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THE SAXON CEMETERY AT BIFRONS.

BY T. G. GODFREY-FAUSSETT, ESQ., F.S.A.

DURING the year 1866 some workmen of the Marquis of Conyngham, while digging for a new plantation in that outlying part of Bifrons Park known as Patricksbourne Hill, disturbed a few Saxon graves, from which they secured some small relics of no great importance. His Lordship with great kindness communicated the discovery to our Society, and afterwards presented us with the relics, which are described and partly illustrated in our Sixth volume.* It being clear that the site of another of our East Kent Saxon cemeteries had thus been brought to light, a request was subsequently made to Lord Conyngham for leave to prosecute further researches at the same spot, which was again most liberally granted; and the autumn of the year being the time preferred for such an undertaking by the tenant of the land, as best suitable to the pasture, I commenced operations with the assistance of two labourers on October 21, 1867.

The site of the cemetery lies about half way up the gentle slope of the hill, which at this point forms the south-eastern side of the valley of the lesser Stour; and is about a quarter of a mile higher up

* P. 329.

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the stream than where Patricksbourne Church stands in the valley. It is noticeable that this vale of the lesser Stour must have been peopled by flourishing settlements in those early days when the Saxons or Jutes of Kent were as yet Pagans, for to these days and to this state of religion we are constrained to refer such cemeteries as this. As high up the valley as Kingston, on a similar sloping hill at its side, Bryan Faussett found a similar cemetery; another exists along just such a slope in Bourne Park, not more than half a mile above these graves at Patricksbourne, and has, from time to time, been partly explored by Lord Londesborough, Mr. Bell, and others; a few such graves have also been lately found on this same Patricksbourne Hill, near Lord Conyngham's keeper's lodge, and nearly opposite Patricksbourne Church; and a few more some way lower down the valley and on its opposite side, in a wood adjoining the park of Howletts. Rich as East Kent is found to be in such relics, it may be doubted whether so many of these burial places have been anywhere discovered lying together, as in this valley of the lesser Stour.

The ground on which we now began operations was perfectly smooth, and gave no outward indication of what lay beneath. For several years it had been laid in turf, but I could myself remember it as ploughed land, and in that condition it had remained long enough at least for every vestige of a tumulus to have been destroyed. The graves however were easy to be discovered by the use of an iron spear of the shape devised and adopted by Bryan Faussett; for the hill was fortunately of chalk, with only a very slight layer of top soil, and any disturbance

in the close and hard stratum below was at once detectable by a thrust. We could not help noticing, as in our progress we grew to a pretty well defined idea of the extent and outline of the cemetery, that it occupied a spot on the hill side slightly leveller than the rest of the slope, apparently naturally so, but perhaps aided by artificial means. There seemed to be remains of a slight ditch and bank surrounding it, but scarcely distinguishable after many years of plough; this would enclose perhaps an acre or so of land. We found by far the greater number of the graves lying in a direction nearly N. and S., but with a slight inclination to the S.E. and N.W., the feet to the N. All cases of a different direction are instanced in my narrative below. The conclusion seemed warrantable that this general agreement of direction had no connection with the sun, or, as we should now say, the points of the compass, but was occasioned by the situation of the ground, and lay lengthways on the slope of the hill, parallel with the valley below. This is noticeable in many other such cemeteries, and is probably attributable merely to the saving of labour thus gained in digging to a level bottom on a hill-side. It will be observed below that a few of the graves lay E. and W., a direction very inconveniently contrary to the remainder; and it occurred to me that these may possibly have been graves of the first Christians, who died before any separate burial place for members of their religion had been established in that district. It is noticeable too that most of these contain no relics, and although this circumstance, as well as their varying direction, may be simply the result of carelessness or haste, it may not unreasonably be attributed to the absence of that Pagan superstition,

which buried with the body what it might be supposed to require or to wish for in its future state.

Much kind assistance was given me during parts of the excavation by the Rev. H. M. Villiers, Rector of Adisham, and by Mr. Brent, of Canterbury; and under their superintendence many of the graves were opened. We examined about a hundred in all. During part of the time Lord Conyngham's gamekeeper was opening others on behalf of his Lordship himself; doing his work with great care and attention, and getting together a very pretty collection now at Bifrons. Being however an uneducated man, he was unable to preserve notes of the contents of each grave, and of the positions and circumstances in which the relics were found; and this diminishes the value and historical usefulness of Lord Conyngham's collection, as of so many others of older date.

