

Archæological Notes

THE BRAY LYCHE GATE.

A point of interest in the "Arabic" numerals carved on this gate, showing its date as 1448, is that the figure used for "4" does not resemble the Arabic figure, which is much more like the 4 in present-day European use. What it does exactly resemble is the Indian (Devanagari) figure for 4, which is a "figure of eight" with an opening in one of its two loops. In the Indian form (8) the opening is at the top, in the English (8) at the bottom. As Sir G. F. Hill has shown¹, this form was in use in Europe from the early 12th century, and in England from the end of the 13th (Wells Cathedral West front) to the middle of the 16th century.

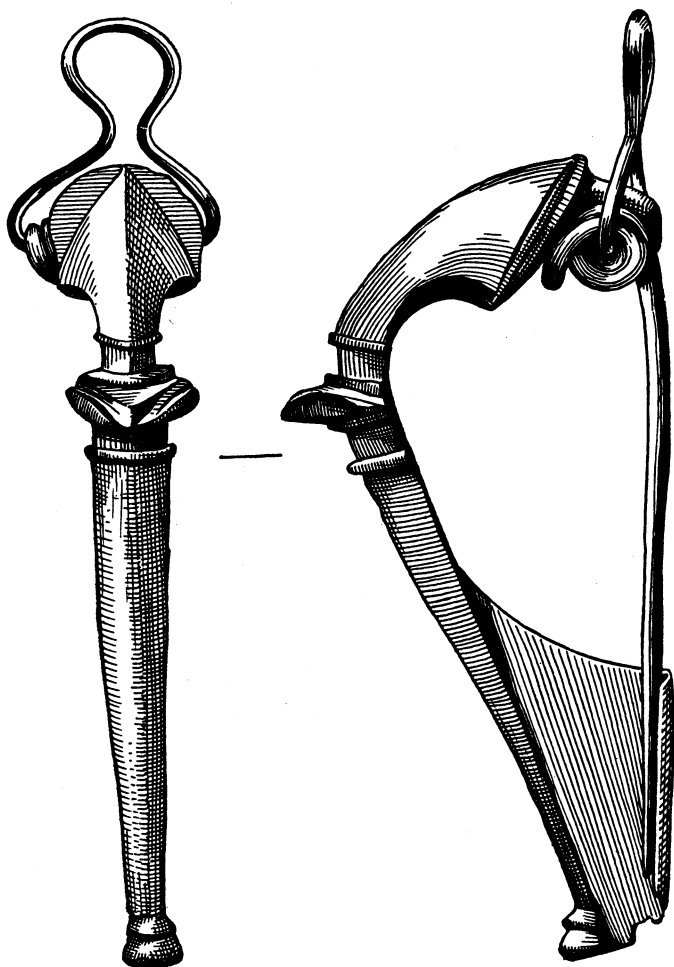
Decimal notation originated in India, and was brought to Europe by Arab agency. About 825 A.D. al-Khwārizmī² wrote a treatise on the subject as an appendix to his work on Algebra, and this was translated by Adelard, a monk of Bath, about 1120 A.D. as 'Liber Algorismi de numero Indorum.' It is for this reason that our English figures are called Arabic. But they might just as well be called Indian. W. Robertson Smith in his article "Numeral" in the 11th edition of the *Encyclopaedia Britannica* quotes (without accepting) a suggestion that the Indian forms reached Alexandria before direct communication between Europe and India ceased in the 4th century. The shape of our mediaeval "4" may possibly be a pointer in the same direction. In Hill's "Development of Arabic numerals in Europe (1915)" "the problem as to the source through which these Indian numerals . . . came to the West has been avoided." Further references are given in D. E. Smith's article "Numerals" in the 14th edition of the *Encyclopaedia*, but the problem does not appear to have yet been solved.

A. G. SHIRREFF.

¹ Tables in *Archaeologia*, xlii. (I am indebted to Mr. F. M. Underhill for this and other references.)

² Chaucer's "Argus, the noble contour" (*Boke of the Duchesse*, l. 435). As Controller of Customs and as Clerk of the Works, Chaucer would have found "Algorism" of the greatest service. But the Globe edition follows a wrong reading in making him speak of "these numbers new," though decimal notation was probably not yet in general use.

Since this note was written, a manuscript written in 1392, probably by Chaucer himself, has been brought to light in the Perne library of Peterhouse in Cambridge by Dr. Derek Price. (The Equatorie of the Planetis,—*Times Literary Supplement*, Feb. 29th and March 7th, 1952). In this manuscript the form of the figure 4 is similar to that on the Bray Lyche Gate, but Dr. Price has informed me that in the code section of the MS. the form 8 is used, and that it seems to be a missing link between 8 and 9.



