

MEDIAEVAL FRAGMENTS FOUND AT BEBINGTON.

1 AND 2. PORTIONS OF WINDOW TRACERY. 3, 4, AND 5. WINDOW JAMBS. 6. DOOR JAMB, WITH BOLT SOCKET.
7. SPANDREL. 8. SILL OF TWO-LIGHT WINDOW.

LEAVES FROM AN ANTIQUARY'S
NOTE BOOK.

MEDIÆVAL REMAINS FOUND AT BEBINGTON.

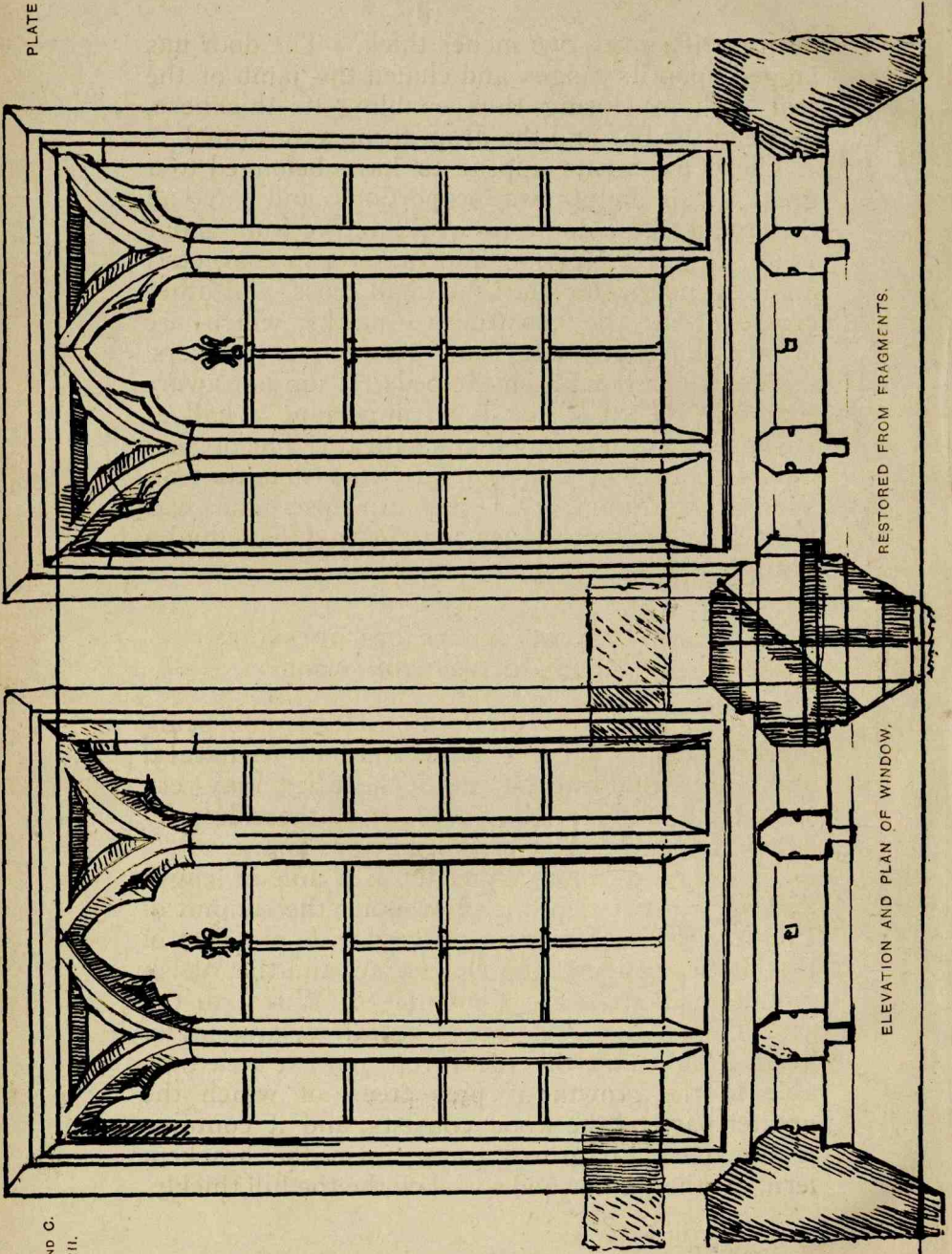
DURING the widening of the narrow road leading southwards from the centre of the village of Lower Bebington, which was effected in April and May, 1897, the boundary wall of the grounds of the Hall was set back about ten feet. The wall was of Storeton stone, and about two centuries old in some parts of its length. Below the wall was a stone foundation, and amongst its stones were found mediæval fragments of particular interest. These consisted of two pieces of bold and massive window tracery, almost uninjured, and a small fragment of a third piece; two large stones from the jambs of the same window, and two that had evidently formed the central pieces of this square-headed double window; a single stone from the jamb of a doorway, in which a portion of the socket of the sliding-bar of oak remained; another stone that had formed the sill of a two-light window, with a thick central mullion chamfered on the exterior and rabbeted for shutter on the inside, for it bore marks of having been strongly grated with a thick stanchion bar on the centre deeply set, and a smaller one on each side of it, the lights being only about a foot wide. The last stone had formed the spandrel of a small arch, flat on the soffit and slightly chamfered, it had had a hood mould with a square return joining the springing of the two arches, but this was mostly broken off. The two arches, between which this spandrel stood, are of different curves, one has been higher than the other, and as the spandrel is small, 18 inches high by 15

