

ARCHAEOLOGICAL NOTES FROM THE VALLEY OF THE LYD

BY JOHN COWLING AND R. HANSFORD WORTH.

(Read at Torquay, 25th June, 1936.)

[The whole of the data for this paper have been supplied by Mr. Cowling; my part has been that of recorder and occasional annotator. Unhappily Mr. Cowling's hands are now crippled.—R. H. W.]

MR. COWLING has in the past given much time to the search for flint implements in the valley of the Lyd, between the Waterfall and Ox Clam. Together with numerous irregular flakes he has succeeded in finding implements of interest, details of which ought certainly to be placed on record. Hence the following notes and their accompanying illustrations.

As regarding the illustrations it should be noted that the black tab on which the numeral appears is precisely one inch in length, and serves to give the scale.

Group 1. (Plate XIV). Eleven flakes, none of defined form capable of classification, save one which is obviously a borer. These were recovered after several hours search on various days among the soil thrown out at the mouth of a badger's holt. They are excellent examples of the class of flake not infrequently found, to which no fixed purpose can be assigned, but which might have had many uses. One such possible use which occurred to Mr. Cowling was as a set of trephining tools. Sir Arthur Keith suggested that the flints should be submitted to Mr. Harold Burrows, F.R.C.S., for his opinion.

Mr. Burrows, having examined them, reported as follows:—

"They are the kind of flints with which a skull could be trephined. At the same time it is possible that they were used for other purposes. Apparently it is not known whether any set of implements would be kept specially for trephining or not."—August 31, 1931.

While the uncertainty so expressed must undoubtedly remain, the opinion is of interest as showing that precision and regularity of form are by no means essentials for utility; indeed, such irregular flakes not infrequently show signs of wear.

Groups 2 and 3. (Plate XIV). Examples of spindle whorls, none in flint, the material being either grit or hard slate.

The top figure in group 2 and the top right hand figure in group 3 show the two sides of the same whorl, which being in slate has split; its average thickness is now one quarter of an inch. All the other whorls are approximately three fifths of an inch in thickness, except that figured on the top left hand of group 3 which is also formed in slate and has been split.

Group 4. (Plate XV). Three flint arrow-heads. Two leaf-shaped, and one barbed and tanged. The larger of the leaf-shaped is barely touched by any secondary chipping on the reverse side.

Group 5. (Plate XV). Six flint scrapers, all of the ordinary "thumb" type. I have found similar on the slopes of Whittor, above Wapsworthly. EVANS would class these as "horse-shoe shaped."

No. 6. (Plate XV). This example has interest as being the first flint which Mr. Cowling found. There is much fine secondary chipping along the upper curved edge shewn in the photograph. Classification is difficult, and any pretension as to a knowledge of the use and intent of the implement is better avoided. It can be called a "trimmed flake."

Group 7. (Plate XVI). Comprises seven parallel flakes, the reverse of each being a single face.

No. 8. (Plate XVI). Is a disc of grit-stone, half an inch in thickness. Its faces are somewhat scratched and abraded. Beyond the fact that it has evidently been rubbed on some harder, or equally hard material there is no evidence as to its former use.

No. 9. (Plate XVI). A piece of the local vesicular igneous rock; is wholly unworked except that a hole has been driven through it. There is nothing to indicate its use.

STONE COFFIN.

Between the village of Brent Tor and the old church there is a field in which a mound once stood. The owner of the field decided to remove the mound, which was sufficiently large to be inconvenient. In so doing he uncovered what he took to be a pig's trough, formed in granite, the internal length being 4 feet 2 inches, and the width varying from 15½ inches to 20½ inches; the depth varies between 13 and 15 inches; the sides and bottom are for the more part between 4 and 4½ inches in thickness. Nothing appears to have been found with it, but from its position in a large mound or barrow it was probably a stone coffin. Its size is no argument against this attribution, since the lid of the coffin of *Robertus de Moles* in Okehampton churchyard is but four feet in length and sixteen inches at its widest.

The owner of the field gave his find to his daughter; and

she, holding that what looked like a pig's trough must be a pig's trough, put it in use as such. There are those who will see in the subsequent happenings ample confirmation of the sepulchral nature of the relic—it drowned the pig.

