s comment on this estimate by Gordon of their value is that ‘it does not appear that any one else competent to judge thereof had ever seen them’. Nevertheless the Lords of the Treasury accepted Gordon’s description and valuation (apparently without checking with Zetland!) and on 26 April the proceedings were brought to a close. A letter was sent to Gordon informing him that ‘the Curiosities in question’ might ‘remain in their present Custody’, and another on similar lines to Henderson, as follows:¹³

With Reference to the Enquiries that have been instituted by directors of this Board, respecting the Curiosities found on the Estate of outer Evie Orkney; I have it in command of the Lords etc to acquaint you that under the circumstances of this Case, they desired the Q. & L.T.R. in Scotland, to stay all further proceedings in this matter, and to suffer the Curiosities in question to remain in their present Custody.

The treasure was therefore left legally in the possession of the Earl of Zetland, but no reference to this treasure or to the related enquiries has been found in the hand-lists of the Zetland papers preserved in the Scottish Record Office (GD173 and 236), or amongst those deposited in the North Yorkshire County Record Office.¹⁴ Enquiry made of the present Marquess of Zetland concerning the whereabouts of both the gold arm-rings and the treasure met with the kind reply that he had ‘no knowledge or recollection of the material from the Orkneys

that you mention' (pers comm 26/7/82). We are fortunately not dependent solely on Gordon's two accounts of his discoveries because of the investigations by George Petrie whose accounts of the treasure, taken from eye-witnesses, suggest that Gordon had deliberately minimized the quality and variety of its contents to prevent it having to be surrendered to the Crown. Gordon's own accounts will, however, be considered first.

WILLIAM GORDON'S INVENTORIES

Gordon's first account of his discoveries is that contained in his 'Answers' to Rankin's 'Petition', mentioned above and published in full here as an appendix.¹⁵ The relevant paragraph reads:

He [Gordon], therefore, employed several workmen to excavate the ground; and after incurring a good deal of expense and a great deal of trouble and vigilance, discovered, in the course of his operations, several urns, placed one within the other, to the number of eight, containing various articles of ornament, or ancient Jewellery, viz. two chains, – two or three brooches; – a pair, it is supposed, of Lady's hair pins, – all of Silver; a necklace of beads of considerable size supposed to be of amber; with a snuff horn, and silver pen, and a few other smaller articles. – But notwithstanding, the utmost care was used with these relicks, the Respondent regrets to have to state, that so much were the urns decayed, by the corrosive influence of time, that they went to pieces upon being handled in the gentlest manner.

Although it is not absolutely clear from this inventory, its construction suggests that the 'snuff horn, and silver pen and . . . other smaller articles' were not *contained* within the nest of eight silver urns, like the silver ornaments and amber beads, but were merely other finds made at the same time. This impression is confirmed by the labelling on Thomas's plan of the excavations where a 'Snuff Box and Pen' are shown as having been found in a different mural cell to the 'Jewels' (illus 1).

The second inventory provided by Gordon was under renewed pressure from the authorities (see above) and is contained in a letter to the Sheriff-Clerk Depute of Orkney, dated 7 April 1841:¹⁶

. . . in compliance with your request I annex a list of the Articles in question viz. one urn in broken pieces, two chains ditto – some brooches ditto – a pair of Lady's hair pins ditto – and what appeared to me to be a snuff pen – all of these are supposed to be Silver – Also a number of Beads conjectured to be Amber or Lammar but much decayed, and also what I took to be a snuff horn with a few other small articles which I am really at a loss to name or describe.

The interesting points to note here are that the eight silver urns have *decreased* in number to one, in broken pieces, and that the chains, brooches and pins are described as *also* being in pieces, although this was not commented on by Gordon in his first list of the articles in question. The discrepancy in the number of silver vessels might be explained if seven of them had so much decomposed that it had only been possible to send one to Zetland. The silver ornaments may not all have been completely intact (as is known of the chains from Petrie's informants, see below) so that on the second occasion Gordon may have thought that he could legitimately refer to them all as being in pieces in order to minimize (successfully!) the treasure's value in order that it would not have to be surrendered.

In both versions Gordon fails to mention the presence in the hoard of the silver combs described by eye-witnesses to George Petrie (see below, and illus 2). There is no possible reason why Petrie's informants should have made up something so essentially improbable in Orkney as silver combs, whilst their accounts of the treasure are otherwise broadly in agreement with Gordon's, if more detailed. One is left to surmise that Gordon was prepared to conceal this

unusual and striking element in his treasure for fear that it might have given it sufficient curiosity value or importance for the authorities to have insisted on it being delivered up to the Crown.

GEORGE PETRIE'S INVESTIGATIONS

It seems probable that George Petrie only learnt of the Broch of Burgar treasure because of the discovery in March 1858 of a great Viking-age silver hoard at Skaill in Orkney; it was owing to his exertions that the latter hoard was recovered for the Exchequer as treasure trove (Graham-Campbell 1984). Quite possibly the publicity surrounding the Skaill hoard brought word of the earlier find to his ear, or he may have undertaken some research in the Orkney Sheriff Court archives for references to previous treasure trove cases which would certainly have brought the Broch of Burgar treasure to his notice. It was in the following summer (August 1859) that Petrie appears first to have recorded a description of its contents; then, in December, he included an account of it in a paper on the 'Primeval antiquities of Orkney', although this was not to be printed for 70 years (1927, 23).¹⁷ The earliest published reference to the treasure appears to be the record, in *The Orcadian* for 10 January 1863, of Petrie's lecture on 'The Ancient Inhabitants of Orkney', which he had given to the Kirkwall Literary and Scientific Society on 6 January.

