

**Examination of barrows on the downs of north Wiltshire, in 1853-57 / by John Thurnam.**

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EXAMINATION OF  
Barrows on the Downs of North Wiltshire,  
IN 1853-57.

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By JOHN THURNAM, M.D., F.S.A.

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*(From "The Wilts Archæological and Natural History Magazine," 1860, Vol. VI. p. 317.)*









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**M**OST of the barrows on the North Wiltshire Downs have been examined: some by Sir R. C. Hoare, some by his colleague Mr. Cunnington, and others by the late Dean Merewether; but many by unknown and unqualified persons, who, whilst they have defaced these ancient mounds, have left no record of their operations. It is clearly the duty of those who engage in such researches to describe them, and I have pleasure in responding to the request of our Committee, that I would give some account of the few barrows I have opened on these Downs, during the past summers. I will commence with those near Shepherd's Shore, about five miles to the north of Devizes.

1. The first is close to the London road at New Shepherd's Shore, and immediately adjacent to the remarkable triplet barrow, examined in 1804 and 1814 by Mr. Cunnington and Sir R. C. Hoare, the curious proportions of which are in course of gradual obliteration, by the foot-paths and trackways made across them to the adjacent farmstead and cottages.<sup>1</sup> That we opened in 1855 is a bell-shaped barrow about five and a half feet in height. In the centre, in a shallow cist scooped out of the chalk rock, was a deposit of burnt human bones, without an admixture of charcoal, or any object of art or other relic. It may be observed that when the other barrows of this group, including two of those forming the

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<sup>1</sup> In June 1852, through the kindness of Mr. William Cunnington, the writer witnessed the large but unsuccessful excavation made in the large mound, the more northern of this triplet, which had previously baffled Sir R. C. Hoare. See *Ancient Wilts*, vol. ii. p. 92. The external form of these curiously arranged barrows is well described by Mr. Falkner of Devizes, in the *Archæologia*, 1847, vol. xxxii. p. 457.



triplet, were opened, they were also found to cover interments after cremation.

2. This barrow is on Morgan's Hill just above Old Shepherd's Shore, close to, and on the south of, the barrier of Wansdyke. It is of the simple bowl-form and about three feet high. The turf over it was perfectly smooth and appeared never to have been disturbed. At a depth of three and a half feet, in an oval cist in the natural surface of the chalk was the skeleton of a man, about thirty years of age and probably six feet in height. The skeleton was in a contracted position, with the head to the north, the knees drawn up and the legs completely flexed behind the thighs. There was no other relic of any kind. The skull (of which four views are given<sup>1</sup>) is of full size, and had contained a brain weighing upwards of 53 oz. It approaches to the shortened-oval or brachycephalic form. The forehead is narrow but moderately full and high: the nasal bones project most abruptly. The facial bones are of full size and rugged. The ascending process of the lower jaw is broad and rectangular. The teeth are large, one molar only having been lost during life, from the effects of an alveolar abscess. Their crowns are much worn, the eroded and hollow surfaces having an oblique position. The thigh bones measured nineteen and a half, and the leg bones (tibiæ) fifteen and a half inches in length.

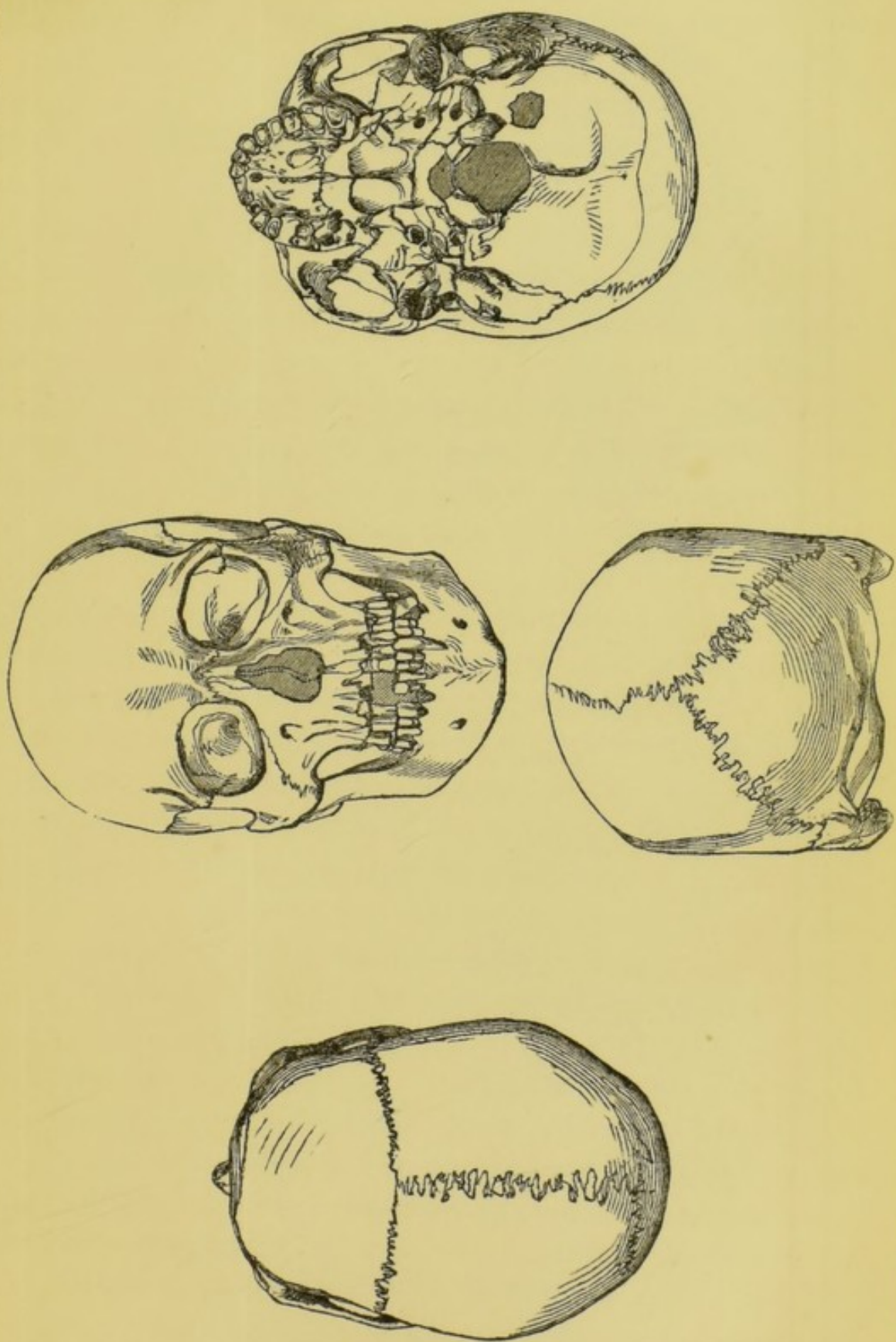
3. A large conical mound, with steep irregular sides and nearly seven feet high, on the west of Morgan's Hill, close to the foss on the north side of Wansdyke and just above its junction with the Roman road from Cunetio.<sup>2</sup> A large shaft was sunk through the centre to the depth of seven feet, but nothing was found excepting some black wood ashes at two feet, and again at five feet. The probable conclusion is, that this was a beacon or specular mound commanding the extensive vale of the Avon, which spreads out below

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<sup>1</sup> We are indebted to Mr. J. B. Davis, F.S.A., for the use of these wood engravings, which are taken from the Fourth Decade of the "*Crania Britannica*," where a lithographed full-sized profile view of this skull is also given.

