Worlebury Camp.

After luncheon, the party met outside Holy Trinity Church, from which they approached the Camp *viâ* "Penwartha," under the guidance of Mr. H. St. George Gray. Having crossed the fortifications at the S.W., they were conducted along the southern margin of the interior of the Camp to the grand Entrance on the S.E., a triple group of pits being pointed out *en route*.

The members having seated themselves on the site of the

chief ancient entrance to the Camp, Mr. GRAY read a paper on "Worlebury," which has been epitomized for the purpose of publication in a limited space.

He said that he felt somewhat in the position of a 'poacher' on the archæological preserves of another antiquary. He referred to Mr. Charles W. Dymond, F.S.A., whose work on "Worlebury" (second edition) formed one of the most thorough books extant which related to a single ancient defensive stronghold. Mr. Dymond, who now lived in the North, had been invited to come and describe the Camp, but circumstances prevented his being present on that occasion. He (Mr. Gray) trusted that Mr. Dymond's absence would not be the cause of diminishing the interest which was, and should be, taken in that notable Somersetshire Camp.

It was almost superfluous to say that Somerset was rich in ancient habitations and camps of various dates, ranging from the Bronze Age to mediæval times, and that it included several examples of ancient castrametation which ranked among the finest in Britain; but, on the other hand, Somerset was badly off for burial-mounds and graves of prehistoric times.

One never wrote about, or thought of, Worlebury, without bearing in mind that Mr. Dymond had been its chief explorer; but other archæologists besides Mr. Dymond and the Rev. H. G. Tomkins had had their names linked with Worlebury, the foremost being the Revs. F. Warre, W. Jackson, H. M. Scarth and W. Phelps, Dr. J. H. Pring and Mr. Martin Atkins, all notable antiquaries in their day. Most of those comparatively early archæologists sometimes fell into excusable error, not in regard to Worlebury, but in respect to other ancient sites also. He did not mean to say that they were always wrong in their assertions or even generally so; but their mistakes were due chiefly to inaccurate and superficial observations on the ground, and casual and partial investigations of archæological areas. Unfortunately the same thing was going on at the present day, but to a lesser extent. As regards Worlebury, Mr.

Dymond, before writing his book, most methodically subjected previous assertions to a critical examination and "reduced them to their just value."

In describing Worlebury that afternoon he purposed to follow Mr. Dymond to a large extent; and to make some observations derivable from recent visits to the Camp, and some new deductions as regards date obtainable from an examination of the relics in Taunton Castle Museum presented by Mr. Warre in 1852-53, and discovered in 1851-52. Unfortunately their exact relative positions had not been recorded, and in some cases we were left to infer that they were found in the pits.

It seemed to him to be more desirable to enter into some detail with regard to what was known of, and what had been found at Worlebury, than to fill up all their time in traversing the ground; and for these reasons:—

(1) There was nothing to be seen of a *very* imposing nature except the great stone-built ramparts; and (2) the area of the camp had become overgrown to such an extent that some of the pits were difficult of identification.

Worlebury fell into Class "A" of the classification of Defensive Works drawn up by the Congress of Archæological Societies, viz., "Fortresses partly inaccessible, by reason of precipices, cliffs, or water, additionally defended by artificial banks or walls." The natural resources of Worlebury were however not *very* great, neither was it a very strong strategic point; but any weakness in the position was compensated by the strength of the ramparts.

Worlebury was situated at the western end of Worle Hill (carboniferous or mountain-limestone formation), which consisted of a promontory jutting into the Bristol Channel midway between St. Thomas's Head on the north and Brean Down on the south. It was only eight miles from the nearest point of the Welsh coast, viz., Lavernock Point, and about seven and a quarter miles in a bee line N.N.W. of the camp of Brent

Knoll. The Weston Bay at one time ran farther inland; that was evident from the discovery, at the foot of Worlebury, some forty years ago, of remains that were thought to be those of an ancient galley, at a point quarter of a mile eastward from the present sea-front. Other proof had been found even rather farther inland. The highest part of the hill was a mile from the nose of the promontory and about 320 feet above high-water.

