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**"Finds" on, or near to, the Excursion of the Society at Stow-on-the-Wold**

by D. Royce  
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"FINDS" ON, OR NEAR TO, THE  
EXCURSION OF THE SOCIETY AT STOW-ON-THE-WOLD.

*On July 25th, 1882.*

By the REV. DAVID ROYCE, M.A.

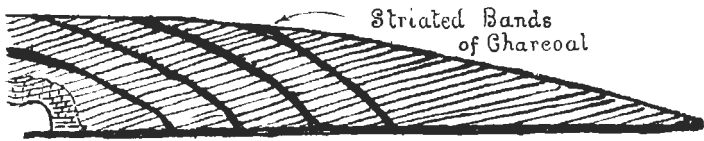
THE subject of this paper will not, it is hoped, be thought below the demands of this extraordinary occasion. An important and distinguished Society, as this now is, on its General Annual Gathering, calls for a corresponding and congenial theme. Subject-matter for such theme is, however, necessarily rare and partial. It is beyond the capability of every locality to furnish it. Stations, camps, castles, cistvaens, and the like, are not sown broad-cast. A Cirencester, a Woodchester, a Chedworth, a Uley, is not forthcoming on this section of the Wolds, to make an excursion hither a signal success, or a paper thereupon necessarily easy and engaging. Nevertheless, presumptuous as the assertion may seem, from the centre of the district now visited, with a radius of three miles, you will encircle a portion of the county eminently prolific in traces and relics of British, Roman, and Saxon occupation. Barrington, Bourton-on-the-Water, Upper and Lower Slaughter, Upper and Nether Swell, and the confines of the latter on the Guyting side, retain singular remains of the above-mentioned races. Discoveries have been made in this neighbourhood, yea, in the two Swells, to which the lamented Professor Rolleston declared that science was greatly indebted. That most laborious and learned of men was free to confess, that the long-horned barrows at Swell, Wold, and Hayle Knap, were as a revelation to him. Those mysterious mounds have been copiously described by Canon Greenwell and the Doctor in that most valuable of works, "British Barrows." Sir John Maclean has done good service by his more compendious account in Vol. V. of the Society's

Transactions. To keep within the limits now prescribed—inferior to the above great discoveries, must be the subsequent “finds” now submitted to your notice. Comparatively insignificant they may appear—yet should they be consigned to oblivion? Minor “finds” they may be, yet do they clothe these Wolds with peculiar interest. They contribute a modest modicum to archaeological and anthropological science. They offer a page to this County’s History. They may minister matter for profitable and inspiring reflexion, even to those whose “daily round and common task,” or country-walk, brings these remembrances of remote ages, from time to time, before their eyes or in their way.

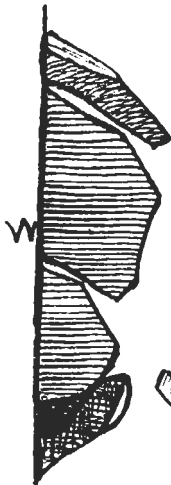
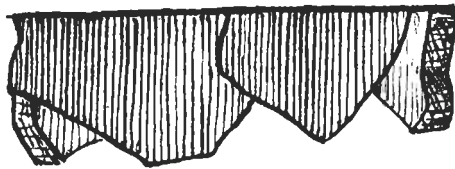
This paper would meet you (at least the Bristol, Gloucester, and Cheltenham members of this Society), at your more immediate entrance into this district honoured by your welcome visit to-day, and will conclude where this day’s excursion has closed. The paper will greet you at *Notgrove, or Westfield Station*. It would first attempt to describe to you what once marked, and we may say consecrated, a spot through which the railway train now rattles with its unconscious passengers.

