

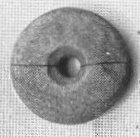
302



Spindle-whorl.

Old Woman's House,  
Taddington Dale, 1771/1799

299



Stone Spindle-whorl.

Old Woman's House,  
Taddington Dale, 1799



Stone Spindle-whorl.

Taddington Dale, 1709.



Iron Knife.

Taddington Dale, 1709



Iron Knife.

Taddington Dale, 1709.

301



Bone Javelin-point.

Taddington Dale, 1709.



Glass Bead.

Old Woman's House,  
Taddington Dale, 1709.

226



Knife-handle.

Old Woman's House,  
Taddington Dale, 1771/1799

ARTICLES FOUND IN THE OLD WOMAN'S HOUSE, TADDINGTON DALE.  $\frac{2}{3}$  natural size.

## Derbyshire Cave-Men of the Roman Period.

By W. STORRS FOX, M.A., F.G.S.

**B**EFORE the discovery or introduction of iron into Western Europe, bronze had for many centuries been the only metal suitable for the manufacture of weapons and tools; and so far as Britain is concerned, it was not until about 400 B.C. that iron also came into general use. From that date down to the beginning of the Christian era, when the influence of Rome began to be felt, the Early Iron Age lasted.

When Cæsar invaded Britain in 55 B.C., the tribes which opposed him were not mere savages. Some of the inhabitants of the island were prosperous agriculturists; others carried on a thriving trade with the Continent; but in the wilder, more mountainous districts, cattle-keeping and hunting were the main occupations. The Britons were not devoid of artistic talent. They produced beautiful work in bronze, and their designs in enamel have never been surpassed. Their methods of warfare and the character of their civilisation were very different from those of the Romans, who soon became their masters. They were adepts at hurling the javelin, and could fight with equal ease and effect from their chariots or on foot. If the various tribes had laid aside their jealousies and combined against their common foe, Cæsar and his army would have been annihilated. But owing to inter-tribal feuds there was no general opposition to the invader, and in 54 B.C. Cæsar crossed to the north of the Thames. He did not, however, conquer Britain. It is doubtful whether the inhabitants ever paid the tribute demanded from them; and for nearly one hundred years they were left in peace to develop their resources.

Nevertheless Cæsar's invasion of the country had not been without result. There is a strange tendency among many peoples to suppose that the arts and crafts of foreigners are in some way superior to their own. The Britons were like the rest of mankind in this respect, and Roman productions soon began to be sought after and to be preferred to native workmanship. When once this spirit became rife, time alone was needed to bring about the extinction of British art.

This process was very gradual, and only reached its climax after the conquest of Britain during the first two centuries A.D. And it is most important to bear in mind that, just as the presence of an English coin or trinket in a remote African village proves neither subjugation nor occupation by the English, so also the fact that Roman pottery or ornaments are found on a British site does not establish Roman dominion there at the time, nor does it necessarily show that Romans had ever reached that place.

Another important point to remember is that mountainous districts are more difficult to subdue than the less hilly lands around them. Consequently it is more than likely that the Britons dwelling in the Peak of Derbyshire remained hostile and independent after the plains to the east and west had passed under Roman rule.

A survey of the British Museum *Early Iron Age Guide* will make it evident to the reader that Late Celtic antiquities of purely British design are comparatively uncommon. This fact adds to the interest of such finds as the brooch ornamented with coral from Harborough cave,<sup>1</sup> and the glass bead from the Old Woman's House. The presence in these caves of fragments of Roman pottery, and of brooches showing unmistakable traces of Roman influence, suggests that the occupation of the sites extended beyond the close of the Early Iron Age, or purely British period, into the early part of the Roman period (A.D. 50-150).

