



BRONZE AGE

2000 BC-500 BC

Pre-Christian Ireland

Section one of paper: Art in Ireland

Background Information

- Settlers came to Ireland about 2000 BC and passed metalworking skills to the Neolithic people.
- The use of Bronze brought significant changes to human activity for a number of reasons
 - 1. It could be moulded into any required shape.**
 - 2. It was a far stronger material than stone.**

Everyday life in bronze age Ireland

The clearing of land and creation of bogland:

- Metal axes made tree-cutting easier.
- A growth in population created pressure to find farmland.
- Forested areas of the lowlands were cleared.
- As the trees disappeared, the land became wetter.
- A thick blanket of peat was formed.



PRESERVATION OF OBJECTS IN THE BOG

- Large numbers of Bronze Age valuables have been found in the bogs of Ireland.
- They may have been left there as 'offerings' of some kind or another.





Clonycavan man

HOUSING AND COOKING

- **Housing:** Only very sparse evidence exists for housing and settlements dating back to the Bronze Age.
- **Cooking:** examples of a bronze Age cooking instrument known as a **fulacht fiadh** have been found in several parts of the country.



FULACHT FIADH

- This was a wood-lined trough in the ground, which was filled with water. A fire was used to heat stones and these were thrown into the water to heat it.



Cauldrons were used for cooking. The bronze cauldron from Castlederg, Co. Tyrone is an excellent example of the technical brilliance achieved in sheet bronze work.



Burials:

- Burials often took place in small Bronze Age tombs called cist graves.
- Rectangular in shape.
- Bodies were placed in a crouched position and covered over with stone and earth.
- Tools, weapons and a small, bowl-shaped piece of pottery were often put with the person.
- This may indicate a belief in the afterlife.



The Beaker People:

- Around 2000 BC, new settlers come to Ireland from Europe.
- Known as the 'Beaker People', they brought a new style of pottery in highly decorated drinking vessels.

Stone circles

- Stone circles, stone rows and standing stones are all dated to the Bronze Age.



METALWORK

Settlers brought the art of metallurgy to Ireland. People soon learned how to mine and process raw ones; craftsmen turned them into finished pieces.

Metal:

Gold, silver and copper were the first metals worked.

Copper:

The earlier part of the Bronze Age is sometimes referred to as the Copper Age. Copper was used in a pure state.

BRONZE

- Bronze is an alloy of **copper and tin**.
- Copper was found in Ireland, but it is likely that tin was imported from Wales.
- Bronze was stronger than pure copper and led to more sophisticated weapons and tools.





METAL ORES

Copper:

- A Bronze Age mine was found at Mount Gabriel, Co. Cork.
- Copper was mined here.
- It dates from 1500-1200 BC and has 25 mine shafts.

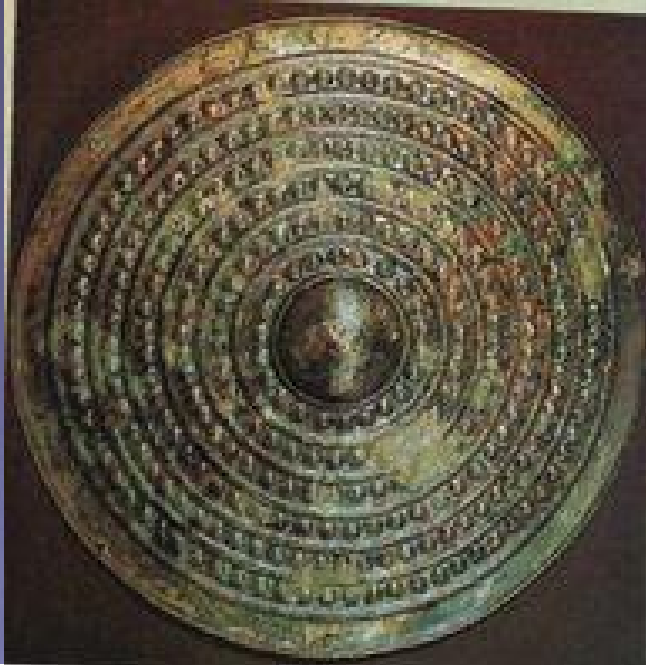
Silver:

- Silver was mined in the Silvermine Mountains, Co. Tipperary.

Gold:

- No gold mines have ever been found.
- It is assumed that **alluvial Gold** (deposited by flowing water) was found in rivers and streams in the Wicklow Hills.

WEAPONS AND ORNAMENTS



CEREMONIAL SHIELD

Example:

- A Bronze ceremonial shield from the Late bronze age was found at Lough Gur, Co. Limerick.

Form:

- Shows a change in the style of combat in Ireland.
- A strap of bronze riveted to the back of the shield is curved to form a handgrip.



Metalwork technique

- Blows directed at the shield would have bounced off the ridges and rounded bosses and reduced the force.

Function

- Probably for decorative purposes only because it is too thin to be really effective.
- Wooden and leather shields of a similar design would have been used in real combat.



GOLD ORNAMENTS

The National Museum of Ireland in Dublin has one of the largest and finest collections of Bronze Age gold ornaments in the world.

Many spectacular pieces of gold jewellery have emerged over the years, particularly from boglands.

The era has been called Ireland's first Golden Age.



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METALWORK TECHNIQUES

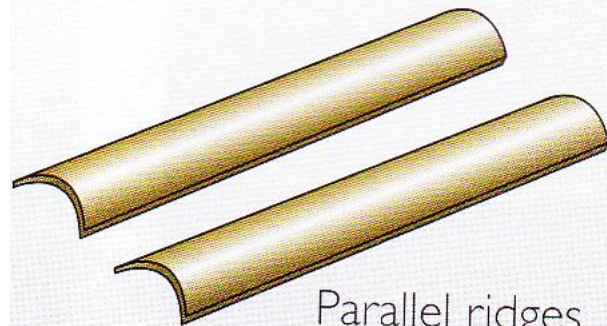
- Gold nuggets are beaten into thin sheets and cut into required shapes and then decorated.
- Very thin strips are cut and then twisted to make fine wire.
- Very thin straps of gold were hammered to make narrow bands then twisted to make ornaments.
- Thicker bars were hammered at the edges and twisted to make ornaments.
- Casting techniques involved the pouring of molten bronze or gold.

