

Notes on Archaeological Remains found on Ham Hill, Somerset.

(Read on the occasion of the Society's visit to Ham Hill, July 20th, 1910.)

BY H. ST. GEORGE GRAY.

THE large collections of antiquities found on Ham Hill, filling several cases in the Museum at Taunton Castle, were for the most part collected by two brothers-in-law, the late Mr. W. W. Walter, M.R.C.S., of Stoke-under-Ham, and Mr. Hugh Norris, L.R.C.P., of South Petherton, by their fathers,—Mr. Richard Walter and Mr. Henry Norris, F.R.C.S.,—and later by Mr. W. W. Walter's son, Mr. R. Hensleigh Walter, M.B. A small series of remains from the Hill has been gathered together by Mr. Arthur V. Cornish, of Odcombe—a collection which has also been deposited in Taunton Museum. Nearly all the archæological remains, as is generally known, have been found by workmen engaged in quarrying operations, almost everything being obtained from near the surface, and seldom at a greater depth than 2ft., during the process known as “rubbling,” or the removal of the surface deposits above the stone to be quarried: and so no proper record has been kept until recently of the circumstances under which the different objects of antiquity were found.¹

Although the operations produce such a large number of antiquarian remains, it is much to be deplored that commercial enterprise has been gradually playing great havoc with the

1. Mr. Hensleigh Walter did a little digging on the east side of the northern spur of the Hill in addition to his excavations in the S.E. part of the Hill which led to the discovery of the foundations of a Roman villa, in 1907, and made some interesting “finds.” (*Proc. Som. Arch. Soc.*, LIII, i, 87 *et seq.*; ii, 181).

earthworks of this, one of the largest and most important strongholds of early man in the kingdom.¹ Quarrying operations, some three decades ago, obliterated the camp of Hunsbury in Northamptonshire, but at the same time revealed a large number of Late-Celtic relics, having the same chronological range and position in the evolution of British civilization as the remains so plentifully found in the world-renowned Lake-villages of Somerset, and bearing characteristics clearly revealing the life-history of the Briton inhabiting our land at the time of the coming of the Romans.

Having written the descriptive catalogues of the Walter and Norris collections in our *Proceedings*,² and read a paper to the Society of Antiquaries on some of the relics from Ham Hill³ (extracts from which were reprinted in the *Homeland Handbook* to Yeovil),⁴ the writer may claim to have some knowledge of the deeply-interesting and varied objects of antiquity which the upper deposits of this Hill have revealed.

The remains found here cover a considerable period, from the Neolithic, or late Stone Age, down to and including mediæval times. A large number of the relics are of similar form and character to the Late-Celtic and Roman antiquities found on the site of the important entrenchment of Hod Hill in Dorset (remains now to be seen in the Durden Collection in the British Museum). The relics of the Romano-British period from Ham Hill are also comparable with the large collection brought together by General Pitt-Rivers in his Museum at Farnham, Dorset,—the results of his excavations in the Romano-British Villages near Rushmore and Woodyates. Again, many of the Late-Celtic remains discovered on the Hill compare favourably with the more numerous relics found

1. I am glad to hear that recently the Duchy of Cornwall and other land-owners have exercised more care in preserving the contour of the earthworks at the points where quarrying operations are in progress.

2. Vols. XLVIII, ii, 24-78; LI, ii, 136-159.

3. *Proc. Soc. Antiq. Lond.*, XXI, 128-139.

4. No. 51, pp. 24-27.

in the Somerset Lake-villages. And so, long lists of comparisons could be made, with which, however, we cannot deal here.

The Neolithic period at Ham Hill is represented by a large number of flint implements, flint celts (some bearing evidence of having been burnt), worked flakes and knives, and arrow-heads, chiefly, if not exclusively, of the leaf-shaped form. It is not inferred, however, that the whole of the many flint objects from the Hill belong to that very early period, for it is now a well established fact that flint scrapers, arrow-heads, knives, and even axes, survived into much later times, scrapers and knives being frequently found in association with Roman remains. The Lake-villages of Somerset, too, of a date extending approximately from B.C. 200 to A.D. 70, have revealed an arrowhead, knives, a saw (all of flint), and one or two stone celts or axes.

