XXXIII—*On the Discovery of a Romano-British Cemetery near Plymouth.*

By C. SPENCE BATE, Esq. F.R.S.

Read March 9th, 1865.

EARLY as the Romans were known to have visited the southern and southwestern shores of England, it is remarkable that so little should be left to testify to it. Historians inform us that on the banks of the waters that flow into the Plymouth Sound there was once a Roman station, but no record or evidence remains that can establish the precise locality of the ancient Tamara. Attempts have not been wanting to fix it somewhat near the present village of Tamerton, but it appears to me that there is little to support this idea beyond advantageous topographical considerations. The remains, however, of an old Roman road are still in existence on the property of the Rev. Collins Trelawny, which appear to suggest that the line by which those old travellers passed from station to station westward to the tin districts of Cornwall lay much nearer to Plymouth.

It is not, however, my object in this paper to endeavour to establish the locality of the lost site of the ancient Roman station in the neighbourhood of Plymouth, but merely to record the result and describe the objects found in some recent explorations that have been made; first, with the desire to communicate what we do know, and second, that it may suggest to others that may be similarly engaged the desirability of the preservation of any objects that may be found during the extensive excavations that are being made in that neighbourhood.

In the spring of the present year, in order to remove any impediments that might interfere with the range of the guns belonging to the new fort which is being erected on Stamford Hill, the engineer found it necessary to cut away the slope between it and the sea, thus bringing to light the remains of an ancient burial-ground.

The hill in question consists of slate, and is situated between the broad bay of Plymouth Sound on the west, and an arm of the sea that is known as "Cat-water," and flows up the estuary of the River Plym, on the east. On the north the land projects to some distance, and ends in a bluff hill of limestone known as Mount Batten, between which and the hill on which the remains were found

is a low grass plain with a gravelly soil, that previous to the erection of the Plymouth Breakwater was occasionally flooded at high spring-tides. On the east of Fort Stamford is another mass of limestone, a portion of the same rather than a separate hill; on the south is the high land of Staddon Heights.

The remains were discovered in pits, generally about four or four and a half feet deep, one foot of which consisted of soil, the remaining three having been excavated in the partially disintegrated surface of the natural rock. These graves were mere hollow excavations, but the sides were sometimes sharply cut, especially where the soft slaty rock was firmest. The bottoms of the pits or excavations were deepest towards the centre, and they were filled in with the *débris* of the materials removed in making them, together with numerous large, rough, weather-worn blocks of limestone, that must have been purposely brought from one of the neighbouring limestone-hills.

The removal of the soil had been proceeded with for some time, and the workmen stated that they had occasionally found bones and pieces of earthenware. It was only, however, when they found some bronze articles, for which they anticipated receiving a few shillings, that they reported the discovery to Captain Moggridge the engineer officer in charge of the fortification works.

As soon as the discoveries were known I was kindly made acquainted with the facts. Hastening to the place I watched, as far as practicable, the progress of the exploration. The graves were very numerous, and of an irregular form. In some instances several graves broke into each other, and in one case the extremity^a appeared to be associated with others as if it had been made at right angles with them. When I first arrived portions of four graves were exposed in section, out of which had been previously taken some human bones, two bronze armlets, a bronze fibula, and some pottery. After my arrival some more human bones were found, evidently portions of at least three skeletons, as well as several isolated molars of the pig. Several pebbles from the sea-beach, mostly of one size, and fragments of glass, together with a vase of coarse pottery, were lying in one grave.

Upon opening a new grave we found at the bottom a bronze mirror in tolerably perfect condition, and traces of decomposed bones. There was also discovered in this grave a bronze fibula. In other places the workmen found the handles of two bronze mirrors. Two bronze bracelets of different forms, a dagger or knife in a bronze sheath, portions of a bronze cup, and some fibulæ were also brought to light. There have also been found fragments of many kinds of earthen vases more

^a I say the extremity because this was all that was not dug away when I arrived.

or less perfect, portions of the human skeleton, and a considerable quantity of iron in a very decomposed state, apparently parts of implements of some kind.