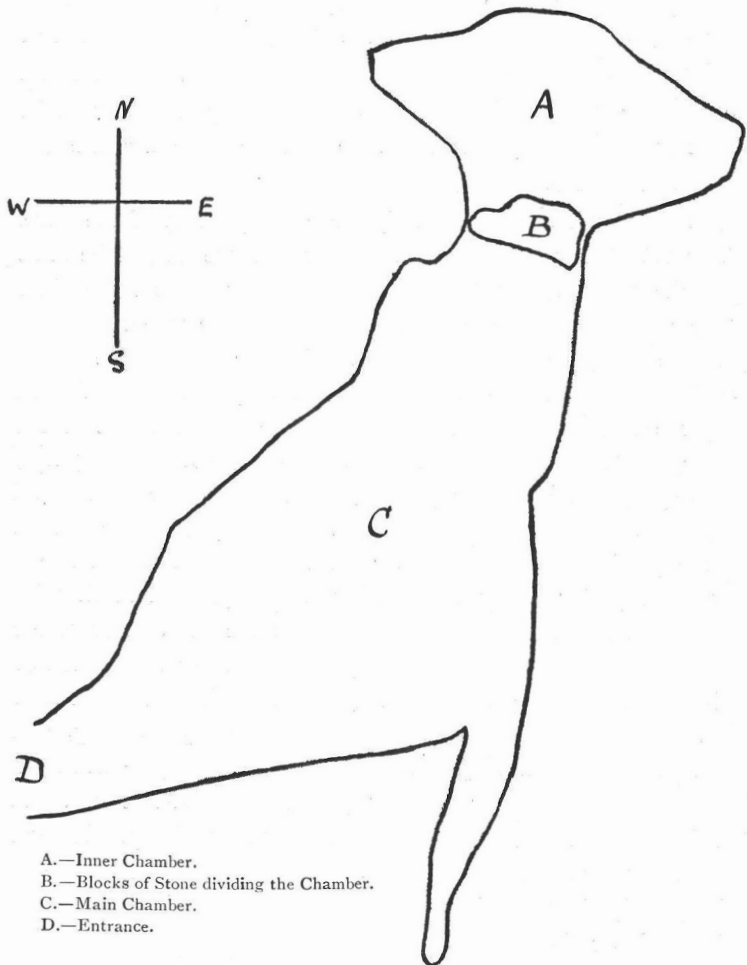
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<sup>1</sup> *Derbyshire Archaeological Journal*, vol. xxxi., p. 103.

The origin of the name, "Old Woman's House," locally given to a small cave in Taddington Dale, is unknown. The former worker of a lead mine, which has not been opened within the memory of man, is locally known as "The Old Man." Possibly some adventurer into the cave in question met with a brooch or ornament, and recognising that it belonged to an earlier age, assigned it to "The Old Woman"; in which case the cave would naturally from that time bear the name of "The Old Woman's House."

It is difficult to define clearly the exact position of the cave. The entrance is small, and at a short distance cannot be seen. On the road between Ashford and Taddington, near the place where Monsal, Taddington, and Demon's Dales meet, there is a mile post, marked four miles from Bakewell (on the 6-inch Ordnance map it is given as three). Nearly half a mile further up the road towards Taddington, on the southern side of the dale, there is a mass of rugged, broken rock. Among this, and lying almost on the 700 Ordnance datum line, is a small opening. With the aid of a rope it is easy to descend to a little platform some six or seven feet below, to follow a downward slope for a few feet further (D on plan), and then by means of a ladder to reach the floor of the cave. Before the excavation was begun (in January, 1909), there was no need of a ladder, as a deep talus of rough stone reached from the floor up to the aforesaid slope. The cave was 25 ft. long, and varied from 10 ft. to  $3\frac{1}{2}$  ft. in width. This length included a small low-roofed inner chamber (A) at the north-east end. In the main portion (C) of the cave the roof was lofty. Its east wall ran due north and south, but the opposite one slanted irregularly from north-east to south-west. Exploration began in the inner chamber, where there was not room to sit upright. The earthen floor rested upon a sloping block of stone, probably fallen from the roof. At the western end of this chamber the earth was only from 2 ins. to 6 ins. deep. It was in this shallow soil that the glass bead was found. Also in this chamber there were three fragments of hard grey pottery and a

small lump of red matter.<sup>1</sup> But as the soil became deeper towards the eastern end, it also grew less productive; and nothing more was found there besides bones of fox, badger, deer, and horse.



Plan of the Old Woman's House, Taddington Dale, 1909.

