

ROMAN REMAINS IN THE VICINITY OF PADSTOW, CORNWALL.

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THE opinion of Camden that the Romans never advanced westward beyond the Tamar into the county of Cornwall has long since been proved to be incorrect.¹ It was not, indeed, probable that the district, whence the much-coveted tin was to be obtained, should have escaped Roman investigation, after Britain had become a colony of that enterprising and practical people, although Cæsar may have been misled by deceptive statements as to this subject in the first instance. At what period the first Roman settlements were established in Cornwall cannot now be ascertained, but the character of its iron-bound northern coast must have become known to the crews of Agricola's galleys, in the reign of Domitian, during their cruise around the shores of Britain. The wide mouth of the river Camel, lying between the two fearful headlands of Pentire and Stepper Points, was doubtless carefully marked, and probably resorted to as a welcome refuge; there alone, for a long distance on either side, could the tempest-tossed exploratory fleet rest awhile in security from the heavily rolling seas of the Atlantic, and take in supplies of water and provisions; of this, however, we are well assured, that eventually the Romans settled themselves,

¹ See Borlase's remarks on this question, *Antiquities of Cornwall*, p. 35. Numerous discoveries of Roman coins and other antiquities are recorded by Borlase, *ibid.* p. 300; also by Lysons, *Magna Brit. Hist. of Cornwall*, p. ccxxiii. See also the account by the Rev. M. Hitchins, of the discovery of a large quantity of coins near Helston, in 1779, amounting, as supposed, to about 10 lbs. in weight, and of another hoard found near Penzance, *Archæologia*, xiv. p. 225. The patera of tin, on the base of which a Roman inscription was to be seen, as described by Borlase, p. 317, is now in the Ashmolean Museum at Oxford. The

only inscribed stone of the Roman period hitherto found, so far as we are aware, in Cornwall, is that figured by Mr. Blight in his interesting *Illustrations of Ancient Crosses and Antiquities in the West of Cornwall* (London, Simpkin and Marshall, 8vo. 1856). It was found in 1853, built into the wall of the church at St. Hilary, near Marazion, in the extreme west of Cornwall. The stone appears to be inscribed to the Emperor Constans, 337—350, or to Constantius II. his successor. The inscription may be read thus:— · · · FL · IVL · CONSTAN · · · P · IO · AVG · CAES · DIVI · CONSTANTII · PII · AVG · FILIO.

at least temporarily, on either side of Padstow harbour, formed by the enlargement of the river Camel into an estuary, before its waters reach the sea.²

On the shore of Trevone Bay, a little to the west of Padstow, a Roman burial ground was discovered some years ago beneath a sand bank. Several rows of skeletons that had apparently been deposited in coffins placed north and south with their feet towards the sea were disclosed; it would, however, have been difficult to have ascertained to what period or people these remains belonged, had not a large plain bronze fibula of undoubted Roman workmanship been found with one of the skeletons (see woodcut, fig. 12), and also a piece of Samian ware close to it. These graves were entirely distinct from another series above them, formed with slates placed upright, and containing skeletons uniformly lying east and west, this burial ground, at first used by the Romans, having been afterwards, perhaps, incorporated into a mediæval cemetery, which may have been attached to the adjacent chapel of Trevone, or used as the burial place of sailors who had lost their lives through some shipwreck—a sad catastrophe still so often witnessed on this portion of the Cornish coast.

Another probable trace of Roman occupation was also found on the small promontory close by the above-named spot, separating Trevone from Permizen Bay; here were brought to light two small stone cists intended apparently to contain cinerary vases; one of these cists was exposed to view on the removal of a large stone, that long served to conceal it; I have not been able to ascertain whether either of these tombs contained burnt bones or pottery, which might serve to indicate satisfactorily the people who deposited them here.

But by far the most interesting Roman vestiges in the vicinity of Padstow lie on the other side of its harbour, in the parish of St. Minver. There a nearly hemispherical eminence, called Brea-hill, is surmounted by three tumuli;

² Traces of the original British occupants of the site now covered by the upper portion of the town of Padstow, were observed by Mr. Kent some years ago. These consisted of three rude and soft earthen urns, disposed in a regular triangle, just sunk below the "hellas,"

or upper stratum of the schist. They were from 7 to 9 inches in diameter, and were filled with fragments of human bones and ashes. Externally they were scored with the usual Celtic zig-zag markings, but they were in too tender a state to be preserved.