During Petrie's enquiries about the treasure he was told both that the relics in question had been sent to Lord Zetland and that Mr Gordon had thrown them into the sea to prevent them being handed over to the Crown authorities. Information concerning the circumstances of its discovery and subsequent history had clearly become hard to establish, but then it had never been widely known. It is, for instance, remarkable that the minister of the united parishes of Evie and Rendell, the Rev David Pitcairn, writing for *The New Statistical Account of Scotland* in November 1841,¹⁸ makes no reference to Gordon's excavations or to his discovery of the treasure only the year before, whilst his section on the *Antiquities* of the parishes (pp 201–2) does refer to nine 'circular ruins' of so-called 'Picts houses', to the excavation of 'tumuli', and even to the discovery of a Tudor/Stuart coin-hoard in 1832.

In a manuscript book of George Petrie, preserved in the Library of the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland, there is the following entry for 18 August 1859 (SAS 541, p 63r; see illus 2):


Mr. George Folsetter Evie informed me that in the Burg at Burgar in Evie which was opened by Mr. Gordon about 19 years ago there were several silver ornaments &c. found. The following Mr. Folsetter saw & handled repeatedly viz^t. a Silver pot or vessel about the size of a half gallon pot – beautifully ornamented apparently stamped on it & also having numerous projecting knobs on it. It was about filled with amber beads of various sizes – some fully as large as crown pieces & a great number of the size of half crowns. Mr. F tested the beads by lifting needles with them with the greatest ease. There were also found several silver combs of various sizes some about 6 inches or better in length with long teeth somewhat of this shape [see illus 2] 5 or 6 silver pins – & several pieces of silver chains like modern watch guards evidently personal ornaments. The above were sent by Mr. Gordon to the Earl of Zetland – but were afterwards claimed by the Queens:and Lord Treasrs Remembrancer but Mr. F does not know whether or not they were delivered up to him but thinks so. All the silver ornaments with the Beads were in the pot. In the centre of the ruins or thereabouts there was a large deposit of burnt bones.

This entry is written in ink, but beneath it is added a note in pencil:

29 Aug^t. 1873. Mr. Folsetter again told me that Mr. Gordon sent the Relics to Lord Zetland.

Petrie's account of December 1859 (1927, 23) adds that the treasure was found 'in the

63

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ILLUS 2 Description of the Broch of Burgar treasure, written by George Petrie on 18 August 1859 (SAS 541, p 63r)

thickness of the wall' of one of the cells. The next reference to have been traced is not by Petrie, but was discovered by Robert Stevenson in the Irvine manuscripts; it occurs in a letter to J T Irvine from Robert A Spence of Lerwick, dated 25 November 1861, but adds no new information:¹⁹

I have good hopes that we shall find some curiosities in the ruins of the so-called “Picts Burghs”, especially as [in] the only such ruin (in Orkney) which has been examined a quantity of Silver Ornaments, Silver Chains, and Amber Beads, were found.

The RCAMS, in preparing their account of the Broch of Burgar treasure, appears to have been unaware of the Petrie notebook quoted above, using a secondary version contained in another Petrie notebook, also preserved in the Library of the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland (SAS 542, 58r–59r),²⁰ apparently without appreciating that it was the text of his paper on brochs read to the Society on 11 June 1866, although this was not published in *Archaeologia Scotica* until 1874²¹; it has only a few minor alterations in punctuation from the manuscript text, so that the printed version is that which is quoted here in full:

Broch of Burgar, Evie. – In 1825 this broch was partially explored, when a human skeleton, a long-handled bone comb, and part of a deer’s horn were found. Fifteen or twenty years afterwards the ruins were re-opened by the late proprietor Mr Gordon. Dr Daniel Wilson states in his “Prehistoric Annals” that two fine gold armillæ, with other valuable relics, now in Lord Zetland’s possession, were then discovered. The later find has been described to me by two intelligent gentlemen, by both of whom the relics were seen. Neither of them recollected the gold armillæ; and they could not tell me whether the relics had been preserved, as they had repeatedly heard that Mr Gordon threw the whole into the sea rather than surrender them to the Crown, for whom they had been claimed. The description I received referred to a highly ornate silver vase or beaker, which would contain about half a gallon of liquid, and to beads, chains, &c., with which it was nearly filled. One of the gentlemen referred to told me that the vase or beaker bulged out about the middle, the mouth and bottom being considerably narrower. Round the middle were many projecting knobs, and various ornamental figures or designs were stamped or incised on its surface. It was nearly filled with the following articles, viz., a great number of amber beads, from 3 to 4 inches in diameter down to the size of a pea, including many of the size of half-crowns; several silver combs of various sizes, some 6 inches long, with long teeth, the back or upper part being rounded and perforated by numerous holes; five or six silver pins, some silver buckles or fibulæ, and several pieces of silver chains, consisting of three links interwoven, and resembling modern watch chains. It is to be hoped that those valuable relics have not been destroyed, as has been supposed; but that Mr Gordon carried out his intention of sending them to Lord Zetland, and that they are safe in his Lordship’s possession.

From the circumstances in which the relics were found at Burgar, it would appear that they had been deposited there as well as the human skeleton, *after* the building had become a heap of ruins (Petrie 1874, 89).

The published version of the earlier lecture given by Petrie in Kirkwall in 1863 (see above), in *The Orcadian* for 10 January, states:

A silver vessel, capable of containing about two gallons of liquid, was discovered some years ago in one of the chambers in the Broch of Burgar. It contained a large number of amber beads of various sizes, some two inches in diameter, and a great many of the size of half-crowns. On these lay several combs about six inches long – silver pins, silver fibulæ, and fragments of silver chains; I have been told that the whole was thrown over the cliffs by the late Mr Gordon to prevent them being handed over to the Crown authorities by whom they had been claimed in accordance with the law of Treasure Trove as it then existed.

