

REPORT ON HUMAN REMAINS FROM A
GRAVEL PIT NEAR FENNY STRATFORD,
BUCKS

BY SIR ARTHUR KEITH, F.R.S.

The fact that Mr. William Bradbrooke has found parts of more than one individual, and that human remains had been found in this pit at former times, leads me to suppose that an ancient burial place has been opened. As to the date of the graves there is as yet no archaeological data, but the condition of the bone, the fact that real cemeteries begin in England late in the Bronze Age, leads to the supposition that these remains belong to people of the Romano-British or Anglo-Saxon periods. The fact that I find it impossible to decide whether the calvaria, is that of a Saxon or of a Briton shows that, as regards skull form, these two peoples or races differed only in matters of detail.

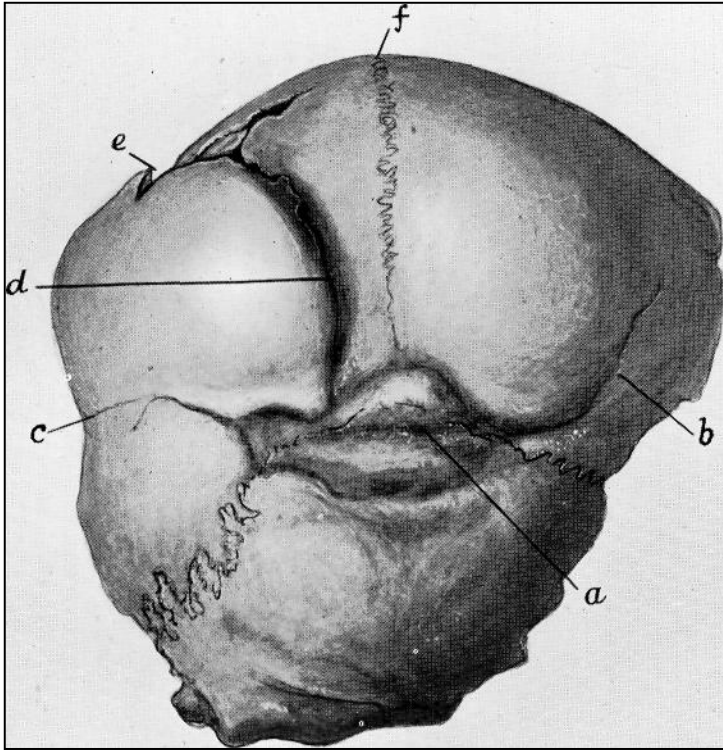
The calvaria is that of a long-headed man—the original maximum length being 194 mm., its maximum width (estimated) 144 mm. (cephalic index 74); although the temporal bones are missing the height of vault above the subcerebral plane can be measured—103 mm.—which corresponds to an auricular height of 118 mm. A long skull of such a height may be Briton or Saxon. The width of forehead, 98 mm. (estimated), and supraorbital width (106 mm.) do not help to decide ; they may be indicative of either. The bone varies in thickness along the vault from 5 to 8 mm. The supraorbital ridges were strongly formed, and the frontal sinuses extended outwards in the forehead to the lower end of the temporal ridges. Taking all indications into consideration, I am inclined to regard this calvaria, as a native Briton (Celt) of the Roman period. The sutures of the skull are almost

obliterated ; the skull is that of a man over 50 years of age—perhaps over 60.

At one time he had received two extensive skull wounds—such as are inflicted by a sword cut. As the state of healing is identical, it is probable that both were received on one occasion.

The drawing indicates the sites and extent of these wounds. In one, the sword entered just below the lambda and passed horizontally forwards into the skull, the edge of the sword, at the deepest part of the wound, having penetrated to a depth of 13 mm., thus reaching the soft parts within the skull. The chord which joins the horns of this crescentic cut is 61 mm. long. This occipital wound has long been filled up and healed by bony union. From the horns of the incision, cracks pass forwards into the skull to a distance of 54 mm. on the right and 49 mm., on the left.

