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An Enclosure on Crickley Hill, Glos

by E. M. Clifford
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An Enclosure on Crickley Hill Gloucestershire

By E. M. CLIFFORD, F.S.A.

A SERIES of earthworks on Crickley Hill in the parish of Coberley Gloucestershire at an altitude of about 800 feet o.d. (Nat: Grid: Ref: ST935165) are not marked on the Ordnance Survey maps and no reference to them has hitherto been made. They originally formed part of the Ullenwood Estate. My attention was first drawn to them by the Misses Trafford in 1948 who then lived at Dryhill just below these earthworks and close to the site of the Dryhill Roman Villa, which was excavated in 1849 by W. H. Gomonde, the report on which was privately printed.¹ The Villa was described as a *Villa Rustica*, in contrast to the courtyard type Villa at nearby Witcombe, which had been excavated by Lysons in 1818.² Gomonde states that he opened a barrow nearby and that Lysons opened a long barrow, so called by Sir Rich^d Hoare, presumably the Crippets, but no account of either of these excavations was published. The Crippets, which lies less than half a mile to the north, is one of the largest long barrows in the Severn-Cotswold group. There are other round barrows in the vicinity, presumably of the Bronze Age.

The Early Iron Age camps on Leckhampton and perhaps on Birdlip are comparatively close, while the Crickley Hill camp almost adjoins the site under discussion. The coins from the excavation of the Dryhill Villa showed that there was occupation of the 3rd and 4th centuries A.D.; a notable find being a tile, which, it has been suggested, was stamped R(es) P(ublica) G(levensis)³ and was therefore a product of the *colonia* of Glevum and might serve as a clue to its *territorium*. All the objects from the Gomonde excavation, however, are lost.⁴

In 1951 Mr G. T. Harding also drew my attention to these earthworks and in view of the fact that the ditch was *inside* the rampart, with nothing to indicate their date and that there was what appeared to be a much ruined Bronze Age round barrow on the line of the rampart and filled-in ditch, I decided an examination would be justified.

¹ W. H. Gomonde. Copy in Gloucestershire Collection Public Library, Gloucester.

² *Archaeologia*, xix, pp. 178 ff.; *Trans. BGAS*, LXXIII, pp. 1 ff.

³ *EE*, iv, p. 700; *EE*, ix, p. 650; *JRS*, XLV, p. 72.

⁴ Gomonde also illustrates an E.I.A. terret.

CRICKLEY HILL

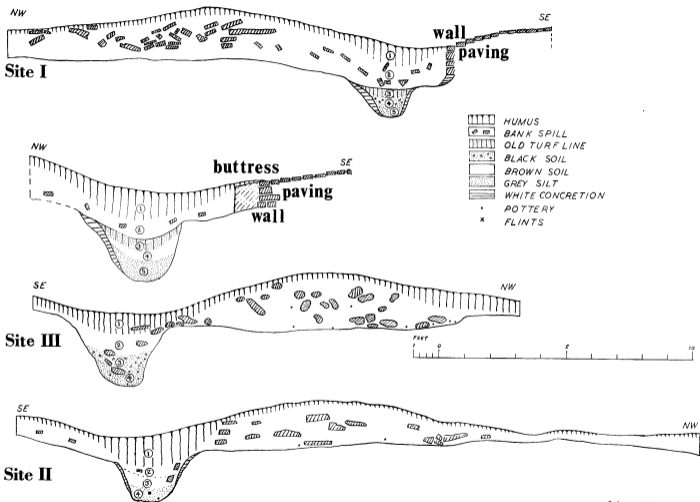


Fig. 1. Crickley Hill

Work began in August 1951 for two weeks and continued intermittently whenever weather permitted, until it was completed in 1952. As the owner, Mr G. Hewinson, was abroad, permission to excavate was given by his solicitors.

The earthwork on the south-west side forms the boundary between The Scrubs and Short Wood¹, the dividing wall being actually built on the rampart. On the north-west side the dividing wall follows the line of the earthwork for almost all the way and only at one point is the wall built on the rampart. On the south-east side the Birdlip-Cheltenham road follows its general line and the east corner governs the line of a trackway or bridle-path which, before reaching Shurdington, becomes a highway leading to Badgeworth and beyond. The general line of the earthwork appears as a broad dark strip on the air-photograph. On the north-west side another bridle-way passes close to the outer side of the earthworks and runs from Birdlip across the Crickley Hill road and joins the first trackway north of the earthworks.

