

IX.—ON SOME VESTIGES OF ROMAN OCCUPATION
BETWEEN WEST HARTLEPOOL AND SEATON CAREW.

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READ ON WEDNESDAY, THE 28TH OF NOVEMBER, 1883.

In the eighth volume of the "Literary Anecdotes of the Eighteenth Century," by John Nichols, F.S.A., a letter of John Cade's, dated Durham, May 13, 1777, is printed, wherein the following passage occurs, viz. : "There were certainly two Roman roads cross [*sic*] this county, which might be easily traced by a skilful antiquary, and as yet not noticed : the one, I should conjecture from the map of Drake's Roman Roads in Yorkshire, came directly from *Dunus* (Whitby)¹ to the *Trajectus* at the estuary of Tees, opposite *Bellasis*, which has certainly been a *Castrum*, and continued along the shore to Hertelpoole [*sic*], Weremouth, and South Shields."² This paragraph is quoted, rather inaccurately, by Sir Cuthbert Sharp, F.S.A., in his "History of Hartlepool," wherein he says, "Previous to the invasion of the Normans, little more than conjecture can be hazarded respecting the town of Hartlepool. It seems to have been unknown to the Romans, although Mr. Cade imagines it to have been a Roman harbour, and that a Roman road once passed in this direction. These conjectures, however, are warranted neither by historical records, nor by any visible remains of Roman art in the neighbourhood."³

¹ Ptolemy's *Dunum Bay* was probably what is variously called Hartlepool Bay and the Tees Bay.—*Vide* "Durham before the Conquest," by W. H. D. Longstaffe, F.S.A., *Proc. Archæol. Inst.*, Newcastle, 1852, I., 45.

² Nichols' "Literary Anecdotes," 8vo., 1814, VIII., 314.

³ "History of Hartlepool," with a "Supplemental History," 1851, p. 15.

The original "History of Hartlepool" was published in 1816, in which year the late Sir Walter C. Trevelyan found Samian and other ware, a fragment of a red tile, animal bones, etc., "on the coast, about half way between Seaton and Hartlepool, in the County of Durham, near a farm called the Blue Houses."¹

The present Carr House was erected by Mr. William Thompson, during the second decade of this century. The older Carr House, which stood on the same site, was roofed with blue tiles, and Mrs. Ninian S. Tate, of Stranton, remembers it being called Blue Houses some seventy years ago. Cliff House, which is shown in the engraving illustrating Sir Walter Trevelyan's paper, was to the north of Carr House, and has been removed this year (1883) by the North-Eastern Railway Company, as it formed an awkward angle in the road to Seaton Carew. About seventy years since, it was occupied by Mr. Wharton, J.P. for the county of Durham; this gentleman suffered occasionally from having his horses worked all night by the local smugglers, who returned them to the stable in the morning in a state of exhaustion. The surrounding farmers, including Mrs. Tate's grandfather, Mr. Joseph Gibson, of West Hall, were annoyed by similar malpractices. The smugglers were then so numerous and powerful in the district that Mr. Wharton, though a magistrate, feared to take measures against them.

In 1822, the late Edward Pease, Esq., of Darlington, "the father of railways," "picked up, on the same spot, a large fragment of the red earthenware, which induced him to examine further, and he found an iron spear head, a brass coin of Domitian, and a small brass fibula." Theodore Fry, Esq., M.P., informs me that he still has an undated memorandum to the following effect, viz., "Found, with a Roman spear head, a Domitian coin and other remains, by E. P., Sen., and Jun., a little beyond Carr House, in the beach washed by the sea." Mr. Fry does not know what became of the objects themselves.

About the middle of August, 1881, R. O. Backhouse, Esq., picked up at the same place a "pricker," which "was the worked splint bone of a horse, and was found together with a worked vertebra of whale, and bones of pig, sheep, and other animals, and shell-fish used for food." Mr. Backhouse says: "They were all found in some black

¹ "Archæologia Æliana," 4to Series, II., 110.

