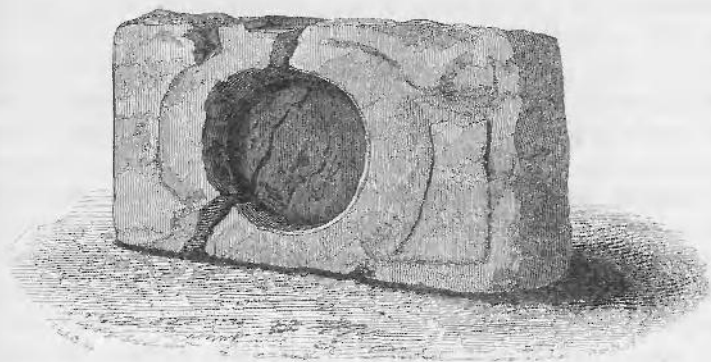


NOTICE OF AN ANGLO-ROMAN SARCOPHAGUS,

DISCOVERED IN HERTFORDSHIRE.



Anglo-Roman Sarcophagus

THE singular sarcophagus, of which a representation is here given, was found near Harpenden, in Hertfordshire; the precise circumstances of the discovery have not been recorded. It was presented to the British Museum in 1844, by C. W. Packe, Esq., M.P. for Northamptonshire, together with the vases which had been discovered in it^a. The sarcophagus consists of a central body or chest, not perfectly cylindrical, covered by a massive rectangular lid, which had been broken

^a The glass and red Roman vases were exhibited in March, 1831, before the So-

ciety of Antiquaries. *Archæologia*, vol. xxiv. p. 349.

asunder to discover the contents, and placed upon a base, similar in general form to the covering; the ends of this base are raised or recurved upwards. The material of which the sarcophagus is composed is a rough gritty calcareous stone. The following are its dimensions:—*Cover*. Length, 5 ft. 3 in.; breadth, 3 ft.; thickness, 11 in.; diameter of hole in centre, 2 ft.; depth of ditto, 6 in. *Chest*. Diameter, 2 ft. 10 in.; height, 2 ft.; internal ditto, 1 ft. 6 in. Consequently the bottom is six inches thick, but the middle is very much thinner, and in the centre of the bottom there is a hole. *Base*. Length, 5 ft. 3 in.; breadth, 3 ft.; thickness, 1 ft.; thickness of central part, 10½ in.; breadth of side, raised part, 1 ft. 10 in.

This form of chest, *arca* or *loculus*, is rather uncommon, although well adapted for single interments; when the remains of two or more members of a family were placed in the same tomb, it was generally made of a rectangular shape, with a long elliptical trough, the ends of which well fitted the vases containing the ashes of the deceased: in these sarcophagi the vases were usually formed of glass. Such is the shape of the coffins discovered by the Rev. P. Rashleigh^b at Southfleet, in Kent, in 1821, and of that published by M. Caumont^c.

In the British Museum are cylindrical vases of lead, with circular covers, and enclosing bones, and small vases, found in excavations made in the island of Delos. These are evidently of the Roman period. Such forms were familiar to the Roman writers. Arrian^d mentions the *πύελος*, or bin, in which the body of Cyrus was deposited, which Curtius translates by *dolium*, or cask^e; and Phlegon of Tralles, the freedman of Hadrian, gives an account of the discovery of the head of the hero Idas, in a *πίθος*, or cask of stone^f. A leaden vase, apparently Roman, with a short cylindrical neck and cover, and body of cylindrical shape, found in Fenchurch-street in 1833, is in the collection of the British Museum.

In the excavations undertaken by Mr. Rashleigh in the Sole field at Southfleet, he discovered two stone coffins, one formed of separate *pieces* clamped together, the other of a single

^b See note g.

^c Cours d'Archæol., tom. ii. c. viii. p. 257. Pl. xxix. Nos. 14, 15.

^d Exp. Alex. vii. 29.

^e X. c. 32: not *solium*, as erroneously

and uncritically given by Gough, Sep. Mon. Introd. xxv. xxvi.; and Carter in Archæol., vol. xii. p. 108—111.

^f Opuscula, 8vo. Halæ, 1775. c. xi. p. 82.

stone hollowed out. The latter was found 3 feet under the surface, and contained two glass vases, one with handles; between them lay a pair of leather shoes, ornamented with a cut hexagonal pattern, and gold wire, apparently of Byzantine workmanship. Round it were found traces of red Roman ware, and portions of a wooden box^g. These discoveries were made close to the Watling-street Road, at the station, conjectured to be Vagniacæ.

