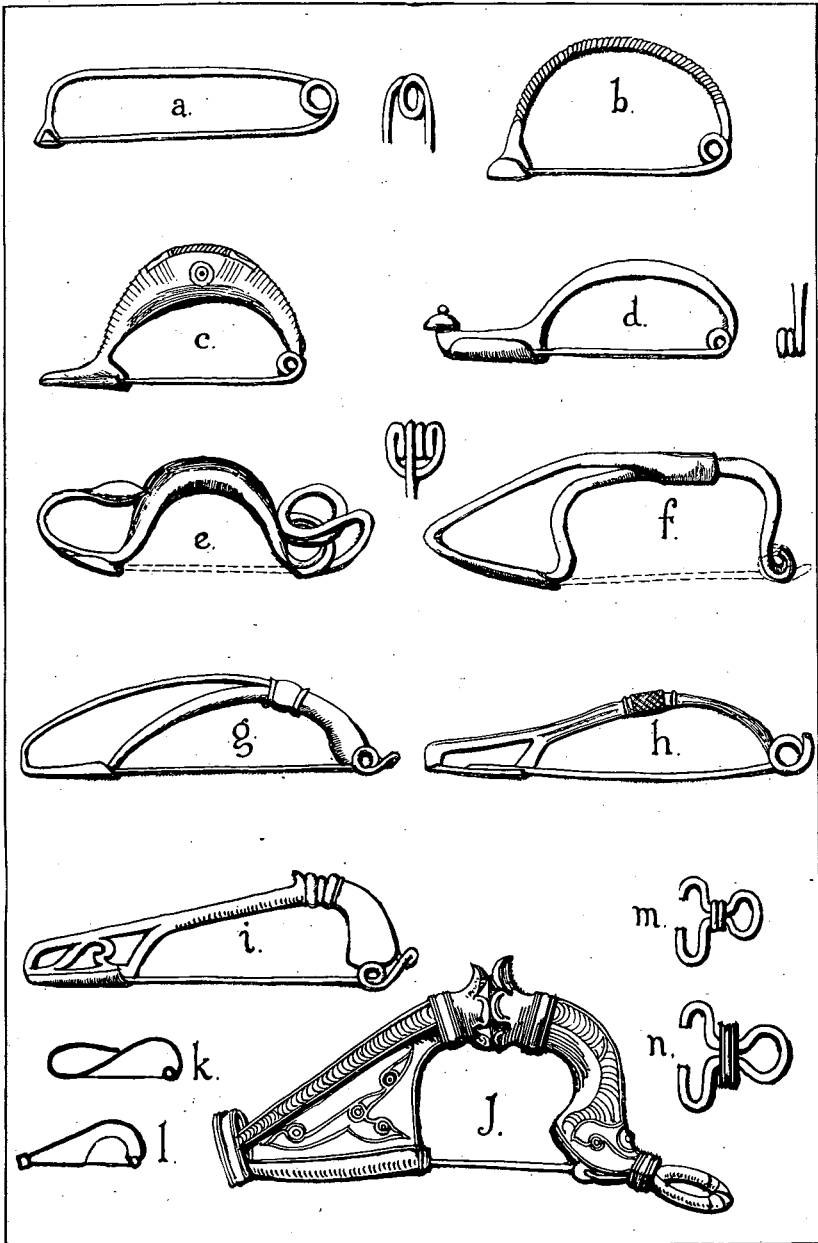


Full size.

PAIR OF SILVER-GILT BROOCHES FOUND NEAR BACKWORTH, NORTHUMBERLAND,
NOW IN THE BRITISH MUSEUM.--(Plate I.)



