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The Kingscote Stone Coffin

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No evidence for the date of the building could be gathered, as all the soil removed was the result of later disturbances and the existing fragmentary remains were almost all directly beneath modern walls. A photograph of the piece of pavement first found and a plan and section of the remains uncovered have been deposited in the City Museum.

Thanks are due to Mrs Goscombe and her family for reporting the discovery and also for their kindness in allowing the work of flooring the cellar to be delayed while an investigation of the remains was carried out.

D. M. RENNIE.

BURIALS IN KINGSHOLM SQUARE, GLOUCESTER

During the Autumn of 1951 workmen who were making up the roadway in Kingsholm Square and preparing to lay surface drains, disturbed with a mechanical excavator a total of at least eleven inhumation burials. These occurred both on the East and on the West side of the Square and the bodies were all placed with heads East and feet West. The graves had evidently been dug through a layer containing much Roman pottery, the bulk of which was first and second century in date. As far as could be ascertained, there were no grave goods and the date of the burials remains uncertain.

Pottery and other objects, including three Roman coins and a Roman netting needle, have, through the good offices of the City Surveyor, been deposited in the Gloucester City Museum. Thanks are due to him and to his staff for their kind and helpful co-operation.

D. M. RENNIE.

THE KINGSCOTE STONE COFFIN

In a previous volume of these TRANSACTIONS¹ the late Captain Willmore has listed the stone coffins found in the county and describes a number of them. He quotes a newspaper paragraph stating that one had been found at Kingscote, but he has no further information.

¹ *B.G.A.S.*, LXXI, p. 135.

The Kingscote family archives, recently secured for the County Records Office, include the following note describing the finding in 1872.

NOTE

The coffin still lies in the churchyard, overgrown by a holly bush.

Remains of the clamps are still to be seen: the two pieces of the cover seem to fit, but are shorter than the coffin. The figure shows the shape which is not quite that of any of Captain Willmore's types.

Length	outside 70", inside 64"
Greatest breadth	outside 22½" inside 17"
Depth	inside 14"



The Kingscote Stone Coffin

'Chestles' was an area name before it was applied to these fields: historians use it in this way, and the 1838 parish Title Map has the name written large across an area on both sides of the Tetbury-Dursley road above the fields. A distinct platform with much stone debris marks the site of the Roman villa which accounts for the name, below the named fields and the spot where the coffin was found. Small finds can still be picked up over a considerable area.

The site is near the junction of two ancient tracks. One of these, frequently described,¹ comes from the fork at Chavenage Green, crosses Kingscote Park, follows the narrow ridge between the Lasborough and the Horsley valleys, and the razor-back leading to Stinchcombe Hill, making for a Severn crossing

¹ *B.G.A.S.*, VIII, p. 156; XLVII, p. 65; LII, p. 151.

somewhere between Sharpness and Lydney. In the Chestles area it was known as Rudgeway and is named in early land grants to Kingswood Abbey¹ while the razor-back is likely to have been the 'spinetum'². 'Greenway'³ is likely to have been the other track running up the Lasborough valley and nearer the villa, described by Witts⁴: but I disagree with his making this a continuation of another track from Chavenage Green, duplicating Rudgeway by a longer route. Other authorities make this piece turn south along the Bath road: this linkage is partly traceable on the ground, while Witts' is not. Instead, I think that the track ran along the Bowldown road, past Roman finds, past Weston Birt and Easton Grey, to Norton where it is still marked as the old 'Small Way,' and then perhaps in the Chippenham-Devizes direction to Salisbury. Of the Bowldown finds one, a Roman stone now lost, inscribed 'Sui Icena . . .' of which there are only conjectural interpretations, was found hereabouts: another to Mettus the Getan, now in the Corinium Museum, was found 'at Nesley Farm'⁵ in a field which is roughly described: this description the present farmer thinks most likely to fit a field in the same vicinity.

The earliest account in 1722 of the finding of the villa thirty years before, and the later accounts down to the present, are brief, without much detail, and not altogether in agreement. Minor finds of fragments of roof and flue tiles, and of pottery, and small flints, I can confirm, adding painted to the Samian ware reported, and oyster and snail shells. I have traced two coins found near the coffin site, which Miss Rennie identifies as Antoniniani of Tetricus I, A.D. 270-3, and of Probus, A.D. 176-82: apparently also a statuette of Roma Minerva was found, of which now only the head survives, in the Corinium Museum. Gough⁶ writes of 'tessellated pavements' being found,

¹ e.g. Jeayes, *Berkeley Muniments*, no. 210.

² *Ibid.*, no. 333.

³ *Ibid.*, no. 210.

⁴ *Arch. Handbook of Glos.*

⁵ *B.G.A.S.*, XI, p. 336.

⁶ Camden's *Brittania*, 1789 edition, I, p. 277.

perhaps before in 1691 a fibula described elsewhere as of brass with red and blue enamel:¹ but Rudder writes of only remains of one pavement, while Gibson² does not mention even tesserae. In fact my impression is that the site has never been excavated, but only turned up in ploughing, yielding surface finds. Baddeley³ writes also of the frequent finding of funerary urns and Romano-British ritual remains: but I have seen no other mention of these. In spite of these doubts and discrepancies, it seems to be certain that there was a villa here, even if Gough's and Rudder's description of it as a Roman military station are exaggerated.

Kingscote Park also preserved and still has a tombstone of Julia Ingenuilla who died young at 20 years⁴: it would have been interesting to identify her with the 'young person, probable female' in the coffin: but this stone with its crescent symbol was found elsewhere. The *C.I.L.* ascribes it to a 'Hearleywood' which cannot be traced: Baddeley says it was found *in situ* at Horsley Wood near Nailsworth, which is only 1½ miles from Kingscote Park: though no other Roman finds from there were known of, the Gloucester City Museum has a coin of Antoninus Pius labelled by Baddeley 'Horsley Wood (Edge),' hitherto wrongly ascribed to Edge near Painswick: also, a trackway traced by Baddeley passes the wood. So that story fails.

E. S. LINDLEY.

“KINGSCOTE, WOTTON UNDER EDGE

On the 27 August 1872, when a field called 'The Middle Chestles,' above Ashel Barn was being ploughed, the plough struck against a stone, not 3 inches from the surface, which on examination was found to be the top of a solid stone coffin. On forcing it open, the two top stones fitting closely together, were secured by an iron clamp at each end of the coffin, a

¹ Rudder, *Gloucestershire*, 1779, p. 512.

² *Brittania*, 1722 edition, I, p. 281.

³ *B.G.A.S.*, LI, p. 151.

⁴ *B.G.A.S.*, LI, p. 164, and *C.I.L.*, VII, no. 75.