

XIV
Museum Notes, 1990*

1. A BARBED-AND-TANGED
ARROWHEAD FROM CORBY'S
CRAGS, EDLINGHAM

This fine example of a barbed-and-tanged arrowhead (fig. 1) was found by Meg Shaw on the 2nd of September 1989 in an eroding soil exposure near the foot of the southern buttress at Corby's Crags (NU127102). It is made of grey flint with white mottles and measures 32 mm from base to tip and is 23 mm across the barbs. At its central point it is approximately 5 mm thick. It is an exceptionally finely made specimen, being nearly symmetrical about its central axis, with deep barbs and slightly convex cutting edges. It is still very sharp and virtually in mint condition. The finder has kindly donated it to the Museum of Antiquities.¹

Barbed-and-tanged arrowheads were the principal kind of stone projectile point used in the Early Bronze Age and have been the subject of a detailed study by Green.² The Corby's Crag find may be placed in either group (a) or (b) of his Conygar Hill Type on account of its shape, size and deep squared-off barbs.³ Examples of the Conygar Hill Type have been found associated with Beakers and Food Vessels, suggesting a chronological range extending, potentially, from c. 2000 B.C. to c.

1250 B.C. However, the radiocarbon dates for this type have a much more limited range, spanning the centuries on either side of 1750 B.C.⁴

Except in cases where groups of arrowheads have been found as part of a grave assemblage, barbed-and-tanged arrowheads usually occur as isolated finds, probably having been lost by prehistoric hunters while in pursuit of game. As such they are not uncommon; but examples exhibiting this degree of craftsmanship are rare.

The arrowhead was found about 600 metres north west of the rock shelter excavated by Beckensall in 1975⁵ (NU12800965). These excavations led to the recovery of a small assemblage of struck flints, which owing to the presence of a microlith were dated to the mesolithic period. However, Beckensall also found several fragments of a burial urn of Food Vessel type and it appears that the rock shelter, like others in the county,⁶ had been used as a burial site during the Bronze Age. Beckensall⁷ drew attention to other Bronze Age finds in the area, especially standing stones and rock motifs, and it is clear that Corby's Crags were regularly frequented during the early 2nd millennium B.C.

Christopher Smith

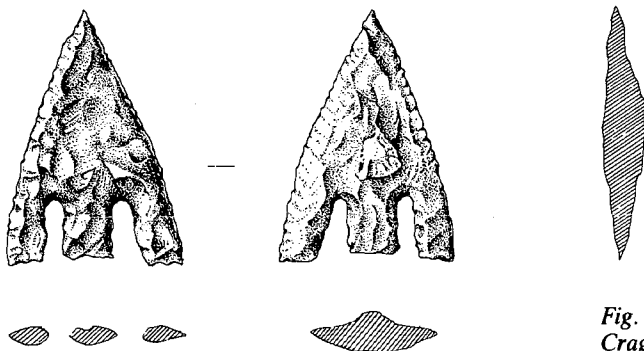


Fig. 1. Barbed and tanged arrowhead from Corby's Crags, Northd. 1:2 Drawn by Liz Lazenby.

2. TWO ESCUTCHEONS FROM ROCHESTER, NORTHUMBERLAND

In 1989 Mr. F. Huggins donated a series of objects found in the vicinity of Hopesley House, Rochester.⁸ Among them were two pieces of copper alloy which, although badly corroded, appear to have been escutcheons; that is, the mounts which were riveted or stuck to the outside of a vessel rim to take the rings which in turn held the handle terminals.

The first (fig. 2) is 5.3 cm long and 2.8 cm at its widest point. It comprises two distinct parts: a loop and a body. The loop fuses into the body one third of the way down its length, forming a slight stub neck. It is sub circular in shape with a central hole 0.7 cm in diameter. The body is convex on both faces splaying out slightly along its length. It tapers to a point which in section projects 4–5 cm away from its main axis, possibly reflecting the line of the vessel's walls. There are no signs of decoration or any indications of attachments, although a rough area on the front may represent more than corrosion. Similar escutcheons are known from South Shields,⁹ Chesters,¹⁰ and Verulamium,¹¹ where an example has been dated to A.D. 150. It is a common form in the Rhineland.¹²

The second escutcheon is of a similar type but takes a more unusual form (fig. 3). Missing its loop it measures 4.8 cm in length and 4.5 cm at its widest point. In section its face is convex and its back almost flat. The edges taper to a narrow fish tail shape with two symmetrical points. A decorative groove runs around the top of the body, possibly aligned to the missing loop.

