

collar, however, leave no doubt that it belongs to the Late Celtic, and not to the Roman group of relics. The evidence does not suffice to show whether this well which was being dug at the east end of the village of Stitchell in 1747, was the same well out of which the armlet seen by Bishop Pococke in 1760 came. But the probabilities appear to be against the view that there were two finds from two different wells, and perhaps Pococke's reference to the half of another armlet may be explained by the fact that this collar is jointed in the middle, and one-half of it may have been shown to Pococke.

#### MASSIVE BRONZE ARMLET FROM ROGART IN SUTHERLAND.

In the present connection there is an opportunity of putting on record the recent discovery of another of the massive bronze armlets of the Late Celtic period at Rogart in Sutherland (fig. 6), which has been communicated to me by Rev. Dr J. Joass, Golspie. It was found in April 1901 in ploughing a field on the croft of Achavrail, in the parish of Rogart. The crofter noticed it on the coulter of the plough, and threw it aside at first, but subsequently bethought him that it might have some interest for the Sutherland Museum at Dunrobin Castle, and brought it to Dr Joass "as some sort of old curtain-ring." It is of the transition variety, which assumes a conventional serpentine form, the band being folded in opposite directions against the middle of the body, and terminating abruptly at each side a little short of the commencement of the swelling of the bend to form the loop round the opening in the centre of each rounded end of the penannular armlet. It thus resembles the similar armlet from Bunnanoch, and also the one from Seafield, near Kinghorn, and makes the third of this particular variety found in Scotland. The ornamentation is of the same general character of design and execution which is peculiar to this class of bronze armlets. As in the majority of cases, the enamel plaques which presumably filled the circular perforations have perished. The weight of the armlet is 28½ oz. avoirdupois.

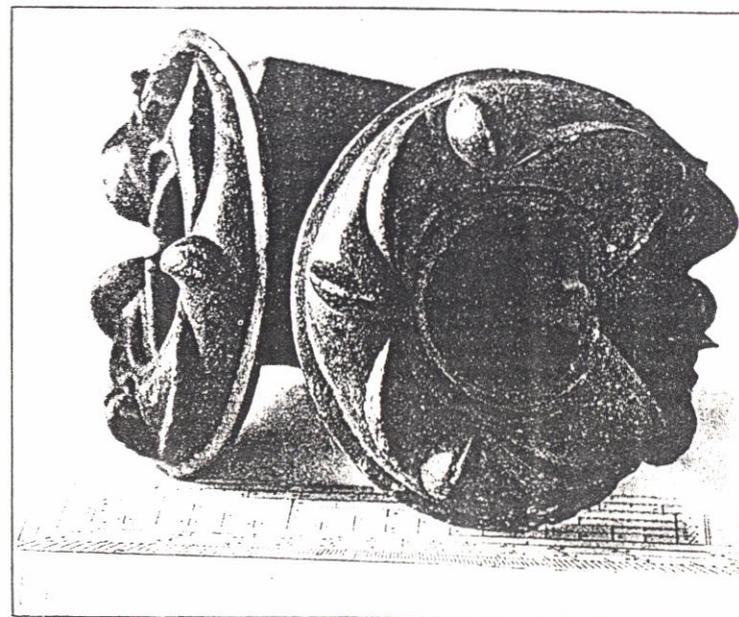
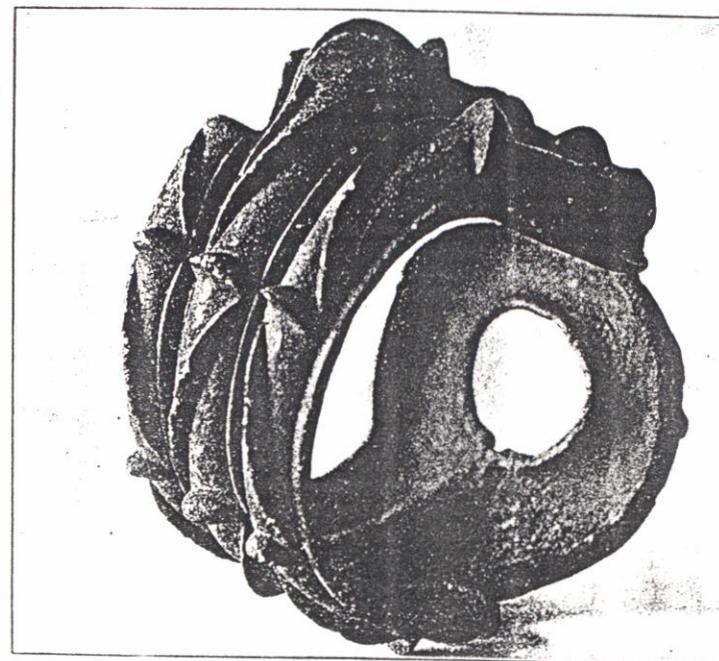


Fig. 6. Bronze Armlet found near Rogart, Sutherland. (3.) (From a photograph by A. M. Dixon, Golspie.)

