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48. The Pit Dwellings at Holderness

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gefällten derartigen Urteils dadurch zu belehren, dass ich es einmal beispielsweise auch bei ihm selbst zu Anwendung brachte.

Damit ist, zu meiner Freude, ein persönlicher Gegensatz, der sich zu bilden drohte, beseitigt. Die Austragung unserer sachlichen Differenzen darf dadurch in keiner Weise behindert werden; ihr vor allem sollte dieser Artikel dienen.

P. W. SCHMIDT.

England: Archæology.

Greenwell: Gatty.

**The Pit Dwellings at Holderness.** *By Canon Greenwell, F.R.S., and*  
*the Rev. R. A. Gatty, LL.B.*

48

The implements of stone and vessels of pottery now brought under the notice of the Institute, though of a very humble, even rude, description, and showing very little evidence of skill in the hands of the makers, are nevertheless of importance for the light they throw upon the cultivation of early man in Britain, or at all events in that part of it in which they have occurred. They all belong to the appliances of domestic life, nothing which can be regarded as a weapon, except scrapers, having up to the present time been discovered. They have been found on the floors of pits sunk into the boulder clay, and on account of the circumstances connected with them they must be regarded as the dwelling-places of people living under very primitive conditions. They are placed within an area, the extent of which has not yet been ascertained, in a position at the present day not far situated from the coast, in the district of Holderness, in the East Riding of Yorkshire.

At the time they were inhabited they were no doubt placed much further inland, the sea having encroached very largely during a long period on that part of the eastern shore of England. That these people lived at some distance from the sea appears to be shown by the absence of the bones of sea fish and marine shells. It is possible they may not have been able to catch fish; still there must have been an abundance of shell-fish on the coast, and the contents of rubbish heaps in the dwelling-places of other early people living near the sea show how large an element in their dietary were cockles, oysters, mussels, limpets, and such like food.

The greater number of the pits hitherto explored are situated near the village of Atwick, two miles from Hornsea, but they have been observed as far as three miles north and the same distance south of that place. At Rolston, three miles south from Atwick, two have been discovered on the cliff face, owing to the washing away of the land by the action of the sea. They occur apparently in groups, and are so numerous that it is evident the district was then occupied by a large population. This seems to have consisted of people who, if we are to judge from their domestic belongings and their place of abode, must have been in a condition of life little above that of savages.

Nor, does it appear, were they living in the neighbourhood of people who had attained to a higher stage of progress, for if this had been the case it might have been expected that some article of a superior kind, or one of their own rude tools made out of an implement of better manufacture, might have been found. This has sometimes occurred on sites occupied by people in much the same social condition as these pit-dwellers of Holderness. This evidence is, of course, only negative, and not in any way conclusive, but it has a certain value and is worth being noticed.

The pits were first discovered by Mr. William Morfitt, of Atwick, when digging the foundations of a house, who from that occurrence was led further afield in search of other pits of a similar kind. In this he was successful, and it is due to his acuteness, persevering energy and patient care, that so much has been recovered in connection with a community of very early dwellers in that part of Britain.

That these very humble places of abode were the dwellings of a people living

there at an early part of the period which is called neolithic does not admit of much doubt. The inhabitants of Britain, during the Neolithic period throughout the greater part of that time, and over the whole country, except, perhaps, in some remote places, were acquainted with the art of grinding and polishing stone. It is quite possible, however, that in the early stages of their cultivation, like the still older men of palæolithic days, they may have been ignorant of that important process in the manufacture of stone implements. To such a time it may be the pit-dwellers of Holderness belonged. Anyhow, no stone has been found in the pits which shows the least trace of such a process of polishing.

That these people were living at a very early period, during the time when stone and bone were the only materials out of which weapons and implements were made (though not in that time, the palæolithic, when the mammoth and other extinct animals occupied the country), is shown not only by the articles found in the pits, but even more conclusively by the position which the pits assume in relation to the surface soil and its contents, by which they are overlaid.