² *Loc. cit.*

earth in the sandhills, and some even washed out by the sea. There was very little pottery with them, and it was evidently a kitchen midden of great age."¹ These objects are preserved in the collection of James Backhouse, Esq., of York.

In the spring of the present year, a small bronze article was brought to me which I at once recognized as a magnificent fibula of Roman workmanship.² It had been found in the autumn of 1881, by Mr. Henry Casebourne, of Carr House, projecting from the black soil from which the loose sand has been removed by the winds and waves, between Carr House and Cliff House, and about midway between West Hartlepool and Seaton Carew, precisely the place where Sir Walter Trevelyan, Mr. Pease, and Mr. Backhouse had discovered the antiquities named above. The fibula is remarkably perfect, the pin, which had originally worked with a spring, and the ring for the attachment of the chain, being alike intact. The spot is accurately marked by an old boundary wall, which crosses the sand-hills from west to east; and a careful survey of the site during the summer convinced me that it would probably repay excavation. The North Eastern Railway Company, to whom the land belongs, most courteously granted the necessary leave, and the place was carefully dug over, as the weather and other circumstances permitted, between the 28th of August and the 6th of October. It proved to be, as Mr. Backhouse had supposed, simply a refuse-heap, like the *kjökken-möddings* of the Danish coast, but ample confirmatory evidence of the presence of the Romans was disclosed. The space excavated lies on each side of the ruined wall just named, and between it and high water mark: it extends about 80 yards in length from north to south, by a mean of about 5 yards in width, the depth varying from 1 foot to 4 feet; in all, about 7,200 cubic feet were turned over, but the soil was not sifted. It is a good garden loam, a mixture of clay and sand, with occasional boulders of magnesian limestone and amorphous fragments of new red sandstone, and is rich in organic matter; immediately beneath it is the littoral sand, exactly on a level with that of the beach itself. A heavy sea scours away the sand between high and low water mark, and lays bare the well-known and extensive forest remains, which are thus demonstrated to be older than the stratum of earth under consideration.

¹ R. O. Backhouse, *in lit.*, 24th October, 1883.

² No. 1 of Autotype.

Among the remains found were the following, viz. :

A second fibula, which retains the pin and is quite perfect, though crushed out of shape.

A beautiful spoon-shaped implement of bone, the "bowl" of which is rudely perforated, flat, and strengthened with a longitudinal ridge at the back.¹ Professor Boyd Dawkins, F.R.S., believes these articles to have been *fibulae*, or dress-fasteners, but this specimen does not appear ever to have been furnished with the hook or hooks sometimes found at the extremity of the "handle," and it is not easy to understand how it can have been secured.

Bone pins, of the common Roman type.²

Bone needles.²

An interesting piece of bone, roughly worked, being evidently a pin or needle in process of manufacture.

A small and neatly-made bone article, ornamented with concentric rings, and having a longitudinal groove running the whole length of the under side.³ The frequent occurrence among Roman antiquities of implements of this kind is as remarkable as their perplexing character. That they were in constant use by the Romans there can be no doubt. Perhaps they were, like some larger ornamental bone cylinders described by Professor Boyd Dawkins, "bone links for fastening dress."⁴ Mr. A. W. Franks, F.R.S., of the British Museum, has been good enough to inform me that he regards them as probably "toggles," such as are now in use in Japan. If so, they were most likely analogous to the bone or metal bars which we employ for retaining hat-guards or "Albert" chains in button-holes; though this hypothesis does not satisfactorily account for the groove above-named. Can this groove have been a mere survival of something else?

Several short lengths of hollow bones, more or less worked, probably handles of small knives.

A fragment of bone, worked down and rounded at one end, with two rudely-cut concentric lines.⁵ Dr. Garson, F.Z.S., an accomplished anthropologist, informs me that this specimen probably illustrates the

¹ No. 6 of Autotype.

