

A GOLD BRACELET FROM HOPE WOOD, WOOKEY HOLE, SOMERSET

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DISCOVERY

The bracelet was found in a cave, in Hope Wood, near Wookey Hole, on 3rd December 1955, by Mr. E. C. Harris of the Ebbor Research Society. It was the subject of an inquest, held on 23rd July 1957 at Wells. Owing to the amount of time which elapsed between the discovery and the inquest, the exact circumstances (from an archaeological point of view) of the discovery are not altogether clear. The finder stated that the bracelet was found in the cave mouth, some 20 inches below the ground surface, which was about 10 inches below the roof of the cave entrance, and that it was in undisturbed soil, unassociated with any other material. The stratigraphical relationship of the find-spot to the rest of the material in the cave will remain unknown, until such time as the excavation is reported. The jury found that the bracelet was not Treasure Trove; it thus remained in the possession of the landowner, the late Wing-Commander G. W. Hodgkinson.

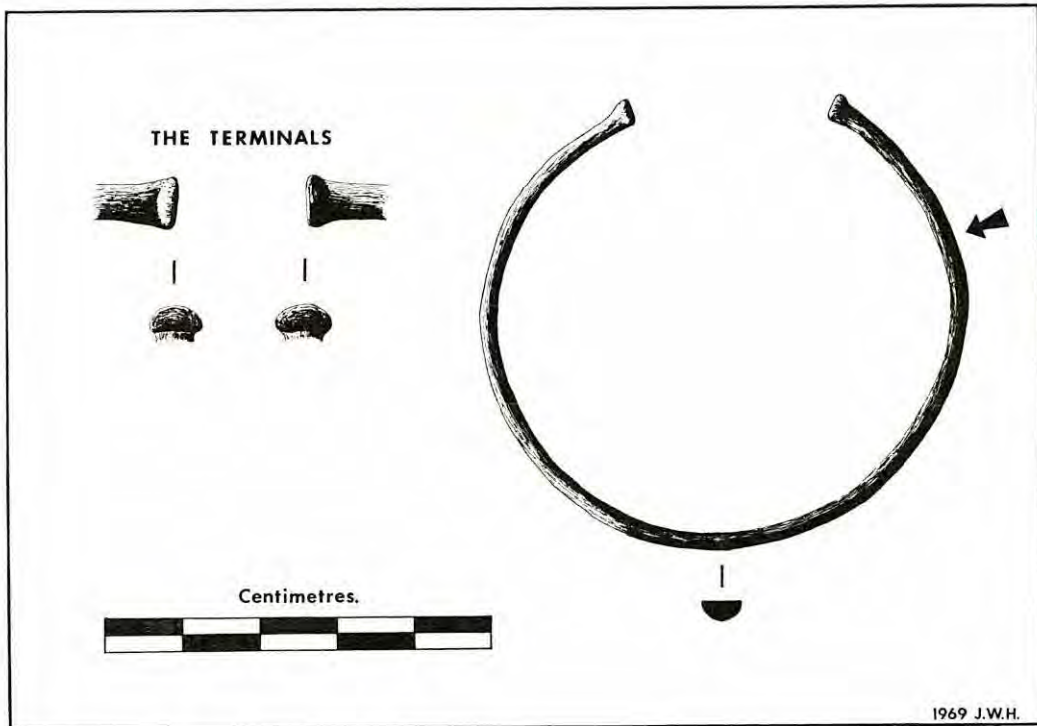


FIG. 1 The Hope Wood Gold Bracelet.

DESCRIPTION

The bracelet (Fig.1), which is roughly circular, with expanded terminals and no decoration, has the following dimensions:

Mean internal diameter

5.8 c.m.

Mean external diameter	6.2 c.m.
Minimum hoop width	0.48 c.m.
Mean terminal width	0.7 c.m.
Minimum hoop thickness	0.23 c.m.
Mean terminal thickness	0.4 c.m.

Width — dimension at right angles to the plane of the bracelet.

Thickness — dimension in the plane of the bracelet.

The weight of the bracelet is 23.7 g.

The width and thickness of the bracelet are almost uniform, except at the expanded terminals. The cross-section of the terminals is plano-convex, as is the cross-section of the hoop.

The condition of the bracelet is excellent. The edges are still well-defined, and many of the scratches on the surface are of modern origin.

ANALYSIS

An analysis of the bracelet was carried out by Miss L. K. Hamblin, of the Research Laboratory for Archaeology and the History of Art, Oxford, using X-ray fluorescence spectroscopy.

Separate readings were recorded for the surface, at the point marked with an arrow in Fig. 1, and for a layer some 50 microns below this. The results, shown as percentages, were as follows:

<i>Element</i>	<i>Surface</i>	<i>Interior</i>
Gold	83.0	83.0
Silver	11.5 — 12.0	13.5 — 14.0
Copper	3.0 — 3.5	3.0 — 3.25
Lead	n.d.	n.d.
Tin	n.d.	n.d.
Zinc	n.d.	n.d.
Iron	n.d.	n.d.

n.d. — not detected, (i.e. less than about 0.01%).

DISCUSSION

The four most important features of the Hope Wood bracelet are:

- (a) The expanded terminals.
- (b) The plano-convex cross-section of the terminals.
- (c) The plano-convex cross-section of the hoop.
- (d) The lack of decoration.

These features place this bracelet within a restricted group, which forms part of a very much larger group of bracelets, all generally similar in appearance, made of both gold and bronze, which are found in Late Bronze Age contexts. These may be characterized, for example, by the bracelet from the Portfield Hoard, Lancashire, (Longworth, 1967), which was accompanied by several socketed axes; or by those from Beachy Head, in Sussex, which were accompanied by winged axes (B.M., 1920).

No useful conclusion can be reached about the origin of the bracelet, from Hope Wood, as there are insufficient analyses of Bronze Age gold work to permit a comparison with the analysis given above, and the distribution of bracelets, with the same character-

istics, is wide-spread, encompassing most of the British Isles and as far afield as Hyken, in Holland (Butler, 1965).

The analysis shows no sign of a significant amount of surface enrichment, natural or artificial.

The condition of the bracelet suggests that it was fairly new, when mislaid, and the total absence of material of comparable date would seem to indicate that the loss of this bracelet was an isolated event.

CONCLUSION

The evidence suggests that this bracelet, which probably dates from the Late Bronze Age and is of unknown origin, was mislaid, when fairly new, by a casual passer-by.

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