



Fig. 1.

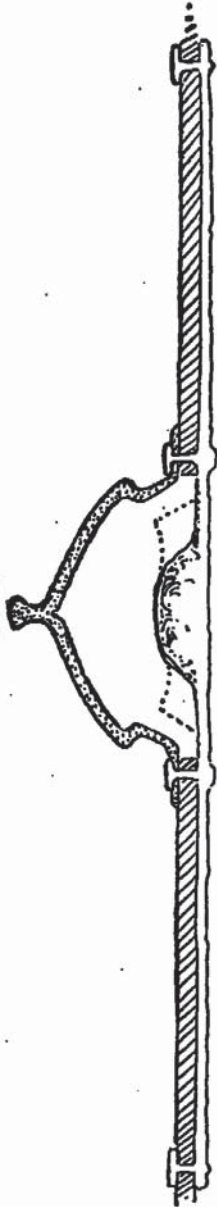


Fig. 2.



Fig. 3.



Fig. 4.

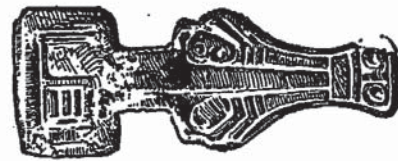


Fig. 5.



Fig. 6.

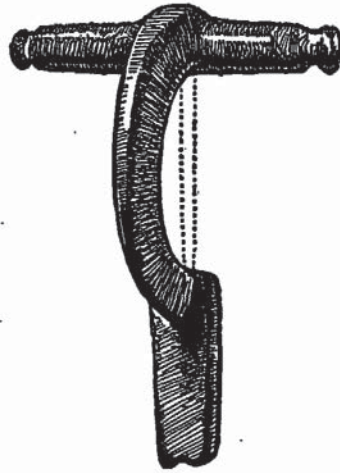


Fig. 7.

FROM AN ANGLO-SAXON CEMETERY, AT DROXFORD.  
(Reproduced by kind permission of the Society of Antiquaries.)

Handwritten text, likely bleed-through from the reverse side of the page. The text is extremely faint and illegible due to the quality of the scan. It appears to be a list or a series of entries, possibly names and dates, but the characters are too light to be transcribed accurately.

ON THE DISCOVERY OF AN ANGLO-  
SAXON CEMETERY AT  
DROXFORD, HANTS.

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BY W. DALE, F.S.A., F.G.S.

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During the summer of 1900, my attention was called to the discovery of a number of interments, brought to light in the process of making the Meon Valley Railway, from Fareham to Alton. The place where they occurred was on the hill overlooking Droxford church and close to where the station of Droxford is now built. At first the discovery did not seem to be of much importance; the skeletons were badly preserved and the fragments of iron work shown me were much corroded. On going to the spot myself, however, I obtained some pieces of battered iron work, which proved to be the umbo and bracer of an Anglo Saxon shield. Later I obtained various smaller objects similar to some that I saw in the British Museum, especially in the Gibbs bequest which consists of a fine series of antiquities from Jutish graves in Kent. I was also able to compare with them several objects from the interments of the same age in the Isle of Wight, and thus to identify the cemetery at Droxford as the remains of a Jutish settlement in the Meon Valley.

The interest of the discovery lay in the fact that it had not been possible before this actually to prove that the Jutes had settled in the Meon Valley, although it was strongly suspected that they had. Only the year before (1899), Mr. Reginald Smith, F.S.A. had taken up the question in the Victoria County History of Hampshire, and, after quoting Bede as to the district appropriated by the Jutes in Hampshire, he said: "The stages of the Jutish progress are marked by a succession of townships

along the Meon Valley from mouth to source : Meon, Titchfield, Wickham, Soberton, Droxford, Meon Stoke, Corhampton, Warnford and Meon East and West were all existing in the eleventh century and in all likelihood had been founded nearly 600 years . . . . Bede's statement is however precise enough to justify the expectation of finding characteristic Jutish remains in the Island and its neighbourhood, and a general resemblance was long ago noticed between the objects found in the Pagan graves of Kent and in those of the Isle of Wight. As both districts are definitely recorded as the seats of Jutish immigration, there is every reason for assigning the Jutish name to this particular type of relics. The parallel however, is not complete for up to the present time no discoveries on the coast opposite the Island have revealed any traces of Jutish occupation." Here a foot note is added : "With possibly one exception noticed in the Hants Notes and Queries, where a newspaper paragraph is quoted : 'Brooches of a peculiar form which have been found in Kent and the Isle of Wight, have been discovered in the Meon Country. They occur nowhere else in England, but they do occur in certain Danish mosses and the natural conclusion is that the design and peculiar decoration were Jutish. These objects have not been traced.'" Mr. Smith continues : "It is possible though hardly to be expected, that similar finds will some day be made in the Meon district or on the edges of the New Forest, but it seems clear that at least no such conspicuous grave mounds exist in these regions as have yielded so much to exploration on the Island Downs. Perhaps the true explanation is that the lower ground on both sides of the water was inhabited by a poorer population whose graves had no mounds or deposits of ornaments and utensils."