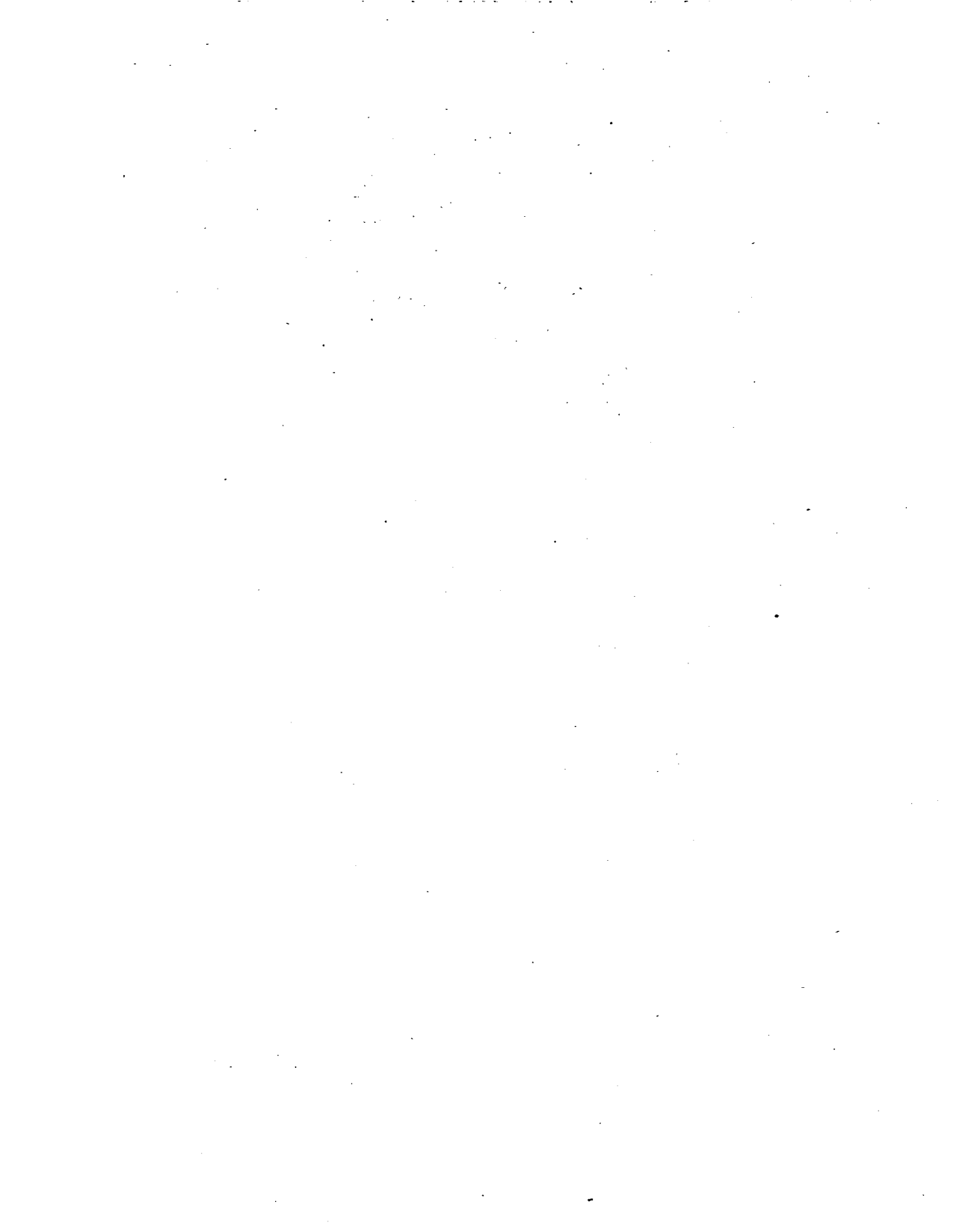


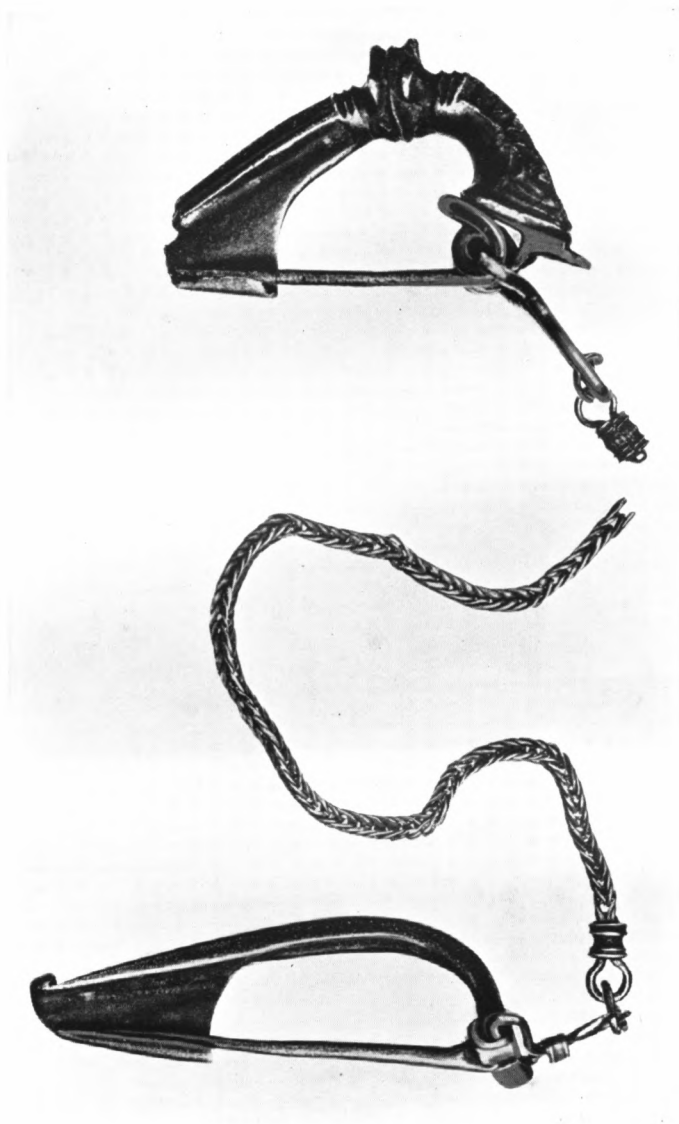
THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE SAFETY-PIN INTO THE BACKWORTH
TYPE OF BROOCH.—(Plate II.)





