

PROCEEDINGS

OF THE

Cambridge Antiquarian Society,

4 MAY—1 JUNE 1908.

WITH

Communications

MADE TO THE SOCIETY

EASTER TERM 1908.

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Monday, 4 May, 1908.

Dr VENN, President, in the Chair.

The Reverend F. G. WALKER, M.A., made the following communications which were illustrated by lantern slides.

(1) SKELETONS RECENTLY FOUND AT THE "WAR
DITCHES," CHERRYHINTON.

Before reading to the Cambridge Antiquarian Society a short account of the finding of the graves and skeletons at Cheryhinton, I must thank Prof. Hughes, as so often it is my happy task to do, for affording me such a delightful afternoon's excavating, for intensely interesting it was in spite of a temperature 8 degrees below freezing point. A quarryman had brought word to Professor Hughes that in the course of his work he had come upon some bones. Not being able, through press of business, to spare time to look into the matter himself, Prof. Hughes asked me to do what I could. So on Feb. 7,

1907, armed with the few tools experience has taught me to be the most useful when excavating, I went to the spot.

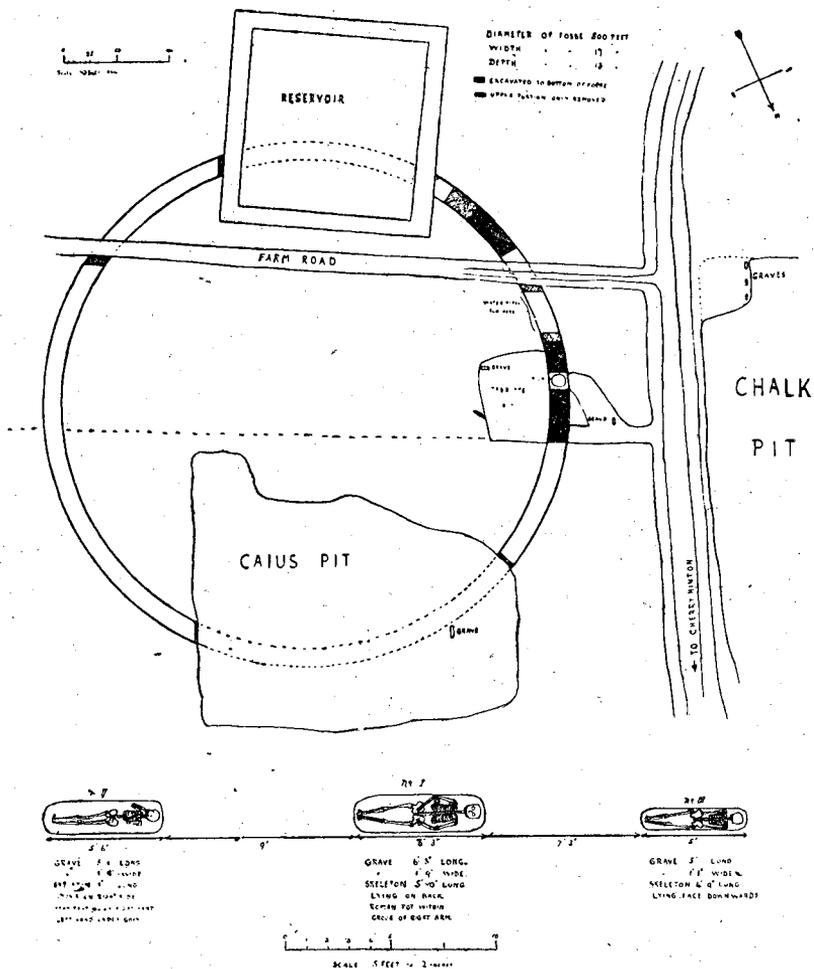


Fig. 1. "War Ditches," Cherryhinton.

Most of the members of the Society will know the place where these graves were, for they no longer exist, the quarrying operations having destroyed them.

Arriving at the Cross Roads at Cherryhinton Village, follow the road leading up to the Cambridge Waterworks Reservoir, and there on the very edge, and at the furthest end, of the big quarry that lies on the right of the road, the site will be reached.

The graves were exactly 65 yards, in a straight line N.N.W. from the point where the Fosse of the "War Ditches" crosses the Farm Road which runs on the north-eastern side of the Reservoir.

