

V.—A CRUCIFORM BROOCH FROM BENWELL, NEWCASTLE UPON TYNE.

BY PARKER BREWIS.

[Read on 28th August, 1935.]

This brooch (plate iv) was found last May, at a point a little east of the Roman fort of Condercum, and a few yards west of the Roman chapel at Benwell.¹

It is $5\frac{3}{8}$ inches long, is made of bronze,² which has a fine dark green patina; in digging it out, it was broken across the bow, the pin also is missing, as well as the lateral knobs to the wings. It belongs to the type known as *Cruciform-brooches*.³ The form of the cross is not connected with Christianity. This brooch is of the sixth century A.D. and belongs to the pagan period.

The origin of this form of brooch has been much discussed. At first sight, it appears to be akin to the Roman provincial *Cross-bow* brooch (fig. 1), and this certainly did

¹ It was found during drainage operations, and the trench was filled in before any archæologist saw it, therefore it is unknown if it was associated with a burial; it is now in the Black Gate Museum, Newcastle.

² I am indebted to Dr. J. A. Smyth of Armstrong College for the following analysis:

Copper	82.00
Tin	12.23
Zinc	1.24
Iron	small quantity
Nickel	small quantity
Oxygen and loss	4.53
	<hr/>
	100.00

³ They have also been termed *Long-brooches*.

influence the form of some Scandinavian examples of the fourth century. In their primitive forms, both the cruciform and the Roman cross-bow brooch had springs of *La Tene* type, i.e. a series of bi-lateral coils, but passed round a short cross bar, which terminated in knobs at either end, to fix the bar, as in fig. 2*b*. It is this common feature which gave rise to the form of both types of brooch; but later in their development, both types abandoned the coil springs for the simple hinge type as in fig. 1*b*. But in the early Roman brooch, the spring was behind the head of the bow, and the central knob fixed directly on to the bow, whereas in the primitive *Cruciform-brooch* (fig. 2), the spring was above the head of the bow, and has a head-plate covering the spring, thus separating the central knob from the head of the bow. This head-plate is unknown in the *Roman cross-bow brooch*. Moreover, from its early stages, the foot of the *Cruciform-brooch* is subject to variations that are without influence from Roman forms. Usually the termination of the foot is formed like an animal's head: the source of this feature is Teutonic. Dr. Haakon Sheteling, of Bergen Museum,⁴ has traced the *Cruciform-brooch* back to the Goths of the second century A.D., when they were still in southern Russia, and there was an amber trade route between the Caspian and the Baltic seas.

In the fifth century A.D. England derived the *Cruciform-brooch* from Scandinavia. In England it developed local characteristics, i.e. the broad flat form, and the central vertical groove in the head of the animal, are characteristics of English examples of the *Cruciform-brooch* (plate IV), of which this is an excellent specimen of the advanced form in our country.

Dr. Åberg of Uppsala has classified the English *Cruciform-brooches* into five groups;⁵ the present example belongs to his group IV. This is the most numerous group;

⁴ *The Cruciform Brooches of Norway.*

⁵ *The Anglo-Saxons in England.*

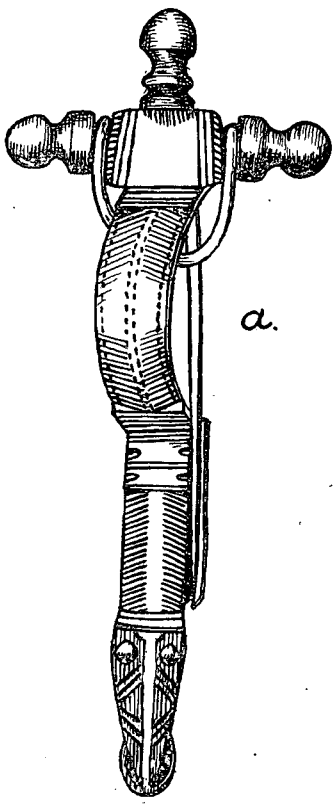
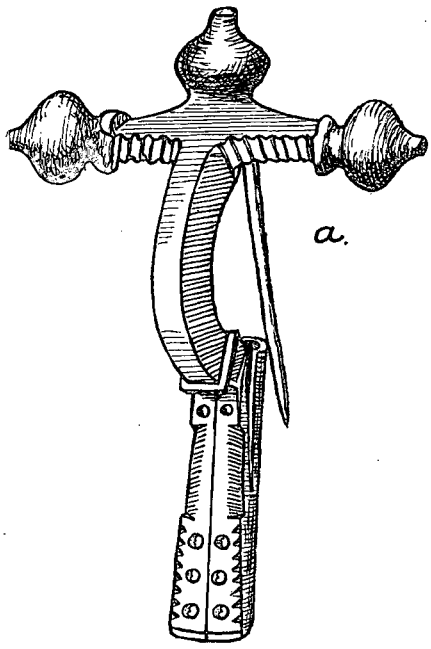
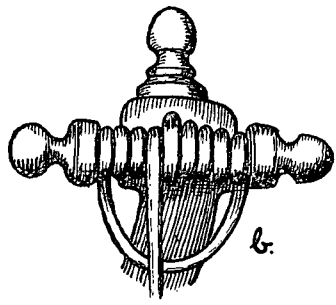
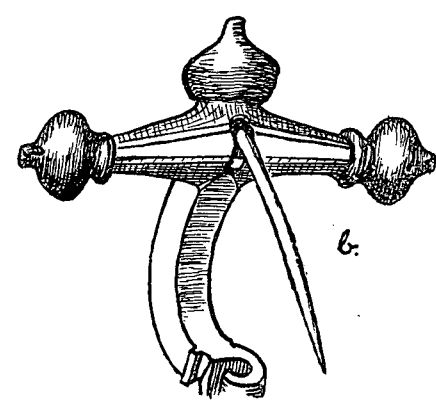


