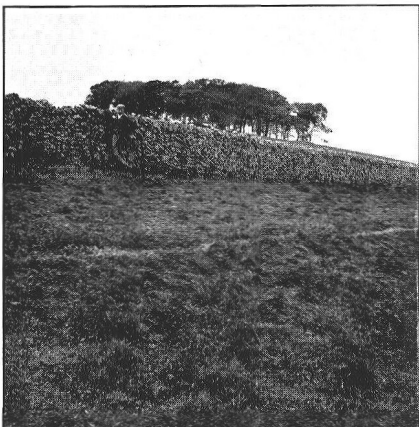


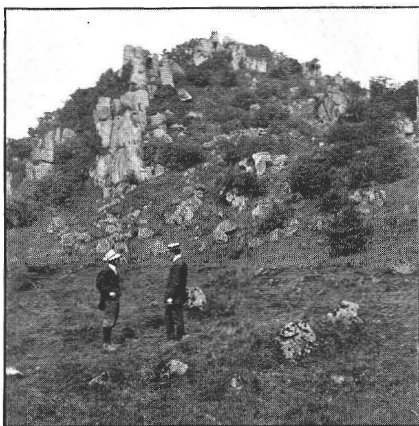
PLATE I.



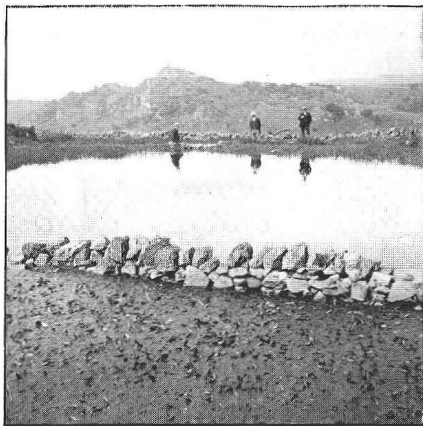
No. 1.—Superficial appearance of Roman Road on Minning Low, between wall and hollow.



No. 2.—Site of road in field near Barn, Hognaston Winn.



No. 3.—Rainster Rocks. The two figures are on the paved road in the middle of the foundations.



No. 4.—Lots Lane Mere and Rainster Rocks.

The Roman Road between Little Chester and Minning Low.

By WILLIAM SMITHARD.



IN connection with the Roman occupation of Derbyshire there are at least three important problems which have long awaited solution, viz. :

(1) The route of the Roman road between Little Chester and Minning Low, on Brassington Moor.

(2) The site of Lutudarum—the head-quarters of the lead mining industry.

(3) The route of Ryknield Street north of Clay Cross.

Whilst these points remain unsettled we cannot completely reconstruct the framework of the plan adopted for traversing and holding our county by the pioneers of civilisation in the first four centuries A.D.

It is with the first of these three problems that I propose to deal in this paper. A suggestion with regard to the second problem will also be made.

From time to time there have been in the *Journal* important papers on Roman remains in Derbyshire, and I will notice briefly those which bear directly on my subject.

In volume viii., page 210, Mr. W. Thompson Watkin wrote, not from personal knowledge of the road, but summarising the observations or speculations of earlier antiquaries: "It passes a little south of Aldwark, crosses Brassington Moor, passes Hopton, where, in the last century, Mr. Gell laid bare a portion of its gravel bank and paving, between Keddleston (*sic*) Park and Duffield to Darley Slade, near which it joins the Ryknield Street, and with it crosses the Derwent to Little Chester."

A statement to the same effect appears in Mr. Thomas Codrington's *Roman Roads in Britain*, second edition, page 282. In each case we are told this account is from *Magna Britannia*, vol. v., page ccxiii., written by Bishop Bennet in 1817.

It will be noticed this route is west of the Ecclesbourne Valley, and that its sponsors take a flying leap from Hopton to Kedleston without troubling about the intervening eight miles of rather awkward country. Wirksworth is left out of account.

In vol. viii., page 214, in a note to Mr. Watkin's paper, Dr. Cox gave brief details of a road, which he regarded as Roman, from Wirksworth to Ryknield Street, and east of the Ecclesbourne Valley. Dr. Cox believed this road crossed the Derwent at a ford between the site of Duffield railway station and Milford, then went along the Chevin, made a steep descent to Black Brook, and that, after an equally steep ascent, its line of route would be represented by Longwalls Lane as far as Knave's Cross.