The earthwork on the north-west side runs for half a mile almost without interruption and it is only for a short distance that it has been partially destroyed by agriculture, when, at some unknown date, a small clearing in the wood was made. It has now reverted to scrub. The earthwork on this side as well as on the south-west is quite impressive and it is probably because both are in a dense wood that they have never been recorded. On the north-east side the rampart can be traced, although it has been, and still is, regularly ploughed. An air-photograph shows it very clearly. In the south-east corner, cultivation and a well-used cricket ground have practically destroyed it. There is an entrance near the north corner, as marked on the plan, from which a trackway runs down to a spring below. It is immediately above the site of the Dryhill Roman Villa.

The area possibly enclosed contains approximately 100 acres.

Geology

Crickley Hill is composed of the Inferior Oolite series² and at the site itself the Oolite Marl and Upper Freestone crops out and it was the stone from these beds which was used for the paving and the building of the ramparts. The exception to this was the discovery of one or two pieces of the Scissum Beds which crop out above the Upper Lias clay on the southern face of the hill. There are extensive quarries in these stone beds, where lime kilns were formerly in use and which now (in 1961) are again being extensively quarried for stone.

¹ The National Trust own 36½ acres of The Scrubs, and Short Wood is owned by Mr W. G. Carter.

² Information from Mr L. Richardson.

The material of which the daub and pottery was made exhibits small flakes of mica and was probably obtained from the fine sandy and micaceous Upper Lias clay which is seen immediately below the Scissum Beds. At this point water is thrown out in the form of seepages and springs.

Fossils, which were abundant, include:—*Terebratula fimbria*, *Rhynchonella tatei*, *Lucina* and parts of *Nerinea*.

Excavation

Work started on the presumed Bronze Age barrow near Site I and excavation revealed a solid oblong foundation; a doorway was clearly marked and a fire-place on the outside of the west wall was in perfect order. No dating material was discovered, but the building is not thought to be pre-historic.

Three sections were cut in the rampart on the north-west side. Site I was chosen, because it was the first point at which the wall which divides The Scrubs from Short Wood is not built on the rampart. The ditch is rock-cut, and the stone, with an admixture of soil, was used to build the rampart. Nearby there is a spring which runs into the ditch and through time this trickle of water has carried a lime deposit which at first was thought to have been placed there. It is this phenomenon which has caused writers to think that on occasions whitewash has been applied to the stone¹ whereas it is in fact the lime exuding from the stone itself. In this case the spring water heavily charged with lime made a thick deposit. Within the enclosure on the west side of the ditch there is a paved area just over 4 feet wide, which extended the whole length of the excavation. It was demarcated by pitching stones placed on edge. The ditch here is lined vertically with stones which form the foundation for the paved area. As this construction approaches the corner it is supported by extra-revetment material, in order to take the additional thrust as it turns the bend. Paving, rampart and ditch have been very much damaged by roots of trees which are growing close to and on the rampart.

Site II was chosen as the only possible stretch between huge beech trees which have been deliberately planted on the rampart. At this point there was a greater admixture of soil in the rampart than at Site I. The ditch was rock-cut.

Site III is at almost the last possible point on this stretch of earthwork before the entrance is reached. The ditch was again rock-cut and the make-up of the rampart similar to Site II. The filling of the ditch contained much black material and in this there were pieces of iron slag.

¹ Such as the famous Birdlip mirror original report *Trans. BGAS*, v, p. 137.

