

TREASURE ACT 1996

SILVER GILT FINGER RING FROM CILIAU AERON COMMUNITY, CEREDIGION [Treasure Case 21.08]

Introduction

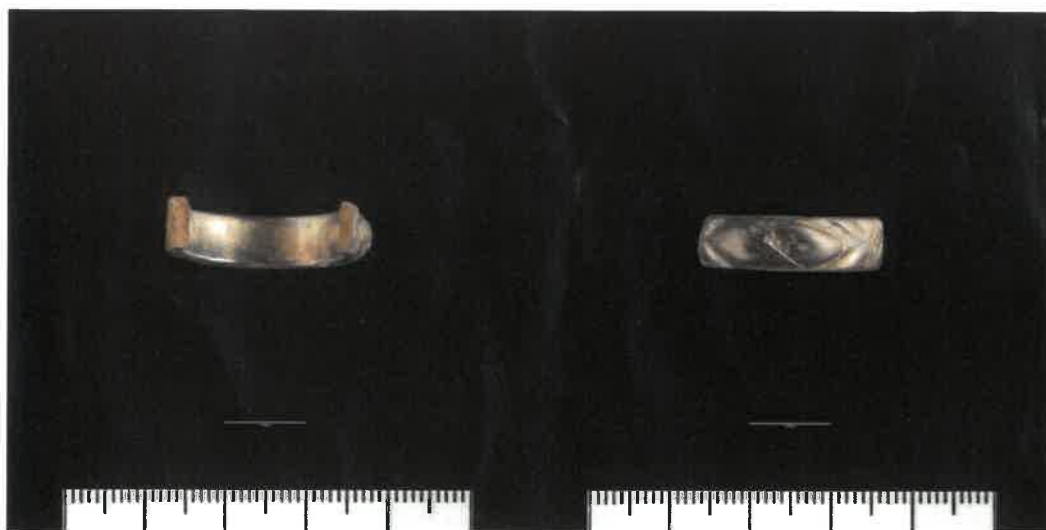
On 7 March 2021 Mr Matthew Bowker of Aberaeron discovered a finger ring while metal-detecting in Ciliau Aeron Community, Ceredigion. The object was reported to the H.M. Coroner for Ceredigion by the finder on 22nd April 2021 and first handed in to Jenna Smith, PAS Cymru Finds Recording Officer at Dyfed Archaeological Trust.

A treasure receipt was completed and sent to the H. M. Coroner for Ceredigion on 29th April 2021. The artefact was subsequently delivered to the Department of History & Archaeology at the National Museum Cardiff on 17th June 2021, for safe-keeping and reporting.

Circumstances and context of discovery

The ring fragment was found with the aid of a metal detector at a depth of about 5-6" (12-15cm) on pasture land owned by The National Trust. A detailed grid reference for the ring's find-spot and details of the landowner are provided on the Treasure Receipt form.





Description

The reported object is a cast silver-gilt 'fede' or devotional ring fragment (50% missing) with a flattened area representing the start of the bezel at one end, and clasped hands, flanked by a repeating pattern of quatrefoils within indented square frames (forming patterned 'sleeves'). The ring appears worn in places. The hoop is of 'flattened D' cross-section.

Internal diameter of hoop 20mm; band width 6.5mm; band thickness 2.2mm; thickness at clasped hands 4mm; weight 5.51g. The ring has not undergone any cleaning or conservation.

Metal Content

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

Summary and conclusions

The device of hands clasped in love and trust is found on brooches and rings across Europe. As such, rings with this device are usually called '*fede*' (faith) rings, and they can represent friendship, love, betrothal or marriage. In addition to their decorative qualities, it is possible that the three incuse cross-hatched lozenges were symbolic of the Trinity.

In terms of design and style of the iconography, the ring is of late fourteenth or fifteenth-century date (cf. Campbell 2009, fig. 108). Other comparable examples of late medieval *fede* rings include Dalton 1912, no. 1016 (inscribed) and no. 1028 (uninscribed), one from Fullerton, Hampshire attributed to the fifteenth century (*TAR* 2001, no.105) and a fifteenth-century example with ridged hoop and inscription (Oman 1930, no. 632). A silver-gilt ring with similar indented quatrefoils on the hoop was found in Rossett Community, Wrexham, in 2014 (Treasure Case no. 16.28).

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.

Ceredigion Museum is interested in acquiring this item for its collections.

References

Campbell, M. 2009, *Medieval Jewellery in Europe 1100-1500* (V&A Publishing, London).

Dalton, O. M. 1912, *Catalogue of the Finger Rings. Early Christian, Byzantine, Teutonic, Medieval and Later, Franks Bequest*, London.

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

TAR 2001, *Treasure Annual Report 2001* (London, DCMS).

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