Worlebury as they saw "was crowned by the ruins of a fortress complicated in construction, by the adoption of every defensive expedient which, with the materials at hand, the military science of an early age could devise." The inner defences of the place enclosed an area of ten and a quarter acres, about one-third of which was occupied by the groups of pits. (At this point Mr. Gray proceeded to fully describe the extent, position, and formation of the stone-built ramparts—*see* Frontispiece—the ditches, and entrances, and referred to the water-supply, important items which will be found exhaustively treated upon in Mr. Dymond's book on "Worlebury.")

With regard to the stone used in the construction of the ramparts, it had often been asked whether the stone was quarried or not. Not a single stone was seen which did not exhibit one weathered face. It was apparently not quarried, but probably derived from pits, loose shakes in the rock, and the surface of the hill.

If we were to judge by the character of the walling *alone*, "there was nothing to indicate whether Worlebury was earlier or later than the stone-built fortresses of Wales, Cornwall or Brittany." . . . . "There was a difference of *quality* in the walling of Worlebury; not a difference of *style*; but the former was only such as would result from fluctuations in the supply of facing-material; from deliberation or haste in construction; from dilapidation and repair; and from the relative importance of various parts of the work." The theory that the ramparts of Worlebury were strengthened by palisading is certainly not practical. Such barriers would rather be



THE MAIN RAMPART ON THE S.E. SIDE OF WORLEBURY CAMP,
TAKEN FROM THE "GRAND ENTRANCE."

From a Photograph by Dr. F. J. Allen.

an encumbrance than otherwise, and they would greatly interfere with the construction of the stone parapet; indeed they were quite inapplicable to strongholds of the Worlebury type.

The camp had three entrances and clear traces of all still existed. The principal one, around which the members were assembled, was near the S.W. angle of the "keep," and on the S.E. side of the camp. The second was at the N.E. corner, and the third at the western end of the promontory. The other paths *over* the ramparts were modern. The grand entrance had a superficial width of thirteen and a half feet. The width of the N.E. entrance was about eleven feet. From these widths it had been assumed that they were adapted and available for chariots. We should leave the camp near the old western approach.

Worlebury contained ninety-three pits, or nine per acre. One was situated in the transverse fosse, eighteen at the E. end of the enclosure, and seventy-four in the larger division of the camp. They occurred more or less in groups and others were arranged in lines. Their position was doubtless chosen according to shakes in the rocks, regulated by stratification and cleavage. "The pits vary in size, from one of the smallest, which is rectangular, 3ft. in length, and 2¾ft. in width, to the largest, which is triangular, sunk almost entirely in the rock to a depth of at least 6ft., and with vertical sides measuring respectively 10ft., 9ft., and 8ft. Commonly they are about 6ft. across; and the most frequent shape is a rude rectangle. The depth varies from 3ft. to 6ft.; the most common depth being about 5ft. All these pits were sunk through the overlying soil into the upper portion of the rock. This, in the majority of cases, is within 2ft. of the present surface." There was no evidence of ramps or steps having been cut for the purpose of ingress or egress; moveable ladders might therefore have been used. With one exception all the pits were cut into the rock without any built sides of stone-work remaining, if any ever existed. The pits excavated by General Pitt-

Rivers at Mount Caburn Camp in Sussex, were similar to those which had been examined here, and their depth averaged 5ft. as at Worlebury.

He thought that the Worlebury pits were not adapted for habitation. If all were of the same dimensions as the largest excavated, the accommodation would have been very restricted, whilst the smallest would only be sufficient to shelter one man in a crouched posture. If not habitations, then what were they? Doubtless holes for the storage of food, grain, sling-stones and domestic articles requiring protection from exposure to various climatical changes. The pits might have been protected by some kind of roofing; some contained evidence of perishable materials suitable for walls and roofs. Others might have been sealed with straw covered with earth and stones. The ring-bank which encircled some of the pits might well have served to exclude water, or as a foundation for the support of a wicker-work wall. The wicker-work, or a framework of poles and branches of trees intertwined, would probably spring almost immediately from the ground to form the roof, and that would of course limit the internal height. It should be mentioned that no pit had been found outside the fortifications of Worlebury on Worle Hill. These pits might of course have sheltered human beings as occasion required, and in times of emergency.

Of the large number of pits that had been opened, the contents of nine only were specified; but then none of these, except the steened pit, could be identified with any of those in Mr. Dymond's plan. There was nothing against the assumption that the pits were of the same age as the ramparts. Had they been more ancient, it was probable that they would have been discovered on various parts of Worle Hill.