² Nos. 7-10 of Autotype.

³ No. 4 of Autotype.

⁴ Journ. Anthropol. Inst., I., 64.

⁵ No. 5 of Autotype.

manufacture of bone beads, the circles indicating the place where a piece was to be cut off, and pierced to form a single bead. Mr. Franks, however, thought it might have been worn as an amulet.

A fine spindle whorl of Kimmeridge shale.¹

Part of a spindle whorl of Samian ware.

The base of a vessel of Samian ware, with the name of the potter, IVLIVS F[ECIT], stamped upon it.² This name is rare, and does not occur in the large series of potters' names found at South Shields, though it has been found at Borcovicus.

A second Samian base, with the potter's name abraded, although the stamp can still be traced.

A fragment of a fine shallow vessel (Samian), with broad lateral rim, the pattern being similar to that of the upper right hand bowl engraved on page 18 of the "Lapidarium Septentrionale." There are also eleven smaller pieces of Samian pottery.

A small fragment of a vase of thin ware, black outside and red inside, with the sides bent in, and the vertical convex ridges decorated with a raised semi-circular pattern of clincher work.

A portion of an earthen crucible, with green and iridescent metallic fragments adhering to its inner surface.

Several pieces of *mortaria* (mortars), the inner surfaces of which are hardened, sometimes with quartz, sometimes with fragments of an intensely hard black rock or slag. This has been subjected to blow-pipe analysis by my friend Dr. Trechmann, F.G.S., who finds it to be ironstone slightly fused in order to make it roughly vesicular. Dr. Trechmann points out that, however much the surface was ground down by use, many sharp edges must have continued to present themselves, and he also draws attention to the large proportion of gritty iron which the Romans must have swallowed with their cakes.

Two fragments of *amphorae*, one with the base of the handle.

A few small portions of vessels of ochreous, pale red or cream-coloured ware; one nicely-worked fragment has a slight micaceous glaze. These types are what are sometimes known as "Romano-Salopian," but they are all classed at the British Museum under the comprehensive name of "Yellow Pottery."

¹ No. 3 of Autotype.

² No. 2 of Autotype.

A large number of pieces of the so-called "Upchurch ware," known in the national collection as "Grey Pottery." They consist of sepulchral urns and household vessels of many different kinds; some fine, others coarse; one or two in which the clay had been strengthened by the admixture of broken quartz and mica; some with and some without marks of the potter's wheel inside; some adorned with external wheel marks; some with three different styles of diamond-shaped markings, and others scratched with a comb. The colours of these fragments vary from a bright black through several shades of brown and grey. Many are burnt. Some are green with verdigris from contiguity with bronze. No less than fifteen different types of rim occur in this ware alone.

All the above-named pottery is Roman. There are in addition several fragments of coarse earthenware, rudely hand-modelled, and generally more or less burnt, which Mr. Franks believes to be late Celtic or Saxon. A few pieces of glazed mediæval ware have also been found, and I am much indebted to Mr. Franks for the identification of some of them as "thirteenth century work."

A layer of burnt loam, with fragments of charcoal, was observed rather low down. Some pieces of a kind of lava, which Dr. Trechmann finds to contain sanidine, or glassy feldspar, were collected. This was probably used as a trass, to make lime hydraulic, and has undoubtedly been imported.

About half-a-dozen more or less squared, but isolated, blocks of new red sandstone were turned up near the south end of the excavations, but no trace of a wall or other continuous masonry was discovered.