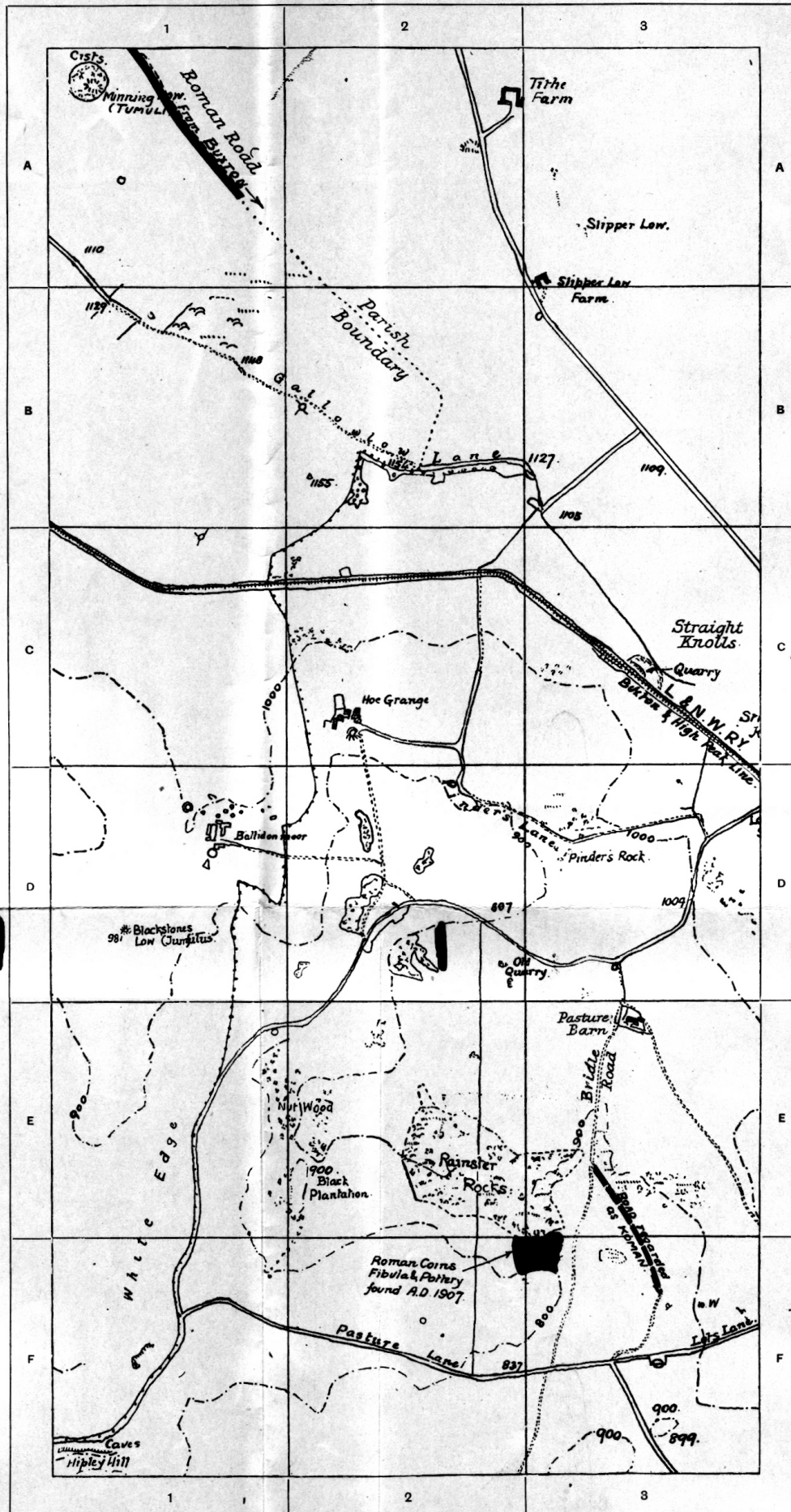
In vol. ix., page 139, "Duffield Castle, IV.—The Romans at Duffield," Dr. Cox dealt more fully with his theory so far as it related to Duffield, but it was outside his purpose to attempt to connect the site of the Roman road there precisely with Derby on the one hand, or Wirksworth and Brassington Moor on the other.