We Dartmoor folk are both practical and determined, the lady clapped a lid on the trough and used it as a butter chest. For this new insult it had no immediate riposte, and as a butter chest it functioned. But it caused family strife, and an action between brother and sister, the one claiming it as passing with the land, the other claiming ownership by gift.

Ultimately it was bought by Mr. Cowling from the grandson of the finder, and has maintained its reputation as difficult. Mr. Cowling set it on end in the wall of his museum, but has had to admit that it does not make so comfortable a seat as he had hoped.

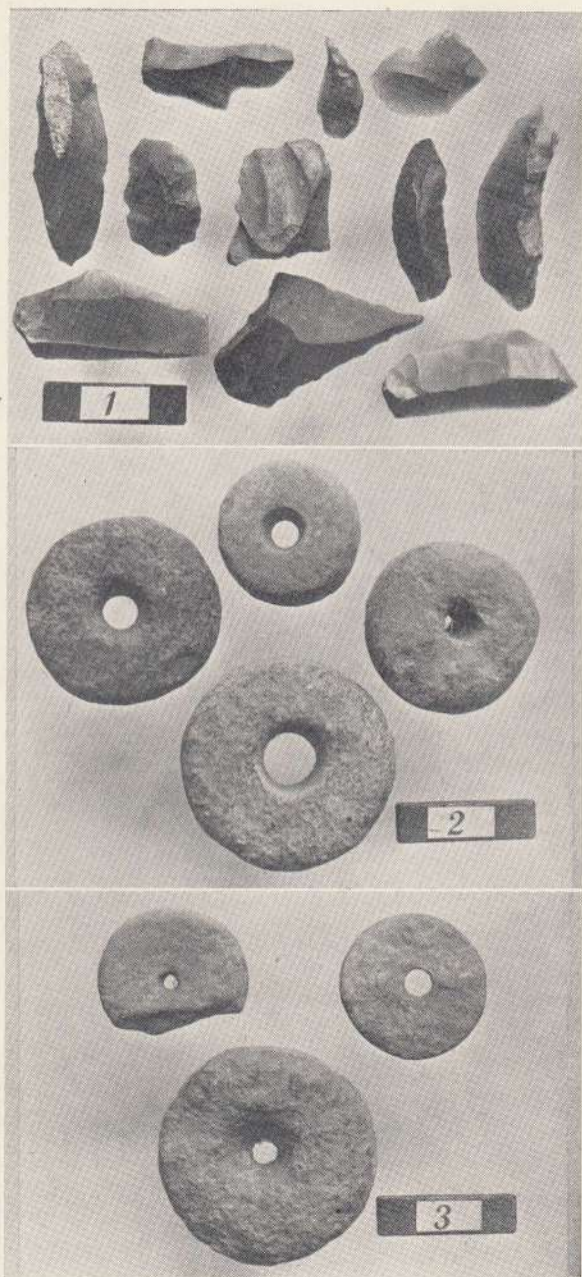
Plate XVII, fig. 1 gives a view of the coffin as it now stands in the wall, and fig. 2 is a plan.

HUT CIRCLE, PETERTAVY VILLAGE.