The quarry man, after clearing off the callow, as the earth and chalk refuse near the surface is called, had dug a trench in the chalk in the ordinary course of his work, and at the side of the trench had hit the skeleton with his pick. Fortunately not much damage was done, since he was on the watch for any traces of graves or antiquities, having been warned by Prof. Hughes that such might occur in the neighbourhood, and so the moment he saw a piece of bone he stopped digging in that place.

The grave lay in a N.N.E. and S.S.W. direction—the head to the N.N.E.—and was dug in the hard rubble, the bottom formed by the solid chalk. The length of it was 6 ft. 3 in., the uniform breadth 1 ft. 9 in. while the depth, from the surface grass to the bottom of the grave, was 3 ft.; its ends were rounded.

On the skeleton being entirely uncovered, it proved to be that of a male, aged about 40 to 50 years, and measured as it lay 5 ft. 4 in. in length; the small bones of the feet had decayed more than any other part.

The body had been placed on its back, the head resting on the right cheek, facing W.N.W. The arms lay at length along the body, the finger-bones of each hand were found lying in correct order upon the two hip-bones. The right arm was sufficiently bent to admit of an earthenware pot resting between the elbow and the ribs.

The earthenware pot (Pl. XVI.), measuring 5 in. in height and 4 in. in diameter across the rim, which contained nothing but small sized chalk rubble, is of Roman type, identical in shape, size, colour, and material with one or two that I dug up in a purely

Roman burial place at Godmanchester, and which are on loan in the Archaeological Museum.

Fragments of a pot were also found—this pot had evidently been broken on purpose for this burial—several pieces, comprising the greater part of the base of it, were resting against the top of the skull, and two other fragments, a few inches in length, had been placed on edge, down the right side of the face.

The two remaining pieces of the base and half a dozen other fragments of the same pot had probably been held by the hands above the middle of the body—these were found lying between the two hip bones.

No trace of iron or other metal was discernible. A little darkish earth—not burnt earth—was found just below the chin of this skeleton. In the trench made by the workman, six inches from the grave, a few bones of sheep, ox, and pig were discovered with several small fragments of pottery.

After completing the disinterment, I pointed out to the quarry men the probable position of other graves, begging them to work very carefully when breaking away the chalk at those spots.

Three months afterwards, on May 9th, word was brought to me that the men had touched another skeleton, on one of the two places indicated.

Grave II. on plan.

The details of this are as follows:—

The depth, from surface grass to the bottom of the grave, 2' 9".

The length 5' 6", width 1' 8".

The direction of the grave exactly as in No. I. namely:—Head pointing to N.N.E., feet to S.S.W.

The skeleton, that of a male of about 40 years of age, is just 5 feet in length.

It was lying on its right side facing W.N.W.

The upper arms lay along the ribs, both bent at the elbows, so that the face rested on the right hand, the left hand being directly under the chin.

This grave was 9 feet in a direct line S.S.W. of the skeleton



Pot found with skeleton, 'War Ditches,' Cherryhinton.

found on Feb. 7th. There was no trace of pottery, coins, burnt earth, or coffin. Some of the long bones—femur, ulna, tibia—were cracked across as they lay in the grave, due probably to pressure from above.

In less than another month, June 1st, the quarry man came to tell me he had found a third skeleton on the exact spot where I had told him to look for one.

Grave No. III.

This was 3 ft. below grass level, measuring to the bottom of the grave.

The length of this grave was 5 feet.

The width 13 inches.

Head pointing N.N.E., feet S.S.W.

The skeleton measuring 4 ft. 9 in. was exceedingly brittle, so much so, that though one could tell it was that of a female, of less than 20 years old, it was impossible to put the skull together again.

This skeleton lay face down, in a slanting position—the head being 8 inches above the level of the feet.

There was nothing whatever in the grave, except the skeleton.

The distance of this grave from grave No. I. was 7 ft. 3 in. in a direct N.N.E. line, so that a straight line, 33 ft. in length drawn from N.N.E. to S.S.W. would pass lengthways through each grave. Both II. and III. like No. I. had rounded ends.

Judging from slight indications on the surface, there is reason to hope that more graves will be discovered when fresh ground is broken in the course of quarrying.