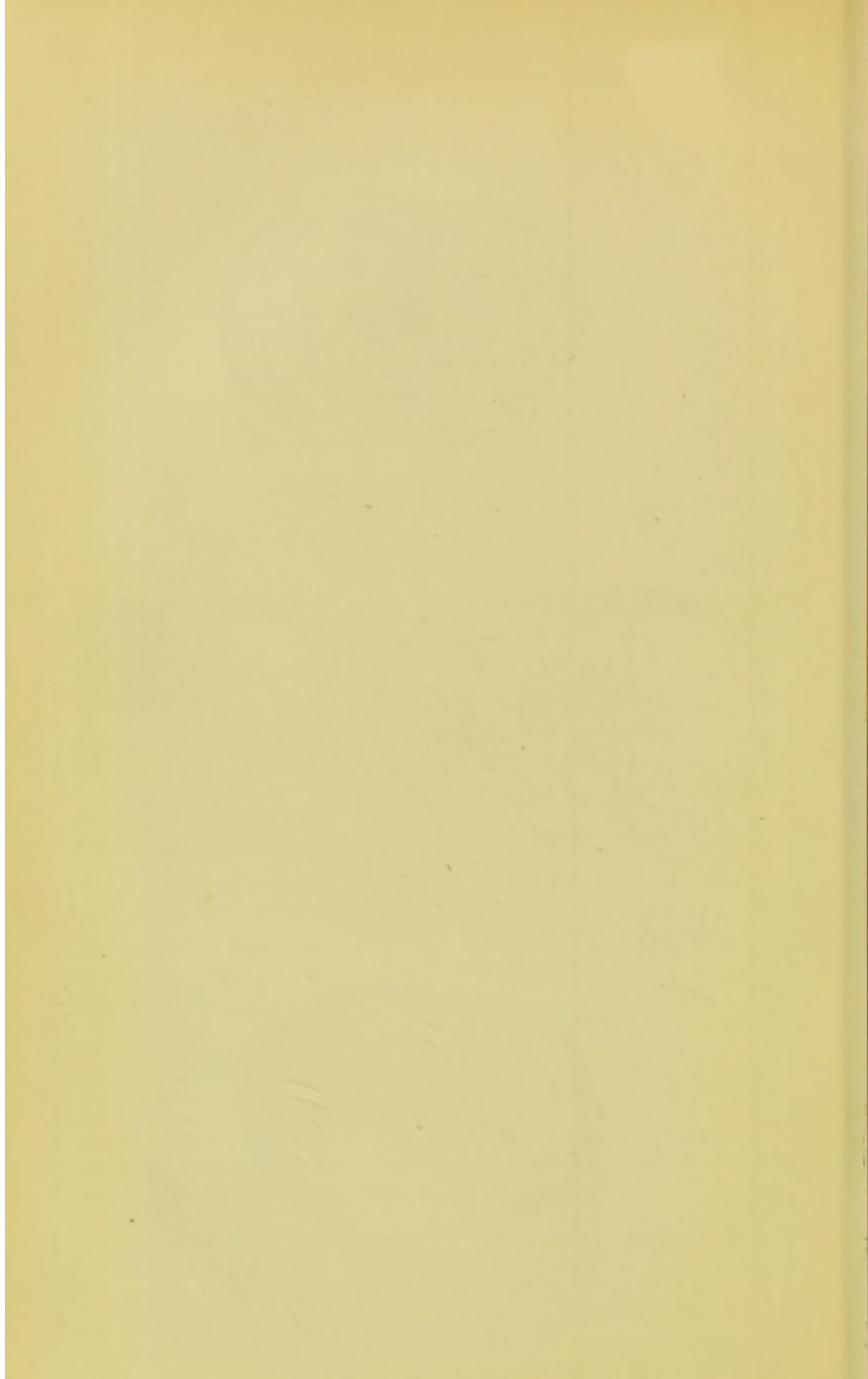
<sup>2</sup> Shown in Hoare's *Ancient Wilts*, vol. ii. pl. 5, No. 2; and in Stukeley's *Abury*, pl. 10. The mound described must have been close to the gibbet seen in this last plate.





SKULL FROM MORGAN'S HILL.—QUARTER SIZE.





to the Roman Verlucio and the vicinity of Aquæ Solis. An adjacent mound of similar form may be of the same character.

4. A very inconspicuous barrow on the northern slope of Morgan's Hill, about half a mile to the north of that last described, not laid down in the Ordnance or any other map I have seen. It is about two feet in height, and had no marks of prior opening. In the centre, in a round hole in the chalk, was a deposit of black ashes, and beneath these a heap of burnt human bones, with which were two beautifully barbed arrow heads and a rudely formed knife or dagger, all of flint, very brittle and white, probably as the result of incrimination.

5. A small mound, still less conspicuous than No. 4, lying about a stone's throw to the west and nearer the Roman road. At a depth of eighteen inches, was a heap of burnt bones, apparently those of a child, and with them some ill-formed and discoloured flint flakes.

On the open Down below Morgan's Hill, and pointing towards Oldbury, is a conspicuous group of barrows, chiefly of the bell-form, and from eight to twelve feet in height. All bear traces of having been opened; but as there is no record of the results, we dug into two of them. The most southern is upwards of seven feet high and remarkable for an enclosing dyke of earth which surrounds its foss. A few bits of burnt bone were thrown up, and at a depth of about eight feet a half-penny of the reign of George the Third, and a square leaden plate, stamped

OPEN'D

1804

W. C.

The fourth of the group is a small bowl-shaped barrow, in which, at a depth of a foot and a half, were the fragments of a very large wide-mouthed urn, of unusually black colour and brittle texture. It was with difficulty in part restored, and must when complete have been fifteen inches in height and twelve inches in diameter. With it were many fragments of burnt bones, and beneath the whole, one of Mr. Cunnington's lead plates, of the same date as the other. It is hence probable that the entire group was opened at that time, and it is to be regretted



that no record of the investigation has been published: perhaps such may remain in manuscript among Mr. Cunnington's papers either in the Library at Stourhead, or in the possession of his family.<sup>1</sup>

