REPORT ON SKELETAL REMAINS FROM IPSWICH IAS 5901

Skeletal remains from 61 inhumations were examined. The condition of the bones was very poor - most being fragmented, eroded and incomplete. This means that only the most elementary facts concerning these individuals can be ascertained and few measurements of the bones could be made.

Several of the inhumation numbers contained the remains of more than one body. In the 61 excavated collections there were parts of 74 bodies identified. When these were divided up as far as possible by age and sex it could be established that only 2 were children under the age of 12 and 2 were adolescents aged between 12 and 18. 4 (3 female and 1 male) were identified as young adults (probably
aged 30 or below) and 23 as older adults. 41 were obviously adults but even a broad approximation of their age was impossible and in 2 cases there was not even enough evidence to say whether or not they were adult.

This is a very small number of children and adolescents - either only part of the cemetery has been recovered or less likely their remains have not survived. There seems little point in trying to analyse the age structure further.

The sex of the 70 adult individuals could not be assessed in 26. 24 of the remaining 44 were male, or probably male, and 20 female.

STATURE

The height of 12 of the adults could be calculated from intact or reconstructed long bones using the formulae of Trotter and Gleser (9952 and 1958). Six males had a mean height of 178 cms. (5'-10") with a range of 167 - 185 cms. Six females had a mean height of 166 ems. (5'-5")with a range of 160 - 176 cms. It must be pointed out that owing to the fragmentary nature of many of the remains the height had to be calculated from long bones such as those of the arm which give less accurate results according to Trotter and Gleser and these heights may need to be treated with caution. These people seem to have been taller than those from the cemetery of St. Edmund de Pountenay at Ipswich and than those from a medieval cemetery at Hartlepool but as pointed out previously the numbers are small and some of the

heights may be inaccurate. At any rate they were not a short people.

PHYSICAL TYPE

It was not possible to make any remarks concerning the physical type of these people. In only one skeleton (a young female) was the skull intact allowing the cranial index to be measured. The length was 177 mm. and the breadth 136 mm - a cranial index of 76.8 in the mid range - mesocephalic.

An examination for the so-called non-metrical traits was made where possible. A persistent metopic suture was seen in 1 of 9 skulls in which the frontal bone was intact - a proportion to be expected. Examination ofthe jaws showed a Torus palatinus (a bony protuberance in the mid line of the hard palate) in one of 10 examined. Wormian (sutural) bones were common - being present in the lambdoid suture of 4 out of 5 skulls where their presence or absence could be established.

PATHOLOGY

The fragmented and poorly preserved nature of the bones means that an assessment of the incidence of various pathology such as arthritis cannot be made - examples must just be noted as they occur.

ARTHRITIS

This is common in all ancient skeletal series particularly Degenerative arthritis (osteoarthritis) one of the signs of which,osteophytes or lipping of the surface at the margin of the joint,seem to develop with age as well as in arthritis. In three female skeletons (0029, 0036 and 0044) a fairly full study for osteoarthritis could be carried out and arthritis affecting several joints of the limbs and of the spine was found in 2.

Schmorl's nodes - a degenerative condition of the body of a vertebra - thought to result from herniation of the intervertebral disc into the bone - are seen frequently in skeletal series and were present 2 out of 4 spines of which the greater part was preserved.

One skeleton - a female (0029) showed several congenital anomolies -

1) There was sacralisation of L5 - that is the last lumbar vertebra, was fused to the sacrum.

2) Two cervical vertebrae were fused together in a manner suggesting Vat the fusion was congenital and not the result of any disease.

3) The bones of the left foot showed a rare congenital abnormality, fusion of the talus and calcaneum bones, a condition known as talocalcaneal bridging. The right foot was missing. This condition tends to give rise to pain in adolescence followed by a condition called peroneal spastic flat foot which can cause limping. It is suggestive that this skeleton is one of those showing signs of widespread arthritis.

Skeleton No. 0136 (a young female) has a depression with a roughened floor at the lower end of the protuberance at the upper end of both tibiae(the tibial tubercle) into which the muscles of the front of the thigh are inserted. This is probably an example of Osgood-Schlatter's disease - a condition of adolescence in which the epiphysis of the tibial tubercle becomes inflamed and damaged.

This would cause temporary pain and tenderness below the kneecap but would tend to heal spontaneously.

Four out of 9 skeletons in which a number of long bones could be examined fully showed evidence of periostitis in the leg bones. This is a thickening or roughening of the surface of the bone due to inflammation of the outer membrane of the bone followed by the laying down of new bone. It may be caused by infection in the bone, infection of tissues outside the bone or by various other causes such as ulcers of the leg or chest disease. It is found quite commonly in various old populations and in no cases could a cause for the condition be found here.

Only one skeleton - an older male (0049) showed any evidence of trauma. This was a linear depression 45 mm. long and 12 mm across in the posterior

part of the left parietal bone running in an antero-posterior direction 2 - 3 cms. to the left of the midline sagittal suture. The edges show signs of full healing and it probably respresents an old fracture of the skull Caused by a long object with a round surface, e.g. a pole, either falling on the head or as a blow. There was no evidence of damage to the inner surface of the skull so longterm effects of the injury may have been non-existant.

TEETH

Many of the teeth showed marked wear - to be expected in skeletons where the majority seemed to be of a reasonable age. There was little caries to see and few signs of loss of teeth during life. Only one dental abscess was seen in a lower first molar tooth. It would seem that their dental health was good allowing for the wearing down of the teeth caused by the coarser diet (with stone-ground flour) of those days.

SUMMARY

This is in many ways an unsatisfactory group - the remains too few and fragmented to stand up to much examination. Most of the skeletons preserved are those of a people of a good age. They did not show signs of any great incidence of disease which marks the bones. In no case could a cause of death be established.

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