

SIXTEENTH REPORT OF THE BARROW COMMITTEE.

SIXTEENTH REPORT of the Committee, consisting of Mr. P. F. S. Amery, Rev. S. Baring-Gould, Dr. Brushfield, Mr. R. Burnard, Mr. P. O. Hutchinson, 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 Kingsbridge, July, 1897.)

THE main feature of your Committee's sixteenth annual report will be found to be the exploration of an undisturbed kistvaen on Watern Down by Mr. R. Burnard.

In view of the exceptional, if not unique, discovery of an unopened kistvaen in a Dartmoor barrow of the smaller type, it is an especial matter of congratulation that this find should have fallen to the lot of an antiquarian, and that the exploration should have accordingly been conducted on scientific lines.

Your Committee has from time to time heard reports of the opening of undisturbed kistvaens, but in every case, of late at least, by utterly unskilled hands, the more part having been opened in the course of agricultural operations.

The only known recent instance of the finding of a kistvaen apparently undisturbed in one of the smaller barrows occurred some years since.

The kist was situated in one of the fields of Nun's Cross Farm, near Princetown, and was opened by the son of the occupier of the farm.

When the circumstance became known, immediate inquiries were instituted, but no clear statement of the nature of the contents of the kist was obtainable, and no attempt

had been made to preserve any object or objects which may have been found within it.

The kist was discovered by accident, and the finder having satisfied himself as to the absence of "treasure," destroyed it as a hindrance to agricultural operations.

EXPLORATION OF AN UNDISTURBED KISTVAEN ON DARTMOOR.

On April 29th last, whilst examining some hut circles near the Stone Row on Watern Down (99 N.E. Ordnance Survey) with the Rev. S. Baring-Gould, I was fortunate enough to discover a small barrow which appeared to be intact. It lies close to the north side of the grassy trackway which leads from Willanhead and Hurston (89 S.E.) to King's Oven, nearly opposite the ruined buildings of West Vitifer Mine, and about 400 yards N.E. of the northern end of the Stone Row. This portion of the Down is known as Chagford Common. The diameter of the barrow is 15 feet, and the height in the centre about 18 inches.

It was not easily distinguishable from the surface of the ground, for there is no circle of stones around the barrow to proclaim its sepulchral character. What drew my attention to it first was a small upright and some fallen stones, which seemed to be portions of a miniature stone row pointing to the barrow. These on investigation did not bear out this interpretation. It is somewhat remarkable that this small barrow should have escaped spoliation, for it is close to a trackway which must have been used for a long period by wayfarers proceeding from the moorland farms in Chagford parish to King's Oven.

On opening the barrow a large flat stone was found in the centre, weighing some 6 to 7 cwt. This was trigged, and appeared to cover something. Surrounding this was an oblong enclosure formed of a series of stones lying inwards layer on layer. These were entirely covered by the barrow, and therefore invisible until opened out by the spade.

As the cover-stone was too heavy to lift without a lever, and as the day was advancing, the excavation was covered up and concealed with "vags," and operations were suspended until next day, which unfortunately opened with much rain, and nothing could be done until the afternoon. On resuming operations next day, at which were present Mrs. O. L. Munday, Rev. S. Baring-Gould, George French, Richard French, and the writer, the cover-stone was soon prized off its triggers and removed, disclosing the four walls

of a small kistvaen, 3 feet 6 inches long and 2 feet 3 inches to 2 feet 6 inches wide. It was full of soil. The top was evidently black peaty earth, which had washed in; but below this thin layer the kist was filled with "calm," or subsoil, in which could be seen here and there small fragments of wood-charcoal. This filling was compact, and was probably trodden or lightly rammed in.

The presence of the charcoal made us hopeful that something would be found in the kist, but we were not prepared, on lifting the cover, to find that the builders of the kist had performed the apparently unnecessary operation of filling it up with the "calm" they had dug out of the hole in which the kist was built.

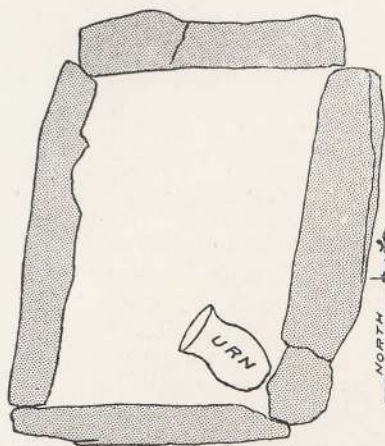
This filling was carefully removed and sifted, and before proceeding far a tiny fragment of pottery was turned up containing traces of a pattern, and later on it was found that there was a small urn lying on its side in the S.E. angle of the kist, with its mouth pointing to the N.W. angle. It was lying 4 inches above the floor of the kist, which was 2 feet deep, and had evidently been placed on its side, for its bottom was set close into the angle, and it was resting on a bed of "calm." (See Plate I.)

