



GOLD ORNAMENTS FROM COUNTY LIMERICK, CLARE AND TIPPERARY

## SOME UNRECORDED FINDS OF GOLD ORNAMENTS, FROM THE COUNTIES OF LIMERICK, CLARE AND TIPPERARY.

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BY GEO. SCOTT.  
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Dermot O'Connor, in his translator's preface to Dr. Keating's History of Ireland, gives a wood cut of a "Gold Crown" which was found at a place in County Tipperary, called Barnanely by the Irish, otherwise known as the "Devil's Bit." It weighed five ounces. He says it was found by men digging in a bog, and gives the depth at which it was found. He enters into a long and particular account of the Cumerford family, a member of this family having saved it from being melted. O'Halloran the historian, in his introduction to the Study of the History and Antiquities of Ireland, speaking of this same crown, says: "This crown was purchased by Mr. Joseph Cumerford, and is still preserved in the Castle of Anglurre, in Champagne, the present residence of the family, and whither they retired soon after the last war in Ireland." O'Halloran dates his preliminary discourse, Limerick, October 10th, 1771. This is the cap or crown which has been copied into all books of Archæology dealing with this subject. O'Connor's wood cut being the only representation of these objects known.

The photograph which illustrates this notice is from the first edition of Dermot O'Connor's translation of Keating, and differs slightly from all the copies usually met with.

GOLD CAP, HELMET OR CROWN.

IN ALL PROBABILITY FOUND IN THIS DISTRICT.

NO. V. IN THE ILLUSTRATION.

This is by far the most important of all the unrecorded gold ornaments which it is the purpose of these notes to describe. It was first

heard of from a working jeweller in Limerick, through whose hands it passed to the melting pot. He described it as being of very fine gold, and although in a very battered and broken state when offered for sale, its likeness to that found in the County Tipperary, at Barnanely, was unmistakable. On being shown the photograph which illustrates the present notice he said it might pass for a picture of the one he melted, only the crown was bulged in and the rim bent down, so that it resembled two ear-pieces, the ornamentation, so far as he could remember, was of the same character, consisting of concentric circles and lines straight and zig-zag. This ornamentation was punched and not engraved. It weighed between five and six ounces, and was quite large enough to fit on a man's head. It had, what has never been noticed on any of the others, hooks or catches which were turned up inside springing from the inner edge. The thinness of the article renders it extremely probable that it had some kind of lining either of wood or leather, and these hooks would just suit to hold the gold covering on its wood or leather foundation. Irish Historians and Antiquaries have been greatly exercised over the question whether the ancient Kings of Ireland wore crowns, or if any ceremony of crowning took place at their inaugurations. The historians of the old school are all agreed (and some of them get very hot over the matter), that the ancient Kings of Ireland all wore crowns on important occasions. The modern school, on the other hand, with Sir William Wilde at their head, urge that we have no direct account of any act of crowning taking place at the inaugurations of the Kings of Ireland in ancient times. Much ink has been spilt on both sides over the question, but what concerns us more is the undoubted fact that six of these objects which may have been crowns, but were more probably helmet coverings, were found in this district (the Counties of Limerick and Tipperary) and that we have a fuller description and more details of the one under consideration than of any of the others.

LARGE GOLD FIBULA,

FOUND WHILST RECLAIMING SLOB LAND ON THE RIVER FERGUS,  
COUNTY CLARE.

NO. III. IN THE ILLUSTRATION.

There are no precise particulars as to where and under what circumstances this fibula was found. The first notice we get of it is as

being found "knocking about" in the watchman's hut, and having narrowly escaped being nailed on to a drawer as a handle. No one engaged on the works seems to have known what it was, and like the watchman, evidently thought it a large brass handle of some kind. On being identified as a gold ornament, it was presented to Mr. James F. Bannatyne, D.L., by the Directors of the Company, in whose possession it now is.

