

NOTICE OF

The Examination of some British Barrows

IN THE PARISH OF BERGH APTON.

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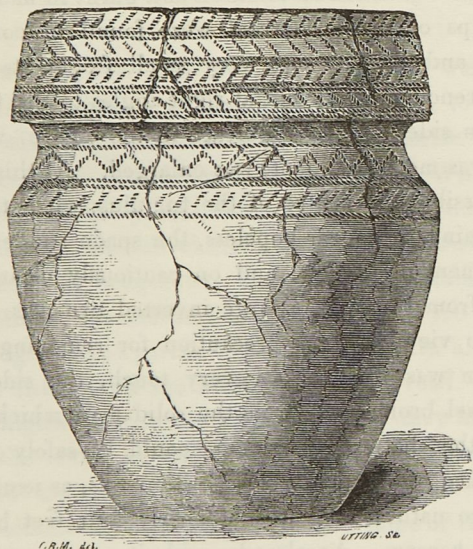
THE REV. C. R. MANNING, M.A., HON. SEC.

ON Thursday, the 12th inst. (Oct. 1854), I was enabled, by the kind invitation of the Rev. Dr. Beal, to examine, together with him, some barrows in the parish of Bergh Apton. They are situated on some land called White Heath, the property of the parish, immediately to the north of the road leading to Thurton church, from which parish the field is separated by a hedgerow. There are three tumuli in this field, and there was another, now removed, on the other side of the hedge, in the parish of Thurton; a fifth also remains at a short distance on the south side of the road. Being so near the highway, it is not surprising that they had already attracted the notice of antiquaries. More than twenty years ago, as the workmen and other residents informed us, Mr. Utting, a solicitor at Thurton, had caused some of the barrows to be opened, and had found some urns, a sword, and other remains. What became of these antiquities I have not been able to discover; but there is a stone celt in the Norwich Museum, of rather advanced form, presented by Mr. Utting, and found in the lane which is the eastern boundary of

Thurton churchyard: it is probable that it came from one of these tumuli, perhaps from the one above mentioned, now destroyed, which was just within the bounds of Thurton parish, and had thus been lying about the neighbouring road for some time before it was acquired by Mr. Utting. One of the labourers also mentioned a stone instrument found on the same land, which he described as being "smaller in the middle, but not pierced through," and may have been some kind of celt or hammer-head.* The present examination commenced with the barrow furthest from the road, which there was some reason to conjecture (and correctly, as the event proved,) had not been previously disturbed. A trench was dug through the tumulus to a level with the natural soil, in the direction south-west to north-east. The earth throughout the tumulus was much discoloured and burnt in many places; small lumps of wood charcoal were found in considerable numbers, and one or two very small fragments of bone. Another trench was now cut at right angles to the first, from the eastern side, and the aperture in the centre, where the charcoal was more abundant, was enlarged. At this point, as near as possible the centre of the tumulus, when the search was beginning to appear hopeless, the spade suddenly threw up a fragment of pottery, and on cautiously clearing away the earth from the spot, a large inverted urn was gradually exposed to view. Every precaution for removing it in an entire state was useless: at every touch, the sides of the fragile vessel broke away from the solid mass which filled it, and only the shattered fragments could be safely conveyed to the surface of the field. Its position was, as usual, on the level of the natural soil, and at nearly four feet below the top of the barrow. As already said, it was *inverted*, as is commonly found to be the case with large urns, and thus the

* See a representation of such an instrument found in Westmoreland, *Archæol. Journal*, X. 64.

more effectually resisted the superincumbent weight of the earth. But besides this, it had been protected, round the sides, by a large mass of rough stones, which no doubt served to keep it in its place while the tumulus was being formed above it. From its broken state, its exact dimensions were not very easily ascertained: the total height was about $14\frac{1}{2}$ inches, and the diameter at the lip, $11\frac{1}{2}$ inches. It is formed of half-baked earth, of a pale reddish brown colour, and the baking seems not to have extended through the material, as the fractures show the middle part to be much blacker than the external and internal coats. The upper part of the urn is ornamented with the rude scoring generally found on British pottery, consisting in this instance of horizontal lines, with



short diagonal lines, in herring-bone fashion, between them; on the neck of the urn, these lines are in chevrons. This kind of scoring appears to have been formed by the indents

of a small punch, placed close together in a line, and has exactly the appearance of a piece of small cord impressed into the clay before it was baked. The same scoring is also made on the *inside* of the lip, where it is not so usual to find any ornament. The urn was closely filled with a mass of burnt human bones; among which, though they were carefully examined, no ornaments or weapons of any kind could be found.

As there appeared no probability of any further remains being discovered in this tumulus, an examination of the other two in the same field was undertaken. These, the labourers employed were confident had been already opened by Mr. Utting. Some remains of burnt earth and charcoal were visible in one, but scarcely any in the other; and on reaching the undisturbed soil without success, the search was given up, and there is no doubt the deposits had been already removed. Our discovery, however, of the single urn was quite sufficient to satisfy the object of the investigation, which was to determine the period to which the tumuli belonged. That they are of the British or Celtic age, the character of the pottery is quite decisive. The material, shape, ornament, and condition of the urn perfectly agree with the common type furnished by British interments. One of somewhat similar form was found in the neighbouring parish of Rockland, and is now in the Norwich Museum; and every archæological work will present specimens nearly allied to it.

The tradition in the parish of Bergh Apton is, that a battle was fought there: one force being placed on White Heath, where these barrows are, and the enemy on Barnes's Heath, the position of which is to the south, and now occupied by woods belonging to Mr. Kett, to the east of Bergh Apton church. I am not aware of any remains having been found on Barnes's Heath, which would identify the nation to which this opposing force belonged. A number of Roman coins were found at Thurton in the year 1707; these were,

however, of the reigns of Gallienus, Victorinus, Tetricus, and Quintillus; also at Carlton. It is possible that this spot may have been the scene of an engagement between the Romans and the native Iceni, and that the urn before us contained the ashes of one of the chiefs of the latter people, who fell upon the field of battle.