It may perhaps be most convenient to notice the various antiquities that were discovered according to the classes to which they belong.

1. *Bronze Mirrors*.—The first of these that we found was lying flat at the bottom at the eastern extremity of a grave. It was nearly circular in form, but rather wide than deep. (Pl. XXX. fig. 1.) The front or polished surface of the mirror was placed downwards. The back, which was upwards, was ornamented with engraved scroll-work, as may be seen in the plate. In order to bring out more strongly the design, some portions of the engraving were filled in with numerous short striations, somewhat like basket work. The mirror was surrounded by a narrow border or rim, which was formed of a separate piece, and folded over the margin. This specimen was damaged in many parts, particularly upon the under surface, and some of the edge was entirely eaten away; but where the rim was preserved the plate was in good condition, and retained the bright colour of the metal. With this specimen no handle was found; but a second mirror, of which the very small portion that has been obtained seemed to shew it to have been similar, has the handle attached to it. (Pl. XXX. fig. 3.) This handle is cast in one piece in the form of a loop made by folding one half back against the other, and securing them in that position by a band, the two free ends being spread out to hold the mirror, which is received in a groove, and supported on each side by a scroll-work of bronze, much of which is lost, but the impression still remains upon the plate. This handle is four inches long. Another handle was also found of a more finished character. (Pl. XXX. fig. 2.) It will be seen by the engraving that it terminates in an oval ring, and was attached to the mirror by a grooved flange with rivets. No trace of the plate that belonged to this handle was found.

I am informed by Mr. Evans that mirrors of this kind are rare, and that only a single specimen with engraved back has previously been found in England.^a It was discovered near Bedford, and is now preserved in the museum of the Bedfordshire Archæological Society.

2. *Armillaë*.—The next objects of interest that were obtained from these explorations are bronze armillaë. There were four of one form and two of another. The first (Pl. XXXI. figs. 1, 2) were formed of solid bronze flattened upon the internal and rounded upon the external surface. They opened by a hinge in

^a Since writing this paper I have seen a drawing by Mr. Blight, of Penzance, of another similar mirror that was found near the Lizard.

BRONZE MIRROR AND HANDLES, AND IRON SHEARS, FOUND NEAR PLYMOUTH.

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the middle, which was made by the insertion of a tongue into a deep notch or groove, and secured by a rivet on which the two halves swung. It is not quite clear what kind of clasp secured them when shut; two of them had one kind whereas the third evidently differed. From the position of the rivets it appears that two were fastened by the projection of a central piece of wire that was caught with a spring clasp as in the bracelets of the present day. A third has a tongue very similar to that of the hinge but smaller, and this probably was caught by a spring also. The external surface of these bracelets was ornamented by embossed markings, consisting of a running scroll that looked like a series of the letter S folded into each other. The rounded portion, formed by the bottom of one S inclosing the top of the succeeding, is raised and perforated by two deep holes placed side by side. These holes are in some few places still filled by a dull red enamel, as were once probably all the rest.

The second form of bracelet, of which we have but two specimens, is much more slender and almost without ornament. Five embossed bands, of which the middle one is the largest, ornament the centre, which is the stoutest part of the bracelet. There appears to have been no fastening, and the bracelet is evidently formed on the principle of a spring that yields to the pressure of the hand as it is forced on the wrist. The bronze of some of these was very brittle, breaking with the slightest pressure.

3. *Fibulae*.—Four specimens of fibulae were found, two in an injured the rest in a tolerably perfect state. These bronze brooches are of an arched form; front and side views of two of them are given in the engraving (Pl. XXXI. figs. 5—8).

From one of the latest opened of these graves we obtained a small bronze penannular brooch (Pl. XXXI. fig. 3), made upon a plan that has recently come again into use. It forms an incomplete ring, the extremities of which terminate in small knobs. The pin, which was movable, was made to pass between the extremities and impinge with pressure upon the opposite side.