DECORATION TECHNIQUES

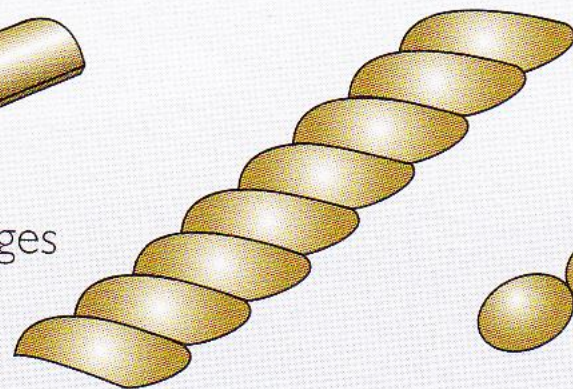
Patterns of decoration were **abstract** and **geometric**.

- **Repoussé** technique was employed: a design was hammered on the reverse of a thin sheet of gold or bronze. (like brail on the front)
- **Incision** was used: cutting a design into the front. (engraving)
- **Compasses** were used for decoration on circular objects.

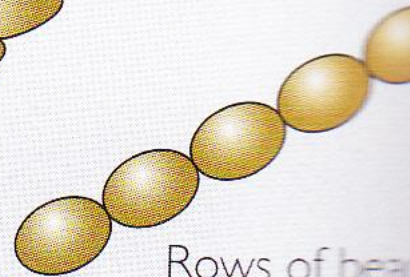
DECORATION MADE BY REPOUSSE



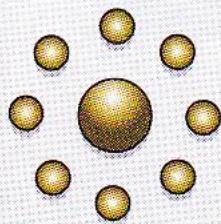
Parallel ridges



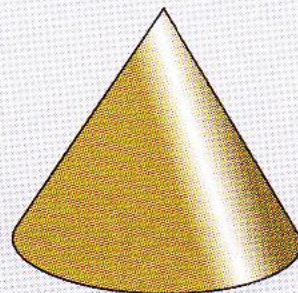
Rope or string pattern



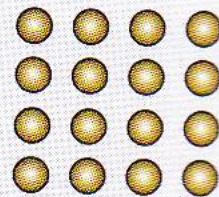
Rows of beads



Beads within
circles of beads



Raised cone shapes



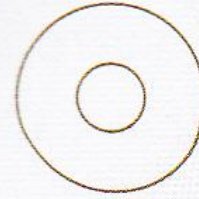
Punch marks

DECORATION MADE BY INCISION

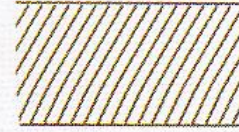
Designs made by incision: cutting into the surface



Concentric
circles



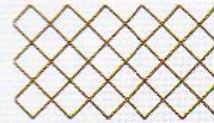
Circle
within circle



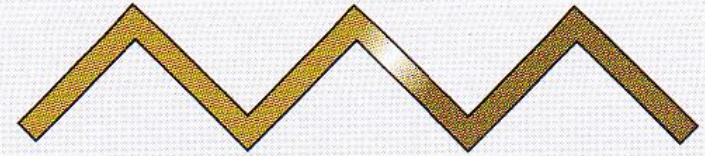
Hatching



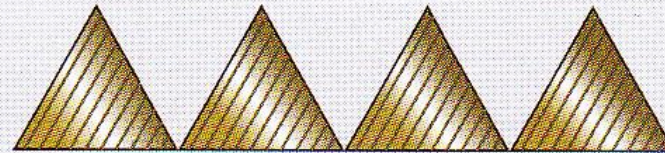
Parallel
lines



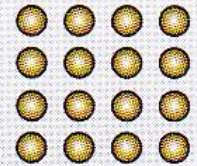
Cross-
hatching



Chevron



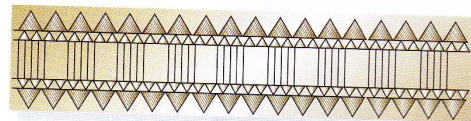
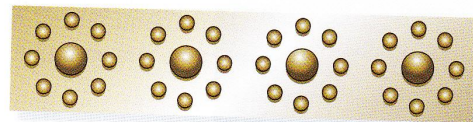
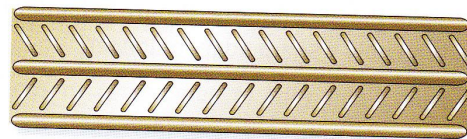
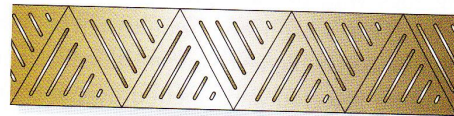
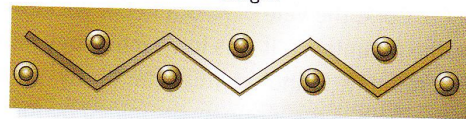
Triangles



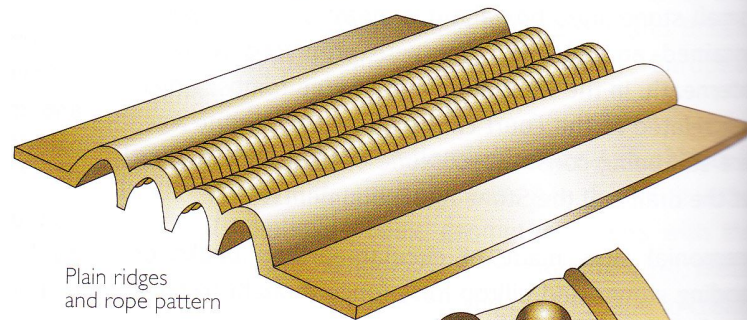
Punch marks

DECORATION MADE BY BOTH REPOUSSE AND INCISION

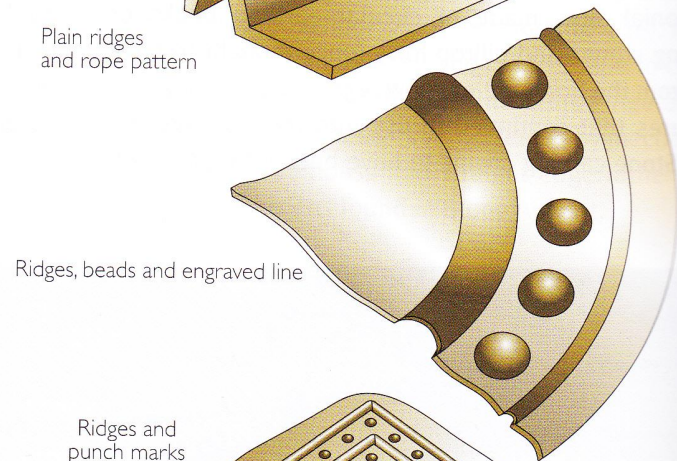
Some combinations of designs



Some combinations of designs

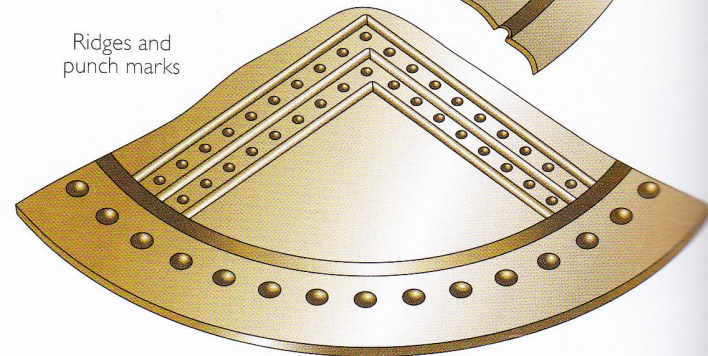


Plain ridges
and rope pattern



Ridges, beads and engraved line

Ridges and
punch marks





THE BRONZE AGE HAS THREE DISTINCT PHASES

Early: 2000-1500 BC

Middle: 1500-1200 BC

Late: 1200-500 BC

EARLY BRONZE AGE ORNAMENTS (200-1500 BC)

