FURTHER EXPLORATION IN THE DOWKERBOTTOM CAVES, IN CRAVEN. BY JAMES FARRER, ESQ., M.P., OF INGLEBOROUGH HOUSE; WITH REMARKS BY HENRY DENNY, A.L.S., &C.

Being desirous of making some further explorations in the Dowkerbottom Cave, or rather Caves—for, in its present state, it is divided into two chambers, one being to the east and the other to the west—I caused fresh excavations to be made in these two compartments during the month of October, 1863; and as the results of these explorations were productive of some objects of more than ordinary interest, I shall briefly enumerate the specimens so obtained, as also the superposition of the deposits passed through. On the surface of the western chamber was a deposit of 14 inches of rubbish, composed of broken stones, earth, and charcoal, in which were found fragments of two kinds of pottery—one, of a coarse black earth, and very rude manufacture; the other, an apparently inferior Samian ware, and a bone needle, about 3 inches in length. Below this deposit was a bed of pure clay, 18 inches in thickness, at the bottom of which, and upon a stratum of very soft stalagmite 3 feet 2 inches thick, were the antlers and bones of the red deer, portions of skulls and bones of the short-horned ox, roebuck, wild boar, primitive dog, fox, &c.: this layer of soft stalagmite rested upon a bed of excessively hard stalagmite 8 inches in thickness, upon which lay the nearly perfect skeleton of a very fine specimen of the gigantic red deer, with antlers of great beauty. An excavation was next made to the depth of 6 feet, passing through clay mixed with stones, gravel, and sand, and subsequently penetrating, by a boring-rod, to a further depth of 6 feet of soft unmixed clay, without reaching any bottom.

The floor of the east chamber was next examined, and the deposit of 18 inches of rubbish yielded a large brass coin of
GROUND PLAN & SECTION OF
DOWKERBOTTOM CAVE,
WITH DIMENSIONS OF EACH ROOM.

J.W. PULLEYN, LEEDS.
Antoninus Pius.—[J. F.]* This coin, singularly enough, is one of the rare types commemorating the conquest of Britain, and minted during the fourth consulate of the Emperor, of which the following is a description:—Obverse, “ANTONINVS. PIVS. AVG. P.P.T.R.P. COS. III. (Antonius. pvs. Augustus. pater. patriae. tribunitia. potestas. consul. tertiam.)” A radiated head of the Emperor to the right. Reverse, “BRITANNIA. COS. IIII. (Britannia consul quartum):” a female figure seated on a rock in an attitude of dejection, before her a large oval shield and a military standard.—[H. D.] (See Plate.)

This type is of considerable interest on two points. First, that while Antoninus struck several coins commemorating different periods of the subjugation of Britain, this is thought, from the desponding attitude of the emblematical female figure, to denote that the conquest was then ended. Secondly, as the only other coins found on previous explorations are of Trajan, A.D. 98, they may point to a probable period when the Dowkerbottom Caves were first inhabited; while that of Antoninus, A.D. 131, to the last occupancy, which was, perhaps, during the second century, unless we suppose that the coins of the latter continued in circulation among the Brigantine or Romano-British inhabitants of the Yorkshire hills during the many changing and turbulent years which succeeded.—[H. D.]

There was also a fragment of an iron hook and ring, obviously of comparatively modern date, which had probably fallen in accidentally; but no pottery occurred. The hard stalagmite was then dug through down to the rock, four yards and a half thick! At about 18 inches below the surface, a small broken flint implement was found, which had not only been used, as evidenced by its edge, but also broken at a remote period. The flint was stained or discoloured with what a numismatist

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* The letters “J. F.” distinguish Mr. Farrer’s communication: “H. D.”, Mr. Denny’s.
stalagmite, and at the bottom of 18 inches of pure clay, and not mixed with the clay. There is, again, another change at hand, and 18 inches of pure clay covers all the animal remains. Another period of quiet ensues, the roof of the cave falls in where it approaches near the surface of the ground, the cavern is divided, the entrances being partially blocked up by the fallen débris, and the two caves, thus formed, are discovered and inhabited by human beings whose ornaments, implements, and coins are found in the most recent deposit of 14 inches of clay, earth, charcoal, and rubbish, which lies immediately upon the unmixed clay. In the east chamber the deposit of rubbish, charcoal, &c., was 18 inches thick, and, resting on stalagmite, was consequently drier; and this part of the cave may have been inhabited for a longer period of time than those parts where clay formed the basement, which would naturally attract more moisture. —[J. F.]

In an account of an exploration of the Craven Caves read at a former meeting of this Society, I hazarded a conjectural period when they were occupied by human beings, which was derived from the relics found therein, and it is a remarkable coincidence that a series of specimens, almost identical in kind, were exhumed from a Pict’s house at Kettleburn, in the county of Caithness, by Mr. Rhind; from which circumstance, probably, a nearer approximation as to date may be arrived at, as it is utterly impossible that two localities, so far distant, would contain articles so precisely similar for domestic or ornamental purposes, or so similar an assemblage of animal remains, if not occupied at one and the same period. Of the specimens found in both Kettleburn and Craven, I particularly allude to the following:—

The bone comb of that peculiar hand-shaped form and rude workmanship.

Whetstone; perforated disks of sandstone.

Pieces of bone, with an oblong hole drilled through the
end, as if to receive some small implement, of which it was to be the haft.

Fragments of coarse pottery.
The upper ends of the tibia and humerus, and parietal bones of the human subject.
Bones and teeth of the horse.
Horns and bones of a noble species of deer, ox, goat, sheep, roebuck.
Skulls and tusks of wild boar.
Remains of dogs—some of large size, and others of small size. The large examples in Craven are, undoubtedly, wolves; the smaller, a primæval dog.

