

Notes on Roman Remains found at Puckington.

BY H. ST. GEORGE GRAY.

PUCKINGTON has, during the last year or two, had a new chapter added to its history. The parish can now boast of having revealed Roman remains close to the church. Puckington is situated, as the crow flies, $2\frac{1}{2}$ miles N.E. of Ilminster, $3\frac{1}{2}$ miles W.N.W. of South Petherton, $\frac{1}{2}$ mile E. of the River Ile, and about $3\frac{3}{4}$ miles N.W. of the Fosse Way.

Hitherto the nearest place which had produced pottery of this period was Walrond's Park, in the parish of Ile Brewers,¹ at a distance of 9 furlongs northwards from Puckington. The discovery was made when the old house known as "Walrond's Park" was pulled down. This pottery consists of several fragments of Roman grey ware, some pieces of fluted hard New Forest ware, and shards of Romano-British pottery (including specimens of the "basin-shaped rim")² exhibited in Taunton Museum.³ This discovery is, no doubt, the same as that briefly referred to by the Rev. Preb. Scarth.⁴

The nearest Roman town to Puckington was Ilchester (*Ischalis*), at a distance of $9\frac{1}{4}$ miles E.N.E.; but there were

1. The parish is given wrongly as Ile Abbots in the *Vict. Co. Hist. Som.*, I, 363. "Walrond's Park" was called "Ile Brewers Park" until *temp. Eliz.*

2. "Excavations in Cranborne Chase," II, Plate cxvi.

3. Presented by Mr. Joseph Ostler in 1877 (*Proc. Som. Arch. Soc.*, XXIII, i, 83).

4. *Proc. Som. Arch. Soc.*, XXIV, i, 74; under this reference the *Vict. Co. Hist. Som.*, I, 363, says "coins vaguely noted" at Ile Brewers. This would appear to be an error in copying, as no Roman coins are definitely known to have been found there.

Roman villas much nearer, *viz.*, at Huish Episcopi,¹ Curry Rivel,² South Petherton,³ and Seavington St. Michael.⁴ Many objects of Roman date have also been found at Langport and Drayton.⁵ Ilminster, on the other hand, has produced little of Roman date beyond two coins.⁶

My attention was first drawn to the discoveries on Puckington Hill by Mr. E. C. Treppin, F.S.A., steward to Lord Portman (the owner of the property).⁷ It appears that some quarrying near the surface had been in progress, for the purpose of obtaining stone for the roads,⁸ in the s.e. part of a large field,—the southern point of the field adjoining the churchyard.

On December 29th, 1909, Mr. Treppin and the writer visited Puckington, having heard that a human skeleton had been discovered. On arrival we found that the skeleton had been uncovered on December 21st, and that the quarryman (W. Welsh) had moved the bones and buried them in the *débris* from the quarrying. We were informed that the skeleton was extended approximately E. and W., the head being to the west; the body had been buried face downwards, and the remains covered a length of six feet (measured

1. *Vict. Co. Hist. Som.*, I, 328; *Proc. Som. Arch. Soc.*, IV, ii, 46; XI, i, 7; XI, ii, 196. "Langport and its Church," by the Rev. D. M. Ross, p. 27.

2. *Vict. Co. Hist. Som.*, I, 328-9; *Proc. Som. Arch. Soc.*, XI, i, 8; XVIII, i, 69. Remains in Taunton Museum.

3. *Vict. Co. Hist. Som.*, I, 332. Roman coins from South Petherton in Taunton Museum.

4. *Vict. Co. Hist. Som.*, I, 332; *Proc. Som. Arch. Soc.*, XII, i, 69. Remains in Taunton Museum.

5. *Vict. Co. Hist. Som.*, I, 328-9. Several objects (including coins) from Drayton may be seen in Taunton Museum.

6. *Proc. Som. Arch. Soc.*, XVIII, i, 71; XLVII, i, 90. *Vict. Co. Hist. Som.*, I, 363. "The Mynster of the Ile," by the Rev. J. Street, p. 2.

7. The writer is also indebted to Mr. Robert C. Vile, of Puckington, for information. The "finds" have been presented to the Society's Museum by Lord Portman (*Proc. Som. Arch. Soc.*, LVII, i, "Additions to the Museum.")

