

LANCASHIRE ARCHAEOLOGICAL NOTES, PREHISTORIC AND ROMAN

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A. PREHISTORIC

1. An axe-hammer (Fig. 14, 1) was found in Station Lane, Barton (NGR SD/516363). It was approximately two feet down in clay, and was discovered in the course of preparing a garden from former farm land. It was sectioned by Dr Coope of the University of Birmingham, and was assigned to Group XV (Lake District, unlocated).¹ The finder, Mr T. Moon, has kindly deposited the axe-hammer in the Harris Museum and Art Gallery, Preston (Accession number, A.560).

2. Both the mounds known as Winckley Lowes were excavated under the direction of the Rev. J. R. Luck, S.J. in 1894.² The finds from the first mound to be excavated (NGR SD/707375) included skeletal remains, both cremated and unburnt, a flint knife and pottery. Some, if not all, of these finds remain at Stonyhurst College, and the purpose of this note is to put on record the fact that the pottery found³ is of medieval date, and to provide an illustration of the flint knife (Fig. 14, 2). From the facts that the mound had a hollow in the top before excavation began, that medieval pottery was found, and that no Bronze Age material other than the flint knife was found, it seems likely that the barrow was robbed in medieval times. The dimensions of the knife are: length, 3.9 cm.; width, 2.0 cm.; thickness, 1.0 cm.

3. Another oval flint knife which is worthy of record is shown in Fig. 14, 3. It was found by the late Ald. W. J. Garnett at Brooks Moss, Bleasdale. This is in the vicinity of SD/570460, and perhaps half a mile or less west of the site of the well known Bronze

¹ E. D. Evens, L. V. Grinsell, S. Piggott and F. S. Wallis, 'Fourth Report of the Sub-Committee of the South-Western Group of Museums and Art Galleries on the Petrological Identification of Stone Axes', *Proceedings of the Prehistoric Society* 28 (1962), pp. 209-26.

² *Transactions of the Lancashire and Cheshire Antiquarian Society* 12 (1894), pp. 30-41. *Ibid.* 13 (1895), pp. 27-31.

³ *Ibid.* 12 (1894), pp. 38-9.

