

PROCEEDINGS
OF THE
CAMBRIDGE ANTIQUARIAN
SOCIETY

(INCORPORATING THE CAMBS & HUNTS ARCHAEOLOGICAL SOCIETY)



VOLUME XLVIII

JANUARY 1954 TO DECEMBER 1954

CAMBRIDGE
DEIGHTON BELL

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ARCHAEOLOGICAL NOTES

MARGARET MURRAY, D.LITT. AND J. R. GARROOD, M.D., F.S.A.

ROMANO-BRITISH BURIALS AT GODMANCHESTER

THESE were found in digging foundations for a new school at Park Lane for the County Council in 1954.

The site is on what was the garden of Island Hall, on the opposite side of the road towards the Park Lane side (Grid Reference 245707). Four incomplete and broken skeletons were got out by the workmen, but Mr C. F. Tebbutt and I dug out one of which the skull only was broken, having been moved previously.

The depth was from 3 ft. 6 in. to 4 ft. and in the last one there was unmoved sand and gravel at 4 ft.

The site consists of rather dirty gravel with evidence of filled-in rubbish pits or trenches containing a good deal of Romano-British pottery of the first and second centuries and very little later ware. The pottery was not associated with the burials, and in one case the burial was into the side of a pit.

The distance from the north side of the Church is 150 yards; it is outside the limits of the town and not far from the line of the Roman Road.

Other Romano-British burials¹ are at *Green End*, cremation, north-west of this site; *New Vicarage*, cremation; *Round Close*, Cambridge road, inhumation; *The Grove*, Cambridge Road; *Lewcocks Garage*, the same; and *Porch Farm*, the Ermine Street cremation.²

The character of the site and the distance from the Church make it most likely that these are Romano-British burials.

POTTERY. Two pieces of a dark grey plate with low foot ring, first century. Two pieces of Samian, form 37. One with a wreath of chevron pattern, first to early-second century, some black smooth Belgic ware as well as a number of other fragments of similar date, certainly nothing characteristic of the fourth.

The Skeletons

1. Fragmentary. No skull; part of lower jaw. Epiphyses not consolidated, wisdom teeth not erupted, other teeth not worn; estimated height under 5 ft.: a young person. Objects found near: pottery, oyster, bones of ox and sheep.

2. Very fragmentary, bones of ox found.

3. More of this skeleton was found; estimated height 5 ft. 5 in. First- and second-century pottery and Romano-British roofing tiles.

¹ *Transactions of the Cambs. & Hunts Arch. Soc.* vol. v, pt. VII.

² *Ibid.* vol. vi, pt. IV.

4. Estimated height 5 ft. 5 in.

5. Adult male, wisdom teeth erupted, skull sutures closed. Height measured *in situ* 5 ft. 8 in., but the base of the skull was crushed and had been moved on discovery, and some of the bones and cervical vertebrae had been lost, so I think the height was probably 5 ft. 9 or 10 in.; the bones were massive and nearly all in good condition. Objects found: one piece of grey Roman pottery and a hand-made nail.

Park Lane Site

A sixth skull was found while digging the drain in Park Lane. It is damaged. The skull is that of an elderly female; there are no teeth in the lower jaw, which has an old fracture of the left side; there are five teeth in the upper jaw and two molars lost since burial. The neck, handle and part of the base of a buff-coloured bottle was also found, probably of the second century. The situation supports the view that these burials are Romano-British.

Conclusion

Burials of the Romano-British period in a site which had been used for the disposal of rubbish from the first century, outside the town and near a road.

Thanks are due to Mr Holloway, the County Architect, to Mr C. F. Tebbutt and to the contractors, Messrs Thackray.

J. R. G.

THE FINDS AT ELY FIELDS FARM

Major Gordon Fowler, in his paper on 'Cratendun: a problem of the Dark Ages' (vol. XLI, 1948, pp. 70-3), discusses the site of the lost village of Cratendun and identifies it with the site first noted by Mrs Violet Pritchard and myself. I think it may be of interest to amplify Major Fowler's account by putting on record a short account of the finding of the site. The information came first (in 1947) from one of the engineers working on the construction of the aerodrome; he wrote to his sister, Miss Annie Baker (of Cambridge), telling her that he had seen the objects and had interviewed the finder. The driver of the bulldozer had crashed into a mass of skeletons which he had at once investigated; he had found the sword which, though all in one piece, was badly bent, a skull with a dagger still sticking in it, a few broken bronze objects, and quantities of red amber beads, which he thought were rubies. On starting his bulldozer again he had two rather startling accidents, which so frightened him that he hastily returned the objects to the place where he had found them, hoping thus to placate the dead whom he had robbed. On receipt of this information Mrs Pritchard and I went out to the site to investigate.

The skeletons lay in a mass, and though the bones were too splintered to be removed it was possible to see that there was no orientation, that the bodies had lain in a confused heap, and that the depth of earth over them was about 12 in. or rather less. The beads and small bits of bronze were strewn widely where the bulldozer driver had so hastily thrown them. A certain number were also found among the splintered bones. Small bronze bangles, evidently worn by children, were found,

also various bronze objects and the saucer brooches (op. cit. Pl. XIX), amber beads in quantity and a few small glass beads. I bought the sword from the bulldozer driver for a couple of shillings and I think he was relieved to get rid of it. The large glass bead (Pl. XIX) was given to us by the farmer.

Mrs Pritchard made a second visit to the site and there picked up the wheel-brooch (Pl. XIX) and the bronze buckle. She also saw the skull with the dagger in it.

It was evident that the skeletons we saw were only part of a larger mass. The number of bodies, the confused manner in which they lay, and the evidence by the beads and small bangles that women and children had been among the dead, seem to suggest that this heap of bones represents the massacre of all the inhabitants of the village. But as the engineers were under contract to finish the aerodrome within a given time and could not hold up the work till a trained excavator could undertake a thorough exploration, we had to be content with surface finds only. But I am convinced that a complete excavation of the site by an experienced archaeologist would yield very important results.

M. M.



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