Among the peculiarities connected with this cemetery it was observable that the brooches were almost invariably discovered in pairs, the two exactly alike, whether circular or of the hammer shape. I have ventured to call by this latter name that character of brooch which other writers have called either 'cruciform' or 'tau-shaped'; for to the name of cruciform there seems no claim in their shape, and it has been used by those who would fain see evidence of Christianity in their design; while to name them tau-shaped gives a distinctly wrong impression of the position in which they were worn, describing them in fact upside down. The shape is the most simple and natural possible, and has clearly no connection with any sentiment, nor is intended to represent any other object whatever. It is simply a shield to the pin, widening and narrowing with the

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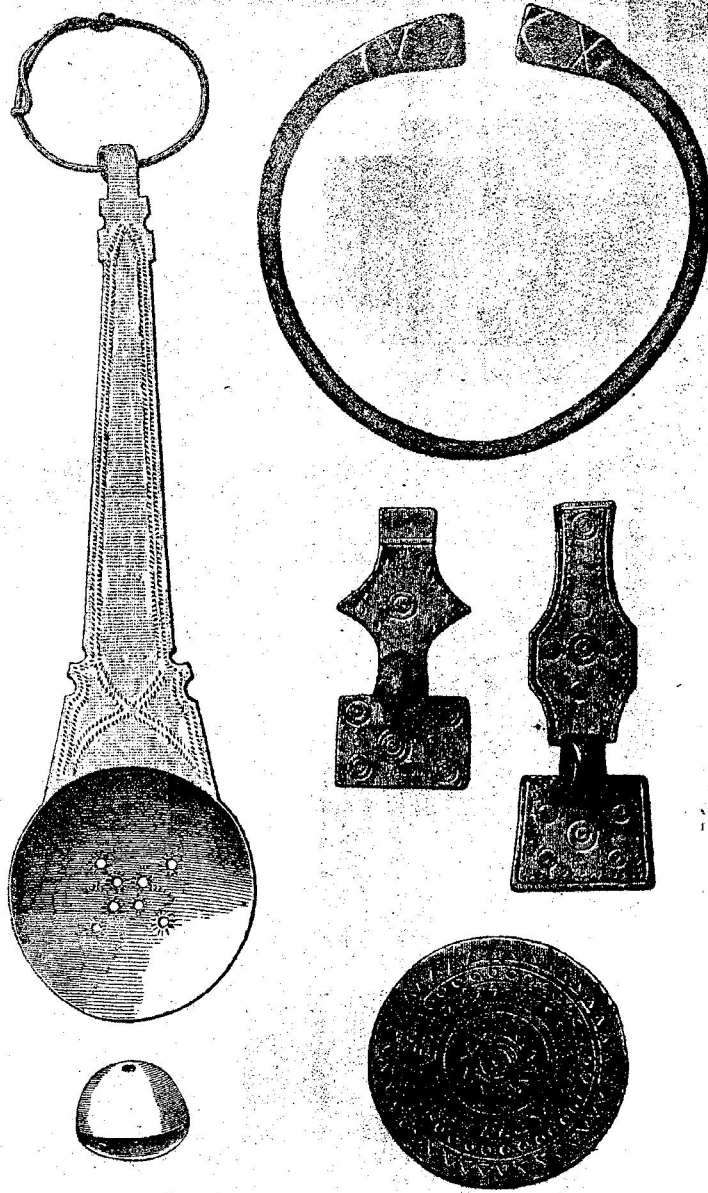
shape of the pin and its adjuncts. The position, therefore, with the point turned upwards, in which I have always found it, without, so far as I remember, a single exception, is easily understood, as rendering the point visible while being fastened. Hammer-shaped seems the most convenient simile,—provided always that no one will connect it with the worship of Thor the Hammerer.

Another peculiarity was the frequency of the crystal ball and perforated spoon found in juxtaposition, and invariably between the thigh bones of a female skeleton. No fewer than five such cases occurred in the graves opened by myself, and at least two more in those worked by the gamekeeper,—a most unusually large proportion. It seems clear that they point to some peculiar rite, and were more than mere personal ornaments, however indisposed one may feel to give any adhesion to the fantastic theories of their supposed magical properties in which writers have indulged. Some interesting and, I believe, new circumstances connected with this type of relic will be found under some of the graves, but I confess to having been unable to weave them into any theory of my own.

I now proceed with my narrative of the graves and their contents, as opened in order.

GRAVE 1. Skeleton about 5 feet 4 inches in height. Grave 2 feet 4 inches in depth. Near the hands a knife; near the waist a bronze buckle, of which the tongue had been iron, and a small bronze *stud* or boss, of oval shape, with raised centre containing a flat piece of red glass set in its front; it was apparently once fastened to a strap behind. By the left ear a glass *drinking cup* of delicate green colour, with an opaque





SPOON AND CRYSTAL BALL; BRACELET AND BROOCHES. Grave 6.

white wavy ornament running round it half way down the side. Its height is $6\frac{3}{4}$ inches, and its width at the lip $2\frac{1}{4}$ inches, from which it tapers to a rounded point at the bottom. It lay horizontally, with one side to the ear, and the lip to the shoulder. (Plate I.)

