

On Ancient Sepulchral Remains discovered
in and around Bath.

BY THE REV. H. M. SCARTH, M.A.

AMONG the many antiquities that have been found in Bath and its neighbourhood, there are none more frequent than the stone coffin. These have been dug up in every locality, and a uniform appearance is found to pervade the whole. Just previous to the meeting of the Somerset Archæological and Natural History Society in Bath, a discovery was made in Russell Street of several of these sepulchral remains, one of which was opened and examined at the time of the meeting, but without any particular result being obtained, or any very important conclusion come to. The discovery of these led to further enquiry, which has brought to light some particulars which it may not be uninteresting to place before this meeting; not that it is apprehended any new ideas can be suggested, but it is rather with the hope of calling forth information and eliciting remark, that these observations are offered.

Some months ago a fresh discovery was made at Combe Down, the particulars of which are worthy the attention of the meeting, and that the facts may not be lost, I have determined to place them on record. It may not however be uninteresting, in the first place, briefly to refer to the discoveries made in Russell Street in September, 1852. An account of them was given in the *Bath Chronicle*, from which the following is an extract, and which may be relied upon as correct :

“ On Friday last, the 10th inst., while the workmen were excavating the road at the top of Russell Street, for the purpose of enlarging the sewer, they discovered four stone coffins, with the heads lying to the N.E. One (the smallest) had no lid ; the others were covered. They were disposed in pairs ; the upper ones nearly parallel, side by side, about two feet apart : the lower pair about a yard distant ; lying immediately above these was a skeleton. In the first coffin was found a skeleton of large size ; in the next, two skulls, with various bones ; the small coffin contained no skull, but loose bones. One of the coffins was preserved untouched till Monday, when it was carefully removed, and afterwards examined. It was covered with a regularly adjusted lid, not with a plain slab (as was the case with the others we have mentioned), the coffin being bevelled off at the foot, to allow the cover to fit more closely ; the upper end of the lid seemed to have been slightly lifted up. The cover was of superior workmanship. The coffin was full of a soft clayey earth, with two human vertebræ lying on it. The earth being removed, a perfect skeleton, supposed to be that of a female, was found ; it was lying on its left side, with the right arm crossing the breast, the left arm extended down the side. The remaining contents of the coffin were part of an infant's jaw ; a metal pin,

nearly two inches in length, but much corroded, together with the head of a smaller one; portions of the jaws of two small animals, and a considerable quantity of a peculiar bituminous substance, which left a greasy purple stain, when rubbed between the fingers. We may add that in the neighbourhood of the coffin were discovered some fragments of an earthen vessel, a coin of Constantine, several pieces of glass of a beautifully purple green hue, with various bones of graminivorous animals.

“As far as can be made out by examination of the human bones, it is evident that they form part of eight skeletons—three being those of children of about the ages of two, six, and ten or twelve; the remaining five skeletons were those of adults.

“Yesterday morning a fifth coffin was discovered. It was found in a line with those to which we have already referred. It contains the perfect skeleton of, apparently, a larger body than any of those found in the other coffins, and a small urn of dark pottery which was placed on the right side of the skeleton, near the ribs. The urn (which is quite perfect, with the exception of being very slightly chipped on the rim), is now in the Museum of the Bath Literary and Scientific Institution, having been given to the corporation of Bath by W. Long, Esq. The contents of the urn, described by the workmen as being yellowish earth, were unfortunately shaken out by them, so that it cannot be ascertained what they were. The coffin contained, also, a small quantity of earth, but not sufficient to prevent the skeleton from being completely seen on the removal of the cover, which is in two or three pieces. In addition to the above-mentioned urn, some interesting fragments of Roman pottery were found at the excavations.

“Yesterday evening a sixth stone coffin was discovered,

containing the skeletons of two children, about eight or nine years of age.

“The following statements will show that previous discoveries of this kind have been made in the same locality.

“In the year 1818, during some excavations made at No. 11, Russell Street, ‘three perfect skeletons were found lying beside each other (one of immense stature), with several copper coins of *Vespasian*.’ In November, 1836, at No. 12, ‘a stone coffin was found, and beneath it two entire human skeletons.’

“The ground on which this street stands was originally a botanic garden, formed by David Russell, an apothecary, who died in 1765—from whom the street is supposed to have taken its name. This fact is further corroborated by reference to an old deed of a house in the neighbourhood, wherein it is expressed as being situated on land ‘called Russell’s Close, otherwise Holdstock’s Garden.’

“As the mode of burial in stone coffins seems to have prevailed in Bath and its neighbourhood, perhaps it may not be uninteresting to mention a few of the other sites in which they have been found:—

“In the lane leading from Lansdown to Weston, a stone coffin may be seen serving the purpose of a watering trough.

