

Field Work

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INTRODUCTION

In this article discoveries of some prehistoric sites are put on record. The investigations that led to them form part of a larger plan, and for that reason only brief notes are here given. In this way, the locations and something of the nature of the sites are made known to all those interested as soon as possible.

LONG BARROWS AND MEGALITHS

A. COTSWOLD GROUP

I. SOME SITES IN THE NEWINGTON BAGPATH—BOXWELL AREA.

All these sites occur in the area covered by Sheet LVII (Gloucestershire) of the 6 in. O.S. map. They are marked on the sketch-map (*Fig. 11*) accompanying this article.

Before describing the newly discovered sites, it will be necessary to give a brief résumé of those already recorded, since certain fresh evidence is now available.

T.53¹. Lat. $51^{\circ} 38' 27''$. Long. $2^{\circ} 16' 26''$.

Parish of Newington Bagpath.—This is a circular mound on Brock Hill, 28 ft. in diameter by 3 ft. high, with distinct traces of a surrounding ditch. Seven slabs of oolite lie flat against the circumference of the mound, and near the centre is another stone, now almost prostrate. Owing to the presence of modern rings of stones round trees not very far away, doubts have been expressed as to whether this mound is prehistoric or not. Although nothing short of excavation can prove the matter, the balance of evidence points towards its antiquity—namely, the conformation of the mound, the presence of a ditch, and the central stone. Two items of information supplied in the summer of 1947 by an old man employed on the Boxwell Court estate strengthen this opinion. This man told us that he remembered the central stone being upright in his younger days. It was knocked over by animals rubbing against it. Also, he had always understood that the mound was an ancient burying place. This barrow is in urgent need of

