III. *An Account of the opening and examination of a considerable number of Tumuli on Breach Downs, in the County of Kent, in a Letter from LORD ALBERT CONYNTHAM, F.S.A., to JOHN YONGE AKERMAN, Esq. F.S.A.; followed by Mr. Akerman's Remarks upon Lord Albert Conyntham's Excavations.*

Read 3d February, 1842.

DEAR MR. AKERMAN,

I have had drawings made of the principal objects found in opening tumuli on Breach Downs, in this county, during the months of September and October, of the present year. Should you consider them of sufficient

interest to exhibit to the Society of Antiquaries, you have my entire permission to do so.

The drawings sent herewith are very faithful representations of these relics; and I have added a few memoranda of the objects found in each tumulus.

Breach Downs lie about four miles from Canterbury, upon the road to Eleham and Hythe, and about a mile distant from the high road between Canterbury and Dover. I counted one hundred and three tumuli upon that part of the Downs near the village of Barham. Of these I found many had been opened, and on enquiry I learned that Sir Thomas Mantell had explored them about two and thirty years since. On some high ground, a little beyond this spot, are traces of an encampment, but I could not hear that anything of importance had been discovered in the neighbourhood.

On the 2d and 4th of September, with the permission of Sir Henry Oxenden, Lord of the Manor, I caused thirteen tumuli to be opened, in the presence of Messrs. Bartlett of Kingston Rectory, Mr. Charles Oxenden, and Mr. Akerman. They varied much in height, the largest being about eight feet from the base, and the remainder varying from three or four feet, down to an elevation scarcely to be distinguished. Within each was found a cist or grave, cut in the solid chalk, from east to west, and from one to two feet (and in some cases three or four feet) in depth.

The following is a brief description of the objects found in the thirteen tumuli opened on the above days:—

1. A skeleton nearly decomposed. At the head, the remains of what may have been an iron-bound casket or small chest. A large crystal bead, of an imperfect globular form, lay near the neck (Plate I. fig. 16). A set of beads, formed of amethystine quartz (fig. 5), with a number of others of earth, and of various colours (fig. 10). A gold bulla, with a ruby in the centre (fig. 9.) In another part of the grave were found two silver rings (fig. 18), so brittle that one crumbled at the touch; and two small objects in brass (17). In the chalk, forming the mound, and at some distance from the skeleton, was found a small brass coin of Victorinus, in very bad condition, and this was the only specimen of ancient money discovered during the whole of my researches.

W. Burgess del.

Antiquities found in the Breach Downs Tumuli.

J. Basire sc.

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2. A skeleton, much decayed. On the right side a long sword, the head of a spear, the *umbo* of a shield,

three studs of iron, a knife, and a silver belt buckle (Plate I. fig. 13).

3. A large tumulus, containing three skulls placed triangularly, but the skeletons, except one, which appeared to have been interred in a sitting or bent attitude, while other bones were scattered irregularly, were nearly decomposed. In this tumulus two glass drinking-cups were discovered, and one of them was taken out entire : they appear to have been protected from the superincumbent chalk by large flint stones, placed above them, and forming a hollow beneath. The fragments of an earthen urn were discovered just below the surface of the ground.

4. A tumulus, nearly the largest of the group, containing, at about eighteen inches below the apex, the very perfect skeleton of a child, of six or seven years of age. Beneath, at the usual depth, was discovered a very perfect skeleton, with a knife by the side.

5. A skeleton, nearly perfect, with a flat striped glass bead (Plate I. fig. 8), and a fibula under the head (fig. 19).

6. A tolerably perfect skeleton, with a knife by the side, and under the head a small green glass bead, which crumbled at the touch.

7, 8. Two tumuli, had skeletons, each with a knife by the side.

9, 10. Two skeletons, without any object whatever.

11, 12, 13. The skeletons in these tumuli were so much decomposed that only minute fragments of bones were perceived, although the contents of the graves were carefully sifted.

