

## NOTICES OF AN ANGLO-SAXON CEMETERY AT FARTHING DOWN, COULSDON, SURREY.

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IN the autumn of last year, with the permission of Edmund Byron, Esq., of Coulsdon Court, the Lord of the Manor, and in company with G. Leveson-Gower, Esq., F.S.A., and our secretary, Mr. Austin, I spent several days in examining the *tumuli* on Farthing Down, the most remarkable of which I now propose to describe.

These *tumuli* are situate on a tract of down-land lying upon the chalk, which rises with a gentle slope from the southern extremity of Smitham-bottom to the entrance of the village of Chaldon, now so well known on account of the very remarkable wall-painting in the church, which was described by Mr. Waller in the last number of our Collections.

The existence of this burial-place seems to have been known for a hundred years at least. In Manning and Bray's History of the county it is stated that one of what are there called *barrows* had been opened about forty years previously by some one who came from London, and that a perfect skeleton was found.

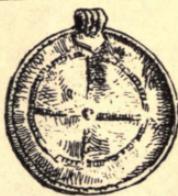
The two largest mounds, one of which lies towards the northern extremity of the ground, and the other at the southern, and about half a mile apart, seem to have been the only ones that were then examined. Probably the result of the examination did not encourage further researches; at all events, it is certain that while these two mounds had been disturbed at some time or other

the contents of those that we examined had never been displaced.

The graves which we examined were sixteen in all, comprising two groups, about a quarter of a mile apart. They were all hewn in the chalk rock to the depth, from the original surface of the ground, of from 3 ft. to  $3\frac{1}{2}$  ft., and their presence was indicated by slight hillocks, rising seldom more than  $1\frac{1}{2}$  ft. above the ground, and resembling those little mounds in village churchyards, under which "the rude forefathers of the hamlet sleep."

In every instance the skeletons were found extended at full length, with the heads placed towards the west, and the arms close to the sides; no traces of cremation, or of any kind of funeral pottery, were met with; every bone was found in its proper place and perfectly sound, except in three or four instances, in which possibly the rain may have reached the bones, or the skeleton was that of a child or young person. It was also observed that, with these few exceptions, not only was every tooth present in every jaw, but all the teeth were perfectly sound.

One of the graves first examined contained two skeletons, probably man and wife. They were placed so close to each other that the skulls almost touched; but no traces of armour or of ornaments were found. An adjoining grave contained the skeleton of a young person, probably a girl: the bones were much decayed. Near the remains of the skull we found two small silver pins, the figure of one of which is given in Plate I. The workmanship of these is very good; they are made to swell a little in the middle, in order to keep them fast in the cloth or other material in which they were placed, and the head is formed of a small coil of silver wire, through which the blunt end of the pin was passed, and was then flattened and made firm by one or more blows. The only other object here found was the blade of a small iron knife, with a rounded back, somewhat resembling in shape those which are now called Wharncliffe knives.



PIN, RING, KNIFE, ETC.

In an adjoining grave, probably that of a woman, we found near the head the remains of a *situla*, or bucket. It is formed as usual of wooden staves, bound together at the top and bottom by thin bands or hoops of bronze, half an inch wide, and the lower one being much thinner than the upper. Both are quite destitute of any kind of ornamentation; the handle, which is riveted on to the upper bronze band, is of iron; the staves, which, although in this as in the several instances presently to be mentioned, much decayed, are found under the microscope to be of the wood of some coniferous tree.

The several graves already noticed were situate towards the northern extremity of the ground. On a succeeding day we proceeded to examine the group lying south, and on higher ground. In the first grave that was opened we discovered lying near the skull a small gold *bulla* or bracteat, of which a figure is given in Plate I. The edge is formed by a thin ring of gold, with crenated edges, welded on to the round plate and furnished with a small loop or ring for suspension. On one face is the figure of a cross inclosed in a circle, both formed by a series of slight indentations, in some of which the remains of some kind of paste or enamel may be seen by the aid of a microscope. Probably some kind of ornament which has perished, or was not found, was attached by this cement to the *bulla*. The reverse is quite plain, and the whole seems to have been much worn by use.

The next grave that was opened presented several objects of remarkable interest. It was about three feet and a half in depth, and contained the full-length skeleton of a man of large stature. The femur and tibia together measured 3 ft. 2 in. in length; from which, as Professor Rolleston informs me, we may conclude, that, when living, the man was 6 ft. 5 in. in height. Every bone was perfect, and found in its place, and the teeth were all quite sound, although a good deal worn down. Lying across the breast, and reaching from the right shoulder to the left knee, was a sword of iron, 3 ft. 2 in. in length, 2 in. wide, and of considerable thickness. It is in very good condition and weighs 1 lb. 14 oz.:

it appears to have been double-edged and pointed ; the *strig*, or iron portion of the hilt, is 5 in. long, and  $\frac{3}{4}$  in. wide.

