

Archæological Notes

The Soldiers' Grave, Dundry. (O.S. 6 in. to 1 mile, Som. 12 N.W., N.G.R., ST 55355534.) This site lies south of the church and immediately north of the Ordnance Survey triangulation point. It is the one part of this area of Dundry Hill that has not been quarried. Traditionally, according to some of the older inhabitants of the area, the name is derived from the number of human bones once found there, though it has not been possible to find any record of their actual discovery, a long time ago. It is also claimed that this part of the hill, only about 30 × 20 yards in extent, was never quarried because the workmen at the time, which was well prior to 1791, refused to destroy the grave. Collinson (1791) in his account of Dundry Hill includes the following description of a structure at the site. "The hand of art never exerted itself here but in hewing out immense quarries in the days of yore, and erecting one poor, forsaken building for the purpose of a beacon house. This building (is) composed of two stones put slantwise for a covering with an arched doorway three feet high and two and a half wide. The room within is five feet and a half long by five feet wide." He concludes that it was not a beacon but rather the watch-house for the keeper but admits that no marks of fire are "distinguishable in any part of its composition". Collinson does not explicitly state that he had visited the site though his account certainly reads as if he had.

Skinner (1826)* visited the site and found a large cist formed of four upright stones on which rested flat covers each about 8 ft. in length and 4 ft. in width. The intermediate space between the uprights was filled up with dry stone walling. The cavity was about 7 ft. long by about 6 ft. wide, "capable of holding three or four bodies laid side by side". One of the stones, then prone beside the cist, had been smoothed prior to removal but had been broken and left. The other stone was supported by the uprights and had apparently been squared. Skinner could gain no information as to when the cist had been opened and adds that the tumulus had not been completely removed, and seemed to be about 60 ft. in circumference. A sketch, which Phelps (1835, p. 90) seems to have copied without acknowledgment, is given. He describes it as "a cistvaen of huge stones". Scarth (1890) says he had examined it about forty years before and had concluded that it "was a small cabin, not apparently prehistoric, being formed of ashlar slabs and seemed rather to have been used as a place for tools in more recent times". There is nothing on the site at all now but it does seem remarkable that this small area should have been left unquarried when one sees how the old quarries run into one another without leaving any intervening area unquarried. There is just this little area unquarried.

The stone of the hill naturally splits up with little tooling into square or rectangular masses and Skinner's remarks need not imply that the structure was not old because the stones were tooled. There is a discrepancy between the description given by Collinson and Skinner, but part at least of the discrepancy would disappear if, in the interval between the two visits, one of the cover stones had slipped still further than in 1791 and fallen flat. The site may have been utilized, as Scarth suggests, as a toolshed, but that does not necessarily invalidate its alleged antiquity and a toolshed could only have been needed there when the quarries were being worked long prior to 1791 though it is hardly likely that the shed would be placed on the very summit and the hill quarried all round. Skinner specifically mentions that there were remains of the tumulus that once covered the cistvaen. On the whole the available evidence points to there having been on the site a prehistoric chambered tomb covered by a mound, probably of stones, as there is scarcely any soil on the site at the present day.

E. K. TRATMAN.

Another Henge Monument on Mendip. (O.S. 6 in. to 1 mile, Som. 28 S.W., N.G.R., ST 559498. Catalogue number, T 239A.) Brief references to this discovery

* I am indebted to Mr. A. T. Wicks of Wells for this reference and for the abstract from which these notes have been made.

have already appeared (Tratman, 1955, and Taylor and Tratman, 1957). The site lies about a mile east of the Hunter's Lodge Inn close to the south side of the road. It was first noted in 1926 as a possible archaeological site, but at the time the ground was so very much overgrown with tummy grass and brambles that no definite opinion could be formed about it. In 1954 it was examined again when the field was under the plough and the work showed up very clearly. It consists of an outer bank 3 ft. high and 30 ft. wide with a ditch 22 ft. wide and 2 ft. deep inside. Both bank and ditch are interrupted by a causeway entrance 10 ft. wide. The central area, 30 ft. in diameter, is generally flat, but there is an oval-shaped mound, with indefinite margins, placed eccentrically towards the causeway. This mound looks as if it might be much more recent than the rest of the structure and may be composed of stones collected from the field in recent times. The overall diameter is 154 ft.

It will be noted that the measurements of this work are very similar to those of Gorsey Bigbury on Mendip (Jones, 1938), and the entrance is in the same position. The structure seems more regular than Gorsey Bigbury but that is probably due solely to the difference in the nature of the ground. The site is in the floor of the head of a very shallow valley. There are several round barrows near (Tratman, 1938, T 234-T 238) and to the north, across the road, is a very large disc or perhaps a degraded bell barrow on slightly higher ground (T 239). The site has all the characters of a henge monument and has been, or is in process of being scheduled as an ancient monument.

E. K. TRATMAN.

Sun Hole Cave, Cheddar. Pleistocene Deposits. In an earlier note (Ollier, 1955 on samples of the Pleistocene deposits, sample 5 from the sixth foot was noted as containing fragments of a mottled yellow limestone from an unidentified source. Subsequently samples of limestone from a Triassic Conglomerate infilling of a small cave exposed in the north face of a quarry (N.G.R., ST 451555) on the road from Cheddar to Shipham were examined. They were found to be identical with the Cheddar specimens. Similar conglomerates occur at Chelm's Combe and Batt's Combe near Cheddar and these extend to within half a mile north of Sun Hole cave. The conglomerates run up to 600 ft. above sea level, whereas Sun Hole lies at about 300 ft. It seems most likely that these conglomerates are the source of the yellow limestone in the Sun Hole deposits. If so, the active Pleistocene swallet entrance beyond the present back of the cave must be looked for in a northerly direction towards the edge of the conglomerates.

C. D. OLLIER.

Investigations at Stanton Drew. On the weekend of October 2nd to 3rd, 1954, the writers, with Dr. and Mrs. H. Taylor and others, and by kind permission of the Inspectorate of Ancient Monuments, and Mr. Lionel Smart (landowner), undertook a small probing and augering operation at Stanton Drew. The auger was kindly lent by the Geology Department of the University of Bristol.

The main purpose was to try to locate a continuation of the two stone avenues towards the River Chew. The ground from the lowest known stones of both avenues to and slightly beyond the winding hedge to the east was thoroughly probed and augered without locating any stones. It is possible that if they ever existed they may have sunk through the river alluvium; a suggestion previously made to one of us by M. P-R. Giot, of Rennes, from his wide experience of Breton megaliths. This suggestion is supported by the fact that very soft mud at a depth of about 2 ft. was brought up by the auger in various places east of the old hedge-line shown by a dotted line on the accompanying plan. (*Fig. 27, p. 111*).

As the ground is level between the winding hedge and the present course of the River Chew, we believe that it might well have been submerged in winter during the second millennium B.C., in which case the winding hedge would indicate the limit of the area then liable to winter floods. If this is so, the avenues may never have continued beyond the line of this hedge.

The incomplete part of the larger stone avenue was next probed and augered for missing stones, which were not located; it is evident that some of the stones must have been removed long ago.

At the junction of the Great Circle and its avenue, our operations met with more success. We were gratified by discovering a buried stone comprising the western