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Source: *The Journal of Irish Archaeology*, 2020, Vol. 29 (2020), pp. 1-16

Published by: Wordwell Ltd.

Stable URL: <https://www.jstor.org/stable/10.2307/27074866>

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A tale of two lost lunulae—one with its ogham story to tell

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Two unlocalised Early Bronze Age gold lunulae originally in the collection of the earls of Dunraven are each notable for distinctive modern features, including a stitched repair and an ogham inscription. This paper considers some aspects of the history of the Dunraven collection, in particular the prehistoric and more recent biographies of the lunulae.

Dedicated to the memory of Valerie Dowling, the National Museum of Ireland's Senior Photographer, whose work illustrates this paper. *Ar dheis Dé go raibh a h-anam.*

INTRODUCTION

This paper is about two gold lunulae that were in the Dunraven collection of archaeological objects—a collection formed by the 3rd and 4th earls of Dunraven and kept originally at Adare Manor, Co. Limerick. A lunula is an Early Bronze Age sheet gold collar of crescentic shape, decorated with geometric motifs arranged in panels on the two narrow sections towards the terminals, with additional decoration also on the inner and outer edges, leaving an area in the centre plain. Lunulae are by far the most common type of gold ornament known from Ireland during the Early Bronze Age, with at least 75 held in public collections and many more known from antiquarian sources.

THE DUNRAVEN COLLECTION

The 3rd earl of Dunraven, Edwin Wyndham-Quin (1812–71), is well known as an authority on Irish medieval architecture, although his two volumes, *Notes on Irish architecture*, were not published (edited by Margaret Stokes) until 1875 and 1877, some years after his death. He was also a collector of Irish antiquities and during his lifetime amassed a collection of archaeological objects, although relatively little is known about how this collection was established. It is also the case that a large component was added to the collection during the lifetime of the 4th earl, Windham Thomas Wyndham-Quin (1841–1926). This included an important silver kite-shaped brooch from Clonmacnoise, Co. Offaly, unfortunately now missing (Somerville 1993, 98–9). Other important pieces in the Dunraven collection included two unprovenanced gold lunulae (the subject of this paper), a gold ribbon torc from the hoard found in Inishowen, Co. Donegal, in

1882 (Cahill 2014, 62–5), a gold dress-fastener and four silver objects, one of Viking type (see Appendix 1).

Records¹ in the National Museum of Ireland (hereafter NMI) of the Dunraven collection note that the kite-shaped brooch and one of the lunulae were not present in Adare Manor in 1931 when the collection was checked by Mr J.N.A. Wallace² at the request of Dr Adolf Mahr, the then Keeper of Irish Antiquities. It is clear, however, from an earlier typescript catalogue with photographs (also in the NMI), compiled by George Scott and which must date from before 11 April 1911 (based on a letter attached to the catalogue), that the kite-shaped brooch and both lunulae were in the collection at that time. The letter was written by Mr J.P. McNamara, Director of the Carnegie Free Library and Museum, County Borough of Limerick, to R.R. Ballingal, Lord Dunraven's estate manager, acknowledging receipt of a substantial loan from the collection to the museum in Limerick City. Mr McNamara also noted in the letter that he was retaining the manuscript catalogue of the collection and he returned a typescript copy to the estate. Neither of the lunulae nor the kite-shaped brooch was included in the 1911 loan. The Carnegie Free Library and Museum, later the Limerick City Museum and the Jim Kemmy Municipal Museum, is now known as Limerick Museum.

The author of the catalogue, George Scott, originally from Scotland according to census records, was a watchmaker employed by the Wallace family of jewellers and watchmakers, whose business in Limerick stretched back to the 1830s.³ He died at the age of 63 in February 1913. J.N.A. Wallace, the compiler/transcriber of the 1931 manuscript catalogue, noted in his paper (1938) on prehistoric gold found at the Bog of Cullen, Co. Tipperary, in the eighteenth century that George Scott was employed in the Wallace family



Fig. 1—Gold lunula. No locality, Ireland (NMI 1990:70); Dunraven I; ex Dunraven collection; max. width 19.6cm (© NMI).

business and that he had a large collection of bronze and stone antiquities which ‘passed into the Dunraven collection through the late Rev. Timothy Lee, PP, Croom’. In the Dunraven catalogue that he compiled, however, Scott states clearly that the silver kite-shaped brooch from Clonmacnoise was acquired by Fr Lee from the boy who found it. Perhaps Wallace meant to say that Scott acquired Fr Lee’s collection and that it was through him (Scott) that the Fr Lee collection was subsumed into the Dunraven collection, perhaps after Fr Lee’s death on Christmas Day 1907.⁴

Mr McNamara listed a considerable number of artefacts as being from Fr Lee’s collection but none from the Scott collection. In 1931, however, Mr Wallace mentioned in a letter to Dr Mahr that Scott had a collection of artefacts. Wallace also stated that Scott compiled a manuscript catalogue of the Dunraven collection—presumably at the request of the 4th earl,

perhaps after this addition to the original collection. It was quite an undertaking, as there are *c.* 200 entries in the catalogue, with many photographs and some sketches. If that is the case, the Scott manuscript catalogue would have to have been compiled between 1908 and April 1911, when a typescript copy was sent to Lord Dunraven’s estate manager, Mr Ballingal, by Mr McNamara. In the catalogue Scott is careful to note objects that he describes as from the ‘original collection at Adare Manor’. In his April 1911 letter Mr McNamara also distinguished between objects as follows:

- 1 From the ‘Fr Lee’ collection
- 2 From the original collection

The manuscript catalogue referred to by Mr McNamara is now amongst many acquisitions relating to the Dunraven family in Limerick Museum (Cat. No. 0000.4752).⁵

In 1940 Robert Herbert (1940, 84) noted in an article about the Limerick City Public Library and Museum that the earl of Dunraven had placed the remainder of the collection on loan. With this loan were included a gold lunula, a gold dress-fastener and a ribbon torc. It appears that the loan remained in the museum for many years until it was eventually withdrawn, although the registers of the museum record the movement of specific objects to Adare Manor from time to time. Eventually the entire loan was removed and the surviving collection was sold by Sotheby's in Ireland in an auction that took place at Slane Castle over several days in May 1980 (Sotheby Parke Bernet 1980). Prior to that sale, however, an event took place in Limerick which is very important in terms of the history of the Dunraven collection. On 10 October 1969 a robbery occurred at Limerick City Museum, then housed at Pery Square. The objects stolen were the three gold ornaments (a lunula, a ribbon torc and a dress-fastener), a bronze brooch of early medieval date and 'Silver ring money (2 pieces)'. These objects are noted as stolen on a list of what then constituted the Dunraven loan, a copy of which is in the NMI records. The theft clearly targeted the most valuable and saleable objects, no doubt to maximise the financial return.

DUNRAVEN COLLECTION LUNULA 1

In 1990 a gold lunula was offered for sale at auction by Christie's in London. The lunula was unusual because it appeared to have an ancient repair executed in gold wire where one of the narrow sections had snapped off. On the basis that the object had to be of Irish origin and did not have an export licence, as legally required under national monuments legislation, with pressure from the NMI and the Department of the Taoiseach the object was withdrawn from the auction and was sold to the NMI in a privately negotiated sale. Before the lunula was put up for auction, the NMI had been in negotiations with an individual with a view to purchasing it. In addition, a file in the NMI, opened in 1975, recorded the substance of a phone call from an auctioneer in Tullamore, Co. Offaly, who described a lunula with a stitched repair which had been shown to him at his premises by a person who had called to the office. When the lunula was offered for sale in London, it was believed that it was the same object reported from Tullamore in 1975, thus giving the NMI the authority on behalf of the State to investigate an unreported illegally exported archaeological object, which it is obliged to undertake as part of its statutory functions.

