

TWENTY-SECOND REPORT OF THE BARROW COMMITTEE.

TWENTY-SECOND REPORT of the Committee—consisting of Mr. P. F. S. Amery, Rev. S. Baring-Gould, Dr. Brushfield, Mr. Burnard, Mr. Cecil M. Firth, Mr. J. Brooking-Rowe, and Mr. R. Hansford Worth—appointed to collect and record facts relating to Barrows in Devonshire, and to take steps, where possible, for their investigation.

Edited by R. H. WORTH, Hon. Secretary.

(Read at Sidmouth, July, 1903.)

YOUR Committee is indebted to its member Mr. R. Burnard for practically the whole substance of its Report this year.

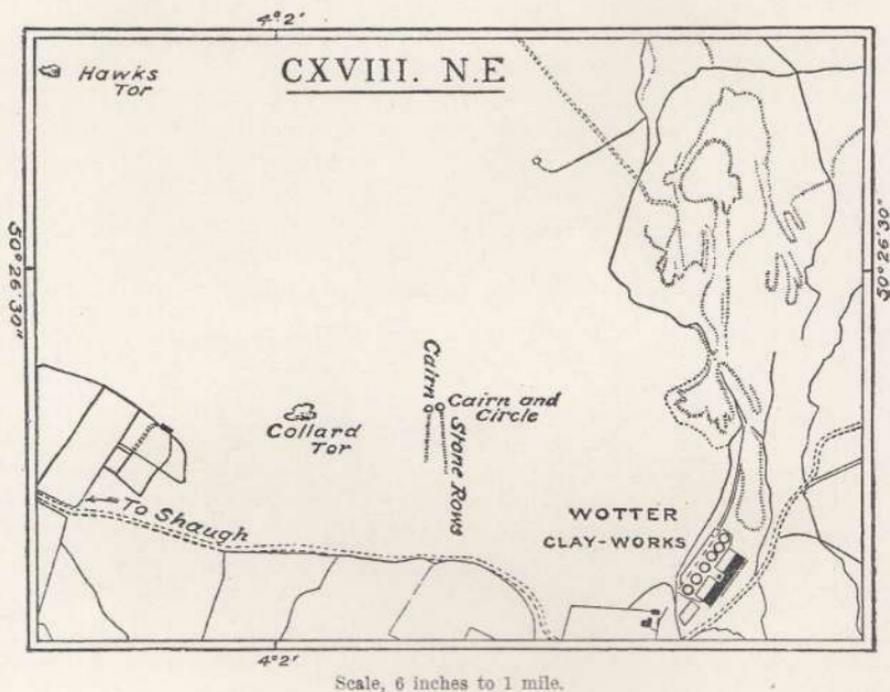
Two features of especial interest are presented—the discovery of charcoal at the foot of a Dartmoor menhir, and of human hair in a Dartmoor kistvaen, the latter under circumstances which may well afford a clue to the true meaning of previously reported finds of a similar character. The difficulty has always been that insufficient detail was preserved by the earlier explorers, and we were faced by the one undoubted fact that hair buried in a Dartmoor soil or subsoil is much too perishable to have endured in recognisable form since prehistoric times, or indeed for any considerable period.

It is a coincidence that following the discussion of this very question in last year's Report we should now have on record this suggestive find.

COLLARD TOR.

In a short paper by the present editor in this volume¹ will be found a reference to two barrows recently discovered on *Collard Tor*, near *Shaugh*—the one with a circle surrounding it, the other without, but each forming the head of a stone row. The plan printed in the paper referred to is also produced here in order to record the exact locality of these barrows.

¹ "Dartmoor Stone Rows," Part VI., by R. HANSFORD WORTH.



The following is Mr. Burnard's contribution.

LAR TOR NEWTAKE.

