

I.

NOTICE OF THE DISCOVERY OF TWO ANCIENT TOWNS IN BRITTANY,
ONE OF THE GALLO-ROMAN, AND THE OTHER PROBABLY OF AN
EARLIER PERIOD. BY JAMES MILN, Esq., F.S.A. Scot.

The question has of late been frequently asked me,—Where is this place where you have been digging? Is it not Carnac in Egypt? The Carnac with which we have to do this evening is not the Carnac of the alignments of sphynxes, but the Carnac of the alignments of menhirs, situated in the Canton Quiberon, in the arrondissement of l'Orient, and in the department of the Morbihan of the French republic. About a mile to the eastward of the town of Carnac there is a small piece of moorland, covered with mounds, called the Boceno, evidently so named from the Breton word Bocen, a mound, in the plural Bocenieu. This moorland is surrounded by cultivated fields, the surfaces of which are thickly strewn with fragments of ancient tiles and pottery.

In 1873 M. Henry du Cleuziou, the commissioner appointed by the Committee for Public Monuments, observed these, and predicted that there would be found the remains of a Gallo-Roman town. In the summer of 1874 I undertook the exploration of the first and smallest of these mounds, aided by the counsels of M. Du Cleuziou, of the distinguished artist M. Valerio, and by Dr Gressy of the Polymathic Society of the Morbihan.

I shall call your attention to

1st. A birdseye view of the Boceno, and drawings of the surrounding country.

2*d.* The remains of the house we exposed, and what we found in digging at the Boceno.

3*d.* A superficial digging at the Mané Bras, and what we found there.

4*th.* Some researches in neighbouring dolmens.

I. THE BOCENO.

In this birdseye view of the Boceno, for which I am indebted to M. du Cleuziou, we see the alignments of small menhirs running in the line of the dolmen (Mein Kam ar Ker Roeh), the crooked stone of the village of the rock. In the field to the west of the Boceno there is a large menhir which points out the partly destroyed dolmen of the neighbouring height. That the dolmens are funeral monuments has been clearly shewn by the recent exploration of the Polymatic Society of the Morbihan, in which cinders, charcoal, bones, pottery, and everything connected with the rites of sepulture have been found.

That the custom of placing a menhir, to point out from afar its dolmen, was a frequent one in the Commune of Carnac is proved by—

1*st.* A menhir points out the dolmen of Grastürn ;

2*d.* The overturned menhir of the hill of the Canopy (Stolzii), indicated a dolmen whose stones now fill a neighbouring ditch ;

3*d.* The menhir of the funeral hill (Manio), indicated the dolmen situated near the mill of the same name ;

4*th.* The dolmen on the hill of Crucey is indicated by the menhir on the summit of the hill ;

5*th.* The dolmen of the hill of the Moustoir is also indicated by a menhir on its summit ;

6*th.* The three dolmens of Mané Gorion have three menhirs adjacent to them, but now overturned.

As the Buddhist tope in India had its Tee, so in Carnac the dolmen had its Menhir.

One more point worth noting about these witnessing stones is this, that they are somewhat similar in form ; long, and running to a point.

The view on looking around from the Boceno is an interesting one. To the southward is the little sea extending westward between the peninsula of Quiberon, and with its many islets, and the mainland, by some

writers supposed to be the Mare Conclusum of Cæsar, and the place of his great battle with the fleet of the Veneti. To the south-west lies the village of Genepe, with the English shot still piled on its chimney tops, a souvenir of the disastrous landing of the Emigrés. In the distance the Fort Penthièvre is seen. To the westward is the town of Carnac, and close to it the Mont St Michel, which is simply a huge cairn,—thence the name Carnac, *i.e.*, belonging to the cairn.

The exploration of the dolmen of the Mont St Michel yielded rich stores of treasures to the Polymathic Society, and these may now be seen in their museum at Vannes, consisting of celts in flint, jade, jadeite, and tremolite, and of beads and pendeloques in jade, amber, agate, rock-crystal, jasper, and coloured glass.

The reports made to the Polymathic Society show, that in those dolmens where stone weapons and ornaments were found in quantity, there pottery was wanting, or found in small quantity, and *vice versa*.

The neighbourhood of the Boceno is also remarkable for the number and vastness of its alignments of menhirs.

To the north-west	are the alignments of Menec,	942	menhirs.
„ north	„ Kermario,	994	„
„ north-east	„ Kerlescant,	266	„
„ east	„ Menec vihan,	125	„
	Total,	2327	menhirs.

