

NINTH REPORT OF THE DARTMOOR EXPLORATION COMMITTEE.

NINTH REPORT of the Committee—consisting of the Rev. I. K. Anderson, Mr. R. Burnard, the Rev. S. Baring-Gould (Secretary), Mr. J. D. Pode, Mr. J. Brooking-Rowe, and Mr. R. Hansford Worth—for the purpose of exploring Dartmoor.

Edited by the Rev. S. BARING-GOULD, Secretary.

(Read at Sidmouth, July, 1903.)

EXPLORATION OF RED BARROWS, SOUSSONS COMMON.

THERE are four barrows, or cairns, situated on the high ground of Soussons (or Southsands) Common, near Post-bridge.

They were examined by the Committee in August of last year, mainly with funds kindly provided by the Teign Naturalists' Field Club.

The tumuli are four in number and lie close together in a line north and south. They are numbered from south to north. Numbers 1 and 2 are formed of earth; 3 and 4 are cairns of stone.

No. 1 has a diameter of 60 feet.

„ 2	„	„	„	45	„
„ 3	„	„	„	60	„
„ 4	„	„	„	26	„

The earthen barrows are honeycombed with rabbit-holes, and the cairns have been so robbed of their stones that only the stumps of these erections remain.

As there was a depression in the centre of No. 1 indicating a previous examination, an excavation was made ten feet square at this point, and at a depth of six feet a pit sunk in the "calm," or subsoil, was found, which measured four feet by three feet and had a depth of twenty inches.

This pit contained some charcoal and a small flint flake. There was no doubt that this portion of the barrow had been previously examined, for the soil was loose all over the area of the excavation.

From this central excavation trenches were driven north, south, east, and west, in search of further interments, and this resulted in the discovery of a rudely built kistvaen at a distance of ten feet from the northern circumference. This small kistvaen was circular, two feet in diameter, and was roughly put together with small flat stones.

It contained burnt bones, including a small piece of a human skull and a flint flake.

Near the south circumference a small sherd of pottery was found of the Bronze Age type.

At this point the ground slopes, and here the barrow was strengthened by a revetment of large stones. These were covered by the soil of the barrow and were only revealed after digging.

Many hundreds of cartloads of earth were shifted during the exploration, and as nothing short of the removal of the entire barrow would satisfy a complete examination, further work was abandoned in favour of No. 2, which did not present so much evidence of previous disturbance.

Trenches were carried through this barrow (No. 2) east to west and north to south, with an additional trench north-west. All these trenches were enlarged in the centre, so that the total excavations represented a removal of about one half of the contents of the barrow. There were signs that the barrow had been previously dug into, but apparently the previous explorers had never reached the central pit in the "calm," for its contents were quite undisturbed. This contained wood charcoal and small fragments of burnt bone.

Adjoining the pit was an area paved with flat stones—under and between these wood charcoal and burnt bones.

This area of paved stones was four feet under central surface of the barrow and on a level with the lip of central pit.

Two and four feet above this paved area two fragments of bronze were found, but as this part of the barrow is full of rabbit-holes it is impossible to say whether this is their original location. They are fragments only and convey no idea of their original form.

A flint arrow-head was found nine feet from the western circumference and three feet under the sloping surface of the barrow.

The area of paved stones is very similar to that found in a barrow in the parish of Halwill (see vol. xxviii. p. 87).

It may have been a platform used for cremation purposes. Both Nos. 3 and 4 cairns were barren of any result; they were mere heaps of stone only a few inches above ground-level.

Three hundred yards north of the Red Barrows is another ruined cairn, thirty-one feet in diameter, which stands at the head of a ruined triple stone row. This also was examined, but without success.