

# Collection Significance Report: Scottish Decorative Arts & Design: Jewellery

Rosemary Watt, March 2008



## About this Document

This document is extracted from a report by Glasgow Museums submitted to the Scottish Executive's Recognition Committee as part of its recognition scheme for non-national collections.

## Overview

Jewellery has been worn for centuries by men, women and children. It is worn for personal decoration, the meaning it has for the wearer or for the message it gives to onlookers. Common or traditional forms of jewellery include earrings, rings, brooches, bracelets and bangles, waist buckles and belts, buttons, shoe buckles, hair ornaments, necklaces and necklets, badges and insignia. Scottish jewellery forms include annular, penannular and luckenbooth brooches.

## Collection Size

Historic Scottish jewellery: annular, penannular and ring brooches (137); luckenbooth brooches (35); brooch mould (2).

Historicist jewellery based on Scottish themes: (65); suite of jewellery (1). Scottish inspired Art Nouveau or Arts & Crafts (76).

Badges and insignia, associated with Scottish regiments and part of military uniform (c145).

Badges and insignia associated with Scottish and Glasgow transport (c135).

## The Collection

The collection of Scottish jewellery is extensive and wide-ranging. The Scottish traditional jewellery includes pins, annular, ring, penannular and luckenbooth brooches made and/or worn in Scotland from the Bronze Age to the present day. There is a large and diverse group of nineteenth and early twentieth century historicist jewellery, mainly English-made, with forms and themes inspired by traditional Scottish or Celtic forms, or by Scottish history. There are large groups of transport-related insignia and badges, and insignia and badges from Scottish regiments. There is a small group of civic jewellery, mainly formal chains of office.

## Collection Significance

The extensive and wide-ranging collection of Scottish jewellery comprises a number of disparate groups. All the expected jewellery types are represented and, considered as an entity, the collection gives an excellent overview of Scottish jewellery in its widest interpretation. The collection is of national significance, with individual items of international significance in their portrayal of Scotland to an international audience.

Of particular importance is the Scottish-themed historicist jewellery, mainly from the large collection gifted by Mrs Anne Hull Grundy. It is described in jewellery history as 'Scottish pebblestone' jewellery, although manufactured mostly in Birmingham or Sheffield using hardstones from Germany. It was part of the craze for all things Scottish in the mid to late nineteenth century. Often dismissed as being fashion items of little importance, these brooches and bracelets can tell us a great deal about the perception of Scotland in their time. Some of the historicist jewellery replicates traditional Scottish forms, such as ring brooches, in silver, slate, brass and pebblestones, whilst other items take their inspiration from Scottish history, such as one brooch in the form of a military cap and another of the Scott Monument in Edinburgh. Some of the historicist jewellery is stamped with design registration marks. One 1830s suite of brooch, necklace and bracelets is of great interest. It is made of shaped agates in whorled gold settings and is, unusually for its period, believed to be of Scottish origin. One star-shaped brooch of granite and silver is by Rettie of Aberdeen. There is also an impressive ring brooch by W. Alexander & Sons of Glasgow c1880, in 18 carat gold and enamel and set with a rock crystal.

There are groups of Art Nouveau and Arts & Crafts jewellery from the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Many of the artists are associated with the Glasgow School of Art (see Charles Rennie Mackintosh and Glasgow Style section). In addition, there is an impressive corsage brooch by James Cromar Watt of Aberdeen and a small group of early twentieth century 'Iona' jewellery, designed and made by Alex and Euphemia Ritchie, with themes and motifs derived from the archaeology and monuments of the island of Iona.

There is a large collection of badges and insignia from Scottish regiments, such as the Seaforth Highlanders and the 5<sup>th</sup> Lanarkshire Rifle Volunteers. These range in date from the late eighteenth century to the early twentieth. Although an integral part of the regimental uniforms, these badges, belts, buckles, buttons and insignia form a distinct group and are worthy of study in their own right. The majority are of English manufacture. The transport-associated badges and insignia relate mainly to the Glasgow subway, tram and bus services, and the five historic Scottish railway companies. They include long service and safe driving medals, company and identity badges, mainly manufactured in England.

Civic jewellery is represented by an important group of chains of office for the provosts of the Glasgow burghs. They are all silver or silver gilt and made by specialist local silversmiths. Their design reflects the importance of these insignia to their local area.

The archaeological and traditional jewellery groups are typical of similar collections in other civic museums. All the distinctive jewellery types associated with Scotland are represented. A number of the brooches, and some pins, are from provenanced archaeological assemblages whereas others are from undocumented groups of

finds. The majority are from locations in the west of Scotland and are important to our understanding of the history of their locales as well as contributing to the wider Scottish history. The materials used are mainly brass and silver. Two of the brooches are from St Kilda. One unusual item of national importance is the bracelet made of nuggets of gold mined from Wanlockhead.



## Bibliography

Gere C. and Rudoë, J. (2000) 'Knowledge, money and time: Ann Hull Grundy as a collector of Victorian jewellery', *Journal of the Decorative Arts Society* 22, 80-97.

(1987) *Glasgow Art Gallery and Museum: The Building and the Collections*, Collins & Glasgow Museums and Art Galleries.

(1984) *Catalogue of the Hull Grundy Gift to the British Museum* (BM Publications. (Does not feature GM objects but relevant to the GM collection).

## How to Cite this Document

The full bibliographic reference for this document is shown below. Make sure to add the date you downloaded the document.

**Watt, R (2008)** *Collection Significance Report: Scottish Decorative Arts & Design: Jewellery*, Glasgow Museums, online at: [http://collections.glasgowmuseums.com/media/scottish\\_jewellery\\_significance\\_report.pdf](http://collections.glasgowmuseums.com/media/scottish_jewellery_significance_report.pdf), last downloaded dd/mm/yyyy



This document is released under a Creative Commons licence requiring attribution and prohibiting commercial and derivative exploitation. For more information see <http://creativecommons.org/>

