

ROMAN REMAINS AT RADNAGE.

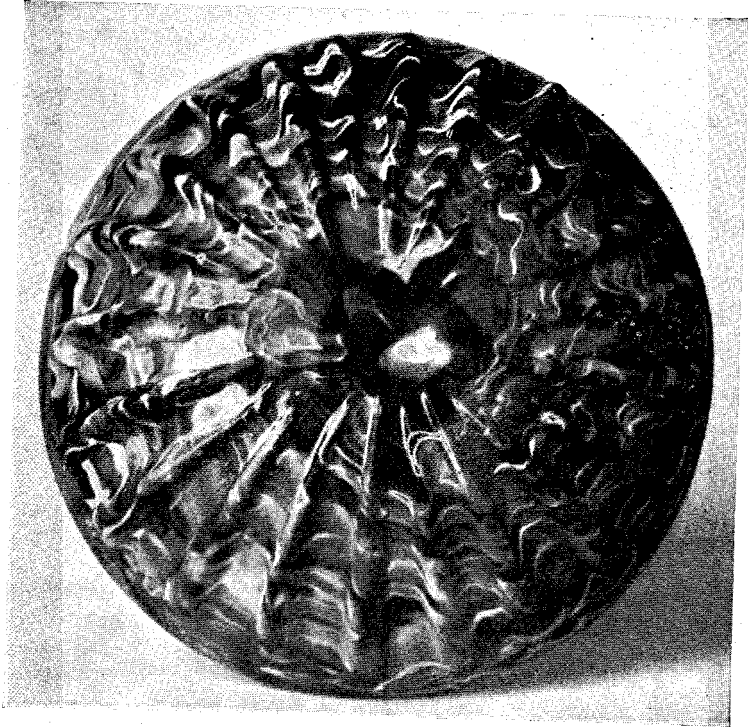
What was unreasonably committed to the ground is reasonably resumed from it.

“Hydriotaphia,” Ch. III.

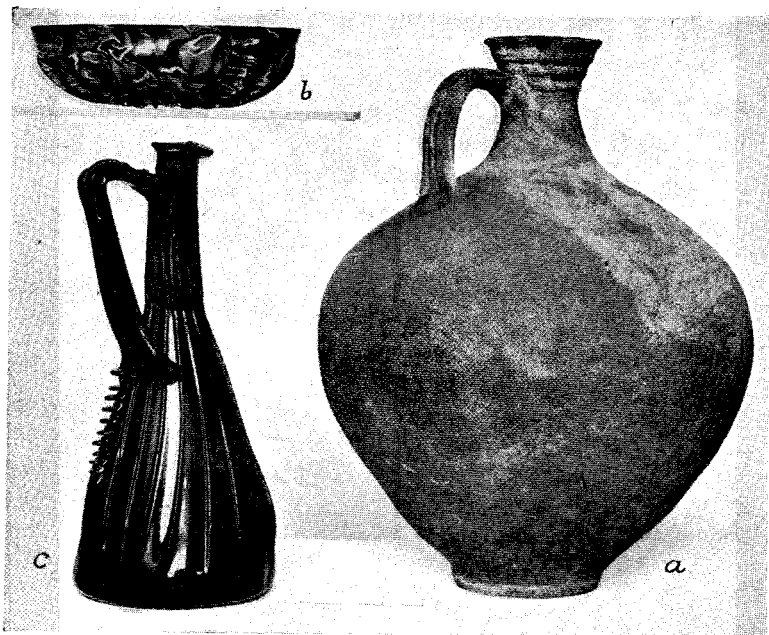
[The following notes are compiled from information kindly provided by Mr. Clement O. Skilbeck, F.S.A.]

In the early part of 1923 a discovery of a Roman burial of importance was made in the western end of Radnage parish known as Sprigg's Alley; the actual site of the burial was in the grounds of a house known as “Two Shires Yew,” which indicates how close it is to the boundary line of Oxfordshire. The house (which stands about 640 feet above sea-level) was built some seventeen years ago; it is approached by a long drive, which ends in a gravel sweep before the house; necessary repairs to this drive involved an excavation which had proceeded some two and a half feet when the neck of an earthenware pitcher¹ was brought up on the workman's pick. The ground was stiff clay with flints, in which digging was made more difficult by wet weather, but the careful removal of the earth brought to light the entire pitcher, which is 14½ inches high; and a singularly beautiful bowl of blue glass of the “pillar moulded” type, curiously mottled or striated with irregular white stripes. The bowl is almost exactly 6½ inches in diameter, inside it is quite smooth, but the outside has ribs which die away both towards the rim and the centre. Where there is a fair amount of white streaking the bowl is not very transparent, but where the blue is quite clear, as in the centre, the

¹ “While many have handles, ears, and long necks, but most imitate a circular figure, in a spherical and round composure; whether from any mystery, best duration or capacity, were but a conjecture. But the common form with necks was a proper figure, making our last bed like our first; not much unlike the Urnes of our Nativity, while we lay in the nether part of the earth and inward vault of our Microcosme.” Sir Thos. Browne: “Hydriotaphia,” Ch. III.



BOTTOM OF GLASS BOWL FOUND AT RADNAGE.
(Re-produced, by permission, from "The Antiquaries Journal.")



a—pitcher ; b—glass bowl (side view) ; c—glass jug
FOUND AT RADNAGE.
(Re-produced, by permission, from "The Antiquaries Journal.")

light easily penetrates through it and reveals a blue of amazing purity and depth.

No entire bowl of this type has previously been found in England, and even fragments are not common; it must ever have been "luxury" ware, and was only owned by wealthy men. It is extraordinarily fortunate that, except for a small hole through which a pencil will not pass, the bowl is entire; and this is still more surprising when one learns that it was found within a very short distance of the foundations of the house, and that a good deal of traffic must have passed over or near to it since the drive was made. Whether it is the "murrine" glass to which Pliny alludes cannot be determined; but it seems attributable to the latter half of the first century, and was conjecturally made at Rome or Alexandria.

The great importance and rarity of this discovery somewhat overshadow the other remains found at the same time; these consist of an amber-coloured glass jug with moulded ribs on its external surface, and a number of projecting spines at the base of the handle. Jugs of this type, though not precisely of this shape, may be seen in the British Museum. It was broken during the excavation, but has been neatly mended.

In addition were found nine dishes of Samian ware, varying somewhat in pattern, but all of a shallow type standing upon circular rims. These were beside the apparent remains of a casket, possibly of wood, with iron straps and bronze rings; two drop handles and a hasp for a lock, some small bosses moulded with lions' mask, and a small key-ring with key attached, all in bronze. Some fragments of burnt bones were found among the remains of the casket, and the whole evidence points to the burial of a person of considerable importance.

Cuttings were made across the garden in several directions, but no other remains were found. Mr. W. Gordon Ross, the owner of the property, offered the entire collection to the British Museum; at the time of writing the bowl is in table case D in the Romano-British room, and the jug, Samian ware, pitcher and metal objects are in Case 17.