

PREHISTORIC TAVISTOCK

BY R. HANSFORD WORTH

In December, 1943, the late Rev. Prebendary H. L. Bickersteth brought to my notice a stone celt which had been found in a garden in Ford Street, Tavistock. It was one of two discovered at a depth of five feet below the surface when an apple tree was grubbed up. The other, and smaller celt was almost at once mislaid; and I am not aware that it has since been recovered.

I understand that the celt which I had an opportunity of examining is now in the City Museum at Plymouth. It is in perfect condition and presents no sign of use or wear. The material I believe to be a fine-grained mica-schist from the metamorphic aureole of Dartmoor.

The overall length is 22.60 cms. (8.9 ins.). The greatest width is 8.40 cms. (3.31 ins.), across the cutting edge. At 3.5 cms. (1.38 ins.) from the other end the width is 6.20 cms. (2.44 ins.). The greatest thickness lies at 8.00 cms. (3.15 ins.) from the centre of the cutting edge, and is 4.10 cms. (1.61 ins.). The weight is 2 lb. 8 $\frac{3}{4}$ oz. (1.155 kilo.).

The section is everywhere oval; fig. 1, gives the section at 9.2 cms. (3.6 ins.) from the cutting edge.

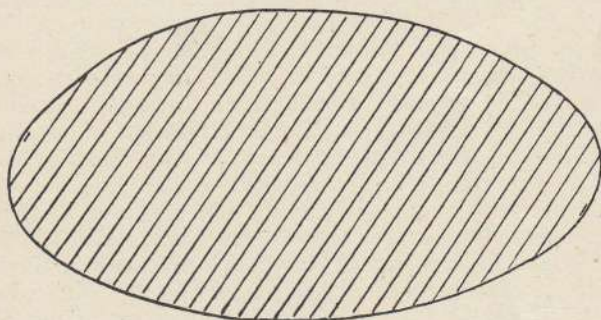


FIG. 1

Plate 6, figs. 1 and 2, are from photographs of this celt.

From the fact that there were two celts found in this excavation, and that both were, as I understand, in perfect and apparently unused condition, it seems probable that they

were either a hoard, or grave goods; nothing indicating an interment was reported to me, but the finder was quite unversed in such matters.

Certainly the discovery is clear evidence of the presence of man on the site of modern Tavistock in the Neolithic or the Early Bronze Age. It suggests, but does not prove, a settlement.

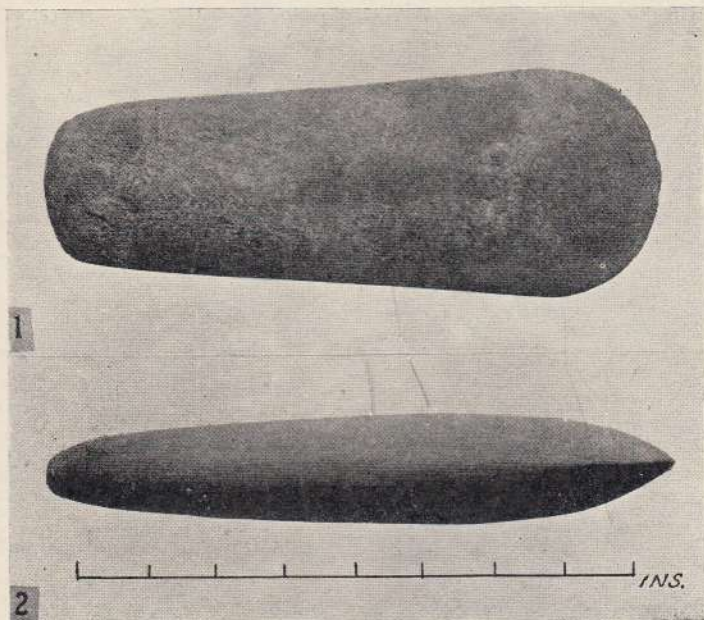
It is elsewhere that we must look for clear proof of early and ordered settlement. On a spur of the hill above Kelly College, almost equidistant from the channels of the Walla-brook and the Tavy, are the remains of a camp with an earth rampart. In shape a rude quadrilateral, its greatest length within the rampart is about 420 feet, and its greatest width was probably about 300 feet; the area enclosed may have been about $2\frac{3}{4}$ acres, or a little more, for the cincture is not everywhere clear.

The camp has long been known, but nothing as to its period. My father ("Early History of Tavistock," *Trans. Dev. Assoc.*, vol. xxi, p. 135) wrote:—"the earthwork on the hill near the Kelly College, cut through by the new railroad, It is sometimes called the Roman Camp, but this name is purely fanciful. It has no definite Roman characteristics, and, so far as I can learn, no definite Roman relics have been found there. The suggestion that it *may* represent the original Tavy-stock should not, however, be hastily rejected. The site is suitable, and of some little strength. More than this one would hardly expect to find in the neighbourhood of such an important and well-defenced town as Lydford, where strong earthworks of unquestionable Keltic date remain." So matters stood in 1889, and it is curious that the construction of the railway across the north-west end of the camp does not appear to have yielded any evidence, whether by way of artifacts or otherwise. The much earlier formation of the old Exeter Road, which passes through the middle of the camp, may have been the formalisation of an ancient track, but, in any event, no record of any finds on its site could be expected to have met with record.

