

Prehistoric Bristol

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IN this paper it is proposed to describe sites and remains within the city and county of Bristol as it stands in 1946. The majority of the discoveries have been recorded in various journals over a long period of time and it seems desirable that these records should be collated. That is the first object of this paper. The collation will show the extent of our knowledge and, by inference, the gaps that exist in it. It is proposed to discuss these items and gaps very briefly and to indicate lines upon which future investigations might proceed.

It is a convention to assume that in England the prehistoric period ends with the coming of the Romans, and that convention will be adhered to in this paper. The material available for study will be considered under the generally recognised principal divisions of the prehistoric period—namely, palæolithic, neolithic, bronze, and early iron ages in order of succession from the earliest to the latest.

PALÆOLITHIC

This period is usually divided into lower, middle, and upper, and each of these is subdivided. It covers ages of many thousands of years and is marked by great changes in climatic conditions in England. It is the period of the great ice age and its interglacials. There are periods when the climate was warm and a fauna of a southern, or African, facies existed, and periods when semi-tundra conditions prevailed, with the major ice-sheets covering most of England, roughly north of the present line of the river Thames.

The earliest deposits are the plateau gravels. Those that exist in Bristol have largely been built over, and it is probable that many of the areas in which they could have been found have thus disappeared without their presence being recognised. Some of these have been described.¹ Portions of these gravels are to be found outside the city boundary on the high land of the Failand-Abbot's Leigh ridge extending to the edge of the Avon Gorge at Stokeleigh Camp, and inside the city at Black Rocks quarry (Sea Walls). Discoveries in these must be more or less accidental, but building operations requiring excavations may at any time yield remains in the form of implements and more rarely animal and human bones.

The terrace gravels of the Avon and its tributaries cover a period

PLATE 2.



PREHISTORIC BRISTOL.

Stone on Redland Green. It may originally have been placed here in Neolithic times.

from the lower palæolithic (Acheulean) to the transitional period of Tardenoisean at the extreme end of the upper palæolithic. A general account of these has appeared, and in this article numerous references to other papers are given. The terraces of the Avon valley towards Bath are much better known than those at Shirehampton, Sea Mills, and Hanham. The fauna includes both warmth-loving beasts such as *Elephas antiquus*, the great straight-tusked elephant, as well as cold fauna beasts such as mammoth and woolly rhinoceros. The terraces in the Bristol area have yielded implements mainly of Mousterian or middle palæolithic date, but some may be as early as the Acheulean or lower palæolithic.¹ Rutter² refers to the discovery of elephant bones in the Shirehampton gravels, but except for this hundred-year-old reference no animal remains have turned up from Bristol. The period covered by these terraces must cover at least the Riss-Würm interglacial and the Würm glaciation itself.

A site of considerable importance used to exist in Durdham Downs. The bone-fissure of that name,³ now completely lost, was probably near the service reservoir of the Bristol Water Works Co. The accounts of this site are not, judged by present-day standards, good, but they do clearly show that the animal remains recovered comprise two separate faunas. The one of warm climate facies including *Elephas antiquus*, hippopotamus, the warm fauna rhinoceros (*R. hemitoechus*), and the lion. This last can exist under temperate conditions but cannot exist under ice age conditions. The other fauna was a cold fauna and included mammoth, reindeer, woolly rhinoceros (*R. tichorhinus*), hyaena, and bear. The first fauna cannot be later than the Riss-Würm interglacial, but the second may be as late as the Solutrean period of the upper palæolithic. It is more probably of the middle palæolithic period.

It is obvious that in addition to great climatic changes there have been equally important changes in the level of the land relative to the sea, but it is not proposed to discuss this general question.⁴ Let it suffice to point out that the Avon and Frome valleys inside the Bristol boundary were in those days wide and swampy in parts, providing abundant game for the hunting and fishing folk that lived in the area. The palæolithic period ended with a rapid, geologically speaking, amelioration of the climate, which became that of the present day. In parts the climate was wetter than at present, and over the whole of the zone forests grew up with thick undergrowth. The movements of the hunting folk were restricted and they tended to settle in isolated communities along river banks and lake shores. Of this transitional period, the mesolithic, the only site so far recorded, and that not definitely, is at Shirehampton in the gravels.⁵ At about this time, or perhaps a

little earlier, the land locally reached its maximum elevation relative to the sea and stood probably as much as 75 ft. above its present level. The Avon then was, so to speak, dammed back by the lip of the gorge at the old ford below the Suspension Bridge. Below this point it must have been for some distance a swift running river and non-tidal to some distance below its present mouth. There is no good section at present exposed to illustrate this inside Bristol, but it is known that the submerged and now surface-dry valley that joins the Avon just where the Portway embankment rises to the bridge across the railway at Sea Mills contains many feet of silt.

NEOLITHIC

The neolithic period is one that is difficult to define in time, because at one end it emerges gradually out of the palæolithic and at the other it merges into the bronze age. It is a period which is culturally marked by the great change from hunting and food-gathering to agriculture, domestication of animals, use of pottery and of polished as well as chipped stone implements. The earliest phases of this period do not seem to be represented in Bristol unless the site that was formerly exposed at Crab Tree Slip near Sea Mills is of that period. The late Mr. A. Selley described* there a clean sandy reach, now covered with mud, as existing in his youth about sixty years ago. Pottery and chipped and polished flint implements were found. These left Bristol in the Perceval collection, which went to Oxford.

Another feature of the Neolithic is the construction of megalithic monuments which appear towards the end of the period, and of this stage there are several, and were more, structures in Bristol. The building of megalithic structures and circles extended into the Bronze Age and until the sites are properly excavated it is not possible to say to which period any site belongs.