Sometime later, however, in the course of researching the sale by an English dealer of another

object—a medieval copper-alloy cauldron,⁶ which had apparently originated in the Dunraven collection but had not been offered for sale at Slane Castle in 1980—one of us (MC) became aware for the first time of both the [Scott] typescript catalogue of the Dunraven collection and the [Wallace] checklist and transcribed catalogue in the NMI's archive. Investigation of these sources made it apparent that one of the two lunulae described, photographs of which were in the typescript catalogue, was in fact the lunula which the NMI had bought in 1990 (Figs 1 and 2). This led to the further realisation that it was the lunula that had been stolen from Limerick City Museum in 1969.



Fig. 2—Detail showing the modern gold stitched wire repair to gold lunula. No locality, Ireland (NMI 1990:70); Dunraven I; ex Dunraven collection (© NMI).

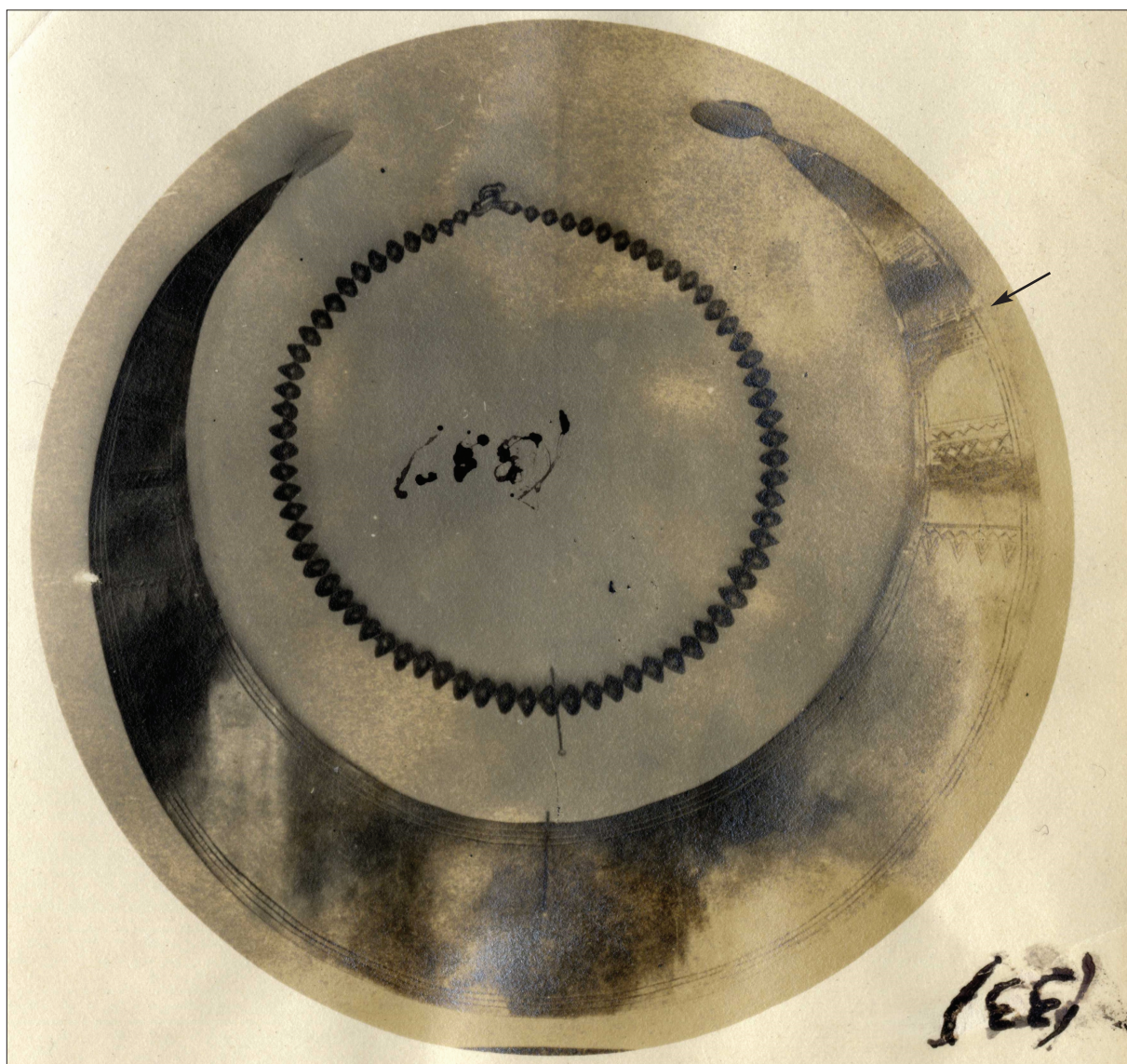


Fig. 3—Photograph of the gold lunula, Dunraven I, from the catalogue of the Dunraven collection compiled by George Scott; max. width 19.6cm (© NMI).

This extraordinary discovery resulted in a lengthy investigation by the then Royal Ulster Constabulary in Belfast, as the lunula had been put up for auction by a person resident in Northern Ireland. Searches undertaken by the RUC resulted in the recovery of a bronze zoomorphic penannular brooch (from the 'shore of Lough Gill, Co. Sligo'; Fig. 11) which was also demonstrated to have originated from the Dunraven collection, as it could be identified in the catalogues. A subsequent court case in 1993 at Ballymena Crown Court relating to a charge of handling stolen property resulted in a conviction, and both the lunula and the brooch were handed over to the NMI by the court. These objects were clearly the property of the Dunraven Estate but, following negotiations, the earl and countess of Dunraven generously presented them

to the national collection.⁷ In return, a replica of the lunula was commissioned by the NMI and presented to Lord and Lady Dunraven. The replica was made by the well-known silversmith Brian Clarke, whose work on reinventing the technique of anticlastic raising used to make ribbon torcs has transformed our understanding of Iron Age goldwork in Ireland. Appendix 1 of this paper lists the objects stolen in 1969.

The photographs of the lunula in the typescript catalogue and a drawing in the [Wallace] manuscript copy of the catalogue (Figs 3 and 4) also made it clear that the repair to the lunula had in fact been undertaken subsequent to the compilation of the Scott catalogue. It can be clearly seen from the photograph and drawing that the lunula was then intact, although

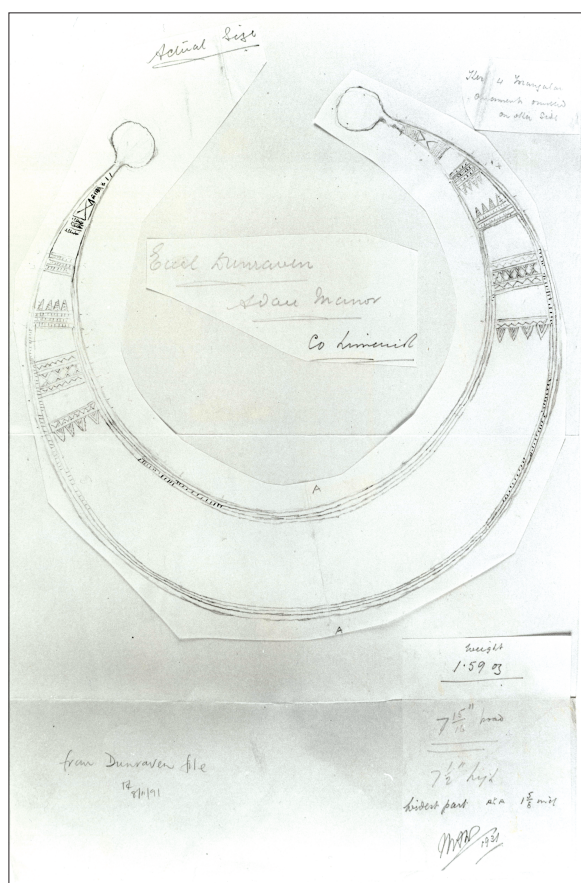


Fig. 4—1931 drawing by J.N.A. Wallace of the gold lunula, Dunraven I, before fracture and repair; max. width 19.6cm (© NMI).