2. Skeleton over 6 feet high. Grave a little more than 1 foot deep. No relics.

3. Skeleton large, and on its side. Grave shallow. No relics.

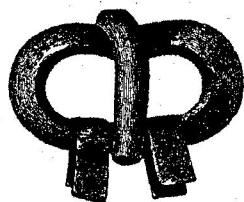
4. Skeleton over 6 feet high. Grave 3 feet 6 inches deep. Near the middle a knife, an iron buckle, an iron awl, and what was apparently the curved handle of a pair of iron shears.

5. Skeleton almost entirely decayed. Grave more than 7 feet in length. Between the thighs two bronze *keys*; near them a bronze *buckle*; and above this two small circular *brooches*, of bronze gilt and of slightly dished shape, each embossed with a rude face in full front: the pair are exactly alike. A knife and a few other iron fragments, one probably another key. On the left side of the chest a long bronze *pin*; and near the left shoulder four loose beads, one of green glass, and another fixed on a thin bronze ring, possibly an ear-ring.

6. Skeleton certainly a woman's. Grave 8 feet in length. Between the thigh bones was lying, with its back upwards, a *spoon*, with eight small perforations in the bowl, arranged cruciformly: it is apparently of bronze, silvered over, and has a thin bronze ring attached to a loop at the top of the handle. Under its bowl lay a small *crystal ball*, perforated as for hanging, and under this a heap of thirty-nine small beads, mostly of green and blue glass, with one larger of amber, probably the chain from which the crystal ball was hung. Just above the left wrist was a bronze *bracelet*, on the left side two hammer-shaped bronze *brooches*, nearly alike, but one longer than the other; on the middle of the chest a flat *circular brooch*, also of bronze, engraved with a rude circular pattern; and near this a small triangular bronze plate, with remains of wood attached to it. At the left shoulder an iron pin, and below this an iron buckle. At the forehead a large ivory bead.

7. A child's skeleton. Grave lying E. and W., with head to W. No relics.

8. Grave 3 feet deep, apparently a woman's. No relics.
 9. Grave 2 feet 6 inches deep. Under the skeleton two or three inches more of loose chalk. No relics.

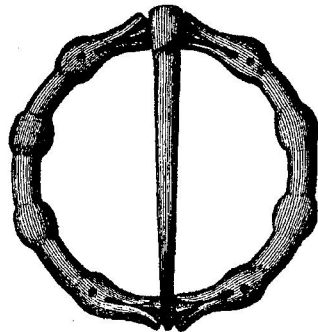
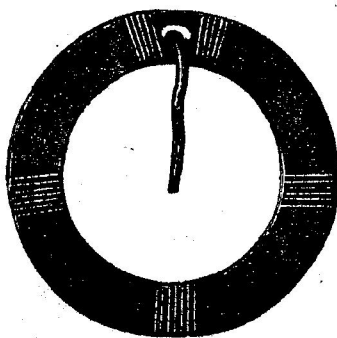


10. Skeleton 5 feet 9 inches in length, lying with its legs crossed. Grave 2 feet 3 inches in depth. Under the backbone a bronze *buckle*. At the left side three thin bronze plates about one inch square, and at the right elbow a knife.

11. Skeleton quite 6 feet in length, but apparently that of a woman. Grave nearly 3 feet deep. Under the waist a bronze buckle and two little bronze *studs*, all retaining traces of gilding, and with them fragments apparently of leather, probably part of a belt. At the left side a knife.



12. Grave 3 feet deep. Near the waist two bronze *brooches*



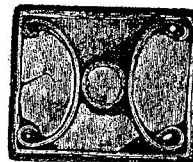
of the ring shape, one perfectly flat, the other rounded and ornamented with grotesque snakes' heads. On the chest a knife, and on the right arm a bronze armlet. At the right side a flat bronze *ornament*, set with an inlaid pattern of glass and enamel, and partly gilt; and near it wooden remains, apparently of a small box, with an iron fragment, probably its handle, but perhaps the bow of a buckle.



13. Skeleton only 4 feet 10 inches. Grave 2 feet 2 inches in depth. No relics.

14. Grave of a woman. Only a piece of iron, a nail or a large pin.

15. Grave of a woman. Between the legs 35 beads. On



the left fore arm three iron rings, and close by a knife, with remains of a wooden sheath. Near the waist a small rectangular bronze *brooch*, set with

five pieces of glass, now colourless; its pin is also of bronze. Near it a small flat circular plate of bronze, perforated in the middle, and by this a bronze ferrule about half-an-inch in length. On each side of the neck a bronze *brooch* of the hammer shape, but more nearly resembling a Roman type. In an empty space of the grave, beyond the head, and among some dark soil which was probably hair, a long pin of bronze, almost exactly like that of Grave 5; and near it a small bronze plate, bent to the shape of the binding of a book, and enclosing remains apparently of wood fastened in by two rivets.



