



Lumbey del.

Roman Sepulchral Antiquities at Lincoln.

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XXXIII. *Account of some sepulchral Antiquities discovered at Lincoln.* By John Pownall, Esq. F. A. S.

Read March 10, 1791.

THE drawings which accompany this [a] exhibit an antient sepulture discovered and dug up about three or four feet below the surface of an open field half a mile due east of the east gate of the antient *Lindum*.

That field having been broken up from time to time in several parts of it to dig for stone, a variety of stone coffins of various shapes have at different times been discovered in the looser ground that covers the solid rock.

From this circumstance there is reason to believe that it was the common burying ground, not only of the Romans belonging to that great municipium, but of succeeding generations for many ages after, and until the established forms of Christian burial introduced different modes.

The singular sepulture here described, is undoubtedly Roman and probably of some person above the rank of the lower order

[a] See Fig. 1 and 2, Pl. XXXIII.

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of the people; but as the urn inclosed in the sarcophagus (if I may so call it) contained nothing but sand or ashes and burned bones, without any coin or other memorandum of date, the æra of interment cannot be ascertained.

This sepulture is now with many other rare fragments of antiquity in the possession of the Rev. Dr. Gordon præcentor of Lincoln.

When I inspected that curious relick, it appeared to me that both the stone and its cover had originally been square, although the ravage of time had so worn the angles, as to give it that appearance of rotundity, which the annexed drawings N^o 1 and 2 exhibit; and I am confirmed in this conjecture by another stone of the same kind found near it, which still retains its quadrangular shape, but without urn or lid.

I have endeavoured to discover whether there is amongst the relicks of antiquity any precedent or example of a similar mode of sepulture, but can find none, that only excepted, which is described by Mr. James Anderson, in his Letter to George Wilson, esq. of Lincoln's inn [*b*], or if such conjecture is admissible, the learned antiquary will find a perfect example in the excavated stones, containing urns with bones, now deposited in the Palace of Aix en Provence, and which were found to make a part of that noble sepulchral tower in the city of Aix, demolished in the year 1785, or about that time, as stated in Governor Pownall's Notices and descriptions of the Provincia Romana of Gaul, pp. 51, 52.

To these drawings I beg leave to add others of several urns dug up in the same cemetery at Lincoln since I was there, and communicated to me by Dr. Gordon, whose po-

[*b*] See Archæologia, vol. V. p. 243. line 22—27.

lite attention to the wishes and objects of the Society cannot be spoken of with too much praise, and whose accurate description of these curious remains of antiquity, and particularly of a very extraordinary room or chamber recently discovered in the same cemetery, cannot fail of exciting the curiosity of every learned Antiquary; and therefore I have thought fit to annex an extract of so much of Dr. Gordon's letter as relates to this subject, with some short notes of my own reading on the facts and conjecture it refers to.

J. P O W N A L L.

*Extract of a Letter to Mr. Pownall from the Rev. Dr. Gordon,
dated Lincoln, March 2, 1791.*

I FELT myself much honoured by your obliging letter of the 14th of last month, in which you acquainted me that you had communicated to the Society of Antiquaries at one of their last meetings a short memorial descriptive of the specimen of antient urn-burial in my possession, as discovered last autumn, at the top of a quarry in the East Field, which I had an opportunity of shewing you, when I waited on you at Lincoln.

You was pleased to add, that the members of the Society present at the meeting considered this relick of antiquity as an object of curiosity, and expressed a wish to be possessed of a more accurate drawing and more exact dimensions of it, than those, you say, you was able to furnish them with from your memory only; for which purpose they had desired you to request that I would communicate to the Society those further notices.

Y y 2

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When Mr. Lumbey was employed about the drawings you wished for [c], I could not help taking the opportunity of getting him to sketch out a few other urns, which the quarry man whom I introduced to you at the pit had brought me from the same cemetery since you was here, and I beg to submit them entirely to your judgement, whether you think them worth shewing to the Society or not.

The glass urn, marked 3. in Plate XXXIII. whose shape indeed might rather entitle it to the name of jarr, I thought might be deemed rather singular, as a vehicle of burnt bones which were found in it, at least in a burying ground, as well as from the circumstance of its being entirely perfect. It is very thick. The rim at the top is better than half an inch: the other parts about a quarter, the opening at the neck about $2\frac{1}{2}$ inches; the colour a blueish green rather opaque, perhaps rendered more so by time; the handle is represented at 4, and the bottom at 5 with the measures.

The forms of some of the other urns appeared to me also somewhat uncommon, as also their ornaments, especially that marked 6, with the shells or scales on the prominent part.

7 and 8 are other earthen urns, the latter contained remains of bones, and 9 a smaller one stood by it.

10 is one of the common sort empty.

I will only break in upon your time further just to acquaint you, as you take an interest in the subject, that the other day, a room of a considerable size, about 20 feet by 16, was discovered in another quarry, about 100 yards west of that you went to see near the entrance into the same field from the town. The height cannot be ascertained; the bottom is about 12 feet from the present surface, sunk down through the rubble and looser

[c] See Plate XXXIII.

stone to the firm part of the rock. The floor was covered with black ashes, and the walls carry the evident marks of fire. There were two skeletons found lying on the floor, and a large stone trough [d], capable of holding a man, not deep enough indeed for a coffin, but raised at the edges like a stone for a sink. For want of having read any thing about the manner of preparing corpses for urn burial, or how the business of *Libitina* [e] was conducted in this respect I would not venture at a conjecture that such a room might be used for some purpose of this kind; but I should think it probable that the corpses might not be prepared or burnt at private houses or in the open air.

[d] At circa Asson Troadis lapis nascitur, quo consumuntur omnia corpora: Sarcophagus vocatur. Pliny, N. H. Lib. II.

[e] Dea, in cujus templo asservabantur sandapila et reliqua quæ ad ritum ceremoniasque efferendi funeris pertinebant.

Lazius, Commentarior. Reipub. Roman.

Pestilentia in agris, forisque et conciliabulis, et in urbe tanta erat, ut *Libitina* vix nunc sufficeret. Livy, Lib. IV. Ainsworth explains *Libitina* here of a *bier* to carry the dead on.

Acceperunt tantis ex principe malis, probisque quædam fortuita: pestilentia unius autumnus, qua triginta funerum millia *Libitinæ* venerunt. Sueton. in Neron. Ainsworth explains *Libitina* here the weekly bill, a book in which was set down the money paid into the treasury at the death of any person, a custom as old as Servius Tullus.

Non omnis moriar magnaue pars mei vitabit *Libitinam*. Hor. Od. III. 30. 7. where and in Juvenal XII. 122, *Libitina* is put for *death*.

Erat porrò Romæ porta *Libitina*, per quam cadavera ad *Libitinam* efferebantur. Lazius ubi supra.

Supereft ut etiam consuetudinem ejus populi (Romani) quam in cremando condendoque cinerem adhibebant ostendamus. Erat autem hujusmodi, quòd cadaver in pyra et pice cremabatur, atque cinis exinde in *Ollas* colligebatur atque *Phialas*, atque libamento in *vitro* vel *phiala*, ex vino et lacte adjecto, &c. &c.

Idem, ibid.

XXXIV.