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A Romano-British Burial at South Cerney, Gloucestershire

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A ROMANO-BRITISH BURIAL AT SOUTH CERNEY, GLOUCESTERSHIRE

INTRODUCTORY NOTE

During the last war (1941) the Vicar of South Cerney, the late Rev. Frank Kennen, a member of this Society, reported to me that a lead coffin containing a human skeleton had been unearthed during the course of gravel digging in the very large gravel pit there. I visited the site and was able to make notes (handed to Mr Kennen), and to photograph the coffin. The skeleton was sent by Mr Kennen to the Royal College of Surgeons.

In 1948 the Royal College of Surgeons transferred the bulk of their skeletal material from archaeological sites to the British Museum (Natural History). In the course of indexing this collection it was noted that the South Cerney skeleton had not been reported on and Mr D. R. Brothwell, temporarily working in the Anthropology Section of the Museum, undertook to describe it for the Journal. It is regretted that it is not possible to say where the lead coffin is, nor are the notes made on the spot available. It was agreed then that the coffin should be placed in the Church porch, but it is not there nor can it at present be traced.

E. M. CLIFFORD

The bones received comprise a fairly complete skeleton. Any parts missing would seem to be due entirely to post-mortem erosion and fragmentation. The body was extended and lay on the back. The arms were bent in slightly and the hands were probably over the abdomen. From the smallness of the mastoids, supraorbitals, and external occipital protuberance, as well as the pelvic characters, the skeleton would seem to be that of a female. The skull is well preserved and there is no observable deformation through earth pressure. The sutures have obliterated internally and the sphenoid, coronal and sagittal sutures are nearly completely fused externally. In the upper



Fig. 1. Romano-British skull from South Cerney (Scale 4) (*Dioptograph drawings by Miss R. Powers*)



PLATE VIII. Romano-British Burial at South Cerney

facing p. 158



PLATE IX. South Cerney. The Coffin

jaw, all but three of the teeth are missing, and were probably lost at a post-mortem date. In the lower jaw nine teeth are still present, three probably fell out post-mortem, two were lost before death and the third molars never erupted. The degree of dental attrition is slight, and only in the canine and incisors has the dentine been exposed. As the sutures would suggest middle age but the attrition points to an earlier age, it is concluded that the female possibly belonged to the higher socio-economic level¹ of the Roman culture, and had little coarse food to produce wear, the age of the female is thus put at 45 ± 5 years. In the teeth present, no caries cavities were found. Calculus (tartar) is to be seen in the lower jaw, and there is a particularly thick deposit on the lingual surfaces of the incisors, canines and premolars. There was most probably an overbite. The palate is noticeably large, with a well developed foramen incisivum. There is a minor deformity of the left condyle of the mandible, but it would not seem to be pathological.

The following cranial and mandibular measurements are recorded:—

Glab. Occip. Length	(L)	173·0 mm.
Max. Horiz. Breadth	(B)	141·0
Min. Frontal Breadth	(B')	92·5
Basio-Dregmatic Ht.	(H')	132·5
Basion-Nasion Length	(LB)	95·0
Nasion-Bregma Arc	(S1)	126·0
Bregma-Lambda Arc	(S2)	117·5
Lambda-Opisthion Arc	(S3)	113·0
Nasion-Bregma Chord	(S'1)	109·6
Bregma-Lambda Chord	(S'2)	106·0
Lambda-Opisthion Chord	(S'3)	93·6
Biasteronic Breadth	(Biastr.B)	107·5
Facial Breadth	(GB)	94·4
Palate Length	(G'1)	37·4
Palate Breadth	(G2)	42·0
Max. Zygom. Breadth	(J)	126·0
Nasal Height	(NH')	54·8
Bi-Condylar Width	(W1)	113·5

¹ Burial in a lead coffin supports this view.

Bi-gonial Breadth	(GoGo)	84.7
Foram. Mentalia Br.	(ZZ)	44.0
Sagittal Ht. Mandible	(H')	31.7
Max. Proj. L. of Mandible	(ML)	102.0
Condyle Length	(CyL)	21.0
Proj. L. of Left Ramus	(RL)	60.0
Ramus Breadth (least)	(RB')	26.8
Mandibular Angle	(ML)	125.5°

The following long bone measurements were taken:—

Maximum Length Right Femur	=	408 mm.
Maximum Length Right Radius	=	218 mm.
Maximum Length Right Tibia	=	333 mm.

From these, the mean overall body height of 5 feet 2 ins. was calculated.

D. R. BROTHWELL

CHEDWORTH ROMAN VILLA: AN EXPLORATORY TRENCH

During September 1954 a short exploratory excavation at Chedworth Roman Villa undertaken by the Ashmolean Museum, Oxford, on behalf of the owners, the National Trust, under my direction, revealed that the mound lying between the south wing of the villa and the car park had not been fully excavated in the 1860's and that the south wing itself would repay further examination.¹ A late Roman burial accidentally found in the mound in 1935 (see plan, FIG. 1) had suggested that the ground here had not been much disturbed and this, combined with the necessity for repair work on the restored walls, gave an opportunity for testing this point.

¹ Extended excavations have since been undertaken by Prof. I. A. Richmond and I am extremely grateful for his kindness in explaining his results and for his advice on the correction and confirmation of some of the tentative conclusions suggested by this preliminary work in the light of his further research.