

## St. Mary's Church, Taunton.

After luncheon a visit of inspection was paid to the fine old Church of St. Mary Magdalene. Prior to entering the building the Rev. E. H. Bates read some notes on the tower by Dr. F. J. ALLEN, of Cambridge, who was unable to be present. Dr. Allen stated that the great towers of Taunton and its neighbourhood were probably built under the influence of the school of masons attached to Taunton Priory. It would have been convenient to call the whole group "The Taunton group," but, unfortunately, the term had been rendered ambiguous by Prof. Freeman and Mr. Brereton, both of whom applied the name "Taunton" to artificial classes containing towers which had no Taunton influence whatever, such as Muchelney and Hutton. As a substitute he (Dr. Allen) had used the term "Quantock type," which was meant to apply to a small group of towers situated mostly on the Quantock side of the Parret, all of which had evidently been built by the same school of masons. The original idea of these towers was evidently borrowed from the towers of the East Mendip district. Although nearer to the West Mendip district the Quantock towers showed no influence from it. The influence never crossed the moors, but followed the hill country on the east. St. Mary's was one of the latest of our towers, and seemed to have been designed after a study of the most prominent towers of Somerset, and that of Gloucester Cathedral as well. The basis of its design was a late Quantock tower, probably Huish Episcopi;

but it imitated Chewton and Leigh-on-Mendip, or rather went beyond them in having double windows in three stages, not merely in two. The panelling above the top windows was from North Petherton. The windows had the ogee tracery of the Quantock district, but were provided with weather-mouldings as in the Mendip towers. The stair-turret was level with the parapet, as at Huish. In most towers the staircase caused a diminution in the number of windows; but here the full number was retained, but the windows were narrowed on the staircase side after the manner of Shepton Mallet and Bruton and Cranmore. The parapet and pinnacles were imitated with exaggeration from Gloucester Cathedral.

Mr. Bates continuing, said that whenever experts endeavoured to arrange the Somerset towers into classes they could not agree. Dr. Allen called these Quantock towers, and then said they were designed from towers on the other side of the Mendips. That was the most artificial arrangement ever heard of.

The party then moved into the Church, a description of which was given by the Rev. D. J. PRING, Vicar of North Curry, Rural Dean. He said :

“The first great period of development in the history of this Church took place in the XIII Century. I use the word development advisedly, because I am sufficiently persuaded in my own mind that a church existed on this site anterior to that period.

“When the Church was restored during the incumbency of Dr. Cottle, as recorded on one of the tablets near the west door, certain ancient foundations were discovered under the piers of the north and south transepts and the columns supporting the chancel arch, which were considered to be the remains of a Norman or Saxon church, and a good deal of evidence is deduced by Dr. Cottle in his book on St. Mary's Church, to show that a church probably existed here in quite early times. Be that as it may, I think we may be ready to

admit that those who saw and examined the aforesaid remains at the time of the Cottle restoration had probably good grounds for their opinion, which we may fairly suppose was not expressed without due consideration. That more than one church existed in Taunton in the XII Century is proved by the fact that at the time of the endowment of Taunton Priory by its founder, William Giffard, about the year 1127, he, as Bishop of Winchester (to which See the Manor of Taunton belonged), granted to the said Priory "all the Churches of Taunton, together with their chapels and all appurtenances." It is not unreasonable therefore to accept the view that of these churches one existed on the present site, of which the ancient masonry discovered by Dr. Cottle was the remains.

"A letter is extant, written by Bishop Branscombe, of Exeter, addressed to the Archdeacons of Totnes and Exeter, and dated from Clist, near Exeter, 13th March, 1277, authorising them to solicit alms on behalf of the Prior and Convent of Taunton, 'who have begun to build their Church in a style of costly magnificence to the completion of which their means are far from being adequate.' Whether, however, this refers to St. Mary's Church, as assumed by Dr. Cottle, or, as would seem more probable, to the conventual building within the Priory, I will not venture to decide. But there is plain evidence that the Church of St. Mary Magdalene was already a building of some importance so early as the year 1244, because in that year the Archdeacon of Taunton held his official court therein.

