

NOTE ON SAXON AND OTHER REMAINS
DISCOVERED AT AND NEAR MENTMORE, IN THE COUNTY
OF BUCKINGHAM. By FREDERICK OUVRY, ESQ., E.S.A.; IN
A LETTER TO J. Y. AKERMAN, ESQ., SECRETARY TO THE SOCIETY
OF ANTIQUARIES.

From the Archaeologia, Vol. XXXV', pp. 379-382.

"49, *Oxford Terrace, Hyde Park,*
"8th March, 1854.

"MY DEAR SIR, — The village of Mentmore stands about eight miles north-east from Aylesbury, four miles from Leighton Buzzard, and one mile and a half from the Cheddington Station, on the London and North-Western Railway. It is situated on a hill, which rises somewhat abruptly from the Vale of Aylesbury. The hill is of irregular shape, throwing out three spurs; on one of which, stretching to the westward, stands the church, and along another, towards the north-east, is the road to Leighton Buzzard. It is a small rural parish, scarcely known by name till the Baron M. A. de Rothschild established his stag-hounds there. I cannot trace the name beyond Domesday Book. The manor is there stated to have belonged to the fair Edith (Eddeva Pulchra), the wife of

King Edward the Confessor, and as then belonging to Earl Hugh. The manor subsequently passed through the families of Russell, Zouche of Harringworth, Bray, Ligoë, Hamilton, (Viscount Limerick), and Harcourt, to the present possessor, the Baron M. A. de Rothschild.

"The advowson of the rectory came early in the thirteenth century to the priory of St. Bartholomew, in Smithfield, and was held by that body until the Dissolution. It was then granted to Sir William Butts, who sold to Newman and Wigg. It then came by marriage to Thomas Ligoë, and has since gone with the manor.

"The church, dedicated to St. Mary, is in the Decorated style, but early in the period. I send a sketch of it for inspection. The bases of the columns would appear to have formed the capitals of an earlier Norman church.

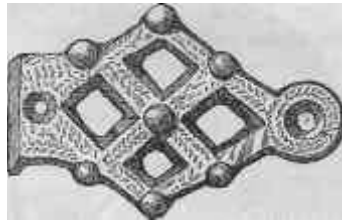
"In March, 1852, I was told by my brother, the Rev. J. N. Ouvry-North, vicar of Mentmore, that some skeletons had been discovered in a gravel-pit on the green, in the centre of the village. I at once went down to make inquiries. No traces of the discovery remained, and I could not learn that anything had been found with the skeletons. Several interments had also been discovered on the brow of the hill, immediately to the south of, and almost opposite, the church, and where the hill begins to slope down to an ancient residence (now a farm house), called Berrystead. With one of these a spear-head was found, about eighteen inches in length. In the same field, but I could not discover under what circumstances, a bronze article was found,

which I conjecture to have formed part of a clasp. It is lozenge-shaped, and pierced lozengey. Also a coin of Constans or Constantius.

"On a subsequent day, and near the spot where the spear-head already

mentioned was found, I myself came upon an interment. By the side of the skeleton I found a short spear-head and knife. There were also small fragments of bronze, probably part of the fastenings of the belt. The skeleton was about two feet from the surface.

"On the 6th August, 1853, six skeletons were dis-



covered near the Kennels, and as much, as a hundred yards from the site of the former interments. I had not the opportunity of seeing any of these skeletons *in situ*, but I am told that nothing was found with them. On the 8th August I visited the spot, and saw another skeleton *in situ*. I carefully removed the earth, but found nothing with it.

"In September three more skeletons were found on the same spot; nothing with two of them, but with the third, which was buried at least two feet deeper than the rest, fragments, apparently of a shield, were found on the breast, but no spear-head or knife.

"Another skeleton was found near the church, which had a knife, but no spear.

"Such of these remains as have been preserved I am enabled, by the kindness of Baron Rothschild, to exhibit.

"The skeletons which I saw were lying nearly east and west, the heads to the west, and such I am told was the position of those which I had not the opportunity of inspecting. The ground is a heavy clay, and the bones were in many cases much decomposed.