The great difficulty in the working of the cave was the disposal of the refuse. It could not be removed outside without

<sup>1</sup> If rouge, cf. *Glastonbury Lake Village*, by Bulleid and Gray.

great labour and considerable risk, so that, when the excavation of the main chamber was begun, the refuse was thrown into the inner one until that was filled up; and later on a succession of tips was built up, one of them reaching a height of 14 ft. or more.

A trench was dug at the northern end of the main chamber. On reaching a depth of 2 ft. a well-defined blackened floor was cut into, which was afterwards found to extend over nearly the whole area of the main chamber, and it was in this charcoal-layer that all the interesting relics were found. The deposits overlying it were not wholly barren, but contained bones of ox, sheep, pig, fox, and badger. Fox was met with at all depths, including the blackened deposit. Bones of badger were numerous, and at least eight adult individuals of this species were represented; but they were confined to the superficial layers. No human bones were found.

The relics from this site and from Harborough show something of the life of these cave-dwellers. In the Old Woman's House the occupants, before settling there, made a thick floor of small rubble.<sup>1</sup> They were thus provided with a level area free from puddles. In rainy weather there is a heavy drip from the roof, which would cause great inconvenience to the occupants unless the floor was well drained. In all probability a framework of poles was erected overhead, and covered with skins, to carry the water from the roof to the sides of the cave where it was drained off. Possibly the nails which were found had been used for this structure. The floor would be bedded with litter, either fern, dry grass, or leaves, or a mixture of these. The fire would be kept burning on the hearth in the middle or on one side of the cave. Probably the litter was rarely, if ever, cleared away. It would become thin and scanty from time to time, and a fresh supply would be placed upon the old. Now and again sparks or embers from the hearth would set fire to the bedding. If any of the family

<sup>1</sup> The presence among the rubble of coarse pottery of an earlier date shows that the floor was artificial.

were at home they would quickly beat out and extinguish the flames, but if left to itself the fire would promote sanitation by reducing the whole covering of the floor to ashes.

But whether the litter was burnt in this way or not, the fact remains that layer after layer of fresh litter must have been laid upon the old, and that thus by fire or by decay the definite stratum of charcoal was gradually formed. This black bed lay a few inches above the thick rubble floor, so that it would seem that earth had been laid over the rubble in order to provide a smooth floor.

Many a time a brooch, a tool, or a weapon would be dropped among the litter. Weapons and tools with handles could not easily be lost; but smaller articles, if not missed at once, might easily be so trodden into the mass as to evade a careful search. Time and accident have left us a few relics with which to patch together a rough outline of the lives of these people. The bones of sheep, goat, pig dropped among the litter tell us what was their staple food. Occasionally ox, deer, and horse gave them a change of diet. Probably they collected nuts and wild fruits, but there is nothing either in the Old Woman's House or at Harborough to show that the Peakmen of that time ground corn or even grew it. During the day the men, accompanied by dogs, herded the cattle and sheep, or hunted the red deer, wild boar, wolf, and fox. The women stayed at home, and prepared and cooked the food, looked after the babies, made pottery, and spun wool. How the Taddington Dale people made this up into garments is not clear; for there is no evidence of a loom in the Old Woman's House, nor could room well be found for one in so small a cave. But at Harborough the presence of a bone weaving-comb proves that weaving was carried on there. Possibly the Taddington Dale women took their worsted elsewhere to be made up into cloth.

A bridle-ring and cheek-piece discovered at Harborough show that the men there rode on horseback. But in the Old Woman's House the only remains of horse are a few bones which were probably thrown aside after a meal of horseflesh, or carried into the cave by dogs.

