

Excavations at Ham Hill, South Somerset.

PART I.

BY H. ST. GEORGE GRAY.

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II. INTRODUCTORY REMARKS.

IN the last volume of *Proceedings* (Vol. LXIX, 49–53, and Plate XI) the writer described some specimens (mostly bronze) which had been found during the last few years on Ham Hill. In that paper allusion was made to the excavations conducted there by the Society in 1923, which are regarded as a commencement of similar work to be carried on in future seasons.

Very little in the way of systematic archæological excavation has been done on Ham Hill. Most of the antiquities hitherto revealed have been found by quarrymen in removing the ‘heading’ of the quarries when extensions have been in progress. Much of the archæological material which has come to light in this manner has been collected and cared for by successive members of the Walter family, and their relative, the late Hugh Norris, and they have with every consideration for their proper preservation passed on their collections to the Society for permanent exhibition in the County Museum at Taunton Castle.

There are few larger “camps” than Ham Hill in this country; its ramparts are nearly three miles in circuit, and enclose about 210 acres. This area has already produced a large number of antiquities covering the prehistoric, Roman and later periods. Some of the remains of the Prehistoric Iron Age and the Roman Period are of the highest interest. The hill was probably only temporarily occupied during early historic times, and its purely military Roman occupation is regarded as being of short duration,—just before the middle of the first century A.D., though there is evidence of Romano-British occupation until the end of the Roman dominion of Britain.

Early in 1923 an Excavation Committee was formed, consisting of Dr. R. Hensleigh Walter, F.S.A. (*Chairman*), Dr. A. Bulleid, F.S.A., Capt. E. A. B. Clive, Sir W. Boyd Dawkins, F.R.S., Dr. H. Downes, F.L.S., the Rev. Preb. J. Hamlet, Mr. Walter (now Sir Walter) Peacock (*Secretary of the Duchy*), the Rev. Dr. Price, F.S.A., Sir Hercules Read, LL.D., Mr. Reginald

A. Smith, F.S.A., and the writer who acted as Secretary and Treasurer and directed the excavations in the field.

The excavations began on Tuesday, May 15th, 1923, and continued until June 2nd; and were resumed on Tuesday, July 17th, in anticipation of the visit of H.R.H. the Prince of Wales on the occasion of his tour of the Duchy of Cornwall property in Somerset. The Prince visited the excavations on July 19th,¹ and the work was carried on till Wednesday, July 25th.

The whole of this work will not be described in the first report. It is not proposed to deal with the excavations at "Ham Turn" on the s.w. side of the northern spur (Cuttings IX and X) until further examination of this area has been carried out (probably in the autumn of 1925).

III. EXCAVATIONS ON THE N.W. SIDE OF THE NORTHERN SPUR.

Chiefly at the instigation of Dr. Walter the first part of the excavations conducted in 1923 was devoted to the lower part of the slope of the northern spur of Ham Hill on the n.w. side.