16. The skeleton in this grave was much displaced and mutilated: it lay on its side, with the knee pointed forward and the foot backward, but with only one foot and fore-legbone: the top of the skull was also severed

from the head, and was lying in exactly reversed position. Near the left hand was a single bead.

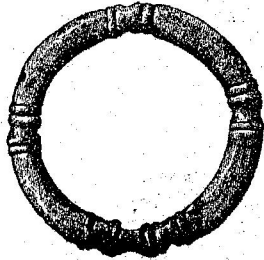
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At the right shoulder a flat *brooch* of the ring shape engraved with small circular ornaments, and at the left shoulder another *brooch* of a modification of the hammer shape: both are of bronze.

17. Down both sides of the skeleton, and across the top of the skull, there were distinctly and continuously noticeable in this grave traces of black soil, of which I have observed less remarkable instances in other graves. They seem beyond a doubt to be remains of a wooden coffin. On either shoulder a bronze *brooch* of the ring shape, and a few beads on the neck, mostly of porcelain.

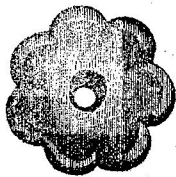


18. Grave 3 feet 4 inches deep, lying lower down the hill than the general group. No relics.

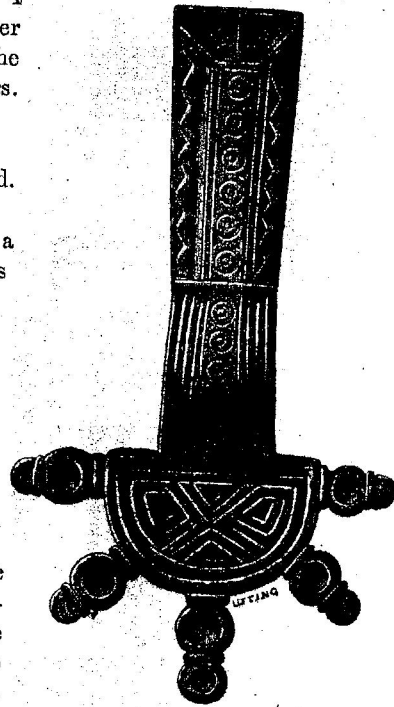
19. Grave 3 feet inches deep. No relics.

20. Grave of a child. No relics.

21. Near the waist a large *bead* of brown glass

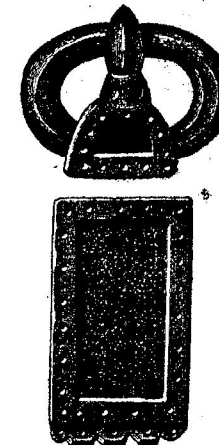


a knife, a ring, some bronze studs, and fragments of iron. At the neck a few beads and two remarkable *brooches* of the

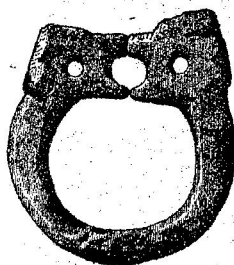


hammer shape, their lower ends being semi-circular, but from the circumference of the semi-circle radiate five outstanding points, with small circular pieces of red glass; red glass is also set at the upper end of each brooch; the pair are exactly alike. On the top of the skull some fragments of *gold wire* or thread, consisting of very narrow strips, cut from a thin beaten plate of pure gold. By the shape into which they are folded they have clearly been interwoven into some substance of the nature of a riband, which has perished. Their gold is so pure that a burial of some 1300 years had not discoloured it in the least. At the left side of the head a circular bronze dish, much broken and decayed, surrounded by remains of wood, as if it had formed the interior lining of a wooden vessel. In sifting the rubbish was found an iron key.

22. At the left wrist a few beads, mostly of amber, and by the left side a knife and two little plates of bronze, perhaps part of the handle. Near the waist a *buckle* and belt *ornament*, both of bronze silvered over: the ornament is flat and slightly dished, and rudely engraved, and the broad root of the buckle's tongue is decorated to correspond.