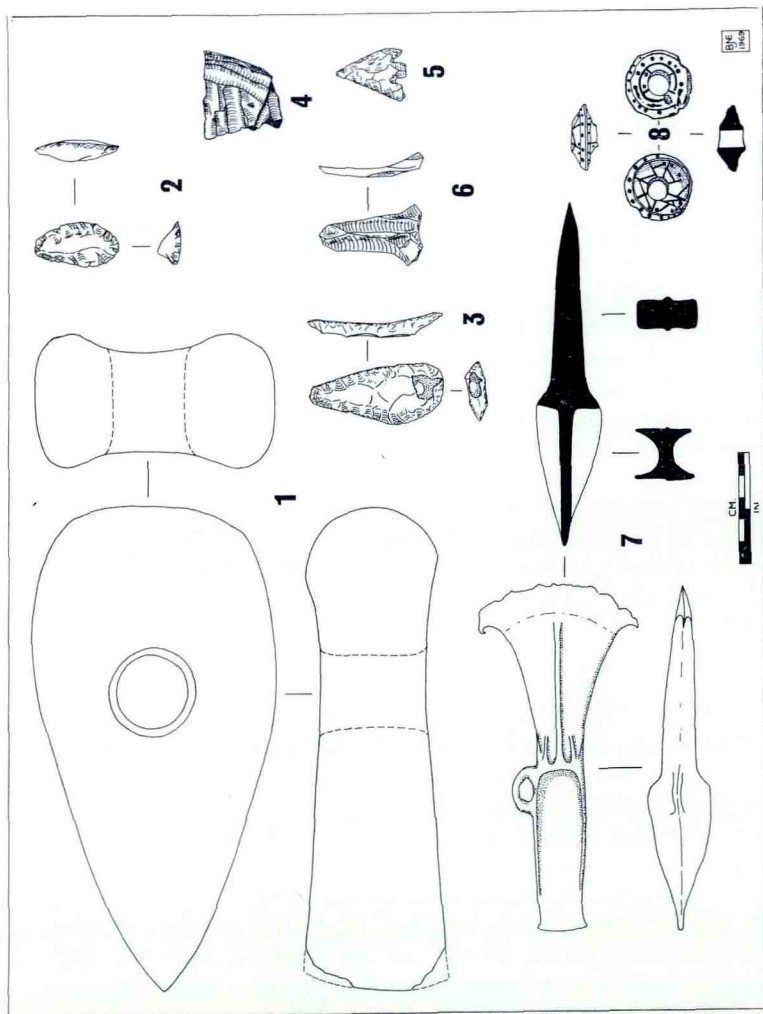


Figure 14
 OBJECTS OF STONE (1), FLINT (2, 3, 5, 6), CHERT (4), BRONZE (7)
 AND LEAD (8)

Age palisaded barrow.⁴ The dimensions of the flint are: length, 6.3 cm.; width, 2.7 cm.; thickness, 1.0 cm.

4. The chert core shown in Fig. 14, 4 was found by Mrs E. Barker in Yealand Redmayne. It has two striking platforms, and flakes have been struck from it in both directions. It bears comparison with cores from Star Carr.⁵

5. The flint barbed and tanged arrowhead (Fig. 14, 5) was found by Mr T. G. Cowley at Mawdesley (NGR SD/483150). It is patinated white and its dimensions are: length, 3.4 cm.; width, 2.4 cm.; thickness, 0.3 cm.

6. The flint blade (Fig. 14, 6) was found in Marles Wood, Salesbury (NGR SD/677358) by Mrs Haworth of Sale Wheel. Its dimensions are: length, 4.9 cm.; width, 2.9 cm.; thickness, 0.6 cm.

7. A Bronze Age looped palstave (Fig. 14, 7) was found about 1930 by Mr J. Lawrenson in digging for a water pipe at Briarfield Nurseries, Horsebridge Dyke, Carleton (NGR SD/336390). It has been kindly deposited by its owner in the Harris Museum and Art Gallery, Preston (Accession number A.2000).

8. Much attention has been attracted by the discovery in Danish and other north European peat bogs of human bodies dating from prehistoric times and preserved in good, sometimes remarkable, condition. Some of these bodies, including the best known one from Tollund, show evidence which has been interpreted as indicating ritual murder. In other cases only parts of bodies have been found, and these discoveries include isolated female heads from Stidsholt Fen (Vendyssel) and Roum Fen (Himmerland), of which the latter at least was probably a sacrificial offering.

In view of the large areas of peat moss in Lancashire which has been intensively drained, cultivated and cut for fuel in the last few centuries, it would have been in no way surprising if such a burial had been recorded from the county. It is interesting, therefore, to consider the facts described in two letters to the *Preston Chronicle* written in 1824 and 1825 by William Birch, surgeon, of Stalmine.

In the first, dated 4 June 1824, and appearing in the following day's paper, he describes the discovery in these terms:

As some labourers were digging peat, on that part of Pilling Moss contiguous to the road leading to Garstang, on Wednesday week, at a depth of six feet from the surface, a piece of coarse woollen cloth, of a yellow colour, was discovered, in which were contained the remains of a human skull, with

⁴ W. J. Varley, 'The Bleasdale Circle', *Antiquaries Journal*, 18 (1938), pp. 154-71.

⁵ J. G. D. Clark, *Excavations at Star Carr* (1954), p. 98 and fig. 33, 6.

a great abundance of hair, of a most beautiful auburn, and two strings of large black glass beads, together with a part of the first vertebre [*sic*] of the neck; the hair was plaited, and of great length; in many parts, about three inches from the extremities of the braids, it was cut off by some heavy cutting instrument, as the ends were exactly level, not a hair projecting, which could not have been the case had it been cut by scissors: a large piece of hardened moss, rendered so by previous exposure to the air, and bearing evident marks of having been dug with a spade, was found lying in immediate contact above the cloth, though the moss above was as solid as in any other part.

Birch goes on to speculate on the circumstances which might have surrounded the death, regarding it as a recent murder, and presuming that 'In all probability . . . the head and body [had] been separately disposed of, in order the more effectually to escape detection', though it is not quite clear how the digging of two six foot holes in the moss would be less likely to attract attention than the digging of one.

