

## XII.

JACOBITE RINGS. BY R. B. K. STEVENSON, M.A.,  
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The following discussion is primarily concerned with the ring formerly in the possession of the Setons of Touch, which has been generously presented to the National Museum by the National Art Collections Fund (see p. 153). But we shall be better able to assess the circumstances and date of its manufacture if various other Jacobite rings are taken into account.

1. *Seton Ring*.—This ring was considered by Prince Duleep Singh in the *Connoisseur* for June 1907, though it had not been mentioned among the relics preserved at Touch when these were described by George Seton in his *History of the Family of Seton* (1896). The hoop (fig. 1) is of four



Fig. 1. Seton ring: extended drawing of the hoop and shoulders. (½.)

scrolls, and has the following inscription in reserve on white enamel C.P.R./DUM/SPIRAT/SPERO, the initials standing for Charles Prince Regent. The shoulders bifurcate, and bear on the dexter side of the bezel a five-petalled rose, enamelled white with five green sepals and pistils reserved in gold, flanked by two green leaves, and on the sinister side a thistle in red, white, and green enamel with reserved detail, also flanked by two green leaves of the right shape. The bezel is oval, its back reeded in two fan-shaped panels, and has minute pellets at intervals round the edge. It contains a bust of Prince Charles Edward in relief on a gold or gilt medallion beneath a crystal with faceted border (Pl. XXI). The crystal measures 14 × 11 mm.

2. *Lovat Ring*.—An enamelled mourning or commemorative ring presented to the Museum in 1939<sup>1</sup> is of similar style and alike in some small details. Its five scrolls are larger and simpler, and separated by small unenamelled panels bearing three oblique ridges in relief. The inscription reserved in white reads ST<sup>N</sup>: L<sup>D</sup>/LOVAT/BE<sup>D</sup>: 9/APR. 1747/Æ: 80. On the inside of the hoop the scrolls are not completely rounded as in the Seton ring, but flattened to bear the inscription *Dulce et Decorum est pro Patria Mori* engraved in italics. The shoulders bifurcate and are shaped as in the Seton ring, but surmounted by pear-shaped crystals set in silver. The bezel, again like the Seton ring in conception, has a similar reeded back and pellets round the edge, but is nearly square with bevelled corners. The crystal,

<sup>1</sup> *Proc. Soc. Ant. Scot.*, vol. lxxiv. p. 149.

also similarly cut,  $8 \times 7.5$  mm., covers a small rectangle of twisted gold wire, below which there appear to be some hairs.

3. *Lyon Ring*.—Another Jacobite mourning ring was most kindly brought for me to see by Miss M. C. Bruce, in whose possession it is. The hoop consists of four black-enamelled scrolls separated by ridges in relief. The reserved inscription refers to the incumbent of the Episcopal Church <sup>1</sup> in Perth, who served as chaplain in Lord Ogilvy's regiment and was hanged at Penrith M<sup>rs</sup> ROBT : /LYON : E : S : P./28 : OCT<sup>is</sup> 1746/ÆT : 36 : (a skull). Engraved on the inner side is PRO ↓ REGE ↓ & ↓ PATRIA ↓ TRUCIDATO. The bezel, rectangular with no pellets, contains under a crystal a few hairs with red dots over them (for blood ?). The back is reeded like the foregoing but the shoulders are not forked or decorated. This ring is illustrated opposite p. 98 of Canon C. I. K. Bowstead's *Facts and Fancies about Kilmaveonaig* (1915).