Now, as the Craven Caves, in addition to all the above primitive specimens, contain also coins, fibula, and other relics of unmistakable Roman construction, the question arises, Have these caves been inhabited by two successive races of men—the original settlers and the Romano-British; or are they relics of one race only, who, while still retaining many of their primitive implements, had also obtained some decorative ornaments, money, and other more civilized articles from the conquering Roman legions which spread over the north of England, and who would, doubtless, during their sojourn have occasional intercourse with the now fugitive, though primæval, colonists of Britain? This latter supposition will probably apply to the objects occurring in the superficial deposit of charcoal and rubbish; but whether it will equally apply to the few scattered human bones which have occurred deeper down, mixed with those of quadrupeds, in both Kettleburn and Dowkerbottom, is doubtful, as these imply an earlier interment, and would rather refer to the first supposition, but will not, even then, account for the fractured condition of the bones, which, however, is supposed, by some writers, to indicate that they belonged to a barbarous race, who were cannibals, and that these bones are the refuse of their orgies, as Diodorus Siculus, Strabo, and
St. Jerome describe many of the Celtic nations, in the first century, as being anthropophagi. Be this, however, as it may, from the depth at which the various fractured bones have been found—in one instance even upon the limestone floor of the cave—their interment must date much earlier than those just beneath the deposit of charcoal and rubbish on the surface, which clearly indicate a residence of considerable duration long subsequent to the former, and consequently point, if not to two distinct races of men, at least to two separate and distant periods of occupancy. Still a proof may appear wanting that the bones at the greatest depth indicate residence at all, but may have been washed down to the lowest part of the cave. The subsequent deposition, however, of hard and soft stalagmite and clay is, in my opinion, of itself sufficient evidence of the improbability of the above supposition; and I have this morning (February 18th, 1864) received the results of another exploration, carried on during the present week, which is of the most important and conclusive character, and supplies incontrovertible evidence of the correctness of the supposition as to distinct and distant residence. In an exploration in the west chamber, about four yards from the spot where the skeleton of the red deer was discovered on the former occasion, and on the same level, a slight hollow or grave was disclosed, which had been dug in the bed of hard stalagmite, measuring 1 foot long, 8 inches in width, and 1¼ inches in depth, in which were the remains of the skeleton of a child of probably 2½ years of age. It was in a very imperfect and fragile condition, arising, doubtless, from the immature condition of the bones; the teeth are good, but the elementary portions of the skull were all disunited, and, from the adhesive nature of the bones when applied to the tongue, the animal matter has been nearly all destroyed. The human bones were covered by a deposit of softer stalagmite, 2 feet 6 inches in thickness, in which occurred several shells of the helix nemoralis, in a perfect
condition, but much faded in colour; after which again occurred jaws of the primitive dog and fox; teeth of the ox and deer; clay, and fragments of pottery and charcoal. But as a doubt might still be attached to the most important part of the discovery—that of the human remains—as it might be inferred that their position was not conclusive of an earlier residence, but might have been interred at that depth for security, by its Romano-British parents, when occupying the upper and last deposit, I made particular inquiry of Mr. Hodgson, of Settle (an experienced and intelligent explorer of the caves, and who superintended Mr. Farrer's excavations), as to whether there was any indication whatever of a mixture of deposits or materials at this precise spot, which must have occurred if the grave had been sunk through the upper beds of clay, rubbish, and charcoal, and he distinctly says, "The softer stalagmite had never been stirred or moved since its formation,"—a point upon which a mistake could not easily be made, as the colour of the stalagmite, I know from experience, is uniform and pale.

Finally, the occurrence of a small portion only of one of the horns of the megaceros in the west chamber of the cave is somewhat strange, for if the animal had been washed in, or carried there as food, some of the bones would have been preserved also, they being more durable than the antlers; yet the former have never been found in the north of England, which may perhaps be accounted for from the fact that this fine ruminant does not appear to have ever occurred in any number in this portion of Britain, the only other indication of its former residence in Yorkshire being that of the horns found at Cowthorpe, near Wetherby, in 1744: I therefore think it probable that a straggler may have died from some cause in the neighbourhood, and that a portion of one of its antlers had been torn off and carried into the cave by some of the carnivorous inhabitants of the district to devour at leisure, which we know at particular seasons would be comparatively
easy to fracture and masticate; while, on the other hand, if it is conjectured to have been a *shed horn* its hardness under such circumstances would render it a very difficult operation for either wolf or dog to accomplish.

Connected with the above occurrence of this animal, there is another point of some interest, which is, that in Ireland, the great centre for this species of deer, their osseous remains are invariably found either in peat bogs or in crannoges, where in the one case they have probably been submerged, and in the other are the refuse of the lake dwellers; while in other localities, both in England and on the Continent, their bones have in almost every instance been found in caves, as at Kirkdale, Kent’s Hole, Brixham, &c. How then are we to account for the entire absence of any remains of the megaceros in the limestone caverns of Ireland, into which we might equally suppose some of the individuals would have retired, or been washed by any sudden and local catastrophe, or been carried piecemeal by the large carnivorous animals which are known to have inhabited Ireland at the same period?

The two chambers of this cave extend conjointly 390 feet in length, and as the entrance to another fresh cave has been recently discovered, additional interesting and important results may be expected, it being Mr. Farrer’s intention to make an examination of the new cave. *(See Ground Plan and Section prepared for and contributed by Mr. Farrer.)*

The whole of the bones, &c., disinterred during these excavations have been presented to the Museum of the Leeds Philosophical and Literary Society by Mr. Farrer.—[H. D.]