It is now necessary to give a detailed list and description of the more important finds which occurred in the charcoal floor of the Old Woman's House. Considering the small dimensions of the cave, they were fairly numerous. They include personal ornaments and articles of domestic use, but no weapons of war. Their chief interest lies in the fact that they all rested on the same well-defined floor, and, therefore, all belong to the same limited period. An iron knife with broad blade measures 4.5 ins. from point to end of tang, and 1.75 ins. across the broadest part of the blade. Another knife is 3.85 ins. long and 0.65 in. wide. Like the larger one, it was sharpened only on one edge, the back being about one-tenth of an inch thick. On one side of the blade there is a longitudinal groove near and parallel to the back. Other iron implements comprise a hook (4 ins. long from the butt-end to the extremity of the curve) turned over at the butt to form a ring; a short, pointed, slightly curved tool, 2.3 ins. long, to which is attached a strong socket for receiving a haft; four short rods resembling the shafts of nails; and six nails. These nails have large heads, one of them being 1.2 ins. in diameter. A whetstone 4.35 ins. long is narrowed by use towards the middle of its shaft, and widens out at each extremity. Three spindle-worls of sandstone have each a diameter of  $1\frac{1}{2}$  ins. Two are of rude workmanship, and appear to have been drilled by means of a stick and sand. The third is well formed and neatly drilled.

Another piece of sandstone worked into circular form, and rubbed flat on both surfaces, seems to have been intended for a spindle-whorl; but it is not drilled. There is, however, in the centre of one of the faces a slight depression, which may mark the position of an intended perforation. The only other stone implement found is a more or less spherical quartz pebble, which probably served as a sling-stone.

Only three bone implements were met with. One is the tine of a deer's antler which has been bored at the thick end, where there are still traces of iron. It was probably used as the haft of a knife. The others are a neatly made javelin point, and part of a bone rod for extracting unguent from a bottle or stibium-pot.



Six articles of personal adornment conclude the list of finds (pottery and bones excepted). These consist of a well-made bone pin with spherical head, four bronze brooches, and a glass bead. Two of the brooches are of the penannular form with twisted (writhen) terminal bosses similar to those found in Ravencliffe and Harborough caves, and elsewhere, especially in Derbyshire. In one of these the bronze pin is perfect, and is formed of a strong, narrow band of metal turned one and a half times round the side of the brooch to form a loop. The edges of the band are then turned over and meet, thus producing a smooth, well-rounded pin, which is carried over as an arch to the opposite side of the brooch. Here the metal band is again widened out to its full extent, and is bevelled on each side to produce a sharp point.

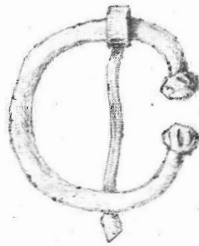


Fig. 1.—Penannular Brooch.

The other penannular brooch, when found, had the remains of an iron pin attached to it; but on exposure to the air the iron crumbled to dust.

The two remaining brooches are of the harp pattern. Both are in excellent preservation with pins complete. The larger one is 2.75 ins. long, including the loop. The body is of cast bronze with two round holes in the catch-plate, and mouldings on the extremity and middle of the bow. The head is ornamented with curves in relief of Late Celtic character, and expands in trumpet form to cover the spiral spring. This is of wire in one piece with the pin, and is coiled on either side of a perforated lug projecting from the head, the chord (or

external loop of the spiral spring) being on the inside. Through the lug and spring coil passes a bronze tube to serve as an axis, and into both ends of it is slipped the wire which carries a button and forms a loop beyond the head for the attachment of a chain, these brooches being often worn in pairs on either side of the breast. The smaller brooch is 1.85 ins. long. The bow is ornamented for half its length by two longitudinal grooves which are terminated by a transverse chevron in relief.

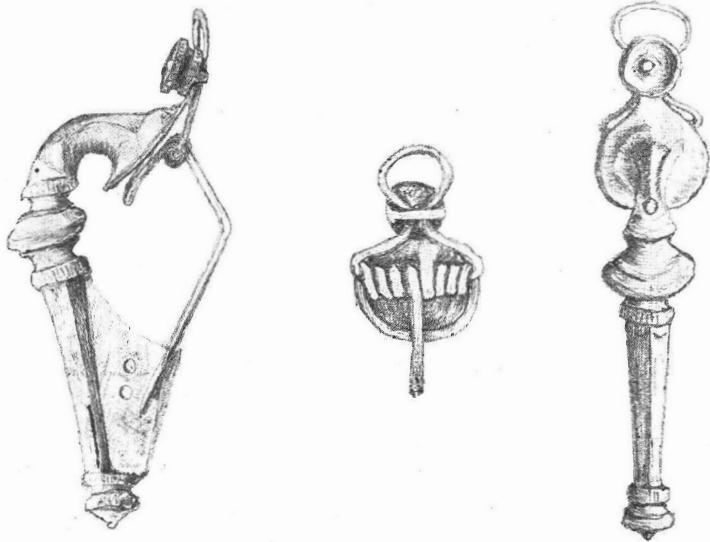


Fig. 2.—Larger harp-shaped Brooch.

