

The Hunt Museum

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The Hunt Museum, named after its benefactors, John and Gertrude Hunt, was officially opened on the 17th of April, 1978, by Mr. Desmond O'Malley, the then Minister for Industry, Commerce and Energy. That John Hunt had not lived to grace the occasion with his presence was the only shadow over a memorable day. But to those who had been associated with the Hunts in the planning of this venture, it was some consolation that before his last illness John Hunt had seen and approved the general outline of the plans. Preliminary discussions with the designer had benefited greatly from his knowledge and expertise. Indeed, it was on his recommendation that Arthur Gibney, the noted Dublin architect, was invited to design the lay-out of the museum; years earlier he had been deeply impressed by Mr. Gibney's arrangement of a ROSC exhibition in which he had also been involved.

The Museum was established to house and display the Hunt Collection of Irish antiquities and European art objects. Before the collection is described, it should however be explained that it is but one facet of two separate but complementary entities which are together known as the Craggaunowen Project; the other is the crannog, ringfort, cottage and castle at Craggaunowen, near Quin, in Co. Clare. The project was John Hunt's brain-child, inspired by his desire to bring alive to the Irish people by a visual presentation their own cultural heritage, and in so doing to emphasize its place in the mainstream of European civilization. While gathering together a supportive committee of representatives from interested bodies, both national and regional, to help him realize his aims, he and his wife demonstrated in the most positive way their own deep commitment by presenting to the nation not only the castle and grounds at Craggaunowen but also their highly important collection of antiquities and art objects.

In setting up the Craggaunowen Project in 1973, John Hunt intended that the complex at Craggaunowen should contain, as well as the restored and refurbished castle, a series of ritual and habitation sites which would illustrate in the most vivid way possible the daily lives of our remote ancestors on this island. The centre-point of this complex was to be the museum, which would house and exhibit the collection using modern show-cases, up-to-date lighting and the latest display techniques. Escalating building costs, allied to the economic recession then raging, forced the postponement of this part of the project, but to ensure that the collection would go on public display Dr. Edward Walsh, Director of the National Institute for Higher Education, Limerick, offered accommodation at the Institute, in Plassey House, for the collection until such time as the original plan could be realized. This proved to be a happy solution to what had appeared to be an intractable problem, and one which gave John Hunt quiet satisfaction. The Project would now extend into his native city, and to quote Mr. O'Malley in his opening address, it was

"particularly appropriate that a collection which this great benefactor intended should inculcate in students an appreciation of our roots in the cultural and

artistic development of Europe, should find a permanent home in a technologically-oriented institute which not only links the superb technology of our early forefathers to that of late 20th century Ireland, but which has European identity as one of its twin themes."

Thus the Hunt Collection came to the National Institute for Higher Education in Limerick. The area made available for it was a suite of two rooms on the third floor of the South Block, the larger of which had been intended for use as a drawing office. With the wall between them removed, one large rectangular room of just 5,000 sq. ft. was created, with an outside wall of glass facing south and about half of the east wall also of glass. It did not appear to lend itself to exciting modern display techniques, yet when the designer's plans were metamorphosed into a museum it was a revelation. A series of linked enclosures had been created, on different floor-levels and with varying lighting techniques. Some display cases were built into or attached to the partitions creating the enclosures, while others, of two standard sizes, were distributed around the floor area. Simple perspex cuboids covering the floor-stands made the objects on display as accessible to the visitor as was possible. Curiosity could be satisfied, and an inscription followed by walking around the case when viewing an object from all sides. Lighting was used in a variety of ways, both to show the exhibits to the best possible advantage and to raise the visitor's interest-level in the objects on view.

That the visitor's interest be maintained is all-important in museum display. For over the past hundred years, almost since public museums have become widely established, the word museum has acquired a connotation almost synonymous with boredom and the term museum-piece, while indicating excellence in the minds of the cognoscenti, has an unfortunate whiff of mustiness in the nostrils of many.

Yet the interest of the visitor can be stimulated by a variety of means. Good display, well-placed lighting, a relaxed and unfussy ambience, all go a long way towards achieving this, but perhaps the most potent ancillary aid is the type, amount, and presentation of the information given to explain the objects on display.

The educational value of a museum is largely determined by the explanatory information given to the visitor. Too little information, and the viewer's interest remains largely dormant; too much, and initial interest turns to satiety and bemusement. But it is not just a question of achieving a satisfactory balance in the amount of information given: it must also be concise, non-didactic and simply presented. Material should not be presented so as to evoke a prescribed and guaranteed response. Different people respond to objects of beauty in different ways, and a museum presentation which helps individuals to educate themselves will have a better chance to succeed than those which set out to mould people's responses in a particular way. In the Hunt Museum information about the various pieces is provided in two ways: in a concise form on the descriptive case labels and more fully in an 'in-context' way in the booklet handed to each visitor. But it is not assumed that the right balance has already been achieved: an increase in information given in a graphic form will aid the visitor to visualize the social context of the object on display, while the compilation of a catalogue raisonné will aid that visitor whose approach to the objects is, perhaps, more systematic. The importance of all these factors, their inter-relationships and the necessity of a balanced presentation, was from the beginning considered of vital importance by the designer and the liaising committee, and all of these points merged in

a determination that within the existing extraneous constraints the setting would be worthy of the collection.

As collections reflect both the personality and the enthusiasms of those who form them, the Hunt Collection reflects John Hunt's life-long absorption in the arts in general and in the prehistory and history of Ireland in particular. He ranged widely through the material remains of the Irish and European past, bringing to his enthusiasms both the knowledge and appreciation of quality of the best type of scholar and a respect and understanding of craftsmanship whatever its period. His interests were catholic; Irish antiquities, ecclesiastical silver, personal ornaments, medieval bronzes, paintings, sculpture, were but some of them. Yet despite their range and diversity they are linked by several common threads. All are objects which mattered to their owners, objects which represented the concerns which governed their lives, and all were infused by their makers with form and grace and craftsmanship. Thus the collection has, despite its variety, an essential unity.

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Apart from a large number of flint and polished stone artifacts of Stone Age date, most of the material from the antiquities section comes from the Bronze Age and, in fact, makes up by far the largest group of objects in the whole collection. Almost all of this material is Irish, though there are a number of British and continental objects too, including some beautifully-made flint daggers of Danish origin which are modelled on bronze originals. There are over one hundred bronze axeheads, ranging from the flat axeheads of the Earlier Bronze Age to the socketed and looped axeheads of the Later Bronze Age, in addition to a number of swords, daggers,¹ rapiers and knives, as well as a large group of over thirty spearheads. Among other items from this period are some wrist-guards, ferrules, chapes and a bronze sickle. Very important, archaeologically, is the Mullingar Hoard, a collection of fragments of socketed axeheads, scabbard-chapes and a sword which dates from the Roscommon Phase of the Later Bronze Age (c. 10th century B.C.). In this large group as a whole, one object stands out on its own from an aesthetic point of view. This is an Early Bronze Age decorated flat axehead with fluted decoration on the sides, beautifully patinated, which comes from the Scrabo Hill Hoard.

But pride of place among the Bronze Age material must go to what are, perhaps, the most important pieces in the entire collection: the Late Bronze Age cauldron, shield, and bucket. These three impressive pieces, which like so much else in the collection have passed through a number of other collections since they were found, were bought by John Hunt abroad and brought back to Ireland. The cauldron (Plate I, 1), made from curving bronze sheets held together by rivets which are themselves given a decorative function, was found in the parish of Ballyscullion, Co. Antrim, in 1880, and would seem to have passed quickly in to the collection of T. W. U. Robinson, a well-known collector of the time, before being acquired in 1890 through Sotheby's, by the

¹For discussion of an Irish dagger and sword from among these pieces, see P. Harbison, "Two Prehistoric Bronze Weapons from Ireland in the Hunt Collection", *J. Roy. Soc. Antiq. Ireland*, 100 (1970), 191-199.

Pitt-Rivers Museum, Farnham, Dorset.² It belongs to Leed's B2 class which can be dated to c. 600-550 B.C. or slightly later.³ Also formerly in the Robinson Collection and the Pitt-Rivers Museum, Farnham, was the bronze bucket (Plate I, 2), which was found in Capecastle Bog, near Armoy, Co. Antrim.⁴ This fine example of its type is particularly noteworthy for its decoration: above the shoulder the surface area is covered with small raised bosses, while below it the decoration consists of triangles produced in the same repoussé style. This bucket appears to be the only example with such decorative features, and has been dated to c. 700 B.C. In the museum the above two pieces flank the third of the group, the shield (Plate II, 1), which is an almost perfect specimen of its kind. Although no find-spot has been recorded for the shield, this also, it is said, was found in Co. Antrim. Of Yetholm Type,⁵ dateable to the eighth century B.C., the shield has, around a central umbo, eleven concentric ribs alternating with eleven rows of raised bosses. These three objects, works of art in their own right, form a magnificent centrepiece to the antiquities section of the museum.

Pottery makes up another significant group in the collection, ranging from the Early Bronze Age down to a superb piece of early Belleek. In all, there are sixty-five pieces. The early Irish material consists of two food vessels, and an encrusted urn which was found at Newtown, near Caherconlish, Co. Limerick, in 1941.⁶ Other funerary pottery pieces are the two lekythoi, or oil jars, decorated with brown figurines on a white ground which date from the mid-fifth century B.C. Among the other items of Greek pottery of this period are the stemless kylikoi, or drinking cups, which are more typical in that they show figures painted in red on a black ground, even though the decoration on some of them suggests an origin in the Greek colonies of southern Italy. The enclosure devoted wholly to pottery has on exhibition a fine group of medieval and tudor pottery with its characteristic green or yellow glaze. Among the finest pieces is a very beautiful jug with fluted decoration on the body, probably early fourteenth-century. Although much of this pottery is English, it is of a kind widely used in Ireland at that period. Among the eight pieces of majolica in the collection are two pharmacy jars, one bearing the arms of the Franciscans,⁷ the other those of the Jesuits. Another jar, decorated in blue, is dated 1544. The earliest piece in this group is the tazza with portrait and lustre, which dates from the 15th century. Perhaps the most interesting object in this group of Italian pottery is the owl jar which, though missing its owl-head stopper, is still an imposing piece.

However, for Irish people the group of eighteenth century Irish pottery, twenty-six pieces in all, must take pride of place. Most of them come from the factory established in Dublin by Captain Henry Delamain, c.1752, and continued by his relatives after his death. But before Delamain there was a number of other pottery manufacturers in

²J. Evans, *The Ancient Bronze Implements, Weapons, and Ornaments, of Great Britain and Ireland*, London 1881, p. 411; E. T. Leeds, *Archaeologia*, 80 (1930-31), 34.

³C.F.C. Hawkes and M.A. Smith, *Antiq. J.*, 37 (1957), 188-189.

⁴Evans, *op. cit.*, p. 413, fig. 513; Leeds, *op. cit.*, p. 35; Hawkes and Smith, *op. cit.*, pp. 142-143.