It should be noted how the size of the silver vessel has increased dramatically from ‘about half a gallon’ in the Petrie (1859) sources to ‘about two gallons’ in this newspaper report.

THE BROCH OF BURGAR TREASURE: SUMMARY OF CONTENTS

The following summary inventory of the contents of the Broch of Burgar treasure, numbered for easy reference in the following discussion, is extracted from the Gordon and Petrie

sources (with Petrie's manuscript notes, 1859 and 1866 papers, preferred to the lecture printed in *The Orcadian* where these differ on the size of the silver vessel):

- 1 Eight *silver vessels* of which one is known to have been of about half-gallon capacity (about three litres), narrower at its top and bottom than at its middle, around which it was ornamented with bosses and stamped or incised designs. This vessel was nearly filled with:
- 2 several *silver combs* of various sizes (some six inches or more in length), with long teeth and rounded, perforated backs;
- 3 five or six *silver pins* (Gordon: 'a pair');
- 4 two or three *silver brooches*;
- 5 several fragments of *silver chains* made up from interwoven triple links; all of which (nos 2–5) rested on:
- 6 a large number of *amber beads* of various sizes, ranging from three to four inches in diameter to the size of a pea.

DISCUSSION

In order to narrow somewhat the discussion that follows it is clearly desirable to determine at the outset what in general terms can be deduced concerning the milieu in which such a treasure might have been assembled and the date at which it might have been concealed. The fullest possible answer to these questions can only emerge after detailed consideration of all six component elements of the Broch of Burgar treasure, but parameters can be established from a consideration of the location of its deposition and of the overall range of its contents.

A hoard deposited in a broch or post-broch site in Orkney containing silver ornaments (and amber beads), *but no coins*, will almost certainly be of either Pictish or Norse origin. The contents of the Broch of Burgar treasure are in no way comparable to those of the late Roman bullion hoards (with their plate, hack-silver and ingots) found at Traprain Law in southern Scotland (Curle 1923), and in Ireland at Ballinrees (the 'Coleraine hoard'), Co Derry, and Balline, Co Limerick (Bateson 1973, 42–3, no 1; 73–4, no 23). Norse hoards in Scotland are characterized above all by the presence of rings (see table 2), whilst only one is known to have contained complete brooches (Skaill). Rings are absent from the four known Pictish hoards of eighth/ninth-century date (as also from the Broch of Burgar treasure); all of them, however, contain brooches (as does Broch of Burgar). No Norse hoard is known to have contained amber beads, but they are present in the ninth-century Pictish hoard from Croy, Inverness-shire. No Norse hoard from Scotland is known to have contained an intact silver vessel, whereas the late eighth/early ninth-century Pictish hoard from St Ninian's Isle, Shetland, contained eight (as Gordon reported of the Broch of Burgar treasure). Viking-age hoards of Scandinavian character are in general characterized by coins, ingots and hack-silver, as well as ornaments (Graham-Campbell 1982). Neither coins, nor ingots formed part of the Broch of Burgar treasure; its chain fragments are most probably to be interpreted as scrap rather than as deliberately cut hack-silver because the combs, pins and brooches all seem to have been complete, at least according to Petrie's informants (cf the chain fragment in the Croy hoard).

In the light of these preliminary observations, there should be no surprise that my final conclusion will be that this is most probably an eighth-century Pictish treasure, deposited at the onset of the Viking attacks on the Northern Isles about AD 800. This should be borne in mind in the following discussion, although the possibility that the Broch of Burgar treasure is (in part at any rate) a Viking hoard is not discounted at this stage.

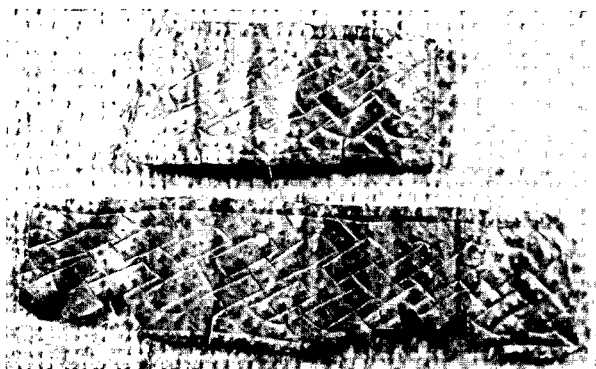
1 THE SILVER VESSELS

The silver vessel recorded by Petrie as an ornamented beaker is unique in Scotland, but then so are the seven bowls of the St Ninian's Isle, Shetland, treasure which represent our only surviving, complete examples of Pictish silver tableware (Small *et al* 1973, nos 1–7, pls XVII–XXIII). Wilson pointed out that such silver bowls 'were obviously known and used throughout Europe from the seventh century onwards' (*ibid*, 107), as were other forms of silver vessel; for example, the seventh-century find from Kuczurmare in the USSR contained a beaker-shaped bowl, and a straight-sided vessel bearing control-stamps of the Emperor Heraklios (610–41), as well as seven shallow bowls (Noll 1958, pls 47 and 48). Cups or beakers have also been found alongside bowls in eighth/ninth-century silver hoards in Denmark, such as that of Carolingian manufacture from Ribe, and that with Anglo-Carolingian ornament from Fejø (Wilson 1960). These cups have low bellies, about three-quarters of the way towards the base, and thus do not have the distinctive profile of the Broch of Burgar vessel, nor do they have bossed ornament; they are also smaller in size, with a capacity of less than half a gallon.

No objects of comparable form to the Broch of Burgar beaker are known either from England or from Ireland in the early medieval period and so its origins should perhaps be looked for in late Roman silver tableware (Strong 1966). Any such parallels are difficult to use because of the wide chronological gap, but it is also worth noting some such relevant Roman and Romano-British silver vessels, and related pottery, are decorated with ornamental friezes and/or bosses (eg Castor Ware: British Museum, *Guide to the Antiquities of Roman Britain*, London, 1958, pl IV). The use of a combination of bosses and incised/stamped ornament is, however, equally in accord with what is known of aspects of Pictish taste from the late eighth into the ninth century.

