

The PRESIDENT then read the following address :—

Ladies and Gentlemen,—As Archæology abhors all looseness

of statement, and exacts from its students the most rigid attainable exactness of thought and expression, I have committed to paper the few remarks respecting the antiquities of this neighbourhood, which I thought might with propriety be made by one filling the honourable office of President of this Society at an Axbridge meeting.

The previous annual meetings of the Somersetshire Archæological and Natural History Society, have been held at the following places:—Taunton (2), Wells (2), Weston-super-Mare, Bath, Yeovil, Dunster, Bridgewater (2), Bruton, Glastonbury, Clevedon, Langport, Wellington, Burnham, Shepton Mallet, Ilminster, Bristol, Williton. When the Society met at Weston-super-Mare in 1851, the excursionists from that place visited Banwell Church, and the Banwell Caves, (which were lighted up for the occasion by Chancellor Law); and the Corporation of Axbridge kindly exhibited their interesting collection of charters in the temporary museum. From Clevedon in 1860 an excursion was made to Wrington, Congresbury, and Yatton, which although not included in the programme of the present meeting, may fairly be considered to belong to our Axbridge district. The Cheddar Cliffs, and Cheddar Church, were visited from Glastonbury in 1859, but with these exceptions the Society has not crossed the limits of the area which we may claim as our own.

But although the Society, in its collective character, has not hitherto explored this particular portion of the county, much attention has been bestowed upon it by individual members, and with good reason. For if we consider the Mendip Hills with reference to their picturesque features, it would be hard to find any of our highland tracts with outlines of a more varied and pleasing character; and if we regard them, from an antiquarian point of view, there is no portion of South Britain, (with the exception perhaps of the Devonshire coast and the neighbouring county of Wilts), which, in its prehistoric traces of man and his works, can surpass it in interest and importance. The geologist finds ample materials

for the study of his favourite science on this vast limestone range, and in its riven sides; and the ecclesiologist sees with admiration in our valleys, such a tower as that of Wrington, which has been pronounced by an eminent authority to be entitled to the designation of "the finest square western tower, not designed for a spire or lantern, in all England, and therefore probably in the whole world."

The results of the investigations of this neighbourhood by members of the Society have been embodied in papers, published from time to time in the Society's Journal, and among the most important of them are the following:— On the Mendip Bone Caverns, by the Rev. W. A. Jones; on Wookey Hole Hyæna Den, and on the Burrington Combe Caverns, by Mr. Boyd Dawkins; on the Mining Operations of the Romans, by Mr. Yates; on Ancient Chambered Tumuli, by the Rev. H. M. Scarth; on the Geology of the Mendip District, by the late Mr. W. Baker, and by Messrs. Charles Moore and McMurtrie; on the Feline Fossils and Pleistocene Mammalia in the Taunton Museum, by Mr. Sanford; and on the types of Ancient Earth Works, by the late Rev. Francis Warre.

The mention of this last name reminds us of one who has recently passed away, but whose labours to promote the success of this Society, and the intelligent study of the antiquities of the county, will not soon be forgotten.

In this our Axbridge district, we have indications of those different periods of man's existence and civilization, which have been, of late, more or less accurately defined by the investigators of the traces of pre-historic times. Caves have been discovered during the present century on the sides of the Mendip Hills, at Banwell, Uphill, Hutton, Bleadon, and Sandford, which have yielded up the bones of the mammoth, the rhinoceros, the hyæna, the bear, and the reindeer. The important collections of these bones, which were made by the Rev. Mr. Williams, of Bleadon, and by Mr. Beard, of Banwell, have fortunately been secured by the Society, and

are now deposited in the most suitable place for them, the Museum at Taunton. When compared with those of the same species which are to be seen at the present day, these bones appear to have belonged to animals of gigantic dimensions; and there is good reason for the belief that these huge creatures lived and died upon the neighbouring hills, during that much colder period, which at one time prevailed in these islands, and of which we have such abundant evidence in the striated rocks of our more mountainous districts.