BRITISH BROOCHES OF THE BACKWORTH TYPE IN THE BLACK GATE MUSEUM,
NEWCASTLE-UPON-TYNE.—(Plate III.)





BRONZE BROUCHES FROM THE RIVER TYNE, NOW IN THE
BLACK GATE MUSEUM.—(Plate IV.)





Figure I. Full size.

FRAGMENT OF A SILVER BROOCH FROM HOUSESTEADS,
NOW IN THE BLACK GATE MUSEUM.



Figure II. Full size.

BRONZE BROOCH FROM RISINGHAM, NOW IN THE
BLACK GATE MUSEUM.

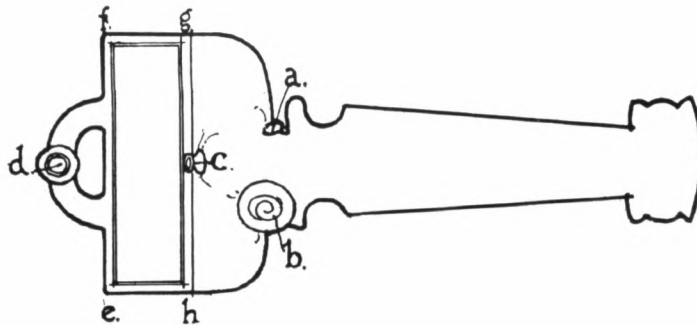
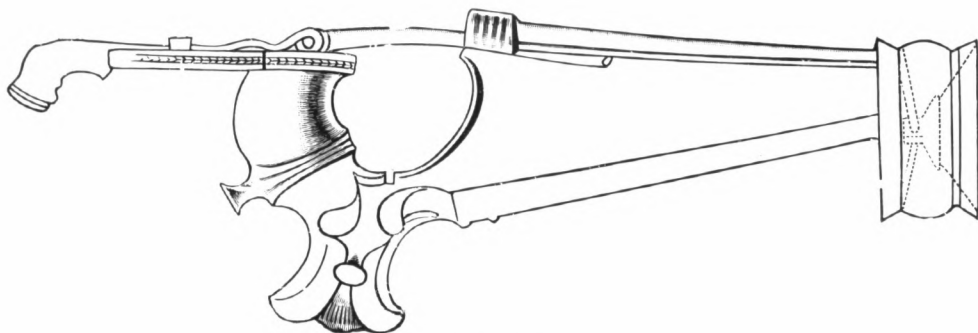
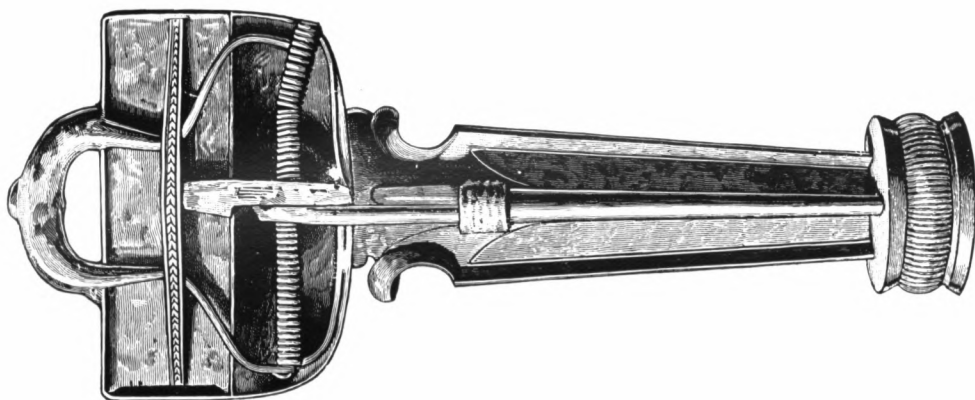
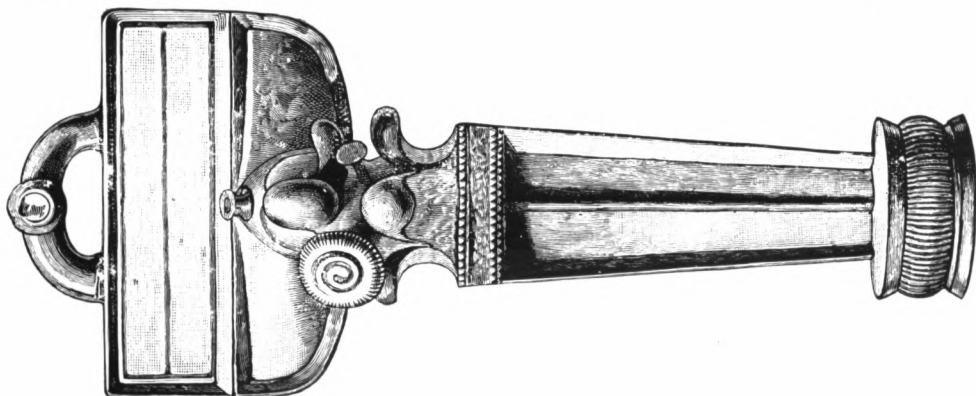