“March, 1808, in digging the foundation of a new house at St. Catherine’s Hermitage, near Lansdown Crescent, some stone coffins were discovered. ‘The first was found below the walls of the old building, the head to the N.E. In it was a complete skeleton, very perfect, six feet long: close to the bones of the feet were a number of iron rivet nails, some held together by a substance like thin plates of iron, the nails in general half-an-inch to the point; some fragments of black pottery and a few long nails were seen

mixed with the earth inside the coffin, but no coins. Outside the cover on the right hand lay a skeleton with its head to the feet of the other, the bones of a very large size, and near them were some remains of a jaw, resembling that of a horse.' 'The head of the second coffin was to the S.W.; on the cover was a skeleton of very large size, with the handle of a sword and part of the blade; all of iron, much corroded; there is a guard to the handle like that of a cutlass. No pottery.'

"We may notice that the eccentric Philip Thicknesse buried his daughter in his garden, of which an account is given in his memoirs.

"May, 1815, on the premises of Messrs. Sainsbury and Co., Walcot, two stone coffins, containing skeletons, were found (one with the face downwards), and 'a half-pint of various coins,' but of whose time is not mentioned.

"In the same month, also, one was exhumed in the garden at the back of Upham's Library, near the Orange Grove.

"May 1822, two stone coffins were found near Burnt House Turnpike Gate, and, previously to this, two near Claremont Place, Combe Down.

"June, 1824, at Lambridge, a sandstone coffin of rude construction, containing two skeletons, one an adult, the other a child were discovered; 'near the head of the coffin were two rings of a yellow metal, $1\frac{1}{2}$ inch in diameter, narrow and flat, and covered with the green patina so much admired by antiquarians; near it were found three pins, the larger two inches long, of a green colour, the two others were broken: their use was probably to connect the grave clothes; another skeleton was found near the place.'

"September 1840, one or two coffins were found, with

skeletons, whilst digging the foundation of St. Stephen's church.

“ In the year 1843, the workmen employed in the construction of a new cemetery in Lyncombe Vale, discovered a stone coffin, containing the remains of a human being, and to all appearance a man of 60 or 70, and of deformed stature. The coffin lay in a S.S.E. direction; it was found broken; the fracture, it is presumed by some, having been made at the interment from too quickly coming in contact with a stratum of rock, on which it was found. The lid of the coffin was also broken; and though it appeared to have borne an inscription, or some rudely carved memorial of the deceased, ingenuity is at fault in seeking to decipher it. Afterwards, a second coffin was exhumed, being found only about 14 inches beneath the turf. This relic was about $6\frac{1}{2}$ feet in length, formed of one block of oolite, and excepting its weighty lid, unbroken. The skeleton it contained (supposed to be Roman) was much more perfect than that previously found, and was that of a tall man. Speaking phrenologically, the skull exhibited the general character of a Roman cranium. This coffin had been sculptured with more care than the preceding one, but it was of rude conformation; the sides and massive cover were covered with diagonal lines, but no letters were visible. Not far from the coffins were also found three copper coins; one was a counterfeit sterling of the reign of Edward I. The remaining two were struck by the Emperors Constantine and Carausius. The date on the former of these was sufficiently legible to be read without difficulty; the latter was very much injured, as, indeed, are all the coins of Carausius that have been discovered in this country, and they generally require to be submitted to the educated eyes of those skilled in numismatics. We consider it important

that the coin of Carausius was found *near* the discovered coffins, as it may serve to fix the date when the spot was used by the Romans as a cemetery.

“A skeleton was dug up at the Gas Works in 1815, and a Roman urn, with reticulated lines; and skeletons were dug up in the Gravel Walk in 1844, and in the Park in 1847; but there are no records of stone coffins.

“It is a singular circumstance that one or more skeletons are generally found lying near the coffins.

“Stone coffins are frequently discovered in barrows, which also contain Roman urns, proving their use in England at that period. Sir Christopher Wren found such, at the rebuilding of St. Paul's; and Gough adds that, from the ninth century to the reign of Henry III., stone coffins were in general use—that is, for persons of the higher classes. The bodies of the common people, not only in the Norman, but also in the English era, as we see from the illuminations of ancient missals, were only wrapped in cloth, and so put into the ground. In this manner, Matthew Paris informs us, the monks of St. Alban's were buried till the time of Abbot Warin, who died in 1195. He ordered that they should be buried in stone coffins, as more decent. Matthew Paris, on this occasion (*Hist. Abb. St. Alb.* p. 95) charges him with innovations on established customs, to please the multitude. Strutt says, in the reigns of Henry V. and VI. stone coffins were made with necks, distinguishing the head and shoulders.