But it is not such a difficult matter to date the comparatively few objects of the Bronze Age which have been discovered on Ham Hill. These consist of a palstave or flanged celt, one or two awls, an axe or celt, a gouge, and a spear-head, all of bronze, the last three socketed.¹ Also another palstave (in the Norris Collection) found near the Hill.² These stray finds are not in themselves sufficient evidence of a continuous occupation of the Hill by the Goidels of the Bronze Age. On the other hand some fragments of ancient British pottery have been found, but apparently in no great quantity.

It is probable that the Brythonic Celts introduced the knowledge of iron-working into Britain about B.C. 300, or possibly a little later. The number of burials of the Early Iron Age that have been discovered in Britain is extremely small as compared with those of the Ages of Stone and Bronze, and this fact would seem to indicate that the period between the introduction of iron into this country and the beginning of the Roman occupation cannot have been very long.

1. Some of these are figured in *Proc.* XXXII, i, Plate I.

2. *Proc. Som. Arch. Soc.*, LI, ii, plate facing p. 144, fig. 3.

From the Prehistoric Iron Age, when the Brythonic tribes inhabited almost the whole of England, and down through the Roman period, the occupation of Ham Hill, judging from the objects found, must have been more or less continuous, although there is nothing to show that the place was a permanent Roman post.¹ Out of several hundredweights of pottery of the Roman period, mostly of the coarser qualities, a very small proportion of true Roman pottery and of the best red Samian ware has been uncovered on the Hill. This, considered alone, would seem to imply that the inhabitants, during the Roman occupation, were not a very rich community.

It is not certain that all the antiquities from Ham Hill displaying marked Late-Celtic characteristics belong to late prehistoric times. The greater number of them more probably belong to the first century of our era, although there is no reason why many of them, showing no mixture of true British and Roman art, should not date back to 100 or 200 B.C.

In the case of some Celtic remains it is very difficult to determine whether particular finds are pre-Roman, of the Roman period, or even post-Roman, as the Late-Celtic style of decoration was in vogue throughout the whole of the Pagan Iron Age in Britain, and survived in remote districts after the introduction of Christianity.

In the solution of this problem the uninscribed British coins of silver and bronze² found on the Hill do not help to any extent, as it is a fact proved in more than one instance that these types were in circulation at the time of Claudius I (A.D. 41-54).³ Of far greater dateable importance, however, are the currency-bars, or iron money, found on the Hill,⁴ which were

1. In this connection, the following extract relating to Stoke-under-Ham from "The Universal British Directory," (London, 1792), which Mr. Hensleigh Walter has sent me, may be recorded, but it does not state on what authority the statement was made. "On the Hill, which is called Ham, is a Roman intrenchment partly entire, which was thrown up in the year 49, by Flavius Vespasian, then the second Roman officer in command in England."

2. One figured in *Proc. Som. Arch. Soc.*, XXXII, i, Pl. I.

3. "Excavations in Cranborne Chase," IV, 240.

