

HIGHLAND REGIONAL COUNCIL



ARTEFACTS

ARCHAEOLOGICAL SITES AND MONUMENTS RECORD

1 SITE CODE	H	NH	6	4	S	E	0	1	4
2 NGR	NH	6	5	4	2	4	3	4	6
3 QUAL	CE								

4 DISTRICT INVERNESS	5 PARISH INVERNESS & BONA	6 SITE NAME TORVAEAN	7 GENERIC TYPE FINDSPOT (CHAIN, SILVER)
8 CONCORDANCE OH164SE14 NMR	9 MUSEUM/LOCATION OF FIND(S) RMS(QUEEN STREET)	10 ACCESSION NO.	11 PERIOD/DATE EM(PIC)
13 FIND CIRCUMSTANCES STRAY FIND(CONSTRUCTION WORK)	14 CONDITION GOOD	15 EXCAVATOR AND DATE	12 DATING METHOD TYP
16 EXCAVATION RECORD NO.	17 LAND USE	18 GEOLOGY	19 SOILS
20 VEGETATION	21 HYDROLOGY/DRAINAGE	22 RELIEF	23 ASPECT
24 ALTITUDE	25 DETAILED DESCRIPTION/DIMENSIONS		

LENGTH: 452.40mm
WEIGHT: 2.636 kg

26 BIBLIOGRAPHY (AUTHOR: DATE: TITLE: JOURNAL OR PUBLISHER: VOLUME: DETAIL)

1. ORDNANCE SURVEY: 1938: 6" MAP (PROV.)
2. SMITH, JA: 1875: PROC. SOC. ANT. SCOT.: VOL. 10: pp328-30
3. : 1810: THE SCOT'S MAGAZINE: : VOL. 72: p323
4. : 1845: NEW STATISTICAL ACCOUNT: VOL. 14: p14
5. WILSON, D: 1863: PREHISTORIC ANNALS OF SCOTLAND: : VOL. 2: p133
6. EDWARDS, AJH: 1938-9: PROC. SOC. ANT. SCOT.: VOL. 73: pp326-7
7. STEVENSON, RBK: 1955: THE PROBLEM OF THE PICTS: : p111 over...

27 GROUND PLAN NO.	28 GROUND PHOTO NO.
29 SLIDES NO.	30 HR. AP. NO.
31 NMR. AP. NO.	32 OTHER AP. NO.: SOURCE
33 ARCHIVE AND LOCATION	
34 GEOPHYSICAL SURVEY	35 SAMPLES
36 PALYNOLOGY	37 NUMERICAL DATES: RANGE: LAB NO.
38 OTHER	

39 NAME & ADDRESS OF OWNER	40 ATTITUDE OF OWNER
41 NAME & ADDRESS OF TENANT	42 ATTITUDE OF TENANT
43 ACCESS & RESTRICTIONS	
44 NAME & ADDRESS OF FINDER/RECORDER: DATE	45 RECORDER: DATE MWC: 12.11.1986
	46 CHECK: DATE

47 TEXT
OH 6542 4346. Silver chain found AD 1808."(1) "A massive silver chain found near Inverness in 1809, was presented to the Antiquaries' Museum as Treasure Trove in 1837. It was discovered in the course of the formation of the caledonian Canal, at the base of a high gravelly ridge known as Tor a Bhean (Torvaine). The chain, 18" in length and weighing about 93 oz, is formed of a double series of large plain unornamented circular rings, 16 pairs of rings with a single ring at one end - 33 in all; not including the large grooved link which is now wanting."(2)(3)(4)(5) "This chain is tentatively dated to the 6th-8th century AD."(6)(7)
"See continuation card for text & illustrations (2)(8)(9)."

26.