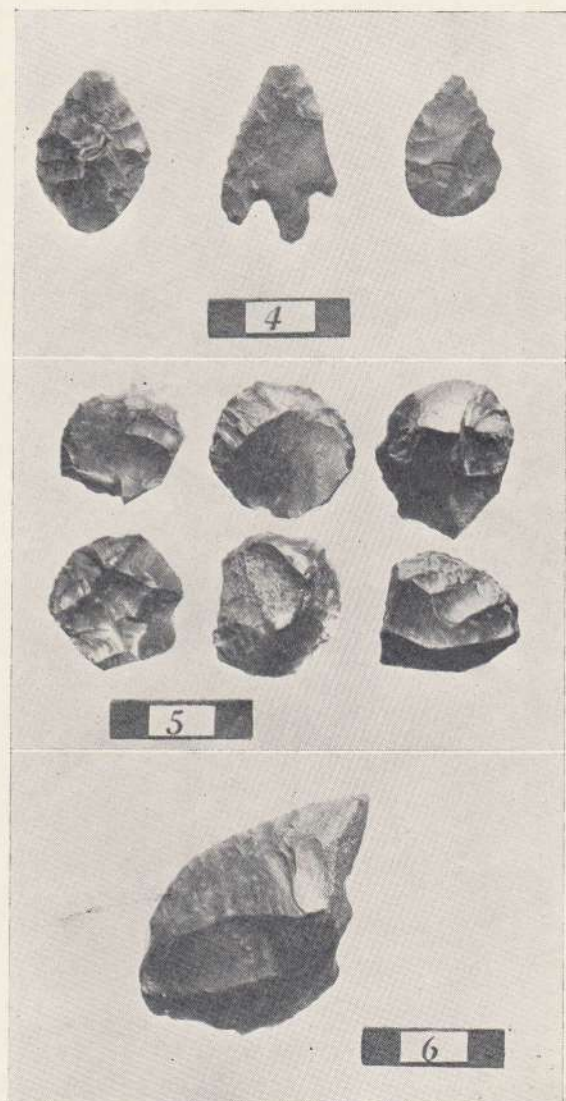
When, in the year 1905, the house now known as the "Hermitage" was built on ground adjacent to the Vicarage at Petertavy, Mr. Cowling found a hut circle during the course of the excavation. The circle was about nine feet in diameter, and near the centre there was a rough earthenware pot, in which was a cooking stone. The pot was sent by the Rev. Dr. Bryant, the then Vicar, to the British Museum. I have made enquiry, but Mr. Reginald Smith who has kindly had search made tells me that neither Petertavy nor the name of the Rev. Dr. Bryant find entry in the books of the Museum. Further enquiries are being made elsewhere, but the prospect of their success seems slight. Very possibly the pot may have been sent to the British Museum for report only, and was returned to the owner.

Mr. Cowling's recollection is that the pot, which was badly cracked, was of a size such that its content would be about three quarts, was over nine inches in greatest diameter, and formed in ware which was bright red on the outside. He says that the outside bore the imprint of the sticks used in burning the pot, and that the inside showed the impression of the potter's hands; it certainly was not wheel thrown.

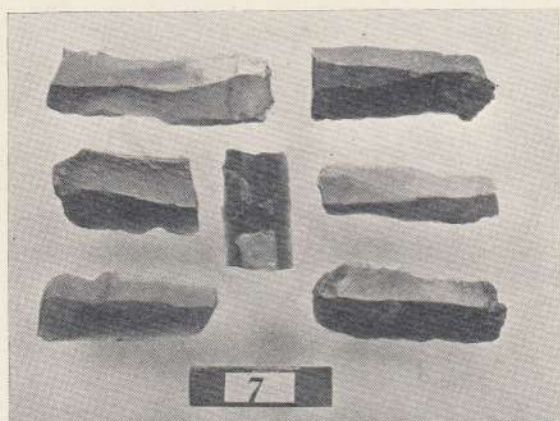
So much of interest has been lost without adequate record, that it is very desirable that those who become aware of such finds should send in accounts to our Association, or if desired I would act as a clearing house for such information, in which event it would find record either in the Barrow Report, the Dartmoor Exploration Report, or the Scientific Memoranda, as might be best appropriate.



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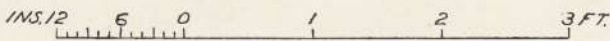
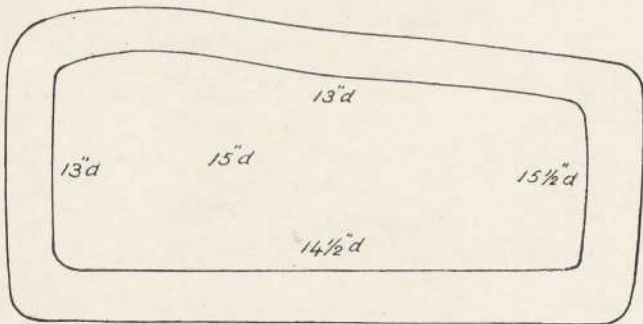
Valley of the Lyd.—To follow Plate XV



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FIG. 1. "STONE COFFIN" BUILT IN TO WALL OF STUDY.

BRENT TOR.



R. H. W. 1936

FIG. 2. PLAN OF "STONE COFFIN."

Valley of the Lyd—To follow Plate XVI