4. *Flora Macdonald's Ring*.—Recently Mrs J. B. Innes lent to the Museum a ring which is of considerable sentimental as well as intrinsic interest. It has been handed down by known stages from Flora Macdonald, who is believed to have got it from the Prince. The history of its descent was written down in 1891 by Mary Macdonald, then aged eighty-seven, daughter of that Dr Kenneth Macdonald who accompanied Flora to America. This ring is well worn and much of the enamel is gone. The hoop is of three scrolls separated by ridges in relief; on the first and third is the inscription reserved on white LOVE AND/HONOUR. The shoulders bifurcate and bear the Prince of Wales' feathers, enamelled white, rising through a coronet. Between these and the scrolls there is on the dexter side a very small and unnatural four-petalled white rose with gold pistils and sepals formerly enamelled. The stem is S-shaped, two leaves forming with it a figure of eight. In the same position on the other side there is a thistle with similar stem and leaves. The bezel is oblong with bevelled corners, and contains a simply-cut crystal, having a few fine strands of hair beneath. The stone seems to have been reset, perhaps to allow the hairs to be substituted for some device. The back is reeded in two fan-shaped panels, but in the centre is a large oval containing a lyre reserved on a blue ground within a scrolled border.

5. Another similar ring inscribed LOVE AND HONOUR was, according to the late Mrs Robertson Matheson, given by James (VIII) to a faithful follower, and has J.R. under the crystal. It has not been found possible to trace its present whereabouts.

6. *Laurence Oliphant's Ring*.—A ring resembling closely Flora Macdonald's was given by the Prince to his aide-de-camp, Laurence Oliphant of Gask, who followed him into exile. It is in the possession of his descendant Mr R. S. Barbour of Bonskied. The two rings actually differ in a number

<sup>1</sup> *Ecclesiae Scoticanæ Presbyter.*

of particulars, as Mrs G. F. Barbour has kindly informed me. The Oliphant ring has only two scrolls in the hoop and no inscription. The oval stone is yellowish, and has under it the letters C.P.R. in gold wire, surrounded by an oval gold chain border. The instrument on the back is a harp.

7. *Four Peers Ring*.—The Oliphants are further connected with an enamelled ring differing in many ways but also incorporating a rose and thistle. The family tradition regarding the ring belonging to Mrs Maxtone Graham and illustrated in our *Proceedings* (vol. lvii. p. 233) is that it was made by Ebenezer Oliphant, brother of the Laird of Gask and uncle of the Laurence Oliphant just mentioned. He was the Edinburgh goldsmith who in 1740 made the magnificent canteen of silver designed to be carried in a holster and bearing the badge of the Prince of Wales and of the Order of the Thistle, now in the possession of the Earl of Albemarle.<sup>1</sup> The ring commemorates the executions in London in 1746 and 1747: four noblemen, including Lord Lovat, were beheaded on Tower Hill, and seventeen officers, ten of them belonging to the Manchester Regiment, were executed at Kennington Common.<sup>2</sup> As in the Seton ring, though perhaps the work is less fine, the bifurcated shoulders bear the white rose and thistle in natural colours. (In the *Proceedings* illustration the rose has been drawn twice in error.) The inscriptions are reserved in white enamel. Here the resemblances cease, however, since in order to carry the initials of all the officers, with dates of execution, the hoop consists of two entwined bands. Initials of the peers and dates and an executioner's axe figure on the bezel, which takes the form of an oblong panel with six hollow sides. At the four corners there are gold coronets. It is nearly flat at the back, and the outline of the upper surface is continued down the sides, which are deeply indented.

8 and 9. Two other examples of the Four Peers ring are known to me. One belongs to Colonel Stirling of Kippendavie, having come down from his great-grandmother, Mrs Graham of Airth; a connection with the Oliphants is again possible. The other is in the British Museum, and was described in Dalton's *Catalogue of Finger Rings* (1912—No. 1417).

10. Lastly, there is in the West Highland Museum at Fort William an unenamelled gold ring containing a medallion like that in the Seton ring. The setting is unattractive; the oval bezel is too large for the medallion, which has therefore been surrounded with a copper-coloured frame ornamented in relief. On the back of the bezel is engraved in italics *Dum Spirat Spero 1745* around a circular hole which was perhaps intended for hair. The rather small hoop is very thin and twisted like a rope. The ring was presented by Mrs Keith Cameron in 1928.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Catalogue of Loan Exhibition of Jacobite Relics*, Edinburgh, 1946, No. 325. Rings 6 and 8 are Nos. 295 and 194 in the same *Catalogue*.