The urn was carefully lifted from its resting-place, having previously been measured and sketched, but it was so water-logged that it subsequently broke up. It has, however, been restored by an expert on the British Museum staff, and now presents practically no trace of breakage.

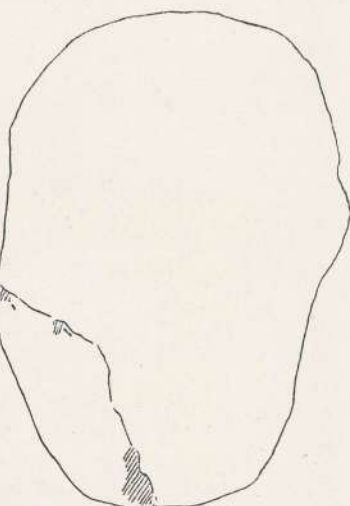
From the sketches made at the time of its discovery and a study of the sherds, Mr. R. H. Worth has drawn the vessel to scale, fully restored, and the reproduction here given is one-half of the original size. (See Plate II.)

The urn is 10 inches high with the following diameters: mouth, 7 inches; neck, $5\frac{1}{2}$ inches; body, 7 inches. The wall of the vessel is three-eighths of an inch thick. The paste is mostly clay mixed with a small proportion of apparently soft fragments of partially decomposed granite. Very little quartz is visible. The pottery is a light chocolate-brown colour, and was hand-made. The ornamentation consists of a series of impressions forming short U-shaped dots arranged in parallel and diagonal lines, produced by some instrument prepared for this purpose—half of a split bird-bone would do admirably. The top of the rim is ornamented in the same manner.

Nothing was found on carefully sifting the filling of the kist—no trace of bone, bone ash, implements, or weapons.



PLAN OF KIST
 SHEWING POSITION OF URN



COVER STONE

SCALE 2 FEET TO 1 INCH

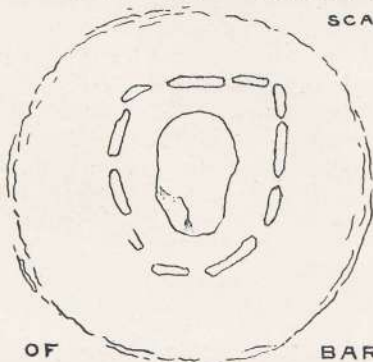


SECTION



SECTION OF BARROW

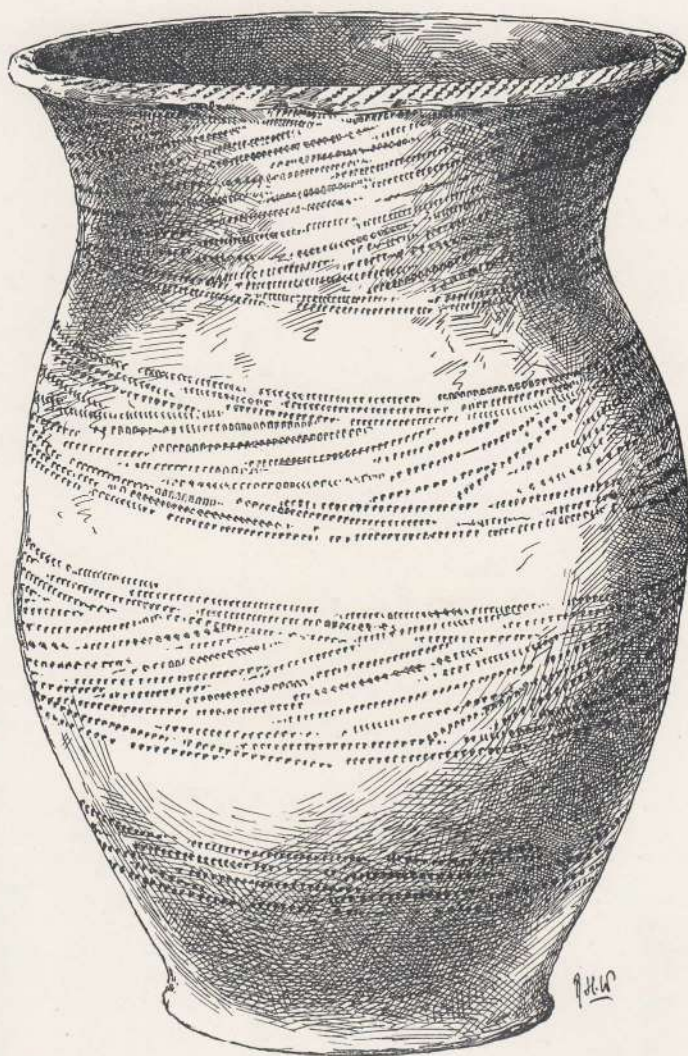
SCALE 4 FT TO 1 IN



PLAN OF BARROW

SCALE 8 FT TO 1 IN .