Professor Macalister and Dr Duckworth, to both of whom I owe much for their kindly patience and time spent in this and other matters, pronounce these three skeletons to be of the pre-Roman Anglian type like many that were discovered in, and near, the "War Ditches" during 1903, while excavations were being conducted by Professor Hughes. To the latter's paper published in the Proceedings of the Cambridge Anti-quarian Society, No. XLIV. 1902—1903, pp. 478—481, I must refer you for the conclusions to be drawn from these interments.

The chief interest lies in the fact of a perfect Roman

earthenware pot being found in a grave of this Teutonic race; I would also draw attention to the fragments of pottery placed round the head.

This was the case with the Roman skeleton, which I am about to describe, found in the Tumulus at Lord's Bridge.

I found also a small bead of white glass in the chalk rubble a few yards from these graves.

It is realised, even now, by only comparatively few people, that the invasion of our eastern shores by the tribes living round the North and Baltic seas began long before the time of the Roman occupation in 44 A.D.

This invasion was put an end to, it seems, during the height of the Roman power in Britain, and recommenced about 250 A.D., when the Western part of the Roman Empire was disturbed, and authority weakened, during the period of the Gallic Tyrants. Carausius, appointed Count of the Saxon Shore in 286 A.D., the first to hold that title (Eutropius, ix. 21), was himself of Frisian race.

Constant raids were made subsequently upon what we know as East Anglia and Kent, especially about the years 365 and 374 A.D., and after the withdrawal of the Roman forces (410—420 A.D.) the Anglo-Saxons, as we commonly call them, though really consisting of every race then inhabiting the coast from Modern Holland to the Gulf of Riga (Shore's *Origin of the Anglo-Saxon race*) came in with a rush and gradually conquered the Romanised British.

In these skeletons we see remains of this pre-Roman invasion.

Measurements of Skeletons.

Description	Grave No. I.	Grave No. II.
	(with Roman Pot) Male, ovoid.	Male, elliptical.
<i>Cranial portion—</i>		
Maximum length	188 mm.	194 mm.
Maximum breadth	148	146
Basi-bregmatic height	116	115
Horizontal circumference	535	539

Description	Grave No. I. (with Roman Pot)	Grave No. II.
	Male, ovoid.	Male, elliptical.
<i>Facial portion—</i>		
Basi-nasal length	97 mm.	111 mm.
Basi-alveolar length	97	110
Nasi-alveolar length	66	71
Bi-zygomatic breadth	128	145
Orbital height	36	43
Orbital width	R. 40 L. 37	R. 40 L. 39
Nasal height	46	55
Nasal width	26	23
Jugo-nasal arc	110	114
Jugo-nasal width	103	105
<i>Indices</i>		
Cephalic	787	753
Altitudinal	617	593
Alveolar	1000	991
Orbital	875	930
Nasal	565	418
Naso-malar	1068	-1086

(2) ON THE CONTENTS OF A TUMULUS EXCAVATED
AT LORD'S BRIDGE, NEAR CAMBRIDGE.

During August, 1907, it was my fortunate lot, by means of a grant from the Cambridge Antiquarian Society, to excavate the Tumulus which is situated within a stone's throw of Lord's Bridge Railway Station, about 5 miles S.W. of Cambridge.

The mound was half hidden by a thick hedge running over its longer axis, and was hardly observable except by one searching closely for such an object.

This hedge is marked on the 1836 edition of the 1-inch scale Ordnance map, and so has had plenty of time in which to