"It appears probable that the XIII Century Church consisted of a nave, with two north aisles, and one south; and a chancel with two chantries adjoining it on the north and south sides, on the plan still existing. If there was a tower, it may have stood at the third archway westward from the chancel, at which point the Church then almost certainly ended.

"If we could say that the tower was originally central, with

transepts on either side, it might serve to account for the great width of the Church, and also for the heavy central masonry found by Dr. Cottle under the chancel arch ; while such an arrangement would quite correspond with the design of a XIII Century church I am familiar with in my own church at North Curry. This would also fit in with Mr. Buckle's suggestion, made on the last occasion of your Society's visiting this Church, that the three Early English arches in the north aisle had been removed from elsewhere. But I cannot see there is sufficient evidence to prove anything of this, and prefer to accept the belief—at all events for the present, in absence of better proof—that the three arches alluded to are in their original position, and therefore stand as evidence of a second aisle on the north side as described. To say with Mr. Buckle that 'the arcade is not genuine' seems to me to be making at least a very strong statement, which would require to be backed up by a considerable amount of proof. There are two similar Early English capitals in Wilton Church, which I should be very sorry to think were not genuine. In the present day we are terribly apt to counterfeit things ancient, but I hesitate to credit our forefathers with such modern methods. That they added to and enlarged, and perhaps adapted, which in the present instance would account for the difference observed by Mr. Buckle in the capitals and bases, may be admitted ; but beyond this I am not prepared to go, and therefore follow the previously accepted ideas as to the development of this Church in respect of its aisles.

"It is no doubt true, however, to say with Mr. Buckle that 'St. Mary's Church, speaking generally, may be described as a Perpendicular church' ; and that 'of two dates.' To quote Mr. Buckle's words, 'most of the windows belong to the ordinary Perpendicular of the XV Century ; whilst the main arcade and clerestory are of the rich and elaborate style which developed at the beginning of the XVI Century.'

"We have then before us two great periods of enlargement,

about 100 years apart, at the beginning of the XV and XVI Centuries respectively.

“The first of these was marked by the extension of the nave and north aisles westward, and the erection of a tower, which seems to have been built after the extension of the north aisles, but before the extension of the south, since it blocked up, we are told, one of the west windows on the north; whereas a reverse process is to be observed on the south, where the aisle is made to encroach westward against the side of the tower.

“The question may fairly be raised whether we are to accept the present tower as presenting the same design as that first erected. It is well known that some amount of controversy has taken place over the question of its designer. On the south belfry window, copied from the earlier tower, may still be seen the letters, *R: B:—A: S:*, forming two groups of two initials each. A paper was read before your Society so long ago as the year 1858, by the late Mr. W. Franck Elliot to maintain that these letters indicated—‘Reginaldus Bray; Architectus Senatus.’ It will be unnecessary to remind you that Sir Reginald Bray was a prominent personage in the reign of Henry VII, and the theory has been advanced that Henry VII rebuilt many of the Somerset churches after his accession to the throne, in gratitude to the people of Somerset for their adhesion to the Lancastrian cause. The Church of St. Mary's, Taunton, is believed to be among those that thus benefited.

“Mr. Buckle, however, is strong in asserting that the initials in question may be ascribed to two benefactors who were probably Taunton merchants, and remarked that it was ‘extremely improbable that a great soldier like Sir Reginald Bray, was also a great architect.’ Against this we may set the authority of the *Encyclopædia Britannica*, where it is stated of Sir Reginald Bray, that ‘his taste and skill in architecture are attested by those two exquisite structures, Henry

VII Chapel at Westminster, and the Chapel of St. George, at Windsor.’

“ If, however, Sir Reginald Bray was the designer of the tower as we know it, it cannot be supposed that he was responsible for the design of the first tower erected. This, as we have seen, was probably put up in the early part of the XV Century, at the time when the nave and north aisles were carried westward to where they now end, and the south aisle also extended, the new work being evidenced by the altered character of the arches. But there is documentary proof from the will of a Mr. John Nethaway, referred to in the Society’s volume for the year 1884, that a ‘newe towre’ was in building in 1503. Now Sir Reginald Bray died in that year, but may well have designed the tower before his death. Previous to this the tower was probably comparatively plain in character, and if erected with the improvements at the beginning of the previous century, must, one would almost suppose, have been faulty in structure to so soon require re-building. Or was it, after all, *not* at the west end, but central, as we have already wondered, but have concluded to be ‘not proven?’