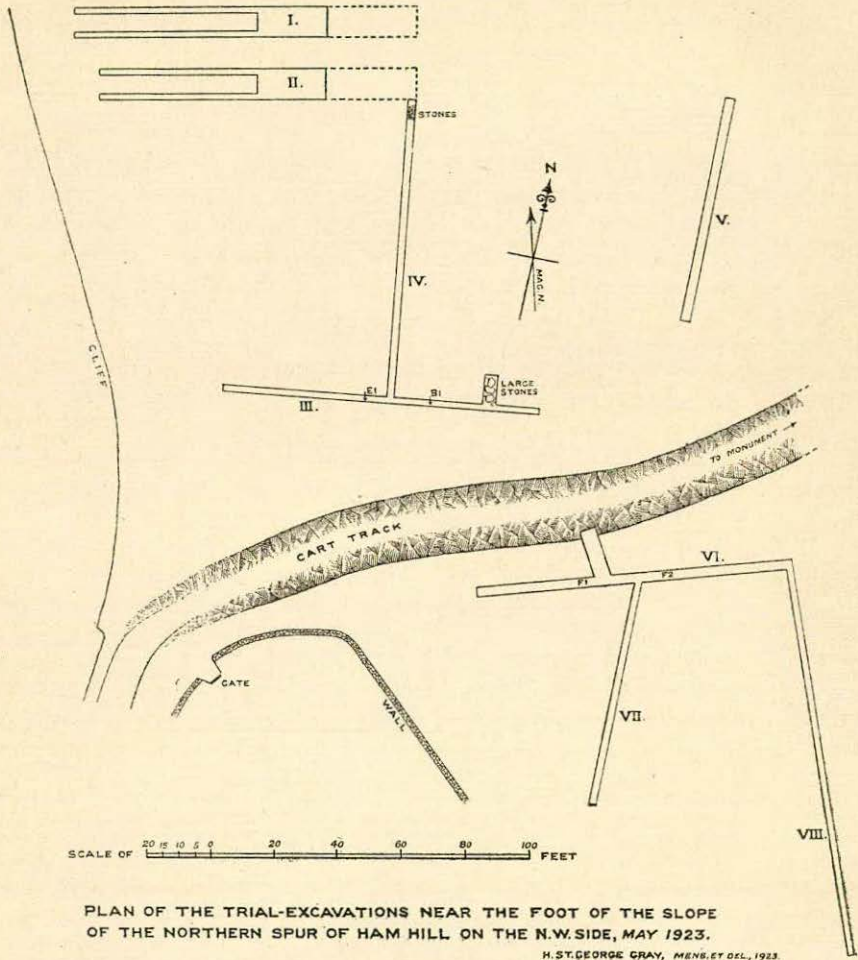
In a lecture given by Dr. Walter W. Walter in 1890 he said, "Close by the 'New Cut' was a Roman burying-ground where skeletons had been found lying in rows pointing N. and S. and not E. and W. as we bury our dead."

'New Cut' is not marked as such on the 6-inch Ordnance Sheet, No. LXXXII, s.w., but it is represented by 'Cart Track' in the accompanying plan of this area.² Owing to Dr. W. W. Walter's statement excavations were made on both sides of the 'New Cut' in the hope of finding some traces of

1. The Prince of Wales was accompanied by the Marquess of Bath, K.G. (Lord-Lieutenant of Somerset), Admiral Sir Lionel Halsey, Sir Godfrey Thomas, and Mr. Walter Peacock.

2. The Director-General of the Ordnance Survey kindly gave information that the magnetic variation, at Ham Hill, Stoke-under-Ham, for May 1923, might be taken as $14^{\circ} 50'$ west of true north, decreasing about $0^{\circ} 11'$ annually. "Owing to local irregularities, this value for the magnetic variation might conceivably be wrong by as much as $30'$, but it is in all probability within $10'$ or so of the real value."

the supposed burial-ground. To the east of this position and higher up the hillside,—in fact fairly near to the summit of the



hill,—the ordnance sheet records, “Skeletons found A.D. 1866.” So that there was some reasonable expectation that burials—even a cemetery—might be found in this locality;

but the eight trial-cuttings (Nos. I to VIII) revealed no human interments.

These cuttings are indicated on the plan, which is here reproduced not because anything of particular interest was found, but chiefly as a record for the future, showing exactly the position in which the trial-excavations were made. In the n. extension of Cutting III, several large blocks of Ham Hill stone were found, but not laid out in any particular order; and an area of small stones was uncovered at the n. end of Cutting IV.

The trial-cuttings are hardly worth describing separately; their dimensions can be ascertained from the plan. In all cases the surface of undisturbed ground was laid bare, and sometimes penetrated to a certain extent. Cutting V was made along a ledge of the sloping hill-side; no relics whatever were found here. The n. extension of Cutting VI was, at the s. end, dug to a depth of 6.5ft. The 'wall' encloses the garden of a house.

The chief 'find' was made in Cutting III, depth 2ft., *viz.* E 1, a fibula of bronze of common form, of the hinge-pin type (pin missing); ornamented with longitudinal groove on top of the bow; plain catch-plate; length 55mm.; Romano-British. This specimen is figured in Plate XIII. Another object, B 1, found in the same cutting, depth 1.5ft., was an early Victorian sunshade handle of carved bone. In Cutting VI, flint scrapers, F 1 and F 2, were found. A very few fragments of Romano-British pottery were revealed in these cuttings.