it appeared to be damaged or cracked across the line of the subsequent break (Fig. 3, see arrow). In order to repair it, holes were punched close to the broken edges and stitched together using a flat gold wire. Clearly it was important that the lunula should be repaired in a way that was seen to be compatible with how a repair might have been executed in antiquity (Figs 1 and 2). It is also clear that the repair was undertaken after the 1931 transcription of the catalogue, as the drawing does not show the repair but appears to indicate a flaw at the point where the lunula later fractured. This drawing is signed by J.N.A. Wallace. Perhaps at a later stage Mr Wallace or someone in his workshop was asked by Lord Dunraven to undertake the repair, although this cannot be absolutely verified. Mr Wallace was knowledgeable about prehistoric gold and would have known that any attempt to solder or fuse the broken ends would have been extremely difficult and could have caused serious damage to the lunula. It is ironic to note that a lunula acquired by the NMI in 1992 from Coolaghmore, Co. Kilkenny, had also broken in a similar fashion across one of the terminals and had been repaired using a similar stitched wire technique (Cahill 2005, 55–7).

This type of damage across the narrow sections of a lunula can be seen in several other examples; it is probably caused by tension in the metal from frequent annealing and hammering while the sheet is being produced, followed by the pressure of inscribing horizontal lines to form the outlines of the panel decoration on the terminals. Unfortunately, the Dunraven catalogue does not record any information as to how or from where this lunula was acquired and so, while certainly of Irish origin, it remains unprovenanced.

DUNRAVEN COLLECTION LUNULA 2

As mentioned previously, very little is known about how the 3rd earl assembled his collection. He may have depended on dealers or other collectors to acquire objects for him, although some objects may have been available locally, such as the important early medieval silver pin known as the Adare Pin.⁸ After his death in 1871 some acquisitions continued to be made, for example, the gold ribbon torc from the Inishowen hoard, which could not have been acquired before it was procured in Derry in 1882 by Robert Day of Cork City, shortly after its discovery. Day was responsible for the dispersal of this important hoard (Cahill 2014, 62–5). The 3rd earl was also very interested in ogham and collected a number of ogham stones, five of which from County Kerry are recorded in the [Scott] catalogue and remain in the grounds of Adare Manor. As he travelled extensively in Ireland to inspect and record medieval architecture, it is likely that his interest in ogham was piqued by his wider interest in early buildings and by his friendship with other notable figures in the world of antiquarianism. One of these was Charles Graves, a man of many parts, as he was during his lifetime a professor of mathematics at Trinity College, president of the Royal Irish Academy and bishop of Limerick. He and the 3rd earl were born in the same year and appear to have been close acquaintances. Charles Graves had a huge interest in and knowledge of ogham. From the 1840s until his death in 1899 he wrote numerous articles on the ogham script and alphabet, including works on his own method of deciphering the script (Graves 1848). He also wrote about particular ogham stones and their inscriptions, such as those found in the cave of Dunloe (Coolmagort), Co. Kerry (Graves 1890–1).

The original ogham alphabet consisted of four groups of five characters each, giving a total of twenty characters representing the sounds of a very early form of the Irish language (McManus 1991). Each character consists of between one and five lines/scores (consonants) or notches (vowels), positioned relative to

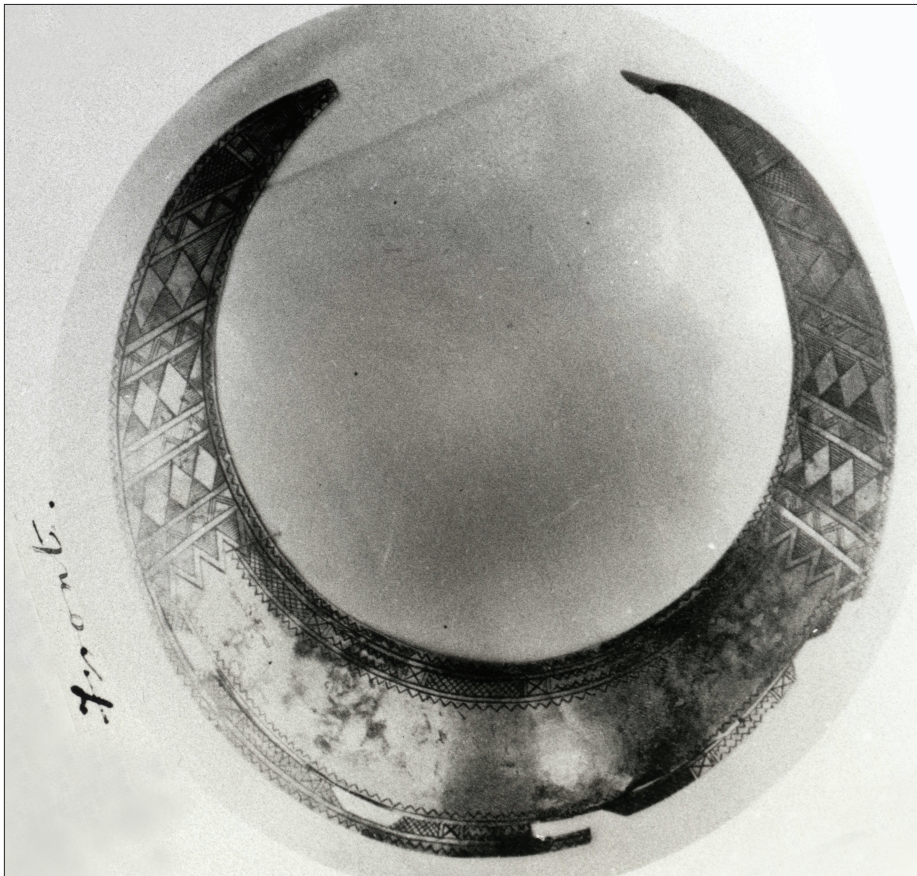


Fig. 5—Photograph of gold lunula with ogham inscription on the reverse, Dunraven 2, from the catalogue of the Dunraven collection compiled by George Scott. Front view; max. width 21.6cm (© NMI).