In October, 1794, a square cist was found at Ashby Puerorum, Lincolnshire, of which an account was communicated to the Society of Antiquaries by Sir Joseph Banks^h. The lid lay three feet below the surface; it fitted the sides neatly, and projected slightly over their edges. This cist was formed of the freestone which is found in abundance on Lincoln heath: it was squared and dressed with much care and precision; and measured externally 16 in. square, and 8½ in. high; the cavity within measured 12 in. every way. It contained an elegant vase of strong greenish-coloured glass, well manufactured: its dimensions were, height, 7 in.; diameter of the widest part, 7 in.; diameter of the mouth, 4 in. This vessel was nearly filled with fragments of burned bones, and amongst them were portions of a small unguent vase of very thin glass. No highway is known to have passed near the spot; the nearest Roman station is Horncastle, (Banovallum, according to Stukeley,) about five miles distant.



A coffin of rectangular shape, with a skeleton, and three glass vessels, of different shapes, standing in it, was also found near St. Alban'sⁱ; and another with red Roman ware, and a skeleton, was found in a crypt at York^j. In 1765 a glass vase, similar to the one found at Harpenden, but without any handle, was discovered at King's Mead, about half a mile from Cirencester, wrapped in lead, and deposited in a stone hollowed out to receive it^k.

The Harpenden cist contained five vases; in the centre was placed a præfericulum, formed of pale green-coloured glass, and of a shape not peculiarly adapted to the purpose of inter-

^g Archæol., vol. xiv. Pl. xxxviii. figs. 1, 2, and Pl. xxxix. p. 222, Pl. vii. p. 37. viii. fig. 1.

ⁱ Archæol., vol. xvii. p. 336.

^j Ibid., xvi. p. 340.

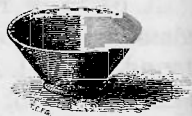
^h Archæologia, vol. xii. p. 96. Pl. x.

^k Lyons in Arch., vol. x. p. 131, Pl. ix. fig. 1.

ment¹, but resembling such as have been found in Pompeii amongst objects of domestic luxury used by the wealthier Romans. The dimensions of this vase are as follows: breadth of side, 7 in.; height to neck, 11 in.; whole height, 1 ft. 2 $\frac{3}{4}$ in.; breadth of neck, 3 $\frac{1}{2}$ in.; breadth of top, 5 $\frac{1}{2}$ in. It is probable that the wine in which the ashes were usually soaked after the extinction of the pyre, was poured from this vase, and that it was then appropriated as a receptacle for the burnt bones.



With this vase, now deposited in the British Museum, were found four small and rather shallow pateræ of the red glazed Roman ware: they were disposed round the glass præfericulum, and were all stamped at the bottom with the potters' names. On two of them may be read indistinctly ENII AM, and . . . ENITA · M., which may be explained as GENITALIS MANU, denoting the fabric of the potter Genitalis, whose ware is not of uncommon occurrence in the excavations made in the city of London. The other two bear the stamps BVI.VRBI, or BVITVRBI, the fabric of Buiturbus, perhaps a barbaric mode of writing Viterbus; at all events a Celto-Roman name, finding its analogies in Buolminus, Boadicea, and Boduocus. These wares were not improbably the produce of the Celto-Roman furnaces of Britannia Prima. Dimensions of the pateræ of Roman ware: diameter at top, 4 in.; ditto at base, 2 in.; height, 2 in.



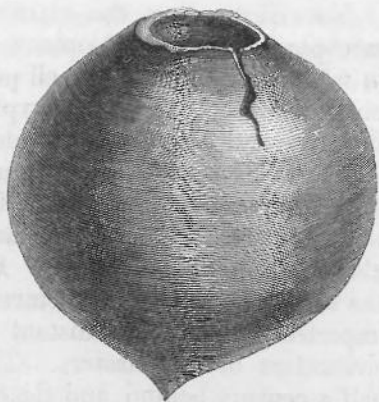
The use of glass had probably penetrated at an early period into Britain, although one of the remotest corners of the Roman world, for amongst the tumuli opened on the borders of Cambridgeshire and Essex, called the Bartlow Hills, in one instance was found a glass vessel with a second brass Roman coin of the age of Hadrian^m. That glass was not exceedingly

¹ This shape is very common. See Caumont, Cours, &c., c. viii. 257, Pl. 29, figs. 8, 10.

^m Archæol. xxv. Pl. ii. p. 6. Pl. xxxii., p. 1, 23, 300, 317.

common before the rule of the Cæsars, may be shewn from the inscriptions *APTAC CEIΛΩN*, with the semicircular sigma, and Artas Sidon in Latin, inscribed on the same vessels, noticed on specimens found in Italy, and preserved in the collection of M. Bartoldi, late Prussian consul at Romeⁿ. It is, indeed, probable that glass was not made in Rome itself, but imported from the Tyrian coast and Alexandria. The glass of the Sidonian manufacturer Artas resembled the commoner kind, such as the vessel found in the Harpenden sarcophagus. Pliny mentions that in the time of Nero the manufacture of glass had reached Italy, Spain, and Gaul: N. H. xxxvi. 66. The glass urns used among the Romans are generally of a different shape, having a globular body with double handles and a conical cover, which is sometimes perforated at the top, like an inverted funnel, for the purpose of pouring liquids over the bones when they had been collected. The glass amphora, discovered in the sarcophagus attributed to Severus Alexander, generally known as the Barberini, or Portland vase, is another proof of the prevalent use of glass, and of the high state of art to which engraving on glass had been carried; and it is also an evidence that the most valuable productions of art were by preference deposited with the dead.