In Armoury Square there existed up to 1935 the remains of a considerable megalith. In that year it was broken up. Seyer⁷ reports that another formerly existed not far from there on the opposite side of the main road. Both sites lay on the spur that runs down to the east of the Frome and between that river and the Avon. The height above sea-level is quite low, but then a number of the Somerset megaliths are on comparatively low ground. They are, like a number of other sites, located close to water, though the implications of this cannot here be discussed. The two stones may have been single standing stones or the last remnants of dolmens or even a long barrow. Not so very far away

* Verbal communication to the author.

at Golden Hill, Horfield, there used to exist a barrow. The accounts⁶ of this are not quite as definite as might be desired, but the balance of the evidence as recorded by the Rev. Fanshawe Bingham points, I think, to there having been a chambered long barrow there containing inhumations. He records that it was opened in 1890, but it was found to have been rifled. Many flat stones were dug up "which had evidently formed the chamber where the body had been placed when buried." In 1896, during the laying of gas pipes to Golden Hill, "a quantity of bones, human without doubt, turned up almost opposite the tumulus." Of some that were recovered he states that they represented a "very tall person." It is reasonable to conclude that these bones came from the tumulus. The exact site was in the south end of the field crossed by the then footpath to Westbury-on-Trym, a little west of the rectory. The field is numbered 72 on the tithe-map and 52 on the Ordnance Survey, 25 inches to the mile map. Cremation had also been practised *in situ* in the tumulus, but this was probably later in date than the primary burials by inhumation. He quotes another reference to the discovery near here of a slave-chain with six collars, and "a double fulcrum for supporting spits." These are of iron and would be much later in date than the tumulus. (See below.)

On Redland Green⁸ is a large stone (Plate II), which is reputed to be of ancient origin. Nothing definite is known about it. It has been suggested that it is a Roman boundary stone and is not a megalith. Neither statement is backed by any evidence, but as megalithic structures are known to exist or to have existed in the district the opinion is here expressed that it is more likely to be a megalithic monument than otherwise. True, the presumed line of the Roman Road from Sea Mills across Durdham Downs to Bath passes near this stone, but it is unlike any known Roman boundary stone.

Perhaps the best known megalithic monument is the so-called dolmen at Druid Stoke. Fairly full accounts of this have appeared,⁹ including one on the inconclusive excavations carried out on the site. The public has right of access to these stones according to a statement in the Transactions of the Bristol and Gloucestershire Archaeological Society.¹⁰ The stones consist of a fallen capstone originally supported on three or four uprights. It is reasonable to conclude that these stones represent the last degraded remnants of a fine long barrow of rather late type. The site is only a little over 100 ft. above sea-level on a commanding spur above the Trym and not far from the Avon.

There remains two more sites of rather doubtful date. Excavation may prove them to be bronze age and not neolithic in date, but even so they are most likely to belong to the earliest phase of the bronze age.

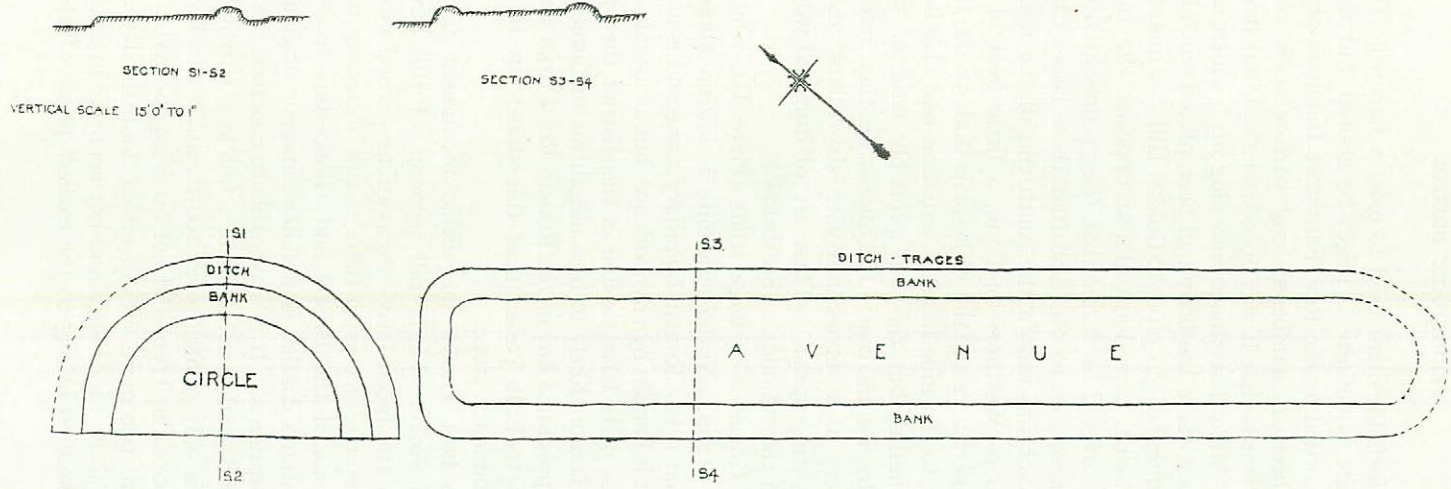


FIG. 1.—Plan of Circle and Avenue on Purdown.

The first has already been described.¹¹ It is a circular earthwork on the crest of Kings Weston Down with an outer ditch. The circle has a diameter of about 195 ft., by pace-measurement, and is complete save for a small segment to the north destroyed by an old quarry. The bank is never very high and the ditch is not easy to see except where the grass is kept short by the use of the footpath that crosses it. Seyer¹² reports that there used to be many large stones on the surface of the hill at its foot, from whence they were removed to be used in the foundations of King's Weston House. It is possible that these may have included stones of a stone circle of which the earthen bank and the rock-cut ditch, now practically silted up, are all that remain visible to us now. This is a site that requires careful, expert excavation if it is to yield up its secrets.

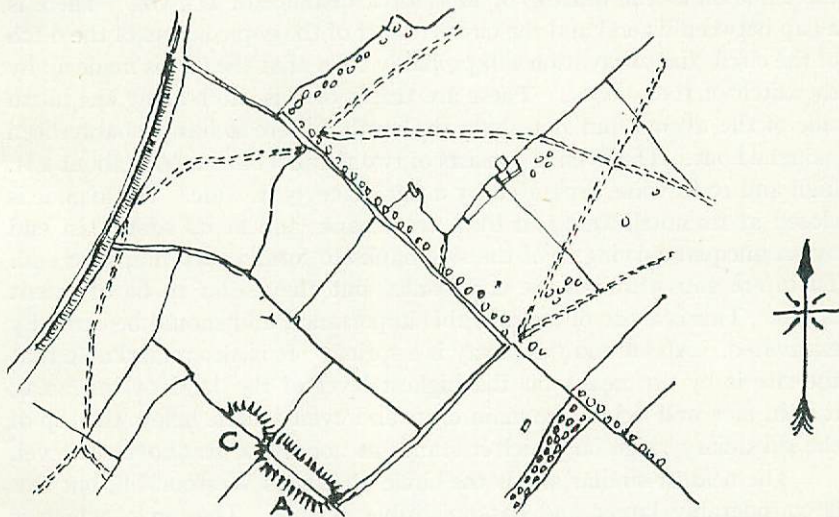


FIG. 2.—A map of the area surrounding the Circle and Avenue on Purdown. (Reproduced from the 6" O.S. map (Glos. LXXII.) with the sanction of the Controller of H.M. Stationery Office.)