wide, it suggests that it has belonged to a sedilia with gradated seats.

It is possible, by careful measurement of the traceries and jambs, to reconstruct a double window of 10 feet in width, having a central pier, the tracery being square-headed. The most curious feature of this window has been that, although it was divided by two mullions into three compartments, only the central light is a full-sized one, with a complete trefoiled arch; the two side openings were half-lights, and their trefoil heads were half-arches, the crown of each half-arch butting against the jamb. That this was the arrangement is quite evident from the half-arch having its upright outer side cut in the tracery and rebated for glass. Fortunately the third small fragment of tracery is enough to show the corresponding half-light of the second coupled window, while the other two pieces give the complete head of the first. Another peculiarity is that the bed of the mullion, where it joined the tracery, was not flat, but curved almost half-an-inch to the centre, the tracery being hollowed to receive it, thus giving a joint not easily displaced.

The lower part of this window has had shutters, as indicated by the rebatings to fit them, while the upper part of the jambs is without this groove. Strong square saddle bars have been fixed across the lights, and the half-lights and the glass of the windows have been very heavily leaded. The jamb stones have been cut to show a fine joint at the faces, but within this a hollow has been dished out of the bed, leaving, however, a square space of flat stone towards the back, so that it could have both a fine joint and a good key of mortar.

The place of the bolt on the door jamb seems to show that the door was not a framed one, but of crossed planking, nailed together, as it has only



RESTORED FROM FRAGMENTS.

ELEVATION AND PLAN OF WINDOW.

been a trifle over two inches thick. The door has lagged upon its hinges and chafed the jamb of the rear arch in closing, thus enabling its thickness, between the bar and the drop, to be ascertained.

These fragments appear to have belonged to a great hall of important proportions, and have all the character of domestic work, dating from about 1340: they are very fine and massive in character, and bear as mason marks a small cross, and other crosses that are constructive marks, which are always differently cut from masons' or bankers' marks, which remain on the beds. I am not aware that any record exists of so important a hall at Bebington as these fragments indicate. The present hall is about 200 years old. It is possible that St. Werburgh's Abbey at Chester, in whose hands was the advowson from an early date, may have had a grange here.

BOUNDARY STONES AND TRACES OF ANCIENT
OCCUPATION IN PRENTON WOOD.

