

BRONZE CELT FOUND NEAR SIDMOUTH.

BY P. O. HUTCHINSON.

(Read at Exeter, July, 1872.)

ON the 10th of April this year, 1872, Mr. Heineken, of Sidmouth, and myself again visited the Cross Dyke. This great work, 2,000 feet long, which crosses the Lyme and Exeter road at right angles, at the site of the Three Horse-shoes Inn, so much resembles the Cross Dykes of British or Saxon construction, as laid down on Long Bredy Down, Askerswell Down, Knowle Hill, and other places in Mr. Charles Warne's Map of Ancient Dorsetshire, as to leave no doubt on the mind that this is a work of precisely similar nature. When I alluded to it at the Honiton meeting in 1868 [*Trans.* ii. 381], I called it simply "The Earthworks," not knowing what it was; but repeated examinations since that time have gone to prove that it was nothing else than a great Cross Dyke; and further, that it had been drawn over the ridge of the hill by the occupiers of Blackbury Castle, opposite which it is placed, to arrest the progress of some enemy advancing from the valley of the Axe. The finding of many sling-stones on both sides of it, exactly resembling those discovered in the cave at Sidbury Castle, have not been without their significance. Before leaving the place in April, Mr. Heineken charged the people at the inn, that if they should turn up any coins or old pieces of metal of any kind, to be sure to take care of them. On hearing afterwards that something had been found, we proceeded again to the spot on the 14th of last June. Mr. Carter, the landlord of the inn, and tenant of the adjoining land, told us that he was last year working in the lane that runs northward from the road, at about 150 yards west of the inn, or about a quarter of a mile west of the tenth mile-stone from Lyme. This lane points towards Blackbury Castle, and is likely to have been the line of communication between the camp and the Cross Dyke. He was digging earth from the ditch close to the

eastern hedge, and throwing the earth on the top of the hedge with his shovel. Along with a spadeful of earth he threw up the celt, but did not perceive it at the time. Some showers of rain subsequently washed it clean. Remembering the charge about old metal given a couple of months before, one of the workmen said that, in passing that way, he had seen something like a piece of old brass lying on the hedge at the spot indicated. Upon this Mr. Carter proceeded thither, and found the celt in the earth he had thrown up. This celt is of simple make, of rude workmanship, and of early type. It is merely a flat piece of bronze, with a slight edging, five-sixteenths of an inch thick, without socket, ears, or flanges. It measures four and a half inches long, and two and three-eighths broad at the widest end; and it weighs seven ounces and a quarter. On both sides there are a number of longitudinal cuts, as if it had been chopped by the sharp edge of another celt. This species of ornamentation is found on similar objects met with in Derbyshire and in Ireland.* The alloy of which it is composed appears to be abundant in copper, the tin being rather deficient in quantity. A short time ago I was looking at a celt of somewhat similar pattern in the Taunton Museum, and I was informed that it appeared to be composed almost entirely of copper. Now, if future research should lead to the conclusion that implements of this type are uniformly deficient in tin, I think that two inferences would necessarily be forced upon us; namely—1st, That such celts were the first, or earliest made of metal; and 2nd, That there was a Copper Age, which preceded the Bronze Age. As yet it is too early to pronounce with any degree of certainty, but there is no harm in bearing the point in mind. This celt is the property of Mr. Heineken, who intends to present it to the Exeter Museum, as one more fact obtained in the ancient history of South-east Devon.

* See "Student and Int. Obs.," v. 275, for an article on Celts by Llewellyn Jewitt.