

Further researches in an Anglo-Saxon cemetery at Frilford : with remarks on the northern limit of Anglo-Saxon cremation in England / by George Rolleston.

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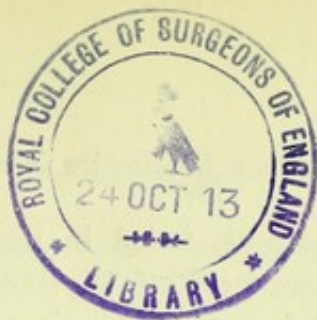
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Further Researches in an Anglo-Saxon Cemetery at Frilford, with Remarks on the Northern Limit of Anglo-Saxon Cremation in England. By GEORGE ROLLESTON, Esq., M.D. F.R.S. F.S.A.

From THE ARCHÆOLOGIA, Vol. XIV.

The first discovery in the cemetery at Frilford, subsequent to those already recorded in the *Archæologia*, XLII. p. 417-485, was made on March 22, 1869, when a leaden coffin was found, containing the bones of a young woman, with a toilet comb^a at the right of the back of her head. This brings the number of leaden coffins found at Frilford up to five; one of them has already been figured in *Archæologia*, XLII. pl. xxiv. figures 7 and 8.

The second was the discovery of some fragments, which when fitted to the three fragments found in September, 1867, one of which is figured in the *Archæologia*, XLII. pl. xxiii. fig. 2, p. 423, make up the larger portion of what is often called a "holy-water vessel." The fragments of September, 1867, were to my eyes so distinctly Saxon that I had one of them figured, and the unexpected discovery of the remaining fragments enabled us to build up the urn shown in the annexed woodcut. I imagine that a plough's coulter had knocked out the first discovered fragments. No burnt bones were found quite close to the urn, but one fragment was found a little way off.^b



ANGLO-SAXON URN, FRILFORD.
Scale $\frac{1}{2}$ linear.

This reconstructed vessel may be compared with vessels of somewhat similar

^a For difference between toilet and other combs, see Anderson, *Proc. Soc. Ant. Scot.* June 10, 1872 p. 551, and woodcut *in loco*.

^b The fragment, which with a triangular apex pointing upwards, occupies about the middle point in the front upper border of the urn figured above, is the same fragment which is figured with its apex pointing downwards, pl. xxiii. fig. 2, *Archæologia* XLII.

shape, and possibly similar purpose, found in Roman cemeteries, for instance, at Hardham, Sussex, as figured by Prof. W. Boyd Dawkins.^a But urns more similar still have been found in many Teutonic cemeteries in England, as well as in France and Germany.

May 3, 1870.—An old Anglo-Saxon woman, with tweezers,^b knife, metallic button, and small metallic ornament at head of humerus; large stones set by the sides of the graves as described in *Archæologia*, l. c. p. 438; but no nails. Depth of grave 2 feet 6 in., direction north-west to south-east. Abundance of charcoal in the grave; arms extended, patellæ *in situ*. Tibiæ platynemic.

May 3, 1870.—Fragment giving about three-sevenths of the circumference of an Anglo-Saxon "holy-water vessel," or, perhaps, rather of a rudimentary representation of cremation urn; found near the bones of a young person. This vessel has the characteristic German angular projection round its body, the vandyking and the stamped pattern, &c., which we are familiar with in urns of larger size intended for the reception of burnt bones. Its small size, as well as



FRAGMENT OF SAXON URN, FRILFORD.
SCALE $\frac{1}{2}$ LINEAR.



SAXON URN, HASLINGFIELD.
SCALE $\frac{1}{2}$ LINEAR.

the fact that many such vessels have been found with buried bodies, and without any bony contents, show that this vessel cannot be considered as a cinerary vessel.^c Cochet, in his *Arch. Ceramique*, p. 13, explains what he calls the mystery of the custom by the often quoted passage as to holy water from Durandus, vii. 35, 37.

^a Sussex Archæological Collections, vol. xvi. p. 58.

^b For figures of similar tweezers, see Lindenschmit, *Alterthümer*, Bd. ii. Hft. v. Taf. vi. where they are said to be found usually in men's graves, but sometimes in women's. Neville, *Saxon Obsequies*, pl. ii. Cochet, *Normandie Souterraine* p. 219, pl. vii. fig. 35.

^c For the greater fineness of workmanship in these smaller vessels, see Kemble, *Horæ Ferales*, p. 225; Roach Smith, *Collect. Antiq.* iv. 161-196.