FIG. 1.

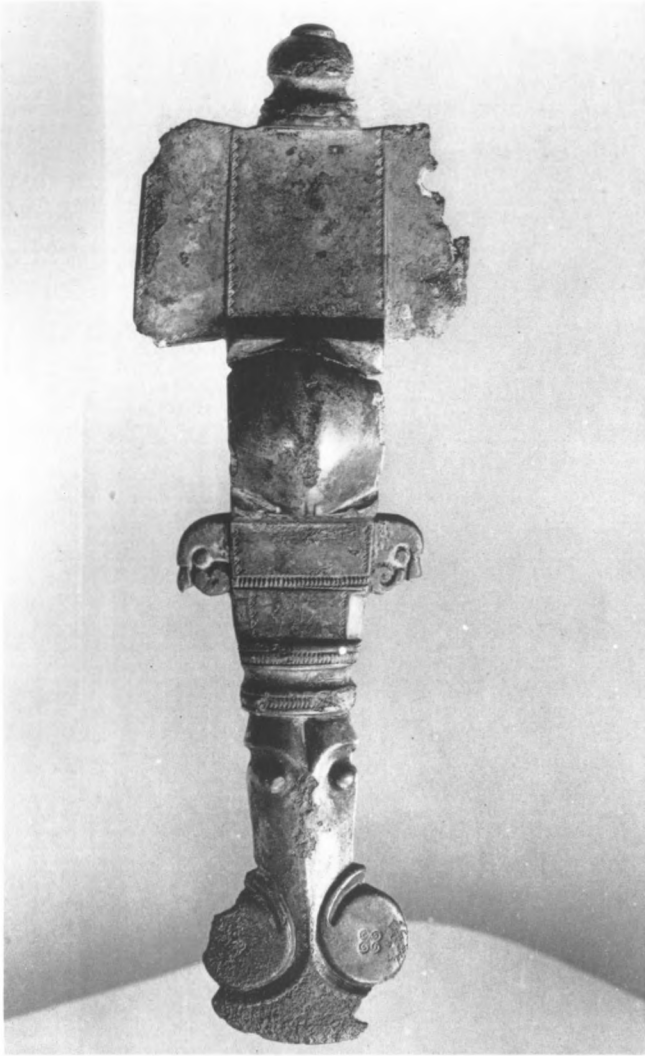
FIG. 2.

sixty-six examples have come from the three counties of Cambridge, Norfolk and Suffolk, only thirty-five from the rest of England—none from Northumberland, until the Benwell brooch was found.