“That stone coffins were used up to a comparatively recent date may be inferred from the fact that at Monkton Farley, near Bath, specimens of superior workmanship (with necks as above described) were discovered, a few years ago, in connection with effigies and architectural fragments, leading to the belief that such a mode of burial

prevailed at the time the monastery was in existence there, from A.D. 1125, to the dissolution.

“A gentleman of this city has informed us that he has seen stone coffins of a shape similar to those found here, equally rude in construction, dug up in the island of Cephalonia.

“Further discoveries were afterwards made in Russell Street, and a seventh coffin was dug up. As the coffins first exhumed were lying in pairs, it might be inferred that, by excavating laterally from the seventh coffin, another would be discovered lying near it. Several large bones were dug out, as well as the lower stone of an ancient hand-mill, or quern, for grinding corn, which is now in the Literary and Scientific Institution. A wall, taking a north-east direction, was also discovered; it was three feet wide, at the base, but tapered towards the top, and was constructed of rough-hewn stones, apparently obtained from the neighbourhood of Lansdown, so firmly embedded in each other that they were separated with great difficulty; the mortar or cement, could not be distinguished. The portion laid bare was about five feet in length, and formed part of a circle; it was nine feet distant from the spot covered by the head of the seventh coffin; and a few feet from the edge of the macadamized road, between this and Russell Street, the whole of the coffins were deposited. This discovery has led to some interesting speculations. One view of the matter is, that the wall may indicate that the ground was enclosed for the purpose of sepulture, and, if so, traces of it may be found running along at the back of the houses on the western side of the street, so as to surround the coffins discovered some years since. Another view is, that the wall served as a boundary between this burial place, and the Roman road, the *Via Julia*, which, it is known, ran along at the top of

the street; and, if we assume that these coffins are Roman, some confirmation is given to this view by the frequent discoveries of Roman sepulchral remains in the present burial ground of Walcot, along the side of which passed the Roman road leading into 'The City of the Waters of the Sun.'

The above particulars relate to the stone coffins found in Russell Street, and to the other places which have come under the notice of the writer of the account which appeared in the *Chronicle*. The following is a letter from the Rev. J. Bond, Vicar of Weston, giving an account of the various instances which he has been able to collect of such remains being found in that part of the neighbourhood of Bath, where he resides.

" Weston Vicarage, Sept. 17, 1852.

" DEAR CAPTAIN CHAPMAN,—You desired me to collect for you what information I could respecting the stone coffins which at different times have been found in this parish. I regret that I have been so long in complying with your request, but I have found much difficulty in ascertaining the facts, and I have been unwilling to communicate them before I was able to do so on what appeared to be sufficient authority.

" I am informed that three stone coffins have been met with at different times, lying *singly*, in fields south of the farm house occupied by Mr. Thomas Davis, in Lansdown Lane; three or four, *together*, immediately behind Weston farm house, in the occupation of Mr. Powney; one in Mr. Saunders's field at Foxhale, and one in Langridge common. But the largest number that has been discovered, were dug up about the year 1825, at or near the site of Partis College, which appeared to have been an ancient burial ground of considerable extent. Three were found, two at the back

and one in the front of the Chapel there, and the remains of a wooden one, in digging the foundations of the west wing. This last was much damaged ; it was of very large dimensions, and appeared to have borne plates of metal, similar to the furniture of modern coffins. In the area between the three sides of the college buildings, and a little to the east of the front of the chapel, there was a bason-shaped hollow sunk into the rock, in which a large number of bodies had been interred without coffins. The skeletons remained, and the earth in which they were embedded is said to have been of a very fatty nature, and so slippery, that the workmen could not stand upon it if the surface was not level. About the same time no less than a dozen stone coffins were discovered by Thomas Bullock, in trenching some ground for a garden then held by him, but now in the occupation of Captain Fownes, immediately behind the college premises. On the same ground he also found remains of buildings, which appeared to have undergone the action of fire. On the floor of a small chamber, or cist, some charred wheat was observed ; a road, covered with yellow gravel, ran from this spot in a direction towards the village of Weston. Some coins were found with these remains, but they were not preserved, and it is not known to what era they belonged, although I remember to have heard a report, when I first came to the parish of Weston, that they were Roman.

“All the coffins above mentioned were of the common trough-shaped form, without any hollow for the head ; they were of Bath freestone, covered with the same material, without effigy or inscription. The covers were about a foot beneath the surface of the ground ; they were lying in all directions, and, when east and west, the head was sometimes to the east.

“In making some repairs at the Chapel Farm, on Lansdown, last year, twelve skulls were discovered on the south side of the house, placed with their faces downwards, and without any trace of the other portions of the skeletons. I understand that several stone coffins have been found about the rectory house, in the parish of Langridge; and in the neighbouring hamlet of Beach, there is a field called ‘Coffin Tining,’ where they have also been met with.”