We have here, then, two theories, viz., (a) Bishop Bennet's route west of the Ecclesbourne Valley, via Kedleston and Hopton; (b) Dr. Cox's route via Duffield and Knave's Cross, east of the Ecclesbourne Valley.

In the *Victoria History of the County of Derby*, Dr. Haverfield discusses these two views, and then remarks, of (a): "For the first thirteen or fourteen miles from Little Chester northwards the line of the road is entirely unknown." And again, of (b): "On our present evidence we must be content to leave the southern section of the road doubtful." On his map, however, Dr. Haverfield marks Dr. Cox's route as a "probable" short disconnected length of Roman road on the Chevin, and thence to Knave's Cross.

PLATE II.

Map issued with paper by WILLIAM SMITHARD in *Journal of Derbyshire Archaeological and Natural History Society*, 1910.



SCALE.—Six inches to one mile.

Based upon the Ordnance Survey Map, with the sanction of the Controller of H.M. Stationery Office.

It will thus be seen that the Little Chester-Minning Low Roman road question has not advanced much in the last hundred years or so. No evidence has been produced either for or against theory "a" since it was advanced in the year 1817.

The important partial alternative (or supplementary) theory "b," put forward in 1886, has not been finally confirmed or extended.

For the information of readers who have not studied the question closely, I may here state that all the authorities agree on the route of the Roman road from Buxton to Minning Low (A. 1, plate ii.), and they are all of opinion that it is not at all likely that the road would cease there, but that most probably, in fact all but certainly, it was continued to Little Chester.

When I began to look into this interesting problem my attention was first directed to Rainster Rocks (E. 2), a fine outcrop of magnesian limestone situated about a mile and a half south-south-east of Minning Low, and 900 feet above O. S. datum line.

A note in the *Victoria History* tells us that in 1889 a piece of unmistakably Roman pottery was picked up on Rainster Rocks, and old foundations were observed there by Mr. John Ward, F.S.A.

I obtained permission to do some excavating at the site, and this work was done in March and April, 1907. At Rainster Rocks three sets of dolomite crags, each about 30 feet high, rise up in staircase fashion (plate i.). Between the foot of the topmost crags and the top of the middle set there is a flat platform with two sides each 40 feet long, and the other two of irregular length, viz., 50 feet and 28 feet respectively.

This platform is in a splendid situation, being screened from north and east winds, and lying within direct range of the sun's rays all day. It also commands an extensive view of the country south and west of the rocks. It was here that

most of the excavating was done. The surface was covered with rank grass, nettles, and weeds, amongst which were a few wild raspberry canes and some common flowering plants. The soil, which averaged a foot in depth, consisted of reddish brown alluvium, and trenches 18 inches wide were driven across it until the bare rock was reached all over the platform.

Here were found four bronze coins, some ironwork, and a considerable quantity of pottery, etc., which will be described a little further on.

At the foot of the rocks is a straight and well-made road 150 feet long by 16 feet wide, lying between low but massive walls constructed of very large magnesian limestone blocks. Its direction is west of south, and at the head of the road are artificial terraces, one branching south-east, 150 feet long, and the other branching north-west, 100 feet long. On this latter terrace a fibula and some pottery were unearthed. A portion of the road, about 6 feet by 2 feet, was excavated, showing that under a thin coating of green turf there is a close level pavement of small dolomite boulders, beneath which is dark soil, about a foot thick, containing pottery, bits of charcoal, and animal bones. Below these is the solid rock, covered with a thin subsoil of light coloured sand.

The ironwork found consisted of:

(a) Half an axe head, 4 in. long, with a 4 in. edge, rolled up like a scroll. The shaft hole is $1\frac{1}{4}$ in. deep and 1 in. across (plate iii.).

(b) A flat thin hinge or buckle, 3 in. long, $1\frac{3}{4}$ in. wide, with a recess $1\frac{1}{2}$ in. by 1 in. (plate iii.).

(c) A plate, $\frac{1}{4}$ in. thick, 4 in. long, 3 in. wide, bent double.

