

THE EXPLORATION OF GRIMSPOUND.

FIRST REPORT OF THE DARTMOOR EXPLORATION COMMITTEE.

(Read at South Molton, August, 1894.)

THE hut circles strewn over the surface of Dartmoor, clustered in certain localities, dispersed in others, here enclosed in considerable numbers within pounds, there lying bare and isolated, have hitherto furnished material for conjecture as to their purport and date, but, to the best of our belief, had not been submitted to examination with pick or shovel till the summer of 1893, when the investigation of these remarkable relics was begun systematically and scientifically by Mr. R. Burnard and the Rev. S. Baring Gould, who felt that the time was come when an end must be put to haphazard conjecture, and positive results should be sought, and, if possible, obtained, in the only way by which the purport of these rings could be established, and their approximate date determined.

The results then obtained were so surprising and so contrary to the expectations of the excavators, that they resolved on invoking the co-operation of Mr. R. N. Worth, Mr. R. Hansford Worth, Rev. W. A. G. Gray, and Dr. Prowse, all well acquainted with Dartmoor, and all of them gentlemen who have for many years made its antiquities an object of special study. They felt that the association of experienced archaeologists was of the highest importance, to correct any tendency in themselves to form conclusions too hastily, or to pass over particulars without due notification. It was then resolved to undertake a thorough exploration of Grimspound, the most famous and perhaps best preserved of the hut collections on Dartmoor, and the one that has been most exposed to random conjecture and inaccurate description.

Grimspound presents this special advantage for examination, that there being no newtake walls near, neither enclosure wall nor hut circles have been pillaged. The ancient walls have fallen, but hardly a stone has been removed. Moreover,

the granite of Hookner Tor and Hameldon weathers into large tables of comparatively small thickness, and this served the builders admirably; they were able to construct their walls of slabs set on edge, instead of piling up small stones in courses, as was the system at Broadun, Broadun Ring, Tavy Cleave, and several other places, where suitable masses of granite in flakes were not available. Consequently the ruin of the habitations was not so complete as in other settlements. The great slabs had fallen over, and all that was needed to be done was to set them up, when the dimensions of the huts could be taken with accuracy; and it was presumed that the collapse of the slabs had in many cases preserved the original floors.

A committee was constituted, comprising the gentlemen named above; and permission having been readily accorded by Mr. W. R. Cookson, who has the freehold,¹ and by the Duchy, which claims a not undisputed overlordship, to make a thorough investigation of Grimspound, it was determined to commence operations as early as possible in the ensuing year.

A further decision was arrived at that, whenever possible, two members at least should be present each day during the investigation, and that those present should report progress to the other members, and invite them to inspect what had been done or what had been exposed, before taking further steps. On three days only during the course of the explorations was a single member in charge, on six there were two to watch proceedings, on six days there were three, and on one day five. On a single day only were the workmen engaged without a member of the committee being present to supervise, but the men were then occupied in work upon which they could be trusted, under the intelligent direction of Mr. George French, who acted throughout as foreman; and in him the committee had a most valuable assistant. Mr. French had been engaged on the exploration of Broadun and Broadun Ring, in the preceding autumn, so that he had acquired a knowledge of the sort of work that had to be done, and he added thereto an enthusiasm not surpassed by that of any of the members of the committee; added to which, his long experience in wall-building, and his general practical knowledge, rendered his judgment in disputed matters of the highest consequence.

¹ Subsequently we ascertained that Mr. J. Kitson and Mr. A. Nosworthy have undivided rights along with Mr. Cookson, and the Committee regret that they were not acquainted with this at the time, so as to ask their leave previous to beginning operations.

It has been a matter of great disappointment to the five members of the committee who have watched the excavations at Grimspound, that they have not had the assistance and opinion of Dr. Prowse, who was engaged by professional duties and unable to attend. They were, however, able to avail themselves of the visits of Mr. J. Duke Pode, of Slade, and Mr. J. Brooking Rowe, who took a lively interest in the proceedings, and whose opinions were of material value.

It may be worth while here to notice the main hypotheses touching the origin and purpose of Grimspound, that have been enunciated. We omit all such references as are mere echoes of the judgment of others.

Grimspound was not noticed by our earlier topographers and historians, or antiquaries, and seems to have come under definite observation for the first time about a century since.

A. *Polwhele*: "That Grimspound was the seat of judicature for the cantred of Durius [the Dart] is no improbable supposition. . . . There is no doubt that these monuments in general are of religious institution, and designed originally for the sake of worship. . . . It is probable that the spot was one of the principal temples of the Druids."¹

B. *W. Burt*: "To the Phœnicians then, or their instruction, may be properly ascribed the alteration of Grimspound from an earthy fortress to a walled town, containing houses, which was then simultaneously rendered a defensive station against enemies, a pen for cattle, and a place for settlement."²

C. *A. L. Bray*: "That the vast enclosure was really a British town, seems to be supported by the accounts given of such structures by Strabo and Cæsar."³

D. *Samuel Rowe*: "The whole presents a more complete specimen of an ancient British settlement, provided with means of protracted defence, than will [perhaps] be found in any other part of the island."⁴

E. *J. C. Croker*: "It could hardly have been an encampment, on account of its situation in a valley, yet it must be observed that these circles are situated near where water can be obtained."⁵

F. *Sir Gardner Wilkinson*: "The site has not been chosen without due consideration of its points from a military point of view. . . . Its position is well chosen to command the passage

¹ *History of Devon*, i. pp. 140, 151 (1797).

² Notes to Carrington's *Dartmoor*, 157 (1826). Mr. Burt also quotes a writer in "Besley's Exeter paper," as supposing it a "temple of the sun."

³ *Tamar and Tavy*, letter vi. (1832).

⁴ *Trans. Plym. Inst.* i. 195 (1830); repeated with "perhaps" in *Perambulation* (1848).

⁵ *Eastern Escarpment of Dartmoor*, 15 (1851).

over the hills, and to intercept the communications through this part of the country."¹

G. G. W. Ormerod: "For the protection of cattle from these [*i.e.*, wolves and bands of robbers], and in the severe winters of Dartmoor I think that Grimspound, Dennabridge, now used as the pound for cattle straying on the Forest, and other smaller pounds were erected, and that the huts were for the dwellings of the owners or herdsmen."²

H. R. J. King: "Grimspound rather a place of protection for cattle and their keepers than a fortified town."³

"The pounds on Dartmoor are not unlike the 'dis' or 'Cathair' of the West of Ireland, although the Irish huts were probably far more carefully built than those of Devonshire. The circular huts of Dartmoor are everywhere found connected with ancient stream-works, and are probably of very different degrees of antiquity. Those which occur in the immediate neighbourhood of sacred circles, of ancient graves, and, perhaps, of stone avenues, may safely be referred to the British period. But similar huts were no doubt used by the miners on Dartmoor, at least, until the reign of Elizabeth."⁴

I. C. Spence Bate: "On comparing Grimspound with the numerous other erections of the kind that are to be found on the Moor we perceive that in design and strength of wall the building differs from all others. . . . Grimspound was erected by a people who were strangers to the place, and therefore built to enable them to defend it against attack. . . . The walled village, or pound, I believe to be an enclosure erected for the purpose of securing the tin that may have been obtained by the men from the beds of the rivers, and that Grimspound was built for the same purpose. . . . Hardy Vikingr (*i.e.*, Vikingir) came in these early days to traffic for and obtain tin, and gradually creeping up the Dart they erected their stronghold on the Webburn at Grimspound."⁵

J. Rev. E. Spencer. Although this gentleman does not mention Grimspound, nevertheless he has opinions relative to other collections of hut circles, that may be quoted.

