

ROMAN MATERIAL FROM RAINSTER ROCKS, BRASSINGTON

BY JOSEPHINE DOOL
(Winchester City Museum)

Rainster Rocks is an impressive natural outcrop of carboniferous limestone in the parish of Brassington, Derbyshire, and the site, it would appear, of an extensive Romano-British settlement. The National Grid Reference is SK 2154-2254. Roman pottery was noted from the site as far back as 1889-90 (Haverfield 1905, 261), and archaeological investigations were undertaken in 1907 by William Smithard (Smithard 1910), who excavated a flat platform among the Rocks and trenched the 'enclosures' below. The finds from 1907 comprised a bronze trumpet brooch, ironwork, coins of Claudius II Gothicus (A.D. 268-270) and Aurelian (A.D. 270-275), a whetstone, a quern fragment, and pottery sherds which included straight-sided flanged bowls of fourth-century type, Derbyshire ware and *mortaria*. Smithard believed that Rainster Rocks might be the site of Lutudarum, but his theory was not supported by any evidence of lead-working activities. The Roman road from Buxton to Little Chester probably passed less than a mile from the site, although the exact course of the road south-east of Minninglow Hill has not been traced, so its relationship to the site at Rainster Rocks is unknown.

The material which forms the subject of this paper was found recently at Rainster Rocks by two treasure hunters, Mr. Derek Holbrook and Mr. Anthony Wright of Derby, with the use of metal detectors. Their collections would have remained totally unknown but for the fact that they came to the notice of a member of the Derbyshire Archaeological Society, Mr. Don Farnsworth, through whose enthusiastic interest and good offices the material was brought to Derby Museum to be recorded.

Anthony Wright was able to give some verbal information about the original position of his material, which mostly had been found close to the surface in loose eroded soil within 20 yards left or five yards right of the centre path leading to the top rock ledges; but no accurate plan had been made. Derek Holbrook simply records that the material which he collected was found 'on or near the surface between rocks on eroded slopes'. The finds remain at present in the possession of the two collectors.

METALWORK (Figs. 1-2)

1 Bronze fibula with a slender, tapering bow and a pierced catch-plate. The spring and pin are missing but would have been contained within semi-cylindrical side-wings with disc-ends pierced for the axial bar. The side wings have two mouldings decorated with faint transverse cross cuts. The chord of the spring would have passed through the small cast loop at the head of the bow, which is extended to form a narrow raised moulding along the upper part of the bow. *Camulodunum* Type IV (Hawkes and Hull 1947, 310-11), which continued at least to the end of the first century A.D. Found 'on or near the surface between rocks on eroded slopes'.

2 A stout bronze fibula with solid catch-plate and a moulded foot. The upper part of the bow originally contained enamel ornament of which a tiny fragment, of orange colour, remains. Beneath is a circular knob, below which a raised ridge runs down the centre of the bow to the foot. There are two pairs of small moulded 'ribs' on either side of this central ridge. The edges of the bow have a slight raised ridge on each side. The head loop is cast solid with the bow. The side-wings are decorated with two mouldings at each end, and they are cylindrical in shape. The disc-ends are pierced to take the axial bar on which the pin was hinged. The axial bar and the pin are made of iron, but the pin is broken. The fibula has close affinities with Collingwood Group M,

