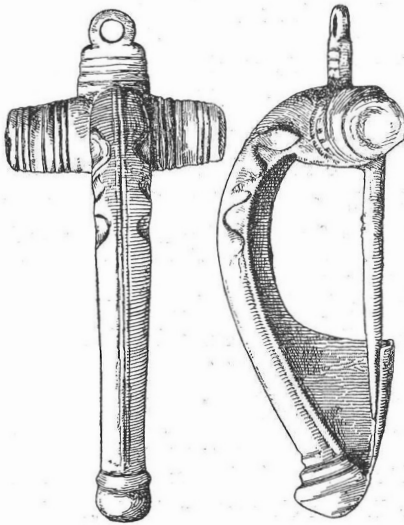


Ravencliffe Cave.

By REGINALD SMITH, F.S.A.



AMONG the finds in Ravencliffe Cave is a bronze brooch that illustrates a comparatively late stage in the evolution of a type possessing both British and Roman features. Numerous illustrations would be necessary to trace the development from the pre-Roman form called La Tène III, but it will suffice to point out here to what extent the Ravenscliffe brooch differs from datable specimens found in this country. The loop at the head is to



Bronze Brooch, Ravencliffe Cave. †

hold one end of a chain that hung over the breast and connected a pair of brooches fixed below the shoulders. Originally this loop consisted of a bend of wire attached to the spiral spring-coil, which, like the loop, subsequently acquired a solid form. The cross-lines below the loop represent the earlier coils of wire between the loop and spiral-spring. The latter is

indicated by the grooving of the head, which in the earlier stages was a long spiral coil of wire, one end issuing from the top of the bow, and the other forming the pin.

The bow has markings in relief on either side of the highest part, the remnants of a much richer and more graceful decoration in true late Keltic style. The foot is moulded and fairly heavy, though not of the exaggerated box form seen on the well-known brooch from Aesica (Chesters).¹ The foot-plate, which is turned over below to form a socket for the pin, is solid, earlier and larger specimens being sometimes engraved with the eccentric curves of Early British art. The pin is no longer the continuation of the spring, but simply works on a hinge in the solid cross-bar forming the head and simulating a coiled spring below its spring-cover. The Backworth (Northumberland) brooch, which has certain points of resemblance,² was found with a coin of Antoninus Pius (A.D. 139), and another pair from Chorley, Lancs. (with chain), can be dated by the latest coins found with them (Hadrian, A.D. 138). But the closest parallels were found in the county at Elton, and show the T-shaped head, as opposed to the more truly British head of trumpet form, as from Chorley and Backworth. The Elton examples have wire loops attached to the head, and the bow in each case is clearly derived from a prototype, of which the development is well seen in examples from Cricklade (Wilts.) and Yeovil (Som.) in the British Museum, which have the foot-plate ornamented with step-pattern in open-work. As might be expected, Keltic feeling often found expression in brooches suggested by Roman provincial forms, though it must be confessed that the Roman element predominates in the Ravencliffe specimen. Various indications fix its date within certain limits, and at least until further dated examples are forthcoming, the end of the second century may be regarded as the time when the brooch was made and Ravencliffe Cave was inhabited, not for the first nor the last time.

¹ *Archæologia*, lv., 181.

² *Archæological Journal*, viii., 39, and *Early Iron Age Guide* (British Mus.), 102, fig. 84.