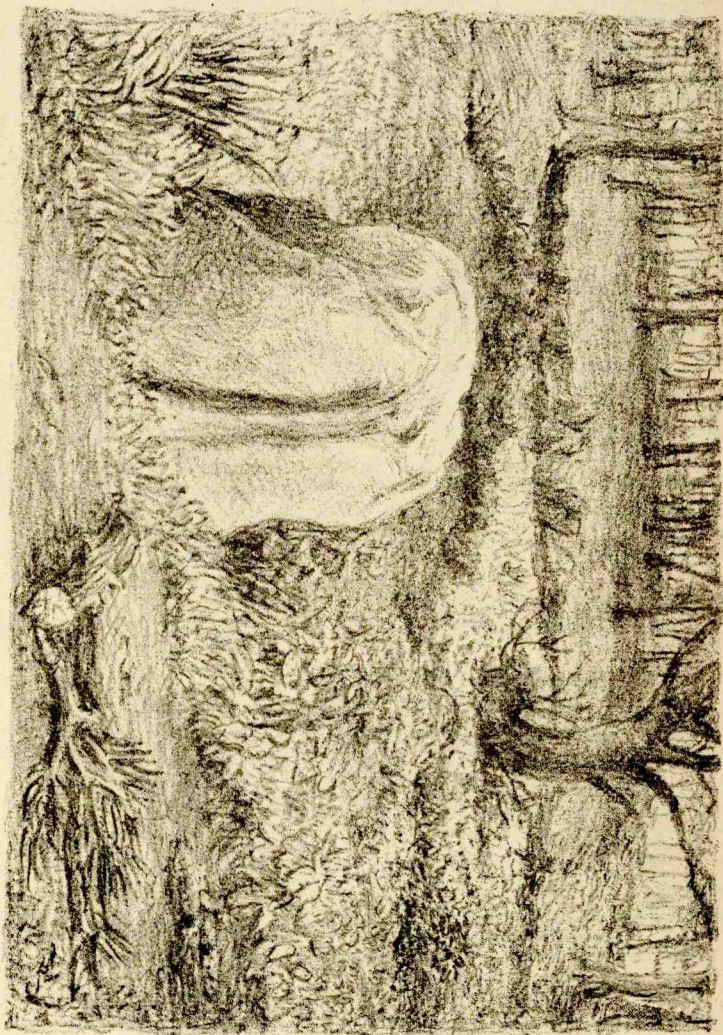
The beautiful wood on Prenton Hill is now being marked out for building land, and both its natural and antiquarian interest, and its beauties, may very soon be a thing of the past. It is, therefore, desirable to record them before they are lost.

The wood is about a quarter of a mile in length and the same in depth, and occupies the summit of Prenton Hill, commanding a very wide prospect of the Mersey estuary, the Dee valley, and the Welsh mountains, and nearly the whole of Wirral to the sea. The soil is rocky, with a shallow covering of sand, from which the rock crops out; it is favourable to the growth of pine trees, of which the greater part of the wood consists, and it contains many splendidly-grown trees; also the bracken, fern, heather, and wood sorrel clothe the hill thickly.

Near the middle of the wood is a spring, which seems to have been at some time formed artificially into a well basin. Across the wood, near its southern boundary, is a line of meare stones marking the limits of Storeton and Prenton. They are five in number. One has fallen and been displaced, another stands almost buried at the side of the road on the east of the wood, the first standing one from the east line of the wood is a plain unwrought stone, about 2 ft. 6 in. high, the fourth and fifth, which are on the ridge of the hill to the west, are, like the others, unwrought stones, without any trace of a metal tool upon them, but these two western stones are curiously grooved with irregularly-made vertical furrows, one such groove being on the north face of each, and two close together on the southern face. These grooves bear no tool marks, but seem to have been rubbed out with considerable labour with a harder stone, in one place the depth is between three and four inches. The faces of the stones themselves, though uneven, seem also to have been rubbed to bring them into a rude pyramidal shape.

I know of no tradition connected with these stones; their working alone suggests great antiquity. The grooves resemble those on the three great pillars, of Romano-British origin, called "The Devil's arrows," near Boroughbridge, and the examination of many of the stones among the British circles and maenhirs of North Wales have had their surfaces worked, although retaining much of their natural form.

The ancient surface of the hilltop has never been subjected to cultivation, and contains many shallow pits, apparently for digging stone, though some resemble British hut circles. A small flint weapon or two of rude make have been found on and near the hill. On the southern and western sides of the



MEARE STONES IN PRENTON WOOD.



hill beyond the wood the soil has three or four terrace-like undulations, which suggest the balks and lynes of ancient communal cultivation. Their area may be distinctly seen when the sun falls towards the west. These traces of antiquity, indefinite as they are, should at least draw the careful research of antiquaries to search this site for other indications of ancient habitation.

