

THE LANGUAGES AND SCRIPTS OF ENGLISH ARCHAEOLOGY.

Presidential Address by SIR RICHARD LUCE, K.C.M.G., C.B., F.R.C.S.

I AM afraid I have taken a very big subject for a short Presidential address and that it may seem to some of you that it belongs rather to History than to Archaeology. But these two are very closely allied and few of us would be able to say that in their archaeological studies they have not felt the need of a knowledge of the languages and scripts of ancient times. I will confess at once that I am speaking from that point of view and not from any special knowledge of the subject in general or of any of its component parts.

It may be helpful, before embarking on the details of our subject, to recall some of the main points of the early history of our land. We know that Britain was inhabited by human beings in Palaeolithic times, for in addition to the vast numbers of their rudely-worked stone implements, definite remains of themselves and their doings have been found deep down geologically in caves in many parts of the country. Whether there were gaps in the human occupation of this part of Europe between Palaeolithic and Neolithic times during the severer Ice Ages has not been definitely decided. Since the beginning of the Neolithic Period, generally taken as about 3000 B.C., this country has certainly been inhabited continuously.

The earliest race of inhabitants definitely identified is that known as the "Iberian" or "Mediterranean," coming from the South of Europe. They brought with them a certain amount of culture. They were small in stature, had long-shaped heads and were buried in long-shaped barrows. About 1500 B.C., or possibly later, the Iberians were gradually overrun by invasions from the Continent of a new race, taller and stouter of build, with rounder heads. These were the Celts. All these people were, as far as we know, illiterate and have left no written record of themselves or their language. The first mention of these islands in literature is that of Aristotle, writing about 330 B.C. in *de Mundo*, in which he says :—"In the ocean beyond the pillars of Hercules are two very large islands called Britannia, namely Albion and Ierne."

Julius Caesar made his two raids on Britain in 55 and 54 B.C. No permanent settlement was made, but after them there was undoubtedly a closer connection with the Continent and Roman influence began to spread. The Roman invasion proper took place 90 years later in the reign of Claudius Caesar and gradually most of the Island, with the exception of Scotland, was occupied. The Roman occupation lasted 400 years, at the end of which the garrison and all the Roman officials were withdrawn to Italy leaving

the Britons to look after themselves. Even before the withdrawal there had been frequent raids coming from Scotland, Ireland and the Continent, kept in check by the army of occupation and the protective lines of fortifications which the Romans built. But after their departure the raids increased, leading to the gradual occupation of all the east and south part of the country by different tribes of Germanic race from the north of Europe, generally known as Goths. The various settlements became separate small independent kingdoms. The Britons were driven westward to Devon and Cornwall, to Wales and to the north-west of England, then called Strathclyde, where for a time they maintained their independence and racial identity.

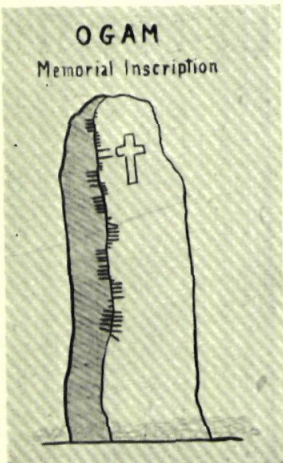
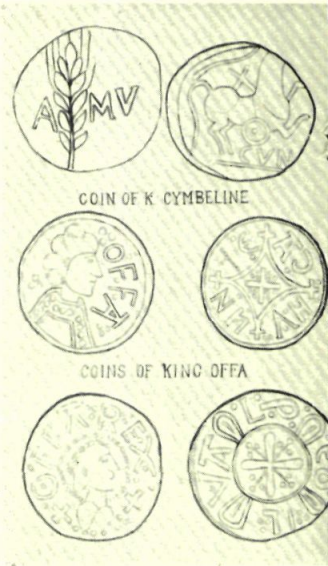
Then for two centuries there was a constant struggle between the different Saxon kingdoms for supremacy among themselves, with a gradual forcing back of the Britons westward until only Wales was left to them. The final supremacy was gained by the West Saxons under Egbert in 827, the others becoming subject kingdoms. Soon a further series of raids began, now from Denmark. The raiders effected settlements on the East Coast and in the Midlands, and in the early years of Alfred almost succeeded in gaining the whole kingdom. But the genius of Alfred and his son and grandson prevented this happening, though the Danes were allowed to remain, recognising the overlordship of the Saxon kings.