23. Grave of a woman; very shallow. At the left hip a



perforated object of baked clay, and of a low conical shape; perhaps a spindle-whorl. Near the middle of the grave a bronze *buckle* of peculiar shape, with pin of iron; a bronze *brooch* of the hammer shape, very much resembling those of Grave 15, and a peculiar *ornament* of bronze, representing a dog of the greyhound type catching a hare by



the tail: it is of flat oblong shape, and is slit laterally through a great part of its width, exactly in the fashion of the handle of a clasp knife, which it has probably been, although the absence of any stain of iron rust makes it probable that the blade was gone before burial. Battely gives us two specimens precisely similar found at Reculver, and believed by him to be Roman;* and Mr. Roach Smith, in illustrating these in his own work on Reculver, figures another from Hadstock in Essex,† but without giving the circumstances of its discovery. A fourth, taken from a grave certainly Saxon, is described and figured by Douglas in the 'Nenia Britannica,'‡ so that the balance of evidence

seems in favour of their Saxon origin.

24. By the left side a sword, and lying half way up it a knife, as though a double sheath may have held both. By the right shoulder a spear head, and a flat piece of iron by the left foot, with traces of wood on both sides of it; this may possibly have been a sharpened ferrule to the spear.

* Antiq. Butup. p. 84; tab. 3, fig. 3.

† 'Richborough, Reculver, and Lymne,' p. 207.

‡ P. 82, and pl. xx.

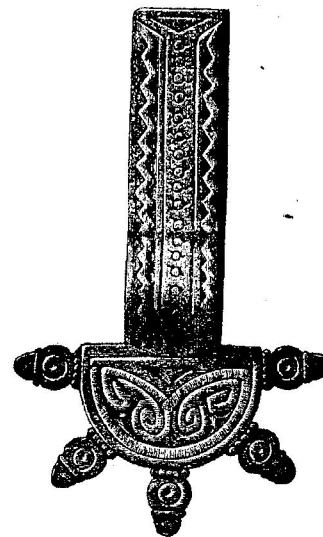
25. Grave of a child; skeleton quite decayed. At the left side a knife. Near the head two bugle beads, and a very small bronze plate, which crumbled to dust at once.

26. Grave of a child, and very shallow. Near the hands a knife and an iron ring.

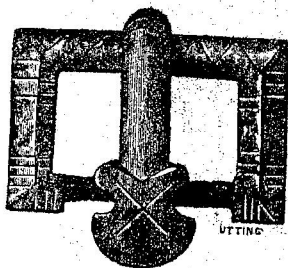
27. Grave 2 feet 2 inches in depth. Skeleton only a little over 5 feet in length, and with legs evidently deformed. It lay E. and W. with the head W. On the chest a large knife or dagger, and lying across it a piece of iron curved at the end; also, close by, a straight pin of iron, perhaps an awl. On the left fore-arm a bronze buckle, with fragments apparently of leather in its immediate neighbourhood preserved by its rust. It has three rivets at its back, fastening to the belt. On the left shoulder a spear head.

28. At the waist a bronze buckle of ordinary type. At the neck some beads.

29. Grave of a woman, 9 feet in length, including a space of 1 foot above the head, in which was dark soil as of a body, not improbably that of a baby. At the left side a Roman bronze coin, much worn. Near the waist two hammer-shaped *brooches*, with rounded lower ends, each throwing out five radiating points, and very strongly resembling those of Grave 21, but without the settings of red glass. Rather higher lay a group of iron objects, consisting of three keys (one broken to pieces), a knife, two iron rings, and lying flat against the larger of the two a small diamond-shaped plate of iron, perforated in the centre.



Under the waist a bronze *buckle* of rectangular shape, with fragments of leather close by. On the right arm a thin armlet of bronze. At the neck a cluster of beads, nearly all of amber,



and, possibly strung in the same necklace, four circular pendants, of pure gold beaten into a thin plate, and with golden loops for suspension. Of these the two smallest are exactly alike, and apparently hammered from the same mould; and these and the largest bear that broken type of ornamentation



which writers have compared to fragmentary snakes, but which comparison of many specimens shews pretty conclusively to be merely blundered imitation of figures from classical coins, not improbably Greek, rude copy being taken from rude copy, till all trace of the original design was lost. The fourth is a very remarkable instance, and has already been engraved in our Eighth Volume,* in illustration of Mr. Haigh's paper

on Runes: it is believed by him, on comparison with other similar designs, to represent a fallen enemy in an attitude of supplication. On the head fragments of gold wire or braid, which have evidently been interwoven in a riband, as in Grave 21. At the neck two small round brooches, of common Kentish type, each set with one central and three radiating pieces of red glass in raised settings; but in one brooch the glass is lost, shewing an undersetting of tinfoil, evidently to bring out the transparency of the glass. On one hand a thin spiral silver ring, much broken; on the other a plain thin ring of the same metal.

30. Much black soil on the left side of the grave. A knife, and an iron buckle, fitting on the tongue of which was a ferrule or ring of bronze.

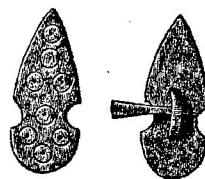
* 'Arch. Cant.,' vol. viii., p. 196.