*Site:* ACHAVRAIL, ROGART,  
SUTHERLAND

*Collection:* Dunrobin Castle.

*Material:* Cast bronze.

*Measurement:* Internal  
diameter 10 cm (4 ins);  
width at back 6 cm (2.4 ins);  
weight 1 lb 12½ oz.  
Flattened diagram at  $\frac{9}{16}$   
reduction.

*Description:* Massive armlet of  
'folded' type, the decoration  
consisting of trumpet domes  
and keeled ribbons.

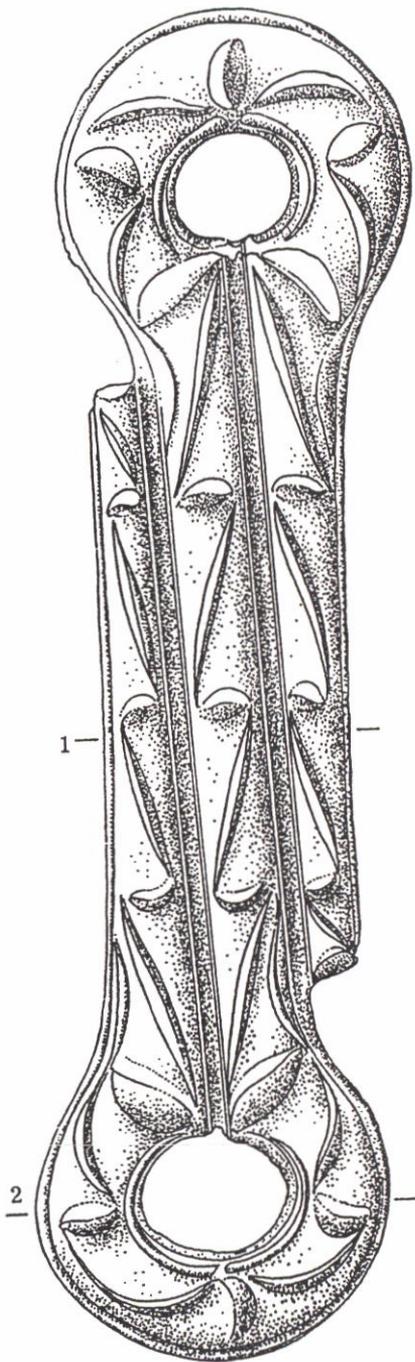
*Condition:* Superb: the patina is  
dark green and rough. There  
is very little sign of wear,  
and this is restricted to the  
back edges and protuberances.

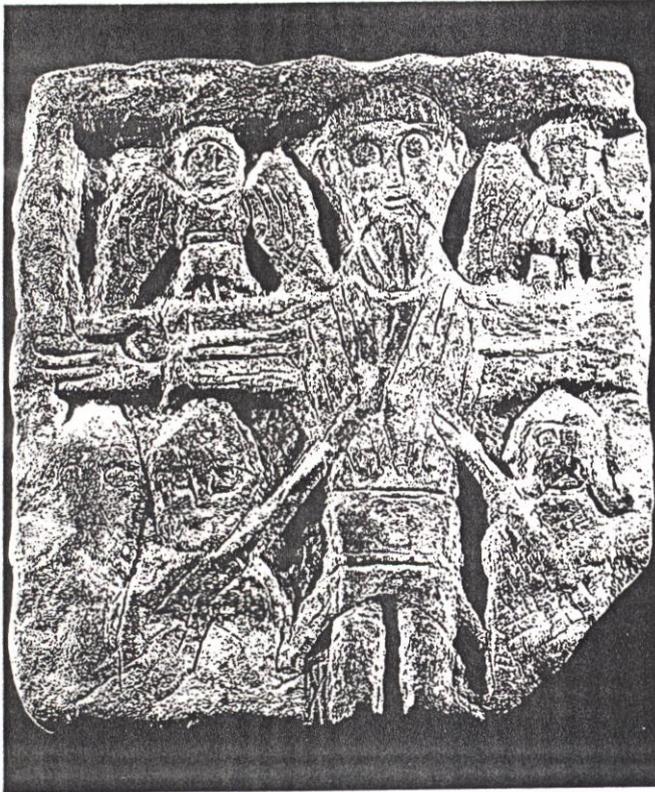
*Technology:* This is a careful  
and competent casting with  
very high relief decoration.  
The interior is hollowed and  
bears countless tool marks,  
a relic of the wax model  
stage. One small flaw on the  
underside of a central mould-  
ing is visible on the interior  
but does not emerge on the  
outside. There is a small  
nick at the base of each ter-  
minal perforation - perhaps  
a rebate for the insertion of  
a wire, carrying tubular  
channel ornament as on the  
Pitkelloney armlets. There  
is no evidence for the inser-  
tion of enamelled diaphragms.