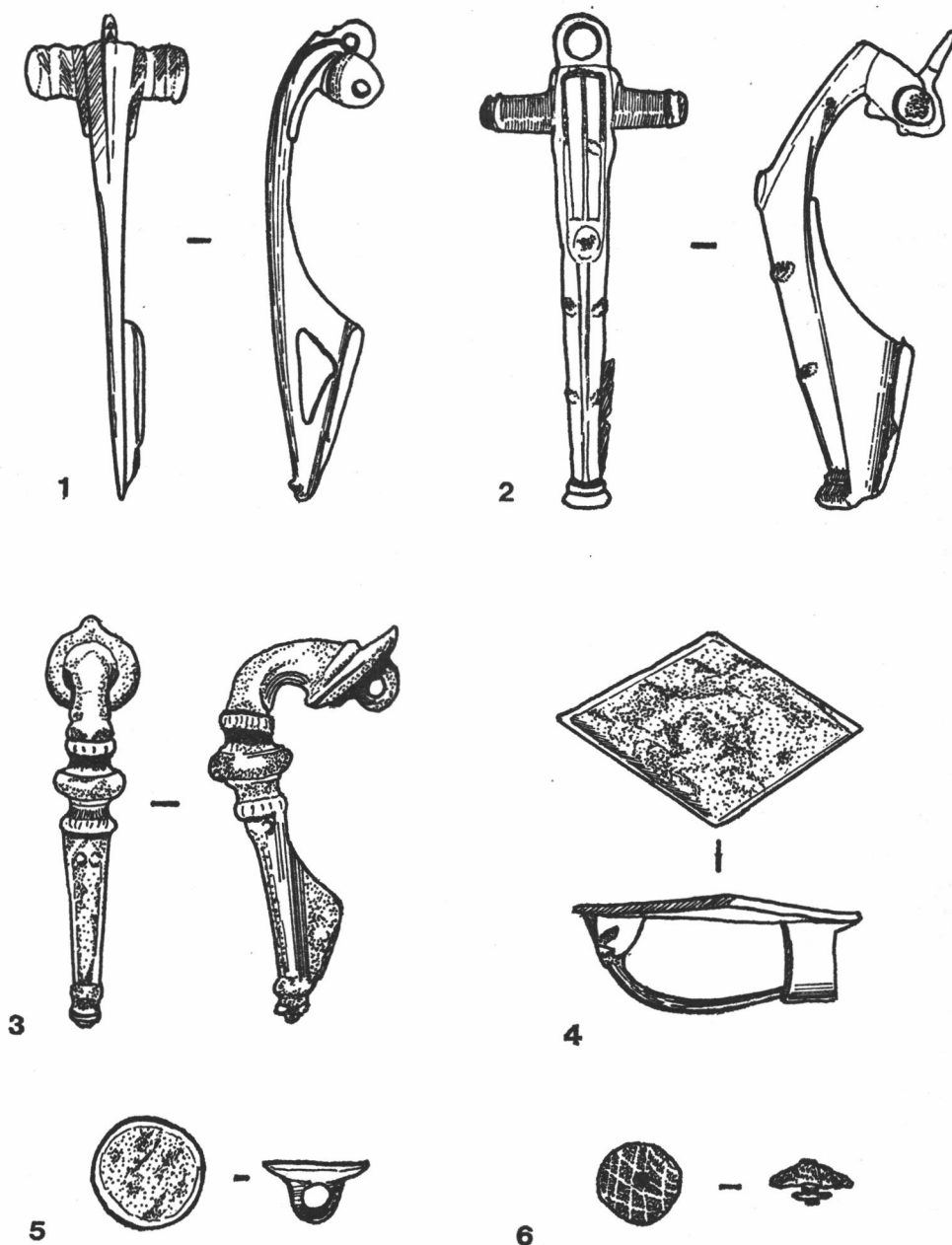


Fig. 1 Bronze objects from Rainster Rocks, Derbyshire. Scale 1 : 1

the tapering bow brooch, which was current in the late first and second centuries A.D. (Collingwood and Richmond 1969, fig. 103, nos. 28–31). Found on or near the surface between rocks on eroded slopes.

3 A small bronze trumpet brooch, with the spring and pin missing. This is Collingwood type R(i) with a trumpet head in combination with a plain moulded waist

knob. The raised 'collars' on either side of the waist knob bear milled decoration; the only other ornamentation consists of vertical lines and circles on the lower part of the bow. Much of the surface is slightly corroded, but parts still have a good patina. The trumpet brooch is a type which developed in the military areas of Britain after the Flavian conquest and reached its peak of production during the first half of the second century A.D. Found on or near the surface between rocks on eroded slopes.