Stone coffins were found, about twelve years ago, at English Coombe, near Bath, where the remains of the Wansdyke are still so distinctly to be traced. They have also been found at Bitton, (probably the ancient Abone) through which passed the Roman road to the Trajectus, and communicated with Wales. The coffins found at Bitton were near the site of a Roman villa, N.E. of Ashton Lodge, where Roman pottery has also been found. In the coffins discovered at Langridge, some years since, a war implement, not unlike in form to an Indian tomahawk, and a spur, are said to have been found. Unhappily all these coffins were broken up and used as paving-stones for the yard of a house erected on the spot. Stone coffins have also been found in the parish of Bathwick, just at the foot of the hill; one of these is still preserved, being walled into the boundary of the burying-ground.

On the ascent of the hill, and not far from a barrow, in opening a quarry, two skeletons were found in a sitting posture; the graves have since been destroyed. On the summit of the hill are the very interesting remains of an ancient British settlement, where there are several barrows, which appear never to have been opened.

We now proceed to a description of those lately discovered at Combe Down.

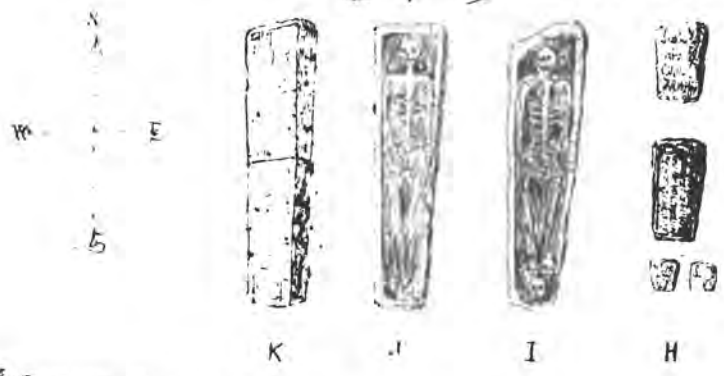
The occasion of the discovery was the making a garden

wall, the boundary of a new villa, just beyond the church. The situation of them is on the declivity of a hill, and a little lower down are the remains of a Roman villa, which was begun to be disinterred a few years since, but, for some reason, the work was discontinued. The builder who has taken the land, and intends constructing a modern habitation on it, has assured me that the old foundations shall be examined with the greatest care, and any objects of antiquity preserved. The site is very picturesque, looking direct south, and shielded on the north and east by gently sloping hills, having an open view of Mitford Castle to the south, with the Wiltshire downs in the back ground. Just above the site of this villa the coffins were found, and with them several pieces of broken pottery, and an entire small earthen vessel, now in the possession of the Rev. W. L. Nichols, of Lansdown Crescent, and undoubtedly Roman. Also a coin of the Emperor Licinius, now in my keeping. The coffins are three in number. These are all that have been at present discovered, but as the excavations are continued along the hill side, in a westerly direction, probably more may be found. They were not many inches under ground, the end of one having been struck by the cart-track, which went close past them. The coffins were placed directly north and south, with the feet to the south, so that the faces looked toward the mid-day sun.

In each of the two which lie towards the east, were skeletons of females, one said to be about forty-five years old, apparently, and the other thirty. These two coffins were of a large size, and the skeletons large also. They were three feet apart, and nine or ten inches from them lies a coffin somewhat smaller, square-headed, and of much better workmanship, which contained a male skeleton,

PLAN OF ANCIENT BURIAL GROUND :
 DISCOVERED AT :
 COMB DOWN NEAR BATH .

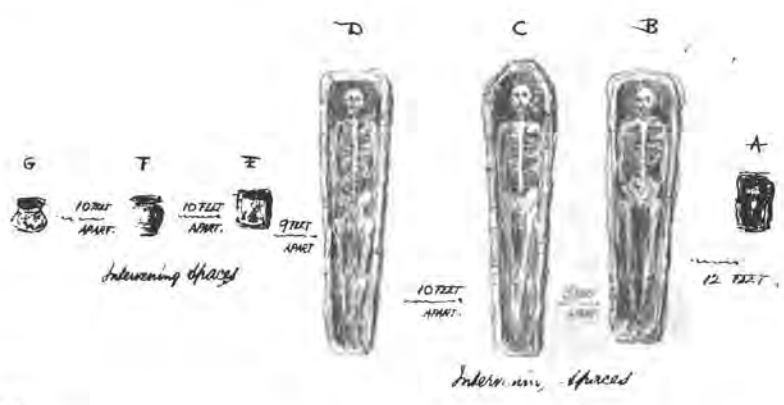
2 FEET 5 INCHES THE DISTANCE BETWEEN EACH GRAVE.