1. Sun discs or Gold discs
2. Gold Lunula



GOLD DISCS OR SUN DISCS

FORM	Thin Gold discs, (flat circles)
Function	Small holes near the center suggest that they were used as buttons sewn onto garments
Metalwork Technique	Gold was beaten into a thin sheet using a hammer. Circles were cut from this and then decorated using Repousse
Decoration	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Repousse bands of raised dots and chevrons around the edges.• Plain band.• Another row of repousse raised dots and chevrons.• Cross shape of repousse raised dots and chevrons.• Square in the centre with two holes. Triangles around it and at the base of the cross



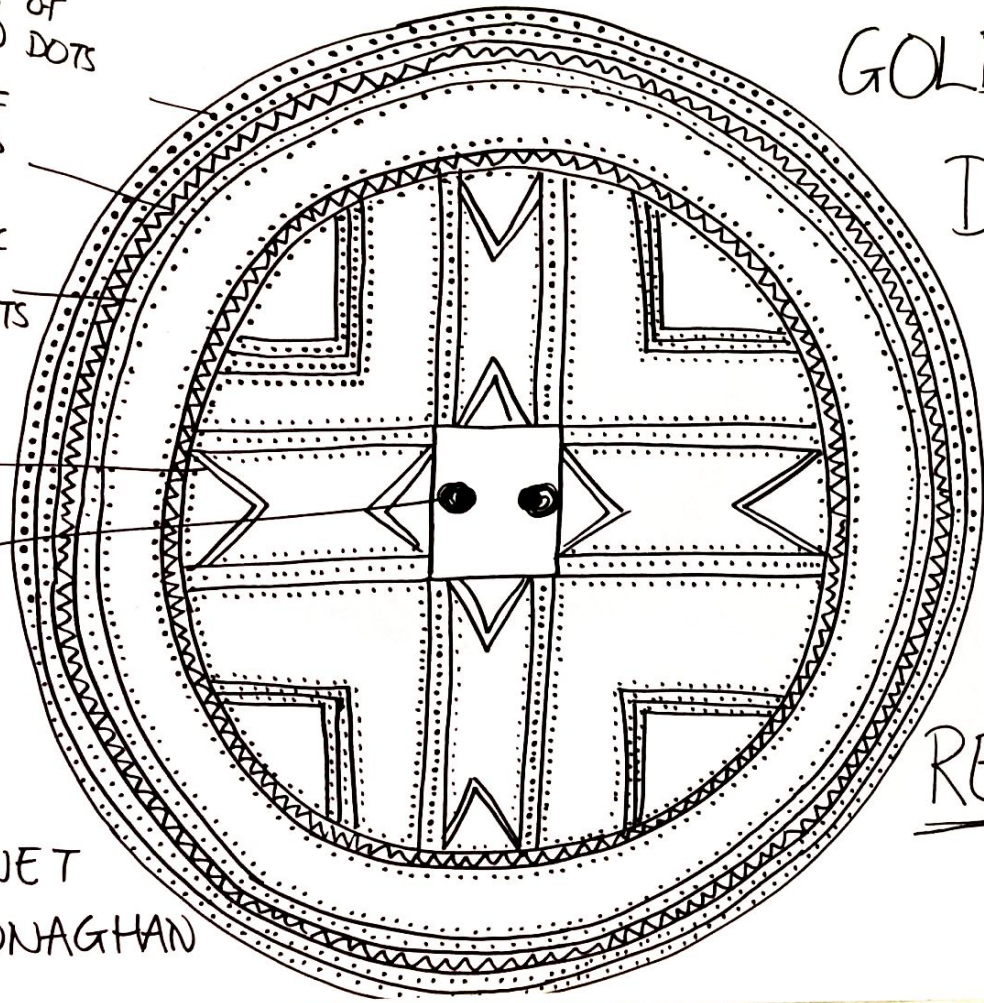
RAISED DOTS
BAND OF
CHEVRONS

CONCENTRIC
BAND OF
RAISED DOTS

TRIANGLE

SUTTON
HOLES

YDAVNET
O. MONAGHAN



GOLD / SURF
DISC

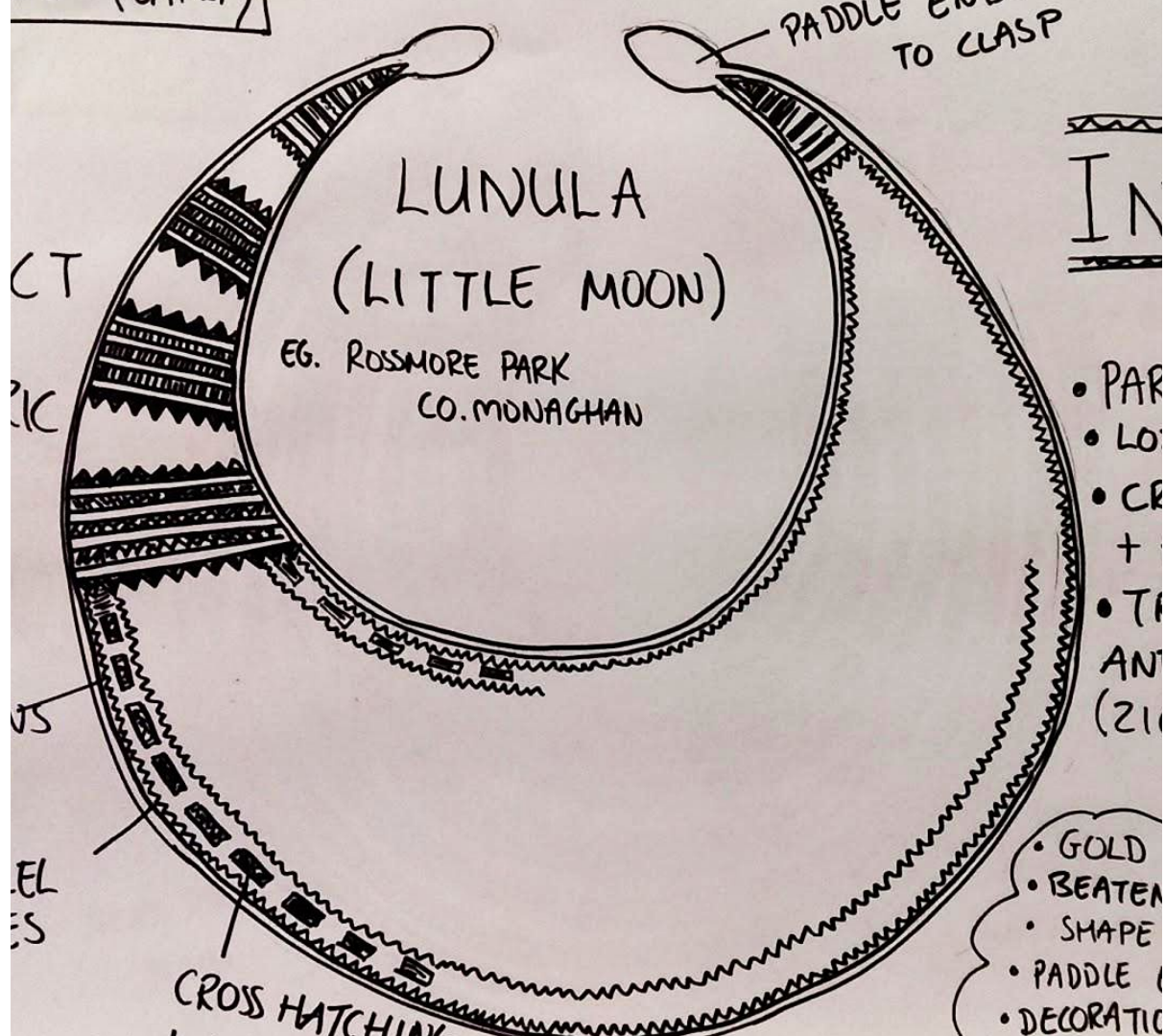
GOLD NUGGET
↓
BEATEN DOWN
↓
CUT SHAPE OUT
↓
DECORATE

REPOUSSE

GOLD LUNULA

Form	The word lunula means 'little moon' and refers to the crescent shape of the object.
Function	The Lunula is a neck ornament.
Metalwork Technique	<ul style="list-style-type: none">● Gold was beaten into a thin sheet using hammer and then cut into the crescent shape.● The ends are left slightly thicker and are paddle-shaped so that they can be turned to form a clasp.
