

**On an ancient British burial at Ilderton, Northumberland, with notes on the skull / by W. Greenwell and D. Embleton.**

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XIII.—*On an Ancient British Burial at Ilderton, Northumberland, with Notes on the Skull.* By the Rev. W. GREENWELL, M.A., AND D. EMBLETON, M.D. (Plates XIII, XIV.)

THE district where the discovery was made, an account of which is now laid before our Society, is one peculiarly rich in various remains of the tribes which occupied Northumberland, before and at the time of the Roman invasion. Fortified places are found upon almost every hill end. At Old Bewick, close to the fine camp there, is a rock, covered with the circular markings—mysterious symbols, which have as yet eluded any solution of their meaning; whilst, from time to time, numerous discoveries of burials, both of burnt and unburnt bodies, associated, in many cases, with sepulchral urns and other articles, testify to the large population, which, in former ages, dwelt along the fertile valley of the Till. After an examination of many places of sepulture of British times, and from a careful study of this subject, we may come, without much doubt, to the conclusion, that, as a rule, during the later British times, the ordinary mode of interment was by inhumation. In the earlier\* part of the bronze period the body was usually burnt, the bones being then enclosed in an urn, a small cist, or a circular hollow sunk in the natural surface of the ground, or simply placed upon the ground, in each of these cases a barrow being afterwards raised over the remains. But though this was the ordinary mode, burials by inhumation are found so intimately associated with burnt bodies as to prove that both modes were sometimes practised at the same period, and by the same tribe. The reason of these diverse manners of burial is at present unknown, but it is quite possible that, by further examination, we may be able to arrive at some just conclusion on the point. Burial after cremation seems to have been replaced, in the main, by burial by inhumation, a practice which

\* There is reason to suppose that, before the period during which the body was burnt, there was an earlier one, when the body was interred in the flesh; but it is most probable that this was practised by a different race, to whom the use of metal was unknown.



continued down, through the time of the introduction of iron\* into Britain, until the Roman occupation, and no doubt also during that period; for though the Roman custom of burning was adopted by many Romanized Britons, others still held to the ancient custom, as examinations of Roman cemeteries abundantly show. During the later part of the Pre-Roman period, these burials by inhumation, at all events in the North of England, appear frequently to have taken place without any barrow having been raised over the body; for certainly in most instances, where they have been discovered, there is no appearance of any mound having ever existed above the cist which contained the interred body. Ploughing may have obliterated all trace of a very small barrow, but we are inclined to think that in many cases the cist was sunk in the natural surface, and that no barrow was ever placed above it. It is not an unfrequent thing to find several cists of this kind placed near each other, too near to have had each its separate barrow, and yet covering too large a space to have had a mound over all small enough for every trace of it to have disappeared in course of cultivation, for we have seen such cists in old grass pastures where there is no sign of the plough ever having been used. These burials in cists, where there is no appearance of a barrow, are frequently found accompanied by urns of excellent shape and manufacture, and elaborately ornamented over their whole surface—many of them, of what has been called the “drinking-cup” type, and which were very probably placed there to receive food or drink for the use of the person whose body they accompany. Bronze daggers, of very skilful make, are also commonly found with males; whilst necklaces of jet, beautifully figured with rows of dots, forming various patterns, sometimes made by minute points of gold being inserted into the jet, more usually by punctured holes, are the frequent adjuncts of females.

\* Iron was in common use in Britain when Caesar landed, and it must have been therefore known for some considerable time before that date. We cannot, I think, place the introduction of iron later than two centuries before our era, if indeed it does not reach to an earlier period.



The burial, which is the subject of this paper, was found December 14, 1863, on a farm occupied by Mr. Clark, at Ilderton, and to his care and intelligent interest we are indebted for the preservation of the skull, which would otherwise have perished, as has been the fate of nearly all those that have been hitherto discovered in Northumberland.\* The cist, in which the body was found, was sunk below the natural surface of a round knoll, which rises several feet above the ordinary level of the adjoining ground. It is difficult to say whether any barrow ever covered it or not. Some years ago a large quantity of field stones was removed from the crown of the knoll, and from above the cist, but it is quite possible that these had been gathered off the land, and laid there, when the field was first brought into cultivation. The cist was formed of four slabs of sandstone set on edge, with a flooring of small flags, and one large stone, five feet six inches long by three feet broad, as a cover. The cist lay east and west, and was about three feet six inches long, by one foot ten inches wide, and eighteen inches deep. The body had been doubled up and laid upon its left side, with the head to the east, the hands had been folded upon the belly, the legs drawn up so as to bring the knees close to the chin, and the head and fore part of the body slightly inclined forward. The bones, when first discovered, were of a chalky whiteness, but soon changed to a red earthy colour, which they still retain. All the teeth were then present, but many have since been lost. No urn, implement or weapon was found in the cist.

The body was deposited in the manner usual in burials of this kind, being doubled up; it was laid upon the left side, a position which, though not universal, is by far the most common.