<sup>2</sup> Scottish History Society, *The Prisoners of the '45*, vol. i. pp. 146 ff.

<sup>3</sup> Miss E. Macgregor kindly drew my attention to it.

It will be obvious from the foregoing descriptions that enamelled gold rings, of various designs but having details in common, were a feature of what might be called Jacobite propaganda. Mourning rings with names, and so on, in reserve on white or black enamel, often in scrolls, were normal in England in the decades before and after the '45, as can be seen from the British Museum and Victoria and Albert Museum Catalogues of rings. An ordinary Scottish example was recorded in *Proceedings*, vol. lxxiv., preceding the Lovat ring. But the adoption of the same style for other purposes as well seems peculiar to the Jacobites. The number of rings made to each of their designs may have been quite numerous, since in two cases three examples at least survive, and both the Prince's A.D.C. and his fair rescuer received closely similar rings, one having an appropriate inscription which was, apparently, not specially made for her since it is duplicated. We should not suppose that a single maker made the various designs. Differences in the drawing of the flowers suggest that similarities of detail are due to copying an original production, which had "caught on."

Sometime in 1747 is the earliest possible date for the manufacture of those that commemorate executions subsequent to the '45. It is less easy to determine whether or not the undated rings were gifted by the Prince during the actual Rising. It has been thought that the Seton ring, for example, was given by the Prince on his visit to Touch during the '45. On the other hand, Duleep Singh suggested that it was "presented to his loyal host when safe from his murderous pursuers," and Andrew Lang in his *Prince Charles Edward Stuart* (p. 310) seems to suppose that Flora Macdonald was also given her keepsake at a later date. Indeed it is extremely incongruous to conceive of Prince Charles carrying numerous rings (and medals, see below) round with him in his campaign, to be presented to supporters who were surely flushed with the hope of more notable tokens of success. It is in particular most unlikely that the motto *dum spiro spero*, which suggests that all but life is lost, should have been adapted to apply to the Prince at any time before Culloden.

Further evidence tending to the same conclusion is provided by another feature of the Seton ring. Our own Museum and the British Museum each possess a specimen of a tiny gold medallion identical with those in the rings, down to a small bar-like mark on the neck. The British Museum specimen was published by Hawkins in his *Medallic Illustrations of British History*, vol. ii. p. 601, No. 253, with the suggestion that it was struck about the time of the Prince's arrival in Scotland, but doubt was cast on this view by Miss Helen Farquhar's paper on "Some Portrait Medals Struck between 1745 and 1752 for Prince Charles Edward."<sup>1</sup> The first of a number of similar medallic portraits was the *Amor et Spes* medal. It bears the date 1745 and was formerly attributed to Pingo. Miss Farquhar showed that it was really

<sup>1</sup> *British Numismatic Journal* (1923-24), vol. vii.

made by C. N. Roettiers in the mint at Paris in 1748, and she considered the tiny medallion to be so closely allied to this medal that she would "hesitate to deprive Charles Roettiers of the honour of its execution." Clearly the reasons which led to the various medals being struck from 1748 onwards were such as might include the manufacture of rings in which the medallions were no doubt all intended to be set.<sup>1</sup> In fact Miss Farquhar also quotes a contemporary mention of "small heads of silver gilt to be set in rings" being carried from Paris to London in 1750; unfortunately their type is not known. The date on the ring at Fort William we may accordingly take to be purely commemorative, like that on the medal.

The context of the various rings therefore seems to be the two or three years before 1750, not earlier. The tiny medallions were doubtless made in France, and the fine workmanship of the Seton ring at least suggests its origin in the same country.