4. *Dirk*.—A small dirk or knife (Pl. XXXI. fig. 9) was also dug out by one of the workmen. The blade of the dirk is still within the sheath; although the latter is of bronze I am inclined to believe that the blade may be of iron. The form of the sheath suggests that one side of the blade possessed a cutting the other a blunt edge. The sheath is formed of two pieces of bronze plate fastened by the broader plate having its edges folded so as to inclose the smaller. A small loop of flattened wire is secured by three rivets to the margin near the handle, which thus enabled the implement to be secured to a belt. No evidence of solder is apparent in any part of this or any other article.

Full Size.

ANTIQUITIES FOUND NEAR PLYMOUTH.

Kell Bro^s lith

5. *Bronze Cup*.—A bronze cup or rather portions were found by the workmen. The fragments consisted of the bottom and a part of the rim only. The bottom is about one and a quarter inch in diameter, and the arc of the rim shows the top of the cup to have been about three inches in diameter. The edge of the rim is slightly turned out.

6. *Glass*.—Some fragments of a glass vase or bowl were thrown out of one grave. They are of a beautiful amber colour, the surface being only slightly iridescent. The fragments that we recovered are the bottom, a portion of the side, and a part of the rim. The bottom is about two and a half inches in diameter, from which the base passes out in nearly a horizontal line, until it has reached the approximate diameter of five inches; it then gradually ascends to the probable height of four or five inches, and as gradually increases in size until it has reached the diameter of six inches, when it is finished by a shallow rim formed by the folding of the edge of the glass outwardly back upon itself. The lower portion of the vase is ornamented by a series of raised lines radiating from the base; but, instead of passing directly to the circumference, they flow diagonally outwards as if formed during the time that the plastic material revolved upon its own axis. Although in many parts the workmanship shows crudeness in execution, yet the vessel, as a whole, must have exhibited an elegance in appearance that is suggestive of the idea that it must have been the property of an individual of some pretension among his fellows of that time, particularly when we compare it with the quality of the pottery that has been found in the same locality.

7. *Pottery*.—With one exception, all the pottery that has been found in this cemetery is in a fragmentary state, nor is this to be wholly attributed to the carelessness of the excavators, although, the excavations having been carried on by men working for a contractor under Government, they were compelled to pursue their labour assiduously, and were not permitted the time necessary to remove such fragile materials with safety from their positions in the graves.

The remains of a bowl of black pottery (Pl. XXXII. fig. 1) are of a coarse ware; it rests on a circular foot about three inches in diameter; from this bottom the base of the vase extends on each side until the diameter is about five inches; at about four inches from the base, there is a small round depression on the inside near the upper edge, corresponding with a similar depression upon the outside, from which latter a groove passes as far as the broken edge. This marking is suggestive of a small horizontal handle having been situated in this position; but, if so, there was no corresponding handle at the opposite extremity of the basin,

POTTERY FOUND NEAR PLYMOUTH.

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since the two fragments together complete more than half the diameter of the vase.

A second black vase (Pl. XXXII. fig. 2) was found by Captain Moggridge. This is of much finer ware than the previous one, and much more thin in texture; it is also of a much more elegant shape, though formed on the same general design. The foot-ring is about three inches in diameter, the centre of which is deeply excavated, corresponding with a convex elevation on the inside. From the ring at the bottom the sides extend on each side until the diameter is about seven inches.

Of a third black bowl or vase, one small fragment only has been recovered, but this is enough to show that the design was the same as the previous; the substance was a little stouter than the last, but less so than the first, and it differed from both in having a double embossed line half way up the sides. This, like the two previous ones, is very dark, almost black, not only on the surface but through the substance, a circumstance that I think must be due to the character of the clay of which the vessels were made, and not attributable to the muffling of the furnaces during the process of baking.

A very small vase, of a less darkened surface to the two previously discovered specimens, Captain Moggridge was fortunate enough to save from the uplifted axe of the excavator in a perfect state (Pl. XXXII. fig. 3). The bottom is flat, and about an inch and a half in diameter. The mouth is about three inches in diameter, and the height is about four inches.

