

From the *Transactions* of the  
Bristol and Gloucestershire Archaeological Society

## **Graves found at Hailes, Gloucestershire**

by E. M. Clifford  
1944, Vol. 65, 187-198

© The Society and the Author(s)

## GRAVES FOUND AT HAILES, GLOS.

by E. M. CLIFFORD, F.S.A.

INFORMATION regarding the discovery at Ireley Farm, Hailes (1), of a setting of stones forming a square, in and around which there was much Roman pottery (PLATE I and FIG. 4), as well as the fact that a flat stone slab had been unearthed by ploughing, was given to Miss Adlard by Mr H. Morgan of Winchcombe, who had been consulted by Mr R. Warmington. Miss Adlard informed Mr Herdman who gave the writer the information.

The site was visited by Miss Adlard and the writer when they were shown by Mr Warmington (A) material already removed from the centre of the stones ; (B) part of a human skull taken from the spot where the stone slab had been ploughed out ; and (C) material picked up from the surface of the ploughed field where the sites lay. The excavation was carried out in late March and early April, 1945 and the writer was assisted by Mr Warmington, Miss Adlard, Mr A. E. Jones, Miss Nancy Smith and Miss Margaret Whitley, who kindly made the plans. Mr and Mrs C. F. C. Hawkes visited the site and gave valuable help and advice. To all, thanks are due ; and also to Sir Cyril Fox and Mr W. F. Grimes.

The site is about a quarter of a mile ENE of Ireley Farm, in the parish of Hailes, on the south side of the Winchcombe-Broadway road and is about 270 feet above sea-level. It is on a stretch of gravel which comes within the Low Level Taelle gravels described by Miss Tomlinson (2) which here rest on Lower Lias clay. The stream on the north rises at Hailes and runs north-westwards to join the Isbourne north of Milhampost. This

<sup>1</sup> Ordnance Survey 6 ins. Glos. XX, N.E.

<sup>2</sup> *Q. J. Geological Soc.*, xcvi, pl. 22.

stream has cut through the gravel into the clay and by so doing has formed a feature which may be described as a terrace, and it was on the edge of this terrace that the graves were made. The field is shown on the estate map as Big Ewe Leasow and contains more than 45 acres (3). It has not been ploughed for a long time and the displacement of the stone slabs was undoubtedly due to mechanized ploughing.

A coffin or cist formed of stone slabs was discovered 10½ inches below the surface, lying east and west (PLATE II), and from the bones shown to the writer on her first visit it was known that the skull lay to the west. Scraps of unstratified Roman pottery were found in the soil above the coffin. Four slabs formed the base, three the north side, three the south side and one each at the east and west ends. Four slabs originally formed the lid. All these slabs consist of Oolite from the neighbouring hills. The coffin was 7 feet in length. (4) The bones are those of a tall robust man and they appeared to be somewhat

<sup>3</sup> We were informed that the field was called Cemetery field for which there is no corroboration. It may be noted that the late Mr St. Clair Baddeley records a Roman villa at Milham-post in *Trans. B.G.A. Society*, vol. XLVII, p. 75, and in his *Cotteswold Shrine*, page 6, says that coins dating from the second century had been found, and that Milham also possesses a Romano-British graveyard, from which he had obtained British handmade, and much Romano-British wheel-made pottery, some fifty yards south of the present farm-house. Reference to the map will show that this site is northwest of the one under discussion and in all probability refers to finds made in a gravel pit marked on the Ordnance Survey now disused.

<sup>4</sup> The coffin was 2 feet 3 inches wide and its narrowest measurement 1 foot 7 inches. The covering slabs which formed the lid were 2½ inches thick, one was 2 feet 6 inches long while another was 2 feet 3 inches. The thickness of the slabs forming the sides varied from 1½ to 3 inches. The inside measurement of the coffin was 6 feet 6 inches with a maximum width of 1 foot 10½ inches and a minimum of 1 foot 4 inches. The slabs on the south side had a distinct batter while those on the north were upright. It is possible that this was accidental as at Harlyn Bay (*Ant. Journ.* 1, 283). Neither the slabs which formed the sides nor those which formed the base overlapped, they were all butt-jointed, but those which formed the 'lid' all overlapped to a considerable extent.