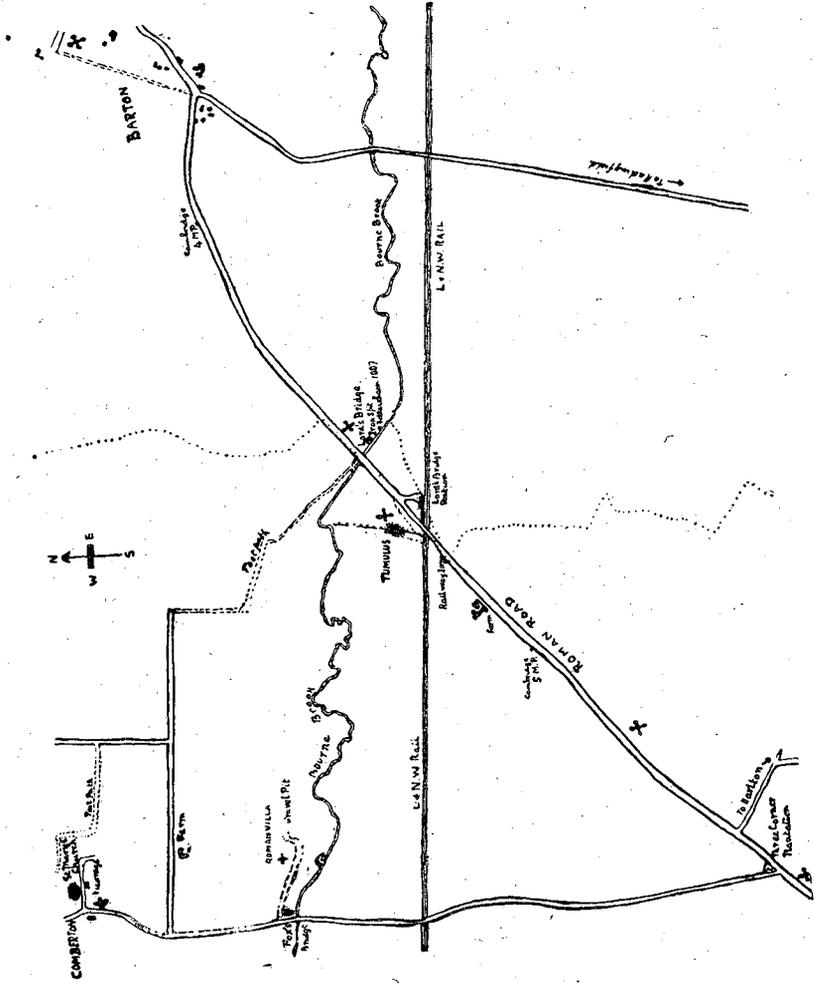


Fig. 1. Map of country round Lord's Bridge. Roman finds marked +.

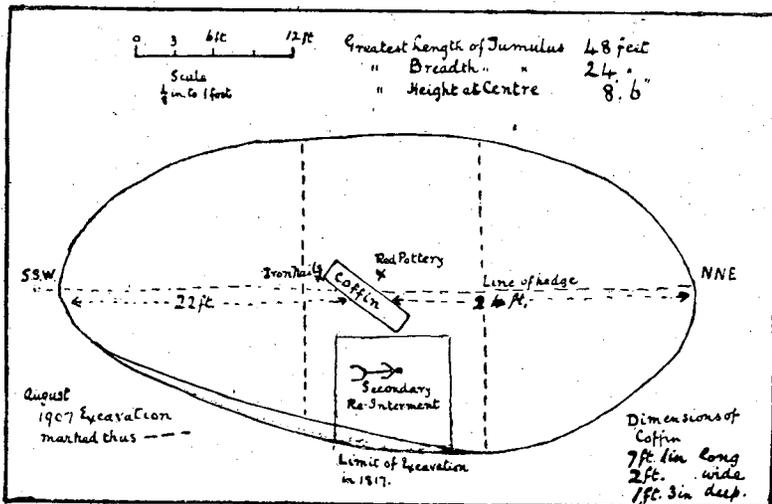
grow and obscure the antiquarian treasure beneath. Before commencing operations the tumulus was carefully measured, with the following results:—

Length 48 feet.

Width 24 feet.

Height 8 feet 6 inches.

Direction along the longer axis S.S.W. and N.N.E.



Roman Tumulus at Lord's Bridge Harlow Near Cambridge

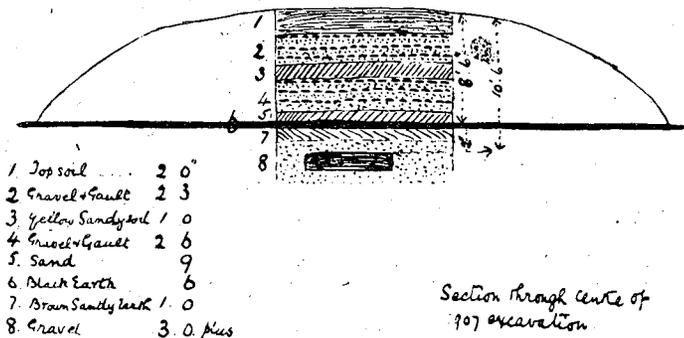


Fig. 2.