“ At any rate, with the beginning of the XVI Century, came the second great enlargement, and there is nothing to show why we should not accept the tradition that this was carried out under the royal patronage of Henry Tudor, the design emanating from the famous Reginald Bray, with whom possibly was associated some less eminent, and therefore forgotten person, indicated by the second set of initials.”

The Rev. E. H. BATES afterwards made a few remarks. Discussing the length of time the operations of re-building the Church were in progress, he said, that in the three volumes of Mediæval Wills issued by the Somerset Record Society, there was a series of wills from 1488 to 1514, where the testators left money to the building and fabric of the church and tower :

1488. John Beste: to the fabric of the new work in the church, and of the new tower there.

1490. Alexander Tuse : to the fabric of the new tower.  
1492. Walter Dolyng : to the making of the new tower.  
1493. Henry Bysshop : to the tower.  
1494. Joan Wynne : to the making of the new tower.  
1497. Philip Love : to the making of the new tower.  
1499. Joan Buyshopp : to the making of the new tower.  
1502. Richard Best : to the making of the pynacles of  
Magdalen church.  
1502. Richard Adams : to the edifying of the tower.  
1503. John Nethway : to the new towre making.  
1503. Agnes Burton : to the making and finishing of the  
towre ; to finish the gable window in the tower with  
glasse.  
1504. Margaret Eston : to the reparacion of the church.  
1505. Simon Fisher : to the tower.  
1508. John Togwell : to the building of the new work in the  
south part of the church.  
1509. Alison Togwell : to the new work.  
1511. Henry Bowyer *als* Lawrence : to the making of the  
church.  
1514. William Nethway : to the "katerynke" of two  
windows in the tower.

The south porch bears the date 1508, so that the legacies of John and Alison Togwell may have contributed to the completion of this portion of the re-building, and thereby incidentally provided an opportunity for the celebration of the quatercentenary of the Church of St. Mary Magdalene in this year of grace.

The evidence provided by this series of wills is very adverse to the tradition that Sir Reginald Bray had aught to do with the designing of the tower. This tradition seems to have developed from an earlier tradition, that Henry VII rebuilt many churches in Somersetshire in gratitude for the Lancastrian proclivities of the inhabitants. Unfortunately for this there is nothing earlier than the statement of Thomas Warton

in his *Observations on Spenser's Faery Queen*, 2nd edit., 1762, Vol. II, 193, and he gives no authority. The King did visit Taunton after the rebellion in the West in 1497, and on this fact the late Mr. W. F. Elliot, in a paper in our *Proceedings*, Vol. VIII, ii, 133, inferred that Sir Reginald Bray may have accompanied him, and that he was forthwith commissioned by his royal master to design a tower worthy of the town and Church. There was then little difficulty in expanding the initials on the tower, R. B. A. S., into Reginald Bray, Architectus Senatus. But the tower had already been nine years in building. As regards Bray's architectural knowledge, his biography in the *Dict. Nat. Biog.*, drawn up by Mr. Thompson Cooper, F.S.A., does credit him with "attention in conducting improvements made upon St. George's Chapel in Windsor Castle by the King." With regard to his other *chef d'œuvre*, the Chapel of Henry VII at Westminster, the author cautiously observes, "the design is supposed to have been his"; and further, "he is said to have been the architect of St. Mary's, Oxford," and "it has been conjectured that he also designed St. Mary's tower at Taunton." There does not appear to be any evidence of contemporary date that Bray had any more to do with buildings than laying foundation stones, and being "a munificent benefactor to churches, monasteries, and colleges." He was certainly fond of placing his initials and badge on buildings helped by his generosity, and it is perfectly possible that the initials on the tower are those of the wealthy benefactor Sir Reginald Bray; though it is much less likely that A.S. denotes Anno Salutis, after the overthrow of Lord Audley's rebellion and Perkin Warbeck's invasion in 1497.