Decoration	<ul style="list-style-type: none">● Geometric and Abstract● The decoration is incised on the front, but the plate is so thin that the designs can be seen clearly from the back.● The front is plain except for parallel lines around the edges and chevrons.● There are several bands of decoration at the pointed ends which consist of cross hatched sections and hatched triangles





MIDDLE BRONZE AGE 1500-1200 BC

The period from 1200 BC onwards was a very productive and creative time for gold ornaments.

Examples: Earrings, armlets, anklets, waist-bands, torcs and neck ornaments.



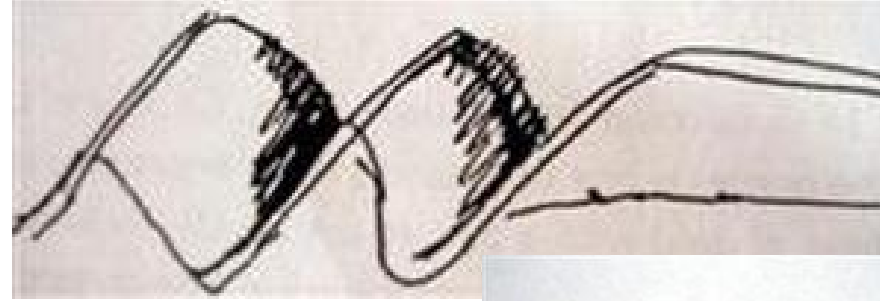
TORCS

- New form of ornament that replaced sheet gold work.
- There were three types: Ribbon, Bar and Flange Twisted Torcs.
- Made by twisting gold into a variety of decorative forms.



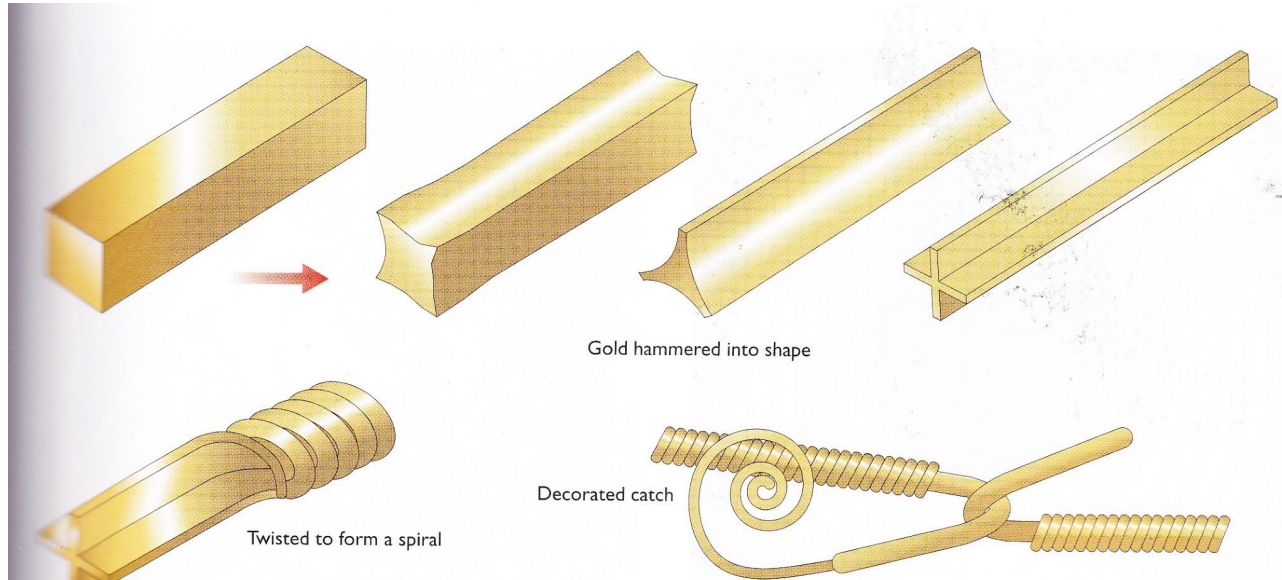
GOLD RIBBON TORC

Form	A delicate spiral of Gold which is round in shape.
Function	Worn around the neck as a neck ornament.
Metalwork Technique	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• A nugget of gold was beaten down into a flat sheet.• A thin strap was cut which resembled a pieces of ribbon.• It was then twisted into a delicate spiral.• The narrow ends were worked into rounded knobs to form a locking device.
Decoration	None.