⁵For the type, see J.M. Coles, *Proc. Prehist. Soc.*, 28 (1962), 165-169 — Coles does not seem to have been aware of the Hunt Collection shield, however.

⁶Formerly exhibited in the Limerick City Museum — see R. Kavanagh, *Proc. Roy. Irish Acad.*, 73, C (1973), 553-554, fig. 23, no. 53.

⁷This is the vessel being examined by the late Monsignor Michael Moloney in the frontispiece of *North Munster Studies* (ed. E. Rynne), Limerick 1967.

Dublin, such as John Chambers who began his venture about 1735, John Crisp who probably took over Chamber's factory about 1747, and John Davis who seems to have taken over from Crisp in 1749.⁸ The pottery produced by these and other Irish manufacturers is known as delftware because of its similarity to the enamelled or tin-glazed blue and white earthenware then being imported in large quantities from the Netherlands, particularly from the town of Delft. Noteworthy among a group of exceptionally fine items is an exceedingly rare complete sweetmeat set of six dishes; a spirit barrel in blue and white which probably comes from the Crisp factory as it has the date 1748 below the bung-hole; another spirit barrel, this one dating about 1756 and from Henry Delamain's factory, is decorated in manganese with landscapes and carries the heraldic crest of the Molyneux family of Castle Dillon, Co. Armagh (Plate III, 1), and a pair of plates, also painted with landscapes, likewise from the Delamain factory.⁹ A blue and white plate, decorated in the centre in blue with a circular escutcheon containing a cross and, below, the date 1538, is probably from the Chambers factory. As the cross is that of St. Cuthbert, the date suggests the 200th anniversary of the closure of the monastic house associated with Durham Cathedral, which was dissolved in 1538; the plate, therefore, may belong to a service commissioned to commemorate that event.

Two other plates deserve mention because, though not Irish, they have important Irish associations. They are from a service ordered from China by James Caulfield, first Earl of Charlemont, to celebrate his installation as one of the first Knights of St. Patrick on the institution of that Order in 1783. The plates are decorated with the Charlemont arms in deep blue, with the collar of the Order of St. Patrick around the edge. One of the two nineteenth-century pieces is among the loveliest in the whole collection. This beautiful object, a stag's head with holders for three candles among its antlers (Plate III, 2), was commissioned from Belleek during its early years, probably in 1859, by a Co. Donegal family, and does not appear to have gone into general production.

While there are only four items of Irish glassware in the collection, all of them are of interest. Two glass chamber-pots, one with lid, are rare survivors from the end of the eighteenth century. A small nineteenth century decanter, with the name Cannock & Tait inscribed on it in gold lettering, is of local Limerick interest. However, the most important piece of glassware is the incomplete drinking glass engraved with a crown and bearing the inscription LORD/ARCH/BISHOP/OF/DUBLIN/1715. It has been shown that the crown is a punning emblem for the name King, *i.e.* William King who was Archbishop of Dublin at that time, and that the glass is a toasting glass engraved to celebrate the Hanoverian victory over the Jacobites in that year. This is the earliest dated Irish drinking glass.¹⁰

⁸M.S.D. Westropp, *Irish Pottery and Porcelain (General Guide to the Art Collections, National Museum of Ireland)*, Dublin 1935, pp. 10-12.

⁹A number of these pieces were exhibited at a ROSC exhibition in 1971 — see catalogue, *An Exhibition of 18th century Irish Delftware at Castletown House, Celbridge, Co. Kildare*, Dublin 1971. The Castle Dillon barrel was used to illustrate a 9p Irish stamp in 1976; it shows the other side to that on Plate III, 1, but printed backwards!

¹⁰C. Mac Leod, "The Earliest Dated Irish Drinking Glass, Dublin 1715", *J. Roy. Soc. Antiq. Ireland*, 103 (1973), 47-50.

A large and varied selection of personal ornaments in the collection ranges in period from the Bronze Age to the early nineteenth century. In all, there are one hundred and twelve pieces. Most of these items are of bronze, but a small and select group of objects are of gold or silver. Among the finest is the waist-size gold bar-torc (Plate II, 2), formerly in the collection of the Earls of Londesborough, and later in the Pitt-Rivers Museum, Farnham, which was found in a hoard in Granta Fen, Stretham parish, Cambridgeshire, in 1850.¹¹ Dating from the eleventh century B.C., it is of a type common in Ireland at that time. Also of gold are seven penannular earrings of graduated size (Plate II, 2 *centre*). These, too, date from early in the Later Bronze Age. There are three silver pieces from the Hiberno-Viking Period; a thistle brooch with both the head of the pin and the terminals decorated with brambled globes, a neck-ring of twisted silver strands with knobbed terminals, and a ring-pin with a decorated pinhead. Among the bronze items are pins of various periods and types, including some swan-necked pins, a sunflower pin, an ibex-headed pin and a hand-pin, nine penannular ring-brooches including an important Early Christian example with zoomorphic-type terminals decorated with the Chi-Rho monogram inset in enamel, a number of rings, brooches, bracelets and hair-fasteners. Not all of these objects are Irish: there are examples of Hallstatt type bracelets and brooches, some Italian ornaments from the seventh and sixth centuries B.C., and a number of Roman brooches and pins, including a delightful brooch shaped like a peacock dating from the second century A.D. From the Irish medieval period are three ring-pins, two of which were found in High Street, Dublin, in 1884. The latest in date from this whole section of personal ornaments is an ironwork tiara dating from c. 1820.¹² This superb example of Berlin ironwork comes from the period of reconstruction following the Napoleonic occupation of Prussia, a time when the aristocracy was encouraged to donate jewellery towards the redevelopment of the State, and the wearing of jewellery of Berlin and Gleiwitz ironwork became fashionable.¹³

Associated with this whole section is a group of sixteen moulds, most of which were for the production of objects of adornment. Of particular importance is the soapstone mould valve for making penannular rings. This, probably dating from the fifth century, has a difficult to read ogham inscription on one edge.¹⁴ Others in this group include an Anglo-Saxon mould for making cross-shaped pendants, an English thirteenth-century example for the production of pilgrim's badges, and one from the sixteenth century for making buttons. Also among these items is a metal die and one of the bronze medals struck from it. The medal commemorates the Dublin lawyer and scientific investigator William Deane who died in 1793. The medallist was William Mossop (1751-1805), the most renowned medalist of his day, best known, perhaps, for the fine medals he made for the Royal Dublin Society. The portrait medal of William Deane was produced in

¹¹ *Catalogue of a Collection of Ancient & Medieval Rings and Personal Ornaments formed for Lady Londesborough*, privately printed 1853, p. 48; G. Eogan, *J. Roy. Soc. Antiq. Ireland* 97 (1967), 141-143. The other objects in the hoard (a gold bracelet, six gold rings, and a bronze rapier) are housed in the British Museum.

¹² Many items from this group were exhibited at the Jewellery Museum at Pforzheim in 1972 — see catalogue, *Ein Sammler stellt aus: 3000 Jahre Schmuck aus einer Privatsammlung*, Pforzheim 1972.

¹³ See A. Clifford, *Cut Steel and Berlin Iron Jewellery*, Bath 1971.

¹⁴ *Frühe Irische Kunst, Eine Ausstellung des Deutschen Kunstrates in Zusammenarbeit mit dem Irischen National-Museum*, Berlin/Munich/Hamburg 1959, No. 111.

1783, the same year in which Mossop struck one of Edmund Sexton, Viscount Pery, Speaker of the Irish House of Commons from 1771 to 1785.¹⁵

Among art experts, John Hunt was acknowledged in his day as one of the foremost authorities on crucifix figures, a complex and difficult field. Little wonder, then, that his own collection should contain some exceedingly fine and rare examples of the genre. A group of twenty-four crucifix figures dating from the eleventh to the seventeenth century, and representing a number of countries and types, is on display. From the starkly simple and majestic examples of the Romanesque period to the drama-laden figures of the Baroque, these offer an immediate and instructive lesson in changing styles and perceptions over the centuries. Noteworthy among them is the bronze crucifix figure from Red Abbey, Co. Longford,¹⁶ dating from the early thirteenth century, and showing in the folding of the loin-cloth a technique without parallel elsewhere (Plate IV, 1). Also on display are a number of crucifixes. A particularly fine example is an early twelfth century bronze altar-cross from Northern Italy. A rare survival from the late middle ages in Ireland is a fifteenth century processional cross with quatrefoils at the terminals of three of the arms holding the symbols of the evangelists Mark, Luke and John; an empty quatrefoil beneath the feet of Christ would have once held the symbol of St. Matthew. Also of interest are three examples from Christian outposts in Asia, dating from the seventeenth century. Two crucifixion groups are from Macao, and show Chinese figures, while a third, from Goa, shows a mixture of Christian and Hindu symbolism. Most appealing of all these pieces is, perhaps, the rosewood crucifix with boxwood figure, the work of Andrea Fantoni (1659-1734), a member of a Bergamese family which flourished as woodcarvers from the fifteenth to the eighteenth century. This piece dates from the end of the seventeenth century.

From the end of the ninth century comes the cross-shaped mount from Co. Antrim, with enamelled animal motifs on the terminals. This important piece of Irish metalwork (Plate X) is described elsewhere in this volume.¹⁷

The Collection contains some very fine examples of objects made of ivory, a precious material from which objects of luxury were made from early times onwards. Although it is difficult to single out individual items for special mention, some pieces demand description. One of these is the Birth of Christ, of fourteenth century German workmanship and one of only two known examples of its type. It shows the Virgin reclining in the manger, with the infant Christ at her side and surrounded by animals. A leaf from a diptych (Plate IV, 2) shows two scenes from the Labours of Life, a favourite medieval theme. In the upper register the expulsion from the Garden of Eden is depicted, the angel grasping a sword and Adam and Eve with fig-leaves; the lower register shows the results of the Fall: Adam delving, Eve with a distaff in her hand, while beside her stands a physician holding a phial of medicine with a sick man lying before him. This fine ivory is fourteenth-century French in origin. Also French is an

¹⁵ A.E.J. Went, 'William Mossop: Eighteenth Century Irish Medallist', *Dublin Hist. Rec.*, 28, no. 3 (June 1975), 95.

¹⁶ This crucifix figure was exhibited at the Metropolitan Museum, New York, in 1970 — see catalogue, *The Year 1200: a Centennial Exhibition at the Metropolitan Museum of Art*, 2 vols., New York 1970, p. 84 (vol. I).

¹⁷ P. Harbison, this *Journal*, pp. 17-40.

elaborately carved double-sided comb,¹⁸ late fifteenth-century in date, which has on both sides scenes from the life of the King of Wessex. An earlier piece, this time of German workmanship, is a carved and painted figure of St. John, originally part of a crucifixion group. This retains much of its original paint.