We commenced digging a wide trench at the centre of the N.W. side, and after removing the turf and the surface soil, found the construction of the mound to be of a peculiar character. Distinct layers of soil appeared thus:—

1	Top soil	2' 0"
2	Gravel and gault	2' 3"
3	Yellow sandy earth	1' 0"
4	Gravel and gault	2' 6"
5	Sand (yellow)	9"
6	Black earth	6" ground level
7	Brown sandy earth	1' 0"
8	Gravel	3' 0" and more

Each kind of soil can be found in the fields and ditches near by.

The layers of gault kept the inside of the tumulus and the coffin perfectly dry.

Some red-coloured fragments of pottery were found near the centre of the tumulus at ground level—these being of Roman type raised my hopes.

We should have come upon the object of my search after the second day's digging but for the tenant's begging me, if possible, not to destroy the hedge over the top of the mound. So having undermined the hedge, as far as we dared for safety's sake, without finding any traces of burial, we began to dig on the other side of the hillock. After a day's work it was easily seen that this side had been disturbed, and we soon came across some human bones, quickly finding the whole skeleton, but no skull; there were also a few bones of a horse near these human ones. All these were reinterred afterwards.

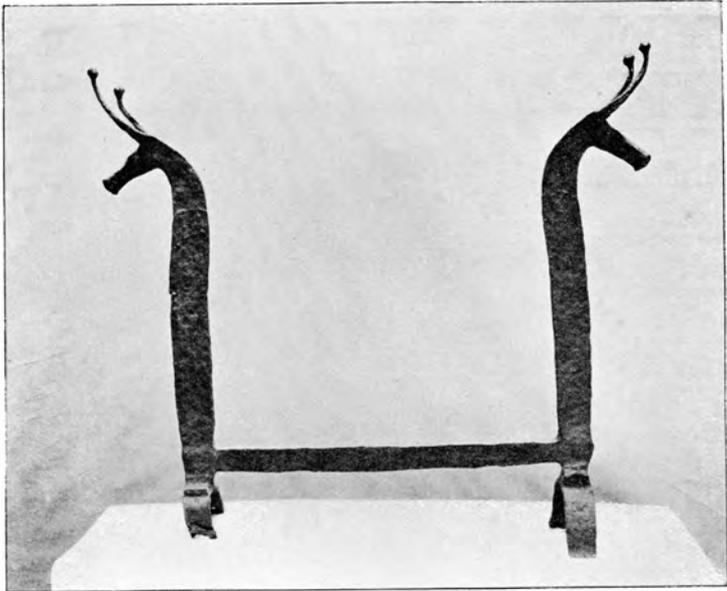
By widening our excavation, before long we could see exactly, as if cut with a knife, the limits of the previous digging.

We worked on, not going below ground level, and knocking a small hole or two through the centre of the bank now left, we were sure nothing of importance had been buried above the original surface of the ground.

I will now make a digression to show how it came about that a skeleton was found without a skull.



Iron shackles found at Lord's Bridge, near Cambridge, 1817.



Iron fire-dogs found at Lord's Bridge, near Cambridge, 1817.

When the work was over and done with, I searched various books and records to see if any mention was made of previous digging on this spot. In *Archaeologia*, Vol. xix., p. 61, the following entry occurs:—

It is the postscript of a letter, dated November 27, 1817, written by the Rev. E. D. Clarke, LL.D., Professor of Mineralogy in the University of Cambridge.

“P.S. In the course of last summer I opened a very considerable tumulus called Hey Hill, standing by the remains of the Old Roman Road westward of Cambridge, beyond the village of Barton towards Wimpole. Some curious remains made of iron had been found near the spot; of which I have also sent a sketch made by the Rev. Mr Pemberton, Minister of Barton. They consisted of a chain with six collars for conducting captives; and a double fulcrum, intended to support a spit for roasting meat, the coals being placed under the spit; illustrating a well-known passage in Virgil, *Aeneid*, v. 103

‘Subjiciunt verubus prunas et viscera torrent.’

