

Roman Remains found at West Coker.

BY H. ST. GEORGE GRAY.

IN August, 1915, Mr. L. J. Pomeroy, of "Inglemount," East Coker, reported to me that he had found on his property near his house what appeared to be fragments of Roman pottery and a fire-place, and asked me to go over to see the site and remains. This I had an opportunity of doing on October 5th, in company with Mr. J. B. Paynter (local secretary of the Somersetshire Archaeological and N.H. Society for Yeovil).

It appears that the pottery, etc., were found in laying a water-supply pipe across two or three fields in 1914, the trenching for this purpose reaching to a depth of about two feet.

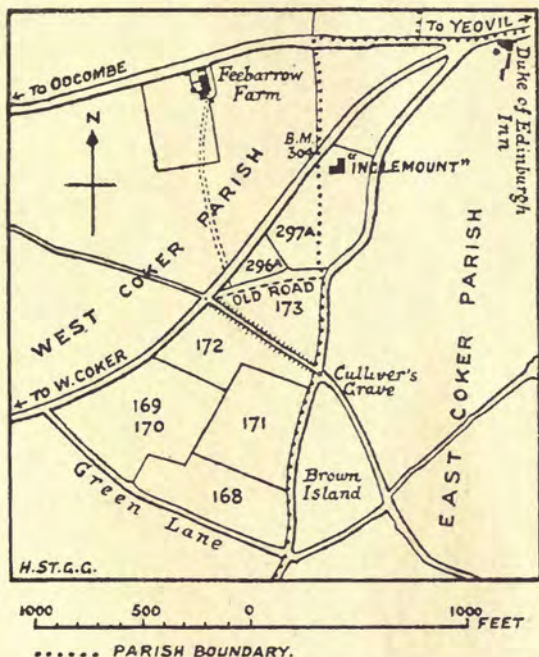
The remains were found in almost flat grass fields to the s.w. of "Inglemount"—which is situated in the extreme n.w. corner of East Coker parish about 300 feet above sea-level. The two fields in which the remains were discovered are, however, just over the n.w. boundary of East Coker parish, and in the parish of West Coker, the area being bounded by "Inglemount" on the n.e., Green Lane¹ on the s.w., Culliver's Grave² and Brown Island³ on the e. and s.e., and by the road

1. Green Lane is the road on the s.w. boundary of Mr. Pomeroy's land.

2. The spot called "Culliver's Grave," at the intersection of the cross-roads near the n.w. boundary of East Coker parish, is probably the place of a suicide's burial ("Notes about East Coker," by the Rev. C. Powell, 1910, p. 4). The Roman remains found in the Cokers are barely mentioned in this pamphlet (p. 3).

3. "Brown Island" is bounded by three roads. The name was given me by the Rev. C. Powell.

from Yeovil to West Coker on the N.W. The position is $2\frac{1}{4}$ miles S.W. of Yeovil Parish Church, $2\frac{3}{4}$ miles S.E. of Montacute Church, and $1\frac{1}{2}$ miles west of the nearest part of the Roman road running from Ilchester to Vagg, Preston Pluck-



Map of the borders of the Parishes of West Coker and East Coker.

The Hearth was found in Field No. 172; and the shards of Roman Pottery in Fields Nos. 169 and 172.

nett, Key (near Barwick), and Batcombe (Dorset), and rather over the same distance S.W. of Larkhill Quarry, Preston, where a number of Roman remains were found in 1908-9 which were presented to the Taunton Museum.⁴

On enquiry Mr. Pomeroy told me that the field in which

4. *Somerset & Dorset Notes & Queries*, XI, 345-6; and *Proc. Som. Arch. Soc.*, LV, i, 91.