A small low barrow on Pound Down, within a short distance of

<sup>1</sup> It appears from the remarks of Sir R. C. Hoare (*Ancient Wilts*, vol. i. p. 166, 173,) that "during the early period of Mr. Cunnington's researches, no very regular account was kept of his discoveries," as at first "no idea was entertained of prosecuting them to the extent" to which they were ultimately carried, and "not the most distant thought was entertained of laying the result before the public." Mr. Cunnington's claim to be the first accurate inquirer into the sepulchral antiquities of Wiltshire, is repeatedly stated by Sir Richard Hoare, who, referring to his death in 1810, calls him "the Alpha of his publication,"—the "Ancient Wiltshire," (vol. i. p. 173.) The first volume of these magnificent folios, commenced in 1810 and published in 1812, is "appropriately dedicated" to Mr. Cunnington, as "a tribute due to justice and friendship." In the dedication of the second volume to Sir Joseph Banks, in 1819-21, Sir R. C. H. says Mr. Cunnington "first induced me to explore the ancient relics of the Britons, and to him I chiefly owe the valuable information I have received from a minute inquiry into the local antiquities of our county." In a later work, Sir Richard repeats these acknowledgements, and observes that "it was reserved for Mr. Cunnington of Heytesbury to investigate barrows in a more perfect manner, and to prove that the *primary* interment was not near the top but always on the floor of the barrow, and generally in a cist cut in the chalk." (*Tumuli Wiltunenses* 1829, p. 3, 7.) Sir Richard Hoare associated himself with Mr. Cunnington in these undertakings in 1804, when he agreed to bear the expense of further researches in the barrows ("Britton's Autobiography," vol. i. p. 370.); and from this date an exact record of their joint and extensive labours appears to have been kept. The name of Sir Richard Hoare, whose—

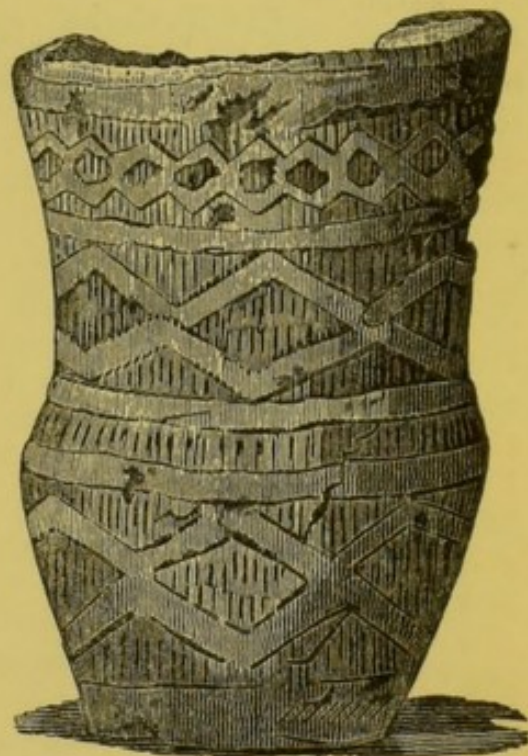
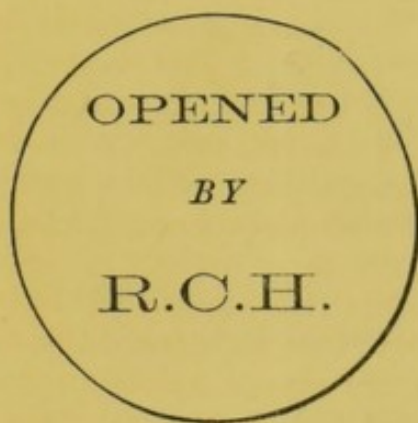
"search

Has dived the Druid mound, illustrating  
His country's annals, and the monuments  
Of darkest ages,"—(*Days Departed*," W. L. Bowles.)

merits indeed the place it must ever hold in connection with the most elaborate investigations of ancient British antiquities yet made; as without his co-operation there is no probability that they could have been prosecuted so extensively, or given to the public with such a profusion of costly illustration. The Rev. Joseph Hunter, F.S.A. speaking of the "Ancient Wiltshire," may perhaps somewhat underrate Mr. Cunnington's contributions, to at least, the first volume, when he says, "In this great work Sir Richard Hoare is entitled to stand very much alone as its author; and it is but in that spirit of modesty, which was a striking part of a character singularly gentle and amiable, that he assigns to any other person any material share in the labour." (*Salisbury Vol. Arch. Inst.* p. 20.) The only unavoidable regret, in connection with these researches into the barrows, is that anatomical and ethnological science was not brought to bear on the human remains, and especially the *crania*, which were so extensively exhumed.



the last group and nearly opposite the fifth mile-stone from Devizes, was also examined. This proved to be the one opened by Sir R. C. Hoare August 11th, 1814,<sup>1</sup> which was the subject of a lengthy poem, entitled "Beth Pennard, or the British Chieftain's Grave,"<sup>2</sup> by the Rev. John Skinner, who with Dean Merewether,<sup>3</sup> was present at the opening. From the terms in which Sir Richard Hoare describes the situation of this barrow (in which the richly ornamented earthen drinking cup, here figured,<sup>4</sup> was found near the head of a skeleton) it was at first by no means clear to which he refers. Its identity with that which we re-opened was however proved by the discovery of a brass medal, inscribed



with the fragments of a skeleton in a cist, which had been excavated to some depth in the chalk. Much poetical merit cannot be claimed for Mr. Skinner's unpublished verses; from which, however,

<sup>1</sup> Ancient Wilts, vol. ii. p. 92, No. 4.

<sup>2</sup> Wilts Archæological and Natural History Magazine, vol. iv. p. 361, note.

<sup>3</sup> "Proceedings Archæological Institute, at Salisbury," 1849, p. 109. The Dean's description of the locality is also ambiguous; but one of Sir Richard's "pioneers," the octogenarian John Parker, perfectly remembers the barrow as the one we re-opened. "Dr. Stukeley" says Sir R. C. Hoare, "has recorded the merits of Reuben Horsall, the Town Clerk of Abury: and why should I not do equal justice to those of our Heytesbury pioneers . . . John Parker and his father Stephen, to the former of whom we feel much indebted for many interesting discoveries."—Ancient Wilts, vol. i. p. 97.

<sup>4</sup> For the use of the wood-cut of this cup, from the Catalogue of the Museum at Stourhead, we are indebted to Messrs. Nichols and Sons, of Parliament Street. The vase is here represented of about one-third its actual size.



as referring to the opening of this particular barrow, and as containing a complimentary allusion to Sir Richard Hoare, the following lines may be quoted.

“Two feet beneath the verdant glade,  
By Bards a narrow cist is made,  
Yet ample to contain  
Those listless limbs, in speed and force  
Which rival'd once the fleetest horse,  
Light bounding o'er the plain.

