

Some Notes on Deepdale Cave, Buxton.

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EXTENDING about half a mile S.S.W. from Marldale, between Buxton and Chelmorton, is the narrow limestone cleft of Deepdale. A cave in this rocky little valley, the property of Mrs. Percival, of Chelmorton, was (in 1884) first discovered to have been inhabited in bye-gone times, by Mr. Matthew Salt, an intelligent tradesman of High Street, Buxton. About two years ago, Mr. Salt again visited the cave, and found various fragments of pottery, as well as a variety of bones.

In the summer of 1889 other townsmen of Buxton became interested in the caves of Deepdale, notably Mr. Robert Millett, builder, of West Street. The finding of a large skull, which was supposed to be that of a wild boar, as well as a great number of other bones and much pottery in fragments, caused the explorers to desire further advice. At the end of August, and during September, both Mr. Salt and Mr. Millett put themselves, with great wisdom, into communication with Professor Boyd Dawkins, F.R.S., F.S.A., of Owen's College, Manchester, who is so well known to archæologists as the leading authority on all that pertains to caves and their inhabitants. A considerable parcel of bones were submitted to the Professor's examination, with the highly interesting result, that they were found to include bones of the red deer, with antlers; of the sheep or goat; of the *bos longifrons*, or short-horned Celtic ox, including skull and teeth; of the horse; of the fox, including a skull; of the hare; and of some large bird. The supposed skull of the wild boar proved to

be the most interesting of the "finds," for it was identified as pertaining to the *ursus arctos*. It is the skull of an old bear, with the teeth worn down almost to stumps. The head and jaw of this bear were thickly covered with stalagmite deposit.

Amongst other articles submitted to Professor Boyd Dawkins were a polished spear head, showing traces of having been gnawed by rodents ; the top of a bone pin, turned in a lathe ; and various fragments of pottery, chiefly of the three different kinds, (1) rude hand-made, (2) Samian, and (3) pseudo-Samian red ware.*

Yet more recently, Mr. Salt has made further discoveries at Deepdale. On December 26th, 1889, he found a skull, which is supposed to be that of a wolf. On the same occasion, a narrow-necked, flask-shaped vessel, was discovered two feet below the surface. It is described as of a light stone colour, and coarse in texture. The vessel has a handle at the lip ; a rough pencil sketch seems to show that it is a small Roman ampulla. Two chipped flints, and a long bone pin were also found on the same day. On December 27th, Mr. Salt found a circular bronze fibula, with a projecting central boss ; and on January 14th, 1890, the greater part of a small bronze bracelet or bangle. From the pencil sketches that Mr. Salt has kindly submitted to me, just before going to press, of these his last discoveries, I venture to think that they are sufficiently interesting to warrant our Society having them specially illustrated and described in the next issue of the Journal.

Mr. Salt has also forwarded to me fourteen fragments of the pottery found by him in the Deepdale cavern on December 27th and on January 14th. There is a great and most interesting variety in this little heap of potsherds. Two of the pieces are of the coarse, hand-made black ware of early times, small fragments of white gypsum being mixed with the paste ; this kind of pottery has been more than once described in this Journal. The remainder have all been turned on a wheel, and may be generically described as Roman, or Romano-British, but of very

* We are greatly obliged to the Professor for kindly supplying us with brief notes as to the result of his examination of these finds.

different texture, and probably of widely differing dates. Three of these are pieces of coarse, strong, reddish ware, in two instances coloured right through, and in the third having a bluish grey centre. Others are of a blackish grey colour, and of lighter make. Several of them have formed parts of large open vessels. There is one piece of fine chocolate paste, that probably, with one or two others, came from the large Roman potteries of Northamptonshire. There is one piece of a dull, whitish grey that is evidently part of the rim of a mortarium of continental make. A small and beautifully glazed fragment is undoubtedly foreign Samian; and another coarser piece of the same style may, with equal assurance, be termed pseudo or imitation Samian. It is not a little remarkable to hold in one's hand this tiny collection of potsherds, weighing in all not eleven ounces, gathered almost at haphazard from the clay on the floor of a little limestone cave in an out-of-the-way Derbyshire glen, and to know that this handful of fragments has been brought there from countries and places hundreds, nay, perhaps thousands of miles apart from each other, and there deposited and used by people, the most ancient of whom may have been there very many centuries before Christ, and the most recent at least fifteen hundred years before Mr. Salt disturbed them from their resting place.

No further surmises shall, however, be now indulged in, for it is to be hoped that the caves of Deepdale (there are more than one) may ere long be systematically explored, and that the results may be made known to the members of our Society by some competent pen.

The Editor was only anxious that the present Journal should not be issued without some brief chronicle of these noteworthy investigations so far as they have yet been pursued.