he had found a hearth and some of the fragments of pottery in the southern half was called "Chessels" (No. 172 of the accompanying map),⁵ and that the adjoining field (Nos. 169, 170), in which pottery only was collected on the N.E. side, was named "Bread, Cheese and Chessels" on the Tithe Map.⁶ To this I added that about 1820 a well known mosaic pavement (representing two men returning from the chase carrying a spear and a dead stag slung from a pole propped on their shoulders, with a small dog barking below the stag) was discovered on the site of a Roman villa in a field called "Chesil," or "Chessells,"⁷ in the parish of East Coker. This mosaic is exhibited in Taunton Museum. A Roman villa and two mosaic pavements were also found at East Coker in 1753, and the mosaic, etc., found about 1820 were probably obtained from the same site, namely, that marked "Villa" in the 6-inch ordnance sheet about 1½ miles S.W. of Yeovil Parish Church, and 3½ furlongs N.E. of North Coker House.

On returning home I found, on reference to Professor Haverfield's article on Roman Somerset,⁸ that Mr. John Moore discovered and partially examined a Roman villa in a field also called "Chessells," in the parish of West Coker, in 1861, and found a large number of Roman remains, including Samian and other potsherds, iron nails, a small bronze statuette of Mars, a pair of tweezers, a penannular brooch, and an inscribed bronze plaque.⁹ On that occasion the digging was carried to a depth of about 2 feet.

Mr. Moore does not describe the precise position of the area he examined in West Coker, but it is highly probable that his

5. This field is also No. 172 in the Tithe Map of 1838 and the Tithe Apportionment (dated 1839).

6. This field is also marked Nos. 169 and 170 in the Tithe Map.

7. The Rev. C. Powell, Vicar of East Coker, informs me that farm-hands in his parish were in the habit of calling Roman tesserae found in the fields, *chessells*, but he had not heard the term very recently. It may be noted that Professor J. Wright in the "English Dialect Dictionary" gives *chesle-money*,—Roman brass coins found in some places in Gloucestershire.

8. *Victoria County History, Somerset*, I, 330-1.

9. *Journal, British Archaeological Association*, XVIII, 392-5, and XIX, 321-2. Some of the objects are figured.

villa was situated in the fields now owned by Mr. Pomeroy;¹⁰ and if this is the case the ground has no doubt already yielded its chief treasures.

In digging the trench above mentioned last year, a circular hearth (about 2 feet in diameter) was uncovered, consisting of slabs of stone embedded in clay; the middle piece was Ham Hill stone and was considerably reddened by the action of fire. Mr. Pomeroy had this taken up and laid out under a little shelter in the yard adjoining his house.

No metals were discovered. Indeed there was little found beyond about two dozen fragments of pottery. These shards are typical of the Roman period and include a large proportion of the common black ware; a well formed black handle has been preserved and a piece of pottery ornamented with the common lattice pattern. Specimens of both the cream-coloured and hard New Forest ware were found and two fragments of a flanged pot of imitation Samian pottery. A piece of a thick grey amphora was also noticed among the shards, and at least one fragment bearing traces of a thin coating of glaze.

It might be recorded here that the old road marked on the north side of Field 173 in the accompanying map no longer exists. This route from West Coker to Yeovil was discontinued in the first half of the XIX Century, when the new and more direct road was made which passes the west side of "Inglemount." The track running n.w. from Culliver's Grave is now a deep broad ditch, some 6 feet below the level of Fields 172 and 173. Carts, however, can still pass along it.

10. Mr. Paynter informs me that in 1838, Field No. 172, "Chessels," belonged to Mr. Thomas Warry, as also did No. 168, "Long Chessels," and No. 171, "Middle Chessels;" whilst the field numbered 169, 170, "Bread, Cheese and Chessels," belonged to Mr. John Moore. No. 173 was called "Docking Street;" and Nos. 296A and 297A then formed part of "Feebarrow" Farm. All these fields now belong to Mr. Pomeroy, and are marked on the accompanying map, which is based upon the ordnance survey (Somerset Sheet LXXXIX, N.E.—1904) and the Tithe Map of 1838.