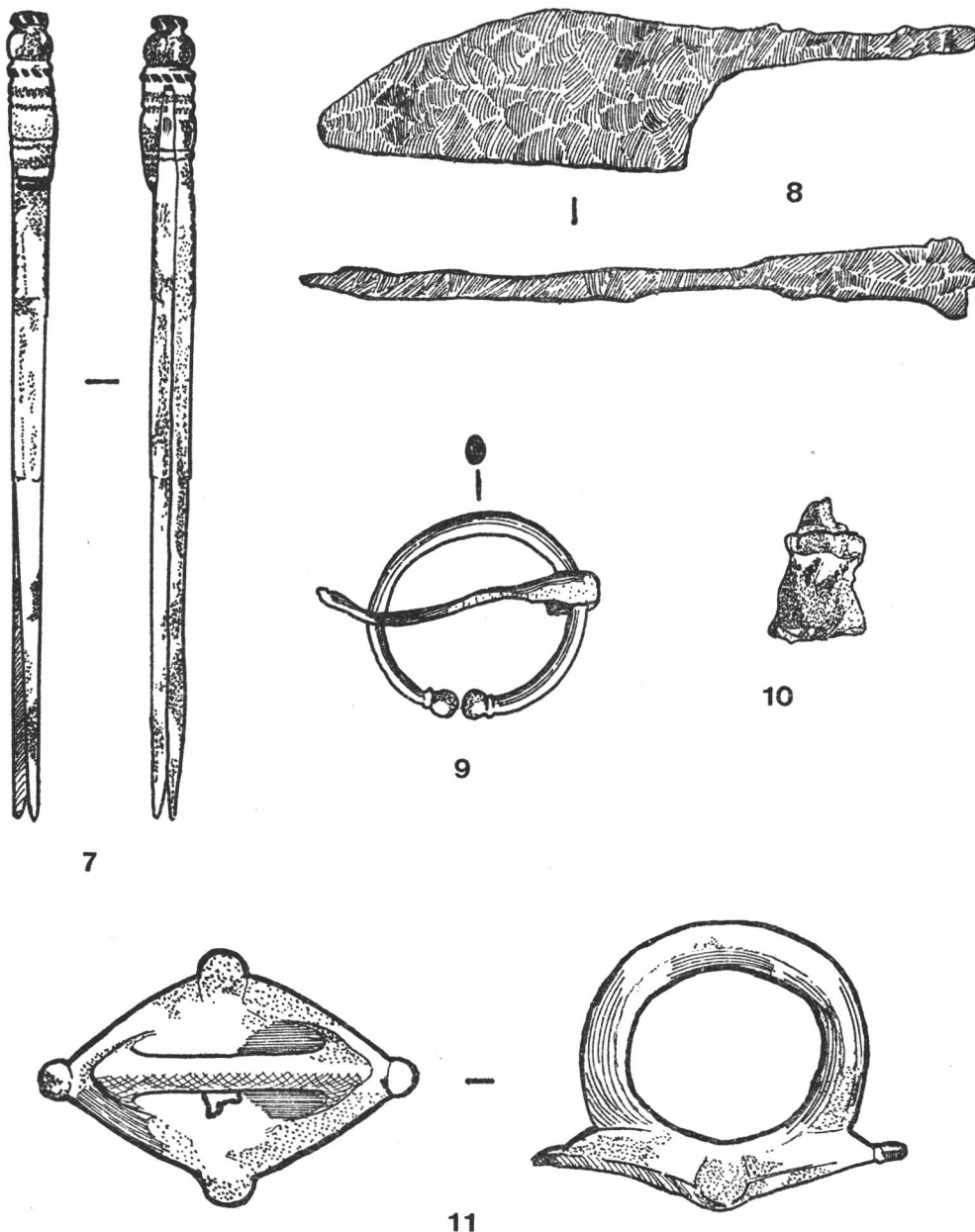


Fig. 2 Bronze and iron objects from Rainster Rocks, Derbyshire. Scale 1 : 1

4 Bronze plate brooch of lozenge-shape. The decoration on the upper surface is missing, but presumably it was inset originally with coloured enamels. The pin and catch-plate are complete. Plate brooches are most commonly found in second-century contexts. Found on or near the surface between rocks on eroded slopes.