8. The upper layer of stone was at a depth of 18 ins. below the surface, and the depth of the stone being removed was about 2ft. 4 ins.

with a foot-rule). It was covered with the ordinary soil of the field, and rested on the solid rock at a depth of 18ins. from the surface. Its position was about 100 yards from the nearest part of the church. Slabs of burnt stone were found about 36 feet north of the skeleton.

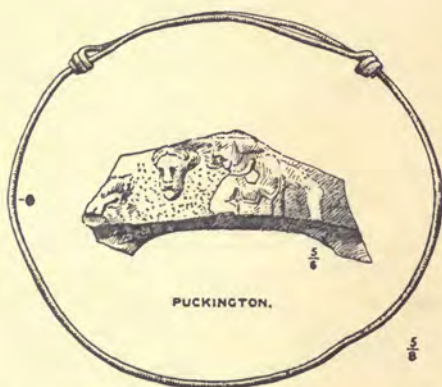
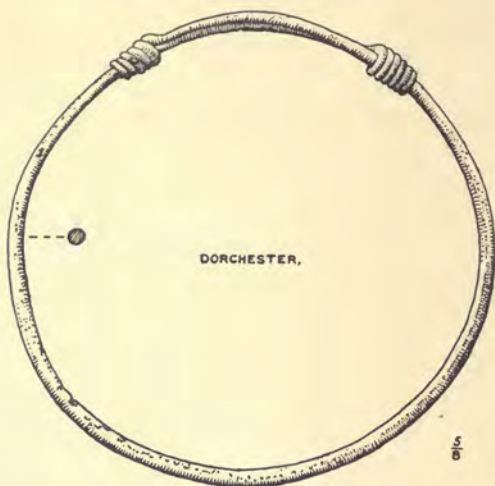
In the soil for some distance round about the skeleton a quantity of shards of pottery were found. Fragments were preserved for examination by the writer, who also collected the other pieces on the spot (1909-10). All of them are referable to the Roman period, and of common types. Two eyelets or loops for suspension, so frequently found with Late Celtic and Romano-British remains, were collected at Puckington; also several fragments of "bead-rims" and "basin-shaped rims." At least six pieces of brownish-black ware were ornamented with slightly indented burnished patterns, including a scroll ornament on the bottom of a vessel, and three examples of the lattice pattern typical of the period.

The most interesting pieces of pottery were two fragments of red Samian ware, and a flat disc of brown Romano-British pottery (max. diam. 1½ins.), perhaps intended for perforation for a spindle-whorl. The Samian ware consisted of a rim piece, the bulge of the vessel ornamented with slightly incised lines parallel to the lip, and a small fragment with figures in relief (illustrated in the accompanying drawing).

The only object of metal found during the quarrying operations was a complete armlet of bronze wire, of oval outline, measuring externally 3½ins. by 3½ins., and weighing 5dwts. 10grs. The wire is of oval section, the maximum dimensions being 2·5 by 1·5mm. As will be seen by the illustration, the armlet is of the "slip-knot" variety, the ends of the wire overlapping considerably—the terminals consisting of spiral twists, of about 2½ turns, encircling the plain strand of wire. This method of manufacture rendered it possible to pass the armlet over a hand however large, the elasticity of the ornament exerting a pressure on the arm which would keep it in place.

The writer knows of only two similar ornaments found in the s.w. of England, *viz.*, one in the Romano-British village of Woodcuts, North Dorset,¹ the other at Dorchester, exhibited

Bronze Leglet, Dorchester.



Bronze Armlet and an ornamented piece of red Samian pottery, Puckington.

From Drawings by Mr. E. Sprankling.

1. Pitt-Rivers's "Excavations in Cranborne Chase," I, Plate XVII, fig. 10; also John Ward's "Roman Era of Britain," p. 237, fig. B.

in the Dorset County Museum, and here figured. It is made of a single strand of bronze, averaging $\frac{1}{8}$ in. in diameter, the ends twisted nearly six times round; present internal diameter of the ring, $3\frac{3}{4}$ ins.; but it is not fully expanded. It was found in 1896, when a sewer was being dug in Albert Road, just outside the west wall of the Roman town. Two or more graves were found; one contained a large black pot of "Upchurch ware." The bronze leglet, for such this specimen must have been, was found encircling the thigh bone (*femur*) of a skeleton; and it is possible that some of the rings below mentioned were used as ornaments for the legs and ankles.