His second letter, dated 28 January 1825, and appearing in the paper for 5 February, gives some further information which, together with that in the first, makes it probable that the burial of the head took place long before the nineteenth century, and most likely in prehistoric times. He says that he has 'just procured a sight of the beads which were found', and describes them thus:

They are in two links; those of one are solely made of jet, in cylinders about half an inch in length, and the thickness of a goose-quill; the other link is composed of jet also, with the exception of one, which is a large round one of amber; the beads in this link are also cylindrical, but of irregular lengths, some being nearly an inch, and others not one third that length.

The elements of these descriptions which are worthy of note are these: the isolated female head, with long plaited auburn hair, partly cut; the coarse yellow cloth wrapping; the cylindrical jet beads and the round (? = globular) amber one; the hardened moss (= peat) in contact with the burial, together with the statement that 'the moss above was as solid as in any other part'.

The discovery of isolated female heads in peat bogs has already been mentioned. In many cases the hair of bog burials is described as knotted or plaited. The colour is frequently described as red or reddish, and this, like the colour of the cloth, may owe something to the effect of the peat. For example, the hair of the Grauballe man was red-brown, but 'this was not its original colour, but . . . was the result of the action of the bog-water'.⁶ In several cases the hair was wholly or partly shaved, and in this context Glob quotes Tacitus to the effect that

⁶ P. V. Glob, *The Bog People* (1969), p. 48.

part of the punishment for adultery among Germanic tribes was to have the hair cut off. Female hair is also said to be among regular finds of ritual deposits in Danish peat bogs.⁷

Many of the burials, too, included parts of cloth garments (e.g. Corselitze, Huldre Fen, Bred Fen). On the other hand, the discovery of beads with bog burials is rare, the only examples being apparently Corselitze, where they were of glass and associated with cloth garments and a body with long blond hair, and Huldre Fen, where there were again cloth garments and two amber beads. There does not seem to be any record of jet beads from a bog burial, and indeed jet necklaces are more generally associated with the Bronze Age than with the Iron Age to which most of the Danish burials are assigned. In this connection it is interesting that the beads found with the Bronze Age burial at Blackheath, Todmorden, included both jet and amber. This suggestion of a Bronze Age connection is given further weight by the fact that pollen analysis has suggested that 'no peat accumulation took place at Cockerham and Pilling until about 1400 B.C. or later'⁸ and 'the archaeological evidence . . . refer[s] the lowest 100 cm. of the Cockerham diagram to the Middle to Late Bronze Age'.⁹ Since there were about 2.5-3 m. of peat at Cockerham, an undrained moss such as Pilling Moss was in 1824, this accords well with the depth of six feet recorded by Birch.

Finally, in many of the continental examples there is evidence that an existing prehistoric peat cutting was used for the burial, which may be the explanation for Birch's description of the hardened peat over the burial, with no sign of disturbance above it.

On the existing evidence, it is impossible to be sure that the find of 1824 in Pilling Moss was a prehistoric bog burial, or even to say to what period it belonged if it were. Only the discovery of further evidence could assist in this. In particular, the rediscovery of the beads, which do not appear to have come into the hands of William Birch, might enable us to be more positive.

B. ROMAN

9. The fact that a number of Roman objects have been found in the vicinity of Whalley church is well known. They are

⁷ *Ibid.* p. 146.

⁸ F. Oldfield and D. C. Statham, 'Stratigraphy and Pollen Analysis on Cockerham and Pilling Mosses, North Lancashire', *Memoirs and Proceedings of the Manchester Literary and Philosophical Society* 107 (1965), p. 7.

⁹ *Ibid.* p. 5.

summarised in a paragraph of the current *Guide* to the church¹⁰ which was contributed by the late Sir Ian Richmond, and include the inscribed stone over the inner arch of the north door (RIB 599).¹¹ It is usually assumed that these objects came from Ribchester, though this seems an unlikely explanation for the coins which are said to have been found in the churchyard. The purpose of this note is to draw attention to another Roman stone at Whalley which is unlikely to have been transported more than five miles for use as a building stone and then never so used. This is the altar to Mars which is now at the west end of the north aisle (Fig. 15). It is presumably the stone referred to by T. D. Whitaker as being in the churchyard and bearing 'the rude remains of an human figure in relieve'.¹² Although Whitaker gives no origin for the stone, J. E. W. Wallis,¹³ without quoting an authority, says that it, and the stone with a lewis hole which is now by the south face of the tower, were found 'three or four feet below the surface between the buttresses on the south side of the tower'. If these various Roman finds from Whalley churchyard did not come from Ribchester, and imply a Roman building in the more immediate vicinity, it seems probable that the relief figure built into the wall of the light-well of Standen Hall (NGR SD/747402)¹⁴ came from the same source.

