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This section, which I now place on record (fig. 1), shows that the surface of this alluvial flat has been raised between 5 and 6 feet in recent times, not by earth movements but by the gradual addition to the surface of silt and soil in the ordinary course of natural operations of denudation and deposition.

The surrounding district shows signs of occupation in banks and ditches and traces of dwellings; and in other communications I have offered reasons for believing that there were numerous settlements here, at any rate as far back as the time of the early Romanised British.

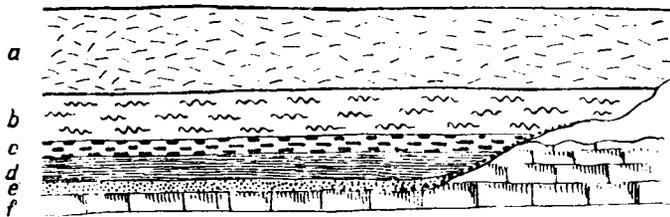


Fig. 1. Section seen in digging foundations of Mr E. Hope's extension of premises at Melbourn. Scale 8 feet to 1 inch.

- a. Made ground.
- b. Clay with thin layers of carbonaceous matter and pieces of blackened wood.
- c. Peat and peaty silt.
- d. Clay passing down into e.
- e. Sand with bones of domestic animals.
- f. Chalk.

II. ON SOME ANCIENT TRENCHES AND INTERMENTS NEAR SHEPRETH.

Many years ago¹ I drew the attention of the Society to a number of ancient remains, of various kinds, and not necessarily connected with one another, which occurred north of the village of Shepreth. There were the foundations and floors of some Roman houses which we covered up again and, which are still, we hope, safe, at a small depth below the surface of the ground

¹ *Report Camb. Ant. Soc.* Nov. 9, 1885, p. 60. = *R.* XLVI. p. 60. = No. XXVIII. p. 60. = Vol. VI. No. 2, p. 60.

awaiting detailed examination. There were earthworks that appeared to be something more than mere fences, but we have not yet got even a section across them, and they may therefore for aught we know be the remains of the trenches round an ancient, perhaps a Romanised British, settlement, or they may be the enclosures round a partly moated mediæval residence—or both. There were also exposed in the side of the Parish Church Pit some shallow graves, but no objects from which their age could be inferred had been found in them.

I am now able to add a little further information with respect to these remains. Over the whole of the low ground which lies between the obvious chalk heights of Barrington and Triplow, the substratum consists of chalk marl, which is extensively worked in that district for the manufacture of cement. It has been carved by natural denudation into a gently undulating surface upon which a chalky drift with scattered flints was deposited. It passes here and there into gravel, but is generally more stiff and impervious than even the chalk marl on which it lies. This drift and the chalk marl have been cut through in later times to form the broad shallow valleys in which the present streams chiefly run, and along these later valleys flint gravel has been deposited (fig. 2). The result of this mode of occurrence of the superficial deposits

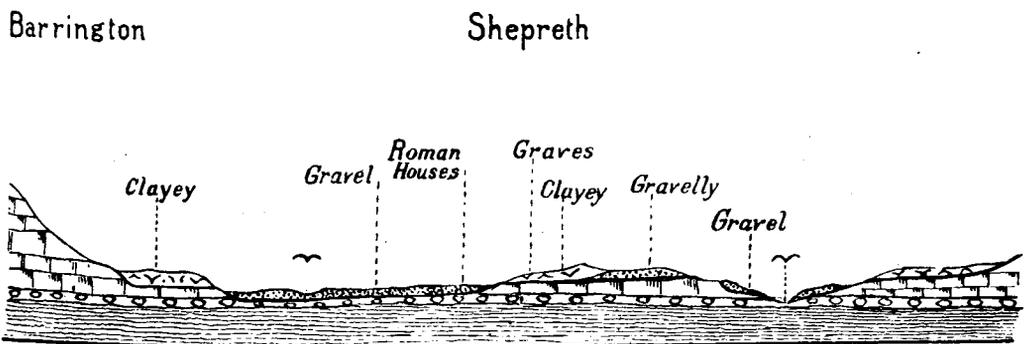


Fig. 2. Section through Barrington and Shepreth to illustrate the mode of occurrence of the gravel and clayey drift.

is that, except where the water is ponded back, so as to rise through the gravel to the surface, the lower ground is more

dry than the higher terraces, which are covered with the cold impervious clayey drift and chalk marl.

These conditions explain the distribution of ancient remains over this district. The Roman houses are on low but gravelly and dry ground, the graves are out in the cold clayey waste land. The considerations which now govern the choice of a site for a cemetery had no weight in those days. The mediæval grange was built on the margin of the dry ground where there was clay and water enough to facilitate the construction of a moat.