A new invasion from Denmark by Sweyne and his son Canute, in the reign of the weak Ethelred the Unready, was joined by the former Danish settlers and resulted in the conquest of the whole country by the Danes. Canute, the Danish king, adopted Christianity, married Ethelred's widow, and, ruling wisely, consolidated the country as it had never been before. But after his death and that of his two sons the Saxon line was restored for the lifetime of Edward the Confessor. On Edward's death in 1066, William, Duke of Normandy, claimed the crown of England and to substantiate his claim successfully invaded the country. Most of the land and the more important positions, civil and ecclesiastic, passed into the hands of William's Norman followers.

Christianity was introduced into Roman England perhaps as early as the middle of the second century. Bede says in his *Ecclesiastical History* that at the request of the British king named Lucius, Pope Eleutherius sent envoys to baptise the Britons in the year 167 A.D. Doubt and even scorn is thrown on the veracity of this statement by later historians, but, personally, I should be sorry to reject a tradition that Great Britain owed its conversion to Christianity to a namesake of my own. Christianity did not apparently make rapid headway in Roman Britain and there are but few remains of churches among the Roman sites, though Silchester undoubtedly had one. However, Christianity managed to survive among the British all through the invasions of the pagan

Presidential Address on "THE LANGUAGES AND SCRIPTS OF ENGLISH ARCHAEOLOGY":
 Some of the Diagrams.

N S F L B	R St N G M	S O T A C	I O C U M
Q C T D H	I E U O A	EBICATUS SON OF THE DESCENDANT OF	
OGAM ALPHABET		SILCHESTER OGAM	



Latin Monumental Script.

Saxons and Danes. It was revived by the mission of St. Augustine in 596 A.D., and gradually the Anglo-Saxons were converted. With the Church came back the use of Latin for religious purposes.

As far as we know, until they came under the influence of Rome the Celts were illiterate. The Celtic language, which was of Aryan origin was divided into two main branches known as Goidelic and Brythonic, the former, the older ; giving origin to Erse, Gaelic and Manx, the latter to Breton, Cornish and Welsh. The first attempt to reduce the Celtic language to a writing of its own seems to have been the invention, probably in Southern Ireland somewhere during the 4th century A.D., of an alphabet which is known as "Ogam," of which there are several varieties. The best known¹ consists of four groups of letters, each letter represented by from one to five short or long strokes, something after the fashion of the dots and dashes of the Morse Code used in telegraphy. The strokes are arranged to the right or left, or across an upright line, and engraved for the purpose or use was made of the angle corner of an upright stone pyramid or stele. About 300 examples of Ogam inscriptions are known, almost all of them memorials, though it was probably used also for messages inscribed on wood. All but 30 come from Ireland, and of the 30 all but one from Celtic areas. This one was found in a well at Silchester in 1893 and is now in the museum at Reading. The Silchester Ogam, which is of soft stone, is partly defaced, but has been deciphered as EBICATOS MAQI MUCOI ? translated as, "Ebicatus son of the descendant of . . ." No. 2² is another example of Ogam from Tralee in Ireland. It reads BRESACOS MAQI CALICO. It will be seen that the word Maqi occurs in both examples. It is probably the same word as Mac which precedes so many Scotch names.

With the arrival of the Romans, Latin became of course both a spoken and a written language, and even before the invasion and settlement we have evidence in the coins of Cymbeline³ or Cunobelinus, the British king of the Trinobantes, that Latin script was already in use for such things as coinage inscriptions.