FLANGED TWISTED GOLD TORCS

- Made from a square, sectioned gold bar.
- V-shaped grooves taken out of each flat side.
- Created an x-shaped section which was then twisted.
- Worn as necklaces, bracelets earrings and also belts.





LATE BRONZE AGE

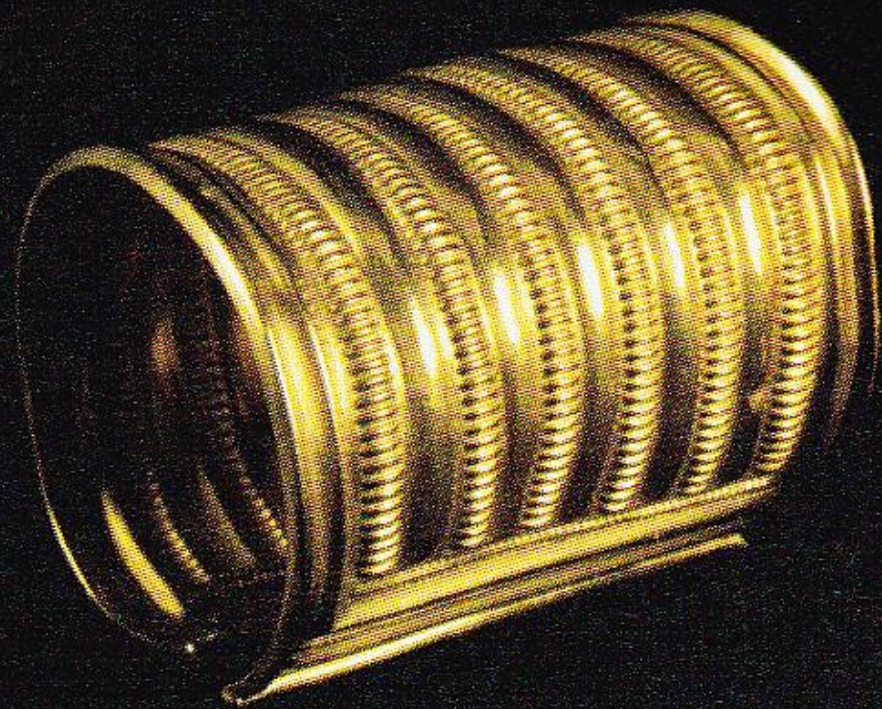
1200-500 BC

- The late Bronze Age is famous for its huge quality and variety of gold ornaments.
- Craftsmanship had reached a very high level of sophistication.
- Gold work produced in Ireland during the late BA is of the highest standard known in Europe

ARMBANDS AND ANKLETS

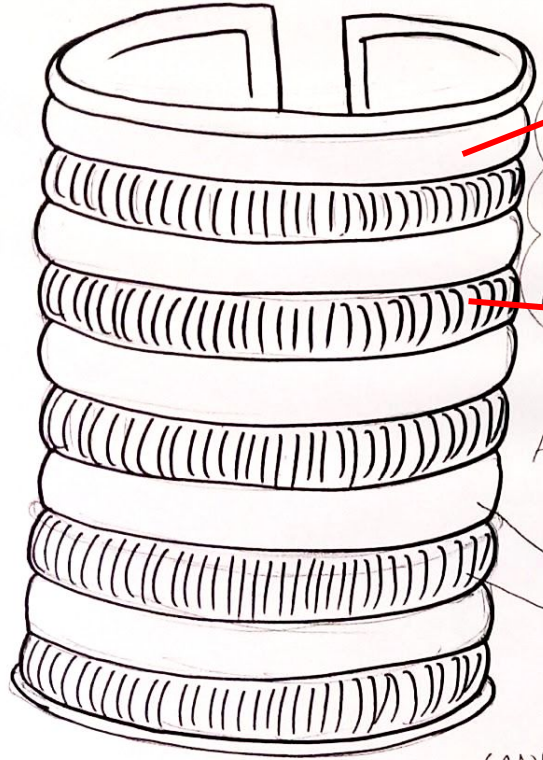
Other types of gold jewellery were also made at this time like a pair of armbands found at Derrinaboy, Co. Offaly.

FORM	A band of gold bent into a cylinder shape.
FUNCTION	Worn around the arm or ankle
METALWORKING TECHNIQUE	<ul style="list-style-type: none">● A rectangle block of gold was beaten down to a flat band or strip.● It is decorated and then bent into the cylinder shape.
DECORATION	<ul style="list-style-type: none">● Geometric and abstract● Repousse technique is used.● Decorated all over with alternative raised ridges of plane and rope moulding.



ARMLETS

IG. DERRINBOY CO. OFFALY



Plain

Rope moulding

THE GLENINSHEEN GORGET

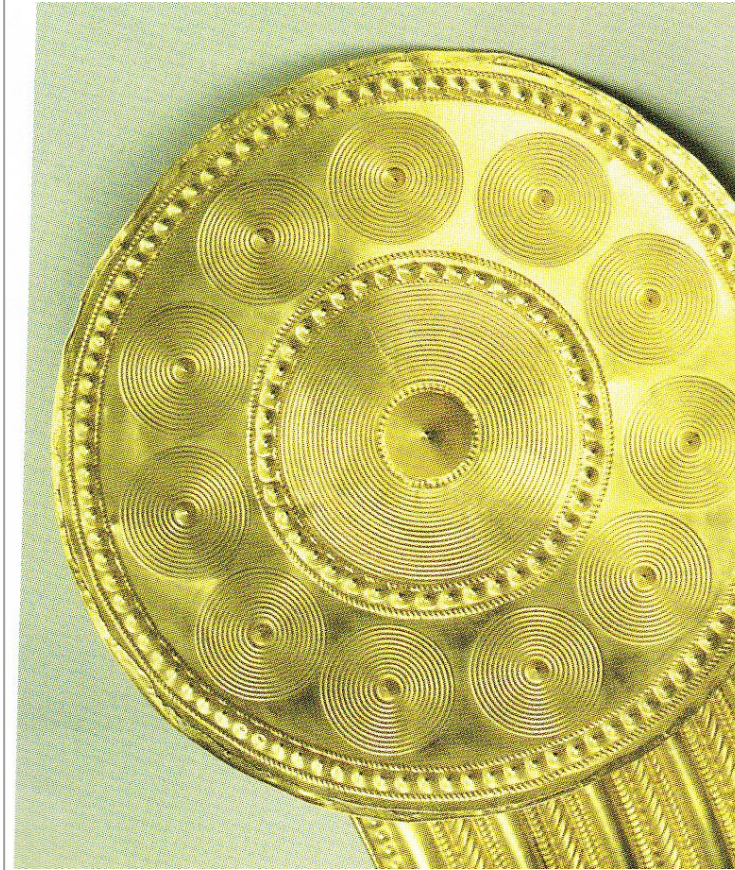
Gorgetts are unique to Ireland. The National Museum of Ireland has a lot in its possession.