The form of the next vase is much like the last described, from which it differs in having a more sudden curving just below the neck; it also stands higher. It is of a red colour and larger, the diameter of the bottom being about four inches, the body of the vessel at its greatest width about seven inches, and the mouth about three; the height is about eight inches and a half.

The next vase to which I have to draw attention differs in form and evidently attained a higher degree of external finish than any previously described; unfortunately of this specimen but few fragments have been recovered. It consists of hard-baked clay of a coarse character; the general colour is red, but in some places the external surface is blackened, probably due to the muffling of the furnace during the process of baking. The height is about four inches and a half; it stands upon a circular base about three inches in diameter, and which raises the vessel from the ground about an inch; the bottom of the vase within is flat, the sides gracefully rounded outwards, then inwards, and again outwards to the mouth, the diameter of which is about six inches, being in fact the widest part

of the vessel, overhanging the body of the vase quite three quarters of an inch. The external surface is ornamented by a rim at the edge, by an embossed ring about an inch below, and by a second but less raised ring an inch still lower, beneath which point the swelling part of the vessel is covered by a number of short engraved notches placed in lines vertical to the base; this latter workmanship resembles the ornamentation of Celtic pottery.

Two vessels apparently intended for holding water were found. The first was a plain earthenware bottle made of very soft friable yellow ware. The body of this vessel was nearly circular, having a flat ringed base and a narrow neck. It was, when first found, perfect as to form but intersected by numerous fractures, so that it was impossible to have removed it except in a very fragmentary condition. It stood in an upright position, and, previous to its removal, I inserted my hand through the broken side but found nothing within. The height of the bottle, which had a portion of the neck broken off, was about eight inches, and it could not be much less in diameter than six.

The other vessel is of the same general form as the preceding but somewhat larger. It is of a light yellow friable ware. It probably stood about twelve inches in height, and its diameter at its greatest circumference was probably about eight inches. The neck and mouth of the vessel are represented in Pl. XXXII. fig. 5, and it will be seen that it had a handle.

The only piece of pottery of any consequence that I have left undescribed appears to have been part of a drinking cup. It is of a yellow ware; its sides were perpendicular to its flat base, and it was ornamented by a double embossed line traversing the circumference on a level with the lower extremity of the handle, which was probably near the middle. Assuming this to be the case, the cup probably stood at about five inches in height, and its circumference, taken from a continuation of the measured segment, could not be less than four inches and a half; so that it was nearly as broad as high, and probably held about a pint of water.

8. *Iron Implements.*—The iron objects were mostly in too decomposed a condition for us to arrive at any positive conclusions as to what they really were. Some appear to have been the remains of the blades of knives; some were probably the tangs of knives that were driven into the handle, and the remains of wood still attached to them deeply stained with ferruginous rust support this hypothesis; some, of which there were a considerable number taken from one spot, might have been the round points of arrows, or the armature of a buckler.

They consisted generally of irregularly-shaped nodules of iron, from which a point or sharp tongue projected. There are many other pieces of irregular form.

About a hundred feet from these graves, while cutting nearer towards the sea, the labourers came upon a solitary grave of similar character to the rest, out of which they obtained several fragments of iron, four of which upon being put together were found to be the remains of a pair of shears. (Pl. XXX. fig. 4.) The others were part of a knife. The point was curved forwards, one edge of the blade being sharp; the other, forming the back of the knife, was thick and blunt.

9. *Bronze Rings*.—With these last implements parts of three bronze rings were found. The largest is faced with three circular discs, the middle one being much greater in diameter than the lateral ones, which are of one size. (Pl. XXXI. fig. 4.) The central one is ornamented with designs in relief. The lateral discs are deep, and when found were partially occupied with a white material, probably the remains of a cement that was used to fix a bead in each. The ring which is now flattened somewhat, was evidently intended to have been worn on the finger.