Of the Latin in use at the time of the Roman invasion what better example can we have than that of Caesar himself? The diagram is an extract from *de Bello Gallico*.⁴ It is not of course facsimile as I do not know of any manuscript of Caesar dating from his own time, but it gives a fair idea of his language and style and is specially interesting as describing a crossing of the Channel for purposes of invasion almost 2000 years ago. Latin scripts and alphabets were of two kinds, Monumental and Cursive or written. An example of the former shows an altar⁵ or votive offering to the god Sylvanus, who was specially interested in sport

1. Victoria County History.

2. Harnsworth, *Encyclopædia*, Vol. VI, p. 4442.

3. *Encyclo. Brit.*, *Numismatics*, Pl.VI.

4. Caesar, *Bello Gallico*, Lib.V, Sec. 8.

5. Collingwood, *Archæology of Roman Britain*, p. 165.

and the woods. It seems to have been the correct thing to put up such an offering after a good season's sport or as in the case of another similar altar to Sylvanus, recording gratitude for success in killing a boar which had proved too much for the donor's friends. The altar shown here was found at Stanhope in Weardale where no doubt the Prefect was stationed. On the same slide is another altar, with a Greek inscription, a language little needed by the British archaeologist. It was dedicated to Astarte, a Syrian and Phoenician goddess, reminding us that the Roman army was recruited from all parts of the empire and contained some whose tongue was Greek. The inscription reads:—"In me you see an altar of Astarte, Pulcher set me up." Astarte or Ashtoreth was one of heathen gods against the worship of whom the Jews had constantly to be warned. Other examples of the use of monumental lettering are the Roman coins bearing the names and effigies of the successive Roman emperors.

The diagrams show rough drawings of coins⁶ of some of the emperors specially connected with Britain.

(1) Augustus, the first emperor, who refused to complete the conquest of Britain which Julius had begun and who is said to have established some sort of relationship with the British king Cymbeline already referred to.

(2) The queer eccentric Claudius, who organised the expedition of conquest in 43 A.D. and himself came to Britain to take part in the final operation and thus give him a claim to a triumph when he got back to Rome.

(3) Vespasian, 69-79, who had been in command of the second legion in the invasion army and was specially responsible for the conquest of the southern part of Britain and the Isle of Wight and no doubt visited "Venta Belgarum" and made it part of the Roman Empire.

(4) Hadrian, 117-138, who came to Britain to consolidate the northern part of the country and who built the famous wall across the country which bears his name.

(5) Septimus Severus, 146-211, came to Britain to restore and strengthen the northern frontier and died at York, A.D. 211.

(6) Constantine the Great, 306-337. His father, Constantius, died at York and his son was probably there with him. He was the first Christian emperor.

The Monumental lettering on all these coins is practically identical with our modern capitals.

Cursive Latin is more angular, more flowing and better adapted to writing by hand as opposed to carved or engraved work. The first example is a facsimile of writing⁷ on a wooden tablet, probably a sort of I.O.U. It reads, "which money Crescens will repay on demand in writing to me or to whomsoever the matter shall