Stone Setting at Hailes, Glos.



Grave at Hailes, Glos., after excavation

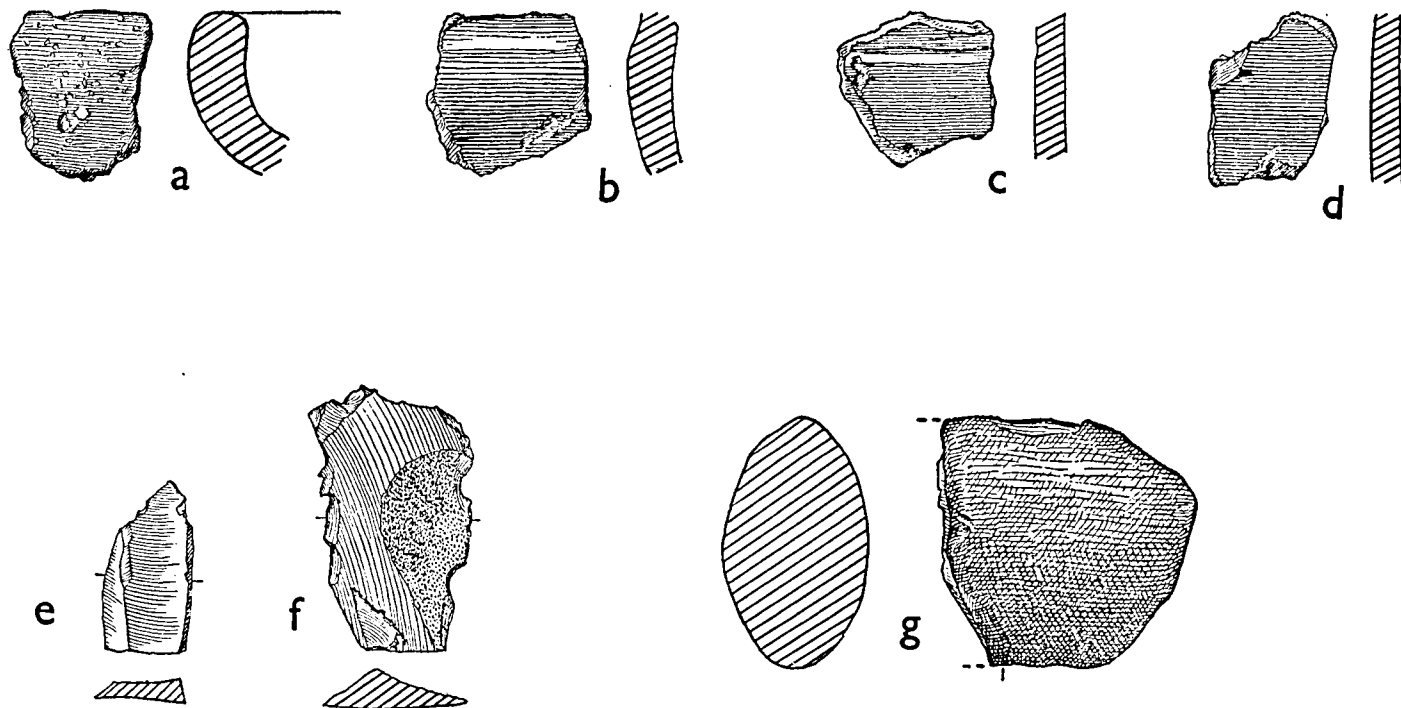


Fig. 1. A-C, pottery from grave 1; D, pottery from grave 2  
 E, flint flake from grave 2; F, flint flake from grave 1; G, clay nodule burnt red

disarranged, the vertebrae were out of alignment and two ribs were lying across the right femur. The damaged skull was lying on its left side and the arms were close to the body. Careful excavation, despite the wet condition of the contents, showed that a number of grains of wheat (5) (*Triticum vulgare*) typical of Early Iron Age wheat found in this country had been placed on the body 3 feet from the east end. The grains are, as usual, carbonised, but they had also been subjected to the action of fire. Charcoal was also found with the wheat. The last lower molar of a sheep was found near the feet and a fragment of another, and a toe-bone (hoof-core) of sheep were found 3 feet 6 inches from the foot of the coffin (6).

