

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.

I am greatly indebted to Dr. R. J. G. Savage and Dr. Anthony Sutcliffe for much assistance in the identification of the remains. The Society is grateful to the Marquis of Bath for permission to excavate in the cave and to Mr. G. Robertson, manager of the Cheddar Caves, and his staff for assistance in various ways.

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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.

There is, of course, no indication that the lead came from Somerset (Mendips) and indeed is more likely to have been derived from local sources known to have been worked in Roman times (e.g. Tylecote, 1962, *Fig. 13*).

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*Secondary Neolithic and Roman Site at Binegar, Somerset.* (ST 61394968.) In the garden of No. 1 Dalleston in 1964 Mr Dudden (tenant) found a quantity of Roman pottery and flint and chert implements. These were all found in that part of the garden west of the house. No buildings or remains are visible nor, so far, have any foundations been exposed in gardening trenches carried down to 18 in., at which level most of the pottery occurs. No pottery has been found in the gardens of houses immediately to the north and so the main site is probably to the south and where Mr. Dudden's garden extends across the back of some old cottages. The pottery, which represents at least thirty-two vessels, has been examined by Mr. Barry Cunliffe (University of Bristol) and pronounced as being a typical 4th-century collection. It contains typical straight-sided shallow dishes, bead rim bowls and other forms. The vessels include ware from Congresbury and New Forest kilns. The pottery is very fragmentary and much of it is badly weathered. Obviously the material has been dug over several times.

The site is of considerable interest as Wicks (1923) records his opinion that the road past the house is a minor Roman road joining, in the south, the Charterhouse—Old Sarum road about 300 yd. east of Whitnell Corner at ST 59924860 and running thence roughly north-east. Preliminary investigations by the author confirm Wicks's view that this is a minor Roman road but much detailed field-work is necessary to trace its extensions to the north-east and south-west.

About 100 pieces of flint and chert have been found. They are very fragmentary and battered in some cases. There seems to have been a great economy in their use for so many of poor quality flint or chert show signs of secondary working. In the collections are three steep end-scrapers, one unfinished, parts of two flat, small discoidal scrapers, part of a retouched knife and what seems to be part of a *petit tranchet* derivative. This little series is consistent within itself and consistent with a late Secondary Neolithic/Beaker age.

The collection is now housed with the Society.

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*Decoy Mounds on Blackdown, Mendip, Somerset.* Several enquiries about these mounds are made each year and as no easily available record about them exists an account of them is here set forth.

During the war, 1939–1945, a series of small mounds were set up on Blackdown. They consist of heaps of peaty turf cut from the surface in a circular form and piled in the centre of the circle so that the mound so formed is encircled by a shallow ditch. Each is about 12 ft. in diameter and each was, originally, about 5 ft. high but are now, 1966, much lower due in part to simple subsidence and in part to burning as they are composed largely of peat.

Their arrangement is in long double rows running in the main east–west but with other rows approximately north–south. They stretch from Charterhouse on the east to Shipham on the west. The whole is said to have been set up as a decoy for enemy aircraft so that the rows were presumably meant to represent a town or railway layout. The mounds were each wired to have a dim lamp lighted on them. These could be switched on to represent “black-out” lighting.

In addition, several great masses of inflammable material were placed ready to fire to imitate, it is supposed, fires in a town. It is doubtful if the mounds' system served their purpose as only one stick of four bombs was dropped anywhere near them. The craters of the bombs are well down the north slope of Blackdown.

Now the mounds are slowly decaying but are still prominent enough to puzzle the casual visitor and provide a trap for the unwary field archaeologist. At present their character and distribution make them readily distinguishable from the series of tumuli, presumably of Bronze Age date, which are distributed along the top of Blackdown. But in course of time these modern mounds will come to look like prehistoric structures, though their size and arrangement should prevent them being taken as such except by someone obsessed with alignments of prehistoric date.

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