With regard to the probable population of Worlebury, when it was flourishing, a general officer, experienced in savage warfare, told Mr. Dymond that from 7,000 to 10,000 barbarians might encamp in a fort of the size of Worlebury,

while it could not provide room for more than 3,000 or 4,000 modern infantry.

Having passed, in hasty review, the artificial work entailed in converting this fortress naturally somewhat strong by nature into an almost impregnable position, Mr. Gray proceeded to briefly summarize the relics found in the various pits; so that their conclusions might exhibit something of the nature of certainty, without being obliged to encroach upon the undesirable realms of inference and conjecture.

All the human remains were found in the pits, portions of about eighteen skeletons, half of them bearing marks of cutting weapons. Two of the skulls were in Weston Museum; and another, which showed signs of seven sword-cuts, was at Taunton Castle. Two skulls were dolichocephalic; but one, in the Weston Museum, was mesaticephalic. They had strong brow-ridges, narrow low foreheads, and deeply hollowed ophyrons. The height given from a humerus of one man was as much as 6ft. 4in., whilst the average stature estimated from the bones of five males was 5ft. 8½ins. They compared far more favourably with the form of Iberian skull than with that of the typical Bronze Age man of the barrow period. For the want of a better term, the name Romano-British might be applied.

Several species of animals had been found, viz., horse, deer, ox (including *bos longifrons*), pig, sheep, a very small goat, badger, dog, otter, weasel and water-vole; small birds and limpet-shells.

Wheat and barley were found at the bottom of many pits. Peas also, but not so frequently, examples of which might be seen at Taunton; a piece of fir wood perforated with two circular holes; and pieces of plaited fibre, partially burnt.

Shore pebbles of generally uniform size, fit for the sling, were found at the bottom of many of the pits, and elsewhere. A small spindlewhorl of fine red sandstone was uncovered, and about three dozen flint implements and flakes, all in Taunton

Museum. They included a well-formed arrowhead, barbed and tanged, and portion of another; also a well-formed scraper, and a few worked knives.

The bronze objects (all in Taunton Museum) found in the pits were for the most part of a nondescript and fragmentary character. A twisted piece of wire, with a rivet at the end, had been described as an armilla, but it was too small for that purpose. There were fragments of other rings and bangles, and three pieces of "bordering" and thin bronze with small rivet-holes so commonly found with Late-Celtic relics and used for ornamenting and strengthening scabbards of swords, etc.

The head of a (?) human femur (wrongly described in Mr. Dymond's book as humerus), blackened by fire, was found; it was perhaps used as a spindle-whorl, but the hole had been obliquely bored. Similar objects, human and animal, had been found at the Glastonbury Lake Village and Ham Hill, at Woodcuts and Rotherley (Pitt-Rivers Excavations), and at Hunsbury. Portion of a tine of an antler was found at Worlebury, ornamented at the complete end by the dot-and-circle pattern in a similar manner to knife-handles and many other objects from the Glastonbury Lake Village; also a bone awl similar to many from Glastonbury. A smalt-blue bead was found at a depth of three feet in one of the pits and resembled similar ones found at Glastonbury. The variously-coloured, long and narrow, glass beads, found in the surface soil, are also most probably Late-Celtic.[1]

The objects of iron included two socketed leaf-shaped lance-heads; a chisel; two borers; large iron cone or ferrule; two heavy spiral rings; part of a bucket-handle; iron spikes and nails. All were found in the pits; all were in a corroded condition; and all were in Taunton Museum.

Some of the Worlebury pottery was of particular interest

1. Similar beads have been found at Woodcuts (*Excavations in Cranborne Chase*, Vol. I, Pl. XLIV, fig. 18), and Marston St. Lawrence (*Archæologia*, Vol. XLVIII., Pl. XXIII).

and especially the three incomplete vessels figured by Mr. Dymond. Since his second edition was published, these pots had been more completely restored and were included in the Late-Celtic series of pottery in our County Museum. They were probably lathe-turned, and we found their analogues dating from B.C. 200 from Glastonbury Lake Village and Ham Hill, Mount Caburn in Sussex, and Hunsbury in Northamptonshire. Indeed without considering the ornamentation on one of them he would without hesitation date them as prior to the time when the Romans penetrated into S.W. Britain. The ornamentation of the least perfect pot consisted of large incised concentric semicircles depending from the rim, filled with oblique crossed lines forming lozenges. This pattern was matched precisely at Glastonbury. On the other hand, Worlebury,—but probably not the pits,—had also yielded pottery typical of the Roman period, including a "basin-shaped rim" and the thin hard grey ware; but no Samian that he was aware of.