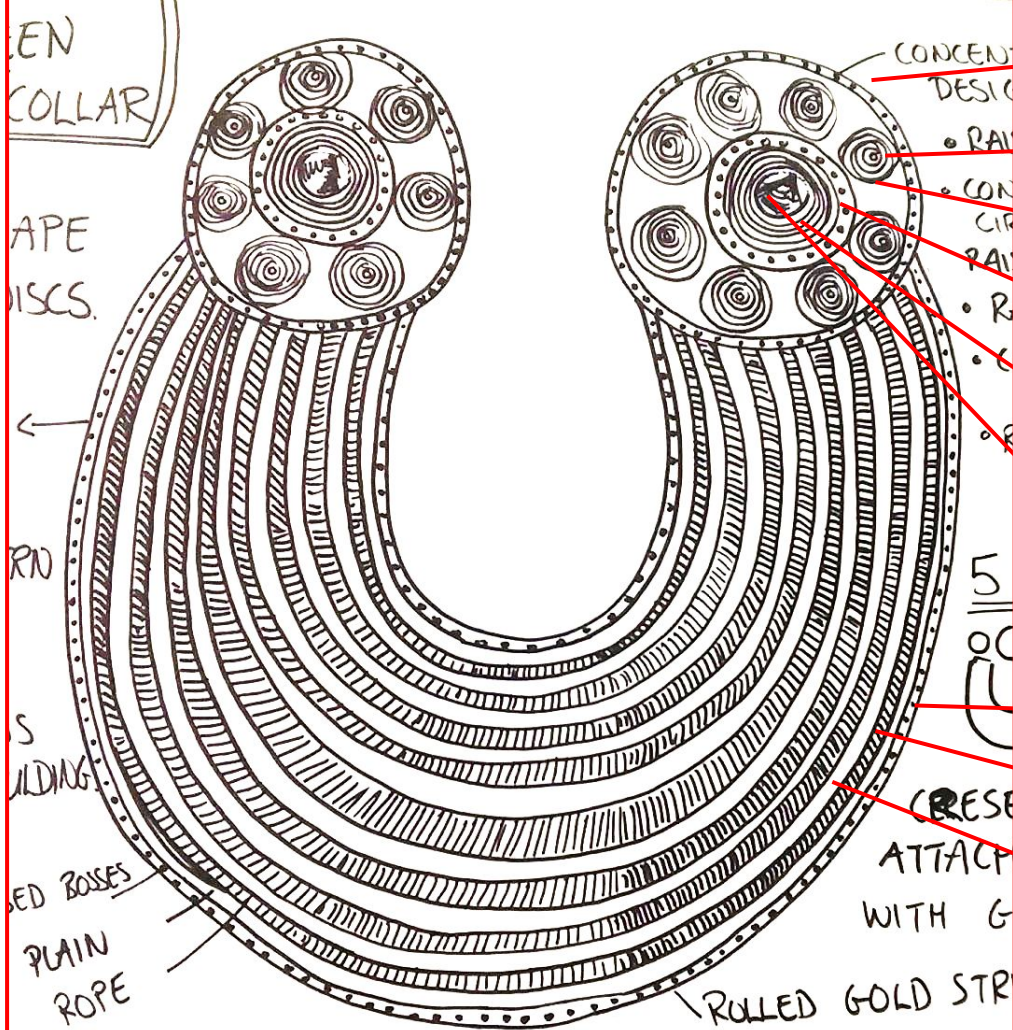


FORM	A crescent (half moon shape) sheet of gold with two round discs at each end
FUNCTION	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Worn as a neck ornament. • Very decorative so probably worn on special occasions. • Suggests wealth
METALWORK TECHNIQUE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consists of 5 parts. Crescent shape collar and 4 round discs, 2 big, 2 small. • All parts were made from beaten down gold into thin sheets and shapes cut out. • Collar had sharp edges so a strip of gold would have been bent around it to keep it from cutting into person wearing it. • Decoration was applied to the crescent shape collar and the two larger discs. • Slits were cut in the middle of the smaller discs. The end of the crescent shape collar were placed into the slits from the back and sewn in place with gold wire. • Larger discs were placed on top and edges were bent around to hold the smaller discs in place.

DECORATION

- The crescent half moon piece was decorated with **REPOUSSE** only.
- Raised beads (dots) along the outer edges and then it alternates in raised plain and rope moulding (Large rope in center with two smaller on either side. Full of texture. Light catches.
- Larger circular discs are only ones decorated. Mixture of **REPOUSSE** and **INCISION**. Use **RIR RIR** to describe it
- Band of **Repousse** raised beads (dots) around the outside with minute rope moulding on either side.
- Band of **Incised** concentric circles with a **Repousse** raised bead in the middle.
- Another band of **Repousse** raised beads with minute rope moulding on either side.
- Followed by one large **Incised** concentric circle.
- **Repousse** raised cone in the center with minute rope moulding around it.
- **RIR RIR!!!**





The Gleninsheen Gorget which was found in a rock crevice in the Burren, Co. Clare.



LOCK RINGS

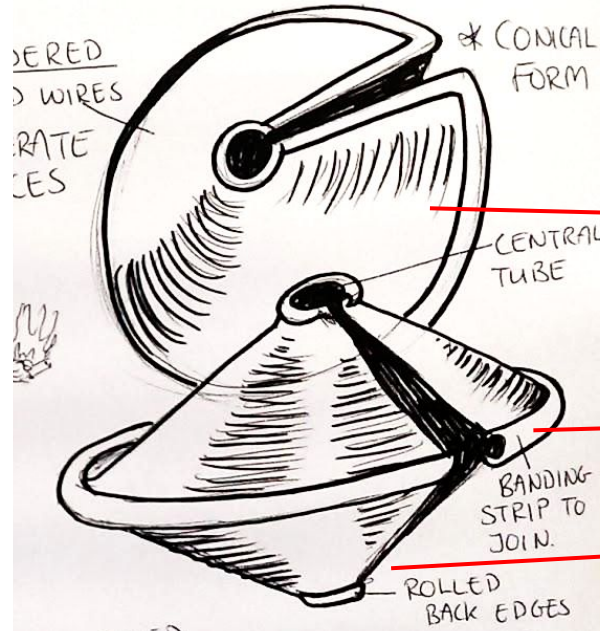
Unique Irish invention. Most advanced work of Irish goldsmith during the BA. Gorteenreadh in Co Clare.