The St Ninian's Isle bowls are decorated with punched and engraved ornament, two with animal friezes (nos 2 and 3) and the others with geometric patterns, most notably bands of ribbon interlace (nos 4, 6 and 7). Any one of nos 2–4 of the St Ninian's Isle bowls might easily be described in Petrie's words as 'beautifully ornamented apparently stamped on', or as having 'various ornamental figures or designs . . . stamped or incised on its surface'.

Of relevance to the ornament of the St Ninian's Isle bowls, in particular to no 4, and thus to this discussion, are two small strips of silver decorated with a band of ribbon interlace in the same technique of punched and engraved ornament (illus 3; cf Wilson 1973, figs 25 & 27). These strips



ILLUS 3 Ornamental silver strips from the Cuerdale hoard, Lancs (scale: 1/1)

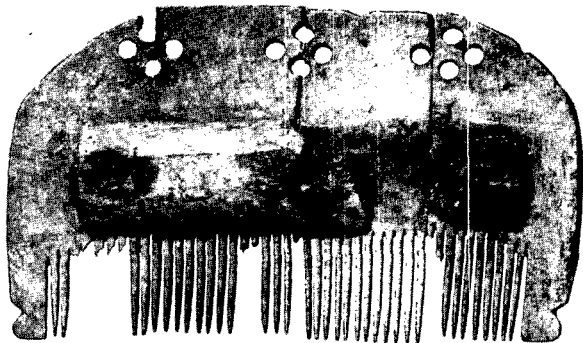
form part of the Viking-age silver hoard found at Cuerdale in Lancashire, deposited c 905 (Graham-Campbell 1980, no 301). It is suggested therefore that these strips, hitherto unpublished, originally formed part of another piece of Pictish silver from which they were cut to serve as Norse bullion.²²

The 'numerous projecting knobs' that form part of the ornament of the Broch of Burgar beaker are without parallel on the St Ninian's Isle bowls, but the so-called 'boss-style' is well-known in Scotland in both metalwork and sculpture from the late eighth century onwards, in particular amongst the Picts (Stevenson 1955; Henderson 1967, 133-4; Wilson 1973, 142-3). This Pictish fascination with ornamental bosses is manifest in the St Ninian's Isle treasure in the form of the three unique silver cones (Small *et al* 1973, nos 12-14, pl XXVII), interpreted by Wilson as 'belt-buttons, perhaps for sword belts' (*ibid*, 123).

In the absence of any more detailed information concerning the form and ornament of the Broch of Burgar beaker, it is impossible to carry this discussion any further. Suffice it to say, by way of conclusion, that no Norse hoard from Scotland is known to have contained an intact silver vessel (let alone a group of eight), whilst it seems probable that this beaker would not have caused any surprise had it been found alongside the Pictish silver tableware in the St Ninian's Isle treasure. The prominent use of bosses in its ornament suggests that this beaker is unlikely to be earlier than the late eighth century in date. All that it is reasonable to deduce concerning the seven other silver vessels from the Broch of Burgar hoard is that they were of approximately similar form to that discussed above, for Gordon recorded that they were 'placed one within the other'. That they were all beakers rather than bowls is also probable from Gordon's choice of the term 'urn' to describe them.

2 THE SILVER COMBS

The Broch of Burgar silver combs are characterized as having rounded, perforated backs with long teeth, 'some about 6 inches or better in length'. The type of insular bone comb of early medieval date that most readily fits this description, although it does not exceed about three inches in length, is one that has been classified as 'Pictish' on the basis of finds from such Orkney sites as the Brough of Birsay (Curle 1982, illus 9, nos 214 & 215; see illus 4), the Broch of Burrian (MacGregor 1974, fig 11, nos 149 & 150), and Buckquoy (Ritchie 1977, fig 7, no 47). Petrie's drawing (illus 2) shows a comb which is less high-backed and rounded than the examples cited above (and lacks their perforations); it appears to be more in the tradition of single-sided

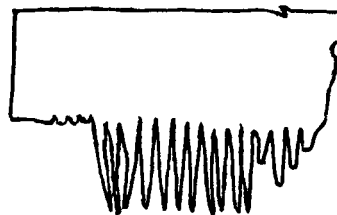


ILLUS 4 Pictish comb from the Brough of Birsay, Orkney (scale: 1/1)

Norse combs (eg Brough of Birsay nos 224–7: Curle 1982, illus 36), in particular with regards to its length, but these combs lack ornamental perforations. It is, however, important to remember that Petrie had not actually seen the combs in question and so can only have based his sketch on the description given him by Folsetter; in fact, all that Petrie claims for the accuracy of his illustration is that the Broch of Burgar combs were ‘somewhat of this shape’.

Both high-backed and double-sided combs are represented on Class I Pictish symbol-stones (but only double-sided examples on those of Class II), as listed and discussed by Curle (1982, 95–7). Few artefacts from daily life were utilized by the Picts as naturalistic symbols and it has been suggested that the comb was employed by them, generally together with a mirror, as a female designator (Anderson 1903, xxxvii; Thomas 1963, 42–3). It is not unreasonable to suppose therefore that in Pictish society combs of varying degrees of elaboration might have served as status-symbols amongst women, in the same manner that brooches of different qualities are supposed to have indicated differences in rank between men in Ireland (*Ancient Laws of Ireland*, Vol II (*Senchus Mor*), 146–9). Early Irish literature contains at least one reference to a woman with a silver comb.²³ In this light it may simply be fortuitous that no example of a silver comb has hitherto been recorded from Pictland.

