

An Anglo-Saxon Cemetery at Wallingford, Berkshire.

By E. T. LEEDS, M.A., F.S.A.

FROM prehistoric times onwards the crossing of the River Thames, which since Saxon days has borne the name then bestowed upon it, was one of considerable importance, in all probability the most important between Oxford and Reading. For, though the Icknield Way normally led travellers down to Streatley they must have availed themselves of every opportunity to avoid a long detour by dropping down from the Way where it crosses the top of Beggars Bush Hill on the Oxford-Henley road, and fording the river at Wallingford, rejoin the old trackway on the Berkshire Downs in the vicinity of Blewbury.

It is, nevertheless, a strange fact that beyond a few bronze implements, and some Roman finds in the river near the more modern bridge, the evidence for early activity on either side, and for the purpose of the present enquiry more particularly on the Berkshire bank is remarkably sparse; a few Iron Age and Norman sherds, a few Roman coins, but no more than might be expected at any such crossing, so well sign-posted by nature as is this ford.

When, however, the Saxon invaders reached the Thames in their *westwardly*¹ advance, they naturally seized the fords, and to judge from the great cemeteries at Long Wittenham and Abingdon, established ford-head settlements sufficiently close to the river itself to admit of an easy and rapid retreat to the left bank in the event of trouble. Obviously Wallingford is a site at which a Saxon cemetery should exist, but it is only quite recently that its existence has been definitely established. This is all the more strange, because owing to its position it was liable to be built upon at any time after the town began to spread beyond the limits of its ancient ramparts.

South of the ramparts, the exact archæological determination of whose age is one of the principal desiderata of Berkshire archæology, and parallel to them runs St. John's Road, named after St. John's Hospital, a mediæval foundation. On the south side of the road, and about 200 yards west of the main road to Pangbourne and Reading is the Pavilion, a property occupied by Mr. F. Snow: it is his ground which has yielded the principal evidence

¹ In accordance with the theory of the invasion advanced by me in *History*, 1925, and further developed in *Antiquaries Journal*, XIII, 229.

of the cemetery. Immediately within the railings a grave (No. 1 on the plan) was exposed in 1924 in the course of gravel-digging, and an account was contributed to the *Berks & Oxon Advertiser* of November 21, 1924, by Mr. R. H. Hutchinson, Curator of the Wallingford Museum, where the objects associated with the burial were deposited.

This was the first substantial proof that came to light, but circumstantial evidence of an earlier knowledge of the cemetery is available. Already in 1910, when the Council School was built (see plan) immediately to the west of Mr. Snow's property, some 10 or 11 skeletons were exposed, as stated by Mr. Snow's employee, in the course of whose work all the more recent discoveries have been made. Commenting on this information Mr. Snow adds that recently a drain to take surface-water from the School playground was excavated to a depth of about 6 or 7 feet within the School premises and parallel to the railing dividing them from the Pavilion, and that though this trench measured several yards no trace of a burial was detected along its length. That such should be the case is curious in the light of the irregular disposition of the graves within the Pavilion grounds, but it can hardly be doubted that the two groups of graves are closely connected, the more so, because the requisite depth for foundations such as those of the School is that at which Anglo-Saxon graves are likely to have been encountered.

So far then knowledge of the cemetery is confined to an area adjacent to the road, and extending from the Council School to the Gospel Hall, in the erection of which on part of the Pavilion ground, two graves (Nos. 5 & 6 on the plan) came to light in 1932. How large the cemetery may be remains uncertain: at the present time the number of graves discovered is increasing as gravel-digging on a small scale proceeds, but the process is slow, and it has seemed desirable to issue an initial report containing all the information up to date, leaving for the future publication of any additional discoveries.

That these may still be numerous is suggested by further information supplied by Mr. Snow. He states that, when on his first entry into the property in 1910, he dug gravel for paths at the southern end of his ground, pottery was discovered similar to that of the Saxon vases described below. If his comparison is correct, then the cemetery may be of considerable size, comparable with Abingdon or Long Wittenham, and covering an area at least 220 yards from north to south and 120 feet or more from east to west.

Mr. Hutchinson reported particulars of other graves found in 1929 as noted in the schedule of discoveries below. Since 1936 the excavation of most of the inhumation interments has been personally supervised by Captain C. Musgrave who has furnished the full particulars without which this report could not have been

compiled. He has also made himself responsible for the plan: the excellent photographs of graves are mostly his; and he has also supplied details of all skeletons which have come within his purview. These after excavation were transferred to the Department of Human Anatomy in the University Museum, Oxford, for reparation and report.