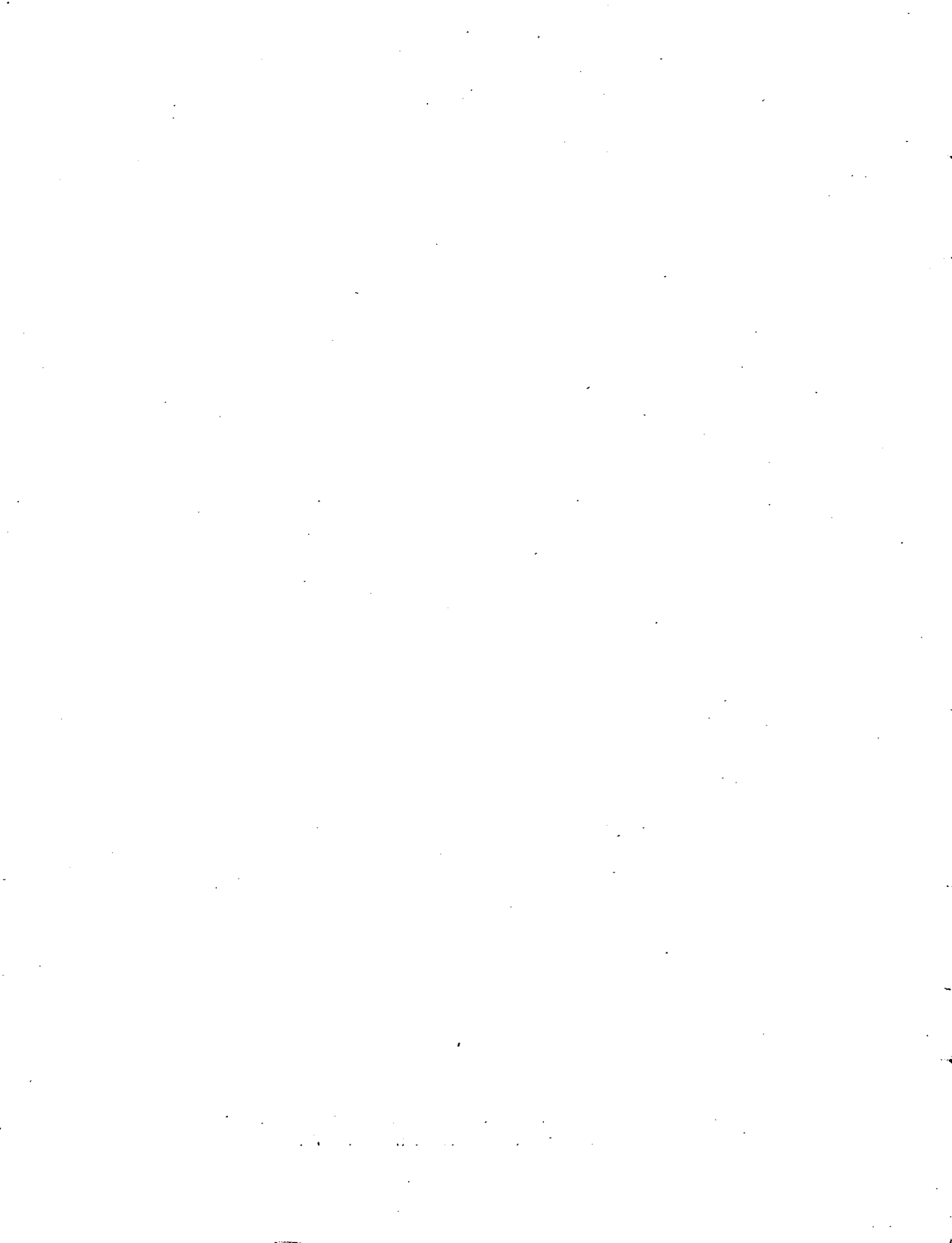
Figure III. Half full size.

