

An account of human bones found within the lime-stone mountain of the Great Orme's Head at Llandudno, in North Wales / William Brown.

Contributors

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AN ACCOUNT OF
HUMAN BONES,

FOUND WITHIN THE
LIME-STONE MOUNTAIN
OF THE
GREAT ORME'S HEAD,

AT
LLANDUDNO,

IN NORTH WALES;

ILLUSTRATED WITH AN ENGRAVING.

BIRMINGHAM :

PRINTED FOR THE PROPRIETOR, ~~MR. WILLIAM BROWN,~~ *44th New*

80 & 81, HIGH STREET, BY

T. UNDERWOOD, CASTLE STREET.

1860.

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HUMAN BONES

Found in Lime-stone, &c.

These bones, which consist of a human skull with the upper jaw, containing a complete set of upper teeth, the principal bones of the legs, the arm bones, a lumbar vertebra, a portion of one of the ribs, and other smaller human bones, were discovered in a cave on the north-west side of the Great Orme's Head; a mountain principally composed of carboniferous lime-stone. There were also found in the same calcareous mass the heads of two young rams, various shells of marine testaceous mollusca, and two canine teeth of a fox. The dimensions of the cave at its entrance are about five feet in length, two feet six inches in height, and two feet from the front to the back part, where a passage resembling a chimney, not visible on inspecting the cave from

the outside, rises and conducts at the height of three or four feet from the floor to a dark narrow cavity six or seven yards long descending towards the west, and another, which passes upward in an oblique direction towards the east, where the human bones were deposited. The head was placed with its back part downwards and the face looking upward toward the east, and appears to have been introduced before the body and extremities. The mass of lime-stones, in which the bones were imbedded, appears to consist of fragments cemented together by carbonate of lime, in the same manner as the cat-brain observable on the tops of the new red sand-stone rocks and, like that, contains the shells of mollusca. Small portions of lime-stone spar and carburet of lime resembling charcoal in appearance have also been met with, which had been connected with the stony mass containing the human bones. On exposing the carburet of lime to the action of red-hot iron, the carbon was dissipated by ignition, leaving white calcareous ashes, which entirely dissolved in hydrochloric acid. The men, who made the

discovery, were induced to search the dark inner cave, in which the human relics were found, by observing a rudely constructed wall at its entrance, consisting of stones put together without mortar or any other cement, according to the custom of the ancient Britons. The approach to the cave, which is situated about 350 feet above the level of the sea in the neighbouring Conway bay, is so precipitous as not to be accessible without difficulty, and the mountain above is nearly perpendicular.

The length of the skull, from the fore to the back part, is nearly eight inches, and the distance across the upper jaw, from one of the wise teeth to the opposite one, is nearly three inches. The forehead is small and receding, but the front upper teeth are as perpendicular as they are found to be in the most perfect variety of the human species. As the upper teeth are complete in number, and no absorption of the alveolar processes in which they are formed had commenced, it is evident that the individual died in the prime of life ; and from the large size of the cranium and of the teeth, the enamel of which

remains unchanged by time, it may be inferred that the sex was masculine. The tibia and humera, or leg and arm-bones, were found resting near the head, and have not been separated from the piece of rock containing them ; excepting one of the leg-bones, which the excavators had detached before the geological curiosities came into the possession of the owner of them. Amongst the loose rubbish, which lay over the lime-stone, beneath which the human bones were incarcerated, bones of rabbits, birds, &c., of a comparatively recent date were found, which had probably been carried there by foxes or large birds of prey ; and a Roman copper coin was also picked up from the superincumbent fragments of stone, bearing the bust and name of Domitian, the last of the Cæsars, evidencing that the human bones had been deposited below it in the lime-stone before the invasion of the Romans ; Domitian having reigned as Emperor at Rome 1764 years ago, about 96 years after the birth of Christ.