I think this passage of little weight,^a considering that Durandus lived in the thirteenth century. I incline to consider these vases, another example of which, from Haslingfield, is herewith figured, and which sometimes have been, as at Selzen, found to contain combs, shears, beads, fibulæ, flint and steel, and bronze rings, in fact everything that an ordinary cremation urn does contain except the bones, to be rudimentary representations of such cremation urns. Solemn occasions are tenacious of their symbols, and will hold to them or keep hold of them in miniature when they can no longer maintain them in full proportions. The wide range over which this diminutive representation of the larger Germanic urn has been found is another argument in favour of my view, which is based upon the recognition of an acknowledged tendency of the human mind as opposed to a view which can only appeal to a superstition of probably much more limited geographical range.^b A somewhat similar vessel, both as to size and contour, from the Oberpfalz of Bavaria, may be found figured in "Die Sammlungen des Germanischen Museum," Nurnberg, 1868, p. 67.

May 23, 1870, iii.; May 23, 1870, vii. — Skeleton of old Romano-Briton lying

^a It was thus as given by Cochet *l.c.*, "Corpus ponitur in speluncâ in quâ . . . ponitur aqua benedicta . . . Aqua benedicta ne daemones qui multum eam timent ad corpus accedant: solent namque desævire in corpora mortuorum, ut quod nequiverunt in vita saltem post mortem agant." Cochet's own words are, "Tous les cimetières mérovingiens et même carlovingiens que nous retrouvons . . . montrent toujours aux pieds du mort un vase vide dont les hommes d'aujourd'hui nous demandent le sens et le mystère. Nous croyons l'avoir trouvé dans la piété naïve et grossière, peut-être même matérielle et superstitieuse, de nos pères. Nous supposons donc, non sans fondement, qu'ils auront mis dans ce vase une eau sacrée préservatrice des obsessions et des possessions démoniaques si fréquentes chez les vivants et dont les morts ne leur paraissaient ni exempts ni affranchis."

^b For the general literature, see Cochet, *Arch. Cer.* p. 14, *ibique citata*; Normandie Southeraine, pp. 199, 267; La Seine Inferieure, p. 530; Tombeau de Childeric, p. 391, *ibique citata*; Akerman, *Researches at Long Wittenham*, *Archæologia* xxxviii. pp. 342, 346, 352, (note) 330, 333, 342, 352; pl. xx. fig. 2; Pagan Saxondom, pl. xxii. where an urn eight inches high is described as containing tweezers, shears, comb, and knife, though it is not stated whether any bones were found in it or not. See also *Inventorium Sepulchrale*, 1856, *Introd.* p. xxvi. and Neville's *Saxon Obsequies*, p. 9, where vessels like these are said to have been very frequently, as regards the entire number (*viz.* three or four times out of twelve), found with infant skeletons, and to have been found either at head or foot, "though in the grave of an adult two small vases were found, one on each side of the former." This difference in placing seems to me to favour my view as above stated. The Selzen vases were, it is true, or nearly always, at the feet, and those found in the French interments of the same period, always, according to Cochet *l.c.* But at Hallstatt (see V. Sacken, *Das Grabfeld von Hallstatt*, 1868, p. 107) the position of these vases was most variable, "bald standen sie zur rechten, bald zur linken Seite des Skelettes, neben dem Kopfe, bei dem Hüften oder zur den Füßen. bei Verbrennungen in der Regel neben den Brandresten, selten auf denselben."

in grave such as are described in *Archæologia*, XLII. p. 422, undisturbed 18 inches below skeleton of a young Anglo-Saxon, æt. about 17, with umbo, spear, and knife.

May 23, 1870, iv. b.; May 23, 1870, iv. a.—Skeleton of old Romano-Briton, buried with coffin, lying from 4 feet 7 inches below skeleton of old Anglo-Saxon woman, lying in the contracted position without any relics, and, indeed, with disproof of any coffin, with two cruciform fibulæ, a shroud-pin, an iron ring, and a knife.^a