\*                      \*                      \*

Now fill the hallowed cup of clay  
With dew from Cromlech's summit grey,  
Last night procured in locks of wool,  
Fill it with care and fill it full.  
Such beverage suits ethereal sprite  
Ere it ascends to realms of light.  
Place it contiguous to the head  
And o'er its mouth a covering spread,  
The liquid pure awhile to keep,  
To guard it from the incumbent heap.  
Two thousand years their course will fly  
Before the vase be void and dry.  
Then 'tis decreed—I hail the sign—  
The grave its treasure must resign  
To a kind Chief, who will revere  
A chieftain's relics buried here.  
One who with us delights to ken  
The ancient works of Celtic men;  
Who makes their labours by his own  
Survive, when falls each magic stone,  
Or roaming midst the hills and groves,  
Views scenes which every Druid loves.  
The cup our benefactor's hand  
That time shall grace, when through the land  
Soft peace and all her festive train,  
By Britain hailed, shall smile again.  
To him alone, by Belin's doom,  
The gifted treasure of the tomb  
Shall pass, to guard with constant spell  
Each stream and shade, each hill and dell;  
That all his days may tranquil glide,  
As his we place it now beside!”

There are several groups of barrows, mostly of small size, on the Downs to the east of Shepherd's Shore, close to Wansdyke on the north. The first of these, near the road, consists of three very small mounds, two of which had been opened before.



6. In the third, at a depth of two feet, was the skeleton of a tall female in a shallow cist, in the usual contracted posture, with the head to the north: under the turf were a few teeth of an ox. Nothing else was found.

About a quarter of a mile to the east, on Roughridge Hill, are two groups, the first consisting of four, the other of three low mounds.

7. In the second of the first group, counting from the south, at the depth of a foot, was a deposit of the burnt bones of a female or young person. The other three had been previously opened by Mr. William Cunnington, and all found to cover interments after cremation.

In each of the more northerly group of three, we also found deposits of burnt bones:

8. In the first, these were at the depth of between three and four feet, mixed with a few ashes, and with fragments of sun-dried pottery, of both the coarse and finer sorts. There were also two pins of ivory, one of them tinged with bronze.

9. This yielded nothing beyond a heap of burnt bones, on the surface of the chalk.

10. In this, at a depth of two feet, was a small deposit of incinerated bones, with much burnt wood and ashes, and likewise a small cup of ornamented but coarse sun-dried pottery, and a perforated bead of bone or ivory an inch long. At a distance of two feet on the same level, was the jaw of a pig, and in another place a bone or two of an ox.

11. A single barrow on the slope of the hill about half a mile to the north of the last, (marked on the Ordnance Map, but not on those in "*Ancient Wilts*," ) at the depth of two feet, yielded a few burnt bones, a fragment of black pottery and a tooth or two of an ox.

Further east, on the summit of Easton Hill, are a long barrow, and one of a fine bell-shape.

12. In this last, at the depth of two feet, was a grooved pin of bone two inches long, and a few scattered teeth and animal bones. At six feet was a large pile of burnt bones, probably those of a male; and below and around these, a quantity of wood ashes.



13. The long barrow, of moderate size, ranges almost due east and west, has the usual slight trench on the north and south sides, not continued round the west or east end, which last is the highest and widest part of the mound. There were marks of former diggings at the east end, near which a large opening was made down to the natural soil. Here, were the scattered bones of four human skeletons, two adult males, and two apparently young persons. The teeth were much worn, the erosion being most marked on the outer edges of the lower, and inner edges of the upper, teeth. There were also a few chippings and fragments of Sarsen stones.

14. On Horton Down, about half a mile further east, is a single barrow of low elevation, in which, at a depth of two feet, was a simple deposit of burnt bones.

Still further east, on St. Anne's, or as it is commonly called, Tan Hill,<sup>1</sup> to the south of Wansdyke and overlooking the villages of Allington and All Cannings, are four barrows, all of the bowl form, surrounded by shallow trenches.

15. In the first of these, to the west, at a depth of three feet and a half, were the burnt bones, apparently of a female or young

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<sup>1</sup> The vulgar name of Tan Hill has almost supplanted its proper designation of St. Anne's Hill, by which it is still known on the Maps. The great annual fair held here on old St. Anne's day, (Aug. 6th) is sufficient proof of the etymology, and of the unsatisfactory nature of the speculations of the late Canon Bowles and others, by whom its name was connected with that of the Celtic Jupiter, *Taranis*.—(Bremhill, 1828, p. 35; Hermes Brit. p. 14.) Stronger testimony may be derivable from Anglo-Saxon charters of the 10th century, of Edward the elder, Edwy and Edgar, in which, if Fosbroke's reading is to be accepted, mention is made, in describing the boundaries of the adjoining parish of Stanton, of "Anne's Thorn" and "Anne's Stone," probably on this very hill, (Hoare's Regist. Wilton, p. 6; Cod. Dip. Nos. 335, 467, and 482). In the 17th century, Aubrey writes of "St. Anne's Hill" as "vulgarly called Tann Hill, where every yeare on St. Anne's day (26 July) is kept a great fair, within an old camp." (Nat. Hist. of Wilts, p. 114). Mr. Duke, who thought the fair of St. Anne may have succeeded to the *feriæ* of Diana, observes "the corruption of St. Anne's Hill to Tan Hill is obviously thus, St. Anne's Hill—S'tan Hill—Tan Hill." (Druidical Temples of Wilts, 1846, p. 95.) There can be little doubt that this hill has been the site of pagan rites, but to what deity these were paid, there is, we think, no proof. The *Beltein* may likely enough have been here celebrated; but these midsummer fires were especially in honour of the solar god, Belin. The hill, it seems clear, derives its name from that of the patron saint of the parish church (All Cannings) viz. St. Anne.



person, and with them a small bead of bluish glass and three larger ones with a pendant, all of jet.

16. In the most eastern, at the depth of a foot, was an urn of coarse red earth, holding from one to two gallons, and filled with burnt human bones; the mouth inverted on a rough flat stone. The urn was broken, but has been restored sufficiently to show its form and size. On each side of the urn there is a deep crack, and on each side of the cracks are neatly bored holes, evidently made for the insertion of thongs or cords, by which the urn might be held together and the further extension of the cracks prevented. The two intermediate mounds had been previously opened; but in one of them was a circular chipped disc of flint, such as, though unusual in the Wiltshire barrows, are common in those of Yorkshire and Derbyshire.

Three low barrows, between St. Anne's Hill and Milk Hill, on the escarpment of the downs close to Wansdyke, were examined; in the first of which a few scattered bones of ruminants, and in the third, traces of incinerated bones were alone met with.

17. In the second, at a depth of two feet, were bones and teeth of sheep and oxen; at three feet two small pieces of deer's horn and a fragment of coarse black pottery, and at four and a half feet, two circular cists scooped out of the chalk rock, a foot or two apart, each two feet and a half in diameter. These were filled with grey ashes, with no distinct trace of burnt bone. Deposits of this kind, to the exclusion of interments, properly so called, have before been found in the barrows of Wiltshire, and are termed *cineraria* in the descriptions of Sir R. C. Hoare.

