A CASE OF LUMBAR OSTEOCHONDRITIS FROM THE BRONZE AGE

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I was recently making an anthropological examination of skeletal remains from a complicated Bronze Age round barrow at Long Crichel, Dorset. In Grinsell's standard numeration of barrows it is Long Crichel No. 5.

The barrow contained several inhumations and cremations. One of the inhumations which dates from about 1600 B.C. is that of an adolescent girl aged sixteen. The skeleton is substantially complete and in good condition. The most noteworthy feature about it is an area of deficient bone on the antero-superior margin of the bodies of the third and fourth lumbar vertebrae (Figs. 1 and 2). In each case about one-third of the mid-line depth of the vertebral body is lacking. The condition extends posteriorly across the vertebrae for about two-fifths of their antero-posterior depth, the total deficient mass being wedge-shaped. A low, raised, limiting margin of bone is present on the ventral surfaces of the vertebrae immediately below the defective area.

![Fig. 1](image1.png)
Photographs of the specimen.

![Fig. 2](image2.png)
Lateral radiograph.

This condition is an undoubted case of adolescent osteochondritis. It is well known radiologically but dried specimens are rarely encountered. The present example appears to be the first recognised as such from archaeological material of this date. For the purposes of photography the bones were assembled with small discs of cork between them.

No other characteristics of special note were found in this body. Large squatting facets were present on the distal articular surfaces of both tibiae and on the necks of the tali, but these are regular features in material of this period.

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