10. Fig. 14, 8 shows a lead spindle whorl which was found by John Cookson on the bank of the Blundel Brook on the south side of Broughton churchyard near Preston. It is of a Roman type, and published examples include those from Woodhouse, Northumberland¹⁵ and from Whitechurch, Shropshire.¹⁶

11. A glance at the Ordnance Survey *Map of Roman Britain* (3rd. ed. 1956) will show that Lancashire has its fair share of the Roman milestones recorded there, but in fact the position requires modification.

There are three symbols on the map, representing five, or possibly six, milestones, all inscribed. To these should be added three uninscribed stones which all seem to have good qualifications for inclusion.

¹⁰ H. C. Snape (ed.), *Guide to the Parish Church of S. Mary and All Saints, Whalley* (1958), p. 3.

¹¹ R. G. Collingwood and R. P. Wright, *The Roman Inscriptions of Britain, Volume I, Inscriptions on Stone*, (1965).

¹² T. D. Whitaker, *An History . . . of the Original Parish of Whalley* (4th ed. revised by J. G. Nichols and P. A. Lyons, 1876), II, p. 15.

¹³ J. E. W. Wallis, *A Chronological Handlist of . . . the Parish Church of Whalley* (1921), p. 9.

¹⁴ W. T. Watkin, *Roman Lancashire* (1883), p. 142.

¹⁵ J. W. Brailsford, *Guide to the Antiquities of Roman Britain* (1951), p. 48 and fig. 23, III, d, 3.

¹⁶ G. D. B. Jones and P. V. Webster, 'Mediolanum: Excavations at Whitechurch, 1965-6', *Archaeological Journal* 125 (1969), p. 245 and fig. 21, 3.



Figure 15
ROMAN ALTAR TO ?MARS, WHALLEY CHURCH
Photograph B. J. N. Edwards.

The inscribed stones are the following. RIB 2268 and 2269 from Ribchester, now lost, and possibly the same stone: RIB 598, also from Ribchester:¹⁷ RIB 2270 from Burrow about three miles south of Lancaster and RIB 2271 from the same area:¹⁸ RIB 2272 from the Artle Beck, Caton.

The uninscribed stones are the following: (a) A stump, now acting as a boundary stone between the parishes of Leck and Burrow-with-Burrow (NGR SD/630761). This was scheduled as an Ancient Monument on 2 April 1965.¹⁹ (b) A gatepost on the corner of the road leading north from B.5272 at Forton Hall (NGR SD/478504) This stone (Fig 16) is the left gatepost, and in front of the right gatepost lies a socket stone for the reception of a cross-shaft. At first sight it appears probable that the gatepost was the shaft of the cross, but the fit would not have been a good one, since the shaft is almost circular, while the socket is rectangular. Taking into consideration the shape of the gatepost, the fact that part of the top has been broken off, and its position on the probable line of the Roman road from Lancaster to Walton-le-Dale, there seems to be a very good case for regarding this as a Roman milestone. Excavations carried out a few years ago by members of the Pilling Historical Society showed that the stone, which at present stands about 4 feet above the ground, is sunk only about 1 foot 6 inches into it, and that there is no inscription on the buried portion. (c) A piece of stone, roughly cylindrical, 2 feet 7 inches in length, now lies in the ditch at the edge of a field where this forms the boundary between the parishes of Little Mitton and Wiswell. The parish boundary is here following the line of the Roman road from Ribchester to Ilkley, and the site is about 20 yards east of the crossing of the Barrow Brook (NGR SD/725383). The stone was found, partially buried, by the Rev. P. Graystone about 1957.

