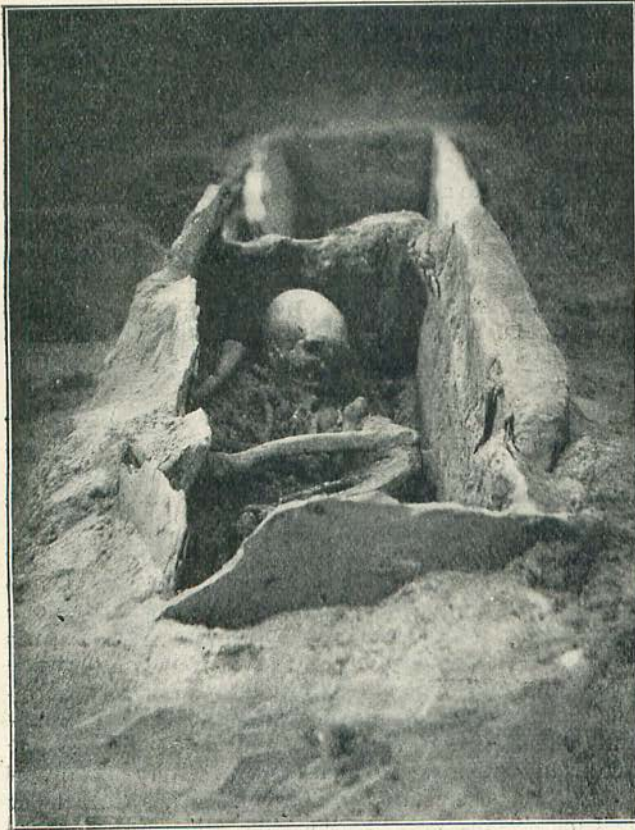


Things and other Things

An Ancient Cornish Burial-ground

THE accidental discovery, which took place a couple of years ago, of a burial-ground in Cornwall dating from a period before the dawn of history, suggests many questions of absorbing interest which cannot be answered with certainty. It is situated at Harlyn Bay on the beautiful but iron-bound coast of North Cornwall, where once the wreckers plied their ghastly trade, and now the neighbouring lighthouse of Trevoze warns and welcomes the travellers from America to Old England. A new museum has lately been erected on the site, and this summer the cemetery has been visited by large numbers of tourists.



(Alex. Old, photographer, Padstow)

Stone cist with skeleton in the prehistoric burial-ground at Harlyn Bay

The district itself is evidently rich in antiquities, for many years ago a valuable gold ornament of crescent form was found at Harlyn, the intrinsic worth of the gold being £50, and it was purchased by the King, he then being Duke of Cornwall as well as Prince of Wales, and presented to the Truro Museum.

When the presence of skeletons was revealed in the sand at Harlyn, the owner of the ground brought the matter before the notice of experts, and a systematic exploration was undertaken by a committee representing the Society of Antiquaries, and the Antiquarian Societies in Devon and Cornwall. The Rev. W. Iago, one of the most eminent authorities on these subjects in the West of England, brought his deep store of experience to bear upon this spot. Lovers of the Rev. S. Baring-Gould's novels might have seen him actively employed in the work of investigation.

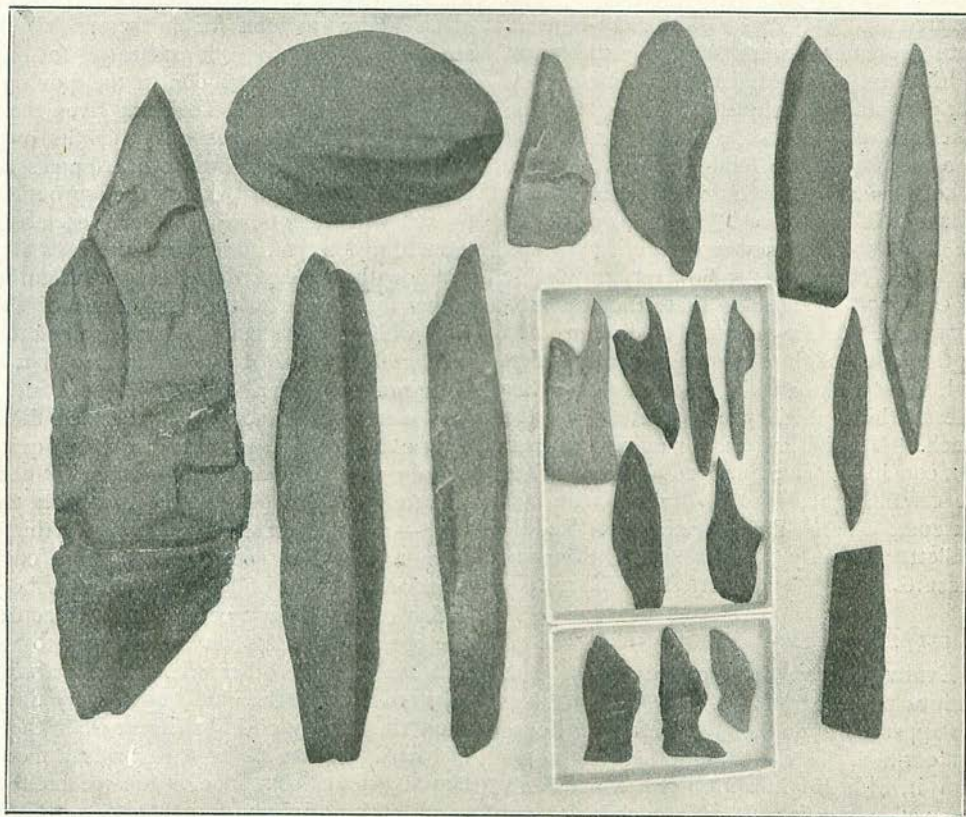
The preliminary task proved, indeed, no child's play, for two thousand tons of earth were removed from one part of the ground alone, before the actual exploration began, as the fine sand which blows up from the sea when the storms rage and toss part of one man's farm on to another's land, had completely covered the cemetery to a depth of 12 to 15 feet, a brown hill being displayed beneath. Here a number of cists, or coffins, formed of slabs of slate were found, containing skeletons in a marvellous state of preservation, and in two months as many as one hundred had been examined. The future may have further secrets to unfold, but already the burial-ground has yielded the largest number of stone cists, skeletons and their accompaniments, yet

