

EARTH-WORKS AT HAMPDEN AND LITTLE
KIMBLE.

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At the last Quarterly Meeting of the Society, 17th April, 1855, the sum of £2 was voted for the purpose of opening barrows and other earth-works which might be expected to afford remains of interest to the Society. This sum was placed in the hands of the Rev. W. J. Burgess and myself for expenditure. D. Cameron, Esq., of Hampden House, had kindly given his consent to the opening of any barrows or mounds we might select on his property; and as there are three of great size, one standing in a corner in the Park and called Danes Camp, which has never been touched, and two others, which have been partially opened, contiguous to one another in a wood called Oaken Grove, we thought it advisable to open the one standing in the Park. This very conspicuous mound measuring about 180 yards in circumference on the outside of the trench, and eight feet in height from the level of the Park, was the one we determined to open, thinking it the one most likely to yield favourable results. By far the cheapest method being to dig down to the outside level

in the centre, I employed a man and a boy to dig a hole about three yards square, as near the centre of the mound as possible. After digging down to the depth of 12 feet, being four below the outside level, and nothing having been discovered which could lead to the idea of its having been erected for funereal purposes, the hole was filled up again. The whole expense incurred was ten shillings. To set the matter quite at rest as to the object for which so large a mound was raised, it might be worth while, should the Society think well, to make a cutting from the circumference to the centre; and thus, should any interments have been made between those points, they would be discovered : but this would incur considerable expense, as there is a large body of earth to be moved. It should be mentioned that, in digging, a piece of tile was found some six or seven feet below the surface, also several other pieces under the turf when removed. Some have stated that a wind-mill stood on the mound, on which some fine trees now stand, but it is hardly probable that so large a mass of earth would have been raised, on so high a situation as the spot on which the mound stands, merely for the sake of erecting a wind-mill on its summit, more particularly as there are two similar mounds in a wood about half a mile distant. There is one peculiarity about these three mounds, viz., that they have each two ways of access opposite to one another, one from the East and the other from the West. They are each surrounded by a deep ditch: the two in Oaken Grove stand on Grim's Dyke, the earth of which has been cut away and used in raising them. One of them is very large, measuring 105 yards in circumference in the ditch, 40 yards the circumference on the top, and about 20 feet high. This has been opened, and is almost hollowed out. The other has also been opened by a cross cut, but not to the same extent as the first. It measures 81 yards in the ditch, and 88 in circumference at the top. The one in the Park had never apparently been opened. It was evidently the opinion that these were barrows, by the way in which two have been searched in the hope of finding either treasures or remains. They are well worth a visit from the Antiquary. Mr. Cameron showed me 3 bronze Celts, dug up on the Hampden property, but I do not know for certain in what spot they were found.

A Member of the Society, who has had the opportunity of frequently visiting these mounds, considers them to have been raised for the purpose of defence, forming what we should now call block houses, and having been crowned with stockade works. As Hampden was from very early times a Saxon settlement, he would suggest that they were thrown up as a defence against the incursions of the Danes.

Hearing from the Rev. J. Ormond, residing at Little Kimble, a Member of the Society, that a Roman tessellated pavement had been some years ago dug up near the turnpike, at Little Kimble, with the permission of Mr. Fordham, I set a man to work, to dig in the meadow behind the turnpike-gate house, close to the spot where, in making the new road, the tessellated pavement had been discovered. Some disjointed tesserae, pieces of thick mortar (evidently Roman) fragments of tiles, oyster shell, bones, and pieces of coloured stucco, were dug up, and after a short time, at the depth of about four feet, a solid mortar foundation was discovered. This was laid upon rag stone and yellow sand. The edge of the mortar had been rounded off, and on its upper surface had been covered with stucco and painted red. The hole was enlarged in the direction of the foundation or floor, but on account of injuring the meadow, we were not able to follow it to its termination; indeed, there is great probability that, if traced, the ground work of a Roman villa may be laid bare. Persons from the neighbourhood, who came to see the excavation, assert that large quantities of stone have been turned up in the fields adjoining.

Being anxious to prosecute our researches in the neighbouring Park of Chequers, I wrote to Lady Frankland Russell, asking permission to open at the Society's expense the camp at Cymbeline's Mount, and a small barrow at the top of the hill. Her Ladyship not only very kindly seconded our wishes, but employed men at her own expense, and asked me to superintend them, and set them to work where I thought best. Several holes were dug in the park near Little Kimble Church, and about 60 yards from where the foundation had been discovered in Mr. Fordham's meadow. The same style of Roman remains was dug up, consisting of fragments of brick, plain and flanged tiles, pieces of mortar stuccoed and painted

with different designs, a few pieces of Samian ware, pottery, oyster shells, bones, teeth, a very fine boar's tusk, tesserae, a small coin, and a quantity of charred wood. A solid portion of foundation was also laid bare amidst a great mass of the debris of buildings. The whole of the ground near the spot has a very peculiar tumbled appearance, as if covering the remains of buildings; and there is every indication that a considerable Roman or Romano-British town stood here. The road between Great Kimble and Ellesborough formerly followed the track of the old Icknield Way, which may still be seen skirting the foot of the hills below Cymbeline's Mount, and above the fish ponds. It now, after leaving Great Kimble Church, bears away down hill to the left of Little Kimble Church, turning then to the right towards Ellesborough; Cymbeline's Mount, with the entrenched camp, would have thus been on the right of the ancient road, and the Roman town on its left, within a few yards.

Whilst speaking of Cymbeline's Mount and the entrenched camp there, I must mention that a cutting was made through about half the centre of the square camp, but nothing peculiar was found except pieces of very coarse brown and black pottery, a boar's tusk, and quantities of oyster shells, and some bones, apparently those of animals. A small barrow on the summit of the hill over Velvet Lawn was also opened by cutting from the circumference to the centre, at the level of the ground outside: some few fragments of bones, a horse's tooth, a few pieces of charcoal, and pieces of pottery of the same kind as that found in the camp, were alone discovered; there were imbedded in the chalk in the centre, a few fossil shells, and several pieces of iron pyrites. There are abundant traces of Roman occupation below the Chilterns in this part of Buckinghamshire. In a cutting, in a spur of the hills called Soldier's Mount; above Princes Risborough, several fragments of Samian ware, pottery of different kinds, glass beads, portion of the neck of a glass bottle of a sea-green color, a small bronze clasp, boars' tusks, and coins — one a remarkably beautiful one of Constantine — have been found. Some suppose that the cross on White Cliff Hill, is a symbol of the faith of Constantine, and the work of Roman antiquaries, whilst the Roman remains, found at Little Kimble in such quantities, speak for themselves.

In the chalk pits in the immediate neighbourhood of these remains, have been found many traces of very early interments. About five years ago, in the small cist in the chalk, were found human bones, charred, immediately under the remains of a horse; and a bronze bulla was found in a field adjoining, which has been unfortunately lost.