The substance of the notes of the writer of this paper, at the time of discovery, are as follows:—

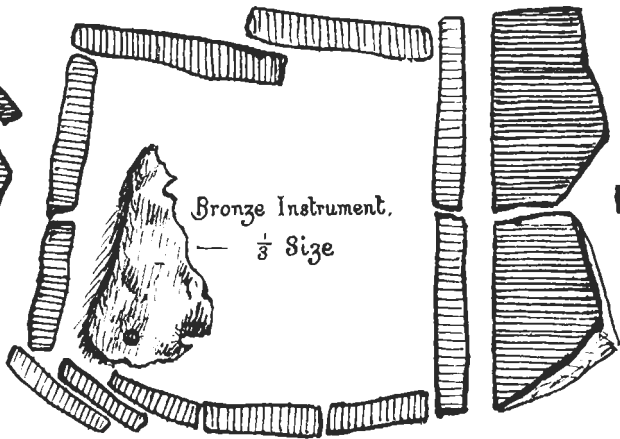
*Westfield Barrow.*—Sept. 10th, 1876. Tuesday—The excavators of the Banbury and Cheltenham Railroad reached the fine round tumulus in the centre of a large field near to the station, on the Bourton side. It was of the average dimensions, 80 feet in diameter. It was composed of fine mould, although raised on the brashy surface of these Wolds. First, there appeared a kind of slight roofing of slates carried up about one-third of the slope of the Barrow. On the east and north-east side, there was a considerable stratum, some 6 inches thick, of charcoal and decomposed animal matter, intermingled with tooth of horse, tusk of boar, and jaw of dog. This dark lower stratum seemed more or less co-extensive with the base of the tumulus. But, over and above this, the superincumbent earth was singularly and regularly striated with curved lines, or bands, of charcoal to the very surface. The following Friday revealed the desired object. The pick, in pursuing



N



W



Bronze Instrument.  
—  $\frac{1}{3}$  Size

E



S

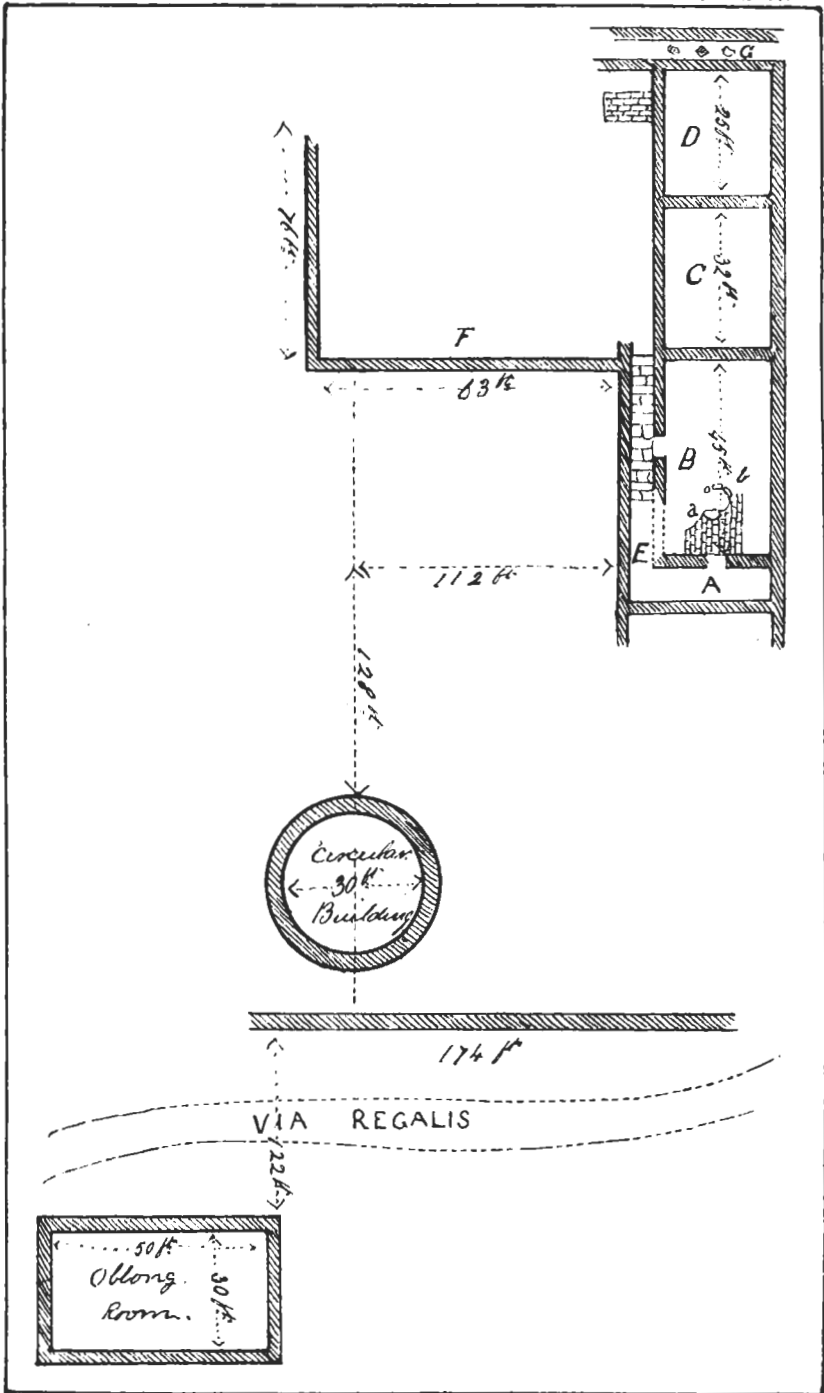
its onward career, struck on loose stones amongst the mould-harbingers of *this* “find.” All carefully cleared off, there came to view a bee-hive-like capping of stones, in size about 2ft. by 10 in., but tapering off—these had sunk in at the apex, from smaller filling-stones having given way. These somewhat spiral coverers removed, all became manifest, viz : a cist, in the rough 4 ft. square, each side facing the cardinal points—two uprights east, two north, two west, and five south (*Pl. X.