

SOUTHAMPTON EXCAVATIONS :**First Interim Report, 1946.**

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THE aims of the Southampton Excavations are to take advantage of the unique opportunities of exploring the local Roman, Saxon and Mediaeval settlements provided by the extensive areas now cleared by the Blitz, before these are built on and the chance perhaps lost for ever.

With due priority given to any sites immediately threatened by development, it is proposed to excavate as much of the Saxon town as possible. This period is generally in relatively greater need of archaeological research than the others.

Acknowledgments. Excavations were carried out from the end of July until the middle of September in a period of exceptionally inclement weather. For the first four weeks, through the kindness of the University of London Institute of Archaeology, seven American students assisted : the Misses B. A. Boule and E. J. Glassenberg, of Wellesley, Messrs. N. A. Doenges and F. A. Wood, of Yale, E. R. Gallagher and H. L. Geisse, of Princeton, and D. H. Kelley, of Harvard. Others assisting for various substantial periods were : The Misses E. Mustaki, C. M. Roy, J. Walker and R. J. Warren from the University of London ; and D. Kirkbride, M. Munroe, H. M. Savage, L. A. F. Sillence and J. Smith ; and Messrs. B. G. and A. F. Childs, R. W. Delves, D. G. Lampard and M. G. C. Wheeler.

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SITES OF ANCIENT SETTLEMENT IN THE SOUTHAMPTON AREA.

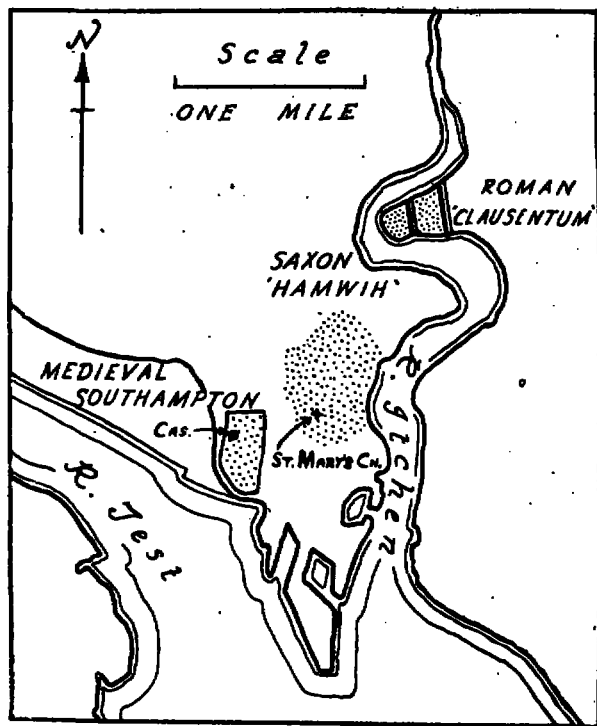


Fig. 1.

The Sites of ancient settlement in the Southampton area (fig. 1, above) are : the Roman town of Clausentum at Bitterne on the east of the River Itchen ; the Saxon town of Hamwih to the south-west across the river, on a promontory formed by the junction of the Itchen with the River Test, and described *c.* 721 A.D. as a mart (*mercimonium*). Perhaps under the stimulus of Viking raids; or Norman economic enterprise, sometime between 900 and 1086, the centre of civic life moved from this latter place to the site of the Norman and later mediaeval walled town lying on a ridge still further south-west. But the "minster at [Hom] Wic" (1045), which may be identified with St. Mary's, the mother church of Southampton, apparently continued to exist and maintain its rights up to, through and beyond the Conquest, with possibly a remnant of the old town clustered round it.

The Roman Town of Clausentum consists of a walled area on the tip of a promontory formed by a curve of the River Itchen,

and an area of about 20 acres between the landward wall and (inner) ditch, and a bank and ditch cutting off the promontory from the mainland. The walled town was occupied from the Claudian period until the 4th century. The nature and date of the occupation in the outer area was hitherto quite unknown till bomb clearance permitted excavations there during 1946.

(i) The site trenched lay immediately south of Stuart Road and east of the Inner Ditch. (*Vide* map: *Ant. Journ.* XXVII, p. 153—Stuart Road lies between Bitterne Road and Quayside Road.)