SILVER BROOCH FROM GREAT CHESTERS, NOW IN THE
BLACK GATE MUSEUM.—(Plate V.)



$\frac{2}{3}$ linear.

SIDE, BACK AND FRONT VIEWS OF SILVER BROOCH FROM GREAT CHESTERS,
NOW IN THE BLACK GATE MUSEUM.—(Plate VI.)



IX.—BRITISH BROOCHES OF THE BACKWORTH
TYPE IN THE BLACK GATE MUSEUM,
NEWCASTLE-UPON-TYNE.

By PARKER BREWIS, F.S.A.

[Read on 26th March, 1924.]

The remarkable hoard of gold and silver objects found about 1811, in the neighbourhood of Backworth, Northumberland, and now in the British Museum,¹ contains a pair of silver-gilt brooches (Plate I.) so widely known that the name 'Backworth brooches' serves to denote a precise type. Associated with the above mentioned pair of brooches was found a number of objects including coins of Antoninus Pius, the latest having been struck A.D. 139.

The brooches, however, are not Roman but British, their decoration being not of classic but of Keltic character. They are provided with loops at the head for the attachment of a chain, so that they may have been worn in pairs. The custom of wearing brooches in pairs, connected by a slender chain, was in use in the early La Tène period, an example being found at Pleurs (Marne) with a female skeleton.² This fashion of wearing brooches in pairs was continued after the Roman conquest by the Keltic women of Britain, Gaul and Pannonia, but never became a Roman fashion.³

¹ See new *History of Northumberland*, vol. ix, pp. 26-32.

² *Manuel d'Archéologie, Déchelette II* (1914), p. 1252. Other examples of pairs of brooches with chains complete have been found in the cemeteries of the Somme, e.g., at Somme Bionne (La Tène, I), at Sommesous (La Tène, II), *Guide Illustré Musée St. Germain*, M. S. Reinach and M. Eggiman.

³ 'The Celtic brooch and how it was worn,' *Illustrated Archaeologist*, vol. i, p. 166, also *The Reliquary* 1895, p. 157 and 1901, p. 195.

'The Romans did not fasten the toga with fibulae, but only used them to secure extra upper garments.' Ridgeway's *Early Age of Greece*, p. 557.

On the continent the Backworth type of brooch, though not unknown, is so rare that a German archæologist⁴ classified one, found near Frankfort-on-the-Main, as of African origin.

Although this type of brooch occurs sporadically in the south of Britain, it is a special product of the north of Britain and forms part of a series of indications that the Keltic element continued to hold its own in this part of the Roman province long after the Roman occupation.

Examples of the Backworth type of brooch have been found at Kirkby Thore (Westmorland) under circumstances pointing to their having been manufactured locally. With them were associated Roman coins from Vespasian to Severus.⁵ Several unfinished and broken examples have also been found at Brough (Westmorland)⁶ therefore this site was presumably also a centre of manufacture. Hence brooches of the type are frequently referred to as 'Brough brooches,' but the area that at a later period became the ancient kingdom of Northumbria seems to have been responsible for their production. They have been found at Corstopitum, Poltross Burn, Carlisle, Risingham, Newsteads near Melrose, Traprain Law, the Lawe, South Shields, the river Tyne, Seaton Carew, Great Chesters, Backworth and other parts of Northumbria—indeed Sir Arthur Evans proposed to term them 'the Northumbrian type.'⁷ This term has not, however, met with general acceptance. There are other types of brooches having claims to the title Northumbrian; though numerically less well represented yet in character they are equally Keltic, for example the silver brooch found at Housesteads (Plate V, Fig. 1),⁸ reveals the Keltic mastery of reflexed curves. Again the **S** or Dragon brooch⁹ is also Keltic in design and manufacture, furthermore the gilt brooch

⁴ Riese in *Heddernheimer Mittheilungen*.