*). In the centre of the chamber, on a floor of carefully laid slates, was deposited a small heap of decomposed matter with small broken bones above it. There were two portions of skulls, perhaps of a mother and her child. To the west of this little heap, a small triangular bronze instrument, much corroded, perforated at the base with two holes. This instrument was sent to Dr. Rolleston, and is probably in the Oxford Museum. This burial was, of course, after cremation. These scanty remains were committed to this cist, erected on the very site of the burning. The charcoal from the pyre seems to have been scattered over the mould as they heaped it up, at intervals. Two Roman bodies were found some 50 yards to the east, edged round with stones, the head and feet covered with planks. Many sherds were scattered about—one, a goodly piece of the white Roman flint-roughed mortar. Here, then, are cremation and inhumation, side by side, as elsewhere in this district—not contemporaneous, judging from the bronze instrument and the cist itself. Yet there were fragments of Roman-like pottery in the barrow. In this discovery the excavators displayed great interest. The archæological world owes a debt of gratitude to Mr. Knox, the engineer, for offering every facility, and for drawings which perpetuate what the Banbury and Cheltenham Railway at once revealed and obliterated. The stones of this cist were conveyed to Copse Hill, and set up there on the site of another burial ground : but not after their original position or arrangement. It may here be noticed that the ancient name of Westfield was Caldecot. Query : Is there any connexion between the old, and not uncommon, name and these interments ?

