

An Irish provenance for the Monzie Estate gold?

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ABSTRACT

General Alexander Campbell of Monzie, a little known antiquarian, provides the link between group of gold objects now held by the National Museum of Scotland and purporting to come from the Monzie Estate, and, a possible Irish provenance. Known objects in Campbell's possession include several finds from Ireland and at least one book on Irish antiquities whilst his military career took him to Ireland on a number of occasions in the late 18th and early 19th century. Many Irish collectors from this period are known through later acquisitions by public museums. Individuals like Campbell who were based outside of Ireland are not as well known and the true extent of their collecting is uncertain and is perhaps now unmappable but does raise the possibility that a larger quantity of Irish material was moved to collections in Scotland than is generally assumed.

INTRODUCTION

This short paper concerns the group of four gold artefacts in the collections of the National Museum of Scotland that are associated with the Monzie Estate in Crieff. The objects include a lunula, cuff-fastener, lock-ring and ring-money (L1963: 30–3). Previous research and discussion of the finds has indicated strong Irish associations, both individually and collectively (Eogan 1969; Taylor 1980; Wallace 1986). Eogan went as far as to suggest that the whole find represented a modern collection of prehistoric Irish goldwork (1969: 119), although Wallace, in his 1986 paper on the lunula, and another of the same type with similarly vague origins from Lanfine, stopped short of assigning an Irish provenance due to the lack of clear connection between the find and a modern collector of Irish antiquities. What appears to have been overlooked is the connection between a late 18th and early 19th century owner of the Monzie estate, under whom Monzie Castle was significantly modified, General Alexander

Campbell, and other documented finds of prehistoric metalwork from Ireland.

GENERAL ALEXANDER CAMPBELL OF MONZIE

The details of General Campbell's career can be gleaned from his obituary which appeared in *The Gentleman's Magazine* (January–June 1832: 276). He had served in Ireland on numerous occasions, having first entered the army in 1769 as an ensign in the 42nd regiment whilst it was stationed in Dublin, Belfast and Donaghadee. He then returned to Dublin with the 62nd regiment in 1772 (where he served alongside the son of the noted antiquary General Vallency), was stationed in north-east Ireland with the 62nd regiment in 1789, embarking at Cork with his 116th Regiment for service in the West Indies (*Lloyds Evening Post*, 24 July 1795), returning to Ireland again during the rebellion in 1798.

Having received the rank of lieutenant-general on 29 April 1802, he was placed on the

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staff in Ireland and Scotland for five years during which he was mainly based in Armagh, where he was commander of the Northern district in Ireland. When Campbell left Armagh to become commander of the Northern district in Britain, a public address from the Sovereign of Armagh, James Iles, was published in the *The Caledon Mercury* (31 October 1807), thanking him for his conduct during his long stay in Armagh. He had been appointed colonel of the 13th Regiment of Foot in 1804, then the 32nd Foot in 1813, and was promoted to full general in 1812. He died in Leamington on 24 February 1832 and is buried in the north aisle of St Mary's Church, Warwick.

There are two well documented finds of prehistoric Irish metalwork that are known to have ended up in Campbell's possession. A Lieutenant-General Alexander Campbell is named in several sources (Stuart 1811: 124; Stuart 1819: 608; McAdam 1860: 103) as the recipient of one of four Iron Age horns recovered in 1799 from the margins of Loughnashade, a small lake beside Navan Fort in County Armagh (see Raftery 1987; Ó Néill forthcoming). A 'Lieutenant-General' Alexander Campbell is specifically identified as having taken ownership of one of the horns by 1811 (Stuart 1811: 124) which is significant as there is a contemporary of the same name who only achieved the local rank of Lieutenant-General in 1812 (*Annual Biography and Obituary* 1826: 409).

Campbell of Monzie must also, then, be the same Lieutenant-General Campbell that John Carr records as having been in possession of 'one of the swords found near Armagh; it is made of brass, about twenty inches long, two inches broad, having small holes in the handle' (Carr 1806: 208). Carr's book *The Stranger in Ireland* is in a contemporary style of a travelogue, based on a tour in 1805 when Campbell was stationed in Armagh as commander of the Northern district. The sword in Campbell's possession is clearly a typical example of a Late Bronze Sword similar to those described by Eogan (1965). In the mid-19th century, Irish

sources make no reference to Loughnashade or Campbell (eg Lewis 1837).