Among the Celto-Roman population, glass, when employed for sepulchral purposes, was generally deposited with the greatest care, the vessel with the bones being enclosed within an urn of earthenware of a globular shape, pointed at the base, when there was not wealth or facility for obtaining a stone sarcophagus. Such are the terra cotta globes found at Tancarville in Normandy, and now preserved in the museum of the Department at Rouen^o. A similar globe was found at Hemel Hempstead, in Essex, enclosing a fictile urn and bones^p, and others were discovered in the Roman burying-grounds at Deveril-street



ⁿ Tolkein Verzeich der Geschin. Steine. Berlin.

^o Caumont, Cours de Arch., Pl. xxviii.

p. 257.

^p Archæol., vol. xxvii. p. 434, 5.

and Whitechapel^a. Another was dug up at Lincoln, enclosing a glass vase filled with bones^r. An urn of glass of the same shape as that in the Harpenden sarcophagus, was found near Meldham Bridge, Essex, with remains of Roman pottery^s.

Glass vases have been occasionally found in England totally unprotected, but these should probably be referred to a much later period, when glass had become common instead of scarce and valuable as it had been at an earlier time.

Glass vases, not of the same shape, have been occasionally found in barrows, with iron implements, as at Dinton, near Aylesbury, Bucks, and in Minster churchyard, Isle of Thanet, and at Woodnesborough, near Sandwich^t. Several vases and jugs of Roman glass, many employed for the same purpose, are in the museum of Boulogne^u, from Roman tombs in the vicinity of that town. A glass amphora, employed to hold bones, was also found by Professor Henslow, with an unguent vase, in the barrow called the East Low Hill, Rougham, near Bury St. Edmunds^v.

That the introduction of glass into Britain was long subsequent to the Phœnician trade is proved by the negative evidence of its not being discovered in the barrows and rude cemeteries of the primitive inhabitants, with their amber and jet beads, and flint or stone weapons.

Notwithstanding the extraordinary accounts of the glass sarcophagi of the Æthiopians, and the glass trough (*πυέλος*) in which Belus was laid^w, all probably of a later age, the early manufacture of glass in Egypt, and its employment among the Alexandrian Greeks under the Ptolemies, it does not appear to have come into general use among the Romans till the third century of our era. Until that period metallic vases were preferred, but under Gallienus the fashion of using glass had become common. Britain, furthest removed from the centre of Roman refinement, seems to have enjoyed only imperfectly, and as a distant province, the benefits of the civilization of her masters. The arts in Britain were always half a century behind, and the chiefs and *reguli* of our country

^a Archæol., vol. xxvii. p. 412.

^r Carter in Archæol., vol. xii. p. 108—111. cf. vol. vii. p. 108. Pl. xiii. the supposed *abrendaria* or *obruendaria*.

^s Arch., vol. xiv. p. 74. Pl. xiv. fig. 1.

^t Douglas, *Nenia Britannica*, fo. 1793, p. 69—7, Pl. xvi. fig. 2, 3. 5. xvii. 1, 2, 3.

^u Roach Smith, *Coll. Ant.*, 8vo., 1843. p. 2. Pl.

^v An Account of the Roman Antiquities found at Rougham, near Bury St. Edmunds. 8vo., 1843.

^w Ælian. II. N. xiii. 3.

were apparently interred with less pomp than household slaves in Rome or Asia Minor, whose bones were deposited in vases (*ἀγγεῖα*), and honoured with a place in the columbaria amongst the remains of their masters.

When the custom of interment by means of burning the body on the funeral pyre became introduced by fashion or in consequence of intermarriage among the Celto-Roman population, a compromise seems to have been the result with respect to the usages of the two races. The Celt, accustomed to deposit the remains of his ancestors in the earth itself, still retained much of his national custom, by substituting for the elaborate vault of the metropolitan Roman a rude grave hewn in the solid rock or chalk, where this expedient was practicable, or else a massive sarcophagus of coarse and very simple workmanship, deposited in the natural soil. Among the Romans the usage still continued to prevail of constructing magnificent mausolea above ground, or superb sarcophagi placed on either side of the principal roads. The custom of burning was far from universal, bodies being found with remains of the same age either burnt or interred, but the progress of Christianity, perhaps, partly caused the distinction. In Gaul and Britain the practice of incremation prevailed from the times of the Cæsars to the reign of Constantine, and the intermediate exceptions must be attributed to the greater or less prevalence of the Celtic or Roman element. Simple humation has always been the expedient of the savage throughout the globe.

SAMUEL BIRCH.