The circle does not appear on any of the old estate-maps. It is about 300 ft. above sea-level.

The second site is an entirely new discovery by Dr. H. Taylor on Purdown. Part of the site has already been destroyed by allotments, but the rest of it should be scheduled as an ancient monument, for it is unique in the area. It consists now of half a circle with an outer ditch and an avenue. The plan* (*Fig. 1*) is based on a rough survey with tape and compass, and the map (*Fig. 2*) shows the position of the site.

* I am indebted to Mr. A. C. Bernard for the drawings for *Figs. 1, 2, and 3.*

Muller Road, not shown, runs between the site and the railway. The catalogue reference number is T 294.

The circle south of the hedge line has been destroyed. The northern part has an outer ditch faintly traceable all round and is 9 ft. wide and 6 in. deep, and is not quite part of a true circle, there being some flattening in on the north-west. Inside comes a bank about 1 ft. high and 10 ft. wide at its base with some partial gaps which seem to be of recent origin. Inside again is a flat central area 80 ft. in diameter, and its surface, like that of the avenue, is raised above the general level of the surrounding ground. This is almost certainly due to the fact that the land outside has often been under the plough, while that inside never seems to have been so treated. The avenue runs from the circle on a true bearing of 128° for a distance of 115 yds. There is a gap between its end and the circle. Part of the gap consists of the ditch of the circle and excavation will probably show that the rest is made up by the ditch of the avenue. There are traces of this ditch along the north side of the avenue but not along the south. Here it has probably been ploughed out. The avenue consists of two parallel banks, each about 1 ft. high and 10 ft. wide, separated by a flat space 35 ft. wide. The avenue is closed at its north-west end by a cross bank, and at its south-east end by an unequal curving in of the side-banks to form a sort of apsidal end. There are gaps through the end banks, but they seem to be of recent origin. This is a site of considerable importance, and should be carefully excavated. About 100 yds. away is a spring. It is also remarkable that the site is by no means on the highest level of the land of the area; it is in fact well below the main crest and even a little below the top of the subsidiary ridge on which it stands at about 200 ft. above sea-level.

The nearest similar site is the circle on King's Weston Hill, but this is considerably larger and has no visible avenue. The circle, which is not a true one, and avenues on Walton Down¹³ are somewhat similar, but the circle there is of considerably greater diameter and may be of much more recent date, as there is evidence from air photographs that that structure is later in date than the cultivation of the hill-top in Celtic times. Perhaps the nearest approach to a similar structure is the small earthwork described as number two,¹⁴ in the parish of Westbury, Mendip. Indeed there is no exact parallel known to me in the immediate district to the Purdown structure. The centre of the circle is lat. $51^\circ 28' 33''$ N., and long. $2^\circ 34' 4''$ W. (O.S. 6" map Glos. LXXII).

BRONZE

In Bristol as yet definite living sites are not known. Surface finds of flint arrow heads, which were extensively used in the bronze age, have

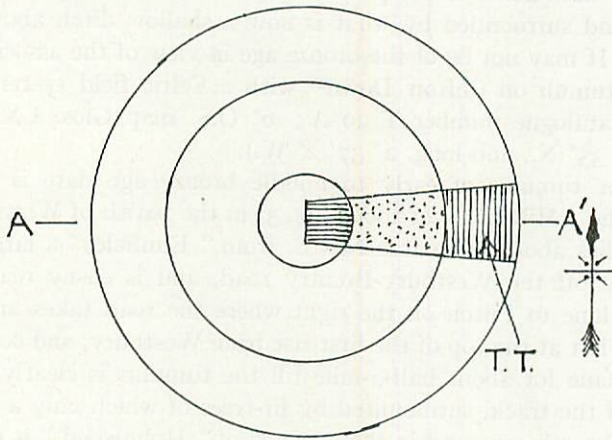
been recorded from Clifton Down, Kings Weston, Sneyd Park, and Shirehampton.^{15, 16} The exact places from which these finds came is unfortunately not stated.

On Durdham Downs is a tumulus known to many as "The Seven Sisters,"¹⁷ from a group of fir trees, now only six, planted on the tumulus. It is a low mound near the tip of a small minor ridge of the Downs just outside the old quarry area, the edge of which can readily be followed. The mound now has a flat top and is about two feet high, 60 feet in diameter, and surrounded by what is now a shallow ditch about three feet wide. It may not be of the bronze age in view of the association of two other tumuli on Clifton Down¹⁸ with a Celtic field system. (See below.) (Catalogue number T 20 A; 6" O.S. map Glos. LXXI S.E. lat. $51^{\circ} 28' 35''$ N., and long. $2^{\circ} 37' 2''$ W.)

Another tumulus of early to middle bronze age date is the one known as the "Mill Tut" or toot (*Fig. 3*) in the parish of Westbury-on-Trym. It lies about 400 yards N.N.E. from "Elmfield," a large house a little way off the Westbury-Brentry road, and is easily reached by taking the lane to Filton on the right where the road takes an abrupt turn to the left at the top of the first rise from Westbury, and continuing along this lane for about half-a-mile till the tumulus is clearly seen on the right of the track, surmounted by fir-trees of which only a few now remain. The other mound in the grounds of "Holmwood" is of recent origin and consists of builder's rubble. (Catalogue number T 20 6" O.S. map Glos. LXXI N.E. lat. $51^{\circ} 29' 32''$ N., and long. $2^{\circ} 36' 21''$ W.)