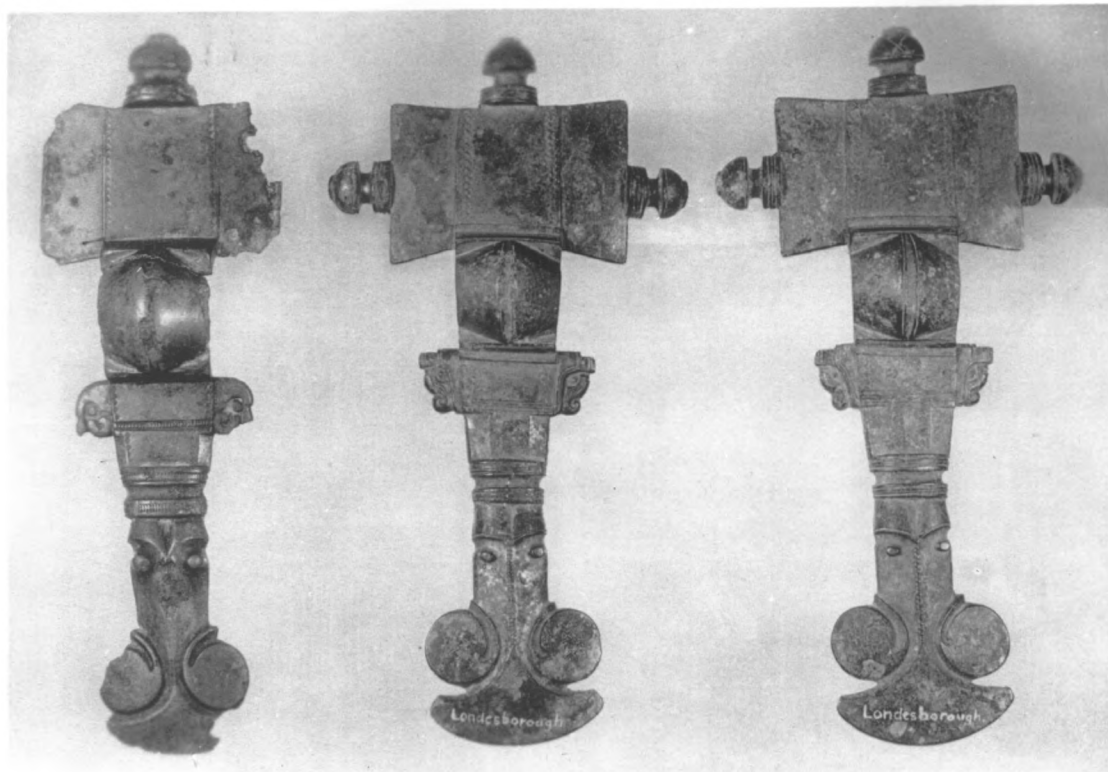
Although East Anglia appears to be the home of Åberg's group iv, yet Yorkshire has produced the finest pair. These were found at Londesborough, and are now in Hull Museum. They are from a female burial, and are distinguished, not only for good design and workmanship, but because they are still in almost as perfect condition as the day on which they were made. They must have been in use only a short time before they were buried.

Plate v shows the Benwell brooch with the Londesborough pair. The latter are so much alike that they appear to be the work of one man and intended for a pair, yet they are not exactly the same size, one appears to have shrunk, and is $1/16$ " less in over-all length than the other. This slight difference is important, and can be accounted for by supposing that the maker had the longer one, and wished to make a pair to it. How then would he proceed? He would make a squeeze in clay of the first brooch, work it up by hand, bake it, and then use the clay as a mould to cast the second. The clay, however, would shrink in baking. Hence the difference in sizes.

There was originally a striking resemblance between the Londesborough pair and the Benwell brooch, and the latter is again $1/16$ " longer than the larger of the pair. Yet the Benwell brooch does not appear to have been the model, from which the larger Londesborough brooch was cast, for the bow of the latter is less and there is a marked difference in the detail of the wings on the foot. On the Benwell brooch they look like birds' heads, in the Londesborough pair they resemble classic brackets. Although these two designs are so dissimilar, yet they had the same origin, i.e. the "helmeted head," a Roman head facing to the dexter side, his helmet on his head, and his open hand up to his face. Mr. T. D. Kendrick of the British



THE BENWELL BROOCH.



THE BENWELL AND LONDESBOROUGH BROOCHES.



Museum has traced this evolution.⁶ In the sixth century the makers of these brooches did not know the origin of the ornament. The maker of the Benwell brooch had attempted it, and, if one has a vivid imagination and knows what to look for, one may trace—the helmet, the eye, and the hand, the latter merged into the face. In the Londesborough pair, it is not so easy to make things out, but the helmet and the eye are traceable. It may seem audacious to compare the battered brooch from Benwell with the perfect pair from Londesborough, but apart from the detail on the wings of the foot, there was, originally, a striking resemblance between them.

It may well be that all three brooches were the work of one craftsman; they are certainly three excellent examples of the Anglian art of England, in the sixth century A.D.

Cruciform brooches are of great importance, because they are a proof of a close link between England and the northern regions that were the cradle of the Anglo-Saxon race. This Benwell brooch is specially so, because it is the first of Åberg's group IV, known to have been found in Northumberland. The most difficult problem in Anglo-Saxon archæology is the lack of evidence of the early settlements in the kingdom of Bernicia, considering the important part it played in pagan times.

⁶ *Transactions of the South-East Union of Scientific Societies 1934.*