Ansd. Oct 5/91

(L716)

Lew Trenchard
N. Devon
Sept 21/91

Dear Sir

I venture to send you some rough pencils & sketches I have made of some remains of a settlement on Trewortha Marsh on the Cornish moors under Kilmar. I have been digging there, & the results utterly puzzle me, and they do Canon Greenwell as well to whom I have sent them. I have not as yet completely exhumed the largest hut E., but have very nearly.

There is a hole I suppose we must consider it a council hole with stone benches down the sides & a judge's seat at the head after Benches on the N. side. This hole has no Doors of fire in it; the centre of the chamber is scooped out.

The second hole, of about the same length is divided into two compartments on the S. side by granite screens. Similar granite screens probably existed existed on the N. side, but that I have not as not thoroughly explored, & is very much mutilated & taken away. In the centre of each of these compartments is a hearth on the floor. The larger (Eastern) hearth was simply on the ground. But like the other there is an upright stone like a headstone in a churchyard

and the hearth is paved with granite slabs so burnt as to be split & to crumble. We raised these & found crockery under them. Now this is just like the arrangement of living in Sphinx huts, each compartment served a family, & this chamber accordingly accommodated 4 families. There are other chambers as yet unexplored. A singular feature is a small opening like M. 1.3 m wide & about 2 ft high. It cannot not have been a door, it is too narrow. It may have served as drought hole to let in wind for the fire. No doors are over 2 ft 3 in high, so that entrance to the huts was effected by crawling. The walls were originally 5 ft high, and we have of a window remains any where.

We found at the place where there is something of the nature of a granite slab what I suppose to be the midden. From 2.6 to 3 ft under found on the virgin surface of the land was a layer an inch thick of wood ash & crockery, spread over a surface (crushed) of abt 6 ft but may extend further. We found there a polished flint axe or celt and a small wheel of slate also several broken whetstones. The crockery appears turned on the wheel, is red sometimes with black inside, & looks mediaeval. We found an iron staple as well.

One hut has a square chimney like structure made of with no opening laterally. Near at hand are masses of burnt stones, small, and I have a suspicion that these stones may have been heated & put into this square box, to serve as oven. Just in front of the huts we have found ovens, one formed in between fashion, another slabbed over all of granite, no traces of "clean" ovens.

There are numerous cairns & barrows near, we opened the kistvaen success one however had a kist of granite upright stones & under the floor of the kist a layer of clay, & under the clay a covered, & under the covered a hollow scooped out in the virgin soil, & ashes in it. No crocks or flints. The other cairns we did not thoroughly examine, broken back by rain, but cut trenches into the centre & found nothing.

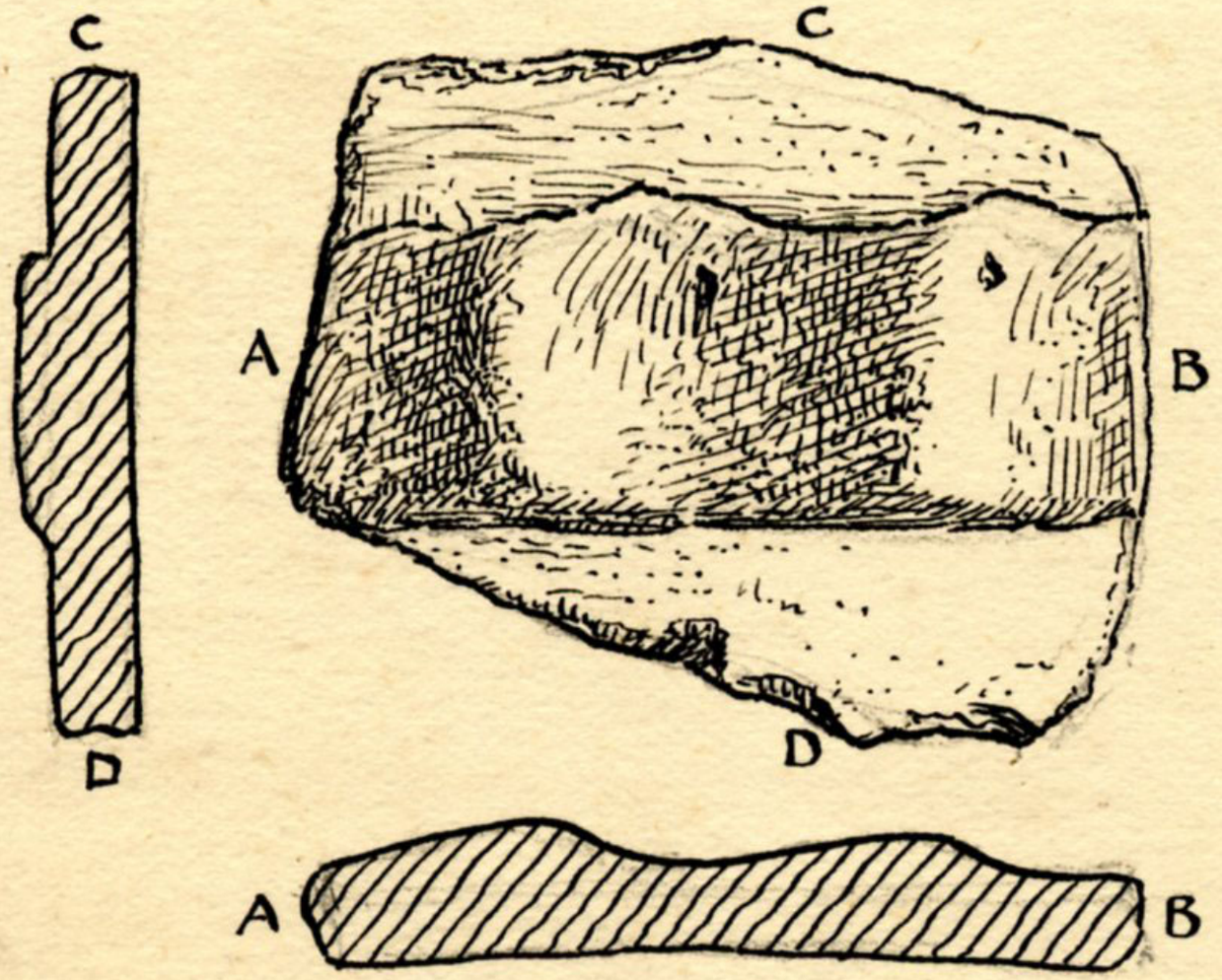
On the opposite side of Trewartha marsh are the remains of another settlement but the character of the ruins is quite distinct, a cairn of slyab. Edw VI & Mary have been found there. Also at the head of the marsh is a third settlement where the huts are mostly hut-hiers, but not all, mixed with quadrangular huts, and one consists of a circular chamber with a gallery that is quadrangular.

I wish you could be induced to come & search some of the Cornish barrows & cairns. They are practically unexplored & some of great size. Also some of the settlements ought to be completely ransacked that their date might be determined approximately.

My own impression of the settlement I have been searching, is that it belongs to the British-Roman period, but that the huts were occupied later, even tho' the Saxon Medieval period. But further diggings must be made before any definite conclusion can be arrived at. The council chamber is a perplexing feature.

Yours very

S. Baring Gould



Fragment of ornamental pottery from Trewortha. Rev. Baring Gould.
Full size.