

## Some Pagan Anglian Finds from Deeside

by Lloyd Laing

Among the unpublished material in the collection of the Grosvenor Museum, Chester, is a bronze brooch (Reg. 47. S. 63), which is associated with a glass bead. The accompanying note describes the brooch as being 'found in Deeside with three beads, probably in the nineteenth century' (Fig. 27).

The association of brooch and beads is strongly indicative of a burial, and as such is the first evidence for a pagan Anglian grave in the region.

The brooch, which lacks its pin, is of the type designated by Leeds as a small-long brooch of trefoil headed type (Leeds, 1945, 8-10). Trefoil small-long brooches are simplified cruciform brooches. The earliest typologically are those with moderate lobes and headplate and with a triangular foot; this specimen while very close to the 'classic' form is beginning to show devolution, the triangular foot showing a tendency to curvature and the ornament on the bow being reduced to a few lines (compare Leeds, 1945, Fig. 4a). On the other hand the arms have hatching round their edges, implying reasonably careful work, and a date early in the development of the series should be ascribed to the Deeside brooch, perhaps in the first half of the sixth century.

The distribution of trefoil-headed small-long brooches is largely confined to the Midlands (Map, Leeds 1945, Fig. 6), with a scatter along the Trent and Witham, the nearest finds to the Dee being in Nottinghamshire.

The bead is a small tubular type in red with a red central band and green and yellow stripes on the ends, and is a type which would not be out of place in a sixth-century Anglian grave.

There are very few early Anglo-Saxon finds from the Cheshire region. There is a bead of blue glass with yellow and green ornament from Hilbre, Wirral (Bu'lock, 1972, 35), and a quoit brooch from Meols nearby (Bu'lock, 1960, Fig. 2e, Pl. 1 and discussion, 6). It is of bronze, with ring-and-dot ornament. As a class they have been discussed by Leeds (1945, 46-9) and the distribution is generally similar to short-long brooches, the nearest finds to Cheshire again being in the vicinity of the Trent (Leeds, 1945, Map fig. 29). It is by no means certain that the belt-fittings ascribed by Bu'lock to the early Anglo-Saxon period from the Meols (Bu'lock, 1960, 6) site are in fact pre-Christian.

Two further finds may be cited. The first is the hoard of metalwork from Halkyn, Flintshire, which included three bronze bowls with triangular lugs of Rhineland origin (Ellis Davies, 1949, 176). These have been discussed by Hawkes (1951, 182) and more recently by Thompson (1956, 194-9), who also plotted their distribution. He suggested that they had been traded by the Irish Sea

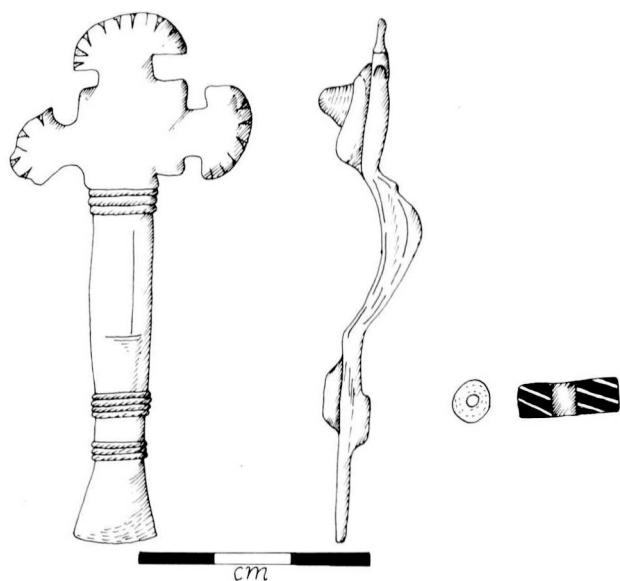


Fig. 27 No title.

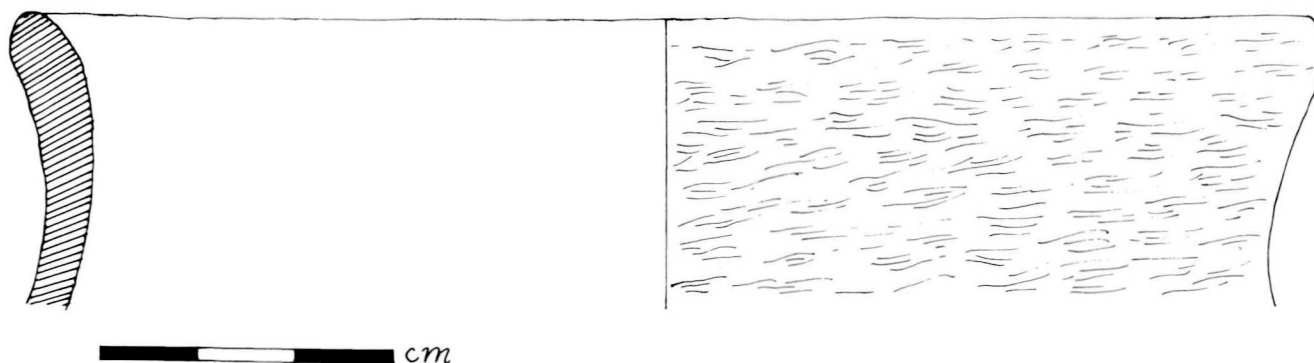


Fig. 28 No title.

trade route, but in view of their distribution in England it seems more probable that they came to the area with the Anglian advance from the Midlands.

The remaining find is an unpublished rim sherd of a hand-made urn which appears to be pagan Saxon from the Roman site at Heronbridge, Cheshire, now in the Grosvenor Museum (Fig. 28). The Heronbridge site is particularly interesting in view of its cemetery of about 20 male burials oriented E-W and without gravegoods, that were ascribed to the fourth century or later and which were subsequently incorporated into a post-Roman earthwork enclosure which may have been monastic, (Bu'lock, 1972, 8).

The foregoing finds, meagre though they are, might suggest an Anglian penetration into Deeside during the sixth century from the Trent Valley region. This picture would seem to be supported by the place-name evidence for the region, as recently set out by Dodgson (1968), which also implies settlement in the sixth (late) century, and by the limited amount of historical evidence (summarized in Bu'lock, 1972).

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## POSTSCRIPT

Since this was written it has been drawn to my attention by Mr N. Moore of the Grosvenor Museum that some doubt is attached to the provenance of the Deeside brooch.