

ART. VI.—*The Orton Scar find, and Thomas Reveley of Kendal.* By ERIC BIRLEY, F.S.A.

*Read at Rydal Hall, July 12th, 1963.*

**W.** G. COLLINGWOOD'S Westmorland Inventory lists under *Orton and Tebay* two separate finds (CW2 xxvi 6):

Silver fibula and torque, Anglo-Saxon period (Greenwell, Brit. Barrows, 397).

“Jewels of date of Petilius Cerealis”, found 1847 (Whellan, 763).

This is no more than a streamlined version of the entry in Ferguson and Cowper's *Archaeological Survey* (*Archaeologia* liii 2, 1893, 528), in which the find of 1847 is given as Roman, under *Orton*, with Whellan as the source, and the fibula and torque as post-Roman, under *Orton Scar*, with references not only to Greenwell but also to *Arch. Journ.* ix 90 and PSAL1 ii 167 — but a query under the first item refers the reader on to the second, as though to suggest that perhaps only one find was really in question.

That could in fact have been demonstrated by reference to an early volume of our *Transactions*; in the paper on Crosby Ravensworth, read on 28 July 1875 by Canon G. F. Weston (1819-1887), vicar of that parish from 1848, comes this passage (CW1 ii 215):

I may mention here, in proof of the Danes having been in these parts, the finding of a very fine silver fibula and torque, in the year 1847, in one of the deep crevices of the limestone rock on the top of Orton Scar, which, from their ornamentation, more particularly that of the fibula, I should consider may be of Danish workmanship. They were presented to the Museum of the Society of Antiquarians, by the late Mr Reveley, who purchased them of the finders, and they are figured and described in the *Transactions* of that Society, as well as in the *Journal* of the Archaeological Institute.

Following up Canon Weston's references, we find in AJ ix (1852) 90 f. that on 5 December 1851 he had submitted to the Institute, through John Hill of Appleby, local secretary for Westmorland, "drawings executed by himself, representing two remarkable silver ornaments, discovered in a crevice of limestone rock, on Orton Scar, in his parish", the drawing of the fibula being reproduced to a reduced scale on a plate facing p. 90; and in *Archaeologia* xxxiv (1852) 446 there is printed a letter from Thomas Reveley of Kendal, under date 21 May 1851, presenting both objects and describing their discovery in April 1847, plate xxxviii illustrating them full-size from drawings by James Basire. They are manifestly post-Roman,<sup>1</sup> though Reveley regarded them "as tending to throw still further light on the Roman Iter" from Burrow in Lonsdale northwards. His opinion provides a cross-link with Whellan, whose account may now be cited:

In 1847 there were found on a hill, not far from Orton, some ancient jewels, which a writer in the Kendal newspaper supposed to have been deposited there in the time of Petilius Cerealis.

When I referred this passage to my brother, Mr R. N. Birley, he was soon able to provide me with an extract from the *Westmorland Gazette* for 24 April 1847 — namely a letter by Thomas Reveley himself, under date 21 April, which clinches the matter:

I have lately become possessed of some remarkable Roman remains, discovered about a fortnight ago in a crevice of the limestone rock on the north side of Orton Scar, in this county, not far from the summit, by a labouring man there employed in quarrying gate-posts. They were lying, as he informed me, at the depth of some 5 ft. from the original unbroken natural surface of the rock, and where, there can be no question, they have remained untouched by human hands for the long period, I may say, of 1700 years or upwards. They consist of a FIBULA VESTIARIA and of a large ring or bracelet. Both of them are

<sup>1</sup> Cf. Reginald A. Smith in PSALz xix 304, identifying the fibula as Viking work of the period A.D. 900-1050; Professor Richmond noted the point, and the identity of the two finds listed by W. G. Collingwood, in CW2 xxxiii 236.

of silver, the former weighing 8 oz. 8 dwt., and the latter 3 oz. 18 dwt., troy weight. The ring of the acus, or tongue of the fibula, is movable; in some specimens the acus is fixed. The bracelet has, I apprehend, been worn round the neck . . .