There were three fragments of Iron Age pottery, one showing the form of the rim FIG I, (A) came from the region of the pelvis while (B) and (C) came from below the knees. A flint flake patinated grey, came also from the pelvic region (FIG. I, F). Above the knees there was a flattish nodule of dark grey compact marly limestone (FIG. I, G) reddened on the outside probably by burning (7). A stone of roughly triangular shape was found on the breast of the skeleton; it is made of reddish ferruginous limestone (with *Pecten* sp. *personatus*) from the lower part of the Grit series which could be obtained from the neighbouring hills, e.g. Nottingham hill on which there is a well known hill-fort. (8). There is a large amount of this uncommon material on the site and the British Museum (Natural History) makes the interesting suggestion that the Iron Age people tried to use it as a source of ruddle for pigment. Charcoal was also found near the feet. (9)

<sup>5</sup> Identified by Professor John Percival.

<sup>6</sup> Identified by Dr J. W. Jackson who says that they are typical of the animals found on Early Iron Age sites in this country.

<sup>7</sup> Identified by Dr Kenneth Oakley.

<sup>8</sup> Information from Mr L. Richardson and confirmed at the British Museum (Natural History).

<sup>9</sup> Identified by Mr J. C. Maby.

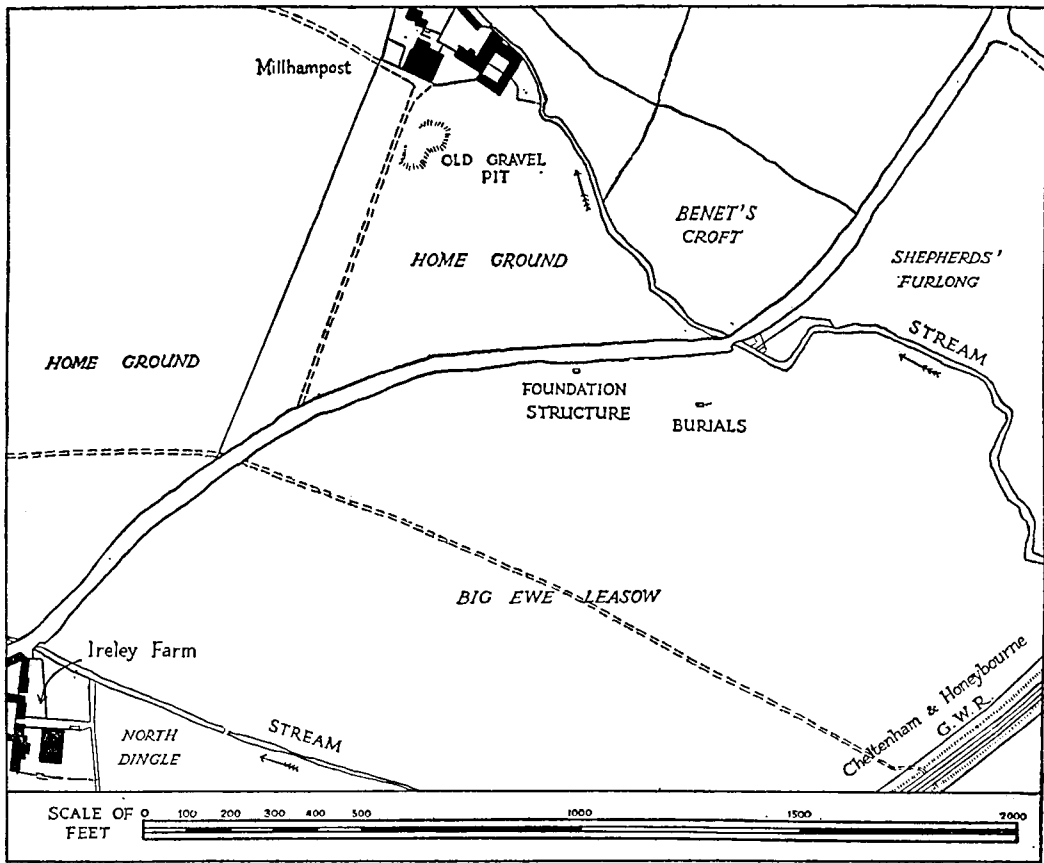


Fig. 2. Map showing the site of the Burials