On the 6th of September I renewed my researches, and opened eight tumuli, in the presence of Mr. P. Bartlett and Mr. George Harrison. The result is as follow :

1. A skeleton, with a small ribbed urn at the head (fig. 3), and at the foot the fragments of a larger urn, apparently broken when the grave was filled up.

2. A large sword lay by the side of the skeleton in this grave. There were also the remains of the umbo of a shield, which crumbled at the touch, a knife with a small buckle (fig. 14), and a spear head, of the usual form, in good preservation.

3. This tumulus contained a skeleton, with an urn of rude pottery at its feet (fig. 1), which was taken out entire, but crumbled on exposure to the air.

4, 5. These contained skeletons, each with a knife of the usual shape, and small buckles.

6, 7, 8. The first of these contained a skeleton and a spear head, the second was empty, and the skeleton of the third was nearly decomposed.

On the 11th of September I opened six small tumuli, and one of the largest of the group on Breach Downs, measuring one hundred and thirty-two feet in circumference, and eight feet in height. On excavating to the surface of the grave a layer of large flint stones was found covering it, and forming a kind of vault. Only a few human teeth and three iron cramps were discovered in the cist. Of the six smaller tumuli, one contained a skeleton with a knife much corroded ; another held a skeleton in a grave so widened as to permit the right arm to be extended to its full length. At the feet of the skeleton were found the bones of two mice. The four other tumuli contained skeletons only.

The result of my excavations on the 15th of September, when nine tumuli were opened, is as follows:

1. A perfect skeleton, with a knife and small buckle on the left side, and on the right a spear head in fair preservation. At the feet were several pyrites.

2. An imperfect skeleton, and a few fragments of corroded iron.

3. A skeleton much decomposed, with a perfect spear head, the wood remaining in the socket, and a knife and buckle on the left side.

4. This was one of the larger sized tumuli. It contained a skeleton with a small silver bracelet encircling the left arm.

5. The skeleton almost entirely decayed with the umbo of a shield, a sword two feet six inches in length, placed on three large stones; four small buckles lying about the middle of the sword blade. Two glass studs were found about the centre of the body; a spear head by the side of the skull, and at the head of the grave a ribbed urn of red pottery (Plate I. fig. 2.) containing calcined bones.

6. This grave contained the remains of a skeleton, pieces of iron, apparently portions of a box or chest, a small buckle, and three halves of large amethystine beads.

7. An imperfect skeleton, a knife, and two beads were found in this tumulus.

8. In this we discovered a knife, a buckle, and a few fragments of iron.

9. This was a large tumulus, containing, *at sixteen inches below the apex*, a skeleton in good preservation. In the cist below were found fragments of bones, large iron cramps of a chest, and a key.

On the 21st of September I opened 10 tumuli, the contents of which were as under:

1. The contents of this grave were, a skeleton much decomposed, with the handle and iron fastenings of a casket.

2. A decomposed skeleton, and a knife of the usual description.

3. A skeleton much decomposed, with a knife and spear-head on its left, and a row of calcined bones, extending the whole length of the grave, on its right.

4. A skeleton with a spear-head and a knife as usual.

5. This grave contained an imperfect skeleton. The objects accompany-

ing it, were a large iron hook, and, by the skull, a small silver wire ornament, and a silver pin, with the head shaped like an arrow.

6. A skeleton in fair preservation was found in this tumulus; near the arm was a large knife. The grave also contained a spear head long and straight, two buckles, and two iron rings.

7. The only objects discovered were several iron fastenings of a chest or coffin.

8. This grave was empty.

9. A perfect skeleton without any object.

10. A skeleton with a crystal bead, or amulet, under the head.

On the 2nd of October, I caused seven tumuli to be opened, and the following is a list of their several contents :

1. An imperfect skeleton with a knife and spear-head on the left side.

2. An imperfect skeleton.

3. An imperfect skeleton, a knife, and *part of the jaw of a horse*.

4. An imperfect skeleton, a spear head, and a knife.

5. A skeleton only fourteen inches below the apex of the barrow, and an imperfect skeleton in the grave beneath.

6. A skeleton in good preservation, with fragments of a casket between the feet. On the pelvis a massive silver buckle, with a gold plate in its centre (Plate I. fig. 20). A silver bracelet in good preservation, some very minute beads, a brooch (fig. 21), and a very small ring.