IV. EXCAVATIONS IN THE EAST VALLEY, CUTTING XI.

Cutting XI was about 400ft. n. of the Prince of Wales Hotel, between the 'tip' from a quarry and the inner vallum of the eastern side of the northern spur. This part of the hill has produced many relics from time to time, especially in the black earth, denoting occupation. At first this cutting was marked out, 8ft. n. and s. by 16ft. e. and w., but eventually it was enlarged to 15ft. n. and s. by 24ft. e. and w.

Near the surface was a layer of black earth in which most

of the remains were discovered, and below this brown earth. Mixed with these soils was a large number of Ham Hill stone slabs including several which measured 3ft. in length.

The numbered 'finds' from this cutting are as follows:—

B 4. Implement formed from a tibia of sheep, worked and highly polished.¹ Found on the surface of the black earth.

B 5. Metatarsus of sheep, perforated longitudinally at the proximal end, length 125mm.² Found as B 4. (Stature of animal at shoulder 1ft. 11ins.).

E 13. Two scales of a cuirass or *lorica*, bronze (one being tinned), in poor condition; the better preserved scale not sufficiently complete for accurate measurement. Found in black mould, depth 1.5ft.³

On the n. spur of the hill a large portion of a *lorica* consisting of 301 scales was discovered in 1911, and another large piece and other scattered scales have also been found on the hill.⁴

E 14. Flat disc of bronze, diam. 18.5mm., with central rivet projecting from one face; perhaps part of a button. Found in black mould, depth 1.6ft.

E 15. Ornamental 'handle' of bronze, length 42mm., probably used opposite a similar one for attachment to the rim of a bronze bowl, to which it could be fastened by means of an iron rivet; traces of such a rivet are clearly seen in the centre of the disc (especially at the back). The disc was probably enamelled; Roman. Found thrown out, and picked up by the writer. Figured in Plate XIII.

A precisely similar object, slightly longer, was found on this part of the hill in 1912.⁵

E 16. Ornament of rather thin bronze, length 38mm.;

1. See type, "Glastonbury Lake Village," p. 419.

2. Type "D," "Glastonbury Lake Village," pp. 422, 424.

3. The depths given in this paper represent the vertical depth measured from the surface of the turf.

4. The chief literature on the subject will be found in *Proc. Som. Arch. Soc.*, XLVIII, ii, 31-33; LVI (1910), ii, 56-57; LVII (1911), i, 117-118. Also see illustrations, *Proc. Som. Arch. Soc.*, XXXII, i, Plate ii, and *V. C. H. Somerset*, I, 296, fig. 63.

5. Figured in *Proc. Som. Arch. Soc.*, LXIX, Plate xi, and p. 52. For somewhat similar hooks for suspension of bowls see Romilly Allen's paper in *Archæologia*, LVI, 39-56.

although now bent in the form of a hook, it was probably not used for such a purpose. One of the ornamented discs remains; formerly there was another in the position of the perforation. Found in dark brown mould, depth 1.5ft. Figured in Plate XIII.

I 1. Two pins of iron, one belonging to a fibula. In black earth.

I 2. Fibula of plain form (length 55.5mm.), pin detached; probably 1st century A.D. In black earth, depth 2ft.

I 3. Pointed implement of iron, length $2\frac{3}{4}$ ins.; also iron chisel, damaged, length $2\frac{1}{2}$ ins. In black earth.

I 7 and I 9. Two spear- or lance-heads of iron, much longer than any similar implements found on Ham Hill. Although the shorter, I 7, is socketed, the greater part of the shaft is solid and the socket comparatively short, whereas in the longer specimen the hammered-over socket extends from the base of the blade to the butt where the ext. diam. is 25mm. (1in.), and the 'split' is open to the extent of 6.5mm. I 7 is probably broken at the butt as well as having its point missing; I 9 is complete in its length, which is 464mm. ($18\frac{1}{4}$ ins.).