But matters are now different; objects have been found which definitely date the camp as Late Celtic; and Tavistock, like Plymouth, can claim to have had a precursor at the dawn of history; at Plymouth the settlement on the Batten Peninsula, at Tavistock the camp above the meeting of the Walla-brook and the Tavy.

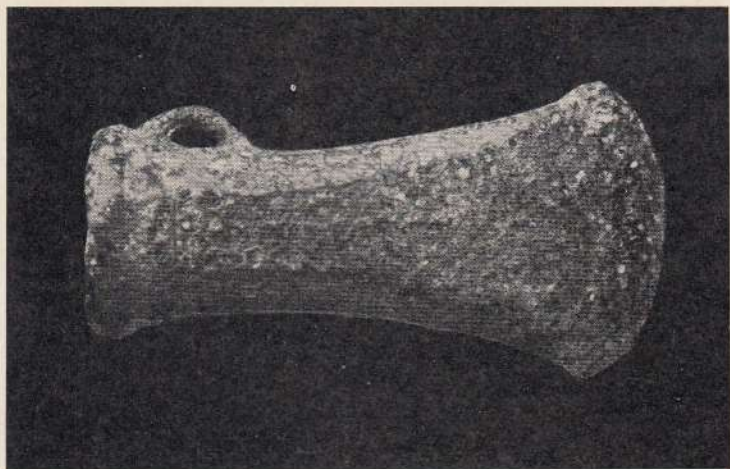
Four artifacts have been found within the area of the camp, during the past few years.

(1). A bronze socketed celt, of the latest type produced. Well patinated, and, while in good condition, yet bearing evidence of use. Length 9.40 cms. (3.7 ins.); width at



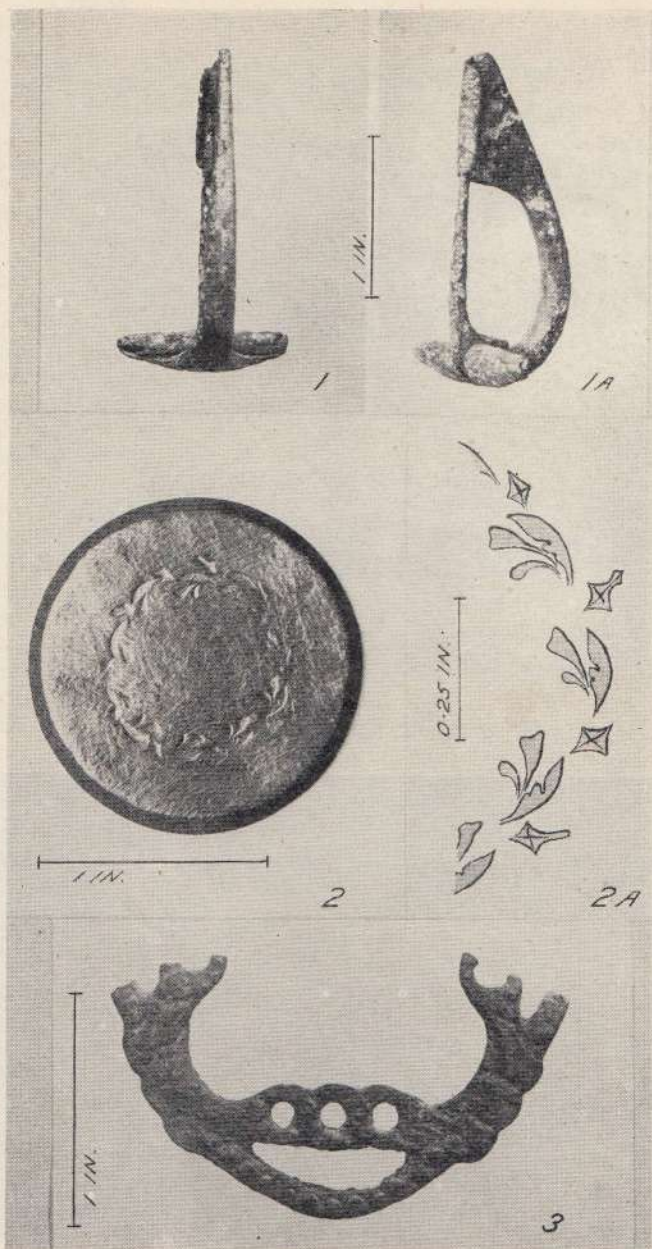
R. H. Worth.

FIGS. 1 AND 2. STONE CELT, FORD STREET, TAVISTOCK.



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FIG. 3. BRONZE CELT, THE "TRENDLE," TAVISTOCK.