(d) A hook, shaped like a miniature sickle, $2\frac{3}{4}$ in. long, 2 in. diameter across the outside curve, $1\frac{1}{4}$ in. inside, the shank $\frac{1}{4}$ in. thick, and the bend as thin as a knife blade. This is similar to instruments used at the present day for dressing leather (plate iii.).

(e) A headless nail, $3\frac{3}{8}$ in. long, $\frac{5}{16}$ in. square at the top, and tapered to a point.

(f) A similar nail with a round head, $\frac{3}{4}$ in. diameter (plate iii.).

(g) Two similar nails, with heads 1 in. diameter, and broken shanks $1\frac{1}{2}$ in. long.

The pottery included rims of no less than thirty-five different designs. There is great diversity also in the colour, finish,

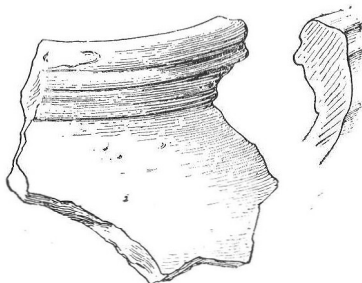


Fig. 1.

and texture of the fragments. Much of it is rough, gritty, and unglazed, and the vessels with contracted necks mostly have rims from five to seven inches diameter. Although the rims vary in detail, they may be reduced to a few standard types so far as their main design is concerned, viz. :

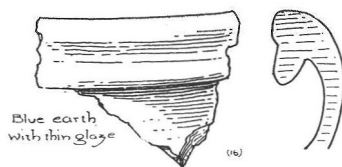


Fig. 2.

(1) The rim which springs outward from the neck at an angle (fig. 4).

(2) The rim which makes a continuous curve with the neck and the body of the vessel (fig. 2).

(3) The rim which projects at right angles a little below the lip of a pot, flat in section, or only slightly curved (fig. 3).

(4) The rim formed of the edge turned inward or outward at right angles or nearly so (fig. 5).

These rims are all very beautiful in design, no matter whether they are merely plain, or ornamented with mouldings either slight or prominent.



Fig. 3.

Nearly all the pottery shows numerous wheel-marks, and some of it is smoked, thus indicating that the fragment formed part of a cooking utensil. Here are details of some of the rims :—

TYPE I.

A red rim, 6 in. diameter, 1 in. deep, and $\frac{3}{8}$ in. thick, full of small quartz grains; well shaped and coated with soot.

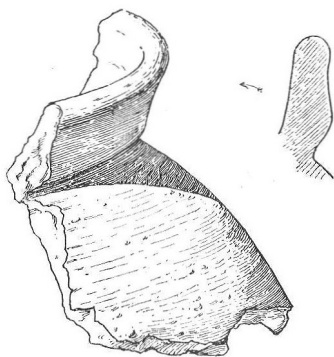


Fig. 4.

A rough rim of dark red material with dark blue skin, $1\frac{1}{4}$ in. deep, $\frac{3}{8}$ in. thick.

A dark, smoky rim, $\frac{3}{8}$ in. thick, gritty, but with fairly smooth finish, and a thumb-mark inside the neck.

A rough, red, gritty rim, $\frac{1}{4}$ in. thick, $\frac{5}{8}$ in. deep.

A dark, drab, earthy-looking rim, rough, $\frac{3}{8}$ in. thick, with large grains of white grit.

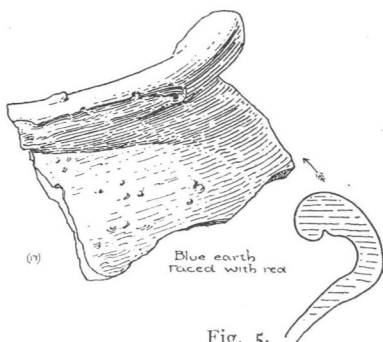


Fig. 5.

TYPE 2.

Rough, grey, gritty. Red wash on inner surface, $\frac{3}{4}$ in. deep, $\frac{3}{8}$ in. thick, with moulding projecting $\frac{1}{8}$ in.

Rough, dark blue, gritty, $\frac{5}{8}$ in. thick. A red inner skin and a thin moulding.

Red, gritty, 1 in. deep, $\frac{1}{4}$ in. thick, medium finish. Much smoked outside. Roll moulding formed by lip being doubled over.