"The stone circles were the huts of the miners, the tin-streamers or washers of the day. The difficulty is not to find them, except in the centre of Dartmoor, where they do not exist. The larger enclosures vary in form, being sometimes circular, at others quite irregular. They were doubtless used to shelter cattle from wolves and weather in winter. Had they been intended for forts to

¹ "British Remains on Dartmoor," *Jour. Brit. Arch. Assoc.* (1862).

² "What is Grimspound?" *Trans. Devon. Assoc.* v. 46 (1872).

³ *Quar. Rev.* 1873, p. 153.

⁴ *Dartmoor Forest and its Borders.* 1856.

⁵ "Grimspound." *Trans. Phym. Inst.* v. 48-53.

Approximate North

GRIMSPOUND



SCALE 60 FEET TO AN INCH

Figures thus—20.04—indicate relative levels of surface of ground

N. Mansford Wood

which the miners and moor men might retire in case of attack, they would not have been situated, as they all are, on the outskirts of the Moor, but further in, in less accessible places, tho' still, as they now invariably are, within reach of the hut clusters. In shape, also, what can be more defenceless than the two long lines on the slope of the hill near Merrivale Bridge? But as a refuge for cattle, close to the fifty cottages with their population, say of 200, including families, they have a reasonable explanation. . . . We find that their long lines of cattle sheds are accompanied by the shepherd's huts found at the ends, and sometimes also in the body of the enclosures.³ The double circle would show the abode of owner and his property, the long lines with their two or more circles, stables for the cattle of many, and the huts of their appointed watchmen."⁴

The examination and excavation of the circles and wall of Grimspound were commenced in March 31, 1894, when five members of the committee were present. On that occasion, Mr. R. Hansford Worth made a new survey of the enclosure. The hut circles were then numbered, and the general order of procedure determined on.

On that day, moreover, two of the rings, Nos. 1 and 2, were explored, but no further works were carried on till April 20th, after which, excavation was recommenced and prosecuted as weather permitted, and the arrangements of the committee allowed, till June 10th. This resulted in the complete exploration of all such huts as were believed to have been formerly inhabited, and in the partial investigation of the rest, which had apparently served as cattle pens or store houses.

The method of procedure followed was to search, in the first place, for the doorway, of which usually one, if not both jambs were in position, and which, in most instances, faced in a S.W. direction. The turf was taken off from the entire surface within the ring, then the "meat earth"⁵ was removed, and such stones as had fallen in were by this means exposed. Such stones, when loose and small, were thereupon placed on the walls, but all such as seemed earth-fast were left untouched. A trench was then carried through the hut from

³ Mr. Spencer is here speaking of the stone rows in connection with cairns, which he entirely misconceives. The stone rows are only occasionally double, and the stones vary from the closing menhirs usually set across, and of considerable height—9 ft. to 12 ft.—to small stones a boy could lift, not over 1 ft. 6 in., or 2 ft. high. They were all connected with sepulchral rites.

⁴ *A few Remarks on Dartmoor.* Plymouth: Chapple, n.d. but about 1892.

⁵ The "meat earth" is the humus, composed of decomposed vegetable matter, black peat.

the entrance to the wall opposite, thus dividing the circle into two halves. Particular attention was paid to stones that appeared to have a straight edge and to have served as curbs. These were not disturbed; or if accidentally displaced, were put on the wall near the spot whence removed, and in the order in which taken up.

When a hearth or presumed hearth was found, careful examination of the soil round was made for charcoal and peat ash.⁶ Owing to the inclemency of the weather in the month of April and the early part of May, it was not possible to sift the floors so soon as they were uncovered, nor to look for the "cooking holes." This was postponed till easterly winds had dried the floors, and made the soil friable, so that it could be sifted, and when, moreover, the depressions beside the hearth, which are supposed to have been cooking holes, were more easily distinguished.

The soil was then cleared away throughout one-half of the ring, and subsequently the second half was treated in the same manner.

The next step in the proceedings was to raise the slabs that had constituted the walls, or a portion of the walls. This was essential. Without this, not only was it impossible to obtain an accurate plan, but also to examine the entire floor. In some cases, moreover, the fallen slabs had covered the hearth; in one a slab had fallen over the cooking hole.

The construction of the habitations seems to have been this. The builders collected slabs of granite and set them up in a rude ring; such slabs when set up being about 3 ft. high. As these slabs often terminate in a point at top, they give the extreme height of the original walls, and they agree within an inch or two of the height of the upper surface of the capstones of the doorways. The spaces between the slabs were filled in with smaller stones rudely coursed; and then the whole circle was backed up with "vags" or turf. In one instance (hut iv.) much of this turf mound outside remained, but as might be expected, in the majority it has disappeared through the action of the weather. In some instances, large stones have been placed on the soil outside the stone structure, to serve as base on which the turf covering rested.

The doorways are in several cases protected by shelter walls, directed so as to cut off the W., N.W., and S.W. prevailing winds. These entrances are invariably paved. They are usually constructed in the same manner as the

⁶ Such charcoal as was found proved to be that of oak and alder.

walls of the habitations, and presumably the roof of the hut was extended to cover them. In one instance (hut xix.) the paving of the entrance passage was traceable but no shelter wall, which, in this instance, was probably built up of turf only.

The doorways were generally constructed of two upright jambs of granite, 2 ft. 3 in. high; in one instance only (hut iii.) so high as 3 ft. On the top of the jambs lintels of granite have been placed, and in most instances the lintels were found fallen, close to the jambs, inside the hut or outside, or lying between the jambs.

The floors of the huts were of the "calm" or subsoil of clay and granite grit and rolled pebbles beaten hard, and occasionally and in places paved. All the huts are on a slope, and the S. side is that most elevated. On this side of the huts a dais is usually found, formed of curbstones with straight edges, all natural, but selected for the purpose, laid in the soil, cutting off a portion of the circle. Where this dais is, there the ring is not accurately circular, but the wall has been carried out so as to afford additional width or depth to the dais. This platform is generally paved. It served presumably as seat for the inhabitants by day and bed at night. In most instances, in front of the dais, near the centre of the hut, in the floor, is a flat stone, not having indications of fire. It is conjectured to have served either as an anvil on which the inhabitants chopped bones, or broke nuts, or else as a basis for a post to sustain the conical roof.

The hearthstone does not always occupy the same place. In some habitations it is in the centre, in others opposite the door. It consists usually of a large slab that has been exposed to fire and has become brittle accordingly, or as in one case (hut vii.), it consists of a depression in the ground built round with curbstones.

Near the hearth is found in most instances the cooking hole, a depression in the "calm," 9 in. deep, lined with stones set on edge, and full of peat ash and charcoal. It is the opinion of the Committee that these holes were employed for culinary purposes.

