

ON SOME ROMAN AND SAXON REMAINS  
FOUND AT CROYDON IN 1893-94.

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AT intervals between February, 1893, and September, 1894, workmen were employed in cutting a new road, terrace-fashion, in some rising ground on the Elms Estate at Croydon, Surrey. In the course of this work they came upon a number of interments, with antiquities of Saxon and Roman date.

The whole of the find would have been dispersed or reburied unnoticed in the rubbish had not the attention of Mr. Thomas Rigby been drawn to the antiquities coming from there. Fortunately, in the intervals of professional business, Mr. Rigby paid many visits to the place, and encouraged the workmen to put aside their finds for him. The result is a considerable collection, especially of iron weapons, shield bosses, etc., of Saxon date; small objects such as fibulæ are very scarce, and beads entirely absent. This fact is attributed by Mr. Rigby to the manner of the discovery by careless excavators, who also may have parted with some of the more portable specimens to other persons.

The spot where the graves were found is the site of the residence of the late Sir Thomas Edridge, and the new road is to be called Edridge Road. It runs parallel to High Street, north-westward towards the new Town Hall, and is cut on the western slope of the above-mentioned rise. A wide space was also dressed back on the upper side of the road to form a gentler

slope. The interments lay at a depth of about 2 feet 6 inches, and both skeletons and burnt bones were found. The following is a list of the objects obtained by Mr. Rigby:

ROMAN REMAINS. *Pottery*.—Small urn-shaped vessel of brown Upchurch ware, H.  $4\frac{3}{4}$  inches; vase of Durobrivian ware with band of raised scale pattern round the middle, H. 6 inches; bottle of yellowish brown ware, H.  $4\frac{1}{2}$  inches; another of the same ware (a pale variety of the Durobrivian type), H.  $3\frac{3}{4}$  inches.

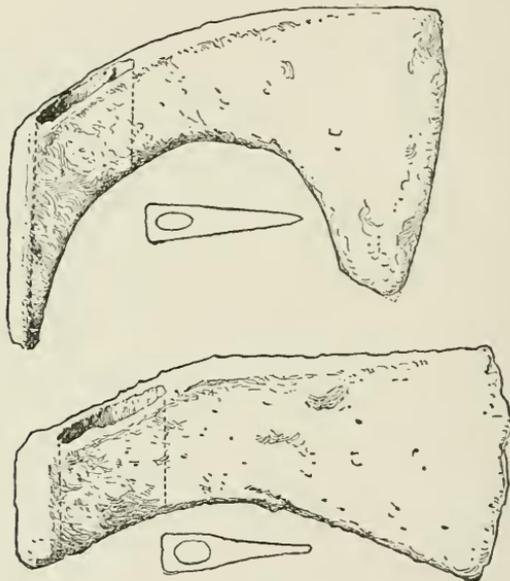
*Bronze*.—In this material there are two needles, two pins, a pair of tweezers, and a narrow armlet with ends twisted together; but it is difficult to decide whether these are Saxon or Roman.

SAXON REMAINS. *Iron*.—Twelve shield bosses varying from the conical type with even curve (but of moderate height) to the compressed type with shoulder. There are two that may be classed with the former, the rest offering varieties of the other type. They are tipped with buttons, large or small.

Three swords, one plain, another with a small bronze tip for the pommel, the third with a bronze band that has once formed the rim of the scabbard. On a similar specimen in the British Museum from Kempston in Bedfordshire the bronze of the pommel and that of the scabbard are associated, but I am assured by Mr. Rigby that the Croydon examples belong to different swords. There is also a remnant of a fourth sword. Twenty-six spear-heads of many varieties; some in fine preservation and of elegant form. One is very large and has a strong rib on each face of the blade, L.  $16\frac{3}{4}$  inches.

One 'angon' head of square section with barbs close to shaft, long iron shaft has a total length of 38 inches: the socket is broken short. This is a very rare weapon in Anglo-Saxon graves. A fine example was found at Sarr, in Kent, and is figured *Archæologia Cantiana*, Vol. VII, Pl. xiv; it measured forty-five inches in length (*l. c.*, p. 319) and shows a moveable ring on the socket,

no doubt to make it grip the wooden end more tightly. Another example, considerably shorter, is figured on the same plate. The iron shaft evidently varied much in length, for a dart-head of the angon type lately acquired for the British Museum from the Humphrey Wickham collection, and found with Saxon antiquities near Strood in Kent,<sup>1</sup> measures only  $17\frac{1}{4}$  inches. The *locus classicus* for the angon<sup>2</sup> is not very lucid. 'The angons are spears not very small nor yet very large, but such as



AXE-HEADS OF SAXON DATE FOUND AT CROYDON, SURREY.<sup>3</sup>

could be thrown on occasion or used in close combat for attacks. The greater part of them is enclosed round in all directions with iron, so that very little of the wood appears between, and scarcely even the whole of the butt-spike; and above, around the top of the spear, bent

<sup>1</sup> Smith, *Collectanea Antiqua*, v. pl. xi.