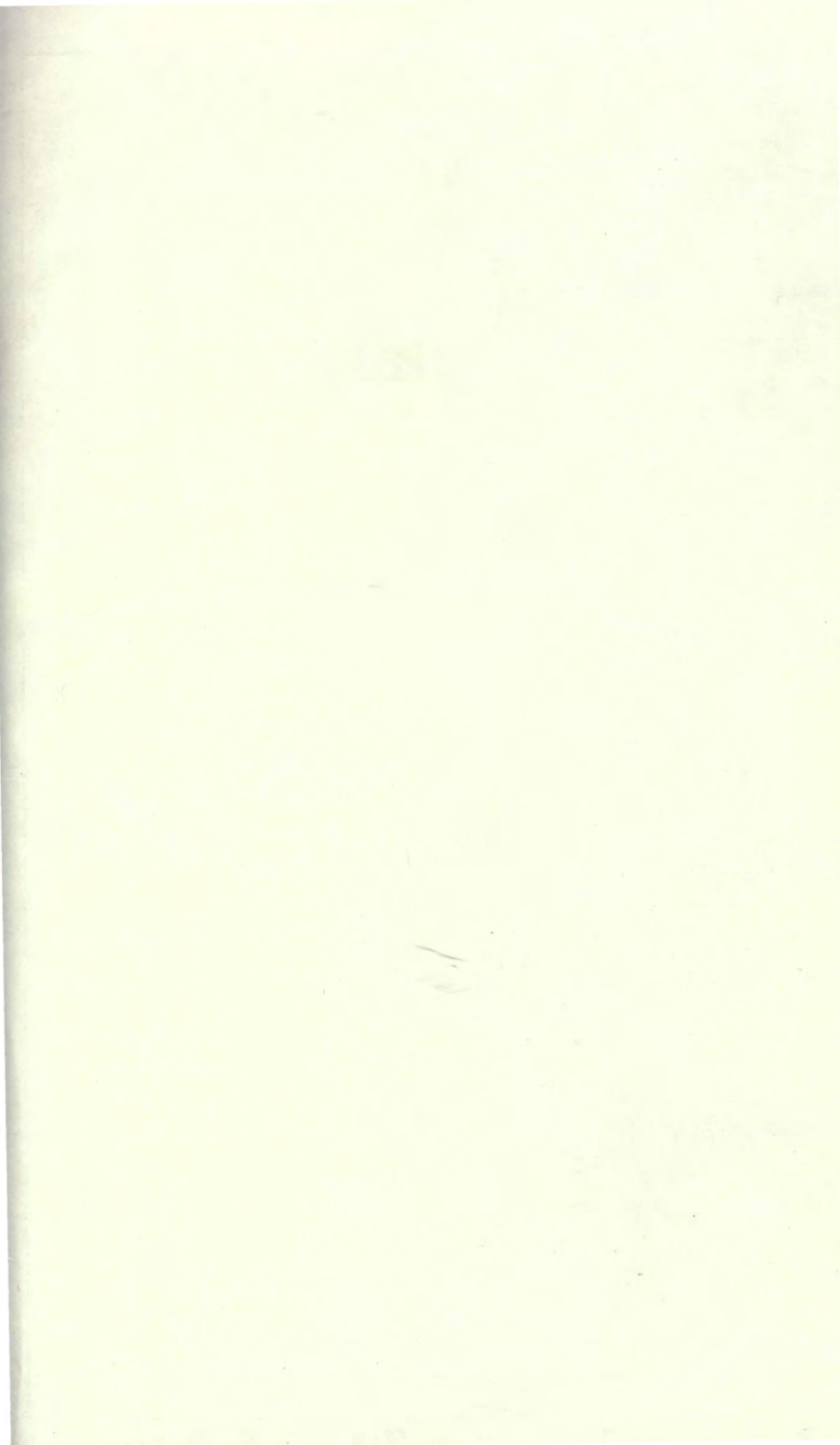
4. One figured in *Proc. Som. Arch. Soc.*, XXXII, i, Pl. III, fig. 4.