An object with immediate popular appeal is a tightly woven girdle with ivory fasteners, believed to be an abbess's belt. It is one of only two of this type known to have survived. French in origin, it dates from c. 1500. The ivory buckle-end is carved with the Holy Face and has renaissance decoration around the opening, while the other end-piece, also of ivory, is decorated on one side with a Virgin and Child and on the other with St Jerome with cross, book and lion under a renaissance-type canopy. The belt itself is set with pierced circular rosettes and carved ivory and bone stops. Examination of the rosettes shows that the wearer got progressively thinner as she aged, requiring the addition of extra stops on the inner side of the belt. There are two ivory boxes or caskets in this group. The smaller of the two (Plate V, 1), probably English in origin, has elaborately decorated mounts, originally set with jewels, some of which remain. It dates from the 14th or 15th century: the lock-plate on this box may be a slightly later fifteenth century addition, but could be original.¹⁹ The larger casket, of thirteenth century date, is assembled from plates of ivory with massive metal mounts terminating in swelling beak-like forms. It is Siculo-Arabic in origin — Sicily was, in the later twelfth century, a meeting ground for European and Arabic culture through the residence there of the Hohenstaufen. Boxes such as this one were popular in their period as reliquaries.

There are three other reliquary boxes in the collection, all of them from the thirteenth century. One, most probably Austrian, is a house-shaped box of gilded bronze with much of the original gilding remaining. It is decorated with engraved folial tendrils. Rings at the sides show that it was intended for suspension on the breast. The second chasse, from Limoges, is also house-shaped but has original cresting with knobbed gable-ends. It is decorated with engraved roundels containing demi-figures of angels amidst foliage. The third and most sumptuously decorated chasse is also of bronze, decorated with enamelling and typical of the best Limoges work of this period (Plate V, 2). The front is decorated with a scene showing the murder of St. Martial who was one of the patron saints of Limoges, and the ends with figures of saints standing between roundels. Both the back of the chasse and of the lid also shows enamelled roundel decoration, while the front of the lid shows Christ in Majesty in a circle flanked by angels. At a later date, probably in the fifteenth century, crocketed gables and pierced roof-cresting were added, as were lion feet to support the crocketed side-posts on which the chasse stood. This fine example of thirteenth century Limoges enamelling was uncovered during excavations for the foundations of a house near Godalming, in Surrey, c. 1840, and was formerly in the collection of Lord Midleton.

Limoges was one of the great centres of enamel work in the middle ages, producing a wide range of objects, many of which were for ecclesiastical use. Plaques for book-

¹⁸For late medieval combs see M. Dunlevy, *Nth. Munster Antiq. J.*, 15 (1972), 22-27 — this comb would fit into her Class H.

¹⁹For caskets of this type, including a wooden one with closely related mounts and lock-plates, see E. Rynne, "A Late Medieval Casket from Knockmore, Co. Clare", *Nth. Munster Antiq. J.*, 14 (1971), 37-40.

bindings, pyxes, reliquaries, thuribles, ciboria, altar frontals and croziers are among some of the objects which Limoges workshops made at this time. Among the pieces of Limoges enamelling in the collection is a panel from a Gospel lectionary decorated with a figure of Christ in Glory, flanked by the letters Alpha and Omega and with the figures of the evangelists Matthew and John in the upper corners. The figures are deeply engraved and ornamented, with the details in white enamel. Another Limoges plaque, the back of a Gospel-book of fine quality, has at some time suffered in a fire so that practically all of the enamel has disappeared. But this piece shows how, before the application of the enamel, a number of compartments for the pattern were dug out (leaving raised dividing strips) into which the enamels were later set.

There is a small but interesting group of eight Coptic bone carvings which vary in date from the fourth to the seventh century. The objects of earlier date, such as a relief of a nude deity with one hand at the waist, the other emptying an inverted vase, or the beautifully-carved relief of a male figure resting one hand on the stump of a tree, show the continuation of the Roman provincial tradition in Egypt.

Irish religious silver is represented in the collection by a small but significant group of twelve pieces, dating mainly from the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. There are three reliquary crosses, five pyxes, an altar cruet, two chalices and a communion cup. A round pyx, three inches in diameter, known as the Cashel Pyx, was a gift to the Franciscan Friary at Cashel by Fr. Anthony Sall, himself a Franciscan priest and a member of a prominent local family, who was Guardian of the Nenagh Friary during the 1670s.²⁰ An unusual feature of this pyx is the chain moulding around the rim. Around the edge of the lid is the inscription IN CRUCE PENDENTEM TE IESU ADORO, and on each side of the crucifix which adorns the lid is inscribed FR. AN. SALL ME FIERI FECIT PRO CONVITU: STI. FRANCI. CASSI.²¹ A smaller pyx, known as the McTigue Pyx, carries an inscription which reads EDMUNDUS THADAEUS, sacerdos me fieri fecit 1636 — in the vernacular, Thadaeus would become McTigue. A third pyx, which carries the maker's initials, is the work of Larry Martin of Kilkenny and was made *circa* 1800. Among the finest pieces in the group are the Galway Chalice, a smaller chalice, and the Mothell Communion Cup (Plate VI, 1). The Galway Chalice, 8½ inches high, is a travelling chalice, the bowl and foot of which can be unscrewed from the stem. It has an octagonal-shaped foot engraved with a crucifix on a mount. It so closely resembles the "Elizabeth Forth Chalice", made for the Friars Minor of Galway and dated 1633, that it might well be by the same hand.²² Datable, therefore, to the 1630s, the chalice has the maker's mark, E.G., the same mark as that on the quillon of the Galway Corporation Sword.²³ The communion cup carries an inscription which shows that it was presented to the church at Mothell, Co. Waterford, by Anne, Countess of Tyrone, in 1697. The second chalice is smaller and later, and belongs to a

²⁰C. Giblin, *Liber Lovaniensis*, Dublin 1951, pp. 123-147.

²¹This pyx, the Galway Chalice, the Cashel Bell, and some of the rosary beads in the Collection, were exhibited at the Limerick Holy Year Exhibition in 1950 — see catalogue, *A Thousand Years of Christian Art and Ecclesiastical Antiquities from North Munster*, Limerick 1950, nos. 48, 21 and 53 respectively.

²²For the "Elizabeth Forth Chalice" see J.J. Buckley, *Some Irish Altar Plate*, Dublin 1943, p. 58, Plate XX, fig. 1 — Buckley seems not to have been aware of the chalice in the Hunt Collection.

²³J. Hunt, "Redating Some Important Irish Silver", *The Connoisseur*, 147, no. 592 (March 1961), 94-95. This article shows that the baluster stems of both chalices were cast from the same mould.

type used in private chapels in the eighteenth century. In the Collection is also a small altar cruet which dates from c. 1700.

In addition to this group of Irish ecclesiastical silver, there are some other pieces of the same general class which are of English or continental origin. Most important of these is the pyx-like box, also English though of fifteenth century date, which is decorated with the seated greyhound emblem of the Woodvilles over the hinge, and is inscribed with the names of the Three Kings, Jaspar, Melchior and Balthazar, as a protection against theft. Also noteworthy here is the rare heel-spoon, dated 1618, with a crucifixion scene in the bowl.

Irish domestic silver is also represented in the collection by a small but choice group of nine pieces. Three of the finest pieces are of Limerick manufacture: a silver salver with contemporary decoration of fruit and flowers; a pap boat²⁴ used for feeding semi-solid food to infants or invalids, and an elegantly-shaped soup-ladle with the monogram M.P. on the handle. All of these pieces date from the 1760s and all have the maker's mark I.I., that of the noted Limerick silversmith Joseph Johns. Also of Limerick manufacture are the silver gilt mounts for a horn cup. This has the mark of John Purcell, who flourished in the early decades of the nineteenth century. Of Irish provincial manufacture but without a maker's mark is the only piece of ceremonial silver in the collection, a mace with early eighteenth century mantling and bearing the arms of Middleton.

While the largest group of bronze objects are those from the antiquities section, there are a number of other objects of bronze in the museum apart from those already mentioned. Amongst these are some Roman pieces; these include a dodecahedron (a twelve-sided figure containing holes of varying diameters, which appears to have been used in a game, probably by pushing sticks of different thicknesses into the holes while guessing the correct size), a wine jug of superb craftsmanship from the second century A.D., and a strainer of situla form from the same period, pierced with a formal design.

From Early Christian Ireland come five bells. The largest of these is known as the Cashel Bell (Plate VII, 1), having been found near that town in 1849.²⁵ Decorated along the lower edges and with a very lightly incised cross on each face, it dates from the ninth century. The four other bells are from the same general period. These are much smaller in size than the Cashel Bell and none of them is decorated. One (Plate VI, 2, *centre back*), found in Bray, Co. Wicklow, is a similar form to the Cashel Bell, while two others come from the counties Meath and Westmeath (Plate VI, 2 *right and left respectively*). The fourth bell (Plate VI, 2, *centre front*), is beautifully proportioned and is the best-documented of these sanctuary bells, having been dug up in 1856 during turf-cutting in the parish of Badoney, Co. Tyrone.²⁶

The only other bell in the collection is English, and dates from c. 1150. An important piece of medieval bronzework, it is mammiform in shape, the body pierced with three zones decorated with acanthus pattern similar to that in stained glass and

²⁴This pap boat was exhibited in the ROSC exhibition of Irish silver in 1971, as were the Cashel Pyx, the McTigue Pyx, the Galway Chalice, and a pair of amber beads with silver cross — see catalogue, *An Exhibition of Irish Silver from 1630-1820 at Trinity College, Dublin*, Dublin 1971.

²⁵Lord Dunraven, *Memorials of Adare*, Oxford 1865, p. 152. J. Rommilly Allen, *Celtic Art in Pagan and Christian Times*, London 1904, pp. 202-203.

²⁶H. Morris, *J. Roy. Soc. Antiq. Ireland*, 61 (1931), 61, Plate I (1).

MSS. of the period.²⁷ Another English bronze piece from the latter part of the twelfth century is the chafing ball or hand-warmer. Cast in two sections which screw together, it is decorated with a foliate design of stems, leaves and flowers; the interior has a self-balancing receptacle for hot charcoal. An unusual and rare object is the polycandelson frame with six apertures in an outer ring which originally would have held small oil lamps. This object is of Byzantine origin and dates from c. 600.

Man in his more domestic moments is represented by a number of groups. Four wooden methers, three of them three-handled and one two-handled, are probably from the seventeenth century. A large group of domestic items contains some medieval knives, a razor, some buckles, keys, livery badges, combs of bone and wood, a fine serving set of knife and fork of seventeenth century date and probably North German, which have ornate handles of ivory and coloured stones, and a bronze dish of shallow form with a broad rim finely engraved with renaissance ornament and the centre decorated with a repoussé design of flowers. This dish is probably Italian and dates from the end of the sixteenth century.