According to Captain Musgrave the depth of deposition in the case of inhumations examined by him and in several cases of cremation remains constant, the grave having been sunk into the gravel to a depth just sufficient to receive the interment, not as at Abingdon for example to 3 or 4 feet. This would imply an average of about $3\frac{1}{2}$ feet from the surface; no measurements, of depth however, have been recorded here, since they would have little significance, because the ground immediately inside the railings of the Pavilion was at one time levelled to make a tennis-court, and much of the top soil was then heaped up into a high bank parallel to and close to the road. The first graves (Nos. 1-4) were discovered under this bank.

In the following schedule inhumations are numbered; cremations are lettered with capitals, while some other finds of pottery in too broken a condition for removal, but, as shown by one case, indicative of the existence of a vessel as distinguished from casual sherds, are designated by uncials.

- 1.—Nov. 19, 1924. Head to S. Adult woman. Pair of gilt bronze saucer-brooches, cast and chased, with seven-point star, and at centre a circular setting of glass or ? garnet; shallow rim with punched circlets on interior face; diam. $1\frac{1}{2}$ ins.: eleven beads,¹ 1 amber, 2 crystal, 6 oblate dark blue glass, 2 opaque glass inlaid with crossed wavy thread, one red with white, the other white with red; bronze pricker from a toilet set.

Reported in *Berks & Oxon Advertiser* Nov. 21, 1924 by R. H. Hutchinson, where no mention is made of the bronze pricker. It, however, appears in a water-colour sketch dated Nov. 19, 1924, by Hutchinson (now in Mr. Snow's possession), where one brooch, the beads and pricker are also depicted. According to this sketch the brooches are $1\frac{1}{8}$ ins. in diameter. This grave group has been preserved in Wallingford Museum².

- 2 & 3.—In Hutchinson's account of the discoveries in 1929 he speaks of the fourth grave found since 1924 under the bank against the railing. No further details of these two graves are available other than that the head in each case was orientated south and that no relics were found.

¹ H. Peake, *Archaeology of Berkshire*, 131 & 239, "more than 11 beads" is according to the above evidence incorrect.

² The antiquities discovered from 1936 onwards have now been acquired for the Ashmolean Museum.

4.—June 28, 1929. Head to S. (photographs in possession of Mr. Snow). Hutchinson records in the *Berks & Oxon Advertiser* of June 29, 1929 that no weapons or ornaments were found, but behind the head were fragments of a small food-vessel of coarse black pottery. He also gives the length of the femur as 16 ins., estimating the stature of the skeleton to have been 5ft. 1 in.

5 & 6.—Two graves found in digging foundations in 1932 for the Gospel Hall, immediately west of the Pavilion entrance. As in the foregoing graves the heads were, according to Mr. Snow's employee, orientated south.

A.—Uncertain date, before 1936. A small vase, imperfect; H. $5\frac{1}{4}$ ins.; diam. 6 ins. (Pl. II). Dark brown hand-made ware; thin, out-turned rim, and hollow neck, below which are three shallow horizontal grooves, and below these are groups of circular stamps arranged in pendent triangles, 3, 2 and 1, the uppermost row forming with that of the other groups a continuous band round the vase, while the single stamp at the bottom of each triangle impinges on a vertical group of incised lines which run over and on each side of a low boss.

7.—Jan. — 1936. Head to W. Girl, 11 years old; skeleton lying outstretched and supine: no relics (Pl. I).

B.—One foot south of the edge of grave 7 (the position indicated by the case of the steel tape-measure, Pl. I) was a small vase of black hand-made pottery. H. $3\frac{3}{4}$ ins., diam. $4\frac{1}{2}$. The rim had been smashed down by pressure and is imperfectly preserved. In the hollow of the neck between two incised lines is a row of circular stamps with a cruciform design; on the shoulder is a second row and from it at intervals depends a line of three more similar stamps in each case crossing the top of a boss (Pl. II).


8.—Nov. 24, 1936. Head to W. Girl about 12 years old. At the waist, two cast bronze buckles with transversely grooved, kidney-shaped rings; a small rectangular plate of double sheet-bronze; two small rectangular plates of sheet-bronze, one imperfect with part of a perforation, the other with two perforations near the median line: all these constitute the mountings of a belt. Another rectangular bronze plate, $\frac{3}{4}$ by $\frac{1}{2}$ in., perforated at each corner, and with the entire middle cut out, an iron knife and an iron purse-mouth lay, the first two above the right hip, the knife by its side (Pl. I).

9-10.—March 27, 1937. Heads to W. Children, one aged 7 yrs., the other an infant. No relics.

C.—March 27, 1937. Cremation; large, undecorated vase, imperfect, of light brown, hand-made ware. Diam. 8 ins. Among the cremated bones was a piece of sheet-bronze, crumpled by heat, with small iron rivets, possibly from a belt.

D.—March 27, 1937. Cremation deposited loose.