<sup>2</sup> *Agathias*, lib. ii, cap. 5: cf. Wylie and Akerman in *Archæologia*, XXXIV, 177 and XXXV, 48.

<sup>3</sup> The Society is indebted to the Society of Antiquaries for the loan of the blocks illustrating this paper.

points project on either side from the head itself, like hooks slightly curved, and incline downwards.' There is nothing said about rings or plates of iron, words which translators of this description have introduced. The vagueness as to the number of barbs is also noteworthy. Agathias lays stress upon two points, the dangerous form of the barbs which held firm in wood or flesh, and the iron protection which prevented the weapon from being cut off short. With these leading features of the angon the historian is satisfied, and he cared nothing and probably knew nothing about the details of its construction. From the discoveries in graves on the continent and in England we may believe that some of these weapons were made with a short stem of iron, still long enough to be troublesome in a wound, and even then the wooden shaft might be protected by a sheathing of some sort, while in others a long iron shaft that put the wood almost out of reach of a swordsman required only a short wooden butt to complete it. The *σανρωτήρ*, however, remains to be considered. Apparently a metal point was not necessary, since butt-sheaths of spears are not found very commonly, although they must have offered a great advantage over bare wood for planting the weapon upright in the ground, and, understanding the butt-point to have been sheathed with metal, I have been inclined to read *ἄσον* for *ἄλον*, thus changing the sense to 'so that very little of the wood appears between, scarcely even an amount equal to the length of the butt-spike.' A short length of wood near the butt would be convenient for the grip.

Three axe-heads of well-marked forms, thickening evenly from edge to back, and so far like wedges, but with the upper edge of the outline angulated or curved downwards, while the socket-hole remains parallel to the cutting edge. The smallest is 4·35 inches in length, and weighs only 11½ ounces troy. The edge is widened downwards considerably, as well as the socket-end, so that the lower outline is very sharply curved, the upper one much less so. The other two are of one pattern, but while the smaller specimen measures 5·2 inches in

length, and weighs  $14\frac{1}{4}$  ounces troy, the other is 6 inches long and 26 ounces in weight; the outlines of these are angulated. Axe-heads again are very scarce in Anglo-Saxon cemeteries, but one of the same type as that first described was discovered by Hillier in the cemetery at Chessell Down in the Isle of Wight and is in the British Museum;<sup>1</sup> one of the second type was in grave 83 at Little Wilbraham, Cambridgeshire.<sup>2</sup> A different type was found at Sarre. An axe quoted by De Baye as a *francisca* from the catalogue of the Gibbs collection is now deposited in the British Museum, but is of quite doubtful age. Are not the two-edged axes of Agathias picturesque exaggerations? they have never been found of this age in England or in Europe.

A buckle, tongue lost, hoop strongly ribbed, showing silver plating, which probably extended over the buckle-plate as well; the latter has three circular cavities for settings. Two rings, one imperfect, diameter, 2·2 inches.

A small prick spur, in the same condition as the Saxon iron, seems worth mentioning, but the relics include a pair of scissors of modern form thoroughly rusted.

*Bronze.*—Bowl, of which only the topmost portion with the rim and an isolated fragment of the bottom are preserved. The rim is turned outwards; the handle, which was of iron, was fixed in triangular upright ears made in one piece with the rest of the bowl; the body is much thinner than the rim and ears. It is evident that the vessel was hammered out of a piece of sheet bronze cut to a circular shape, with the two triangular pieces for the ears left projecting. Diameter of rim  $7\frac{1}{2}$  inches, the body wider.<sup>3</sup>

Two buckets, the greater part of each preserved, with its wooden staves, and three bronze bands, the top one very broad: bronze rim and remains of handle: four up-

<sup>1</sup> Hillier, *History and Antiquities of the Isle of Wight*, p. 37 and fig. 113.

<sup>2</sup> Neville, *Saxon Obsequies*, Pl. 39 and p. 19. See also *Collectanea Antiqua*, II, 224.

