



ROMAN URNS FOUND NEAR RAINHAM
CREEK, ON THE MEDWAY.

BY HUMPHREY WOOD.

SEVEN Roman vessels were discovered in January 1881 by men who were digging clay from the "Saltings," on the north of Rainham Creek, between Bartlett Ness and Nor Marsh. They were 20 feet from the water's edge, standing on a level in an upright position, and in the form of a circle about 3 feet in diameter, at a depth from the surface of 10 to 14 feet. Three of the urns had covers on them, and these contained calcined human remains. At the bottom of the largest of the three was some long human hair, broad, plaited, and coiled round. The contents unfortunately did not share the care and

attention bestowed on the vessels, as they were dispersed during the "washing" operation, before they were seen by me. The heights of the vessels are—No. 1, $4\frac{1}{2}$ inches; No. 2, $7\frac{1}{4}$ inches; No. 3, 6 inches; No. 4, $3\frac{1}{8}$ inches; No. 5, 7 inches; No. 6, $3\frac{1}{2}$ inches; No. 7, 6 inches.



The cover of No. 5 is a *patera* of the Samian pattern, but of different material. It is of a purplish hue, and has an attempt at a potter's mark on the interior; the familiar letters O F only being legible. The urn itself is different; coarse in material, and brown in colour. The urns Nos. 6 and 7 and their covers are of compact material, with smooth surface, of a purplish hue. The other vessels are coarser.

There are one or two points of interest attaching to this deposit. Mr. Roach Smith, in his paper* entitled *Remains of Roman Pottery on the Banks of the Medway, etc.*, alludes to the fact that funereal deposits had been discovered in the upper ground;

* See *Collectanea Antiqua*, vol. vi. The position of Nor Marsh is shewn in the map which accompanies that paper.

but not in the lower or marsh ground where these vessels were found, within a few feet of the water's edge. He adds that this lower ground is higher now by 2 or 3 feet than it was in the time of the Roman occupation. His opinion is supported, I think, by the great depth at which this discovery was made, viz., 10 to 12 feet below the surface. That it was a funereal deposit there can be no doubt from the orderly disposition of the vessels, and from the contents of at least three of them. It will be observed that three of the vases have the peculiarity of having lids or covers, two of which were evidently made for the purpose. I do not remember meeting with any such before. No other articles of domestic use or ornament than the smaller vessels were found. Mr. Roach Smith, in concluding his paper above mentioned, leads us to expect something further from his pen in connection with discoveries in this locality. It is to be hoped that he may take notice of the discovery of these seven vessels. They are at Chatham, in my possession.