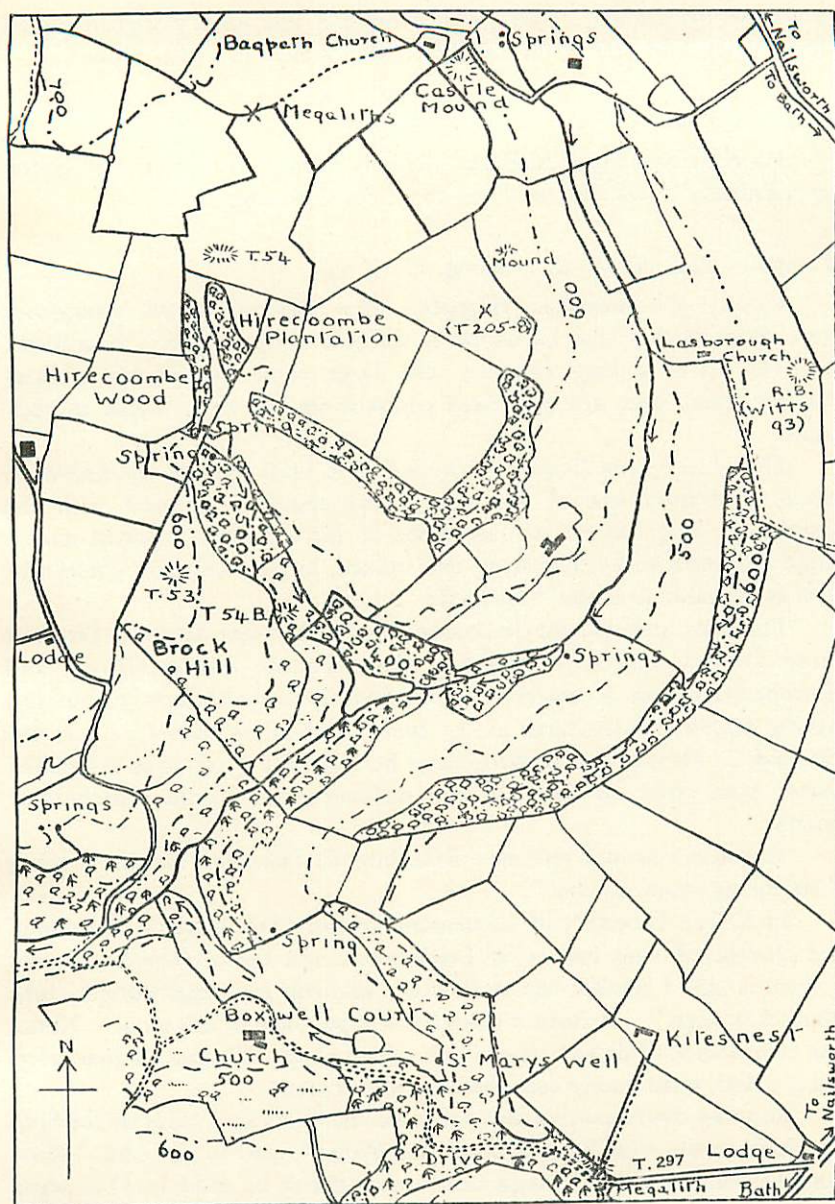


Fig. II.—Newington Bagpath and Boxwell Area.

(Reproduced from the Ordnance Survey Map with the permission of the Controller of H. M. Stationery Office.)

PLATE 6



Megalith near Boxwell Court.

protection by fencing. The ground round it has been ploughed within recent years, and one of the circumferential stones has been moved.

T.54². Lat. $51^{\circ} 38' 50''$. Long. $2^{\circ} 16' 21''$.

Parish of Newington Bagpath.—This is a large, oval mound of stones, now marked “Long Barrow” on the 1 in. O.S. map.

T. 54B³. Lat. $51^{\circ} 38' 24''$. Long. $2^{\circ} 16' 13''$.

Parish of Newington Bagpath.—This barrow is so overgrown with thorn bushes that its nature is difficult to determine. It appears, however, to be a long barrow; one large stone lies on its surface, and two small ones are embedded edgewise and at right angles to each other.

The ‘Lost’ Long Barrow at Irecombe.—A fresh attempt has now been made to identify one of the three above-described barrows with the chambered long barrow at “Irecombe at Boxwell near Wootton-under-Edge” referred to by Thurnam⁴ and quoted, in part only, by Crawford,⁵ who was unable to locate “Irecombe”.

Thurnam included the Irecombe long barrow with those of Littleton Drew (Wilts), Gatcombe Park and Duntsebourne Abbots (Glos.), and Enstone (Oxon) in a category “containing cists or chambers within and having megalithic structures in the form of standing stones . . . at the east end”. (It is not proposed to enter here into the question as to whether stones even occur *on* long barrows, unconnected with the chambers or portal.)

Thurnam’s second reference describes the Irecombe barrow as being “an oblong, stone barrow”.

In Kelly’s Directory of Gloucestershire for 1856, mention is made of the chambered long barrow at Leighterton, and the account continues: “there is also a smaller one at Boxwell, whereon is a large upright stone above 6 ft. high”. A further reference will be made to this stone. Notice the coincidence of dates between this reference and Thurnam’s first reference. Both must surely describe the same barrow.

Running down towards Boxwell from the north is a valley at the head of which to the west lies “Hirecoombe Wood”, and to the east, “Hirecoombe Plantation”. Though unnamed on the 25 in. and 6 in. O.S. maps, it seems likely that the valley itself was once called “Hirecombe” (? Higher Combe) and although just over the parish boundary in Newington Bagpath parish, it might well be described as “at Boxwell”, if approached from Wotton-under-Edge via Boxwell—the most probable direction of approach in Thurnam’s time.

It seems, therefore, reasonable to identify Thurnam's "Irecombe", with either T. 54 which stands at the head of this valley, or with T. 54B, further south on its western edge.

T. 53 stands further back from the valley, and can be ruled out, as it does not tally with the references in any particular.

T. 298. Lat. $51^{\circ} 37' 45''$. Long. $2^{\circ} 15' 38''$.

Parish of Boxwell with Leighterton.—In 1947, in consequence of information received from Mr. E. Bury, of Wotton-under-Edge, and the Rev. Charles Overy, of North Nibley, we visited a megalith standing on the south side of the drive to Boxwell Court, rather more than 400 yards from the Lodge on the main Bath-Nailsworth Road. As one comes from the Court, the stone appears straight ahead, at the end of a vista, just before the drive swerves to reach the Lodge.