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- FIGS. 1 and 1A. BRONZE FIBULA, THE "TRENDLE," TAVISTOCK.
 FIG. 2. HEAD OF PIN, BRONZE, THE "TRENDLE," TAVISTOCK.
 FIG. 2A. DETAIL OF ORNAMENT ON HEAD OF PIN.
 FIG. 3. PENDANT? THE "TRENDLE," TAVISTOCK.

cutting edge 5.00 cms. (2 ins.); inside of socket 2.50 cms. (1 in.); outside of socket, measured over bead, 3.40 to 3.35 cms. (1.34 to 1.31 ins.); eight-sided under the bead. When found some wood of the handle still remained in the socket. The celt is looped. See Plate 6, fig. 3.

(2) A bronze fibula of a type attributable to the second half of the first century A.D. Complete with pin; the security of the fastening depends upon the elasticity of the pin itself, which operates precisely as in a modern brooch. Present length overall 5.1 cms. original length probably 5.3 cms. (2.1 ins.).

(3) Disc head of a bronze pin. Diameter 3.4 cms. (1.34 ins.), thickness of metal 0.9 mm. (say 0.04 ins.). Bears a circle of ornament, which has been impressed by two punches, used alternately. One punch gives the impression of a spray of three leaves; the other forms a lozenge-shaped impression in the form of an inverted pyramid. The use of these two punches permits any slight irregularity in the spacing to be masked, and the circle of ornament to be reasonably well closed. The ornament, consisting of natural forms, is distinctly Late Celtic in type.

(4). A fragment of bronze ornamental work, may have been part of a pendant, or may have had some other use. The face is decorated with beading, the back plain. It may have significance that the back is encrusted with iron rust. Greatest width or length of the fragment 5.0 cms. (2.0 ins.). Thickness, including raised beads 0.2 cms. (0.08 ins.).

Photographs of the fibula will be found on Plate 7, figs. 1 and 1a; of the disc-head of the pin on the same plate, figs. 2 and 2a; and of the unidentified ornament on the same plate fig. 3.

POSTSCRIPT

Since I read this paper at Chagford Mr. H. P. R. Finberg has kindly given me some data from his Tavistock notes. He tells me that in a fourteenth century Extent of the Manor of Hurdwick there is entered a parcel of land called *Trendle*, paying a rent of one halfpenny to the lord of the manor on St. Rumon's day.

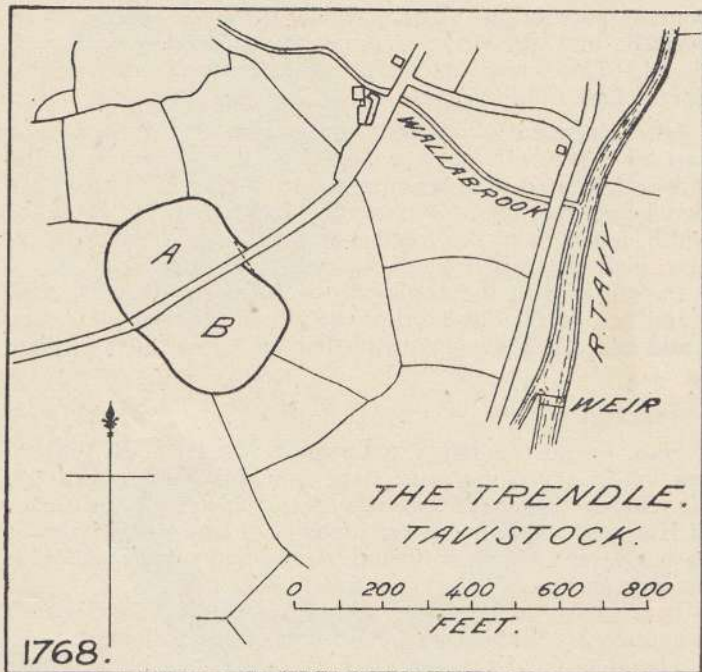
In a survey of Hurdwick dated June, 1726, the *Trendall* is entered as still held on a chief rent of one halfpenny.

The identity of this land is fully determined by an estate map of 1768, in the Bedford office at Tavistock, on which the camp above referred to is shewn as divided by the road into two fields; of which the northern (marked A on the reduced copy here inserted) is described as *Trendle Meadow* while the southern (marked B) is named *Little Field*.

Having received this information I have been able, with the kind consent of Mr. T. S. Bliss, to prepare a plan reduced from the 1768 map; thus presenting an actual survey of the camp prior to its partial destruction by the Southern Railway line, and by the removal of portions of its rampart in order to throw its area in with adjacent fields. The dimensions of the camp which I have already given agree sufficiently closely with this survey; according to which the greatest length was 450 feet, the width across the centre of the length was 295 feet, and its area (including the road which crosses it) was two and five-eighths acres.

Trendle is good Saxon for a circle or ring; and in Walkhampton parish there is a farm now called *Routrundle* but formerly *Row-trendell*, which is marked by the presence among its enclosures of two approximately circular pounds.

I am much indebted to Mr. Finberg.



PLAN OF THE "TRENDLE" from Estate Survey, The Bedford Office, Tavistock.