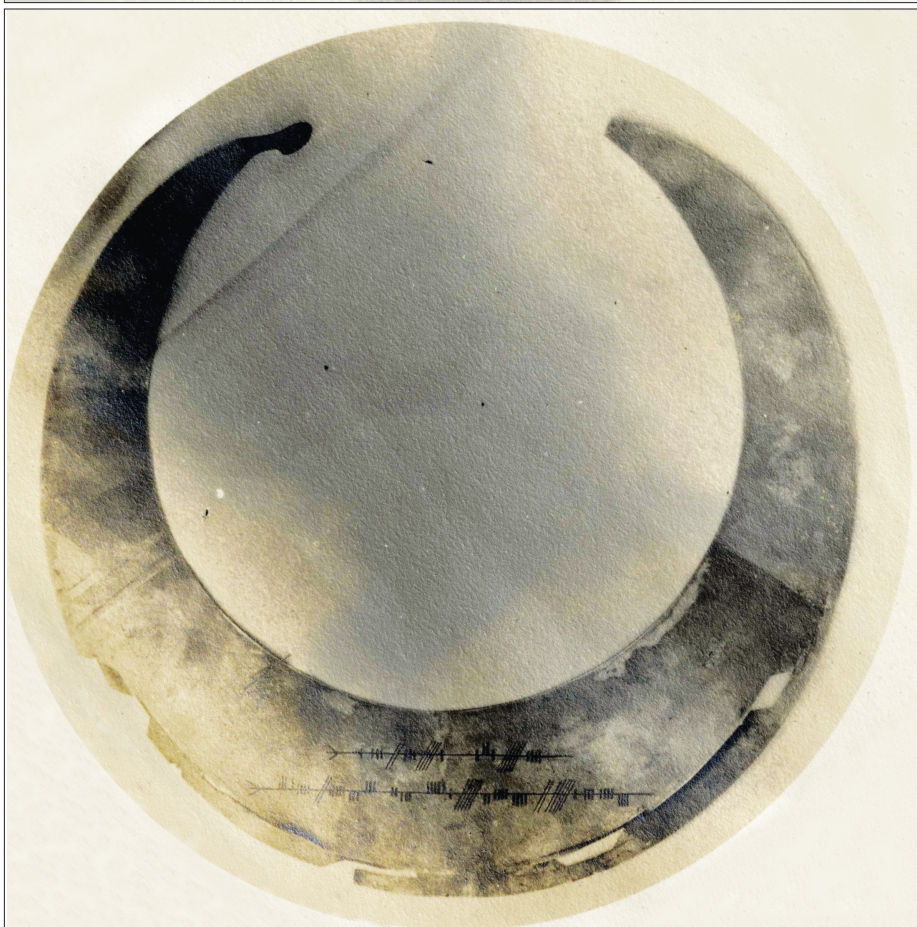


Fig. 6—Photograph of gold lunula with ogham inscription, Dunraven 2, from the catalogue of the Dunraven collection compiled by George Scott. Reverse view; max. width 21.6cm (© NMI).

a stem line, generally the angle/edge of a stone pillar. The earliest surviving ogham inscriptions, which are found on stone monuments in Ireland and parts of Britain, have been approximately dated, according to a relative chronology of linguistic features, to between the late fourth century and the seventh century AD, although ogham continued in the manuscript tradition after the practice of carving in ogham on stone died out in the late seventh century. The manuscript sources *Auraicept na n-Éces* ('the Scholars' Primer') and *In Lebor Ogáim* ('the Ogam Tract') supply a key to the ogham alphabet in which all of the letter names are interpreted as names of trees. In the early days of modern ogham scholarship these meanings were taken at face value, which led to the belief that the ogham alphabet was based solely on the names of trees (hence the 'tree alphabet' misconception). In an 'enlightened' article published in 1876, Graves was one of the first to warn against what McManus (1988, 129) described as this 'figment of the medieval Irish glossators' imagination'. Graves also supplied readings and interpretations of the five ogham stones at Adare for the publication *Memorials of Adare Manor* by Caroline Wyndham-Quin (Countess of Dunraven) in 1865.

The second lunula in the Dunraven collection is known only from two photographs in the Dunraven [Scott] catalogue (Figs 5 and 6). These photographs, like most in the catalogue, are of poor quality and have

faded over time but nonetheless are adequate for the purposes of description and recognition if this lunula should ever come to light. George Scott's description is quite detailed and includes a description of a highly distinguishing and unique feature—on the reverse is a two-line ogham inscription written in English, which reads as follows (Fig. 6):

AUGUSTA ADARE
THE GIFT OF CHARLES GRAVES

This ogham inscription and the lunula therefore provide a direct and personal link between Charles Graves and the Dunravens. George Scott attempted a reading of the inscription, but he confused the first two consonant groups so that he was reading L for D, S for C, and so on, which led him to believe that the inscription was in Latin rather than English. As a result, his reading is inaccurate and unintelligible. The inscription makes use of arrows indicating the direction of the text. The V of GRAVES is written with the vowel U (as in Latin), and the character for V (later F) is used for the F in GIFT. Two ogham characters not securely attested in earlier inscriptions on stone are also used: the ST of AUGUSTA is written with the character represented as four diagonal lines crossing the stem line, and a single score to the left of the stem line is used to represent the H of CHARLES. These features



Fig. 7—Gold lunula (NMI W2) from near Killarney, Co. Kerry, found on the earl of Kenmare's estate in 1788; max. width 22.9cm (© NMI).

are considered typical of later manuscript (or 'scholastic') use of ogham (McManus 1991, 129).

The ogham inscription on the lunula is very helpful in determining when Charles Graves presented this gift to Lady Augusta. Before he succeeded to the title of earl of Dunraven and Mount-Earl in 1850, Edwin Wyndham-Quin was titled Viscount Adare and referred to as Lord Adare. His wife, Augusta Goold, whom he married in 1836, became Viscountess or Lady Adare. As Lord Adare and Charles Graves were well known to one another, it may not be too surprising that the lunula was a gift to Lady Augusta Adare from her husband's friend, presumably to mark some special occasion such as their marriage. The fact that Augusta is addressed as Lady Adare means that the gift must have been received no later than 1850 when, following the death of the 2nd earl, Viscount Adare succeeded to the earldom and would have been addressed from then on as Lord Dunraven.

Such an extravagant gift, even in the context of Lady Augusta's husband's interests, raises some questions. Charles Graves is not known to have collected antiquities, so a question arises as to where he might have procured a lunula. He did, however, have two ogham stones from County Kerry⁹ at his summer residence, Parknasilla House, near Kenmare. Given his connections to the Royal Irish Academy—he was elected a member in 1837 and was president from 1862 to 1866—he would have known the Academy's museum very well, and would have known other members who maintained their own private collections while the Academy endeavoured to build its museum collection, which included several lunulae. It should also be noted that Graves (1844–7) was aware of and commented on an ogham inscription on a Late Bronze Age gold dress-fastener said to be from County Mayo, which was originally in the collection of the earl of Leitrim. Graves exhibited the dress-fastener at a meeting of the Academy on 10 May 1847. The artefact was acquired by the NMI in 1975¹⁰ as one of a small collection of gold ornaments from what was then known as the Clements Collection. Charles Vallancey (1790, 90–1) had first written about both the ogham inscription and another inscription said to be in Phoenician—one on each of the terminals of the dress-fastener. In his article, Graves not only dismissed Vallancey's interpretations but also gave it as his strong opinion that the inscriptions were not ancient (and not in Phoenician) and, furthermore, that they had been inscribed on the surfaces of a genuine antiquity in relatively modern times, quoting Mr West, the jeweller, as his authority for this statement.

Mr West had over many years acquired numerous gold ornaments, including a substantial portion of the enormous hoard found at Mooghaun, Co. Clare, in

1854, and had transacted much business with the Academy, including carrying out extensive repairs and restoration of damaged artefacts. In the account published of the exhibition of the dress-fastener by Graves at the Academy's meeting, no mention is made of any other artefact with an ogham inscription, either genuine or bogus, although Graves was well aware of the authentic inscription on, for example, the silver bossed penannular brooch from Ballyspellan, Co. Kilkenny (Ryan 1983). It might have been expected that he would comment on a genuine inscription and perhaps mention a newly applied inscription to an object such as the lunula presented to Lady Augusta. As he did not refer to any other form of ogham inscription on an ancient artefact, perhaps his decision to inscribe the lunula post-dated the exhibition of the dress-fastener.

George Scott described Lady Augusta's lunula under the catalogue number 33a as follows:

'8½ in. [21.6cm] across its widest part, and 6¼ in. [15.55cm] in the clear. One of the ends is broken off, and the edge is damaged.'

Because he believed the ogham to be original and in Latin, Scott suggested a very lengthy period of time for the presence of lunulae in the archaeological record, from the Late Bronze Age through the Iron Age and into the Early Christian period. Current thinking on the dating of lunulae places them in the Early Bronze Age, perhaps dating from about 2200 BC and continuing in use in Ireland for several centuries. While it is difficult to suggest a cut-off point in terms of production, they may have continued in use for generations after they were made and after production ended (Cahill 2006, 276–8).