The Grim's Ditch Fibula. Enlarged to twice natural size.

THE GRIM'S DITCH FIBULA.

The fibula figured above was formerly the property of the late Lord Wantage, V.C., and had been kept at Lockinge House, Wantage, until sold at Sotheby's in May, 1946. According to the catalogue it was "dug up in 1898 on Grim's Ditch when the covered yard (since taken down) was constructed between Midsummer Wood and Ridgeway Reservoir." All these features are marked on the 6 in. O.S. map of Berkshire, Sheet XX.N.E. In point of fact the covered

yard is marked just south of, almost adjoining, Grim's Ditch and some 200 yds. north of the Icknield Way. The site is on the north fringe of the downs above East Lockinge and East Ginge, at an elevation of some 600 ft. It has not, apparantly, produced any other Roman objects.

Apart from the small ring that must have secured the head loop, the brooch is complete and perfect and, except where it has been scraped off on one side of the bow, covered with a smooth, green patina.

It can, of course, be easily classified as belonging to Collingwood's type R iv. with the half round "acanthus" moulding on the bow. The graceful, yet vigorous profile, the unusual, bevelled treatment of the trumpet, coupled with the spring and wire head loop (instead of the hinge and cast head loop usually found on R iv.), make it almost certainly a product of the northern workshops.

Yet the detail is weak; the spring has only four, instead of the usual six, coils, the attempt at the acanthus is careless and the footstud is extremely feeble. For these reasons, and the absence of enamel, usually a late sign, the brooch can be assigned to the period when the northern workshops had begun "mass production" and export to the south, a phase dated by Collingwood (*Archaeologia*, LXXX, 51) to c.150-175 A.D.

It is the sort of object that might have been lost by a trader or traveller passing on the Icknield Way.

E. J. W. HILDYARD, F.S.A.

A BRONZE SPEARHEAD FROM CAVERSHAM.

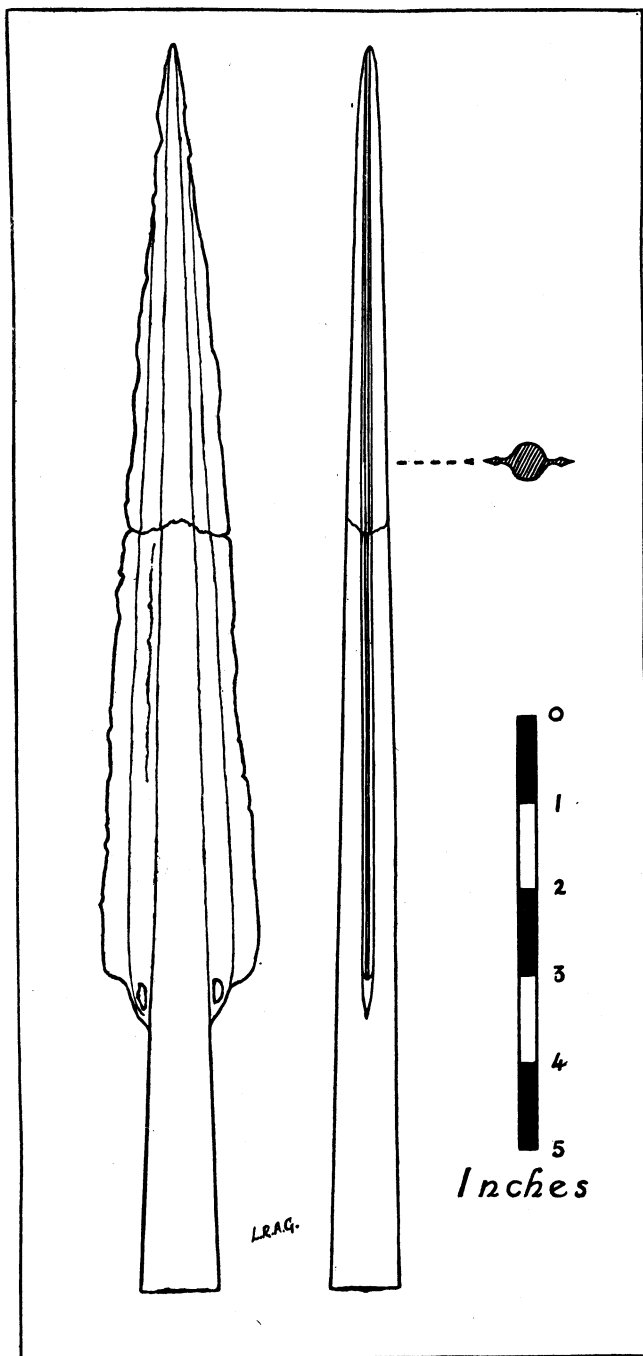
In Peake's *Archaeology of Berkshire*, page 220, a reference is made to a bronze spearhead, found at Caversham and now in the Royal Museum, Canterbury, Kent. No further details are given. Mr. Frank Higenbottam, B.A., F.L.A., Canterbury's City Librarian and Curator, has kindly allowed me the privilege of borrowing this spearhead for drawing and has given me permission to publish more details concerning it.