AN ENCLOSURE ON CRICKLEY HILL, GLOUCESTERSHIRE

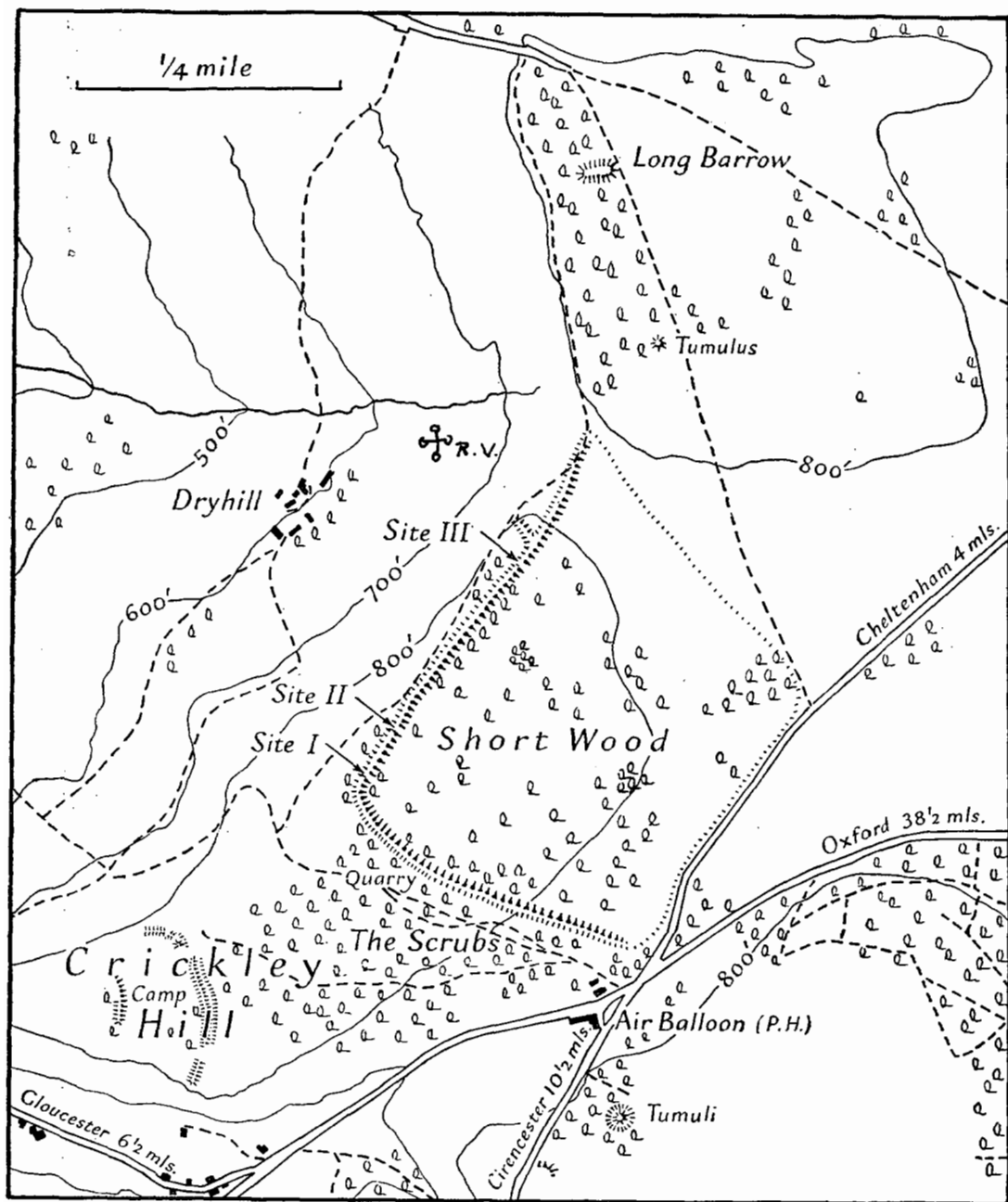


Fig. 2. Crickley Hill. Based on 6-in. O.S. maps

Finds

Sherds of Roman pottery including some scraps of Samian ware were found in and under the ramparts and in the bottom of the ditches. Roman *tesserae* made of red tile and local oolite were found in and under the paving at Site I. Flint flakes were found on all the sites as they may be almost anywhere on Cotswold.

A northern Drift Quartzite pebble from the ditch at Site II may be a sling stone. Mr Richardson says the slag from Site III may have been obtained from smelting of stone from the Scissum Beds to obtain the iron.¹ Three hundred and fifty-five land mollusca in twenty species have been identified from the site.

A human phalange was found at Site III.

Nothing later than Roman pottery sherds have been found but none of this material is sealed and securely stratified, but is in places where it could have been embedded in the ramparts if lying on the ground surface at the time of their building. Therefore a Roman date cannot be sustained for the earthworks.

