

THIRTEENTH REPORT OF THE BARROW COMMITTEE.

THIRTEENTH REPORT of the Barrow Committee, consisting of Mr. P. F. S. Amery, Dr. Brushfield, Mr. P. O. Hutchinson, Mr. E. Parfitt, Mr. J. Brooking Rowe, and Mr. R. N. Worth (Secretary), to collect and record facts relating to Barrows in Devonshire, and to take steps, where possible, for their investigation.

Edited by R. N. WORTH, F.G.S., Hon. Secretary.

(Read at Tiverton, July, 1891.)

THE Report of the Barrow Committee for the present year consists of two contributions, both of which are of considerable interest.

J. BROOKING ROWE, Chairman.
R. N. WORTH, Secretary.

BARROWS ON DARTMOOR.

On the summit of Great Nodden, near the source of the river Lyd, is a small but interesting grave, which, differing in shape and mode of structure from those of the ordinary form, deserves to be recorded, especially as I cannot find that it has been hitherto noticed, although it has been opened and ransacked some years since, and now remains in the condition it was then left.

Wedge-shaped in form, the broad end is semicircular, and the sides are somewhat elliptical, fining off into almost a point.

The dimensions by estimation, for I had no means of taking actual measurements, are about three feet six inches in length by two feet at its broadest; the depth, however, I could not

ascertain, as it had been completely filled in with pieces of slaty stone from the surface of the hill, and with much peaty earth and decayed moss and heather. So that although with my hands I removed as much of the filling as I could, possibly to the depth of eighteen inches, I did not succeed in reaching the bottom of the kist, nor did I find any relics whatever, excepting some fragments of modern earthenware.

This little grave differs from most of those I have seen, in having the sides built up of pieces of slaty stone, so arranged that the cleavage sides of the stone form a fair perpendicular wall all around, no slabs or large stones being used. In this respect it somewhat resembles the little grave that was discovered some years since in Stillman Street, Plymouth, which contained a fine urn of unusually thin ware, half filled with burnt bones—but it differs from that in shape.

It is probable that this grave was once covered with a large barrow or mound of small stones, most of which, however, have been removed to form a large cairn, about twenty feet off. Very few of these stones are of granite, but they mostly consist of the metamorphosed rock of the hill and district. Not far from the grave I found a flint flake and a small borer of white or patinated flint. These were lying close together.

On White Hill, Lydford, are numerous barrows, mostly saucer-shaped, some of which appear to be intact; others have been ransacked; whilst from some every stone has been removed, probably during the formation of the walls of a neighbouring "Newtake," and their former presence is indicated now only by the scars on the moor. I found near these barrows a small but perfect flint knife.

On the adjoining hill, Yellow Mead, is a fine and perfect circle, composed of small stones, its diameter, by estimation, being about thirty-two feet. I could find no break in the wall that could have served for an entrance.

On Black Hill (Gibbet Hill as it is locally called), near Lydford Station, are the remains of a barrow, and the summit of the hill on which it stands has been smoothed off level, affording a considerable area. Near this barrow I found a tolerable sized piece of white chert, from which flakes appear to have been struck off, but I doubt if the piece itself has ever been used as an implement or weapon.

(FRANCIS BRENT.)

CROUCHED INTERMENTS AT MOUNT BATTEN.

The estuary of the Plym (the Cattewater) is bounded on the south, at its outlet into Plymouth Sound, with the rocky peninsula of Mount Batten, which is connected to the mainland by a low-lying isthmus, mainly composed of earth and beach material, forming dwarf cliffs or banks. These at various points are steadily wasted by the waves, chiefly at present on the weaker inner side.

