

## MEARE LAKE VILLAGE EXCAVATIONS

1953

The excavations, under the direction of the undersigned, were continued on 13 July, 1953, and the season's work closed on 7 August. As in the last few seasons we had to rely to a large extent on voluntary help.

Firstly, the N. part of the large oval Mound XXVIII was tackled, to complete work on that dwelling which had been begun in 1948 and continued in 1952. In *Proceedings* the five groups of superimposed hearths and the four clay floors were briefly described. This season the N. margin of the Hearths, Group 'D,' was uncovered; and two holes, 1.5 ft. in diameter at the top and 1.8 ft. deep, were found, but they did not contain any wood. The small finds and pottery at this end of Mound XXVIII were comparatively scarce; they included weaving appliances, a bronze pin and a few flint implements.

The excavations were then conducted on the E. and W. ends of the office-shed. A part of Mound LI (on the east) was examined in a position where the upper 2 ft. consisted of slabs and lumps of lias stone mixed with dark mould, found in continuation of similar and larger deposits of stones of the Roman period (probably late 4th century) found in 1934 overlying clay floors and hearths of the Prehistoric Iron Age. This cutting was dug mostly by students and may be continued another season.

The chief excavation was the partial examination of Mound XIII on the W. side of the office. This dwelling proved to have seen much occupation and consisted of four floors which were provided with a group of four superimposed hearths, and another group of eight layers, the sixth from the top being surrounded by rough stonework. The N. half of the latter group has yet to be examined. A feature of this cutting was the unusual number of lias stones scattered about on the floors. In the black earth below the clay, pottery was found in considerable quantity—the remains of large cooking-vessels. Animal bones, chiefly of young ox and sheep, were also collected in large quantity. Among the smaller finds were five saddle-querns, some objects of bone including a needle, five glass beads and one of amber, two combs and other weaving appliances and an ornamented counter or gaming-piece.

1954

This season's excavations at the Meare Lake Village have been productive, both in structural features and in small finds, in spite of some rain and the temporary flooding of the trenches at the lower levels. The objects discovered included a large variety of materials: Bronze, iron, lead, tin, bone red-deer and roe-deer antler, Kimmeridge shale, glass, amber, stone, flint and, of course, earthenware and baked clay.

The season's work was devoted to two dwelling-mounds in the middle of the east village (Nos. XIII and LI). These are two of about sixty dwellings in the east village, most of which have been examined in former years. The southern part of Mound XIII was excavated in 1953, and on the four clay floors a number of superimposed hearths, mostly four feet in diameter, were uncovered. This season in the northern half another group of hearths was revealed, besides a few other separate hearths. The lowest fireplace consisted of part of the clay floor first laid on the undisturbed peat, at about 3 ft. 6 ins. below the present surface of the mound. Where the fire was kindled the baked clay was much cracked by intense heat and on that account well preserved. The peat was very solid here and little timber was necessary for the foundation of the dwelling (No. XIII).

When the northern group of hearths, which consisted of six layers, was being removed a discarded saddle-shaped quern of oblong form was found resting on the third layer. Large pieces of other quern-stones were unearthed in the dwelling and a perfect example of an upper stone and lower stone resting in position as a pair. Later a very large lower quern-stone was found at the bottom of the lowest clay floor. (Rotary querns which were fairly numerous at Glastonbury are rare at Meare.)

An exceptionally large amount of plain domestic pottery (many hundreds of shards) were found especially in the foundation—mostly broken-up cooking vessels. Just under the flood-soil a little Belgic ware has come to light.

Weaving is represented by eleven combs, made from red-deer antler, bobbins and spindlewhorls. Personal ornaments include a ring-brooch of bronze, a tiny fibula, and an armlet of tin and parts

of two others. Several portions of Kimmeridge shale bracelets, and a small spearhead of iron are among the finds. Glass beads have again been found and part of an amber bead. In antler are two or three knife-handles, and two cheek-pieces of horse's bridle-bits. Two square counters are among the other finds.

Animal remains were extremely plentiful, chiefly the bones of ox and sheep of young animals, indicating that these people of the first century B.C. were fond of lamb and veal. Bird-bones have been collected, and remains of beaver have been found again. They evidently liked the peaty clearings of this district. This rodent mammal has long been extinct to Britain and also in Scandinavia, and generally speaking the beaver does not now favour Europe. A number of worked shoulder-blades (scapulae) of ox were found in the excavations; they were probably used as shovels for grain and flour.

During the year Vol. II on "The Meare Lake Village Excavations (West Village)," by the late Dr. A. Bulleid and H. St. George Gray, has been issued privately; and copies of Vol. I (1948) are still obtainable.

H. ST. GEORGE GRAY.