5 Small bronze fastener with a loop for attachment. The upper surface originally was inset with decoration, presumably in coloured enamel, which has been entirely lost. Found on or near the surface between rocks on eroded slopes.

6 Dome-headed bronze stud, the upper surface decorated with cross cuts forming an irregular lattice pattern. Found on or near the surface between rocks on eroded slopes.

7 Bronze dividers. A fine and rather unusual specimen. The dividers are surmounted by a knob bordered by two moulded 'collars' with milled decoration. They pivot on a pin that is concealed through the top of the arms. It is somewhat remarkable that a measuring or mathematical instrument of this kind should be found at Rainster Rocks. Found with 'head protruding out of soil by rock face', left-hand side of centre path.

8 A small iron knife with tang. Somewhat corroded.

9 Bronze penannular brooch. The plain rounded terminals have raised collars. The pin is oval in section, but one end has been fashioned into a flat strip and bent round the ring. Fowler's type A1, a common Romano-British type which is found down to the third century A.D. (Fowler 1960). Found 'under moss on the rocks', right-hand side of centre path.

10 A small, crudely-made bronze object, apparently some kind of terminal.

11 Bronze object comprising a lozenge-shaped mount with a stout ring. The mount has semi-circular projections at each corner. The under-surface bears traces of three metal attachments. The purpose of the object is unknown, but it most probably served as a domestic fitment or handle, perhaps from an item of furniture; it would not have been suitable for use as a harness fitting. Found 'in tuft of grass on rock at base of slopes'.

Not illustrated

An assortment of iron nails, probably Roman.

A large iron ring, probably modern.

An iron buckle (shoe buckle?), post-medieval.

Fragments of bronze including part of a pair of tweezers and a small scrap of sheet bronze with repoussé decoration. Roman.

A roughly circular off-cut of lead c. 3 cm. in diameter with an irregular-shaped hole in the centre.

Two small pieces of smelted lead.

A lump of unsmelted lead ore, galena.

POTTERY

A small quantity of pottery was also collected, the bulk of it consisting of sherds of Derbyshire ware. Several sherds of grey ware, including rim fragments of a large hook-rimmed jar 13 in. in diameter and a wide-mouthed bowl. One sherd of samian, the rim of a Dr. 31 bowl, much abraded; probably Antonine. Found in 'loose eroded soil' either side of the centre path leading to the top ledges.

