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REMAINS OF ROMAN INTERMENTS FROM EAST HALL, NEAR SITTINGBOURNE.

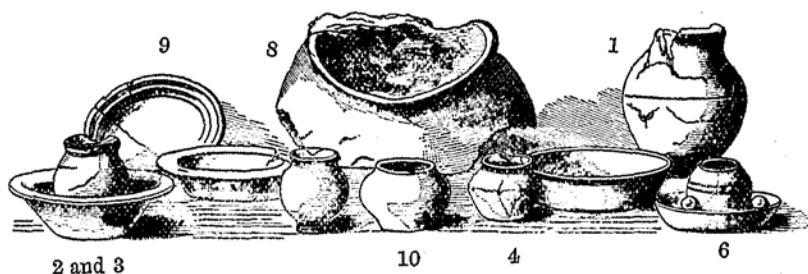
BY GEORGE PAYNE, JUN.

WHILE making excavations for brick-earth in a field on the East Hall estate, at Murston, near Sittingbourne, in December, 1871, the workmen came upon several vessels of Roman pottery. The site of the discovery is 800 yards south-east of Murston old church, 600 yards from East Hall House, and about half-a-mile north of the main line of the London, Chatham, and Dover Railway.

The greater portion of the specimens found were of Upchurch ware, and of great variety in shape and pattern. With the exception of two bronze fibulæ, the relics consisted entirely of pottery, and were deposited nearly in a line from north to south. From their position they fall under two groups. The southernmost group consisted of eight vessels of pottery, two fibulæ, and two earthen beads. The second group likewise comprised eight vessels of pottery.

The vessels in the southernmost group are nearly all of small dimensions—one of them is an urn of yellow ware (1), 8 inches in height, $2\frac{3}{4}$ in diameter at its base, and 4 inches at its mouth; it bears a slight ornament. Close to this were the two fibulæ, and a dish of Samian ware (2), containing a small black urn (3). On the other side of the large urn,

towards the south, was a small urn-shaped vessel of black clay (4), globular in form, and only $1\frac{3}{8}$ inches in height. Next to it was a patera (6), containing a dark coloured urn, and two green earthenware beads. Lastly there was a vase, of jug-shape, with a handle, and of common red clay, about 10 inches in height.



In the second group of objects, the largest specimen was a fine cinerary urn of black pottery (8), half filled with calcined human bones, and buried at a depth of two feet. It is about 8 inches high, and 12 inches in diameter at its widest part, contracting to about 6 inches at its mouth. Close beside it, on the south, was a good specimen of a Roman patera, ornamented with the leaf pattern.

At a short distance from this urn, and lying in the direction of the first group, one of the jug-shaped vessels was found and another patera (9).

Further towards the north was a dark-coloured patera besides three other vessels. The first of these was an urn of yellow colour 5 inches in height, and 3 inches in diameter at the mouth. Around its sides are five depressions, formed by pressing the soft clay inwards with the hands. Next to this urn was another of dark-coloured pottery (10),

3½ inches in height, and not dissimilar in shape to the small globular urn in the first group (4).

The third and last vessel was of jug-shape and of red ware.

No more discoveries were made until 7 March, 1872, when the workmen came upon the remains of other interments fifty yards south-east of the relics already described. These consisted of sixteen specimens of pottery, arranged in groups from two to three feet in rear of each other.

The first group consisted of a small black urn, 3½ inches high, with a cup and patera of Samian (1) ware on its right.

In the second were four urn-shaped vessels, one being yellow and three black, which were unfortunately broken. The next vessels were placed in two lines, from north to south. In the first line were, first, a small black urn (2), 3 inches high; then, thirteen feet to the right of this, a vessel of black ware, 13 inches in circumference, and 2¼ inches high, with a neck 1½ inch high and ⅜ths of an inch in diameter. On the north and on the south side a small urn of blue-black pottery, 3 inches high, and



1 $\frac{3}{4}$ inches at its mouth; close to it were the fragments of a large jug-shaped vessel, of yellowish colour.