An important point to be determined was the original height of the walls of the huts. These walls were in part formed of slabs set upright. It was probable that no courses of stones had been set on the top of these slabs; but it was desirable to ascertain exactly what had been the original method adopted for covering in the area enclosed:

whether, for instance, the huts had been of the beehive character, with gradually contracting stone roofs. To determine this, the Committee proceeded in hut iii. to replace the small fallen stones, in courses, between the upright slabs, and it was discovered that they served exactly to fill up the interstices, and bring up the walls throughout to the level of the apexes of the slabs. As no stones had been removed from Grimspound, as already stated, and not a single stone from a distance was used in this reconstruction, and every stone that was fallen was utilised in the reconstruction, the Committee were satisfied that the roofs could never have been covered with stones, but were probably made of turf or rushes over poles, set in the "vags" enclosing the circular wall and drawn together in the centre.

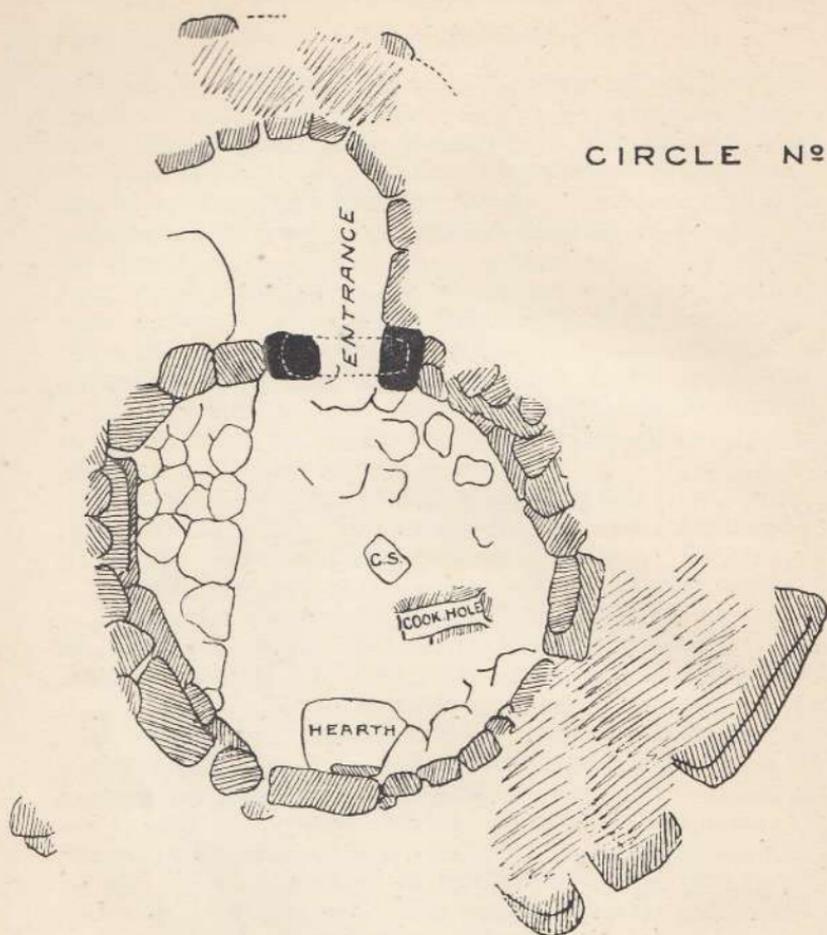
It would have required five or six cartloads of stones to have domed the hut. In no single instance were there found on the spot sufficient for the purpose.

We will now proceed to describe each hut as excavated.

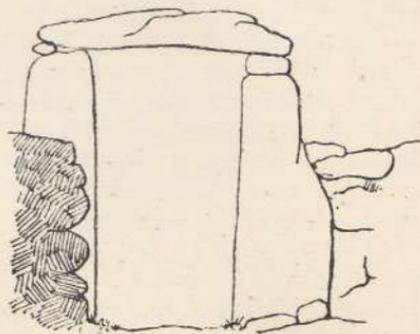
I. This hut, which is 15 ft. 6 in. in diameter, was supposed by Mr. R. N. Worth and Mr. R. Burnard to have had its entrance to the N.N.E., and excavation was commenced inside by the footstone of the supposed entrance. It was soon found that this hut had been disturbed. A flat hearthstone was, however, found approximately in the centre, with a pit or cooking-hole near it, 2 ft. long by $1\frac{1}{2}$ wide and 9 in. deep. In it were found wood charcoal and ashes. Fragments of charcoal were scattered over the floor. At a point of the circle to the S.S.W., a number of small stones were discovered under the turf, amongst which were found coal cinders and some wood charcoal. It was the general opinion of the five members of the Committee present that this hut had been altered and re-adapted for perhaps temporary habitation, at a period long subsequent to its original erection. The Rev. W. A. G. Gray and the Rev. S. Baring Gould were of opinion that the original entrance had on this occasion been blocked, and that the N.N.E. entrance was made at the subsequent occupation, as it has no stones planted at right angles to the main walls, which is almost invariably the case in original doorways, and as, moreover, it points in a different direction from the openings into all the other huts.

It may here be noted that the original floors are unmistakeable. They consist of the ancient clay or grit, locally termed "calm," trampled hard, so that the spade easily passes along the surface, dividing it from the "meat earth," which differs totally from it in colour, quality, and consistency.

CIRCLE N° III



P. H. Wood



ELEVATION OF ENTRANCE

II. This hut was apparently a cattle-pen. The enclosing wall is entirely different in character, consisting of a single ring of large stones originally set on edge, and not backed up with smaller stones and earth. The door jambs were 4 ft. and 5 ft. 4 in. long respectively, and no lintel was distinguishable, so that probably the enclosure was never roofed over. The width of the doorway was unusual, 3 ft. 6 in. A trench was run to the centre, and no traces of a floor could be found.

III. This hut is 10 ft. 9 in. from the doorway to the large upright slab immediately opposite. It is not perfectly circular. The doorway is 2 ft. 9 in. wide, and is paved. On the right hand is a raised dais, about 8 in. above the original floor. Opposite the door is the hearth, which was covered by the large wall stone that had fallen upon it. Much charcoal was found here. The cooking hole was also discovered, lined with stones set on edge, and the floor between it and the nearest jamb of the door had apparently been paved. Near it was a small, rudely-square, flat stone, that may have served as an anvil for splitting bones on, or as a base for a post supporting the roof of the hut. Much charcoal was found between the cooking hole and the jamb. The doorway into this hut is of unusual height, 3 ft. The entrance to the hut was by a curved, paved passage, with a shelter wall to screen it from the wind. The lintel of the doorway was discovered in the entrance, leaning against the left jamb, and was replaced in its original position.

Owing to the remarkable condition of preservation in which this hut was, the Committee resolved to re-construct the walls where fallen, to bank them up with turf, and then to enclose the whole with iron hurdles; and to leave the floor exposed, with hearth, dais, and cooking hole, for the enlightenment of visitors interested in the pre-historic antiquities of Dartmoor.