On Walker's Hill, Alton-Priors Down, near the very large long barrow, by which it is distinguished,<sup>1</sup> are three small mounds; two of which disclosed marks of interment after cremation; they had been previously opened. The smaller one was not examined.

11. A small barrow, under cultivation, somewhat more to the west and not more than a foot in height, presented no trace of interment, after careful investigation.

To the east of Walker's Hill is Knap Hill, having on its sum-

<sup>1</sup> Ancient Wilts, vol. ii. pp. 12, 46. Salisbury Vol. of the Arch. Inst. p. 98.



mit a small defensive earthwork or camp. At the foot of this, (close to the road to Kennet, and to the line of the old British trackway which stretches by Avebury into Berkshire,) are two defaced barrows connected by a dyke, extending sixty yards east and west.

19. To the south of the eastern mound, is a small low barrow not two feet in height. In digging into it, a few pieces of burnt bone were found, and near the centre, the carelessly buried skeleton of an infant. On the west side of the barrow, in a narrow cist in the chalk, more than six feet long, was the skeleton of an adult female of large stature, stretched at length, the feet to the east, as in Christian cemeteries at the present day;

“Mindful of Him who in the orient born  
There lived, and on the cross His life resigned;  
And who from out the regions of the morn  
Issuing in pomp shall come to judge mankind.”<sup>1</sup>

In the absence of any accompanying relic it is impossible to assign a period to this last interment. From the traces of cremation, however, it may be inferred that this was an ancient British barrow, which under peculiar circumstances had been used for the interment of a woman and child in mediæval times. Might it not be the case of some unhappy infanticide or suicide, who, excluded from the graveyard of the village church, had been taken for interment to this pagan burying place on the hill?

Within the area of the camp on Knap Hill, Sir R. C. Hoare describes “two small barrows, and another on the outside.”<sup>2</sup>

20. This last, to the south-west of the earthwork, is not more than a foot high. An opening, of at least three yards square, was made in the centre; but excepting some animal bones near the summit, nothing was found after a most careful search.

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<sup>1</sup> Wordsworth, it is true, here alludes to the orientation of churches; but there can be no doubt that similar views have determined the position of the dead in Christian cemeteries. The great mediæval ritualist, Durandus, thus writes: “Debet autem quis sic sepeliri ut, capite ad occidentem posito, pedes dirigat ad orientem: in quo quasi ipsâ positione orat et innuit quod, promptus est ut de occasu festinet ad ortum.” *De Divinis Officiis*: quoted by Abbé Cochet, *Arch.* vol. xxxvi. p. 261.

<sup>2</sup> *Ancient Wilts*, vol. ii. p. 12. \* Maps of Marlborough Station and of Wansditch.



21. The simple bowl barrow at the west end of the camp, is about two feet high and surrounded by a slight trench. Near the summit, were a few bones of a sheep and perhaps other ruminants, such as are commonly found in this position in the barrows of Wiltshire: they are probably the relics of funeral feasts or of sacrifices over the graves. In the centre, was a circular cist in the chalk rock, two feet in diameter and two feet deep, nearly full of ashes and burnt bones, but without any other relic. At the east end of the camp, the ground has been much disturbed by digging for flints, and no trace of any barrow remains.

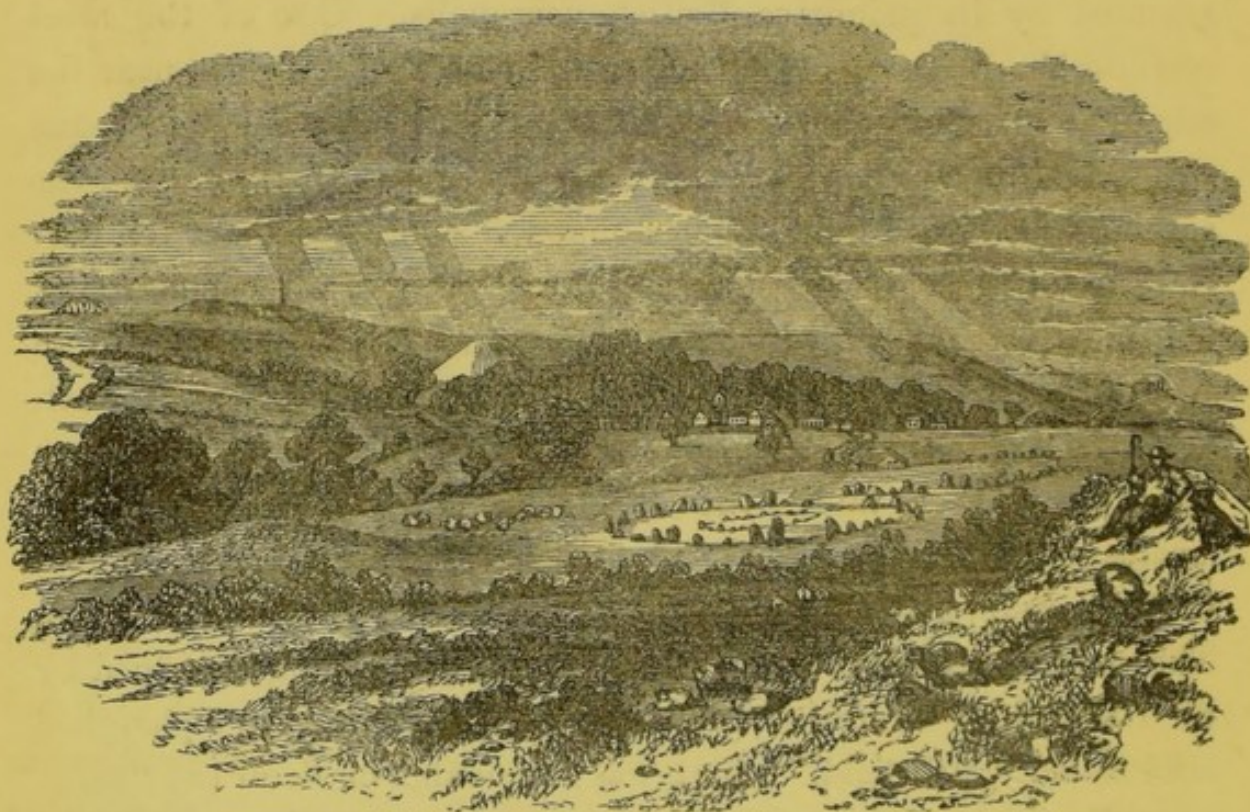
The downs and fields around Avebury abound with barrows; this *locus consecratus*, like the later one of Stonehenge, being surrounded by its primitive British necropolis. One of the most remarkable groups is on Kennet or Overton Hill or Down, near the site of the "sanctuary" and commencement of the Kennet avenue which led to the great circle at Avebury, and a little beyond the seventy-ninth milestone from London. There are about ten barrows in all, seven of which are or have been of conspicuous size, and must be those called the Seven Barrows (*seofon beorgas*) in an Anglo-Saxon charter of the tenth century referring to Kennet. (*Cod. Dip.* No. 571). The hill itself went by the name of "Seven Barrowes Hill" as late as the seventeenth century, as appears from a passage in the curious work, "A Fool's Bolt soon shot at Stonage."<sup>1</sup> Of this group, seven were opened by Sir R. C. Hoare about 1815. The most southerly of the ten is a low mound, not examined by Sir Richard, or numbered on his plan.<sup>2</sup> It is situated in a ploughed land called "Mill-field," where was the double circle of the "sanctuary," which field was enclosed in 1685, as we learn from the curious letter of Dr. Toope of Marlborough. Here, close to the sacred circles, a large number of skeletons were found, with "the