There are eight small cairns lying in Lar Tor Newtake, south of Lar, or Laugh Tor (6 in. O.S. Devon, 107 N.E.). None are marked on the Ordnance Survey maps. Three of these were examined this spring, and all disclosed pits in the "calm," or subsoil, more or less filled with charcoal.

No. 1, nearest the wall dividing Brimpts and Lar Tor Newtake, a dozen feet in diameter, possessed an oval pit in the "calm" containing a good deal of charcoal.

This pit was 2 feet long, 15 inches wide, and 16 inches deep.

No. 2, nearest the gate leading into Higher Dunnabridge Newtake, was 22 feet in diameter, with a round hole sunk 2 feet deep in the "calm," and with a diameter of 16 inches.

It contained nearly a wheelbarrowful of charcoal.

No. 3 is one of a series of small cairns five in number, and is the most easterly of the set. This also has a pit in the "calm" containing charcoal. No. 2 of this set has been carted away for the sake of its stones, and 4 and 5 are apparently untouched.

There was no ring of stones round either cairn, but all these interment holes were protected and covered by stones leaning inwards, and on the top of these a flat stone was laid (see section of pit in No. 3 Cairn).

There is a small cairn at the foot of the prostrate menhir which stands at the head of a stone row which is partly in Lar Tor Newtake and partly in Brimpts Newtake. This small cairn was explored, and a great quantity of charcoal and peat ashes, or what appeared to be peat ashes, was underneath.

This is the first record of charcoal and ashes at the foot of a Dartmoor menhir.

A ruined cairn was also examined in Brimpts Newtake, but without result.

RING HILL, POSTBRIDGE.

There are two tumps in the ring-shaped enclosure at Ring Hill, Postbridge. They were dug into, and they were found to be small mounds covering some large stones which were partly filling wide and deep pits which had been sunk from 2 to 3 feet into the "calm." They did not appear to be the remains of graves, but rather of pits in which menhirs might have stood, and the stones found in them were used as triggers.

These mounds are in a straight line with the standing stones in Hartland Newtake, which are distant about 100 yards.

SOUSSONS COMMON, POSTBRIDGE.

On Soussons (Southsands) Common, near Postbridge, is a sepulchral circle 28 feet in diameter. The stones composing this are 22 in number—not large stones—the tallest is about 2 feet above ground-level. On digging in the centre a fine kistvaen was uncovered. The cover stone was gone, but side stones of thin, shapely slabs remain. The north end of the kist was built up of small stones, and the south end was formed of a stone which did not reach the floor of the kist by some 10 inches. It, however, acted as a blocking stone and “spreader” to the side stones.

The whole of the kist was filled with “meat” earth. On removing this a layer of flat stones presented itself, and it was at first thought that the bottom of the kist was paved. These stones were 18 inches below the level of the side stones.

They were removed, and the true bottom of the kist was revealed. In the north end of the kist was a cavity, and in this were two large coils of human hair.

An account of this find, together with some of the hair, was sent to Mr. F. T. Elworthy. The latter had no doubt about the human origin of the hair, and this has since been confirmed by microscopical examination. Mr. Elworthy wrote as follows:—

“I think there is no sort of doubt that the deposit was made in comparatively modern times relatively to the kistvaen by someone who knew of the latter and desired to work a spell on the former possessor of the hair. I have referred to the belief that sympathetic magic can be worked by the possession of any article (especially hair) that belonged to a person to whom it is desired to work evil (in my book *The Evil Eye*, p. 71, also p. 416).

“Since writing that I have much more evidence. In Italy it is a well-known rule to avoid leaving in any place any particle of hair, because if it falls under a witch’s eye a curse is sure to follow you. The intention in your deposit was that as the hair was buried and pressed down under flat stones, so the owner of that hair might be caused to pine away and die. You have lighted on a true witch’s piece of work which had no sort of connection with the prehistoric interment.”

This interesting find may throw some light on the report made to Mrs. Bray that human hair had previously been found in Dartmoor kistvaens.

(R. BURNARD.)