*The Chessells or Chestles, Heath Hill, or Æthel.*—Our next station is Bourton-on-the-Water, celebrated as being the site, originally, of a British city, and an important station during the

Roman dominion—subsequently, perhaps, called Salmonsbury. The camp here, and the undoubted villa with the “finds” connected with the latter brought to light in building the new railway bridge, will be fully described by our excellent ally, Mr. Moore. Onward, about half-way between Bourton-on-the-Water and Stow-on-the-Wold, near the Dikler (Theokyloure), whether travelling by rail or road, you have, on the left hand, the field called *Chessells*, or *Chestles*—nomen sat—(Cf. Kingscot, Rudder). The colour and richness of the soil, coins silver and bronze, and a crock containing a hoard of *minimi* found here, indicate Roman occupation. *Heath Hill* is no doubt more correctly given *Ethel* in the Ordnance Map. Accidentally, perhaps, it is found in the first two syllables of the adjoining hamlet, *Methelgaresbyrig*, now Maugersbury. In the garden of the farm-house, now called Heath Hill, several Roman coins have been found; whilst small tumuli in the adjacent field may possibly be tumuli.

*Stow*.—Not a stone’s throw from S. Edward’s Hall, on the north-east corner of the square, on the east side, at the back of the passage of the first doorway, was lately found a skeleton, in a cavity in the rock, just below the surface, N.N.W. and S.S.W., and pronounced by Dr. Rolleston to be Roman “well filled out globose skull, with the width on the crown, so characteristic of the Roman skull.” Outside the town, in the first quarry, on the right, on the Moreton road, lay the Saxon, with a spear-head 18 inches long, a foot of which is the sharp-pointed blade. It was the weapon of one who may have fallen on the spot, afterwards immortalizing Stow and Donington its hamlet, where Royalist and Parliamentary were together locked in their last mortal decisive struggle. Hard by, fell Capt. Keyte. Within earshot, or at most, gunshot, Sir Jacob Astley (seated on a drum) gave his captors his well-known shrewd and laconic counsel.

*Upper and Nether Swell*.—Pursuing this day’s beat, as originally mapped out, and unfortunately, at the eleventh hour, in part rescinded—it was proposed to halt at the third field down, on the left hand side of the road to Upper Swell. Here, some twenty years ago, old foundations were dug up, wherewith to build cattle sheds



and the boundaries below. On the summit of the hill stood the building, laid down (as discovered thus far) on the accompanying plan (*Pl. XI.*) It seems to be as follows:—A, vestibule some 8 ft. wide, 27 ft. long, facing south, at each end, traces of walls, projecting southwards, 8ft. Behind A, northwards, in line, were apparently three rooms: B, 45ft.; C, 32ft.; and D, 20ft. by 24 ft. each. In the fore-part of the room A, was found irregular pitching (*a*), somewhat zig-zag in places, the stones out of the upright. At the north-east corner of this pitching (*b*), in a hole, 3ft down, were light grey ashes, which, with a very little kneading, became a stiff putty. West of A, a passage E, 3 ft. wide, planked, ended at a wall F, running west, 63 ft., and then turning north, ran in that direction 75 ft. and more. At the north-east corner of D, more and more even pitching, about 8 ft. by 6 ft, implied an entrance there. Beyond D, a passage G, with very strong foundations and rough blocks of freestone. In this passage were found fragments of colander, a bronze armlet, an iron arrow-head, a drain-pipe, &c. All beyond this north side of the building, up to the road some 30 yards, was covered with quantities of rubble, slates, burnt stones, as of old buildings thrown down. This building may have served as a quarry early in the middle ages. It may have supplied in part, the very stones of Abbotswood—judiciously re-utilized from the Park Wall, bounding the field in which this building stood. Those wall-stones, at any rate, for their size, finish, and fire-stain, caught the attention of those “who go about with their eyes open.” To return to the building. Below, downhill, south, were circular-foundations, 30 ft. in diameter; below this, a very strong wall was excavated to the extent of 174 ft. In the northeast corner of the crew-yard, was a kind of kiln filled with ashes. Lower down, below the crew-yard, was an oblong building, 50ft. by 30 ft, between the two latter ran the road, no doubt, the “*via regalis*,” which was diverted by Richard, Earl of Cornwall, when he imparked this part of the parish and gave to his newly founded Abbey at Hayles, with

“The true blood of Christ at Hayles,  
Where pylgrymes paynes ryghte much avayles.”

A similar oblong building, only with much bolder outline, exists



in the field below, toward the Bowl (Bolde). But, still, what ground is there for supposing this to have been a Roman building? The masonry—hypocaust; flanges; bits of pseudo-Samian ware and Caistor ware with the potter's mark, ESCVS . M; pointed slates; nails for slating in abundance; an unique coin of Carausius, obv. IMP · CARAVSIVS · P·F· AVG; rev., two hands, conjoined MAXI · AVG · XX; others, Romano-British; oyster shells, the armlet, arrow-head, and quantities of broken pottery; the situation—on the Fosse, and commanding a view of it on the distant horizon, beyond Bourton—its half-way position between the great camps of Bourton and Dorne, on this highest point of ground—these may be adduced as evidence. It may have been a barrack, or halting place, or receptacle of some kind. It were presumption to suggest that this might have been the “Ystyw,” or “Stow,” which gave our metropolis its name. To make a compromise, this structure may have been connected with *the* Stow then, as now—the Pharos of the Wolds.