The second ring is smaller than the previous one. Its face is merely a flattened extension of itself, and is ornamented by two rows of short vertical lines inclosed within engraved margins. This ring, of which only a portion has been recovered, appears to have been too small to have been worn on the finger even of a female; and the circumstance of the face being at right angles with the sides suggests that it may have been used for other purposes than as a finger-ring.

Some portions of a third ring were also found, but not sufficient to enable any idea to be formed of its character with certainty. The fragment consists of small wire flattened at one extremity, the sides of the whole being closely ribbed.

On the completion of the work necessary for the fortification, I applied for permission to pursue further research. In this way I have been enabled to proceed more cautiously, and obtain a clearer idea of the positions of the things found in relation to each other. Undoubtedly the remains appear to be very heterogeneously mingled together, but still I think the following may be relied upon as being an approximation of their relative positions to each other.

The blocks of weather-worn limestone which appear in the first instance to be so irregularly placed I ascertained, by tracing the circuit of the walls of the graves, where it was practicable to do so, to have been placed originally as a wall, within which the corpse was placed in a sitting posture. It is

probable that some of the stones were also employed for the purpose of covering-in the body.

The reason that ornaments and objects of value were buried with the dead has never been clearly established. The small number of things that are found interred militates altogether against the idea which Cæsar has affirmed to be the case with the inhabitants of ancient Briton—that all their wealth was buried with them—even if we suppose that the inhabitants of a Roman colony had so far adopted the customs of the people among which they had settled as to have copied them in their mode of interment.

Judging from these explorations, the opinion at which I have arrived is that it was customary, arising from sanitary purposes or from feelings of affection, to bury with the body all the objects which the individual had in use at the time of or during the sickness that preceded death. It is in this way only that I can account not only for the existence of ornaments and vessels of value, but also for the presence of pebbles from the shore as well as the teeth of the pig, all of which I assume to have been objects of amusement belonging to the child from whose grave I took them.

In the solitary grave the discovery of finger-rings, a knife, and scissors indicate it as the burial-place of a female, but why it was separated so distantly from the rest there are at present no means of ascertaining; that the separation was intentional may be accepted from the circumstance that a cutting in the rock was found to exist between it and the other graves, which the engineering officer assures me, from its appearance and character, must have originally been intended as a drain.

I offer these suggestions merely as ideas that occurred to my mind as I progressed with the research, which at present must be considered in an unfinished state, inasmuch as there appears to be a very considerable ground not yet explored.

Since the explorations were made by which the preceding objects were obtained, I have received from my friend Captain Moggridge a coin that was dug from the soil in a direction nearer to the sea than the place at which the graves were found. This coin is much defaced, but appears to be a Second Brass of Vespasian.^a This Roman prince having reigned from A.D. 69 to 79 we may form some idea of the period at which existed the station on Stamford Hill from among the inhabitants of which those who occupied these graves were buried. I am aware that the evidence furnished by the coin is very unsatisfactory,

^a Since this a worn First Brass coin of Antoninus Pius has been found on the same hill.

but when data by which to arrive at a conclusion are wanting we are thankful for every feeble substitute. That the coin may have been buried at any subsequent period is quite possible, but the circumstance that it should be a Roman coin and, though not found in one of the graves, yet buried deeply in the soil, does, as I said before, in lieu of better evidence, assist us somewhat to arrive at a date which may possibly be the correct one.

It cannot be doubted that in the neighbourhood of such an extensive burial-place there must have been some village or station of the same period. No record of such a place is handed down to us either by history or tradition; and, as it is not very probable that there were two stations so very near, it is not unlikely that this may have been the site of Tamara. Of course the objection that will be raised to this hypothesis is that the river Plym and not the Tamar, from which the station derived its name, flows down the Catwater. In answer to this objection I would remark that Plymouth Sound is the ocean mouth of the Tamar, of which the Hamoaze is but a part, and that it is not unlikely but that the entire length of the river from the English Channel to the weirhead may formerly have been known as the Tamar, even if the branches were not also recognised under the same term. I think that the locality would be a favourable one for a station, where vessels might ride at safety and have but little difficulty in getting out to sea.