There are three armlets of the Roman period in the British Museum with slip-knots, but with more spiral twists at either end of the wire than the Puckington specimen. One, about 4 ins. in diameter, was found in the Thames, near Buckland, Berks;¹ another came from Icklingham, Suffolk; but the locality of the example in the Meyrick Collection is not known.

Similar armlets of bronze are exhibited in the Mayer Collection in Liverpool Museum. They were found at Sibertswold and Kingston, and in other Kentish graves.²

Armlets of the same pattern are to be seen in Colchester Museum, all being found in that town.³ An armlet, very similar, was found at Novaesium (Neuss), Germany.⁴

Of similar character are two twisted armlets of gold, bequeathed to the Dorset County Museum by Miss Daunsey, 1906; they are labelled as Roman, from the Fayyûm, Egypt.

1. *Proc. Soc. Antiq. Lond.*, 2 ser., V, 474.

2. Faussett's "Inventorium Sepulchrale," Plate xvi, figs. 14, 15.

3. There is one complete armlet (in Group 104) and another imperfect (in Group 110), in the Joslin Collection. One, in the Jarmin Collection, is of the same type, but of heavy make. Another (general collection MCXXXIV) has a small bronze "box" attached. The Museum also contains a very small specimen, formed from a flat band of bronze with slightly corrugated outer face, which may probably be of later date (Jarmin Collection).

4. Bonner *Jahrbücher*, 111/112, 1904, Plate xxxiii, fig. 70. Another is figured in Grivaud de la Vincelle, Plate LXX.

In April, 1910, another extended skeleton was found at Puckington, at a distance of about six feet to the south of that previously described. The head was to the s.w., resting on its side and facing w.n.w. The right hand was in front of the face; the left arm straight down by the side. The skeleton was, like the other, at a depth of 18ins. below the surface. There were no associated "finds," except a smooth pebble found near by; a similar pebble was found near the other skeleton.

The skull and long-bones of this Romano-British skeleton were removed to Taunton Museum and repaired. The chief skull measurements are as follows:—

Horizontal Circumference ...	568				
Max. Length—				Arcs	{
Glabello-occipital ...	205			Vertical ...	350
Ophryo-occipital ...	203			Frontal ...	304
Max. Breadth ...	143			Parietal ...	370
Cephalic Index—				Least Frontal Width ...	103
G. O. Length and Breadth	698			Bi-stephanic Breadth ...	126
O. O. Length and Breadth	704			Bi-auricular Breadth ...	111
Basion to Bregma ...	148			Ext. Bi-orbital Breadth ...	107
Height Index—				Int. Bi-orbital Breadth ...	96
By Glab. Occip. Length ...	722			Bi-zygomatic Breadth ...	115
By Oph. Occip. Length ...	729			Bi-maxillary Breadth ...	83*
Basion to Nasion ...	115			Ext. Bi-alveolar Breadth ...	60
Basion to Alveolar Point ...	106			Bigonial Breadth ...	86
Alveolar Index ...	921			Bi-mandibular Breadth ...	75
Nasal Height ...	50			Height at Symphysis ...	31*
Orbital Height ...	32			Nasio-Bregmatic Length ...	118
				Nasio-Alveolar Length ...	71
				Nasio-Mental Length ...	124

Measurements in Millimetres. * *Approximate.* Sex, probably Male.

From the cephalic index (glabello-occipital) it is seen that the individual was hyperdolichocephalic, or very long-headed.¹ For the Romano-British period this is an unusually long head. Referring to the Pitt-Rivers excavations we find that, of the seventeen measured skeletons found in the Romano-British settlement at Woodyates, only one had a skull as long as the Puckington example. Of the skeletons found in the Romano-

1. The cephalic index (ophryo-occipital) would show the individual to be dolichocephalic (long-headed).

British village of Rotherley, only three out of the thirteen measured skulls had a lower cephalic index than the Puckington skull. Of the fourteen measured skeletons from the Romano-British village of Woodcuts, none were so long-headed as the skull under consideration.

The following long-bones only were sufficiently perfect for measurement :—

Right Tibia . . .	length	350mm.
Right Humerus . . .	„	316 „
Left Radius . . .	„	240 „ <i>approx.</i>

The stature of the individual, if male, was 5ft. 3ins. (according to Rollet's method). The right arm was rather long in proportion to the right leg.