In the course of his description of Lady Augusta's lunula, George Scott made a very interesting and intriguing observation—one that shows his knowledge of the contemporary corpus of lunulae, probably gleaned from Wilde's gold catalogue, published in 1862. He commented that:

'The lunula from Killarney No. 2 [i.e. no. 2 in Wilde's catalogue] in the museum of the RIA is earlier than the Crescent at Adare with the ogham inscription but the ornamentation is the same to the minutest detail. The photograph is from Wilde's catalogue. The similarity of the ornamentation cannot be explained otherwise than that the Adare lunula is a copy of that from Killarney.'

The lunula from Killarney noted as No. 2 is now referred to as NMI W2 (Fig. 8), as it is the second



Fig. 8—Drawing of gold lunula (NMI W2) from near Killarney, Co. Kerry, from William Wilde's 1862 gold catalogue; max. width 22.9cm.

lunula described by William Wilde (1862, 11) in his catalogue of gold in the Royal Irish Academy's museum. There is very little information available about its find circumstances or its find-place, other than that it was found near Killarney, Co. Kerry, and was presented to the RIA in 1788 by Lord Kenmare (not in 1778, as stated by Wilde (1862, 11) and Armstrong (1920, 50)). Wilde described the lunula as one of the largest and most perfect. He gave its dimensions as 9in. (22.86cm) across, 5 $\frac{7}{8}$ in. (15cm) in the clear (i.e. the undecorated area) and 2 $\frac{1}{8}$ in. (5.4cm) at its widest point. His illustration of the lunula is positioned as if the object would have been worn on the head, as he believed that this was most likely. He identified them with the *mind* or *minn* referred to as a form of headdress in early Irish texts. It is now thought that they are more likely to have been neck ornaments, and the lunula is illustrated here in the opposite position (Fig. 8).

In his account of his travels in Kerry in 1788, Revd Daniel Beaufort (1788, 187) recorded that on 15 August:

'Dean Graves breakfasted with us and invited me to go and spend some days at Sackville. He offered to introduce me to Lord Kenmare & we walked up there but the family were at prayer. Dr Day went with me after 12 when we were politely received & asked to dine tomorrow. Lord Kenmare shewed [us] a curious Gorget of pure gold, 9 Inches in Diameter, found a few days ago under a rock, as his men were making a road. Weight 4ozs [124.4g], I hear. The fretted borders are evidently done with a stamp, not with a chisel. He asked me to dine tomorrow but I refused the honour to go on the Water.'

Lord Kenmare lived in Kenmare House on the eastern shore of Lough Leane, just outside Killarney. The register of the Royal Irish Academy recording donations and acquisitions for the period notes on 15 November 1788 that the lunula was found 'in Lord Kenmare's estate near Killarney'.

Given Scott's comment on the similarity between the lunula from near Killarney and the lunula presented by Graves to Lady Augusta, it is curious that Wilde did not remark on the existence of another lunula which so closely resembled the Academy's specimen. Wilde would have been aware that no two lunulae are exactly the same; in fact, the contrary is the case. Even though the range and nature of the decorative motifs used are confined to a restricted repertoire, the goldsmiths making them always produced unique pieces which might be described as similar but different. Wilde (1862, 17) noted that there were fifteen lunulae in the Academy's museum. He noted also the existence of those from Ireland in the British Museum and five in private museums (i.e. collections). Charles Graves was president of the RIA in 1862 when Wilde was finalising the third part of his *magnum opus*, cataloguing the Academy's archaeological collections, so it seems even more unlikely that the existence of Lady Augusta's lunula would not have been mentioned by Graves, unless it is covered by the remark made by Wilde that there were five lunulae in private collections. It might even be expected that Graves would have used the Academy's own journal to publish an account of a lunula in his possession. Is it a more likely scenario that Graves might have had a replica made of the 'near Killarney' lunula to offer as a gift to Lady Augusta Adare on some very special occasion? In that case we might expect that this would have been known to the Dunraven family and mentioned to George Scott as he worked his way through the collection. If Graves had commissioned a goldsmith to make a copy in the nineteenth century, it undoubtedly would have been assayed and marked appropriately by the Assay Office. A replica would have had its own special box with the name of the goldsmith who made it, as any reputable or fashionable jeweller of the period would have done. Scott does not mention any assay marks, and in so far as can be seen from the existing photographs none are present. His remark about its being part of 'the original collection', meaning the collection of archaeological objects, is important. Furthermore, he made another interesting comment on the metal composition of the lunula in question, saying of it:

'There is another lunula at Adare Manor ... it is made of gold that has been alloyed with copper or silver and is less ductile than the earlier examples.'

Lunulae are made from unrefined gold, a natural alloy which contains principally gold and silver with less than 1% copper and, in most cases, considerably less than this. Scott would have been very familiar with the look and feel of modern refined gold because of his

training and work as a watchmaker. It is probably safe to suggest that he would have been able to distinguish between modern and ancient workmanship, as modern tools will leave a different 'signature' on the metal, just as Mr West was convinced that the inscriptions on the earl of Leitrim's dress-fastener were executed by modern tools.

Lunulae have been divided typologically into three groups, termed the Unaccomplished Group, the Classical Group and the Provincial Group (Taylor 1970, 44–53). The latter type is not known from Ireland but has been found in Britain and France. The two other groups are found principally in Ireland, while a few examples found in Britain are regarded as ancient exports. Within the Unaccomplished and Classical groups the main differences are that, as the name implies, the unaccomplished type is less well made, less well decorated and generally smaller than the Classical Group. A special feature of the Classical Group is that there is a very close correspondence in terms of the detail of the decoration between one terminal and the other, with the most expertly made displaying mirror imaging of one side to the other. They are also larger and wider than the lunulae of the Unaccomplished Group. The lunula from Mangerton, Co. Kerry (BM 1871,0401.1), is one of the most finely made and ornamented of the entire Irish corpus.

At first glance it might seem that the lunula from near Killarney should be assigned to the Classical Group, based on its size and the very skilful execution of the decoration (Figs 7 and 8). On close examination, however, it can be seen that there are discrepancies in the layout of the panel decoration from one side to the other, perhaps as a result of not adequately preparing a plan for the layout of the ornament. Usually the number of individual panels would be equal, even when the number of individual motifs or groups of lines might vary, but this lunula has three panels of lozenge-shaped ornament on the left-hand side and four on the right-hand side, resulting in a very unbalanced and imperfect layout. The running V-shapes that separate these panels also vary in terms of numbers from one side to the other, which would not be the case for a Classical lunula. While Taylor (1970, 69) considers the lunula to belong to the Classical Group, on the basis of this discrepancy it would have to be regarded as Unaccomplished. It weighs 3 ounces 4 pennyweights 3 grains Troy, equivalent to 99.31g. This is quite a heavy lunula, as very few from Ireland weigh over 3oz. Troy/93.3g.

