

First Report on Kings Weston Hill, Bristol.

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Kings Weston Hill forms part of that ridge of high ground to the north of Bristol, and lies between that city and its suburb of Avonmouth. It is continued westwards to form Pen Pole Point, a short distance from the right bank of the Avon.

During 1923 a series of investigations has revealed a number of features of archaeological interest, which had remained unnoticed by former observers, and it is with these features that this report will deal, and not with the camp on the hill, which has been briefly described from time to time.

The hill may be divided for convenience into two portions, east and west; of these the eastern portion is the greater, and runs roughly from N.E. by E. to S.W. by W., and is rather over half a mile in length. The western portion runs from N.E. to S.W., and is about one third of a mile long. The division of the two portions is marked naturally by a slight col. (Fig. 19).



FIG. 19.

All the features which are dealt within this paper, with one exception, are to be found in the eastern portion of the hill. Here one of the most conspicuous features is a low mound and ditch enclosing a roughly egg-shaped portion of the crown of the hill, with the broader portion at the eastern end.

The ditch can be quite readily traced for the greater part of its length, but it is missing for a short stretch at the east end. For the purpose of description it will be convenient to take as a starting point the gate on the footpath through the wood on the north of the hill, where the path emerges on to the open down immediately north of the W in Weston (Fig. 19). A few yards east of this gate the ditch can be easily picked up, and followed in the same direction for 220 yards, the mound on the inner side being marked by the hedge dividing Evergreen Wood from the open down of the crest of the hill. At the end of this stretch the ditch makes almost a right angled turn to the south, pierces the hedge and runs across the crown of the hill. At the point where it pierces the hedge the mound and ditch are most prominent, the mound being here about two feet high, and the ditch about 3 feet wide by 1 foot deep. This ditch runs somewhat obliquely across the crown of the hill, (apparently in order to avoid a tumulus,¹) where it has been obliterated for a short stretch in the centre; on the south side close to the hedge it turns west through more than a right angle and follows the line shewn on the map.

What this ditch and mound represent is at the time of writing quite unknown, though it has been suggested that they represent the boundary ditch of a Celtic, (I use the term advisedly,) lynchet system; this suggestion is supported by the close proximity of a fair-sized camp, which, like so many camps of a similar nature, was probably built during the Early Iron Age. At all events this earthwork, as it may be termed, seems to have been made at a time when tumuli were still regarded with reverence, so that the course of the work deviated sufficiently to avoid disturbing a tumulus.

On the open down of the hill crest is a series of five tumuli, which will next be described in order from West to East, the number of each representing the order of discovery.

TUMULUS No. 3.

This is the only one in the western portion of the hill, and it lies on the northern side, 55 yards to the west of the Old Windmill (Fig. 19). It is a round tumulus of the bowl type, though there is no rim, and only a very slight trace of a surrounding ditch remaining on the

¹ See Tumulus No. 2, below.

southern portion of its circumference. Lying, as it does, where the slope of the side of the hill commences, it is quite a prominent mound, with a north and south diameter of 37 feet. Its maximum height, allowing for the slope of the hill, is about two feet, while the top of the mound is flat with a slight hollow just south of the centre, which possibly indicates previous disturbance.

TUMULUS No. 2.

This is the largest of the present series, its position in relation to the mound and ditch described above being shewn on the map (Fig. 19). Its position is immediately north of the P in F.P., above the N of Weston. The tumulus is of the bowl type, without rim, with a flat top. The north and south diameter is 50 feet, while the height is about 2½ feet.

TUMULUS No. 5.

Just over forty feet from tumulus number 2, in an easterly direction, is a small round mound partly covered by the hedge on the northern side of the hill. It is a simple mound 18 inches high, with a diameter of 19 feet; here again there is no surrounding ditch.

TUMULUS No. 1.

This lies a short distance to the east of number 5, and in the centre of the open down which forms the crest of the hill. This tumulus was dug in July 1923, and proved to be a barrow. It is a small round one, without ditch or outer mound, having a diameter of 36 feet, and a flat top.

A large area in the centre of mound was dug, and all the earth sorted carefully. A section of the excavation gave the following stratification.

Turf, 4 inches.

Earth and angular fragments of limestone 15 inches. Below this second layer lay the original weathered surface of the limestone of the hill with all the cracks filled with a fine earth.

The finds described below came from the earth and stone layer, though a few pieces of bone were found adhering to the lower surface of the turf.