Hooe Lake, two thousand years ago, was probably not so filled with mud as it now is, and would offer to vessels at anchor the safety of a dock harbour.

By the river Plym the Dartmoor tin, the produce of the stream-works of which such abundant evidence remains, could easily be brought down. By the river Tamar might come the tin from the great western range of the Duchy Hills.

The old Roman road, which I have been informed by Mr. Trelawny is still in existence on his estate, would appear to be in a line from the station at Stamford Hill to the nearest ferry on the Tamar, where the crossing would not entail the passage of other rivers.

Whether the idea of this having been the old Tamara be correct or not, there can, I think, be no doubt but that it must have been the site of a Roman village, and, as being the first traces that have been found in the neighbourhood of Plymouth, I have thought that it might form a subject worthy of the consideration of this learned Society.

I may add that all the specimens are preserved in the Museum at the Athenæum, Plymouth, where have also been deposited such as have been since found at the same place.

Note on the Mirrors, &c. discovered in a Cemetery near Plymouth. By AUGUSTUS WOLLASTON FRANKS, Esq. M.A. Director.

The mirrors which have been discovered in the cemetery near Plymouth, and which are engraved in Plate XXX., are objects that have been rarely discovered in the British Islands. Three specimens are however known to me, which it may be interesting to compare with those under consideration. 1. A bronze mirror slightly elliptical in form, and with a marginal band like fig. 1. It has likewise engraved scrolls on the back of the same general character as the mirror from Plymouth. Greatest width, seven inches and three-quarters. The handle is attached to the mirror by a plate cut out in scrolls somewhat like fig. 3, is composed of two loops with a cross-band at their junction, and terminates in a large ring. It was found near Bedford, and has been alluded to by Mr. Spence Bate. 2. A smaller mirror of the same description, with engraved scrolls at the back and an ornamental handle. It forms part of the collection presented by Joseph Mayer, Esq. F.S.A. to the town of Liverpool. Nothing is known as to its history. 3. A mirror of a slightly elliptical form (greatest width eight inches and a quarter), with a plain back, a marginal rim, and a broad handle. The portion of this handle joining the mirror is ornamented with scrolls in relief; the lower end is decorated with pierced work. It was discovered at Balmaclellan, Kirkcudbrightshire, and is preserved in the Museum of the Scottish Antiquaries. See *Proceedings Soc. Ant. Scotland*, vol. iv. p. 294, and *Sculptured Stones of Scotland*, vol. ii. p. x. With it were found a number of other bronze objects, including a large crescent-shaped plate engraved with scrolls of precisely the same character as fig. 1. Similar scrolls also occur on the shield found in the river Witham, engraved in the *Archæologia*, vol. XXIII. Pl. xiii. and in Kemble's *Horæ Ferales*, Pl. xiv.

It is well known that mirrors are not unfrequently represented on the early sculptured stones of Scotland, accompanied by combs and other symbols.

The mirrors of unquestionably Roman origin found in England and the Continent may be divided into the following classes:—1. Quadrangular mirrors without handles; 2. Circular mirrors fitting into cases of the same form; 3. Circular mirrors with handles, but without marginal bands, the edges often pierced. These mirrors are of a whiter metal than those found at Plymouth, more like modern speculum metal, and probably contain a larger amount of tin.

I should be therefore disposed to attribute the mirrors from Plymouth and the others which I have described to a Late Celtic origin. The only other mirrors with ornamented backs are the Etruscan; in their elliptical form the specimens under consideration are not altogether unlike Egyptian mirrors.

To a Late Celtic origin I should also be inclined to refer the armlet engraved in Plate XXXI. fig. 1. Some of the pottery, especially Plate XXXII. fig. 5, is purely Roman.

I may add that in 1832 a considerable number of British coins were found on Mount Batten, near this cemetery. See *Numismatic Journal*, vol. i.; Evans, *Coins of the Ancient Britons*, pp. 72, 106, 128.