It does not appear from the accounts which have come down to us of the discovery of these animal remains, that any remains of man were found in juxtaposition with them; but it seems to be clearly established, from the recent discoveries, in English and foreign bone caverns, of flint implements and other traces of man indiscriminately mixed with bones of the mammoth, bear, hyæna, rhinoceros, Irish elk, &c., that, in the words of Sir John Lubbock, "man was coeval in Europe with the great group of quaternary mammalia."

The examination of the Hyæna Den, at Wookey Hole, near Wells, by Mr. Boyd Dawkins (described in his interesting paper in the Journal for 1861), and which resulted in the discovery of several rude flint implements, interspersed with bones of the extinct fauna of Somersetshire, led him also to the conclusion that man was here a contemporary with the mammoth and rhinoceros.

We cannot, I think, err much if we suppose the condition of the human beings of this very early period to have differed but little from that of the Esquimaux tribes in the present day.

This age, however, whatever may have been its duration, in course of time passed away; the mammoth and hyæna disappeared from this part of Europe; and the traces of man are next found in connection with the bones of the wolf, fox, badger, wild boar, goat, roebuck, bos longifrons, and horse. A cave at the head of the Cheddar pass, explored by Mr. Boyd Dawkins in 1859, produced the bones of all these animals, together with a human skull. In one of the upper

caves in Burrington Combe Mr. Boyd Dawkins found, with bones of the above named animals, the fragments of a rude urn and much charcoal, proving that the cave was inhabited by man for some considerable time. The lowest cave in this Combe was discovered at the end of the last century; and within it were found nearly fifty skeletons, arranged in order, and near them, a considerable quantity of flint knives and bones of sheep and deer. It is much to be regretted that the skulls and flints from this cavern have been dispersed, and are no longer available for examination.

In 1863 Mr. James Parker found human bones, along with rude pottery and charcoal, and the bones of the wolf, fox, badger, bos longifrons, pig, red deer, dog, and water rat, in a cave in the lime house cliffs at Uphill.

There are, doubtless, other caves in the Mendip range which will, ere long, be brought to light; and we may hope, that a careful examination of their contents will furnish us with additional materials for estimating the condition of man, in the two periods which we have just been considering.

We now come to traces of pre-historic man in these parts of a different character, possibly coeval with, but probably posterior to, the second cave-dwelling period. On the northern side of the Mendip range, near Butcombe, but in the village of Nempnett, there was, a few years ago, a remarkable specimen of the long barrow, very similar to those, which are somewhat numerous in the region of the Dobuni, who in the adjoining county of Gloucester, seem to have held with much pertinacity, their position as an aboriginal race. It was 150 feet from north to south, 75 from east to west, and 40 feet high at its highest elevation. It was opened by a farmer in 1788, who was in search of stones, and was found to contain a series of stone chambers of a somewhat similar character to those in the other Somersetshire long barrow at Wellow. Like that, it appears to have been constructed with unhewn stone, and to have contained many human skulls and bones, but no trace of metal, and nothing of an ornamental

