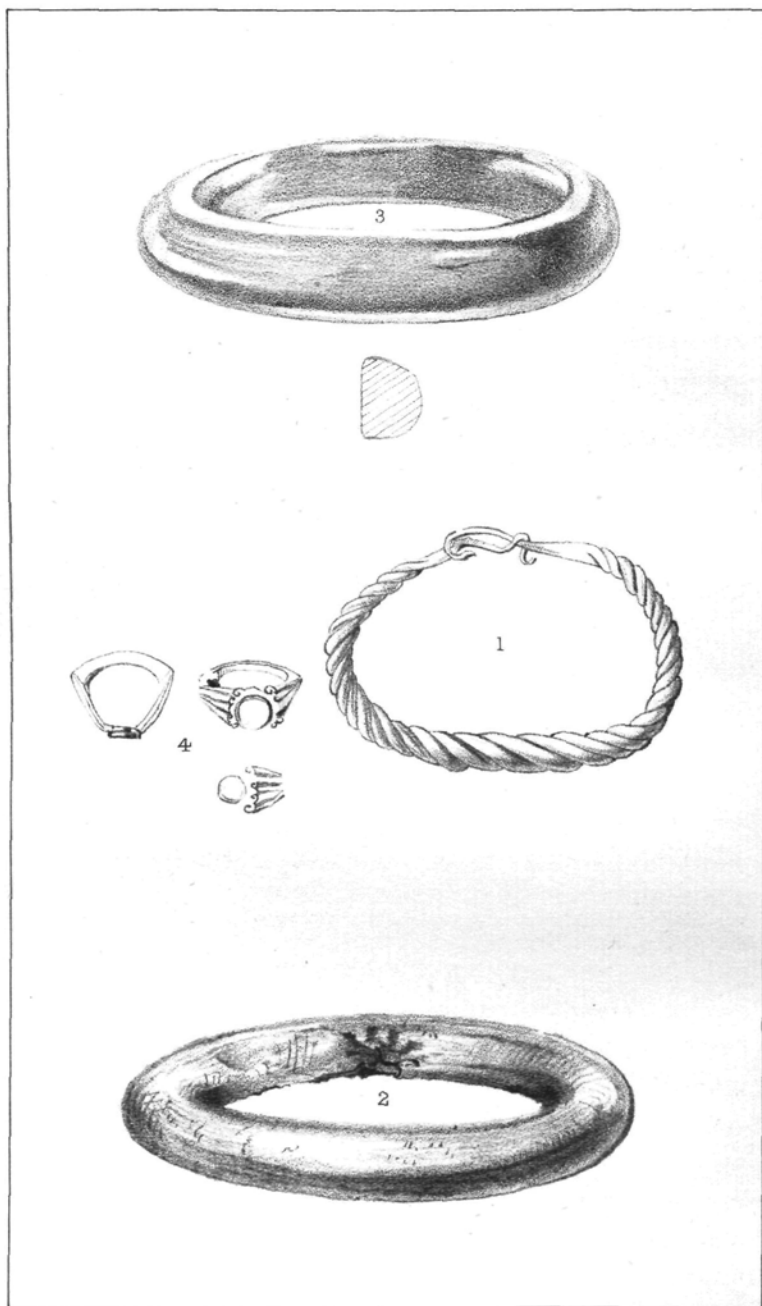




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ROMAN ARMILLÆ OF GOLD (N<sup>os</sup> 1 & 2) AND OF JET (N<sup>o</sup> 3)  
FOUND WITH A GOLD RING (N<sup>o</sup> 4) IN A CHILD'S LEADEN COFFIN  
NEAR SITTINGBOURNE.

# ROMAN LEADEN COFFIN AND OTHER INTERMENTS DISCOVERED NEAR SITTING- BOURNE, KENT.

BY GEORGE PAYNE, F.S.A., F.L.S.

THE field where the above were discovered is situate one mile west from Sittingbourne, on the Watling Street; in rear of the spot where the turnpike gate-keeper's house formerly stood.

This field has during the past five years been entirely excavated for brickearth by Mr. Charles Burley; to whom the writer is indebted for much kindly courtesy and co-operation, in connection with the discoveries made therein. On the 9th of December 1879, notice was received that a coffin had been met with by the workmen, at a depth of seven feet from the surface. It lay east and west, and contained a portion of the remains of a child about six years of age, as was shewn by the milk-teeth still remaining in the lower jaw, the second teeth being visible below them. Accompanying the bones were two gold armillæ; one (fig. 1) of twisted wires bent to fit the wrist; the other (fig. 2) a hollow tube, welded so skilfully that the point of junction could not be seen; also a plain flat oval ring of jet (fig. 3), and a minute gold finger-ring (fig. 4) with claws clasping a circular disc. Outside the coffin at the foot was a vase of Durobrivian ware of flesh-coloured pottery painted brown,  $5\frac{1}{2}$  inches in height and 4 inches in diameter.

At the head, were a red-clay pitcher and a cup of white transparent glass, decorated with round lozenges, exactly similar to the tall modern ale glass; both these vessels were smashed by the workmen, in their eagerness to extract the coffin.

The latter is an unusually fine specimen, ornamented with a new pattern. Its dimensions are as follows: length of coffin, 3 ft. 9 in.; width, 1 ft.; depth at head,  $8\frac{3}{4}$  in.; at foot,  $5\frac{1}{2}$  in.; length of lid, 4 ft. 3 in.; width, 1 ft. 3 in.