George Scott in his description said that 'the ornamentation is the same to the minutest detail', but this is not the case, as Lady Augusta's lunula actually has three panels of lozenge-shaped decoration on each side, although the panels vary somewhat in size and

cannot be regarded as perfect or mirror images. The number of running V-shapes between the panels are also more numerous, and the lunula is slightly smaller in overall dimensions. Unfortunately, its weight is not recorded. It could be said that the lunula is more skilfully made than the 'near Killarney' lunula, but the resemblances between the two lunulae are really remarkable and they are the two closest to one another of any two lunulae in the known corpus. If the lunula from the Dunraven collection is an original Early Bronze Age lunula, it is an extremely important discovery from an archaeological perspective. It is important, therefore, to note any other features that are discernible from the photographs that might bear on whether or not the lunula can be accepted as an original ancient artefact. Fortunately, the photographs do give us some additional evidence. As can be seen from Figs 5 and 6, the terminal on the left-hand side of the lunula is missing and seems to have broken off. At the lower or outer edge of the lunula can be seen several areas of loss and several gaps in the border, with significant cracks in the metal along one of the circumferential lines that define the areas of decoration of the inner and outer edges of lunulae. Lunulae are made of thin sheet metal and, while quite robust if handled carefully, they are subject to damage in areas where the metal has come under stress because of the necessary process of working and reworking as the sheet is produced. The photograph of the reverse of the lunula shows these fracture lines (Fig. 6). As the ornamentation is worked from the front of the object, it can often be seen on the reverse as a faint but slightly raised reflection of the front, because of the pressure applied by the inscribing tool and the punch. As mentioned already in connection with the Dunraven lunula 1, areas of weakness were visible on the photographs and the artefact subsequently broke across one of those lines.

It seems highly unlikely that if Charles Graves had had a replica of a lunula made for Lady Augusta in or before 1850 from modern refined gold of anything from nine to 22 carats it could exhibit this kind of damage, which is so typical of ancient lunulae that have been worn through many generations and been deposited in bogs and under rocks. Many have also been unwittingly damaged in the act of finding, as the sheet is so thin that any agricultural tool can cause severe damage. In fact, it is amazing that so many have been found intact.

It would appear on balance, taking all the available information into account, that the lunula presented to Lady Augusta Adare by Charles Graves is an original ancient lunula. This means that it and the lunula from near Killarney, which are so close in terms of the overall design of their ornamental schemes, including the

specific detail of the motifs used and their execution, must have been made in the same workshop and almost certainly by the same hand. Taylor (1970, 53) has noted that it is possible to identify individual goldsmiths. Examination of lunulae from the Provincial Group found in Cornwall in south-west England and in Brittany in north-western France has shown that they came from the same workshop and were made by the same goldsmith because of the highly diagnostic tool marks. This has never been proposed in relation to any Irish lunulae, although it must be the case that some of the extant Irish examples were produced by the same persons in specific locations. The fact that a lunula is found in a particular place does not necessarily mean that it was made in that place. So, is it likely that Lady Augusta's lunula was also found in County Kerry, like its very close comparator from near Killarney? The county of Kerry has produced six lunulae, including the exceptional Mangerton lunula mentioned above, found south of Lough Leane. The occurrence of so many lunulae in Kerry has been interpreted as evidence of the control of territory and copper resources at Ross Island, Killarney, Co. Kerry (O'Brien 2004, 570–2).

Current research suggests that the most likely source for the gold used in Ireland and Britain during the earliest periods of use is in Cornwall and not in Ireland (Standish *et al.* 2014). This is based on scientific analysis of lead isotopes present in natural gold alloys from Cornish sources and in samples taken from early gold artefacts, including many from Ireland. As tin was also required in Ireland in order to make bronze, it may be the case that trading copper from Ross Island for gold and tin from Cornwall provided the perfect conditions for the presence in Kerry of so many fine lunulae. As research in this field progresses, it should be possible to develop a clearer and more nuanced understanding of early gold metal production, the manufacture of gold artefacts and their distribution throughout Ireland, Britain and western Europe.

A recent unpublished review of all extant lunulae undertaken by MC calculates that there are currently 75 lunulae from Ireland in public collections. Antiquarian records suggest that many more were once in existence, some of which are known to have been melted down, while others may still remain in private collections. John Ó Néill (forthcoming) will demonstrate, based on extensive antiquarian research, the extent of the loss that has occurred in the province of Ulster, the important point being that these records not only add considerably to the overall number of lunulae recorded but also modify the known distribution significantly.

In the meantime, we are left to ponder the fate of the lunula given by Charles Graves to Augusta Adare. Has it survived and will it come to light eventually? Where are

the other gold and silver objects that were stolen in 1969? As the lunula stolen that night in Limerick was recovered 21 years after it went missing, there must be a chance that Lady Augusta's lunula and the other objects will find their way back to a public collection. The lunula and the kite-shaped brooch have been missing for 90 years at least, but both are easily identifiable should they ever reappear. Examination and analysis of the missing lunula would readily authenticate it as a genuine antiquity, allow it to be compared to its close companion from near Killarney and advance greatly our understanding of the workshop practices of our earliest goldsmiths, as well as the cultural and societal strictures which governed both the product range and style of Early Bronze Age goldsmiths in Ireland.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The authors wish to acknowledge the generous assistance and facilitation of the preparation of this paper by the Keeper of Irish Antiquities, Maeve Sikora, and the staff of the Irish Antiquities Division, National Museum of Ireland. We are very grateful to our colleagues in the Photographic Department, Valerie Dowling and Richard Weinacht, for the provision of photographic images, and to Eamonn McLoughlin for providing digital scans. The permission of the National Museum of Ireland to reproduce images is also acknowledged. We thank Ragnall Ó Floinn and Aideen Ireland for commenting on the text and John Sheehan for commenting on the photographs of the silver objects. The advice and comments of two anonymous reviewers and the Editor of the journal are also gratefully acknowledged. MC wishes particularly to acknowledge the important role played by Eamonn P. Kelly, former Keeper of Irish Antiquities, National Museum of Ireland, in the recovery of the stolen lunula and bronze brooch.

NMI ARCHIVE SOURCES

MS register: Royal Irish Academy Museum Donations Book 1775–1856.
 Catalogue of the Dunraven collection compiled by George Scott (typescript copy with photographs).
 MS catalogue of the Dunraven collection transcribed from a copy of the Scott catalogue c. 1931, with sketches and notes by J.N.A. Wallace.
 Irish Antiquities Division files on the Dunraven collection.

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NOTES

- 1 These records include a manuscript transcription of the earlier catalogue (see further below on the Scott catalogue of the Dunraven collection) with the addition of some original drawings by J.N.A. Wallace and dated 1931. While a considerable amount of material was noted as missing at that time, most of the missing objects were eventually located, as confirmed by Mr Wallace in correspondence with Dr Mahr. He was unable, however, even with the assistance of Lord Dunraven, to find the silver kite-shaped brooch, one of the lunulae (this paper, Dunraven 2) and a piece of gold ‘ring-money’. Some incomplete correspondence is dated from 27/4/1931 to 3/1/1934. From these letters it appears that Dr Mahr wished to negotiate the purchase or transfer of the collection to the National Museum of Ireland. Unfortunately, Lord Dunraven did not agree with this proposal. The subsequent history of the collection partly related here led to the breakup of the collection and the loss of significant elements of it.
- 2 J.N.A. Wallace is well known both as an antiquarian and as a goldsmith managing his family business in Limerick City. He was in frequent contact with the National Museum on local archaeological discoveries over many years. He also published several articles in the *North Munster Antiquarian Journal*.
- 3 R. Wallace, Gold & Silversmith, Watchmaker & Jeweller, Optician, 129 O’Connell St., Limerick. An article by Sharon Slater of the *Limerick Leader* published on 20 July 2018, entitled ‘Limerick Chronicle files: city jeweller shines at astronomy’, gives an interesting history of the Wallace family

- business (<https://www.limerickleader.ie/news/home/325018/limerick-chronicle-files-city-jeweller-shines-at-astronomy.html>; accessed 14/02/2020).
- 4 The death of Fr Timothy Lee is recorded in an obituary published in the *Journal of the Limerick Field Club* 3 (1908), 248.
- 5 The catalogue was unavailable for examination at the time of writing.
- 6 Bronze cauldron NMI 1992:54.
- 7 Lunula NMI 1990:70. Brooch NMI 2011:3.
- 8 NMI 1980:81.
- 9 Details of the ogham stones can be found at <https://ogham.celt.dias.ie/search.php?ciic=223> and <https://ogham.celt.dias.ie/search.php?ciic=205>; accessed 14/02/2020. Both stones are now in the collection of the National Museum of Ireland.
- 10 NMI 1975:230.