31. Grave of a child, 3 feet 8 inches in depth. Near the left hand a knife, an iron ring, and fragments apparently of keys. Beads at the neck.

32. Grave of a woman, with much black soil as of wood enclosing the skeleton, clearly a coffin. Under the left knee some beads, mostly of amber. At the left side a knife, a few fragments of iron, and a ring or large bead of ivory, upon which lay a small diamond-shaped plate of iron, perforated in the middle, and apparently strung on the same string. On the chest two small Roman coins, one of which has preserved the texture of the dress adhering to it.

33. Grave of a child. A few beads at the neck, one of peculiarly bright blue glass.

34. Grave 7 feet 10 inches in length, 3 feet 2 inches in depth. At the waist a bronze buckle, and on the chest a short knife. On the left side of the chest a spear-head, and the iron umbo of a shield, pointing upwards, with the iron handle below it, and iron braces or supports of the shield lying towards the head and feet, but not laterally. From the position of the umbo, close to the wall of the grave, the shape of the shield could not have been circular, and the absence of any braces extending laterally confirms this view. Near this a piece of bronze plating, bent double, much resembling that in Grave 15.



35. By the right leg two bronze tags or rivets, containing pins of bronze, which have apparently secured them to a strap. Near the waist an amber bead, a knife, and another fragment of iron. Near the head an amber bead.

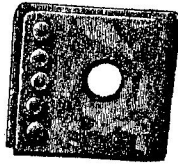
36. Grave of a child. One glass bead of pretty design, at the neck.

37. Grave 3 feet 6 inches in depth; the bones entirely decayed. The iron umbo of a shield, with iron studs or rivets, but no braces as in Grave 34. This lay again so close to the left side of the grave that the shape of the shield must necessarily have been either oval or oblong. The iron handle of the shield lay as before under the umbo, and near it some small bronze studs, probably part of the shield. Near the feet the ferrule of a spear, and its head beside the right cheek.

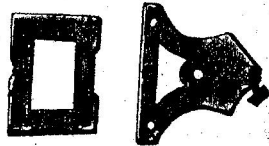
Near the waist a bronze buckle and a knife. Near the wrists a thin iron ring, and on the top of the head a larger one. Down the left side much light brown remains of wood, possibly of a bow, having nothing corresponding on the right side to suggest a coffin.

38. Grave of a woman, but the bones were almost decayed away. Traces of wood down the left side. Under the waist a bronze buckle with two bronze tags and traces of leather about them. At the neck a few beads.

39. Down the left side lay a good sword with a *hilt* of bronze partly silvered and partly gilt, and near it three flat ornaments of silver gilt and two of *bronze*, all attached to what

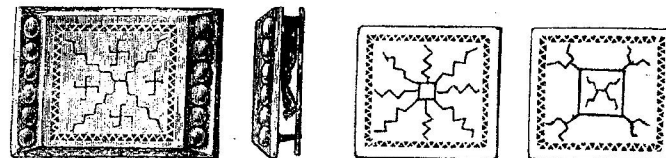
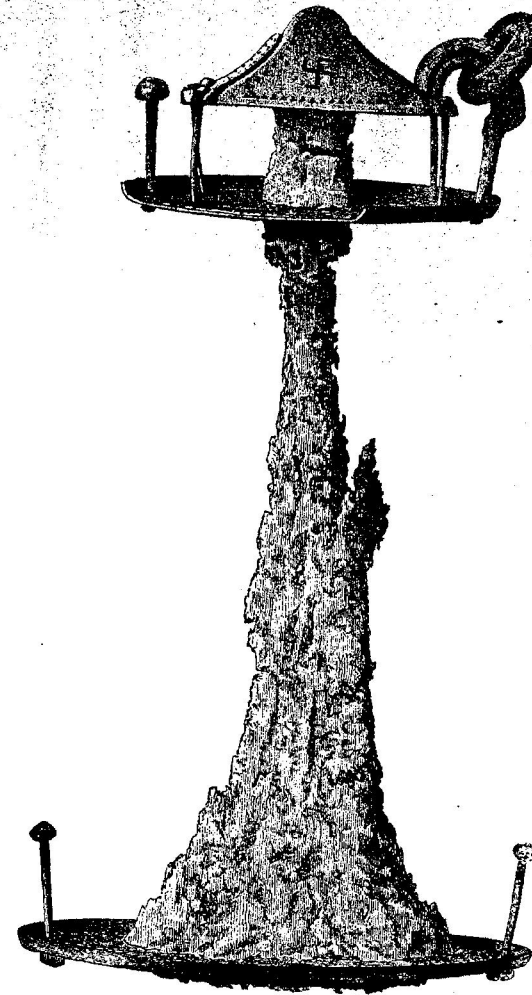