7. A very perfect skeleton only.

On the same day I caused to be opened a very large mound on the opposite hill. After excavating to a certain depth, it was found that the earth had been heaped up, but lower down the chalk bore no traces of having been disturbed; I am therefore led to believe that this mound had not a sepulchral origin, and that it was raised as a signal post.

On the 14th of October, twelve tumuli were explored, and the following is a notice of their contents :

1. Empty.

2. A perfect skeleton without any relic.

3. A skeleton in a perfect state, with two small buckles, a knife, and a spear-head.

4. Fragments of a skull, close to which were three silver finger rings, some beads, three small iron rivets, and a small portion of white hair.

5. This grave contained a perfect skeleton, and a buckle.

On both sides of the skeleton, from the neck downwards, was a mass of very small bones, for at least two square feet on each side. On examination, some of these bones were found to be of mice, but others were of larger animals.

The remaining graves contained nothing unusual or remarkable.

It may be worthy a passing observation, that the skulls found in these graves were, with one exception, of an inferior organization.

I remain, yours sincerely,

Bifrons, November, 1841.

ALBERT CONYNNGHAM.

Mr. Akerman to Lord Albert Conyngham.

MY LORD,

I avail myself of your permission to offer a few remarks on the objects discovered in the tumuli recently explored by your Lordship on Breach Downs.

The stranger visiting this spot would naturally be led to consider these barrows to be the graves of those who had fallen in the second expedition of Cæsar, and the name assigned to an earth-work on Barham Downs favours the supposition; but the contents of the numerous tumuli which have been opened in this neighbourhood completely negative such an hypothesis, and prove beyond all doubt that they are referable to a period some centuries later.

Although I had heard of the explorations of the late Mr. Faussett, and had seen in the collection of Mr. Rolfe, of Sandwich, several objects found in barrows, in the neighbourhood of that town, which are clearly of a late period of the Roman Empire, I was yet led to believe that some of the tumuli on Breach Downs were of an earlier origin. I had imagined that *some* of these ancient sepulchres contained Roman remains, and this opinion was strengthened by particulars derived from the Rev. T. Bartlett, of Kingston Rectory, who informed me that, a short time since, some labourers on the road crossing Barham Downs had occasion to remove for highway repairs

a heap of stones, which had remained there undisturbed for ages, without any suspicion as to their origin; when, on clearing them away, they discovered a cist or grave beneath. Its tenant had mouldered to dust, but there were found about thirty denarii, of the reigns of the Antonines. Some of these coins are still in the possession of Mr. Bartlett. They are much worn by circulation, and it may therefore be safely conjectured that their deposit was posterior to the reigns of the Emperors whose effigies they bear.

Whatever opinions may have been entertained as to the character of the tumuli on Breach Downs, the excavations under your Lordship's directions set at rest the question of their high antiquity, since the objects therein discovered clearly belong to a comparatively recent period of our history.

It is remarkable that, during the whole of these excavations, but one coin was discovered, and that in such a corroded state as to be valuable merely in shewing that the interments must have been subsequent, perhaps long subsequent, to its issue. It is of the tyrant Victorinus, whose money is repeatedly discovered in almost every European state. We have therefore evidence that the group of tumuli on Breach Downs cannot be referred to a period earlier than the sway of that usurper, while it is equally clear that the gold pendent ornament, or bulla, which was found in the same grave, must be assigned to a much later date. From the device and workmanship we may safely conclude that it is not earlier than the reign of the Emperor Justin.

On turning to the *Nenia Britannica* of Douglas, I find this opinion receives confirmation from the very minute descriptions and exact drawings of that intelligent and accurate antiquary.

In some of the tumuli opened by Douglas, coins of Justin were discovered; and in Tab. xxii. fig. 8, we find one of the French monarch Clovis. Some of these coins have loops affixed to them that they might be suspended as ornaments, like the bulla above noticed; and it is worthy of observation, that rude coins, evidently barbarous imitations of the gold money of Justin, are frequently discovered in the eastern parts of the county by labourers at plough.