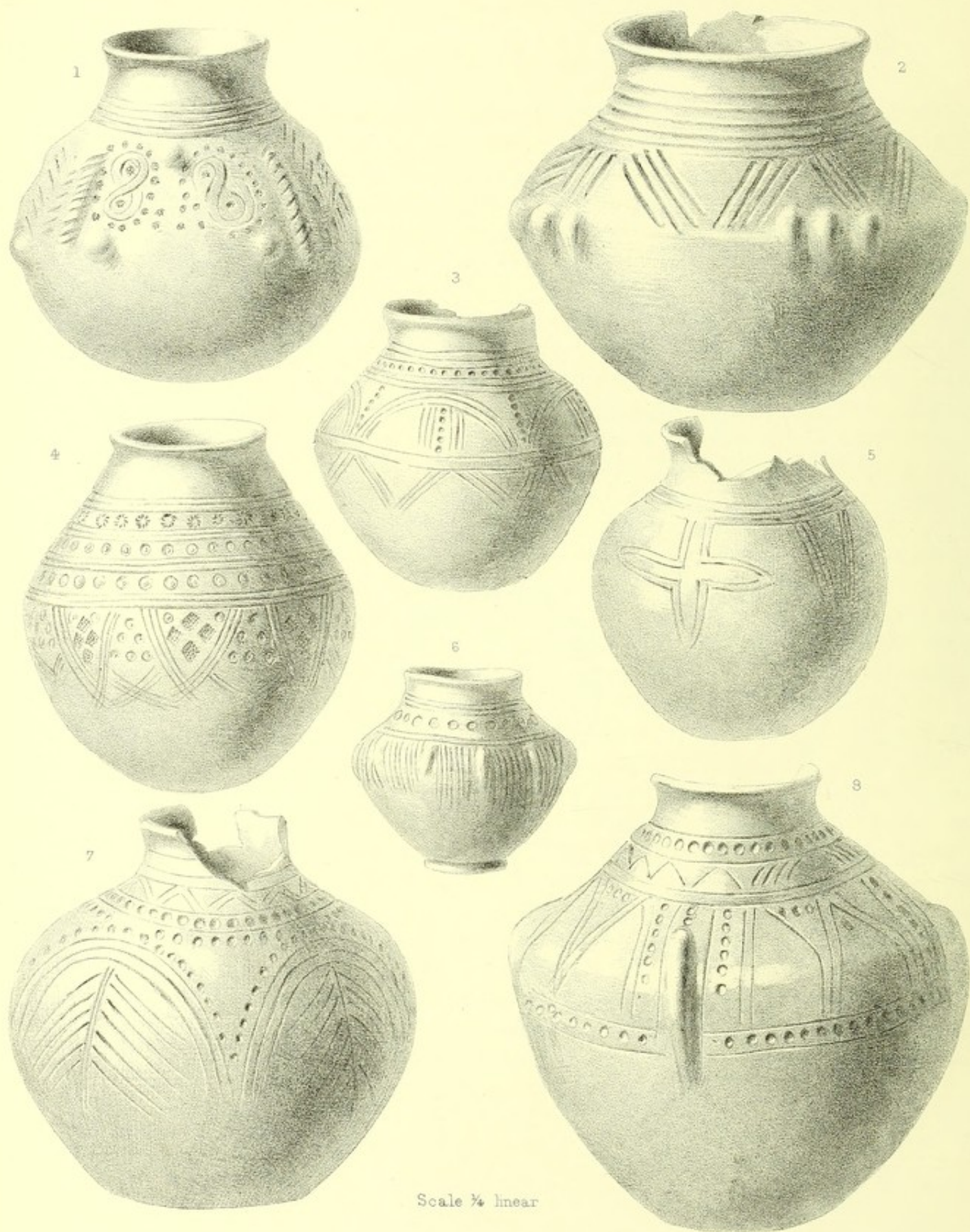
In both cases the long axis of the upper grave formed more or less of a right angle with the long axis of the semi-oriented lower one. This shows that the burials could scarcely have been simultaneous; for the other conclusions which can be based upon the finding of two skeletons, verifiable as Saxon and Romano-British respectively in the relation specified, see my previous Memoir on Frilford, p. 423. It is worth while noticing that this Anglo-Saxon woman was 5 feet 5 inches in height, an instance of what is said to be usual, but what I have found to be by no means invariable, viz., an equality, or an approach to equality, in the stature of the German women and men;^b next, that her skull was found five inches above her sternum, three stones having been placed underneath it; and, lastly, that the knees were at a higher level by several inches than either the ankles or the hips, besides being, as the statement of the body having been in the contracted position implies, out of the line of the long axis of the skeleton. These points are not ordinarily found in Christian burials. The arms were, however, crossed, and the hands folded inwards, as was often done in such interments; with which, again, on the other hand, this Anglo-Saxon burial appears to have contrasted in the body's being turned somewhat on to the left side, a point which, from the crushed condition of the skeleton, lying only about 2 feet from the surface of the ground, it was difficult to make out.