This megalith is marked as "Stone" on the 25 in. and 6 in. O.S. maps. It stands on a small circular mound, 15 ft. in diameter by 3 ft. high. The stone, of much-weathered oolite, stands with its long axis roughly N. \times S. and slightly to the E. of the centre of the mound. It is 7 ft. high, by 5 ft. wide at its base, tapering towards the top, and 6 in. thick.

The stone gives one the impression of being too large for its mound, and that it is not in its original position. This is borne out by Edwin Cox, the old man living at the Lodge, who affirms that it was "put there", but has no idea where it came from, or when it was moved. Mr. Overy was told the same thing some years ago by other estate workers.

As against this, however, one elderly employee believed the site to be sepulchral, and could not remember the stone having been moved.

It seems to have no name, and inquiries from various sources as to further details about it, and other sites discussed in this section of the paper, proved fruitless. In the absence of other evidence, it is tempting to conjecture that this may be the "large upright stone above 6 ft. high" which originally stood on the "Irecombe" long barrow.

Plate 6 shows the megalith from the west.

T. 297. Lat. $51^{\circ} 37' 46''$. Long. $2^{\circ} 15' 39''$.

Parish of Boxwell with Leighterton.—Almost opposite the megalith just described, the track to Kitesnest Farm leaves the drive on the north side. At this spot "Stones" are marked on the 25 in. O.S. map of 1903. No trace of these now remains, but the track shows a distinct rounded rise, passing over a mound which may well be a degraded long barrow. The rest of this mound is much overgrown, and its exact limits not determinable.

Its long axis is W.N.W. \times E.S.E., the "Stones" being marked on its more easterly end, which is wider and higher. The stone on T. 298 cannot be one of these transferred, since it, also, is marked on the 25 in. map of 1903.

Lat. $51^{\circ} 38' 59''$. Long. $2^{\circ} 16' 16''$.

Megaliths near Newington Bagpath Church.—Mr. Bury also drew the attention of one of us to some megaliths in, and close to, a field boundary approximately 400 yds. W.S.W. of Bagpath Church. This boundary actually forms the northern extremity of the field containing T. 34, and might therefore be included in the "Irecombe" area.

There is an upright stone built partly into the wall on its N. side, the upper end being free. It is about 3 ft. 4 in. in height (the base being invisible), 1 ft. 5 in. wide, and 7 in. thick.

Just to the S. of the wall lies a large stone 4 ft. 7 in. long, and 3 ft. 4 in. at least in breadth; it is partly embedded in earth. Two other very large stones are built into the N. side of the wall W. of the upright, and several more also occur which are larger than those used in the usual wall construction.

There are indications that the wall in the vicinity of these megaliths stands on a slight elevation, even allowing for the fact that the fields on both sides have been under the plough.

II. HAWKESBURY UPTON

T. 299. 6 in. O.S. map. Sheet LXIV, S.E. (Glos.). Lat. $51^{\circ} 34' 59''$.
Long. $2^{\circ} 20' 3''$.

The name "Hawkesbury" suggests that there might be prehistoric remains in the vicinity. The O.S. map gives no indication of any such remains save the name "Hawkesbury Knoll" to a spur of high ground. A visit to this site showed that there is an egg-shaped long barrow on the very edge of the escarpment at the tip of spur running S.W. from the Hawkesbury Monument. The site of the barrow commands magnificent views over the valley and along the line of the escarpment. When seen from below the barrow stands out boldly against the skyline—even from spots from which the actually higher land and the lower portions of the Monument cannot be seen. There are springs in the valley heads to the N.W. and S.E. of the barrow.

The estimated length of the barrow by pacing is 70 ft., and the maximum width 40 ft. Its greatest height is about 4 ft. It is orientated approximately N. and S., with its higher and wider end to the N. This end has been partly destroyed by a small quarry. To the N.E. there is a suggestion

PLATE 7



Winsley Long Barrow.

of a horn, and along the E. side perhaps a ditch. The W. side merges into the very steep slope of the escarpment.

A sketch-map of the area is given in *Fig. 12*.

