

the paired stones of the West Kennett Avenue at Avebury, the supposedly male and female elements (*Plate 9*).

Stanton Drew, like Avebury, is situated down in the valley bottom in close association with a river. But the two avenues at Stanton Drew both end, as far as can be seen, at the edge of a channel of the River Chew.

Finally, for the sake of future archæologists, it is worth recording that a very large old elm tree approximately at the centre of the Great Circle was finally felled and removed in 1963. Its removal caused a major disturbance in the central area where its presence had certainly destroyed any archæological subsoil features that may have been there.

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*Trial Excavations at and the Pleistocene Fauna from the Long Hole, Cheddar, Somerset.* (N.G.R. ST 46655388. U.B.S.S. Catalogue No. M 21.) This cave lies 120 ft. above the main show cave at Cheddar that is generally known as Gough's Cave. It is part of the high-level system of the underground drainage and has long been abandoned by the stream. The mouth is about 20 ft. wide and 10 ft. high and overlooks the bottom of Cheddar Gorge. Beyond the mouth it is connected with Gough's Old Cave (Tratman, 1960) by a large circular funnel leading nearly vertically down to the lower cave. Collapse of the material filling this was triggered off by excavations made by Gough to make the lower cave into a show cave. Beyond this shaft there was formerly a steep scree slope down to the level of the road. This slope was known as the Slitter. This great mass of scree has now gone. It yielded, from time to time, several Bronze Age items of which a double-looped palstave is in the museum at the show cave. The scree has also yielded Romano-British pottery and some of this is also in the museum. The Long Hole itself had many Roman coins (Boon, 1958), including a hoard, and indeed the cave is frequently described locally as "The Roman Cave".

At the mouth there is ordinarily a copious drip on the right side quite sufficient to form a water supply for a small community. Just inside the entrance arch, on the right, is an opening in the floor which leads down into the roof of the inner part of Gough's Old Cave. The floor rises gently and after about 100 ft. another passage is seen with a boulder floor sloping down on the right. This passage descends steeply and is eventually connected with the top of "The Fonts" in the main show cave. (The connexion is blocked with a thick boulder choke.) Opposite this passage, and thus on the left, is a very steeply rising rift passage in the roof. The floor of the main cave continues to rise, in places quite steeply, to where a tricky little climb of 15-20 ft. leads up into the higher level, and one passage off this has living tree roots in its mud filling, so the surface is not far away.

As both the lower caves had yielded important remains including those of the Late Pleistocene, it was thought that the Long Hole would be worth excavating in spite of the known disturbance that had taken place. Just inside the entrance a trial trench 4 ft. wide was dug to rock. It was soon found that the whole deposit had been completely disturbed. No objects, other than obviously modern ones, were found, not even animal bones.

A second trench, 40 ft. further in, produced the same evidence of complete disturbance.

A third trench near the limit of the twilight zone was dug with the aid of artificial light. Rock was encountered a few inches down on the left side, looking in, and at a somewhat greater depth on the right, where it was noted that two thin stalagmite floors had been broken through by earlier diggers. Nothing worth recording was found.

It had been noted on various visits over a number of years that bits of ancient-looking bone had fallen out of the roof rift already mentioned on the left. This passage ascends very steeply and it is necessary to jam oneself between its walls to prevent a too rapid descent to the floor of the main cave. At the top of the accessible part is a loose angular limestone scree, quite unweathered and with only a small amount of fine material. It is dangerously unstable and digging it from below is risky work. However, a few remains were found and subsequently identified. They were lemming (*Dicrostonyx gulelmi*) (a skull and three mandibles), ox tibia, part of a canine of a large carnivore (almost certainly lion), the pelvic bone of a large hare and a gnawed rib fragment probably reindeer.

