

## TRIAL EXCAVATIONS NEAR GORSEY BIGBURY

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In the last number of these *Proceedings* (1949, p. 80) I mentioned the existence of several circles in the same field as Gorsey Bigbury, Charterhouse-on-Mendip, which were noticed on aerial photographs and subsequently traced on the ground. The Society decided to excavate in case the circles should prove to be works connected with Gorsey Bigbury, and trial trenches were accordingly dug by a small party of members at Easter, 1949, under the direction of the writer.

A circle of 140 feet external diameter, whose centre is about 97 yards due west from that of Gorsey Bigbury, was selected for excavation. An interrupted trench was dug along one radius from 60 to 95 feet from the centre. A continuous trench was dug along a radius at right angles to the first, from 56 to 75 feet from the centre, and extended on one side. These trenches, which were supplemented by extensive soundings with the auger in this and other circles, did not reveal any structures which might be regarded as artificial, or any objects save three flint flakes, which are common all over Mendip. We therefore concluded that the circles were a purely natural phenomenon.

The soil in the area consists of stiff red clay, showing very little stratification, and hard to dig. Near the junction with the solid limestone below it is coloured dark grey for two or three inches from the contact. The surface of the solid rock was found to be very irregular, the thickness of the soil varying from a minimum of 1 ft. 8 ins. to no less than 7 ft. 9 ins. in one place. In the central area of Gorsey Bigbury the soil was very shallow (*see* Jones, these *Proceedings*, 1938, p. 5), but it seems that this was abnormal for the area.

Since nothing positive was found it has not been thought worth while to publish plans of the circles and of the trenches dug. The log and plan of the excavation have been deposited with the Society's records.

Vegetation circles similar in appearance to those of Gorsey Bigbury have been noticed in a field of rough pasture about 700 yards east-south-east of Shipham parish church. We have not been able to determine any reason for the existence of these circles.

The Society's thanks are due to the Axbridge Rural District Council, and to Mr. Young of Lower Farm, by whose courtesy the excavation was carried out.