*Upper Swell Barrows.*—Had the programme been adhered to, the road from Upper to Nether Swell would have taken our party under the two horned barrows, described in “British Barrows,” which, it was hoped, the Society would have inspected. A detail or two of “finds,” subsequent, and too late for insertion in the above work, may be worth recording, viz: secondary Saxon interment, on that favourite spot, the horned end of Long Barrows. Two Saxons were interred, after their wont, in pure earth, on a barrow of sheer stones. No 1, a young man, arms bent; left, on breast; right, on stomach—clavicle, scapula, tibia, fibula wanting; only half of right femur; under right pelvis, a small iron knife; spear on right side. The bones were “mashed” by heavy stones over them. No. 2, spear-head, like that of No. 1, only horizontal over head; left arm down by side; a large knife below. This skeleton more perfect, was that of a strong tall man; yet tibia, fibula, feet and finger bones were not found with the body; but bones that might have belonged to it were found on the top of the barrow, lower down. The bones of both were, in part, decayed and

weatherworn. Both lay on their backs in line with the barrow, a foot to 18 inches below the surface and 17 ft. from the curve in the horns.

Barrow 2—seen at times, by those gifted with second sight, swathed in unearthly flame. On its surface, at the horned end, with her head south, broken, and her bones displaced, lay a lady—between her knees, a small iron knife; below her breast, an amber bead, whilst two circular cabled fibulæ fastened her shroud, one on each shoulder.

But, “place aux dames!” as Dr. Rolleston exclaimed, on further removal of the soil, the remains of other bodies appeared. The frame of a man, lying north-east by south-west, had been displaced to receive the lady’s body. Skulls and bones of two infants were found. A Saxon family, prematurely cut off, would seem to have been committed to this particular spot, on the, even then, revered and ancient cairn. A singular circumstance attending this “find,” was the arrival of a telegram, at a British barrow, summoning Dr. Rolleston, from the grave of the Saxon lady, to the sick bed of his sister. Progress indeed!

*Nether Swell.*—Within a stone’s throw from the north-west angle of the church, on the summit of the rising ground, in the allotments, stood, within the memory of the writer of this paper, a familiar, yet most venerable monolith. It was known as the *Whistlestone* (so called, perhaps, from this, the Wheat Hill, as the one beyond was the Oat Hill). This stone was the last, most probably, of a cist. Many bones were found at its base. A witticism, amongst the villagers, was this:—“When the Whistlestone hears Stow clock (a mile off) strike twelve, it goes down to Lady-well (at the Hill’s foot) to drink.” Alas, poor Whistlestone! Farmer Illes, one of the olden time, one day picked up two of a perfect set of teeth, in plowing by the stone, but so harried was he by the weirdy teeth, that he replaced them speedily where he found them. But a later occupier did what the good folk of the village declared could *not* be done—for “All the King’s horses and all the King’s men” could not cast down nor carry away Whistlestone—but it was carried away—yet rescued from the

roads or profane use. In the vicarage-paddock the pre-historic block now finds asylum.

*Nether Swell Church.*—The site of this, as of many of our churches, was a hallowed spot in heathen times. On levelling the ground for the new nave were found two cart-loads of pure red ashes, indicating great cremation here. Round the fire, here and there, had been placed plank-stones, by fives or sixes. On these were charcoal, and to the edge of one stone, the westernmost of all, clang a third brass of Constantine. The churchyard abounds with sherds of Roman pottery. Animal remains, the bones of a horse, the horns and a frame of bos longifrons have been dug up. In the neighbouring field, where are traces of two round barrows, a prick spur, iron arrow-head, a bronze fibula, and much black pottery were turned up, in merely digging a trench for pipes to convey water; whilst at the once marvellous village spring, once sending forth its 240 gallons per minute—a river of water—were found Roman pottery, a Commonwealth silver penny, two small bullets, and the usual propitiatory pins.

*Kineton Quarry.*—Diverging a little from the line of excursion, passing by Swell Hill homestead, where Roman coins, flints, and copious pottery have been found, and between the thick-set barrows of Swell Wold and Eyford, we arrive at the site, most probably, of a Roman house (the lines are visible), and just beyond it, at a considerable Roman cemetery. Bodies, and what besides none knows, at every fresh ridding for slates for years past, have been turned up. Of late years, a Roman, lying north and south, in a wooden coffin, the nails of which remain. Further on, a body with the conical nails of the soldier's boot at his heels. Further still, a body, described as dropped and pressed down in a hole, a British slave, probably, in a contracted position, his face falling back towards the east. Beyond this, a nearly perfect urn of red pottery, full of ashes, with a heap of ashes, a foot deep, close by. About four yards beyond, with the face towards the west, stones alongside and slates underneath, a lady with a plain bronze armlet. On re-opening the quarry, 1874, Nov. 9, a frame, two feet down, in a sloping position, the head raised higher than the feet

