

ON AN ANGLO-SAXON CEMETERY RECENTLY
UNCOVERED NEAR SAXBY.

BY THE REV. J. CHARLES COX, LL.D., F.S.A.

THE following account, which was communicated by Dr. Cox to the Society of Antiquaries, on April 30th, 1891, and is printed in their *Proceedings*, Second Series, Vol. XIII., p. 331 &c., is here reprinted by his kind permission.*

“In the year 1833, whilst some labourers were digging two small shallow ponds on rising ground in a field near Stapleford Park, Saxby, Leicestershire, a variety of Anglo-Saxon relics were discovered about 3 feet below the surface. These relics can still be seen in the little-known, dust-covered, liliputian museum of Melton Mowbray, which occupies a small, low room in the picturesque bede houses just opposite the east end of the fine parish church. The pottery consists of three urns, in each case somewhat broken, and of portions of a fourth. They are made of dark-coloured coarse ware, and are similar to the abundant fragments and specimens found within the last six months. The larger of these urns remains full of calcined bone fragments. A wheel-turned, plain jar, 7 inches high and 5 inches wide, of good design, is pointed out in the same little museum as coming from Saxby, but it is unlabelled and has, we feel confident, no connection with these Anglo-Saxon interments. These relics include two or three iron spear and lance heads, one or two other small iron fragments, and two much-corroded iron umbos of shields. There is a handful of beads of the usually varied character, some of glass and others of earthenware. In bronze, there are a pair of tweezers, a long small-headed pin, and several thin circular fragments that seem to have been buckles. There are also two large bronze fibulæ, both cruciform, and lightly gilt. The largest of these, about 6½ inches long, by 3 inches in the widest part, is a noble specimen, and the best that I have seen either in collections or drawings, being beautifully worked in characteristic patterns, and having a grotesque head introduced into the lower part of the shaft. So far as I know this fibula has never been engraved and seems to have escaped attention. I could only examine it quite cursorily, as my time was limited and the case was locked, but it struck me as being superior to any in the British Museum collection. The other fibula is nearly as large, but not so richly ornamented, and broken off below the centre. A brief but not very accurate account is given of this find in the first volume of the *Transactions of the Leicestershire Architectural and Archæological Society*, printed in 1863.

* See also the *Transactions*, VII., 223.

My attention was directed to this find of sixty years ago towards the end of last October, when I received a communication from the Midland Railway Company as to discoveries that had been made during the construction of a loop line from Saxby to Bourne. On looking at the Ordnance map, at the place indicated on the railway plans, I found that it was there stated, with the inaccuracy that deprives these maps of any real archæological value in certain districts, that on this site had been found Roman fibulæ and human remains; but I have satisfied myself that this record refers to the diggings of 1838, which undoubtedly turned up only Anglo-Saxon remains. Last autumn I saw and carefully examined at Derby all that had then been found, and had come into possession of the company. Mr. McDonald, the chief engineer, who takes a great and intelligent interest in these matters, kindly promised to let me know when operations were resumed there, as I was anxious to be on the site of this Anglo-Saxon cemetery, to see the uncovering of anything further. About ten days ago I heard again from the Company as to further finds, and last week I visited Saxby, and though, unfortunately, the work on that section was not then in progress, I gained a good deal of information from Mr. Wilson, the resident engineer, and from some of the gangers whom I interviewed. The second series of finds were submitted to me, and I have the honour to-night to offer the most considerable and valuable portion of them for the consideration of the society.

I have taken measurements of the various urns, fibulæ, iron weapons, etc., for their accurate description, but do not wish to weary you with such details to-night, especially as most of the articles are here before you.

With regard to the urns, there are six tolerably perfect specimens here. One is of an unusually large size. The great majority of the urns of this cemetery are of an ordinary or cinerary character, and have or had the fragments of calcined bones tightly packed within them. Unfortunately a very large number of these urns were broken up by the navvies before special attention had been called to them. From the numerous collection of broken fragments that I cleaned, I was able to make out at least thirty-seven distinct patterns. Some of the best of them are here, both the actual sherds and drawings of them. It has usually been assumed that the stamps on these Anglo-Saxon urns and vases were made with a wooden instrument, the end of a stick being cut to the desired pattern. This was the opinion of the late Mr. Wright and others, and Mr. Jewitt improved on this by giving drawings of the cut stick in his *Ceramic Art*, but I conclude only from imagination. When Mr. Bailey, a Derby artist and antiquary, was drawing the best of these patterns for me, he remarked these must have been produced by metal dies or stamps. This, too, was the opinion of

a working Hanley potter to whom I showed the sherds. The patterns of some nearly resemble the cinerary urns that were uncovered at Kingston, Leicestershire, some years ago when the foundations were being dug for Lord Belper's house; they have also a similarity to some found in a railway cutting at King's Newton, near Melbourne. Both these instances are in the same district. There is a still closer resemblance in some of the patterns to those of Little Wilbrabam, Cambridgeshire, found in 1852, and sumptuously illustrated by Mr. Neville in his *Saxon Obsequies*. But having looked through all the illustrated works that I know of containing drawings of these ornamented urns, and having seen a good many in collections, including those of the British Museum, which I visited this afternoon, I cannot find exact similarity between any one of the Saxby examples and any others. It would seem that the potter made use of dies of metal or wood instruments for the stamps, but used his own imagination as to the method of arranging them. I believe I am justified in claiming for these urns and fragments, that they show richer and more artistically varied patterns than any that have previously been unearthed on any single site. One of the urn fragments has a small hole pierced through a projecting boss, an unusual feature of Anglo-Saxon pottery.