FORM	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• A double cone shaped piece gold with a gap that leads into a cylindrical tube with raised bosses on the inside. There is a binding strip of gold around the edges to hold the two cones together.
FUNCTION	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Used to hold hair in place like at the end of a plait.



METALWORK TECHNIQUE	<ul style="list-style-type: none">● The 2 cones look like they are one piece that have been decorated with incision lines of concentric circles but it is infact lots of fine gold wire that are soldered together to create the cones.● There is a gap in both cones to allow the hair to be put into it.● There is a gold tube down the center that holds the hair in place. Top and bottom of tube is rolled back.● There are repousse bosses on it to help hold the hair.● There is a strip of gold around the edges to bind both cones together.
DECORATION	<ul style="list-style-type: none">● They are not decorated in any way even though it looks like they are incised.

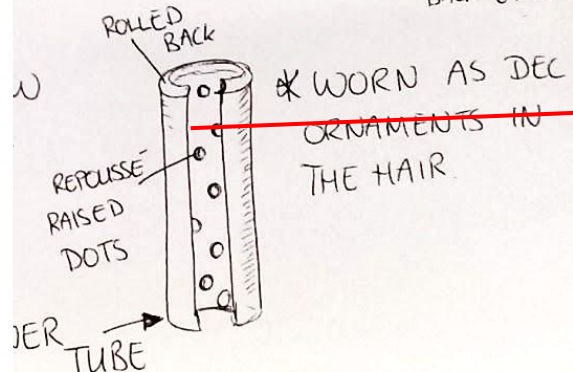
LOCK RINGS



Gold wires soldered together

Binding strip

Rolled back edges of tube in centre



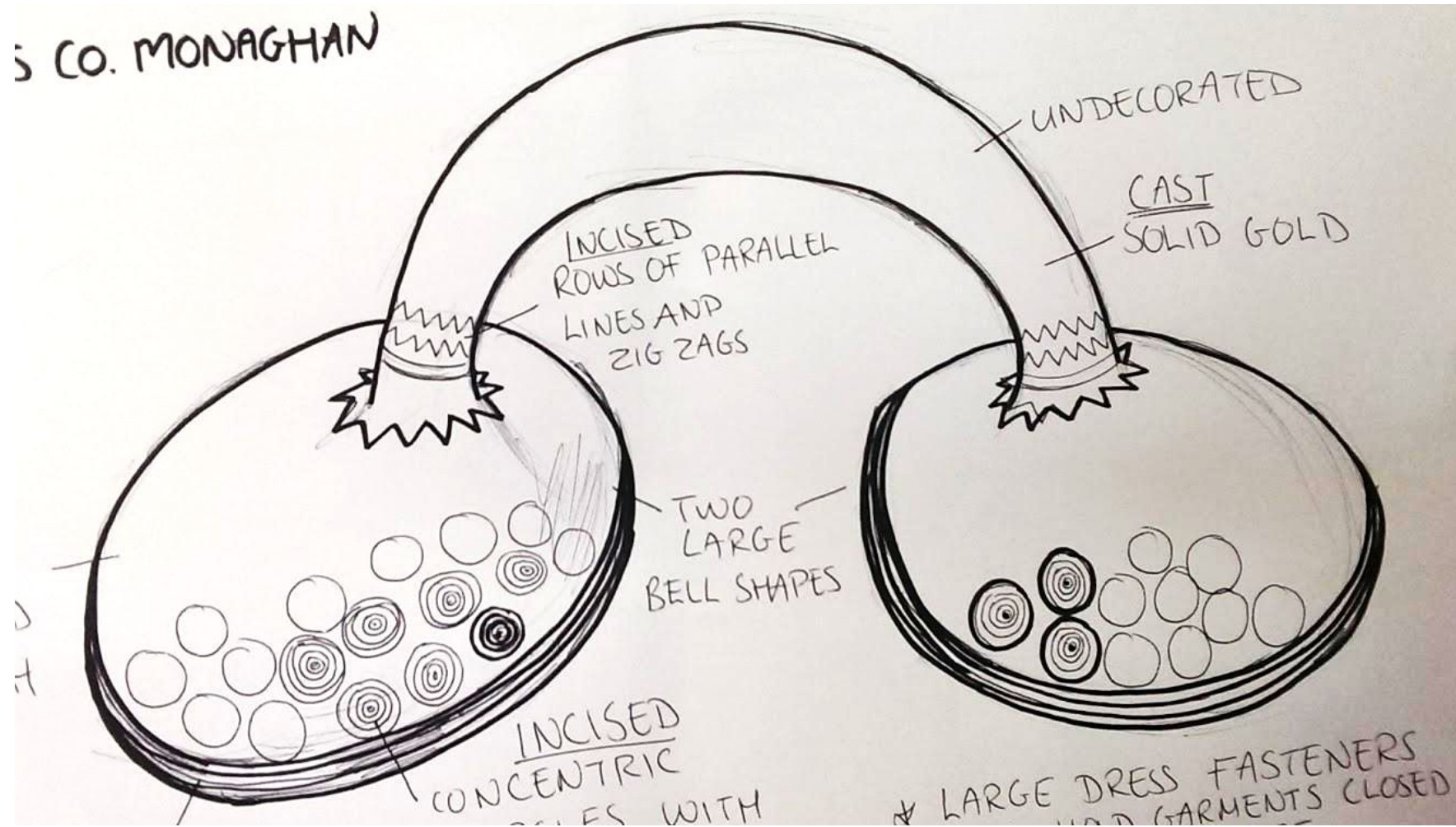
Repousse raised dots inside the tube.

GOLD FIBULA / DRESS FASTENER

FORM	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• A heavy gold bow with two hollow cup shaped discs connected at both ends
FUNCTION	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Like double buttons that would fit into button holes.• Likely to be worn for ceremonial purposes as it is quite heavy.• Some were used as cufflinks and were much smaller.
METALWORK TECHNIQUE	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Cast in one piece using a mould.• The bow narrows from the middle towards each end to the curved terminals. They do not connect to the bell terminals symmetrically.• The bell shaped terminals were hammered into shape.
DECORATION	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Both bell terminals are decorated with a series of small incised concentric circles surrounding a central dot.• The connects of the bow with the bell terminals are decorated with incised chevrons followed by incised bands of lines followed by another band of chevrons.



