

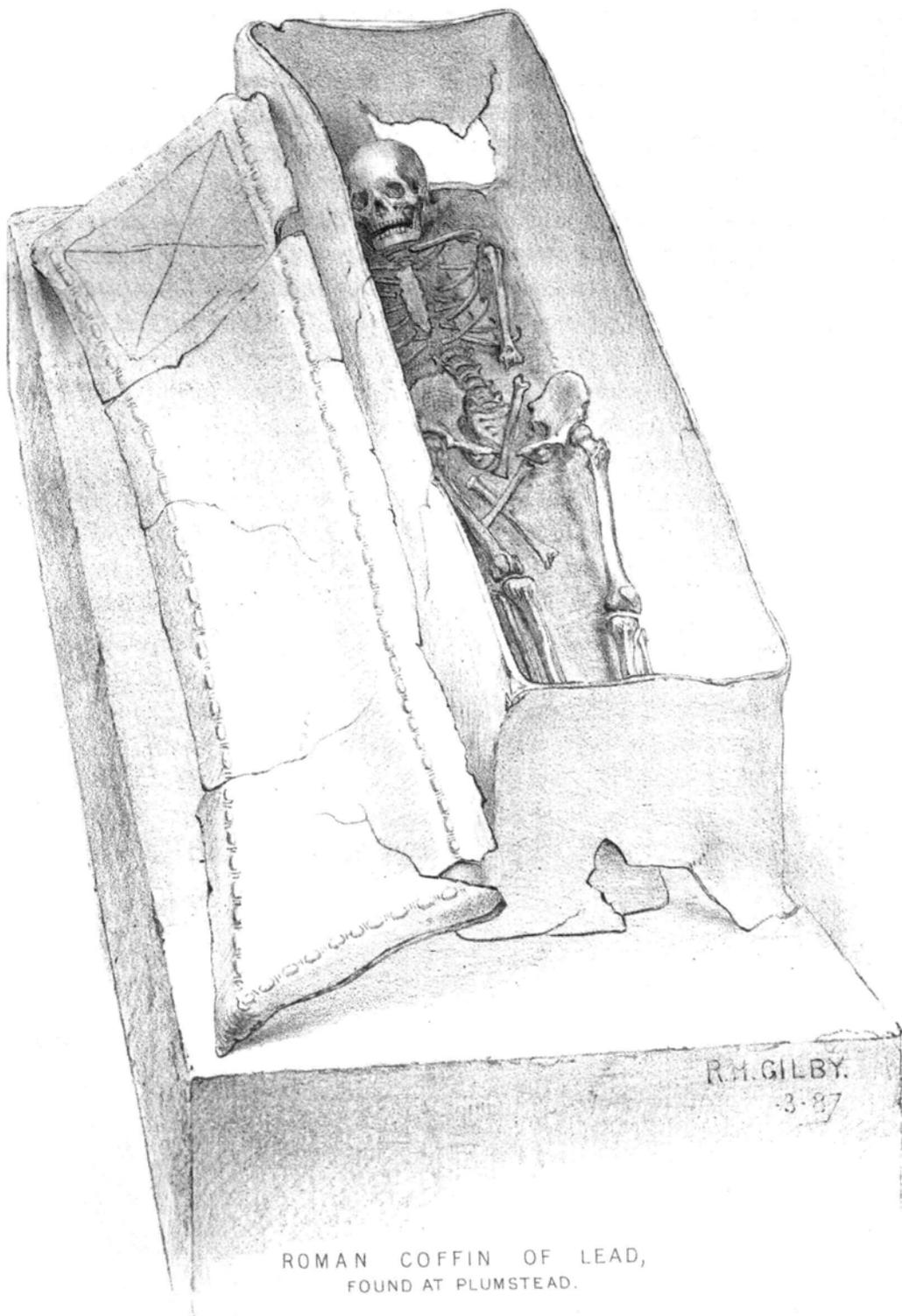
ROMAN LEADEN COFFIN DISCOVERED AT
PLUMSTEAD.

BY GEORGE PAYNE, F.L.S., F.S.A.

ON the 21st of January, 1887, some workmen, engaged in excavating for foundations of houses on the property of Mr. W. G. Dawson of Plumstead Common, discovered, about four feet from the surface, a leaden coffin containing the skeleton of a female, both being in an unusual state of preservation. The body of the coffin measured six feet in length and fifteen inches in width; the thickness of the lead varying from one inch to three-eighths of an inch. The lid was ornamented with a simple moulding, formed of a small bead and double ring alternately repeated all round the lid near its edge. Similar mouldings have frequently been met with on Roman leaden coffins; for instance, on one found at Milton next Sittingbourne,* and upon a leaden *ossuarium* preserved in the Rouen Museum.† The admirable drawing, kindly placed at our disposal by Mr. R. H. Gilby of Hudson Road, Plumstead, renders further description unnecessary. The position of the coffin was north and south, the head being towards the north. The field in which it was found is known locally as "Johnson's Field," bounded on the south by a road called the King's Highway (which runs from Woolwich over Bexley

* *Archaeologia Cantiana*, Vol. IX., p. 167.

† *Collectanea Antiqua*, vol. iii., p. 62.



ROMAN COFFIN OF LEAD,
FOUND AT PLUMSTEAD.

Heath), and on the east by Wickham Lane; the site of the interment being thirty yards from the north side of the former road, and due north of East Wickham Church. Three feet from the coffin a second interment was met with, consisting of a human skull, accompanied by two vases. One vase was of red clay (its handle broken and neck imperfect), its height $6\frac{1}{2}$ inches, width of body $4\frac{3}{4}$ inches, base $\frac{5}{8}$ of an inch in diameter. The other vase was of black Upchurch ware, its height 7 inches, width of body $5\frac{7}{8}$ inches, diameter of base and mouth $2\frac{1}{2}$ inches and 1 inch respectively. It is necessary to record that when the coffin was exhumed it was deposited, by order of the owner (Mr. W. G. Dawson), in the mortuary in Plumstead Cemetery until arrangements could be made for its ultimate preservation in some museum. Mr. Dawson subsequently presented it to Mr. Flaxman C. J. Spurrell, F.G.S., of Belvedere, for the museum of the Kent Archæological Society; but in the meantime the Vicar of Plumstead, the Rev. J. McAllister, caused it to be buried in Plumstead Cemetery, at eight o'clock one night, in defiance of all right, all reason, and much remonstrance.