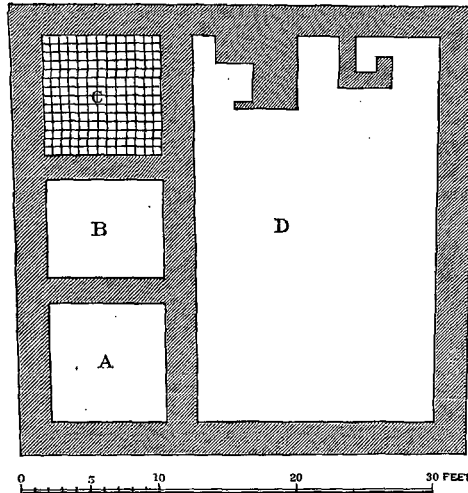
Now these names are significant ones,—Menec—“belonging to the stones;” Kermario—“place of the dead;” Kerlescant,—“place of burning.” Two of these alignments run in the lines of the solstices, and two in the lines of the equinox. The axis of the alignment of Stonehenge is also on the line of the solstice. The alignment of Kermario points to the dolmen of Kercado (the place of St Cado), to the astronomical features of which I alluded at our last meeting.

II. REMAINS OF THE HOUSE, &c.

The manner of procedure in exploring the mound was this. All stones had to be carted a long distance away. Bricks, tiles, metals, bones, and pottery, were laid aside in separate heaps as found. The fragments of tiles and pottery were carefully examined for markings. When the day's

work was over, such of the find as was considered of importance was carried home for farther inspection.

We commenced to dig on the south side of the mound and worked down to the level of the fields, or a little below it, when we came on the walls of the house. Following the wall, and working carefully round the mound, enabled us to expose the foundations in their entirety as represented in the plan. These were built with small roughly squared stones



Ground Plan of Gallo-Roman House at Boceno.

of granite and mortar, and are shown in the rubbing taken from the mid portion of the east wall, down to its foundation course. The plan shows that the foundation walls had been laid down considerably off the square, and the same feature is strikingly prominent in the ground plan of the Gallo-Roman fort of Jublains, in Mayence.

The flooring of the three apartments, A, B, and D, was in fine concrete. The apartment C had been floored with tiles. These were deranged and broken, but some were found entire. Fragments of orna-

mental tiles were also found here. Three of these flooring tiles bore the impress of dogs' feet, which had walked over them in the soft state. The flooring was covered with charcoal cinders, burnt earth, iron, and clinker, and even pieces of granite, in a state of vitrification. The house had evidently been burned, and judging from the smallness of the fragments of pottery found, it had very likely been pillaged. The marauder smashes up and destroys what he does not carry away with him.

Roof.—Amongst the cartloads of fragments of tiles, only one roofing tile was found unbroken, which is now before you,—the “tegula of the Romans,” or the “brique à rebord of the French.” The drawing on the wall shows how these tiles were laid on the roof, and their edges covered by the imbrex, a demi-cylindrical tile resembling our ridge tiles. The Gallo-Roman furnace at Redon, discovered a few years ago in the grounds of the College of the Eudest Fathers, had, until six months ago, its roof arranged in the manner I have described, but it is now fallen in. It is to be regretted that this interesting monument had not been preserved.

Trenches.—Trenches of one metre in depth were dug across the large apartment and round the inside and outside of the walls. At a depth of 30 centimetres we came on the unmistakable traces of a burnt house, and at 80 centimetres of those of a still older house, which had also been burned. In digging these trenches we came on quantities of bones, shells, and fragments of pottery.

Bones, teeth, and shells.—The bones are fairly represented by what are on the table before you, and have been classified by M. Riviera, the discoverer of the fossil man of Mentone. They are :—

1st. Bones and teeth of a small species of ox, one of these bones shows two cuts, evidently made by a sharp-cutting instrument, and another traces of having been gnawed.

2d. Bones and teeth of the deer or goat, the sheep, the pig, and teeth of the dog or wolf.

3d. Oyster, shells, cockles, limpets, mussels, all were found in abundance, more especially oyster shells.

Stone Implements.—On the flooring we found portions of querns or hand millstones, flakes of flint, an unpolished celt in greyish flint, also smoothed stone instruments. Another celt was found by an English boy in my absence, and, singularly enough, when poking with his knife in the ruins

of the chimney; but he flung it amongst the adjacent heaps of rubbish, not knowing its value, and it was not recovered. The white polished celt on the table was found at Ploemel, and was stated by the boy's mother to have exactly resembled the one her son had found. The Bretons to this day build celts into their chimneys as a preservative against lightning. The Breton name for a celt is (*mein jürin*) the Thunder-stone.

Iron.—The nails exhibited were taken out of the walls where the mortar had preserved them; even there some were found so completely oxidised as to crumble into powder on being handled ever so carefully. Lumps of iron and clinker were found on the floor, and what appeared to have been iron weapons, but these were too much oxidised to be lifted.

Glass.—One fragment of flint glass having double lines engraved, and another line above these, but not quite concentric. We found some fragments of a bluish green glass also—all of these are on the table.