I 9, in spite of the split socket, probably belongs to the Early Iron Age, but I 7 may be of the early Roman period; Roman specimens are, however, rare in the south. In these remarks, Mr. Reginald Smith, F.S.A., concurs.

Found, I 7 depth 1ft., I 9 depth 1.8ft. on the old turf line under the inner slope of the vallum. Figured in Plate XIII.

I 16. Javelin-head of iron with flat blade and plain socket, present length 111mm. ($4\frac{3}{8}$ ins.); of a type rather common on the hill. Figured in Plate XIII.

I 17. Fibula, complete, length 61mm., of typical Romano-British form. Depth 2ft.

K 1. Piece of a lathe-turned bowl, or vase, of Kimmeridge shale, ornamented with a raised cordon; thickness of vessel 9.2mm. Depth 2ft.

Vessels of shale of Late-Celtic and Roman date are not very frequently met with. A piece with cordon was found at the Meare Lake Village in 1910 (K 5), and part of a shale vessel was found at the Glastonbury Lake Village (K 27, Plate LXVII and p. 205 of that work).

P 10. Portion of the rim and base of a Roman lamp of fine earthenware, with concave upper surface ornamented with traces of a raised design. Found under the edge of the 'tip' of a quarry, depth 1ft. below the turf covered by the 'tip.'

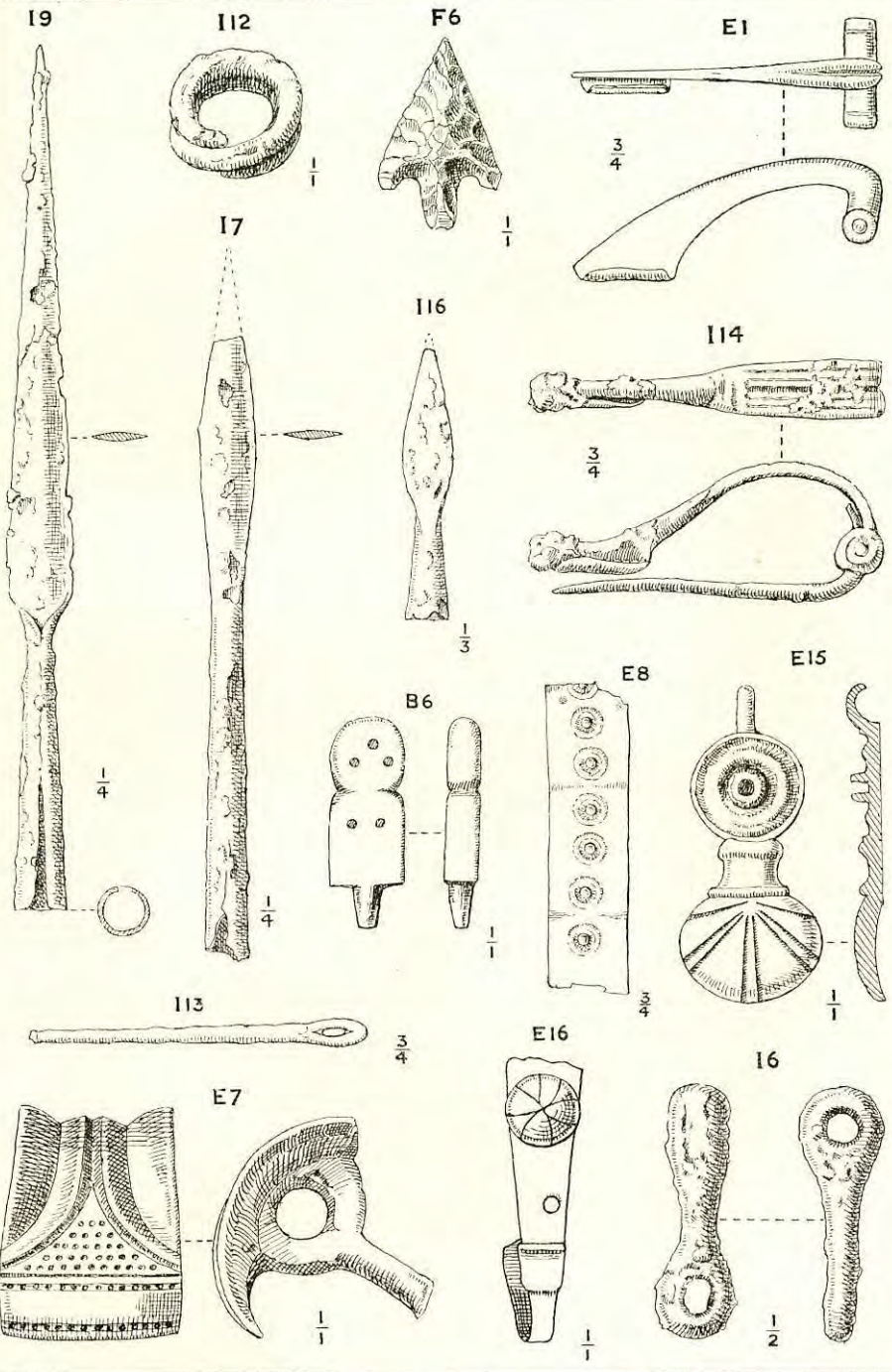
Besides the numbered 'finds' several iron nails and a large amount of Roman and Romano-British pottery was found including many fragments of large, thick grey vessels, several pieces of thin cream-coloured Roman pottery, the perforated base of a pot perhaps used as a honey-strainer, two small discs of pottery, and a piece of *terra sigillata* (first century); also some pieces of pre-Roman pottery (one at least of Hallstatt type), and a lump of finger-marked clay. There were also several objects of stone, including a flint hammerstone, broken whetstone, plain disc of Ham stone, another (diam. about 2 $\frac{3}{4}$ ins.) with one smooth face and hole highly polished,¹ half a rotary quern of high outline (Q 4)—the top of which was only 0·5ft. below the surface,—and part of a saddle-quern (Q 3). A large grooved stone was also found on the s. margin of the cutting close to a similar stone—maybe two parts of one object; the groove was rather shallow and tapered from a max. width of 6ins. at one end to 5ins. at the other.