This gold ornament was kindly lent by Mr. Bannatyne for exhibition at the Annual Meeting of the Limerick Field Club, 1898. It weighs nearly four ounces (3 ozs. 18 dwt.), and is six inches almost in length. The photograph is from a negative by Miss Bannatyne. It was much admired at the Field Club Meeting. As may be seen by the photograph, the bow (unlike the great majority of these ornaments) is *solid* and roughly triangular in section, changing to almost a circular section where it joins the cup-like ends, it was cast in one piece and worked into its present shape as no sign of solder shows on the closest scrutiny. There is a plain border round each of the cups, the only attempt at ornamentation (unless we consider the working of the bow as such.) This is worthy of note as the great majority of these fibulæ are most beautifully proportioned and ornamented. This rudeness of form and lack of ornament in the present example showing either of two things, viz., that it was made in very early times, or by an incompetent worker in later times. This latter is very unlikely, as we know that gold ornaments of most beautiful workmanship are found in the County Clare, and that an important article of this kind would in all likelihood have been entrusted to the best talent available, so that in all probability this is an early example, and if so it is somewhat of a crux, as Archæologists are inclined to trace the development of the fibula from the solid wire bracelet with the expanded ends through those with the wine glass shaped ends, and those like the Ballyvaughan and Brahalish examples, with ornamented ends and a hollow bow. In this development theory our County Clare example finds no place. (1)

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(1) Perhaps Antiquaries are going too far in holding that a hard and fast line of development can be traced in these ornaments. It is the fashion to apply the development theory to Archæology as to every other science, to which no one can object, if exceptions, as these appear to be, are allowed.

It is generally agreed that these fibulæ were used as cloak fasteners, but the manner in which they were worn has never been satisfactorily settled. The most satisfactory theory being that advanced by Sir William Wilde, in which he supposes the two edges of the cloak to be drawn into the hollow between the bow and the two ends, with a pin passed through the garment to keep the fibula in its place. This theory has the drawback of only showing the side of the ornament, and as this would conceal a portion of the most highly ornamented parts, there is, obviously, something wrong. It is with some diffidence that the following simple plan is advanced of wearing the ornament which would show every ornamented part, and, at the same time, be an effectual means of fastening the cloak: If a thin thong were fastened to either neck of the fibula and passed through two worked holes in the cloak an inch or two from the edge and tied inside, every ornamented part would be shown, and the cloak could be turned so that the ornament would rest on the shoulder of the wearer, where it was in all probability worn, like the large brooch used by the modern Scottish Highlander to fasten his plaid, the great size of some of these ornaments would make them most unpleasant articles to wear at the throat. Another thing which favours this theory is that the bow is always placed at one side of the cup-like ends, and never in the centre, so that the tying thongs would pass down the space between the two ends, and at the very points where the thongs would be attached this fibulæ shows great signs of wear. Sir William Wilde noticed this on some of those which are in the National Museum, but attributed it to the friction of the fastening pin, forgetting that a fastening pin would only wear at the side of the neck whilst the wear seems to have been all round the neck such as the friction of an encircling thong would make. On the Great Seal of William the Conqueror there is an ornament very like a fibulæ fastening the King's cloak; it is worn on the right shoulder, and every part is shown. See "Annals of England," Vol. I.

#### ANCIENT GOLD BRACELET

FOUND IN EDENVALE CAVE, CO. CLARE.

NO. I IN THE ILLUSTRATION.

This bracelet is now in the National Museum, Dublin, and has the following inscription attached to it:—"Gold bracelet found in the

Edenvale Cave, Co. Clare, given by Mrs. Stackpool." It is made of a flat ribbon of gold, four-tenths of an inch wide and one-tenth of an inch thick, and measures two-and-a-half inches in its longest diameter; the ends are open; after having been forged and bent into its present shape the edges have been hammered, no doubt for the double purpose of making the edges even, and for the purpose of stiffening the article, thus making it less liable to be put out of shape by any accidental blow or squeeze. (2) This hammering of the edges suggests at once a similar hammering on the edges of very early flat copper and bronze celts, and may roughly serve to fix the period at which it was made. The hammering of the edges of the flat celts was as is well known for the purpose of raising a rudimentary flange so that the celt would have less tendency to slip in its wooden handle. But it has never been remarked (so far as I am aware) that it would at the same time stiffen it so that it would be less liable to bend. To illustrate this—a copper celt that was found in the County Limerick, which had never been hammered on the edges, was very badly bent and cracked, evidently whilst in use in ancient times, so that if the hammered celts serve to fix the period of our gold bracelet the gold bracelet returns the compliment by showing us that the ancient worker in bronze had a double object in hammering the edges of his celts. (3)