In that part of Holderness where these dwelling-places have been discovered the underlying strata are covered by a deposit of boulder clay of varying thickness. This clay, which contains, together with the usual rolled and scratched pebbles and larger blocks of various kinds of stone, the remains of the mammoth, and other animals belonging to the same fauna, has been excavated in places to form the pits which constituted the living-places in question.

The pits, which are generally about 5 feet deep, vary considerably in shape and size. They are mostly of an elongated form, in some cases as long as 40 feet by 9 or 10 feet in width. They are now filled in with a dark-coloured deposit, evidently the result of mud washed into them by an overflow of water, apparently the result of local rainfall rather than of a general flood of water. This mud deposit has not been found to contain anything except the hardened mud itself, all the animal bones, implements, and pottery having been found on the floor of the pits.

After this flooding had taken place, which either drove out the occupants, or found the pits already deserted, they became covered by a deposit of surface soil from 15 to 18 inches in thickness. This soil, which equally covers the boulder clay and the pits, has never been in any way broken through, or otherwise disturbed in the spaces occupied by the pits, and, therefore, they must have been dug out and inhabited before the mud was carried into them, and the surface soil had later on accumulated over them. In this surface soil the ordinary implements of flint, and other stones characteristic of the Neolithic Age, and in some measure those of bronze, have been found in fair abundance. On the other hand, neither on the floors of the pits nor in the filling in has any example of the highly-finished implements of the Stone Age, or any portion of one of them, come to light.

This is a very important fact in connection with the time when the pits were occupied. That time can only, however, be considered as it has a relation to other periods of occupation in the Stone Age of this district, and it must not be attempted to give it a place in chronological time. If the occupation of the pits is considered with reference to other and later periods, when the country was inhabited by early man, it is evident that the people, who had their abode in them, must have been living there a long time before the neolithic men of the polished Stone Age were settled in the district.

We cannot say how long the pit people had lived in these dwellings. First the pits became filled in with a deposit, the nature of which would require very many years for its accumulation. After that, a surface soil had grown over them, of a depth such as could only have taken place by the gradual growth of a long period. Upon this surface the ordinary neolithic man lived, and within its soil are found the imple-

ments he had used, and lost. Who can say how long before his days were those during which his possible ancestor lived his life, endowed with the poorest means of existence? That time must have been very remote, and the interval between the occupation of the pit-dwellers and the people who used polished stone implements very great.

W. GREENWELL.

The above are Canon Greenwell's views on this subject, and as I was present with Professor Boyd Dawkins at the opening of the Rolston pit I am able to supplement them with details from my own observation.

The first pit discovered by Mr. Morfitt came to light in the process of digging the foundations for a new house, and four more were found as the work proceeded. In all these cases the surface soil was disturbed, and got worked in with that of the pits, so that it was impossible afterwards to see the exact position of the layers. A later discovery on the cliff face, where the ground is perpetually falling into the sea, brought to light a pit in section, a drawing of which is given in Fig. 1.

This pit is on the property of Colonel Haworth-Booth, at Rolston, who kindly gave permission to have it examined, and I visited it with Professor Boyd Dawkins, while Mr. Morfitt was engaged in digging it out. It was at once seen that a surface soil of about 18 inches completely unbroken lay over the pit. It was of a colour and texture different from the black mud which filled in the pit and the boulder clay in which the pit had been excavated.

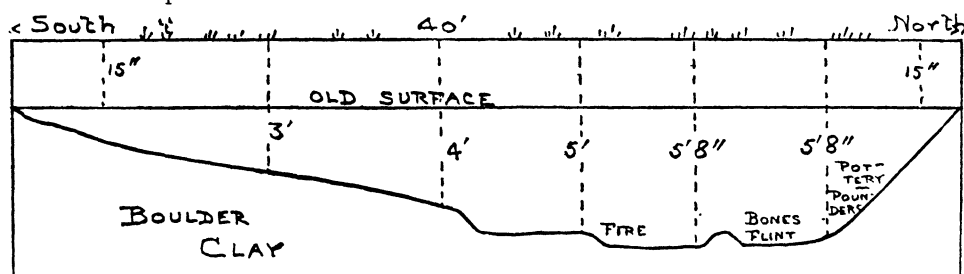


FIG. 1.—SECTION OF PIT-DWELLING.