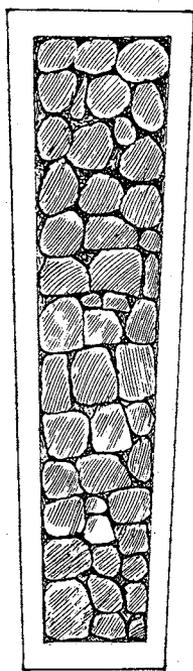
That they were Roman antiquities is therefore very probable; but in opening the tumulus nothing further was discovered likely to decide this point. Upon the floor of the tomb, about 9 feet from the summit, we found the remains of a single human skeleton; the head separated from the body, was lying upon the right ear, north and south; the top of the skull pointing south. The bones of the body were lying east and west. The skull was removed, and it is now in our University Library. [Professor Macalister has since kindly gone with me through the records of all skulls now in the Anatomical Museum, but no trace of this one could be found.]

Since writing the above (so lately as April 15th, 1818) some labourers being employed digging gravel near the same tumulus, discovered at the same distance and on the same side of the Roman Road, fourteen inches below the surface of the soil, a rude stone slab, covering the mouth of an amphora, which was full of water and within it a black terra-cotta vase of elegant form, half filled with human bones; also two other smaller vessels of red terra-cotta with handles. I am at this moment engaged in removing these antiquities to our University Library.”

Unfortunately all these have disappeared in the course of time—no trace of them remains in the Museum, nor of other Roman pottery from Comberton bought by the Cambridge Antiquarian Society in 1849. The iron chain and shackles and the iron support for a spit are now figured. (Plates XVII., XXVIII.)

Mr Sanders Holben of Barton, one of our members, assures me that his father told him that these chains and cooking implements were dug up in the field immediately bordering up the Bourne Brook in Barton parish, in the S.E. division of the Cross made by the intersection of the Bourne Brook and the

Scale 1 in. to 1 foot
1/2 2/3



Coffin covered on work
large stones & gault
buried down in a solid surface

Fig. 3.

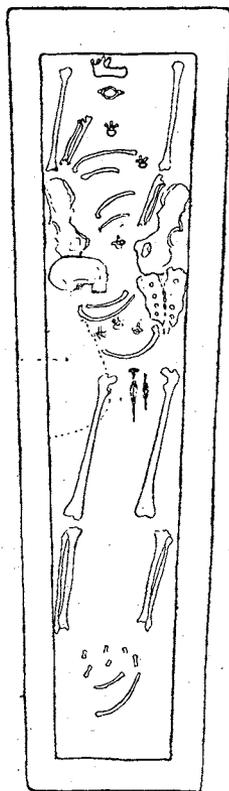


Fig. 4. Position of bones in coffin.

Roman Road between Lord's Bridge Station and Barton (see plan). Mr Holben also tells me that he remembers an old road and ford across the Bourne Brook some 100 yards eastwards of its present course. This confirms Mr Clarke's statement when he says these Roman articles were found on

the same side of the road as the tumulus; at present the spot is on the further side.

To return to our Tumulus.

Having proved there was nothing above ground level, I followed my invariable rule, when excavating, of digging 2 or 3 feet beneath what *seems* to be the natural level of the ground, or the cause of the mound, or other object upon which one is working. Mr Clarke in his digging had not gone below the natural surface—the “floor of the tomb” he calls it.

After clearing away another 2 feet of gravel a piece of worked stone was touched which proved to be a large stone coffin, lying S.W. and N.E. (as on plan).

As the gravel was removed on and around it, the appearance of the coffin was thus:—it had no lid, but was filled in with large stones and gault, at a level of about 2 inches from the top of the sides of the coffin, packed tightly together, so that it took some considerable effort to unloosen the solid surface they formed.

At the S.W.—the larger end of the coffin and just touching it—27 Roman boot nails were picked out. The assumption is that one of the men employed in the work of burial was wearing an old boot and left the sole of it behind him.

The coffin measured as follows:—

Outside.

Length 7' 1"

Width 2' 0" wider end. 1' 6½" narrow end.

Depth 1' 5½"

Inside.