Taking into consideration the formation of the cist, the way in which the skeleton was found placed within it, and the very marked type of the skull, we have no doubt in attributing the

\* We must acknowledge our great obligations to Mr. James Moffatt, of Lilburn Cottage, who, in the kindest way, gave us information of all the facts connected with the position of the body, and who, from his knowledge of the ancient remains in his neighbourhood, has otherwise been of the greatest service to us.



burial to the later period of the time during which a bronze-using people occupied Britain before the Roman invasion, and who were, in the main, the inhabitants of our country at that time. It is perhaps in vain to assign any date, even an approximate one, for this interment, the only thing about it which can be laid down with confidence is, that it belongs to a time previous to that in which Rome began to influence the habits of the Northumberland tribes, for the facts connected with it all point to the British mode of burial in its integrity.

Our chief attention has been directed to the skull, which, together with the other bones, was in a very good state of preservation.

The skull is robust, well arched, and symmetrical, its superciliary arches are very prominent, and its external angular processes well developed. The forehead slightly recedes. The occipito-parietal region is large and rounded. The nose has been of moderate size, but the lower ends of the nasal bones are broken off. The mouth is rather large and well formed, the jaws strong, and contained a full set of sound teeth, a good deal worn, especially the large molars. The lower jaw has a strong, square and somewhat projecting chin, the angle is not far from being a right angle, and the distance across from angle to angle is considerable. The frontal sinuses appear to join together, and form a projection over the root of the nose. The temporal fossæ and spaces of origin for the temporal muscles are wide and large. The sutures, coronal, sagittal, and lambdoidal, are partially obliterated.

Taking this last character, with the number and state of the teeth, and the general condition of the skull, it may perhaps be inferred to have been that of a man about forty-five years old. Again, considering the strong muscular impressions on the long bones, and size and strength of the cranium, it may perhaps be correctly concluded to have belonged to a man of robust frame, and of good intelligence. His stature, as inferred from the length (19·1 inches) of the femur, must have been about five feet ten inches.

The following are the principal dimensions of the skull, taken



according to the method adopted by Dr. Thurnam, in his interesting and valuable Essay "On the two principal forms of Ancient British and Gaulish Skulls."

Probable Age.	I. Cubic capacity.	II. Circumference.	III. Length.	IV. Breadth.	V. Height.	VI. VII. FACE.		A Breadth Length, = 100.	B Height Length, = 100.
						Length.	Breadth.		
Years.	Inches.	Inches.	Inches.	Inches.	Inches.	Inches.	Inches.		
45	95	21	7	6 (t)	5·6	5	5	85·7	80

The capacity was taken with fine sand (ground flint) of sp. gr. 2·65.

In Dr. Thurnam's Table of twenty-five Brachycephalic British skulls, the average proportion of breadth to length is 81, that of height to length 76 to 100.

The Ilderton skull is therefore above the average of brachycephalism, as given in Dr. Thurnam's Table.

Other dimensions of the skull are as follows:—

	INCHES.
Fronto-occipital arch .....	14·7
Length of frontal .....	4·8
Ditto parietal .....	4·8
Ditto occipital .....	5·1
Intermastoid arch .....	15·0
Breadth of frontal .....	4·9
Ditto parietal .....	5·5
Ditto occipital .....	4·6
Height of frontal .....	5·7
Ditto parietal .....	5·6
Ditto occipital .....	4·3

The right femur measured 19·1 inches in length. The ends of this bone are rather larger in proportion to the shaft than is usual, and the shaft more arched.

The right humerus is 13·3 inches in length, and is well formed. In both bones the muscular impressions are well marked.

The above measurements have been carefully made, and accurate drawings on stone, from photographs of the skull, have been executed by the Messrs. Lambert, of Grey Street. The

accompanying plates will convey an excellent idea of this fine skull.

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Plate XIII is a profile view, half the size of the original, and has been minutely finished in all its details.

Plate XIV gives four different views of the skull, quarter size, and partially shaded.

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XIV.—*On Human and other Remains found in a Cavern near the Ryhope Colliery.* By JAMES W. KIRKBY AND GEORGE S. BRADY.

AT the last Field Meeting of the Club at Marsden (October, 1865), a discussion took place relative to the occurrence of osseous remains in a cave near the Ryhope Colliery; and a committee\* was appointed to enquire into the facts of the discovery, and to watch the further progress of the excavations. After visiting the cavern several times and carefully examining the remains that have been preserved, we present the following short report—not so much on account of any great scientific value attached to the remains, as for the purpose of recording the nature of the discovery and the circumstances under which it took place.

The cave is situated on the north side of what was once a very picturesque glen, directly opposite to, and not fifty yards distant from, the Ryhope Pit. This portion of the valley is called Hollicarr Sides, though it virtually forms the eastern termination of a larger waterless valley named Tunstall Hope. Prior to the sinking of the pit the sides of the glen would be nearly fifty feet high; but that height has been greatly reduced by the deposition of ballast in the vicinity of the pit; and as the mouth of the cave is at present on a level with the surface of the ballast heap, its position originally must have been about half way up

\* Dr. Embleton, the Rev. W. Greenwell, Messrs. E. C. Robson, G. S. Brady, and J. W. Kirkby.