It has already been stated that the ditch is on the inside of the rampart and its only use is as a demarcation line and to keep cattle in and not to keep people out. Local farmers assured me that cattle could not get out of the ditches if they once got in and as this hill-top is used for summer grazing each site had to be fenced while excavation was in progress.

Mrs Cotton has kindly prepared the plans for publication. In her view the earthworks should be classed as an estate boundary and she has consulted Mr A. L. F. Rivet who informed her that he had visited the site with Mr Collin Bowen (who very kindly paid a hurried visit there in 1960 when I was in communication with him) and that they both classed it as an estate boundary of post-Roman date.

The indications on the air photograph of enclosures within the earthworks must now be studied. Professor I. A. Richmond has very kindly examined this photograph and considers that indications may represent Roman farming enclosures, probably for stock, in three long divisions terminating on the south-west in smaller pen-like enclosures. In the north-west division nearest Dryhill there seems to be traces of stone foundations, perhaps a house. He compares it to an air photograph by Dr J. K. St. Joseph of a Roman villa at Cromwell, Nottinghamshire, which is surrounded by not dissimilar regular enclosures.²

This explanation would account for the Roman material which includes samian ware and *tesserae*.

¹ Through the kindness of Mr J. W. Brailsford this was examined in the B.M. Laboratory and it was found that it contained approximately 50 per cent of iron.

² *JRS*, LI (1961), pl. xi, 3.

REPORT ON THE LAND MOLLUSCA

By A. G. DAVIS

	Ditch Site A	Ditch Site B	Rampart Site A	Rampart Site C	Ditch Site 3	Ditch Site 1	Rampart Site 2 'B'
<i>Pomatius elegans</i> (Müller) ...	6	7	7	4	5	15	
<i>Carychium tridentatum</i> (Risso) ...		1	2	1			
<i>Pyramidula rupestris</i> (Drap) ...			1		2		
<i>Pupilla muscorum</i> (Linné) ...							1
<i>Ena montana</i> (Draparnaud) ...			1			1	
<i>Marpessa laminata</i> (Montagu) ...			3			1	
<i>Clausilia rolpheii</i> (Turton) ...					1	1	
<i>Cepaea hortensia</i> (Müller) ...	1					1	
<i>Cepaea nemoralis</i> (Linné) ...	19	6	43	16	3	13	7
<i>Helix pomatia</i> (Linné) ...	1					2	
<i>Trichia striolata</i> (C. Pfeiffer) ...	1	1	13	6			29
<i>Trichia hispida</i> (Linné) ...		1	2	2	1	1	5
<i>Helicella itala</i> (Linné) ...	1			5		1	
<i>Helicigona lapicida</i> (Linné) ...	4	1	4		1		4
<i>Punctum pygmaeum</i> (Draparnaud)			1				
<i>Discus rotundatus</i> (Müller) ...	2						
<i>Arion</i> sp. ...	10	3	18	6	5	20	7
<i>Vitrea crystallina</i> (Müller) ...			1	1			
<i>Oxychilus cellarius</i> (Müller) ...	2	1	1	12	1	2	8
<i>Retinella nitidula</i> (Draparnaud)				1			
<i>Limax</i> sp. ...			1				

Twenty species are here recorded and they are all forms which may be expected to be found in woodland on a highly calcareous soil. In the construction of this work an ancient woodland was cleared; the site is probably much drier than formerly as a result of this clearance. All the above-mentioned species still live in the vicinity. *Ena montana* is a denizen of our ancient and primaeval woodlands. *Helicella itala* is not strictly a woodland species and was probably the first to colonize the rampart.

Thanks are due to Professor Richmond, Mrs M. Aylwin Cotton, Mr Collin Bowen and Mr A. L. F. Rivet for their help in interpretation, to Mr Irvine Gray, County Records Officer, for information, to the late Mr G. Hewinson for permission to excavate, to many friends for help in digging, particularly the Misses Trafford and Mr G. T. Harding, and for reports to Mr M. R. Hull, Capt. H. S. Gracie, Mr Owen Parsons, Mr Richard Reece and the late Mr A. G. Davis.

Delay in publication is due to the fact that Mr Harding left almost immediately for Canada, taking the plans, which he was re-drawing, with him and they were not available until 1958 when I was heavily committed in another way.