There is only one extant fragment of a silver comb of an early medieval date known from Britain or Ireland; it forms part of the Cuerdale hoard and is published here for the first time (illus 5).²⁴ As a unique object, it can do little more than confirm that silver combs were known in



ILLUS 5 Silver comb fragment from the Cuerdale hoard, Lancs (scale: 1/1)

north-western Europe by the end of the ninth century (deposited c 905), for it is missing its back-plates without which its original form cannot be deduced, other than to note that it is single-sided; no other silver comb is to be found amongst the many thousands of silver artefacts contained in Viking-age hoards from Scandinavia or anywhere else in the Viking world. Indeed, metal combs are of extreme rarity in the Viking age, if comb-shaped pendants of eastern type are discounted (eg Arbman 1940, pl 100, 2), as well as the few antler combs fitted with bronze back-plates (eg *ibid*, pls 136, 1 & 161, 7). The only possibly relevant exceptions known to me are a couple of small bronze combs found in Iceland, one of which has a somewhat rounded back (National Museum of Iceland: nos 5021 & 12912) and a crude bronze ‘horse-comb’ (with an openwork back) from Sweden;²⁵ bone combs with openwork ornament do not seem to have come into fashion in Scandinavia until after the end of the Viking age (eg Mårtensson 1976, fig 293, no 49A). It is hard to see any immediate relevance in these far-flung parallels to the silver combs from the Broch of Burgar.

It is suggested therefore, in conclusion, that the Broch of Burgar silver combs are most likely to have been examples of a Pictish type that is well-known from Orkney in pre-Norse contexts (cf illus 4).

3 THE SILVER PINS

No details concerning the form or ornament of the Broch of Burgar silver pins are recorded, although it should be noted that Gordon described them as 'Lady's hair pins' so that they are likely to have been shorter than the silver hand-pins which form an element in seventh/early eighth-century Pictish hoards: there being two in that from Norrie's Law, Fife, and one (with other unspecified, lost pins) in that from Gaulcross, Morayshire (Stevenson & Emery 1964, pl xi). There is, in any case, no evidence to suggest that hand-pins remained in fashion in Pictland into the eighth century, as they did in Ireland where further elaboration of their form had taken place (Duignan 1973).

No silver pins (as distinct from brooch pins) are present in late eighth/ninth-century Pictish hoards – those from Croy, Perth, Rogart and St Ninian's Isle – but the use of metal pins was clearly not abandoned by the Picts with the growing fashion for the use of penannular brooches in the eighth century. Moulds for metal pins were found in the pre-Norse Pictish levels at the Brough of Birsay (Curle 1982, illus 18 & 57) of which a couple are for pins with quite elaborate zoomorphic heads (nos 327 & 330), whilst a fine bronze pin from Golspie, Sutherland, with its head in the form of a human mask, has been dated to the eighth or ninth century by Dr Close-Brooks (1975).

Silver pins, other than brooch pins, are unknown in Viking-age hoards of Scandinavian character in Britain and Ireland with the one exception of the Skailh hoard (deposited c 950) which contains one intact silver ringed-pin amongst some 90 artefacts, other than coins (VA II, 129, no 49, fig 59, where it is erroneously catalogued as a 'silver fish-hook'), and the shaft of a second (*Proc Soc Antiq Scot*, 72 (1937–8), 131, fig 2; Fanning 1983, nos 18 & 53). The Norse graves of Scotland have produced two further silver pins: one from Ballinaby II, Islay, consisting of a filigree-ornamented bead mounted on a plain shaft; and the other from Kildonan Bay, Colonsay, being a Norse stick-pin of 'Vestfold type' (VA II, 37–8, fig 18, and 58, fig 30; Graham-Campbell 1976a, 118, 124, 131).

It thus seems evident that a group of perhaps as many as five or six silver pins is not very likely to form part of a Norse silver hoard found in Scotland, but would not necessarily be out of place in a seventh/eighth-century hoard of Pictish silver.

4 THE SILVER BROOCHES

As with the pins discussed above, there are regrettably no details recorded concerning the nature of the silver 'fibulæ' in the Broch of Burgar hoard. The term 'fibulæ' was used by Petrie in 1858 to classify the large penannular brooches in the Skailh hoard, so that it may be reasonable to assume that he meant penannular brooches when he used it again in 1859. The probability that these 'fibulæ' were indeed penannular brooches is increased by the fact that they appear to have been likened to 'buckles' by Petrie's informants, given that buckles approximate in form to penannular brooches.

It seems reasonable to deduce from this reference to the brooches as 'buckles' that they, like buckles, had short pins which did not greatly exceed in length the diameters of their hoops. This suggestion may gain some support from the statement that they were contained (with much else besides) *within* a half-gallon beaker. This renders them less likely to have had the very long pins of the substantial silver penannular brooches favoured by the Scandinavian settlers in Britain and Ireland from the late ninth to the mid-10th century (as found in the Skailh hoard) – unless they had been bent out of shape, a feature which might possibly have received some comment.

These factors combine to suggest that the 'fibulæ' in question are likely to have been similar

in form to the penannular brooches in the St Ninian's Isle treasure which Wilson demonstrated belong to a distinctively Pictish type in use from the eighth into the ninth century (1973, 81–105). If one feature above all can be said to characterize Pictish hoards of late eighth/ninth-century date, it is that penannular brooches form a significant part (or even all) of their contents (table 1), although penannular brooches are also present in the seventh/early eighth-century Pictish hoards from Tummel Bridge, Perthshire (Henry 1936, pl 23; Stevenson 1976, 250), and Norrie's Law (Stevenson 1976, 250); the Gaulcross hoard contained some unspecified brooches, now lost (Stevenson & Emery 1964, 206). Whichever the period, it still remains more probable that a hoard containing two or three brooches, found in Scotland, will be of Pictish rather than of Norse origin.

