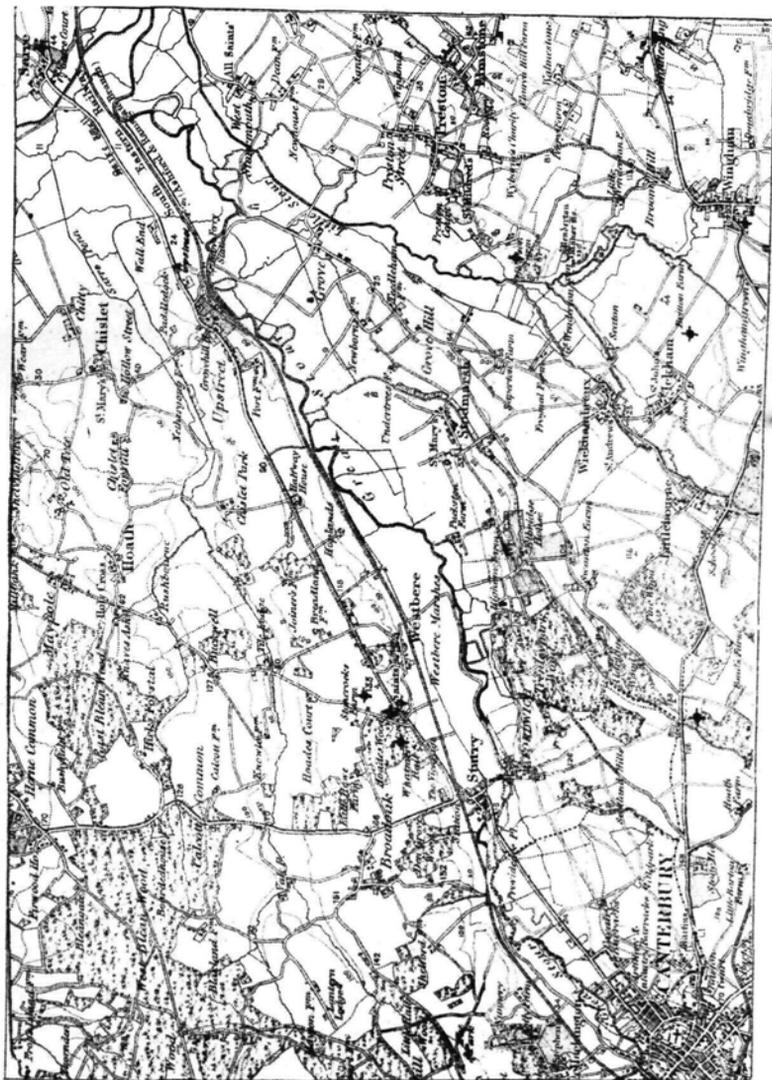


ON A ROMAN CEMETERY DISCOVERED AT  
WESTBERE, NEAR CANTERBURY.

BY GEORGE PAYNE, F.S.A.

THE village of Westbere is pleasantly situated on the slope of a hill, about three miles to the east of the city of Canterbury, upon the south side of the highroad to Ramsgate. That portion of the road known as Somer's or Staines Hill has, during the past few years, been extensively worked, on either side, for gravel and sand; a wood called Babsoak has also been partially grubbed to clear a space for the erection of a residence for W. G. Pidduck, Esq., to whom the land belongs. These excavations disclosed the presence of several interesting Roman interments, which probably would have remained unrecorded had not the writer been recently made acquainted with the discoveries. He is much indebted to Mr. Pidduck for kindly assisting in collecting the necessary information, for the gift of some of the vessels exhumed, and especially for supplying him with a manuscript account of the discoveries, in the handwriting of the late John Brent, F.S.A., of which the following is a copy, with a few slight additions.