seems to be the remains of leather, and was probably the sword-belt. The three silver ornaments are alike, except in their chased ornamentation. I have engraved a full representation of one, with side view, shewing the manner in which it held the belt; of the other two I have given the ornamentation only. It will be observed that both on the sword hilt and on one of the ornaments occur instances of the Aryan religious symbol called the "*swastika*," well known as representing the primitive wooden machine for producing fire by friction, and used as typical of heat and life. The other ornaments also bear Aryan designs, especially the zigzag character supposed to represent lightning. These and similar Aryan symbols are not altogether unusual on the ornaments of the early Teutonic races, but have hitherto been more often found on Scandinavian than on Anglican relics. Three instances of the former will be found engraved in Mr. Haigh's paper in our Eighth Volume.* In England they are much rarer, and I believe this to be a unique instance of their discovery among the Jutes of Kent.



Close to the sword lay the iron umbo, handle, and braces of a shield, which again could scarcely have been circular. At the feet two knives; two iron nails, and an iron

* 'Arch. Cant.,' vol. viii., pp. 180, 181, 262.



SWORD HILT AND SILVER BELT-ORNAMENTS. Grave 39.

buckle. Between the knees a buckle of bronze plated with silver, four bronze tags or rivets, and near them three little ornaments of silver. Near the left shoulder a spear-head.

40. Grave small, but apparently not a child's. Near the waist a bronze buckle and two small bronze studs; also two bronze *tongues* for the ends of a strap or belt, meant apparently to make it easier to push them through the buckle. On the chest a knife



and some other undistinguishable iron objects.

41. By the left side a knife, an iron key, and two iron rings, and near them an iron buckle with a bronze ferrule on the tongue as in Grave 30. On the chest towards the right side a large hammer-shaped bronze *brooch* elaborately embossed, which came out of the grave in the three pieces in which it had been originally manufactured, the soldering or cement having decayed. The three divisions are given in the engraving of its reverse side.

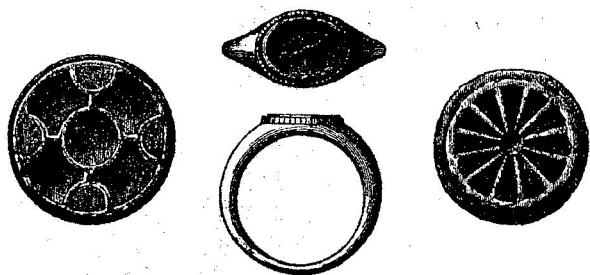


Two smaller *brooches* of the same shape, of bronze much gilt and set with pieces of red glass; one of these had lost its point, apparently before burial. Near them lay too another very small *brooch* of bronze, shaped to represent an eagle, or other bird with a hooked beak. Its pin points to the bird's head, confirming my remark in the preface, derived from the position in which hammer-shaped

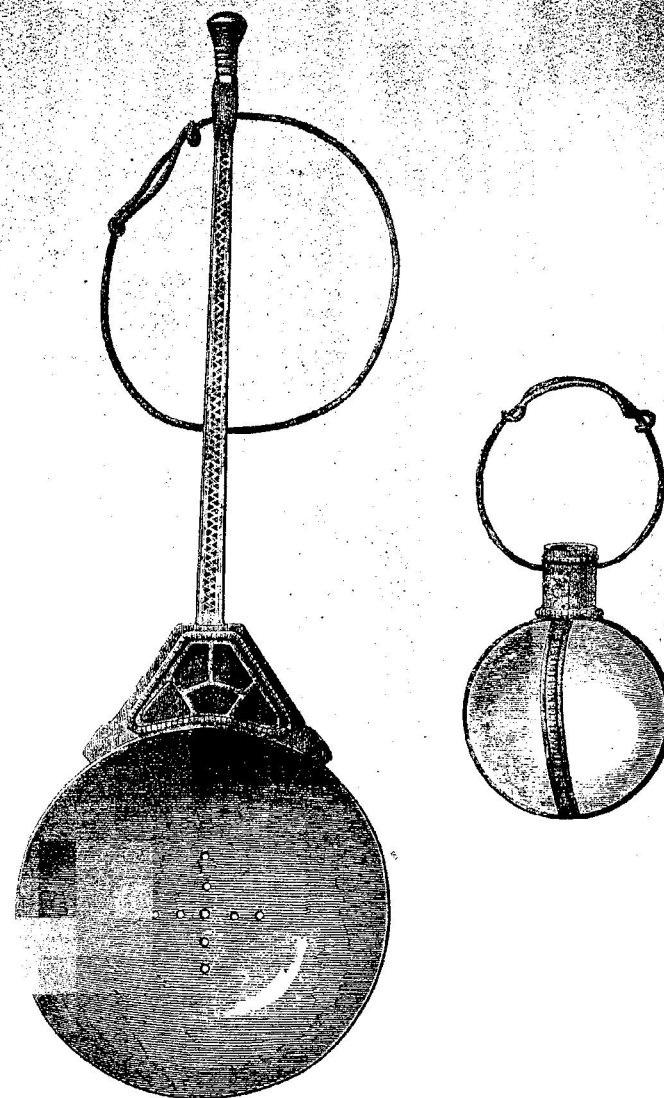
brooches are found, that the longer brooches pointed their pins upwards. Also a buckle, a strap-tongue, and a small tag or rivet, all of bronze, and four small brass Roman coins. At the feet a few beads, mostly of bugle shape, and near them a flat circular disc or counter, apparently of a black stone polished, which may possibly have been a touchstone for assaying gold. At the head another series of beads, principally amber, and among them a few links of a bronze chain; one of these beads is a large one of green glass nearly an inch in diameter, and a very