6. Collingwood, *Arch. Rom. Brit.*, pp. 275 and 7.

7. Collingwood, *Arch. Rom. Brit.*, p. 273.

Roman Emperors



Augustus
B.C. 23- A.D. 14



Claudius
A.D. 41-54



Hadrian
117-138



Vespasian
69-79

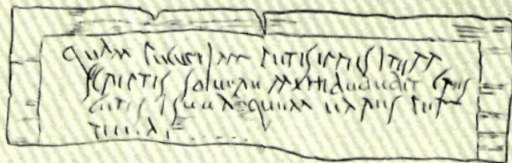


Constantine
306-337



S. Severus
193-211

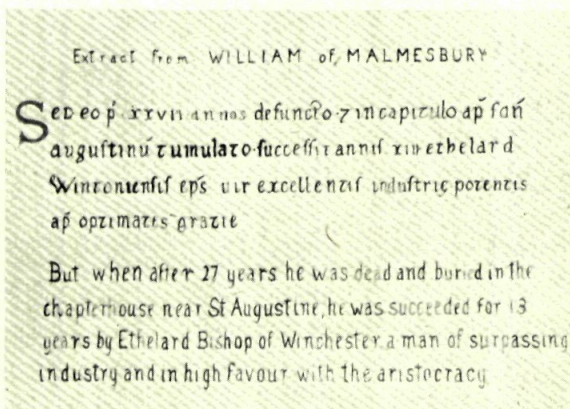
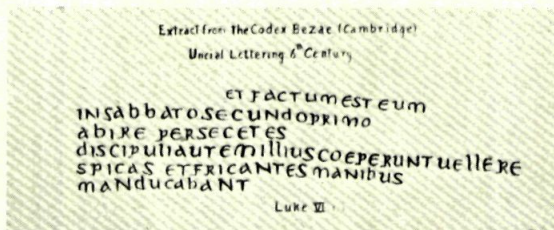
Latin Monumental Lettering.



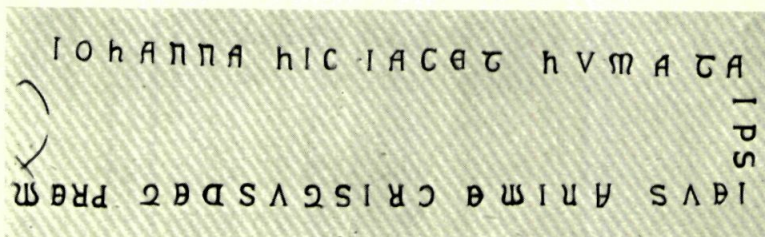
quam pecuniam petitionis item
scriptis solvere mihi debet Cruscens
isve ad quem ea res pertinebit



Latin Cursive Writing.



Monkish Latin of the 12th century.



To face p. 133]

Latin inscription from Romsey tombstone, Gothic in character.

pertain." The second is a reproduction of a graffito⁸ on a tile, probably the effort of a workman in chaff of a companion: a possible romance. It reads: "Austalis has been wandering off by himself every day for a fortnight." Gradually the Cursive style of writing became rounder and bold until the lettering known as "uncial" was developed, so called because each letter was supposed to be an "*uncia*" or inch long. The example of this shown is not British but is a facsimile extract from the Latin part of the *Codex Bezae*,⁹ a manuscript of the New Testament, now in the library at Cambridge. It dates from the 6th century. The extract is from St. Luke's Gospel:—"And it came to pass on the following sabbath that he went through the cornfields and his disciples began to pluck the ears of corn and rubbing them in their hands did eat." This MS., which contains the Gospels and the Book of Acts only, is in both Latin and Greek, the one above the other on each page. It varies considerably from the more authentic MSS. used for the Authorised version. The writing is clear and easy to read.

By the 12th century the lettering had again changed considerably and the Latin style had become what we are accustomed to call "Monk" Latin. An example is from the *Gesta Pontificum*¹⁰ of William of Malmesbury, the Deeds of the Bishops. It was written in 1125 in the reign of Henry I and the manuscript (from which the extract is a facsimile copy) is undoubtedly in the handwriting of William himself. He was by birth half Norman and half Saxon and lived all his life in the Benedictine Monastery of the little town of Malmesbury where he was librarian. He was a true antiquarian and writes thus of himself:—"I began to compose myself, not indeed to display my learning, which is comparatively nothing, but to bring to light events lying concealed in the confused mass of antiquity." The extract refers to an early event in the episcopal history of Winchester, namely, the promotion of Ethelhard, Bishop of Winchester, to be Archbishop of Canterbury in the year 791.

The next is a Latin inscription from the tombstone¹¹ in Romsey Abbey of Johanna Icthe, who was Abbess from 1333 to 1349 and who probably died of the plague. The lettering is reconstructed from a rubbing of the stone and is now very difficult to decipher. It is distinctly Gothic in character. "Here lies buried Johanna. May Christ give the reward to her soul."