The earliest previous record of this tumulus is by Seyer.^{17a} The identification is not absolutely certain. A trial trench was dug into it by this Society in 1922 or 1923, when it was proved to be a barrow. Since then the remains and the manuscript records have been destroyed by enemy action, and the following notes on the site structure are based on memory. The site is, however, an important one that warrants full and careful excavation. The tumulus at present is threatened by the near approach of a housing site. It stands with steep sides about seven feet high and is about 60 feet in diameter. The outlines of the trial trench are clearly visible running in from the east to about the present centre of the barrow. The actual structure (*Fig. 3*) of the barrow seems to be that originally a wide ring of dry stone walling was placed round the circumference. This wall is now in a state of collapse. Then came an interspace, now partly filled by weathering of the central mound, thus forming a bank of loamy soil against the inner face of the wall with below it on the original ground level a hard, presumably trodden, layer containing much finely divided charcoal and being about 1 in. to $\frac{1}{2}$ in. thick. Over all is a cap of stones which is certainly secondary to the


original structure and is probably of quite recent origin, and indeed may be the result of the farmer clearing up the outlying portions of the collapsed dry stone wall and placing the stones recovered on the top of the mound. Towards the centre of the mound was a large heap of loamy soil with some streaks in it suggesting that it may originally have been a mound of turfs. It was not till 1937, when the writer visited the Pond Cairn barrow in Glamorganshire, which had been so carefully





SCALE 1" = 20' HORIZONTAL AND 10' VERTICAL

T.T. TRIAL TRENCH GROUND LEVEL

 DRY STONE RING WALL (COLLAPSED)

 TRODDEN CHARCOAL LAYER IN INTERSPACE

 CENTRAL STACK · LOAMY SOIL · TURF

 LOAMY SOIL DERIVED FROM WEATHERING
OF CENTRAL STACK


 SECONDARY STONE CAP

FIG. 3.—'Mill Tut' tumulus, Westbury-on-Trym.

excavated by Sir Cyril Fox, that it was realised how closely the structure revealed by the trial trench resembled that of this important middle bronze age barrow in Glamorgan. Fox is of the opinion that this particular type of barrow probably derived immediately from similar ones in North Devon perhaps travelling via the Mendips, and, to judge from the present case, thence to Bristol and across the channel from somewhere nearby. The only finds came from the charcoal and trampled floor, and included a few indeterminate pottery fragments, small portions of polished flint implements, and two tiny fragments of bronze. If the analogy with the Glamorgan site is correct, then the date of the construction of the barrow is about 1300 B.C. Neither the primary nor any secondary burials have been found, so that though the trial trench reached the centre of the barrow as it now exists, it probably did not reach the original centre. When the trial trench was filled in the stones were placed at the bottom and the earth on top.

Another barrow probably existed on Barrow Hill, Avonmouth, but the site is so covered up with foundations of modern structures that there is no hope of proving this.

One of the barrows on Kings Weston Hill yielded fragments of a biconical urn,²⁰ which probably belongs to the very end of the bronze age proper and may be of the first phase of the early iron age.

The rest of the bronze age remains consist of casual finds, most of them made during excavations for buildings or docks. There is one hoard, the Coombe Dingle hoard,²¹ found in a small recess in the rock, which crops out above the right bank of the Trym not far from the old bridge across the river in the valley bottom. The hoard was contained in a basket-like structure and had with it a "black stone", which is a hæmatite pebble. The hoard comprised three bronze celts* of the flat type with only slight flanges and a chisel or trunnion celt (*Fig. 4, No. 1-4*). The latter implement is of a type generally accepted as being considerably later in date than the celts, which typologically belong to the early bronze age (*circa* 1800-1400 B.C.). It is difficult to account for this association of implements of differing dates in one hoard except by the hypothesis that it is a trader's hoard. But such hoards usually contain more than four articles and often broken or damaged ones as well. Perhaps the usually accepted dating for the trunnion celts or chisels is wrong, for Evans²² figures Irish flat axes in association with similar chisel implements. If the implements are thus of one period then the hoard represents some individual's private possessions temporarily cached for safety in this little shelter, and failure to recover

* The drawings for *Figs. 4, 5, and 6* were made by Mr. W. M. Skeen.

them may be due to a variety of reasons. The group would seem to indicate close trading connexions with Ireland, and its presence suggests that there is a settlement site nearby and probably on the first and more gentle part of the slope up to the Kings Weston ridge.

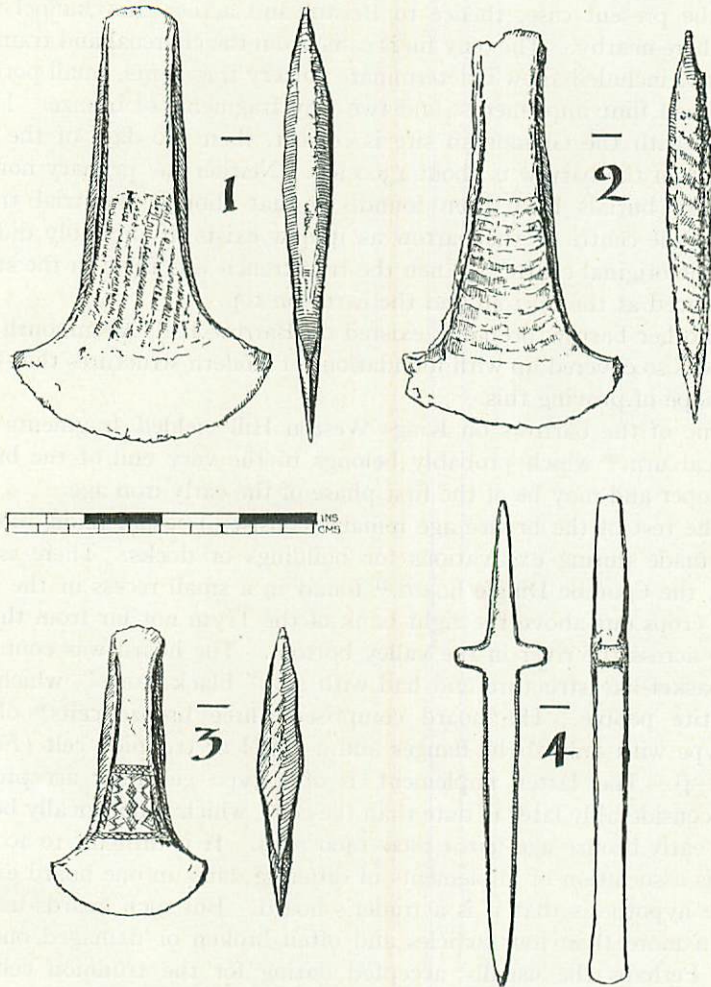


FIG. 4.—The Coombe Dingle hoard.

