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DISCOVERY OF FRAGMENTS OF ANCIENT BRITISH, ROMANO-BRITISH, AND ROMAN POTTERY FOUND IN A CHALK CAVERN IN CAMDEN PARK, CHISLEHURST, NEAR BROMLEY, KENT.

BY ROBERT BOOTH LATTER, ESQ.

ON the western edge of the rising ground, a portion of which is the wild heath known as Chislehurst Common, the chalk, overcapped with "Thanet sands" and gravelly drift, forms an escarpment, produced by the separation of the chalk rock; the sunken portion of the chalk forms the contour of the valley which passes through Sundridge Park, Bromley, towards Lee. Along this valley flows occasionally a small stream, gathered from the watershed of the long winding line of declivities above.

The chalk escarpment may be traced at the foot of the woods of Bickley, Camden Park, and Sundridge Park, along the boundary line between Bromley and Chislehurst formed by the stream under the Bickley Woods. The horizontal chalk adits, now in many parts choked up with sand fallen in from above, (and these adits extend to great lengths in various directions underground,) must have been worked for many ages.

Under Camden Park, it is reported among the chalk-workers, that waggons and horses have been led underground, into horizontal adits and passages. The openings, however, are now closed up with sloping banks of fallen sand.

Under Sundridge Park, lower down the valley, the chalk lies deeper, and is there overlaid by those interesting "tertiary" conglomerate beds, described by Buckland and others, containing the *Ostrea Bellovacina*, *Cyrena*, *Serpulæ*, etc.; but here, surface ground has sunk into a cavity below.

Along the watercourse under Camden Park, the stream is here and there suddenly lessened in volume, and one may observe the water engulfed on one side of the bank or the other, in what are termed, in various parts of the kingdom, swallet- or swallow-holes.

In Camden Park the excavations in the side apertures of the protruding chalk rock, as they *now appear*, are of recent origin.

In May, 1857, a labourer was employed in Camden Park pit, in cutting chambers in the chalk at right-angles, and removing chalk for lime-burning; suddenly his pickaxe entered a mass of dark, soft, pulpy, sandy earth. On widening the aperture the mass of dark earth appeared in considerable quantity, and the skull of a large dog or wolf, with several delicate land shells, rolled with the mass at his feet.

A few gentlemen visited the spot, and, assisted by careful labourers, the earth was removed, and well examined, both *in situ* and in separation. The first large skull found was of delicate texture and much shivered. The parts however were afterwards united, and appearances suggested the possibility of its being the skull of the *Anoplotherium*; competent authorities have, however, suggested that it is that of the extinct *Bos longifrons*. Unfortunately the teeth were wanting, and the sockets were too much fractured for very accurate judgment.

The accidental pickaxe-blow fortunately entered the *base* of the cavity, and this was first explored; the compact nature of the earth above allowed this mode of proceeding. At or near the base were found great

numbers of separate teeth, and jaws of large animals of the ox and deer tribe, with parts of deer-horn in various stages of growth, with the teeth and jaws of dog or wolf, and remnants of early rude British or Romano-British pottery, and among these, the skulls of (apparently) hedgehogs, and great numbers of perfect specimens of the tender *Helix nemoralis*. This circumstance (the tender shell being *unbroken*), and the pulpy sandy state of the earth, led to the early conclusion that water, by slow degrees, had been the agent exerted in carrying in the shells at least, which must have floated and gradually subsided in the soft pulp, whilst the water became drained off by the porous and fissured nature of the rock.

Over these bones and shells, a few feet above the base, irregular blocks of chalk (on which might be traced the mark of a tool worked by the hand of man), with huge flints interspersed with tertiary round pebbles, in mass a foot or two in thickness, were lying compact, in cone-like form, highest in the centre; and the earth *above*, as well as *below* the arched chalk mass, was striped in corresponding cone-like form, it was observed, as if a small stream of water had slowly and gradually fallen from above on the *centre*, carrying with it the *débris* it met with in its passage. Above this layer of chalk and large flint, the perfect shells (yet exhibiting, in some instances, striped bands of delicate colour) again largely appeared, with jaw-bones and teeth of ox, deer, dog or wolf, and remnants of rude pottery: most were found around the edges. On one side of the cavity was doubled up the nearly complete skeleton of a hog, and above it, also in a contorted position, doubled up, the skeleton of a small horse or ass, the coffin-bones being perfect.

Openings had been made on each side of the chalk cavity, and when the earth from below had been removed within arm's-reach of the spades and tools employed,

poles and spikes were thrust against the soil overhead, the operators being protected by the chalk floors of the adits, and the earth was allowed to fall on the floor of the cave, whence it was removed and minutely examined. Among the earth which fell from above, a small vessel of *red Samian ware* (evidently almost the last substance that had fallen into the cavity) was dislodged.

On the removal of the earth, the floor was carefully worked over: it disclosed nothing but a basin-shaped floor in the natural chalk rock. The probable "opening" above has not yet been touched, but a dark oval spot can be seen from within the cave, at the top of the circular decanter-shaped excavation, and the impression of a large square-shaped tool is still observable on the chalk sides.