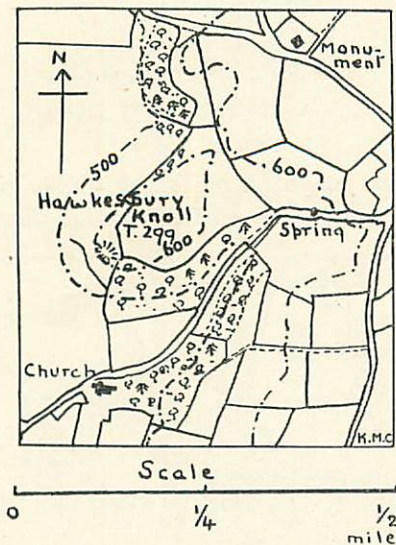


Fig. 12.—Hawkesbury Knoll area.

(Reproduced from the Ordnance Survey Map with the permission of the Controller of H. M. Stationery Office.)

III. WINSLEY

T. 300. 6 in. O.S. map. Sheet XXXII (Wilts). Lat. $51^{\circ} 20' 36''$.
Long. $2^{\circ} 17' 14''$.

In the garden of a house called "The Chase" is a long barrow known as "The Island". We were given permission by the owner, Wilfred Harvey, Esq., to examine the site, which lies just on the edge of the escarpment. It consists of a large wedge-shaped mound mainly composed of stones, and now planted with trees. It is orientated approximately E. and W. and is higher and wider at its eastern end, which has suffered some destruction, and in which there appears to have been an entrance. There are clear indications of a ditch along the N. side, and traces of a retaining wall in the barrow. There seems to be a horn at the S.E. angle, but on the N.E. the horn, if ever present, has been destroyed. The tail of the barrow has been dug into on the S. side, presumably as a source of stones.

The dimensions of the barrow are 112 ft. long by 66 ft. wide. It is about 6 ft. high on the N. side, and on the S. is merged with the slope of

the escarpment. It stands well above the 300 ft. contour line. There are springs a short distance away on the lower ground to the S., and from this direction the barrow stands out against the skyline.

Plate 7 shows the barrow from the N. side.

IV. STOKE PARK, PURDOWN

T. 296. 6 in. O.S. map. Sheet LXXII (Glos.). Lat. $51^{\circ} 29' 32''$.
Long. $2^{\circ} 33' 25''$.

This long barrow was found by Dr. H. Taylor, whose previous discovery of the Circle and Avenue on Purdown has already been recorded.⁶

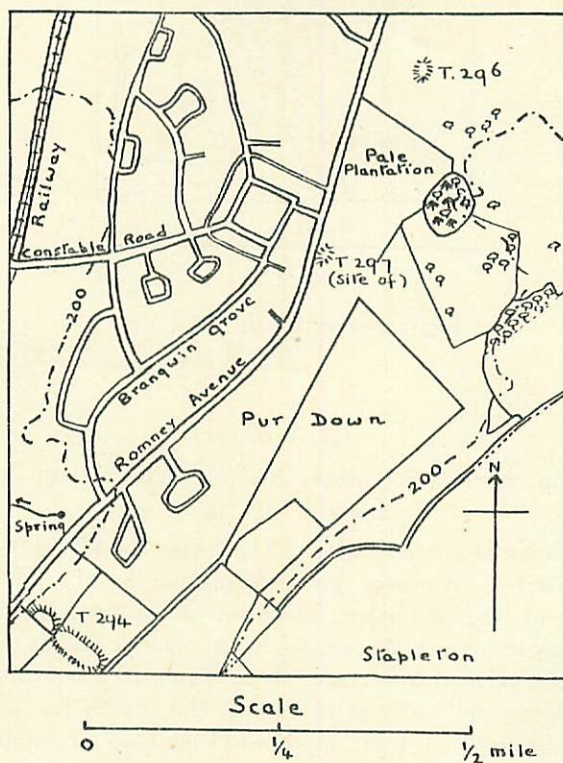


Fig. 13.—Stoke Park, Purdown area.

(Reproduced from the Ordnance Survey Map with the permission of the Controller of H. M. Stationery Office.)

It is a fine barrow on the high ground to the N.W. of the Duchess' Pond and N. of Pale Plantation.

