

**On human and other remains found in a cavern near the Ryhope Colliery /
by James W. Kirkby and George S. Brady.**

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

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. Rohson, G. S. Brady, and J. W. Kirkby.

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CAVERN NEAR THE RYHOPE COLLIERY.

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examine it, it is never more than between three and four feet
high. On the east it is connected by a small opening with
another passage smaller than the first. As the whole of the
debris had not been removed at our last visit we are not quite
in a position to say that the end of the cave has been reached,
though from appearances it is probable that such may be the case.
The sides and top of the cave are somewhat irregular; but where
the rock is hard it is worn smooth, or coated with calc-sinter.
The cave earth is composed of soil mixed with marl from the
sides. It does not seem to have been washed in; at least there
is no trace of its deposition by water. The bones—those belong-
ing to human subjects excepted—are scattered without any order
through the cave earth. All of them contain more or less animal
matter, the great majority having apparently lost very little of
it. A few however have lost considerably more than the others;
these may be older, or they may have been less favourably placed
for preservation than the rest. None of them are in the least
degree fossilized. With the bones occur numerous shells of *Helix*
nemoralis, *Littorina littorea*, and *Patella vulgata*. Fragments of
small branches of trees are also common; and in one instance we
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the side of the glen, which was once undoubtedly steep and precipitous, though the accumulation of debris at the base has subsequently transformed it into a bank of half crag, half bramble-covered slope, like those which so often characterize the minor vallies of limestone regions.

The rock in which the cave is excavated is described by Mr. Howse as the Middle Limestone of the Permian series of Durham; by Professor King it would be called the Pseudo-brecciated Limestone. It varies greatly in hardness and general structure, and thus offers a more than usually favourable material for the formation of caverns. There are indeed indications of several other caves of limestone in the immediate neighbourhood.

The cave appears to have run in from the old face of the rock as a narrow passage, about two feet high and three wide, descending gently as it advanced: it then enlarges somewhat, both laterally and in height, though, so far as we have been able to examine it, it is never more than between three and four feet high. On the east it is connected by a small opening with another passage smaller than the first. As the whole of the debris had not been removed at our last visit we are not quite in a position to say that the end of the cave has been reached, though from appearances it is probable that such may be the case. The sides and top of the cave are somewhat irregular; but where the rock is hard it is worn smooth, or coated with calc-sinter. The cave earth is composed of soil mixed with marl from the sides. It does not seem to have been washed in; at least there is no trace of its deposition by water. The bones—those belonging to human subjects excepted—are scattered without any order through the cave earth. All of them contain more or less animal matter, the great majority having apparently lost very little of it. A few however have lost considerably more than the others; these may be older, or they may have been less favourably placed for preservation than the rest. None of them are in the least degree fossilized. With the bones occur numerous shells of *Helix nemoralis*, *Littorina littorea*, and *Patella vulgata*. Fragments of small branches of trees are also common; and in one instance we observed a few small pieces of charcoal.

In the examination of the bones we have had the kind assistance of Dr. Embleton.

Immediately after the discovery of the remains, and before the interest which might attach to them was at all understood by the workmen on the spot, great numbers of the bones were carried away by the people of the neighbouring pit-village, and no doubt speedily found their way into the stores of itinerant rag-and-bone merchants. But when the possible importance of the relics was represented to the managers of the colliery, they at once gave orders that any future discoveries should be carefully preserved, and all bones which have since come to light have been handed over to the Sunderland Museum, where they are now deposited. The large quantity of bones abstracted in the first instance makes it impossible to state with certainty the total number of human skeletons, or to say whether the entire skeletons were actually there, and considering the fragmentary character of the remains now extant it seems useless to give a catalogue *in extenso*. We shall therefore content ourselves with a brief notice of them.

Of human bones there are in the Museum, at Sunderland, four skulls; two others being, we believe, temporarily in the possession of Mr. Greenwell, of Durham, but these last we have not seen. Of those at Sunderland three belong apparently to adult males, and one to a young female. Two of the male skulls, but *one* more especially, are very massive and strongly developed both as regards the facial and cranial portions. These have also apparently lost much more of their animal constituents than the younger skull. As to race there seems little or nothing in their characters to point to any considerable antiquity. Besides the skulls there have been preserved many other bones belonging doubtless to the same skeletons, and comprising detached vertebrae, scapulæ, pelvic bones, ribs, and bones of the upper and lower extremities. It should be noted also that we saw at Ryhope the lower jaw-bone of a child, which must have formed part of a seventh skeleton: this has unfortunately disappeared.

The bones of the lower animals comprise fragments of skulls of the dog, rabbit, goat, and sheep, many broken jaws of the pig, sheep, ox, and dog, as well as fragments from other parts of

those animals. Part of the jaw and one of the cranial bones of a fish were also found. These may all be supposed to have been brought there by human agency, or to have inhabited the cavern at the same time as man. But there were likewise many bones of small wild birds as well as of barn-door fowls, some of them with feathers still attached, and all evidently of quite recent origin. For these the fox must doubtless be held responsible.

It will be seen that none of these remains necessarily indicate great antiquity. Even as belonging to the historical era they would scarcely appear to date many centuries back. Had the human bones and shells not been present, the rest of the remains could easily have been accounted for by our looking upon the cave as an old fox-hole. We conclude, however, that the cave must, at some time or other, have been used by man as a place of resort—as is indicated by the burnt wood and remains of edible shell-fish—and afterwards, either by intention or accident, as a place of burial. We have evidence of the presence of not less than seven human beings, five of whom seem to have been males, one a female, and one a child. Why so many of our fellow creatures should have left their remains there, at a period which cannot but have been comparatively recent, is difficult to understand; nor can we even venture to hazard a conjecture as regards this part of the subject.

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XV.—*On the Opening and Examination of a Barrow of the British Period at Warkshaugh, North Tynedale.* By the Rev. GEO. ROME HALL. (Plate XV.)

AMONG the numerous vestiges of the pre-historic vale-dwellers of the North Tyne, yet remaining, are several *tumuli* or barrows. At High Shield Green a group of such burial mounds takes the form of an ancient cemetery. They are clustered around a great central cairn on a lofty eminence, not far from several ancient British camps. In the autumn of last year (1864), six or seven of these barrows were carefully examined, including