The hinge and pin are on the same principle as those of the larger brooch, except that the axis of the spiral passes through the ends of the drum or spring case, and the external chord is held in its place by means of a hook at the extremity of the head. The bead is made of translucent dark blue glass. It is ornamented with four almost equidistant eyes. They are formed by a patch of inlaid white glass with a blue spot placed on the centre. The bead is 1.2 ins. in diameter.

It is perhaps worth recording that two valves of a shell, or shells, of fresh-water mussel were found.

It has already been stated that from the entrance to the cave a talus of loose stone and earth sloped down to the floor. Buried in this material was a bronze coin of the early days of Constantine the Great. It was lying four or five feet above the charcoal layer, and is of some interest as showing the gradual growth of the talus.

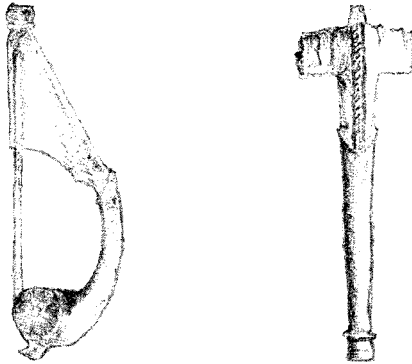
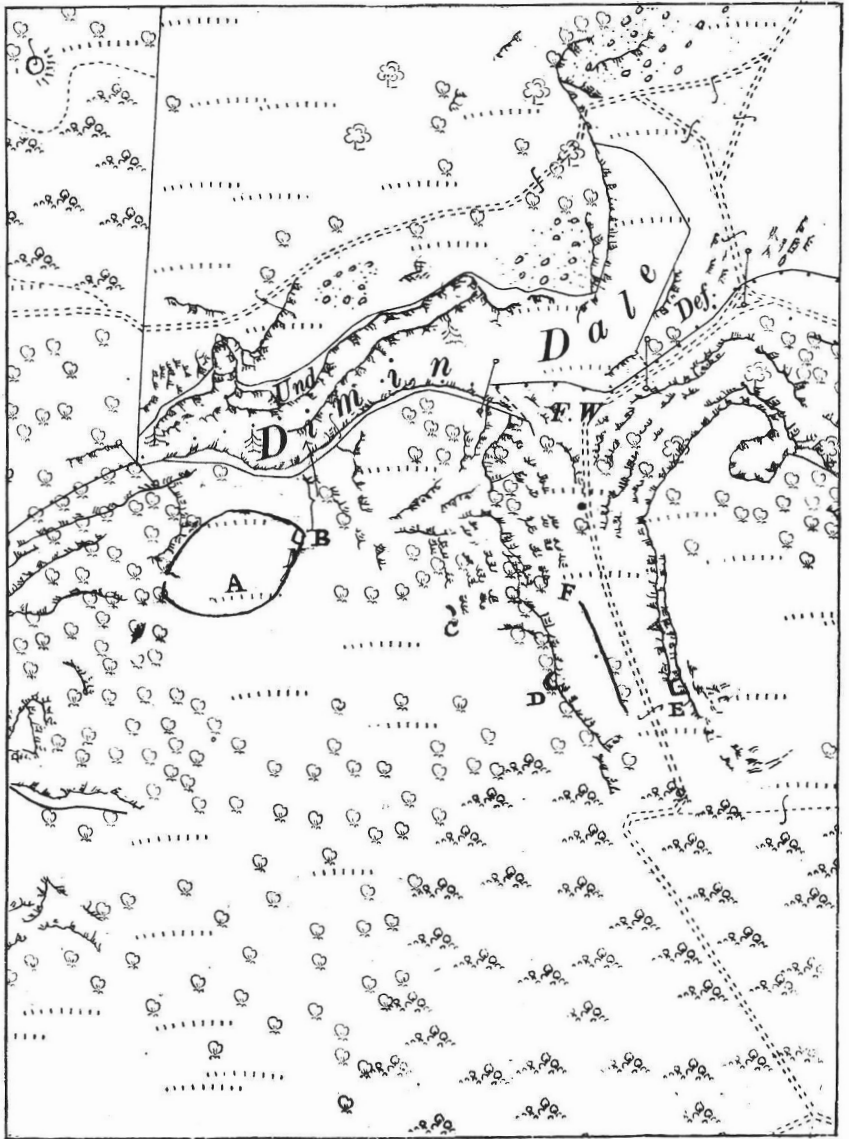


