

ACCOUNT OF THE DISCOVERY  
OF  
**Ancient British Remains,**  
NEAR CROMER.

COMMUNICATED BY

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THE district lying along the coast between Cromer and Blakeney, and extending a few miles inland, is extremely rich in the remains of its ancient inhabitants. The numerous pits—the presumed vestiges of ancient British villages—and the Roman kiln found near Sheringham by Mr. Bolding, have been already described in papers read before our Society. It will be my present task to describe the results of excavations which I have made at various times in the parishes of Salthouse, Runton, and Roughton.

Upon the heath which lies on the side of Salthouse, next Holt, are several ancient earthworks, such as pits, a curious circle of raised earth, and tumuli. Two of the most conspicuous of these last are locally called “Three Halfpenny” and “Three Farthing” Hills. These are situated near a farm known as “the Lowes,” which, doubtless, takes its name from the adjacent sepulchral mounds, which were anciently denominated “lowes.”

“Three Halfpenny Hill” was partially examined in 1849 by Mr. Bolding and some other members of our Society. A small and broken urn of sunburnt clay was all that was discovered upon that occasion: it had apparently been placed somewhere near the surface of the mound on the North-eastern edge, but its position was not clearly ascertained, as it was not observed until after it had been thrown out by the spades of the workmen. This urn is only four inches in height, and has a kind of chevron pattern scored on the rim. “Three Halfpenny Hill” is about seventy feet in diameter and eight feet high, and is surrounded by a bank and double trench.

In August, 1850, I opened the adjacent tumulus called “Three Farthing Hill.” This is a large mound, being forty feet in diameter, and five feet in height. It is formed of sand mixed with flints and gravel, and in shape somewhat resembles an inverted bowl. I commenced operations by causing a trench to be dug across the mound, North-east and South-west. The ground had recently been disturbed, and a small hole dug in the centre by a boy who had been digging for a rabbit; and when my trench had been excavated to the depth of about a foot, a small piece of pottery was turned out which had evidently been only lately broken off. Thus encouraged, I continued excavating, and at the depth of about four feet came upon the fragments of an urn of considerable size, with a broad sloping rim ornamented with scored lines. This urn was filled with burnt bones, and had evidently been broken by the rabbit-catcher, who, as I found on inquiry, had dug out a rabbit from the spot only the day before. The fragments having been carefully removed, the excavation was resumed. About three feet from the surface, exactly in the centre of the tumulus, the workmen employed suddenly dislodged some large stones, and with them a piece of pottery, which proved to be part of an urn, which was surrounded on all sides by a kind of rude

wall of large flints, put together very closely, but without any cement or mortar. When some sand had been thrown out I descended into the hole, and gradually loosened the stones with a knife, carefully working round the urn. In about half an hour the stones were all cleared away, and the urn appeared, standing on a bed of gravel at the level of the natural soil. It was carefully lifted out and placed upon a bed of fern. The mouth was filled up by a large water-worn flint stone, which had evidently been placed over the top as a covering, but had been forced down by the weight of the superincumbent soil. The dimensions of this noble urn, which I have presented to the Norwich Museum, are as follows—

Height . . . . .	17 $\frac{1}{2}$ inches
Across the mouth . . . . .	13 „,
Round the widest part . . . . .	3 feet 10 inches
Round the bottom . . . . .	22 inches

It is formed of sun-burnt clay, without ornament of any kind, and was filled with sand, pieces of charcoal, small flints, and an immense quantity of burnt bones. I carefully sifted the entire contents, but not a vestige of any beads or other ornaments could be traced. One flint, however, may *possibly* be an exception to this remark, since its shape and appearance might suggest that it had been chosen to make a celt from. But this I think is highly improbable, as I believe the interment to belong to the *bronze*, not the *stone* period. I submitted the bones found in the large urn to a physician, who assured me that they must have belonged to several individuals of different ages, as they differed both in appearance and texture. Some were doubtless those of a very young person; others, as the great thickness of the skull indicated, to one far advanced in life. Were these remains deposited *at once*, or was the family urn opened *from time to time* as occasion required? Scarcely the latter; yet, on the former supposition, how are we to account for the simultaneous deaths of so

many members of a family? Is it possible that slaves or captives were immolated at the funeral of one noted Icenian chieftain?

Upon visiting the spot on the following day, I discovered a few fragments of another urn on the South-eastern side of the mound: this urn likewise was of sunburnt brown pottery, but was of a much thinner texture than those previously discovered. These pieces were ornamented with a pattern made by puncturing the clay before drying, six or seven times in a line, with a very small pin, or such-like instrument.

A large urn of the same period, was found some years since in a sandbank by the side of the road, near Wiverton church, which stands about two miles from Salthouse heath.

The village of Runton, near Cromer, is another station which abounds in Celtic pottery. Having seen some fragments in the house of a gamekeeper, I commenced digging at the spot indicated to me, and was rewarded by the discovery of several rude black urns filled with burnt bones. It was, unfortunately, impossible to remove any of them entire, as they had been deposited so near the surface of the sandy soil that they have been broken by the ploughshare. There was no appearance at this place of any thing like a mound, but it is possible that such may have existed before the enclosure of the land.

The elevated site of Roughton heath, within three miles of Cromer, can boast of several tumuli, of which I believe I have explored all, or nearly all. In the largest, I found at the natural level of the surrounding soil a mass of burnt bones, amongst which were four jet beads. Of these, two are shaped like hogsheads, and two like those elongated "barrels" of lead, used as weights to pike-tackle. Precisely similar specimens have been found with a *skeleton* in the Cambridgeshire fens; and with *burnt bones* in an urn discovered on the moors near Scarborough. In another tumulus, I came upon a mass of burnt bones nearly five feet in length.

At one end of this mass was a large heap of woodashes and charcoal, and immediately above it was placed a large round wave-worn flint, resembling a stone cannon shot. In a third mound, which was scarcely raised a foot above the surrounding heath, I made the most curious discovery of all. This was an immense urn, shaped like a pie-dish, of the rudest fabric possible. The extreme friability of this vessel, which was filled with bones, burnt and pounded, rendered its removal utterly impossible. This is the more to be regretted, as I believe, so far as this country is concerned, that it was unique in form. A tiny fragment of a bronze pin amongst the bones in this urn, showed that it belonged to the bronze age; and I am inclined to believe, that all the interments named above may be assigned to the same period.

I have been induced to bring these details into one notice, because they relate to a class of remains which has received comparatively little notice in our Journal, although yielding to none in point of interest.

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