- A: OBLONG STONE BOX CONTAINING HEAD OF A HORSE
AND SOME OTHER BONES.
- B: STONE COFFINS CONTAINING SKELETONS
- SUPPOSED TO BE FEMALE.
- C: STONE COFFIN CONTAINING SKELETON
- SUPPOSED TO BE MALE.
- D: STONE CIST CONTAINING BURNT BONES.
- E: EARTHEN WARE JARS CONTAINING
BURNT BONES.

FOURTY SEVEN FEET
BETWEEN THE FIRST AND
LAST ROW OF GRAVES.

- F: INSCRIBED STONES PLACED ON THE LOWER PART OF
STONE COFFIN f.
- G: STONE COFFIN WITH MALE SKELETON
HAVING A COIN IN THE MOUTH AND 3 INCHES IN FEET.
- H: STONE COFFIN WITH SKELETON OF LARGE SIZE.
LID OF THE SAME.





A



A: STONE COFFIN found in *Reisel* shaft:

B: EARTHEN POT found in the COFFIN:

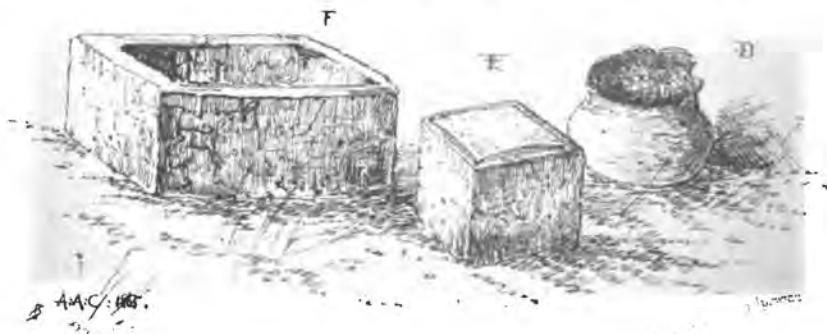
C: STUDS connected by thin metal plates
- found at the feet of the skeleton.

D: EARTHEN VASE containing *Amulet* bones

E: STONE CIST containing burnt bones:

F: STONE BOX containing skull and bones of a horse:

All found at COMP DOWN-BATH.



A.A.C. 1885.

smaller than those of the females. On the east side of the first coffin, and about twelve feet from it, was found an oblong box, with a cover to it, measuring twenty inches by fourteen, which contained the head of a horse. A skeleton was also found lying bent round the head of the first coffin, and about two feet distant from it. But the most curious portion of the discovery was a stone chest, full of *burnt bones*, measuring twelve inches by nine, and six and a quarter inches deep. The lid is so contrived as to fit into the top of the box, and is slightly oval on the outside. This chest was distant nine feet from the last of the three stone coffins, namely, that containing the skeleton of the man; a few feet above this chest, a skeleton has since been found. In order to form any correct idea of the dates of these interments, or the nation to which they belonged, it will be necessary to compare them with similar discoveries in other parts of England. I am inclined to think that they go back to an early period, at least prior to the Saxon invasion. In the Saxon burial-grounds which have been lately examined, I am not aware that any stone coffins have been discovered.

The investigations which have lately been made in the Anglo-Saxon Cemetery, at Harnham, near Salisbury, and those made in Lynton Heath, Cambridgeshire, have thrown much light upon the manner of Anglo-Saxon burials; but in neither case are any stone coffins mentioned. The contents of these three coffins, as far as they have been investigated, have only revealed what is stated to have been found in those discovered in Russell Street, namely, long iron nails, and small iron studs, united together, and lying near the feet, which have apparently formed part of the sandals.

I have in my possession a curious stone ornament, with a

circular hole in the centre, the stone itself being circular, with two flat surfaces. This may have been placed as a talisman or a charm, or have served merely as a rude ornament.

On visiting the Museum at York, this winter, I was struck by the resemblance of the coffins found in Bath, to some that are there preserved, and which have been discovered around the ancient city. York was the ancient Eburacum, the quarters of the Sixth Legion, very striking records of which are still preserved there. It was also the residence of Roman Emperors, and the remains that have been found there, surpass in interest those of almost any other city in England. They are preserved with much care, and have been recorded in a learned work by the Rev. C. Wellbeloved, from which I have extracted the account of stone coffins there discovered. Some of the chests found in York have Latin inscriptions upon them, by which they are undoubtedly proved to be Roman; others are plain, and without any inscription at all, but in size and shape exactly correspond to those found in Bath.