beautiful specimen. Here also was some gold wire, woven as part of a riband. On a left finger a silver ring spirally shaped. Somewhere in the grave was a small fragment of green glass, and by the head a very beautiful and delicate glass *cup*, 4 inches in height and $2\frac{3}{4}$ inches in diameter at the mouth, and tapering in bell-shaped form to a point at the other end. (Pl. II.) The other end however seems to be broken at the tip, and not improbably once ended in a small circular boss, like that similar but more elaborate cup from Grave iv. in the Sarr Cemetery, figured at p. 316 of our Fifth Volume.

42. Grave 7 feet in length and 3 feet in depth. It lay close by the side of the last grave, so that possibly the two may have been under one tumulus. Both seemed more carefully and regularly dug than most of their neighbours. By the right foot were fragments apparently of ivory. Between the thigh bones lay a *spoon* of silver gilt, perforated in the bowl with nine small holes in cruciform pattern, and ornamented with red glass in a raised setting at the junction of the handle and bowl. It is inlaid up the front of the handle with something resembling *niello* work; and the top of the handle has a thin silver ring as for suspension. Close to it was a *crystal ball* surrounded by two flat silver rings, which unite at the top in a raised ornament perforated to admit a ring of silver wire for suspension. At the left side of the legs were two knives, an iron key, an iron buckle, and some other iron fragments; and near them a small counter of green porcelain, rather broken. On a finger of the right hand a *ring* of silver gilt, set with a



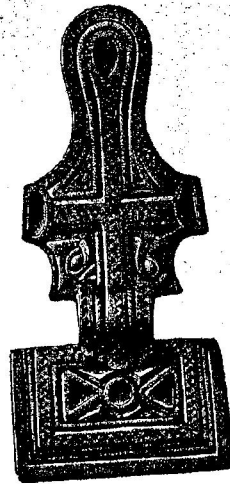
red stone or piece of glass, and exactly the shape of a modern



SPOON AND CRYSTAL BALL. Grave 42.

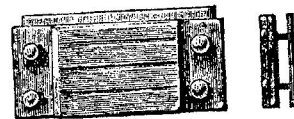
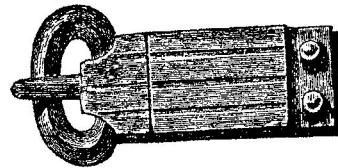


Glass Cup
From Saxon Cemetery in Balfour Park



signet ring; and on a finger of the left hand a plain ring of silver. Near the waist two hammer-shaped *brooches* of bronze, silvered and gilt, and set with the usual red glass; the pins of both are of bronze, and they are exactly alike in all respects. Near these also were a buckle and two studs of bronze, and a small circular plate of bronze with a hole through the middle, and with them a small brass Roman coin. Up the chest and to the neck a large quantity of beads of different materials, glass, porcelain, earthenware, and amber; and among the last one fine circular flat bead, nearly an inch in diameter. With the beads were two small circular *brooches*, both set with red glass; one is of iron, the other of bronze gilt.

43. Grave about 4 feet in width and 3 feet in depth; it contained two skeletons lying side by side. With the left skeleton no relics. With the right were two spear heads at the right shoulder, one of a larger size than usual; and at



the right foot one ferrule only. Lying crossways on the stomach were a dagger and a knife, in a position as if one wooden sheath, of which there were traces, had held them both. Near the waist a bronze *buckle*, with long ornamental fastening of the same metal, into which the belt has fitted and been riveted; with two other belt *ornaments* of the same pattern and metal, through which the belt has passed in the same manner; with them a bronze strap-tongue.

44. Grave of a child and very shallow; the skeleton quite decayed away. Near the neck a few beads.