(about a foot), protected by two stones on either side, and one stone over, and with nails, as above, at the feet. Then beyond this, another, with the head similarly protected, with nails, as above. Then, a year ago last Christmas, in that bitter frost and snow, were found seven bodies in a line, about four feet apart, buried with more care; all lying north and south, but No. 2 with the head toward the south; Nos. 3 and 4 said to have been in coffins, the first with stones all round, the second without; then a child, with a tall body at its feet; and outside all, the skeleton of another man. Pottery was strewed over all. The last “finds” were in a line with the foregoing:—No. 1, Nov. 3, 1880, an entire frame, in a grave three feet deep, covered with four planks, nails at feet. Femur 1 ft. 5 in., tibia 1 ft. 6 in.—total length, about 5 ft. 4 in., and carefully ridged over. No. 2, to the north, a body without covering, head perfect, but severed and laid at the feet. No. 3, a little further on, and more north still, the head severed and placed between the knees, conical nails of his boots at his heels. Query; Whence this severance of the head—is it elsewhere, or often found?

Leaving Nether Swell for Upper Slaughter, in the second field to the right, after the turn of the road to the latter village; there remains, providentially protected, that now very rare relic of pre-historic time, a *Horestone*; from which the ground, in the centre of which it stands, takes, and to this day retains, its name.

*Upper Slaughter—Copse Hill.*—To close with this day’s excursion. In quarrying where the lawn tennis ground now is, human bones were discovered. This led to careful observation. In the snow and hard frost of 1875 a body was found with stones for head protection; but the intensity of the weather rendered investigation difficult. To the east about eight feet, a body of a man, N.N.W. × S.S.E., with right hand on pelvis and left on breast, and with stones at the head and two over the face, after the manner observed at Kinton Quarry. Aug. 21, 1876, Monday: in a line with the above, twenty feet eastward, a grave of stones, arranged coffin-wise, measuring 5 ft. 6 in. in length; 1 ft. 4 in. at the head and feet; and 1 ft. 6 in. in middle; covered mainly by two plank

stones, the upper one 3 ft. 5 in.  $\times$  1 ft. 8 in., the lower one 3 ft. 2 in.  $\times$  1 ft. 6 in. Outside all, two stones on the east side of the head, and four down the west side, apparently to keep the coverers in place. In the soil above were a few scattered fragments of pottery. The grave itself was full of sand. There was no sign of subsidence. Whether it was put intentionally, or worked in by worms, is uncertain. This grave appears to have been occupied by two—mother and daughter. The form of the young woman was more traceable; yet the bones were in a very decayed condition. Only the frontal and parietal bones of a remarkably small skull, and two small teeth and a portion of another were found. The head faced west, turned over the right shoulder; no clavicle; the scapula wasted; the upper ends of the humerus gone; the hands met over the abdomen, but the finger joints were scattered. A few bones of lumbar vertebræ remained; the left pelvis was decayed, and the right nearly gone; femora, tibia, fibulæ were perfect; one patella and the feet were left.

Jan. 16, 1877, Tuesday. In working on, the men came upon the lower part of a large vessel of amphora shape, of slate-coloured pottery. This vessel had been placed here with some care. It was packed with brown clay, brought for the purpose, and supported by vertical stones, some burnt. On removing the soil, within the vessel, stones from nine to four inches had fallen or been cast into it. The bottom of the vessel was gone; nor could any fragments of this part or of the mouth be found. Close by were discovered portions of other earthen vessels of black clay; a smaller one nearly perfect; the rims of two others; one very thick and large, but too tender to hold together. The skeleton of a pony; a fine green celt, and two bone pins were here found.