E.—March 27, 1937. Cremation, with small undecorated vase, reddish brown in colour, diam. $4\frac{1}{2}$ ins.

II.—May 7, 1937. Head to W.; girl under 12 years (Pl. I). Below each shoulder, a small bronze brooch with flat Maltese-cross head-plate, arched bow, and flat sub-triangular foot (L. $2\frac{3}{4}$ and $2\frac{7}{8}$ ins.). Though similar in type, they are not an exact pair; the shorter example is better finished with more relief in the casting and has a raised panel on the head-plate and punched  around three sides of the middle of the head-plate and along the sides of the foot, while across its base are two engraved lines. At the breast an iron pin with looped head; fragments of tubular bronze engraved at intervals with transverse lines, probably remains of a needle-case. At the neck and on the breast a string of beads consisting of one large, crystal spheroid, two large and ten smaller amber and 33 oblate dark blue glass (Pl. III). Behind the head stood a small cup of squat form; around the shoulder is a band of incised decoration, consisting of a row of spots between two pairs of horizontal lines; round the body a deep vertical groove defined by two pairs of narrow lines is repeated four times. H. $2\frac{1}{4}$ ins., diam. $3\frac{3}{4}$ ins. (Pl. IV).¹

12.—June 24, 1937. Head to W.; adult woman. A pair of gilt bronze cruciform brooches, of Maltese-cross shape, cast and chased; at the centre is a pointed quatrefoil; each arm consists of a grotesque face, the nose or muzzle expanding into a flat, triangular plate L. $1\frac{3}{8}$ ins. A large crystal bead, roughly faceted and 10 small amber beads. Iron knife, and two iron fragments, one ? part of a pin (Pl. V).

F.—June 24, 1937. Cremation, in a large, plain, light brown vase, the rim wanting. H. (as preserved) $7\frac{3}{4}$ ins.; diam. $8\frac{1}{2}$ ins. Among the burnt bones which entirely filled it were found a small comb, $1\frac{1}{2}$ ins. long and $\frac{5}{8}$ in. wide with perforated, triangular back, straight sides and six teeth; also remains of a set of iron, model toilet-implements on a suspension-ring.

¹ *Berks & Oxon Advertiser*, May 14, 1937; *Oxford Times*, same date.

a, b, c & d.

In proximity to and around F were found 4 small vases in very broken condition; only part of one, the base of a plain, thick black vase was preserved.

- 13.—Jan. 31, 1938. Head to W. Girl, 18 to 24 months old. A short string of 16 beads consisting of 11 dark blue glass and 5 polychrome beads

Close to this grave was found a necklace of beads and coins. Of the beads two are small amber, one black glass with a wavy white line, one dark blue glass, and one large cylinder, red, yellow and green, the two third brass Roman coins perforated for suspension are of Gallienus (A.D.260–8) and Constantine II as Caesar (A.D.330). It is difficult to account for the absence of a skeleton in view of the adequate preservation of the bones in other graves, but Capt. Musgrave states that the beads were not associated with any sign of a grave.

- 14.—Jan. 31, 1938. Head to W; no other details; no relics.

- 15.—May 20, 1938. Head to W. Woman, 20–21 yrs. old. (Pl. VI). Skeleton outstretched and supine; richly equipped. Above the head a wide, annular brooch of tinned bronze, $1\frac{3}{4}$ ins. in diameter, with a bronze pin hinged in a hole at the inner edge; the body of the brooch, which is slightly domed, is decorated with stamped borders of S-motifs and between them the surface is transversely scored with fine lines. On the breast remains of a pair of bronze dished brooches of the applied type, $1\frac{1}{2}$ ins. in diameter; the back-plates are entire; the rims are wanting, and only fragments of the embossed disks have survived. In these last can be detected a fairly common geometric design. Lying across the breast, a bronze pin with a fine, green patina, $4\frac{1}{4}$ ins. long; it has a knob of hour-glass shape, with notched upper and lower edges and five ribs encircling the waist, the shaft is similarly ribbed for $1\frac{1}{4}$ ins. below the head, except for a faceted section midway.

On the left side of the body, near the waist, a flat, annular brooch of tinned bronze, $1\frac{5}{16}$ ins. diam., with an iron pin, hinged in the inner edge. Around both borders is a border of stamped \wedge pattern.

From the neck to the lap, a long string of beads, 142 in number¹. Of these 132 are oblate dark blue glass; the remainder consist of one jet disk, one small dull green glass spheroid, two black, yellow and maroon opaque glass cylinders, two pale green glass oblate with four bosses in each of which is a dull red spot, one flattened spheroid, yellow, green and brown mottled opaque glass with a wavy maroon line, one

¹ For convenience of photography they were grouped round the lower part of the body.

spheroid, white opaque glass inlaid with a double wavy blue line intersected by a straight line, also blue : in each cell thus formed is a dull red spot, two spheroid, chrome yellow opaque glass streaked with brown. (Pl. VII).