APPENDIX 1: OBJECTS FROM THE DUNRAVEN COLLECTION RECORDED AS STOLEN FROM LIMERICK CITY MUSEUM

The following list details six objects recorded as stolen from Limerick City Museum on 10 October 1969. The list is derived from an annotated list that originated in Limerick City Museum and was incorporated into the [Scott] Dunraven catalogue. The objects stolen were ticked on the list, with a note to the effect that the ticked objects were the ones that were stolen.

1. Gold torc

This Iron Age gold ribbon torc (Fig. 9) formed part of the hoard of torcs found in 1882 in the Inishowen area,

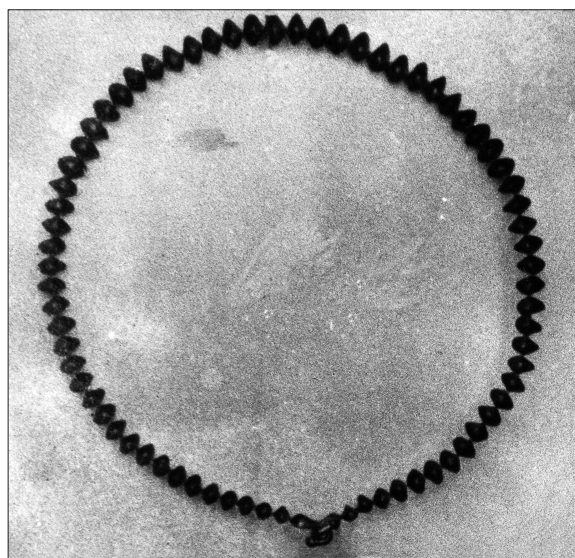


Fig. 9—Photograph of a gold ribbon torc from a hoard found at Inishowen, Co. Donegal, from the catalogue of the Dunraven collection compiled by George Scott; max. diameter 11 cm (© NMI).

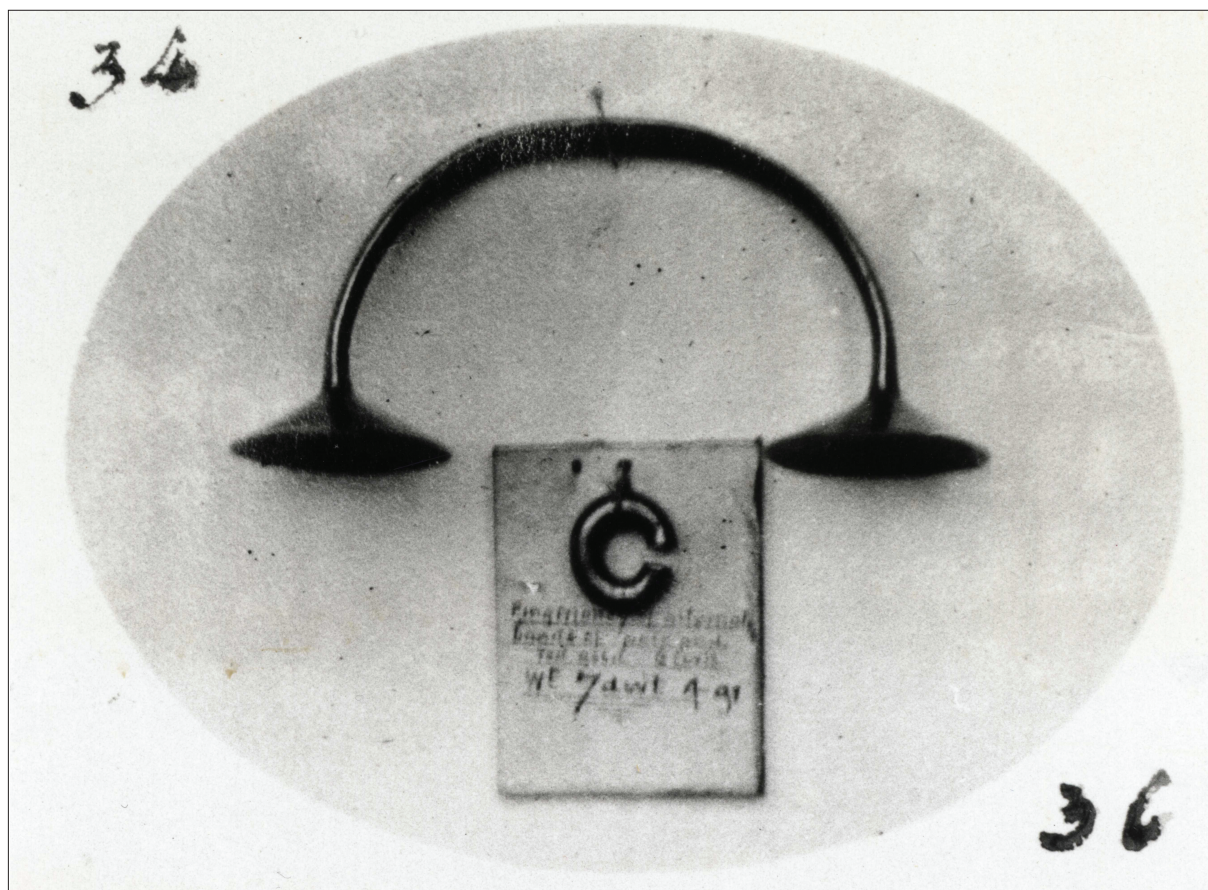


Fig. 10—Gold dress-fastener. No locality, Ireland, from the catalogue of the Dunraven collection compiled by George Scott; max. width 11 cm (© NMI).

Co. Donegal (Cahill 2014). It is listed as no. 35 in the Dunraven catalogue and is described as a ‘gold armband weighs 8dwt; it is nearly circular and measures $4\frac{3}{8}$ in. across, “was found with 14 other gold armlets and neck ornaments in Co. Donegal near Inishowen in July 1882, bought in Derry”’.

2. Gold fibula

This object is a Late Bronze Age gold dress-fastener (or cup-ended ornament; Fig. 10). No provenance or history of collection is recorded for it. It is listed as no. 34 in the Dunraven catalogue and is described as a ‘Gold fibula, cast in one piece; weight 2oz 5dwt 15grs; measures $4\frac{3}{8}$ inches across and $1\frac{3}{8}$ inches across each cup; solid bow, lozenge shaped in section, it springs from the centre of two plain cups’.

3. Gold lunula

Dunraven lunula 1; recovered, as discussed above; NMI 1990:70.

4. Bronze brooch

An early medieval zoomorphic penannular brooch, said

to have been found on the shore of Lough Gill, Co. Sligo, in 1814 (Fig. 11); recovered; NMI 2011:3.

5. Silver ring-money (two pieces)

The Dunraven catalogue lists four objects of silver ring-money (Fig. 12a, b) as follows:

‘(8) Large piece of so-called Irish ring money in Silver, found near Charleville, measures $1\frac{7}{8}$ inches across its widest part and weighs 1 oz 12 dwts 15 grs. About half its surface is covered with a spirally coiled silver wire, this is twisted into a loop pattern about the middle of the coils on one side only; at the extreme end the wire seems to have been again formed into a series of loops. The uncovered side is roughly squared at its end and has punched annular markings on three of its sides, 8 on the outer face and 7 on the two sides on the round part are four groups, each consisting of three of these markings, two groups on either side. The tendril pattern into which the coiled wire is worked is supposed to show Danish influence.

