

Papers relating to John Thurnam, Medical Superintendent 1846 - 1849

Publication/Creation

1848

Persistent URL

<https://wellcomecollection.org/works/ky78z2w6>

License and attribution

You have permission to make copies of this work under a Creative Commons, Attribution, Non-commercial license.

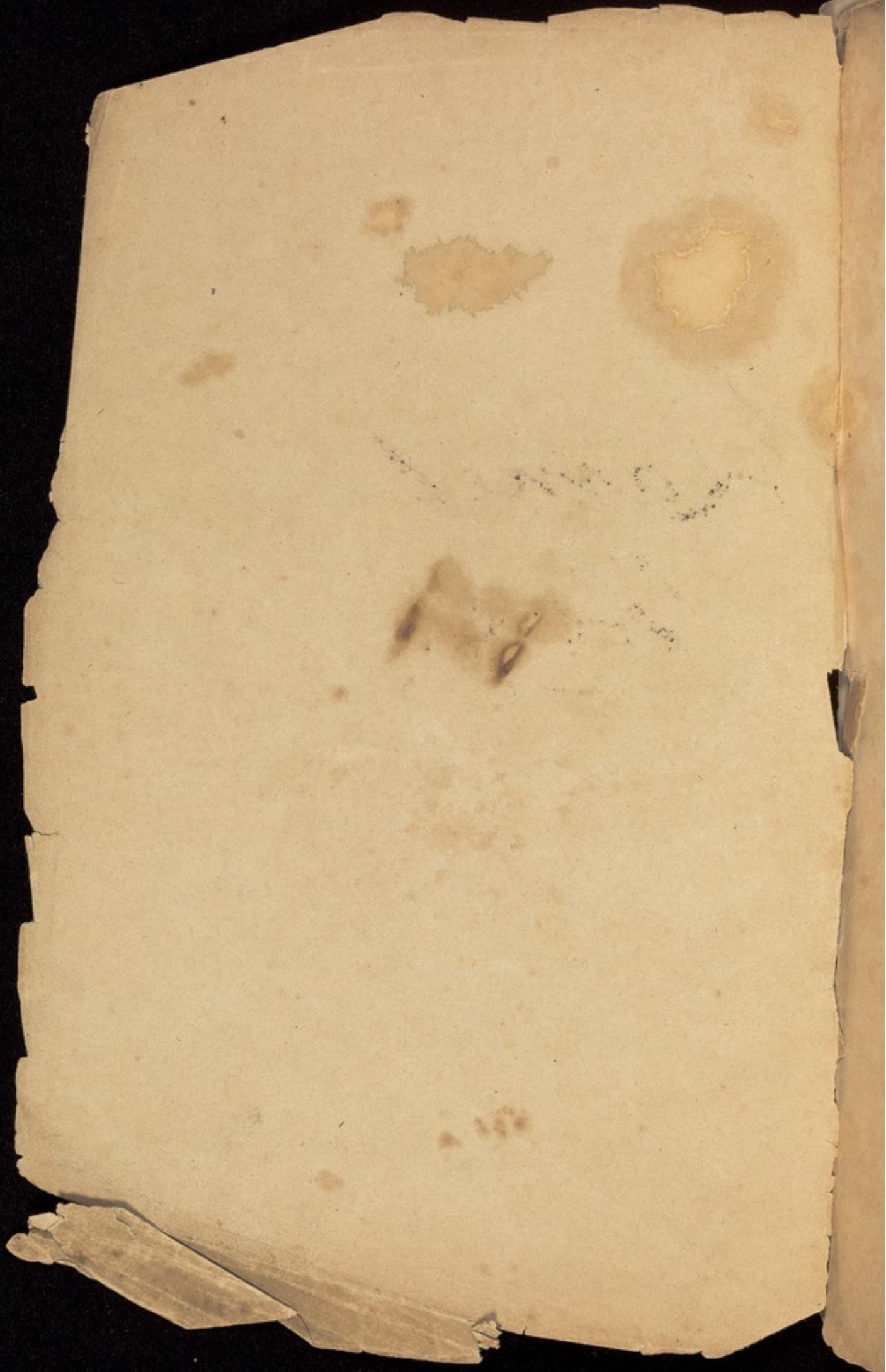
Non-commercial use includes private study, academic research, teaching, and other activities that are not primarily intended for, or directed towards, commercial advantage or private monetary compensation. See the Legal Code for further information.

Image source should be attributed as specified in the full catalogue record. If no source is given the image should be attributed to Wellcome Collection.

