

EXPLORATION OF A LARGE BARROW AT CHETWODE.

MAJOR GREEN, of Chetwode Priory, was good enough last spring to report to the Society that a large mound, which he believed to be a barrow, was about to be demolished in making a cutting, in that parish, on the line of the new Manchester and Sheffield Railway. Arrangements were accordingly made for its systematic opening before the all-devouring bucket of the unsentimental steam-navvy reached it; and not only are my personal thanks due to Major Green for his hospitality and assistance, but the thanks of all Bucks archaeologists are due to him for giving timely notice of the impending annihilation of the relic. We have also to thank J. T. Middleton, Esq., the contractor, and the members of his staff, for their kindness in the matter.

The barrow, known as Windmill Hill, in consequence, according to local tradition, of its having been formerly surmounted by a windmill, stood close on the south side of "Windmill Lane," which runs somewhat north of west from Chetwode, and joins the Tingewick and Stratton Audley road at right angles. A bridge to carry the road over the railway is to be built a few yards south of the present course of the road, or to within some two or three yards of the site of the barrow.

The mound was circular, and surrounded by a well-defined ditch; it was some 90 ft. in diameter, and about 5 ft. 9 in. in height, but the latter had doubtless originally been somewhat greater.

Beginning from the south, a trench was cut inwards to some distance past the centre of the mound, and carried down to the natural or unturned soil, fully 6 inches lower than the present level of its surroundings. Both the natural soil and the material of the barrow consisted of exceedingly stiff boulder-clay, which at the time of the opening (in May, 1896), after the prolonged dry weather, was of almost brick-like consistency. In the clay of about the upper four feet, were interspersed small fragments of chalk, showing a tolerably distinct

stratification between the upper and lower material. Twenty-seven feet from the south, and at two feet depth, were a few fragments of red pottery (two or three showing a rim), which Mr. C. H. Read, F.S.A., of the British Museum, agrees "seem to be Roman."

On approaching the centre, masonry foundations were met with. These were formed of blocks of forest marble and oolite, which are procurable from the same quarry, in the parish of Newton Purcell in Oxon, less than a mile distant. The foundations reached a depth varying from 2 ft. 8 in. to 3 ft. 6 in., and were set *dry*, a slight grouting of sand having, however, apparently been added. They extended roughly in a square with spurs or buttresses at the corners, inclusive of which they measured about fifteen feet square.

All round these foundations, both above and below to a depth of about five feet from the surface, were quantities of iron nails of various sizes, but especially 2 to 3 inches long; scraps of pottery and crockery, "churchwarden" tobacco-pipes of the old small-bowled form, buckles, etc., etc.; all which seem to date between the sixteenth, and perhaps the early part of the eighteenth centuries. Under some parts of the foundations the clay had been transformed into dark-brown mould, evidently the result of the washings of the floor of the mill, and several persons besides myself noticed that this mould smelt quite strongly, like flour!

Even, however, without this last item of evidence, there is no reason to doubt that these foundations were the remains of the windmill which traditionally once stood there; and the fact that until recent years a cottage had existed close to the mound, makes the matter more complete, as the miller would naturally have lived in immediate proximity to the mill.

On the natural soil, about the centre of the mound, was a thick layer of wood-ashes covering fully 6 feet square, so thick and continuous, that it may be best described as a *carpet* of charcoal. In opening a barrow it would be exceptional not to find wood-ashes, but I had not previously met with a case where a large surface was covered with an unbroken bed at all like this.

Curiously enough, no other substance was mingled with the ashes—not a vestige of bone, pottery, or metal,

although from the uninterrupted layer in which the ashes lay, it seemed very unlikely that the "carpet" had been disturbed at any time since its deposition; but, here and there, a few feet outside the edge of the ash-carpet, and at the same level, were stray scraps of dark-coloured pottery, which may be Anglo-Saxon.

We explored thoroughly for several feet all round the "carpet," but with no further result.

Being completely nonplused at this unsatisfactory negative result, I wrote to the greatest living authority on barrows—Canon Greenwell, for an opinion, who very kindly answered as follows:—

"The mound you opened is a very puzzling one, as, from having a trench round it, it appears to have been a barrow and not a mound thrown up to support the mill. I do not think the burial deposit can have been disturbed by putting in the foundations of the mill, as they did not go down to the ground level, and the layer of charcoal was intact. In certain cases, bones, unless burnt ones, have gone totally to decay, and unless there was anything deposited with the body, there would be no indication that there had ever been a buried body at the place. And I have been brought to the conclusion, from the result of some of my later barrow openings, that mounds (cenotaphs) were sometimes thrown up where no interment had taken place. Are you sure, however, that you got down to perfectly natural undisturbed material, and that there may not be a grave sunk beneath the surface level?"

In answer to Canon Greenwell's question, I must add that the undisturbed surface was quite plain, not only to myself, but to the practised eyes of several of the Contractor's staff, of a local brick-maker, and of the labourers employed. But it occurred to me, that *possibly*, a quite small hole just sufficient to contain a burnt burial, had been sunk lower, and the mark of which we *might* have overlooked. I therefore had the whole of the centre, for many feet square, carefully dug two spits lower, but with the result of proving that no such pocket had been made.

ALFRED HENEAGE COCKS.