"In many places where the ground was opened extensive signs of cremation appeared, but no urns have been found. Bones of animals were of frequent occurrence. Several Roman coins besides the one already mentioned have been turned up.

"I was told by an old inhabitant that some ten years ago two pieces of armour had been dug up, and from the



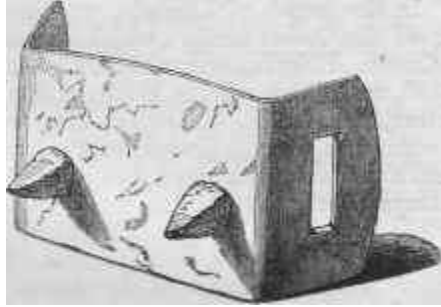
description given me, I was satisfied that one of the two pieces of armour was in fact a cup-shaped fibula. After some months' inquiry I succeeded in recovering this, and it is now exhibited to the Society. In the character of its ornamentation it resembles those discovered by Mr. Wylie at Fairford, but the workmanship is

much ruder. The other piece of armour has at present eluded my inquiries. It is said to have been like the ornament on a soldier's belt.

"A spur of the twelfth century was also dug up with a coin of Alexander III. of Scotland. This spur has been added to the extensive and curious collection of spurs formed by Jas. James, Esq., F.S.A., of Aylesbury, which that gentleman, it is hoped, will some day give the Society the opportunity of inspecting.



"The head of a bird-bolt, and an iron instrument, which it is conjectured may have been used for jousting on foot to prevent the wearer from slipping, were also discovered. In the adjoining parish of Wing, in digging the foundation for the erection of schools, several skeletons were found, no doubt Saxon inter-



ments; but, the site adjoining the churchyard, it was considered that they were merely strays from the consecrated ground, and they were re-interred accordingly. Wing is unquestionably a village of high antiquity. Its church dedicated to All Saints, is believed to exhibit traces of Saxon architecture. It has an apsidal chancel, with a very rude crypt underneath. I send a sketch of this remarkable church. In the chancel are two fine monuments of the Dormer family.

"Wing was granted to the Dormer family on the dissolution of monasteries, and they subsequently acquired the titles of Baron Dormer of Wing (still subsisting) Viscount Ascot, and Earl of Carnarvon. Ascot is a hamlet of Wing, and here stood Ascot House, the residence of the family, now entirely destroyed. The higher titles were conferred on Robert, the celebrated Earl of Carnarvon, who died on the field of Newbery in 1643, and they expired with his son. The property came by marriage to the Stanhopes, Earls of Chesterfield, who sold it to the

present owner, Lord Overstone. There are two mounds in this parish, which are marked as 'tumuli' on the Ordnance Map. One is very large, and stands on the Vicarage Farm. It is generally called 'The Castle Hill;' the other stands by the roadside on the Leighton road. It is of much smaller dimensions, and is thickly planted with fir trees. I cannot ascertain that either of these has been opened. I hope on a convenient opportunity to make the attempt on the larger one, though I am rather disposed to think that it is not sepulchral, though clearly artificial.

"There are two small tumuli in Wing Park, one of which has apparently been opened, but it is not known when, or by whom.

"In the parish of Linslade, or Linchlade (formerly a seat of the Corbet family), which is mentioned in the will of Queen AElfgyfu, anno 1012, Codex Diplo., tom. iii. p. 359, and which adjoins Wing, a few weeks since, my brother, the Rev. P. T. Ouvry, Vicar of Wing, was told by some men digging gravel for the roads, that they had found a skeleton, with an earthen pot. They had effectually destroyed both; but the fragments of the urn which my brother was able to recover, and which are now upon the table, will sufficiently indicate that the interment was Celtic. I send a sketch of the church of Linslade, now disused.

"I send a map of the parish of Mentmore, and I append a list of the articles exhibited.

" Believe me,

" Yours very sincerely,

" FREDERIC OUVRY.

" J. Y. AKERMAN, Esq., Sec. S.A."