

Society of Antiquaries,
Burlington House, London. W



6th Nov^r - 1902

M. Cartailhac,

Dear Sir,

I am very much obliged to
you for your kind letter about
the subterranean chambers at
Palmella, &c. I now enclose
for your acceptance a little
account of the Waddon discovery
read at the British Association
at Belfast. I also send for
your acceptance a photograph
showing plan and section of
one of the Waddon chambers.
I shall be very glad if you will
kindly let me know if you think



them to be similar in age and
purpose.

For myself, I think there
can be no doubt at all on
the point of their being
neolithic, because we found
that flint implements of
neolithic character had been
made in the chambers
and shall be very glad
of indeed to hear from you
about this.

Yours very faithfully
George Clinch

Read at the British Association, Belfast, Sep^r: 1902

Section H.—Belfast, 1902.]



FBC. 185. 110)

On Some Ancient Subterranean Chambers recently discovered at Waddon, near Croydon. By GEORGE CLINCH, F.G.S.

Excavations for a sewer at Waddon House, near Croydon, in June 1902, revealed three subterranean chambers cut in a bed of Thanet sand, and partly occupied by sand which had fallen or been washed into them. In each chamber, however, a compact floor was found at about 15 feet below ground. The chambers were of beehive shape, about 7 feet high and 12 feet or less in diameter. Each had its independent entrance opening on the south-south-east side, but no other means of access till the domed roofs were cut open by the sewer trench.

Below the sand which covered the floors of the chambers several cores and chips of green-coated flints were found, with small fragments of imperfectly baked pottery, and larger fragments of Romano-British pottery. These green-coated flints occur at the base of the Thanet beds, whereas the chambers were excavated 10 to 15 feet above the base; the flints must therefore have been procured lower down, near Waddon Station (where there is an outcrop of the bed in which they occur), and brought up the hill to the chambers. This could not have been done by rain wash or similar agencies.

The small dimensions and the form and plan of the Waddon chambers, the absence of a perpendicular shaft, and their occurrence in sand, differentiate them entirely from the so-called 'dene-holes'; nor have they any feature in common with the 'flint-mines' of Grime's Graves and Cissbury, nor with the beehive-shaped cavities found in the Isle of Purbeck in 1883.¹

On the continent of Europe the most similar chambers are those at Palmella in Portugal, which M. Cartailhac ascribes to sepulchral purposes in the latter end of the Polished Stone Age.² In particular, the flat floors and hemispherical vault-like sides and roofs are common to both; and the thickening of the walls near the doorway—a provision, as M. Cartailhac notes at Palmella, against the special wear and rubbing to which these parts are subject—recurs in two at least of the Waddon chambers. Similar chambers have been noted in Brittany and elsewhere. The subterranean 'beehive tombs' at Mycenæ, also, are identical in plan, though different in dimensions and material.

Bones of *Bos taurus* (*longifrons*?), horse, dog, or wolf, &c., were found in the loose sand in the Waddon chambers, but no human bones; nevertheless, the evidence seems to show that the chambers were primarily sepulchral. Subsequent disturbance, however, is indicated by the later objects found in the loose sand, and by certain rude scratches—possibly mediæval—on the curved roof, variously interpreted by different observers as a bird, an animal, or a boat.

South-east and east of Waddon there are many hut circles which have been attributed to the neolithic age. They are circular in form, with marks of entrances on the east and south-east side, and exhibit general resemblance in dimensions and plan with the Waddon chambers. On the steep side of Croham Hurst (about three miles south-east of Waddon) traces of similar dwellings are recorded, and may very likely have influenced the design of the sepulchral chambers, as so often happens.

The Waddon discovery is therefore of some importance as evidence for the size, shape, plan, &c., of prehistoric dwellings; the vaulted roofs cut in hard sand reproducing, in general form, the interlaced boughs, benders, and wicker-work of the ordinary surface hut, and the lateral passage the doorway of the neolithic dwelling.

The same idea of interment within a house survived during the Bronze Age;

¹ *Proc. Geol. Assoc.* viii. 7 (July 1884) pp. 404–410.

² *Matériaux*, 3 Ser. II. (1885) pp. 1–18; reprinted in Cartailhac's *Les Ages pré-historiques de l'Espagne et du Portugal*.

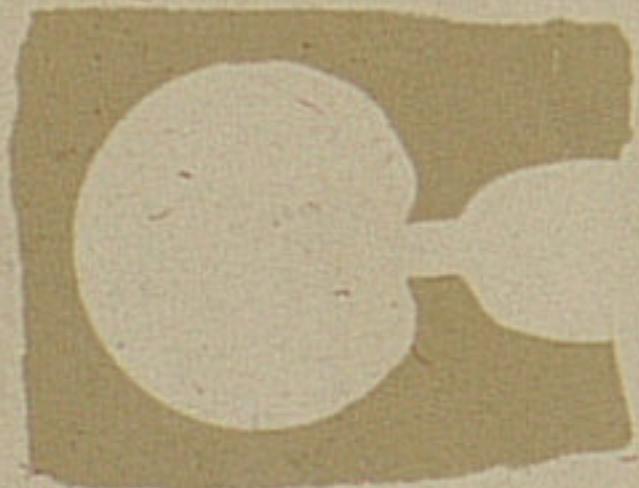
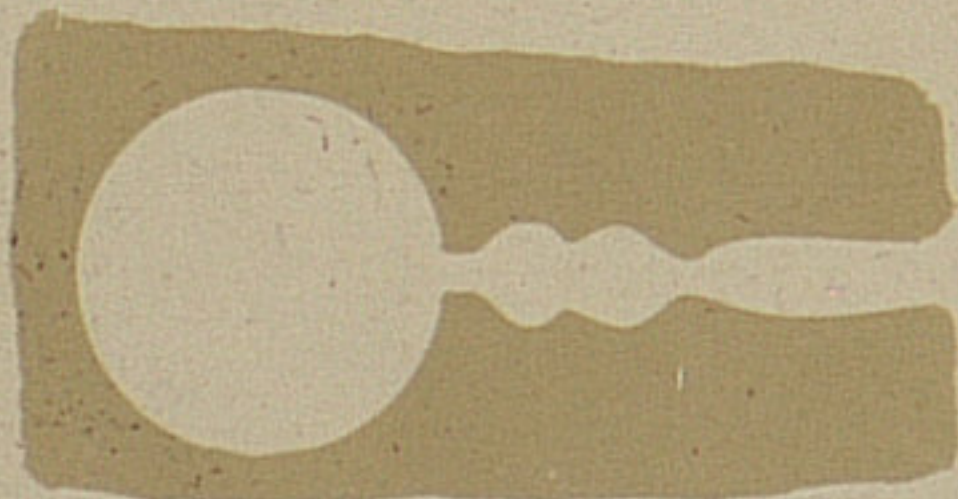
but when cremation came into vogue, a miniature copy of the Bronze Age house—the 'hut-urn'—was sufficient repository for the ashes.

The tradition of the circular neolithic hut was carried on in the Celtic beehive dwellings of Cornwall, Wales, Scotland, Ireland, and Gaul, and probably in the circular buildings of subsequent English architecture. The Bronze Age dwellings, on the other hand, which are reproduced in the 'hut-urns,' may be regarded as the prototypes of the square or angular forms of ecclesiastical and domestic architecture.

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PALMELLA (PORTUGAL)



WADDON