Above the right pubis : a bronze pin, headless ; L. $2\frac{5}{8}$ ins. ; by left ulna, iron knife, L. 4 ins. Remains of three pieces of bone, only one is comparatively perfect, and measures 1 in. in length. They are square in section and are tapered to a blunt point ; on each face are engraved a band of three lines at the top and four bulls'-eye circlets below. One piece has been hollowed out for a third of its length, the recess being square except at the base where there is a shallow round pit ; one of the others has been solid ; of the third only a fragment remains. Their position in the grave is unknown, since they were removed by the workman in advance of Capt. Musgrave's exploration. (Pl. IV).

The position of the objects on the body suggests that while the pair of applied brooches fastened a garment in the normal position, the two annular brooches and the large pin had served to secure an enveloping cloak or shroud.

A few notes may be added about the burials, pottery and ornaments so far discovered.

GRAVES. The point that will be noted at once is that not only is there up to the present no record of a man's grave, but also that the majority of the graves are those of female children. No stress can be laid upon this, in the absence of details about the skeletons found under the School and the Gospel Hall, as well as those from graves Nos. 2 & 3. Moreover, the graves so far discovered apparently represent no more than the fringe of the cemetery.

POTTERY. The larger vessels are all plain, and seem in all cases to have served as urns. About the smaller vases it is more difficult to judge. The depositions of small cups or bowls in Anglo-Saxon graves is not uncommon : several examples were found in the Abingdon cemetery.¹ It is the evidence of isolated occurrences of these small vases that is puzzling. They were not, it seems, associated with burnt bones : otherwise infant cremations might be indicated. On the other hand their deposition at the normal grave-depth does argue for such an explanation. Further discoveries may elucidate the problem.

BROOCHES. A wide range of forms in vogue in early Anglo-Saxon times has long been known : within its compass fall all the types from Wallingford except one.

¹ E. T. Leeds and D. B. Harden, *The Anglo-Saxon Cemetery at Abingdon, Berkshire*, p. 34, fig. 6.

The brooches from grave 5 are of a type that has a wide distribution throughout the Eastern Counties and Midlands: their date is difficult to fix within close limits, since every shade of development is known from one, the head-plate of which is of purely Maltese-cross form through a long series in which the cross gradually fades out into a plain rectangular plate. The Wallingford specimens would on this reckoning occupy a midway position. Parallels from the Upper Thames region are known from Frilford, Berks., from Broughton Poggs and Filkins, Oxon, and from Fairford, Gloucs.

The broad annular brooches from grave 15 are an adaptation and development of a British (Celtic) form and remained in fashion throughout the period of the pagan cemeteries. Analogous specimens occurred at Abingdon (graves 80 & 85),¹ and others are known from Fairford² and Chavenage,³ Gloucs., from Stanlake⁴ and Wheatley,⁵ Oxon.

Of the applied brooches from the same grave fortunately sufficient of the embossed disks has survived to allow the decorative design to be determined; it must have closely resembled that on a saucer-brooch from High Down, Sussex, namely a development from a floriated Cross. The evolution of this design has been discussed in the *Antiquaries Journal*, XIII, where the High Down brooch is figured (pl. XXXVI, e). It is interesting to note that the star-motive employed on the saucer-brooches from grave 1 at Wallingford, though furnished with seven points instead of six is of the same sharp-pointed variant which occurs in combination with the design of the applied brooches on a brooch from Guildown, Surrey.⁷ In its developed form the design and thus too the brooches upon which it is employed may probably be assigned to the end of the 6th or the early part of the 7th century, when contacts for which other evidence is available had been established between the Upper and Lower Thames. Both in its early and later forms the distribution lies between these two areas and Sussex, and not with the Eastern Counties, whence the earliest settlers in the Upper Thames region must have started.

That surprises can still be expected from Anglo-Saxon cemeteries, particularly in the Midlands, is certain, but it is a notable event that this small group of graves at Wallingford should have produced a brooch-form entirely novel to Anglo-Saxon archaeology. Such is the pair of brooches from grave 12. The term cruciform is normally applied to the large series of brooches with three knobs attached to the head-plate and an elongated bow and

¹ Ashmolean Museum (Evans Coll.) 1909. 490, 495, 492, 492a.

² Loc. cit., pl. XV.

³ W. M. Wylie, *Fairford Graves*, pl. VI 5-6.