There is a small group of objects associated with hawking, all of which date from the seventeenth century. These are a silver hawk's bell engraved with the arms of James I and the Holy Roman Emperor, a hawk's call of wood, leather and bone, a hawk's hood of leather and red velvet on a wooden stand, and two silver hawk's rings, one inscribed with the name Philip Jell, Esq., of Hopton in County Derby, and the other with the name Oliver Le Neve, Esq., of Winchingham in Norfolk.

Gamespieces include, in addition to the dodecahedron already mentioned, a number of chess, draughts and dice pieces. A bone draughtsman, engraved with circles and ovals, may be early medieval Irish in origin. A pawn from a chess set is seventh century Arabic, while another chess figure, in the form of a seated woman, is North German and probably from the seventeenth century.

The collection contains three tapestries. Two are small Irish tapestries which appear to be practice pieces, probably made by Richard Pawlet or Daniel Reyley while working under John van Beaver in Dublin about 1740-49. That they were made during apprenticeship has been adduced from the fact that the designs are not particularly suited to tapestry technique nor are they particularly ornamental. The themes appear to have been taken from prints of the type available in Dublin in the 1740s.²⁸ The third tapestry is a fragment of the Beaufort armorial tapestry, probably made soon after 1370. It is a highly important piece, being one of only ten fragments of what is the only armorial tapestry pre-dating the fifteenth century known to have survived.²⁹ It was made to commemorate the Beaufort, Turenne and Comminges families in the

²⁷ P. Nelson, *Acta Archaeologica*, 4 (1933), 252-254. In 1959 this bell was exhibited in the City of Manchester Art Gallery — see catalogue, *Romanesque Art c. 1050-1200*, Manchester 1959, p. 46.

²⁸ See A. Leask (née Longfield), *Antiques*, 58, no. 4 (Oct. 1950), 300; A.K. Longfield, "Further 18th Century Dublin Tapestries", *J. Roy. Soc. Antiq. Ireland*, 81 (1951), 34-36.

²⁹ The nine other pieces are widely scattered: three in the Burrell Collection, Kelvingrove Museum and Art Gallery, Glasgow, and one in each of the Thyssen-Bornemisza Collection, Lugano, the Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam, the Metropolitan Museum, New York, the Martin Collection, New York, the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, and the Rhode Island School of Design.

person of Guillaume Rogier III de Beaufort who was rector of Avignon during the papacy of his brother, Gregory XI.³⁰

The Irish Penal Period is represented by a variety of objects, including four rosary beads all of which have silver decade beads and silver tubular crosses of typical Irish form. These all date from the eighteenth century. There are four small crosses of the type usually known as penal crosses, though it has been shown that they are more correctly styled pilgrimage crosses as they appear to be mementoes of the pilgrimage to St. Patrick's Purgatory, Lough Derg.³¹ Two of these crosses, of wood, are dated 1799, while a third, the only known example in lead, has the date 1829 on its back. Also belonging to this group is a small bone roundel with a crucifixion scene carved on it, and a penal altar-stone made from a rough slab of stone with three of the corner crosses and the centre cross visible on one face, the other corner being defective.

A number of objects in the museum are of special interest but evade categorization. Perhaps the finest of these, and certainly one of the collection's greatest treasures, is the carved limewood figure of the Virgin which had, originally, the Infant seated in her lap in the position known as *Sedes Sapientiae* (Plate VII, 2). This very fine piece comes from the Lower Rhine and dates from the twelfth century.³² Much of the original twelfth century paint remains. Another representation of the Virgin is a limestone figure of Virgin and Child, though the upper part of the child is missing.³³ The Virgin is crowned, with a pendant veil. This serene statue is late fourteenth century in date and comes from Burgundy. Also with a religious theme is a large painting of a group of three saints, inscribed as St. Sebastian, St. Nicholas and St. Anthony, on a gold background. This painting, which comes from the Upper Rhine region and dates from the second half of the fifteenth century, may be the work of the Lichtenhal Master. There are two other paintings, one being a late seventeenth century portrait of the second Viscount Muskerry, artist unknown, and the other a nineteenth century scene of Kilmallock showing the ruined abbey and friary church with the towncastle and other buildings in the background (Plate VIII). This painting is attributed to Mulcahy. An unusual item is the lead head of the statue, by Cheere, of William, Duke of Cumberland and son of George II, which used to stand on the column in the main square of Birr, Co. Offaly. The collection contains one Sheela-na-Gig, that from Caherelly Castle. It was discovered during the 1940s by workmen repairing a culvert in the townland of Caherelly East, near Lough Gur.³⁴

Mention of a seventeenth century map of Limerick City brings this general description of the more important pieces in the Hunt Collection to a close on a topical

³⁰ W. Wells, "Tapestry with the Arms of Beaufort, Turenne and Comminges", *Apollo*, 105, no. 180 new series (Feb. 1977), 94-101. The author was, apparently, not aware of the fragment in the Hunt Collection.

³¹ A.T. Lucas, "Penal Crucifixes", *Co. Louth Archae. J.*, 13 (1953-56), 145-172 (reprinted in booklet form by the National Museum, Dublin 1960).

³² Exhibited, 1959, in the City of Manchester Art Gallery — see catalogue, *Romanesque Art c. 1050-1200*, Manchester 1959, p. 34.

³³ This statue, repaired and much repainted in the past, has recently undergone conservation in the Conservation Laboratory of the Queen's University of Belfast and the Ulster Museum — see John G. Kelly, this *Journal*, pp. 41-45.

³⁴ J. Hunt, "An Unrecorded Sheela-na-Gig from Co. Limerick", *J. Roy. Soc. Antiq. Ireland*, 77 (1947), 158-159; J. Andersen, *The Witch on the Wall*, London 1977, p. 146, ill. on front cover.

note. This important map shows the city as it was c. 1637-1645. A number of buildings and structures of historical interest can be seen, among them King John's Castle and St. Mary's Cathedral.

Inside the door of the museum is a polychrome wooden statue of Apollo as '*The Genius of the Arts*' (Plate IX). About his person are various objects representing various pursuits, trades and crafts, among which music, painting, woodwork and metalwork are represented. Made in Augsburg about 1600, this unique piece of sculpture seems to preside over the collection. Indeed, with its implied concern for excellence in all human endeavours, it is a fitting symbol both of the treasures it appears to guard and of the benefactors who have made the museum possible; for thanks to John Hunt's passion for quality, his scholarship and his wife's expertise and feel for period, the objects on display are a tribute to their taste, their love of Ireland and its past, and their appreciation of its place in the development of European culture.

Acknowledgements

Grateful thanks for much information concerning the material dealt with in this article are particularly due to Mrs. Gertrude Hunt, and also to Mr. Cormac Bourke, Dr. Peter Harbison, Mrs. Mairead Reynolds and Professor Etienne Rynne. Thanks, too, are due to the Craggaunowen Project and the Shannon Free Airport Development Company for supplying the photographs used to illustrate the article.



1. Late Bronze Age cauldron from Ballyscullion, Co. Antrim.

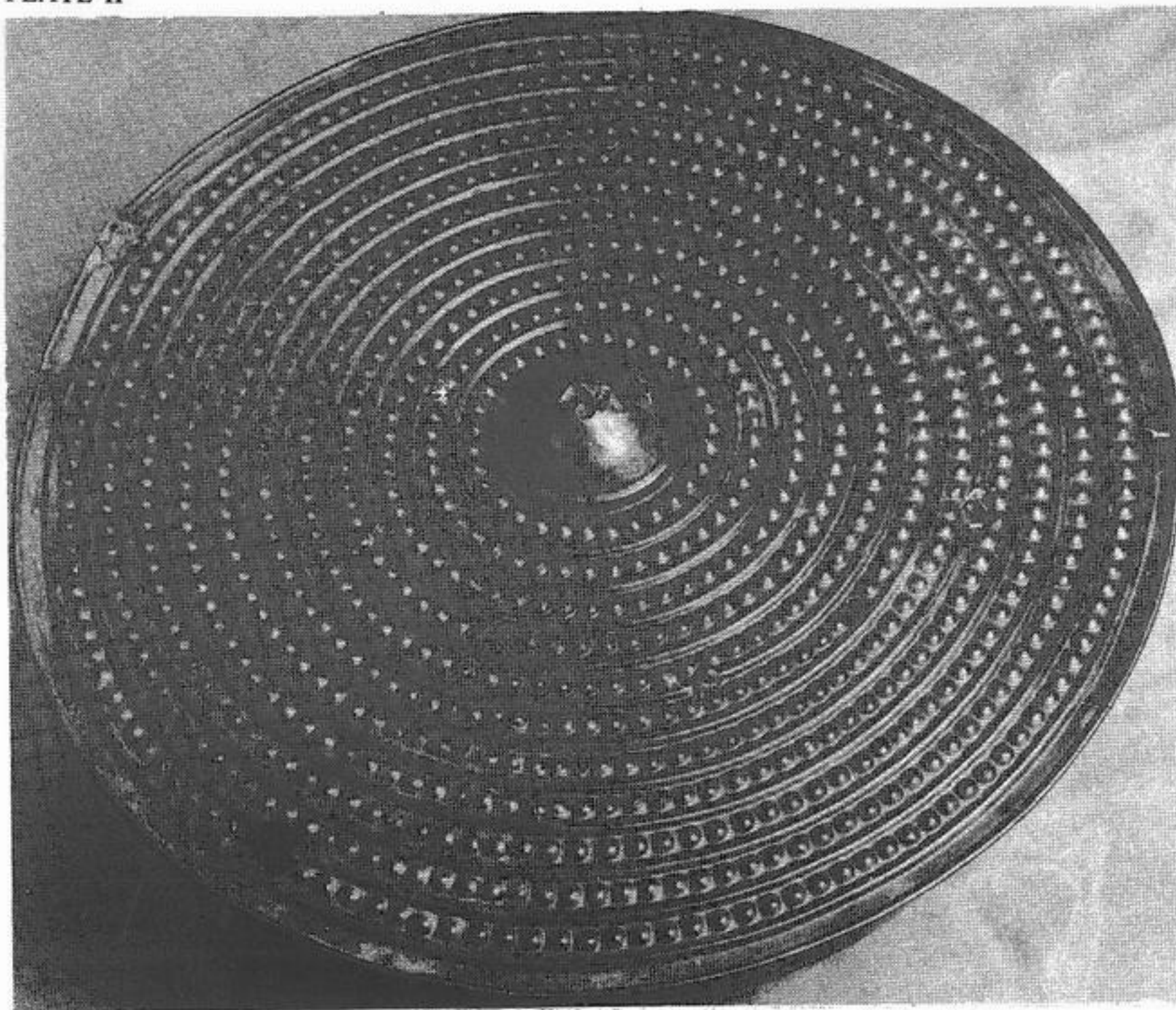
(Photo: SFADCo)