COINS

- 1 Macrinus (217–218)
Base core of forgery of a *denarius*, originally silvered.
Obv. IMPCMOP[EL SEV MACR]INVS AVG
Laureate bust right
Rev. Annona standing by modius at feet
PMT[R PH]COS PP
R.I.C. 26
- 2 Gallienus A.D. 253–268
Æ Antoninianus
Obv. GALLIENVS[AVG]
Rev. Uncertain
- 3 Gallienus. A.D.
Æ Antoninianus
Obv. GAL[LIENVS AV]G
Radiate head right
Rev. [SOLI]CONS AVG
Pegasus springing right
R.I.C. 283
- 4 Salonina A.D. 253–268
Æ Antoninianus, with a silver wash
Obv. [SALONINA AVG]
Rev. [IVNO REGINA]
Juno standing left
R.I.C. 13
- 5 Salonina.
Æ Antoninianus, with a silver wash
Obv. SALONINA AVG
Diademed and draped bust right,
resting on crescent
Rev. VESTA
Vesta seated left, holding patera and
sceptre
R.I.C. 32
- 6 Victorinus A.D. 268–270
Æ Antoninianus
Obv. [IM]P C VICTOR[INVS P F AVG]
Radiate bust right
Rev. INV[ICTVS]
Sol advancing left, holding a whip
R.I.C. 114
- 7 Claudius II Gothicus A.D. 268–270
Æ Antoninianus
Obv. [IMP C CLAV]DIVS[AVG]
Radiate head right
Rev. [MARS V]LTOR
Mars advancing right
- 8 Tetricus I A.D. 270–273
Æ Antoninianus
Obv. IMP TETRICVS [P F AVG]
Rev. HILARITAS AVGG
Hilaritas standing left
R.I.C. 79
- 9 Tetricus I
Æ Antoninianus
Obv. [IMP C TE]TRICVS[P F AVG]
Rev. Illegible
- 10 Tetricus I
Æ Antoninianus
Obv. [IMP C TETR]ICVS P F AVG
Radiate, draped bust right
Rev. [PA]X A[VG]
Mint mark in field V*
- 11 Tetricus I
Æ Antoninianus
Illegible
- 12 Tetricus II A.D. 270–273
Æ Antoninianus
Obv. C P E TETRICVS CAES
Rev. [PIETAS AVGVSTOR]
Sacrificial implements
R.I.C. 259
- 13 Tetricus II A.D.
Æ Antoninianus
Rev. PIETAS AVGV[STOR]
Sacrificial implements
- 14 *Æ* 3
A.D. 330–335
Obv. CONSTAN - TINOPOLIS
Rev. Victory on prow
TR·P Mint of Trier
Late Roman Bronze Coinage, 71
- 14 Valentinian I A.D. 364–375
Æ 3
Obv. DN VALENTINI - ANVS P F AVG
Bust right, draped and pearl
diademed.
Rev. GLORIA ROMANORVM
Victory to left, holding wreath and
palm.
Mint of Trier.
Minted A.D. 367–375
- 16 Valentinian I A.D. 364–375
Obv. DN VALENTINI - ANVS P F AVG
Bust right, draped and pearl
diademed.
Rev. GLORIA ROMANORVM
Emperor dragging captive right,
holding labarum in left hand.
- 17–22 Six *antoniniani*, late third century A.D.
Illegible
- 23 Barbarous radiate, minim. 7 mm. diameter
c. A.D. 270+
- 24–25 Two coins corroded together. Late third
or fourth century A.D.

Details of provenance are available for some of the coins:

- 3 Top ledge by rock face on left-hand side of centre path, at a depth of one inch.
- 5 and 13 Ledge to right of the centre rocks, in nettles at a depth of one inch.
- 6 Left-hand side of centre footpath, halfway up, under a rocky ledge at a depth of one inch.
- 7 Top ledge by rock face, right-hand side of centre path, at a depth of half an inch.
- 10 On grass at the back of the Rocks, at a depth of a quarter of an inch.
- 15 Small 'cave', right-hand side of the centre path, at a depth of half an inch.

- 16 and 23 Loose soil which had recently been excavated, left-hand side of centre path.
17 Side of the path left of the centre rocks, at a depth of one inch.
24 and 25 Base of tree beneath the top ledge, at a depth of one inch.

REFERENCES

- COLLINGWOOD, R. G., and RICHMOND, I. A., 1969. *The Archaeology of Roman Britain* (London, Methuen, 1969).
FOWLER, E., 1969. 'The Origins and Development of the Penannular Brooch in Europe', *Proc. Prehist. Soc.*, 26 (1960), 149-177.
HAVERFIELD, F., 1905 'Romano-British Derbyshire', pp 191-263 in *The Victoria History of the County of Derby* (ed. W. Page), Vol. 1 (London, 1905).
HAWKES, C. F. C., and HULL, M. R., 1947. *Camulodunum. First Report on the Excavations at Colchester, 1930-1939*, Reports of the Research Committee of the Society of Antiquaries of London, 16 (London, Society of Antiquaries, 1947).
SMITHARD, W., 1910. 'The Roman Road between Little Chester and Minning Low', *Derbys. Arch. Journ.*, 32 (1910), 125-140.