Amongst the various relics from Worlebury, including the ceramic products, he observed nothing of the Bronze Age nor anything that could positively be assigned to an earlier date than B.C. 250 (approximately);[1] but there was every reason to believe that the Camp passed through the vicissitudes of several succeeding centuries, with intervals of precarious peace, and was occupied, possibly not continuously, down to the time of the evacuation of Britain by the Romans; however, there was no evidence that the Romans utilized the Camp to any extent, as it was not built in accordance with the Roman rules of castrametation; but no doubt it was occasionally resorted

1. Since writing the above, the speaker found that there were deposited in Weston Museum two thick fragments of Early British Bronze Age pottery and a small portion of the rim of a large thick cinerary urn of soft quality apparently, without grains of quartz and with a projecting ridge just below the rim ornamented with rough vertical incisions. No record of the *gisement* of these shards was given, so that as evidence of date they were valueless and they might probably have been found outside the area of the Camp.

to for centuries as a rallying-point in times of invasion and civil commotion.

It might be urged by some antiquaries that the presence of flint implements pointed to an early date, but it not only frequently happened that flint objects were found with Late-Celtic and Roman remains, but it was rather the rule than the exception.

Mr. J. E. Pritchard had identified eleven first and second brass coins, found by Mr. Sholto V. Hare when a school-boy in 1833 on the s.w. side of Worlebury. They covered a lengthened period, viz., from Tiberius, A.D. 18, to Constantius II, A.D. 361. Taunton Museum possessed about 200 third brass Roman coins from the Camp, but unfortunately the majority were badly corroded. They covered the Constantine period, and although he found one or two of Valens (died A.D. 378), he thought that, judging from the very small size of some of them, the balance weighed in favour of their extending down to Honorius; the poor preservation of that collection, however, prevented him from making any definite assertion.

In considering Worlebury in a state of siege, Mr. Dymond had said that a Roman attack on an early British race seemed more probable than a Saxon attack on Romanized Britons. That remark was borne out by the fact that no Roman remains had been found in the pits, and moreover no Saxon or Danish remains had been recorded as being discovered on Worle Hill.

The final assault of Worlebury was not likely to have taken place before the arrival of the Romans into N.W. Somerset; they probably found the Belgæ in possession of the stronghold, and he saw no reason whatever why anybody should disagree with Mr. Dymond's conclusion that Worlebury was taken and destroyed by Vespasian, *circa* A.D. 47. The theory of a Phœnician origin for Worlebury, which had sometimes been raised, was, he thought, untenable.

One thing of all others was certain about Worlebury,—it could not have been hastily constructed for a passing danger;

it must have been intended from the first for permanent use. "The size and strength of Worlebury bespeak it a stronghold of a numerous and powerful tribe, or clan, in secure possession of this part of the country; to have attained to such a status, they must have had greater resources than could have been furnished by a merely pastoral and agricultural life,—in short, to a certain extent, they must have been engaged in trade or commerce; that the latter is probable, is indicated by the position of the fortress-town."

Mr. Gray having been cordially thanked for his explanation of Worlebury, the party proceeded to traverse the Camp under his guidance. The transverse fosse, with the pit sunk into its bottom, was firstly pointed out. The members next crossed the ramparts on the east and examined parts of the dry walling which had been exposed for inspection. The external defences on the weak side of the Camp—the east—were viewed, and the so-called "cattle-fold" commented upon. The positions occupied by the various walls on the east having been explained, the members were re-conducted into the Camp, *viâ* the N.E. entrance. Several pits were passed on the way to the steened pit, which Mr. Gray stated was opened on Oct. 21st, 1851, by Messrs. E. M. Atkins and Bailward, and Dr. Tomkins. The depth of the steening was 27ins. On the top, stones extended to the margin of the steening. Below this, 4ins. of earth. Next in order, a large skeleton lying on right side; head nearly south, and 6ins. from the skeleton below it; face eastwards; legs drawn up. Then, skeleton No. 2, lying on left side; head S. and W.S.W.; vertebral column close to E. side of pit; legs drawn up. After this, a third skeleton was discovered, with head N. and N.W. Then, a quantity of shore-pebbles. Below this, in the centre, about half a peck of charred wheat and barley, mingled with bones of birds. On the rock-bottom, thin plates of lias and charred wood. Total depth of pit, 5ft. 9ins.