I did not find any coins, but Mr. Robt. Chilton, keeper of the low lighthouse, Seaton Carew, has a large second brass of *Augustus*, with the inscription on the obverse, DIVVS AVGVSTVS, and on the reverse, CONSENSV SENAT. ET EQ. ORDIN. P.Q.R., with a figure to the left, seated on the curule chair. The Rev. John Lawson, Vicar of Seaton Carew, has a second brass of *Vespasian* inscribed IMP. CAESAR VESPASIAN AVG. COS. IIII, and on the reverse, PAX (?) AVG. The material of these two fine coins is the yellow brass or "orichalcum," and both were found on or immediately adjacent to the site of the recent excavations, by Edward Potter, an agricultural labourer, who, as I have latterly ascertained, has employed his spare hours for the

past twenty years in recovering these relics of an ancient commerce. His principal tools have been his own fingers, but he has frequently found coins washed out of the soil by the winters' storms. As a rule, he has obtained them singly, and he assures me that not more than three or four have ever occurred together. In all, he has procured more than 100; of these, about 30 have been stolen, but he still retains between 70 and 80, of which 43 are Roman. He does not understand them at all, but he values them in proportion to the time expended in collecting them. Mr. Blair and I, however, induced him to lend them to us, and we were thus enabled to make out a tolerably complete list of the Roman coins, as follows, viz. :—

Claudius, 2nd brass, Mars reverse.

Titus, 2nd brass, Hope reverse.

Two of *Hadrian*, 1st brass.

Septimius Severus, denarius.

Severus Alexander, 3rd brass, P.M. TR.P. VII. COS. II. P.P., standard bearer on reverse.

Gallienus, 3rd brass, SALVS reverse.

Postumus, 3rd brass.

Postumus, billon denarius, Hercules reverse.

Tetricus Junior, 3rd brass.

Claudius Gothicus, 3rd brass.

Carausius, 3rd brass, PAX AVG. reverse.

Two of *Theodora*, 3rd brass, PIETAS reverse, with nursing woman.

Four of *Constantine the Great*, 3rd brass.

Three of the Constantine family, 3rd brass.

Constantinopolis, small brass.

Two VRBS ROMA, with wolf and twins, TR. P. in exergue.

Crispus, small brass, VIRTUS EXERC. on reverse, with seated figures and banner inscribed VOT. XX.; P. TR. in exergue.

Valentinianus I., small brass, a very interesting coin, with the legend GLORIA REIPUBLICAE on the reverse, and a military figure, grasping with one hand the hair of a kneeling captive, and with the other holding the *labarum* surmounted by the Christian monogram.

Two other coins of *Valentinian*, small brass, SECVRITAS REIPUBLICAE reverse, one with a figure of Victory, OF. I.

Three of *Valens*, small brass, one with Victory reverse, inscribed
SECVRITAS REIPVBLICAE OF. II.

Gratianus, small brass.

There are five or six minimi, and the rest are undecipherable. Among the remainder of Potter's coins are nineteen English silver ones, ranging from Edward II. to Elizabeth, a farthing of William and Mary, a copper coin of John V. of Portugal dated 1743, and three or four tokens in bad condition, one being that of a hatter with the face of a timepiece on the reverse, and another a "mail coach halfpenny."

John Wood, son of W. H. Wood, Esq., of Coxhoe Hall, found a small brass of *Gallienus*, at or very near to the place in question, in 1881.

The animal remains were very abundant, and were as follows, viz. :—

CRUSTACEA.—Relics of the edible crab were very rare, and being rapidly reduced to a calcareous dust.

MOLLUSCA.—A great many shells of molluscs were found, the animals having evidently been eaten. The species were the following, viz. :—

Eusus antiquus, the common spindle shell or "roaring buckie."
—One specimen.

Buccinum undatum, the common whelk.—This shell rarely occurred.

Littorina littorea, periwinkle.—Extremely abundant.

Patella vulgata, limpet.—Layers of these shells were found, their condition being very friable.

Ostrea edulis, oyster.—Occasionally.

Cyprina islandica.—Somewhat frequent.

VERTEBRATA.—Fish remains were found, but very scantily. One or two bird bones occurred.

One large bone, too much crumbled for identification, is probably that of a cetacean.

The horse is represented by many teeth and a few bones of a small race. The skulls appear to have decayed away.