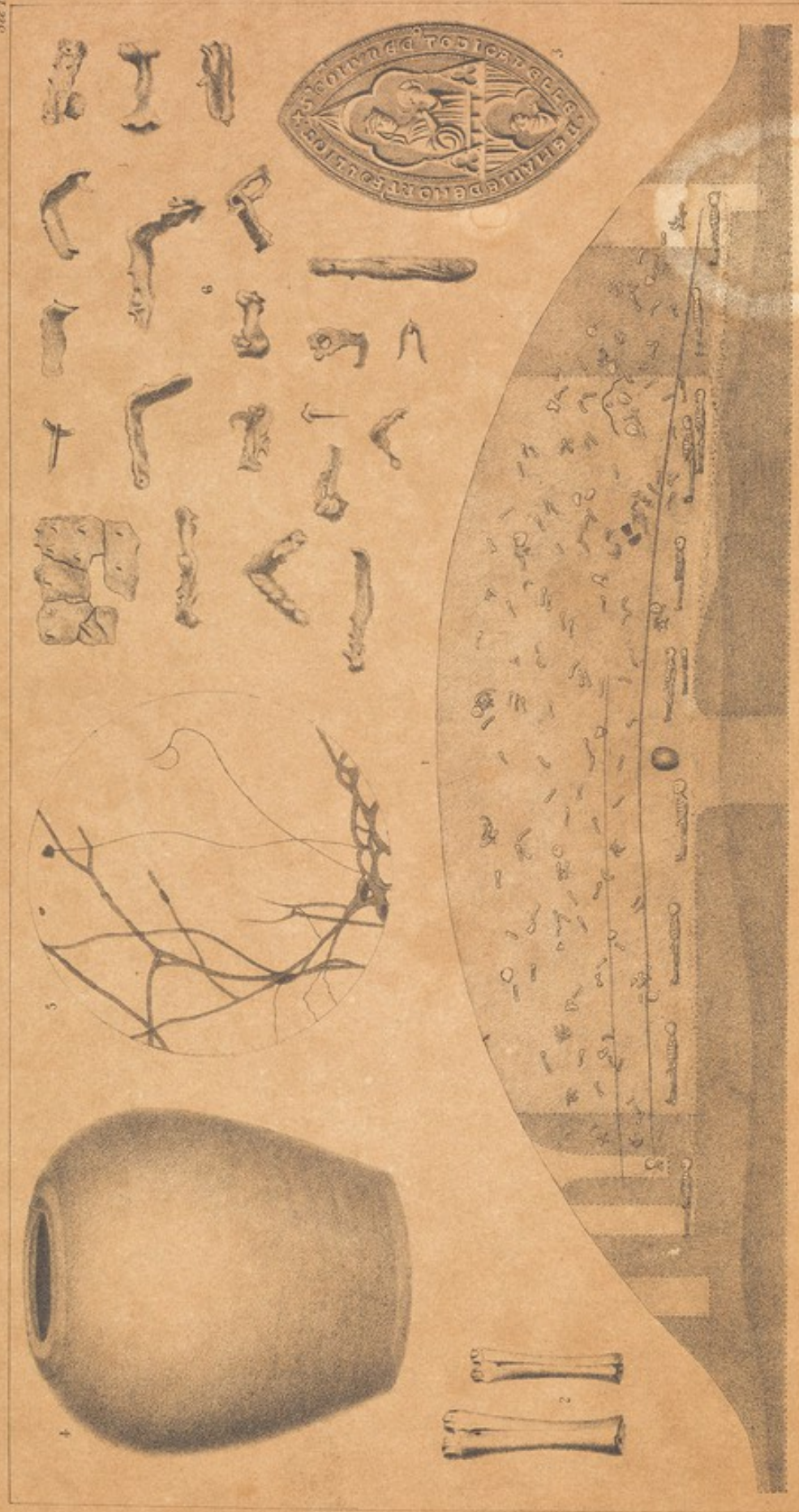


Wellcome Collection
183 Euston Road
London NW1 2BE UK
T +44 (0)20 7611 8722
E library@wellcomecollection.org
<https://wellcomecollection.org>

Larnel
Hill.



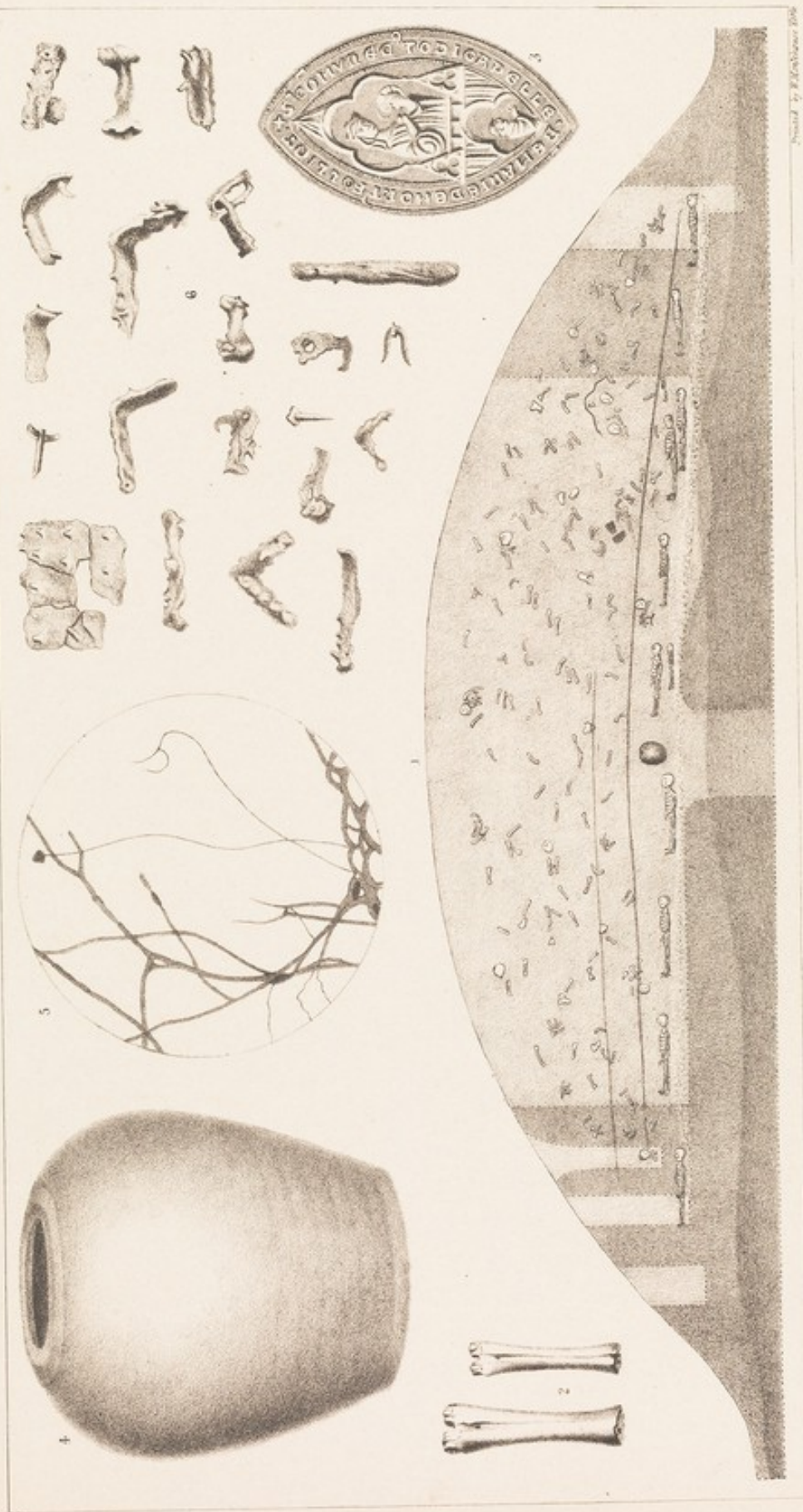




Drawn by Mr. M. H. ...

Section-plan of, and, objects found in, the Tumulus of Lound-hill near York.