It is located close to the new Romney Avenue. The orientation is N.W. \times S.E., being higher and wider at the S.E. end, which has a trench

cut through it, the spoil having been thrown to the S.E. A ditch is still detectable on the E. side of the N.W. end.

There is water available from a spring some 600 yards to the E.

Dr. Taylor reports that there used to be another, but ruined, long barrow not far away. This has now been completely obliterated by army hutments. Its site was approximately 200 yds. W.S.W. of Pale Plantation.

The sketch-map (*Fig. 13*) shows long barrows, circle and avenue. We take this opportunity of thanking Mr. H. M. Webb, the City Engineer, whose helpful co-operation made the sketch-map possible.

These additional sites emphasize the importance of the Bristol River Frome in relation to the distribution of long barrows and other megalithic remains of the district, to which some attention was drawn in a previous paper.⁷

B. MENDIP GROUP

I. BARROW RAKE FARM

6 in. O.S. map. Sheet XXVIII (Somerset)

In a field to the S. of the road from the Hunter's Lodge Inn to the Bristol-Wells road, and about 600 yds. from the Inn, are two barrows. These were originally described as T. 234 and T. 235.⁸ Further investigations in 1947 showed that T. 235 is in reality a much ploughed-down long barrow, and not a mutilated twin round barrow. Both can be seen from the road.

The long barrow has been greatly degraded by ploughing, which has been done in such a manner as to increase the width relative to the length, so that its present measurements of 80 ft. long \times 60 ft. wide cannot be regarded as indicating the original size.

It is orientated E. and W., and is higher and wider at the eastern end, close to which is the round barrow T. 234. The greatest height is now rather less than 2 ft. No stones are visible in the barrow other than those normally present in the soil, and the whole mound seems to be composed of earth. There are no signs of a ditch.

CIRCLES

The term "circle" is used for convenience and its use is without prejudice to the exact nature of the structures to be described, which were discovered in a series of visits to places the topography or name of which suggested the possibility of ancient remains.

I. KNOWLE HILL (CHEW VALLEY)

T. 301. 6 in. O.S. map. Sheet XII (Somerset). Lat. $51^{\circ} 20' 6''$.
Long. $2^{\circ} 33' 38''$.

Knowle Hill rises from the valley of the headwaters of the River Chew about 1 mile S. of Chew Magna. Its height is 369 ft. and it is a remarkably prominent landmark of the immediate district.

Crowning the summit of this hill is an earthen circle with an outer ditch. It is not quite a true circle—the diameter varying from about 100 ft. from N. to S., to about 110 ft. from E. to W. Outside, the ditch is about 3 ft. wide and 1 ft. deep, while the bank of the circle itself is about 1 ft. high and some 4 ft. wide at its base.

The site has been disturbed by an excavation of small extent which cuts in through the bank to the S., while on the N. a wartime (1939-45) observation post has been sunk through the ditch and bank. The sides of this have been bricked up so that no section is exposed.

II. WOODFORD HILL

6 in. O.S. map. Sheet XII (Somerset)

This hill lies about half a mile S.E. of Chew Stoke, and it was thought that it might have on it a circle similar to that on Knowle Hill, but an examination of the site proved negative.

III. SPUR NEAR DOWLINGS WOOD, STOWEY

T. 302. 6 in. O.S. map. Sheet XIX (Somerset). Lat. $51^{\circ} 20' 6''$.
Long. $2^{\circ} 33' 38''$.

The tip of the spur S. of this wood forms a commanding position, and here there is an earthen circle with outer ditch, very similar in general to that on Knowle Hill. It surrounds the terminal knoll of the spur. The bank and ditch thus come some little way down the slope, and without proper surveying instruments its diameter is hard to determine, but it is in the region of 150 ft. The size of the ditch and bank are closely comparable with those of the Knowle Hill circle.

The site has been planted with trees, the distribution of which do not correspond to the circle, and are probably therefore not contemporary with it.