The central pathway was now crossed, and having passed a

number of pits closely grouped, the party halted to see the upper end of a formerly supposed subterranean passage. Mr. Dymond had, however, shown that nothing of the kind existed and that the adit at the bottom of the slope merely led to a sand-pocket in the rock.

Having spent an-hour-and-a-half on Worlebury, the party descended the hill at the western end, and proceeded to the Royal Pier Hotel for tea. At 4.30 p.m. the members left in carriages, for

Kewstoke Church,

where they were met by the President (Colonel Bramble, F.S.A.) and the Vicar (Rev. David Lloyd).

Colonel Bramble gave an interesting address, which ran as follows :—The church occupies a prominent position on the northern slope of Worle Hill. It comprises a nave with south aisle, a chancel, western tower, a chapel or "family pew" south of the aisle and east of a large south porch, with both of which it communicates. There is also a rudimentary porch over the priest's door on the s. side of the chancel.

The chancel roof is acutely pointed, but the remaining roofs are of low pitch. Owing to the slope of the site, the north wall has—although there is no n. aisle—the appearance of having been intended for a clerestory. The tower is of three stages, with an octagonal stair turret at its s.e. corner, capped by a small spire. At the other angles are single diagonal buttresses. The church is of four different dates. The inner door of the porch, which probably occupies its original site, is Norman ; and, although small, of somewhat rich character. The side shafts are spirally moulded, and the principal order of the arch embattled. This is figured in Rutter's *Delineations of Somerset*, p. 1.

The font is of E.E. character. The e. window and two on



FRONT VIEW OF RELIQUARY FOUND IN KEWSTOKE CHURCH.

(Now in Taunton Castle Museum.)

the N. side are of XIV Century date; the former is of two cinque-foiled lights, with a spherical triangle in the head, having a very graceful effect. The latter have rear or scoinson arches—somewhat unusual in the district.

South of the chancel arch is an arch or blocked squint, with a peculiar dripstone, depicted in the *Archæological Mag.*, edited by Sealey, of which only three parts appeared in 1843. The appearance of the head surmounting the dripstone may be attributed to the assumed pressure of the rood-loft, long since removed.

The pulpit, of stone, stands on the N. side of the church, between the two XIV Century windows. It is of hexagonal plan, with rich Perpendicular tracery in the panels. Stone pulpits would be seen at Worle and Banwell during the excursions, and there were others at Wick St. Lawrence, Locking, Christon and Hutton in the same locality.

Under the sill of the N.E. window of the nave there was formerly inserted the reliquary or shrine now in the Museum at Taunton. (See accompanying illustrations.) It was probably removed to this church, which was a dependent of Worspring Priory, about the time of the suppression of that House. The date would be XIII Century, corresponding with the older part of the Priory, but long antecedent to the date of the wall in which it was then inserted. In a hollow within, closed by a wooden door, was a wooden cup containing dry sedimentary matter of a dark colour. The generally received theory is that this was one of the wooden cups sold by the Monks of Canterbury as containing some portion of the blood of their great Martyr, S. Thomas of Canterbury. As the Priory at Worspring was founded by a descendant of Wm. de Tracy, one of the murderers—or executioners—the supposition has apparently a very fair basis.

The chapel has Coats of Arms in the window of the various families with whom the Pigotts—the Lords of the Manor—claim connection. The tinctures are of the crudest!

Nearly opposite the Church are "St. Kew's Steps,"[1] about one hundred in number, gradually mounting a cleft or depression in the limestone rock of Worle Hill. St. Kew is not an historical personage, but he may well have been one of the numerous local saints, hermits or anchorites, who had abiding places on this and the Welsh coast. There are here no remains now apparent of a Hermitage or Chapel, but the Church may well have been erected on the site as on Holy Ground. There does not appear to be any need to canonize "a landing place for boats," and to ignore the venerable tradition of our remote predecessors. "St. Kew" it has been, "St. Kew" may it always remain!