The original height of the walls could be determined by that of the large stone to the N.W., and by the top of the lintel, *i.e.*, 3 ft. 9 in. In sifting the floor a piece of flint was found.

IV. This hut is small, only 9 ft. in diameter internally. The doorway was found tolerably perfect, the jambs in position, and the lintel between them. The jambs are 2 ft. 3 in. high. The hearthstone was found in the centre, much injured by fire, crumbling easily, and much charcoal lay about it. A bench or dais was on the right hand side of the entrance, too narrow to have served as a bed. In the doorway a fragment of flint was discovered.

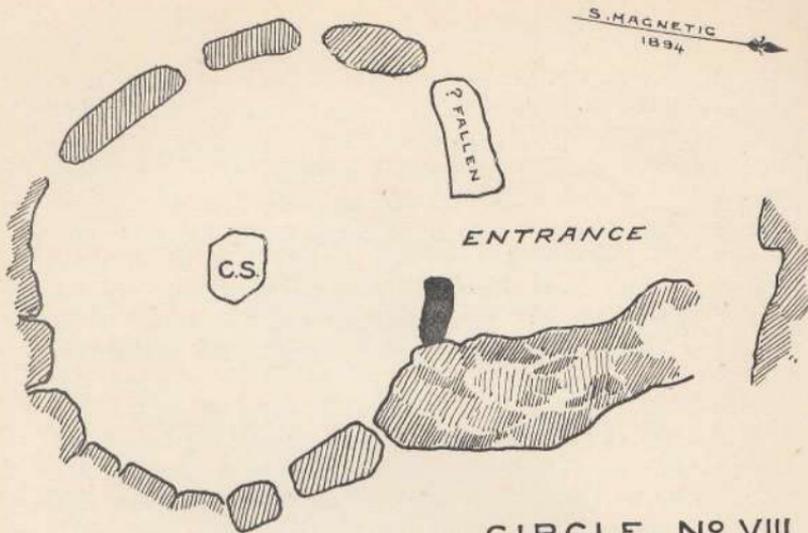
V. This hut was but 6 ft. 6 in. in diameter internally. The floor was paved throughout, and was strewn with charcoal in small quantities. No hearth could be identified, the hut being in a very ruinous condition. Only one jamb of the door remained. The presumed lintel is 4 ft. 9 in. in length. The door was approached by a covered way, and near the entrance of this covered way lies a long stone, 4 ft. 6 in. in length. Thinking it possible that this stone was at one time erect, the subsoil was examined near the extremities, but no indications were found of a pit cut in the "calm" to receive the stone.

VI. The diameter of this hut is 9 ft. 6 in. In the centre was found the hearthstone, measuring 1 ft. 4 in. by 1 ft. 3 in. The doorway is in an uncertain condition; one jamb remains. The other and the lintel are not so certainly identified. On sifting the floor, charcoal was found and two pieces of flint, whereof one was a scraper.

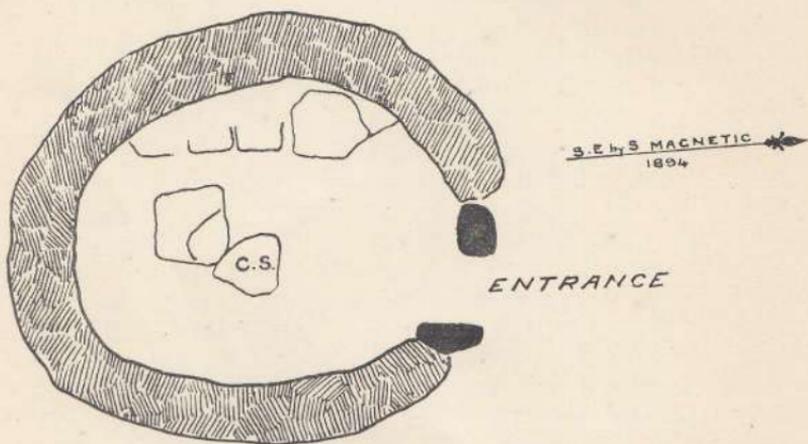
VII. This hut lies near the S.W. corner of the enclosure, where a way was broken through by the farmers to enable their cattle to enter the pound, when the original entrance was choked, and the new openings for the track from Manaton to Headland Warren had not been made. This hut is happily in a remarkably good condition of preservation. The door jambs were in place, and the lintel has fallen beside them. The hut is 12 ft. in diameter. The walls are in part formed of upright slabs, two of which are 4 ft. high; the N.W. portion of the wall is ruinous, and consisted of small stones laid in courses. As the slope is comparatively steep on this side, they have fallen. The dais is 8 ft. in length, and very perfect. At the foot of it, on the left hand, is the cooking hole, of the usual depth, and it was found brimful of ash. The hearthstone, sunk 8 in. below the floor, was discovered built round with curb stones. Near the hearth, in the floor, is one of the flat stones alluded to above, that possibly served the purpose of anvil.

VIII. This hut is close to the enclosure wall, and the doorway has the remains of a shelter wall connecting it with the main enclosure wall. The diameter of this hut is 10 ft. The door is greatly ruined, and only one jamb is *in situ*. In the centre is the hearthstone, measuring 2 ft. in diameter. There were faint and uncertain traces of a dais.

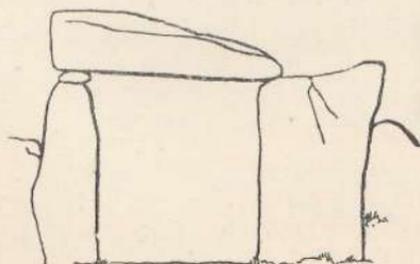
IX. This ring was examined. The natural rock has been taken advantage of for sides in three places. No traces of human occupation were found.



CIRCLE No VIII



CIRCLE No 4



ELEVATION OF ENTRANCE

A. M. Wood

X. XI. These rings presented the same characteristics as IX., and were not examined.

XII. The hut is 9 ft. in diameter. The doorway has a threshold stone. The height of the jambs is 2 ft. 6 in. The lintel lay immediately outside. On the right on entering is the dais, very perfect. At the foot of the dais is the hearth-stone, and on the left of the hearth is the cooking hole, 9 in. deep. Two of the upright slabs at the back of the dais are 2 ft. 10 in. in height. In this hut some burnt round stones or pebbles from the "calm" were found, also a small water-worn river pebble. There is a shelter wall on the W. of the entrance.

XIII. XIV. XV. Appear to have been cattle pens or store huts. They are formed of a few large slabs and blocks, and have no great heap of earth, and pile of ruined wall enclosing them, as is the case with those which have apparently served as human habitations.

XVI. This hut, unhappily, has its doorway in a ruinous condition. In cutting a trench through the ring the dais was unfortunately disturbed. The hearth, a large flat stone in the floor, was uncovered, and then the excavators came on two stones planted on their edges, standing out from the wall. Not at once understanding what they had come on, they lifted two of the curb stones, as they proved eventually to be, and placed them on the bank above. The dais in the other huts had been on the right of the entrance, and in this was not in the usual position, and therefore was not at once recognized. The excavators afterwards discovered that there was a double dais, or rather one divided in the middle by upright stones set on edge, standing 1 ft. 7 in. above the floor. This dais is opposite the doorway. The curb stones, which had been placed on the wall, above where they had been raised, were then replaced as nearly as possible where they had been. No cooking hole was found in this hut, but the committee are not certain that one has not been overlooked. In this habitation was found a polishing stone, broken at each end, and composed of a fine-grained elvan.