Many coffins, says Mr. Wellbeloved, in general rudely formed of a coarse grit-stone, a few of lead, originally perhaps cased in wood, have, at various times, been found in the vicinity of York. In the year 1813, some workmen engaged in digging a sunk fence, found two very large coffins of grit-stone, placed close to each other, one side of each neatly panelled, and the lids, as usual, slightly ridged. Each coffin contained an entire skeleton, (p. 108). Two stone coffins, of a coarser grit, and of inferior workmanship, were recently found in a gravel-pit in Heslington Field, by the side of the road from Heslington to Grimston, and probably not far from the line of Roman road from Eburacum to Derwentio; one of these was presented

to the York Museum. On removing the lid, the coffin appeared to be almost half filled with lime, excepting the place in which the head had lain. The lime having been very carefully taken out, the lower surface presented a distinct impression of a human body, over which, with the exception of the face, the lime had been poured in a liquid state, the body having been first covered with a cloth, the texture of which is still clearly to be seen in the impression on the lime. The feet had been crossed, and covered with shoes or sandals, having nails in the soles, the marks of which on the lime are distinctly visible, and several of the nails themselves were found in the coffin, in a very corroded state. These nails correspond with what have been found in the coffins in Bath and at Combe Down. A very small portion of the bones remained, sufficient however to indicate that they were the bones of a female.

All the teeth, except one, were found with the enamel undecayed. Just above the left shoulder, a small portion of a gold ring appeared; and the lime surrounding it being carefully scraped away, the remnants of a lady's ornaments were brought to light, consisting of fragments of large jet rings, two earrings of fine gold, two bracelets, several brass or copper rings, one of which resembled a cogwheel, about two inches in diameter, three finger rings, one of them of jet, of a modern pattern, and two necklaces; one of the necklaces was formed of glass beads, yellow and green; the others, of small beads of coral, intermixed with smaller beads of blue glass, strung in both cases on very slender twisted silver wire. All these, with the coffin and the lime, are deposited in the Museum of the Philosophical Society.

In the spring of 1841, when workmen were employed in removing earth to the depth of three or four feet, for the

purpose of forming the North of England Railway, several stone coffins, containing lime, were discovered, just without the walls of York, but the skeletons in no case entire.

It is remarked, that of the great number of stone coffins which have been at various times discovered at York, very few have been found bearing an inscription.

Three only are known, which are engraved in Mr. Wellbeloved's *Eburacum*, (see page 110.) It is singular that very near to the first of these, the skeleton of a horse was found lying; and Gough, in his *Sepulchral Remains*, vol. i. p. 22, notices a similar circumstance at Chute. At Combe Down we have the head and some bones of the horse enclosed in a stone chest. The reason of the interment of the horse, or some portion of its remains, near the human skeleton, would form a very interesting subject of enquiry, and might be pursued with advantage. Instances of it occur not merely in Roman, but in Saxon burials. I am informed that in one of the graves at Linton Heath, opened by Mr. Neville, the skeleton of a Saxon was found, with a horse's skull placed on the leg bones; no other bones of the horse occurred there. In the *Memoirs of the Society of Antiquaries of Picardy*, vol. v., p. 145, there is a paper on the Remains of Horses, found near Gaulish tombs and places of sacrifice, by the Abbé Santerre. Not having the work at hand, I am unable to state his view of the fact. It has been conjectured that the remains of the horse may be connected with the funeral feast which took place at interment; or it is more probable that the favorite horse was killed at such a time, because he was supposed to be of service to his master in the abodes of the dead. On the tomb of Cecilia Metella, near Rome, horses heads are said to be sculptured in relief. The Hindoos have a custom of sacri-

ficing a horse, and the festival at which this takes place, is called the Aswa Medh.

There is much probability that when the body was interred, it was apparelled as the deceased usually was. The iron nails found at the feet of the skeleton, are remains of sandals, which have, in some instances, been found entire. Thus, at Avisford, in Sussex, there was discovered a pair of well-nailed soles of caligæ. This was a case of cremation; the ashes being in a glass, were surrounded by vases, etc., and all placed in an oblong, rectangular stone box. In graves near Worthing, where was discovered a curious glass bottle, were found, in 1845, remains of well-nailed caligæ. The interments here were by cremation. (See Dixon's *Geology of Sussex*, pp. 43 and 44.) It is curious to find these leathern reflex placed with cinerary urns. Leather is less destrüctible than tissue, and it may be that a complete suit of clothes was placed in the cist, of which these soles are the only reliques preserved. There was certainly a curious notion of giving the dead all they wanted in a future state.