The other or parietal wound is much more extensive and serious. The blow had been delivered from above, the edge of the sword entering above and tending to separate that part of the left parietal which carries the eminence. The blade sank into the bone to a depth of 30 mm. ; the chord which joins the ends of the crescentic wound is 94 mm. long. At its hinder end the incision reaches within 10 mm. of the sagittal suture, while its anterior end is 77 mm. distant. The incision sinking so deep into the skull—the sword blade must have cut into the parietal lobe of the brain to a depth of 20 mm. at least—has caused the flap of bone separated to break along a line which joins the crescentic ends of the wound ; a twist of the sword-man's wrist has turned the flap outwards, leaving a gaping wound 6 mm. in width. Healing has led to the posterior part of the wound being filled and mended by the deposition of new bone, but the anterior part of the wound has never been filled up with bone, but it may have been with fibrous tissue, for there is no evidence of a persistent sinus discharging pus.

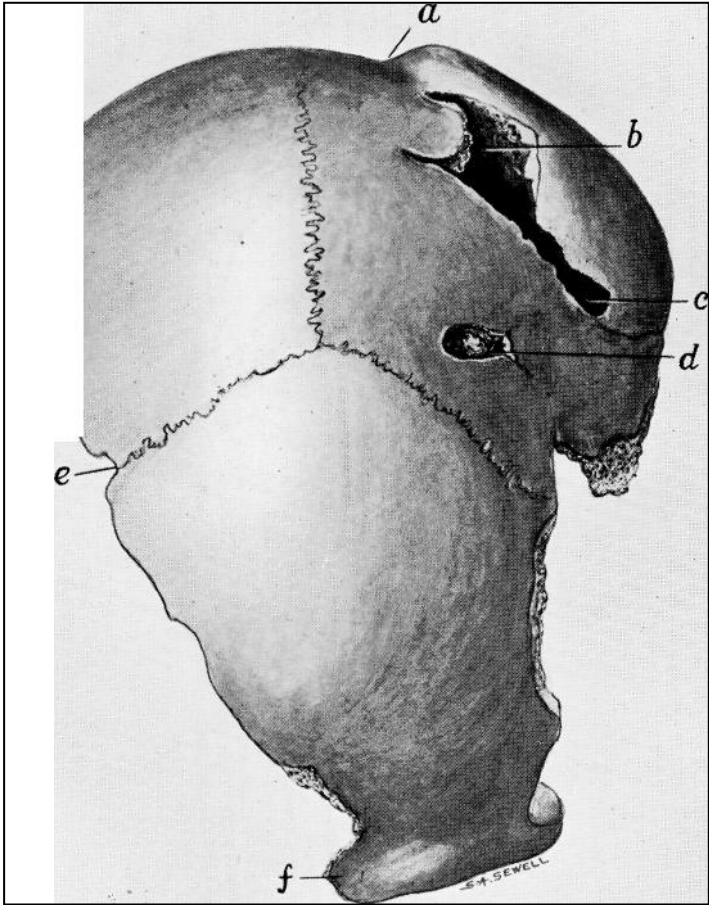


A

Drawn 2/3^{rds} natural size

DESCRIPTION OF FIGURES.

- A—View of the occipital or hinder end of skull.
a—Centre of the horizontal wound, showing union by bone;
b—Fracture caused by the blow.



B

Drawn $\frac{2}{3}$ ^{rds} natural size

B—View of skull from above.

a—Vertical wound (healed part) ; b—hole produced by pick of workman; c—Open or unhealed part of wound; d—Erosion of bone by root-action.

With this calvaria are three other fragments:

(1). The greater part of the lower jaw of a young person—probably a girl—about 14-16 years of age, in which all the teeth have erupted save the last molars. All the teeth are perfectly healthy.

(2). A palate which may belong to the same individual as the calvaria. But I do not think so, as the teeth are small, not greatly worn, and show certain feminine characters.

(3). A lower jaw, probably of an old woman, but it may be part of the same individual as the palate.