NOTES ON THE PRE-HISTORIC ARCHÆOLOGY OF EAST DEVON.

Part II.

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In a memoir of the excavation of three tumuli at Broad Down, which has appeared in the printed Transactions of this Association, I called attention to the fact of the abundance of these sepulchral memorials in the eastern division of this county. Further research has proved them to be even more numerous than I had at first supposed to be the case. Some fifty of them comprise the group, of which Broad Down may be described as the head-quarters. From a careful examination of these barrows, I am disposed to believe that the larger members of the group, some of which are about 100 feet in diameter, and attain a perpendicular height at the centre of the mound of ten or twelve feet, are stone tumuli or cairns. These are the result of great labour, and probably they are not to be accounted for from mere local peculiarities furnishing the requisite supply of loose stones. The oldest historical book* that we have informs us of the practice that prevailed among the Jewish people of raising heaps of stones over the dead as a mark of detestation and indignity. The contents, however, of the stone barrows at Broad Down prove that they had a different purpose. They must have ranked among the most distinguished honours awarded to the illustrious dead, and have occupied the labour of months, and have required the united exertions of large bodies of work people in order to gather together the materials, and pile them up into such durable monuments.

Another arrangement is also deserving of mention, where a group of seven barrows occurs in the immediate neighbourhood of those visited by the Association last year, and

* 1 Joshua vii. 26; 2 Sam. xviii. 17.

which form a continuous chain running due north and south, and separated from one another by regular intervening spaces of about thirty feet. The central barrow of this group, and which is the largest, was formerly surrounded by a single row of stones closely set together, and forming a regular circle around the base of the mound. Whatever appears to indicate design in the form and arrangement of these primitive structures is worthy of note. If we can trace the motive by which those who raised them were actuated, we gain some clue to the condition and civilization of the race. Our attention to these minor details may also afford the means of classification in reference to the era or people, and may assist us in establishing a relative chronological arrangement of them on a satisfactory basis.

The existence of these memorials to the illustrious dead is not, however, confined to the neighbourhood of Broad Down. At Buckerell Knapp (about two miles west of Honiton) there occurs a group of five barrows, which are of even larger dimensions than are any at Broad Down; and at Combe Raleigh, about three miles north of Honiton, a single barrow of gigantic size stands alone. An attempt was made a few years ago to cut a trench through the centre of it, but the work was abandoned in despair.

My attention has lately been called to the existence of a group of barrows at Thorverton, about six miles north of Exeter; and through the kindness of Archdeacon Freeman, I have been enabled to undertake the excavation of one of them. The site of these barrows commands an extensive and varied prospect. On the southern side lies the range of the Haldon Hills; in the far west the granite tors of Dartmoor are distinguishable; whilst on the north there is a beautiful and interesting contrast of fertile slopes and dreary moor, amidst which peers up the antient hill-fortress of Cadbury. Of the tumuli occupying this favoured position, we selected the largest for examination. In general form and appearance it agreed closely with those with which we are familiar at Broad Down, being circular or sub-conical, six feet in perpendicular height at the centre, and about eighty feet in diameter. The mound was constructed of earth brought from a distance, and, apparently, the surface of the ground immediately surrounding the chosen site had been pared away and heaped upon the mound, so as thereby to add to its height. We commenced the excavation by driving a gallery from the south side towards the centre, and immediately upon removing the surface soil we came upon abundant traces of black

mould, ashes, and charcoal, the usual accompaniments of cremation. However, we reached the centre of the mound, and removed the superincumbent earth down as far as the natural surface without discovering any calcined bones, or specimens of mortuary pottery. We then enlarged our excavations, until we had entirely removed the earth which formed the centre of the mound, such as would be contained within a circle of about eight feet in diameter; but although the subsoil and different points within the central area were carefully examined, the labour was devoid of any practical result. The absence of any interment would perhaps imply that the mound was a mere cenotaph, although the abundant traces of the action of fire observable in the progress of excavation would tend to a contrary opinion. Probably the interment itself, and even the pottery that may have been associated with it, had been destructively affected by atmospheric influences, or by the extreme wetness of the surrounding soil. The penetration of the roots of the heath, furze, and peat, into and around the calcined human remains, affects them injuriously, and ultimately leads to their entire disintegration and absorption. By the same agency the pottery becomes filled with peat fibre, which causes fissures and displacements; and after the lapse of so many centuries, the material of which they are composed, being imperfectly baked and possessing but little cohesion, relapses into its original unctuousness.

We now proceeded with the remainder of the tumulus, and continued the excavation of the mound in a northern direction, when we came upon an interesting and eloquent memorial of the simple arts of the remote era when the mound was raised. This was a hammer-stone, doubtless one of the rude implements of the occupant of the barrow, and probably one of the tools with which his arrow-heads and other weapons of flint were fashioned into shape. The example before us appears to be simply a pebble, the rounded contour and smooth surface of which have been produced by long rolling either upon the sea-beach, or down the course of a river; for it bears no trace of artificial polish. It was probably selected by its owner for the particular purpose intended, both on account of its almost symmetrical shape, and also because, when the finger and thumb are placed in the orifices of the perforation, the shape of the stone naturally adapts itself to the hand. The material of the stone I take to be a cherty flint; it is semi-translucent, and of a pale amber colour. The perforation which existed originally in

the stone, and which is due to natural causes, appears to have been enlarged by working on the two sides of the stone with an instrument to which a semi-rotating motion was given, and which acted as a kind of drill; for the perforation opens out wide on the two surfaces, and is narrower towards the middle. In circumference the stone measures seven inches in a direction parallel with its longer axis, whilst transversely it measures five inches, and weighs about half a pound. At either extremity it is very much bruised and abraded, and presents such an appearance as would be produced if it were used, as I have suggested, for the purpose of striking blows or knocks on some hard brittle stone.