### St. James's Church, Taunton.

The party then paid a visit to St. James's Church, before entering which, as in the case of St. Mary's, the Rev. E. H. Bates read a description of the tower by Dr. F. J. ALLEN. This stated that the tower appeared to be the second in age of



the great towers of the district, the oldest being Bishop's Lydeard. The lower part of St. James's tower was very similar to that of Bishop's Lydeard; but the parapet was a little more florid, and in particular the pinnacles were independent of the buttresses. The parapet was, however, a conjectural restoration. Mr. J. Houghton Spencer had stated that at the re-construction the lower part of the tower was copied exactly; but, the parapet being apparently not the original one, a new parapet, pinnacles, and turret-roof were designed after a study of related towers, especially those of Staple Fitzpaine and Kingston.

After the party had seated themselves in the Church, Mr. W. A. GUNNER, Secretary of the Restoration Fund, in the absence of the Vicar, gave some details of the history of the Church and of the restoration work which had been carried out in 1884, and from 1902 to the present time.

The Rev. F. W. WEAVER, F.S.A., said that the Church of St. James was quite distinct from the Priory Church, which was dedicated to SS. Peter and Paul.

William Huchyns in his will dated 29 Oct., 1532,<sup>1</sup> desires to be buried in the holy grave of Peter and Paule within the priory of Taunton; he leaves benefactions to the two "services" in Mary Maudlyn and to our Lady service of St. Jamys. All Taunton wills bear the same testimony.<sup>2</sup>

The Rev. D. P. ALFORD, who was unable to attend the meeting, has contributed the following notes on the Church:

There was a Church here—Norman or Early English—in 1180;<sup>3</sup> for at that time, Prior Stephen writing to Bishop Reginald, was claiming exemption from episcopal dues for his chapel of St. James, as well as for the chapels of St. George de Fonte (Wilton), St. Margaret's Hospital, and St. Peter de Castello. Moreover, some fragments of a XII Century

1. "Wells Wills," p. 161, and other Taunton Wills, pp. 156-171.

2. See *Som. Rec. Soc.*, Vols. XVI and XIX.

3. *Proc. Som. Arch. Soc.*, Vol. IX, ii, p. 5, and "Wells Cathedral MSS.," 38.

Church have been found during recent excavations. By the ordinance of Bishop Walter Hasleshaw, in 1308, the prior is bidden,<sup>1</sup> in aid of the vicar of the parish Church of St. Mary Magdalene, to provide perpetually one secular priest for the chapels of Staplegrove and St. James, and another for the chapels of Stoke and Ruishton. In 1353, William atte Halle, the curate of St. James and Staplegrove,<sup>2</sup> complained, first to the bishop, then to the archbishop, that he was not paid his proper stipend.

This present Church—plain and rather late Perpendicular—was probably built early in the XV Century; but the nave and north aisle are the only parts remaining of the original edifice, and even these have suffered change. In 1812, a rood-screen was taken down; and probably the hagioscope, lately discovered, was built up. In the same year, Mr. F. Corfield,<sup>3</sup> who endowed an afternoon Sunday service, presented the Church with a “fine-toned” Broadwood organ to be placed in the western gallery; and no doubt his gift seemed to fully make up for the loss of the rood-screen. In 1836-7, Dr. Cottle doubled the width of the south aisle, did away with the chantry of St. Mary<sup>4</sup> at its east end, shut up four clerestory windows in the south wall of the nave, and introduced into the porch the wheel window which has often puzzled visitors.<sup>5</sup> The tower, very like that at Bishop’s Lydeard, and almost as graceful, was re-built from 1871 to 1873. It was intended to be exactly like the original, but it differs in two respects: the stone used, a local red sandstone, is more firm and of a finer colour; and the stair-turret, instead of being lost amongst the pinnacles, rises conspicuously above them, giving a new character to the tower. In 1884, the chancel with its chapels was entirely re-built,

1. *Proc. Som. Arch. Soc.*, IX, pt. ii, p. 17.

2. *Ibid.*, p. 44.

3. Savage’s “History of Taunton,” p. 161.

4. “Somerset Chancies,” pp. 24 and 202.

