

*The Human Remains
from the Stoney Littleton Barrow.*

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THE ancient tomb at Stoney Littleton belongs to that variety of the long barrow which is called a chambered barrow or galleried tumulus. It is not, I think, however, quite clear that these chambered barrows differ as to the period of their erection from other long barrows; certainly no difference between their respective tenants has yet been made out.

This one is of considerable interest and is fortunately in a very fair state of preservation. It is the subject of a paper by Sir Richard Colt Hoare, in the 19th volume of the *Archæologia* which is illustrated by several careful drawings, including a ground plan drawn to scale. This plan and one of the drawings correctly indicate the entrance as being at the south-eastern end of the barrow, though in the text Sir Richard speaks of it as "facing the north-west."¹

Our business, however, lies with the osseous contents, whereof the alas! very scanty relics are in our local museum. They have been described in the *Crania Britannica* of Davis and Thurnam, in connexion with Thurnam's account of another famous long barrow, that at Uley, near Dursley, but may nevertheless furnish occasion for some further remarks.

¹ The mistake made by Sir R. C. Hoare in his original account of the barrow, published nearly seventy years since, as to the position of the entrance, was noticed by Sir John Maclean in a paper on *Chambered Tumuli*, in the *Transactions of the Bristol and Gloucester Archaeological Society* for 1881 (vol. v. p. 109). but had been copied by most previous writers on the subject, some of whom had even added to the confusion. Thus both the late Thos. Wright, F.S.A., in *The Celt, the Roman, and the Saxon*, and the late Llewellynn Jewitt, F.S.A., in *Grave Mounds and their Contents*, state that the entrance was on the north-west side. Mr. Kains-Jackson in *Our Ancient Monuments and the Land around them* (1880), misquotes Sir Richard, as follows:—"The entrance of the tumulus faces the south West" In the *Proceedings of the Somersetshire Archaeological and Natural History Society* for 1858, there is a ground plan on Plate 3, which shows the entrance on the south-west, while on Plate 4 is an elevation of "the south entrance."-Ed.

Thurnam, following hints thrown out by Daniel Wilson and Bateman, worked out with much ability the theory now generally accepted, which connects the long barrows of Britain with a longheaded race of comparatively small stature, believed to be of Iberian kinship. The skulls found in such barrows, though narrow, are as a rule of good form and capacity, certainly not smaller, perhaps even slightly larger, than the average of round-barrow folk, or of modern Europeans. It must be remembered, however, that these huge tumuli are almost certainly the graves of chiefs and of their families and dependents, not of the mass of the people, and that chiefs among barbarians owe their position to the superior endowments of themselves or of their ancestors, such superiority implying, on the average, greater volume of brain. The commonalty were probably buried, if buried at all, with very little care, and their remains have mostly perished, just as those of the round-headed serfs of the long-headed grave-row men must have perished out of Swabia. Dr. Henry Bird, indeed, thinks he can recognize, in the small ill-developed skulls occasionally found in small "tump" barrows on the Cotswold, remains of an earlier population than that of the chambered tumuli. It is, I think, possible that they were coeval with or even later than the long barrows, and contain the only relics of the servile population that have come down to us.

There is little doubt that rites analogous to the Hindu Sutti were practised at the obsequies of chiefs in the Neolithic period². The dependents who were put to death on these occasions must, sometimes at least, have been inferior in cranial type to their lords. In an undisturbed barrow it may often be possible to distinguish by position the principal interment from the rest, the chief from the dependent; but the Stoney Littleton barrow had been well rummaged and ransacked before Sir R. C. Hoare's day, and the position of the several bones he found in it may have been shuffled to any extent. This, however, may be affirmed, that the fragments we have to do with were not found in the principal chamber, and there is, therefore, some slight presumption against their having belonged to the principal interment.

When the barrow was explored in 1816, by Sir R. C. Hoare and the Rev. John Skinner, it would seem that these fragments were not quite the only remains of the two skulls to which they belonged. At least Mr. Skinner expressed his regret that he

² See Thurnam's account of the Rodmarton barrow, in *Crania Britannica*.

could preserve no more, seeming to imply that there were other and smaller fragments which might have been preserved and put together, had he only known how to do so. We must, however be grateful to him for what he did, rather than censorious as to what he left undone, for osseous remains had not then the interest which they have for modern archaeologists. His words are, "Two of the skulls appear to have been almost flat, there being little or no forehead rising above the sockets of the eyes, the shape much resembling those given in the works of Lavater, as characteristic of the Tartar tribes. I wish I could have preserved one entire; but I have retained the upper part of two distinct crania, which will be sufficient to confirm this remarkable fact" Sir R. C. Hoare speaks of "the two skulls discovered in this tumulus, which appear to be totally different in their formation from any others which our researches have led us to examine, being *fronte valde depressâ*."