8. (NEWSPAPER):12.4.1986:THE HIGHLAND NEWS:

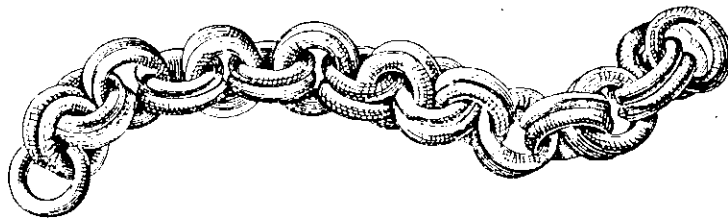
9. (NEWSPAPER):8.4.1986:THE INVERNESS COURIER

10. WILSON,D:1851:ARCHAEOLOGY & PREHISTORIC ANNALS OF SCOTLAND: :Vol. 1(?):p444

Silver Chain, formed of large Rings, found in Inverness-shire.—The first of these chains, formed of large plain circular rings, was presented to the Museum as treasure-trove in 1837. It was discovered in the course of the formation of the Caledonian Canal, at the bottom of a high gravelly ridge forming part of a hill fort beside an old cairn, and was figured and described by Sir George Mackenzie in the "The Scot's Magazine," for May 1810 (Edinburgh, vol. lxxii. 1810), as follows:—

"This chain of pure silver was found in the course of last year (1809), by the workmen employed in digging the Caledonian Canal. It is now in the possession of the Honourable Barons of Exchequer, and is conceived to be an object of considerable curiosity. We were anxious, therefore, to preserve a drawing of it, which we have been enabled to gratify our readers with, through the polite attention of Sir G. Mackenzie, Bart., who has not only supplied us with the engraved plate, but also with the following extract from a communication made by him on the subject to the Royal Society of Edinburgh.

"The chain was found at the depth of two feet, among gravel. The length is 18 inches, exclusive of a grooved link, which has not reached Edinburgh with the chain. The single ring at one end is 2 inches and one-tenth in diameter. The rings at the other end 2·8 inches in diameter. The thickness of the rings at the end is ·45 of an inch, that of the others ·4. The whole chain weighs 92 oz. 12 dwts. It was reported that a ball of silver was found with the chain; but it has not been recovered. Sir George is of opinion, from the general appearance of the chain, that it has been used for ornament, and that it probably had suspended a lamp in some Roman Catholic Church, whence it had been stolen during the ferment excited by John Knox, and buried. Perhaps it had been concealed by the rightful owners; and, owing to some accident befalling the possessor, had lain concealed till dug up in the line of the canal."—(P. 323.)



(2)

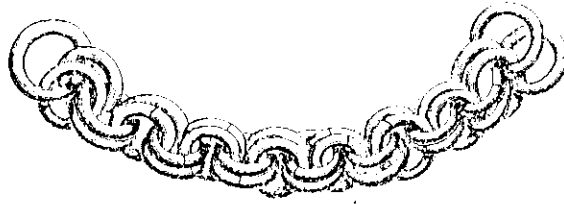
Silver Chain found on the line of the Caledonian Canal, Inverness-shire, in 1809.
(18 inches in length.)

I can find no notice of this communication published in the Transactions of the Royal Society of Edinburgh.

Part of this account, with the figure of the chain, is also given in the "Archæologia Scotica," vol. iv. p. 373, and from the interest connected with it, I reproduce the accompanying figure.

As shown in the annexed woodcut, the chain is formed of a double series of plain unornamented circular rings, sixteen pairs of rings with a single ring at one extremity, thirty-three in all; not including the large grooved link which is now wanting. The rings show distinctly the marks of the hammer used in bringing them into proper shape.

The woodcut represents another remarkable Scottish relic, a massive silver chain, found in the year 1808, near Inverness, in the course of the excavations for the Caledonian Canal. It now forms one of the most valued treasures of the Museum of the Scottish Antiquaries. It weighs a little more than ninety-three ounces, and each link is open, and only bent together, so that it may perhaps be assumed with considerable probability, that it was designed to be used in barter, being in fact silver ring money. There



Silver Chain, Caledonian Canal.