character. The animal bones found in it, were those of the *bos longifrons*, the red deer, and the horse. Here again, we have cause for regret, that none of these skulls were preserved, as the examination of those from the long barrows in the adjoining counties of Wilts and Gloucester, and in Yorkshire, has shown that they possess a marked character, and one which Dr. Thurnam and Canon Greenwell consider to be typical of a distinct race. "The long barrows," says the latter, "have hitherto universally produced the dolicocephalic (or long) skull, which taken in connection with the shape and method of the mound, the absence of metal and perhaps of pottery, and the manner of the burial, affords strong grounds for believing, that, in them, we have the place of sepulture of a different and an earlier race than the bronze-using people, to whom the round barrows belong." (Archæological Journal, Vol. XXII, p. 108.) This remarkable difference between the length of the skulls found in the long barrows, and that of those found in the round barrows, has led Dr. Thurnam to the conclusion that the long-headed race, were either derived from the ancient Iberians, who had this peculiar form of head, or from a common source with that people. "These long-heads," says he, "are the earliest people, whose sepulchral monuments can be shown to remain to us. The exploration of their tombs—the long barrows—shows that they buried their dead entire, and almost without cremation; that they possessed herds of small short-horned oxen—the *bos longifrons* or *bos brachyceros*; that they subsisted largely by the chase of the red deer and wild boar; that some of their customs were barbarous in the extreme; and, in particular, that, if not addicted to anthropophagism they at least sacrificed many human victims, whose cleft skulls, and half-charred bones, are found in their tombs." (Paper on the Ancient Barrows of Wiltshire and the adjoining Counties, read at the opening of the Blackmore Museum, Sept., 1867). The number of instances, in which, during his examination of long barrows, Dr. Thurnam found, with one skull unutilated,

the Megalithic Remains at Stanton Drew, and the Camp on Worle Hill, both of which, may, I think, be not unreasonably assigned to the pre-Belgic period. For more than a thousand years B.C. an active trade in metals seems to have been carried on with Britain, first by the Phœnicians of Tyre, and afterwards by the Carthaginians, and the other Phœnician colonists who were settled on the shores of the Mediterranean Sea, and on the western coasts of Spain and Gaul. Copper they had in abundance in the islands of Elba\* and Cyprus, but for tin they were compelled to go beyond the pillars of Hercules. As Pliny says expressly that India possessed neither bronze, tin, nor lead, but exchanged her precious stones and pearls,† for these metals, we may assume that the tin of Banca was not then known, and that as Spain did not produce much, the chief supply of this metal came from our Cornish coast. Tarshish (supposed to be Tartessus in the south of Spain) is spoken of nearly 600 years B.C. by the Prophet Ezekiel (c. xxvii, v. 12) as being the channel through which Tyre was supplied with silver, iron, tin, and lead. Considering that the Phœnician sailors were the boldest and most experienced of the mariners of old, and that they did not shrink from encountering the perils of the Land's End, is there any improbability in the supposition that as they went to Cornwall for their tin, so they would visit our Bristol Channel for their supply of lead? ‡ and

\* See Jervis' Mineral Resources of Central Italy pp. 60, 62. At page 63, he gives an interesting account of the old workings for copper by the Etruscans at Temperino, in the Tuscan Maremma. In some parts of this mine Mr. Jervis found a large quantity of "black jack," in others very perfect crystal of dark blende.

† India neque ces neque plumbum habet, gemmisque suis ac margaritis hoc permutat (xxxiv. 49). The word 'plumbum' seems to be used here generically, and to apply both to 'plumbum album,' (tin), and to 'plumbum nigrum,' (lead).

‡ Etruscan leaden antiquities are still in existence. Antonio Filippo Giachi, a chronicler of the last century, mentions among the antiquities of the museum of Volterra certain sheets of lead with Etruscan inscriptions, of which Gori (*Istoria litteraria dell' Italia*, 1784) has given an account. He ranked them, after the Eugubian tables, among the most remarkable antiquities of the kind.—(Jervis' Mineral Resources of Central Italy p. 70.)

if this be conceded as probable, would it not be a very natural proceeding that with a view to the better working of the mines of this district, and to the greater security of their collected ore, they should establish a settlement on the neighbouring shore, and that Worle Hill should be selected as a fitting site for such a settlement? There is something so peculiar in the construction of the defences of that Camp, and so unlike what we usually see in camps of the pre-Roman period in this part of England, that it is not difficult to believe it to have been the work of foreign hands.