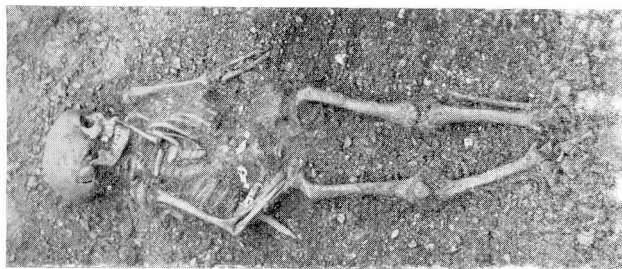
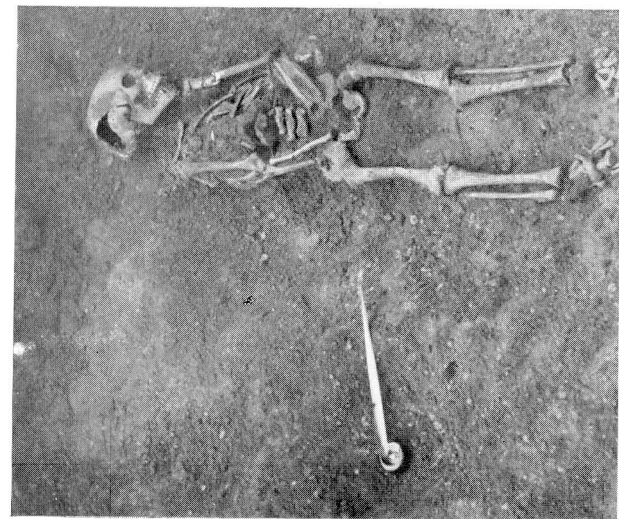
⁴ *Journ. Brit. Arch. Ass.*, IV, 50.

⁵ Ashmolean Museum 1921.1110.

⁶ *Proc. Soc. Ant.*, XXIX, 51, fig. 2.

⁷ *Ant. Journ.*, XIII, pl. xxxvi, i.

PLATE I.



GRAVES 7, 8 AND 11. THE CASE OF THE STEEL TAPE IN GRAVE 7 MARKS THE POSITION OF POT B (Pl. II).

Ph. C. Musgrave & Howard Evans.