2. Late Bronze Age bucket from Capecastle Bog, Co. Antrim.

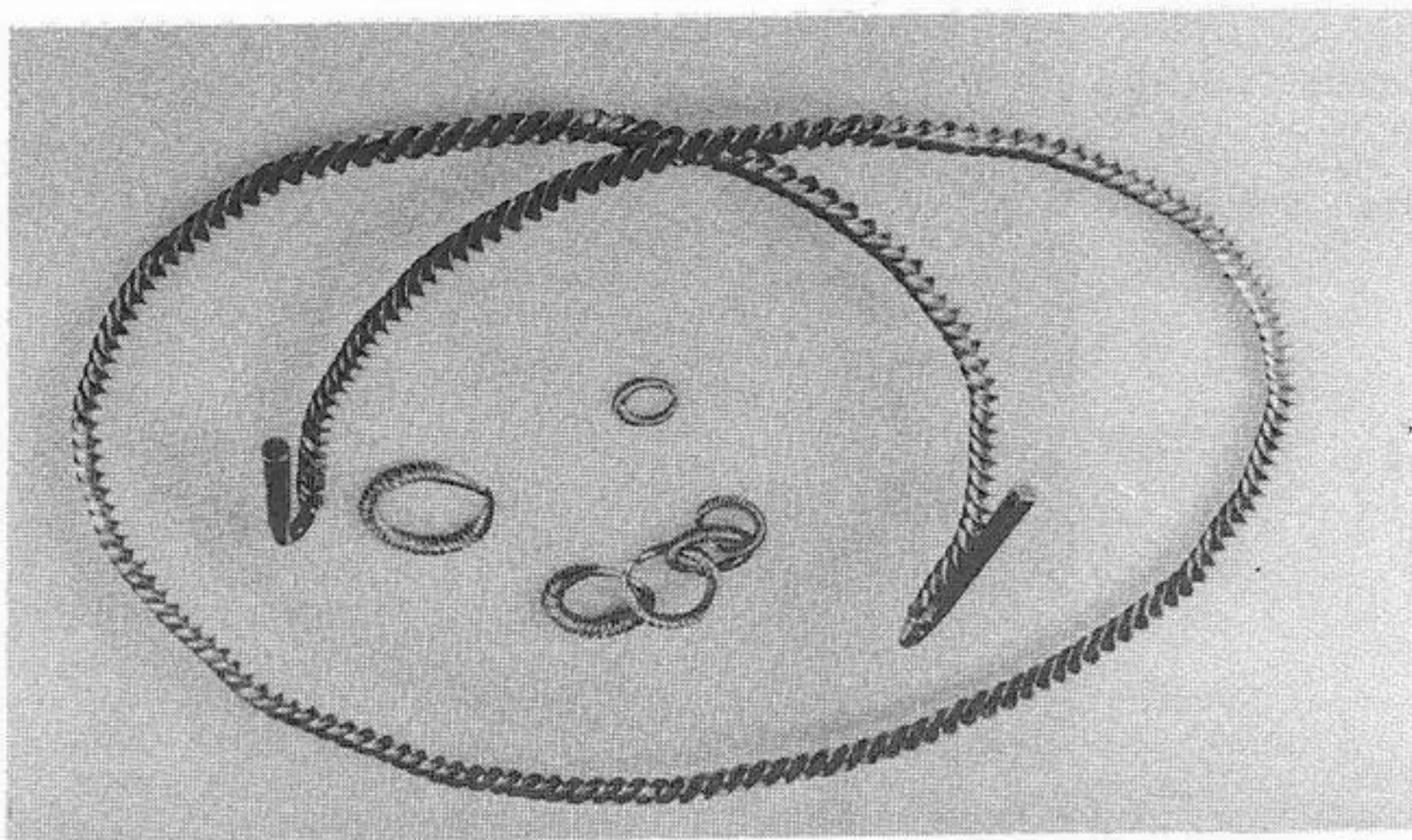
(Photo: SFADCo)

PLATE II



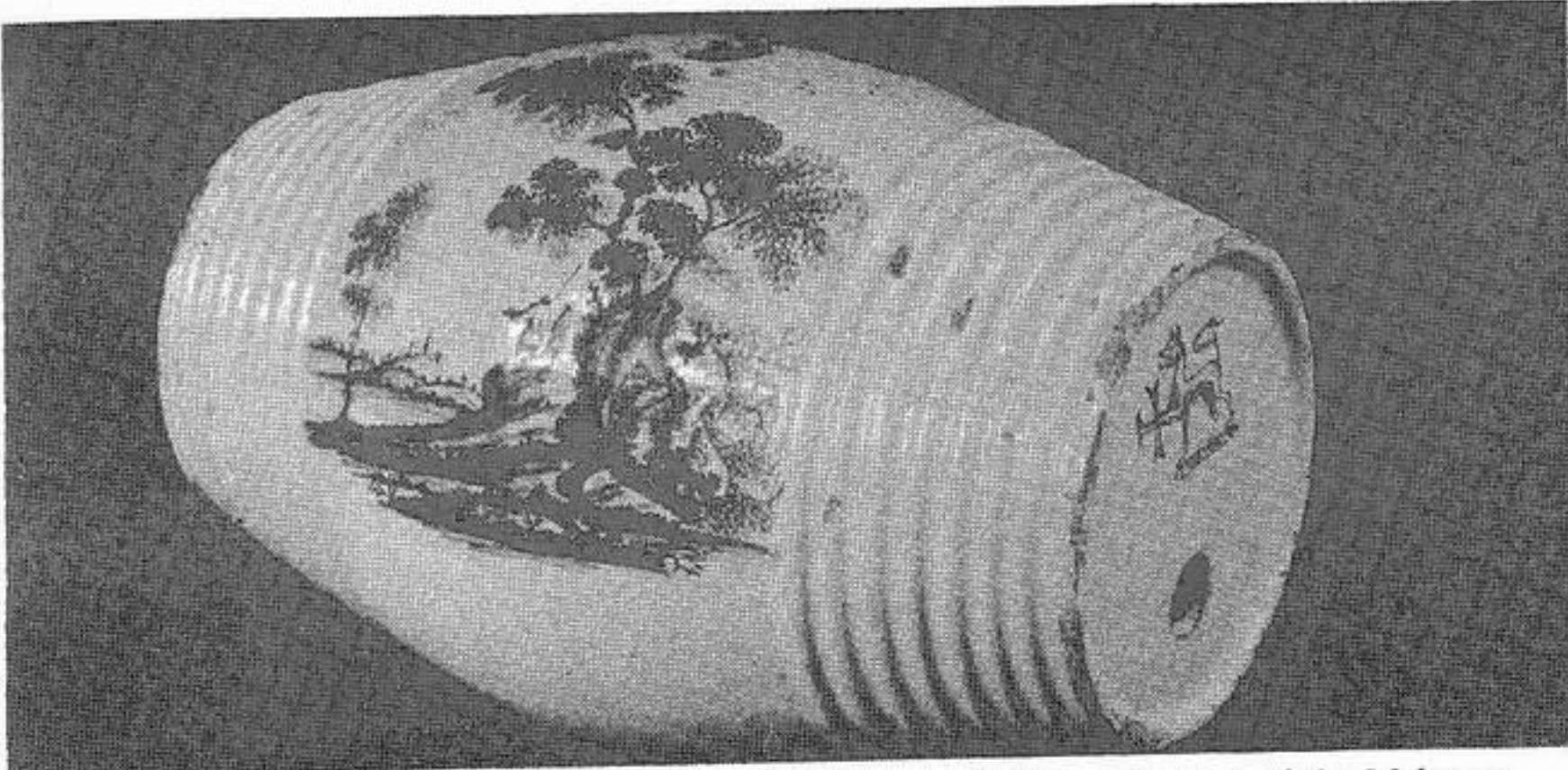
1. Late Bronze Age shield from (?Co. Antrim.

(Photo: SFADCo)