The Royal Edward Dock at Avonmouth yielded a rapier blade,²³ 13½ m. long (*Fig. 5, No. 1*), from a sandy stratum 10 ft. below spring tides and 40 ft. below the present surface. The rapier was probably dropped from a boat and can be dated as late middle bronze

age about 1200-1000 B.C. During the Bath Street widening near Bristol Bridge in 1874 a flat axe with slight flanges, a palstave, and a portion of a sword²⁴ were found. A second palstave very similar in

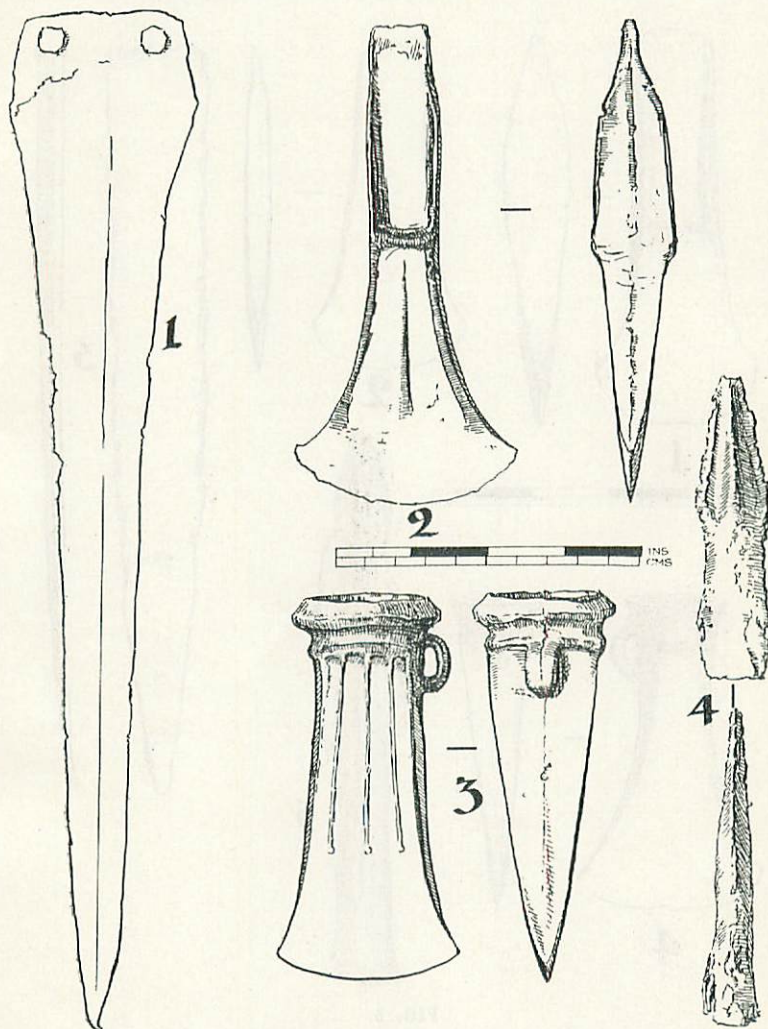


FIG. 5.—Bronze Age finds.

form to the one illustrated from Westbury (*Fig. 5, No. 2*) was also found.^{24a} These articles are not described as forming part of a hoard and seem to be separate finds (*Fig. 5, No. 2, 1, 3*). They are articles which were in use over considerable periods of the bronze age, with the sword

fragment as the most recent. The finds cover a period of not less than 700 years from about 1700-1000 B.C. The most probable explanation of their presence is that they represent articles lost by the accidents of transport or in fighting at a crossing-place either by ford or boat of the

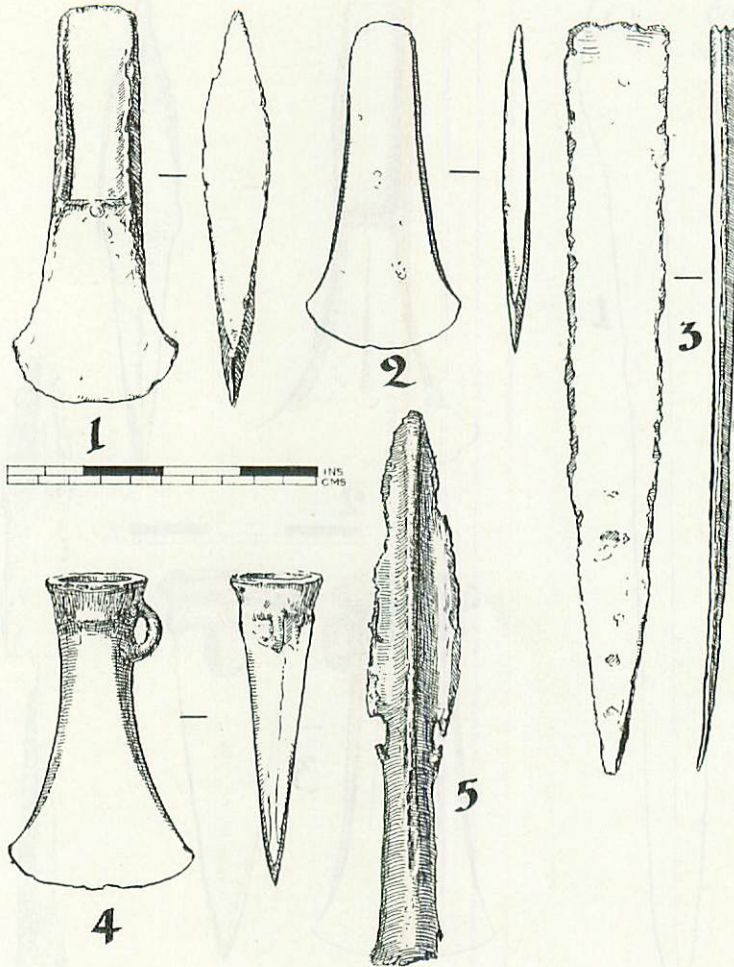


FIG. 6.