AN ANGLO-SAXON CEMETERY AT WALLINGFORD, BERKSHIRE

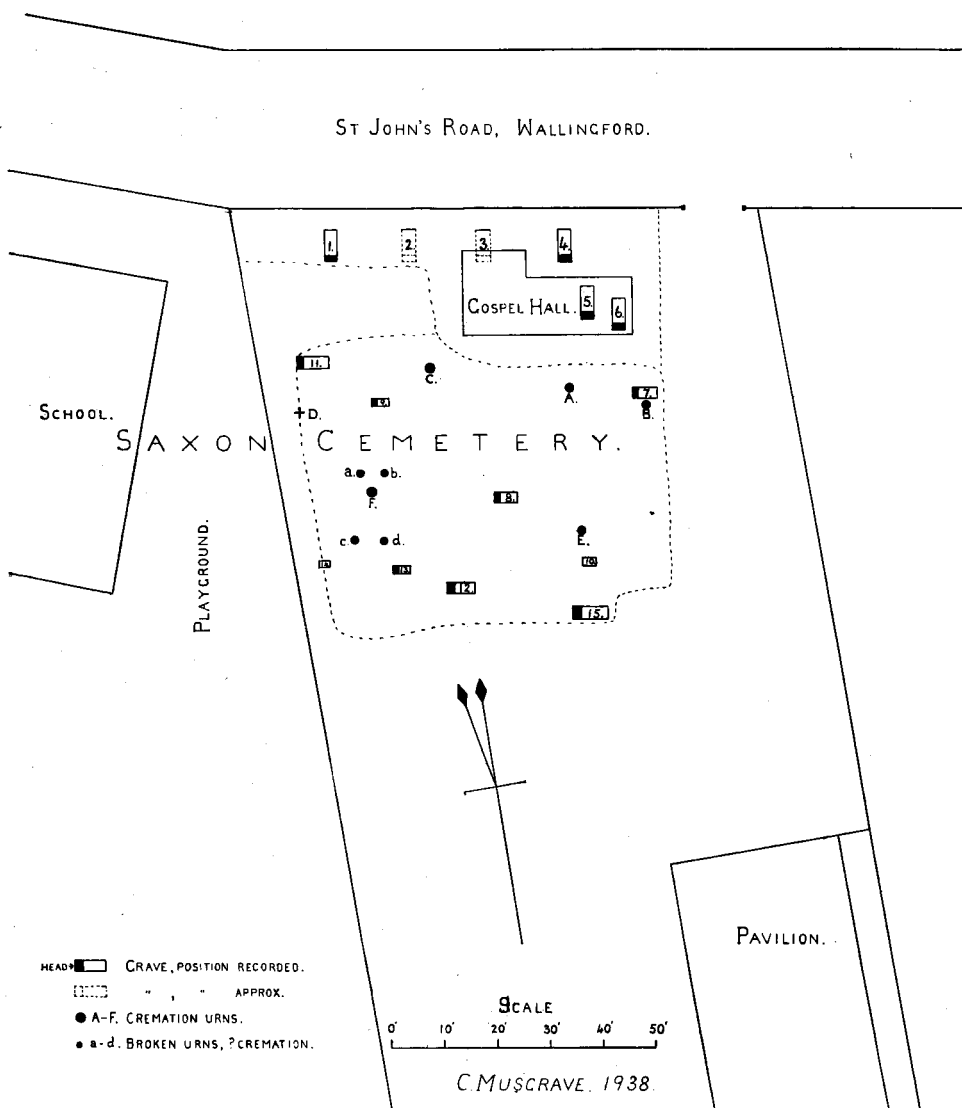


FIG. 1.

PLAN OF GRAVES IN THE ANGLO-SAXON CEMETERY, WALLINGFORD, BERKS.

foot: these are mainly Anglian in origin, and are only scantily represented in the West Saxon region, and then by typologically early examples. But the type can claim no monopoly of the designation, and the new brooches must on grounds of form be similarly named, the more justifiably, because the designer of this novel form has evidently drawn his inspiration from the details of the more exotic and florid brooches of the normal cruciform type, which are widely distributed in the Eastern Counties and Eastern Midlands. He need have gone no farther afield than Warwickshire or Northamptonshire for the mask-like finial of the arms¹ and even the little quatrefoil at the centre of the cross occurs more than once on the same series of florid brooches²: it is indeed conceivable that the brooches were made outside the West Saxon area. This new type of brooch can hardly date before the 7th century.

BEADS. Little need be said about these, except to remark on the unusually fine string of dark blue glass beads in grave 15. The beads are not rare; they occur in most cemeteries, but so long a homogeneous string in blue glass is uncommon; they are usually mixed with other varieties, as at Brighthampton, grave 2³.

The large cylindrical bead (near grave 13) and other smaller ones in variegated opaque glass, red green or black, yellow or maroon are seldom found in West Saxon graves, but form quite a feature of necklaces in the Anglian districts.

Perforated Roman coins often occur as part of Saxon necklaces, notably in grave 22 at Brighthampton, also in grave 17, and at Filkins.⁴

VARIA. The bronze pin from grave 15 is a somewhat unusual piece. For, though long pins, with ornamental heads, mouldings and ribbing occur in Anglo-Saxon graves, as a rule they have slender shafts like those from Alfriston, Sussex (graves 29, 62 & 65).⁵ To the example from Wallingford with its thick shaft and short blunt point it is not easy to cite parallels: one, shorter, similarly ribbed, but with a large, biconical knob from Brighthampton, Oxon (grave 18) seems to fall into the same category.⁶ Perhaps these stout pins served, as has been suggested above, to secure a cloak.

¹ Nils Åberg., *The Anglo-Saxons in England*, fig. 83, 4-6; *Archaeologia*, LXII, pl. LXXXI, 5.

² V.C.H. *Rutland*, I, 102, fig. 6 from North Luffenham.

³ *Archaeologia*, XXXVIII, 86.

⁴ Ashmolean Museum, 1909. 495e.

⁵ *Sussex Archaeological Collections*, LXVI, pl. VIII.

⁶ *Archaeologia*, XXXVIII, 85.