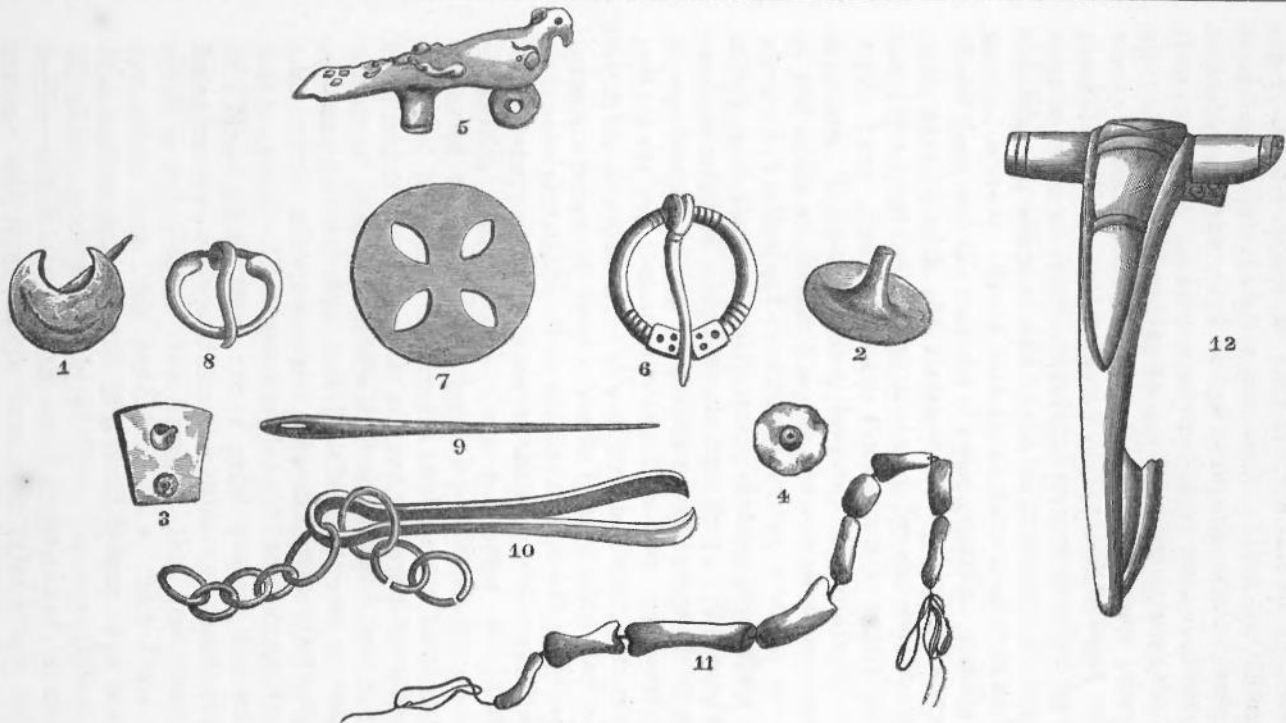
these have all been opened, one of them in this year (1860), but nothing was found within them; they are, however, clearly sepulchral, and probably of British formation. From the foot of Brea-hill, and southwards of the half-buried little church of St. Enodock, with its circular burial-ground around it, is a curious region of sand reaching to the village of Rock, and almost as restless in its nature as its neighbouring element the ocean. The component materials of these sands are chiefly broken shells, and their study is interesting, specimens being not unfrequently found, amongst many others, of far western and tropical origin, pointing to the influence of the great gulf-stream as it breaks upon the Cornish coast. But their movements here, as in other instances in Cornwall, are still more calculated to surprise visitors, these sands, originally thrown up from the bottom of the sea, after a minute trituration from its rocky depths, sometimes being tossed up into banks and masses of considerable elevation at particular points on the land, and then again scattered—sometimes quickly, sometimes gradually but surely, until the whole has been once more carried off by the winds so as to expose the natural slaty surface of the soil, or the “country,” as it is locally called; and then a fresh combination commences through the same process, forming perfectly smooth plains, ranges of detached hillocks, or continuous ridges. In this sandy region, and on the Duchy Manor of Penmaine, the remains of a small chapel existed until a few years ago, about a mile to the south-west of the church of St. Enodock,³ and there Roman pottery was found as well as specimens apparently of earlier date mixed with burnt bones and ashes. Above these were graves of a far more recent period, the cemetery of a small chapel having, curiously enough in this case as in that previously mentioned, been formed on the spot formerly used for the same purpose by a different people. This discovery was made by Mr. Thomas Kent of Padstow, to whom I am indebted for much of the information gathered together in this communication.