We may remark that in none of the coffins recorded to have been found in and near Bath, do we hear of the bodies having been covered with lime poured into the coffin, and on none of these have any inscriptions been found, unless it be on one discovered in the Widcombe Cemetery, which was illegible. But the slight examination which such remains too often receive, leads us to suppose that many interesting peculiarities are often passed over. There is also a striking difference between the Roman altars found in Bath and those which I have seen elsewhere, and especially in the north of England. The sides of all the altars found in Bath are plain; the altars have merely the inscription on the front,—while in most other altars, we have

the sides ornamented with devices, such as the sacrificial implements, the head of the victim, or some other device.

From the close correspondence of the coffins found in and near Bath with those found in and about York, which have been, without hesitation, assigned to the Roman period, I am inclined to think that the former are Roman also. They are of a humbler description, but the character of the two cities differed essentially; York was an imperial residence at certain times; it was the station of a Legion; officers of the first rank were located there; wealth was there concentrated, and art of a very high order. Whereas Bath was a place of resort for relaxation, and for the restoration of health. The military men who came there were either retired officers, or on leave, for the purpose of recruiting their health, and although the city and neighbourhood was much frequented for pleasure, repose, and relaxation, yet it had not the same character or importance as York. Nor could it be supposed to possess the same amount of opulence, and the same class of workmen, as would naturally congregate about a military station. No doubt the remains of the Temple of Minerva, still preserved in Bath, indicate its importance and its advancement in the arts; but the general class of citizens appear to have been content with humbler memorials than those that have been found in some other parts of our land. The frequency of Roman coins, in connection with these coffins, is a strong corroboration of their Roman origin. But if they be not actually Roman, I think there can be little doubt that they must be referred to the period just preceding the Saxon invasion, and be attributed to the Romano-British inhabitants of the island, who retained the Roman mode of life, while they fell far short of Roman perfection, both in arts and arms.

It will not be well to bring this notice to a conclusion, without mentioning an interesting discovery of a stone coffin, or Roman sarcophagus, which was made on the 24th May, 1853, in London, during excavations for the foundation of a warehouse, near Haydon Square, Minories. This sepulchral chest, which measures about five feet, by two feet one inch, the depth being about three feet, is now in the British Museum. The lid, which is ridged, is sculptured with foliage, and firmly fastened down by iron clamps; one side of the chest is left plain, as if the sarcophagus had been formed to be placed against a wall; on the other side, and at the ends, are sculptures. When the coffin was opened, a leaden one was found within, the lid ornamented with lines of a beaded pattern, in relief, and escalop shells at intervals. Within this were found the remains of a child, supposed to be about eight years old, surrounded by a layer of soft matter, but not sufficient to cover the bones. This was considered to result from the decomposition of the body, and presented no analogy to the bed of lime noticed in the Roman interments at York.

Leaden coffins of the Roman period are not unfrequent in this country; but in no case, it is believed, have they been found placed in a receptacle of stone.

A learned antiquary, who gave an account of this discovery to the Archæological Institute, at one of the monthly meetings, to which I am indebted for this information,—although I have myself seen and examined the sarcophagus—considers that both the stone and lead coffins had been used previously. Clamps of iron seem to be peculiar to the later Roman period, as is shewn by a rude, unsculptured sarcophagus, in the York Museum. The clamping seems, in the present case, to have been added at a later period.

The leaden coffin appears also to have been altered to fit the stone chest. The leaden coffins which have been found with escalops and other ornaments, have been discovered only in the neighbourhood of London, York, and Colchester. (See Weever's *Funeral Monuments*, p. 30; also *Archæologia*, vol. xvii, p. 333, vol. xxxi, p. 308).

This sarcophagus, which, from the style of the sculpture, may be assigned to the fourth century, is formed of the material called Barnack Rag. The character of the sculpture, however, may recall that of an earlier period, as shewn on the tomb of Cecilia Metella, near Rome. A curious narrative of Bede, contained in the fourth book of the Ecclesiastical History, c. xix, confirms the opinion of a secondary interment. It appears from this that stone coffins, discovered on the sites of Roman cities, were taken for the purposes of christian burial in after times. On the site of Camboritum, the Roman Cambridge, stone coffins have been discovered of a large size, similar to those found in Bath and the neighbourhood, without any lids corresponding, but over them small stones, with devices on them, which fix the date of the interment to the time subsequent to the Norman Conquest. (See *Archæologia*, xvii, 221.) The Saxon historian, Bede, relates that the corpse of Ædilhryda, Abbess of Coldingham, had been interred in a wooden coffin, by her desire, on her death, A.D. 679. Her sister and successor, Sexburga, desiring to place her remains in a new receptacle, and to remove them into the church, sent forth some of the brethren to seek stone of which such a coffin might be formed. Having taken ship, and in vain sought for any of sufficient size in the marshy region of Ely, they came to the ruined city of Granta-ceaster, and presently found a suitable coffin near its walls. Regarding this as a providential interposition, they retraced their

steps from the Roman station. The marble chest perfectly fitted the corpse of the abbess; a cavity provided in it for the skull, precisely fitted the head, and it seemed as if the coffin had been prepared specially for her.