With respect to the stone circles and avenues at Stanton Drew, I would merely submit to your consideration, whether we may not reasonably assign their origin to Phœnician influence reaching these shores through that energetic maritime people, the Veneti, who inhabited a portion of the coasts of Armorican Gaul; who were still carrying on a brisk trade with Britain in the time of Cæsar; and in whose district were the remarkable stone structures of Karnac and its neighbourhood.

The traces of the Belgic occupation of this district are to be seen in the camps, barrows, circles, hut circles, trackways, and cattle enclosures which abound on the Mendip and neighbouring hills. Their extreme western boundary, the Wansdyke, may be very distinctly seen in many places between the Bathampton Camp above Bath, and Maesknoll above Keynsham; but from this point, in its supposed course either to Portishead, or to the Clifton Down Camps, Mr. Scarth and I have sought for it in vain.

It is probable that, although the use of bronze, both in the east and on the continent of Europe had prevailed for a considerable previous period, the Belgic race was the first which introduced the bronze age into Britain. Even in the time of Cæsar, bronze was an imported article ("Cere utuntur importato," B. G., v. 12); and it is not likely that the Phœnicians, if they found it to their advantage to have settlements on these coasts, would allow the native population to possess any weapons of a more formidable character than their sling stones and arrow heads of flint.



Of this Belgic race, which drove westward, and reduced to slavery the previous and long-headed occupants of this district, Dr. Thurnam, the great authority on the craniology of our early British races, says, "The brachycephalous people or round-heads, who buried in the round barrows were more civilised than the dolicocephali or long-headed race; and may be inferred to have brought with them the more common use, if not knowledge, of bronze. The exploration of their tombs, shows that burning the dead was with them the prevailing and fashionable, though not the exclusive, mode of burial; and the appearances are consistent, with what we are told of the funerals of the Gauls (their supposed congeners) by Cæsar and Pomponius Mela. From the same source, or the appearances in their tombs, we should infer, that they had advanced from the nomadic, hunting, and pastoral condition, to a more settled agricultural stage of culture; and that if they had not altogether abandoned the more barbarous customs of their ancestors, and in particular that of human sacrifice, (which all history tells us, was at one time, everywhere prevalent) they had at least restricted them within narrow limits." "These British brachy-cephali of the bronze period," Dr. Thurnam adds, "are to be regarded as an off-shoot through the Belgic Gauls, from the great brachycephalous stock of central and north eastern Europe and Asia, in all the countries of which—France, Switzerland, South Germany, Bohemia, Poland, Russia, and Finland—the broad and short cranial type is still the prevailing one." (Paper on the ancient British Barrows of Wiltshire and the adjoining counties, read at the opening of the Blackmore Museum, Sept. 1867.)

This race of Belgæ carried on, doubtless, in this district a considerable traffic in the Mendip lead ore, and their trackway to the channel probably passed over Banwell Hill, on which are the remains of a British Camp; and over Bleadon Hill, on which are the remains of a British Settlement. Dolebury Camp would serve as an emporium for their metal, before it was conveyed to the coast. High enough to command a view of

the entire bay from Uphill to Worlehill, large enough to contain many hundred defenders, and strong enough with its double ditch and rampart to defy attack, this hill fortress was admirably adapted for a store house of the mineral products of the neighbourhood, until an opportunity offered of shipping them off to foreign parts. Into its eastern entrance would be brought the lead produce of Charterhouse and Shipham, and from its western it would be carried across the valley to the opposite hill, and from thence along the high land to the harbour under Brean Down.\*

The Barrows upon the Mendip range, and which may be seen in clusters near Maesbury Castle; at Priddy, near the Castle of Comfort Inn; and on Blackdown, are not nearly so numerous or of such varied form, as those which are to be found on the Wiltshire downs around Abury and Stonehenge. They are the burial places of the more distinguished occupants of these hill tops during this Belgic period. The greater number of them were opened about 50 years ago by the Rev. John Skinner, Rector of Camerton, near Bath. His manuscript account of their examination is in the library of the Bath Literary Institution; but it has been printed *in extenso* by the Rev. Mr. Scarth in the 16th volume of proceedings of the Archæological Institute. The interments were all indicative of the Belgic or bronze period, cremation having been practiced in every case; and the few articles discovered with the burnt ashes consisting of bronze spear heads, some amber beads, and some coarse clay cups.