discovered in any one spot in Britain. The skeleton shown in the photograph was lying in a large oval-built cist at the north end of the cemetery, numerous pieces of spar helping to form the sides, and had been remarkably preserved from time immemorial.

None of the graves were long enough

5 feet 9 inches in height. There were several lines of graves side by side, running north and south, the slate slabs composing them being of large size.

Even the little children were laid in the same position as the adults, the cists of tiny infants being discovered, one measuring



(Alex. Old, Photographer, Padstow)

Some of the slate implements found in the prehistoric burial-ground

to allow the skeletons to be extended at full length. The bodies were always in a crouching position, after the fashion of the Neolithic, or later Stone Age (probably 1500 to 1000 B.C.), lying usually on their left side with their heads turned to the north. The knees almost touched the chin, the hands were sometimes crossed, and the skull often resting on a round stone. They were evidently a strong though not very tall race, since none measured more than

only eight inches square, containing the bones of a newly born child, curled up as a kitten might go to sleep, every bone in position, but the skull no larger than a small-sized apple. Some cists were divided into partitions, the mother possibly occupying the larger and the child the smaller division.

The discovery in the sand of a number of flakes of slate, two or three inches in length and upwards, attracted considerable atten-

tion. The edges and points of many are very sharp, and the opinion is maintained that they are undoubtedly slate implements used as knives, scrapers, and needles for cutting up animals and sewing skins. These would be of real service, for a man recently told me how he had shaved himself with a flint razor made by the Indians, and declared that only twice did he cut himself. Slate implements were previously unknown, so that in this respect the cemetery at Harlyn would be unique. The fact that the flakes are said to be of a much harder kind of slate than that found in the district, if conclusively proved, would be greatly in favour of this theory. Certainly many of the flakes which I saw were very sharp and tapering. Other experts, however, are unable to convince themselves that they are anything more than fragments of slate, sharpened by the action of the sea and sand rather than by human workmanship, similar to countless pieces which might be collected on the beach. Tourist and visitor may form their own conclusions, for hundreds of these flakes are carefully preserved on trays in the new museum, where the owner, Mr. Reddie Mallett, zealously guards his antiquarian treasures.

ARTHUR KELLY.

Tame] Moor-hens

EVERY winter, for several years, with curious punctuality, at the first frost, there has appeared upon the lawn before the house a moor-hen. This year another has come with it, with brighter plumage, a red beak and yellow legs. It is a cock-bird, and our solitary visitor of the years before must, from her dingier wardrobe, have been a hen. We call them all moor-hens or water-hens, though the males should surely be called moor-cocks or water-cocks. But "moor-cock" is already the name of a grouse, and water-cock sounds so much like water-taps or turn-cock, or something to do with a cistern or pump that it would be absurd. So there is nothing for it but to say cock-moor-hen. But how folk would laugh if we called a she-grouse a hen-moor-cock! Yet there would be no difference between the two—except that one is right and the other is not.

One of these moor-hens we know to be the same visitor year after year, for there is one particular bush in the shrubbery from which it always comes walking out and to which, when alarmed, it always goes running back. It knows its way everywhere; sits on the wall when the dogs are being fed and, when they have done and are gone, comes down to look for the scraps which are always thrown out specially for it; hides behind the wych-elm in the poultry-yard when the chickens are being given their corn, but always comes out when its own piece of bread is thrown to it; forages in the "potato-house," where the sprouting potatoes, beetroots, and other vegetables have always a treat for it, and pretends not to know that the gardener sees it when he comes in, but sits in the very corner of the wall with its tail stuck up hard against the wall, and its head on the ground, so that it does not look like a bird at all. So it must be the same bird every year. Besides, there is one thing it does that makes it quite certain that it is, and that is this. Whenever it gets a large piece of bread on the lawn—it will take it away from anything, from a crowd of sparrows, or from a cock pheasant—it runs off, *not* into the shrubbery which is only a few feet off, but right across the open lawn at its very widest part to the shrubbery on the other side. And it always runs to exactly the same spot every time. Now this is very odd, for except when there is a hard frost we never see or hear a moor-hen anywhere. As soon as the ice melts it is off back to its pond or stream or ditch, but where it goes to we never know, yet it appears every year upon the lawn.

A moor-hen is a very clever bird at hiding. In the water, it will sit among weeds or in a shady place, or under a single dead leaf that happens to be on the water, with only its beak and nostrils out, and there it will stay as long as you stop to watch it. On land, it disappears in a most wonderful way, but the explanation is quite simple, though most people do not seem to be aware of it—and certainly no dogs know it. The moor-hen, as soon as it gets a chance, hops up into a bush or a hedge or, if there is one handy, a tree. Those who are looking for it hunt about