V. EXCAVATIONS IN THE EAST VALLEY, CUTTING XII.

Cutting XII was about 750ft. N. of the "Prince of Wales Hotel," and nearly as far south of the "Frying Pan." The N.E. corner was 167ft. S. of the middle of a presumably ancient (?) entrance through the inner vallum, and 120ft. from the top of the incurved vallum on the S. side of the entrance. The E. margin of the cutting ran along the foot of the inner slope of the vallum on the E. side of the N. spur. Near this position a number of interesting specimens belonging to the Walter Collection had been found from time to time, but no proper record of their position had been kept.

The work in this situation was begun on July 17th and continued until July 25th—the area measuring 31ft. N. and S. by

1. Two articles on the subject of stone discs, many of which are perforated, are: *Proc. Soc. Antiq. Lond.*, XXI, pp. 456–461 (with illustrations), on Discs from the West Moors, near Buttern Hill, Altarnon, E. Cornwall; and *Proc. Soc. Antiq. Scot.*, XXXVII, pp. 166–177 (with three plates), on perforated Discs from the Garioch, Aberdeenshire, by J. Graham Callander.



ANTIQUITIES FOUND IN THE EXCAVATIONS ON HAM HILL, S. SOM., 1923.

From Drawings by Mr. H. C. Chartwood, F.R.I.B.A.

42ft. E. and W., equalling about 145 square yards. In the lowest ground at the north the natural stone was reached at a minimum depth of 1·2ft. East and west the ground rose, and on the W. margin of the digging rock was struck at a depth of 3·5ft., whilst at the E. end, on account of the slope of the vallum, the depth to rock was 4·5ft., and it was along the latter margin that the majority of the relics were found.