The survey of the cave shows that it is running roughly parallel to the cliff face of the Gorge, so that the rift must open to the surface close to the lip of the Gorge or

on the plateau above. In either case excavation would be impossible because of the certain risk of dislodging material down into the very popular tourist roadway at the bottom of the Gorge. So for the time being the Pleistocene deposit can only be tackled by the risky process of attacking it from the bottom. Even so, only minimal information would be obtained from what is obviously a talus scree of thermoclastic origin.

The cave is also used by foxes, and a favourite spot for them to eat their dinners is under this rift, so that it is possible to have Pleistocene bones mixed up with recent chicken bones.

On the surface of the descending passage on the right were found part of a scapula and two phalanges of fallow deer (*Dama dama*) and the mandible of black rat (*Rattus rattus*). Further down the same passage under a stone were found, by members of the Axbridge Caving Club, two teeth and bones of bear (presumably *Ursus arctos*), a metapodial of fox and a calcaneum of sheep or goat. The two last had a much more recent appearance than the heavily mineralized bear bones, which represented a young adult and a cub. All the bones were said to have been found together.

All the bones from the roof rift were very heavily mineralized and friable.

Fallow deer and rat from the surface of the right passage pose a problem. The deer bones indicate a date about the end of the last Interglacial. However, the black rat is an equivocal find as it is considered to have arrived in England within historical times (e.g., Barrett-Hamilton and Hinton, 1916, p. 588) and no other specimen has yet been identified from any Pleistocene site in Britain. It would be easy to write this specimen off as a modern intrusion were it not that its state of preservation, including a partial coating of stalagmite and the fact that the empirical test of adhesion to the lip when pressed thereon was positive, seems to be identical with the undoubted Pleistocene remains from the roof fissure. All one can do under the circumstances of the find is to place it in a suspense account. One cannot, because of the circumstances of the discovery, aver that it is of Pleistocene date.

The total disturbance of the floor deposits in the cave as far back as the limit of the twilight zone from the mouth and the absence of any pieces of bone in these floor deposits seem to indicate that the Pleistocene remains have all come from the roof fissure. Obviously those found in the right passage cannot be considered as being stratifically undisturbed. Taken as a whole the Pleistocene fauna belongs to the end of the last Interglacial or perhaps the beginning of the last glaciation itself. Some degree of admixture might be expected in a deposit found in a steeply sloping fissure.

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*Roman (?) Lead from Merlin's Cave, Wye Valley.* (SO 557153.) Accounts of this cave have appeared in *Proceedings* in the past (Hewer, 1925] and 1926; Phillips, 1931). Only a very brief recapitulation of these accounts is necessary. There was much disturbance. There had been occupation periods from late Neolithic/Beaker times to Romano-British times. The last occupation was quite long. There had been a considerable time lag between the end of the Iron Age "A" occupation and the beginning of the Romano-British one for which coins indicate a date around A.D. 330-335 though an early coin dated from A.D. 71-72. The lead specimen (Hewer, 1926, p. 218) came from a disturbed area and was probably Roman.

In 1963 Dr. Gordon Warwick drew my attention to a report on this specimen by Friend and Thorneycroft (1929), but as this report appeared in a journal not generally read by archaeologists and was not referred to by Phillips (1931) it has been thought desirable to reprint a summary of it here.

"(13). Lead from Merlin's Cave (? A.D. 100-A.D. 400). This is an irregular lump of metal weighing approximately 100 gm. from Merlin's Cave in the Wye Valley . . . [it is regarded] as probably [of] Romano-British date though the possibility of its being of earlier origin is not excluded. 32.26 gm. of metal was cupelled, yielding a silver bead weighing 0.0085 gm. equivalent to 0.0263 per cent. . . Its silver content was similar to that . . . of the Blagdon [Somerset] pig of Roman lead analysed by Gowland [0.0254 per cent]."

The authors go on to state (p. 116) that the Merlin's specimen had such a high silver content that it had not been desilvered. They also remark upon the low silver content of Somerset galena and that pre-Roman lead was not desilvered.