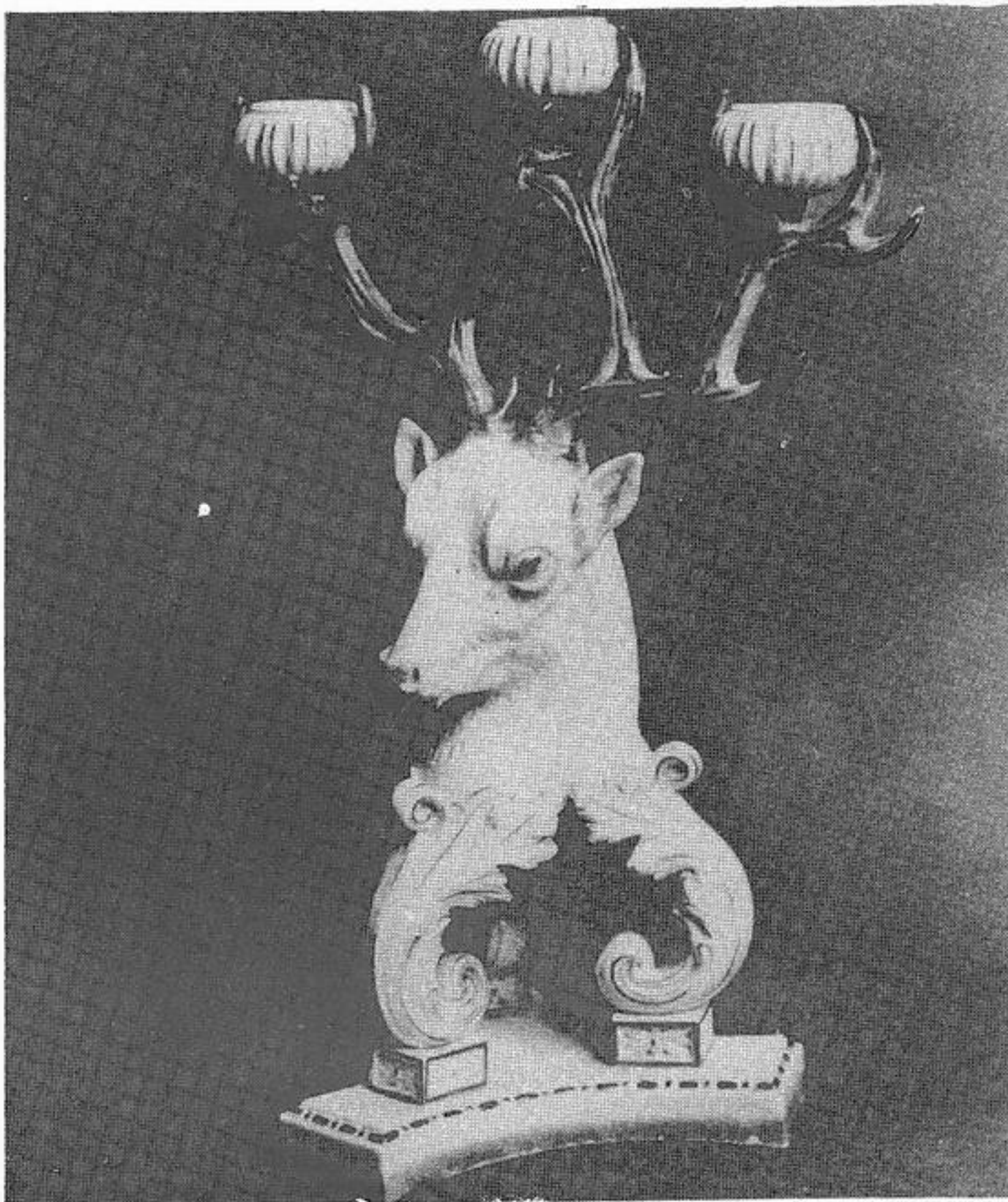


2. Late Bronze Age gold torc from Granta Fen, Stretham, Cambs., and unprovenanced gold earrings.

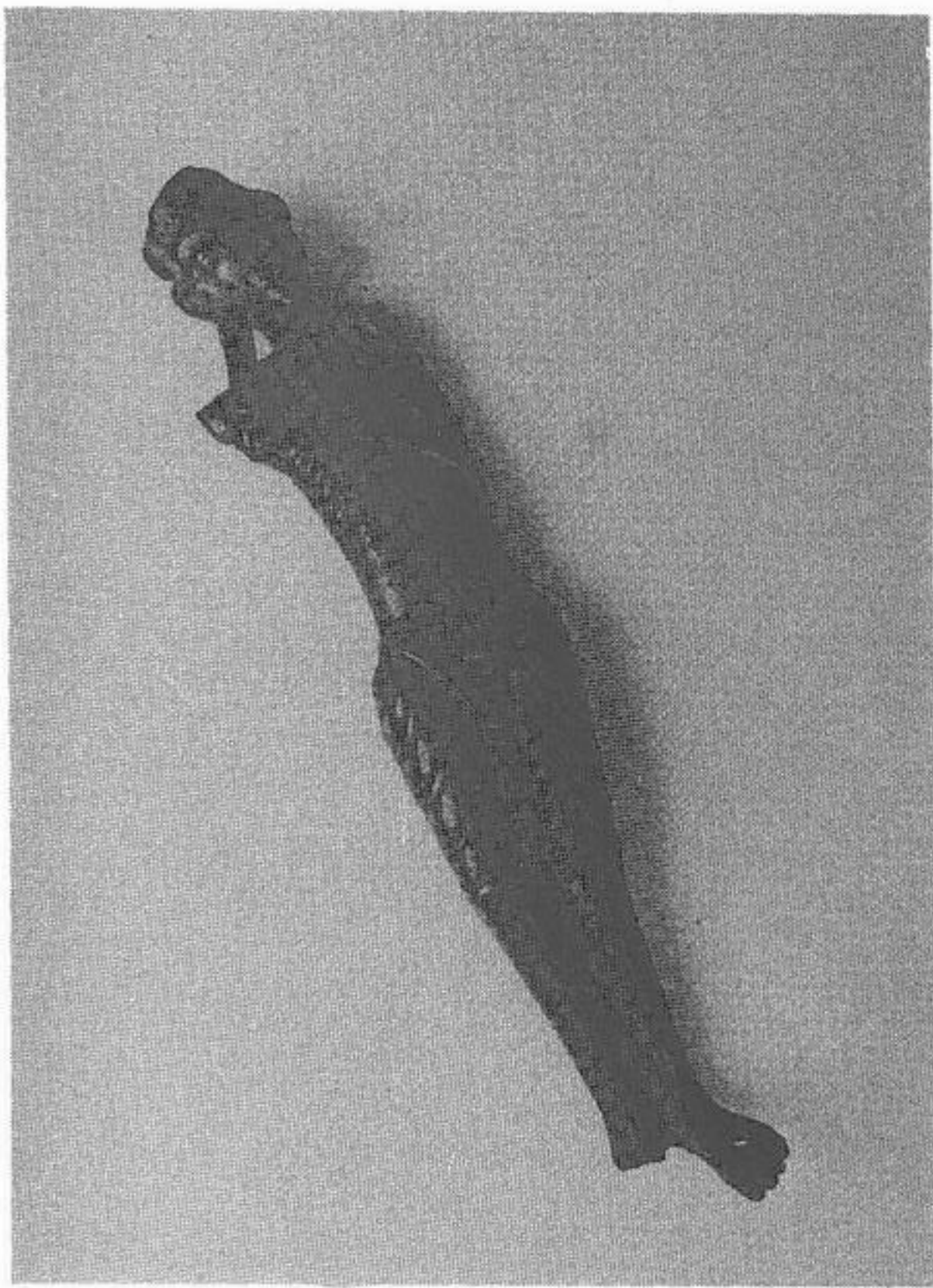
(Photo: SFADCo)



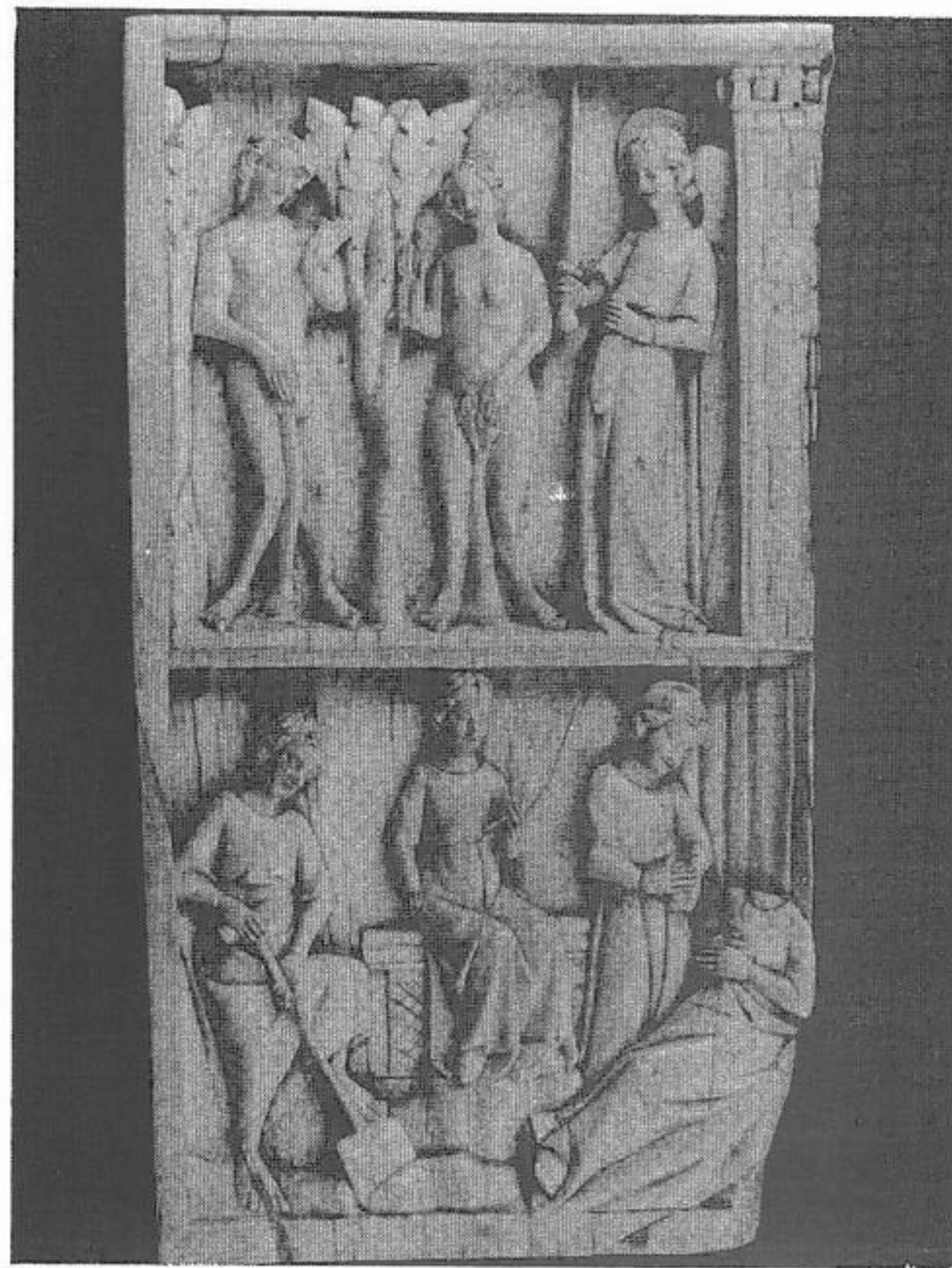
1. Spirit barrel, c.1756, from Henry Delamain's factory, Dublin, with crest of the Molyneux family of Castle Dillon, Co. Armagh. (Photo: SFADCo)



