

MEARE LAKE VILLAGE EXCAVATIONS

1955

The season's work in the eastern half of the Meare Lake Village, near Glastonbury, which began on August 15th, came to an end on September 8th, after which the ground had to be made good and returned to pasture. Owing to the dryness of the summer the ground was hard to work, except in the foundation below the clay floors of the large dwelling-mound (No. XIV) which was partly examined.

This dwelling is one of the largest of the circular type—about 30 feet in diameter. (The average dwelling is about 23 feet in diameter). The artificial layers built up on the natural peat were 3.8 feet in height and consisted, from top to bottom, of, firstly, alluvium or flood-soil, then two habitation floors of a clayey dark mould with a slight admixture of stone. These floors were difficult to separate. Below them three superimposed floors, the clay for which was brought from neighbouring clay-pits and laid down as required to keep the dwelling well above the normal water-level. The lowest layer, below the clay, consisted of black earth resting on reed and rushes, with a little timber, and then the solid peat. Datable objects and pottery and animal bones are common finds in this material.

In this part of the digging, just under the turf, a large amount of blue lias stone had been dumped presumably by the Romans, for some remains of that date have been found associated with these stones, which probably were used for raising the ground in this part of the village well above the water-level of the floods.

For the visit of the British Association (Section H) from their Bristol Meeting a very interesting foundation of a square dwelling was re-opened, the first time since its discovery in 1930. The structure, 9 feet square, consists of a heavy framework of oak, the interspaces filled with lengths of alder arranged in parallel order.

Some of the objects found at Meare this season are new to the collection. A large piece of red-deer antler, carefully shaped, polished and ornamented, is puzzling, but it is thought probable that it was used in connection with weaving. The weaving objects also include a number of spindle-whorls, some bobbins and combs, one of which is richly ornamented with scroll-work. Among the other finds in antler is a finely worked pin with carved head, one piece of a set of dice marked 3.4.5.6., and handles of tools. Among the bronze objects are two La Tène III fibulae and a toggle of rare type. There is a large assortment of pottery, some ornamented.

The work has been directed by Mr. H. St. George Gray, with the assistance of Dr. Michael Bird and a team of voluntary helpers, most of whom have worked on former occasions.

H. ST. GEORGE GRAY.