PLATE II.



URN.

SCALE $\frac{1}{2}$

The kist was built to receive the urn, which was placed as previously described, was carefully filled in with "calm" mixed with a little wood-charcoal, covered with a large flat stone, surrounded with stones leaning inwards towards the kist, and the whole covered with a barrow of earth 15 feet in diameter, and which was doubtless higher in the centre than when opened, for it has probably wasted down by the action of the weather and the trampling of cattle. All this trouble was taken to bury this small urn containing within it when air-dry 3 lbs. of what looked like light brown soil flecked with a little black carbonaceous matter.

The interest now centres in the contents of the urn; so this was carefully sampled and analysed by my friend, Mr. H. S. Billing, F.I.C., with the following result:—

Moisture	2.48	per cent.
Water of Combination	} 7.42	"
Organic Matter, &c. (loss on ignition)		
Insoluble Matter (silica, quartz)	83.12	"
Oxide of Iron (Fe_2O_3)	1.81	"
Alumina (Al_2O_3)	4.22	"
Lime (CaO)13	"
Phosphoric Acid (P_2O_5)19	"
Undetermined—Alkalies, Magnesia, &c.63	"
	<u>100.00</u>	"

The striking features of this analysis are the large amount of insoluble matter, and the small amount of phosphoric acid and lime contained in the sample.

The microscopical examination gave no trace of bone or bone ash, and it was found that the black carbonaceous matter was adhering to fragments of quartz, and was simply organic matter containing no lime.

These results are curious and puzzling, for there is no evidence whatever of the urn containing any remains of a cremated body.

If bone or bone ash had been placed in the urn, and these still remained, both the chemical examination and the microscope would have disclosed it.

The phosphoric acid and lime, which the analysis shows to be present in small quantities, cannot safely be ascribed to bone origin, for it is possible for such to be derived from the decomposition of granitic matter, or of food which *may* have been placed in the urn. There are features connected with these small Dartmoor barrows which are extremely

curious, and it is to be hoped that the Committee will find further untouched examples, the exploration of which it is to be hoped will throw more light on the matter.

At present it is wise to abstain from drawing any deductions from the slender material thus far accumulated.

Mr. R. H. Worth has subjected small fragments of the urn to a microscopical examination, and his report is that the paste has been made from selected clay, there being no added gravel and little, if any, natural. It contains but little iron oxide.

This find of an unexplored kistvaen is an important one, for it is the first recorded exploration of an undisturbed Dartmoor barrow of the smaller type which has yielded definite results.

Mr. Spence Bate and Captain Oliver explored a cairn near Pen Beacon, with a diameter of 50 feet by 45 feet, which contained an imperfect kist, and in it an oval-shaped implement of yellowish white soft clay-slate $3\frac{1}{2}$ inches long and 1 inch wide, together with some sherds of an urn with a mouth diameter of 8 inches. These sherds are described as being made of coarse clay mixed with quartz.¹ Mr. Spence Bate and Mr. J. Brooking Rowe conducted the exploration of the large tumuli on Hameldon, finding the remains of a bronze dagger with a highly ornamented amber pommel, comminuted bone, and a palatal fang of a human upper molar tooth which had been subjected to fire, also a flint flake.

The Rev. S. Baring-Gould has reported the examination of three small barrows on Black Down, Lydford, with excavations in the subsoil containing ashes and charcoal;² and the writer reported last year a similar result in a small barrow in Stannon Bottom, with the addition of burnt bones and a sharp-pointed piece of flint.

In 1878 Mr. S. H. Slade found an unopened cairn, 30 feet in diameter, at Thornworthy. In this were two kistvaens. One is described as being full, or almost so, of very black soil, in which a flint implement was found some weeks after it was opened. The other was exposed to the cover-stone and then left for some days, with the result that some unauthorised person rifled it, and no record exists of this pillage. The contents of the kist which had been thrown out was subsequently raked over, and some sherds of rude hand-made pottery and two flint chips were recovered.³

¹ *Trans. Dev. Assoc.* vol. v.

² *Ibid.* vol. xx.

³ *Ibid.* vol. xii.

It is much to be regretted that these kistvaens were not thoroughly and continuously explored.

The fact that one of these was almost filled with black-looking soil indicates that the similar filling of the kistvaen on Watern Down with subsoil mixed with fragments of wood-charcoal is not an isolated instance, but points in the direction of this being at times a customary proceeding. Should this turn out to be the case, an unexpected contribution to our knowledge of Dartmoor kistvaens will have been made.

A small barrow was opened by Mr. R. H. Worth at Shaugh Lake, and is reported in last Barrow Committee's Report. This contained nothing but a platform or hearth of granite, with a rounded flint pebble lying on it. Another opened at Cosdon gave purely negative results.

(ROBERT BURNARD.)