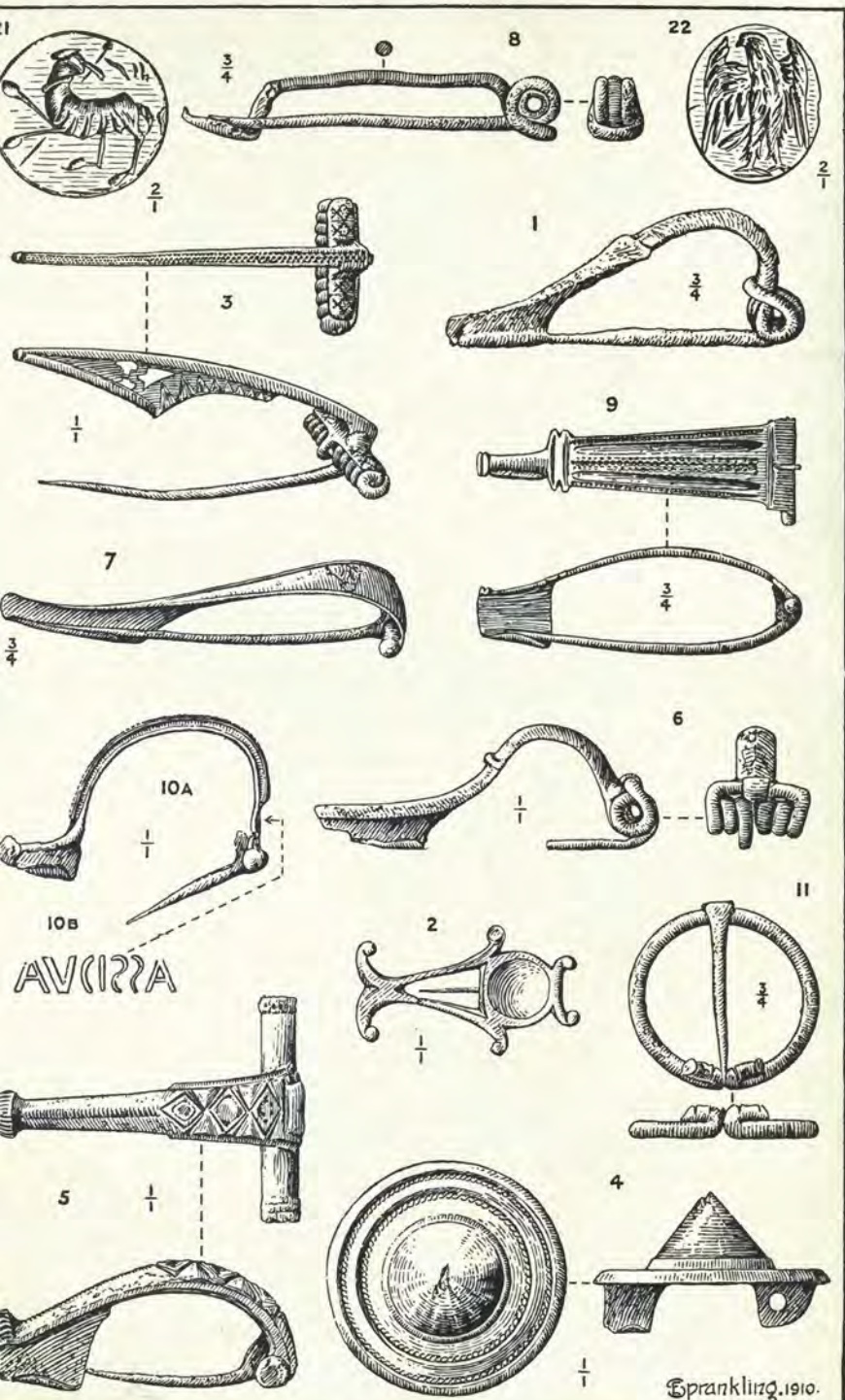
in use as mediums of exchange at the time of Cæsar's invasion, and called by him *taleæ ferreæ* (*Bello. Gall.*, V, 12). Our knowledge of this subject is due in the first place to Mr. Reginald A. Smith, F.S.A., of the British Museum.¹ In Taunton Museum there are nine of these bars from Ham Hill, all of which appear to be specimens of *double* weight (the presumed standard being 9540 grains), but most of them are in a bad state of preservation. They take the general form of unfinished swords with blunt edges, and measure about 32 inches long. It is recorded that nearly a hundred of them were ploughed up on the Hill. The Somerset and other specimens of British currency will be referred to in the monograph on the Glastonbury Lake-village.

Roman coins are commonly found sporadically on Ham Hill, covering nearly the whole period of the Roman occupation, and extending from Augustus (B.C. 43-14), and Marcus Agrippa (B.C. 39-27), to Arcadius (A.D. 394-408). Several British imitations of Roman coins of the third and fourth (date of issue between A.D. 360-385) centuries have also been discovered. But the most notable finds of coins are the two large hoards. One was discovered in 1882 at Bedmore Barn, and consisted of three good-sized amphoræ containing, it is said, over 2,000 "first brass" coins. One of the pots, about 11 inches high and having two small handles, is preserved in Taunton Museum. Judging by the emperors represented in this hoard, the crocks appear to have been buried about the middle of the third century; most of the coins are in a much worn condition. A second hoard was dug up about 1816, at some little distance south of the Hill; the coins, which were deposited in a large earthen vase, were of copper and white metal, extending from Volusian to Constantine (A.D. 251-337), according to one account.²

1. *Proc. Soc. Antiq. Lond.*, XX, 179-195; XXII, 337-343.

2. *V.C.H. Somerset*, I, 297, where the authorities are given.





BROOCHES AND GEMS FOUND ON HAM HILL, S. SOMERSET.