A number of contemporary accounts describe his residence, Monzie Castle, as having a hall that was hung '-... with a prodigious variety of ancient armour of different nations, and contains some excellent statues, busts, and innumerable curiosities' (Shepherd 1829). Accounts dating to after General Campbell's death in 1832 suggest the collection was maintained by his family. Monzie Castle is described in Lewis' *A Topographical Dictionary of Scotland* as containing 'a superior collection of paintings, ancient armour, &c' (Lewis 1846: 276), while Rogers' *The Beauties of Upper Strathearn* from 1855 states 'in the castle is preserved an interesting collection of native and foreign antiquities and other objects of vertu' (Rogers 1855: 48). Other contemporary accounts make similar reference but make no mention of individual pieces other than a sword and stone axe said to have been found in a 'subterranean building of rude construction' near Monzie Castle (*New Statistical Account of Scotland* 1845: 272).

Antiquities known to have been in Monzie Castle include four of the Stirling Heads, numbered 4, 5, 7 and 34 in the *Lacunar Strevelinense* (Dunbar 1960). Campbell's son, Alexander put these Stirling Heads, a double cannon and a 17th-century knife on show at the Edinburgh exhibition of 1856 (see Way 1859). No Irish objects owned by Campbell are listed for the 1856 exhibition, which is not problematic as the theme was 'Scottish Relics'.

All of the sources clearly state that Campbell brought back the Iron Age horn to Scotland, and, while he owned a number of properties, its most likely destination clearly was his castle at Monzie. No doubt he also brought the Late Bronze Age sword with him to the same location. Exact details of the collection of material gathered together at Monzie Castle is now unclear and, as he had arranged the transfer of Monzie Castle to his son prior to his death, Campbell did not provide an inventory of the

Castle in his will (*Edinburgh Sheriff Court Inventories*, SC70/1/51).

THE MONZIE ESTATE GOLD

The gold objects labelled as coming from the Monzie Estate were originally loaned to the National Museum from a collection held by the Captain of Dunstaffnage, another Campbell property (Wallace 1986: 567). Angus Campbell, who became the 20th Captain of Dunstaffnage in 1908 was the son of the 19th Captain and Jane Campbell, youngest daughter of Alexander Cameron Campbell of Monzie and Inverawe (heir of General Alexander Campbell), and thus granddaughter of General Alexander Campbell of Monzie (see Angus Campbell's obituary in *The Times*, 18 January 1958). According to his will, the estate of General Campbell's son and heir, Alexander Cameron Campbell, passed to his three daughters on the death of his widow Christina (*Dunoon Sheriff Court*, SC51/32/16). Jane Campbell appears to have been the only grandchild of Alexander Campbell to have remained resident at Monzie (McGregor 2006).

During the afternoon of Wednesday 15 April 1908, the chimney in the servants' quarters of Monzie Castle went on fire and continued to burn until the next night. While *The Scotsman* of 17 April reported that the castle, furniture and works of art were destroyed by the fire, *The Times* of 16 April had been slightly less pessimistic and stated that servants and estate staff worked energetically to save the valuables and '... most were removed ...', although it notes the loss of at least one statute and estimates the damage at £20,000–£30,000. The Stirling Heads owned by the Campbells of Monzie (see Way 1859: 163) were amongst the material retrieved from the fire, as, apparently, was his collection of Irish goldwork. Unfortunately, none of the other finds that are mentioned above can now be identified in private or public collections. It seems that, between the accounts given in *The Scotsman* and *The Times*, that the 'valuables'

saved from the 1908 fire included the Stirling Heads and goldwork, but not bronzework, and that Campbell's Loughnashade horn perished in the fire, along with his other bronze antiquities.

It also seems reasonable to conclude that material saved from the fire at Monzie Castle was subsequently moved to Dunstaffnage for safekeeping during the refurbishment of the Castle (although Dunstaffnage was itself damaged by fire in 1940). This would seem to be the reason for the objects being loosely labelled as being from the Monzie Estate.

Detailed studies of the lunula (Taylor 1980: 94–5), the cuff-fastener (Taylor 1980: 64–8) and lock-ring (Eogan 1969: 119) have indicated that they are likely to be Irish in origin, with Eogan suggesting the whole find must represent a modern collection of prehistoric Irish goldwork as the known date ranges for the circulation of the individual artefacts is too broad. There are echoes here of the history of the 'Mull' hoard, originally from Munster and acquired in 1825 by Sir Walter Scott, but later mistakenly provenanced to Mull (as outlined in Eogan 1967). Campbell's varied postings across Ireland and opportunities to acquire objects from different regions would also account for the variation in likely provenances, such as the North Munster origin suggested by Eogan for the lock-ring.