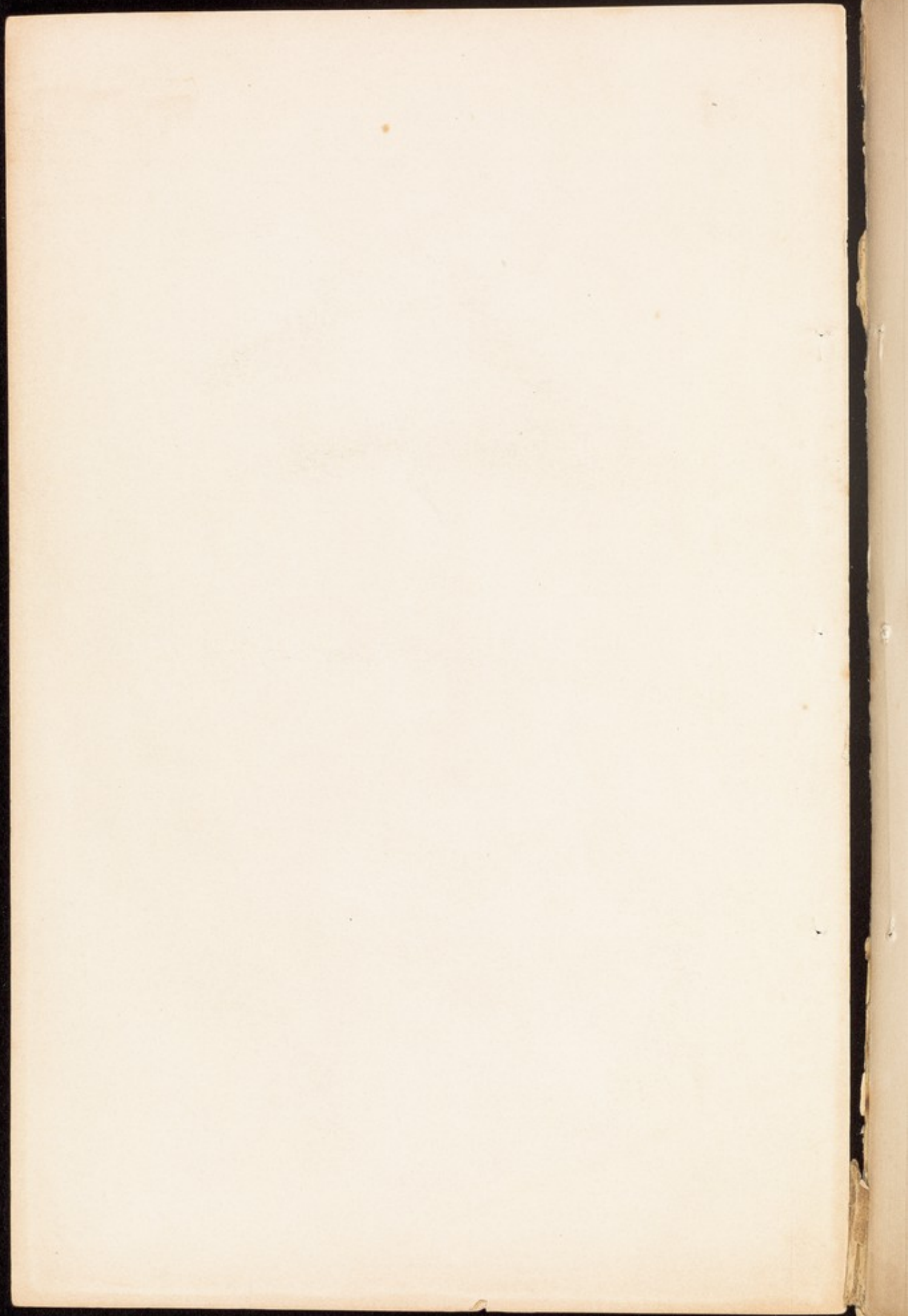
PLATE 2.

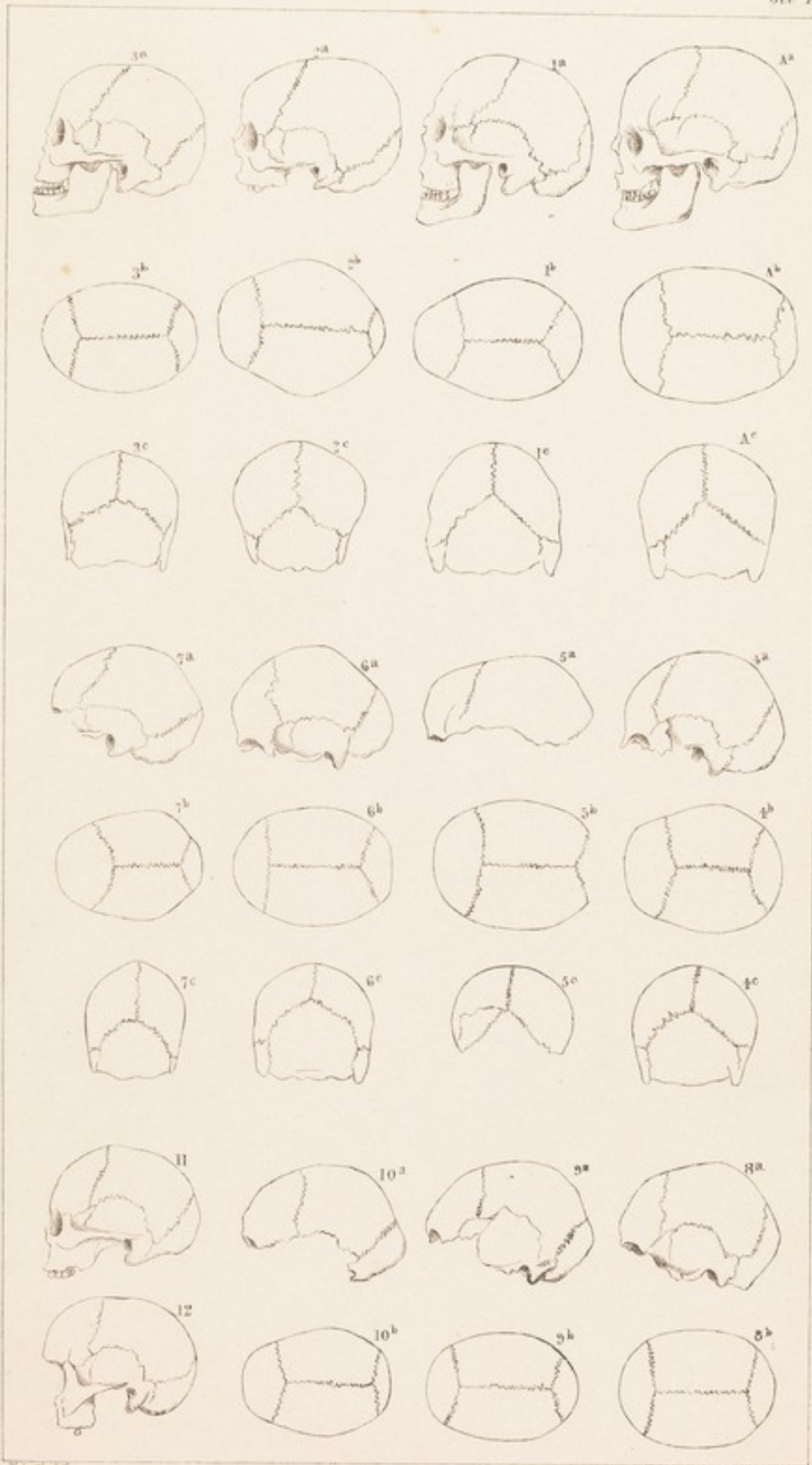


Section-plan of, and, objects found in, the Tumulus of Lamed-hill near York.

