

## Third Report on Rowberrow Cavern.

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Two short accounts of Rowberrow Cavern and its excavation have already appeared in these Proceedings.<sup>1</sup> It has not been possible to continue the work since August, 1923, but the owner has now kindly given permission for it to be resumed.

### EXCAVATION.

A further 11 tons of clay and stones have been removed and sorted. The total now exceeds 200 tons, of which about two-thirds has been derived from the cave, the remainder from the Barrow Run. All the material from the cave and from the adjacent 10 feet (approximately) of the Barrow Run has been sorted: and in addition frequent large samples of the remainder, which were invariably barren of objects of interest from an archaeological point of view. The extent of the excavations is shown in figure 9 (plan and elevation).

The deeper strata have not been reached since the digging of the original trial pit, it having been decided to clear first a large area of the cave to the depth of the "Cemented Floor," the dividing line between disturbed and undisturbed deposits.

### STRATIFICATION.

(Fig. 10.)

Considerable additions must be made to the previous account.<sup>2</sup> The layers are as follows:

- I. *Humus*, 3-ins. thick, present only near the cave mouth.
- II. *First Clay and Stones layer*. 2½ to 4 feet thick. Most of the clay has entered from the hillside via the mouth, or through fissures in the roof; some is derived from weathering of the conglomerate roof and walls, which are also the source of the stones. Various small hearths, mediæval and modern, are present. The contents are chiefly bones of domestic animals, but owing to disturbance by badger and rabbit, a considerable number of articles of most types occurring in the first four layers are found in this one.

IIa. *The Grey Hearth*. It has been mentioned that the maximum incidence of Romano-British pottery and coins was in the lowest foot of layer II, and the hypothesis that an occupation level had existed at this depth was proposed.<sup>3</sup> Recently a definite greyish

<sup>1</sup> Proceedings, Vol. I, Nos. 2 and 3.

<sup>2</sup> *ibid.*, No. 2.

<sup>3</sup> *ibid.*, No. 3.