Three main features were discovered. The exact position of the original outer edge of the Inner Ditch was located at one point. No evidence for its date was forthcoming, as disturbance had here destroyed any contiguous stratification there might have been. Running towards the Ditch at right angles was a gully, perhaps for drainage purposes. On an average this was 4 feet wide and 18 inches deep and apparently at least 80 feet long. Adjacent were traces of part of a burnt structure: the corner of an area of burnt debris, a foundation-beam trench and a rather large possible post hole. Tentatively this appears to represent the outside of a timber building of the first half of the 2nd century. Elsewhere was disclosed a section of an evidently oval hollow about 15 feet long, 8 feet wide and 2 feet deep, cut into the natural gravel. The occupation layers running into it contained Gallo-Roman butt-beaker and terra-nigra and Claudian Samian.

(ii) This, other traces of depressions with occupation levels, and the burnt structure, coupled with the absence of any building stones, tends to indicate the presence of only timber structures. Hence the occupation here seems to have been of a light nature, the Roman deposits being on an average about 18 inches thick as compared with 5 feet within the walled town, and starts in the middle of the 1st century as there. Stratified evidence in the area explored seems to cease in the 2nd century, though the surface plough soil produced 3rd and 4th century sherds.

The Saxon Town of Hamwih. The approximate position of the settlement is known from mediaeval tradition, and discoveries, covering an area roughly half-a-mile by a third (fig. 2, p. 69), made in the last century when the district was being dug for the brick earth and developed for building. As the result, the two sites tested had been disturbed to a certain extent. There are no surface indications of the settlement.

(i) At the first site, Kingsland, a strip of about a third of an acre was trenched. The structural remains found were two huts. (The second of these was thought to be a ditch till the excavations at Easter 1947 disclosed its true nature.)

Hut I (fig. 2, X.) consisted of an oval depression about 14 feet by 8 running north and south. The southern half was taken up with two large 'steps,' the northern half being cut about 3 feet into the natural clay with ramped sides. Only two definite post holes could be located—one at the centre and one on the surface at the edge, modern disturbance having destroyed any others which may have existed. From the nature of the filling of the depression it would appear that the wattle and daub walls of the hut gradually decayed and collapsed into it. The awkward size and shape, and the character of the floor debris, may indicate some kind of storage hut rather than a dwelling.

In the floor debris was a fragment of a fine, imported, glass vessel (fig. 3, p. 70) of 8th to 10th century date, and also the remains of the skeleton of an infant under six weeks old.

Hut II (fig. 2, XI.) was approximately 7 feet wide and 5 feet deep, cutting through the natural clay into the natural gravel.¹ The filling consisted of an unstratified agglomeration of deposits of clay and gravel, capped by a thick layer of occupation debris. Mainly from this came a large quantity of pottery, fragments of bun-shaped loom weights and nodules of lava "probably identical" with that of Niedermendig.

From the rest of the site came pottery, including a piece of buff incised and red-painted imported Norman ware, the shaft and wards of an 11th century bronze key, and small pieces of burnt daub.

(ii) At the second site, Grove Street (fig. 2, XII.), circumstances only permitted a cursory examination. Part of the tops of two (or three) large pits, apparently some 6 feet in diameter, were located and partially explored. The fillings consisted generally of occupation debris. Objects from the pits included many animal bones, pottery similar to that from Kingsland, and a well-preserved coin of Berhtwulf, king of Mercia (? 839-852), by his moneyer Burnwald. The examination was not sufficiently adequate to ascertain the exact nature and function of these pits, but they appear to be similar to some of those described in the 19th century discoveries.

(iii) Provisional conclusions: the bulk of the pottery was of the domestic Anglo-Saxon type—coarse hand-made bowls, and jars with sagging bases and flaring rims. Associated with these was a variety of wheel-turned sherds: mainly of imported 7th to 8th century Frankish wares and shapes, some with stamp decoration; but also perhaps several 9th century Carolingian pieces.

The period of occupation so far demonstrated by the excavations is indicated by the imported pottery, the fragment of amber glass, the coin, the piece of Norman ware, and the bronze key. These

¹ Regarding the depth in the virgin rock, it must be remembered that modern disturbance has probably often destroyed the old land surface.

HAMWIH.

MAP SHOWING SITES OF SAXON FINDS IN SOUTHAMPTON.



Fig. 2.

Arabic numerals indicate approximate positions, Roman numerals the exact positions of finds.

Reproduced from the Ordnance Survey Map, with the sanction of the Controller of H.M. Stationery Office.

would perhaps cover the 7th to the 11th centuries, with the bulk of the material representing the earlier part of this period.