Several of the urns have bulges or knobs produced by pressure from the interior; but in some cases bosses, and in one raised ribs, arranged in a diamond pattern, seem to have been applied from the outside. They are all of coarse dark coloured paste, interspersed with particles of white flint and spar and are lightly baked. None of them show any trace of the use of a lathe.

The interesting fact about this cemetery, in common with a few other of the midland and eastern counties, is that side by side lie the remains of extended interments and of the ashes of those who were cremated. A considerable number of skeletons were exposed at Saxby, the males having knives, daggers, and spear-heads, or the remnants of shields by their side, and the females fibulæ or other ornaments; and these were found within a few feet of and at the same level as the cinerary urns.

In 1855, Mr. Kemble wrote a most interesting and carefully digested paper on 'Burial and Cremation,' for the *Archæological Journal*, wherein he argues that these mixed interments of what he terms 'the Unburnt German of the Age of Iron,' and the 'Burnt German of the Age of Iron,' point to the use of some common burial-ground within the mark or boundary land set apart to receive the dead, which was used both by Christians and Pagans. The question is worked out most ably and has convinced me of the reasonableness of the surmise. Churchyards for Christians did not exist till the middle of the eighth century, and then only very rarely. If Mr. Kemble is right and if this was a cemetery of the

transition period from Paganism to Christianity, I suppose the date of these remains of the Middle Angles is that of the 7th century, Mercia being professedly Christianised about 653.

Several smaller urns that had no connection with cremation were uncovered near the skeletons. One of the gangers told me that they found them by the head of the skeleton, and that each of the skeletons lay with the head to the east.

The fibulæ are an interesting and varied collection, and include, besides a variety of cruciform ones, a circular one of rough but rather unusual workmanship.

There are two small and defaced Roman coins, each of which has had a hole punctured for personal wear.

There is one fine spear head of iron, and several smaller lance heads and knives. The usual characteristic, almost invariable, of Saxon iron spears and javelins is the longitudinal slit in the socket which received the wooden staff, and which, after being fixed, was closed with iron rings, but one of these ends in a circular socket like those of the bronze age.

A single iron umbo of a shield was found, over 6 inches in diameter, as well as one or two fragments.

Two small pieces of a bone comb are among these relics. A larger one I saw in the keeping of Mr. King the agent of the adjoining property, who has also two perfect urns and a sling stone.

About sixty beads from necklaces are here. Several are of amber, the majority are varieties of glass, whilst some are earthenware or porcelain. One of the last of these is nicely striated in a wavy pattern. The remarkable variety of Saxon beads is a subject that has not yet I think been duly followed up.

Where did the occasional elaborate and beautifully patterned beads of clay or earthenware come from? The late Mr. Roach Smith, in his introduction to the *Inventorium Sepulchrale*, thought they were from North India. And did the Germans have any regular trade with the East?

I omitted to state, in the right place, that these finds were uncovered on a small plot of ground about a chain and a-half in length, a few yards north of the old find of 1833, as shown on the plan kindly furnished by the Midland Railway Company. The interments and the urns were found, as stated to me by the resident engineer and others on the spot, at depths beneath the sod varying from fifteen inches to three feet, and were in a light soil and resting on a harder gravel. Round most of the cinerary urns I was told that large sized pebbles were heaped. There is no appearance in the present condition of the surface of the neighbouring undisturbed ground of there having been anything of the nature of a tumulus over the burials."

NOTES ON SOME STAINED GLASS FORMERLY IN A
WINDOW AT SKETCHLEY HALL.

BY THOMAS HARROLD.

THE accompanying illustration represents two pieces of ancient stained glass, formerly in the staircase window at Sketchley Hall.

The lower one represents the appearance of St. Bartholomew, after his martyrdom, with his skin on his left arm, to six persons, probably a father and mother, two sons and two daughters, and is considered to be XIV. century work. The colouring is a dark claret colour on amber ground.

The upper one is supposed to be St. John, or the good Shepherd, and probably a century later. The colouring is the same, the diaper work being amber.

They were purchased in Flanders, with many other similar curiosities, by the late David Wells, Esq., of Burbage, and presented by him to the late Richard Spooner Jacques, Esq., of Sketchley Hall. They were removed from the staircase window, when the estate was sold by the late R. S. J. Winterton, Esq., about fifty years since, and are now in the possession of his widow.

The representation of St. Bartholomew is illustrated in Nichols's *Leicestershire*, IV., Plate LXXII., page 461. A memoir of David Wells is given in the same volume, at pages 460-1.