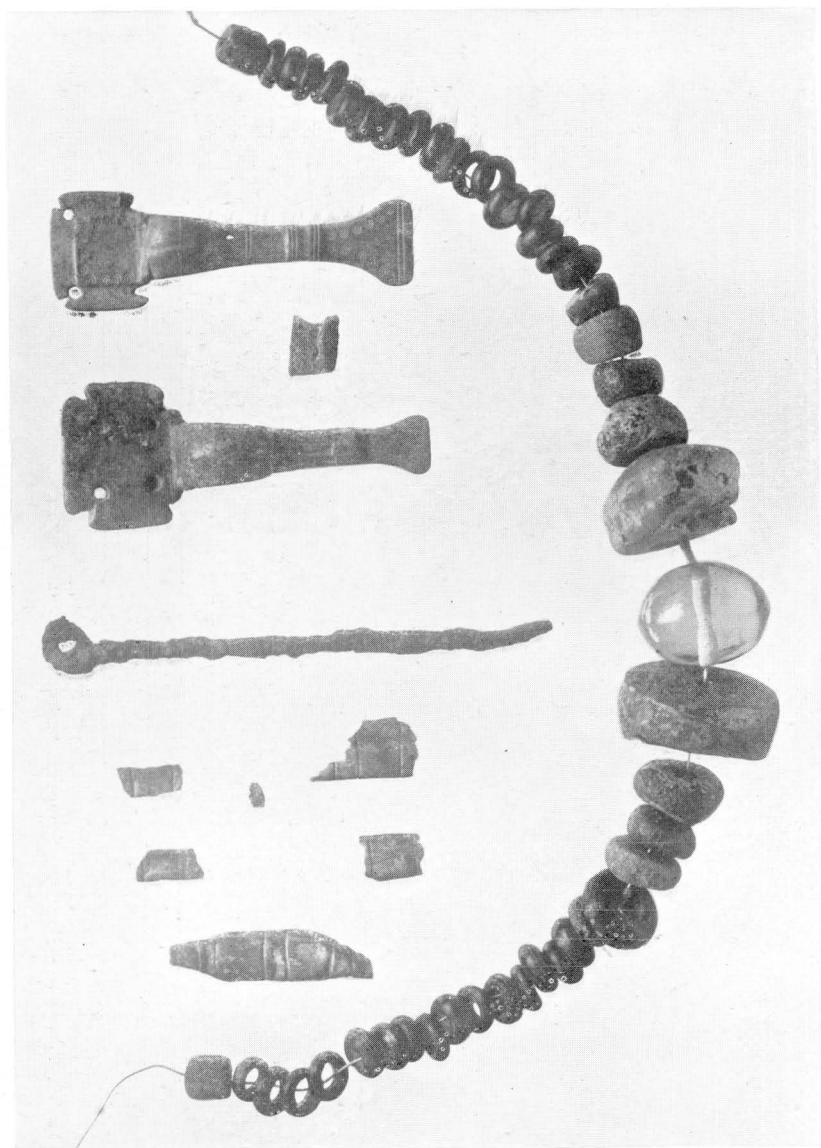
PLATE II.



ABOVE, POT A, BELOW POT B FROM NEAR GRAVE 7. ($\frac{1}{2}$)

Ph. Ashmolean Museum.

PLATE III.

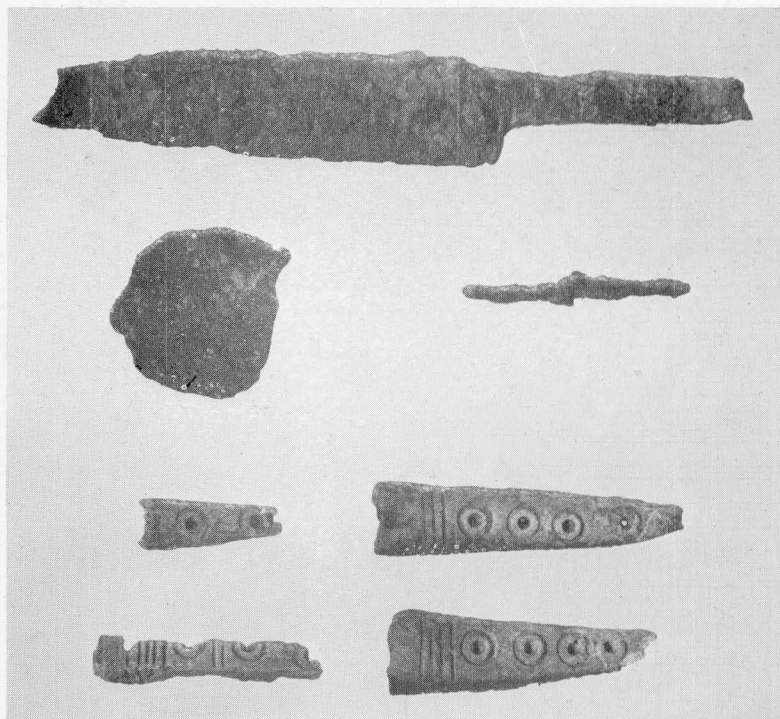


AN ANGLO-SAXON CEMETERY AT WALLINGFORD, BERKSHIRE

PLATE IV.