Kewstoke Reliquary.

The following note has been written by the Rev. C. H. Bickerton Hudson:—

"It has been suggested that the rough wooden vessel known as the 'Kewstoke Reliquary' would be an unlikely receptacle to contain so precious a relic as the blood of St. Thomas. Now Herbert of Bosham relates how in the scare and hurry of the terrible night, the blood of the dead prelate was gathered up '*vasulis allatis*,' while the body was still lying upon the pavement of the Church. These vessels would quite probably include wooden drinking cups, such as the one in question might well be, hastily brought from the refectory of the monastery—perhaps even from the kitchen—and if some forty years afterwards a Canterbury relic was to be bestowed upon the newly-formed Church of Worspring—with its intimate connection with the martyr and its dedication in his name—what more precious memorial and more eloquent in historic appeal to the devout imagination could be thought of than one

1. A small silver ring-brooch (pin deficient) found at "St. Kew's Steps" may be seen in Taunton Castle Museum. It is figured in Knight's "Sea-Board of Mendip," p. 172. The Museum also contains an earthenware jug, probably XIV Century, from the same place.



BACK VIEW OF RELIQUARY FOUND IN KEWSTOKE CHURCH.

(Now in Taunton Castle Museum)

of these *vasulæ* with its sacred and to some extent indelible contents."

Mr. Hudson adds that "Attention should be drawn to the unquestionably XIII Century work of the stone tabernacle which contains the Reliquary and its contemporary character with the earliest Church of the Priory."

Evening Meeting.

The Annual Dinner having taken place in the Assembly Rooms,—the President in the chair,—an Evening Meeting was held in the Hall of the Y.M.C.A. for the reading of papers, at which a fine silver porringer formerly belonging to the old Corporation of Axbridge was exhibited by Mr. H. H. Pleydell Bouverie, and a facsimile in bronze by Mr. H. Franklin of the famous bowl found at the Glastonbury Lake Village.

The first paper was on "Worspring Priory," by the Rev. F. W. Weaver, F.S.A. This is printed *in extenso* in Part II, with illustrations.

An excellent paper was read by Mr. F. Bligh Bond, F.R.I.B.A., on the "Screens and Screenwork in Somerset Churches," which was illustrated by a fine series of lantern slides made by the lecturer. The following is a brief summary of the paper:—

The surviving examples of Pre-Reformation screenwork in the County of Somerset are chiefly of late date—XV or XVI Century—when most of the churches were enlarged and earlier woodwork to a great extent displaced to make room for the more elaborate work of later times.

The frequency of screenwork in the West Country is noticeable, the Rood Screen being often an essential feature owing to the peculiarity of the churches having no structural division between nave and chancel. The development of the screen may be traced down from early days from a heavy

mural partition to lighter stone screenwork, thence to flat wooden screens, and lastly to the elaborately groined and canopied works of the Tudor period.

Specimens of the various local types of screenwork were shewn in the lantern, together with supplementary examples from other districts, all the principal varieties being thus shewn.

Amongst these may be mentioned the plainer square-headed type of screen found chiefly in the northern part of the county, of which the screens at Backwell and West Pennard furnish examples—the advance in design being shewn by the Wrington group, and a further elaboration by the Keynsham model.

The screens of the south-west district were exemplified by views of Dunster and others. These approximate to the Devonshire type, having fully groined carvings for the Rood-loft.

Specimens were also shewn of a fine group of screens peculiar to the county, possessing very stately proportions, and of these High Ham and Queen Camel possess good instances; whilst the grand screen at Banwell is of kindred type.

The character of the designs and their detail were compared, and local peculiarites noticed.

Lastly a portion of the lecture was devoted to the Post-Reformation screenwork of Somerset—an important branch of the subject.

This was illustrated by reference to some magnificent surviving examples, as Croscombe and Rodney Stoke. The latter exhibits a feature once, it is believed, fairly common, but now almost extinct in our churches—namely, the retention of a singers' gallery or loft over the chancel screen in Post-Reformation days, following the older tradition. This instance being of Jacobean date, co-eval with the screen, is thought to be unique.

Another paper read on this occasion was "Æthandune," by Mr. W. L. Radford, a résumé of which is given in Part II.