Drawn by Robinson 1856

W. Smith. Esq.

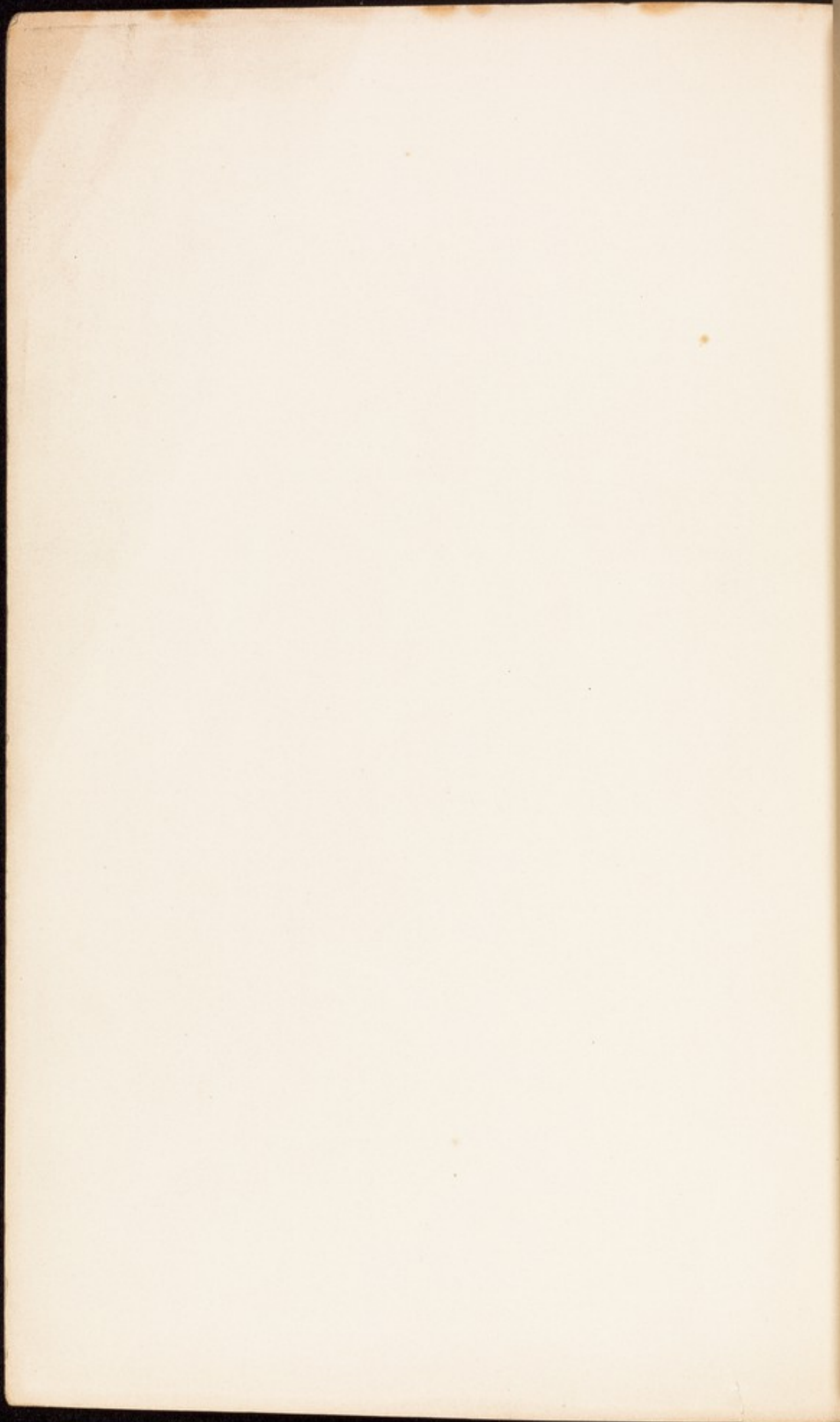


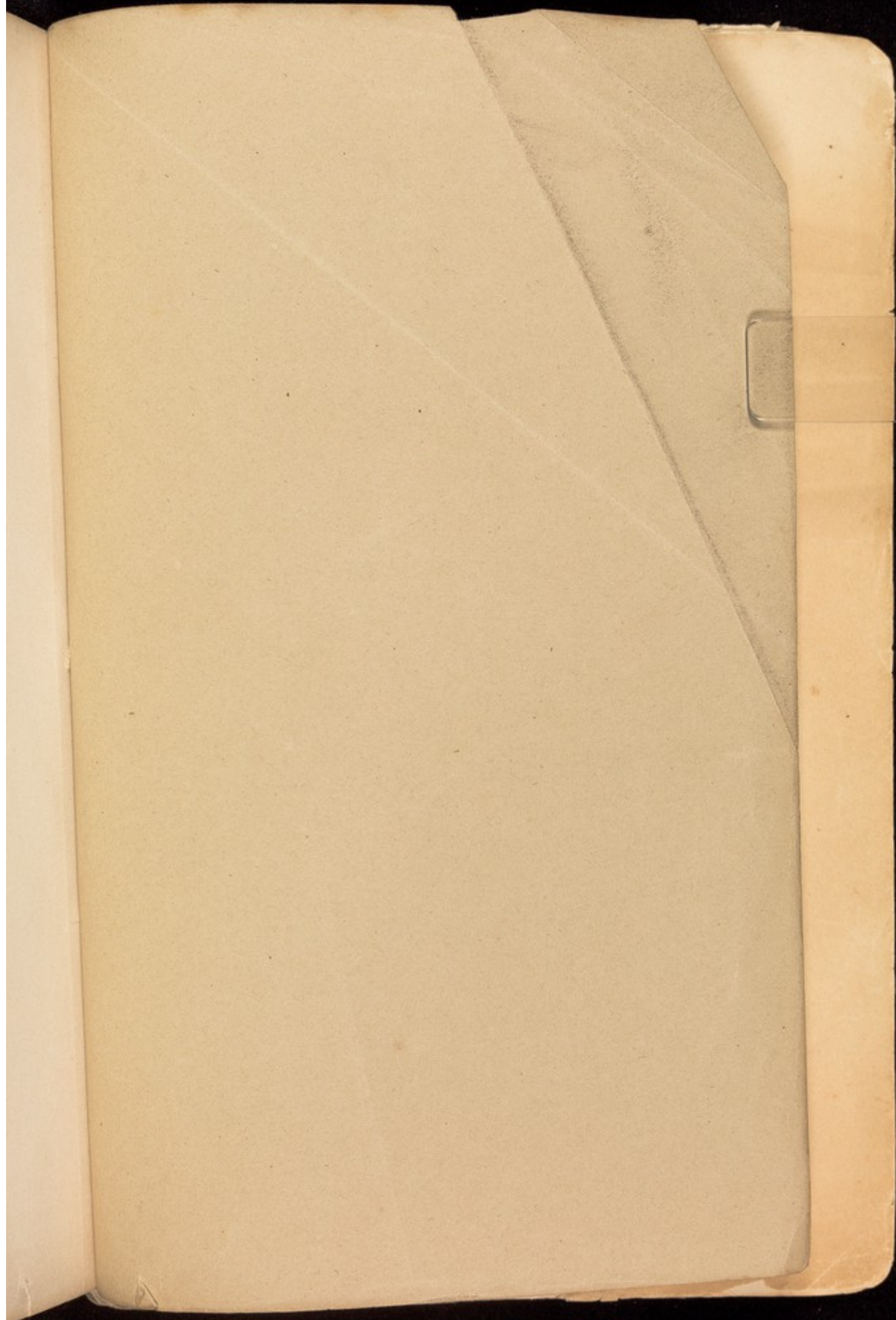


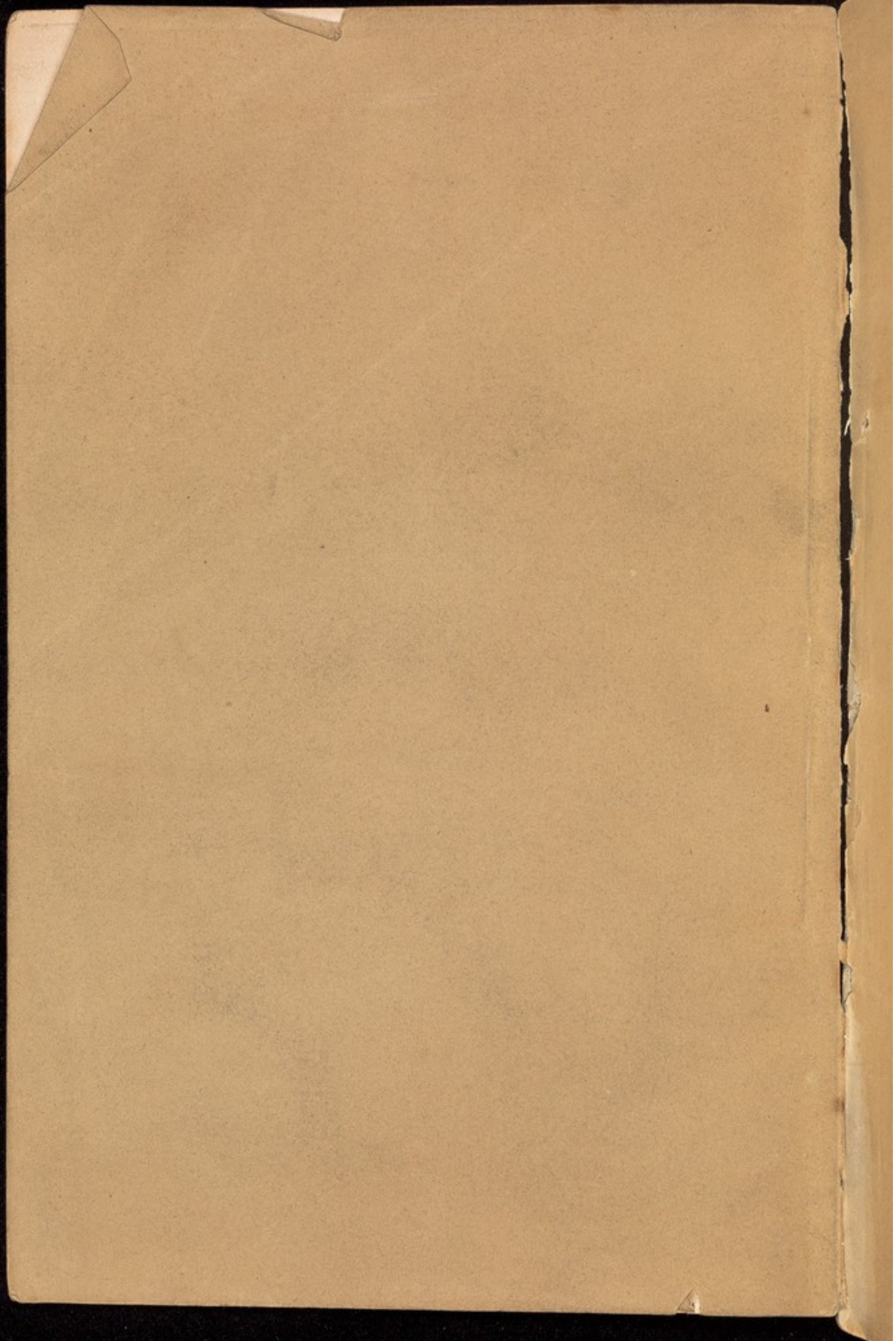
W. Smith, 1866

Drawn by W. Smith, 1866

Crania from the Tumulus of Lamel-hill, near York.







Drake Duke

[*Extract from the "Proceedings" of the Yorkshire Philosophical Society, for June, 1848.*]

Description of an Ancient Tumular Cemetery, probably of the Anglo-Saxon period, at Lamel Hill, near York.—By JOHN THURNAM, M. D.*

Lamel hill is the well known mound, about half a mile from York, on the rising ground to the south of the road to Heslington. On this tumulus, which is now included within the grounds of the Retreat, a windmill formerly stood, but was removed about fifteen years ago. About half a mile to the east of Lamel hill, and situated on the same rising ground, is another tumulus, now called Heslington mount, but which, as Mr. Davies was the first to point out, seems formerly to have borne the name of Siward houe. The site of both these tumuli must have been very near to the Roman road between Eburacum and the nearest station to the east—Derventio.†

Drake observes of Lamel hill, "I take this hill, as several others around the city, to have been originally raised for Roman tumuli, though they afterwards served to plant windmills upon."

Lamel hill is noted as having afforded a site for a battery, which was placed here by the parliamentary army under Fairfax, during the siege of York in 1644. The contemporary writers,‡ to whom we are indebted for what we know of this siege, do not mention the mound under the name by which it

* As it is proposed that this paper should appear at length, in the *Archæological Journal*, a rather concise description only of the actual facts is given in this place.

† See Wellbeloved's *Eburacum*, and Newton's *Map of British and Roman Yorkshire*.

‡ *Rushworth*; Sir H. *Slingsby*; and *Hildyard* (by *Torre*).

is now known; and the first author who, so far as I am aware, speaks of "Lamel hill" is Drake; who says "it must have took its name from the windmill which stood on it, Lamel Hill being no more than *le meul*, the miln hill, called so by the Normans.*" This derivation appears very questionable.

Lamel Hill has a diameter, from east to west, of about 110 feet, and of about 125 feet, from north to south. Its base, which measures 375 feet in circumference, has therefore a circular form, inclining to an oval. At the summit, is a tolerably level area, having a circumference of about 100 feet. The mound is situated somewhat on the southern slope of the higher ground between York and Heslington, and has, consequently, a greater elevation above the surrounding fields on the south side than it has on the north; its height, on the east, west, and north sides, varying from about $14\frac{1}{2}$ to $15\frac{1}{2}$ feet, whilst, on the south side, it is not less than $22\frac{1}{2}$ feet. Its elevation, above the summer level of the Ouse, is about 90 feet.