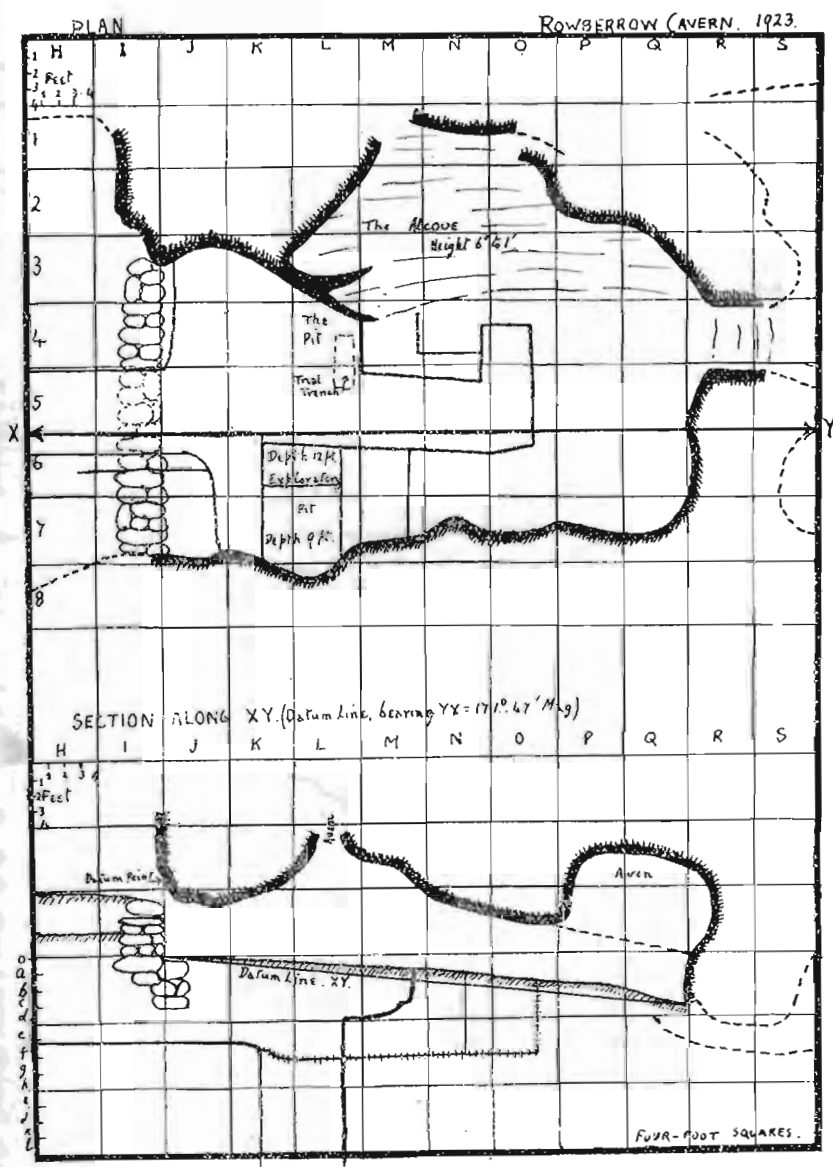


FIG. 9.

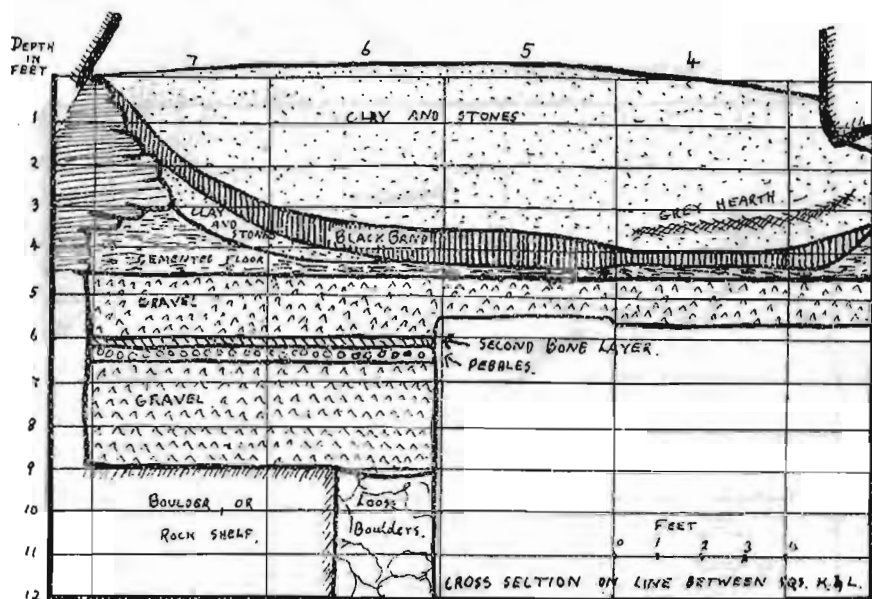


FIG. 10.

hearth was found in J.K. 3 and 4. It lay at a depth of 3 to 3½ feet, was about 3-ins. in thickness, and was separated by rather more than 3-ins. of reddish earth from the Black Band. It contained Romano-British pottery; pottery decorators and bones of domestic animals and deer, many charred. The colour was due to charcoal. The hearth was disturbed in most places, and contained fragments of waste iron similar to that in the Black Band, but these were few.

III. *The Black Band.* This layer rarely exceeds 6 ins. in thickness. It comes to the surface on the Western<sup>4</sup> side of the cave, where it lies upon a stalagmite shelf, but it is usually found at a depth of about 4 feet. Traced towards the back of the cave it becomes thinner, and seems to disappear in the squares marked N on the plan; its limit in the opposite direction is probably marked by traces of an occupation level found in the Barrow Run, 10 feet in front of the cave mouth. In squares L 3 and 4 it filled a pit, apparently dug to a depth of 18-ins. through the Cemented Floor, at the bottom of which flat stones had been laid to form a floor. \* The upper surfaces of some of these stones appeared to have been fired, and at least one had iron fused on to it. The pit contained much slag and char-

<sup>4</sup> Owing to an inaccurate compass bearing, possibly due to the proximity of iron in the Black Band, the orientation of the cave given in the first account was not correct.

coal, but few bones and little pottery : it may have been a furnace.

The colour of the Black Band is due to charcoal and iron, both of which are very abundant. The latter occurs chiefly in a partly-smelted form, often mixed with charcoal fragments. The other characteristic contents of the layer are pottery of La Tène type, and bones chiefly of domestic animals and deer, very many being charred.