From time to time large quantities of human remains have been found at Batten and its isthmus, and on the mainland immediately adjacent. The most important discovery of this kind was a cemetery of the Late Bronze Age, opened upon in the construction of Fort Stamford. At Batten itself as many as forty skeletons were found in digging the foundations for a house. Human bones too have been frequently exposed by the washing away of the inner bank; and in close proximity to, if not in direct association with, the remnants of a kitchen midden,¹ pieces of funereal pottery have occurred, which are duly recorded in these reports. The bulk of the human remains found can readily be accounted for. Batten, then called Hoe Stert, was one of the places where pest-houses were set up when Plymouth was visited by the plague in 1626, and those who then died were buried close by. Again, there was considerable fighting and slaughter there at the time of the Siege of Plymouth by the Royalists, and those who were then killed were customarily "pitted" where they fell. Further, it was a common practice to bury the frequent bodies washed ashore from the sea, with little ceremony and trouble, near at hand. We cannot, however, so explain the presence of funereal urns: any more than we can include in either category the interments in the Bronze Age cemetery; nor the special facts recently come to light, which seem to claim a place in this report, though every trace of grave mound has long disappeared.

At the western end of Mr. Kelly's shipbuilding yard, on the inner side of the Batten promontory, in Cattewater, the face of the isthmus is an earthen bank, which, next the beach, is not more than four to five feet in height. A skull found here a short time since, was brought to the notice of Mr. W. Gage Tweedy, of Plymouth, and to him we are indebted for initiating investigations, which have resulted in

¹ Vide *Trans. Dev. Ass.* xix. 58.

the discovery of a set of peculiar and highly interesting conditions.

The skull was in an upright position, looking outwards from the bank and facing north-west, and it lay in clean vegetable mould about two feet below the sward of the isthmus, penetrated in all directions by the fine rootlets of the grass. Few traces of other bones were at first visible, but subsequent digging showed that the original interment must have been that of a complete body, for though much of the skeleton had disappeared, there still remained portions of the clavicles, scapulæ, ribs, vertebræ, sundry phalanges, arm bones, including humeri and a radius, and leg bones, including a femur and fibula. While, to a certain extent, approximately in relative position, these bones were not properly in place, and there had evidently been some amount of soil-shifting since the decay of the integuments—a thing not at all unusual in such a situation and easily accounted for. No trace of human handiwork was found, after most careful research.

There are two peculiar features in connection with this discovery—the manner of the interment, and the physical characters of the remains. The body had evidently been buried in a crouching or sitting posture—a contracted interment, vertical instead of horizontal—fronting the estuary; and on enquiry it was ascertained that some eight or nine such skeletons, placed in precisely the same manner—that is, facing the summer setting sun—had been unearthed at or near this spot. The first indication of these interments was usually the appearance of the leg bones in the bank as it crumbled away; and digging back upon them body bones, and at length the skull, would be found. So much for the position of the interment, which is essentially Neolithic in character.

There is nothing about the condition of the bones to give any indication of the period of their deposit; and it must be borne in mind that such physical indicia are very uncertain. Contemporary bones will at times occur in cavern deposits—some of which have lost every trace of animal matter, while others are quite solid and heavy. And in dealing with the undoubted Neolithic bones from the Perth Chwareu caves in Wales, Professor Busk pointed out that while some were fragile, the majority were “as firm as common churchyard bones,” and that some had “quite the natural degree of hardness.” They were lightish yellow, did “not adhere to the tongue,” and afforded “scarcely any earthy



SIDE AND FRONT VIEW OF BATTEN SKULL.

Reproduced from Photographs by Mr. W. Gage Tweedy, B.A.

smell when breathed upon or moistened.”² The Batten bones are more tender than the bulk of these appear to have been; but very much of ordinary churchyard consistency. Some of the neighbouring cave bones are in a very similar state.

The extreme length of the skull (which is slightly under twisted to right by *post mortem* deformation), from the most prominent part of the occipital region to the outer edge of the upper incisors, is 7·18 inches—the true cranial length being 7 inches; its extreme width 5·68 inches—at a point 1·75 inches behind the aural orifice, where the width is 5·38 inches. This orifice (inclusive) is 4 inches from the extreme back of the skull, and about seven-eighths of the bulk of the brain lay behind the aural perpendicular. The height of the cranium is 5·75 inches.