Fibulæ,¹ or brooches, are found occasionally in iron (like Fig. 1,—of La Tène III type), but far more plentifully in bronze—the latter as a rule being in a fine state of preservation, and sometimes tinned (as the depression in Fig. 2).² For the most part they are of a very usual unornamented type; on the other hand, one or two of the Roman brooches are ornamented with finely engraved designs (like Fig. 3, and the circular Roman brooch of gilt bronze with a dark glass conical projection in the centre, Fig. 4); and an enamelled brooch (Fig. 5) of a not uncommon type has also been found. Others clearly show the blending of true British with Roman art (Figs. 6 and 7); and a few of La Tène type are of pre-Roman date (see Fig. 8, a rare Early Iron Age fibula bearing Bronze Age characteristics);³ some of these compare with brooches found in the Glastonbury Lake-village, and will be mentioned in the monograph on that site.

Another type of bronze brooch found on the Hill (Fig. 9) has a thin wide bow very slightly curved,—a type rarely found elsewhere, except in the Romano-British Villages near Rushmore.⁴

One of the most interesting fibulæ from Ham Hill is that having a deep semi-circular bow (Fig. 10*a*), at the back of which is the inscription **AVCISSA**. This is one of seven or eight known from Britain bearing this inscription, and of about thirty examples recorded from the whole of Europe.⁵ Of these, two others come from Somerset, and are now in the

1. The fibulæ mentioned in this paper and figured, are described in more detail in *Proc. Som. Arch. Soc.*, LI, i, 87; LIII, i, 87, 89, 90; LIV, i, 121; LV, i, 101-2; LVI, i, Additions to the Museum, 1910.

2. Some of the bronze fibulæ are figured in *V.C.H. Somerset*, I, plate facing p. 296; and *Proc. Som. Arch. Soc.*, XXXII, i, Pl. II, 5, 6.

3. This specimen is not in one piece as it should be, but the bow ends in a coil, and the spring of the pin is attached to it by an internal cylinder. It was probably broken in ancient times and repaired.

4. "Excavations in Cranborne Chase," Pl. XI, 3; XIII, 4; XIV, 7, 11; C, 3, 10, 12; CLXXXII, 18. Three from Ham Hill figured in *V.C.H. Somerset*, I, plate facing p. 296, figs. 7, 10, 11.

5. *Archæol. Journ.*, LX, 236; LXII, 265.

Bristol Museum, being found about 1875 in the Roman lead-workings at Charterhouse-on-Mendip.¹ Two other British examples come from Cirencester, and two from Lincolnshire.² The Ham Hill specimen differs from all the others in having the two S's of **AVCISSA** reversed³ (Fig. 10*l*).

Penannular brooches (Fig. 11),⁴ of a character belonging to the Late-Celtic period and to early Roman times, are also found. Bronze finger-rings and bracelets, both of British and Roman type, have been discovered on the Hill.

Speaking still of personal ornament, it may be mentioned that glass beads⁵ are occasionally found, but no amber beads appear to have been unearthed in the locality. Kimmeridge shale is found in the form of broken lathe-turned bracelets; cores and waste pieces from the lathe are also represented, and part of what may be a trencher.

One of the most remarkable specimens from the Hill is the portion of a Roman *lorica*, consisting of thirty-nine plates of scale-armour joined together by means of small rings of bronze wire (Fig. 12).⁶ These scales originally formed part of a tight-fitting and flexible cuirass, and are of burnished bronze, tinned alternately. The holes at the top of each scale were for attachment to the leather or linen tunic or lining which held the whole together. Three scales of the same piece are still in private hands in this neighbourhood, and five in the British

1. Figured in *Archæol. Journ.*, LX, plate facing p. 240; and *V.C.H. Somerset*, I, 343.

2. *Proc. Soc. Antiq. Lond.*, XXI, 131; *Archæol. Journ.*, LXII, 265-6.

3. Fibulæ of the Aucissa type, but without inscription, have been found on Ham Hill (1)—figured in *Proc. Som. Arch. Soc.*, LI, ii, plate facing p. 144, fig. 6; Combe Down, Bath (1)—Cruickshank Loan Collection, Bath Museum; and Stoke Abbot, W. Dorset (2)—James Ralls Collection, Bridport Literary Institution.