S. Nillson describes and figures several varieties of stone-hammers which the aborigines of Scandinavia* made use of to chip out their flint instruments, and some of which resemble in a remarkable degree the example before us.

He says: "The marks of blows found on them were, as must be evident to every one not totally ignorant of the subject, occasioned by blows on some hard brittle *stone*, not against any kind of metal. Similar chipping stones are found from the pole to the equator—among all nations who use stone implements. . . . . On all of them we find at the edges marks of the purpose to which they were formerly applied so unmistakable, that, when once pointed out, no further doubts can be entertained on the matter. I am of opinion that all hammer-stones, without exception, were portable, and that the savage was in the habit of carrying them with him while hunting. For this purpose some of them have a groove or furrow running along the outline, round which, probably, a string was passed, by means of which the stone was tied to the belt; others are, for the same purpose, pierced through; and others again, without either groove or hole through the centre, were probably carried in a pouch attached to the belt or otherwise. . . . . Amongst this latter or portable hammer-stones we class those which are provided with two or more round indentations, in order that they may be held more securely between the fingers while being used. If we examine a stone more minutely, it is scarcely possible to mistake the purpose for which it was used. We see on its edges the most distinct traces of blows against some other hard stone, while the sides are perfectly smooth and untouched. This is so evident that it cannot escape our notice when we have once perceived it. We find some hammer-stones which have only one indentation on each side; these

* "The Primitive Inhabitants of Scandinavia," pp. 10–13.

are partly oval. We also find others provided with several indentations, and of these some are nearly sperical, or of a round cubical form, with six indentations; others are of an oblong cubical form. All these tools are made of hard and heavy stones, and to all of them the savage has, by chipping, sharpening, and drilling, given the form which he considered to be most suitable."

M. Lartet describes and figures a hammer-stone found in the caves of Perigord at La Madelaine, and which nearly resembles the example before us.

Thus, then, the excavation of the Thorverton barrow gathers interest, not only from the fact of its having yielded the only example of an implement to be referred to the stone age that has yet been discovered in East Devon, but also because it affords us at the same time an unfailing index of primitive arts, and an instance of a defined progress in civilization. However true be the words of the preacher in the sense in which he uttered them, yet we may find "device, and knowledge, and wisdom, in the grave;"* that is, in the grave-mounds of the antient people, the records of whose history we are endeavouring to trace out. The very fact of the existence of these memorial heaps, indestructible except by violence, is an eloquent one in the evidence it furnishes, that in the dim and long-forgotten past, of which we are seeking to recover the history, man was still the same, of like passions with ourselves, violent in his anger, and no less demonstrative in unavailing sorrow.

During the past winter a find of coins occurred at Cotley Farm, near Axminster. A labouring man, in removing an old hedge-row, came upon a hoard of some forty or fifty silver coins, uninscribed, of which but five are now to be found. The rude type to which these coins are to be referred at once proves their antiquity; they belong to a class usually found in Dorset and Wilts, though never before (so far as I can learn) found in either of the Western Counties, and were probably struck not long prior to the Roman occupation of this country. Their average weight is about fifty grains. Gold and copper coins of nearly the same type are occasionally found with the extremely degenerate head of Apollo on the obverse, and the disintegrated horse on the reverse.

Some writers have even gone the length of denying the existence of any *British* coinage at all. It seems, however, now to be generally admitted by numismatists that a British coinage did once exist, and of this we appear to have a proof

* Eccles. ix. 10.

in the examples before us. We know that there was a native coinage in Gaul long before the days of Julius Cæsar, and we also know that at the same period traders were in the constant habit of passing from one country to the other; indeed, Cæsar mentions that the coast of Britain was inhabited by colonies which had passed over from Belgic Gaul, and it may be inferred that the state of civilization in his time would not be materially different among the people who dwelt upon the two sides of the Channel.

The coins before us appear to be rude and degenerate imitations of the STATER of Philip of Macedon—the *regale numisma* of Horace. The types of this coin—the Philippus—are, on the obverse, the laureate head of Apollo, and on the reverse a charioter in a *biga*, with the name of Philip beneath. The earliest Gaulish imitations follow the prototype pretty closely; but in the course of time both the head and the *biga* become so transformed that almost all resemblance of the original is lost. Now if, as was probably the case, the Britons derived their knowledge of the art of coining from the Gauls, we may expect to find an imitation more or less rude of the types of the Macedonian Philippus; and the greater or less resemblance of the coins to the prototype may afford a means of approximating to the date.

The examples before us appear to have attained to the extreme of degeneracy; we shall probably, therefore, not greatly err if we attribute them (as I have said) to a period not long anterior to the time of the Roman occupation. On the obverse appears but a small portion of the laureate bust, whilst on the reverse the horse has entirely disappeared. There are numerous pellets in the field, and in one of the examples the space beneath appears to have been ornamented with lines.