Mr. Ussher, the excavator of the Edenvale cave, in a lecture delivered to the Limerick Field Club, thus describes the finding of the bracelet:—"It was found 2 feet under the surface of the gallery of the cave in which we were working, the spot being marked by a small heap of stones so that it had evidently been hidden away, the heap of stones being placed there as a guide to its recovery."

Both Mr. Ussher and Mrs. Stackpool were present when it was brought to light by one of Mr. Ussher's "cave men" assistants, the edge showing in the hard earth like a ring of gold. This is the only piece of

(2) All the early copper wedge-shaped celts are very thick in proportion to their size, it evidently being found in practice that the extra stoutness of the article was necessary to prevent it from bending whilst in use.

(3) It may be cited as further evidence of its having been made as early as the beginning of the bronze age, its want of ornamentation and evident disregard to economy of the precious metal in its manufacture.

gold Mr. Ussher has found in all his cave hunting, and was probably hidden long after the users of the stone and bone implements he found in the cave had passed away.

### THE ROSSROE BRACELET.

A GOLD PENANNULAR BRACELET, WITH WHAT IS KNOWN AS WINE GLASS SHAPED OR HOLLOW, CONICAL ENDS.

NO. VII. IN THE ILLUSTRATION.

This bracelet was found at Rossroe, County Clare, quite close to Finlough, by a workman who was blasting what is supposed to have been the stones of a ruined cromlech. He could give no particulars as to whether the bracelet was under the stones, or buried close to them. He found it, he said, whilst clearing away the fragments of stone made by the blast or blasts, and of this he was quite sure, that it was the only piece of gold in the field as he had searched it well expecting to find more.

This ornament is again no longer available for examination and comparison, as it and two bracelets from "The Great Clare Find," were unfortunately, buried with their late owner some years ago. The photograph is from a reproduction which was most carefully made and submitted to those who had examined the original repeatedly, who are all agreed that the reproduction is, as far as they can remember, a facsimile of the original.

THE ASKEATON FIND OF GOLD ORNAMENTS,  
CONSISTING OF TWO BEAUTIFUL GOLD ORNAMENTS FOR THE HAIR,  
A GOLD PENANNULAR BRACELET WITH EXPANDED ENDS,  
AND A HAMMERED GOLD INGOT.

NO. II. IN THE ILLUSTRATION.

Although these ornaments were all said to have been found together, they belong to different periods in the Bronze Age, the hair ornaments having been made at the end, and the bracelet dating back to the latter half of that age. The Ingot may or may not belong to either of those periods, as it was only in an elementary stage of manufacture at the time it was lost or hidden away. The hair ornaments are most cleverly put together without the assistance of solder, the ends of the central tube are turned over the side pieces, and the rim is beautifully fitted and

hammered on to the edges of the embossed side pieces. The ornamentation on these side pieces consists of very fine concentric circles which have been made with a punch probably consisting of hard wood, which punch must have been turned in a primitive lathe, a comb-like bronze tool being used as a cutter, as it would have been much easier to have made the ornament without the slit, and as all the examples known have it, there must be some good reason why the maker went to the trouble of fashioning it so. The slit, it may be mentioned in passing, is ornamented on both sides with short lines which form an angle with the slit, and give it quite a finished appearance. This would seem to dispose of the theory that these ornaments are only parts of a larger ornament, like the huge neck ornament found at Tory Hill, Croom, County Limerick, and others of the same class from this district. The presence of the slit itself should do away with the Bead and Bullal theories, especially when we learn that somewhat similar objects are used as hair ornaments in India by the natives at the present time, and that the slit comes into operation as the principal means of fastening it on the hair of the wearer. The mode of fastening is simple, and gives very satisfactory results. A few hairs at a time are passed down the slit until the central tube is filled with a rope of hair, this tied above and below makes the ornament a fixture, so that the ornament should remain in the position desired by the wearer. The central tube has punched up teeth which gives it the appearance of a hollow rasp. These punched up teeth are in the ancient specimens under consideration. There are seventeen rows of teeth with seventeen teeth in each row. On showing the Askeaton hair ornaments to the late Maurice Lenihan, the Historian of Limerick, he told me that he had bought a pair almost similar from a jeweller. He presumed that they were found in the Limerick district, on the strength of their being brought to a Limerick jeweller and offered for sale as old gold. This theory seems very feasible, but no definite information as to where they were found was forthcoming. I make this note for the purpose of showing that one pair certainly, and in all probability two pairs were found in this district.

