

*Archaeologia, or miscellaneous tracts relating to antiquity*

Society of Antiquaries of London

III.—*On a Hoard of Bronze, Iron, and other Objects found in Belbury Camp, Dorset. Communicated by EDWARD CUNNINGTON, Esq., of Dorchester.*

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Read March 30, 1882.

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I HAVE the honour of exhibiting to the Society of Antiquaries, through Mr. Joshua James Foster, of Dorchester, some objects of bronze, iron, glass, and earthenware lately found together in Belbury Camp, near Higher Lychett, Poole, Dorset.

This camp (see Plan on next page) is nearly circular, with a south aspect, the ground gradually sloping for about 700 feet to a small stream. Its rampart on the north side is the best preserved, showing a height of 10 feet above the external ditch; that on the east is in process of destruction by the plough. Its length and breadth are each about 11 or 12 chains, making an inside area of rather more than 10 acres. The entrances east and west are guarded by the vallum being brought inside about 82 feet. The centres of north and south are open to the north for a road and to the south for the water supply. The breadth of the vallum was 41 feet in its present condition. The objects and a large quantity of wrought iron were all found together in the western side from 2 feet to 3 feet underground whilst draining the camp.

The antiquities discovered were as follows :—

Two bronze cast figures about 4 inches long with bull's head and horns.

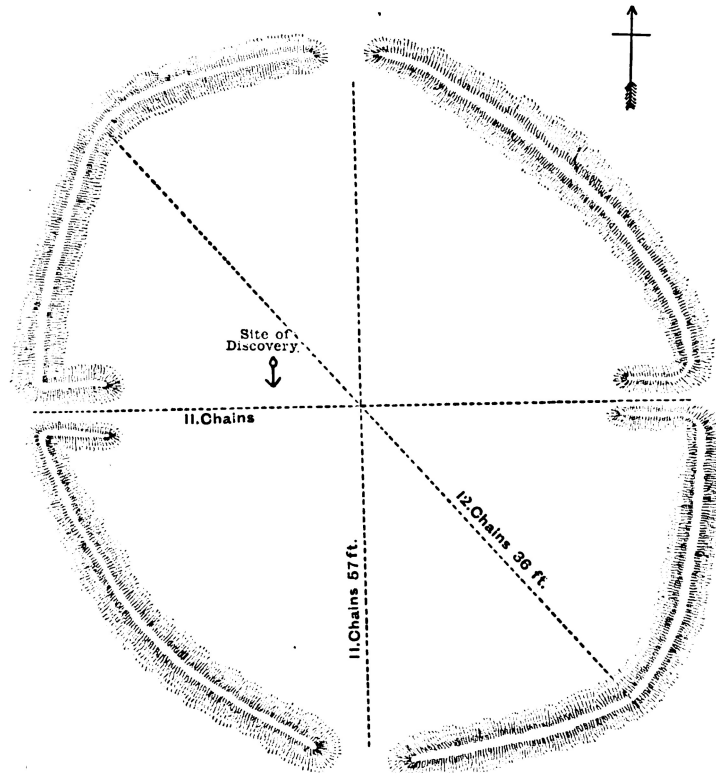
Two small bronze ornaments pierced with holes for fastening on wood, and ornamented on the sides and tops.

Two large bronze rings, 3 inches in diameter, with small rings encircling them for attachment.

Three smaller bronze rings.

Handle of an iron dagger with bronze fittings.

Piece of bronze with iron ribs for strengthening it.



Belbury Camp.