ARTIFACTS. GLASS.

A single blue thin bead 12 mm. long, with an internal diameter of 1.5 mm. This has been placed as Roman.²

² Kindly identified by R. A. Smith, Esq., British Museum.

BRONZE.

Two tiny thin flakes of this material were found, which may have formed part of some blade like implement.

In addition, a bronze article (Fig. 20, Nos. 8 & 9) was found, and this has been identified and described by Mr. R. A. Smith of the British Museum. It is a portion of a late Saxon bronze of the 7th or possibly 8th century; the design represents the hind quarters of an animal squashed flat with the limbs splayed out. Its use is uncertain. A somewhat similar article comes from an Anglo-Saxon cremation burial of the 7th century in Anthall Barrow, Oxfordshire.³ Its nearest parallel is to be seen in Salin's "Die Altermanische Thoronamentick," Fig 652, from which No. 10 is borrowed. The date given in this case is about 600 A.D.

STONE (Fig. 20).

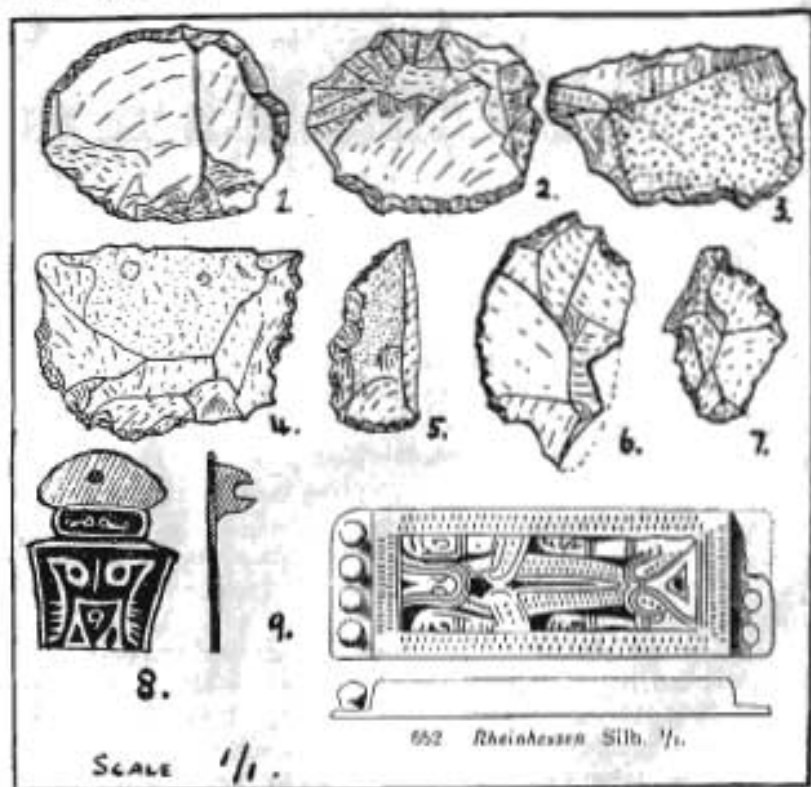


FIG. 20.

³ *The Antiquaries Journal*, Vol. IV, No. 2, p. 113

A number of flint implements were recovered, all shewing a degree of patination from a slight white mottling to a dense white one all over.

1. This is a roughly round flat scraper, having the more circular portion of the edge retouched all round, and having a well-marked bulb of percussion on the back. It has a grey to white patina all over.

2. This is very similar to No. 1, but the degree of patination on one of the flat surfaces is rather less. It is slightly smaller than No. 1, and like it, has secondary chipping on the more circular portion of the edge. In addition the thicker and straighter edge also bears some secondary chipping.

3. This again is a scraper, bearing part of the crust of the original nodule. There is secondary chipping on the more rounded border. The other long side has been made by means of a single flake, and has a maximum thickness of 12 mm. The patination is similar to that of No. 2.

4. This scraper is trapezoid in shape with steep sides, and a roughly triangular base. The implement bears part of the crust of the original nodule. The patination is less in degree than in any of the preceding specimens. The result is a mottled grey.

5. This is a portion of another scraper bearing secondary chipping all round its unbroken edge. Part of the crust of the nodule remains on the upper surface, while the patination ranges from grey to dense white.

6. This is the greater portion of a rough scraper, with hardly any secondary chipping. The patination is slight, and in parts has hardly commenced.