<sup>1</sup> Collected and published by Hearne, with Langtoft's Chronicle, in 1725, and usually attributed to a Mr. John Gibbons. I am, however, indebted to the Rev. Canon Jackson for the information, that a note preserved among the Aubrey MSS., at the Bodleian, shows it to have been written by a Mr. Jay of Nettlecombe, Somersetshire, who died about the year 1675.

<sup>2</sup> Ancient Wilts, vol. ii. p. 70, pl. x. A view of this group of barrows, with a distinct representation of the triplet in the centre, is given by Stukeley. Abury, pl. xxix. p. 56.



feet intending the temple." The Doctor obtained from this spot "many bushels" of bones, of which he says, "he made a noble medicine that relieved many of his distressed neighbours!" *Cranium hominis* has now lost its reputation, even in epilepsy; and if, at the present day, a skull be removed from an ancient barrow, it is for preservation in the cabinet of the anatomist; where it is treasured for the purposes of science. The low mound in this field is perhaps the base of the barrow, which Dr. Stukeley says was levelled for ploughing, in 1720, in which was found an unburnt skeleton "within a bed of great stones forming a kind of arch," and with it "several beads of amber, long and round, as big as one's thumb end, and several enamelled beads of glass, some white and some green."<sup>1</sup>



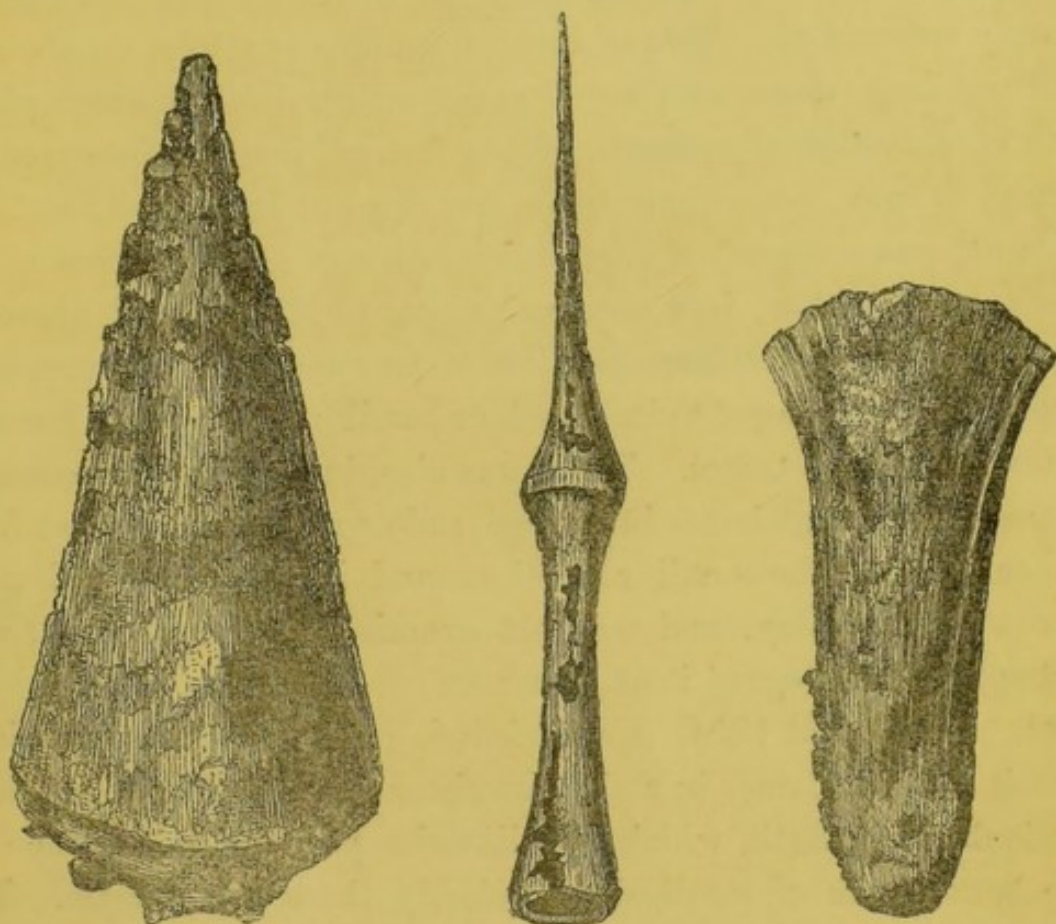
*View from "Seven Barrow Hill," Overton Down, showing the village of West Kennet, Silbury Hill, and a restoration of the Double Circle and Avenue of Stones leading to the Great Circle at Avebury. (From a sketch by Mr. J. Waylen.)*

Our excavation, in 1854, disclosed deep trenches in the chalk and bits of old fashioned pottery, several large nails, and a ring or loop of iron. If not the remains of the barrow described by Stukeley, it may perhaps have been the site of a windmill removed before the time of Aubrey, and whence the name of the field.

<sup>1</sup> Abury, p. 44.



We re-opened the large barrow, No. 1 on the plan of Sir R. C. Hoare, in which he found the large skeleton of a man, "the chief," as he supposed, "of the clan that inhabited these downs," interred in "the post of honour adjoining the sacred circle." Near the head, were a small celt, a pin with a handle, and the blade of a small



*Blade of Knife or Lance, Pin, and Celt of Bronze.—Actual size.*

lance (or knife) all of bronze. The skeleton was in the contracted position, but did not as usual range north and south, but east and west, the feet being to the west—the reverse of the position in Christian cemeteries; reminding us of the passage in *Cymbeline* (Act iv. sc. 2.), where Shakespeare makes Guiderius say of the supposed corpse of Imogen,

"Nay Cadwal, we must lay his head to the east:  
My father hath a reason for't."

The skull was well preserved, and has been described and figured in the "*Crania Britannica*;" and the whole skeleton justified the statement of Sir R. C. Hoare, who says it was "one of the most perfect interments he had ever found."<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Ancient Wilts*, vol. ii. pp. 90, 91.