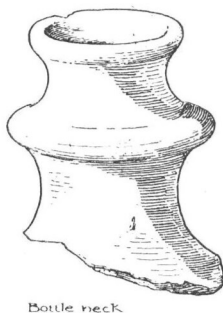


Fig. 6.

TYPE 3.

Black, smooth. Outside diameter, $7\frac{1}{2}$ in. ; inside, $5\frac{1}{2}$ in. ; $\frac{1}{4}$ in. thick. Rim projects $\frac{5}{8}$ in.

TYPE 4.

Rough, gritty, dark red interior. Blue skin. Vessel, $\frac{3}{8}$ in. thick. Rim, $\frac{5}{8}$ in. thick.

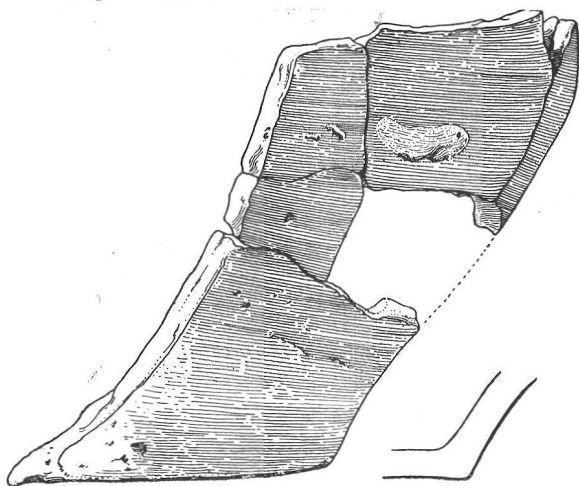


Fig. 7.

There is also a bottle neck of black, smooth earthenware, $\frac{1}{4}$ in. thick, $1\frac{1}{4}$ in. diameter, with a top rim $1\frac{1}{2}$ in. diameter, and a middle ring 2 in. diameter (fig. 6).



Fig. 8.

Nearly all the rims had belonged to vessels with curved sides and small bases, of which figures 7 and 8 show examples,

but some parts of broad, flat, shallow dishes (plate iv.) were found, viz. :—

A complete section of dark blue, smooth ware, $9\frac{1}{2}$ in. diameter, $1\frac{1}{4}$ in. deep; sides, $\frac{3}{8}$ in. thick; base, $\frac{1}{4}$ in. thick.

Part of a heavy shallow dish or trough of reddish-brown substance, with a buff skin; base, $\frac{3}{4}$ in. thick; sides, $1\frac{1}{4}$ in. thick.

Several dark blue pieces of similar design and thickness to the above specimen.

The most delicate piece of pottery turned up is part of a bright red vessel, 2 in. diameter, $\frac{1}{4}$ in. thick, with dark glaze inside and out. The sides are at right angles to the base. This is said to be a fragment of a drinking cup of a form in common use in the seventeenth century and early part of the eighteenth. These vessels were usually about 5 in. high.

Only a very small portion of the pottery has any other ornament than plain rings, either projecting or slightly sunk. The exceptions include :—

A cream-coloured glazed piece, $1\frac{1}{2}$ in. long, 1 in. deep, $\frac{3}{8}$ in. thick, scored with six horizontal lines $\frac{1}{8}$ in. apart.

A piece of grey glazed ware, 2 in. long, $1\frac{1}{4}$ in. wide, $\frac{1}{4}$ in. thick, lightly scored with close sloping straight lines with a row of close double dots below them. This is a specimen of Roman "engine turning."

Other Roman pottery is as follows :—

Fragment of tazza with "frilled" lip in "black ware."

Two fragments of mortaria in buff ware. The form of rim common, but not of the commonest. A sprinkling of slag fragments in the bottom to aid trituration.

Two fragments of "Samian" or Rhenish pottery, apparently part of a basin.

Several other pieces distinctively Roman.

These portions of Roman pottery have been identified by the Curator of the Welsh Museum of Natural History, Arts, and Antiquities at Cardiff, Mr. John Ward, F.S.A., who further says: "The coarse, gritty ware found at Rainster

would be regarded as mediæval by most, but on several occasions I have met with it on Romano-British sites. This gritty stuff related to cooking pots. They were rather globular, with a somewhat rounded or convex bottom, and the clay was well mixed with sand. No doubt the mediæval form was derived from the Roman and pre-Roman pots."