In connection with the inscribed stones referred to above, it should be noted that the findspot of RIB 598, given in the current National Trust *Guide to the Roman Fort at Ribchester* and in RIB as 'in one of the granaries' should read 'in the north guard-chamber of the west gate'. This is clearly stated in the *Interim Report* on the excavations of 1899. The relevant passage reads '... a small turret presently revealed itself, which proved

¹⁷ Recently identified by J. P. Sedgley (Keele University thesis on petrological identification of Roman milestones) as a Namurian Sandstone of the Millstone Grit series, probably quarried on Longridge Fell. See also E. B. Birley, review of RIB in *Journal of Roman Studies* 56 (1966), p. 230.

¹⁸ For finds from this Burrow see B. J. N. Edwards, 'Finds from *Contrebis*', forthcoming in *Transactions of the Cumberland and Westmorland Antiquarian and Archaeological Society*.

¹⁹ D. Charlesworth, 'A Roman Milestone near Overtown, Lancs.', *Trans. Cumb. West. Antiq. Arch. Soc.* new series 65 (1965), p. 427.

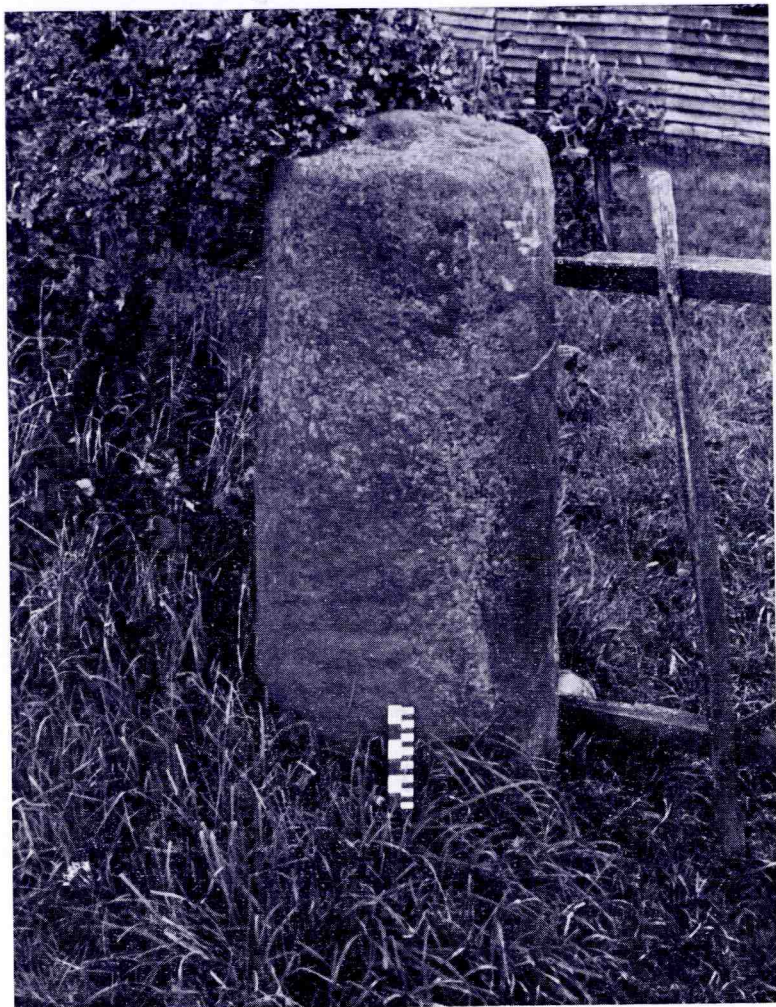


Figure 16
ROMAN MILESTONE AT FORTON
Photograph B. J. N. Edwards.

to be the guard chamber of the westerly gateway. Its interior was not completely cleared, but [a number of small finds were made]. But of greater importance was the finding of a piece of broken pillar, some nine inches high . . . inscribed with the following letters:

.....O.....

...VINTO. '

12. Attention has been drawn by the present writer²⁰ to the discovery of an uninscribed Roman altar on Mellor Moor and its subsequent mention in print. In this connection it seems worthy of note that there is in the chapel of Samlesbury Old Hall a small uninscribed Roman altar. Nothing seems to be known of the origin of this, but it may well be that from Mellor.

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²⁰ B. J. N. Edwards, 'Roman Lancashire' in *Britain and Rome, Essays Presented to Eric Birley*, edited by M. G. Jarrett and B. Dobson (1965), p. 104.