Thurnam traced the fragments to our Bristol museum, and with the assistance of our fellow-citizen, Augustine Prichard, made a careful examination of them. His account is as follows:—

"The general resemblance of these portions of skulls to the Uley cranium is sufficiently apparent. The frontal bone is from the skull of a man, of not more than middle age. The frontal sinuses and temporal ridges are unusually marked and prominent. Its narrow and contracted character is very obvious, and its peculiarly receding and flat form fully justifies the observations of Mr. Skinner and Sir Richard Hoare. In the great extent to which it is present, this last is probably an exceptional and individual peculiarity. As in the Uley skull, a central ridge is to be traced along the median line. The length of this frontal bone is 4.8 inches, its breadth 4.2 inches; in the thickest parts it measures the third of an inch. The length of this skull must have fallen short of that of the skull from Uley, the length of the frontal bone being one inch less; the elongation of this bone in the Uley skull being most unusual. The defective calvarium consists of the frontal bone, the greater part of the right, and a smaller portion of the left parietal bone. It has probably formed part of the skull of a female, of rather advanced age. The frontal sinuses, temporal ridges, and other features are much less defined and prominent. The forehead is narrow and receding, but less so than the former. The tendency in the form of this skull has clearly been to narrowness and elongation. The length of the frontal bone is 4'9 inches, the breadth 4'5 inches; the

greatest thickness is a quarter of an inch."

Dr. Thurnam does not mention the lower jaw which accompanies the other relics of Stoney Littleton in the Bristol Museum. This may or may not have belonged to the owner of either of the skulls of which we have portions; if to either, it was probably to the woman, though the teeth are too little eroded for a person at all advanced in life. The mandible is imperfect, but there is enough of it to show that the chin was narrow and angular, and the alveolar arch oval rather than round.

There can be little doubt that Dr. Thurnam was right in attributing one of the skull-fragments to a man, and the other and larger one to a woman. His measurements and mine, which follow, are pretty nearly in accord: they are all in inches.

		Length of frontal.	Min, breadth of frontal.	Stephanic breadth.	Maximum Parietal breadth.
Stoney Littleton	m.	4.9 (?)	3.7	4.3	
"	f.	5.0	3.7	4.4	5.2 (?)
Micheldean	ms.		4.02	4.72	5.6
"	fs.		3.85	4.55	3.5
Gloucester	ms.		3.82		5.5

I have here compared these fragments with the skulls of people most likely to be akin to their ancient owners. The Gloucester skulls mentioned are those of Mr. John Bellows's find, and are of the Roman period; the Micheldean ones are mediaeval, from the ossuary there. It will be observed that the measurements of our fragments are small, except the length of the frontal, which is about equal to the average of European races. The skulls were therefore probably of fair length, but narrow and decidedly low, especially the male one, containing, we may be certain, but small brains. In this most important respect they differ from the ordinary long-barrow type; and in the lowness of the forehead, coupled, in the case of the male, where it is most marked, with great prominence of the brows and frontal sinuses, they approach more nearly to the Canstatt type, that to which the famous Neanderthal skull belongs. Sir Richard Hoare had opened several long-barrows; and though he had found in them little that interested him, had probably seen some typical long-barrow skulls; yet the form of these Stoney Littleton foreheads, "these foreheads villanous low," seems to have struck him as a novelty, as something quite peculiar. Dr. Thurnam compares them to the only perfect adult skull that was got from the chambered tumulus at Uley;

but the forehead in that one, as he himself says, though narrow and contracted, was not low ; and its cubical contents were eight or nine per cent, over the average of ancient British or modern English crania. In truth, Thurnam was perhaps a little biased towards seeing this likeness; he had stinted his valuable theory about the connexion of long-barrows with a long-headed race, and was on the watch for resemblances of this sort.

In the absence of certainty, we must fall back on conjecture. We have here, I suppose, the remains of a male and female serf, not unlikely a brother and sister, sacrificed, it may be, at the obsequies of a Neolithic chieftain, or at the least buried in his tomb; their blood may have been the same with his, or it may have been that of an earlier, lowlier endowed, and subjugated race.