Mr. Ward informs me the bronze fibula (plate iii.) is a Roman one, bow shaped, and of the hinged type. The pieces of thin sandstone, of which a large number were found, he thinks are probably portions of roofing stones, such as were in common use in Roman times.

Here is Mr. Ward's description of the four bronze coins found at Rainster:—

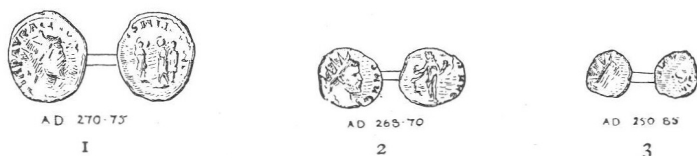


Fig. 9.

(1) Second bronze of Aurelian, A.D. 270-75. The radiated head of the Emperor to the right—IMP AVRELI [ANV]S AVG. *Reverse*—Two soldiers (or a female—Fidelity—and a soldier) holding military ensigns, [FID]ES MIL [ITVM]. In exergue, an indistinct T, etc. Possibly struck at Treves.

(2) Third bronze, I have little doubt, of Claudius Gothicus, A.D. 268-270. Head of Emperor, rayed, to right, — s AVG. *Reverse*—Equity holding a pair of scales and a cornucopia. A [EQVITA]S AVG (The Equity of the Emperor).

(3) Coin. Much worn, but the rayed crown and other characters suggest a "third bronze," of the period of the "Thirty Tyrants"—about A.D. 250 to 285. On the reverse, traces of a female figure—perhaps "Spes" (hope) or "Pax" (peace).

(4) Too worn to be deciphered—presumably Roman.

The miscellaneous finds include a worn whetstone (plate iv.) 5 in. long, $1\frac{1}{8}$ in. wide, and $\frac{3}{4}$ in. thick, and a piece of gently curved gritstone, 8 in. long, 3 in. wide, $1\frac{1}{2}$ in. thick, with thin sloping lines cut out on one edge, and wider hollows, three vertical and three slanting, on the other. This is part of a quern of Roman pattern (fig. 10).

An incision was made in one of the enclosures at the foot of Rainster Rocks—at a lower level than the terraces—but nothing very notable was discovered.

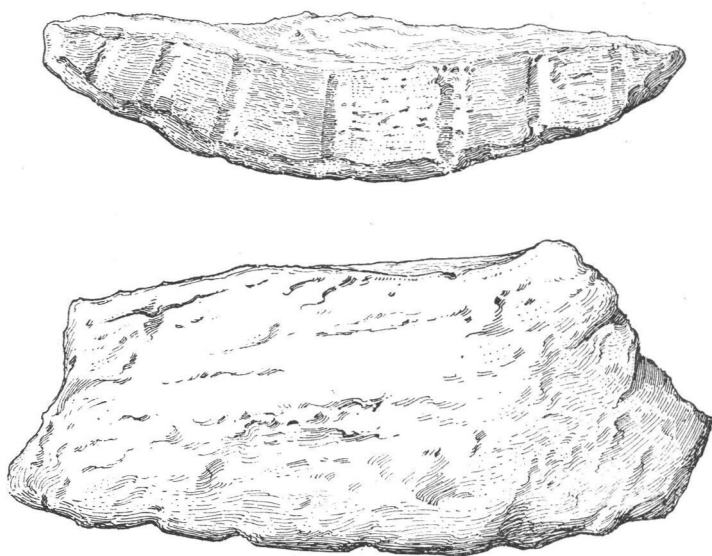


Fig. 10.

The walls of the enclosures are broad, low mounds, made up of large irregular blocks of dolomitic carboniferous limestone, closely fitted but without mortar. The floors of the enclosures are similarly constructed. Floors and walls alike are covered with a thin coating of turf.

These mounds and enclosures are of much the same character as those at the "camp" at Lombard's Green, near Parwich, which Bateman and other antiquaries were disposed to regard

as Roman, though they were somewhat uncertain, chiefly on account of its remoteness from the road, and I cannot find there has been an authoritative pronouncement about it.

Mr. W. T. Watkin included this Parwich "camp" in his *List of Temporary Roman Camps*, vol. viii., page 193.

