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REPORT AND COMMUNICATIONS.

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XXV. ON ROMAN INTERMENTS BY THE SIDE OF THE
SO-CALLED VIA DEVANA, NEAR CAMBRIDGE. BY
CHARLES C. BABINGTON, M.A., F.R.S. F.S.A.

[Read *April 27, 1863.*]

THE Roman way which the antiquaries of the last century called the "Via Devana" is believed to have left CAMBORITUM (Castle End, Cambridge) at the same place where the present turnpike road to Huntingdon passes out of the town, or perhaps very slightly to the west of that spot; to have passed over or by the side of what until recently was called "The Hill of Health," and through the grounds of a gentleman's house called The Grove. Its course afterwards was probably through the fields lying to the west of the present road, for there is no doubt that it traversed the closes opposite to Howe's House. All trace of this ancient road was removed at some former period, for it has been usual in this district to remove the gravel and stones from the Roman ways for use in the formation or repair of modern roads. It therefore often happens that there is very little, except perhaps a slight rise in the ground, to show where the Roman way passed.

One of the fields bordering the western side of the present road and also adjoining the old inclosures of Howe's House, at

about a mile from Cambridge, has been recently trenched to the depth of many feet in order to obtain the so-called "coprolites" contained in the soil. Thus many hundred yards of the supposed course of the Roman road, and the land lying on each side of it, has been thoroughly examined; and from the attention paid to the matter by Mr. Swan Wallis, the tenant of the farm (Gravel Hill) and the extractor of the coprolites, it is probable that nothing of much interest has escaped notice. These trenching operations were commenced in 1861, when a considerable number of broken pieces of Roman pottery together with 2 or 3 perfect vessels were found by the side of the supposed line of the ancient way. There were a few fragments of the red Samian pottery, but most of the pieces noticed belonged to a smoky-looking, dark, rather rude ware. They were accompanied by burned bones, and were certainly the relics of interment after cremation.

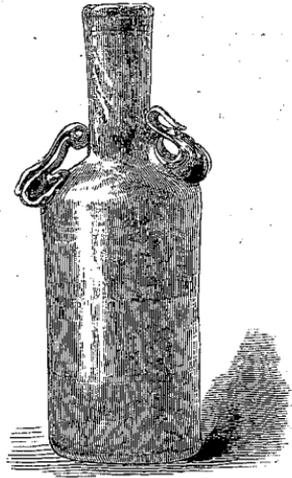
In 1863 the workmen discovered two large stone coffins, placed at a few feet apart, one about 2 and the other nearly 4 feet beneath the modern surface of the ground, and lying at right angles to the direction of the road. The coffins are rudely formed of what appears to be Barnack stone; are very massive; and that which has been removed for preservation is rounded at one end. They were covered by large thick slabs of the same kind of stone. A single skeleton was found in each of them, one male and the other female; the male skeleton was utterly disarranged, owing to water having had access to the interior of the coffin, and floated the bones from their original places. The other coffin was water-tight or nearly so, and there the female skeleton lay as it had been originally deposited; except that the bones had fallen to the bottom. All the bones were beautifully preserved, but presented no remarkable feature. Mr. Humphry informs me the crania are of Caucasian type, and are not in any way remarkable.

The smaller coffin, which is now placed under the southern wing of the portico of the Fitzwilliam Museum, is six feet six

inches in length externally, two feet wide, and one foot two inches high; the covering slab is four inches and a half thick. The whole is supposed to weigh about three quarters of a ton.

Before the larger coffin was used to contain the remains found in it, it had been broken into several pieces, and mended by means of iron clamps, of which very clear traces were seen when it was removed. As these coffins must have been costly from the amount of labour expended upon them, and the distance to which the stone was conveyed from its quarry in Northamptonshire, we may perhaps conclude that economy caused a mended coffin to be used: or the fact may have been that no other coffin was ready, and of course the corpse could not be kept until another had been excavated.

The coffins only contained the bones; but at the end of the smaller of them, which inclosed the female remains, four glass bottles and one vase of pottery were found; also an oval armlet of jet, having a longer diameter of three inches, and a shorter of two and a half; also two rather elegant pins made of jet and another of bone. Likewise a thin sheet of bronze forming a shallow vessel, but having its whole edge broken away, so as to render it difficult to form a guess at its use; and a thin circular dish of coarse pottery having a diameter of about four inches and less than half an inch in thickness. The latter appears to be quite perfect, and no guess is made at its use. The annexed plate will show the form of the bottles, and their circular top is shown below them. They are exactly alike in shape, and respectively measure four and three quarter, five, and five and a quarter inches in height and seven and seven and a half inches in circumference at



their thickest part. The small bottle is four inches high and four inches in circumference. It has two rudely formed but rather elegant handles formed by attaching the glass when plastic to the shoulder of the bottle, carrying it up to the neck and then back again parallel to itself. The earthen vase is six and a quarter inches in height, and measures eleven inches round its thickest part: a representation of it is given on a plate.

The antiquities have been liberally given to the Museum of our Society by Mr Swan Wallis.

It will be remembered that two inscribed stones were found by the side of this same road, at about three miles from Cambridge, in the year 1820 (See *Anc. Cambridgeshire*, pp. 23 and 71). They have now been safely placed under the portico of the Fitzwilliam Museum.

P. S. I avail myself of this opportunity to correct an error in my *Ancient Cambridgeshire*. The Akeman Street did not pass through CAMBORITUM, but ran parallel and close to the north-western side of that station, from the western angle of which the road traversed the ground now occupied as a garden by Mr Cumming; crossed the long lane leading to the footpath to Coton at about the middle of the hedge bounding the last field on its northern side; and left St John's farm a little to the west, thus avoiding the brook, which is sometimes flooded, and must formerly have rendered the adjoining land soft and swampy.



Two glass bottles found on Gravel Hill Farm.



Vase found on Gravel Hill Farm.