River Avon. A similar explanation probably accounts for the looped socketed celt and a looped socketed spear head said to have been found in 1932 during the excavations for the new Co-operative Society building in Prince's Street which must have been a swamp area in those days. They are both of fairly late type of about 1000-500 B.C. (*Fig. 6, No. 4, 5.*)

From a site at Westbury-on-Trym, "a mile or two east of Coombe Dingle", came a bronze flanged celt,²⁵ dateable to the middle bronze age. In 1870 during the excavations for the New Locks opposite St. Vincent's Parade (Hotwells), at the entrance to the Avon Gorge, a looped socketed bronze celt²⁶ was found 20 feet below the river bank (*Fig. 5, No. 3*). It is dateable as belonging to the late bronze age. Two palstaves²⁷ of late middle bronze age date were found in 1885, "just on the Gloucester side of the city boundary" (*Fig. 5, No. 2*, shows one of them). The second one is said to be in Strasbourg. In the Pritchard collection, as purchased by the City, is a small socketed bronze spear head (*Fig. 5, No. 4*). It is merely labelled "Bristol," and no other information is available about it.

It is important to note that where there is an accurate statement of locality all the finds are directly associated with the rivers of Bristol, indicating their importance then as now for peaceful trade and warlike operations. They were the easy routes through the country, which was then not so densely forested as it became later on. The rivers also were serious obstacles on land routes and could only be crossed at suitable fords, which, on the large rivers, were comparatively far apart. These ford crossings were probably supplemented at the more important points by boats or rafts, which may have been the sole means of crossing where there was no suitable ford. The Avonmouth Dock discovery is particularly important, because it shows the land level of those times to be considerably below that of the present-day, so that the Avon below the lip of the Gorge was still a rapid clear running river without mud as far down as its present mouth. This fits in very well with what is known of life in the bronze age from the rest of this part of England, where the habitation sites seem generally to have been on comparatively low ground and not confined to the high ground. Clearly then the forests were not so dense or so extensive as they became in the succeeding iron age.

PREHISTORIC EARLY IRON AGE

The period covers the time between the end of the bronze age and the Claudian invasion; that is from about 500 B.C to A.D. 54. It has been divided for convenience into "A," "B" and "C" periods, of which "A" roughly represents the English equivalent of the continental Hallstatt and "B" of the La Tène. The "C" period is that of the invasions of the Belgæ, who do not certainly appear to have reached this area much, if at all, before the coming of the Romans. Bristol is a key area for research on this particular problem, and work may well show that penetration by the people as well as by cultural elements had occurred before the Romans came.

" A " PERIOD

It was on Kings Weston Hill that some of the earliest discoveries of the remains of this period in England were made. They came from two low tumuli on the hill (*No. T.1 and T.2*²⁸). The third tumulus was of possibly earlier construction (see above). Tumulus *No. 1* yielded fragments of pottery and some flint implements; the burial, which was by inhumation, though some of the associated animal bones had been burnt, was of a child. The pottery has been identified as belonging to the transitional period from the bronze age to the iron age. It is more probably closer to the latter, if not actually of the iron age, in view of the finds from the neighbouring tumulus. It had been disturbed in Roman and Saxon times. A short way to the west and north from this tumulus is *No. 2*. In this was a cremation burial in which the cremation had been carried out on the site. Associated with the burial were a number of horse remains and a single cheek piece of an iron bridle. The pottery includes pieces of bowls of undoubted Hallstatt type. In all at least six vessels were represented. Horse burials in association with human ones were common in this period, but it is a little surprising to find a cremation. One might argue that the introduction of iron into the area was a peaceful process at first, unaccompanied by any substantial change in the population and in the older burial customs of the people.

An old account²⁹ of Kings Weston Hill refers to the discovery of an " iron spear head with three prongs " and a number of human bones in or near the quarry on the hill. It seems probable, in the light of more recent finds, that there was formerly another tumulus at the west end of the hill at the site of the now disused quarry, and that it contained an inhumation burial of early iron age " A " date.

" B " PERIOD

This is the period in England of the greatest development of the great defensive, as distinct from religious, enclosures that we speak of as camps. In the first phases of this period the defences were comparatively weak, but towards the end they were frequently renewed, extended, and generally strengthened to meet the exigencies of the times. The pressure of the Belgæ was being very much felt.

In Bristol pottery of the opening phase of this period is turned up from time to time in the spoil from rabbit burrows inside Blaise Castle camp, which must be at least as old as this period. From the river at Sea Mills³⁰ has come a short anthropoid type of iron sword. It is of a type in use in the first century B.C. It is now in the British Museum.

Part of a weaving comb comes from the neighbourhood of Baldwin Street.^{30a}

On Durdham Downs, on the Clifton side of the Clifton Parish boundary, are a number of enclosures tending towards the rectangular and of the type now identified as Celtic fields. They have been described by Dr. A. B. Prowse¹⁸ and are associated with two small tumuli: these are, therefore, probably of nearly iron age, but whether "A" or "B" period is unknown. They still await excavation. Two of the enclosures are described as village "pounds."

The great camps of Clifton Down, Blaise Castle, and Kings Weston Down are all within the Bristol boundary, and by analogy with other areas belong to the early iron age "B", but were probably first built in the "A" period. Our knowledge of them is, at present, extremely scanty.

Clifton Down on the right bank and Bowerwalls (now almost completely destroyed) and Stokeleigh Camp in Leigh Woods, together form a powerful trio. The reason for their presence is the ford across the Avon. This ford runs from the bottom of the Slade on the Clifton side to the bottom of Nightingale Valley on the Somerset side and was until comparatively recently, when a sailing ship ran aground on its maiden voyage and had to be blown up and the ford was then destroyed (1893-1894), passable on foot at low water, when it was not more than knee-deep.³¹ This ford was an easy crossing place on an otherwise difficult river obstacle on a cross-country trade route which could also be used for war purposes. It is on the route from Wiltshire to Somerset and from Gloucestershire *via* the track across the Durdham Downs from the top of Bridge Valley Road. It is particularly important, for close to it on the Somerset side was an abundant supply of fresh water available all the year round. This spring can still be seen gushing out at low tide.