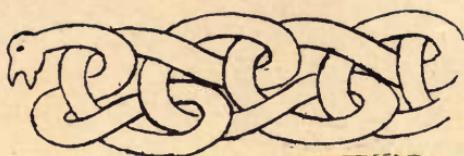
But the most remarkable object found with this interment, was the boss or *umbo* of a shield (*see Plate II.*), placed on the right foot of the skeleton. It is of iron, 7 in. high and 5 in diameter, and of a very unusual form ; indeed, as far as I have been able to discover, it is unique. It would seem that in the first instance a framework was constructed of six bars or *laminæ* of iron,  $\frac{3}{4}$  of an inch in width, welded together into a kind of projecting button at the top, and then bent out into a dome-shaped form. Each of these plates is depressed or forced out through its whole length in the middle, so as to form six vertical ribs on the outside, leaving a flange or rim on each side  $\frac{1}{4}$  in. wide. The framework thus formed is held in its place and strengthened by a little cup, also of iron, an inch in diameter, and about  $\frac{1}{4}$  inch deep, fixed on the inside under the intersection of the plates. An iron or steel plate was then placed between each pair of ribs, and riveted to the flanges left on each side of them ; thus presenting the figure of an hexagonal dome. The whole was then placed over, and riveted to, a second rim or circlet of iron of slightly less circumference. This is worked into a circular flange, which occurs about an inch below the lower margin of the dome-shaped frame, and the flange is then furnished with six bosses or studs, answering to the vertical ribs, each of them being perforated, doubtless in order to allow the *umbo* to be attached to the hide or the wood of which the shield was formed. No traces of this were found ; but on lifting up the *umbo*, we found a short cylinder, or rather half-cylinder, of iron, resembling the longitudinal section of a gas-pipe. This corresponded with the diameter of the *umbo*, and was furnished at each end with a slight wing or projection, for the purpose of attaching it to the *umbo* ; and it can hardly be doubted that it was contrived as a handle by which the shield could be firmly held.

Although we made a long and careful search for the



Plate II.

UMBO OF ANGLO SAXON SHIELD.  
FARTHING DOWN.



DRINKING CUP.

dagger, which probably was buried with the other armour, we could find no trace of it; but near the left shoulder we found the remains of a *situla* or bucket: the wood, of which some portions were in tolerably good condition, is of fir. The staves were bound together by iron hoops a good deal broken and corroded, and the handle was also of iron.

The only other object found in this grave was a small bronze buckle, of very good workmanship, with an iron tongue (Plate I.). It was probably attached to the girdle or band to which the sword was suspended.

On the same day on which the grave last described was explored, we were so fortunate as to make another interesting discovery. In a grave a little to the north, we found a well-preserved skeleton, probably that of a lady, and near the left shoulder were the remains of the beautiful drinking-cup of which a figure is given in Plate III. It cannot be called a *situla*, since it is certain that it never had the handle which characterizes objects of that kind; indeed it never had any handle. The staves are of wood, which, when examined under the microscope, is found to be of either oak or ash. They were bound together, both at the top and at the base, by bands of bronze, half an inch in width and very thin; and these are strengthened by a second smaller band, which slightly overlaps the first and covers the edges of the staves. Both bands are attached to each other and to the wood, by three small bronze fillets, and these again are fastened by two small bronze nails, round-headed, which pass through the lower band into the wood. The smaller band—that on the edge of the cup—quite plain, but the larger ones—both that on the rim or lip and that at the base—are gilt, and are ornamented in *repoussé* work, with a design of admirable workmanship. It is a kind of Runic pattern, and represents a snake with very intricate convolutions. The rim of this beautiful cup is fortunately quite perfect and unbroken, the base is broken into three or four pieces, but all the pieces were found and preserved.

The only other object found in this grave was a small

well-shaped knife of iron, of the same pattern as that already described (Plate I.).

We next proceeded to open a small tumulus, in which we found the skeleton, very much decayed, of a young person, probably a boy. The only other object found in it was a socketed iron spear, 18 in. in length, and well formed: the wooden haft had perished.

The only other grave that contained any object of interest was that, probably, of a young girl; the first teeth had not all been shed. The head had been laid on a large flint stone, and near the jaw was a small iron buckle, of which the tongue was wanting, and six beads, two of them white, two yellow, one red, and one blue (see Plate I.).

This concluded our explorations for the year. The bones were carefully reinterred in the graves in which they were found, with the exception of one skull, which was retained in order that it might be examined by Professor Rolleston. The sword, and umbo, and drinking-cup, and other objects, have, with the permission of Mr. Byron, been placed in the Museum of the SURREY ARCHAEOLOGICAL SOCIETY, lately established at Croydon.