There appears to have been a considerable Belgic mining settlement at Charterhouse, which from the articles discovered in it, must have been subsequently occupied by the British, who here worked the mines for their Roman masters. I will take this opportunity of commending to the attention of

\* It was probably the tradition of this camp having been at some former time a place of deposit for mineral treasure, which occasioned the dog-grel lines recorded by Leland,

“If Dolbyri digged were,  
Of gold should be the share.”

Somersetshire Archæologists a remarkable and extensive collection of hut circles, which seems to have been hitherto unnoticed by them. It is on the slope of the northern barrier of Cleve Combe. Some of these circles are in the wood on the crest of the Combe, but the greater number are in the open space adjoining. One cannot traverse this ground without wishing to examine some of these circles with pick and shovel.

I will now briefly notice the traces left of the Roman occupation of this portion of Somerset. The desire of possessing and retaining the mineral districts of Britain was, doubtless, the chief incentive to the Roman invasion, and to their prolonged occupation of this island. Although they worked and smelted the lead ore, which is to be found in many parts of England, that which they possessed on the Mendip Hills would, from its proximity to the adjacent channel, be of especial value to them for exportation. The visitor to Rome observes, among the results of the Ostian excavations now in the Lateran Museum, large pieces of leaden pipe which had been used in early imperial times for the conveyance of water. Lead was also used by the Romans for securing the iron bondings with which the large blocks of travertine in the Coliseum and other buildings were fastened together. Pliny (*Hist. Nat.* xxxiv, c. 17) informs us, that whereas lead was extracted from the ground with considerable labour in Spain, and throughout Gaul, it occurs in abundance near the surface in Britain; and we may with reason assume that much of the lead imported into Italy came from this part of Britain. Two Roman pigs of lead have been at different times found on the Mendip Hills; one, stamped with the name of Claudius, was found near Wookey Hole in the time of Henry VIII, the other impressed with the name of Britannicus, son of Claudius and Messalina, was found near Blagdon in 1853. Whether the Romans were successful in extracting the silver from the lead ore we know not, but that they were unable to eliminate the whole of the lead is sufficiently apparent to us of the present day, as their refuse lead heaps or slag are now being worked over again

on these very hills. When the Romans had become absolute masters of this district, they had no need of the British hill forts for the protection of themselves and their mineral treasures; and they accordingly carried their lead away direct, either to their station at the mouth of the Axe, or to a port like Clausentum, which, being nearer to the coast of Gaul, would relieve them from the necessity of making the long and perilous voyage round the Land's End. Their road, which followed for the most part the course of an ancient British trackway, was carefully traced out by Sir Richard Hoare, and his surveyor, Mr Crocker, in its course over the hills between Old Sarum and Uphill. It passed by Charterhouse, the head quarters of the Roman mining district, to the left of Dolebury Camp, through Shipham, skirting the southern sides of Sandford and Banwell Hills, and the north side of Bleadon Hill, till it reached the station at Uphill, designated by Mr. Leman "ad Axium."

Although the iron of Elba was smelted and worked by the Etruscans (Diod. Sic. v. 13. Varro) some hundreds of years before the Christian era, it was not until the Roman conquests had extended into the iron-producing countries that the use of this metal began extensively to prevail, and the use of bronze to decline. According to Cæsar, iron was known to the British, but only in the form of money. The Roman smelting of iron was very extensive in the Forest of Dean, and in Sussex; but although a great deal of iron ore may be dug on the Mendip range, I am not aware that any traces of iron workings are to be found nearer to this district than on the Brendon Hills, near Minehead.