In order to ascertain whether the grave was within a mound or ditch, trenches were cut north and west and no trace of anything was found. In the trench on the east side, however, part of a lower human jaw was found, and a little further east some stones on edge were met with. These proved to form the headstone of a further burial, in which the skeleton was buried in a grave which had been cut through the gravel into the underlying clay. This grave was demarcated only by the headstones already mentioned, one flat one on which the feet rested and a further upright one which marked the end of the grave. This last stone was supported on the east side by several smaller stones.

The skeleton was in a very fragile condition and so a drawing was made before the bones were removed. This shows that the body had not been laid in a fully extended position but that the head had been brought forward on to the chest. The bones are those of a small woman. The centre line of this burial was due east. Unstratified scraps of Roman pottery, including one small piece of Samian ware, were met with, and a piece of Iron Age pottery was in close association with the bones (FIG. I, D). There was also part of a flint blade, patinated grey, a last lower molar of ox, and a fragment of burnt bone (FIG. I, E).

In an area where stone was plentiful a cist or coffin formed of slabs of stone would be the easiest way to demarcate the area allotted to the dead person, as well as keeping whatever possessions which had been buried with him within reach. As it was so easy a form it had a long life in Cotswold. In the Nymphsfield long cairn the excavators of 1862 found that in the north chamber a smaller chamber or cist had been partitioned off (10), and at Notgrove in the central dome there was a cist formed in the same manner (11). Such cists are

<sup>10</sup> *P.P.S.*, 1938, p. 190.

<sup>11</sup> *Archaeologia*, LXXXVI, 127.