So much imported material, the glass, the pottery and the lava, is such as might be naturally expected at so obvious a centre of communication with the Continent.

The observation (*Antiquity* 1942, p. 43) that the "Romano-British relics" of the 19th century antiquaries might turn out to be Anglo-Saxon after all, seems to have been justified, as nothing definitely Roman has yet been found, although the imported Continental sherds were at first mistaken for such.

(iv) Bibliography of Saxon Southampton : O. G. S. Crawford, "Southampton" in *Antiquity*, March 1942, No. 61, pp. 38-47, supplemented by his "Bitterne after the Romans" in *P.H.F.C.*, Vol. XVI, Pt. 2, pp. 148-155, gives a synthesis of, and references to, the original sources both literary and archaeological previous to the present excavations.

The map (fig. 2) and register (p. 73) show the sites and the nature of the Saxon finds so far as they are known up to 1946. The location of the discoveries made in the 19th century can be only approximate.

FRAGMENT OF GLASS VESSEL FROM HUT I.

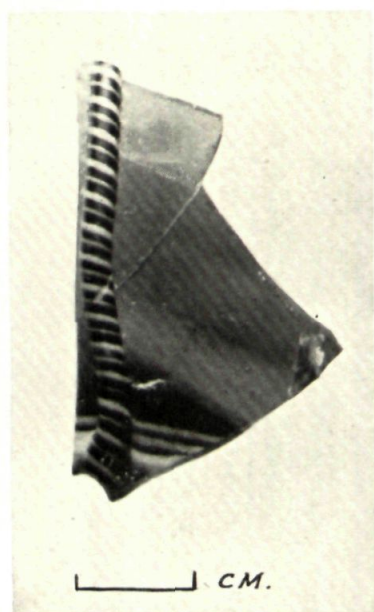


Fig. 3

Sketch of probable shape of complete vessel.

"Lower part of side of beaker (?), smoky brown glass; good metal with few bubbles; at base of fragment (*i.e.* near bottom of side) one thick and two thin marvered horizontal trails of opaque white; on exterior, portions of two vertical raised ribs made of applied rods of smoky brown with opaque white spiral threads wound round them and marvered flush; the better preserved rib has two such threads, one thick and one thin. Birka Grab 649 seems to be an exact parallel."

MAP REF.	NATURE (T.H. indicates that the object is in the Tudor House Museum, Southampton)	SITE	REF. (to <i>Antiquity</i> , March, 1942)
	(i) Bone-pits (b-p's).		
1.	b-p's ; " streets " and " wells " ; coins, keys and metal pins.	1825-49, " new gaol field."	p. 41 ; illus. <i>Coll.</i>
2.	reported b-p's, but evidence inconclusive.	1849, '59, Hoglands.	<i>Ant.</i> IV, pl. XVI.
III.	coins ; pot (T.H., Bullar Collection.)	1854-5, New Gaol.	p. 44.
IV.	rectangular b-p's (huts ?), bricks or tiles with tubular perfora- tions (loom weights or burnt daub ?), Anglo-Saxon pottery.	1856, Edinburgh Hotel.	41 and N. ; <i>Cat. of</i> <i>Hartley Exhibition</i> , 1904, p. 16.
5.	bone-pits, coins.	c. 1860, 63, between Hotel and Compton Walk.	p. 41-2.
6.	b-p's, " clay whirl " (loom weight in T.H.), fibula.	1863-6, Nichols Town.	42 and N.
VII.	bone-pit, bone weaving comb (T.H.).	1941, Trinity Road.	43.
8.	pottery (T.H.).	1941, just west of St. Mary's Church.	43.
	(ii) Cemetery.		
9.	skeletons, green glass vases.	c. 1849, Grove Street.	44.
	(iii) Excavations : 1946.		
X.	hut I : pottery, glass.	i. Kingsland.	} accompanying report.
XI.	hut II : pottery, loom weights, Niedermendig lava.	"	
XII.	b-p's : pottery, coin of Berhtwulf (<i>d.</i> 852).	ii. Grove Street.	
	(iv) Mediaeval Town.		
XIII. (just west of edge of map.)	coin of Offa (<i>d.</i> 796) (T.H.).	1822, The Castle. Mound.	<i>J.B.A.A.</i> XXI, 1865, p. 28.
14.	bronze equal-armed cross, 9th century (T.H.).	" 10 feet down in High Street " acc. to label.	