In 1857 another discovery of a different character was made in this remarkable locality, through a shifting of the

³ This chapel was 30 feet long and 20 feet wide, with a door at the western end: from the fragments of wall-plaster

turned up when its site was levelled, it appeared that the interior had been decorated with paintings.

sand, which exposed to view the remains of a forest at a level 12 feet below high-water mark. Here the stumps and roots of oaks, yews, and also of some soft-wooded trees, were thus revealed ; the former were of large size, blackened with age, and so indurated as to give a ringing metallic sound when struck with an axe. This forest must also have abounded with hazel bushes, as layer below layer of nuts were found in profusion, separated from each other by a thin vegetable deposit produced by the fall of the leaf during many successive years. Mixed with these were the horns and teeth of red deer, and the remains of other animals. A lofty sand-bank parallel with the Padstow estuary now preserves this low level from being overwhelmed by its waters, but the winds have again veiled the forest from view with a sandy covering. The fearful gales, however, with which this portion of the coast of England is so often visited, have done good service to archæology in other instances, and on the whole it has profited considerably by the shifting propensity of that sandy locality of which we are speaking. There, when the accumulated sand has been blown away so as to expose the natural surface, Roman remains have been disclosed in considerable abundance. Perhaps not the least remarkable of these are heaps of wood ashes indicating the sites of fires, and now protruding through the thin coating of fine sand which otherwise entirely covers the face of the ground like a snow-drift. Mixed with these ash-heaps are numerous pieces of trap-rock, that have been fused by an unusual degree of heat, such as furnaces could alone have produced. Here fragments of Roman pottery are most abundant, consisting of portions of small vessels with nearly pointed bottoms, and the rims and handles of others of red, grey, and cream coloured wares, besides numerous pieces of Samian vases. This spot has also produced many fragments of Roman glass ; these are of good quality, thin and clear, being chiefly portions of small bottles and vases of a light green or amber tint. One fragment that has come under my notice from this locality is of a violet hue ; a few blue and variegated beads of a usual Roman type are also in Mr. Kent's possession, derived from the same locality. Its surface is still strewn with small fragments of bronze ornaments ; and, from time to time, after rains or the shifting of the wind, more perfect specimens have been picked up, and



Roman Ornaments and Relics found near Padstow, Cornwall. (Original size.)

In the Collection formed by Mr. Thomas Kent, at Padstow.

have been preserved in Mr. Kent's collection, from which the specimens here figured have been selected. These consist of ornamental nails or studs, fig. 1, 2, 3, and 4; a bronze fibula representing a bird, perhaps a hawk, fig. 5; a pretty little penannular fibula in perfect preservation, fig. 6; a flat perforated fibula, fig. 7; and another of an ordinary form, fig. 8. Here also were found the bronze needle, fig. 9, and the tweezers with two short pieces of chain attached to them, fig. 10. But, among the most curious relics discovered in these sands with the above named Roman objects, I must call attention to the remains of a necklace of pink coral; many short pieces of that material having been gathered up nearly in their natural form, but perforated so as to admit of their being strung, as indicated by fig. 11, which represents a few of these rudely shaped beads of a material of very rare occurrence among objects of the Roman period.

During a late visit to this Roman settlement, I noticed a sandy tumulus, in the midst of a circular space surrounded by a high boundary of drifted sand, pierced only by little valleys in three directions, and, by the aid of my kind friend, Mr. C. Prideaux Brune, it was opened for my satisfaction. This tumulus is 40 feet in diameter, 5 feet high, and is rather thickly strewn with small stones, apparently for the purpose of preventing the light materials of its surface from drifting away. Upon driving a wide shaft straight through the tumulus, it was soon evident that ashes had been mingled with the sand, as shown by the darkening of its hue; and then pieces of charcoal began to be turned up, until, on arriving under the centre of the mound, and at about 2 feet from the top, a small heap of calcined human bones was found, but no fragments of an urn. Beneath this deposit was a large mound of wood-ashes, but nothing else was found below, although the excavators continued to dig until they came to the natural schist rock of the district. It was, however, observed that a small circular shaft had been sunk in this rock, and filled in again with fragments of rock, pieces of spar, and sand. It is possible, therefore, that this tumulus may have been previously examined, although certainly not of late years.

A few Roman coins have occasionally been found here, including some small brass coins of Gallienus, Arcadius, and Constantius Maximus, but none of any peculiar interest.

It is remarkable that no vestige of any Roman building should have occurred in conjunction with the numerous and somewhat significant traces of a Roman visit to this spot on the Cornish coast. I am inclined, therefore, to think that certain parties of Roman colonists, on exploratory expeditions, may, for awhile, have been located here, for the purpose of testing the value of the minerals of the district. Some temporary occupation for such an object may seem indeed to be indicated by the numerous traces of strong fires around it, which may very probably have been required for metallurgical operations. At the present time a lead mine has been lately opened on the opposite side of Padstow harbour, and it is well known that almost every description of metal is to be found in the county of Cornwall. It appears highly probable that the Romans may have made expeditions into this rich mineral district of Britain, after it had become reconciled to their stern yoke ; and here, on the eastern side of Padstow harbour, in the midst of natural wonders, I believe are manifest indications of the spot once selected by such a party, whence to sally forth on expeditions to the various promising localities around, and to which they may have returned with samples of ore to be submitted at leisure to the test of fire.