Fig. 3.—Smaller harp-shaped Brooch.

In all probability the people living in the Old Woman's House were not an isolated family, but formed part of a community. About half a mile to the south-east of the cave there is a small plateau (locally known as Horsborough) on the south side of the gorge of Demon's Dale,<sup>1</sup> lying between it and the foot of a steep hill which rises 300 ft. above it towards Sheldon. This plateau is the site of a British fortified village. It is not marked on the 25-in. Ordnance map; but lines of stones set up on edge clearly indicate the general plan of the defences.

The suggestion that this site was contemporary with the Old Woman's House is not a mere conjecture. In the summer of 1908 Mr. Alfred Bramwell, of Bakewell, made several holes and short trenches at various points within the fortified area, and

<sup>1</sup> Spelt Dimin Dale in the Ordnance map.



BRITISH VILLAGE AT HORSBOROUGH.

*Reproduced from the Ordnance Survey Map, with the sanction of the Controller of H.M. Stationery Office.*

met with a flint arrow-point, a well-made bead, one-half of a pair of bronze tweezers, and a quantity of fragments of pottery. No one rim exactly corresponds with any of those from the Old Woman's House; but among the Horsborough ones are parts of Roman vessels, and the ruder native sort bear a strong resemblance to those of similar workmanship from the cave.<sup>1</sup>

The accompanying plan (most of the details of which are taken from the 25-in. Ordnance map) gives a rough idea of the position of Horsborough. The main enclosure (A) is of irregular shape, 80 yards long, and 58 yards wide. Possibly it was used as a cattle-fold. The entrance to it is at the western end, and is approached by a narrow way between low crags. Within its walls at the opposite extremity is a small hut (B) of more or less rhomboidal shape. From it there is a narrow entrance into the main enclosure. At a distance of 100 yards to the south-east is an almost circular hut or pen (D), measuring 16 yards in diameter, on the edge of a low crag. Between these two there is some masonry, which probably formed part of a similar building (C). The site is protected on the north by the gorge of Demon's Dale; and on the east by a line of low, irregular crags. Where these crags are broken artificial defences have been erected. The crags themselves are faced at a short distance by another line, and the narrow valley between the two forms an approach to the plateau. In this little valley is a long line of walling (F), and a small square enclosure (E).

To the south of the plateau a steep hill overlooks the village. This must have made its position very insecure in case of attack by hostile tribes. The site was probably chosen as a sheltered one and suitable for flocks and herds; and such defences as it had were probably erected to keep out wolves.

What now remains of these ancient walls stands so little above the rough turf, and is so inconspicuous, that it would be an easy matter to walk over the site without being aware of its existence. Mr. William Blackwell, of Ashford, pointed it out to the writer

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<sup>1</sup> It is to be hoped that in the near future someone may be found to examine and compare all the pottery from Thirst House, Harborough, Rainster Rocks, the Old Woman's House, and Horsborough.

of this article, and it has since been visited by Mr. Reginald A. Smith, of the British Museum, by Mr. W. J. Andrew, and by Mr. E. M. Wrench.

Locally the plateau is called the "Orsbroughs." It is a common practice in the district to drop the initial *h* and to add a final *s*. The name, therefore, may fairly be supposed to be Horsborough, the latter half of which suggests an ancient settlement.

In conclusion, I wish to record my gratitude to Mr. Reginald A. Smith, who has given me very valuable help in the preparation of this article.