

Observations on the Topography of Sigwell.

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AS it was my particular function during these excavations (see last paper) to make the survey and take the measurements, a few words on the topography of Sigwell may be desirable.

Leaving Professor Rolleston (whose admirable description we have just heard) to superintend the digging, I set about examining the surroundings.

At the distance of a mile in a south-west direction we have Cadbury, a large British Camp, which, like most earthworks that are distinctly British, occupies with its entrenchments the whole brow of the hill on which it is situated. It is one of those positions which the Rev. F. Warre, in his excellent classification of the British Camps of this district,¹ describes as fortresses pure and simple, having no interior divisions, as distinguished from other works which, having a kind of keep, and sometimes one or two fortified interior partitions, he considers to be fortified towns, rather than positions of a purely military character. It is on a detached spur from the line of hills and which run north and south, forming the eastern boundary of the Yeo valley, and the source of many of its tributary streams.

To the west of Cadbury the ground is low for some distance. On the east the summit of the hills is occupied by table-land, the margin of which is defined by Hicknoll, Pen hill, Charwell, Sigwell, and Beacon hill; and between this range and Cadbury is the long eastward-stretching valley of Whitcombe, with its central stream rising in Sigwell, and joining another stream from the summit of Charwell, (and below Pen,) below Cadbury hill, from which point it flows westward by Sutton Montis, and ultimately into the Yeo. Paddock hill is another detached hill belonging to this range, and situated between Cadbury and Beacon hill.

(1). *Som. : Archaeol. : Proc. :* vol. v, p. 38.

The position of the twin barrow, first opened and described by Professor Rolleston on the table-land, is shewn on a sketch made by me, which it must be observed has no pretension to accurate detail, but is simply an enlargement from the ordnance 1 inch map. Past this tumulus an ancient British roadway runs northward, and, turning to the west, descends the hill by the steep ravine between the round barrow, opened afterwards, and Sigwell; and then, running along the north-east of Whitcombe valley, below the hill and beneath Charwell, takes the direction of South Cadbury. My attention was first directed to the little spur of Sigwell, between the two steep ravines which unite at the springs, from which Sigwell derives its name.

This spur, it soon appeared evident, had been converted into a camp by means of a ditch, about 60 feet wide, uniting the two ravines. The artificial character of this ditch is shown by its direction, forming with the two ravines the base of an equilateral triangle, and therefore being a position in which it would be impossible that it could have been excavated by water flowing down the ravines from the high ground. The rampart, if it ever had one, has been destroyed, but it is possible the earth from the ditch may have been used to form an interior mound. It would appear that the ditch, as at first drawn, formed too oblique an angle with the northern ravine, and that, in order to prevent the position from being taken in reverse by missiles from the high ground on the opposite side, the ditch was afterwards thrown back on that side. This, at least, appears to me the best way of accounting for a mound composed of undisturbed soil, which has been left in the ditch on the line of the old escarp, and another smaller ditch cut at the back of it; the structure, however, is peculiar, and may bear different interpretations.

The ditch throughout its length is shallower than the two ravines which form the north and south defences of the triangular interspace, but, as the soil is yielding, it is probable that the ravines may have deepened considerably since the place was used for defence, and the enclosed space has probably, by the

widening of the ravines at their summit, been much reduced, whereas the ditch, not being liable to denudation by water, has retained its original depth, or filled in by wash of sand from both sides.

The interior of the camp is commanded, at the short bow-shot range of about 120 feet, by the summit of the tumulus Sigwell III. I assume, therefore, that it is unlikely that the defenders of the place should have allowed such an erection to be made outside their camp at the time it was occupied, and, as we have proved by excavation that the tumulus belongs to the Bronze Age, it is a reasonable conjecture that the camp was abandoned at some time previous to the termination of the Bronze period.

This is confirmed by finding an unusual number of flint flakes and chips in the interior of this camp. I say unusual, because a considerable portion of the neighbouring ploughed land was searched by the whole party without finding such an accumulation of flakes in any other spot. So abundant were they that we should have no hesitation in pronouncing such an accumulation of chips as marking the site of a small flint implement factory, wherever it might be found.