Very little progress was made with the railway in 1900 owing to the scarcity of labour, and the cutting, after going about half way through the field where the interments were found, stopped until the following autumn when the work was again resumed and fresh discoveries made. The place was twenty miles from me and five from any railway station, but I managed to go once or twice a week and was present when burials were struck. I was also fortunate in enlisting the help and sympathy of a couple of navvies who were more intelligent

than usual and who had a keen eye to business, so that I was able to secure almost everything of importance. The result was, however, somewhat disappointing. The burials were very close to the surface and in a tenacious clayey earth (the clay with flints of the geologist which here caps the chalk), out of which it was very difficult to extract anything of any size whole. The iron work was oxidised almost to destruction. Only the larger bones of the skeletons were preserved. Skulls could not be got out except in fragments although the teeth were perfect and well preserved. The employment of a steam navvy did not help matters and probably some few objects were lost.

The surface of the ground gave no indication of burials. If there had ever been anything in the form of tumuli all traces of them had been removed by cultivation. Some bodies were lying east and west but I saw two femurs lying due north and south and I think there was no rule in the matter. The area of the cemetery seemed confined to the top of the hill and the railway cut through about 100 yards of it from north to south, apparently near the middle, but the actual extent and boundary of it cannot be fixed without systematic exploration of the whole of the site. Until this is done, the limits of the burying ground can only be a matter of conjecture.

The interments were numerous and close together. Large flints were put over some, but not all. With many no articles were buried. In reading of the discoveries at other Anglo-Saxon cemeteries, it strikes me that this one was not by any means so rich in objects as usual, which bears out the statement of Mr. Reginald Smith, that this part was inhabited by a poorer population than that which inhabited the Downs of the Isle of Wight. On the other hand, I obtained no less than six swords, and the presence of a sword is considered to indicate the burial of a person of high rank. It is rare to find so many as six swords in one cemetery. Mr. George Clinch, in his lately published book on English antiquities says that the Rev. Bryan Faussett, out of seven hundred and fifty graves explored in Kent, obtained only fifteen swords. Shield bosses and spear heads were fairly abundant. With some bodies, only a single knife or a knife and a spear had been laid. With one of the swords, two unusually fine spear heads had been



placed. The beads, of which there were a considerable variety, glass, amber, terra cotta, &c., were found only one or two at a time, and never associated in such a number as to form a necklace. I conclude that the fibulæ, chatelaine holders, tweezers, spindle whorls of Kimmeridge shale, and many other things of feminine use which were found, indicate that it was not a battle field or place of sepulture for warriors only, but the burying place of a large settlement in the neighbourhood. Pottery was not common. I obtained some broken fragments, and one small perfect cup of the typical black ware, also part of a tumbler of brown glass. The usual Saxon vessels made of small wooden staves hooped with bands of bronze, occurred sparingly, and I secured some in a fragmentary condition. Roman coins occurred twice only, two are pierced to be used as ornaments. They were identified for me as of Marcus Aurelius, Faustina, Maximinus, Crispus, and Constantine II. Amongst a quantity of much corroded iron work, are probably some horse trappings and several shoes, one quite perfect. I did not hear of any horse bones being found. A large nodule of iron pyrites was found near one of the swords, which had been placed there either as a weapon or as a strike-a-light. There was also a small piece of whetstone near one of the spears.

By the time the main railway cutting was finished, I had obtained a very large assemblage of objects, which, after being exhibited at the rooms of the Society of Antiquaries, found a home in the British Museum, where they can be seen in the Anglo-Saxon room, side by side with the Jutish relics from Kent and the Isle of Wight. Between thirty and forty spear heads are exhibited, some of them of unusual length and beauty of form, and the six swords already referred to. There are also eight shield bosses. Many others were found but not well preserved. In commenting on the collection, Mr. C. Hercules Read, of the British Museum, called attention to three shield bracers which extended to the circumference of the shield, the like of which had never before been found (Fig. 1 and 2) the usual form of bracer is a short piece of iron crossing the hole in the wooden shield, covered by the iron umbo or boss. The two button-like brooches, (fig. 3 and 4) the square ended brooch, (fig. 5) and the semi-circular pendant of gilt bronze, (fig. 6) all

resemble Kentish work. The beautiful cross-bow fibula, (fig. 7.) Mr. Read regarded as a survival from the Roman period. To some of the swords portions of the scabbard still adhered.

After the main cutting was completed, and my visits ceased, the railway was widened a little near the station, and there was also a little digging privately done, which was however promptly stopped by the agent of the Lord of the manor. A few more things were found, but nothing of additional interest. They are now in the Winchester Museum. Among them are two of the small saucer-like brooches shewn in figs. 3 and 4.