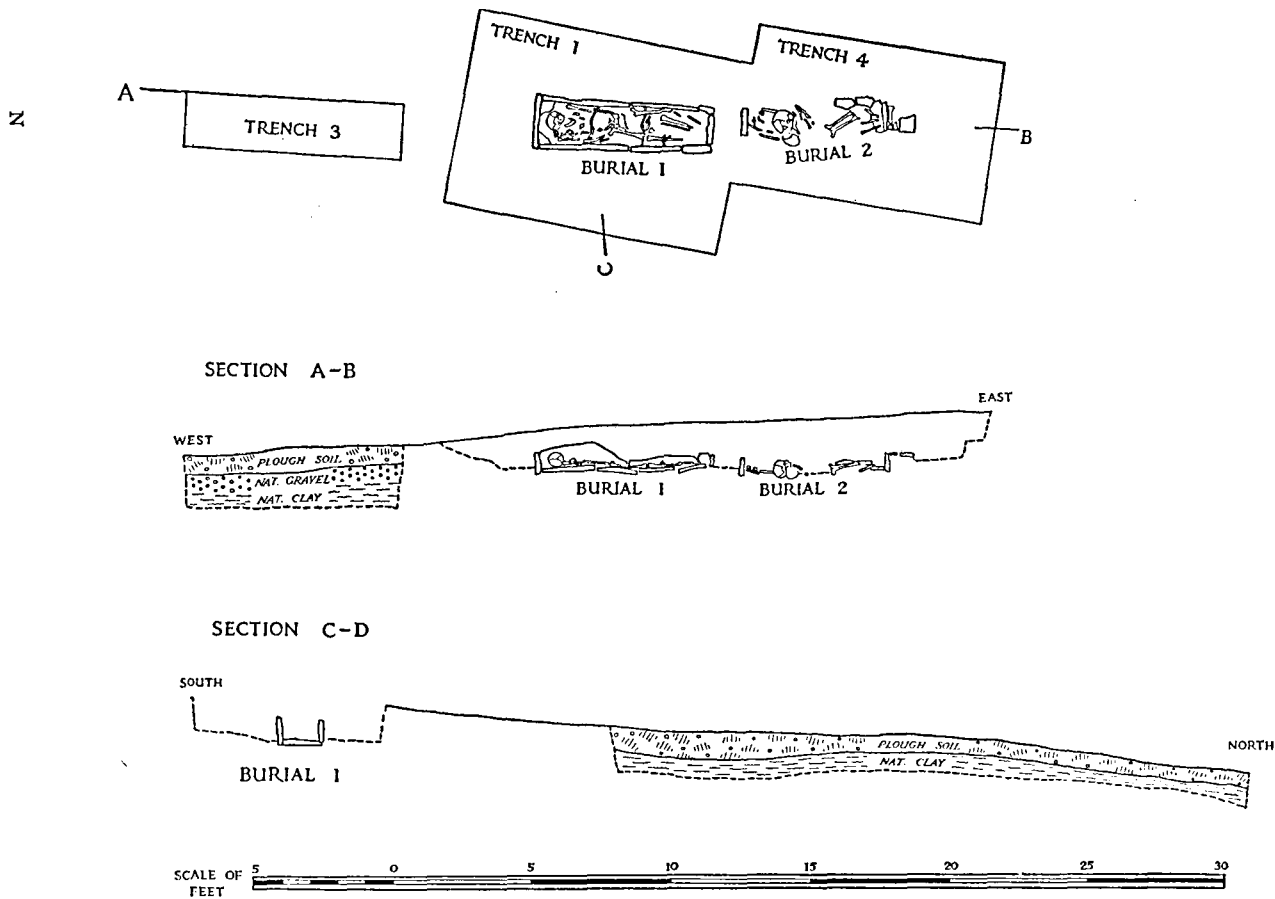


Fig. 3. Plan and Sections: limit of D is not shown on plan

frequent in Bronze Age barrows, as at Notgrove (12), Chedworth (13) and Foxcote (14). In Iron Age contexts elsewhere they have been recorded at Harlyn Bay (15), while in Cotswold there are the Birdlip burials which produced the famous mirror and other personal possessions of a great British lady. There, on the edge of the escarpment, were three graves lying in a line as at Hailes, but at Birdlip their feet were to the south. There were 'thin slabs of stone on edge round the bodies and covering these in with broad thin flags, so as to form a rough tomb' (16). The type continued into the Roman period (17) when coffins made out of solid stone, as at Gloucester, Cirencester, Bristol, were in common use (18).

We cannot therefore date a burial on form of coffin or cist alone, and we have then to consider the grave goods, or absence of grave goods, as well as the burial rite. The survival of inhumation in the Early Iron Age in the west is evidenced at Birdlip and Barnwood (19), while contracted burials of the period are stated to have been found at Salmonsbury (20). The grave goods at Hailes include wheat, animal bones, teeth, ferruginous limestone, flints and the marly limestone nodule burnt red. The fragments of Iron Age pottery are perhaps too small to be so counted, but they must be considered in arriving at any conclusions. It has been suggested that a late Roman date is likely for the Hailes graves, but if that were so we must assume that the usual practice of that time was departed from, indeed in one case a total absence of grave goods was claimed as a reason for

<sup>12</sup> *B.G.A.S.*, VII, 71.

<sup>13</sup> *Procs. C.N.F.C.*, V, 336.

<sup>14</sup> *ibid.* p. 335.