The bracelet is of a type very common in Ireland, and is considered characteristic of the gold bracelets made during the latter half of the bronze age, as bracelets almost similar have been found with





bronze implements and weapons of that period. It seems to have been much longer in wear, and not to be compared with the hair ornaments in technical merit.

The Ingot, which is the heaviest of all the objects found at Askeaton, has been worked by a convex hammer on a stone anvil (the grain of the stone showing still). It is just a question whether the hammer was of bronze or stone—in all probability it was of stone—as no bronze hammer that is known to antiquaries has a purely convex face; and the blows show the grain of what would appear to be a stone hammer, made of a harder and finer stone than the anvil. There is a hammer stone from the County Kerry, at one time in the collection of the late Dr. Graves, Lord Bishop of Limerick, which, if mounted in a horn socket and wooden handle, would make an implement admirably suited for the working of gold by the ancient goldsmith. It has a convex face, and although made of an Agate pebble, is somewhat flattened by use, and just shows such a grain as we find on the hammered ingot.

It by no means follows that, because we find this ingot wrought by a stone hammer on a stone anvil, that the worker was unacquainted with other metals, for the stone anvil survived into the Iron Age, and indeed, has been found in use in country districts in quite recent times, and stone hammers such as has been described were, in all probability, in use during the whole bronze period, judging from the scarcity of ancient bronze hammers found in this country and in England.

The two hair ornaments weigh six dwts. each, and are an inch and-a-half in diameter, being very light in weight when their size is taken into consideration; this favours the hair ornament theory. The bracelet weighs ten dwts. and the hammered ingot, fourteen dwts.; it is almost an inch and-a-half in length by three-tenths of an inch wide, and two-tenths in depth.

These ornaments are now in the possession of collectors in this district

#### THE GOLD AMULET

FOUND AT ROCKSTOWN CASTLE, CO. LIMERICK.

NO. VII. IN THE ILLUSTRATION.

This amulet was found at Rockstown or Rochestown Castle, near Ballyneety, County Limerick, by a workman, in turning up old pasture

to make a potato garden. There may be no connection, but it is well to note that the find took place just outside an old graveyard in which, at least, every second person buried was named Barry. It measures *seven-tenths of an inch by almost half an inch, and weighs four dwts.* This is now in my possession, and is a most interesting and rare object, being part of what must have been a very beautiful gold ornament, it appears to have had a longitudinal ridge on one side and been plain on the other, of course it is purely guess work to say what the ends were like as we have such a small piece to judge by, but as it must have been part of either the bow of a gold fibula or a bracelet like the hollow Ballyvaughan one, with ornamented ends (now in the National Museum) as these are the only Irish gold ornaments which we find *cast hollow*. It may have formed part of a unique ornament of which we have no example, but the great probability is that it formed part of a hollow bracelet like that found near Ballyvaughan, County Clare. On comparing it with the Ballyvaughan example it measures roughly one-twelfth part, and in weight is one-eleventh exactly of that bracelet. The interesting point however, is not so much what kind of an ornament it formed part of, as why the ornament was cut up into parts. This has been answered by the following very plausible conjecture: That it formed part of an ornament belonging to some prominent person whose descendants could not agree as to whom the ornament should become the property of, the only way out of the difficulty being its division into parts, that it was divided into parts so that they could be worn on the person, there can be no doubt, as they were first marked with a chisel, and then by repeated bendings at the marked points broken up, and in this case a thin sheet of gold was inserted projecting at either end. The chisel was again used to close the ends on the sheet of gold a little behind the first marking. When found a good piece of the projecting gold sheet remained, however enough remains to prove what has been stated: why a thong was not run through the hollow piece and worn in that way may be asked. The only answer that can be conceived is that partially flattened and with the projecting pieces holed and stitched on to a prominent part of the wearer's attire, it would be more conspicuous than if worn as an oblong gold bead. These parts of gold ornaments cut up with the intention of being worn as amulets are very rare. We