The writer then proceeds, at inordinate length, to conjecture that the two objects had been lost in a skirmish thereabouts, between Romans and Brigantes, during the campaigns of Petilius Cerealis, i.e. A.D. 71-74.<sup>2</sup>

Thomas Reveley proves, on investigation, to be one of those local antiquaries who died just too soon to become founding fathers of our Society. Mr C. Roy Hudleston, F.S.A., points out to me that he was baptized at Crosby Ravensworth on 22 May 1787, as son of the Rev. Samuel Reveley (vicar of that parish from 1783 until his death in November 1809) and Ruth his wife, and his burial there is attested by a monumental inscription which gives 18 March 1861 as the date of his death.<sup>3</sup> Of his education we have as yet no record; but by 1826 he had evidently become a prominent resident of Kendal, for he was one of the men who made public affirmation of their confidence in the two local banks during the financial crisis of that year (Curwen, *Kirkbie-Kendall*, 1900, 37): Parson & White's Kendal directory (1829) shows him as an attorney, clerk to the commissioners of taxes and to the Heronsike and Eamont Bridge, and the Kendal and Milnthorp turnpike roads, his address being Hunter's yard, Highgate. Slater's 1848 Directory gives Kirkland as his address; so does Kelly's Post Office Directory of 1858, listing him under private residents and thus implying that he had retired from his legal practice. So far, there is no hint of his outside interests, but for them Canon Weston's paper comes to our help;

<sup>2</sup> It was presumably this letter, rather than the *Gentleman's Magazine* (in which there is no trace of the topic), which Lord Templetown had in mind when he mentioned to Canon Weston that the claims of Orton Scar to be the scene of the decisive battle between the Romans and the Britons had been advocated with great ingenuity in that magazine (CW1 ii 211).

<sup>3</sup> Cf. *Registers of Crosby Ravensworth*, 111; and Bellasis, *Westmorland Church Notes*, i 198.

mentioning, as a possible etymology of Ravensworth, the equation Ravenwart=Hill of the Standard of the Raven, he continues (CW1 ii 214):

This was suggested to me by the late Mr Thomas Reveley, an antiquary of no mean attainments, and he considered it supported by the fact of entrenchments, having the appearance of a camp, being found on the highest part of Bank Moor, an elevated plateau a little to the S.E. of the village.

Sedgefield's *Place-Names of Cumberland and Westmorland* (1915), 169, opts for the personal name *Hrafnsvartr* (meaning "raven-black"), but admits as an alternative that it might mean "Raven's beacon", from the personal name *Hrafn* and Old Norse *varda*; Reveley's etymology is thus not necessarily far wide of the mark. As to the entrenchments, the Royal Commission's map only shows, at approximately the position given by Canon Weston, the following monument (*RCHM Westmorland* 90, no. 53):

MOUND (called Tumulus on O.S.) at Raise Howe,  $1\frac{1}{2}$  m. S.E. of the church, is 45 ft. in diameter and 3 ft. high. It has been badly damaged by excavation.

It may be wondered whether the Commission's staff did not miss Reveley's site.

Other clues to his antiquarian interests come in Reveley's letter in *Archaeologia*, notifying his gift to the Society of Antiquaries of further local finds (as well as "a British coin in very fine preservation, said to have been found near Huddersfield . . . with many others, some years ago"):

(a) A *denarius* of Lucius Verus (A.D. 161-169), "found near Trainlands, in the same parish of Crosby Ravensworth, a few years ago, on removing a heap of stones." Not recorded elsewhere.

(b) Three silver coins, one of Edward the Confessor and two of William the Conqueror, "severally found, with many others, in 1834, on digging a grave in the church of Betham." I discuss this find and its significance in an appendix to this paper.

Many questions remain unanswered — not least, what

was the occasion for Reveley presenting part of his collection to the Society of Antiquaries? His antiquarian interests, as we have seen, were not confined to his native parish, but it was from it that he had the good fortune to acquire one of the most remarkable treasures ever found in the county. One could wish for far fuller particulars of the life and interests of this Westmorland worthy.

For a detailed study of the fibula and torque, readers should turn to the paper by Miss Rosemary Cramp, F.S.A., which follows (Appendix II).