A discovery of Roman remains was made in the summer of 1881 at Oaklands (Babsoak), Somer's Hill, Westbere, on the property of W. G. Pidduck, Esq. Under the stool of an old oak-tree was found, lying at a depth of about three feet from the surface, a large cinerary urn, containing about one gallon of burnt human bones; the urn is nearly twelve inches in height and about nine inches in diameter. In a circle of about four feet were five other vessels, a Samian patera, a small black olla, a vase of reddish clay, and another vessel which was broken by the workmen. The fragments of a much larger vessel, perhaps of the kind



C.E. Kell, Photo-Litho, Castle St. Barbours, London, E.C.2.

THE MARK ✕ INDICATES SITES OF ROMAN VILLAS, OR CEMETERIES, AT WESTBERE, ICKHAM, WINGHAM, PRESTON, & SARRE, AND ENTRENCHMENTS IN FISHPOND WOOD, BETWEEN CANTERBURY AND LITTLEBOURNE.

called *dolia*, lying near the large urn previously mentioned, suggest that it was the receptacle in which the cinerary urn had been preserved. It was not an uncommon practice for the Romans to enclose a vessel of glass, or of pottery, containing the ashes of the dead, in some larger cist, either of stone, lead, or clay. In the locality whence the remains as described were taken, many previous discoveries, extending over thirty acres of ground, manifest that it had been the site, not only of Roman, but of British or Celtic interments.

Since the above was written two more "finds" have been made on the Somer's Hill property. The first consisted of a flat black *patera*, composed of rather fragile material, as if not sufficiently hardened in the baking, yet of decided Roman character; it was found inverted over a small heap of calcined human bones, chiefly those of the skull, upon which had been placed a bronze harp-shaped fibula. The second discovery was a more interesting one, consisting of a *patera*, a cup, and a vase, all of Samian ware; the two former are stamped with the potters' names, SATVRNINVS and AVENTINVS, respectively. Both these manufacturers are familiar to collectors in East Kent. The vase was of elegant and unusual shape, somewhat like a little milk-jug, without handle, and possessed a brilliant lustre. British pottery and British interments have been found near the same locality. Not long since, on the opposite side of the highroad, to the east of Babsoak wood, in a place called Stone Rocks, a coffin of slightly baked clay was met with, containing human bones. The Romans followed the British settlement and perhaps appropriated the British cemetery. There is no doubt that at a little distance from Somer's Hill there was a Roman *Vicus*, and at no spot more likely than where Westbere now stands, snugly sheltered between the hills, with a view of the marshes on the south before it. These marshes were in Roman times covered with the waters of the sea, mingling with the River Stour, and so forming an estuary, over which there was an easy passage to Thanet and the great Roman fortress and town of Rutupium; whilst to the north-east, on the sea coast, lay also the Roman *castrum* of Regubium.

The foregoing description left by Mr. Brent is sufficient to shew the importance of the discoveries at Westbere, which form another link in the long chain of evidence already recorded concerning the early history of Kent. The accompanying map has been so marked as to shew the relationship between the Westbere discoveries and those made at Wingham,\* Ickham,† Dearson in Preston,‡ Fishpond Wood,§ Sarre,|| and Whatmer Hall.¶ The latter discovery consisted of a sarcophagus, enclosing a leaden coffin; and as there was an earthen vessel with it, it probably belonged to the Romano-British period. The presence of interments on each side of the road leading from Somer's Hill to Reculver is an important point, as fixing the course of the original road from Durovernum to Regulbium. The antiquity of that roadway is thus established beyond doubt. Its average width is from 15 feet to 18 feet, and channels occur throughout its entire length, varying in depth from 6 feet to 20 feet.

\* *Arch. Cant.*, Vol. XIV., p. 134.

† *Ibid.*, Vol. XII., p. 47.

|| *Arch. Cant.*, Vols. IV. to VII.

† *Ibid.*, Vol. XIV., p. 139.

§ Extensive entrenchments (unrecorded).

¶ Hasted's *Kent*, folio ed., vol. iii., p. 615.