This evidence of the antiquity of the camp must be taken for what it is worth. In my judgment, and what is of greater value, in the judgment of Professor Rolleston and three other gentlemen by whom we were accompanied, it is sufficient to make it extremely probable that the camp is at least as early as the Bronze Age : assuming it to be a work of defence, which I see no reason to doubt.

Another hypothesis may be mentioned, viz., that the ditch, instead of being a work of defence, is simply the continuation of the ancient roadway, which, instead of passing down the ravine, ran across the top of the hill ; and thus the small trench above mentioned is the way down the eastern ravine. This view, however, is rejected by both Professor Rolleston and me.

We have now to consider the value of this conclusion, and its bearing upon the topography of the surrounding neighbourhood.

It is seen that this camp at Sigwell commands the Springs beneath it. Charwell, also, on the nearest projecting hillock to the north, had been already recognised as a British camp, by Mr. Bennett. The entrenchment at Charwell, with its ditch on the outside cutting across the gorge of the hill, is distinctly seen on the east side, the remaining sides being defended by natural declivities, which, as usual in British camps, are rarely strengthened by embankments; the only exception being, in this case, at the west end, where the slope is more gentle, and where a small rampart, now used as a division to a field, has been thrown up so as to enclose the spring before mentioned, which rises on this hill and joins the Sigwell rivulet beneath Cadbury. Both these small camps therefore covered springs. Whether there is a camp on Beacon hill to the south I am unable to say with certainty—my impression is that there was. There has certainly been a low bank with a ditch on the outside across the gorge or narrowest part of the hill, but the greater part of it has been destroyed by a quarry, and there is no spring upon this hill that I am aware of.

There are also traces of a small bank on Hicknoll, to the north, but not of sufficient extent to afford adequate evidence of a defensive work.

Whether there were two or more of these posts, it appears unlikely that such small and feebly defended camps could have held their own as the strongholds of independent tribes in the vicinity of so large and powerful a fortress as Cadbury, defended by three ramparts and almost precipitous declivities on all sides, and we might therefore assume on *a priori* grounds that they were outposts dependent on the larger fortress. But other and more cogent reasons may be urged in favour of this assumption. The occupiers of Cadbury had flocks and herds, as is proved by animal remains discovered in the interior, and described first by Mr. Winwood and subsequently by Professor Rolleston.² These flocks and herds must have had pasture somewhere. To the

(2). *Som : Archaeol : Proc* : vol. xvi, p. 18.

west, as I have said before, the great valley is low, swampy, and probably, at that time, an impassable jungle. The high, dry, and well-watered valley of Whitcombe, between the camp and the hills, would be the only place in the neighbourhood where these flocks could be pastured. But with the commanding hills to the east and the springs arising from them in the hands of an enemy, there could be no security against surprise by hostile neighbours, who, approaching them unperceived from the table-land, might at any moment make raids upon their cattle from the hills above. The sources of this water supply, and the command of the hills, must therefore have been a matter of vital concern to the possessors of Cadbury; and the small camps of Sigwell and Charwell appear to have been thrown up to command the springs, and secure an uninterrupted communication with the plateau beyond; where also, as well as in the valley, there was good pasturage. From these considerations it would appear that we have here evidence of a central fortress, defended on one side, and that the most approachable, by a chain of detached but dependent outposts, which, affording as it does some insight into the social condition and military organization of the inhabitants of this district at a very remote period, may be regarded as being of some interest to anthropologists.

That Cadbury was occupied at a later date than that of which I have been speaking appears certain, from the discovery of horse shoes and other objects of iron within the camp.³ But, if the evidence afforded by Sigwell Camp and the adjoining tumuli is to be relied upon, (and I see no reason why it should not be accepted at least provisionally), the first erection of the fortress, and its connection with the neighbouring outposts, should date from a period certainly earlier than the Bronze Age.

(3). *Som : Archaeol : Proc* : vol xvi, p. 18.