TABLE 1
Late eighth/ninth-century Pictish silver hoards

Hoard	No of brooches
St Ninian's Isle	12
Rogart	11
Croy	3 (?4)
Nr Perth	2
Broch of Burgar	2 (?3)

5 THE SILVER CHAIN FRAGMENTS

The several fragments of silver chains in the Broch of Burgar treasure are described as 'consisting of three links interwoven and resembling modern watch chains'. These chains were thus different in form both from that in the ninth-century Croy hoard, made in the Trichinopoly technique (Graham-Campbell 1976a, 118), and from that in the seventh-century Gaulcross hoard, made of individual rings bent and fitted into one another (Stevenson & Emery 1964, 209–11, pl xii), although these finds demonstrate that small silver chains were in use amongst the Picts at least during the seventh to ninth centuries.²⁶ The closest parallels for these chains that may be advanced from an insular context would appear to be fragments of link-chains in the Cuerdale hoard (eg Hawkins 1847, fig 82; VA IV, fig 12),²⁷ although none fits this description exactly. The only Norse hoards from Scotland known to have contained silver chains are Skaill (VA II, 131, fig 60) and that deposited c 1000 on Inch Kenneth in the Hebrides (Graham-Campbell 1980, no 434), but these are also made in the Trichinopoly technique of knitted wire, as was that found with the silver pin in Ballinaby grave II (VA II, 38, fig 18). A hoard concealed c 1030? at Parkhill, Lindores, Fife, is said to have contained 'gold chains' 'of rather a slender make', but these are lost (Graham-Campbell 1976a, 122 & 130).

The fact that chain fragments form part of both Pictish and Norse hoards found in Scotland, ranging in date from the seventh to the 11th-century, means that this element in the Broch of Burgar treasure is of little help towards establishing its nature and date.

6 THE AMBER BEADS

The only treasure from Scotland other than that from the Broch of Burgar that certainly contains amber beads is the Croy hoard. Three are known from this hoard (diameters 17, 15 and 13 mm), together with five glass beads (VA II, 193), although it must be remembered that the Croy hoard was recovered on two separate occasions by different finders and is unlikely to have been retrieved in its entirety (Graham-Campbell 1976a, 117). There is at present no other

evidence known to me for the use of amber necklaces by the Picts, though amber was used occasionally by them for settings in ornamental metalwork, as on brooches in both the Rogart and Croy hoards (VA II, 193, 195; Stevenson 1974, Table III);²⁸ only glass, however, was used for the surviving settings in the St Ninian's Isle metalwork (Wilson 1973, 66, 98).

The use of amber to ornament insular metalwork of the eighth to ninth century, and its source of supply, has never been properly considered, although it appears to have been used quite widely in Ireland, and to some extent in Scotland where it is present most notably on the pseudo-penannular brooches from Hunterston, Dunbeath and Westness (Stevenson 1974). Ryan has recently drawn attention to this very problem in Irish metalwork in his preliminary discussion of the early to mid-ninth-century Derrynaflan chalice (1983, 38) which is ornamented with the remarkable quantity of 57 amber studs (*ibid*, 13).

In Viking-age Scandinavia considerable use was made of amber for beads and other artefacts, such as spindle-whorls, gaming-pieces and pendants (Graham-Campbell 1980, nos 72, 97, 107, 108, 152, 153 & 461). Eight of the Norse graves in Scotland, catalogued as such in VA II, are recorded as containing amber beads (pp 38, 42, 45, 68, 77, 86, 87 & 88). There were eight amber beads amongst 60 found in what may also have been a Norse grave in the Knowe of Moan, Harray, Mainland, Orkney; the rest were of glass with the exception of one cornelian (VA II, 201). As noted in the introduction to the discussion of the Broch of Burgar treasure, no Viking-age hoard of Scandinavian character is known to have contained amber beads, although Greig interpreted as a hoard the find of a silver Hiberno-Viking arm-ring with an amber bead at Blackerne, Kirkcudbrightshire (VA II, 109). He seems to have been unaware of Wilson's (1851, 443) information on the circumstances of this discovery which suggest that it was yet another Norse grave:

A silver armilla, of the same type as those discovered at Cuerdale, was found, in the year 1756, in a cist, along with a quantity of burnt human bones, underneath a large cairn at Blackerne, Kirkcudbrightshire, when the stones composing the cairn were taken to inclose a plantation. It is now in the Museum of the Scottish Antiquaries.

The interpretation of the Blackerne find as a grave rather than a hoard is supported by the contents of the Clibberswick grave on Unst, which contained a silver arm-ring with two glass beads, together with a set of woman's brooches (VA II, 103-5).

The presence of 'a large number' of amber beads in the Broch of Burgar silver hoard is therefore problematical, but on balance it suggests that we are dealing with a Pictish treasure rather than a Norse hoard, despite the fact that the Norse made greater use of amber than the Picts. There is at present no evidence for the use of amber by the Picts other than in the eighth and ninth centuries.

CONCLUSIONS

It is obviously not possible, in the light of the limited evidence available, to establish conclusively that the Broch of Burgar treasure represents a Pictish hoard rather than a Viking hoard containing Pictish loot. But, on the basis of the above discussion and of the tabulated summary of the contents of the relevant Pictish and Norse hoards (table 2), it seems beyond reasonable doubt that this treasure will once have formed the property of a wealthy Pictish inhabitant of Orkney. There is nothing about it to suggest that it was 'the gradually accumulated treasure of a Viking marauder; there is no hack-silver in the hoard and no ingots, no exotic pieces . . . and no coins', as Wilson commented on the St Ninian's Isle treasure in seeking to establish its

TABLE 2

Pictish and Norse hoards from the Northern Isles, north-eastern and eastern Scotland north of the Firth of Forth: summary of contents (excluding miscellaneous hack-silver and/or scrap). The revised dates are those suggested by M Blackburn and H Pagan in *Anglo-Saxon Monetary History*, forthcoming.