#### APPENDIX I: *The Beetham hoard.*

W. G. Collingwood's Westmorland Inventory gives, without citing any authority, a brief and misleading note of this hoard (CW2 xxvi 30): "Coins of the 11th century found in lower part of the tower." This ignores four specific references: (1) *Gentleman's Magazine*, 1834, ii 300: "In digging a grave near one of the pillars in the nave of the church of *Betham*, county of Westmoreland, upwards of 100 silver coins, of very high antiquity but in a fine state of preservation, have been discovered. They are chiefly of the reigns of the Norman Conqueror and his son Rufus, with a few of Edward the Confessor and Canute the Dane." (2) Whellan, 817, notes that the grave was on the north side of the nave and adds that the coins "appear to have been deposited in a large stone, about two feet high, set up against the pillar where the pulpit is placed." (3) Joseph Bintley, CW1 i 260, adds that they "had been placed in a block of ashlar hollowed out for their reception" and concludes that they "were placed there to commemorate the laying of the foundation stone", thus dating the church late 11th or early 12th century. (4) The additions to Hutton's *Beetham Repository* (Tract Series 7, 1906) 116 f., give what seems to be a contemporary account of the find, presumably by the Rev. Joseph Thexton, vicar of the parish 1811-1844: "August 4th 1834. In digging a Grave for Dora Dickson on the North Side of the Middle Aisle within the Church near to the foot of a Pillar next to that against which the Pulpit is plac'd, were thrown out about an hundred pieces of silver coin about the size of a sixpence, when decypher'd were found to be coins in the Reign of Edward the Confessor, William the Conqueror & William Rufus; & which had been deposited in

a large Freestone Stone, about two feet high, set up against the Pillar, the Top of which had been hollowed out with a Chissel; large Limestones were also piled up against it, and which had been preserved in that Deposit, it is supposed ever since the Church was built, till the Day of their Discovery. It is suppos'd there are yet a great deal more in the Mould, as one half of it was put into the Grave before the Coins were discovered." What is evidently a later addition takes the story on: "In 1872 when the soil of the Church in the inside was removed which had greatly accumulated by the interment of so many generations, several more Coins of the reigns above named were found about the same place which seems to have been the foundation stones of the North Wall of a former church, in the direction of the mark A A a little within the line of pillars in the North Arcade." The accompanying diagram shows that the finds were made between the first and second piers from the west end of the church, the pulpit being against the second pier. The account of St Michael's Church in *RCHM Westmorland* 101 f., shows no knowledge of the hoard or its findspot, concluding that "The lower part of the *West Tower* is perhaps of the 12th century and is the earliest part of the existing structure" and assigning the piers on the north side of the nave to the 15th century. A more detailed study of the fabric seems called for.

APPENDIX II: *The "Viking Type" penannular brooch and torc from Orton Scar.* By ROSEMARY CRAMP, F.S.A.

Professor Birley's nimble disentangling of the confusing references to the Orton Scar find well illustrates that archaeology, like literature, is productive of myths when two interpretations of the same object differ so widely that they are later felt to be separate entities. There has been no confusion in the dating given to the find by Anglo-Saxon archaeologists who have mentioned it<sup>3</sup> since the brooch belongs to a clear group, other members of which are dated by coin evidence to the first half of the 10th century. However, the brooch has been strangely

<sup>3</sup> J. Romilly Allen, "The Orton Scar brooch", *Reliquary* ix, 1903, 203-204; R. A. Smith, *Irish Brooches of Five Centuries*, *Archaeologia* lxxv, 1914, 250, pl. xxviii; *Viking Antiquities in Great Britain and Ireland* iv, Oslo, 1940, 46, ed. H. Shetelig; and vi, Oslo, 1956, 118-120, for discussion of type; R. A. Smith, *PSALz* xix 304 (28 May 1903); David M. Wilson, "A Group of Penannular Brooches of the Viking Period", *Þriðji Víkingafundur*, Third Viking Congress 1958, p. 96, includes this in the most recent list of this brooch type.



PLATE I.—The 10th century silver penannular brooch from Orton Scar.