4. One figured in *V.C.H. Somerset*, I, plate facing p. 296, fig. 6; another in *Proc. Som. Arch. Soc.*, XXXII, i, Pl. II.

5. Some of the beads are compound pearls, such as occur frequently in Anglo-Saxon graves of the VI Century, and it is interesting to find the type associated with IV Century coins on Ham Hill.

6. Figured in *V.C.H. Somerset*, I, plate facing p. 296; *Proc. Soc. Antiq. Lond.*, XXI, plate facing p. 135. See also *Proc. Som. Arch. Soc.*, XXXII, i, Pl. II; *Homeland Handbook*, Taunton, No. 29 (1903), p. 20,—Yeovil, No. 51 (1906), p. 27.



FIG. 12.—PART OF A ROMAN LORICA FOUND ON HAM HILL, SOUTH SOMERSET, 1885.

THE NEW YORK

18

1870

1870

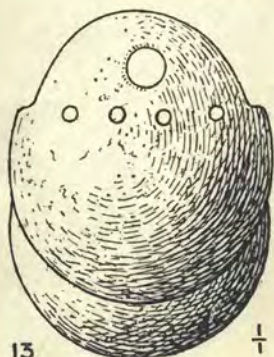


Fig. 13. Scales of Armour, bronze tinned, Roman. Found with a fragment of a red Samian bowl, Site C '07, Ham Hill, 1910.

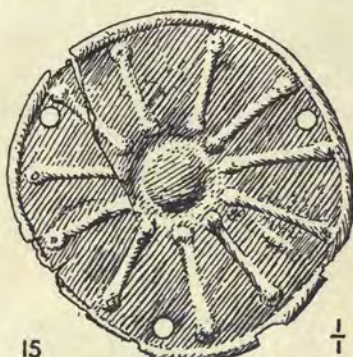


Fig. 15. Embossed bronze disc, perhaps connected with Sun-worship. Found on Site A '07, Ham Hill, 1908.

Museum; they were found in 1885. Three similar scales, conjoined, also measuring 25 x 15mm., were found in another place on the Hill this year; and six scales of another *lorica*, having scales measuring 22 x 11mm., were discovered in 1909. Quite recently two much larger scales (39 x 35mm.) of the same general character have been revealed (Fig. 13). A remarkable find of 350 similar scales of the small variety, of Roman brass, not bronze, mostly if not all detached, were discovered at the Roman station of Newstead, near Melrose, but beyond that a very few examples have been found in the kingdom.¹ The Romans evidently derived scale-armour from the East, where it is still in use over the whole of Northern Asia, in Japan, etc. The recent mission to Tibet found a type of scale-armour in use among the natives.

Typical of Late-Celtic art is the finely patinated bronze head of an ox which probably formed part of a complete animal (Fig. 14).² It is undoubtedly one of the rarest specimens from the Hill, the ox being rarely represented among the art products of the period.

1. *Proc. Soc. Antiq. Lond.*, XXI, 135-136; *Proc. Som. Arch. Soc.*, XLVIII, ii, 31.

2. *Proc. Soc. Antiq. Lond.*, XXI, figured on p. 133; *V.C.H. Somerset*, I, plate facing p. 296, fig. 12.

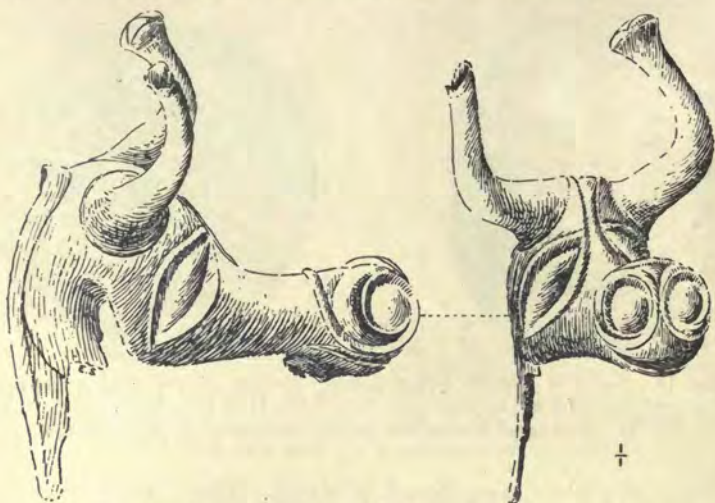


Fig. 14. Bronze Head of an Ox, Late-Celtic, Ham Hill.