IV. *Second Clay and Stones layer.* Similar to the First, this layer separates the Black Band from the Cemented Floor in a few places, in one or two of which it was undisturbed. Its maximum thickness was a foot. In undisturbed areas its only contents were flint implements of Neolithic type, and a very few bone fragments. It also fills the gaps and cracks in the Cemented Floor.

Contents: To judge by the presence of a stalagmite crust, most, if not all, of the flint implements found in the cave may belong to this layer, or to the extreme upper surface of the next ; and also the perforated oyster shell, bones of horse, deer, badger, fox and rabbit, some charred ; a few rodent bones, not yet identified ; snail shells of a type still found in the cave, and a little charcoal.

V. *The Cemented Floor* is an incomplete breccia floor, composed of stones of varying size, with red clay, cemented together by stalagmite. The stones appear to be derived from the roof of the cave. It seems likely that the lime-salts were dissolved from the stalactite which once covered much of the roof, and redeposited in this Floor ; the general deposit of stalactite on the roof and walls being of much earlier date and corresponding with the stalagmite on the boulders in layer X.

The Cemented Floor varies from nothing to 6-ins. in thickness, except along the Western wall, where it forms a shelf more than 3 feet thick. The lower surface of shelf and floor seems to be approximately a horizontal plane, at a depth of 4 to 5 feet below the surface of the present deposit.

It is probable that this layer was of relatively slow formation, and therefore the layers below it of considerable age, for :

(a) When the Black Band began to be laid down, the deposit of stalagmite had ceased. Cessation of a deposit is likely to be gradual, provided the floor remains dry enough, and the drips continue.

(b) Thick areas of the floor do not correspond to modern drips.

(c) If the material lying beneath this floor is gravel of the cave stream, as seems likely, then the main valley in front of the entrance

must have been deepened, say, 30 feet, and two lateral valleys over 40 feet deep have been formed since the period represented by the under surface of the floor.

The contents include : One chip of flint, probably of human origin, found 2-ins. deep in the top of a stalagmite boss ; (in such a site, two inches may be only the equivalent of a film elsewhere) ; snail shells, unidentified ; and numerous fragments of rodent bones, only two of which are identifiable ; they are a lower incisor of the long-tailed field mouse, and a metacarpal of rabbit.<sup>5</sup> Both of these came from the upper surface of the stalagmite. In some places fragments of snail shells are so numerous, and complete shells so rare, as to suggest the agency of birds.

VI. *The Upper "Subangular" Gravel*,  $1\frac{1}{2}$  to 2 feet thick. This layer is composed, I think, of débris from the conglomerate, not much rolled. The upper part is scarcely at all stratified, the lower part well. This and subsequent layers have only been exposed by the trial pit ; all were barren in the small area examined, with the exception of VII.

VII. *The Second Bone Layer*, 3-ins. thick. This is merely a stratum of the last, at a depth of 6 feet below the present surface, in which a few tiny fragments of bone were found. They were probably mammalian ; it is uncertain whether they had been rolled.

VIII. *Pebbles* ; a 4-in. thick layer of small rounded pebbles of rather uniform size.

IX. *The Lower "Subangular" Gravel*, 2 to  $2\frac{1}{2}$  feet thick. This is well stratified.

X. *A flat rock surface*, either a very large boulder or a solid shelf, was found at a depth of 9 feet on the Western side of the pit ; but nearer the centre of the cave there were loose conglomerate boulders, some stalagmite-covered. Between these were air-spaces, scantily filled by gravel. A rod was thrust in, it is said, to a total depth of 10 feet amongst them, but only the upper three feet were examined.

## FINDS.

### HUMAN BONES.

A canine tooth was found in the third foot. Of the four fragments of human bones found, three lay in the First Clay and Stones layer ; the other was found at the depth of the Second Bone layer, but beneath recently-fallen earth. Since so few have been found in the large area of superficial material excavated and these in the only

<sup>5</sup> Kindly identified by M. A. C. Hinton, Esq.

two places where disturbance is known to have extended below the Cemented Floor, it is possible that all were derived from some layer below that floor.

#### ANIMAL BONES.

New species identified are : Cat (? wild) ; bank vole : bat (sp.) ; long-tailed field mouse.

#### POTTERY.

Although a little more Romano-British and ?La Tène pottery has been found, no vessels can be reconstructed.

Two or three fragments resemble Bronze Age material. One of these is reddish, and bears a pattern composed of dotted lines, forming chevrons. The dots were made by an instrument with a somewhat rectangular end.