We must now return to Anglo-Saxon, the language which the Saxon invaders brought with them to England. It is really from this, modified by additions from Latin and Norman-French, that our modern English tongue has developed. It has been estimated that out of 38,000 of our English words, 23,000 are Anglo-Saxon,

8. Collingwood, *Roman Britain*, p. 120.

9. Harm., *Encyclo.*, "Codex."

10. Wm. of Malm., *Gesta Pontificum*, Frontispiece.

11. Tombstone in Romsey Abbey and Liveing's *Romsey Abbey*, p. 120.

and these largely the words most used in ordinary affairs. The Anglo-Saxon settlers in England were heathen in spite of earlier attempts of the missionary, Ulfilas, to convert them in the latter half of the 4th century. Ulfilas is credited with having invented for his translation of the Bible into Gothic, the alphabet used later for Anglo-Saxon writing, based largely on the Greek alphabet.

But this was not the only alphabet used for Anglo-Saxon. An earlier one is that known as Runic or Futhorg,¹² the letters of which were known as Runes. Tradition attributed the Runic alphabet to the Scandinavian God, Odin or Woden, and Carlyle, in his *Heroes and Hero-worship*, suggested that possibly Odin's claim to divinity rested on the miracle of his having given letters to his people. At any rate, certain mystical powers were always attributed to these Runic letters. The earliest known Runic inscription, a Danish one, dates probably from the middle of the 3rd century. The most interesting example of Runic that I have to show you is that known as Franks' casket,¹³ now in the British Museum. It is made of whale-bone and Northumbrian work dated not later than 650. The lettering is read from left to right at the sides and top, but from right to left at the bottom, the letters also here being turned to the left as in a looking-glass. The translation is :—"The whale bone. The flood threw the fish on the firm rock. The monster was stranded on the stone in agony." It looks very much from the graphic account as if the inscriber had himself been a witness of the whale's death agonies.

The next is a Saxon coin with "PADA" inscribed in runic. Paeda was king of Mercia 655 - 657, and having married a Christian wife introduced Christianity to Mercia. Another coin of this king, a gold one, recently acquired by the British Museum, was reproduced in *The Times* of February 22nd this year with King Paeda's name in Runic.

The next is a very interesting tombstone¹⁴ from Lindisfarne, as the inscription on it is in both the Anglo-Saxon types of character. The name on it is Osgyth.

Until King Alfred's time such literature as was produced in England was mostly written in Latin. Few were educated except the clergy and the religious language was Latin. The Venerable Bede, the monk of Jarrow, the earliest English historian, like other ecclesiastic writers in the early part of the 8th century, wrote in Latin though some of his works were afterwards translated into Anglo-Saxon. King Alfred was the first person to attempt to found an Anglo-Saxon literature and almost all the earliest writings in this language that we have were either his own personal work or made under his inspiration.

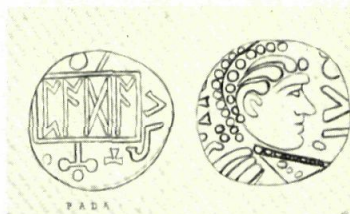
12. *Encyclo. Brit.*, Runes, p. 662.

13. *Encyclo. Brit.*, Runes, p. 662.

14. Kendrick and Hawkes, *Arch. England and Wales*, p. 344.

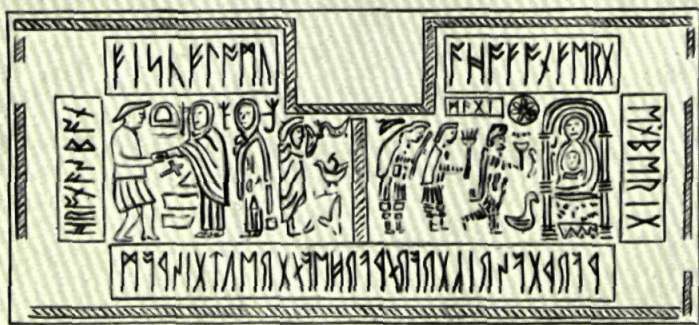
ANGLIAN RUNIC FUTHORC

F	U	Th	O	R	K	G	W
N	I	A	Eo	P	X	S	
T	B	E	M	L	Ng	D	O
F	F	N	T				
A	Oe	Y	Ea				



Coin of Paeda, King of Mercia, with Runic inscription.