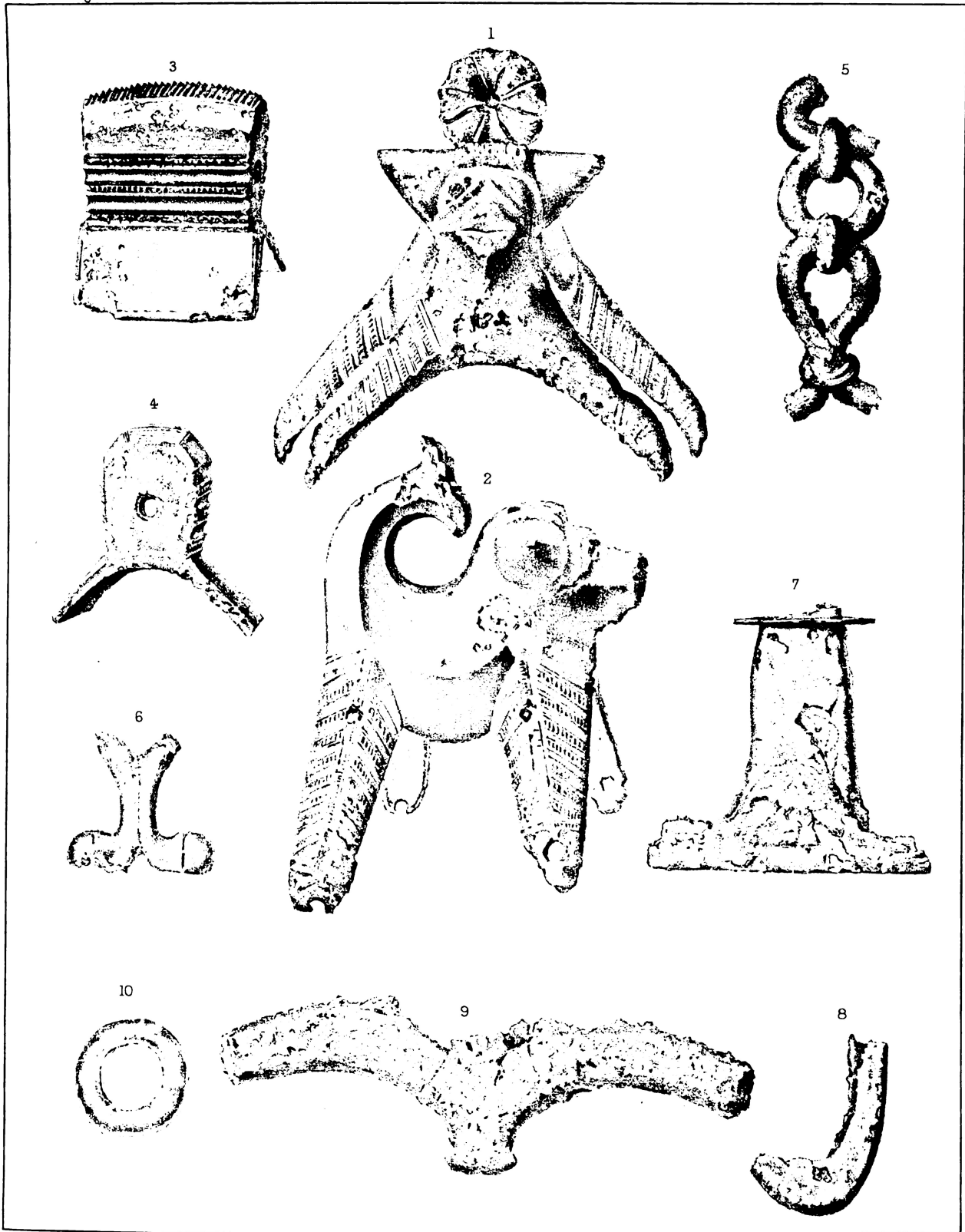
An anchor (see fig. opposite) 4 feet 6 inches long,  $27\frac{1}{2}$  inches from point to point of the fluke, the main stem varying from 2 to 3 inches in breadth, the links of the chain close to anchor 5 inches in diameter, the rest of the links about 2 inches.

Two glass beads 1 inch in diameter, and six of the same kind  $\frac{1}{2}$  inch in diameter.

Several fragments of bronze.

A bar of iron 3 feet long, and 1 inch by  $\frac{3}{4}$  in thickness.

Large nails, 6 to 7 inches long, "as thick as a thumb" (see the passage of Cæsar below).



CP. Mellish Castle St. Milborne P. C.

OBJECTS FROM BELBURY CAMP, NEAR POOLE, DORSET.