7. A small implement probably used as a scraper. There is only a small amount of secondary chipping on the implement, the patination being also relatively slight.

In addition to the above flint implements a number of chips and portions of other implements, including a polished one, of the same material were found.

The other stone artifacts consist of four stones, the only non-angular stones found during the excavations.

The first is a hammer stone of red chert.⁴ It is a flat smooth pebble with a roughly circular outline, a portion of which is missing, its place being taken by a smooth flat surface representing the chord joining the cut ends of the circle. This sectional surface, as well as the upper and lower surfaces, shews marks made by using the

⁴ Kindly identified by Prof. S. H. Reynolds.

stone as a hammer. The stone has a diameter of 5.0 cms., and is 2.1 cms. thick on the sectional surface.

The second is a hone stone of old red sandstone.⁴ It is a rounded oblong in shape with an obvious flattened surface in one part running for two thirds of its length, and ending quite abruptly. Its length is 7.2 cms., and its thickness 1.8 cms.

The third is an approximately round quartzite pebble¹ from a stream bed, though it is of interest to note that no quartzite occurs along the course of the Trym, the neighbouring river. The stone has been polished, and has a diameter of 2.2 cms. It resembles the gaming stones from the Glastonbury Lake Village and elsewhere.

The remaining artifact of stone is a small smooth, roughly rectangular piece of black chert 2.2 by 0.8 by 0.3 cms.

POTTERY.

Only a few small sherds were found, and of these only one can be placed as of the Bronze Age with any degree of certainty, the remainder having more the appearance of pottery of the Early Iron Age.

OTHER REMAINS.

HUMAN.

These are represented by a single upper central incisor very much worn, and quite unburnt.

ANIMAL.

Some of these are well burnt, while others are not burnt at all. The teeth are generally unburnt. From the few remains available it is possible to identify horse, pig, dog or fox, and another carnivore represented by the left mandible of a very young individual.

The period of the construction of the barrow cannot be fixed with any degree of accuracy, because of the scarcity and fragmentary condition of the finds, but the flints and the small thin flakes of bronze suggest that the original interment may have been of the Bronze Age. That this interment was disturbed, possibly twice, is suggested by the presence of the Roman bead and the Saxon Bronze, but this evidence is far too scanty to base any reliable conclusion upon. Finally it must be remembered that fragments of flint implements are turned up by moles all over the hill, but these are few and far between, compared to the number of implements and fragments found in the barrow.

⁴ Kindly identified by Prof. S. H. Reynolds.

TUMULUS No. 4.

Just a hundred yards eastwards from tumulus No. 1 is a very small one, which is only just over twenty feet in diameter, in fact the mound is so low and insignificant that it is almost invisible during the summer months when the grass is long.

This tumulus brings one to within a short distance of the outer defence of the camp (Fig. 19 A). This defence consists merely of a ditch, with a mound on the inner side, running transversely across the hill in a north and south direction, and having its ends turned inwards (east) at each end on the slope of the side of the hill.

Between this outer and the inner defence of the camp lies a peculiar circular earthwork (Fig. 19 B). It is complete, except for a small segment on the north, which has been destroyed by quarrying. The work consists of a ring-shaped mound, with a ditch on the outer side, and having a diameter of 195 feet. The ring has no break in it, save as described above, and is most pronounced in its southern portion where the slope of the hill begins to make itself felt. Here the mound is 2 to 3 feet high, and about three feet wide.

The nature and purpose of this earthwork is at present unknown, but subsequent excavation will, it is hoped, throw some light on these points. It is of course, possible that the work is a very large disc barrow, but it is larger than any yet discovered, and has the ditch on the outer, instead of the inner side, and in addition had no break in its circumference, unless it was situated in the destroyed portion.

It has been suggested that it represents the earthen analogue of the stone circles found elsewhere; or again it may have been an actual stone circle from which all the stones have been removed, and in this connection there is a most interesting statement by Seyer made with regard to the origin of the stones of the dolmen at Druid Stoke. He considers that these stones came from King's Weston Hill, "where," he says, "many of them were to be seen, but of smaller size, which Mr. Farr collected for the foundations of his house."⁴

In conclusion, on behalf of the Society, I should like to express my thanks to Mr. Napier Miles, the owner of the Hill, for permission to excavate there. Also I am indebted to Mr. O. G. S. Crawford for valuable hints and suggestions, and to Mr. J. A. Davies for the drawings in Fig. 20.