<sup>3</sup> Cf. Neville, *op. cit.*, Pl. 16.

right strips widening towards the base, the edges with row of bosses produced by punching, two of these in each case pierced at the top for hooked ends of handles to pass through. Height,  $3\frac{7}{8}$  and  $4\frac{1}{8}$ .

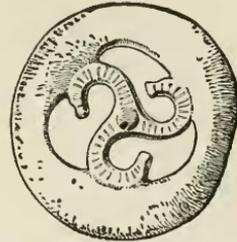
Thin saucer-shaped brooch, the inside tinned, but probably once covered with an ornamental plate, diameter, 1·6 inches; ditto, thick, engraved with four human faces placed crosswise, not gilt, diameter, 1·2 inches; pair of broad annular brooches, tinned and engraved with four small circles, the pins of bronze. Diameter, 2 inches. Long brooch, with square top, nearly plain. Length, 2·5 inches.

Two circular ornaments of open work, consisting of a ring with triscelic design radiating from the centre. They differ considerably from each other, but in each case the design is made to represent the heads and necks of three serpents. Diameter, 2·5 and 2·2 inches (*see figure*). This ornament is well known in Merovingian cemeteries.

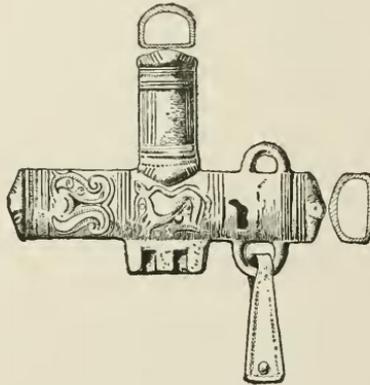
Two double plates for attachment to cloth or leather. Length of each 2·2 inches.

A very curious object (*see figure*) has as a central stem a flattened tube, on one face rounded and with engraved ornament, other flat and plain. From the middle of one side projects a very similar but plain tube, and opposite to this is a hinge in which iron has worked upon a bronze pin. Below these

there are two loops, one on each side, and from one of them hangs a looped tab of bronze with rivet for leather work (?). The tubes look like sockets for wood, but there



BRONZE SAXON  
ORNAMENT FOUND AT  
CROYDON, SURREY.



BRONZE OBJECT OF SAXON DATE  
FOUND AT CROYDON, SURREY.

is no trace of rivets within. The designs on the tube are engraved and inlaid with plates of tin or silver. In the middle there is a large-eared animal; at the end with the loops the imperfect casting has left a hole in the front which appears to have been covered over with a silver plate; at the other end is a design remotely



SAXON GLASS CUP  
FOUND AT CROYDON,  
SURREY.

resembling two dolphins *affronté*. I have no explanation to offer for this curious relic, which appears to be complete as far as the bronze is concerned. The general appearance of it and the figure of the animal indicate that the main tube hung horizontally or nearly so, but the wear of the loop hanging from the arm shows that the right-hand end inclined considerably downwards.

Several small bronze objects, including fibulae, have not been available for description.

*Glass.*—Several fragments of a lobed vessel, of pale green colour; of the usual type with crinkled bands down the lobes.

Pale yellowish green cup with foot; a thread wound round many times below the rim (*see illustration*).

*Pottery.*—Remains of 16 urns, and one small plain cup perfect; all are hand-made. The urns are of various forms; one is burnt harder than usual, resembling grey Roman ware; it is the lower half of a large plain vessel, the walls rather thin and of very even thickness though hand-made. Diameter of body, 11 inches. There are several others plain and some ornamented with stamps, lines, and bosses, alone or in combination.

*Stone.*—A small rectangular sharpener pierced at one end and measuring  $3\frac{1}{4} \times 9 \times 5$  inches, was found with the largest axe-head. This is the only record of association obtainable in the whole find.

*Horn.*—A cow's horn pierced on the outer side with a circular hole, age doubtful.

The angon, the two small axe-heads, the mysterious bronze object, and a selection of the remainder have

been most kindly offered by Mr. Rigby as a donation to the British Museum, where they will be the more welcome, as Surrey is a county quite unrepresented in the Saxon room. The glass cup and some of the most interesting relics are reserved for a local museum to be established in the new Town Hall at Croydon.

Sketches of a few additional objects have been sent by Mr. Rigby since the meeting. They consist of two long square-topped brooches, a circular brooch with embossed plate, two buckle plates, and a bar with hooked end terminating in a disk, and with a ring on the hook. The last is perhaps Roman.