FLINT IMPLEMENTS FROM THE DRIFT IN WIRRAL.

The geological surface of Wirral shows in many places beds of fluvatile sands and gravel, with veins and beds of clay regularly stratified, and, in many cases, faulted, belonging to the latest geological periods, together with some earlier deposits of the same character, known by the name of "The Middle Sands." The drift in this district, unlike that of the southern counties, contains scarcely any examples of natural flint among its gravels; they are so rare that it is considered exceptional to find any specimen.

In one of the sand-pits worked in this formation I have, during the past few years, found a large number of flints and chippings, together with small deposits of carbonised wood and vegetable matter, apparently charcoal. Many of the flints and some other stones, such as greenstone, &c., have the appearance of having been wrought by human agency into rude implements, chiefly of small size, and these finds are restricted to a very small area, and are not generally distributed through the strata. Drawings of some of these are given of full size of the objects.

ANCIENT MILLS.

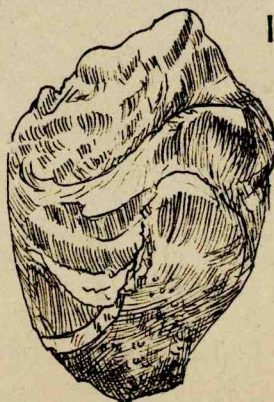
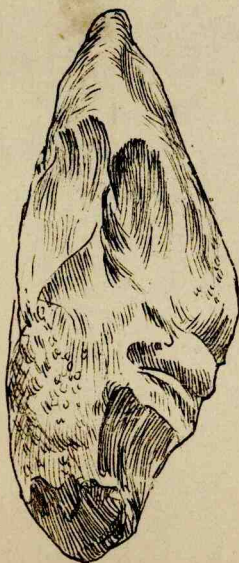
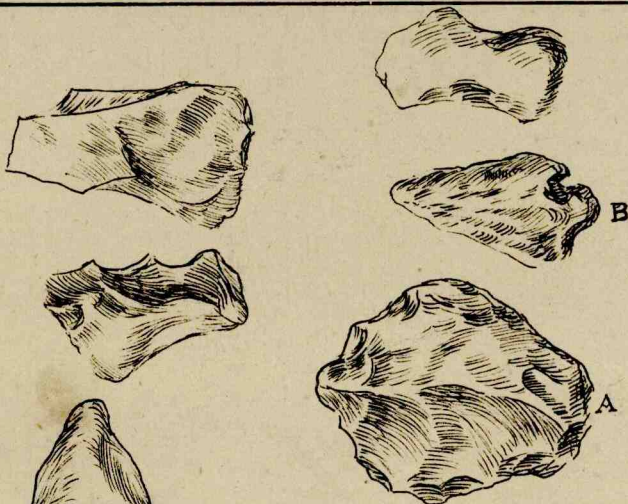
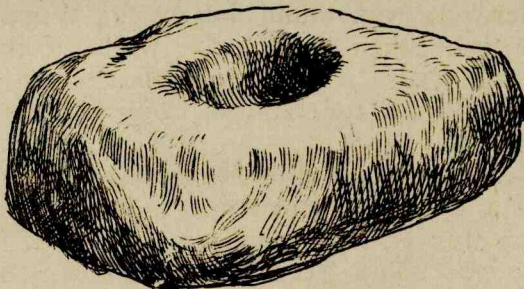
The last illustration shows two ancient grain crushers or mortars. The first is probably prehis-

toric, and is hollowed with a cavity in the centre and a shallower one at each end for holding the grain to be pounded. It is made of a hard whinstone boulder. It was found by me in Wirral. The second was taken out of the walls of the crypt at Birkenhead Priory. It is made out of a rough block of red gritstone, and is deeply hollowed with use.

The two examples are interesting, as showing to how late a date prehistoric methods survived in milling, as this form is found to date back to a prehistoric era. The Birkenhead example is no doubt monastic, more than one having been found in the ruins.

E. W. COX.





Stone
 Implements
 & Ancient
 Mills
 found in
 Wirral.

FULL SIZE

EWC 3 Aug 97