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ON A GROUP OF PREHISTORIC REMAINS ON DARTMOOR.

BY FRANCIS BRENT, ESQ.

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THE prehistoric monuments on Dartmoor are fast disappearing, and in a few years the very existence of some of them will be forgotten. It may, therefore, be pardonable if I endeavour to give some account of an interesting group of remains that soon may be entirely lost. The inroads of civilisation are making rapid strides, the slopes of our hills are being cleared of stones, and brought under the hands of man, whilst little regard is paid to ancient monuments by our grass-farmers or agriculturists.

There are few amongst us who have been wont to take our rambles on Dartmoor, but must have missed, from time to time, some interesting relic: now the capstone of a cromlech has been split by the quarryman for the purposes of his work; now a hut-circle or the wall of a pound has been ruthlessly destroyed for the sake of the stones composing it. "The Ancient Monuments Bill" may serve to protect such erections as Stonehenge or Avebury; but, unfortunately, none of our Dartmoor relics are scheduled for preservation; and it is greatly to be regretted that the fine cromlechs of Cornwall do not meet with the consideration that is shown for Kit's Coity House, near Maidstone, in Kent.

As it is not marked on the Ordnance Map, nor mentioned by Rowe in his *Perambulation of Dartmoor*, I cannot

help thinking that this group has hitherto escaped the observation of those who have made Dartmoor and its prehistoric remains their study. I have, however, had no opportunity of learning if this group was observed by Mr. Lukis, who recently examined the district; but whether his explorations extended beyond the boundary of the Forest, so as to include those to be described, I am unable to say. The Forest boundary runs over Eylesburrow, by Siward's or Nun's Cross, to Prince Town, and is about a mile to the eastward of Down Tor, where this group is situated.

At the foot of Eylesburrow, on its western side, rises a small stream, which after a circuitous route through a rocky district that has been most extensively streambed for tin in ancient times, finds its way into the Meavy, to the north of Sheep's Tor. This little stream shuts in a moorland district which is known as Down Tor. To the north is a rough road, which, passing by Clacywell Pool, is eventually lost in a moorland track leading to Fox-Tor Mire or Nun's Cross.

On Down Tor Moor are several barrows, most of which appear to have been opened. These, together with indications of extensive stream-workings, tend to show that the district was formerly largely inhabited. The first feature in the group is a circle of twenty earth-fast stones, the diameter of which is 40 feet. These stones are interspersed with seventeen others of a smaller size, so close together as, in some places, almost to form a wall. Many of the stones are not more than 2 feet high, whilst some of them are considerably larger. Within this outer circle is an immense heap of loose stones, forming a huge barrow, the summit of which is cup-shaped or hollow, within which are stones that may have formed a kistvaen. The outer circle does not touch the inner barrow, from which it is clear and distinct.

Running about east-north-east from this circle is a line of upright stones, the first two of which are of great size; one being 13 feet in length, the other 10. These two, however, are now prostrate, the larger one upon the smaller, although they once stood, like two menhirs, at the commencement of the track. Next to these is a large stone, 5 feet 10 inches in length, also prostrate; and con-

tinuing from these, the line, consisting of one hundred and twenty stones, runs without interruption for about 750 feet, and then continues for 960 feet further, with much greater intervals between the stones, until it reaches a large mound of stones piled loosely together, and forming a heap, the diameter of which is about 37 feet. This long line of stones is imperfect at the latter portion, owing either to the stones having been removed or having sunk into the peaty moorland. Still it can be here and there most unmistakeably traced up to the pile of stones at the north-east end.

This great mass, which may rise about 8 feet in its highest part, is roughly circular, except that at its west end the stones are extended so as to form wings or flanges, which run out on each side of the line of stones. The centre of the heap is depressed, and appears to have been at one time a large chamber, the sides of which, where seen, are nearly perpendicular. In the outer mass or wall are numerous depressions, as if they were formerly small chambers, the roofs of which had fallen in: these hollows do not form a continuous ring, but are irregular not only in size, but also in relative position to one another. To the north of the eastern part of the track-line is a large circular pound, somewhat irregular in outline, the diameter of which is about 150 feet. Within the cincture is a barrow, closely adjoining the wall; whilst to the north-east, at what appears to be the entrance, is a large standing-stone of somewhat of a gnomon or dial-pin form, too massive to have been the post of a doorway, but placed in its position evidently for some purpose, and perhaps forming the headstone of a small barrow, which adjoins the wall of the pound. There is a similar flat upright stone at Grimspound. Within the pound are what appear to me to be traces of at least two smaller circles, although my friend, Mr. C. W. Dymond, holds a different opinion; the stones which I take to form the circles are certainly very irregular, and may possibly be only the ordinary moor-stones. Outside of the pound is an enormous prostrate stone, 15 feet long by 5 feet broad at its widest part, and now partly buried in the soil. I think this has been erect and has had a circle of stones surrounding it; but this admits

of some doubt. To the southward of the track-line is a large rock, shaped like a wedge, or like a slice cut from a huge cheese. This is placed on a foundation of small stones, and appears to have been artificially so placed. Not far from this is a very perfect circle, which is either a cup-barrow, or a hut-circle, probably the former, as it presents no appearance of an entrance or doorway. Near the south-west end of the track-line are two large rounded rocks, equidistant from the row, one on each side, and looking as if artificially so placed; still they may be in their natural position, having been too massive to move when the moor was cleared of the surface-stones to form the barrows, circles, and track-lines.