IV. ROUND HILL, STOWEY

6 in. O.S. map. Sheet XII (Somerset)

This site is about $1\frac{1}{2}$ miles S.S.E. of Stanton Drew. On it are faint indications of an earthen circle, with outer ditch. This circle, if it may

be so called, is not round the summit of the hill like the two just described, but at the western end.

The few trees now present follow the line of the circle as far as it can be at all determined.

The structure is probably recent.

Catalogue numbers in the Tumuli and Barrows list of this Society have been allocated to these circles for convenience of reference, and are not intended to indicate positively that they are tumuli of the disk type.

At Butcombe (6 in. O.S. map. Sheet XI (Somerset)) in 1933, two similar circles were discovered.⁹ At that time it was thought that they were isolated examples. The presence of circles on Knowle Hill and at Dowlings Wood show that this is not correct, and the whole group suggests that there are remains of a "Circle Culture" in this area. Neither the nature, origin, nor distribution of this culture is known, and awaits further investigation. The relationship, if any, to the stone circles at Stanton Drew is not established.

The distribution of all the circles in relation to the Chew Valley, however, indicates the importance of this valley and its contained river as a route connecting at the one end with the Bristol Avon at Keynsham, and at the other with the Yeo Valley and its direct line to the Bristol Channel.

CAMPS

I. BOW DITCHES

Rutter¹⁰ describes a camp known as "Bow Ditches" as being situated "above Chew Magna", and as having three ramparts and ditches commanding a view of the sea, i.e., the Bristol Channel.

A study of the maps of the area suggested that a hill north of Chew Magna named "Blacklands" might fulfil the requirements of the description. This name itself was suggestive, and a visit was paid to the site. Traces of old mining could be seen—also recent bomb craters—the name "Blacklands" being probably due to the former. Also, it is possible on a clear day to obtain a glimpse of the Bristol Channel across a col near Nempnett Thrubwell.

On the S.E. flank of the hill, but not elsewhere, is a series of extremely well-marked lynchets following the contour of the hillside. Seen from below they closely resemble the ramparts of a camp, and it seems likely that Rutter mistook them for such, and that this hill is the site of his "Bow Ditches". There is certainly no camp there, however, though the site fits his description.

II. BURLEDGE. NORTH WIDCOMBE

6 in. O.S. map. Sheet XIX (Somerset)

This is a large camp of the promontory fortress type, and previously unrecorded, though the first element of the name "Burledge" might have led one to expect some sort of defensive work to be present. It lies on a tongue of high land about one mile S.S.W. of Bishop Sutton. As one approaches from the E., one encounters first an outer ditch and rampart, across which the modern track passes. The ditch is most marked in a field

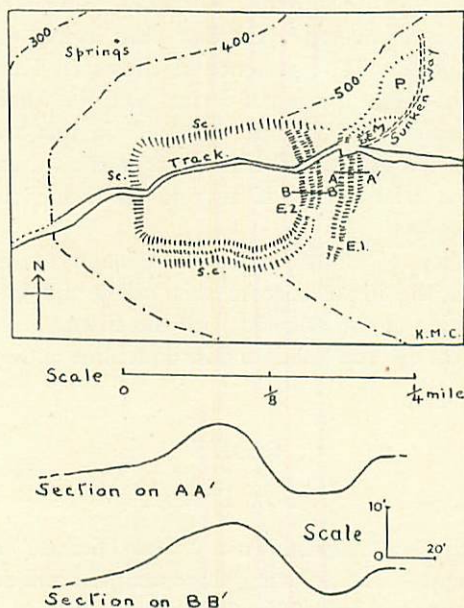


Fig. 14.—Burledge Camp.

(Reproduced from the Ordnance Survey Map with the permission of the Controller of H.M. Stationery Office.)

to the S. of the modern track, when it is seen as a wide, flat-bottomed ditch up to 28 ft. wide and still 7 ft. deep. The middle stretch only of this ditch is clearly defined. Inside it is a vallum about 14 ft. high and 40 ft. wide at its base; it fades out towards the S.

This ditch and vallum cross the base of the spur from N. to S. and the site of the vallum is indicated by the line of the hedge and trees running S. from bench-mark 530.5 on Burledge Common. It ends on the edge of the steeper part of the slope to the S.