Mr Gildea, when "uncallowing," that is removing the superficial deposits over a portion of the field to the east of the Parish Church Pit, has recently exposed a number of graves similar to those which I formerly saw on the west of the pit, but, from the manner in which the work is being carried on, I had now a better opportunity of examining their position and construction. All those I saw were dug exactly east and west, the feet in a row of graves coming up to a definite line. The west end of nearly all of those then exposed was cut off by the edge of the pit (fig. 3). The largest grave measured 7 feet

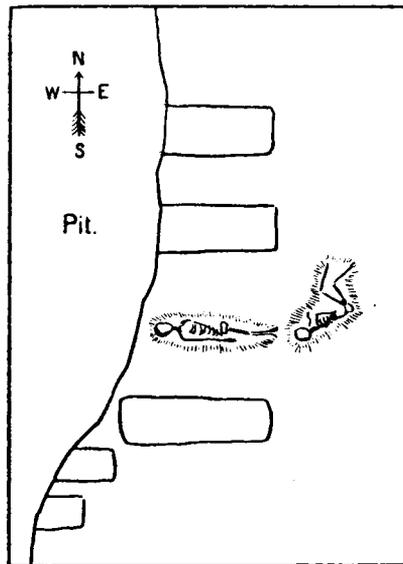


Fig. 3. Plan of Interments seen April, 1903.

4 inches in length, by 1 foot 10 inches in breadth, and was sunk 10 inches into the chalk. The depth of soil above the chalk

was rarely less than 1 foot, or more than 2 feet. All the graves except two had clean cut vertical sides; the two exceptions were in shallow pan-like depressions scraped out of the surface of the chalk, and into these the bodies seemed to have been hurriedly thrown, or to have been subsequently disturbed. The skeletons had been removed in every case except in two of these shallow graves, and when I visited the pit only a small number of bones were to be seen collected together in a heap. There was no skull sufficiently perfect to allow us to form an opinion as to its character. The teeth were somewhat crowded and worn, but very sound, and indicated a young person. The longest femur measured only 17 inches. In the surrounding soil some bones of domestic animals occurred. I noticed ox, pig, and dog, but there was nothing to connect them with the graves.

Within a few yards to the south-east there were two ditches running east and west, 8 paces apart, and some 4 feet 8 inches in depth, of which 1 foot was excavated in the solid chalk. The sides sloped from 3 feet 10 inches at the surface to 2 feet 4 inches across the bottom. They do not appear to have been filled by gradual accumulation, but by the material which was dug out having been soon thrown back. There was nothing to indicate their age or object, and they may have been trenches dug to test the depth and character of the rock below the soil. All over the area there are small pits of similar appearance in section which the workmen told me they thought were trial holes. I did not see anything to encourage us to follow them up.

The only object I found anywhere near was a fragment of a coarse earthenware ring which was in the soil at the north-east corner of the field. It is 4 inches in outside and $1\frac{1}{2}$ inches in inside diameter, and $1\frac{1}{2}$ inches in thickness. Similar rings of hardened clay are not uncommon at Horningsea, and indeed are frequently found where coarse cooking ware was either made or used. They may have been used to support vessels with a pointed base.

Unfortunately only a few fragments of bone have been preserved, so that we cannot determine even the sex of the

persons buried. The regularity and various size of the graves point to their belonging to a village community, and not to the hurried burial of men killed in battle. The parallelism, orientation, and depth of the graves, suggest comparison with interments at Burwell and Saffron Walden, which are known by the associated ornaments and instruments to be of Saxon age. On the other hand we have abundant evidence of Roman or Romanised British inhabitants all round Shepreth, and these graves may belong to any part of the period between the departure of the Romans and the arrival of the Normans when the Church was built, but we have no data for speculation as to which of the mixed races of that period we should refer them.

III. ON A SKELETON FOUND NEAR THE OBSERVATORY, CAMBRIDGE.

On September 21, 1903, the workmen employed in digging gravel in the pit at the back of the Observatory came across a skeleton lying about 4 feet deep in a grave running N.E. and S.W. with the head to the S.W. I learned that the body was lying face downward with the arms drawn round it as if they had been secured behind the back.

The face of the pit crossed the body obliquely, and unfortunately the skull, which was first exposed, was a good deal broken by the workmen's tools. The teeth were much worn, but generally sound, and the femur indicated a person some 5 feet 10 inches in height. I secured the skull, and some of the other bones, and requested the foreman to have them forwarded to the Museum of Human Anatomy.

I was informed that with the body an iron knife or dagger about 5 inches long was found, and a buckle and tongue such as might have been used with a strap about $\frac{3}{4}$ inch broad. The buckle was in such a position as to suggest that the strap had been fastened round the wrists, which, as above stated, appeared to have been secured behind the back.

These were all disposed of before my arrival, and I have

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