The most striking features of the face are the great size of the orbits, the strongly-marked supraciliary ridge, the lowness of the retreating forehead, and the prominence of the upper part of the nasal bone. The measurements of the orbit of the right eye, which is perfect, are:—Vertical depth 1·5 inches, horizontal breadth 1·4 inches—but the greatest width is slantwise from the nasal suture to the lower part of the cheek bone, 1·75 inches, the transverse diameter at right angles to this being 1·63 inches. The depth of the cavity, within the supraciliary ridge, is about 1·75 inches. This ridge projects ·32 inch beyond the forehead line, and is about ·5 inch—varying somewhat—in depth. The highest rise of the cranium above this ridge, when the skull rests on the occipital condyle, is 1·5 inches, and this it takes 3 inches to attain. When the condyle and floor of the nasal cavity are brought to a level the highest point of the cranium is 2·65 inches above the ridge, and this is 4 inches from the brow. The nose, from the insertion of the nasal bone to the base of the nostrils, is 2 inches, the greatest breadth of the orifice approaching an inch; but the most singular feature here is that on a perpendicular drop of ·31 inch the nasal bone curves rapidly outward ·65 inch. The depth of the upper lip to the edge of the alveolus is ·65 inch; including the teeth, 1 inch. This makes the extreme length of the face with the supraciliary ridge 3·63 inches, or 3·12 inches to the upper rim of the orbit merely. The extreme breadth on the interzygomatic line is 4·5 inches. As the chin depth of the lower jaw, with the teeth, is 1·5 inches, the frontal aspect of the complete skull is decidedly narrow in proportion to its height, and this is

² BOYD DAWKINS, *Cave Hunting*, 168.

emphasized by the size and outward slant of the orbits. The extreme breadth of the upper jaw itself is 2.32 inches, but the outward slope of the molars increases the spread of the teeth to 2.56 inches. The depth to the back of the palate is 2.06 inches, and this is increased to 2.31 inches by the projection of the incisors.

The breadth of the lower jaw at the condyles is 4.88 inches; at the back of the teeth 3 inches. The length from the posterior condyle to the chin is 3.56 inches. The symphysis at the chin is 1.06 inches, at the sides 1.12 inches. The height of the condyles is 2.75 inches, their width 1.57 inches, breadth of notch 1.12 inches. Beyond the fact that this jaw is exceptionally massive, there is nothing peculiar about it. The teeth are fairly regular and normal—4 incisors, 2 canines (small), 2 premolars on each side, 1 molar in right ramus—11 in all. The sockets of the other teeth are absorbed, showing that they were lost a considerable time before death. The points of the incisors and canines are worn flat by use; the molar and premolars retain their tuberculation, but the molar shows signs of decay. There is a notch between the right outer incisor and canine in the lower jaw, into which the right upper canine fits, wedge-like.

One of the chief peculiarities of the skull, however, is connected with the dentition of this upper jaw. There are only two incisors here, and there is no trace that there were ever any more. Both canines are in place. The right maxillary further contains one premolar, the stump of the second molar, and the third molar perfect. In the left maxillary are the second and third molars perfect. The skull was kindly examined for me by Mr. Louis Sexton, L.D.S., and the existence of these abnormal conditions of the incisors clearly ascertained.

To Mr. G. F. Aldous, M.R.C.S., who examined the place where the skull was discovered, and collected such of the remaining bones of the skeleton as could be found, I am greatly indebted for a list, with descriptions and dimensions, which I reproduce. The only other bones that I know of belonging to the skeleton in existence are a broken portion of the other humerus, a fragment of rib, a phalanx, and one of the lumbar vertebrae. Mr. Aldous's list is as follows:—

“*Scapula*, right.

“*Humerus*, right; length $12\frac{3}{8}$ inches.

“*Radius*, right; from the head to the tip of styloid process $9\frac{1}{2}$.

“*Os innominatum*, left.