Superficially, there appears to have been relatively limited export of Irish antiquities to Scotland in the 19th century, despite the proximity of an active collecting community in Belfast. For instance, hardly any of the gold objects listed with Irish provenances by Taylor (1980) and Eogan (1994) are in Scottish collections, with Mull, Monzie and probably Lanfine being obvious exceptions. At least one major Irish collection was acquired by the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland: that of John Bell, a Scotsman based in Dungannon and active in Irish antiquarian circles (see Haworth 1981; Haworth 1982). Another collection, that of David Wilson, was sold in Edinburgh in 1877 (*The Scotsman*, 22 November 1877) and eventually donated to

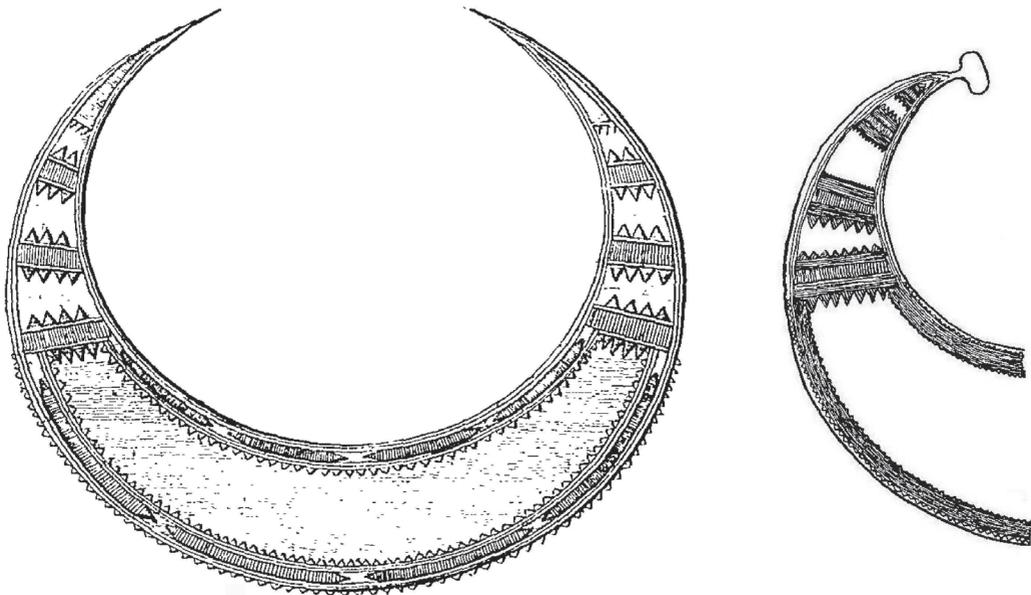
the (then) York Museum (*The Leeds Mercury*, 6 January 1883). More typically, collections of Irish antiquities were acquired by the Royal Irish Academy and the British Museum. The opening of the Belfast Museum (1831) and other regional museums and public collections in the north of Ireland provided repositories that allowed objects to remain in the area and limiting their export. The possibility remains, however, that a significant quantity of Irish material was acquired by collectors in Scotland like Campbell and Sir Walter Scott but had long since lost any significant record of its origins and is now simply (and no doubt irreversibly) listed as unprovenanced.

A minor detail illustrating Campbell's interests comes from the catalogue of the sale of the Gibson Craig library in Sothebys in 1887–8 which lists a number of books with the attached book plate of 'Lieutenant General Campbell of Monzie'. They include J. C. Walker's *Historical Essay on the Dress of the Ancient and Modern*

Irish (Gibson Craig 1887: lot 1340), which was published in Dublin in 1788 and was the most comprehensive source on ancient Irish goldwork available at the time.

The book covers items similar to the gold objects from the Monzie Estate and includes an illustration of a lost lunula originally found on lands at Kilwarlin in County Down. Walker states this object was in the ownership of the Earl of Hillsborough, a veteran of the North American colonies like Campbell, who had died in 1793. In the text, Walker describes the lunula as being roughly 8 inches in diameter and 2¼ inches at its widest, which suggests the appended figure is not a scale drawing (Walker 1788: 159). Despite some (temptingly) superficial resemblances between the Monzie lunula and the Kilwarlin lunula (see *illus 1*), it is unlikely that this is the lunula acquired by Campbell.

Possession of this book and the character of the finds that appear to have been acquired by Campbell also suggest he was no mere dilettante



ILLUS 1 *Left* Kilwarlin lunula (after Walker 1788: 159, fig 1). *Right* Decorative scheme on the Monzie Estate lunula (after Craw 1929: 176, no. 2). Not to scale

collector. In the 1790s and 1800s, the dominant Irish-related discourse amongst antiquarians concerned the origins of civilisation on the island and putative Mediterranean influences (eg Waddell 2005: 77–86). A number of themes were central to this debate: round towers and bronze horns; bronze swords; and the various gold objects now known to be mainly of Bronze Age date. Campbell can be shown to have an interest in all three, through objects or books which he collected, such as the horn and sword from Armagh and Walker’s volume. Given his interest in the subject, it would be entirely in keeping with Campbell’s collecting habits to have acquired the Monzie Estate gold objects while in Ireland.

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