

Late and early post Viking-Age Insular dress pins: a reassessment

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Over 25 years have passed since Tom Fanning's (1994) monograph on Viking Age ringed pins from Dublin and over 20 years since Celie O'Rahilly's (1998) publication on stick pins from medieval Dublin. Both are still used as standard reference works but have severe limitations, concentrating on classification and on the material then available from the Dublin excavations.

This paper will reassess the evidence for certain types of late and early post Viking-Age (c.950 – c.1150 AD) ringed- and stick pins in the light of new discoveries made over the past quarter century. It will examine issues of chronology, manufacture, distribution and use. New discoveries have enabled the date range of individual types to be refined. Their geographical distribution now extends over a much wider area than previously thought. The paper will also investigate their find contexts – rural and urban settlements, ecclesiastical sites – especially of those from controlled excavations, as well as their metal composition and condition, to determine what can be said of where they were made, whether regional variations are apparent, how and by whom they may have been used and the mechanisms by which they were distributed across the late Viking world.

The paper will touch on three Congress themes: Irish Sea Connections and Making a Living; Trade, Networks and Towns and Group and Gender Identities.