#### BONE ARTIFACTS.

(Plate II.)

These are mostly potter's implements.

No. 5 is a polished fragment of compact bone, closely resembling Romano-British pottery liners recently found at Keynsham, but having a fine chisel-like point.

No. 6 is a rough fragment whose point has been worn smooth by use.

No. 7 has a fine polished tapering end about an inch long, the remainder being unworked.

No. 1 is a fish-shaped fragment of a large bone. The rounded edges may have been intended for shaping vessels ; the broad flat tip bends out of the plane of the rest of the implement, and is polished on one side by use, perhaps as a burnisher.

No. 3 may have been a similar type, but it has been broken. The small piece found has broad shallow grooves upon one side close to the convex edge.

No. 2 is a small "long bone," drilled at one end with a hole about one-eighth of an inch in diameter. The epiphysial ends have broken off. It seems too fragile for use as an implement ; possibly it was suspended as an ornament.

No. 8 is a polished rod of blackened bone, which may be a part of a bone pin.

No. 1 was found in the Black Band, the remainder in the First Clay and Stone layer.

#### METAL ARTIFACTS.

No. 9 is the iron lance or arrow-head (Plate II), previously men-

tioned,<sup>3</sup> is figured; it is "probably Medieval" unless it be an atypical product of the Black Band occupants.

A bronze coin, probably genuine, of Tetricus I<sup>6</sup> is interesting, all previous specimens having been British imitations of coins of Tetricus I or II, or Victorinus.

Half a coin, possibly of Tetricus II, and possibly genuine,<sup>6</sup> and a number of other fragments, including a half not yet identified, but perhaps of Tetricus II, have been found. The total is now 13.

Curious fragments of copper or bronze with curled-up edges were discovered in the pit filled by Black Band in L 3 and 4. They may possibly be Romano-British.<sup>6</sup>

#### ORE AND SLAG.

Small fragments of iron ores, including hæmatite, were fairly abundant in the pit just mentioned.

One or two pieces of galena occurred but perhaps their presence was accidental, for no lead-slag has been found. Partly-smelted iron and slag, often mixed with charcoal, is abundant in the Black Band.

#### MISCELLANEOUS ARTIFACTS.

One half of a small, pale-blue rectangular bead, (? Faience), was found in the Black Band. It has a very fine perforation.

A round polished stone 1.8 ins. in diameter occurred at the base of the Black Band, but in a disturbed area. The material appears to be a compact O.R.S.

#### FLINT ARTIFACTS.

(Figs. 11, 12, 13.)

These are in most cases Neolithic in type; one or two Palæoliths have occurred, but so few that they may have been transported by later peoples. A number of microliths have been found; they correspond exactly in average degree of patination to the Neolithic implements; the Palæolithic are all heavily patinated.

*Microliths.* These are of a geometric type, resembling the Tardenoisian; Nos. 69, 84, 3 and 4 belong to a common pattern, which has been figured as occurring, *e.g.*, at Scunthorpe, and on the Yorkshire moors.

No. 69 is a flattened, quadrilateral implement, approaching the triangular; it is of a grey flint, with a faint marbled patination. One face has been worked; the longest edge is very finely chipped, the two opposite edges meet at an obtuse angle, and bear a steep refouch.

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<sup>6</sup> Kindly identified by R. A. Smith, Esq.