Clifton Down camp in its heyday must have been well-nigh impregnable. One side abuts on the precipitous slopes, now steepened by quarrying, of the gorge, while the remaining portion is guarded by formidable double and in parts triple ramparts and ditches. The ditches are now the sites of modern paths; the one coming up into the camp on the eastern side is probably following the line of the ancient defended entrance. Casual finds made on the surface show that this camp was in occupation as late as Roman times. When the Observatory was built hut-circles could still be seen inside the camp, but they were filled in. These hut-circles are mentioned by Seyer.³¹ In dry weather they are still visible as roughly circular patches of green against the burnt grass of the rest of the area. Only some very tentative and quite

inconclusive excavations have been made in this camp,³² through the banks enclosing the so-called "Roman Camp" in the N.W. corner.

Except for chance finds on the spoil from rabbit burrows of La Tène I pottery and Roman coins, nothing is known of Blaise Castle camp. Across a low col lies Kings Weston Hill camp, which on older maps is marked as a "Roman Camp." This appellation seems to be derived entirely from its somewhat square shape, which will probably be found, on excavation, to be due to a large extent to the natural rock formation at that end of the hill having been utilized as a ready means of defence. Dry stone walling was, as late as 1926, visible in the western face. Besides, this square part of the camp is only the inner defence. There is a good outer defence farther to the west, a bank and ditch first described³⁹ in 1821, and rediscovered in 1928.¹¹ On the analogy of the trio at Clifton guarding the ford and the similar trio guarding the very important pass into the Mendips along Dolebury Bottom (Dinghurst, Dolebury, and the works behind Warren House, Rowberrow), the siting of Kings Weston Camp was unexpected, for there is no deep valley between it and Blaise Castle, but only a low col. The main gap is in the deep ravine, through which flows the Trym between Blaise Castle and Coombe Hill. How formidable this ridge must have been is best appreciated by viewing it from across the Avon from Failand Ridge, and this at once shows how important the Trym gap must have been. It is the only way through the ridge from Pen Pole Point eastwards. The Pen Pole Point end needed no defence because of the swamps that must have then shut it in on the Bristol Channel side and the Avon estuary would be impracticable except to people coming by sea, and even then it would not have been easy. But a land route keeping out of the swamps coming down from the north and east, perhaps *via* the camp at Oldbury-on-Severn, would have to cross the ridge, and the obvious gap is the Trym one. The failure to defend both sides of this gap seemed so odd that field investigations were undertaken. On Coombe Hill remains of a bank with the ditch on the outer side were found crossing the golf course on the open hill-top at the seventh green (1937), and running to the oval wood to the south. Its course in the wood was found to have been partly obliterated by shallow quarries, but both bank and ditch could be traced through it to where it returned north across the hill-top to the boundary wall of the Blaise Castle estate, where that wall runs almost at the edge of the very steep slope down to the Trym. The first part of the bank and ditch near the seventh green was found to be continued, in a much better state of preservation, over the boundary wall northwards through the wood nearly up to the edge of the escarpment, along the edge of which there may have been an entrance.

MISCELLANEOUS

There remain a few items of indefinite date to be discussed.

The old field banks on Durdham Downs have already been mentioned. Some of them, especially when seen from the air, have the typical appearance of Celtic fields. That these should exist is only to be expected in view of the known presence of iron age people in the area and the known frequent occurrence of Celtic field systems on the high ground on the Somerset side of the Avon.³⁴

On Kings Weston Down is an ancient somewhat egg-shaped enclosure consisting of an outer ditch and an inner bank.³⁵ Starting at the east end and going south from Ever Green Wood the bank and ditch are slightly bowed out eastward as if to avoid tumulus No. 2. Just after passing the crest of the hill it turns slightly, and is here well marked, south-westward nearly to the edge of Southside Wood, where it again turns and runs nearly due west, gradually crossing the hill to enter Ever Green Wood about 50 yd. to the east of the point where the two woods approach each other most closely at the neck joining the east and west parts of the hill. Once in the wood it turns abruptly back to the east and runs just inside the edge till it meets the part running south. This length is about 250 yds. The date of the structure is unknown, but it does not appear on any of the old estate-maps. Its course to avoid, apparently, an iron age "A" tumulus suggests that it was made not so very long after the tumulus and at a time when the tumulus was still honoured as a burial place. The location of the entrance cannot be determined at present. Only excavation can prove its date, and reveal details of its structure and purpose.

From the field in which lies the Mill Tut barrow British and Roman coins have been reported. On one occasion a contracted skeleton with many Roman coins was found³⁶—an unusual combination, as contracted burials are usually earlier than Roman. There is no doubt a Romano-British settlement there. An early British coin of early Macedonian type has been found there and probably indicates a pre-Roman occupation.

A bead of early iron age or Roman date was recovered during dredging operations in the floating harbour. It is in the Bristol Museum. From time to time discoveries of ancient remains have been made during the excavations for buildings on the slope of or at the foot of the spit of higher land between the rivers Frome and Avon near their junction.³⁷ The accounts of these finds have been carefully studied and the surviving articles examined. They are alleged to be of early iron age date. The remains came chiefly from the old natural slope of the Frome bank and therefore their relative vertical position is not a reliable guide

to their relative antiquity. The actual implements themselves are not, taken as a whole, entirely of the usual early iron age facies. Pottery is frequently referred to, some of it being described as pre-Norman, but unfortunately none of this was available for study. The finds were originally submitted to the late Sir William Boyd Dawkins, who expressed the opinion that they 'were not older than the iron age'. Since then an undoubted iron age weaving comb has been recovered from a site nearby (see p. 177), but even so there must remain a considerable element of doubt as to whether the majority of the finds are really of iron age date or medieval. If the former, then a living site is indicated.

Another tumulus, No. 4, exists on Kings Weston Hill, but this is probably of Roman date.³⁸

Oldbury Court is a name suggestive of an ancient burial mound or camp being in the vicinity. No such site can be found, unless it refers to the Purdown one, and it has not been possible to find out anything of the origin of the name. It may have been derived from the word *Berue*, meaning wood or grove.

Bingham¹⁷ mentions earthworks near Golden Hill, Horfield. He gives a reference to the discovery of neck-chains for slave-gangs and what must have been fire-dogs. He thinks that these discoveries were probably connected with the barrow described above, but such a combination of iron articles with a long barrow would be most unusual. As the reference is indefinite I would suggest that these iron articles came from the earthworks, now built over, that he describes as being near the barrow and which could well be of iron age date. It is a pity that all trace of these articles has been lost, for though similar ones are recorded from other early iron age sites none are recorded for Somerset and neither, I think, for Gloucestershire. There is a pair of shackles from Somerset,³³ but these are ankle shackles, if indeed they were for slaves, and are not the usual linked neck-chains. Ellis⁴⁰ describes the finding of pottery which was "reddish, fairly well burnt, porous, with a large proportion of fine sand and moulded with simple tools". He terms it much superior to bronze age pottery. It was found when making a new road near Horfield Church and probably came from the same site as the iron articles. An iron age date is indicated.