In digging over the mound, a few human bones had occasionally been thrown up, but nothing further was known of it as a place of sepulture. During the late spring, the excavations were made by which the following particulars were disclosed.

The only probable relics, found on or near the surface, of the occupation of Lamel hill by the troops of Fairfax and Lesley, consist of a few coins, and a piece of cast iron which weighs nearly two pounds, and seems to have formed part of the bottom of a large pot or boiler. It is probably part of a camp-kettle, though some have supposed it to be a piece of armour. These coins are chiefly of the reign of Charles the First; and consist of a silver penny and two or three farthings of the Scotch coinage of that monarch. There is also a small copper coin of the contemporary Louis the Thirteenth of France.

Commencing at a depth of about three feet from the surface, human bones were found, in great numbers, throughout the mound; but complete skeletons were only discovered at a level

* Eboracum, 1736, p. 251.

varying from ten and a half to twelve feet from the summit. All the human remains which were found above this level were in the shape of scattered bones, which had evidently been disturbed since their original interment. No skeletons or other remains were found at a greater depth than twelve feet; though, in the centre of the tumulus, the excavations were carried to the depth of about twenty feet from the summit.*

The skeletons were uniformly laid from west to east,—the feet to the east;—a distance of not more than two or three feet intervening between every two skeletons. At this level, Lamel hill has been the seat of interments arranged nearly or quite as regularly as in any churchyard at the present day. From twenty to thirty skeletons and the detached bones of at least as many more were exhumed; and it may be concluded that this cemetery has afforded interment to from two to three hundred bodies.

The bones have all the appearance of great age, being, for the most part, very light, porous, and brittle. Those found nearest the surface, particularly on the south side of the tumulus, are much eroded, and have a peculiar worm-eaten appearance. Whilst, however, the more free action of air and water upon the bones has produced this appearance, it seems, after a certain time, to have induced a peculiar density and hardness, somewhat resembling that of semi-fossilized bones, which has rendered them less susceptible of further change. The bones found at a greater depth, and particularly those of skeletons previously undisturbed, have less of the eroded character externally, and are generally lighter and more fragile, and of a darker colour. This difference is particularly seen in the crania; many of which are very thin and decayed, and even present large holes in the side which was placed most deeply in the earth.

The skeletons are those of persons of both sexes, but those of adult males appear to preponderate. A few skeletons of children and young persons, and the lower jaws of two decidedly

* See section-plan of tumulus; plate 2, fig. 1. The section is from east to west, through the centre of the tumulus.

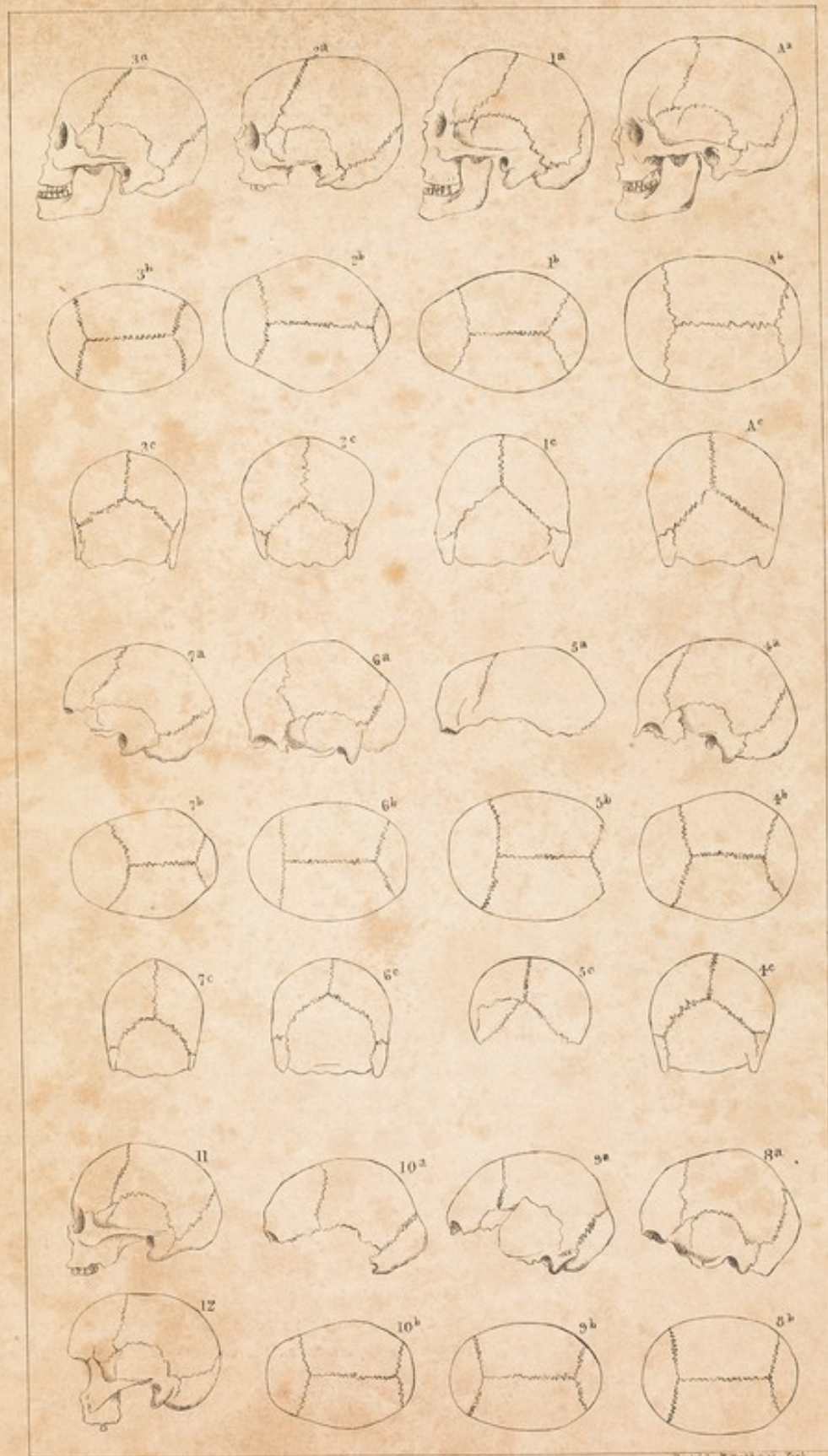
old persons, were found. Many of the skeletons must have been those of men of a stature varying from six feet to six feet four inches: the thigh bones, in several instances, measuring from 19 to $21\frac{1}{2}$ inches, and in one case not less than $22\frac{1}{2}$ inches, in length.