The other barrows of this group, opened by Sir Richard, yielded interments after cremation. Three of the number, of an elegant bell-form, are curiously united within a common trench, having a sort of hour-glass shape. Twin barrows thus united are not uncommon, but a three-fold union is very rare; indeed the only other example, with which we are acquainted, is that at Shepherd's Shore, already referred to. Two of those forming the triplet on Overton Hill are large barrows (Nos. 3 and 4 on Sir R. C. Hoare's plan,) with an elevation of upwards of ten feet, whilst the intermediate mound is not more than three feet high. In each of the large barrows, was a deposit of burnt bones; in one, on the surface of the chalk, in the other, in a cist scooped out of it; and with these, in one (No. 4) a small "lance-head" of bronze and a bit of ivory, supposed to have belonged to its sheath or handle; of the wood forming which there were traces. There was also, in this last, a secondary interment of burnt bones in a large rude urn, about two feet from the summit. The small central mound is not numbered as a barrow on the plan, and was not examined by Sir Richard, who perhaps did not regard it as a barrow.

22. In August 1854, it was found, on opening, to contain a deposit of burnt bones in a shallow cist, and a rude bone pin nearly five inches in length, which had likewise passed through the fire. The bones were of small size, probably those of a female. The three barrows doubtless formed a family sepulchre, that perhaps of two brothers, with the wife of one, or perhaps of both of them, in the centre.<sup>1</sup>

Attention was next directed to the miniature mounds in this group, immediately to the north of the Roman road, and to the south of the barrow numbered 6, on the plan of Sir R. C. Hoare. It was extremely doubtful, from their form and trifling elevation, whether any of these were sepulchral. In the most southern nothing whatever was found. The second was not examined. In the third, of rather larger size, at a depth of less than two feet, were a few bits of decayed bronze, of doubtful purpose, and two or

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<sup>1</sup> The Britons were *polyandrous*, as we learn from Cæsar, (B.G. lib. v. c. 14.) "Uxores habent \* \* \* inter se communes, et maxime fratres cum fratribus."



three fragments of black pottery, with a thin coin the size of half-a-crown, which fell to pieces on removal. There were also some ashes and slight traces of burnt bones.

23. A disc-shaped, or so called, "Druid's"<sup>1</sup> barrow, on the brow of the hill, a little to the north of that numbered 7, by Sir R. C. Hoare, was examined. It is figured by Dr. Stukeley, in Tabs. xix. and xxii. of his "Abury." After digging down to the undisturbed chalk in the small central mound, nothing whatever was discovered to indicate its having been used for sepulchral purposes.

24. To the south of this last, directly above West Kennet, are two barrows, in a ploughed field called "Eight Acres." Some years since, several projecting sarsen stones, we were told, were removed from the summit of the most northern, when the skeleton of a small horse with his iron shoes,<sup>2</sup> and three or four large urns full of burnt bones were uncovered. In 1857, the skeleton of a child, of two or three years, was found at a depth of about two feet, with fragments of burnt bones, a bit or two of coarse pottery, and the perforated head of a bone pin. Towards the south side of our large excavation, several large sarsen stones were uncovered, beneath which, at a depth of two and a half feet, lay an entire skeleton of small size, in the contracted position, with the head to the west, probably that of an aged female. The form of the skull is remarkably similar to that of the large man found in the neighbouring barrow, described above. (No. 1 on Sir R. C. H.'s plan.)

The other barrow of larger size was excavated to a depth of more than seven feet, before reaching the chalk rock, and yielded nothing but a tine of deer's horn. We were afterwards informed that, many

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<sup>1</sup> It is much to be regretted that this ill-founded designation of Stukeley's (Stonehenge, pp. 10, 45,) should have been adopted by Sir R. C. Hoare; especially as he had come to the reasonable conclusion, from their contents, that the barrows so called were the burial places of females. (Ancient Wilts, vol. i. p. 21; vol. ii. p. 110.) The designation of *disc-shaped*, which we propose for them, seems sufficiently to express their form, which resembles a circular flat dish, surrounded by a deep rim, presenting, sometimes, one or two slight eminences in the centre.

<sup>2</sup> As neither the Britons nor Romans used horse-shoes, this skeleton must have been a secondary deposit, possibly of late date.



years since, nearly a bushel of burnt ashes had been accidentally discovered, under a large sarsen stone in this barrow.

A few barrows, which have been opened on the Downs of South Wiltshire, may also be noticed. Near West Everley, on the south side of the road to Andover, and about a mile to the west of the village, are three low barrows in a ploughed field, which were opened in 1853. Nothing was found in the two smaller; but in

25, the third and central mound, which was between three and four feet in height, was a small deposit of burnt bones, some charcoal and a small bit of soft reddish pottery.

On the down, about a mile to the north of those last described, and close to the track between Pewsey and Everley, are two very fine bell-shaped barrows placed close to each other;<sup>1</sup> and in front of these, one disc-shaped, or so called, "Druid's" barrow, and behind and to the north, a small mound, probably not sepulchral, both of which last were dug into, without result.

26. The most eastern of the bell-shaped barrows is upwards of thirteen feet in elevation; and in this, in a slight cist scooped out of the chalk, was a large deposit of burnt bones, probably those of a man, unaccompanied by urn, weapons, or ornaments; and proving, as Sir Richard Hoare often found, that "we must not judge of the contents by the form of a barrow. *Fronti nulla fides.*"<sup>2</sup> The upper part had been used in later times for a secondary interment; the skeleton of a tall man being met with, about a foot from the summit, laid at full length and with the head to the south. The arms were close to the sides of the skeleton; the thigh bones measured nineteen and a half inches. The skull has an ovoid form, the crowns of the teeth are flatly eroded; and, notwithstanding the discovery of a few fragments of coarse Roman pottery close by, the interment may be attributed to the Anglo-Saxon period.

27. The more western barrow is not quite so high as the eastern. At the depth of about eleven and a half feet, was a heap of burnt bones, apparently those of a man; and with these a small bronze

<sup>1</sup> These fine barrows are not referred to by Sir Richard Hoare, in his account of the tumuli of this district. They are close to the south side of the "very perfect oblong earthen work," described by him. *Ancient Wilts*, vol. i. p. 190.

<sup>2</sup> *Tumuli Wiltun*. p. 23. *Ancient Wilts*, vol. i. pp. 46, 166, 210.



blade three inches in length, retaining one of the rivets by which it had been attached to its handle, and altogether similar to that figured at page 1. Adjoining the burnt bones, was a pile of grey ashes mixed with wood charcoal. No secondary interment was discovered in this barrow.