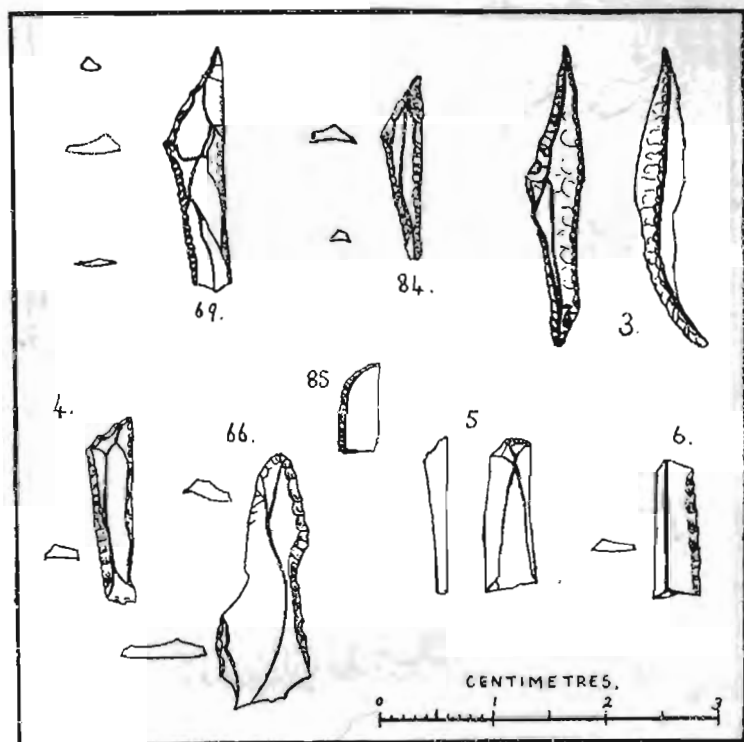


FIG. 11.

No. 84 differs in being smaller and stouter; it is triangular and fish-backed on transverse section.

No. 3 is of a translucent yellow flint; one end is curved considerably out of the line of the rest of the implement, the other end forms a very sharp point. The longest edge seems to show a very fine secondary working; the opposite side is chipped steeply from one edge.

No. 4 is similar to 69 and 84, but rather thickly patinated.

No. 5 may be a tiny graver; the short edge forming one end has a very fine secondary working.

No. 6 is a fragment of triangular section, retouched on one edge.

No. 85 is an isosceles triangle on transverse section; the side represented by the narrow base of the triangle has been chipped carefully.

*Implements of Palæolithic type.*

No. 70 is a scraper, from the business edge of which large flakes have been removed on alternate sides.



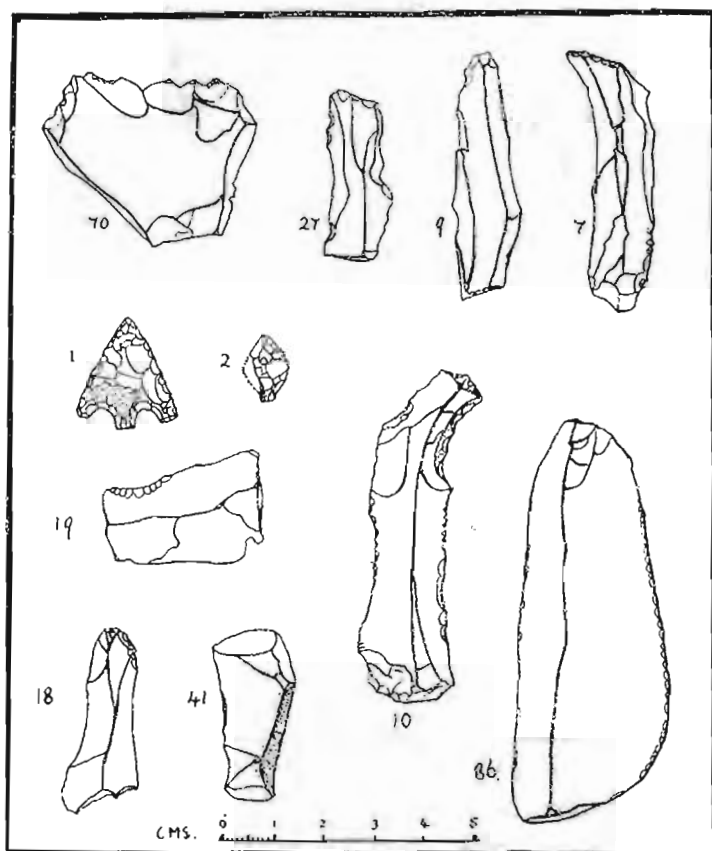


FIG. 12.

No. 7 is parrot-beaked. A part of the beak (where shown by the star) has been broken off long after the original fabrication, but not in modern times. Whether this was accidental or not is uncertain. It resembles some Aurignacian implements.

One or two other specimens may be Palaeolithic, e.g., the fragments which Professor Sollas described as "Palaeolithic in execution."

*Implements of Neolithic or indeterminate type.*

No. 27 is a small knife with battered edges, No. 9 another knife. These two are rather heavily patinated.

No. 1 is a barbed and tanged arrowhead, and No. 2 a pigmy specimen, tanged only, and unfortunately incomplete.

No. 19 is perhaps a whittling tool,—a very thin flake.

No. 10 is parrot-beaked, but in no respect does it resemble No. 7.