Hoard	coin-dating	vessel	comb	pin	brooch	chain	bead	coin	ring	ingot
Pictish										
Tummel Bridge	—	+	—	—	+	—	—	—	—	—
Gaulcross	—	—	—	+	+	+	—	—	+	—
Norrie's Law	c 380+	—	—	+	+	+	—	+	+	—
St Ninian's Isle	—	+	—	—	+	—	—	—	—	—
Rogart	—	—	—	—	+	—	—	—	—	—
Croy	c 845+	—	—	—	+	+	+	+	—	—
Nr Perth	—	—	—	—	+	—	—	—	—	—
Broch of Burgar	—	+	+	+	+	+	+	—	—	—
Norse										
Skaill	c 950	—	—	+	+	+	—	+	+	+
Tarbat	c 1000	—	—	—	—	—	—	+	+	—
Burray	c 1000	—	—	—	—	—	—	+	+	+
Garthsbanks	c 1000	—	—	—	—	—	—	+	+	?
Parkhill	c 1030?	—	—	—	—	+	—	+	+	—
Caldale	c 1035	—	—	—	—	—	—	+	+	—
Dunrossness	c 1065?	—	—	—	—	—	—	+	+	—
Ring of Brodgar	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	+	—
Stenness	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	+	—

Pictish nature (1973, 146). Furthermore, in connection with both hoards, there is another fundamental factor to be taken into account – the absence of penannular rings. In contrast to this lack of material diagnostic of Viking-age Scandinavian-type hoards, there is nothing in the Broch of Burgar treasure that would seem to be out of context in a Pictish hoard and, indeed, both intact silver vessels and amber beads are only to be paralleled in Scotland in Pictish hoards.

If it is accepted that there is here sufficient evidence for a lost *Pictish* treasure, then the final question needing to be answered is that of its date of deposition. Hoards of assorted Pictish silver are known from the seventh to the ninth century, but it is my contention that the Broch of Burgar treasure shares more in common with the St Ninian's/Rogart/Croy group of late eighth- to mid-ninth-century hoards, than it does with the seventh to early eighth-century Gaulcross/Norrie's Law/Tummel Bridge hoards.²⁹ The factors taken into account in assigning the Broch of Burgar treasure to the later group include the use of bossed ornament on the beaker and the presence of the amber beads. Such a Pictish hoard is unlikely to have been deposited in Orkney much after AD 800, given the Norse take-over of the Northern Isles from about that date; it may even have been concealed in the face of Viking attack, as Wilson suggested of the St Ninian's Isle treasure in Shetland (1973, 147), but such can be no more than speculation.

It is to be hoped that the Broch of Burgar treasure, in all its elusiveness, may now be recognized as a major late eighth-century Pictish hoard – one that may be placed alongside its Shetland counterpart as a further indication of the wealth of the Northern Isles in the immediately pre-Norse period.

NOTES

1 In addition I wish to express my gratitude to the many others in museums, libraries, and archives who assisted me in the research on this treasure, but notably to my father, Mr D J

- Graham-Campbell, for work in the Scottish Record office and to Mr C D Chalmers of the Public Record Office (Kew). I have also benefited greatly from comments on a preliminary draft of this paper by Dr Robert Stevenson, Mrs Leslie Webster, and Sir David Wilson, but they are in no way to be held responsible for my final speculations. Illus 2 was kindly provided by the Royal Museum of Scotland and illus 4 by the Scottish Development Department (Ancient Monuments Branch).
- 2 The weaving-comb was presented to the National Museum by Peterkin in 1827 (GA 56: *Catalogue of the National Museum of Antiquities of Scotland*, Edinburgh, 1892, 228); it is illustrated both by Peterkin (1831, pl 5, 5) and by Wilson (1851, 424). The well-known type is discussed by MacGregor (1974, 84) in relation to the similar combs from the Broch of Burrian, Orkney.
 - 3 PRO: *Treasury Branch Papers* (T1/4534/26909).
 - 4 PRO: *Out Letter Book* (E806/15).
 - 5 *Loc cit* in note 3.
 - 6 PRO: *Treasury Out Letters: North Britain* (T17/36), pp 240–1.
 - 7 *Op cit* in note 4.
 - 8 PRO: *Treasury Letter Bundle* (T1/4576/8114).
 - 9 *Op cit* in note 6, p 264.
 - 10 *Op cit* in note 4; see also a copy in *op cit* in note 11.
 - 11 Orkney Archives: *Diet Book of the Sheriff Court, 1834–41* (SC-11-8).
 - 12 *Loc cit* in note 8.
 - 13 *Op cit* in note 6, pp 276–7.
 - 14 I am grateful to Mr M Y Ashcroft, County Archivist, for this information.
 - 15 *Loc cit* in note 3.
 - 16 *Loc cit* in note 8.
 - 17 Petrie had visited the site four years earlier; there is a water-colour of the ruins, signed and dated August 1855, amongst the Petrie mss deposited with RCAMS (SAS 487: sketchbook 3, f 17v).
 - 18 *The New Statistical Account of Scotland* (Edinburgh/London, 1845), Vol 15: *Orkney*, 196–203.
 - 19 J T Irvine, *Shetland Historical Collections*, Vol I, pt iii (SAS 534), 608–9.
 - 20 The RCAMS cites two Petrie notebooks (identified by them as *Notebooks* Nos 4 and 5: now catalogued as SAS 542 and 543), but all their quotations are drawn from the same passage in *Notebook* No 4; there appears to be nothing about the treasure in *Notebook* No 5.
 - 21 Information from Dr R B K Stevenson.
 - 22 In the Assheton collection (now on loan to the British Museum).
 - 23 The undoubtedly hyperbolic, opening description of Étain, in the tale of ‘The destruction of Dá Derga’s hostel’, describes her as ‘a woman with a bright comb of silver adorned with gold, washing in a silver basin’ (Stokes 1901, 14). I am grateful to Dr Anna Ritchie for drawing this reference to my attention.
 - 24 I am grateful to Mr Ben Edwards for the original drawing of this comb fragment which forms part of the Assheton collection (on loan to the British Museum).
 - 25 In Jönköping Museum: information from Dr Ingmar Jansson.
 - 26 The Gaulcross hoard has been dated as late as the first half of the ninth century, presumably because of a mistaken belief that the Gaulcross and Croy chains are both ‘knitted’ (Ralston & Inglis 1984, 50–1, no 25); Stevenson’s (1976) datings are accepted here (see also note 29).
 - 27 A similar chain to this fragment from Cuerdale is attached to a plain silver pin found at Lagore, Co Meath, in 1867 (*Catalogue of the Day Collection*, Sothebys, 1913, no 458; *Arts of the Migration Period in the Walters Art Gallery*, Baltimore, 1961, no 52).
 - 28 As are the settings on the Pictish silver brooch found near Galway in 1854 (Small *et al* 1973, pl xxxvii, c); this identification was kindly confirmed by Dr Charles Little of the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, which purchased the brooch, previously believed to be lost, in 1981 (*ex Carruthers and Pitt-Rivers collections*). The Pictish brooch from Loch Glashan, Argyllshire (*ibid*, pl 1, e), has recently been examined by X-ray fluorescence in the NMAS Laboratory (No 7092) when its settings were identified as also being of amber (information kindly made available to me by Miss Helen Adamson of The Art Gallery and Museum, Kelvingrove, Glasgow).
 - 29 Following Stevenson’s (1976) and Wilson’s (1973) datings: the recent suggestion by Laing and Laing (1984, 263–4) that the Norrie’s Law hoard could have been deposited as early as the fifth century is unconvincing and will be disputed by me elsewhere, with new evidence in support of the late seventh/early eighth-century date accepted here.