In the sepulchral remains found at Combe Down, we have an instance of the two modes of disposing of the dead which are known to have existed among the Romans, namely, by interment and by cremation. And this also leads me to suppose that the remains are to be attributed to the latter period of Roman occupation, or the times which immediately succeeded it. We have the body interred entire, placed in a coffin, and also *not placed* in a coffin. These two modes of sepulture were both common among the ancient Romans; and we have the small chest of burned bones, in which the ashes of the deceased were collected after cremation, and deposited in the earth. This was likewise a Roman custom of disposing of the dead. Again, the site of these remains leads to the supposition that they were Roman. In the country, we generally find the burial-places in the immediate neighbourhood of a villa or hamlet. As I observed before, the remains of a villa are to be traced in front of the spot where the coffins were found.

The stone cist containing the burnt bones is certainly very remarkable. Sepulchral chests of this kind are frequently found on the site of Roman cemeteries; and, according to Montfaucon, the number of square chests predominates over the round. Chests are also found which are made of tiles, and these are said to be more common in Roman burial places than stone chests. A remarkable stone one was found at Avisford, in Sussex, in 1817. Avisford is in the immediate neighbourhood of several large Roman villas, and not far from that of Bignor, where the very interesting pavements are still preserved. It ap-

pears to have been a chest formed out of a solid stone, and covered with a flat slab or lid. Mr. Wright describes it as containing in the middle a large square vase of fine green glass, containing calcined bones. In a Roman cemetery, at Cirencester, was found a stone which had been cut into the shape of a short cylindrical column. This had been sawn through the middle, and in the centre of the lower half was cut a cell to contain the urn, which was enclosed by joining the two parts of the column together. (See Mr. Wright's *Celt, Roman, and Saxon*, p. 306.)

We find that sepulchral urns were of different sizes and forms, and made of various materials, according to the wealth of the deceased, whose ashes they were to contain, and the taste of the surviving relatives. When made of marble, they were generally *rectangular*, adorned with bas-reliefs, often of beautiful workmanship, and contained inscriptions.

We are not to expect, on the site of a Roman villa, at some distance from a town, and in a Roman province at the extremity of the empire, the same amount of art which is displayed in the elaborate works preserved in Rome. The provincials were, no doubt, content with very humble imitations of the customs prevalent in the capital, and in rich cities; a plain stone chest, of small dimensions, would, in a country seat in the provinces, perform the part allotted to a rich marble sarcophagus in the capital, and be made the depository of the remains of what was valued and loved while living.

Montfaucon, *L'Ant. Exp.* tome v., pt. 1, p. 55, pl. xviii, gives a drawing containing the façade, the plan, the urns, and the inscriptions of a tomb of the family of Furia, discovered in 1665, at Camaldules, in the high ground above

Frescati, in Italy. Everything is very simple. The urns, or chests, are made *square shaped*, and the cover is ridged. This monument is said to be more ancient than any in Italy, of the same kind, as appears from the character of the inscriptions. The inscriptions upon the two urns, or chests, are not easy to decipher; but the true reading appears to be—Lucio Turpleio Lucii filio. Turpleio may stand for Turpilio, which was the name of a Roman family. The other will be Quinto Turpleio Lucii filio. All the other inscriptions are of the Furian family. Fourio is for Furio, in the manner of the ancient Romans.

A question has arisen on the subject of cremation,—how it was possible to preserve the ashes of the persons apart from the ashes of the pile on which the body was burned? There is, in Montfaucon, an interesting letter detailing the circumstance of the discovery of a garment, or covering, of what the Greeks called *Asbestos*, in one of the sepulchral urns found near Rome. This had been subjected to the action of fire, and was found to be scorched by the heat, and partially burned; it was placed, together with the bones, in the funereal urn. We may suppose, therefore, that in some instances the device was used of wrapping the body in this material; but it appears probable that the bones, when reduced to ashes, might generally be distinguished from the wood ashes. We know that when the body had been consumed, and the pile reduced to ashes, these were extinguished by having, in many instances, wine poured on them, which custom it was found necessary afterwards to regulate, as needlessly extravagant, and it was made lawful only to use water for such purposes.

It would be very interesting to trace the various modes of sepulture which have prevailed at different periods, and

thus endeavor to throw some light upon the present subject; but this would occupy too much time. Let us hope that these very imperfect remarks may induce some other member of the society, more competent than myself, to pursue the subject further, and thus bring to light much that would clear up historical doubt.