CONCLUSIONS AND SUGGESTIONS

It is clear that the city and county of Bristol is, for its size, remarkably rich in remains of the various prehistoric periods. Most of the knowledge that we possess is derived from casual finds and by analogy with other sites, which have been excavated. Little has as yet been done to amplify and extend the available knowledge and to fill the great

gaps that exist in that knowledge. A preliminary paper on Romano-British Bristol is badly needed.

Bristol has a fine museum, one of whose functions is to set forth, for the benefit of the public, the history of Bristol. As far as prehistory is concerned the material available is lamentably small and yet there are so many good sites awaiting excavation from which the necessary information and material could be obtained. I would like to suggest that a long-term policy of systematic excavation of selected sites under expert direction should be adopted by the city. The cost would not be high and a sum, say, of £50 to £100 per year for ten years would produce much information on Bristol's prehistory. If, as on sites in other areas, the public had access to the excavations contributions to the cost would be forthcoming and volunteer labour would not be wanting. Come, then, let those in authority give the lead.

REFERENCES

Abbreviations

- B.G.A.S. *Transactions of the Bristol and Gloucestershire Archaeological Society.*
 Brist. Nats. *Proceedings of the Bristol Naturalists Society.*
 C.A.C. *Proceedings of the Clifton Antiquarian Club.*
 U.B.S.S. *Proceedings of the University of Bristol Spelæological Society.*

- ¹ U.B.S.S., III, 162-172.
- ² John Rutter, *Delineations of the North-western Division of the County of Somerset and of the Mendip Caverns*, 1829, 315.
- ³ Brist. Nats., V. (N.S.), 3-45.
- ⁴ For accounts of these changes as affecting local deposits see—
 U.B.S.S., I, 126-9; III, 154-61; *Proc. Geologists Assoc.*, XLII, 345-61.
- ⁵ U.B.S.S., III, 167.
- ⁶ Fanshawe-Bingham. *Horfield Miscellanea*, 34 et seq. Other references are given in this work.
- ⁷ Seyer, *Memoirs of Bristol*, 1821, I, 102.
- ⁸ B.G.A.S., XXXVI, 112.
- ⁹ B.G.A.S., XXVI, 217-9.
- ¹⁰ B.G.A.S., XXX, 153.
- ¹¹ U.B.S.S., II, 82.
- ¹² B.G.A.S., XXXVI, 218.
- ¹³ U.B.S.S., IV, 34-42.
- ¹⁴ U.B.S.S., II, 285 and plate XVIII.
- ¹⁵ C.A.C., V, 101.
- ¹⁶ C.A.C., V, 280.
- ¹⁷ U.B.S.S., II, 89.
- ^{17a} Seyer, *Memoirs of Bristol*, 1821, I, 104.
- ¹⁸ Brist. Nats., 1893, VII, pt. II, 93-104.
- ¹⁹ *Archæologia*, 1937, LXXXVI, 129 et seq., "Two Bronze Age Cairns in South Wales, Simondstown and Pond Cairns, Coity Higher Parish, Bridgend", especially p. 142 et seq.
- ²⁰ U.B.S.S., II, 240-2.
- ²¹ C.A.C., V, 118-21 and plate XX.
Antiquaries Journal, V, 51.
Proc. Soc. Antiquaries, XVIII, 239.
- ²² Evans, *Bronze Implements*, 68-9.
- ²³ B.G.A.S., XXVII, 328, and *Bristol Times and Mirror*, 1903, Dec. 10th.
- ²⁴ *Ibid.*
- ^{24a} *Ibid.*, 329 and plate II, fig. 1.
- ²⁵ C.A.C., V, 118.

- ²⁶ B.G.A.S., XXVII, 330.
²⁷ *Ibid.*, XXVII, 327, 329-30 and plate II, fig. 2.
²⁸ U.B.S.S., II, 76-82 and 238-40.
²⁹ Seyer, *Memoirs of Bristol*, 1821, I, 73.
³⁰ Dobson, *Archæology of Somerset*, 123.
^{30a} U.B.S.S., IV, 155.
³¹ Seyer, *Memoirs of Bristol*, 1821, I, 60.
³² C.A.C., V, 18.
³³ U.B.S.S., I, 14 and plate X.
³⁴ U.B.S.S., IV, 139-50.
³⁵ U.B.S.S., II, 77.
³⁶ C.A.C., II, 158.
³⁷ B.G.A.S., XXIII, 270; XXVII, 30; XXX, 151 and 227; XXXI, 298
³⁸ U.B.S.S., II, 142.
³⁹ Seyer, *Memoirs of Bristol*, 1821, I, 72.
⁴⁰ C.A.C., II, 157.

APPENDIX

LIST OF BRONZE IMPLEMENTS FROM BRISTOL

No.	Item	Bristol Museum Number	Locality	Fig.	No.
1.	Flat axe flanged	E.1728	Coombe Dingle	4	1
2.	ditto	E.1729	ditto	4	2
3.	ditto decorated	E.1730	ditto	4	3
4.	Trunion celt	E.1731	ditto	4	4
5.	Rapier	E.1778	Avonmouth Dock	5	1
6.	Palstave	F.2171	Westbury-on-Trym	5	2
7.	Looped socketed celt	F.881	Hotwells	5	3
8.	Socketed spear head	E.446	Bristol	5	4
9.	Palstave	E.448	Bristol Bridge	6	1
10.	Flat axe	F.2170	ditto	6	2
11.	Sword fragment	F.2169	ditto	6	3
12.	Looped socketed celt	F.2329	Prince's Street	6	4
13.	Looped socketed spear head	F.2328	ditto	6	5
Not available					
14.	Palstave		Bristol Bridge		
15.	Palstave		"Glos. side of city boundary"		similar to item 6
16.	Flanged celt		"Mile or two east of Coombe Dingle"		similar to item 6