Douglas, observing that Christian sepulture was admitted within the walls of towns, A. D. 742, this island being then converted to Christianity, concludes that all these groups of tumuli exceed that date. This cannot be

questioned ; but, although Christian emblems are occasionally found in these graves, and the cross appears on the elegant little pendent gold ornament discovered in the Breach Down tumulus, it does not appear conclusive that all their tenants were primitive Christians, as this author is led to believe. These interments *may* have commenced at a much earlier period, although the coins and other objects repeatedly discovered point to the latter part of the fifth or the commencement of the sixth century. It is very true that some of the coins discovered by Douglas, in tumuli explored by him in Kent, are of Antoninus Pius and Faustina, but they are worn as if by long circulation, and may have been used as money several centuries after their issue. In support of his conjecture, that these were the burial grounds of early Christians, before such places were annexed to the churches, this author observes, that they are to be found in the immediate vicinity of Saxon stations, such as Chartham, Barham, Sibertswold, Wimbledon, Ash, &c.

With respect to the ornamented fibula, of which one specimen was discovered in the Breach Down tumuli, Douglas notices a similar object on a bust of Queen Ultragotha, the wife of Childebert, whose reign commenced A. D. 514. on the tower of St. Germain des Prés, in Paris. He supposes it to have been connected with the subucula, or under garment ; but it rather seems to fasten a kind of scarf, or band, round the neck, the two ends being crossed, and lying on the breast.

The discovery of the two masses of iron pyrites in one of these cists is worthy of observation, as they appear to have been designedly placed there. Douglas informs us, that he sometimes discovered shards and pebbles, not the produce of the soil, placed in various parts of the grave, and I noticed in the Breach Down tumuli several of those globular-shaped flints which have of late so much engaged the attention of our geologists, and which appear to have been collected and thrown upon the remains at the time of interment.

I have the honour to remain, my Lord, with much respect,

Your Lordship's obliged and faithful

JOHN YONGE AKERMAN.

Lewisham, December, 1841.

To the Lord Albert Conyngham, K. C. H.

&c. &c. &c.

Postscript.

Postscript.

While these sheets were in the press, I received a letter from Mr. J. P. Bartlett, informing me that, a short time since, he opened several small tumuli on Breach Downs (their sites having been almost obliterated), in one of which he discovered a skeleton, and, among the mouldered remains of what had doubtless been a purse, four silver coins or *sceattas*, in most perfect preservation. Two of these pieces are of the type of those engraved by Ruding, "Sceattæ," plate II. Nos. 22-25, and the other two are similar to Nos. 27-37, of the same plate. These coins have the Christian symbol, but it would be difficult to determine whether this is the result of *design*, or of that *imitation* so common among semi-barbarous nations, who, in many instances, probably copied the types of better executed money, without considering their signification. Among numismatists those *sceattas* which are without the sign of the cross are, with apparent reason, considered the earliest examples of Anglo-Saxon coinage.

Pieces similar to those found in this tumulus are frequently dug up in the eastern parts of Kent, and especially in the neighbourhood of Canterbury, one having recently been discovered in the village of Barham, immediately adjacent to the tumuli on Breach Downs.

Two of the coins in question have on their obverse a crowned head, around which are the letters TICA, which may be a proper name; but whether of a prince, an ecclesiastic, or a moneyer, is extremely doubtful. The name of Tycca (and it probably occurs in no other Anglo Saxon document) is subscribed to a charter of Ecgberht King of Kent, printed in the *Codex Diplomaticus Ævi Saxonici* (No. CLX. p. 193) "signum manus Tyccan." This Tycca was, in all probability, an ecclesiastic at Canterbury, but I do not venture to attempt connecting him with the name, if name it really be, on these interesting, though perplexing, and yet unexplained, examples of early Anglo-Saxon money.

Lewisham, February 28, 1843.

J. Y. A.