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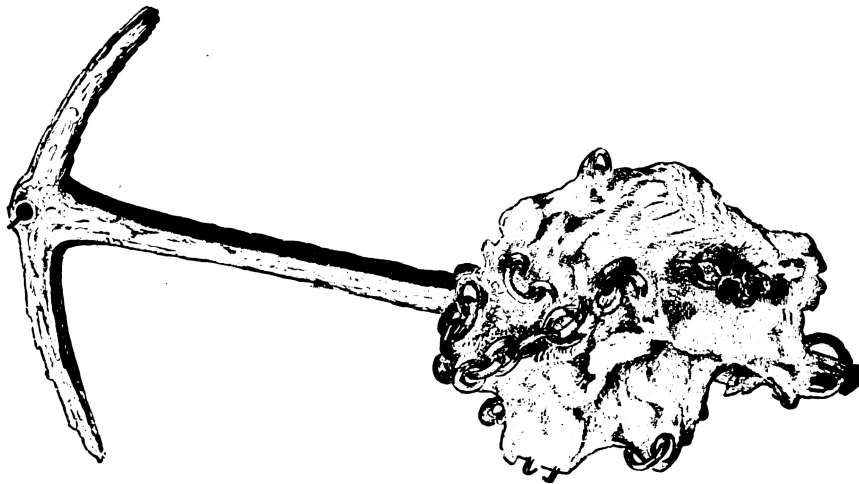


A large sledge hammer, 6 inches long,  $2\frac{1}{2}$  inches square, weight  $7\frac{1}{2}$  lbs.

A smaller hammer.

An iron hatchet.

A long iron with two feet, exactly similar to an andiron.



Anchor from Belbury Camp.

A piece of fine bronze chain or armilla.

Two or three rounded flat pieces of iron, which may be timber-clamps.

Half of a good quern of a very hard sandstone.

Fragments of black well-burnt pottery.

This hoard was found in the autumn of 1881. Having heard of the discovery, I paid a visit to the old woman who was reported to possess several of the objects. On inquiring of her for them, she told me that she "hadn't a' got 'em." On my asking what had become of them, she said "Well, there! I was obliged to send 'em to my poor boy, for he was ter'ble bad, and did sort o' pine for 'em; and a' thought if a' could have thic there little dog, and nail un up over the door, a' would be better." I then went to the son's house, where I duly found the animal nailed over the door. Afterwards I learned that a quantity of beads, a duplicate of the animal, and some pieces of rusty iron, had been discovered at the same time and place, but had been dispersed. My search for these was successful, and its result appears in this communication.

My idea is, that the bull was used as an ornament to the helmet, as illustrated in Smith's *Dictionary of Greek and Roman Antiquities*, 2nd edition,

p. 566. On one of the helmets there engraved "from antique gems" is affixed a lion in a somewhat similar position. The writer says, "In the Roman army of later times the crest served not only for ornament, but also to distinguish the different centurions, each of whom wore a casque of a peculiar form and appearance."

The anchor and its chain are remarkable in respect of their discovery on a spot at a considerable distance from, and height above, any place where they could have been used, even in the earliest historic times. They are also singularly illustrative of the following passages in the third book of Cæsar's *Commentaries*, "*De Bello Gallico*," describing the Veneti, and their ships and naval power:—

"Hujus civitatis [Venetorum] est longe amplissima auctoritas omnis oræ maritimæ regionum earum, quod et *naves habent Veneti plurimas, quibus in Britanniam navigare consueverunt*, et scientiâ atque usu nauticarum rerum reliquos antecedunt. \* \* \* \* Ipsorum naves ad hunc modum factæ armatæque erant. Carinæ aliquanto planiores, quam nostrarum navium, quo facilius vada ac decessum æstus excipere possent; \* \* \* \* transtra pedalibus in latitudinem trabibus confixa *clavis ferreis digiti pollicis crassitudine*; *anchoræ*, pro funibus, *ferreis catenis revinctæ*."

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"This state [of the Veneti] has far the most ample authority in all the sea-coast of those regions, because *the Veneti have very many ships with which they have been used to sail to Britain*, and also exceed the other nations in knowledge and use of navigation. \* \* \* \* Their ships were built and equipped in this manner: the keels somewhat flatter than those of our ships, so as the more easily to deal with the shallows and the ebb tide; \* \* \* \* the benches of planks a foot wide, fixed together with *iron nails as thick as a thumb*; *the anchors fastened to iron chains*, instead of ropes."