No. 18 is somewhat like the microlith, No. 66, and but little larger.

No. 41 is a thin flake, probably a knife; part of the crust remains to form a surface for finger pressure.

No. 86 is perhaps a knife, the edges being retouched on both surfaces in such a way as to increase their sharpness. This implement lay in undisturbed material in a crack in the Cemented Floor.

No. 21 may be a push-plane, although one edge is well adapted for scraping. One side has been chipped to a plane surface. It lay upon the stalagmite shelf close under the Western wall. This shelf must have been three feet or more above the general level of the cave floor in Neolithic times; possibly the implement was placed there by the owner and forgotten.

No. 17 is a much-battered nodule, possibly a scraper.

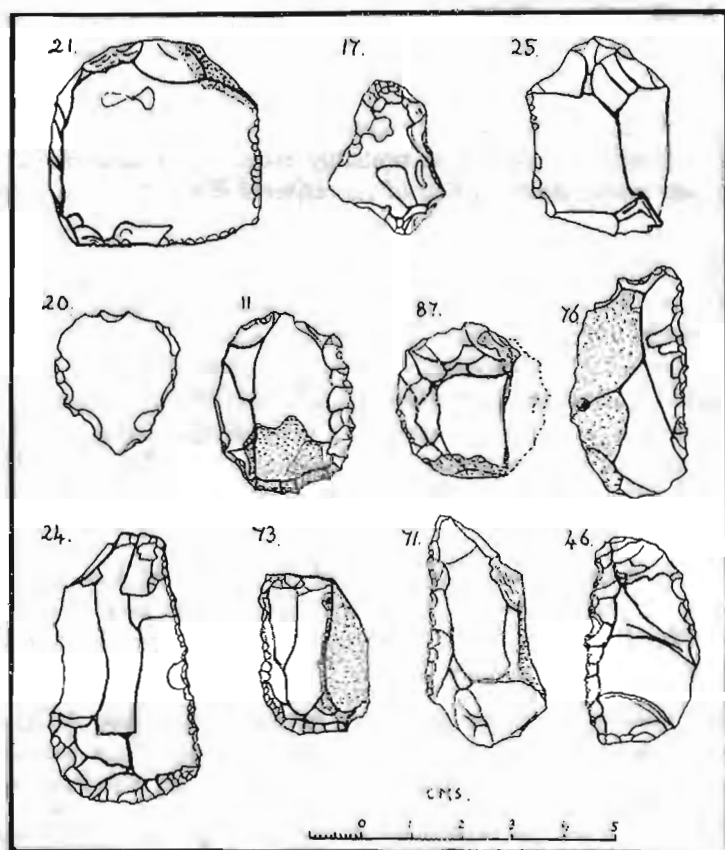


FIG. 13.

The remaining implements are Neolithic scrapers of various types.

Flint chips occur in large numbers in the area J K L M, 3 and 4, the lightest and driest part of the cave.

### CONCLUSIONS.

1. Rowberrow Cavern is an exit cave in the Conglomerate.
2. The deepest layers exposed do not appear to be a water deposit, but loose boulders. Their depth is unknown and their origin uncertain, but they seem to belong to a period when the cave was dry, and therefore probably habitable, and are worth further excavation. We may expect to find deposits of the stream which originally issued from the cave beneath this boulder layer.
3. Gravels, probably deposited by the same stream, cover the boulders. A few fragments of bone have been found in one stratum.
4. After the stream had ceased to flow, an incomplete stalagmite floor was laid down; it probably represents a long period of time, but further examination of its contents is necessary to decide how long.
5. Towards the end of this period when little was being deposited in the cave, man entered and left behind him flint implements, mostly Neolithic in type, but some perhaps Transitional (the Microliths). This was perhaps a succession of visits at long intervals, not an occupation, although fires were lighted and bones charred. The few Palæoliths may possibly indicate a very early period for the first of these visits, but are probably not significant.
- Material now began to be carried in to the cave from the hill-side.
6. A definite occupation occurred in the Early Iron Age, or possibly early Romano-British, times; the cave was used as a forge or smelting-hearth for iron. It is possible that the people were the same who occupied Read's Cavern.
7. Subsequently, the cave was inhabited circa 300 A.D.; to judge by the coins, by a Romano-British people. There seems to have been an interval between this occupation and the last.
8. Casual use has been made of the cave right down to modern times.