The height of this circular excavation is seventeen feet eight inches, the diameter eleven feet eight inches; the untouched earth, from the top of the excavation within, to the surface of the turf outside, may be of the thickness of about ten feet.

A few pieces of flint, apparently knives and arrow-heads, came to light, but no human bone, nor tool, nor weapon; nor has any coin yet been met with to fix a date. The Samian ware however (potter's mark, VIC) would lead to the conclusion that the cave existed prior to the fifth century: it is slightly broken, and apparently a salt-cellar.

The *unburnt* vegetable fibre appearing in some of the fragments of pottery among the blackened shades of the burnt clay, and on other fragments the dull black tint, suggest that these vessels were burnt in "smother kilns," during the existence of the extensive Romano-British pottery-works in Kent and Northamptonshire: all appear to be remnants of articles of domestic use.

If the date of the formation of the cavern be doubtful, the even circular form, and the violently applied tool-marks, render it certain it was the work of man. Simi-

lar excavations have been discovered in various parts of Gaul and Britain. Cæsar ordered the caves into which the Aquitanian Gauls had retreated to be closed up. Those mentioned by Camden, discovered near Tilbury and near Faversham, may, upon further examination of the orifice of this pit, be identical in form, narrow towards the top, and broad in expanding circle below, contracting towards the base.

The sinkers of the pit probably had in view the extraction of "marl" for agricultural purposes, referred to by Pliny:—"The Britons used to sink pits one hundred feet in depth, narrow at the mouth, but within of great compass." And Tacitus refers to these pits as storehouses for corn, and places of refuge from the enemy.

The opening towards the top, as has been stated, has not yet been touched, but if on examination it shall be found that the steining has been *dislodged*, it may be inferred that the tool-cut blocks of chalk, and large flints found among the bones, were those which had originally formed the steining of the *shaft* or approach from above; and if so, the bones of the animals (ruminants of the woods and fields, animals of prey and of the chase) found *below* as well as *above* the fallen steining, have belonged to *pit-fallen* animals; whilst the watershed falling down the extensive range of loamy sloping hills, may have carried in its course any fragments of bone or pottery, landshells or other light substances, into the opening thus formed, especially as there is reason to suppose that the surface around has been covered with wood and wild vegetation to such an extent as to allow of no forewarning of danger.

The "swallow" near Camden Park appears to have been a boundary-mark in A.D. 862, mentioned in a Saxon Charter of Æthelberht, King of Wessex, to Dryghtwald his minister, granting ten carucates of land in Bromleag,—"ðanne fram Swelgende, Cregsetna haga, to sioxhiltre,"

—“then from the Swallow, the Cray-settler’s dwelling,¹ to the gibbet-mark.”

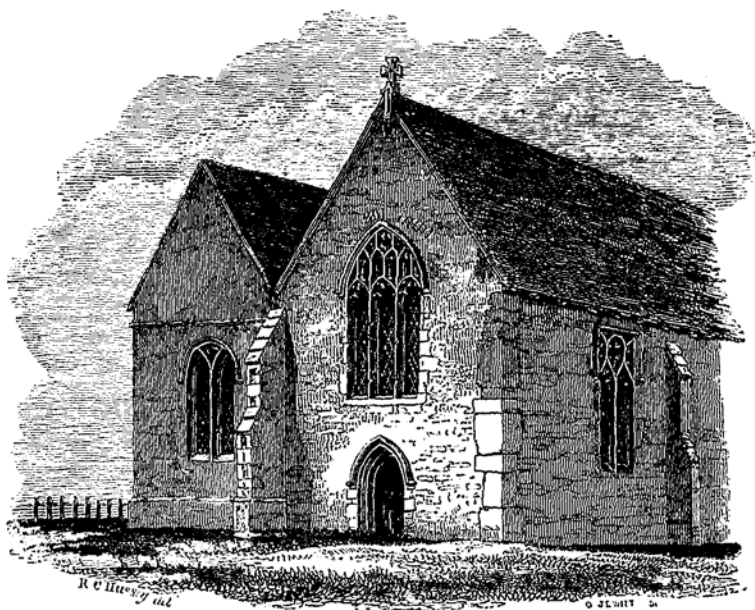
The long-used Bickley chalk-pits near, are probably those referred to as “Swellinde Pette,” in the Saxon charter dated between 1250 and 1274, by which Andreas de Chiselherst granted to the Bishop of Rochester and his successors, eightpence annual rent out of the “Marlera” at “Swellinde Pette,” in “Villa de Chisleherst.”

The hillside above the valley, now Camden Park, laid down in grass, presents, on passing the eye over the formerly ploughed lands, several surface irregularities and slight hollows, denoting some former disturbance of the surface.

It is reported that some years since, the earth on the opposite side of the valley fell into a cavity below; and lately, in Sundridge Park, a similar fall took place, but the cavity was at once filled up without examination. Similar earthfalls have been observed at Paul’s Cray and Cudham. Within a few feet however of the lately explored cavern, the side of one of the adits, some distance apart from the other, has slightly given way, and has disclosed similar black earth, in an apparently similar cavity, and this unexplored cavern remains untouched, awaiting future operations.