Bones and teeth of swine were found in great abundance. Some may have been those of the wild boar, but the two cannot be separated.

The red deer, though so plentiful throughout this district in olden times, does not appear to be represented in the large series of bones disinterred.

The remains of *Bos longifrons* were extremely plentiful, as also were those of a larger breed, which the Romans are known to have kept in a state of domestication.¹

Bones and teeth of sheep were very abundant, the breed having evidently been a remarkably small one.

Of the dog a few bones were found, though some may have been those of the wolf, the osteological and dental characters of the two being sometimes indistinguishable. Our leading zoologists are agreed that the wolf was the progenitor of our larger dogs, and it was very abundant in this country in Roman times.

The water vole (*Arvicola amphibius*, Desmarest), is represented by the greater part of a skull, including the upper teeth, four left mandibles, one right mandible and a few other bones, the remains of at least four individuals being present. These animals were perhaps brought from running water, now choked with sand, immediately to the north of the site. The sand of that part of the beach is loose and always in a state of saturation, indicating the existence of a spring, which doubtless fed a small stream whose level was reduced by the subsidence of the coast-line. It would be interesting to know whether the Romans ate the water vole.

Of the larger animal bones, many were in a very fragile condition. Some bore marks of the knife, or other instrument; a few were burnt; large numbers had been split for the extraction of the marrow.

No human bones were found.

Thomas Maugham, Esq., of West Hartlepool, believes that, at the place where these remains were found, the sea has encroached some forty or fifty yards since he came to the district in 1846. Much, therefore, has doubtless been irretrievably lost.

Chilton, the lighthouse keeper, will be 75 years of age in April, 1884, and he distinctly remembers that the old wall² named above was

¹ In my collection of scientific letters is one, dated September 20th, 1869, from the late Professor Harkness, F.R.S., to the late Mr. Edward Wood, F.G.S., of Richmond, Yorkshire, in which the writer expresses the opinion that "the present representatives of *Bos longifrons* are the Shetland cattle and the dun cattle in the high Alps."

² This wall formed the north-eastern boundary of the Seaton Carew estate. The ordnance map shows a "boundary post" at the seaward extremity of the wall; this post, which has but recently disappeared, had cut upon it the letters G.H.W., the initials of the late George Hutton Wilkinson, Esq., Recorder of Newcastle-upon-Tyne, who was Lord of the Manor. Another boundary post was fixed at Wambling's or Wambler's Run, a little stream at the Tees mouth, between Greenabella and Lord Eldon's estate. The custom of riding the boundaries was practised when Chilton was young.

called the *White Dyke* in his youth. This name may have been given by our Saxon ancestors to the remains of Roman works which occupied the site. The *trajectus*, or ferry, near Bellasis, was probably Roman, but Mr. Longstaffe has shown that Bellasis itself was mediæval only. In his valuable paper on "Durham before the Conquest," when writing of the "Salters' Tracks," that learned antiquary says, "Some of these roads proceed apparently to an ancient ferry over the Tees, which existed at or below Haverton Hill, and was furnished with steps." He adds in a note, "The Melsonby book agrees, bounding Belasyse Common on the east by the way which is now called Ferrygate."¹ In the interesting map, drawn by Mr. Longstaffe in 1856, to elucidate the paper just named, the following "early roads of uncertain date" are traced, viz., one from a point just to the east of Haverton Hill to near the mouth of the North Burn or Claxton Beck; a second short one immediately to the north of that stream, apparently connected with the "large mounds said to be the remains of the old Greatham Salt-works," and a third from Seaton Snook to Carr House. There is also shown a "supposed line of ancient road" from the Raw,² on the north side of the mouth of the New Burn, near Stranton, to Tunstall; while from the north-west of Tunstall a "Salters' Track," with short branches from Throston and Low Throston, is exhibited as running to Scrufuton (Sheraton), and thence westward and northward to the mouth of the Wear. Roman coins were found long ago at Seaton-cum-Slingley on the east of the track, and at Houghton-le-Spring on the west, but there does not appear to be any record or trace of Roman occupation between Seaton Carew and Seaton, near Seaham. North of the Wear Roman relics abound; the discoveries at Fulwell, Whitburn, Marsden, etc., form the links of a chain palpably connecting Wearmouth with the magnificent *castrum* of South Shields. But south of the Wear all is guess-work. Topographical names do not help us in the least; they are all essentially Teutonic. There is not a *caster* or a *chester*, or a *street* to be found in Hartness. Nothing Roman has occurred at Hartlepool; the substantives used in local topography are mainly Saxon, as, *e.g.*, *dene*, *heugh*, *cove*, *bower*, *slake*, *warren*, *law*, *batt*, *scar*, *shelves*, *knock*, *snook*.³