"*Femur*, left; length, from the tip of the great trochanter to the lowest point midway between the two condyles, 16 inches; length, from the depression (for ligamentum teres) to the lowest point of internal condyle, $16\frac{3}{8}$ inches. (This is probably a bone of a woman past middle age.)

"*Fibula*, left.

"*Clavicles*, right and left (small). The articular ends are absent, so no correct measurement is possible.

"*Ribs*, 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 8, 11, and 12.

"*Metatarsal bones*, left, 2, 4, 5.

"*Phalanx*, first left great toe; first left second toe."

From these descriptions it will be gathered that the original owner of the skull could hardly have been classed among the beauties of her time, unless ideas of taste then were very different to what they are now. The shallow and retreating forehead, beetling brow, slanting, deep-set eyes, prognathous and massive jaws, must have combined to form a most forbidding whole. The head was large in proportion to the body, and it certainly contained plenty of brains, but we have no guarantee that their quality was equal to their bulk.

In dimensions the skull approaches very closely to the Perthi Chwareu skulls described by Professor Busk.³ Their mean dimensions were:—Length 7·07 inches, breadth 5·5 inches, height 5·6 inches; while an allied skull from the Cefn tumulus was 7·2 inches long, 5·6 inches broad, and 5·7 inches high. These figures correspond very closely with the Batten 7·18, 5·68, and 5·75 inches respectively. The Perthi Chwareu skulls, however, are distinctly dolichocephalic; but the Batten skull, while approaching that form, is rather of a middle character; and its facial features are really brachycephalic.⁴ The absolute gross dimensions (length, breadth, and height) of the Batten skull are 18·61 inches, against the Perthi Chwareu mean of 18·65.

We get another very important link in the peculiar conformation of the nasal bones. Professor Busk, in describing skulls from the Cefn tumulus,⁵ remarks of one that the nasals "project almost, if not quite, horizontally forward, with a rapid curve at first, and then straight out"; a second presenting the same peculiarity, and a third probably being in the same category. In dealing with this "extraordinary projec-

³ Vide *Cave Hunting*, 168 *et supra*.

⁴ A skull from a Stone Age grave is figured by Nilsson in his *Stone Age*, which is very similar in character, but less exaggerated in detail. (p. 230 pl. xii.)

⁵ *Cave Hunting*, 180.

tion" he likewise recalls the very similar condition in the "old man" of Cro-Magnon, in whom "the ridge of the nose, slightly depressed at its base, rises again almost immediately, and advances boldly forward, making a rapid curve."⁶

The owner of the Batten skull resembles the Welsh Neolithic cave folk also in lowness of stature, and in relative disproportion of head and body. The length of the Batten femur, 16.625 inches, even allowing for difference of sex, compares unfavourably with the 18.2 inches of the one perfect Perthi Chwareu femur, described by Professor Busk; but Mr. Boyd Dawkins notes others as ranging from sixteen to eighteen inches, so that the general resemblance here also is very striking. The height of the Batten individual may be fairly estimated at slightly less than five feet. The shortest of the Perthi Chwareu folk was about four feet ten inches, the tallest five feet six inches. All these coincidences seem too close and repeated to be simply accidental, and their cumulative force is strong.

So far all the known facts support the hypothesis that these remains from Batten date from Neolithic times, and nothing has been ascertained that does not harmonize with this view.

The mingling of the dolichocephalic and brachycephalic characters, due doubtless to a crossing of the two races, has been observed elsewhere.

The method of burial is exactly set forth in the following description of Neolithic interments in the Belgian cave of Chavaux⁷:—

"The bodies had been interred in the crouching posture, their heads resting on their arms and their faces turned towards the valley."

I am indebted to Mr. W. Gage Tweedy for the admirable photographs of the skull, from which the accompanying illustrations are taken. And but for his appreciation of the value of the "find" this description would never have been written, and a most interesting series of facts wholly lost to science.

(R. N. WORTH.)

⁶ *Cave Hunting*, 184.

⁷ *Ibid.*, 217.