It will be convenient provisionally to call the foundations or enclosures at Rainster the site of a settlement. The dimensions of the compact portion are approximately 400 feet by 300 feet.

The sketch-plan (plate v.) shows that the settlement was constructed to a definite and coherent design, and we cannot doubt that it was intended for a serious and important purpose and for regular use. It is, for instance, far more extensive and substantial than the Roman camp near Coneygre House, Pentrich, in connection with Ryknield Street. It is also considerably in advance of the Parwich "camp," both in design and construction. Mr. Ward holds the view that it is of late Celtic origin, and was occupied in Roman times.

Owing to the massive character of the Rainster "settlement," a thorough investigation is beyond the powers of a small private excavation party, and I would like to commend this site for consideration by our Society when they have any funds to devote to such a purpose.

What, then, is the significance of the settlement at Rainster Rocks, and of the remains unearthed on the terraces above it?

On page 191, vol. viii., Mr. Watkin wrote: "Somewhere adjoining the large British sepulchral low or mound called Minning Low there appears to have been, in the time of the Lower Empire, a Britanno-Roman settlement." It would appear that at Rainster Rocks we have the site of the settlement.

Bateman could not connect the "camp" at Parwich with the Roman road, though he saw that the distances from Derby to Buxton respectively would suit well for an intermediate station between these places. At Rainster Rocks we have an excellent site for a halfway halting-place, and evidence of

prolonged and extensive occupation there. My own opinion is that the foundations indicate the site of Lutudarum.

Rainster Rocks are less than a mile away from Straight Knolls (C. 3), formerly called Street Knolls, on Brassington Moor.

There cannot be much doubt that the Roman road passed close by Straight Knolls, but the point to decide is whether it lay east or west thereof. My conclusion is that its route was west of Straight Knolls, and thence by Pasture Barn (E. 3) to Rainster Rocks. This is the only convenient route to the latter site from Minning Low.

Across the head of a broad valley called the Pastures (F. 3), quite close to Rainster Rocks, and east and south-east thereof, is a bridle-road, a sixth of a mile in length, which has every appearance of a Roman origin. This track, which is now a bridle way, is formed of a bank of earth, held up by a retaining wall formed of heavy irregular blocks of stone, unmortared but strongly fitted together.

This road is of similar structure to the Roman way on Minning Low (section No. 2, plate vi.) as regards the bank and wall, but, as might be expected, the limestone metalling is absent. It is said that some of the latter has been taken up in quite recent years. I think this is so, but, in any case, the present evidence is quite strong enough as it stands.

The Brassington Moor enclosure award map shows that in 1808 the Pastures bridle-road had a direct connection with Brassington Moor by means of an ancient gate called Pyndar's Gate.

If this road across the Pastures is accepted as Roman, we have to put aside the theories that the Derby-Buxton road passed through either Hopton or Wirksworth. We need to have little hesitation in doing this. No scrap of positive evidence has ever been brought forward to justify us in putting Wirksworth on the main line of route to Buxton. It is nevertheless possible, and even probable, there was a Roman road from Wirksworth to Derby in connection with the lead mines.

With regard to Hopton, I have traversed several times the old road there, which was cut through in 1791-2, when the Via Gellia was made, and I have doubts as to whether it is Roman. I take this to be the moorland road which near Hopton is known at Tiremare Lane.

It appears to me to have much more the character of a mediæval pack-horse track, with portions converted into a road for vehicles in the eighteenth century. Part of it is called the Chariot Way. In any case it does not connect with the Roman road on Minning Low, but keeps one and a half miles east thereof, and goes across the hills to Grange Mill and Elton.

It may be asked what direction the Roman road would take from Rainster Rocks to Little Chester.

Having recently walked over the ground critically, I am disposed to think its course would be by Hognaston Winn, Hulland Ward, Turnditch, Firestone Hill, and the Chevin to Milford, and thence along the east bank of the Derwent to Little Chester. This I will call theory "c."

I have, in fact, located and excavated ancient disused paved roads in the fields at Hognaston Winn and Duffield Bank. These I take to be surviving portions of the Roman road. A section and photograph of the Winn road are here given (plates i. and vi.).