are thirty-three links in all, each of them measuring one and nine-tenths inches in diameter, and about two-fifths of an inch in thickness, excepting two at one extremity, and one at the other, each of which are two and one-fifth inches in diameter. With this exception the links appear to be of uniform size, and would probably be found to correspond in weight. An additional link, which was in an imperfect state, was destroyed by the original discoverers, in an attempt to ascertain the nature of the metal. Another silver chain is described

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hoops, but which proved to be six silver bracelets. They were penannular, and tapered nearly to a point at the ends. The largest of them were square, and ornamented with a kind of herring-bone pattern; the remainder were round. The weight of the heaviest was nearly six ounces, that of the least one ounce, and one which weighed nearly one and a-half ounce, had silver wire coiled round it. Within the horn were pieces of other bracelets, and a quantity of Anglo-Saxon silver coins, including those of Ethered, Athelstan, Edwg, Eadgar, and Ethelred; and alongside were also discovered several broken stone basins. A few of the coins were preserved, but the armillæ, and the remainder of the hoard, were disposed of to a goldsmith in Lerwick, and melted down. Slight sketches of the armillæ, and a deposition taken before the sheriff-substitute of Zetland by the discoverers, are deposited in the library of the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland. Barry describes another hoard extremely similar to this, found at Caldale near Kirkwall. Two horns were discovered by a man while digging peats: they contained about three hundred silver coins of Canute the Great, and near them lay "several pieces of fine silver, in the form of crescents or fibulæ, differing from one another a good deal, both in figure and dimensions. Some of them were flat, others angled; some round, some nearly met at the ends; others were wider at the extremities; one resembled in shape the staple of a door, and another a loop for hanging clothes upon."¹ A portion of the coins alone escaped the usual fate of British relics of the precious metals. A silver armilla, of the same type as those discovered at Cuerdale, was found, in the year 1756, in a cist, along with a quantity of burnt human bones, underneath a large cairn at Blackerne, Kirkcudbrightshire, when the stones composing the cairn were taken to inclose a plantation. It is now in the Museum of the Scottish Antiquaries. A silver bracelet, of a rarer and more artistic design, was found at Brough Head, Morayshire, by labourers engaged in digging the foundation for a new house, and is figured of the full size in the *Archæologia Scotica*.² The woodcut represents another remarkable Scottish relic, a massive silver chain, found in the year 1808, near Inverness, in the course of the excavations for the Caledonian Canal. It now forms one of the most valued treasures of the Museum of the Scottish Antiquaries. It weighs a little more than ninety-three ounces, and each link is open, and only bent together, so that it may

¹ Barry's Orkney, p. 225.

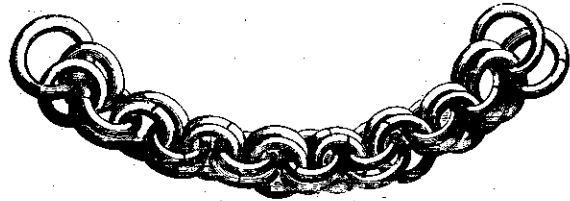
² Vol. iii. Plate v.

THE ARCHAEOLOGY AND
PREHISTORIC ANNALS OF
SCOTLAND

By DANIEL WILSON

Published SUTHERLAND & KNOX 1851

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Silver Chain, Caledonian Canal.

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Reference has already been made to the discovery of nine lunar ornaments of silver, on opening one of the great tumuli, or Knowes of Brogar, at Stennis, in Orkney. Notices of fibulæ, and other relics of the same metal, are to be found scattered through the Statistical Accounts, but mostly described in such vague terms as to render them of little avail to the archæologist. The information is usually added that they were immediately concealed or destroyed. A rude chain, now in my own possession, was found during the present season in the Isle of Skye; two of the links are of silver, and the third of bronze. It corresponds to relics composed of fragments of rings broken in pieces for the purpose of exchange, with which both British and Scandinavian antiquaries are familiar. They are not uncommonly linked together, as in the example now referred to.

The bronze relics of this period are much more abundant, and here it is that we, for the first time, come in contact with examples bearing undoubted traces of Scandinavian art, though these belong more