Fish tail escutcheons have been found at Nijmegen in the Netherlands where a comparable pair found *in situ* on a bronze bucket should be particularly noted.¹³ They are also known in the Rhineland at Zugmantel,¹⁴ and there has been some debate as to their date and centre of production. Willers¹⁵ considered them to be of Gaulish manufacture but with a long period of popularity from A.D. 150 to A.D. 350, while Boesterd reports Werner's suggestion that they were widely manufactured in the Roman pro-

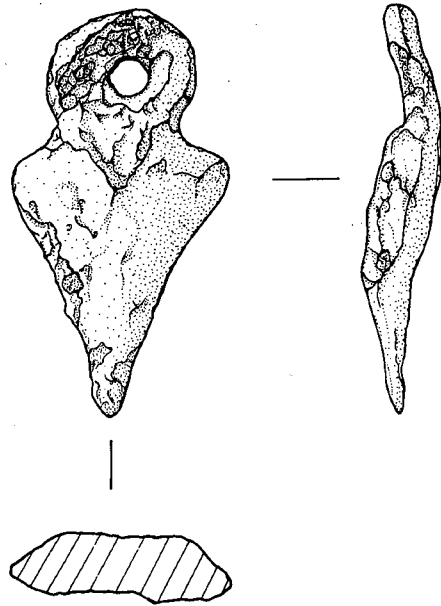


Fig. 2. Bucket escutcheon from Rochester, Northd. 1:2 Drawn by S. Corder.

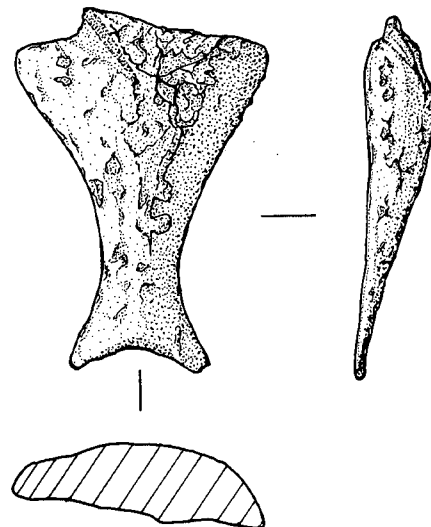


Fig. 3. Bucket escutcheon from Rochester, Northd. 1:2 Drawn by S. Corder.

vinces but only in the late 2nd to early 3rd century A.D.¹⁶

There has been little research into the function and classification of Roman escutcheons, possibly because of the paucity of finds. The literature available is very limited and the establishment of a classification, ideally including a chronological element, requires a larger corpus. Consideration of escutcheons as components of vessels is necessary in order to validate any classification but the discovery of two escutcheons from one site displaying variations on a particular type must add to our body of knowledge.

Sharron Corder

NOTES

* Prepared for the press by L. Allason-Jones with grateful thanks to the contributors.

¹ Accession Number 1989.22.

² Green, H. Stephen, (1980) *The Flint Arrowheads of the British Isles* BAR 75(i) and (ii), Oxford.

³ Ibid., 117, 123.

⁴ Ibid., 137-9.

⁵ Beckensall, S. (1976) "The excavation of a rock shelter at Corby's Crag, Edlingham" *AA*⁵ IV, 11-6.

⁶ Burgess, C. (1972) "Goatscrag: A Bronze Age rock shelter cemetery in North Northumberland" *AA*⁴ L, 15-69.

⁷ Op. cit.

⁸ Accession Number 1989.6.

⁹ Allason-Jones, L., and Miket, R. F. (1984) *Catalogue of Small Finds from South Shields Roman Fort* Newcastle upon Tyne, 3-765.

¹⁰ Budge, E. W. A. (1907) *An Account of the Roman Antiquities preserved in the Museum at Chesham, Northumberland* London, 380, nos 865 and 980.

¹¹ Waugh, H., and Goodburn, R. (1972) *The Non-ferrous Objects from Verulamium* Oxford, fig. 41, no. 132.

¹² Kastell Dambach: *ORL* 69, Taf. III, no. 12; Kastell Stockstadt: *ORL* 33, Taf. VII, no. 30.

¹³ Boesterd, M. H. P. den (1956) *The Bronze Vessels in the Rijksmuseum G. M. Kam at Nijmegen* Nijmegen, no. 153.

¹⁴ *ORL* 8, Taf. XIII, nos 12 and 14.

¹⁵ Willers, H. (1900) *Die römischen Bronzeimer von Hemmoor* Hannover, 63, 186.

¹⁶ Boesterd (1956), 47.

