

THE ROMANS AT TAMAR MOUTH.

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The paucity and scattered character of traces of the Romans in Devon and Cornwall, west of Exeter, gives special interest to new discoveries in this direction. This must be my apology for endeavouring to bring into one focus all that seems to be known of the presence of the conquerors of the world at the mouth of the Tamar, on the shores of what we now call Plymouth Sound.

Until the present year I do not think we have had any evidence west of Exeter of more than casual or individual Roman occupation, or rather presence. The forgery attributed to Richard of Cirencester is primarily responsible for the baseless fiction of the existence of Roman stations in South Devon and Cornwall; nor do I think that in this latter county, at any rate, we have proof of the existence of Roman roads, the St. Hilary stone notwithstanding.* Still, the presence of that stone; the discovery of hoards of coins, as at Helford Haven and near Gorran and at Pennance; and the not unfrequent occurrence elsewhere of casual examples of Roman money; show clearly that the Romans not only visited the county, but that there was some amount of occupation by them, probably in the form of trading posts. And I think it very likely that the vestiges of their intercourse and presence would be far more numerous than they are, had more attention been paid to bringing them to light, and preserving them.

I am the more strengthened in this belief by my own experience in the Plymouth district, where, within the past few years, discovery has followed discovery, until I am able to lay before the Institution a body of evidence that I myself was probably the last to suspect. Indeed, before the present year

* And, I may add, the Tintagel stone, discovered since this paper was read, by the Rev. W. Iago. There were British trackways, which the Romans who came west naturally followed.

the only known traces of the Romans about "Tamar Mouth" consisted of the casual occurrence of a few coins, and of a few fragments of pottery. We learnt far more in 1888 than the most sanguine local antiquary ever dreamt of.

The coins have been found in several localities, but chiefly by the ancient sea margin. The site of the Millbay Railway Terminus yielded several, and others have been found on the reclaimed shores of what was once an inner reach of Millbay, known as Surpool. Others have been found on the Hoe, and at Cattedown; and several at and near the isthmus which joins Mount Batten to the mainland of Staddon Heights. Prince Rock, further up the Laira, yielded many, and some have been found at Plympton.

Then on the higher ground away from the water we have Roman coins occurring at the Devonport Park; Mannamead—where five were dug up in one spadeful of earth; possibly on the line of an old trackway, at Torr, in the same neighbourhood; and—the most recent of all—in loose earth in a space enclosed by the foundation walls of a house in Prospect Street, Plymouth.

I give as complete a list as is in my power of the particulars of these various finds, the star indicating those that are in my own possession. The only coins of the series that had any association with other antiquities were those from the Batten district. At Mount Batten itself British gold and silver coins have been found; on the Batten isthmus there are remains of a kitchen midden; and on the slopes of Staddon, immediately above, a Keltic cemetery was discovered when Fort Stamford was built. Though such association existed, there was however no connection between the Roman relics and the other antiquities—nothing was indicated beyond successive occupation or presence.

Alexander Severus	Mount Batten.
”	Cattedown.
Antoninus Pius	Cattedown.
”	Mount Batten.
*Carus (second brass)	Millbay.
O. Diademed head to right	IMP CARVS P F AVG
R. Figure of Hope	SPES PVBLICA.

*Constantine (second)	Mannamead.
O. Laureated head to right	CONSTANTINVS.....
R. Two Roman soldiers with standards.	Legend imperfect.
*Constantine (second)	Prospect Street.
O. Head to right	CONSTANT.....
R. Detrited and patinated.	
Constantine	Prince Rock.
Constans (third)	Mount Batten.
Domitian	Battery Hill, Stonehouse.
"	Mount Batten.
Faustina	Plymouth Hoe.
Hadrian (2 examples)	Cattedown.
Magnentius (second)	Millbay.
*Nero (first)	Mount Batten.
O. Diademed head to right.	Patinated.
R. Female figure	"
*Nero (?) first	Prospect Street.
O. Head to right	Imperfect.
R. Detrited.	
*Probus (second)	Devonport Park.
O. Diademed head to right, IMP C PROBUS P F AVG.	
R. Figure of Peace, IIII in exergue, PAX AVG.	
Trajan Decius	Mount Batten.
Vespasian	Mount Batten.
*Victorinus (third).	Staddon Heights.
O. Head to right	IMP C VICTORINVS P F AVG.
R. Figure of Peace.	PAX AVG.

Unknown and undetermined.

First brass, head to right	Prospect Street.
*Second, female head to right	"
Greek colonial character.	
*Third, wholly detrited	"
*Second, head to right	Plympton.
*Third, undecipherable.	"
Several, no particulars	Millbay.
" "	Prince Rock.

But a discovery was made in April last of a much more important nature. A characteristic Roman bronze, the figure of

the god Mercury, was dug up in a garden overlooking Hooe Lake, a land-locked inlet from Cattewater, in the vicinity of Batten. It is small, $2\frac{1}{8}$ inches in height, $1\frac{1}{4}$ in extreme breadth, and weighs only $\frac{2}{3}$ of an ounce. With the exception of the right foot it is perfect. This is just one of the little gods that Roman merchants carried with them, and there can be no reasonable doubt it is the relic of the presence of a Roman trader, who, for aught we know, may have had his post at this peculiarly convenient spot.

Still more important is the last matter to which I have to refer; for if my hypothesis is correct, we have in a discovery at Stonehouse, in 1882, evidence that there must have been a Roman settlement of very definite character on "Tamara ostia." Though the discovery was made in 1882, the men who made it had reasons for keeping their own counsel; and the whole of the facts would have been lost to archæology had not Mr. Stenteford of Hooe perseveringly followed up a clue, and put me in possession of particulars since supplemented by personal investigation.

Without going into details, which may be found elsewhere,* I may state that in 1882 there was found in Newport Street, Stonehouse, on the edge of Stonehouse Creek, and extending back from the ancient beach to a low limestone cliff (once the water boundary) a few feet only above tide level, an area which had been paved with pebbles; and in one corner of which there was a group of little tombs—4-ft. to 4-ft. 6-in. in length, 2-ft. to 2-ft. 6-in. in height, and about $2\frac{1}{2}$ -ft. wide. The sides and ends were of thin tile bricks greatly decayed, and they were covered by slate-slabs. They ran *north and south*.

The whole area was buried under a mound of ashes, bones, and refuse matter, the surface of which had been levelled, covered with earth, and planted as a shrubbery. Some pottery, &c., seemed to date the refuse heap about the early part of the 16th century; but there was nothing found by which to date the tombs.

* Trans. Devon Assoc. 1888, pp. 134-138.

However, within certain limits they seem to date themselves. They were not big enough for interment by inhumation—indeed, they were merely built kist-vaens, and built too as Romans often built them. Again, the fact that they lay north and south at once suggests a non-Christian, if not a pre-Christian, origin. The probability that they are Roman almost amounts then to certainty; and it seems quite likely that this spot was an *ustrinum*, a place in which the Romans both burnt and buried their dead.

If so, we can understand further why in Saxon times Stonehouse had such an important building as its name indicates. It must have been structurally far in advance of its neighbouring manors; and the existence of remains of a Roman building would supply the needed explanation.