Length 6' 5"

Width 1' 5" wider end. 1' 1" narrow end.

Depth 1' 2" except near the narrow end, where it is 1' 4" deep.

It is made of oolite rock—most probably from Barnack. On removing the large stones which formed a covering to the coffin, the contents were found to be in a rather unusual condition; “orderly disorder” best describes the state of things.

The skeleton was that of a young woman, about 23 years old, and from the calculation made by measuring the *femur*, she was about 5' 2" in height when alive. Two of her hair pins made of bone, $3\frac{1}{4}$ inches in length (fig. 5), were near the skull.

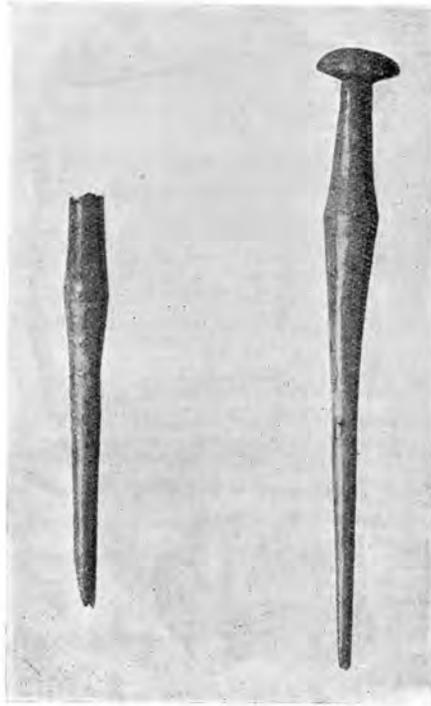


Fig. 5. Bone hair pins.

The larger bones were separated; no bone was touching the bone that would lie next to it had the body been buried in the ordinary position, with the exception of the tibia and fibula of each leg.

The lower jaw was at the extreme end of the coffin, while the skull was near the centre. It is to be noted that this

skull, like the one found by Mr Clarke, was also apart from the body.

Measurements of Skull.

Description	Ovoid
<i>Cranial portion—</i>	
Maximum length	181
Maximum breadth	153
Basi-bregmatic height	120
Horizontal circumference	520

Facial portion. This was too imperfect for measurement.

Indices—

Cephalic	845
Altitudinal	663

About the middle of the coffin, touching the south side, were the bones of a cock and a goose, also a fragment of a tooth of sheep or goat and a developing tooth of a young pig, which Dr Harmer was kind enough to identify for me.

Within the coffin, round the sides of the wider end, were the fragments, some 60 in number, of a large urn.

If the skeleton had been in the usual position, one would have supposed these fragments, as in the case of the Cherryhinton skeleton mentioned in the previous paper, to have been placed there in order to protect the head and face from pressure of earth above.

The thought came to one's mind that some animal might have burrowed into the tumulus, and penetrating the stones and gault forming the lid of the coffin, have dragged the bones about in its horrible feast, but there was no sign of such a thing having taken place, nor was there room for such action.

The bones of the skeleton were surrounded by, and the whole coffin was full of, dark earth capped closely by the, to all appearance, undisturbed covering of stones and gault.

The remaining conclusion, which one hardly likes to draw, is that the young woman was cut in pieces before burial. This form of burial was fairly frequent during the Neolithic and

Bronze Ages¹, but Professor Ridgeway assures me he has never heard of such a thing in connexion with a Roman burial. There was absolutely no room for an animal to drag the two parts of the skull such a distance from one another. The gault could not have formed the lid accidentally or have been squeezed there by pressure from above, for between that and the nearest layer of gault were 2 feet of gravel, 1 foot of brown sandy earth, 6 inches of black earth, and 9 inches of yellow sand—4 ft. 3 ins. in all. The disorderly arranged skeleton seems then to have been buried purposely as it was found.

Two or three fragments of Roman pottery were picked up just outside the coffin—one, a piece of a so-called engine-turned vase.

There is a curious story still current in my parish of Comberton.