Mr. Morfitt has opened about thirty pits, and in all these cases there was no indication, by mound or depression, of the existence of a pit below. Sometimes the vegetation appears more rank, and a group of thistles or a darker patch in a cornfield may serve to show that there is a pit on the spot, but these are the only guides.

It was fortunate that Professor Boyd Dawkins was present to confirm the unbroken position of the surface soil, as on this point the principal evidence of the antiquity of the pits depends.

In every case the pits are found to be filled with a black mud, which bakes like clay in summer, and can only be dug out during the winter-time. Whether this mud is due to some great overflow of waters or is simply the working in of rains has not been decided.

In the present case of the Rolston pit we found the depth of the pit to be about 5 feet 9 inches in the centre. The breadth could not be definitely ascertained, as some of the side had fallen down upon the shore, but Mr. Morfitt thought it must have been about 9 feet. The length was 40 feet, and it had an entrance from the south sloping down gradually to the centre, where the fireplace was *in situ*, composed of rough stones. Near by was a broken cooking pot, which Mr. Morfitt has restored, while broken bones, heavy stone pounders, and rude knives, and flint flakes lay scattered around. On the floor were the remains of a peaty substance, which might have been composed of grass and rushes, suggestive of a couch, while near the fire lay the bones of a dog curled round as if it had gone to sleep in that position.

Professor Boyd Dawkins examined the bones taken from this pit, and they proved to be those of *Bos longifrons*, and comprised horn cores, teeth, and broken bones of young and old animals, some of which were partially burnt. There were also bones of horse, sheep or goat, domestic hog, and red deer.

In one of the pits the atlas vertebra of a whale was discovered, and this is the only marine relic that has come to light. This seems to show that when these pits were inhabited they were a long way from the sea. The cliff erosion which is taking place in this part of Holderness is too well known for me to dilate upon it. Colonel Haworth-Booth, whose property is bounded by the coast line, told me he calculated that he lost two acres or more every year by the spoliation of the sea.

Professor Boyd Dawkins describes this whale vertebra as "partially burnt while fresh, with square holes cut in the posterior articulation. Its use is uncertain, but it may have been a stool, like the vertebra of the *Megatherium* found in the Pampas of the River Plate, and used by the Guachos for a seat in their tents."

Among other things found in the pits is a red pigment, made apparently from burnt clay. The cooking-pots are of various sizes and shapes, but one very small cup, holding exactly a teaspoonful, is suggestive of the nursery (Fig. 2).

The exceedingly primitive condition of the people who inhabited these pits is shown more especially by their flint implements, which, with the exception of some of the scrapers, are hardly recognisable as tools. When compared with the tools found upon the surface soil above the pits the contrast is very great, and it is impossible to suppose the inhabitants of the pits existed

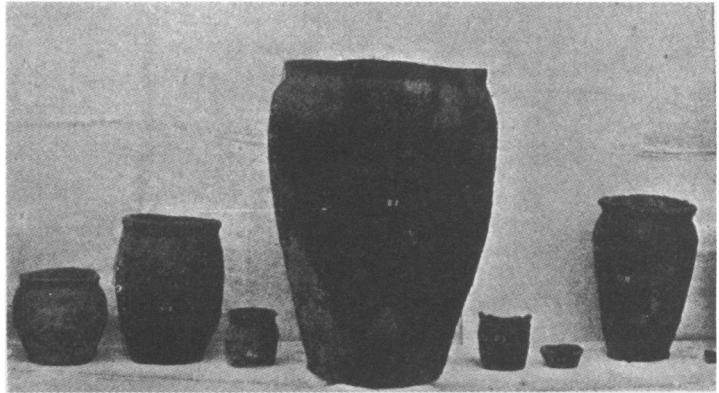


FIG. 2.—POTTERY FROM PIT-DWELLING.

at the same time as the race who dwelt upon the surface of the land. We may therefore reasonably conclude that after the inhabitants of the pits had vanished, and after the filling in of the pits with mud, and on the top of this a deposition of surface soil from 15 to 18 inches, a later people settled on the soil, and made the tools now scattered on the surface. This must throw back the date of the pit-dwellers to a very remote period of time.

