

Archæologia Cantiana.

A BRITISH VILLAGE AT RAMSGATE.

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WITHIN the last twelve years there has been excavated at the top of High Street, between it and the station of the South-Eastern Railway, a large chalk-pit of more than an acre in extent, and during the work several pits of varying size and depth have been disclosed, containing evidence of human occupation in the form of pottery of several kinds, and bones and shells of animals used as food.

The pit first noticed, which we will call No. 1, was about 7 feet deep and 8 feet in diameter, nearly circular, with upright sides, and with a recess in the chalk at one side, about 2 feet from the floor; ashes remaining in the recess shewed that it had been used as a fire-place. There were also in the earth of the pit broken pieces of pottery, bones of animals, and mussel-shells.

No. 2 was a circle of large boulder-flints, brought, it is believed, from the shore at Pegwell, a mile away. These were about 18 inches below the surface of the ground, but scarcely below the level of the top of the chalk. Within this circle were broken pieces of pottery, and two pieces of metal, viz., a hoop-like piece of thin bronze, and a piece of iron like the

guard of a rapier, or a handle of some kind; neither of these were preserved. In the immediate neighbourhood of these, at a later date, were found some Roman pottery in fragments, and a small silver coin of M. Aur. Antoninus, and not far from this another silver coin of Nero Cæsar Augustus.

No. 3 was a large pit with sloping sides, about 8 feet deep, nearly circular, and 15 or 16 feet in diameter, having within it numerous bones of animals (no human bones), many large boulder-flints like those mentioned above, a disc of fine-grained granite $3\frac{1}{2}$ inches in diameter and $\frac{3}{4}$ inch thick, which might have been used for bruising corn, and broken pottery, some Roman, some British.

No. 4, a pit not quite so large as the last, but similar in form and depth; in it were the usual large boulder-flints and some broken pottery.

No. 5, a pit with upright sides like No. 1, but not quite so large, about 6 feet in diameter and of a like depth; in it were only a few pieces of broken pottery.

No. 6, a trench 3 feet long by 18 inches broad and deep, containing many pieces of unburnt clay vessels.

No. 7, a small pit containing pieces of rough pottery.

Running across the ground between these pits was a straight ditch, in section like a wide W, which could be traced for nearly 80 yards; while in the midst of all these was a well of unusual form and construction, which was not noticed until it had been excavated several feet. This has just been fully explored, the whole depth from the surface of the ground to water was 115 feet; it is of square section, the sides varying from 2 feet 6 inches to 2 feet 10 inches. On two opposite sides, every 15 to 18 inches,

are foot-holes, and also smaller recesses for the fingers, while another side is worn smooth as if by the frequent passage of something up and down it. The shaft was filled nearly to the top with large boulder-flints, while the lowest 30 feet had alternate layers of earth, bones, and flints, and among them a skull of *Bos longifrons* (a breed of cattle now extinct), a horse's skull, a roebuck's antler, and a dog's jaw, a few pieces of Roman pottery, a small piece of iron like a large nail bent at a right angle, and a bronze vessel of about three gallons capacity, in form like a deep bason, but much broken and corroded; it had ears on opposite sides for a handle, and had been mended in four places by patches being rivetted upon it. At the bottom of the well were some slabs of indurated Thanet sands, such as one now finds at Pegwell, the largest, 2 feet 6 inches in diameter and nearly circular, having a hole through the centre, which was worn as if by the passage of a rope or thong through it; this may have been originally at the top. The well was evidently made by right-handed people, as the shaft had a gradual twist to the right, so that the east corner at the top became S.E. at bottom. The pottery found in these pits was of many kinds, but seldom anything approaching to an entire vessel. Several pieces of Samian ware, one piece beautifully embossed, the lower part of a vessel of Durobrivian ware, Upchurch, and smothered ware, and from the well several fragments of a red-clay vessel (Samian?), with small quartz gravel embedded in the bottom on the inside for grinding in, and a thick piece of tile which was probably the pestle. Much of the pottery was of very rude construction, not made upon a wheel, and some not even kiln-baked. Of the animal remains there were several

antlers of red-deer, cores of the horns of oxen, goats, and sheep, jaws of swine, teeth of several animals, and bones of many small animals, with shells of oysters, mussels, and cockles in abundance. No human bones were at any time found. Before the ground was disturbed none of these pits were visible, being all filled to a general level with the surface.

Taken together, these remains indicate that here was a British village at the time of the Roman occupation. Its occurrence at the hamlet of "Ellington," on the other side of which similar pits, containing flints, shells, and pottery, have also been found, would lead us to infer that traces of this village remained until Saxon times, giving rise to the characteristic Saxon affix "ton"; the prefix "Elling" has also a Saxon sound. From the manner in which the well was filled up, it was evidently done with the intention of spoiling it for future use. The "gate," or way to the sea, from which Ramsgate takes its name, was a natural outlet of three shallow valleys, which join here to run to the shore; it was not made artificially. The Romans had stations of considerable size at the head of the two valleys, which run nearly parallel to the shore; while the British village was near the top of the third valley, between the other two.