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On the question of appropriating the camp or the objects found therein to any age or people, I may mention that there are several Celtic barrows at Bloxworth Down, about a mile from the camp, and that there are large numbers of stone implements on the same down now ploughed up.

I do not know the height of the camp above the sea-level, but should think that it is about 150 feet above the small stream that runs down the valley some

200 yards off. Lychett Bay is two miles off. If there ever has been any road between the camp and the bay, it is now entirely obliterated by the plough.

Plate VI. represents some of the most remarkable objects, and is accompanied by a description kindly supplied by one of the Vice-Presidents of the Society, A. W. Franks, Esq., of the British Museum.

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DESCRIPTION OF PLATE VI. \*

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Figs. 1, 2. Two views of a bronze object, evidently intended to be fastened to a rounded surface by four rivets. It consists of a rude representation of a bull, through the rudimentary legs of which the rivets passed. The tail-end is curved round and terminates in an eight-petalled flower, forming a kind of hook. The figure of the bull is coarsely executed, but the hooked portion is good in outline. The flower somewhat resembles Etruscan ornaments. The probability is that this ornament is Late Celtic; but it does not resemble English examples, in which animal forms are rare and further removed from nature; it may therefore have been brought from the Continent. Two of these bronze objects were discovered, exactly alike.

Figs 3, 4. Two views of a hollow bronze object which has also been fixed to a rounded surface. The arched portion has no rivet-hole, but the means of attachment seems to have been by a large rivet-hole at each end. There are bands of engraved ornaments not unlike those on the legs of the bull. Two of these objects were also discovered.

It has been suggested that the four objects in question may have formed the crest of one or more helmets, but the discovery of two of each seems to be against this, especially when it is remembered how great was the love of variety during the Late Celtic period, so that it would not be likely that two helmets should be exactly alike. The hook forming the termination of the bull would seem to have been made for use, as though for a cord or thong, or perhaps a bar—the inner surface of the hook being flat, not convex—to pass through it. It appears therefore more likely that they formed parts of a war-chariot. That the British *essedum*, or at any rate the yoke of it, was ornamented, appears from a passage in Propertius, (El. lib. ii. 1, 76.)

“*Esseda cælatis siste Britanna jugis,*”

and, as there were two horses, the ornaments would be in pairs.

Fig. 5. Part of a curved bronze ornament decorated with openwork, showing resemblance in style to some of the horse-trappings discovered at Stanwick, Yorkshire; see for instance, the *York* volume of the *Archæological Institute* (1847) Pl. ii. fig. 6.

Fig. 6. Fragment of a similar bronze ornament, or possibly another portion of the same.

\* The objects are figured full size.



Fig. 7. Part of the hilt of a sword, Late Celtic in character. It is of iron with a pierced plate of bronze towards the upper part. The tang extended probably for as much more in length before it terminated in the pommel. The lower part resembles in its outline the corresponding portions of other Late Celtic swords. See for an account of such swords, *Archaeologia*, XLV. 251.

Fig. 8. Fragment of the bronze edging of a sword-sheath.

Fig. 9. Bronze object, perhaps part of a mirror handle; a thin plate of bronze seems to have been fixed into it to form a mirror; the lower part of the handle is broken off. Such mirrors have several times been found in England. For instance, at St. Keverne, Cornwall, (*Archæol. Journ.* xxx. 267, woodcut); at Stamford Hill, near Plymouth (*Archaeologia*, XL. 500, pl. xxx.); near Bedford (*Archæol. Journ.* xxvi. 71); and a very fine example has been recently found near Gloucester. Another, from the Isle of Portland, has been lately presented to the Duchess of Edinburgh.

Fig. 10. A ring or head of transparent amber glass. Glass beads were found with the mirror from St. Keverne, Cornwall, mentioned above; they have also been found in barrows of the Late Celtic period at Arras and Cowlam in the East Riding of Yorkshire, the material being fine in colour, as here, and very transparent. See *Archaeologia*, XLIII. 496.