¹ Proc. Archæol. Inst., 1852, I., 72.

² Before West Hartlepool existed, the street now known as Musgrave Street, was called *Raw Lane*, or *Stranton Lane*.

³ *Snaca*, Saxon, a snake; compare *snoe*, Danish, to turn, to wind.

We have seen that Mr. Cade, more than a century ago, suspected the existence of a Roman road traversing the whole coast from the Tees to the Tyne. Mr. Longstaffe also writes, "eventually, perhaps it may be found that a Roman road passed along the coast."¹ But it appears to me that then, as now, the deep gorges in the magnesian limestone would present most serious obstacles to highway traffic; and that any road existing in Roman times must have taken a westward sweep to avoid the precipitous and thickly-wooded ravines of Hesleden and Castle Eden. It would be rash to hazard an opinion as to the antiquity of the Salters' Lanes, but, if they were Roman, it is not improbable that the Salt Works were Roman too. Seaton Carew is regarded by Mr. Longstaffe as one of the places which may claim to be the Saxon Ceattun. May we not find further traces of Roman life at some of the sites which are now supposed to be Saxon only? The ancient village of Yoden,² with its extensive and well-marked earthworks, has never been excavated, but I much hope that something may be done in this direction ere long. It would be a matter of sincere congratulation if the examination of that interesting site were not merely to disclose long-buried memorials of our Saxon forefathers, but also to furnish one more of the links needed to explain the occupation of this portion of Britain by the conquering hosts of Rome.

On the 20th December, 1883, the writer again carefully examined the soil in question, which had been much disturbed by stormy weather and high tides. Animal bones and teeth, periwinkles, limpets, one shell of the common cockle (*Cardium edule*), and layers of mussels (*Mytilus edulis*) were noticed, these relics being traceable in abundance for more than 150 yards north of the extreme northerly point excavated. It is, therefore, probable that much more remains to be discovered. At the northern end there is a layer of red, tenacious, boulder-clay beneath the Roman soil; this is mentioned by Sir Walter Trevelyan in his paper.

¹ *Loc. Cit.*, p. 70.

² Yoden = Yew Dene, now Eden. The site is midway between Eden Hall and Horden Hall.

The great bank of sand and clay on which the Volunteer Battery and the Time-gun are located is artificial and recent, having been brought from the West Hartlepool Harbour when it was excavated.

EXPLANATION OF PLATE.

- 1.—Bronze Fibula.
- 2.—Base of Samian Vessel, with potter's stamp (IVLIVS F).
- 3.—Spindle Whorl of Kimmeridge shale.
- 4.—Bone "Toggle."
- 5.—Worked Bone, probably illustrating the manufacture of beads.
- 6.—Bone Fibula?
- 7.—Bone Pin.
- 8.— Ditto.
- 9.—Bone Needle.
- 10.— Ditto.

All are of the actual size.

NOTE.—These objects, with other antiquities referred to in the above paper, are now preserved in the Museum of the Society of Antiquaries of Newcastle-upon-Tyne, having been most generously presented to the Society by the author.

THE EDITOR.