<sup>15</sup> *Antiquaries Journ.*, 1921, p. 283.

<sup>16</sup> *B.G.A.S.*, V, 137.

<sup>17</sup> *B.G.A.S.*, LVI, 129; LXI, 107 ff.

<sup>18</sup> *ibid.* LXI, p. 135 ff.

<sup>19</sup> *ibid.* LII, 224-6.

<sup>20</sup> Kendrick and Hawkes, *Archaeology of England and Wales*, 187.

suggesting that a 4th century date was the correct one (21). We must also assume that there was a little Iron Age pottery lying about which got included in the graves, but

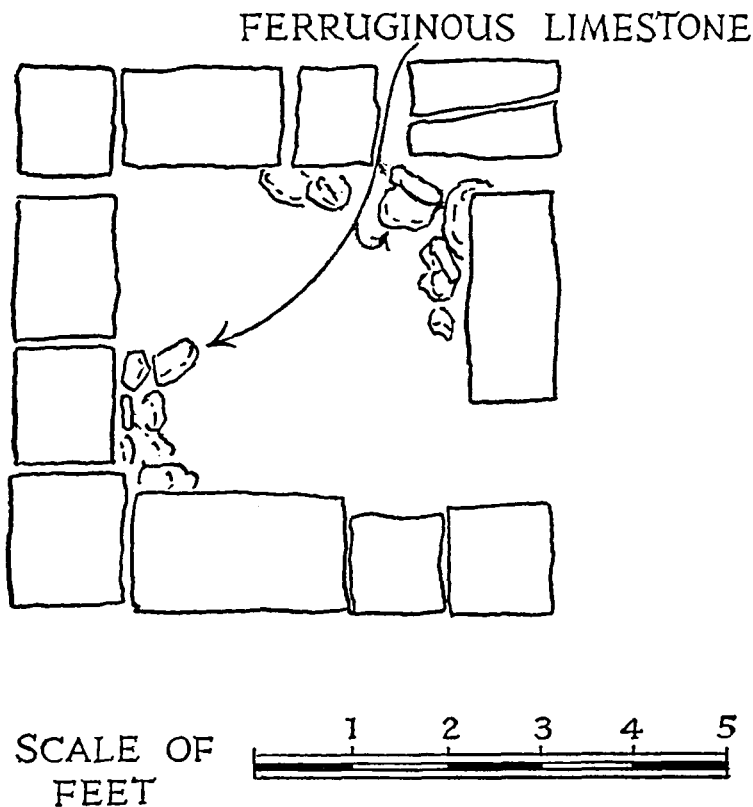


Fig. 4. Stone Setting

it is then difficult to explain why no Roman pottery was in the man's grave also, considering how much of it there is still in the field. There is, moreover, so far as can be judged at present, no evidence of a late Roman occupation

<sup>21</sup> Naunton B.G.A.S. LVI, plate p, 131.

of the area ; the available Roman pottery points to its being a first or second century site. Among the material picked up on the surface of the field there are two parts of querns of Old Red Sandstone, which probably came from the Old Red Sandstone regions of Herefordshire, much Roman pottery of the first and second centuries and many animal bones and teeth ; these include both sheep and ox. The writer found near the grave, but on the surface of the field, a piece of black pottery of Early Iron Age date as well as a sherd of the Roman orange-burnished ware, lately studied by Mr Charles Green and called by him Glevum ware (22). Part of a vessel from the Spoonley Wood villa in the Sudeley Castle collection is illustrated by Mr Green and there described by him as late first or early second century, but he adds that this ware did not reach such outlying places until the second century (23).

