

The Tickenham Rock Shelter.

BY J. H. SAVORY.

O.S., 6-ins., Somerset, Sheet V. N.W.

$\frac{5}{8}$ -in. South of "C" in "Tickenham Hill."

In August last, work was started by the local members of the Wells Society on a small single chambered cave situated on the south side of the Cadbury ridge. After the preliminary clearance of modern debris, a somewhat heavy task, sufficient excavation was carried out to promise important results from the cave, and some interesting discoveries have already been made in the first cutting.

As shown on the map reference above, the position of the cave mouth is just over the half mile W.S.W. from the S.W. corner of the Cadbury Ramparts. Although this line takes one part way down the side of the hill, it is yet some 200 feet above sea level, and commands uninterrupted views over a grand sweep of landscape, from the channel, over the western Mendips, up to the Dundry Ridge, and beyond. The wide expanse of Nailsea Moor runs up to the immediate foreground. Facing practically due south, with protecting shoulders of rock, on either side, the setting and form of the entrance may be considered ideal as an habitation, both for security and comfort.

A small collection of finds from the present floor surface, made by the young people of Mr. Burleton, the tenant of the adjoining land, made it very evident that the place would well repay systematic investigation. These were shown to P. Sincock, H. E. Balch, and the writer, to the first of whom goes the credit of tracing this particular spot. Permission for the Society to carry out the work was readily granted by Sir Ambrose Elton, Lord of the Manor.

The Cave mouth is an old outlet, now, however, far from any existing line of drainage. What will in all probability prove to be the chief inlet of this disused system has already been traced, situated on the broad crest of the ridge, directly above and at no great distance from the cave mouth.

The one chamber at present accessible is a regular oval in form, opening out directly from the entrance; 20 feet from front to back, and 18 feet at its greatest width. Across a wide section at the back

of the chamber, the walls recede considerably, before meeting the cave earth, and this, together with a roomy pipe coming in at a higher level, clearly indicates a continuation of the system, and promises a further penetration as digging approaches this buried archway.

The chamber being squared off, excavation has been started by a trench across the entrance, 3 feet wide and 3 feet deep. At this depth, hereabouts, the cave earth gives place to what appears to be the top beds, much fractured, and for the most part very stained, as if metal ores are present. As far as can be determined these are (at this point) in their original position and show no signs of previous disturbance. Standing in the trench, beneath the crown of the arch, there is now some 7 feet of headroom.

Rather to our disappointment, no layers show themselves on the faces of the trench, and no hearth layer has yet been exposed, in fact, no charcoal or ash has occurred at all. On the whole, the top two feet have proved the more productive, but finds have been made fairly uniformly through the whole of the digging, with no apparent instance of any relation to each other, and those in the first foot not differing in any marked respect from those in the third.

As there is no layering it is difficult to detect disturbance, but the cause may well be that the comparatively shallow cave earth has, here at the entrance, suffered periodical (early) disturbance. No trace of anything modern, excepting in the top few inches, indicates any recent movements. It is to be hoped that, further into the Chamber, layers will occur to help throw light on the course of the habitation of the cave.

The finds have not yet been submitted to expert opinion, but a general description is as follows: A mass of bone fragments including several large, cracked marrow-bones; a number of animal jaws, including young pig; a number of detached animal teeth, including one instance of horse; small bird bones.

HUMAN REMAINS.

Two halves of lower jaws, one being that of a child; the point of a lower jaw, adult, teeth missing, was among the finds made previous to the digging; an ulna, this with the two jaws was found only 9-ins. below the present surface to the right, just inside the entrance; a number of teeth, scattered; a number of the smaller bones are expected to be proved human.

POTTERY.

Fragments only have been found, and, as yet, nothing to piece together to obtain a shape ; several pieces of the rude half-baked type, made without the wheel, showing single lines faintly incised ; other fragments, thinner, of higher grade, made on the wheel.

OTHER ARTIFACTS.

A jade-like pebble with the surface at one end flattened by rubbing ; a decorated bead ; one cut bone point. The most interesting item is still the small comb-like object found before digging was started ; it consists of a fragment of rib, $3\frac{7}{8}$ -in. long, rubbed down exceedingly thin, and having at one end, in a width of $\frac{3}{4}$ -in., no less than 15 teeth. In Mr. Balch's opinion this may possibly have been used for decorating pottery. The teeth are too fine, close and delicate, for any ordinary use, and it is a matter of surmise as to how such fine teeth were cut.

No metal object has yet been discovered, but, notwithstanding this fact, digging, so far, seems to point to an Iron Age occupation on the lines of Wookey Hole, but by, of course, a smaller community.