can conceive why they are so, if we consider for a moment, they are always small, and unless to an expert would be in no way attractive, and if bought by a jeweller would find their way to the melting pot as pieces of old gold of good quality, but possessing no artistic merit.

In an article by Mr. Carlisle (in the "Nineteenth Century and After," for August, 1905), on the connection between ornaments and money, Mr. Carlisle cites records of ancient gold bracelets being broken up to serve as money, but gives no instance of these parts ever having been found. Perhaps for the same reason, the broken-up bracelets which served as money, also made their way to the melting pot. The County Limerick fragment just escaped being cited as evidence of Mr. Carlisle's theory by the stronger evidence of its having been manipulated in ancient times, so that it could be worn on the person as an amulet.

PIECE OF SO CALLED "IRISH RING MONEY,"  
FOUND IN A GRAVEL PIT AT KILMALLOCK, COUNTY LIMERICK.  
NO. IV. IN THE ILLUSTRATION.

I find that I made the following note of this object soon after its discovery:—

This piece of so called Irish Ring Money was found in a gravel pit at Kilmallock, County Limerick. It is of fine gold, and has been enamelled. The rings still showing on the piece, not as plainly as on those from the Dawson Collection, still plain enough to be seen by the naked eye, and showing most plainly under a magnifying glass as alternate rings of orange and light yellow; the lighter, or yellow rings, being those which were enamelled. A great heat must have been used, as the enamel appears to have entered into the grain of the gold and altered its colour. The rings are not very regular either in breadth or spacing, but this is not to be wondered at when we consider that perhaps these were the first objects enamelled in Ireland, archæologists placing them at the beginning of the Iron Age, the period when enamelling was either discovered or brought into this country.

It is pretty well agreed that these pieces were never intended to pass as money in the sense we understand it, that is to pass from hand to hand with a fixed value placed on them, and not being intended for any other purpose, of course. It is self-evident that all ancient gold

ornaments may have been used for purposes of barter when their owners were in straits. But that was only a secondary use when their owners were driven to it by necessity, although modern archaeologists are all agreed as to these objects never having been intended to pass as money, they are quite silent as to what use they were put to in ancient times.

The man who found this piece thought it was made of brass, and sold it with some other things which were really of base metal, to a dealer in Kilmallock, who discovered it to be gold. From him it was bought by its present owner, Mr. James R. Wallace, the Limerick goldsmith. It weighs exactly eight dwts., and is seven-tenths of an inch in diameter by two-tenths in thickness. A close examination of the ring shows that it was first cast in its present form, slit included. It was then gone over carefully with a hammer, the hammer marks still showing—not having been removed before enamelling—the slit appears to have been dressed into a straight line after the hammering, as it shows like a dressed burr. A tapering hardwood or metal tool known to jewellers as a mandril, appears to have been thrust into the centre whilst the hammering process was in operation.

#### PIECE OF SO-CALLED SPURIOUS IRISH RING MONEY FOUND IN COUNTY LIMERICK.

This piece was bought from a farmer by a Limerick jeweller and sold to the late Maurice Lenihan, Esq., M.R.I.A. What has become of it is unknown. It had a copper core covered with a thin skin of gold, and had all the appearance of the piece shown in the Catalogue of the Royal Irish Academy, page 88, fig 624, and answered to Sir W. Wilde's description: "The junction of the gold tube covering the copper core was imperceptible and very well made, but that the ends were roughly bent in with no attempt at concealment." It showed no hammer marks and appeared to have been finished on the surface after it came from the mould.

That these gold-covered copper rings are ancient there seems no doubt, and the period during which they were made seems to be pretty accurately fixed.