FRANK'S CASKET



Lindestarne Tomestone

Æfter þam he hi oferþunnen hæfde Iuliu
for on Bryzzonie þ islanð 7 rið þa Bryzzar
zefeahz 7 zeflymed pearð on þam lande þe
man hæz Lenzland.

K. ALFRED'S OROSIUS

The first is an example of his own work, an extract¹⁵ from King Alfred's translation of the Latin history of the world by Orosius. The passage deals with the invasion of Britain by Julius Caesar. It reads:—"After he had overthrown these he set out for the Island of Britain and fought against the Britons and was put to flight in the land that is called Kentland." This extract, though not facsimile, shows the character of Anglo-Saxon lettering and its differences from our own.

The next is a facsimile extract from one of the manuscripts of the famous *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*¹⁶ which contained a *résumé* of the main points of English history down to the accession of King Henry II in 1154.

The first compilation of the *Chronicle* was instigated and perhaps contributed to by King Alfred himself; and subsequently it was kept up by more or less contemporary additions to the various existing copies. How these were co-ordinated we have no idea, but the different manuscripts have in many cases quite different additions both in matter and wording and often have a distinctly different political bias according to the part of the country to which they belonged. The manuscript from which this example is taken is known as the Bodleian from its present home, but it came originally from the Monastery of Peterborough. It has a further point of interest in that it once belonged to Archbishop Laud, whose name is at the foot of the first page. The extract is the opening passage of the manuscript and reads:—"The Island of Britain is 800 miles long and 200 broad. There are in this Island five languages: English, British, Welsh, Scottish, Pictish and Book-Latin." Curiously this makes six and not five, but some of the other manuscripts contain the names of only five.

This list of languages current at the time of the compilation of the *Chronicle* shows that the three Celtic languages—British, Welsh and Gaelic—were already distinct from one another. English is, of course, Anglo-Saxon. Of Pictish or even of the Picts themselves, little is known as they early became merged with the Scots, who came as invaders from Ireland. Professor Rhys thinks that they were possibly a remnant of the pre-Celtic race of Iberians. Traces of their language remained in Galloway down to the 12th century. The term Book-Latin marks it as at this time a language of letters and not in use for general converse.

The next is a diagram of Alfred's famous jewel,¹⁷ known perhaps to many of you as one of the most valued possessions of the Ashmolean Museum at Oxford. It is made of crystal, mounted in gold, and apparently formed originally part of a small sceptre. The inscription reads:—"ÆLFRED MEC HEHT GEWIRCAN." "Alfred had me made." It was found in Newton Park, Somerset, in 1693. The next will be familiar to most of you. It is a

15. *Alfred the Great*, Bohn, p. 458.

16. *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*, Frontispiece.

17. *Alfred the Great*, Bohn, Frontispiece.

diagrammatic representation of one of Dr. Green's photographs belonging to our Photographic Section, that of the Saxon arch in Breamore Church.¹⁸ The Anglo-Saxon inscription has been dated by Dr. Sweet as not much earlier than the middle of the 11th century. It reads :—"Here is the covenant manifested to thee."

Next come two Saxon coins¹⁹ of the reign of Offa, the last and greatest of the Mercian kings. He reigned from 755 - 796. With the conquest of England by the Normans a new language was introduced into the country, Norman-French. Like the Anglo-Saxons, the Normans, coming originally from Norway, were a Scandinavian race and spoke a Gothic language. They had settled in France at the beginning of the 10th century, about the same time that Alfred was having his troubles with the Danes. But unlike their cousins who came to England, the Norsemen soon became Christians and adopted the language and civilisation of their new home ; so that when they came to England 160 years later their language was French.

This is not the occasion to go into the efforts that the Normans made to introduce French into England and their almost complete failure as regards the general population. So that by the reign of Edward III French had virtually died out except for certain legal and Parliamentary purposes. A Statute of 1362 enacted that all pleadings in the Law Courts should be in English. Today the only remains of official French to be heard in England are when the Town-crier rings his bell and shouts, "Oyez," "Hear ye," and when the assent of the King to Parliamentary Bills is announced in the House of Lords in the words :—"Le Roy le Veut," or "Soit fait comme il est désiré."