Bronze.—The bronze articles are few in number and small in size, viz., a pin or fibula—a ring somewhat elliptic in form, probably used for the waist-belt. There is also what at first looks like a nail or button. This had served as an ornament on the leather garment of the ancient Breton. The modern Breton still wears silver buttons of the same size on his coat, and more for ornament than use. The gipsies in Hungary to this day wear similar bronze ornaments on their leather garments, as shown in the two drawings copied by permission from Valerio's Studies in Hungary.

Pottery.—Fragments of pottery were found enough to fill three baskets. These were of many varieties and were classed as follows:—

(1.) Pottery anterior to the Conquest; (2.) of the time of the Conquest; (3.) of the time of the Antonines. The Pre-Conquest pottery has little or no ornament, is badly fired, mostly made by hand, that is, not turned on a potter's wheel; the indents of the potter's fingers are sometimes plainly visible, the thickness is unequal, and an examination of its paste shows that it is formed from the debris of decomposing primitive rock, showing crystals of quartz, zeolites, felspar, and scales of mica, &c.

1. The drawing shows the reconstruction, from fragments on the table, of the form of two plates or dishes, and on comparing these with the drawings of modern Breton pottery we see that the form is still preserved. At the village of Malansac, which is a village of potters, the men to this

day make all their large vases by hand. The women turn the smaller vessels on a potter's wheel.

2. In the pottery classed as of the time of the Conquest, the firing is better; the paste is better prepared and ornamentation sometimes occurs. The drawing shows the reconstruction from the fragments on the table of these forms, and a reference to the drawings of modern Breton pottery shows that these forms are still preserved. The specimens drawn are placed in the order in which they were found in digging the trenches (from the flooring to one metre in depth), and form an interesting study, showing that as we descended in the trench the forms got simpler.

3. Here we have fragments of pottery of the time of the Antonines, fragments of water jars, bowls, amphoræ, and parts of the handles of amphoræ. I exhibit also two drawings of an amphora of similar form to these fragments, which was fished up in the river near Locmariaker. The coloured drawing of the so called Samian pottery shows the reconstruction of the forms of the specimens on the table.

The drawing of the Gallo Roman potter's mould serves to show how these vases were made, viz., by moulding the lower portion and turning off the upper on the wheel; then taking the vase out of the mould and adding on the ring or foot.

Tradition.—Traditions are the echoes of forgotten events, and one might expect that some tradition would have remained of the ancient town of the Boceno. The plague, however, which ravaged Europe in the sixth century, and which swept away whole communes in Brittany, must have blotted out many histories. The tradition generally current at Carnac about the Boceno is that the Templars ("the red monks") had a convent there, that they were massacred, and that their houses were burned on the same night on account of their impiety. The Abbé Collet states that the Templars never had a convent in the Canton of Quiberon. The place bears an evil reputation to this day, and children are warned to return home early or beware of the ghosts of the Boceno.

THE MANÉ BRAS.

To the eastward of the town of Carnac, in a straight line, between three and four miles distant, there is a hill called the Mané Bras, which means the Great Hill. In August last year M. du Cleuziou discovered indica-

tions there of ancient structures. Shortly afterwards I drove down there accompanied by MM. du Cleuziou and Valerio, and taking with us only two men and a boy. In a few hours we exposed the walls of a house, and turned out stone instruments polished by use, flakes of flint, fragments of iron weapons, iron, clinker, fragments of bluish green glass, and a basketful of fragments of pottery, mostly of the pre-Conquest period. From what we could make out on so short an inspection, the Mané Bras had been a fortified town, surrounded by a wall, and of older date than the Boceno. One could not leave it without feeling a strong wish that it should be thoroughly explored. The drawing copied from Maximilian de Ring's, "Tombs in Alsace," represents a vase in red earth with holes round the neck. There is a specimen from the Mané Bras in red earth also, and having similar holes round its neck. No feasible explanation has as yet been made as to the uses of these holes. It has been suggested that the vessel may have been covered at the mouth, and that the holes would serve for the escape of gas from fermentation.

DOLMENS.

On the table before you are arranged what was attained by digging up the floors of the dolmens of Mane Gorion, Mane Stiiio, the Magdalen, &c., and although these had been previously exposed, we still found flakes of flint, rolled pebbles, portions of worked iron, iron clinker, charcoal, pottery in fragments of various ages from pre-Conquest downwards, and similar to the fragments found at the Boceno and the Mané Bras.

GENERAL CONCLUSIONS.

The teaching of these diggings at the Boceno, the Mané Bras, and in adjacent dolmens, then, is this—that the Boceno mound covered the remains of a Gallo-Roman house of the second or third century—that the Mané Bras was probably of an older date—that the evidence of the rites of sepulture is incomplete as regards polished stone weapons, but we have stone instruments polished by use. Then the dolmens were used for funeral rites during the second and third century by the inhabitants of Brittany, a Gaulois or Celtic race, and this may explain the affinity and resemblance of the stone monuments of the two Britains—Armorica and Great Britain.