XVII. A hut 9 ft. 9 in. in diameter. No distinct evidence of the entrance. The hearth was discovered, together with a small pit 8 in. deep behind it. Much charcoal was found at this spot. An unusually high dais, 11 in., occupied a portion of this hut. Outside the circle, towards W. S. W., is a prostrate stone; supposing that it may have at some time stood upright, the "calm" was examined at each end, but no indications of a pit were found. On the north side of the

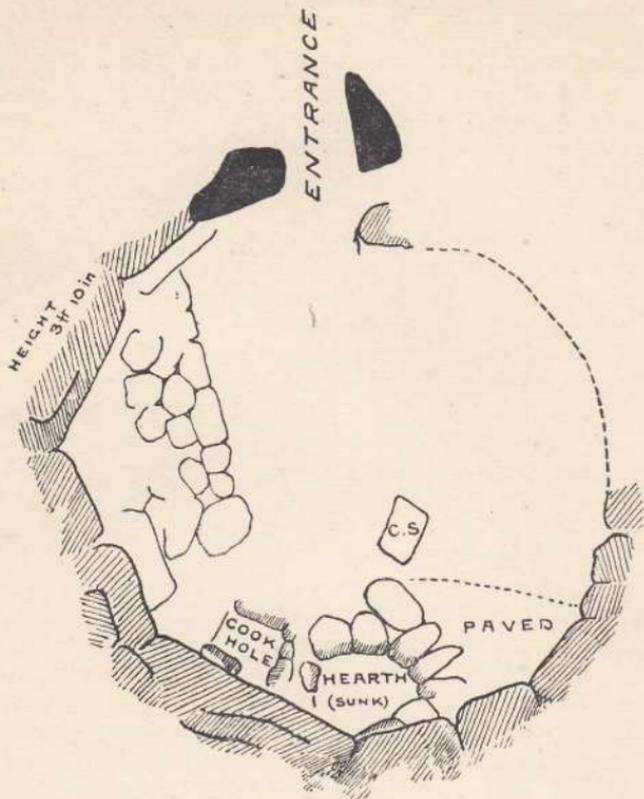
hearth is a raised seat 7 in. above the floor; a long stone lies in the middle of the hut, partly covered by the dais, and tilted upwards, probably by the pressure of superincumbent weight of fallen stones. It may have served as an "anvil stone."

XVIII. XIX. These huts adjoin, but there is no internal communication between them. XVIII. is 9 ft. 6 in. in diameter. The entrance is by a steep slope. A natural rock has been used as one of the jambs of the door, so also does a natural rock serve for a portion of the curb of the dais. This dais, unlike the rest, is unpaved. The hearth is opposite the entrance, and the cooking hole, 9 in. deep, is on the right hand of the hearth. A stone that was perhaps the anvil, lies in the middle before the dais.

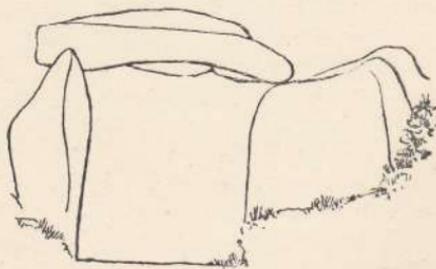
XIX. The diameter of the hut is 10 ft. 4 in. The door is in an imperfect condition, and the shelter entrance, paved, has no stone wall to protect it. The lintel of the door is also missing. The hearth occupies an unusual position. It consists of a large flat stone on the right of the entrance. To the left of this is the cooking hole, 9 in. deep. A large slab in the wall had fallen over it and covered it. It was found to be completely filled with charcoal and peat ash, unmixed with surface peat. On the S.E. side is the dais, paved throughout; and a singular bench of stones set on their edge, occupies the curve of the hut from the foot of the dais to within 1 ft. 9 in. of the door jamb.

An upright stone 4 ft. 9 in., its faces measuring 1 ft. 6 in. by 1 ft. 5 in., stands against the wall of this hut outside, near the entrance to XVIII. Its position there could not be mistaken, as the hole dug in the "calm" to receive it was found. The slab behind the hearth is 3 ft. high, marking the original height of the walls of this hut. It is conjectured that the upright stone or small menhir, may possibly indicate this hut as the habitation of the chief man of the settlement. Although other large stones are found beside some of the other huts, this one alone seems to have been planted upright, the others served as foundations to the outer wall or backing of peat.

XX. The diameter of this hut is 9 ft. 9 in. The sides are composed of slabs originally set on edge, but several had fallen over and some slipped in. They were replaced where fallen, and showed that the walls had originally been 4 ft. 2 in. high. The hearth was paved, and a great deal of charcoal was strewn on the floor, completely blackening it in some places. A broken flint knife, that had been much used, was

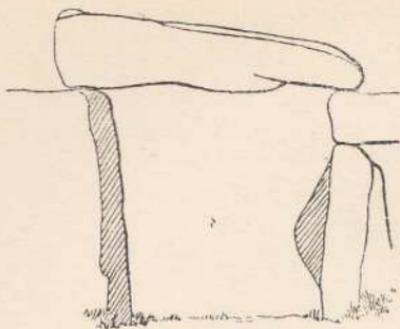


CIRCLE N^o VII



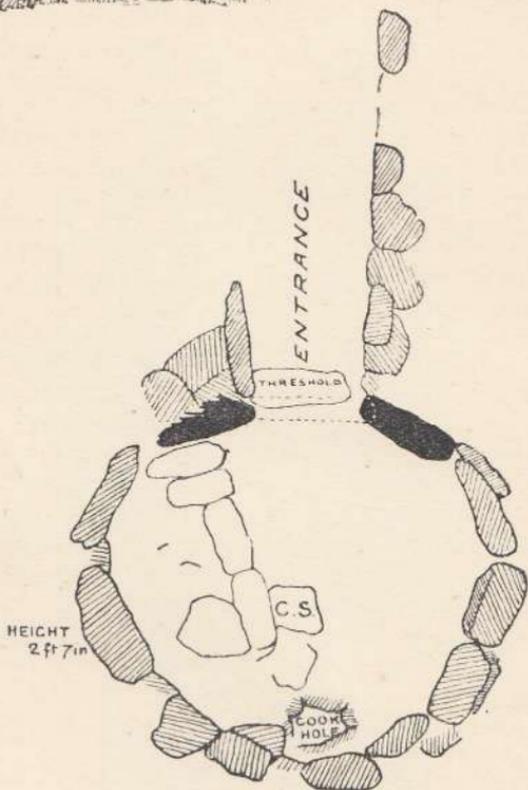
ELEVATION OF ENTRANCE

J. H. Walth



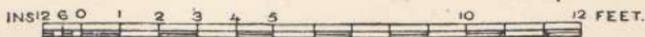
ELEVATION OF ENTRANCE

SSW MAGNETIC
APRIL, 1894



CIRCLE No XII

Hansford Wall



SCALE FOR CIRCLES 4-12



SCALE FOR ENTRANCES
4-12

found near the hearth. The cooking hole was discovered, of the usual depth, but of otherwise small dimensions. The doorway has a threshold stone, and the entire floor was paved.