Although it is impossible to assign any precise date to these remains, yet from the position of the skeletons, with the feet placed towards the east, and the absence of any traces of burning, it seems tolerably certain that they are of the Christian or post-Augustine age, while from the absence of a vast number of objects of elaborate and artistic workmanship found in Kent, and on that account of a presumably much later date, they may perhaps be assigned to a very early period after the conversion of the Saxons to Christianity.

The name of the place may perhaps in this, as in other instances, assist us at least in forming a conjecture on the subject.

Coulsdon, the parish in which Farthing Down is situate, is undoubtedly the *Cuthredesdune* of the Anglo-Saxon charters. This name occurs in no less than four several charters, or confirmations of charters, of land in

Surrey to the Abbey of Chertsey, which are printed in Kemble's *Codex Diplomaticus*. In the index to this work the place thus designated is conjectured to be *Cotherstone, Surrey*; but there is, however, now no such place as Cotherstone in Surrey; nor is it likely that there ever was; and this probably is one of the numerous errors which are met with in the index to the Codex. In all the charters in question, which range from 675 to 1062, *Cuthredes-dune* is placed in the same category with Merstham, Chaldon, Epsom, Ewell, Carshalton, Beddington, and other villages which either immediately adjoin Coulsdon, or are near to it; and indeed, *Whatindone* (incorrectly given by Kemble as Wootton), one of the manors granted, is in Coulsdon parish. Besides this, we know that Coulsdon remained in the possession of the Abbey of Chertsey until 1538, when it was sold to the King.

The earliest of the four charters in which this name occurs is one dated in 675, by which Frithewald, described as “*Sub-regulus Provinciae Surraniorum*,” in conjunction with Erkenwald, Bishop of London, granted to the Abbey, of which he was the founder, large possessions in the county, and amongst them “*XX mansas cum pascuis illic rite pertinentibus in Cuthreds-dune.*”

From the circumstance that the village, or, if not then a village, the hill or dune, was named after Cuthred, we may infer that he was a person of some importance. In the same way, *Cwichelms-hlæwe* (now known as Cuckhamsley Hill, Berks) was in all probability so named from *Cwichelm*, King of the West Saxons; and many similar instances are met with elsewhere. Indeed, from the earliest times, and in all countries, men have been accustomed to “call their lands after their own names,” as well as to commemorate persons of great importance by giving their names to those places in which they had dwelt, or in which they were buried.

The only person of any eminence bearing the name of *Cuthred* prior to 675, of whom any mention is made in the chronicles of the time, was the son of *Cwichelm*

and grandson of *Cynegils*, the first Christian kings of Wessex.

This *Cuthred* was baptized by *Byrinus* at Dorchester in 639, and having materially aided his uncle *Cenwalch* in the recovery of his dominions, in the year 648 was rewarded by him with the grant of a large portion of his lands ;—the Saxon Chronicle says 3,000 hides,—“*by Æscesdune* :” he died in 661.

It is not impossible that Coulsdon and the surrounding district may have formed part of this *Cuthred*'s possessions, nor is it impossible that his name was given to the hill on which the graves were found, because he was buried there, and that the village or town may have acquired its name from that circumstance. It is true this hill has long been known as *Farthing Down*; but that name, the meaning of which has not been discovered, may be of comparatively recent date. And if I may be allowed to add conjecture to conjecture, may we not regard it as possible, that he was interred in that grave in which the umbo and sword above described were found?

It may be presumed, from the paucity of graves at this spot—there not being more than eight or ten,—that it was the burial-place of the family and retainers of some Anglo-Saxon prince or chieftain, rather than the cemetery of a parish or district; and when we take into account the beauty and unusual form of the drinking-cup, the singular and elaborate character of the shield, the presence of only one sword, and the *iron situla* (those met with elsewhere being, I believe, always of *bronze*), we are justified in concluding that the remains here interred were not those of obscure or ignoble persons. As Professor Rolleston has reminded me, burials with armour or *insignia* were early discontinued by Christianized populations, except in the case of distinguished personages, ecclesiastical or temporal; and Mr. Akerman<sup>1</sup> has justly observed, that the comparative rarity of swords

<sup>1</sup> “Researches in a Cemetery of the Anglo-Saxon Period at Bright-hamton, Oxon,” *Archæologia*, vol. xxx. p. viii.

in Anglo-Saxon graves is, in reality, referable to the fact that it was not the ordinary weapon of a man under the rank of a thane, as is apparent from Canute's law of heriots ; and in proof of this, he shows that out of a thousand graves which were examined at different places in Kent and Cambridgeshire, only nineteen were found to contain these emblems of superior rank.

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*Note.*—Professor Rolleston having examined the skull found in this grave, informs me that it is a very remarkable one, evidently that of a strong, vigorous man, such as was Hengist or Horsa. It greatly resembles the skull of an Anglo-Saxon lady who was buried with a profusion of trinkets at Savre, a Kentish, and therefore Jutish cemetery.

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