Along the W. margin of the cutting a large block of Ham Hill stone, just showing in one place on the surface, was partly excavated; it covered a length of 10·5ft. On the top were some scorings, and on the E. side was a rounded recess which would have served well for a seat. This stone was photographed.

The numbered 'finds' from this cutting are as follows:—

B 6. This bone object may in its present form have been used possibly as a marker in some game. Originally it may have been the head of a long bone pin. The design may perhaps be regarded as a rude representation of the human head and trunk—the three dots to indicate the features, the two dots the breasts; length 28·5mm. Found by Capt. E. A. B. Clive. Figured in Plate XIII.

A pin-head of similar outline and of Roman date was found in King William Street, London, but it is ornamented only with a dot-and-circle in the lower half (Guildhall Museum).

B 7. Half a metacarpus of sheep, broken across central perforation (6mm. in diam.) through the shaft; Type "A" of the Lake Villages.¹ Depth 2ft., on old turf line under slope of vallum.

E 7. Bronze object, complete, in good preservation and well patinated, and ornamented as shown in the drawing; the under-surface is extremely rough; the shank, which is of round section, is burred at the end; of Late-Celtic type. Found at the foot of the interior slope of the vallum, depth 1·2ft. Figured in Plate XIII.

The only parallel known to the writer is a similar object found on Hod Hill, Dorset (British Museum, Durden Coll., acquired 1892).

1. "Glastonbury Lake Village," p. 422.

E 8. Band of thin bronze, width 13.5mm., well patinated and ornamented with seven repoussé dots-and-circles; of Late-Celtic type. Found at the foot of the interior slope of the vallum, depth 1.7ft. on the old turf line. Figured in Plate XIII.

E 9, E 10, E 12. Four pieces of bronze bordering, or binding; E 9 and E 10 are long pieces; E 12, two short fragments. Depth from 1ft. to 1.2ft.

E 11. Rivet-head of bronze, dome-shaped, diam. 12.5mm., height 8mm.; similar to others found on the hill and many dozens from the Lake Villages.¹ Depth 1ft.

E 17. Bow and catch-plate of bronze fibula, tinned, length 59mm.; Roman. It has been rather badly bent and distorted.

F 6. Arrowhead of flint, barbed and tanged, and of fine workmanship; length 25mm. (1in.); across the barbs, 15mm.; thickness 4.2mm.; weight 1.11 grammes. Depth 1.8ft., in mixed mould and stones. Figured in Plate XIII.

F 7. Flint scraper. Depth 1.6ft.

I 4. Fibula of iron, length 52.5mm., of a common Romano-British type, and similar to I 17 (Cutting XI). Depth 1ft.

I 5. Part of an iron knife, or sickle. Depth 1.3ft.

I 6. Half a horse's snaffle-bit (one of two 'links'), length 68mm. (2 $\frac{3}{8}$ ins.); the thicker enlargement is the outer part of the bit through the perforation of which the loose ring (for bridle) was inserted.² Figured in Plate XIII.

This specimen was found in a small pit, called "Hole I," on the n. margin of the cutting, associated with various other objects of Late-Celtic character. The pit was 2ft. in diam. at top; max. depth from surface to bottom of hole, 2.5ft. Besides the specimens below mentioned the pit was filled with much burnt material and earth, but no charcoal of sufficient size to identify.

1. "Glastonbury Lake Village," several figured in Plate XLIII, and pp. 234-235.

2. This "Late-Celtic type" has been found elsewhere, notably in the Glastonbury Lake Village and several other sites of the Prehistoric Iron Age. ("Glastonbury Lake Village," Plate LXII, and pp. 378-380, and 389-390, where full references are given).

The other objects (not figured) consist of an iron knife, greater part of a tanged sickle of iron, an iron harness-ring and four other pieces of iron, a stone spindlewhorl (W 10,—of a flat type, diam. 2ins.), six smooth pebbles or 'calculi,'¹ a whetstone, and three fragments of Late-Celtic pottery, two of which bear characteristic ornament.²

I 8. Knife-blade of iron, curved, broken. Depth 1.5ft.