The Committee further proceeded to investigate the wall of the enclosure. This is in a condition of sad, and at first sight, inexplicable ruin; but the wrecked condition of the wall presents some significant and instructive features. In several places two faces, one outer, the other inner, remain comparatively perfect, showing that the wall originally did not consist of a congeries of stones piled together at random, but was composed like the hut walls of stones, some set on edge, and of others laid in courses.

Twenty five yards north of the western exit of the track which runs through the pound, the wall has both faces perfect. The width is here 9 ft. from face to face. The outer face is still $4\frac{1}{2}$ ft. high, the inner $1\frac{1}{2}$ ft. A little further on the wall is 10 ft. thick. The wall by hut vii. is $9\frac{1}{2}$ ft. The inner face is there 4 ft. 4 in. high. From this examination, and this condition of the walls, it was difficult to account for the height of the wall being originally more than about 5 ft. It seemed absurd that a wall of huge stones 10 ft. thick should be only 5 ft. high; but if the wall was solid, and of this width, it was clear that there were not enough stones to account for even this height, and as there are no newtake walls near, it is certain that there has been no pillaging of stone to provide for their construction.

Accordingly the examination of the structure was taken in hand, and the men employed on it were all experienced wall builders. The complete state of ruin in which the wall was, was quite inexplicable if it had been constructed solid. At first the Committee thought that great violence had been used to wreck the enclosing wall, but when the investigation had been carried on for a day or two, it became obvious that such was not the case.

It is observable that very generally the wall faces have collapsed towards each other, and that between them are to be found either large slabs that are tilted inwards, or else confused masses of small stones. On a scrutiny of the wall on the N.W. side, it was made abundantly clear that there had been a double wall with a space between. Each wall was 3 ft. wide at top, and about 3 ft 6 in. at bottom. The space between them is about 3 ft. wide at bottom, and 3 ft. 6 in. at top. When the stones were removed from this space and replaced on the walls, it was apparent that these

latter had never been more than 5 ft. high, at the very outside 5 ft. 6 in. in height. That there were entrances into this passage from the interior of the enclosure at several points not far apart is probable. One such entrance was in tolerably perfect condition, and easily distinguishable, and two or three others can be made out with some degree of probability.

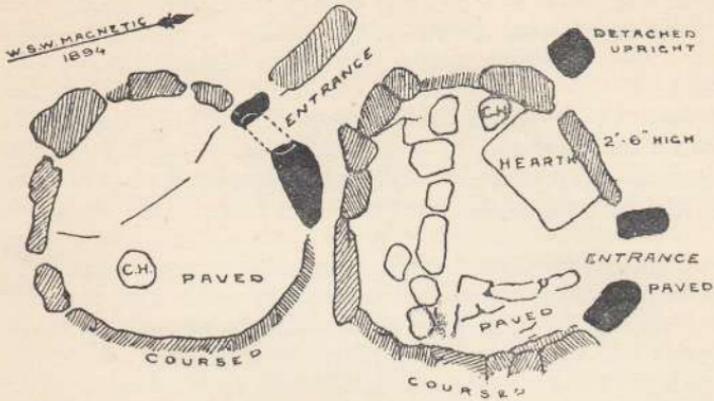
The Committee are unwilling to express an opinion relative to the space or passage between the walls, till a further examination has been made of the enclosing wall of the pound at several points, as what has been done so far is not sufficient to afford ground for pronouncing a final decision.

That these walls were not mere defences against wild beasts, is almost certain. The double wall would not have availed against a wolf. It could easily leap up on a wall not above 5 ft. 6 in. high, and leap across the interval of 3 ft. 6 in. to the internal wall. This internal wall is explicable as far as we can see, only as a protection to the backs of the besieged.

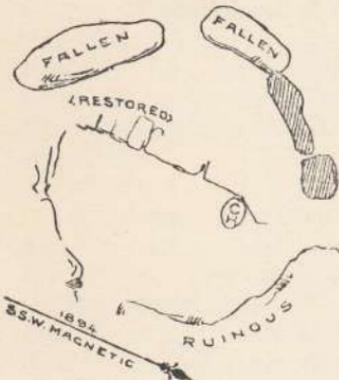
When we consider that there are but a dozen huts that were occupied by human beings within the circuit of Grimspound, we cannot suppose that these twelve householders erected the cyclopean defence themselves unaided. Some of the stones employed are of great size. On the W. is a huge slab set on edge, measuring 10 ft. by 5 ft., and it is from 9 in. to 1 ft. in thickness, and weighs from 3 to 4 tons. Other stones laid in courses, if not so long, are not of less weight. Such a wall as that enclosing Grimspound would cost, with modern appliances, and with horse-power for drawing the stones, three guineas per land yard, and a land yard would engage four men for a week.

There are numerous huts scattered over the slopes of Hookner Tor and Hameldon Tor. There were formerly several below in the valley, of which merely traces remain, as they have been demolished for the construction of walls connected with the warren at Headland.

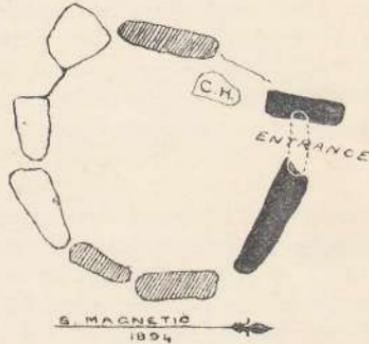
When, moreover, we consider that the circumference of the wall measures over 1,500 feet, it becomes obvious that such an extent presupposes some two hundred defenders. Presumably, Grimspound was not a fortified village, any more than it was merely a cattle pound, but was the *oppidum*, the place of refuge for the scattered population on Hookner and Hameldon, and the twelve householders within the enclosure were the *oppidani*, the guardians in time of peace. This was, as we know, the system among the Gauls, and the Gallic men of Iron who invaded the land now called France, almost



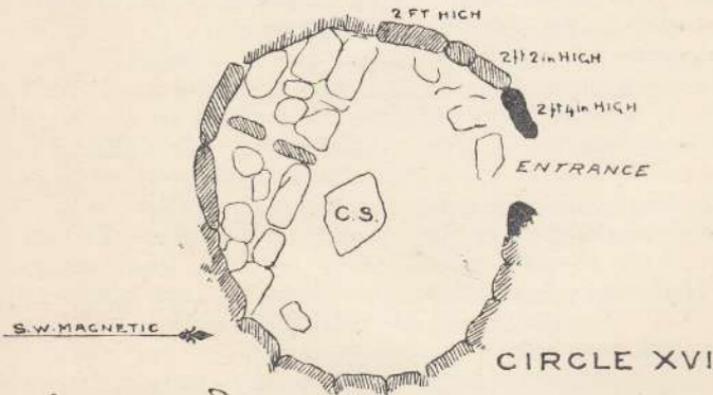
CIRCLES N^{OS} XVIII, XIX



CIRCLE N° XVII



CIRCLE XX



CIRCLE XVI

A. H. ...

certainly adopted this system from the Neolithic and Bronze race which they overcame, and whose land they occupied, and whose rites and superstitions they adopted.