Here are two examples of Norman-French. The first,²⁰ an extract from a bit of history contained in the Register of Malmesbury Abbey. It deals with the death and burial of King Alfred. And in this connection one cannot help feeling that it is a reproach to Hampshire that the burial place of their great king, "the darling of England," was allowed to be forgotten. Happily, with an active Archaeological Society in being, such a disaster would not be allowed to happen today. The language of the extract is surprisingly close to modern French. You will, of course, notice the presence of the letter "s" where to-day we should often have a circumflex accent.

The last of the diagrams is of the tomb of William Bristow²¹ who was vicar of King's Somborne, 1305 - 1327. It is taken from another of our Society's photographs. A Norman-French inscription on the tomb of an ecclesiastic is very unusual.

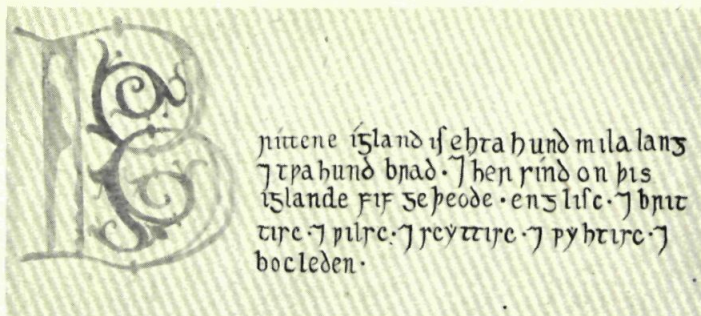
I think you will agree that the languages and scripts used in Early England are not unworthy of consideration from an Archaeological point of view.

18. H.F.C. Photographs Breamore.

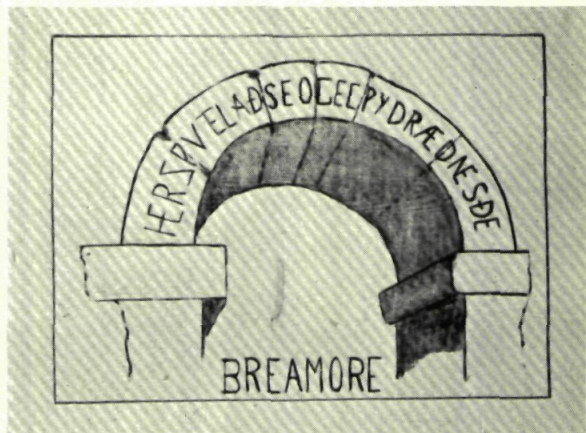
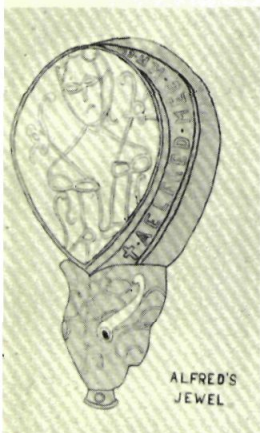
19. (a) Harmsworth, *Encyclo.*, "Numismatics." (b) *Encyclo. Brit.*

20. Register, Malmesbury Abbey, Vol. I, p. 53.

21. H.F.C. Photos., Somborne.



Extract from *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*.



Apres lui recut Alwred, son frere, le regne, home pruz e
 After him Alfred his brother, received the throne a man valiant
 e sage. Ic il Alwred fist les leys en Engleterre. Si rescut
 and wise. This Alfred made the laws in England. He received
 la corune del apostoule. Si fu corune a Rome. Si tint
 the crown from the Pope. He was crowned at Rome. He held
 le regne vint e vitanz e demy a grant trauail. Si
 the throne twenty eight years and a half with great labour. He
 murust e gist a Wincestre
 died and lies buried at Winchester

To face p. 136]

Register of Malmesbury Abbey—Norman-French.