The spearhead forms part of the Copeland Collection and Mr. Higenbottam thinks that it may have been presented to the Royal Museum sometime between 1900 and 1903, although there is no definite record of this. The only other available recorded information is that the implement was dredged from the River Thames at Caversham.

It is of the type with loops at the base of the blade and with semi-lunate openings. The edges are corroded but the rest is in moderate condition of preservation. The patina is of a dark green colour. There is a crack on one side of the blade (to the left in the figure) and under the loop on the same side there is a hole $\frac{1}{16}$ x $\frac{1}{8}$ in. The blade has broken across the middle, just below the point where the socket becomes solid in section.

Length: $14\frac{1}{2}$ in. Greatest width of blade: $1\frac{1}{4}$ in.

L. R. A. GROVE.



Bronze Spearhead from Caversham

ROMAN POTTERY FROM THE BATH ROAD HOUSING ESTATE, READING.

Mr. T. E. Hardy, who works on the new housing estate south of the Bath-rd., opposite Prospect Park, has deposited in the Reading Museum a quantity of Roman pottery found by him during trench-digging.* The main area in which finds appeared to be concentrated lies N.W. of Southcote Manor and S.W. of the (new) Ashampstead-rd. The National Grid reference is SU/690717. A visit paid by Mr. W. A. Smallcombe with Mr. Hardy proved unproductive of finds but at this spot possible indications of a ditch were seen.

The pottery belongs to the 1st and 2nd centuries A.D., but includes some of a pronounced native facies which may have been made before the Roman conquest. A little plain samian of form 31 is also present, one shard of which bears a meaningless graffito.

The gentle slope above the Holybrook and Kennet where the remains were found is admirably suited to primitive agriculture, and perhaps a humble farmstead seems indicated by the finds. It will be remembered that the Early Iron Age site at Denton's Pit, excavated by the Museum in 1933 (*P.P.S. III*, 43 ff) is close to the site of the present discoveries, and that Prospect Park Clay Pit, which has produced pottery of date similar to that placed on record here, is not far away.

The pottery received from Mr. Hardy included some mediaeval material which presumably derives from Southcote Manor.

GEORGE C. BOON.

* Acc. No. 48 : 52.

ERRATA.

I am grateful to Miss M. Maplesden for bringing to my notice an error of reading in the Selected Document—Original Justices' Order, 1586, published in Vol. 51 of the Journal, pp. 15–16. The name given as Chrys. Pytcott should read Lytcott, of the Swallowfield family. Miss Maplesden has suggested that the name given as Edward Benton may be Edward Unton. After re-examination of the original I am inclined to adopt this revised reading though the formation of the letters is far from clear.

F. HULL.

Query

The BEVER family of Mortimer, Berks, and an oil painting by John Keyse SHERWIN.

According to the *D.N.B.*, Thomas Bever, LL.D. (1725-91) was presented by John Keyse Sherwin, the engraver, in recognition of peculiar obligations, with a very large and exquisite picture in oil colours of Leonidas taking leave of his wife and infant son.

Dr. Thomas Bever by his 1791 will appointed his brother, Samuel Bever (of Mortimer, also a bachelor), and his two sisters, Mary and Ann Bever, joint executors. In 1807 letters of administration were granted to Edward Bever, Esq., for goods left unadministered by Samuel Bever, the two sisters having both died without taking probate. Ann Bever in her will proved March 6th, 1807 appointed her "relation" Edward Bever, Esq., sole executor, and gave him the great tythes of the parish of Mortimer held by lease under the College of Eton, and "Mill Farm" in Sulhampstead, Berks, and her house, plate and furniture in Mortimer. According to the *V.C.H.* of Berks, the Mortimer property was sold to Mr. J. H. Benyon. I have communicated with Mr. H. A. Benyon of Englefield House, Berks, but he has no information.

I would be grateful to any reader for information as to where this painting might now be, as I am compiling some notes on J. K. Sherwin, or as to the present descendants of Edward Bever.

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W. H. CHALLEN.