Grimslake, a small stream that dries up in very hot summers only, flows through the enclosure at its northern extremity. It passes under the wall, now flows through it for some way, and then emerges three-quarter of the way down.

It has been confidently asserted that the stream was diverted from its proper course by the hands of men, to force it to enter the pound. This, however, is not the case. There is an outcrop of feldspathic granite in the midst of the furrow between Hameldon and Hookner Tor, so that the drainage of these hills cannot unite, but flows parallel, in independent channels, and meets below the road from Chagford to Widdecombe, at a distance of 1,200 feet from the enclosure. There is, at present, very little leakage from Hookner Tor: nevertheless it must have been greater in former times, as the groove of the channel of its stream is not only distinctly visible, but is more important than that of Grimslake.

The pound has been constructed where it is for two reasons—one, to take advantage of the outcrop of granite that divides the waterways, and which was largely exploited for the construction of the enclosure wall and of the huts; and the other, so as to have the advantage of the stream flowing through the pound.

It may perhaps be as well to notice a statement made by the late Mr. Spence Bate that a little east of what was the southern entrance a tortuous passage is constructed in the wall, intended as a secret opening. What Mr. Spence Bate fancied was a postern may more likely have been one of the entrances to the hollow way that runs between the walls throughout the circumference. The Committee were, however, unable to identify it.

Some writers, in recording what they have seen, assert that the entrances on the east and west, by which the track passes from Manaton to Headland Warren, were ancient entrances and are paved. The Committee are entirely convinced that they are neither one nor the other.

There are lunettes or enclosures in the west side of the pound, and the wall of one of these runs to the opening in the inner wall. None of these have been explored as yet. To

the S.E. there appears to be a singular construction against the wall that has not been investigated.

The Committee are agreed that the enclosing wall of the pound demands much further examination, especially on the north side, where it seems to have been higher than elsewhere, owing to the interior being there commanded by the rising ground of the outcrop of granite. In this portion of the circumference, moreover, there are several places where both faces of the wall are comparatively perfect.

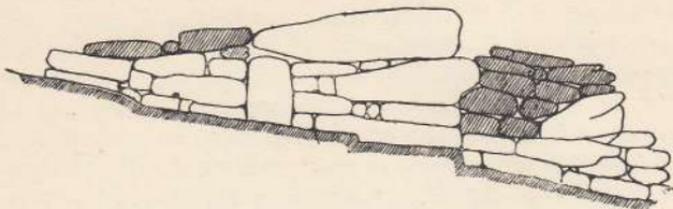
The original entrance to Grimspound was to the S.E. This was much encumbered with fallen stones, which the Committee proceeded to clear out, when the entire entrance was revealed in its original condition, paved throughout, and with steps in the floor. It is 7 ft. wide, and the wall at this point is 14 ft. thick.

It is remarkable that the two sides of the entrance are constructed in a different manner. That to the east consists of enormous slabs set on edge. One of these is 7 ft. long, and 3 ft. high. Another is 4 ft. 6 in. high. In the midst of the entrance was lying a huge mass of granite that had fallen in, owing to the great slab having inclined about 9 in. inwards. It had rested originally upon the top of it, and had rolled in. This was replaced, when it raised the height of the eastern wall to 4 ft. 8 in., the same as that of the western wall.

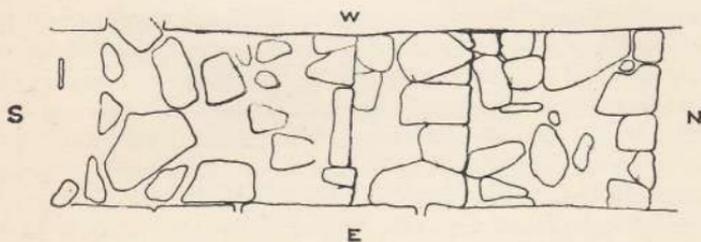
This latter is composed of large slabs in courses, measuring one 7 ft. 2 in., another 6 ft., another 5 ft., and another 3 ft. 6 in. On the west side of the great entrance was apparently a small entrance into the shelter passage between the walls, but owing to the wall in this part being very ruinous, and no two courses being in position, it has not been possible to determine this with anything approaching certainty.

The paving of the entrance was a matter of necessity to the occupants of Grimspound. The gate faces the slope of Hameldon, and the water trickles through the opening, and the soil would speedily be worked into an impassable slough by the feet of cattle unless paved throughout in a substantial manner. As the descent is rapid, the paving is on a slope.

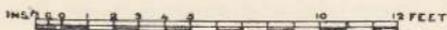
With regard to the presumed date of the construction of Grimspound and similar collections of hut circles, there is very little positive evidence on which to go; nevertheless, some of that which is negative is quite as valuable. The deductions drawn from the excavations made apply only to such habitations and collections of habitations as have been investigated; it is quite possible that similar huts may have



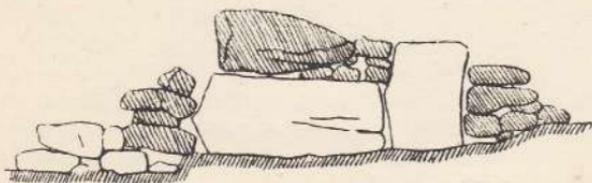
ELEVATION OF WEST WALL
OF ENTRANCE



PLAN OF ENTRANCE



SCALE
FOR ABOVE & CIRCLES 16-20



ELEVATION OF EAST WALL
OF ENTRANCE

been erected and occupied at subsequent periods and by different races. Indeed it is quite possible that similar huts were occupied by miners in comparatively modern times. All we venture to assert is that the huts at Grimspound belong to a vastly remote period.

The condition of existence of the occupants of these huts was rude in the extreme. Not a particle of metal or of pottery has been found at Grimspound, nor in the Broadun or Broadun Ring huts, nor in those at Tavy Cleave, nor in some explored at Assacombe, nor in two near the Dewerstone that have been investigated. The cooking-stones that seem to be a constant feature in these huts are sparry pebbles brought from the river, rounded by having been much rolled, and cracked with heat. Their existence in these huts indicate that the cooking was carried on by the occupants in the manner of the Assiniboine Indians, who are ignorant of pottery. A cooking stone was found wedging up one of the slabs that formed the extremity of a kistvaen near Broadun, and another, along with a flint scraper, was found wedged between two upright stones of a ring that enclosed a ruined cairn at King's Oven. We cannot say for certain as yet that kistvaens and circle-enclosed cairns belonged to the same race as that which erected the hut circles, but it is probable that further investigation may establish this.

The method of using the cooking holes was this. The depression in the floor was lined with a skin, water was poured in, and a couple of hot stones rolled into the extemporised vessel; or else meat was placed in these holes along with hot stones, and covered with turf or clay, till roasted.