As no human bones have ever, to the knowledge of the author, been met with in the fossil

state, according to the geological acceptation of the term in lime-stone, and, agreeably to the Mosaic and the natural theory of the creation, man was not an inhabitant of the globe until after the lime-stone formations occurred; this discovery of human bones in the calcareous mountain of the Great Orme's Head cannot fail to excite the attention of antiquarians and geologists, and give rise to various conjectures respecting the period when the human bones were entombed in the same bed of lime-stone with the heads of rams, and marine testaceous mollusca, whose empty habitations are visible on the surface of the stone.

It may be observed that this part of North Wales was formerly inhabited by Druids, and a Cromlech, where they performed their Druidical sacrifices, is still extant on the Great Orme's Head. At this ancient relic, which consists of five stones, on which no tool has ever been employed, like the stones composing the altars of the primitive Hebrews, one occupying one side, two the other, one enclosing the back part, and one covering the top; many bones have been, and some are still to be found, in which all

animal structure has been dissipated by the calcination resulting from the sacrificial fires. In order to prove that the bones found in the cave had not been exposed to the action of heat by human sacrifice, the author submitted a portion for solution to hydrochloric acid, which entirely dissolved the phosphate of lime and magnesia, and left a small quantity of cellular membrane perceptible through the microscope. Hence the bones had not been subjected to Druidical incineration, and had probably been deposited in the cave either by the Brahmins, who emigrated into North Wales from Tartary, or the Hebrews, who settled there from the borders of the Caspian sea, bringing with them their religious rites and ceremonies as well as their astrology and their bards. This hypothesis will account for the heads of the young rams, sacred alike to the Brahmins and the Hebrews, and represented in the accompanying drawing, being observable in the lime-stone containing the human bones. The chemical analysis before mentioned distinctly proves that the human relics have not been converted into inorganic

lime-stone, like the fossil bones of marine animals, which had existed before the creation of man ; and therefore the most rational conclusion appears to the author to be that they were laid in the cave by some of the primitive inhabitants of Britain, in conformity with the custom of burying the dead in caves, observed by the Brahmins, the patriarchal Hebrew nation, and probably the Egyptians, according to the earliest Asiatic and African records of antiquity. No other explanation, it appears to the author, will account for the bones of the extremities being found in a line with the upper part of the body, which we learn from observing the Egyptian mummies, was a position adopted sometimes by the ancient people of Egypt, probably with the view of economising space and adapting the dead body to a narrow and contracted sepulchre. As the Israelites resided in Egypt in a state of bondage during a period of 400 years, and were constantly evincing an obstinate and almost insufferable inclination to idolatry ; particularly, like the Druids, by their worship of the visible works of the Creator in groves, in preference to God himself, by whom all

things were made, we cannot wonder that they should have adopted the pagan superstition and customs of the dominant nation with which they must have been long familiar before the Mosaic dispensation. The appearance of the shells of the bivalve and the other mollusca, may have been accidental, as it is not probable that they had been deposited by the ocean at so great an altitude after the burial of the human bones took place within the cave.

Having described these osseous curiosities and explained the manner of their discovery, and having ventured to suggest the improbability of their having been formed at a period anterior to the deposit of lime-stone, notwithstanding the fact of their having been found in connexion with such deposit, and with marine, testaceous mollusca, lime-stone spar, &c., the author must leave the subject for the discussion of antiquarians and geologists more experienced and competent to pronounce a decided and satisfactory opinion, after viewing the objects themselves, now open to public inspection at a small charge, at Quatford Cottage, in Llandudno, which has been erected

by the proprietor for the special purpose of their exhibition. Among the numerous natural attractions at Llandudno, none can be considered more interesting than these extraordinary curiosities. The phrenologist and all who are engaged in a philosophical inquiry into the progressive natural history of man, will find much to invite their investigations, and the objects have been so well arranged by Mr. Brown for public inspection, that they may be conveniently viewed by, and explained to all classes, without offending the delicacy of the most fastidious ; and all religious and sober-minded persons, who have studied the inspired writings of Moses, must derive infinite satisfaction from observing how wonderfully the discoveries of geology confirm the history of the creation, as revealed to mankind, and recorded by him in the sacred volume of Genesis.

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