*Discovery:* Found in 1901 while  
ploughing.

*Association:* —

*References:* Anderson 1903-4:  
266 and 267, fig. 6.





20

## 20 Hiberno-Norse Plaque of the Crucifixion

By unknown Hiberno-Norse artist-craftsmen working in the Penrith area of Cumbria in the tenth to eleventh century AD

Limestone, 30 × 32 × 6 cm  
 Abbot Hall Art Gallery, Kendal, Cumbria (normally on permanent display at Kendal Museum of Natural History and Archaeology)

This carved limestone depiction of the crucifixion was probably once a devotional wall plaque within the pre-Norman church at Penrith. It represents Christ, without a cross, with two attendant angels; the spearbearer, Longinus, pierces Christ's left side, whilst, to the right, the spongebearer, Stephaton, awkwardly holds a pole terminating in a trumpet-shaped cup or chalice. The heavily worn remains of a third attendant are visible beside Stephaton.

Originally the whole composition, once some 36 cm square, was brightly painted with polychrome pigments, traces of which – and of the underlying gesso – most unusually remain.

The iconography of this crucifixion isolates it from the hundreds of carvings which have survived from pre-Norman England and links it conclusively to Ireland, specifically to an openwork metalwork plaque from Clonmacnoise. Both depend on the same model-type circulating in Ireland, and the closely related areas of Man and western Scotland.

The reverse of the plaque is roughly punch-dressed, with an incised graffito of a boar, which is probably not original

but more importantly two painted reference numbers prefixed by the letters 'LC' (for Lowther Castle) and the vital painted inscription 'PENRITH CUMBERLAND' betray both the provenance and the origin of the sculpture.

In the late nineteenth century, Lord Lonsdale's sculpture galleries at Lowther Castle were justifiably famous. Amongst the classical splendours lurked at least three examples of pre-Norman English sculpture – two late eighth/early ninth-century cross-shafts from Lowther Churchyard, elaborately decorated with vine-scrolls and animals (and now in the British Museum and the Burrell Collection, Glasgow), and this crucifixion slipped out, unnoticed, in the 1947 sale of Lowther's contents as part of lot 2326 ('various fragments of sculpture, probably emanating from churches and other buildings in the vicinity and other unimportant fragments about 20'). After some years in private ownership, the crucifixion emerged on the London art market in 1981. It was eventually acquired by Abbot Hall Art Gallery for £3,800, with a grant of £950 from NHMF together with grants from the V & A Purchase Grant Fund and Kendal Town Council.

## 21 The Achavrail Armlet

First-second century AD, bronze, internal diameter 10 cm, height 6.2–9 cm

Inverness Museum and Art Gallery

INVMG. 987.050

EXHIBITIONS: *Origins of Design: Bronze Age and Celtic Masterworks*, Michael Ward, Inc., New York, October–December 1987

This massive bronze armlet, almost 800 g in weight, is a superb example of Celtic craftsmanship of the early 1st millennium AD. It is penannular in form, and cast with an external high-relief decoration of trumpet domes and keeled ribbons around the large circular terminals and along the triple bands. The interior is hollowed and its surface bears numerous tool marks, probably from the wax model stage of its production.

About twenty such Celtic armlets have survived the passage of time. They have almost all been found in eastern Scotland, with a concentration in Aberdeenshire, the supposed area of their manufacture.

The Achavrail armlet was found in 1901, while a field was being ploughed on the croft near Rogart in Sutherland. The crofter thought that he had found an old curtain ring until he took it to the Reverend Dr Joass, a minister and antiquarian of Golspie, who had established the archaeological collections at the Duke of Sutherland's museum at Dunrobin Castle. On realising the importance of his discovery, the crofter gave up the armlet to the Sutherland Estates. It remained on public display at Dunrobin until 1977 when the museum was forced to close owing to disrepair.

In 1986 the Achavrail armlet was offered for sale to the Royal Museum of Scotland, to raise funds for the renovation of Dunrobin Castle's museum building, collections and displays. However, the Royal Museum has a number of similar armlets in its collections and did not wish to add to them. Thus the armlet subsequently went to auction and, several months later, an export licence was applied for. Inverness District Council was determined to keep the armlet in

Scotland, close to where this most northerly example was discovered.