The date of the Early Iron Age pottery found in the graves is probably within the century preceding the conquest. It would appear, then, that the site was chosen for occupation in the earlier part of the Roman period by an antecedent Early Iron Age occupation. If the evidence is sufficient to enable us to assume that these graves are of the Early Iron Age, and belong to that occupation, their main importance is that they are the first of the type since Birdlip to be recorded in our region and that they suggest that this mode of burial was a normal one here—in say the last half of the last century B.C. and the first half of the first century of our era. It is perhaps relevant to point out that in the collection formed by the late Mrs Dent at Sudeley Castle, about two miles to the southwest, there are objects of the Iron Age, all presumably found on the estate. They include a brooch of La Tène type (24), an important object of

<sup>22</sup> *J.R.S.*, xxxiii, p. 15, fig. 3, 38.

<sup>23</sup> This ware is also present at Broadway among material which has come from a site in Station road.

<sup>24</sup> *Antiquaries Journ.* xvii, 446.

early British enamelled bronze (25), and two currency bars (26). This evidence and much more shows that Iron Age man was in the neighbourhood. It is not at first sight 'an area of easy settlement' (27), for there is Lower Lias clay hereabouts but prehistoric occupation is frequently found on a patch of gravel such as we have at Hailes.

The practice of placing colouring material with the dead is long lived. Lumps of ochre which Professor Gordon Childe includes among toilet articles (28) were placed with the dead in Upper Palaeolithic times and Sir John Evans (29) records many examples of ochre, haematite and ruddle, and adds, 'there can be little doubt of this red pigment having been in use for what was considered a personal decoration by the neolithic occupants of Britain. But this use of red paint dates back to a far earlier period, for pieces of haematite with the surface scraped, apparently by means of flint flakes, have been found in French and Belgian caves of the Reindeer Period, so this red pigment appears to have been in all ages a favourite with early man. The practice of interring war-paint with the dead is still observed among the North American Indians.

The paints that warriors love to use  
Place here within his hand,  
That he may shine with ruddy hues  
Amidst the spirit land'.

Haematite was found in Nympsfield long cairn (30) and in Rodmarton long cairn (31). At Castern in Staffordshire (32) Carrington opened a Bronze Age round barrow in

<sup>25</sup> *ibid.* xviii, 75-6.

<sup>26</sup> *ANTIQUITY*, December 1940, p. 427-33.

<sup>27</sup> Sir Cyril Fox, *Personality of Britain*, 4th ed., p. 78.

<sup>28</sup> *Man*, Jan.-Feb. 1945, p. 15.

<sup>29</sup> *Ancient Stone Implements of Great Britain*, 1872, p. 238.

<sup>30</sup> *P.P.S.*, 1938, p. 204.

<sup>31</sup> *ibid.* 1940, p. 143.

<sup>32</sup> Bateman, *Ten Years' Digging*, p. 169.

1850 and records that he found ' a flat piece of sandstone rubbed hollow at one side and a flat piece of ruddle or war-paint, which, from its abraded appearance, must have been in much request for colouring the skin of its owner. In the few instances in which this substance has been found in our tumuli, it has uniformly been associated with weapons of flint of good workmanship '.

A Bronze Age barrow on Broad Down, near Honiton, Devon, famous for its cup of bituminous shale (33), produced also nodules of ruddle.

It would appear therefore that there is some evidence of the recurrence throughout prehistoric times of a desire for the dead to appear as living people, with colour on their cheeks.

The stones set in a square, as illustrated in PLATE I and FIG. 4, were probably brought from Hailes Abbey, as the tooling suggests medieval work. They rest on black earth which here is of considerable thickness, and this thickness, together with its texture, suggest the filling of a ditch or pit. This black soil contains many fragments of Roman pottery and some pieces of ferruginous limestone. The setting measures 5 feet 10 inches square and was formed of stones 10 inches thick, one of which measured 2 feet 3 inches long. On the inside of the northeast and southwest corners there were pieces of ferruginous limestone arranged in the form of a semi-circle. For what purpose these unmortared stones were thus placed it is impossible to say, but on one was scratched the lay-out for Nine Men's Morris (34), a game which survived into the Renaissance.

<sup>33</sup> *Archaeological Journ.*, xxv, 295.

<sup>34</sup> First noticed by Mr A. E. Jones.