5. e.g. Mr. J. H. Parker, in 1872.

mainly by the energy of the late Dr. Samuel Farrant. Since 1902, a careful restoration has been carried on during the vicariate of the Rev. F. W. Young.

The tower looks best perhaps from the North Town bridge. The finest interior view is that of the tower arch and vault with the handsome west window ; and a noticeable feature is the greater and unusual breadth of the easternmost arches of the nave. Objects of interest are the Jacobean pulpit, and especially the font, a good example of XV Century sculpture, which was unfortunately too much restored when it was recovered by Dr. Cottle.

At the dissolution of the monasteries, one of our canons, Thomas Dale, had his pension raised from £5 6s. 8d. to £8, for the cure of St. James ; *i.e.* he performed all the duties of the Church for £2 13s. 4d. a year, or 1 $\frac{3}{4}$ d. a day, equal to about 3s. of our present money.

Other notable incumbents were : the devout John Glanville,<sup>1</sup> who, being ejected in 1662, "continued a painful preacher in his own house," till his death in 1693 ; his successor, Still Strode, buried in the Church, 1675 ; George Atwood, 1714, who was Archdeacon<sup>2</sup> of Taunton from 1722 to 1752 ; and James Hurley, 1752 to 1783, of whom it is said on his tombstone<sup>3</sup> in Wilton churchyard that he was incumbent-curate of St. James and Trull, as well as of that parish, besides being master of the Grammar School ; whilst family tradition says he added to these many duties that of chaplain of the gaol. Truly the incumbents of St. James's have never had an easy time of it.

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### Taunton Castle.

The party then adjourned to the Castle, the Rev. E. H. Bates describing the imposing archway on entering the court-

1. Calamy's "Nonconformists' Memorial," edited by S. Palmer, Vol. II, p. 379.

2. What other cure had he besides St. James's ?

3. It stands against the wall to the right of the porch.

yard, in connection with which he mentioned that nobody could sell the room over it as it belonged to the copyholders of the Manor of Taunton Deane. The Manor Records however would have been nothing but for the work of Mr. (now the Rev.) A. J. Hook, who had recently restored and tabulated them.

An inspection was afterwards made of the Great Hall of the Museum and the other departments, and many were the expressions of delight at the important alterations and additions made since the last visit of the Society to Taunton.

The apartments until recently occupied by the Curator had had dividing walls and partitions removed and had been thrown open to receive valuable collections temporarily, Mr. Gray's residence now being at Castle House in the courtyard. A collection of needlework and lace, collected and presented by Miss Laura Metford Badcock, was shown in temporary cases on the ground floor of the Museum extension.

After an inspection of the Castle and its contents, the Society were entertained to tea in the grounds on the south side of the buildings by the Taunton Field Club.

The Rev. F. W. WEAVER, on behalf of the Society, thanked the Taunton Field Club, and especially the secretary, Mr. C. Tite, for the kindness shown in entertaining the members,—a kindness which was very much appreciated.

Mr. C. TITE acknowledged the compliment, and regretted the absence through indisposition of the President of the Field Club, the Rev. D. P. Alford. The ladies who had assisted that day had only been too delighted to do so. The members of that Society did not know what the Castle was to the Field Club, which met there several times during the year, and also held summer excursions. He could assure the Parent Society that the Club was very grateful for the use of the Castle for their meetings and conversaziones. He would like to mention specially the names of Mrs. St. G. Gray, Miss Barrett and Miss M. B. Barnicott in connection with the arrangements for Tea that afternoon.

## Evening Meeting.

After the Annual Dinner at the London Hotel, the Marquess of Bath presiding, a meeting was held at the Municipal Hall for the reading and discussion of papers. The subjects dealt with were:—"Excavations at Wick Barrow, Stogursey," by Mr. H. St. George Gray; "Recent Excavations at Glastonbury Abbey," by Mr. F. Bligh Bond, F.R.I.B.A.; and "The Discovery of Meare Lake Village and the preliminary digging conducted there in July, 1908," by Mr. Arthur Bulleid, F.S.A. The papers and discussions were followed with much interest by the large company present, the only disappointment being that, owing to some breakdown, the lantern could not be used to illustrate Mr. Bond's remarks on Glastonbury Abbey, while his paper on "Screenwork in Churches near Taunton," which was to have been given, had to be omitted. (This, however, is given as an illustrated paper in Part II).