Canon Greenwell remarks upon this absence of any superior class of implements, "that if the people had been living at the same time with others of superior knowledge in flint manufacture, some of the latter implements, or portions of them, would have been found in the pits, as in the case of the kitchen middens in other localities."

Canon Greenwell also testifies to the excellent work done by Mr. Morfitt, who for more than twenty years has steadily pursued the investigation of these pits, and carefully collected the objects which are now exhibited for the first time. Only those who, like myself, have been present at the excavations know what laborious work it is, often in the teeth of furious gales in winter on the north-east coast, to dig through very hard mud, every bit of which has to be examined with the fingers numbed with cold. No work can be done in the summer time as the mud and boulder clay are baked as hard

as brick. It is true the objects which are found are not valuable in themselves, but their extreme rudeness and primitive character give them a claim to be ranked among the earliest records of neolithic man in his domestic life which have yet been discovered.

R. A. GATTY.

In the discussion which followed the reading of the paper, Professor Boyd Dawkins thanked Mr. Gatty for bringing this interesting discovery of Mr. Morfitt's before the Institute, and said that he could testify to the accuracy of the details and to the energy and enthusiasm of the discoverer. The find is clearly proved to be of early Neolithic age from the geological section. The inhabited site—now on the edge of the cliffs at Rolston—was a camping ground in a hollow in the boulder clay, that had been filled up by a subaërial wash up to the base of another subaërial accumulation that covers the whole district like a mantle. In this are neolithic implements of the usual higher types of the Yorkshire Wolds. The boulder clay was being formed in this area while the south of England was inhabited by the palæolithic hunters. The date of the find is therefore clearly shown by the section, without reference to the further evidence of the remains of the short-horned ox (*Bos longifrons*), introduced into Europe by the neolithic peoples.

### Africa: White Nile.

Cole.

**African Rain-making Chiefs, the Gondokoro District, White Nile, 49**

**Uganda.** By W. E. R. Cole, Assistant District Commissioner.

The district administered from Gondokoro is the most northern of the three which comprise the Nile Province of Uganda. This district was formerly part of the Equatorial Province of Egypt, and is separated on the north from the Sudan by the 5th parallel of latitude, on the west from the Lado enclave of the Congo by the White Nile, while on the south it reaches to the Assua river, and to the east to the distant and unadministered tracts around the northern shores of Lake Rudolph.

The chief tribes who look to the District Commissioner at Gondokoro for protection are the Bari, Luluba, Lokoïya, and the Latuka.

The Bari were particularly troublesome to Sir Samuel Baker in 1870, but are now a peaceable and tax-paying community. Most of the chiefs of these tribes are rain-makers, and enjoy a popularity in proportion to their powers to give rain to their people at the proper season. In one instance I came across a rain-maker who was not a chief but just a "drawer of water" for his people. This arrangement did not answer very happily, for there was always friction, and the chief, who himself had proved a failure as a rain-maker, was very jealous of the power exercised by his man.

Rain-making chiefs always build their villages on the slopes of a fairly high hill, as they no doubt know that the hills attract the clouds, and that they are, therefore, fairly safe in their weather forecasts. The huts are conical in shape, and each is usually surrounded by a bamboo fence, though in many cases the whole village is enclosed by one stockade.

Bombo, the paramount chief of the Bari, is perhaps the best known of the rain-makers, and this man produces water from the clouds not only for his own people but frequently for people in the Sudan, 30 or 40 miles away, and receives altogether quite a handsome return in kind.

Rualla, chief of the Luluba, is a warm supporter of the Government, and a most friendly old man who lives on a beautiful table-land at the top of a range of hills. He has a great reputation as a rain-maker.

Lummelun, the Lokoïya chief, who gives much trouble, and is a great raider and the fear of the countryside, is another of these magicians, though a more insignificant and stupid man it would be hard to find.

Lukuwyero, the Latuka chief, whose warriors wear the celebrated helmets and