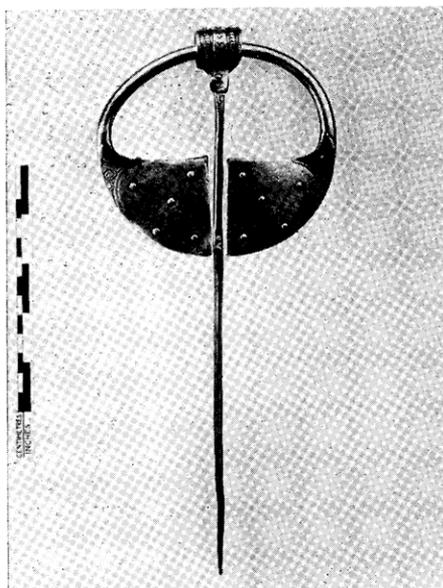


PLATE II.  
FIG. 1.—Back of the brooch.

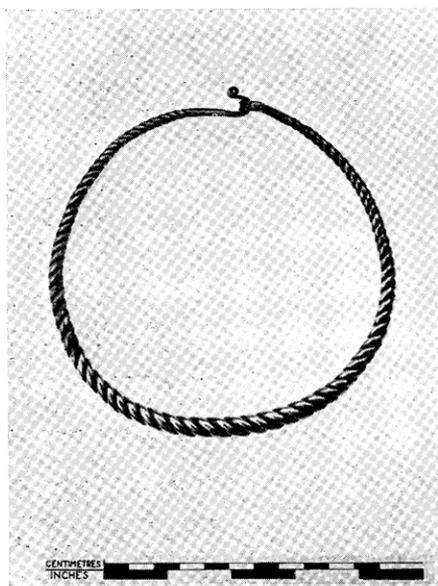


FIG. 2.—The silver torc.

neglected in the discussion of the type — Reginald Smith merely lists it in the appendix to his long article — and the only photograph of it, the frontispiece of *The Reliquary* ix, is rather inaccessible.

Romilly Allen's two reasons for considering the brooch to be of the Viking period are (i) the stamped ornament on the head of the pin, (ii) the fact that it was found with a twisted wire collar of Viking type, and since the silver torc is of very frequent occurrence in Viking hoards and graves, it is easier to dispose of discussion of this first. The only illustration of this object is Basire's drawing in *Archaeologia* xxxiv, pl. xxxviii, and the only detailed description is Weston's, *Arch. J.* ix, 1852, 91, where he describes it as "a simple twisted bar of decreasing thickness towards the extremities" which is hooked by a simple hook. He gives the diameter of the piece as about five and three-quarter inches and its weight as 3 ozs. 18 dwts. This description of it as twisted is more accurate than the reference to it in *Viking Antiquities* iv 46, as "plaited". Silver armlets and neck pieces of plaited silver are known but this is a less elaborate type. These silver ornaments occur in such numbers in Viking contexts that they may have been a form of portable bullion, and as the varying references to the Orton Scar piece as a neck or arm ornament show, it is sometimes difficult to tell where they were worn. As a rough guide there seem to be those whose diameter varies from 5 cms. to 12 cms. which are armlets and others from c. 14 cms. upwards which were worn around the neck. The Orton Scar piece is irritatingly marginal in size but would, I think, be more comfortable as an armlet.

The brooch which is of silver, weighing 8 ozs. 8 dwts., has the following dimensions: pin length 11 in., the body which is oval, four and a half and five inches, the expanded ends two inches across. The head of the pin has been hammered out into a flattened loop and fastened with a rivet. The ornament of the penannular ring is of chased interlaced animals and the plate is embossed with five raised rivets, the central one of which is connected to the others by two straight and two curved granulated bars. Two only of these remain. The junction of the hoop and plate is formed as the gaping jaws of an animal enclosing a triquetra.