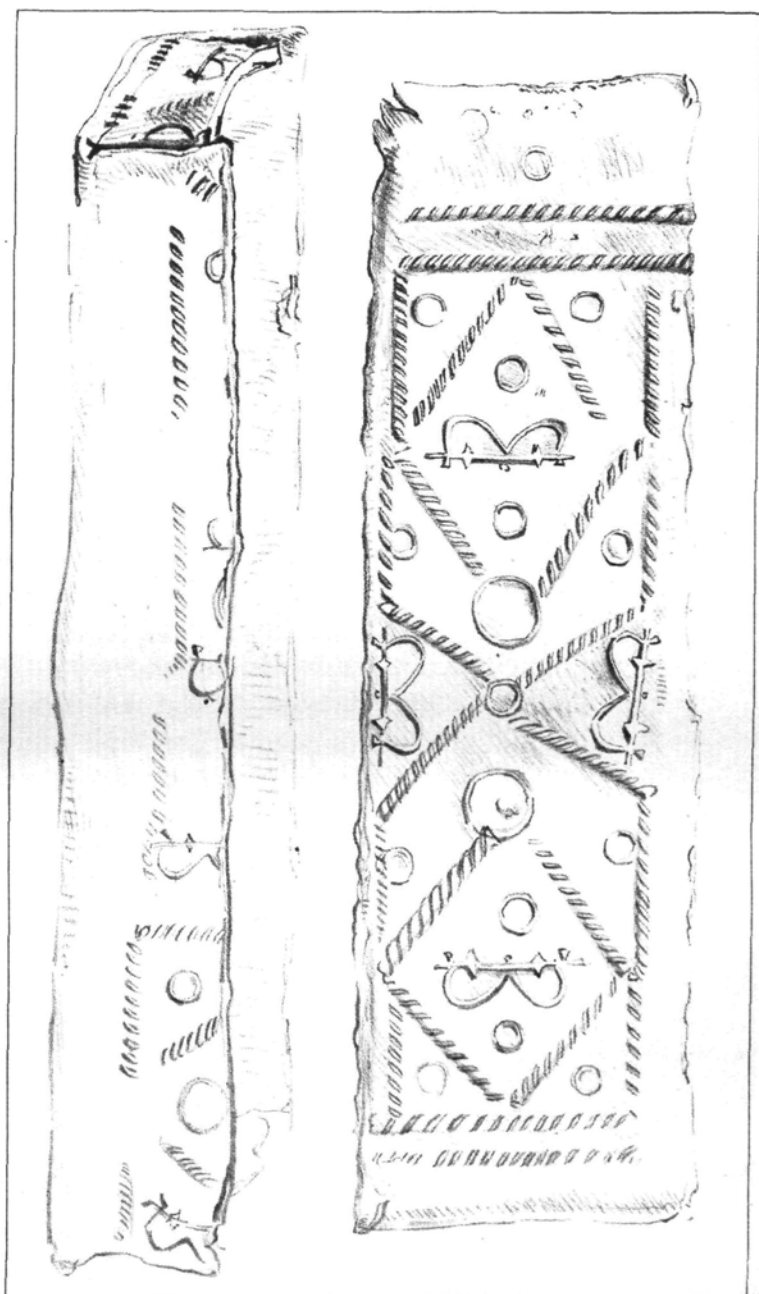
The coffin had been bound with pieces of wood, fastened together by stout iron bolts or nails, several of which were found around it.

The unique ornamentation upon the lid, sides, and ends, which will be best understood by reference to the annexed plate, consists of rope moulding, oxen yokes, and rings.

There appears to be no means of explaining, with any certainty, the signification of such ornaments on Roman coffins. Mr. Roach Smith has treated fully upon this subject in his valuable work,\* to which reference should be made.

On 19th December 1879, nine yards to the west of the coffin, another interment was met with, which exercised considerably the ingenuity of the writer, as the remains when discovered presented nothing but a confused mass of broken fragments, which, after being cleaned and arranged, shewed that the calcined bones had been placed in a leaden cist (*ossuarium*). Accompanying it were a bronze vase and bowl, a glass vessel, and a vase of Durobrivian ware, painted brown and embossed with a scroll pattern in white; the handle of the bronze vase was entire and decorated at its

\* *Collectanea Antiqua*, vols. iii. and vii.



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ROMAN CHILD'S COFFIN OF LEAD, FOUND NEAR SITTINGBOURNE.

termination with the bearded face of a deity. Several iron nails were also found, which may have come from the inside of the cist or had been used to fasten a wooden box in which it might have been enclosed. About fifty yards from the above graves the foundations of a circular tower came to light, of the following construction and dimensions. The walls were 5 ft. 6 in. in thickness, and built of flint, the mortar having been poured in a liquid state between the interstices of the stones; the diameter of the interior of the tower, 11 ft. 6 in.; upon the floor was a shallow tank, 7 ft. square and 1 ft. deep, paved with Roman tiles set on a bed of salmon-coloured mortar. Outside the tower three human skeletons were met with, besides numerous fragments of Roman pottery, tiles, flints, etc. As the brickearth digging proceeded, some yards southwards a rotten flint wall, running east and west, was cut through at several points, turning to the north at right angles near the town. The presence of the latter in conjunction with walls indicates that this was a walled cemetery, similar to that discovered in Joy Wood, Lockham, near Maidstone, to which the student is referred.\* One hundred yards to the south-west of the wall before mentioned two Anglo-Saxon graves were met with, the skeletons lying north and south, heads to the north; with one were two perfect fluted amber glass cups of the tumbler type,  $3\frac{1}{2}$  in. in height and about  $2\frac{1}{2}$  in. in diameter, and the bronze handle of a situla or bucket. The only relic found with the other skeleton was a bronze buckle; one of the same pattern, but ornamented, has been figured by Mr. Roach Smith.†

\* *Arch. Cant.*, Vol. XV., pp. 81, 88.

† *Antiquities of Richborough, Reculver, and Lympne*, pl. v.