2. Candelabra made at Beleek, Co. Donegal, c.1859. (Photo: SFADCo)

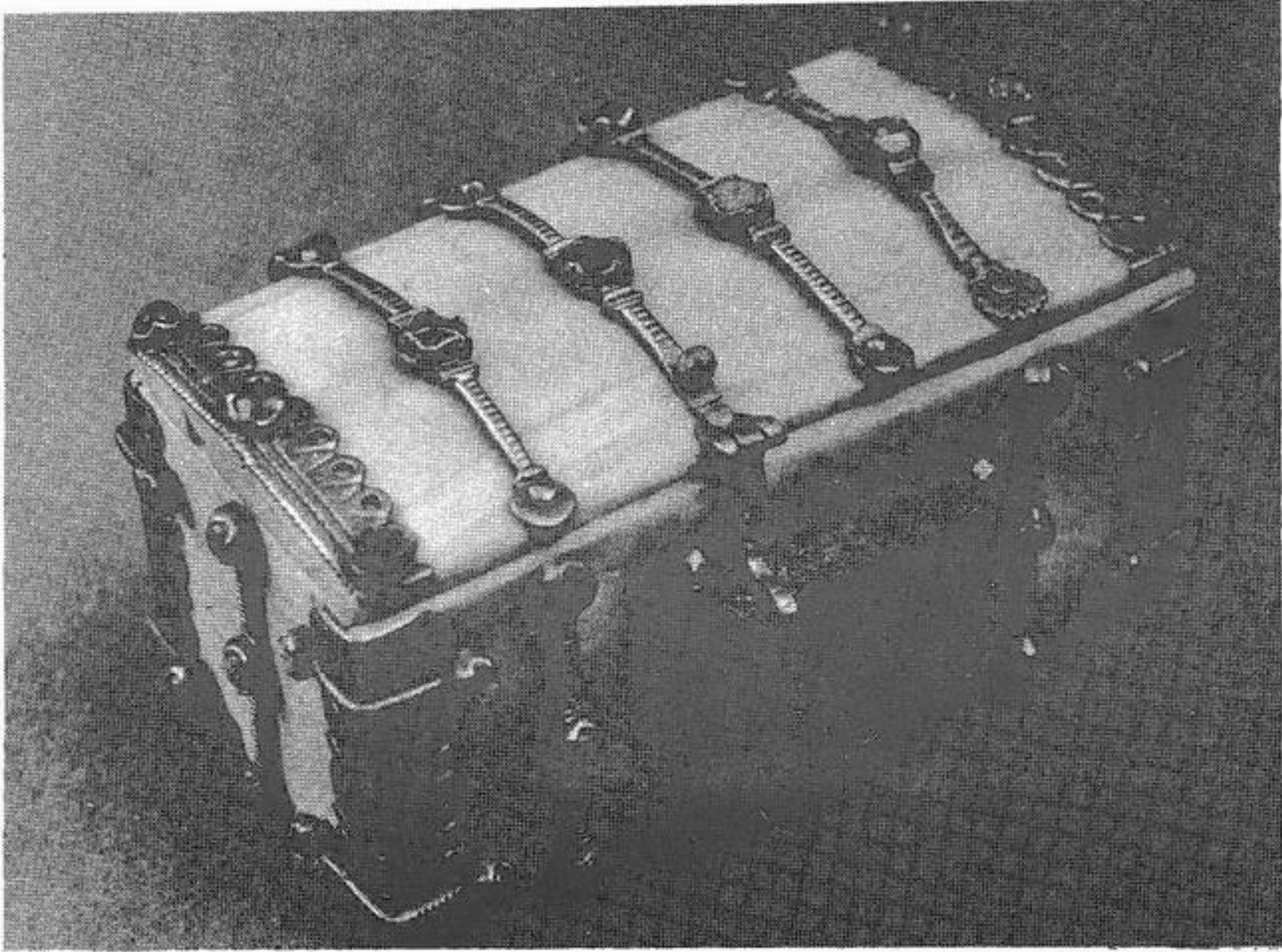


1. Bronze Crucifixion figure from Red Abbey, Co. Longford; early 13th century.



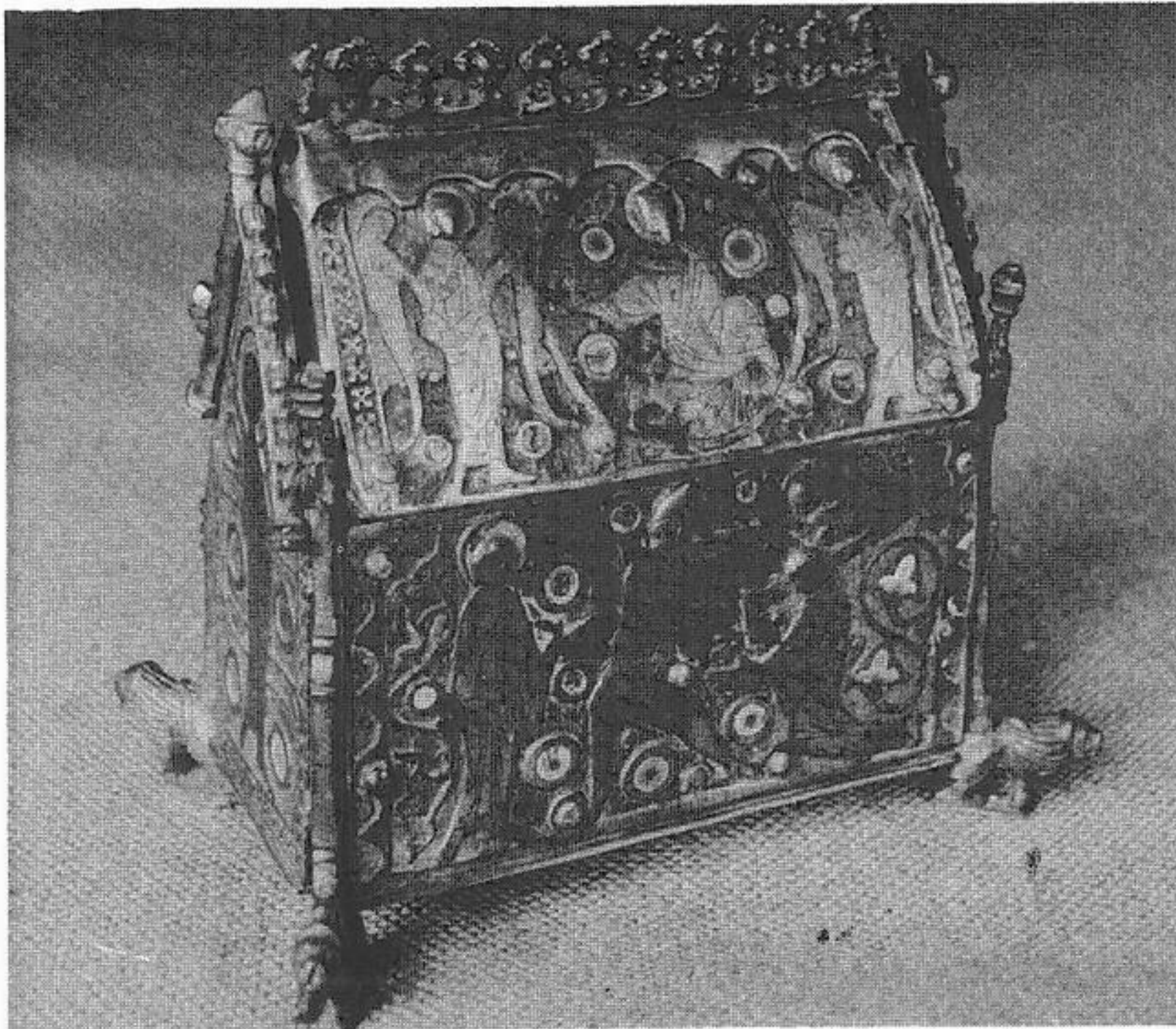
2. Ivory leaf from a French 14th century diptych.

(Photos: SFADCo)



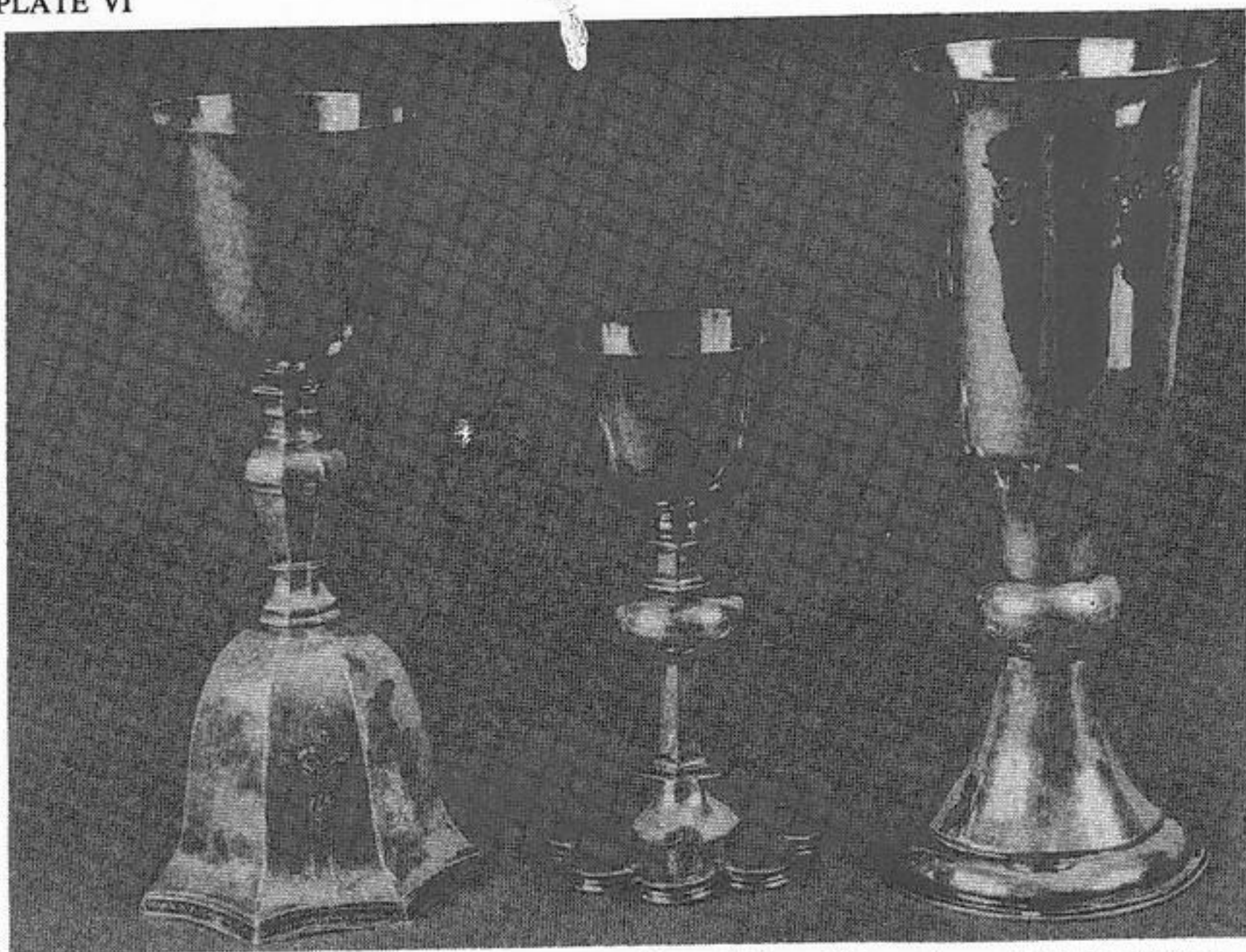
1. English ivory casket; 14th/15th century.