The thin embossed bronze disc (well patinated), having three perforations, apparently for suspension, is probably Late-Celtic (Fig. 15); it is regarded by Mr. Reginald A. Smith as a pendant connected with the worship of a Gaulish sun-god, who is frequently represented holding a wheel.¹

The small Roman lamp of bronze is also a rarity, the lamps of the period found in Britain being mostly of earthenware. In bronze less than a dozen are recorded to have been found in England.²

The Roman steelyard (*statera*) is one of the largest and best preserved on record;³ near it a bronze scale-pan (*lancula*) was found⁴ (Figs. 16 and 17). Rare, too, are the two bronze

1. "Le Dieu Gauloise du Soleil et le Symbolisme de la Roue," by Henri Gaidoz, 1886.

2. *Proc. Soc. Antiq. Lond.*, XXI, 135; *Proc. Som. Arch. Soc.*, LI, ii, 146; figured in ditto, XXXII, i, Pl. II, fig. 2.

3. *Proc. Som. Arch. Soc.*, LIII, ii, 181.

4. The pans and beam of a pair of Late-Celtic scales have recently been found in Dog Holes Cave, Warton Crag, Carnforth, Lancs.; the pans are each ornamented with twenty-nine dots-and-circles, five being grouped in the centre and six arranged triangularly at the edge of each of the four quarters (the apices of the triangles pointing inwards).

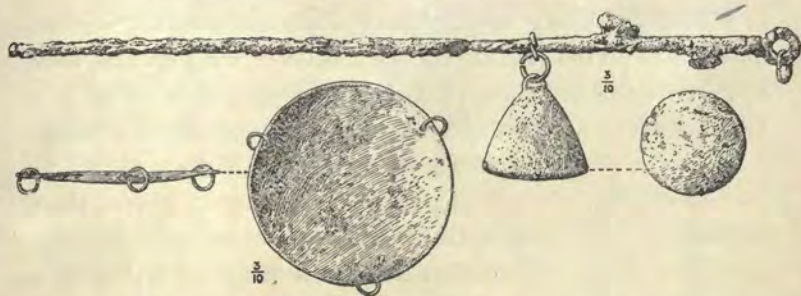
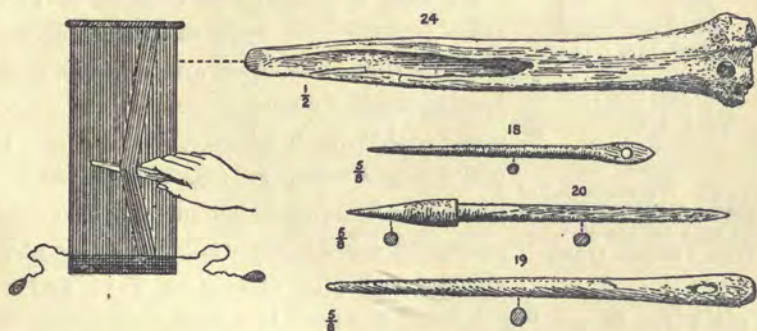


Fig. 16, Roman Steelyard (*statera*), of exceptional length—the beam of iron, the weight of lead, the loop and rings of bronze; and Fig. 17, bronze Scale-pan (*lancula*). Found within a few feet of each other, about 140 yards to the S. of the "Frying Pan," on the E. side of the N. Spur, Ham Hill, 1907.

objects of the Early Iron Age which have usually been described as probably caps or bosses that were fitted to axles of chariot-wheels; they were found here in 1823, and compare with about three specimens found in the Thames and one in the fens of Cambridgeshire.¹



RELICS FROM HAM HILL.

Fig. 18. Bronze Needle, found at "Ham Turn," 1905.

Fig. 19. Bone Needle, found at "Ham Turn," 1907.

Fig. 20. Bronze Awl, or Piercer, perhaps used in leather-working. Found on the N. Spur of the Hill, Site A '07.

Fig. 24. Bone Implement which may have been used for selecting certain of the warp-threads for pattern-weaving, say, in two colours (see sketch). Found at "Ham Turn," 1907.