As brass seems to have been known to the Romans\* (the

\* Mr. Crawford in a paper on 'Cæsar's account of Britain' published in the Volume of Transactions of the Ethnological Society of London, for 1867, says that brass "was unknown to the Romans, who were even ignorant of zinc, one of its ingredients." On the other hand, the analysis of one of several very bright coins of the reigns of Domitian, Trajan, and Hadrian, found three or four years ago at Latton, near Cirencester, showed a result of nineteen parts of zinc to eighty of copper. Dr. Ure,

analysis of coins of the Empire, showing the presence of zinc), it is probable that the lapis calaminaris (a carbonate of zinc which, in combination with copper, forms brass), which abounds on the hills at Shipham, and Rowberrow, was not unheeded by them. The gathering of this mineral, until blende or sulphuret of zinc was introduced from Flintshire about thirty or forty years ago, furnished the inhabitants of those villages with constant occupation. I have heard from a neighbour, within the last few days, that the Swansea Copper Workers have been recently negotiating for renewed supplies of the Mendip calamine.

Your attention will be called to-morrow to a very interesting relic of these Roman times. At Charterhouse (so called from there having been at this place a cell of the Carthusian monastery at Witham) there is still remaining a Roman Amphitheatre, in a very perfect state, and with the three entrances well defined. The more sensitive and imaginative portion of the excursionists need not suppose that any of our Belgic-British ancestors were here

“Butchered to make a Roman(s) holiday,”

for as slaves and mine-workers for their foreign masters their lives were far too valuable to be thus disposed of. We may be content to believe that here were slaughtered no creatures of greater value than the wolves and the boars, which haunted the large forests which then clothed the sides of the Mendip Hills. Possibly there were also exhibited here some of those brutal pugilistic combats, which, in all their disgusting details are to be seen represented upon the tessellated pavements now in the great hall of the Lateran Palace; for Romans were always Romans wherever they went. That they spent their

in his Dictionary, article ‘Alloys,’ says, “It is not a little curious to find that some of the coins of high antiquity contain zinc, which does not appear to have been known as a metal before 1280, when Albertus Magnus speaks of zinc as a semi-metal.” The probability is that calamine (zinc ore) was known from the earliest times as a peculiar earth, although it was not thought to be an ore of zinc or of any other metal. (See Wilts Arch. Magazine, Vol. 9.)

lives pleasantly enough in our island is plain from the number of villas which they built in the most attractive spots. On their tessellated pavements, as we may see in the Society's Museum at Taunton, they exhibited their fondness for the chase; and we have every reason to believe that in this County of Somerset, with its hot baths, and pleasant valleys, with its hills, and its forests, our Roman conquerors had less reason to regret their southern skies and imperial city than many others of that nation whose lot was cast in less favoured portions of their almost unbounded dominion.

To make our Caves our Downs and our Valleys supply us with knowledge where history fails us, and confirm or explain our knowledge where history speaks, but with feeble accents, is a matter at once of surpassing interest, and of considerable importance. The value of earth-work evidence, even in relation to historic times, was fully recognized by that admirable arhæologist Dr. Guest, when he carefully examined the country between Bath and Wells for traces of the boundaries that separated the Welsh and English races, during the seventy-five years which followed the capture of Bath A.D. 577, (Arch. Journal Vol. xvi.) Our Mendip Hills have not in this respect received the full measure of attention that they deserve, and if any Members of this Society having time at their disposal, would carefully examine the entire range from Maesbury Castle to Brean Down, together with the outlying heights on the northern side, taking note of such traces of man's former occupation as still remain unobliterated, they might yet add considerably to our stock of data for the solution of the questions which still perplex us.

Mr. E. CHISHOLM BATTEN proposed a vote of thanks to the President for his admirable address, which would, he said render the district they proposed to see much more intelligible than it could otherwise possibly have been.

The proposition was unanimously assented to, and the PRESIDENT briefly acknowledged the same.