At E.1 (Fig. 14) about 120 yds. S. from the track is a gap which may be an original entrance.

About 70 yds. further W. the track crosses the line of the inner ditch and rampart. The position is indicated on the 6 in. map by the second curving line of hedge and trees. The ditch here has been much disturbed by shallow quarrying in its northern portion. Its rough measurements are 13 ft. wide at its base by 5 ft. deep. The vallum stands 15 ft. high above the bottom of the ditch, and is 60 ft. wide at its base. There is a marked contrast between the flat bottom of the outer ditch (where this is well developed) and the U-shaped section of this inner ditch.

At E.2 (*Fig. 14*) about 60 yds. from the track is another gap which may be part of the original entrance. As the rampart reaches the southern edge of the escarpment both ditch and vallum take an abrupt turn to the W. The bank becomes much lower, while on the outer side added protection is given by the steep natural slope with the ditch some 15 ft. below, shallower now, and with a low outer bank. It is almost certain that the natural slope has here been steepened by scarping. The westerly direction is continued for about 300 yds., when there is a fairly abrupt turn of the natural scarp to the N. Along this western portion neither bank nor ditch is detectable, but this is not surprising in view of the height and steepness of the scarp, which may be partly artificial. This portion of the perimeter of the camp followed northwards crosses the track and continues for about another 60 yds., only to take another abrupt turn to the E. along the line of the escarpment to complete the circuit of the camp.

The western end of the camp N. of the track and practically the whole of the line of the northern side is now so densely overgrown that it is impossible to distinguish details. At the N.E. corner there does not appear to be any return of the outer bank to meet the inner bank, as the former seems to end simply on the edge of the scarp. Disturbance by quarrying makes it difficult to determine the details here. It seems that there is a platform-like extension ('P' on the sketch-map) running out towards a sunken way coming up from the N., while outside the outer rampart is a small, low, round mound ('M') perhaps associated with the entrance defences.

If the sunken way represents the original approach, then the way into the camp would seem to have been along the ditch of the outer defences from N. to S.—thus exposing the right sides of the enemy to the defenders on the vallum—then presumably through the gap in the outer bank, with a slight turn back to the N.W. to reach the gap in the inner defences. The gap through which the present track passes is probably recent.

Both the inner and outer banks are built mainly of stone, with indications of walling. The total area enclosed by the inner defences is about 13 acres. It is hoped to publish a survey of this camp at a future date.

The camp is tactically well sited, as it commands both the headwaters of the Rivers Yeo and Chew and the entrance to the Chew river gap, which latter is covered again to the N. by Maesknoll Camp. The distribution of the great camps of the Early Iron Age in the zone to the W. suggests that the expected attack was coming in from the sea, or if by land, from the N. perhaps from South Wales. The great line from Worlebury with its companion Brean Down further S., to Cadbury on the N. of the Yeo coastal plain, and Banwell, Dinghurst, and Dolebury on the S. (but on the northern flank of Mendip), appeared to end with the camp at Burrington. Now it is clear that this was only the apparent end, for at the very next strategic point, guarding the head of the Chew Valley, which is geographically in part a continuation of the Yeo Valley, stands Burledge camp.

Discoveries of still more camps are possible, from which we may form a clearer picture of the strategical distribution of the Early Iron Age defences of the area.

REFERENCES

- ¹ U.B.S.S. *Proc.*, 1925, Vol. II, p. 292.
 - ² *Ibid.*, p. 293.
 - ³ *Ibid.*, 1935, Vol. IV, p. 266; 1938, Vol. V, p. 90.
 - ⁴ Thurnam, *Wilts. Arch. Mag.*, 1856, p. 173; 1862, p. 323.
 - ⁵ Crawford, *Long Barrows of the Cotswolds*, p. 198.
 - ⁶ U.B.S.S. *Proc.*, 1946, Vol. V, pp. 166-8.
 - ⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 162-81.
 - ⁸ *Ibid.*, 1938, Vol. V, pp. 82 and 85.
 - ⁹ *Ibid.*, 1935, Vol. IV, p. 254.
 - ¹⁰ Rutter, *Delin. of N.W. Somerset*, p. 205.
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