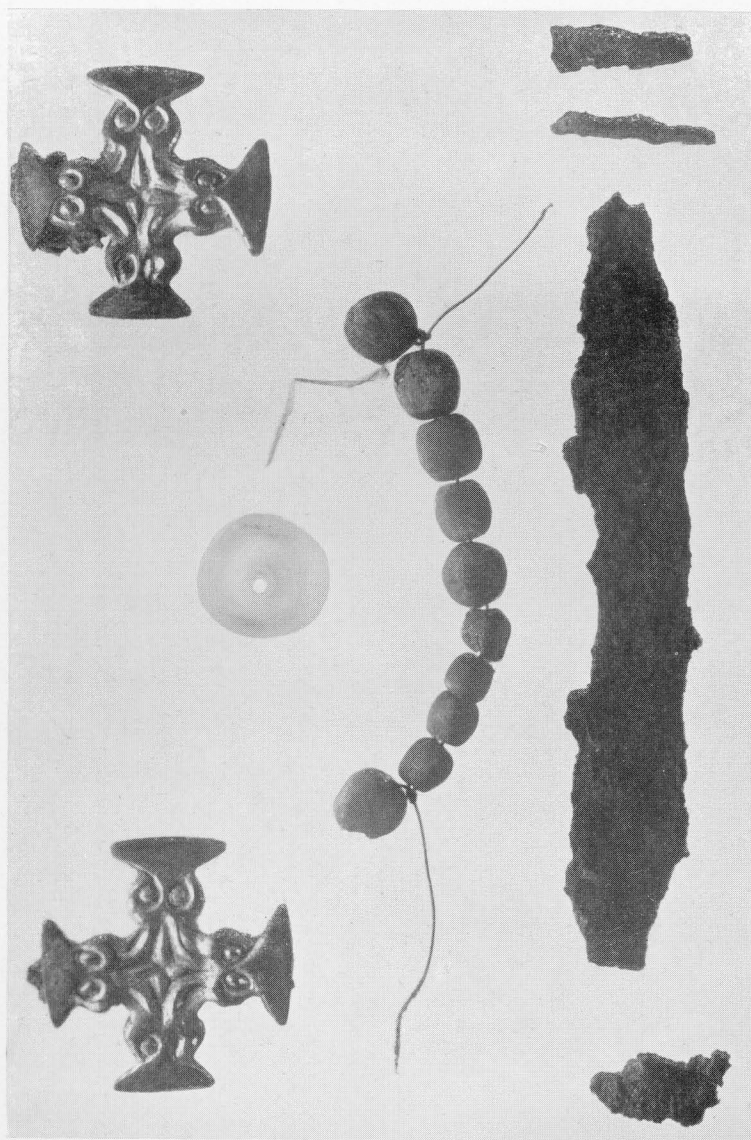
POT FROM GRAVE II. ($\frac{1}{2}$)



OBJECTS FROM GRAVE 15. ($\frac{1}{2}$)

Ph. Ashmolean Museum.

PLATE V.



OBJECTS FROM GRAVE 12. (1)

Ph. Ashmolean Museum.

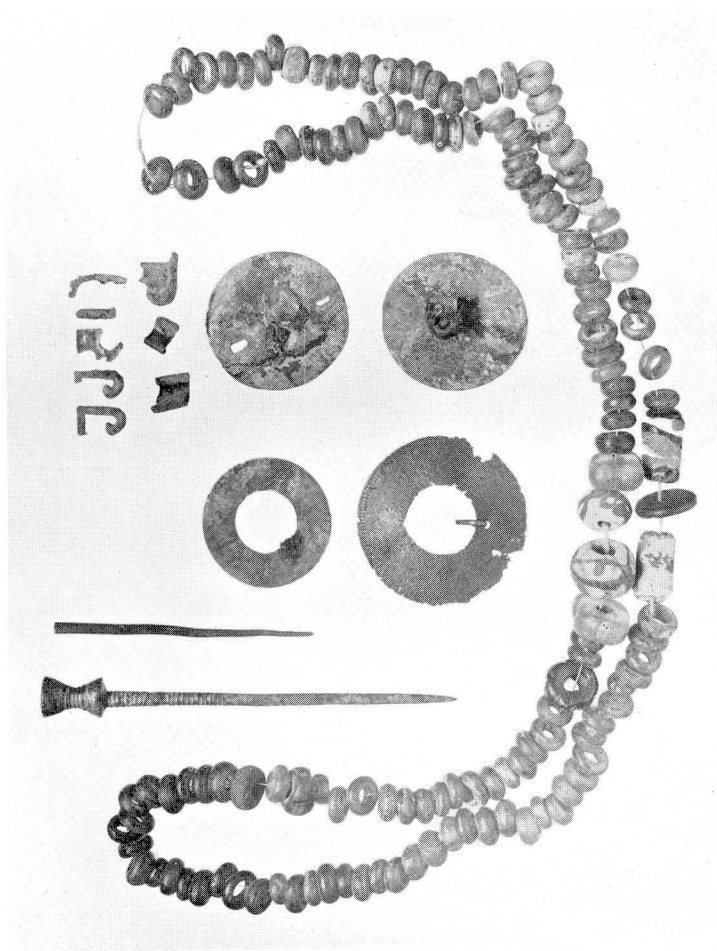
PLATE VI.



GRAVE 15, SHOWING ORNAMENTS *in situ*, EXCEPT BEADS.

Ph. C. Musgrave.

PLATE VII.



Ph. Ashmolean Museum.

OBJECTS FROM GRAVE 15 ($\frac{1}{2}$)