

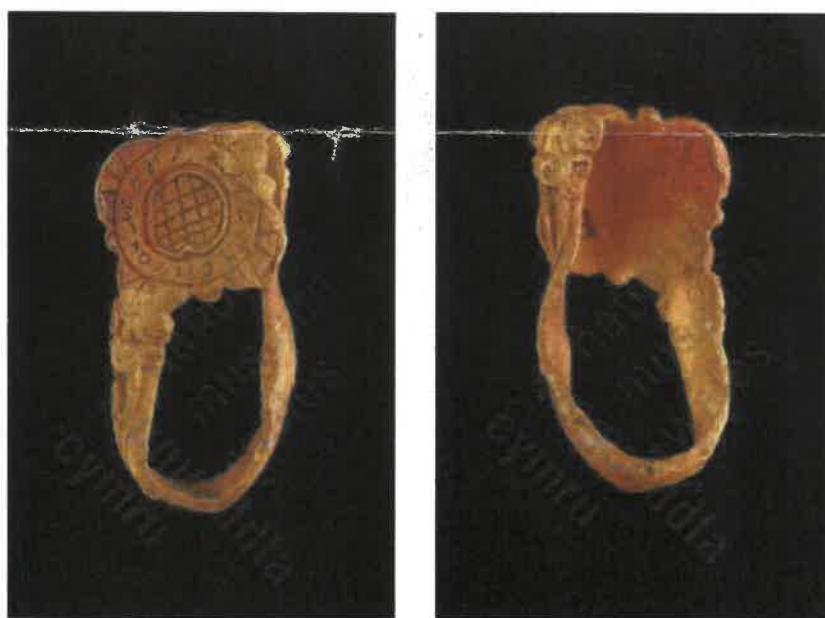
TREASURE ACT 1996

POST-MEDIEVAL GOLD FINGER RING FROM UZMASTON, BOULSTON AND SLEBECH COMMUNITY, PEMBROKESHIRE [Treasure Case 21.07]

Discovery and reporting

On 14th February 2021 Mr Timothy Warner discovered a post-medieval gold *memento mori* finger ring while metal detecting on a riverbank in Uzmaaston, Boulston and Slebech Community Pembrokeshire. The find was made at a depth of 5-6 inches (13-15cm) in mud deposit. Full details of the findspot (NGR) and addresses of the finder and landowner are provided on the Treasure Receipt form for this find. The finder had prior permission from the landowner to metal-detect on the land.

The find was first reported to Mark Lodwick, PAS Cymru Co-ordinator on 4th March 2021. H. M Coroner for Carmarthenshire and Pembrokeshire was first informed of the find on 24th March 2021 and a treasure receipt was completed and sent to the coroner on 29th April 2021. The artefact was handed in to Jenna Smith, PAS Finds Recording Officer based at Dyfed Archaeological Trust on 30th June 2021 and was later couriered to the National Museum Cardiff on 9th September 2021 for safe-keeping and reporting.



Description & identification

The ring is a *memento mori* ring with a flat bezel with the outline of a death's head (a skull), infilled with incised cross-hatching, at its centre and four projecting semi-circular lobes, each engraved with three radiating lines and notches along the outer edges to create four-petal designs. The central motif is surrounded by the inscription: + *Memento + Mori* + in small, neat italic script. The shoulders are cast with scrolls and 'stems' below. Much of the ring is damaged, but there are small traces of black enamel in some of the engraved lines of the inscription and the outlines of the petals.

The underside of the hoop, which is of flattened D cross-section, is plain.

The hoop is crushed; bezel max width 15.2 mm; bezel thickness 1.35 mm; hoop thickness 1 mm; hoop width 2.8 mm; weight 6.383g. The ring has not undergone any cleaning or conservation.

To judge from its colour and weight and visual comparison with other gold rings and brooches in the collections of the Department of History & Archaeology, the alloy is well in excess of 10% gold.

Summary and conclusions

The inscription, the ring form, style of the engraved skull and neat italic lettering indicate that this ring dates between 1550 and 1650. Similar examples with hexagonal examples are known from this period (eg Oman 1930, plate 31, nos 740, 740a; Scarisbrick and Henig 2003, plate 20, no. 1, dated to the sixteenth-century; plate 22, no. 5a dated to the early seventeenth century). For a lozenge-shaped bezel on a gold ring with the same inscription in Roman capitals dated to the seventeenth century, see Dalton 1912, no. 1448. The palaeography of the inscription is paralleled by an example on a 'Memento Mori' ring in the Ashmolean dated c.1585-1620, engraved around a similar white skull (Scarisbrick and Henig 2003, 62-63, plate 22, no. 5), and one from Carreghofa, Pembrokeshire (AC-NMW Treasure Case 19.11). Another close parallel with similar font and motto found at Shabbington, Buckinghamshire (GLO-927C54) retained some black enamel around the skull, and within its the inscription and lobed design.

This ring reflects the high mortality during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, the motif and inscription acknowledging the brevity and vanities of life.

Recommendation

It is my opinion that as an object which has at least 10 per cent by weight precious metal, and which is at least 300 years old, it is Treasure under Section 1 (1) (a) of the Treasure Act 1996 and Section C.I, paragraph 6 of the Treasure Act 1996; Code of Practice (2nd Revision) (DCMS 2008, 8).

Expression of interest

Haverfordwest Town Museum has expressed an interest in acquiring this find for its collections.

References

Dalton, O. M. 1912, *Catalogue of Finger Rings Early Christian, Byzantine, Teutonic, medieval and Later* (London).

Oman, C. C. 1930, *Catalogue of Rings* (Victoria and Albert Museum, Department of Metalwork, London).

Scarisbrick, D. and Henig, M. 2003, *Finger Rings from Ancient to Modern*.

Ashmolean Handbooks (Ashmolean Museum, Oxford).

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