This type of silver penannular brooch, with either three or five bosses, belongs to a type known by some ten specimens in Ireland,<sup>4</sup> from fragments in the Cuerdale and Goldesborough hoards (*Viking Antiquities* iv 32-45, and 30-31, fig. 7, respec-

<sup>4</sup> A. Mahr and J. Raftery ed., *Christian art in ancient Ireland*, 2 vols., 1932-41. Plates 37, 38, 39, and pp. 148-149.

tively), and a fragment from Skye. The Cuerdale hoard is dated on coin evidence *c.* 905, and Goldesborough *c.* 925, and archaeological opinion inclines to date the whole of this group<sup>5</sup> to the first half of the 10th century.

Shetelig, *Viking Antiquities* vi, 1956, 119, has noted the reciprocal Norse and Irish influences in this brooch series: the penannular form is derived from earlier Irish brooches as is the ornamentation of the plate with interlaced beasts and the gaping head with triquetra at the hoop, but he sees the taste for linked boss ornament as Norse. He considers, however, that these brooches are "definitely of Irish make". More recently, however, Mr Wilson has shown<sup>6</sup> how the division of the terminals by hatched lines and the decorative domeheaded rivets, which are unique features in Irish art, can be paralleled on 10th century English metal-work, concluding "On the basis of their distribution we must presume that they were made in Ireland or North Britain with no external influences." The animal ornament on the Orton Scar piece, which is discussed below, would seem to support this view.

It may be that we are dealing with a localised group in both time and place, and the variations between individual brooches within the group are no more than one would expect from craftsman produced objects. All the same, the Orton Scar brooch has some significant individual traits. Normally, as on the Londesborough, Mahr, pl. 37, 2, and Ballyspellan, Mahr, pl. 38, brooches, the links between the bosses serve as real divisions for the ornament, enclosing separate motifs of interlaced animals. The design of the plates on the Orton Scar piece is very similar to that on the Virginia brooch. On the Irish brooch, Mahr, *Christian Art in Ancient Ireland*, i, pl. 39, i, which has only three bosses and so more room to play with, there is a similar treatment of the field as the heads and bodies burrow under the bosses. Moreover, on the Virginia brooch, also, the heads of the birds and beasts are outlined with more delicacy and precision than are the mass-produced amorphous ribbon animals which ornament the brooch plates on the rest of the group. The bodies of the animals on the Orton Scar brooch are even less stylised and ribbon-like than on the Virginia brooch, nor do they have the cross-hatched ornament so typical of the metal-work of this period, with which animal bodies on the other Irish brooches are adorned. The loose soft bodies sprawl

<sup>5</sup> Weston notes, *op. cit.*, p. 91, that a "broken silver fibula (diameter 4 in.), closely similar in form and ornament, was found in a fishpond at Brayton Park." This now appears to have been lost.

<sup>6</sup> *Op. cit.*, n. 1, pp. 92-99.

across the surface with weak vestigial limbs and there is some attempt at modelling of the head which is quite untypical within this group of brooches. I can find no close parallel for this type of ornament but they are somewhat reminiscent of two of the animals from the silver bowl 3, from St Ninian's hoard, *Antiquity* xxiii, 1959, fig. 3, p. 244 and pl. xxvi c, although unlike the St Ninian's beasts which derive from the older Hiberno-Saxon type, they have no lappets and joint spirals. The animal ornament of this Orton Scar brooch seems to me to deserve further study since it could fit into a north of England rather than Irish context.

In one lesser respect also, the Orton Scar brooch differs from others of its group so far known and that is in the ornament and construction of the pin. One pair of these brooches, Mahr, pl. xxxviii 2, pl. xxxix 1 and 2, have the same motif of hatched and curled ornament on the barrel swivel top, and the Ballyspellan brooch pin head is covered with silver filigree. The punched decoration on the Orton Scar brooch can be paralleled on a specimen from Halleberg and is a common enough style of 10th-century ornament, but this, like the heavy rivet head which features the pin head, is distinctive among the Hiberno-English group.

The Orton Scar brooch is the only complete specimen of its type with a clearly documented find-spot, known from England. Since the whole problem of Viking Art in the British Isles and its indebtedness, or otherwise, to the existing art traditions the Viking settlers encountered in their own homes, is in process of reconsideration, this brooch, in my opinion, is deserving of re-assessment.

I should like to thank Mr R. B. K. Stevenson for his helpful comments on the draft of this paper.