ROMAN POTTERY AND OTHER FINDS

- SITE I. Level 2. (Beneath pitching) 2 *tesserae*
1 piece red pottery.
- SITE II. Level 3. Thin abraded sherd black pottery.
Beneath rampart O.T. Line base of softish grey pot.
- SITE III. Beneath rampart—Samian, 1 dark grey sherd. 4 black sherds, 12 red abraded sherds.
Level 2. Iron slag.
Level 3. 3 sherds black pottery.
6 sherds.
1 rim from throw-out.
Bone tool. Sling stone.

Opportunity is taken to publish for the first time objects which have been found in the immediate neighbourhood.

Mrs T. P. Green and her late husband farmed for many years at Dry Hill and on their ploughed land found several objects of interest. Among them were three brooches, two of which were taken to Australia by Mrs Green's brother, the late Mr G. Hewinson. The third is now published by the kindness of Mrs Green, together with lists of coins and flints. All these have generously been presented by Mrs Green to Gloucester Museum.

BROOCH

By M. R. HULL

Brooch (FIG. 3)

This very pretty brooch is a Polden Hill type with plastic decoration. This plastic decoration occurs not infrequently, but is never common and usually rather ugly—chiefly raised chevrons or rows of raised dots. This more fanciful decoration seems to belong to the Gloucestershire area: there is a very nice one from Bollitree in Gloucester Museum and another rather larger one in Cheltenham Museum.

I have no dating evidence other than the fact that these three brooches seem to be sprung and have a rearward facing hook, so I think that they must belong to the second half of the 2nd century and be Dobunnic in origin.

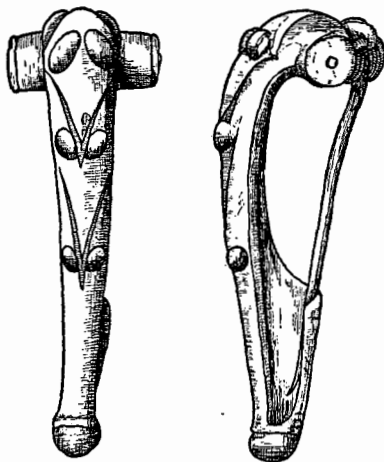


Fig. 3. Brooch from Crickley Hill

COINS FROM DRYHILL

By RICHARD REECE

Roman

Six coins, all are copper and range from A.D. 269 to A.D. 380.

Radiate:—worn and probably barbarous.

House of Constantine:— CONSTANTINOPLIS: m.m. $\overline{\text{TR}}\text{S}$

Constantine I:— MARTI CONSERVATORI: m.m. $\frac{\text{TIF}}{\text{PTR}}$
GLORIA EXERCITUS, 2 standards: m.m. illegible

Valentinian I:— SECURITAS REIPUBLICAE: m.m. illegible (worn).
Completely illegible.

COINS FROM DRYHILL

By O. F. PARSONS

Post-Roman

Charles II. Copper farthing (two specimens). Known dates are all between 1672 and 1679.

George III. Copper halfpenny, first issue (two specimens). Dates known 1770–75.
Copper halfpenny, second issue (one specimen). Only date 1779.
Copper penny (last type), one specimen. Known dates 1806 and 1807.
Copper halfpenny (one specimen). Known dates 1806 and 1807.

George III. *Ireland.*
Copper penny (one specimen). Only date, 1805.

There is also a copper French coin and two illegible specimens, perhaps farthings of late 17th or 18th century.

THE FLINTS

By H. S. GRACIE

Sixteen flints picked up on the surface in the neighbourhood of Dryhill form quite an interesting collection. With two exceptions all are deeply patinated white or grey. They include a finely worked knife on a narrow blade 3.1 inches long, a broken fabricator or 'slug' with the working end worn smooth, two round scrapers and a small thumb scraper, and a core. There are two leaf-shaped arrowheads, one lozenge and one tanged specimen with vestigial barbs. The remainder are flakes and blades, one of which is heavily water-rolled.

All these are very similar to those found on other sites on the high ground in mid-Gloucestershire. They range in date from the Neolithic to the end of the Bronze Age, perhaps into the Early Iron Age. In addition to these the writer has seen a microlith from the adjoining field near the Crippets Barrow. Occupation, therefore, would appear to have been continuous from the Mesolithic period.



PLATE III. Air photograph showing earthworks, Crickley Hill

facing p.48