The question now arises, Were such non-oriented, contracted, shallowly interred, but relic-provided, bodies, the bodies of heathen or of Christianized Saxons? Mr. Kemble's dictum, "*Horæ Ferales*," p. 98, to the effect, that, "if there is any equivocation in the matter, it lies the other way; a few half-converted Christians may for a while have clung to the rite of burning, but no Pagan Saxon was buried

^a These four skeletons, with the relics accompanying them, were presented to the Cornell University, Ithaca, United States. A more detailed account of these objects than that given above may be found in the "*Register*" of that University for 1870-1871, pp. 50-54.

^b For figure of a skeleton with skull similarly raised, see Grabfeld von Hallstatt, tab. iii fig. 4.





C F Kell Lith London

ANGLO - SAXON URNS FROM SANCTON, YORKSHIRE.

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without it," is well known; but I am of opinion that this is one of the few mistakes which Mr. Kemble made. This one mistake of Mr. Kemble led him logically to a conclusion to be found at p. 230 of the same valuable work, the "*Horæ Ferales*," in a remark printed from the MSS. left behind him. Speaking of the rarity of Saxon urns in Scottish Museums, one from Buchan, to be seen in the Museum of the Antiquarian Society, being specified as the only one he knew of, Mr. Kemble remarks, "If they (Anglo-Saxon urns) should turn out to be very rare there (in Scotland not merely in Scottish museums), it would be evidence that no very important settlement was made there by the Saxons before their conversion to Christianity; a result which history seems to bear out. It was, in fact, Christianity which united the Saxons sufficiently to make them capable of acting *en masse* against their neighbours." Without raising any objection to the view which would assign the tendency to attack one's neighbours *en masse* to the religion which is ordinarily said, and by members of the Society of Friends believed, to teach lessons of peace, I would remark, that history does not seem to me to bear out Mr. Kemble's view, and that the finds in many unmistakeably Teutonic burials by interment seem to me to suggest the idea of heathendom by their shallowness, their want of orientation, their possession of secular relics, and by the frequency, especially in the north, with which the skeleton is discovered to be in the contracted position. In the case of Kent, the great salient facts recorded by the historians as to the conversion of Æthelberht are almost or even quite as indisputable as the facts of the "*Inventorium Sepulchrale*" as to the comparative rarity of cremation urns in that earliest to be founded of Saxon kingdoms. It is true, as Mr. Kemble himself has shown (*Horæ Ferales*, p. 91), that cremation urns are not entirely unknown in Teutonic cemeteries in Kent, but no one can doubt that this comparative rarity in that locality, when coupled with the facts that Kent was sufficiently powerful and thickly peopled for the Frankish King Charibert to give his daughter to the King of Kent, and that this King Æthelberht, and, by consequence, most of his Court, were nevertheless heathen, shows that a Saxon population, at all events when firmly established in a country, could give up cremation before taking up with the teaching of the missionaries.

The drawings which I lay before the meeting represent a number of urns from a Saxon cemetery at Sancton, co. York, a village a little south of Market Weighton, and the once much better known Goodmanham. These urns, which are represented in the accompanying Plate (Plate XXXIII.), and the acquisition of which I owe to the kindness of Charles Langdale, Esq., of Houghton Hall, mark, as I believe, and as

far as is known, the northern limit of cremation as practised to any considerable extent by Teutons in the north of England. But, little^a as we do know of the history of the Conquest of Northumbria, we have some reason for believing that Æthilfrith was an unbeliever, and that by his great victory of Daegsastan in 603 a Pagan Saxondom was established under his rule from the Humber to the Forth. If Æthilfrith was a heathen, such no doubt were his followers; and, if the whole of Northumbria was heathen in 603, its two component sub-kingdoms of Bernicia and Deira were, it cannot be doubted, at least as pagan for the period little short of a couple of generations which intervened between the date of the battle of Daegsastan and that of the landing, before A.D. 547, of Ida the Flame-bearer at Flamborough Head. The bones, however, of the unsung heroes of these wars have not previously been found in cremation urns, at least in any abundance, though contracted Teutonic burials are common enough between the two latitudes mentioned.

^a For statements as to this littleness, see Stubbs, *Constitutional History*, p. 61; Freeman, *Norman Conquest*, i. 25, 26.