

## Archaeological Research Grants Report

Recipient name:	Dr Brian Scott
Discipline and subject area:	Archaeology Research Grant
Year awarded:	2023
Title of project:	Research visits to Alnwick Castle and the Ashmolean Museum, to re-record specimens in the light of new information from recent finds, and to the National Museum of Scotland and Pitt Rivers Museum to record previously unknown cheek-pieces of Irish origin.

### Summary of findings:

A total of twenty-two specimens were recorded, with a further three identified by Dr Bryony Smerdon at the Pitt Rivers after a follow-up request for a search of internal documentation. Two of the Pitt Rivers specimens have firm geographical provenances, while a further two are recorded to county only (Cork and Dublin). Of the remainder, sixteen are recorded only as being from 'Ireland', two from 'England' only, while three have no find location (Table 1). The four provenanced specimens add little to the distribution pattern of the assemblage overall,



which has a strong bias to the northern half of the island, except to augment slightly the sparse number in Munster. There is no information on the history of the National Museum of Scotland specimens, or of those in the Ashmolean. All of those at Alnwick Castle originated in the collection of Roger Chambers Walker, the Sligo antiquary (Ireland 2002), while those in the Pitt Rivers Museum are attributed to the collecting activity of Lieutenant General Augustus Lane Fox Pitt Rivers, probably during his military service in Cork between 1862 and 1866. He obtained at least one piece (PRM 1884.68.92) from the sale of the collection of the Cork antiquary John Lindsay, another (PRM 1884.52.26) from the collector and dealer Robert Hugh Brackstone. It is possible that others simply located as from 'Ireland' were acquired from the Cork region.

### Please outline the objectives of the project.

To re-record 10 specimens, and record 12, previously unseen.

### Please describe the methodology used in conducting the research.

Visual examination and photography.



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### Please outline the findings of your research and/or milestones achieved.

Of particular interest is a sub-type with inlaid floral decoration (PRM 1884.52.26) that is likely to date to the end of the 15th century. It matches a piece in the National Museum of Ireland collections (NMI RIA 1906.163) which also shows the remains of an inlaid decoration that analysis by Dr Paul Mullarkey shows to be gold.

A second Pitt Rivers piece (PRM 1884.52.25) is of a form that places it at, or close to, the head to the sequence of development of what Wilde and Armstrong described as 'dragonesque' and those which I have designated as the 'deer' series (Wilde's 'horse' series). It has a incised chevron pattern around the motif panel, similar to other examples in the assemblage.

The label on the Pitt Rivers display case indicates that Pitt Rivers saw the developmental connection between the deer series and later more abstract forms. Another Pitt Rivers piece (PRM 1884.68.94) belongs to the 'deer' series. However, unlike all of the others known, the depiction of the animal has limbs and torso that are significantly elongated, in a manner not dissimilar to the way in which the figure of Christ is depicted on - amongst others - the late-15th century Donaghmore, Co. Monaghan and Cloonaheen, Co. Offaly, crucifixes.

Finally, one of the Alnwick Castle cheek-pieces (ALN 451) is the twin of a piece in NMI (NMI 6615:W103). The Alnwick specimens all originated in the collection of Roger Chambers Walker, the Sligo antiquary. While ALN 451 is provenanced only to 'Ireland', it is possible that it might be more closely to the Sligo area on which Walker operated, like NMI 6615:W103 which otherwise has no recorded provenance.

### How will you continue to communicate the results of your project and what are your publication plans?

The results will be incorporated into my forthcoming monograph 'A Corpus of cheek-pieces of Irish origin' to be published in late 2024 by Archaeopress, Oxford, as No. 3 in the Queen's University Archaeological Monographs series

### What plans (if any) do you have to further your proposal/project?

The grant has enabled me to finalise my catalogue of cheek-pieces and prepare for publication.