The teeth are almost uniformly much worn down, as if from the use of food of the hardest and coarsest kinds. This condition is observed even in the incisor teeth, and is very characteristic. A few of the bones present marks of disease; one thigh bone is affected by *exostosis*; a *tibia* by the disease called *spina ventosa*; and two *humeri* and one *tibia* by *necrosis*. All these diseases are more or less likely to have originated in injuries or violence to the bones. The parietal bone of one skull exhibits a considerable cleft, such as may probably have been produced by a sword or other weapon. Two skulls present a peculiarly thickened and spongy condition, from disease. One of these skulls has a thickness of five-eighths of an inch, and the hypertrophy, as exhibited in the prominent condition of the sutures, is very marked.

The crania are generally small, and their prevailing shape is elongated and partially pyramidal; the frontal region being decidedly narrow and low; the parietal wide and often much elevated; and the occipital, though likewise small, often protuberant in the centre.* Other shapes however exist; thus one of the crania, (5) is very flat and wide in the parietal region, whilst it has both a wider and higher forehead. A few of the skulls (e.g. 12) approximate more closely to the modern European standard, and are better proportioned and tolerably ample in the frontal region. Probably three out of every four of the crania

* See plate 3. I am indebted to a friend for the sketches of the crania represented in this plate. They were taken with the craniograph, described by Dr. Morton, (*Crania Americana*, p. 294). The skulls are drawn to the same scale, and are reduced to rather less than one-eighth of the actual diameter. The skull A, a, b, c, is introduced as a standard for comparison. This skull is of rather more than average size, and well proportioned, though in shape, inclining rather more to the round than usual. It was found in digging on the site of the Railway Station, in Tanner Row, York. In this plate, the six crania, 1, 2, 4, 5, 8, and 12, are, probably, those of males, and the other six, those of females.

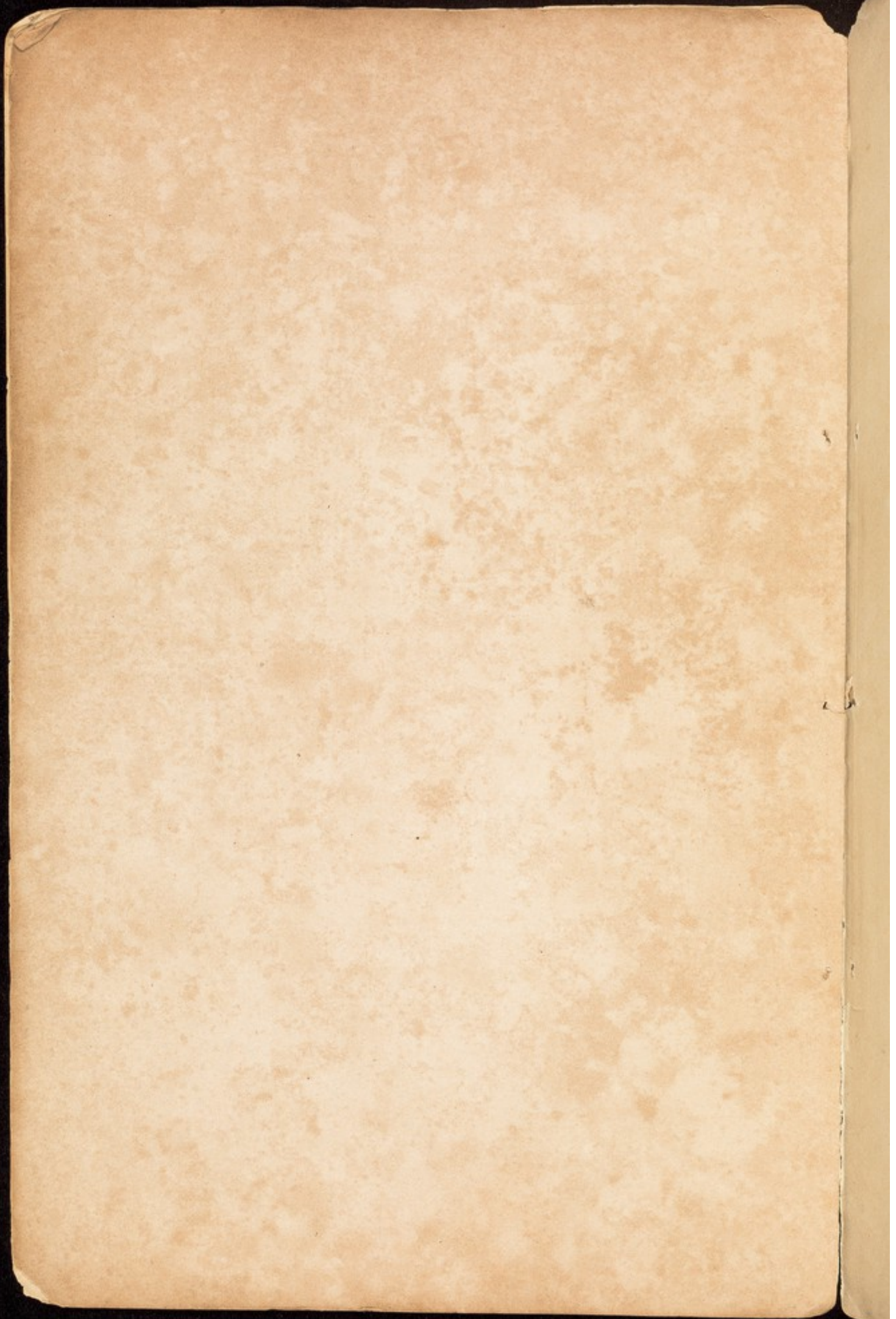
J. H. Duke



Pl. 3, 186

Drawn by W. Woodcock, York

Crania from the Tumulus of Lamel-hill, near York



examined, belong to the first described class, as regards form.

Scattered amongst the disturbed human remains, and even within a foot of the undisturbed skeletons, were found several bones of some of the lower animals. Amongst these were the bones, including the jaws and teeth, of a small horse, and the fragments of the burr of a deer's antler; but the majority consisted of the bones of the small extinct ox,—the *Bos longifrons* of Owen. Hitherto, I believe, the remains of this animal have not been found with antiquities which can be assigned to a later period than that of the Romans. The species, however, may have possibly existed, in this part of the kingdom, down to the time of the Saxons.*

A few coins and counters were found, at depths varying from six to ten feet. Some of these are very much worn, and not to be deciphered. Two of them, however, are Nuremberg counters, of the sixteenth or seventeenth century, one of which bears the name of Hans Schultz. One of the coins is that of a Ferdinand; and there is a second brass Roman coin, perhaps of the Emperor Trajan. The most interesting object, however, is the brass seal of the keeper of a chapel dedicated to the Blessed Mary at Morton Folliot. This seal is probably of the fourteenth or fifteenth century, and bears the inscription, "S.Cōmune C'todi Capelle bē Marie de Mort Folliot." It has for a device, a figure of the Virgin and Child, and beneath this, that of an ecclesiastic with the hands uplifted in the attitude of prayer.† It is difficult to understand how this seal made its way from Morton Folliot, in Worcestershire, to Lamel hill.