⁵ See *Archæologia* xxxi (1854), p. 279 *et seq.*

⁶ *Pro Soc. Ant.*, vol. xix, p. 130.

⁷ *Archæologia*, vol. lv, p. 185.

⁸ *Arch. Ael.*, 2nd Ser., vol. xxv, p. 286.

⁹ *Soc. Ant. N/c.*, *Pro.*, 3rd Ser., vol. iii, p. viii.

found at Great Chesters, associated with the silver example though of a different type, is Keltic in decoration and has, in a less degree, a claim to the term Northumbrian. In the term 'Backworth Brooch' there is no ambiguity, for only one type of brooch was found at Backworth. Moreover, with the exception of enāmelling, the Backworth pair (Plate I.) comprehensively exhibit all the characteristics of the type, viz :

1. A chain-loop at the head in order that they may be attached and worn together as pairs ;
2. The trumpet-mouthed expansion of the head covering the bilateral spring ;
3. The harp-shaped bow carrying a boss, with a conventional floral ornament on the bridge ;
4. The extended foot terminating in a disc or box ;
5. The sheath ornamented with Keltic designs.

Since these characteristics are the outcome of long evolution, it may be well to sketch a pedigree of this particular branch of the brooch family.

The simplest form of brooch is that of the safety pin constructed out of a single piece of wire, by making a coil in the middle of its length to act as a spring, a point at one end and a hook at the other (Plate II, a.). This simple safety pin type of brooch was invented more than 3,000 years ago. In cold countries, where thick garments were necessary, the simple safety pin did not allow sufficient space between the pin and the bridge for much stuff, hence towards the end of the Bronze Age, the bridge of the safety pin was arched into a bow (Plate II, b.). The arch of the bow was at first high, usually semi-circular, but it was lowered in later examples. In the Hallstatt period the bow was thickened to give solidity, and also to afford scope for ornamentation (Plate II, c.). These brooches are termed 'Leech' or 'Boat-shaped Brooches' and sometimes have an extended foot. In the next stage this extension of the foot was exaggerated, the foot terminating in a turned up tail appendage, the purpose of which is purely decorative (Plate

II, d.). This type is termed the 'Certosa' pattern, because a large number were found in the graves at Certosa near Bologna in Italy. In these graves were also found a number of Greek and Etruscan objects of 5th century B.C. The extension of the foot continued, and in the next type the foot was turned back until it touched the bow (Plate II, e.). The example shown was found by The Rev. Wm. Greenwell in a barrow at Cowlam in Yorkshire¹⁰ and is now in the British Museum. This type is termed 'La Tène I' and is widely distributed. The oldest La Tène examples are almost as old as the Certosa pattern.

The extended foot was liable to be accidentally bent, therefore its termination was attached to the bow, either by bending it round the bow (Plate II, f.) or by binding the two together by a separate collar (Plate II, g.). In both these cases the type is termed 'La Tène II.' In the course of time the foot merged into the bow without a joint, but a raised ring usually marks what had been the place of union (Plate II, h.). The triangular space at the foot was sometimes left open, but in later examples it is usually filled by a thin plate frequently pierced (Plate II, i.). These forms (h and i) are known as 'La Tène III.' The term 'La Tène' means 'the shallows,' and is the name of an important late Keltic settlement at the East end of Lake Neuchâtel in Switzerland where a number of these brooches have been found, mainly La Tène II. The importance of this early Iron Age settlement has resulted in the attachment of its name to three stages during which the brooch also passed through three well-defined phases.

In La Tène I the foot is turned up until it touches the bow.

In La Tène II the foot is attached to the bow.

In La Tène III the foot is cast in one piece with the bow though there is usually a simulated joint.

The evolution during the La Tène periods is of great interest in that at the start the main line of the brooch flows from the head, over the bridge, down to the pin, then extends along the

¹⁰ *British Barrows*, p. 208 (a female burial).

foot, and back in an S-shaped curve until it meets the bridge of the bow (Plate II. k.) whereas in the late example of La Tène III the main line of the brooch appears to flow from the head, half way over the bow, thence in a straight line down to the foot and back to the pin (Plate II, l.) *i.e.*, ending in a reverse direction to that of La Tène I and II. This is due to the bow in La Tène III being a *cire-perdue* casting and no longer in one piece with the pin and its spring.

Simultaneously with this evolution, the spring was also undergoing considerable change. Beginning with a simple loop (Plate II, a. and b.), the coils were increased in number, at first unilaterally (Plate II, d.); but during La Tène Culture the spring becomes bilateral. This far reaching change serves to divide brooches into two great groups, the early or unilateral, and the late, or bilateral.