The two groups of barrows above described, are clearly those alluded to in a survey of "The Manor of Everleigh," of the time of Elizabeth, printed in this Magazine, by Charles E. Long, Esq.;<sup>1</sup> where they are named as follows:—"Thence westwarde by the boundes as they lie to a bound on the west side of the iij *burrowes* w<sup>ch</sup> devideth this mannor and Uphaven, wherehence northwestwarde followinge the balkes and merestones to a balle without the *two burrowes* nere adioyninge to Pewsey waie, therehence northwarde to Carrell Pitt, from thence to Popplestone, deviding this mannor, Pewsie and Milton."

In the preceding paper, the writer has described twenty-seven barrows, in addition to others opened and described by former investigators. If from these be deducted one specular mound (No. 3), one long barrow apparently before opened (No. 13), three tumuli in which, if not of the nature of cenotaphs, the interment must have been overlooked (Nos. 18, 20, 23), there will remain twenty-two in which the original interment seems to have been found. In three only of the number, this consisted of the entire skeleton, in the primitively contracted position. In the large proportion of nineteen, there was distinct evidence of the practice of cremation; in one of these a *cinerarium* alone was found (No. 17), in another the burnt bones had been collected into an urn (No. 16), whilst in the remainder they had been simply deposited in a heap on the surface, or in a more or less superficial cist, scooped out of the chalk. In two cases, the mound originally devoted to burial after cremation, had, in a later age, been resorted to for the interment of an entire body stretched at length. (Nos. 19 and 26). In seven only of the whole number, and these barrows containing interments after cremation, were there the remains of personal

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<sup>1</sup> *Ante*, p. 194.



ornaments, weapons, or other relics. In one of these were beautifully barbed arrow-heads and a knife of flint, (No. 4.); in three, pins of bone, (No. 8—in which there was also an earthen cup—12, 22); in one, pins of ivory (No. 9), in one, beads of jet and glass (No. 15); and in another, a small blade of bronze (No. 27).

The researches of the writer in the barrows of North Wiltshire, like those of Dean Merewether in the same district, in 1849,<sup>1</sup> confirm the observations of Sir Richard Hoare, who tells us that he found in them “no costly ornaments of jet, amber, or gold,” such as “so often had rewarded his labours in the Southern district of the county.”<sup>2</sup> Sir Richard hence draws an inference as to the “very high antiquity” of the tumuli near Avebury, and also as to the “poverty” of the clan of Britons who inhabited these downs. It is perhaps more to the point to insist on a difference of race in the tribes in the two districts; that occupying the North Wiltshire Downs appearing to have consisted of the Dobuni of Ptolemy, who clustered round their aboriginal fane at Avebury; whilst the tribe in possession of South Wiltshire, for some time, perhaps two centuries, before our era, consisted of the immigrant Belgæ. These last brought with them from the Continent a more advanced civilization; probably erected Stonehenge; and doubtless maintained a more intimate traffic with Gaul than did their northern neighbours. Another argument in favour of the priority or distinction of race, of those who raised the barrows to the north and south respectively of Wansdyke and the Vale of Pewsey, is derived from the external form of the barrows themselves. It is true, indeed, that no form of tumulus is distinctive of either district; but it is also true that the more elaborately formed barrows are much more common in the Southern district. On the plains around Stonehenge, it is the elegant campaniform, or bell-shaped<sup>3</sup> barrow, and the

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<sup>1</sup> Salisbury Vol. of Arch. Institute, p. 82.

<sup>2</sup> Ancient Wilts, vol. ii. pp. 91, 93. Tumuli Wiltun. p. 4.

<sup>3</sup> In North Wiltshire, the bell-shaped barrows are rare, but the disc-shaped ones of very much rarer occurrence; and indeed, so far as the writer is aware, they do not exceed five or six in number. Now that in the present season, 1859-60, a large portion of the down north of Shepherd's Shore is been ploughed



equally elegant disc-shaped barrow that most frequently arrest attention; whilst in North Wiltshire these are of much more rare occurrence and give place to the more primitive and simple bowl-shaped barrow.

A few words may be added on the mode of opening barrows. Like Mr. Cunnington and Sir R. C. Hoare, our plan has been to dig a hole, ten or twelve feet square, in the centre of the mound; and to sink a shaft from the top to the bottom, until the undisturbed chalk rock is reached, and the original interment disclosed. By this method, when carefully filled up and the turf replaced, the external form of the mound is hardly at all affected; and, as Sir R. C. Hoare observes, barrows so opened scarcely bear the appearance of any examination.<sup>1</sup> It is the more desirable to allude to this point, as in the adjoining county of Dorsetshire, the much more costly and tedious method of cutting a trench through the entire mound seems to be the plan still usually adopted. The external form of the barrow is by this means much more defaced; though except in rare cases, such an extensive section cannot be requisite for the full disclosure of the contents of the tumulus. It is, however, hardly possible to write in measured terms of the injury inflicted on these ancient monuments, through the recklessness of those modern barrow-diggers, who after satisfying their curiosity, entirely neglect to restore

These grassy barrows of the mighty dead  
to their original form. During a visit to the Dorsetshire coast, in August last, the writer witnessed with regret the condition in which the remarkable tumulus called "Culliford Tree Bar-

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up, two or three tumuli of this rare form, situated about half a mile to the west of the fifth mile-stone from Devizes, are unfortunately threatened with obliteration.

"They do zae that a travelling chap  
Have a put in the Newspeaper now,  
That the bit of green ground on the knap,  
Should be all a-took in vor the plough.  
He do fancy 'tis easy to show,  
That we can be but stunpolls at best,  
Vor to leave a green spot where a flower can grow,  
Or a voot weary walker med rest."

*Poems in the Dorset Dialect. 2nd Series. By Rev. W. Barnes.*

<sup>1</sup> Tumuli Wiltun. p. 6.



row," of so much interest as the place of meeting in old times of the Courts of the Hundred of the same name, had been left by those who had excavated it a year or two before. A wide trench had been dug through it on one side, from the summit, and the rubble which had been thrown out had not been replaced ; though the labour of a single day would have sufficed for the purpose. Another subject of regret was the fact, that though, as we were told by the neighbouring rustics, human remains, with pottery and certain other relics, were found in the barrow, no authentic account of the exploration had, so far as we could learn, been put in print.

I have now completed the account of the examinations I have made in the barrows of North Wiltshire. The results may often appear insignificant, and the details tedious, and the question may arise, *Cui bono ?* If, however, we have failed in discovering the rich arms and ornaments of the native Briton, or elaborate urns and other objects of aboriginal manufacture, yet, speaking for myself and occasional companions, as well as for those by whose manual labour the work has chiefly been accomplished, we can at least look back to pleasant days passed in active exercise on the breezy downs ; where if, like the eastern monarch in the apologue, we have found no basilisk, we, like him, have found healthful recreation suited to our taste, the results of which, are not, we think, entirely without value and interest.

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*Erratum.*

In the description of Barrow No. 1, at p. 1, line 22, for "bell-shaped," read "bowl-shaped."