Near the centre of the tumulus, at the depth of about ten feet, two or three fragments of tile, evidently Roman, were found. Not far from these, two or three pieces of Samian ware, and a few fragments of coarse earthenware, some of them ornamented and covered with a green glaze, were also thrown up.

* In plate 2, fig. 2, a metatarsal bone of *Bos longifrons*, from Lamel hill, is compared with that of the common English ox. The size is reduced to one-tenth in diameter.

† See plate 2, fig. 3, which represents the actual size of the seal.

In the very centre of the hill, on the level, and in the line of the undisturbed skeletons, a large urn, of simple but unusual form, was discovered. This urn measures twelve inches in height, and has a capacity of three imperial gallons.* It is formed of a very hard and coarse ware, of a dirty brick-red colour, and has evidently been turned on a wheel. Part of the surface is somewhat corroded, and presents numerous fragments of broken pebbles and even granite. There was nothing but some clayey soil found in the urn, which had a peculiarly offensive odour. Its internal surface presented a pellicle of dry, scaly matter, of a dark green colour. Placed in water, for a few hours, and observed with the microscope, this substance was found to consist of an aggregation of vegetable organisms, living specimens of which are capable of being thus reproduced. These, no doubt, consist of a species of those minute confervæ, now called *mycoderma*.†

Several rude iron nails and rivets, and numerous pieces of clumsy iron plate and bar, bent at a right angle, and perforated for nails, were also found. They are covered with a very thick rust, and, in many cases, are almost entirely oxidized and encrusted with pebbles.‡ Many of these present distinct traces of wood adhering to them. A few portions of decayed wood were also found; and, in several instances, it was observed that three or four pieces of iron, such as have been described, were found by the side of undisturbed skeletons. Though some of the fragments of iron were hardly capable of being used in this way, the most probable opinion respecting them seems to be that of their having formed the fastenings of coffins, in which the bodies had been deposited. Altogether, about nine pounds weight of this old iron was collected.

Immediately below the skeletons and extending to a depth of about two feet, the gravel and clay of which the soil consists

* See plate 2, fig. 4.

† See plate 2, fig. 5, which represents a charred specimen of this microscopic plant, magnified about 120 diameters.

‡ A few of these pieces of iron are figured, plate 2, fig. 6. They are reduced to a diameter of one-sixth.

was extensively mottled with a white calcareous matter, which effervesced, on the addition of dilute muriatic acid. A remarkable black seam, averaging about an inch in thickness, was found to stretch, with little interruption, through the centre of the mound, at a level of between ten and eleven feet from the summit, and from one to two feet above the undisturbed skeletons. The colour of this seam was found to depend on the presence of minute fragments of wood charcoal. In the course of, or near it, a few portions of burnt human bones were found, but a microscopic and chemical examination did not disclose bone ashes, as forming an essential constituent of this seam.

It appears probable that this black seam indicates what has, at some period, been the surface of the cemetery. Fires, for some purpose, appear to have been made on this level, and to have left behind them their traces in the form of the seam in question. Whether this seam of ashes originated in beacon fires, or in fires which had been lighted for the combustion of the body, in connexion with cremation and urn burial, or for some other purpose, must remain doubtful.

The facts described seem also to render it probable that the cemetery was originally of much greater superficial extent, and proportionately less elevated; and that its outskirts were, for some reason, subsequently dug up and piled on the central part, which remained undisturbed. This change may possibly have taken place in 1644, when the battery was erected here, during the siege of York. At the same time, also, the urn in the centre of the mound may have been disturbed, and the deposit of burnt bones, which it probably once contained, scattered. The urn, however, may have been deposited empty. In any case, the position of this urn, in the centre of the cemetery, surrounded by so large a number of skeletons, is very remarkable.

Another seam, of less extent, of a reddish brown colour, and from one to two inches in thickness, was observed running through the east side of the mound, about eighteen inches above the black seam. The matter composing this seam was

proved, chemically, to contain a large amount of iron, and had, doubtless, originated in the oxidation of portions of the old iron already described.*

For the reasons already stated, I do not in this place produce the arguments which seem to warrant the following conclusions respecting the place of burial now described. These conclusions are :—

1. Lamel hill appears to have been the site of a Christian, but not ecclesiastical, cemetery; and must, consequently, be attributed to a period subsequent to the introduction of Christianity into this island, under the Romans, in the second century, and previous to the appropriation of cemeteries around churches, which commenced under Archbishop Cuthbert, in 742.

2. Whilst, perhaps, there are not grounds for concluding, positively, that this cemetery does not belong to the Roman-British period, it is much more probably to be attributed to the early Saxon Christians of the seventh or eighth century; at which time, the burial of the dead not being allowed in towns, there was no church-yard within the walls of Eoforwic.

* In the section-plan of the tumulus, plate 2, fig. 3., the upper line on the left or east side indicates the seam of iron-rust; the lower line, that of charcoal. The lighter stratum, beneath the skeletons, represents the earth mixed with chalk or lime, beneath which is the natural gravel of the district. The dotted lines indicate the extent of the excavations.

The important discoveries on the edge of the Wolds at Unleby, half a mile N.E. of Kirby Underdale, have not been fully recorded, but comprise some of the most valuable relics in the county. A pre-historic barrow, in which the primary burial was found, was about 70 feet in diameter, but had been extended by the Anglo-Saxons, and at the time of its excavation by Canon Greenwell measured 94 feet in diameter and 3 feet in height, but the plough had considerably reduced the latter dimension. The later interments beyond the outline of the pre-historic mound were in graves, but the other bodies had been laid on the mound itself & covered with earth in rows running E. and W, the rows being about 3 feet apart; and, while those on the E. side had the head higher than the feet, the converse was the case on the West. There were no burials on the north side, and on the S. side about 18 had the heads to the north & N.W., & appeared to have been isolated from the rest. Only 8 burials, principally upon the E. side were laid at full length, the usual position in Anglo-Saxon burials, and these were on the back and with the head mostly to the W., the remainder having the head at various points between N. & W. The occurrence of contracted burials is not unusual in Yorkshire, but is somewhat rare in other portions of England. There were no coffins, and charcoal was present with all bodies. It was noticed that the men had died young, and aged persons were always women."

Dear Pierce.

I came across this shortly after reading the full report on Lancel Hill in Vol. VI. of the A.J. There they were puzzled to account for the Urn in the midst of what they thought an Anglo-Saxon cemetery. (The Primary Burial was the one now.) Does not this seem a very parallel case down to the arrangement of the skeletons and the presence of charcoal? Coffins may even have been present as some soils would very quickly settle iron as well as wood. The difference in diameter is not so vast but that in height is - very much so. The explanation might easily be due to the original

Francis H. Mountney.

had
old
ture
on
e
in,
be
r
n.
e
s