We have then a large circle of earth-fast stones, in the centre of which is a cup-barrow, connected by means of a track-line of upright stones 1,710 feet long, with a cluster of depressions or chambers in a huge heap of unwrought stones from the moor, and near to these a pound or enclosure, containing barrows, and possibly circles. Such a peculiar collection of remains does not appear to have been recorded as existing on Dartmoor; for although we have each portion, represented more than once in different parts of the moor, nowhere else is the complete series to be found. At Merivale Bridge we have double paralleloliths,—a sacred circle, a menhir, a cromlech, and hut-circles. On White Tor the summit has been guarded with a wall of stones, within which, on one side, is a cluster of small chambers, and in the centre is a natural rock, round which is a clustered heap. On Cocks Tor the arrangement is similar. On Bron Gilly in Cornwall are, or rather were,—for one has been entirely removed within the last few years,—five “Kings’ graves”, as they are called by the country people, which consist of similar huge heaps of stones, having each a large chamber in the centre, and the smaller ones clustered in the substance of the wall. One of these has, in addition, the projecting wings or flanges that are attached to the heap on Down Tor; and at Ditsworthy are barrows from which track-lines (one partly double) lead to huge prostrate menhirs, one of which is 18 feet long; and in the immediate vicinity of these is an enormous cup-shaped barrow. At the head of Awns and Dendles, under Pen

Beacon, is an interesting collection of remains, consisting of a large enclosure, containing some perfect hut-circles, some prostrate menhirs, and a logan, whose estimated weight is nearly 5 tons, which can still be easily moved. These I had hoped to have been able to have pointed out to the members of the Association, but it was ruled otherwise.

Passing from the larger circle, the pound, and the track-line, I now wish to draw more particular attention to the large heap of stones, containing a centre chamber, round which are clustered numerous depressions or small chambers. What then is this? Can it be that we have a large ruined bee-hive hut, a sort of communal or family dwelling, in the centre of which was the day or living room, and the small chambers in the circumference the sleeping places of the family, whilst the projecting sets of stones or wings, at the south-west, were the ruined sides of the passage, through which access was obtained to the interior, after the manner observed by the Esquimaux in their summer-huts, or the older peoples of pre-historic times.

I must, however, admit that I could in no way trace any communication between the larger and smaller chambers, nor from the exterior to these, but the ruined state of the whole would preclude this from being done; and without completely clearing out the fallen stones this could scarcely be observed.

It may be objected that the smaller depressions are not sufficiently large even for sleeping-places; but if they were cleared of fallen debris, and restored to their original state, many of them would be more than 6 feet square; and it is mentioned that an ancient bee-hive hut,¹ or *bôh*, containing two rooms, one 6 feet by 6, and a larger one measuring 6 feet by 9, found in the island of Lewis at Uig, was still used as a dwelling by three young women, even in the present day. This hut, looking like two small hillocks joined together, was not the height of a man; the living-room was about 6 feet high in the centre, whilst in the dairy, in no part was it possible to stand upright. The doorway connecting the two rooms was so small that it could be passed through only by

¹ *The Past in the Present*, by Dr. Mitchell, pp. 58, 60.

creeping, whilst the outer hole, by which access was obtained to the interior, was 3 feet high by 2 feet wide : bed places were partitioned off, and the smoke escaped through an aperture in the roof, which could be covered over by a sod or stone ; and yet in this diminutive little dwelling three persons lived and slept, and performed their daily avocations.

It would scarcely be possible now to clear out this little cluster, as the whole has fallen together in one ruinous heap, but the resemblance is so strong to the clusters of huts that have been observed in the Hebrides, and carefully described, and also in West Cornwall, at Chysoister, and elsewhere, that those on Dartmoor are worthy of more consideration than has hitherto been accorded them—especially as in the adjoining county they have been somewhat fruitful of relics.

No relics of any kind, either of stone or of metal, have been found near the remains I have been describing ; but on White Tor, where a similar cluster of depressions exists, I have found, in turning over the mole-hills within the fortified circle, a considerable number of flakes, scrapers, and fragments of dark-coloured flint ; but from the nature of the thick turf that fills the enclosure on White Tor, no systematic examination of the subsoil has been possible with the appliances that have been available ; although I have little doubt that could the turf be turned over, and the soil examined, the labour of such an examination would be amply rewarded.