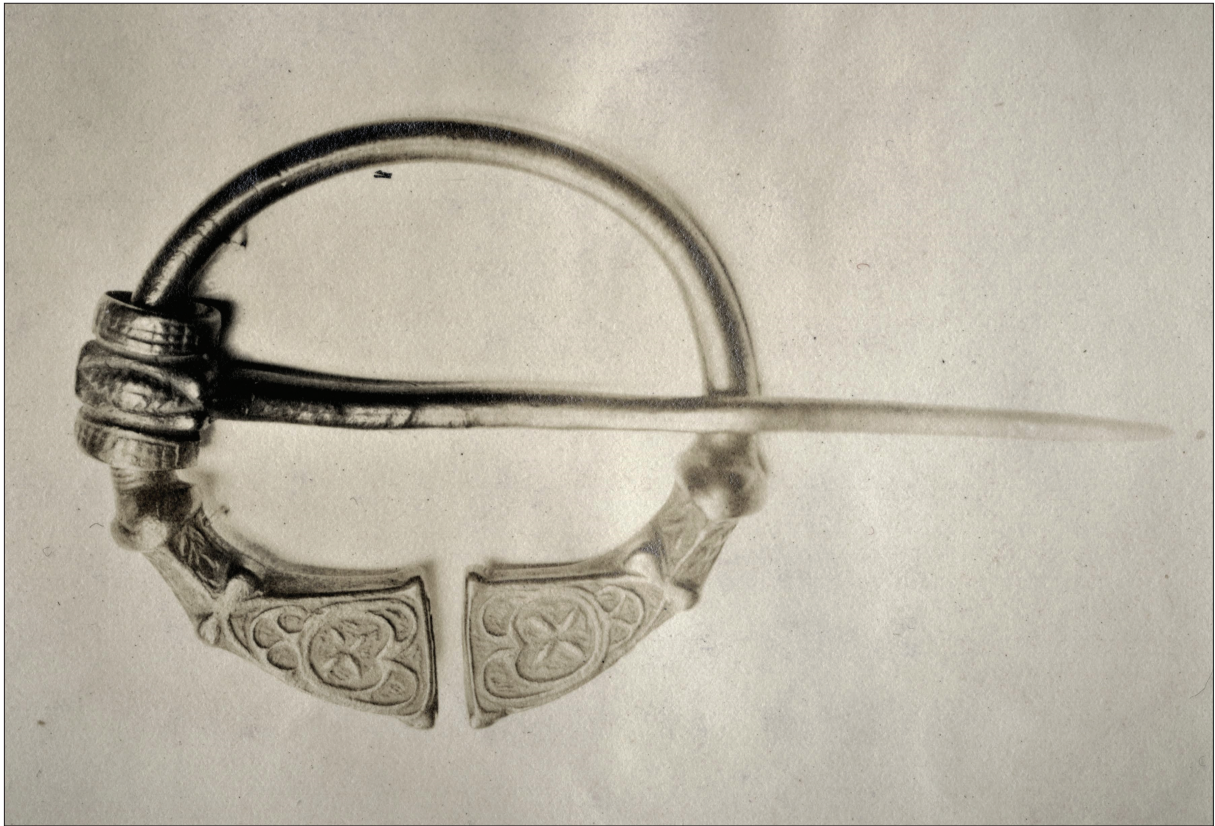


Fig. 11—Early medieval zoomorphic penannular brooch, said to have been found on the shore of Lough Gill, Co. Sligo (NMI 2011:3), from the catalogue of the Dunraven collection compiled by George Scott; max. length of pin 11.75cm (© NMI).

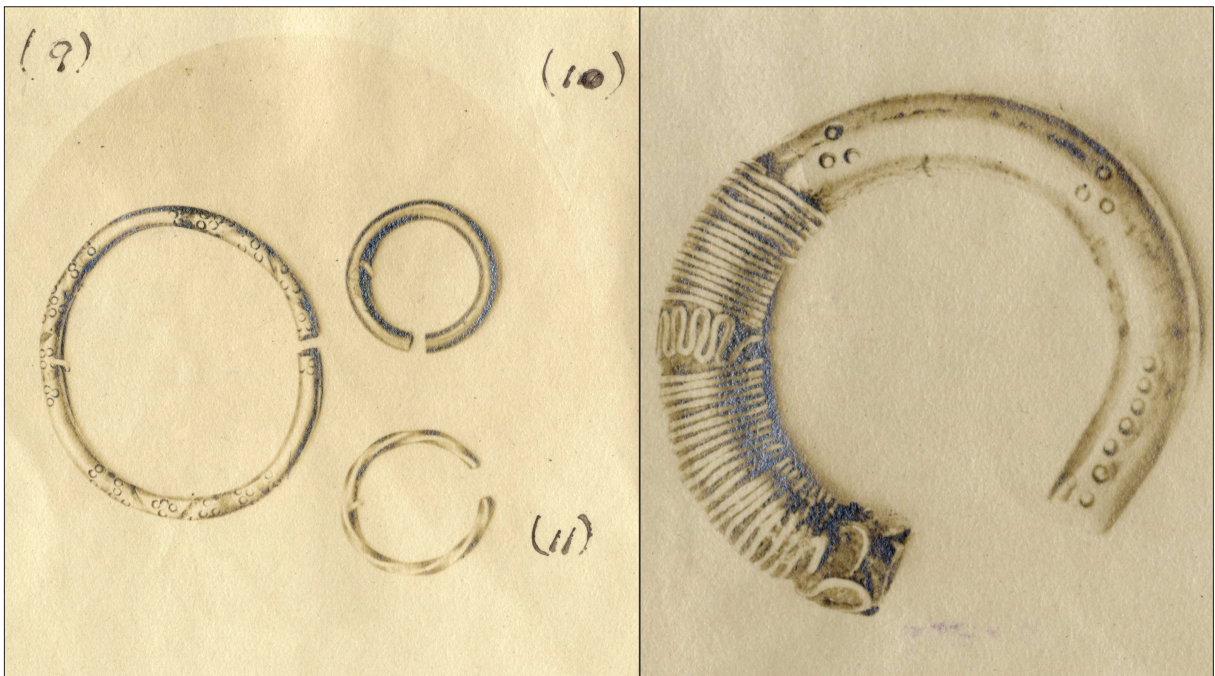


Fig. 12a–b—Silver 'ring-money', from the catalogue of the Dunraven collection compiled by George Scott; diameter of no. 9 in Fig. 12a: 4cm; diameter of no. 8 in Fig. 12b: 4.76cm (© NMI).

(9) Unique specimen of Irish silver ring money has punched annular markings (like those on No. 8) with enamelled lines in niello $1\frac{1}{2}$ inches across the widest part, wt 4 pennyweights. From Dr Frasers collection.

(10) Piece of (so-called) silver ring money weighs 2 dwts 4 grs. it came from Dr Frasers collection and bears the following on a card to which it is attached:— Silver ring money of Ireland weight 2 pennyweights, 4 grains. Found in making a trench for irrigation on the lands of Carrigwhane [Carrigrohane] in the County Cork the estate of Sir Edward Hoare Baronet on the 26th of June 1853.

(11) Silver ring money it bears the following description on the card in Dr Fraser's

handwriting:— “Unique specimen in silver of the twisted pattern of the ancient Celtic ring money of Ireland dug up near the town of Kilmallock in the county of Limerick during the month of May 1855, it weighs 20 grains”.’

It is not possible to say which two of the four objects detailed above and illustrated in Fig. 12 were stolen in 1969.

John Sheehan (pers. comm.) is of the opinion that only the object from Carrigrohane, which he classifies as a small example of a penannular single-rod arm-ring, a type that is of more common occurrence in Munster than elsewhere in Ireland, can be considered to be of Viking type, and that in spite of the stated Irish provenances the other silver objects are of ethnographic origin.