La Tène type III is a well-known Roman provincial type with a wide western distribution. In Gaul, the Roman conquest does not appear to have favoured further evolution of native art. On the other hand in northern Britain, where the indigenous element was less fully assimilated by the Romans, Keltic art continued living and creative. Keltic craftsmen made La Tène type III the ancestor of a new local type—'The Backworth brooches'¹¹ (Plate I and II j.). The collar which had been the binding of the foot to the bow, developed into the conventional floral ornament. This survival of the collar now assumes a highly ornamental form resembling two early French Gothic florated capitals placed abacus to abacus (see Plate V, Fig. 2). The sheath of the brooch was covered with ornamental scroll-work, based on classic palmette motifs, modified and re-modelled by Keltic art (Plate I). The massive cast harp-shaped bow afforded a fine field for enamelling. British craftsmen were unmatched in the art of enamelling—indeed the particular process known as 'champlevé,' in which the metal

¹¹ This development was traced by Mr. (now Sir Arthur) Evans. *Archæologia*, vol. lv, pp. 179-198.

ground is scooped out to form cells for the enamel, was a product of our insular art. Brooches of the Backworth type are frequently decorated with 'champlevé.' For example, Plate III, Nos. 5 and 7.

Plate III shows the Society's collection of eight brooches of the Backworth type.¹²

No. 1 is $1\frac{1}{2}$ inches long, exclusive of the ring, found at the Lawe, South Shields.

No. 2 is 2 inches long, exclusive of the ring, found at the Lawe, South Shields.

No. 3 is $2\frac{1}{2}$ inches long, exclusive of the ring, found at the Lawe, South Shields.

No. 4 is $2\frac{1}{4}$ inches long, exclusive of the loop—the catch plate has been repaired by a piece of bronze fixed by two rivets—provenance unknown.

No. 5 was dredged from the river Tyne. The foot is missing, the head and bow are enamelled in blue, and there is a fragment of chain attached to the loop. This brooch is again shown on Plate IV in association with another British brooch.¹³ The latter, though not of the Backworth type, has a harp shaped bow and belongs approximately to the end of the second century A.D. It has seven inches of chain attached; as it also was dredged from the river Tyne, these two brooches may possibly have been worn as a dissimilar pair. Several pairs of this type of brooch found without a chain at Backworth, Traprain Law and Chorley in Lancashire, may have been connected by a perishable ribbon, or a

¹² In the Black Gate Museum, there is also a fragment of a bronze brooch, the pin, spring and foot are missing and the provenance unknown, but it has a trumpet mouthed expansion to the head of the bow and a floral ornament on the bridge. It does not otherwise display Keltic art. In Tullie House Museum, Carlisle, there are half a dozen specimens of the Backworth type of brooch, mostly found in Carlisle or its vicinity: see Haverfield *Transactions Cumberland and Westmorland Archæological Society N.S.*, vol. xix (1919), pp. 1-16.

¹³ Now in the Black Gate Museum.

string adorned with beads as in north-west Africa to-day.

No. 6 is $2\frac{3}{4}$ inches long, exclusive of loop. Found at a Roman post between Seaton Carew and West Hartlepool.¹⁴

No. 7 (shown also Plate V, Fig. 2) $2\frac{7}{8}$ inches long, exclusive of loop—head and bow enamelled in blue and yellow, the catch plate pierced with a triquetral scroll—Found at Risingham (Habitanicum) Sept. 1842.

The above brooches are all bronze.

No. 8 (shown also in Plate V, Fig. 3, and Plate VI) is an ornate and unique silver example found at Great Chesters (Æsica) in 1894.¹⁵ It is $7\frac{1}{2}$ inches long, of which the bridged opening for the pin occupies only $\frac{15}{16}$ inch. The box at the foot is $1\frac{3}{4}$ inches in diameter and $\frac{5}{8}$ inch in thickness—these abnormal dimensions place the brooch in a category by itself. The spring has 50 coils.

The form of the chain-ring is of much service in assigning the relative dates to individual examples of brooches. The addition of a special loop to attach the chain is a peculiarly British characteristic that is not confined to this particular type of brooch. It occurs also on the gilt example found associated with the silver brooch from Great Chesters.¹⁶ In both these examples the loop is a fixed portion of the frame of the brooch, but in earlier examples it is merely a piece of bent wire (Plate III, Fig. 5, and Plate II m.) the ends of which are passed into the centre of the coils of the spring, frequently serving as the pivot of the pin, the whole being kept in place by the ligature. In course of time the ligature became emphasized (Plate V, Fig. 2 Risingham). In the Backworth pair (Plate I) it is a

¹⁴ *Arch. Ael.*, 2nd Ser., vol. x (1885), p. 114.