If the line of the Roman road from Buxton is projected beyond Minning Low, it points nearly straight to Little Chester by Hopton, Kirk Ireton, Turnditch, Windley, Quarndon, and Darley Abbey. A straight road on this route would go across numerous steep hills and deep, narrow valleys on the west banks of the Ecclesbourne and the Derwent. Such a road would not be in accordance with the method on which Roman roads are laid out elsewhere in Derbyshire.

On the limestone plateau between Buxton and Brassington Moor, where there is not much variation from a general and continuous level of a thousand feet above the sea, the Romans made a straight road, though even that is not so straight in reality as it looks on the map. It bends wherever it crosses the shallow upland valleys.

Between Buxton and Glossop, where the uplands are cloven by several very deep valleys, the straightness of the Roman road is much diminished.

It appears, then, that though the Roman ideal was a straight line from point to point, this was not a dominating principle. Their first object was to get the safest and most convenient route from point to point. If that could be obtained by a straight road, so much the better; if not, straightness was sacrificed. If they had a hill to cross, they mounted it by the easiest gradient consistent with safety and sound construction. If there was a valley to cross, they crossed where it could not be overlooked by an enemy, and sometimes where it was protected by a fort or camp. This was the case at Little Chester, at Duffield, at Brough, and at Melandra.

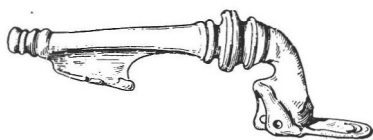
My route "c" fulfils these conditions, and we need not be surprised that it contains a number of curves. It takes the line with the minimum of variation in general level, with the easiest gradients, the maximum amount of outlook, and the fewest points liable to attack by an enemy on the users of the road.

It is advisable to lay stress on another fact which I have not yet seen mention of, and that is the great importance of Minning Low as the central point of the Derby-Buxton road. This hill can be seen from Rykniel Street, two miles south-west of Derby. It can be seen also from Hulland Ward, from Hognaston Winn, from Rainster Rocks, and from Great Low, four miles south-east of Buxton.

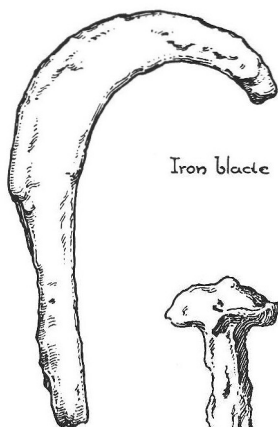
I would like to take this opportunity to express my gratitude for the kind assistance I have received in pursuing my investigations. Mr. John Ward, F.S.A., has been most helpful in freely giving me the benefit of his wide knowledge on the subject. Mr. R. Cresswell, Mr. J. Dakin, Mr. J. Hall, and Mr. J. Howard, of Brassington, readily gave permission for excavations to be made on land which they occupy, and it was Mr. Hall who first drew my attention to the bridle-road across the Pastures. Mr. Isaac Rains and Mr. Edmund Rains,

of Brassington, who assisted Mr. Ward years ago in his excavations at Harboro' Rocks and Rains Cave, have borne the burden and heat of the digging, besides giving me the advantage of their intimate acquaintance with the locality. Useful aid has also been rendered by members of the Derbyshire Pennine Club. For the drawings of the finds I am much indebted to Mr. Ernest E. Clark; whilst valuable service has been rendered by Mr. R. M. Archer, Mr. James Clayton, and Mr. G. W. F. Horner in connection with the map, plan, and road sections.

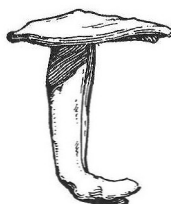
REMAINS FOUND AT RAINSTER ROCKS.
DERBYSHIRE.



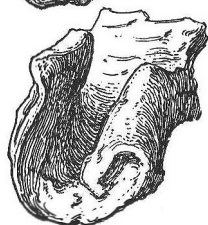
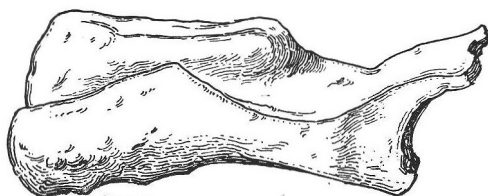
Roman
Fibula
Bronze.



Iron blade



Nails



Iron Forms

