AN ANCIENT INTERMENT AT MANNINGTON.

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In a gravel pit not far from Mannington, Norfolk, a number of cinerary urns have been from time to time exposed. The pit, perhaps better described as a sand pit, is on the summit of a mound or low hill, which does not appear to have been artificially raised, and the fact that some urns have been found in an adjoining field, also a low hill, renders it less likely that the natural contour of the ground has been disturbed. The urns lie a very short distance beneath the present surface, not more than from six or eight inches up to a foot, as a rule, and so they are generally much broken by ploughing, etc. But they are not so much disturbed but that their contents remain *in situ*.

The urns vary in the excellence of their workmanship, but none is very fully burnt. The accompanying photograph (Plate XXXV.) represents an exceptionally perfect one, and also some fragments of others showing the decoration. But the immediate purpose of this communication is to call attention to one in the bottom of which there was an oval hole. This had been mended by pouring molten lead into it; apparently the urn was stood upon sand and the molten lead poured into the inside, the excess running out into a feather edge. An examination of this specimen shows quite conclusively that the lead was used deliberately to mend the hole, and was not derived from some article of lead melted in the urn and accidentally running into the hole. Indeed, the urn, like all the others, is too imperfectly burnt to have ever been subjected to heat which would have melted the lead. It is remarkable that so much trouble should have been taken to mend a hole with molten lead when it would seem to have been so much easier to have mended it with clay, which could have been found quite near at hand, some of the glacial deposits here being almost of the nature of a brick-earth. On enquiry at the British Museum I cannot learn that any other example of a cinerary urn having been mended with lead is known, though the Romans sometimes mended their better baked cooking utensils in this way. The photograph (Plate XXXV.) showing the lead *in situ* was obtained by piecing the fragments together upon a lump of clay; the urn, though all in place, being too much broken to get it out entire.

The urns are filled with blackish fine mould and contain fragments of calcined human bones. A good many have been found, but the labourers hold them of small account, so that the contents often have been lost. I myself have found nothing else besides the calcined bones, except in one in which there were a few fragments of quite thin bronze, in places nearly fused. Except that some bits show that the thin bronze had been bent double as if over an edge of leather or of wood, it is impossible to say what they were: probably some ornament which had been burnt with

1. Anglo-Saxon urn and ornamented fragments found at Mannington, Norfolk.
2. Base of Anglo-Saxon urn found at Mannington, repaired with lead.

the body. Lord Orford has a perforated jet bead which is said to have come out of an urn, and the labourers say that they have sometimes found bits of metal, but these have not been preserved. No flint, bronze, or iron objects have been found in the pit with these exceptions.

The bones are not calcined to such an extent as to reduce them to ashes; they retain their form and appear to have been broken up after the burning of the body in order to get them into the urns. It is possible to identify portions of ribs, finger-bones, flat bones of the skull, etc., but with a single slight exception I have not found any portion of the large bones. Thus there are no fragments of the pelvis, none of the femur nor tibia, and only one little piece which may be from a humerus. What, then, did they do with the large bones? They were not buried near to the urns, or some would have been found in searching for implements, as they would have been preserved in the gravel. And they were certainly not reduced to ash, as the much smaller bones retain their form and would be quite easily identifiable had they not been broken up small.

Indeed, the heat obtainable in a funeral pyre in the open air would not be sufficient to reduce large bones to an ash. And, further, the entire bones of a human skeleton could not be packed into urns of this size unless quite reduced to ashes. It is possible, of course, that the large bones might have been buried much more deeply, or in some other place, but, unfortunately, my knowledge of ancient interments is not sufficient to enable me to say whether this has been found to be the case elsewhere.

In respect of the size of the bones, the contents of these urns differ markedly from those of the Roman urns preserved in the Colchester Museum; in the latter larger fragments are abundant, and the bodies of vertebræ, portions of long bones, etc., are easily identifiable.

Mr. A. G. Wright, of Colchester Museum, states that "the urns are of about 6th century date from an Anglian cemetery. The little S-shaped stamp is a common decorative feature on several urns obtained by the Hon. R. C. Neville from the cemetery at Wilbraham, Cambs., in 1851. In the Lincoln Museum is a small urn of this type with a piece of glass let into the base, and we have the bottom of a 'Samian' mortar, a hole in which has been plugged with lead. I cannot recall an Anglo-Saxon example of this method of repairing."