Dr. Joyce, in his *Old Celtic Romances*, 1894, p. 440, says of one of the primitive races of Ireland:—

“When the Fena were on their hunting expeditions, we are told that they ate only one meal a day, and for this meal they cooked the flesh of the animals brought down in the chase, in the following manner. They first dug a deep pit in the earth near their camping place, and having lighted a great fire beside it they heated a number of round stones. They next covered the bottom of the pit with hot stones, on which they placed the meat bound up with sedge and grass-ropes, and on this again they put another layer of heated stones; and, having closely covered up the whole with branches, they let it stand till the meat was sufficiently cooked. The remains of these old earth-ovens are still to be seen, and are called by the peasantry, ‘fulachta-na-bhfiann’—the cooking place of the Finns.”

Had pottery been in use, inevitably some particle would

have been discovered in the 38 or 40 huts explored. Search has been made for kitchen middens; none have been found. Moreover, no querns, no mullers, no crushing stones, have been discovered so far, so that the inhabitants of these circular huts cannot have ground their corn, supposing they had any, but must, in case that they possessed grain, have parched or boiled it in their cooking holes, and made of it a sort of soup or fermety. No metal whatever has been found, but flakes of flint, and some scrapers. Moreover, in proximity to collections of hut circles throughout the Moor, there are frequently to be found places strewn with flint flakes, flint cores, and where also may be discovered scrapers, arrow-heads, and knives, all of flint.

It is therefore a legitimate conclusion that the population who occupied Grimspound, or used it as their place of refuge, belonged to a very primitive age; that they were clad in the skins which they cleaned with the flint scrapers; that they were ignorant of metal, and that they were a pastoral race, having flocks of sheep, and probably also cattle: that is to say, they belonged to the Neolithic age, and possibly to a very early period in that age.

It was a matter of surprise at first to the Committee that so few "cooking stones" were discovered at Grimspound, as these have been found in great abundance in other settlements that have been investigated. On mature consideration they have come to the conclusion that this absence of cooking stones is due to the fact that Grimspound is at a great distance from a river in which rolled quartz pebbles are found. Consequently the inhabitants of these huts made use of such rounded, handy pieces of granite as lay on the surface of the "calm," or were imbedded in it. These would speedily crumble away after a few firings, and then be cast aside, and others taken in their place. Many such stones lay about, and some had certainly been subjected to heat.

Not far from the source of Grimslake is a cairn surrounded by a circle of upright stones, and some fallen. This was examined, and a ruined kistvaen discovered, that had been rifled. No indications of bone ash were discovered, but some particles of wood charcoal were picked out of the soil on the floor of the kistvaen. The two covering stones had been thrown aside, and these were replaced where they had obviously been before the wreckers plundered the habitation of the dead.

There are perhaps indications of a second circle surrounding the cairn. Owing to the wet and sodden condition of the

soil thrown out, and to the fact that the weather would not hold up sufficiently to dry it, the Committee were unable to sift what was obtained from the interior of the stone chest.

The Committee are not prepared to generalise as to the hut circles scattered over the Moor; but they feel justified in pointing out that in such as have been explored at Grimspound, all the indications point to a Neolithic occupation. That the inhabitants of the huts employed weapons and tools of bone is probable. The polishing stones found there and at Broadun seem to have served for these. There are on them no signs of having been used for sharpening metal tools. No objects of bone were found, nor were they expected to be found, in a peat soil, in which all calcareous matter is rapidly consumed. The flints found belong in every case to the Chalk, and not to the Greensand. There is no evidence that the Great Central Trackway was in any way connected with Grimspound. Though it passes over Hameldon, a quarter of a mile south of the settlement, rough rocky land and a clatter intervene. There is no evidence, whatever, that the huts were occupied by miners engaged in tin-streaming, as no particles of slag, no moulds, no crushing stones have been discovered.

The Committee have been most careful not to destroy anything during the investigations. No earthfast stone has been consciously moved; only such fallen stones as were obviously out of place have been removed from the soil they covered; and the floors of the huts cleared of the accumulations of rubbish that lay on them. After exposure and careful planning, the earth has been thrown in again to cover up the original arrangements. Only hut iii. was reconstructed, so far as the circular wall was concerned, for reasons already stated, and this has been left with the floor exposed, but with an iron rail erected around the hut for its protection against cattle.

When the grass springs again, Grimspound will be as it was, excepting only that it has yielded up some of its secrets, and that it can be looked upon with an intelligent understanding of its purpose and the cultural stage to which it belonged, and no longer with vague wonder.

In conclusion, the Committee are glad to state that this report on Grimspound is not final. They hope to continue their researches there, and having obtained permission, very readily accorded by H.R.H. the Prince of Wales, to their

investigating other-like collections of huts on the Duchy land, they hope by this time next year to be able to add considerably to the information they have been able to obtain relative to the early inhabitants of Dartmoor, and their mode of living, as can be fairly deduced from the exploration of their habitations. The Committee hope, moreover, to have sufficient evidence to lay before the Association next year, to justify a conclusion relative to the structure of the bounding wall of Grimspound, and the purport of the double wall and space between, if, as they suspect, this latter has been carried completely round the pound with openings into the enclosed space at intervals. It is also hoped by them to be able to throw some light on the relation borne by the cairns, and kistvaens, and stone-rows, to the hut groups on Dartmoor, and that obtained in the only possible way in which certain results can be obtained—investigation with pick and spade, and accurate measurement with rule and chain.

It is not to the credit of Devonshire that a scientific investigation into its primeval antiquities has not hitherto been systematically taken in hand. In France, in Germany, even in Spain—in Scotland with the thoroughness that characterises the Scottish character, and in Ireland with the enthusiasm of a patriotic race—the early antiquities have been closely investigated, and a flood of light has been poured on the early ethnology of these lands. But Dartmoor has been left to be the field for idle and baseless speculation. Pre-historic archæology is a science still young—not more than thirty years old, but in that period it has revolutionised the early history of mankind and of our island. All the assumptions relative to Druids and Phœnicians in connection with our megalithic monuments have been blown to the winds, and the necessity has been made out for accurate observation, careful and detailed description, and hesitation in the formation of theories. We now know that at least one race, and that Ugric, occupied our land before the advent of the Celt, and that the Celt arrived in successive waves, the one Goidelic, the other Brythonic, distinguished by linguistic peculiarities. We know further that the megalithic monuments of Europe are now believed to be due rather to the Ugric race than to the Celtic occupants of our land. But we are not in a position as yet, with reference to the remains on Dartmoor, to connect the rude stone monuments with the hut circles, with anything like scientific certainty.

Owing to the rapid decomposition of bone in a peaty soil

there is little hope of the recovery of any skulls in the barrows on the Moor, and the connection of the barrows with the hut circles has yet to be established. The stone rows, or so-called avenues, are invariably associated with sepulchral remains. Of those now known on Dartmoor, to the number of something like four-and-twenty careful measurements have been taken and plans executed. In some instances the fallen menhirs closing the rows have been re-erected, in the hope of preserving them from further destruction, as such stones when prostrate are taken by the Moormen without scruple to serve as gateposts or to prop sheds. When erect the Duchy is able to order that they shall not be removed, whereas when fallen it is not so easy to enforce respect for them.

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