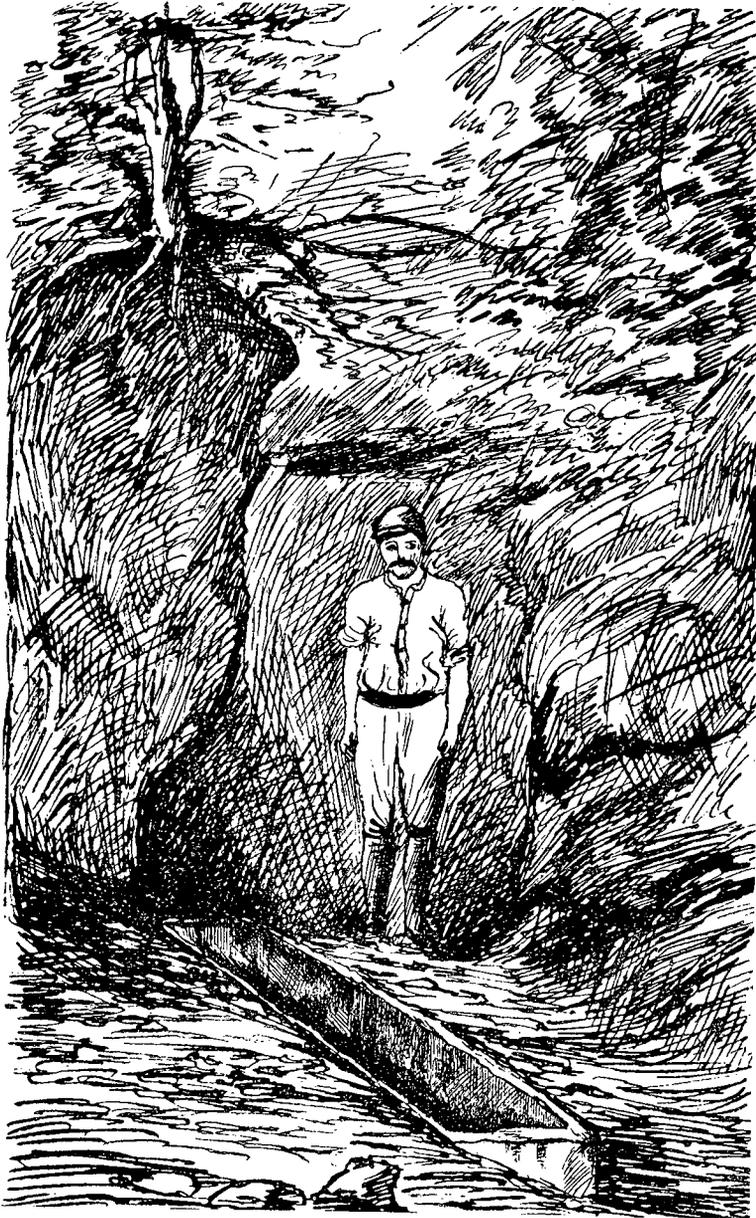
Two women who were in service during the late "sixties" at the Farm House, a quarter of a mile from the tumulus, tell me their mistress often tried to frighten them into good behaviour when they became a little rompish in their play on Hey Hill, by saying "the Roman soldiers will come out and have you."

This was only brought to their minds by the stir caused in the neighbourhood by the discovery of the stone coffin.

No tradition remains in the minds of the people round about of Roman things having been found at or near Hey Hill, nor any memory of Mr Clarke's excavation. It is possible, though one hesitates to state the probability, that the memory of Roman occupation of the site has been handed down locally from Roman times until now.

The whole Bourne Brook Valley, from where the stream flows into the Cam at Grantchester up to the village of Bourne, is full of Roman remains; some few of the spots, where I personally have found Roman articles, are marked with a cross on the plan. In the fields each side of the Roman Road from Lord's Bridge to the top of Orwell Hill, can be found numerous fragments of pottery and bits of bronze, etc.

¹ J. R. Mortimer, *Forty Years' Researches*, pp. xxxii, 15-16, 63, 66, 77; Pitt-Rivers, *Excavations in Cranborne Chase*, iv. 66.



This district needs careful attention, and, I am sure, will repay labour spent upon it. Roman remains are frequently found. Celtic things I have dug up in it, and it contains the only Scandinavian place name in the county, Toft, one mile and a half west of the tumulus that is the subject of this paper.

I may also point out that this tumulus of Roman date is but a half-mile from the site of the Roman villa at Comberton, which was laid bare in 1842.

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