APPENDIX

From the 'Certified Copy Process [by] B. M. Rankin P.F. of Orkney agt. Wm. Gordon Esquire of Outer Evie' (PRO: *Treasury Branch Papers*: T1/4534/26909).

Answers for William Gordon Esquire of Outer Evie to the Petition of Bryce Macmurdo Rankin, Procurator Fiscal of Court for Her Majesty's Interest.

In answering, shortly, the present petition, the Respondent may remind your Lordship that there are in Orkney, a number of ruinous buildings, known by the name of "Picts' Houses"; and of these, there is one, called the Brough of Burgar, situated on the Respondent's property in the Parish of Evie. – Little curiosity seems to prevail, of exploring these remnants of antiquity; and it occurred to the Respondent that it would, at least, be a source of amusement to search the interior of this one, in order to satisfy himself, of the subterranean form and structure of the fabric, and not certainly with any hope of gain. –

He, therefore, employed several workmen to excavate the ground; and after incurring a good deal of expense and a great deal of trouble and vigilance, discovered, in the course of his operations, several urns, placed one within the other, to the number of eight, containing various articles of ornament, or ancient Jewellery, viz. two chains, – two or three brooches; – a pair, it is supposed, of Lady's hair pins, – all of Silver; a necklace of beads of considerable size supposed to be of amber; with a snuff horn, and silver pen, and a few other smaller articles. – But notwithstanding, the utmost care was used with these relicks, the Respondent regrets to have to state, that so much were the urns decayed, by the corrosive influence of time, that they went to pieces upon being handled in the gentlest manner. –

The Respondent does not profess to be so deeply versed in antiquarian lore, as to be able to trace the antiquity of these trophies of his search; but he was sufficiently impressed with a zeal to have that, if possible, ascertained; and had them transmitted to the Right Honorable, the Earl of Zetland, for his acceptance, – a Nobleman, intimately connected with the county, and whose antiquarian researches, and more learned acquirements, are likely to throw more light upon them, than could be gathered in this quarter. – Indeed, the Respondent, confesses, that so much was he captivated with this ancient treasure, and with the desire of having their age and description, properly defined, that he determined, at once, upon transmitting them to that Nobleman. But before being forwarded, they were seen and examined, by several Gentlemen in Orkney, at the Respondent's House, for there was no desire to conceal them, but quite the contrary: – Their intrinsic value was of little or no consideration, although to the learned antiquarian, they may form a subject of pleasant amusement and Speculation, in acquiring a knowledge of some part of the early history of these Islands; and the Respondent has considerable hope, that a description of them may, in a little time be obtained, if they be not too much decayed to render that possible.

In these circumstances the Respondent trusts that your Lordship will consider the Petition to have been frivolous and unnecessary, and find him entitled to the expenses of these answers –

In respect whereof etc.

Drawn by [signed] John Fraser

Pleas in Law

-
- I The Respondent having openly and avowedly, transferred the ancient relicks alluded to, to the possession of the Nobleman before mentioned, they are not now at the Respondent's disposal. –
 II Neither Her Majesty, the Queen; nor the Nation at large; nor the County of Orkney, as an integral part of it, have sustained injury, or loss, or damage by the articles having been so disposed of. –
 III A private Individual, who chooses, for his own amusement, to be at the expence and trouble, of searching for relicks of antiquity, upon his own property, is not bound to deliver up, for behoof of Her Majesty, what he may find, as "hidden treasure", until adequately indemnified for his labour and expences. –

[Signed] John Fraser

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