I 10. Bow, part of catch-plate and part of coiled spring of an iron La Tène III fibula; present length 53mm. Depth 2.2ft., on the old turf line under western margin of the vallum.

I 11. Part of the straight blade of a single-edged knife of iron. Depth 0.8ft.

I 12. Woman's or child's spiral finger-ring of iron, consisting of wire or plano-convex cross-section completing two turns, the ends tapering to a blunted point; int. diam. 14.5mm. Depth 0.8ft. Figured in Plate XIII.

Similar finger-rings were found in the Glastonbury Lake Village,³ but they are much commoner in bronze than in iron.

I 13. Needle of iron, point missing, length 58mm. This is not of the typical Early Iron Age type expanded in the position of the eye. Depth 1ft. Figured in Plate XIII.

A finely preserved bronze needle was found on Ham Hill in 1913.⁴

I 14. Fibula of iron, ornamented along the top of the bow; length 61mm.; of 1st century A.D. type.⁵ Depth 2.9ft., below the inner slope of the vallum. Figured in Plate XIII.

I 15. Part of blade and tang of large iron knife, damaged. Depth 2.1ft.

P 8. Lug or ear of black pottery, attached to vessel vertically; of British type. Depth 2ft.

This type was commonly found in the Romano-British Villages in S. Wilts and N. Dorset excavated by General Pitt-

1. *Op. cit.*, p. 622, etc., and Plate XC, S 6 (three specimens).

2. One of the patterns similar to "Glastonbury Lake Village," Plate LXXXI, P 206.

3. "Glastonbury Lake Village," Plate XLI, pp. 216-217.

4. *Proc. Som. Arch. Soc.*, LXI, p. lvi.

5. Iron fibulae, both of the Early Iron Age and the Roman Period, have been found previously on the hill.

Rivers, and elsewhere; and occasionally they are met with in the Lake Villages.¹ A similar lug was found in Cutting XI.

P 9. Fragment of the base of a pot ornamented in Late-Celtic style,—not sufficient remaining to complete the design. Depth 1·6ft.

S 3. Whetstone of sandstone, quadrangular in cross-section; length $4\frac{1}{4}$ ins. Depth 1·2ft.

W 7. Part of a spindlewhorl of pottery, convex on one surface, concave on the other. Depth 1·3ft.

W 8. Half a spindlewhorl of stone, diam. 42mm., the hole somewhat eccentric. Depth 2ft.

W 9. Spindlewhorl of Ham Hill stone, with flat surfaces and straight sides; diam. 34·5mm., thickness 11·2mm. Depth 1·6ft.

Among the unnumbered 'finds' from Cutting XII were:—A few iron nails and an iron punch (?); some iron slag; a few flint flakes, knives and chippings (some calcined); large number of sling-stones; two baked clay sling-bullets of fusiform shape, length of both $1\frac{1}{2}$ ins., similar to others found on Ham Hill and to those commonly found in the Lake Villages.² Also a squared hammerstone and part of radius of human skeleton.

In addition there were eight rough discs of Ham Hill stone, and half another which was perforated (like many others found on the hill). The average diameter of the eight was $2\frac{3}{4}$ ins., thickness $\frac{5}{8}$ in.

The shards of pottery were not particularly interesting—a typical selection of Roman and Romano-British pottery and some of late prehistoric type (with cordons and finely finished surface), including one fragment which might be classified as Hallstatt. A few pieces of red pottery included a fragment of mortarium. There was a fair proportion of the thick grey ware of the Roman period and a few handles. Of the rim pieces the bead rims predominated.

The most interesting of the animal remains were one metacarpus and two metatarsi of Ox (adult), giving estimated height of animal, 3ft. $2\frac{3}{4}$ ins., 3ft. $3\frac{1}{2}$ ins., and 3ft. $4\frac{3}{4}$ ins. (average 3ft. $3\frac{3}{4}$ ins.). The small Kerry Cow of to-day measures in height at shoulder about 3ft. 5ins.

1. "Glastonbury Lake Village," Plate LXXIX, pp. 518–519.

2. "Glastonbury Lake Village," Plate XC, pp. 562 *et seq.*