The second line was made up of six specimens, comprising a patera of black pottery (3), on the north, and on the south a small black urn and patera; in the centre was found a Samian patera (4), with a yellow-coloured urn (5), 3 $\frac{1}{8}$ inches high; on its left and on its right a bottle-shaped vessel (6) of coarse red clay, 9 inches high, 5 inches in diameter at its widest part, with a long narrow neck, tapering off to a diameter of $\frac{3}{8}$ inch. From the end of March work was discontinued, in this part of the field, until November, when three cups of Samian ware were found. These, from their proximity to the relics discovered in March, would seem to have belonged to that group. Fifty feet in rear of the above-named vessels a bronze fibula was found, which had been placed on a small heap of calcined human bones, accompanied by a black patera. To the south-east of these, at a distance of eight feet, a similar heap of bones was disclosed, with two large urns of coarse red clay, capable of holding a gallon each, a Samian patera, a bronze fibula, and two vessels of black ware (11). Twenty feet to the north of these came a small black urn, a large vase of red ware, and close by, two black pateræ and one black urn, neither of which could be secured in consequence of their shattered condition. A few yards to the east, grouped around another heap of bones, with a fibula placed thereon, were a yellow urn, a large jug-shaped vessel of red ware, and two Samian cups (7). In a line with these, and seven feet to the right, came a yellow urn (12), 5 inches high, with a lid of blue-black pottery, the urn shewing signs of its having been

coloured black. With it was a Samian cup (8), and a vessel of red ware, of a similar pattern to the modern water bottle frequently seen upon sideboards. The two large vessels (9 and 10) were found together, near the above-mentioned specimens; fig. 9 is of drab colour, its circumference being 39 inches; fig. 10 measures 12 inches in height, $5\frac{1}{2}$ inches in diameter at its mouth, and 2 feet 5 inches in circumference at its widest part; it appears upside down in the engraving.

It will readily be seen from the number of relics already found that the field from whence they were taken was one vast cemetery; and no doubt further excavations, more particularly to the north and north-east, will discover many more specimens of like interest. The writer was most unfortunate with regard to the preservation of the vessels. The workmen procure the brick-earth by a process termed "falling," and the huge masses of earth, as they are precipitated into the truck below, carry with them many interesting objects, which are crushed in the fall.

When such discoveries as these are made, one is struck with feelings akin to reverence at the sight of the little heap of calcined bones, with urns, wine vessels, and delicate Samian cups, placed there by Romano-British hands so many hundreds of years ago, as a last loving tribute of affection ere the earth covered all that remained of parent or friend.

How often is the antiquary blamed for "disturbing the ashes of our forefathers." Let any murmurers attend the discovery of a Roman or Saxon interment when an archæologist is not present, and let them see the pottery and human bones, without thought or care, carried away to the wash-mill in the brickfield, there

to be demolished. Will they not at once join hand in hand with the antiquary, and rejoice with him that every nation, and almost every town in Europe, has its public or private collection, wherein these relics may be safely housed, and protected from the hands of desecrating workmen?

The neighbourhood around Murston has for years furnished us with innumerable examples of Roman manufacture. Many objects of fictile ware from these brickfields enriched the collection of the late Mr. Bland, of Hartlip, which were presented by that gentleman to the Kent Archæological Society's Museum, at Maidstone. Dr. Grayling, of Sittingbourne, also possesses a few fine types.

In 1869 a Roman leaden coffin, containing a skeleton and the fragments of a glass vase and lachrymatory, was found near the old church of Murston, in a field called "Eleven Acres." This coffin was ornamented with bars of bead moulding, arranged cross-wise; the lead was of the finest quality, but of no great thickness. It is strange that in this district, which must have been densely populated, we scarcely ever find any trace of the dwellings or camping grounds of its former occupants. The whole place teems with the ashes of the dead, the ground is constantly being excavated in every direction from Rainham to Teynham, and yet no vestige of a Roman villa or pavement has been (during my researches) brought to light, except the villa at Hartlip.

It is probable that in past times the vestiges of buildings have succumbed to the plough, and to the various purposes to which we daily see ancient buildings applied.