1. Figured in *Archæologia*, XXI, Plate VI, and *Proc. Som. Arch. Soc.*, XXXII, i, Plate I. See *Proc. Som. Arch. Soc.*, LI, ii, 145, and *Proc. Soc. Antiq. Lond.*, XXI, 132, for references.

Among the many other objects of Roman and Late-Celtic times found on the Hill are bronze and bone pins,¹ bronze, bone and iron needles (Figs. 18 and 19), bronze awls (Fig. 20), bronze tweezers, parts of spoons, parts of chains, thin bronze repoussé work,² carnelian gems (Figs. 21 and 22), objects of antler—many of them comparable with the large series from the Somerset Lake-villages, and including a comb (Fig. 23),³ and other objects used in weaving (Fig. 24), knife-handles, and the so-called cheek-pieces of horses' bits—spindle-whorls and other larger whorls of stone and clay, clay loom-weights, massive querns and other grinding stones, sling-bullets of clay and stone, whetstones, and many other objects too numerous to describe in detail here.



Fig. 23. Weaving-comb of antler, from the "Central Plateau" of the N. Spur, Ham Hill (Site C '07).

In iron, a quantity of remains of the same periods have been discovered from time to time, including arrow-heads and javelin-heads, numerous spear-heads, daggers,⁴ scabbards, bill-hooks, sickles,⁴ small pick-axes, shears, knives, chisels, nails, horse-bits,⁴ adzes,⁴ hammers, harness-rings, and other horse-trappings, ox-goads, chains,⁴ styli (for writing on wax), and a plain iron torque found round the neck of a skeleton.⁴

The Anglo-Saxon period is represented by an iron umbo, or boss of shield.

Mediæval remains are occasionally met with and include

1. One figured in *Proc. Som. Arch. Soc.*, XXXII, i, Pl. II, fig. 3.
2. *V.C.H. Somerset*, I, plate facing p. 296, fig. 4.
3. Figured also in *Proc. Som. Arch. Soc.*, LIII, ii, 121.
4. Examples of these are figured in *Proc. Som. Arch. Soc.*, XXXII, i, Plates II, III.

some seals, a bronze spout of a jug,¹ and a handsomely worked bronze stirrup.²

It is seen, then, that the yield of archæological material on Ham Hill has been great, and there is every reason to believe that the area will produce many more ancient remains than it has already revealed. Although other ages are represented, the chief archæological interest in Ham Hill undoubtedly centres in the antiquities dating from the transition period connecting the Briton of Brythonic blood with that determined invader, the Roman.

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Parenthetically, it may here be noted that Late-Celtic remains, of the same general character as those from the Somerset Lake-villages, have been found,—sometimes singly, sometimes in considerable number,—in the following localities in the county :—Ham Hill, Worlebury Camp, South Cadbury Camp, Cannington Park Camp, the Polden Hills, Wraxall, Bawdrip, Moorlinch, Melbury (near Somerton), Weston (near Bath), Lansdown, Gough's Cavern (Cheddar), and Wookey Hole Cavern.

A full description of the relics has not been attempted in this paper. It merely represents the Address read at the Society's Meeting on Ham Hill, on July 20th, 1910.

The antiquities found on Ham Hill during the last few years are described in greater detail in the *Proceedings* :—Vol. L, i, 73-4; LI, i, 86-90; LII, i, 82-3; LIII, i, 85-90; LIV, i, 120-1; LV, i, 100-102; LVI, i, Additions to the Museum, 1910.

With the exception of Figs. 12 and 14, all the antiquities illustrated have been found on Ham Hill since the death of Mr. W. W. Walter in 1904, and have been added to the collections at Taunton Castle Museum by Mr. R. Hensleigh Walter, M.B.

The drawings to illustrate this paper were made by Mr. Ernest Sprankling, of Messrs. Sprankling & Price, Architects, Taunton.

The cost of the illustrations and their reproduction has, to a large extent, been most kindly defrayed by Mr. R. H. Walter.

1. Figured in *Proc. Som. Arch. Soc.*, XXXII, i, Plate II, fig. 7.
2. *Proc. Som. Arch. Soc.*, XXXII, i, Plate III, 9; *Archæologia*, XXVIII, 450.