## Wick Barrow.

The first paper read, which was illustrated by a series of excellent lantern views, was on the "Wick Barrow Excavations," by Mr. ST. GEORGE GRAY. His report, with several illustrations, is printed in Part II, p. 1.

Professor BOYD DAWKINS, F.R.S., who was introduced by the Rev. E. H. Bates as one of the greatest authorities on pre-historic man in Britain, said he felt some surprise at being called upon that evening when they were to have such rich entertainment yet to look forward to, to make any remarks on that most admirable paper to which they had just listened. The method of exploration which was now being carried on by that Society was likely to lead to the most important archæological results. In the first place there was no district, and no county in this country, which offered such a wide field for investigations of this kind as Somerset, and it so happened that they had in their assistant-secretary a man who was about

the best qualified in the country to carry on exact researches into the remains of pre-historic man. He had known him almost from the time when he was as a boy getting a special training under that prince of archæologists, General Pitt-Rivers. He also knew that the work Mr. Gray had done since the death of General Pitt-Rivers had been remarkable for its minuteness and accuracy and the loving care with which he had dealt with all the relics found. He quite agreed with what Mr. Gray said with regard to the period of that interesting barrow and he did not know of any parallel case of the interference of remains of earlier date by the Romans in this country. There was however one point on which he did not feel quite satisfied. When he heard that 1800 years, B.C., was the date of the Early Bronze Age, he felt inclined to put on his severest sceptical armour. He did not, for his part, know of any method by which they could estimate exactly in terms of centuries any of the pre-historic periods except that near portion of the pre-historic Iron Age which came immediately before history, that was to say the period of the Glastonbury Lake Village. He did not believe they knew anything whatever nearer of the dates of the beginning of the Bronze Age in this part of the world. With that exception he was in full agreement with that most admirable investigation, and the Society was to be congratulated on getting such a piece of work put on record. They must remember that every man who added to the age of the history of a district in which he lived was really doing a patriotic work.

The Rev. J. F. CHANTER said the Wick interments appeared to be all of contracted skeletons. He had uncovered barrows on Exmoor, and every one of the interments were by cremation, some being in pits and some in urns.

Professor BOYD DAWKINS said it was a very interesting question, and he could only answer it in one way. In the first place, it was an undoubted fact that if they took the whole of the burial-places of the Bronze Age in the whole of this

country into consideration, he thought that about ninety per cent. of them contained cremations. In some cases, however, they found cremations going on side by side with inhumation. In the various caves he had explored near Rhyl, he found a cavern full of these contracted interments. There was a family vault, with pottery exactly the same as they had seen from Wick. For his own part he believed that in the Bronze Age the contracted posture was the most ancient posture.

Mr. ST. GEORGE GRAY, in reply to Prof. Boyd Dawkins' criticism, said that his dates for pre-historic times were given in round numbers, to give the general public *some idea* of the period of time under consideration. He had advanced no new theories on the date of the divisions of the Bronze Age, but had, in this respect, merely followed several recognised authorities. Personally he would, in the present state of their knowledge, prefer to speak of the Early Bronze Age for Wick Barrow, but there were so many people who wanted to have some idea of what that represented in years.

### Excavations at Glastonbury Abbey.

Mr. F. BLIGH BOND, F.R.I.B.A., followed with an interesting paper on "Recent Excavations at Glastonbury Abbey," which is printed in this volume, Part II, with illustrations.

Mr. A. F. SOMERVILLE, v.p., as one of the trustees of Glastonbury Abbey, said he wished to bear testimony to the splendid work which was being done by Mr. Bligh Bond, and he ought not to omit the gentleman working with him, Capt. Bartlett. The Bishop was as fully desirous as Mr. Bond and himself that the walls already uncovered should remain permanently exposed for the future. The work they proposed to do would involve years of labour and expenditure, but he thought they would be able to get the consent of the tenant to carry the fence of the Abbey back, so as to enclose the

newly-discovered chapel. With regard to the preservation of the Abbey, he assured the Society that they had no idea of *restoration*. Certain work was, however, necessary for the preservation of the ruins, and that accounted for the recent erection of scaffolding there. Not only had they had the advantage of Mr. Bligh Bond's opinion on the matter, but Mr. W. D. Caröe had reported on it at the request of the Bishop. When the required work was done it would be carried out with the utmost care, in a conservative spirit, and with the object of adding to the beauty of the remains.