¹⁵ *Arch. Ael.*, 2nd Ser., vol. xvii, pp. xxii, xxxii.

¹⁶ *Archæologia*, vol. lv, p. 187, and *Arch. Ael.*, 2nd Ser., vol. xvii, pp. xxii, xxxii.

rectangular bar almost as wide as the trumpet-mouthed head of the brooch, in the silver example from Great Chesters it is exaggerated into a rectangular panel (Plate V, Fig. 3, c.f.g.h.) the full width of the head, with which it forms an integral part.

Typologically this example (Plate VI and Plate V, Fig. 3) may be regarded as the latest of all known specimens. Sir Arthur Evans¹⁷ and Mr. Reginald Smith¹⁸ have attributed it to c. A.D. 200.

Part of the hoard associated with this brooch is Roman, but both the brooches found in it are British and of types worn by women. It is noteworthy that they are comparatively unused, therefore soon after they were made, they must have been buried in the west guard chamber of the south gateway at Great Chesters.¹⁹ Unfortunately the discovery was made in the absence of any trained archæologist,²⁰ but the treasure apparently lay in material showing traces of fire and between two floor levels of different dates.²¹ The Romans upon re-occupying Great Chesters did not trouble to clear out the western guard chamber of the south gateway, but made a new floor at a higher level—hence the treasure remained undisturbed. It is obvious that the treasure must have been buried when the tower was partially ruined and already choked with earth. This event appears to be connected with the troubles that marked the end of the second or the beginning of the third Century A.D.

The known facts are as follows :—About A.D. 155 there was a general rising of the tribes of northern Britain. The same thing occurred on a larger scale in A.D. 181 when both the Antonine wall and Hadrian's wall were overrun. In the north of the province disaster was complete. About A.D. 196 the Roman garrison was withdrawn from Hadrian's wall and for a

¹⁷ *Archæologia*, vol. lv, p. 186.

¹⁸ *British Museum Guide to Roman Britain*, p. 58.

¹⁹ *Arch. Ael.*, 2nd Ser., vol. xvii, p. xxx.

²⁰ *Archæologia*, vol. 55, p. 179.

²¹ *Arch. Ael.*, 2nd Ser., vol. xvii, plate oz.

time the native tribes regained their independence.²² For a third time a Roman emperor visited Britain; Severus came over in A.D. 208 and undertook a great campaign for the subjugation of the northern Britons. The campaign, however, seems to have been launched before his arrival here, and the line of Hadrian's wall to have been re-occupied before A.D. 207.²³

In A.D. 211 Severus died at York. Though he had not effected a permanent conquest of northern Britain, yet he reduced and pacified the tribes, and restored the line of Hadrian's wall. The native element of the population in the area south of the wall now became more Romanized to the detriment of native art. Doubtless north of the Tyne and Solway frontier where Roman influence was less in evidence Keltic art continued to flourish; nevertheless all the brooches of the Backworth type found at Traprain Law are from the lower levels and presumably not later than the second century²⁴ A.D.

The problems of the evolution and classification of *fibulæ* and *faience* have been the object of numerous studies, mostly continental, with the result that such apparently trifling things as pins and pottery are of the greatest service in the chronological determination of associated finds.

NOTE.—Plate I is from Romilly Allen's *Celtic Art*, by permission of the publishers, Messrs. Methuen. Plate V was published shortly after the finding of this brooch. It shows the knob decorated with spiral ornament fixed to the projection b. (Plate IV, Fig. 3) but the knob was loose and there are projections at a. b. c. and d. (Plate IV, 3) all of which appear originally intended to bear such ornaments. Only one knob now survives fixed at d. See Plate I, Fig. 8. This change of position of the knob was made by John Gibson, late warden of the Keep, Newcastle-upon-Tyne. He was present at the discovery of the treasure and also disentangled, cleaned and fixed in position the knob first at b. and later at d.

²² R. G. Collingwood, F.S.A. 'The British Frontier in the reign of Septimius Severus,' in the forthcoming *Journal of Roman Studies*, and 'Roman Britain,' p. 34.

²³ See Stone from Risingham No. 138 in Black Gate Museum, Newcastle-upon-Tyne, *Arch. Ael.*, 3rd Ser., vol. xvii, pp. 77-79. *Lap. Sept.* No. 626, and also the inscription on the rock of Gelt, *Lap. Sept.* No. 469. Both dated A.D. 207.

²⁴ *Pro. Soc. Ant. Scot.*, 1920-21, p. 194.