Jan. 18, 1877, Thursday, brought to light a grave, composed of plank-stones a foot high, three on each side and one at each end; within lay, N.N.W.  $\times$  S.S.E., the body of a man, 5 ft. 5 in. in stature—the average height of the Roman; the bones were of a purple hue, and all in situ. The head was on one side, facing the rising sun. The left jaw had all its teeth, much worn; the right was imperfect, black, and in a fibrous state. The arms were

crossed above the wrist, left over right, on the abdomen; the leg-bones were very clean and perfect. This grave was perfectly clear of sand or soil, although it was but 6 feet to the north-east of the one full of sand. This grave was covered precisely as that, and as one found at Kineton Thorns: viz., by a large plank-stone at the head, and another at the feet, and three smaller ones in the middle to protect the joint. One entire stone formed the bottom of the grave. Nothing was found with this or the other bodies. This grave has been preserved. East of this was found a body in the contracted position.

Feb. 24, 1877, Saturday. A body, 36 yards in a line S.W. from the above, a foot-and-a-half below the surface, lay E. and W., a point to S.S.E. and N.N.W., at full length, about 5 ft. 10 in. in stature. The head had fallen forwards. Femur  $15\frac{1}{2}$  in., tibia,  $13\frac{1}{2}$  in.; humerus, 11 in.; ulna, 8 in. No stones for protection. The arms lay straight down by each side.

Sept. 1, 1880, Wednesday. Beyond the tennis ground, on the brow of the hill, facing west, was found a body in a contracted position, N. and S. The head slightly inclining to the west, was severed from the body by the settling of the sand in which it was buried. The teeth were perfect. The backbone, slightly curved. The arms folded, the right hand under the left elbow, to which the knees were brought up. This, on the west, and the one on the east were possibly Britons and Roman slaves. It may be added here, that on the opposite hill (Beggy Hill) bodies of Romans have been discovered, by threes at once, side by side, in graves edged round with stones. One more important person was encased in a lead shell and oak coffin. A thought may be kindling in some mind, "Is it not rightly named 'Slaughter'?" But all the aforesaid does not necessarily imply the carnage involved in that sanguinary word "Slaughter." If this name did originate in the results of mortal conflict, the scene would have been at Slethranford, on the nethermost confines of Bourton with Nether Slaughter. Thence the baleful appellation spread over both parishes. These "Copse" and "Beggy Hill" "finds" may, however, only indicate that there was *then* what there is *now* on a more magnificent scale. The whirligig of time is ever verifying the proverb that the new is but

the old again. A Roman settlement, or establishment of its kind, possibly existed here, played its part, and went its way. The degrees of care in consigning each, in turn, to his or her resting-place graduated according to the condition of master, mistress, freeman or slave of the household.<sup>1</sup>

The last "find" was at the foot of Copse Hill, in a gravel pit near the angle of the road to Lower Slaughter, by Mr. Whitmore's new cottages. In a cavity, three feet wide and three feet deep, filled with black soil, were found two Roman knives, one with a ring at the end of the handle, pieces of black pottery, and one ornamented bit of pseudo-Samian ware. At the east side there was a small bit of wall, about three feet beneath the surface, but it extended only to some two feet, and there abruptly ended.

The "find" of the Saxon fort at Upper Slaughter remains for the pen of the intelligent explorer, Mr. G. B. Witts.

Thus this day's excursion has wound round a small and remote district, where little, perhaps, was expected. Yet has it been in contact with monuments and memorials of every stage of this island's wonderful history. This day's round, according to the original programme, has thread its way by Long and Round Barrow, by Roman and Saxon occupation and sepulture, through sparse but choice specimens of church architecture, through the scene of two of the most important events in the Civil War, and the sites whereon still stand fine manor-houses of two of the most ancient of our Gloucestershire families. Verily, we of this locality do hail with gratitude the visit of the Bristol and Gloucestershire Archaeological Society to gather up and rescue from a second burial, and that in oblivion, these minor but not worthless "Finds on and near the line of the first day's excursion, July 25th, 1882."

<sup>1</sup> Three grounds off in a line S.W. of the grave of the westernmost contracted Briton, on the right hand of the road from Nether Swell to Upper Slaughter, in the cavity of the former quarry, still discernible, opposite the Lots—the roadman, corroborated by others, states that a body was found lying E. and W., in a circular pit, about four feet in diameter and four feet deep, excavated out of the rock. It was in a sitting posture, with the head on the knees facing E. Behind the body to the W. was a piece of iron, about a foot long and an inch wide, laid on stones placed after the manner of a cottage fire-place; within which was a quantity of ashes, as when the fire went out.