### Meare Lake Village.

Mr. ARTHUR BULLEID, F.S.A., then read a paper on the discovery of Meare Lake Village and the trial-cuttings which had been made, of which the following is a summary :

The existence of this site had been known to Mr. Bulleid since 1895, and his attention had been drawn to the spot in the first place through the tenant of the field, Mr. Stephen Laver, bringing him some pottery and other objects of Late Celtic origin ; but as the Glastonbury Lake Village excavations were in progress, no examination was attempted.

Meare Lake Village was situated in the peat moors, lying near the N. side of a low ridge of ground on which the village of Meare was built, and from 400 to 600 feet S. of the river Brue.

Large tracts of land in this neighbourhood, situated to the N. and N.E. of this Lake Village, were at one time occupied by Meare Pool, a body of water which in the early part of the XVI Century was five miles in circumference. At an earlier date this was doubtless of far greater extent, and at one time included the Lake Village in its area.

The Lake Village covered part of five fields, and consisted of two distinct groups of circular mounds, separated by a level piece of ground some 200 feet in width. The entire site



measured 1,500 feet E. and W., and averaged 200 feet in width N. and S. The western group of mounds occupied three fields, and was composed of some forty dwellings. This portion contained the more important mounds, the highest being 4·4 feet above the level of the surrounding fields. This was twice the height of the largest mound excavated at the village nearer Glastonbury.

The level of the land lying to the S. of the site was only 13·6 feet above the mean tide level at Highbridge, ten miles distant at the mouth of the river Parret, the river Brue being affected by the tide some distance E. of the site. The flood-soil covering the fields immediately adjoining the village varied from 12 to 24 ins. in depth.

The eastern group of mounds occupied portions of two fields, and consisted of at least fifty dwellings. The mounds were comparatively low, varying from a few inches to two feet at the centre, but they covered a larger area of ground.

The recent trial excavations consisted in digging a few trenches and test holes. A trench five feet wide was made through the centre of a dwelling-mound of medium size, and proved most interesting structurally, apart from the number of objects it produced. The foundation consisted of eight clay floors, together measuring six feet in depth, with twelve superimposed hearths. The floors were supported by a wood sub-structure two feet thick. The greatest diameter of the mound was 32 feet.

Although the ground was explored for more than 50 feet beyond the outside mounds of the western group of dwellings, no palisading for protection was found, though the ground still produced pottery and other evidences of occupation.

Considering the small amount of digging that was done, the number of objects found was truly remarkable. The trench through the dwelling-mound yielded more things of interest than were found in the excavation of some of the largest dwellings at Glastonbury.

Mr. Bulleid concluded by saying he trusted the systematic exploration of the Meare site would be undertaken by the Society; as there was every prospect of its yielding one of the most important collections of Late-Celtic antiquities in the kingdom. (See also *British Association Report*, 1908).

Professor BOYD DAWKINS said he warmly sympathized with the work which Mr. Bulleid had proposed for them for the next series of years. He fully accepted what Dr. R. Munro had said with regard to the enormous importance to history of investigations of that kind. When they came to deal with the beginning of history it was an undoubted fact that the historians of the future would have to use the results of the work of people such as Mr. Bulleid, and each one of the museums in which these various groups of facts were exhibited would be used in the future as libraries were now. This matter was a very important one, and never in all his experience had he known such an opportunity presented to any Society for undertaking a great work which was almost national in importance. There could be no doubt that that part of Somersetshire in the pre-historic Iron Age was covered with a considerable population and that Glastonbury was merely one of a series of such habitations. The class of population and group of things found at Glastonbury and Meare were practically of the same order and kind as those found in Worlebury Camp, which was rapidly being swallowed up by Weston-super-Mare. He congratulated them on having such an opportunity as that afforded them by the excavation of the Meare Lake Village.

The proceedings then closed.