(Photo: SFADCo)

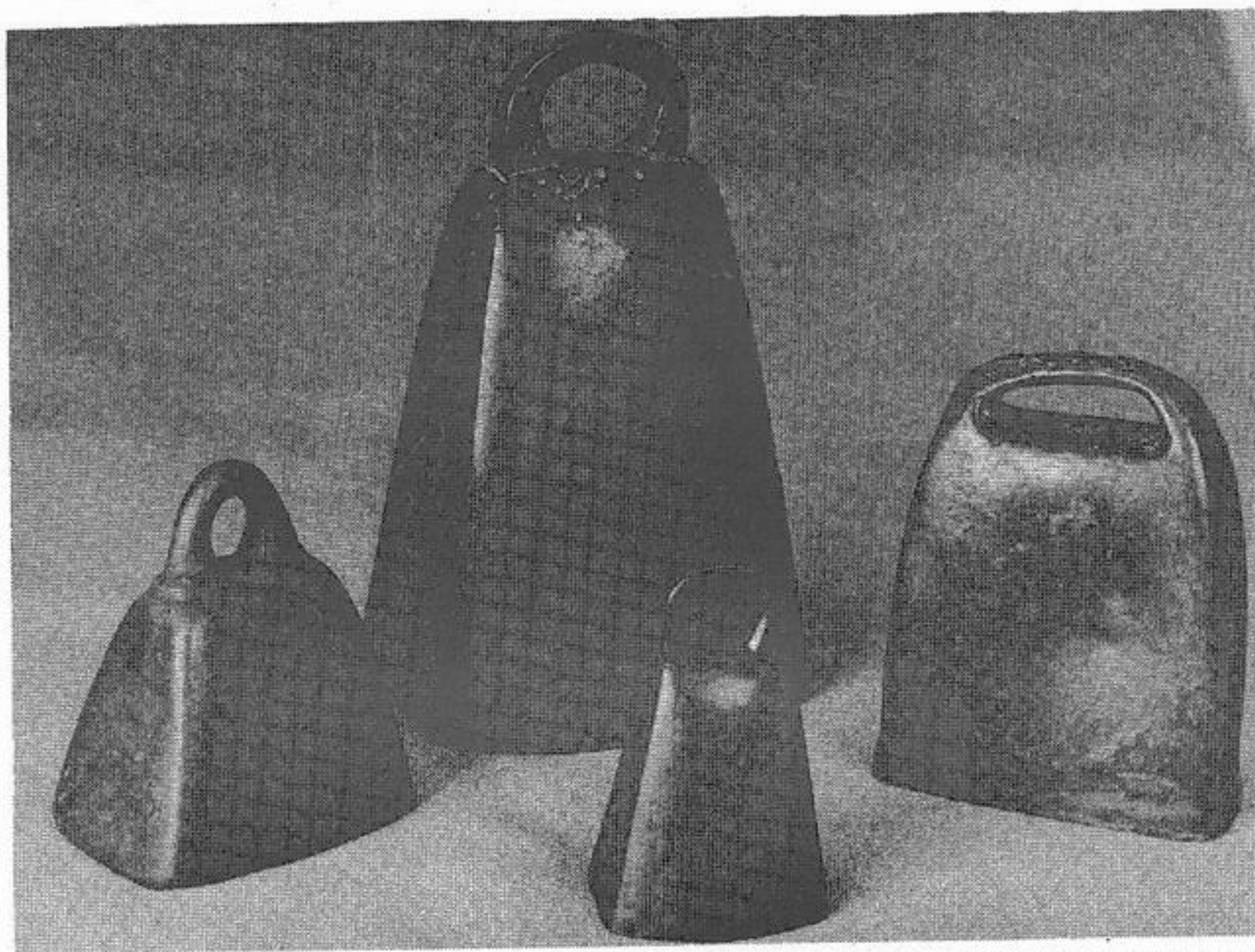


2. Limoges enamelled chasse, decorated with scenes from the life of St. Martial; 13th century.

(Photo: SFADCo)



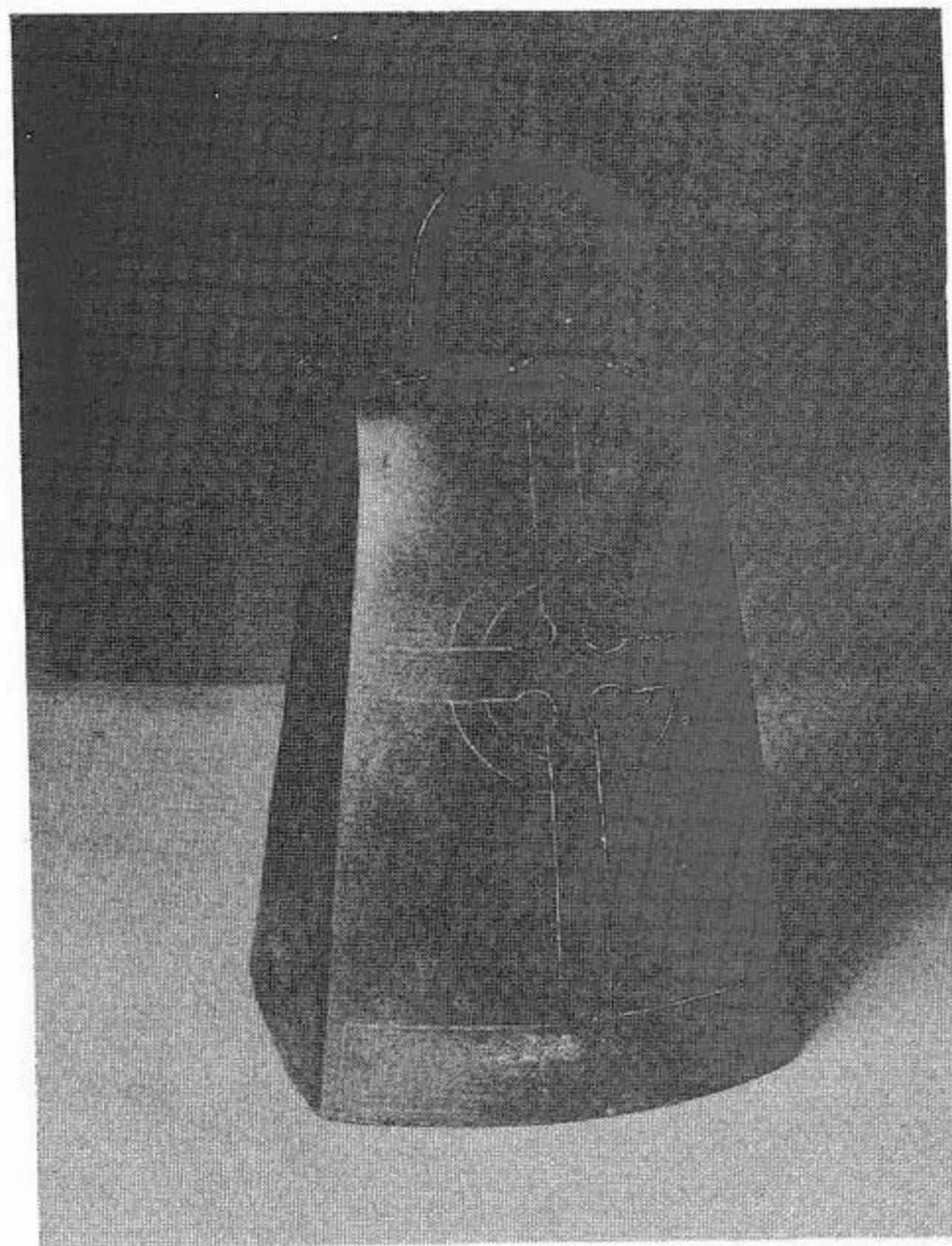
1. *Left:* The Galway Chalice, 1630s; *centre:* silver chalice, 18th century; *right:* the Mothell Communion Cup, 1697.
(Photo: SFADCo)



2. Four bronze bells. *Left:* Co. Westmeath; *centre back:* Bray, Co. Wicklow; *centre front:* Badoney, Co. Tyrone; *right:* Co. Meath.
(Photo: SFADCo)

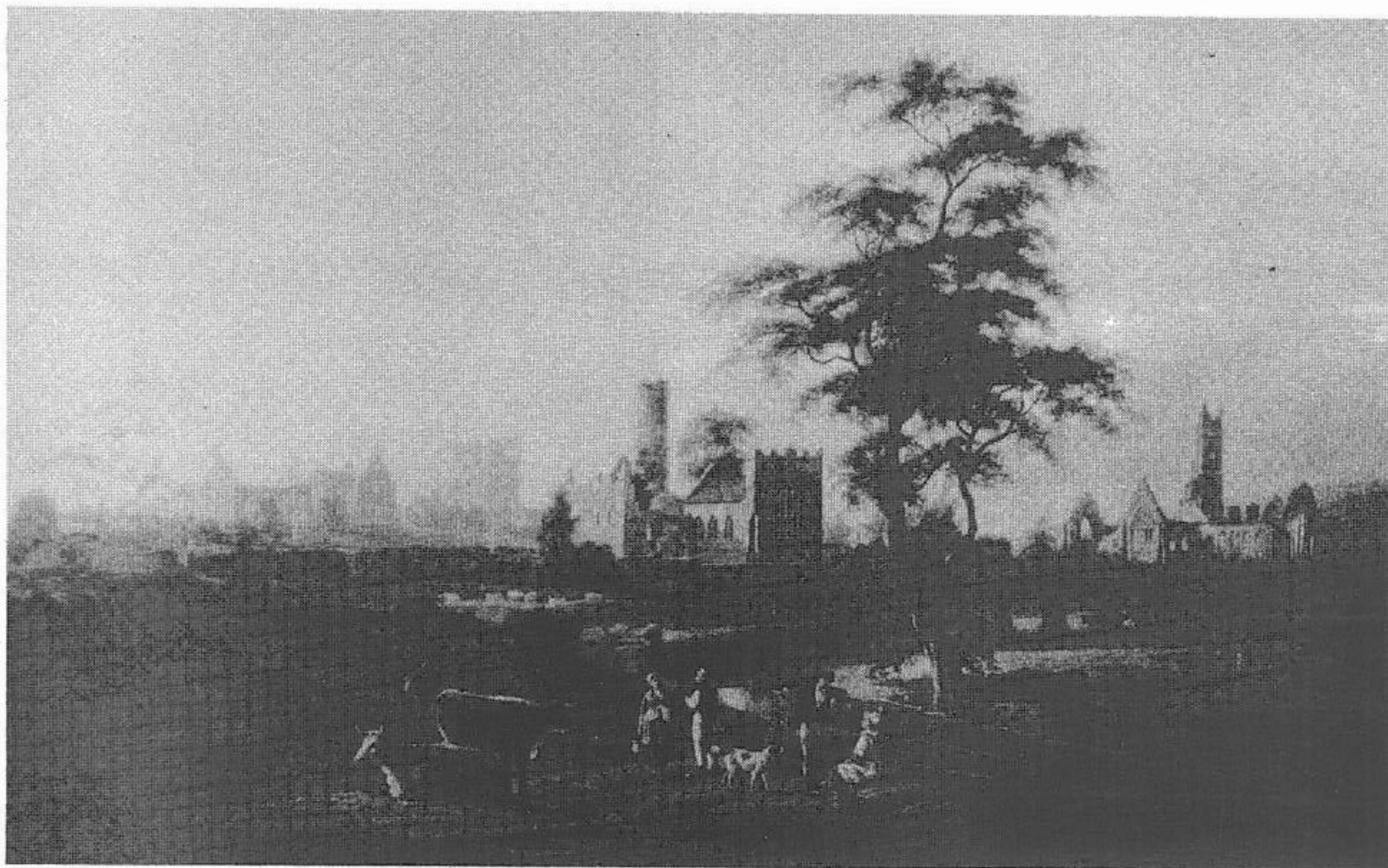


2. Limewood carving of the seated Virgin, from the Lower Rhine region; 12th century.



1. The Cashel Bell; 9th century.

(Photos: SFADCo).



View of Kilmallock, Co. Limerick; 19th century.

(Photo: SFADCo)



Statue of Apollo as 'The Genius of the Arts', Augsburg, c.1600.

(Photo: SFADCo)