S CO. MONAGHAN



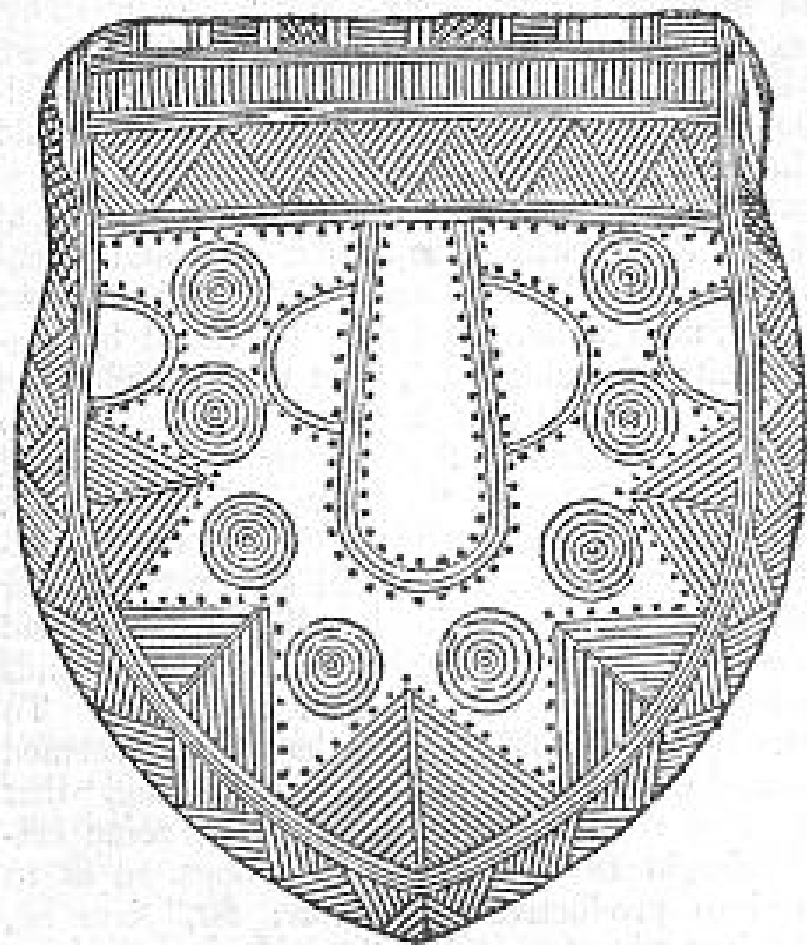
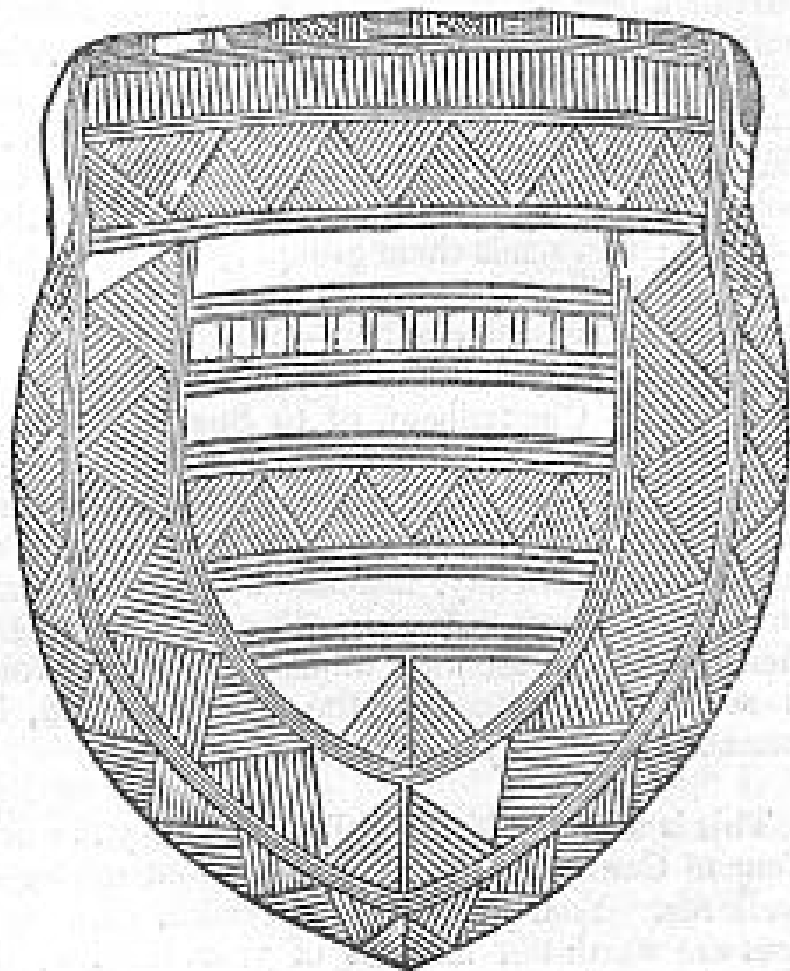


GOLD BULLA

FORM	<ul style="list-style-type: none">● A small shield shape locket.
FUNCTION	<ul style="list-style-type: none">● May have been an amulet: a charm worn to ward off evil or promote fertility.● Probably worn around the neck on a chain like a locket.
METALWORK TECHNIQUE	<ul style="list-style-type: none">● LEAD would have been cut into the required shape.● It was decorated and then covered in gold foil.
DECORATION	<ul style="list-style-type: none">● Decorated with REPOUSSE technique.● Hatched lined at the top. Triangles with hatched lines.● A nose shape down the centre with two semi circles on either side.● Concentric circles and triangles around the sides.● They look like a human face



THE ANCIENT IRISH BULLA.









ESSAY 2014

“Gold-working techniques developed during the Bronze Age in Ireland, allowed for the production of beautifully crafted artefacts.”

Discuss this statement with reference to the TWO examples ILLUSTRATED on the accompanying sheet. (Lunula and Gleninsheen gorget)

In your answer name both types of artefact (5) and refer to form, function, and the techniques used in their production and decoration. (15) (15)

AND

Briefly discuss what you know about the Bronze Age People in Ireland (10)

Illustrate your answer. (5)

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Find the marking scheme.

Plan the essay.

ESSAY STRUCTURE-PLAN

- Discuss the statement.(general-Intro)
- Statement: Lunula. Form, Function, Techniques
- Statement: Glen Gorget. Form, Function, Techniques
- Bronze Age people
- Illustrations throughout.