Although no trace of the existence of a Roman building in Camden Park as yet appears, except the remnants of early fictile ware thus found on the spot, it is undoubted that Roman gentry, during the four centuries of the Roman occupation of Britain, had residences not far distant, and, in the language of antiquarians, “hereabout.”

¹ “Chislehurst-man’s dwelling,”—*forsan*.



ST. MILDRED'S, CANTERBURY.

BY R. HUSSEY, ESQ., F.S.A.

IT is not uncommon to find fragments of Roman work in the walls of medieval buildings which occupy or are adjacent to Roman sites, and these remains are sometimes the only evidence of the earlier settlement,¹ as at Eynesford Castle, in this county. They usually consist of tiles or thin bricks, generally more or less broken, and sometimes of pieces of hard concrete or mortar built in at random with the ordinary materials of the walls;² but

¹ Some small lumps of concrete which were found in the walls of the church at Frittenden, in this county, during the repairs in 1846, were, until recently, the only signs of Roman occupation in that neighbourhood; but in the course of last year two sepulchral urns were dug up within about a mile of the church.

² It is well known that Roman mortar and concrete may very frequently

when the tiles are abundant they are used, especially in districts where stone is scarce, for quoins and for relieving arches over openings. Occasionally less rude and insignificant remnants of Roman work are met with in later erections, but they seldom amount to more than a few squared stones; these should always be carefully examined, to see whether they retain any original features of interest, and their geological character should be noticed, especially if they are not the produce of the neighbourhood.

The church of St. Mildred, at Canterbury, has many fragments of Roman tiles built into the walls among the flints; and it is my firm belief that most of the stones of the two quoins of the south wall of the nave, have also been taken from a Roman building; the majority of them are of larger size than are usually found in medieval work, especially of a date so early as this wall; and five of those in the western quoin, and six in the eastern, are of oolite, a material very rarely found in this

be distinguished by the redness of the pounded tiles and pottery with which it is made, instead of sand and gravel. The same materials may perhaps, occasionally, and to a slight extent, have been used in medieval buildings; but, with the exception of some very late works at Colchester, no specimen which could be mistaken for Roman has ever come under my observation. Mr. Hudson Turner, in the introduction to his 'Domestic Architecture in England' (p. xxvi.), discredits the idea that this peculiarity in mortar is a certain evidence of Roman date; and he gives a translated extract, from an account of the repairs of Newgate in 1282, in proof that pounded tile was used in mortar at that time. But his quotation is inconclusive; the document to which he refers is probably written in Latin, with contractions, and it may be that the broken tiles which he has supposed to be for making mortar, were provided *pro cement.*, that is, "*pro cementariis*," for the masons, or wallers, and were intended to be used for some other purpose, perhaps to be laid under some of the thinner stones, where required to bring them up to the general level of the courses, as was frequently done in medieval erections. Tiles, mostly broken, were also much used in medieval times for the backs of fireplaces, and were considered to be peculiarly fit for works exposed to the action of fire. Antiquaries who wish to gain credence for opinions based on ancient documents, must set forth the documents fully, and in their original language.

district, in buildings contemporary with this church.¹ The lowest and largest stone in the western quoin is about 4 feet, by 2 feet 9 inches, by 1 foot 5 inches, and there are indentations upon it which show that it has been used for some other purpose. There is also, on one side, what appears to be a hole for a lewis² (now stopped with cement), which, if it is so, implies that it once occupied a higher position in an earlier building. Each of these quoins contains one stone taken from a large arch; that in the western is 1 foot 11 inches long, 1 foot 3 inches wide at the upper or broadest end, and, to speak technically, 1 foot 8 inches deep in the bed; the other, in the eastern quoin, is broken, and I could not reach to measure it, but it seems to be of corresponding dimensions. I have not been into the church, and do not know whether the interior presents any characteristics to determine the date of the south wall. Externally the original features have been obliterated by subsequent alterations, but the construction shows that it is not later than the Early English period, and it probably may be older. It is very unlikely that at that time such stones as these could have been taken from any but a Roman building. I am too ignorant of geology to be able to say from whence these pieces of oolite have been brought, but it may be hoped that some one better informed will determine their native district. The Romans certainly carried oolite into this part of the country for building purposes, for fragments

¹ A stone of rather coarse texture, but very durable quality, of the oolite kind, dug on the banks of the Orne, below Caen, was imported into this country during the prevalence of the Norman and Early English styles, and possibly later; but this appears to be very different from the stones under consideration, and I have never met with it in pieces of any great size, except perhaps occasionally a gravestone. Is not the stone in the Martyrdom, in the cathedral at Canterbury, on which Becket is said to have fallen, of this kind?

² The lewis is said to have been used in medieval times. I do not remember ever to have met with any indication of its employment.

of it were found at the villa at Hartlip, when re-opened a few years ago ; it is also met with at the villa at Bignor in Sussex ; and a block of it lies within the walls of Richborough Castle, which was probably taken there by the Romans. The late Dr. Buckland, on a slight examination of a piece which he broke off this last-mentioned specimen, said he believed it came from the neighbourhood of Weymouth.