

## THE MOATED MOUND OF SEKINGTON.

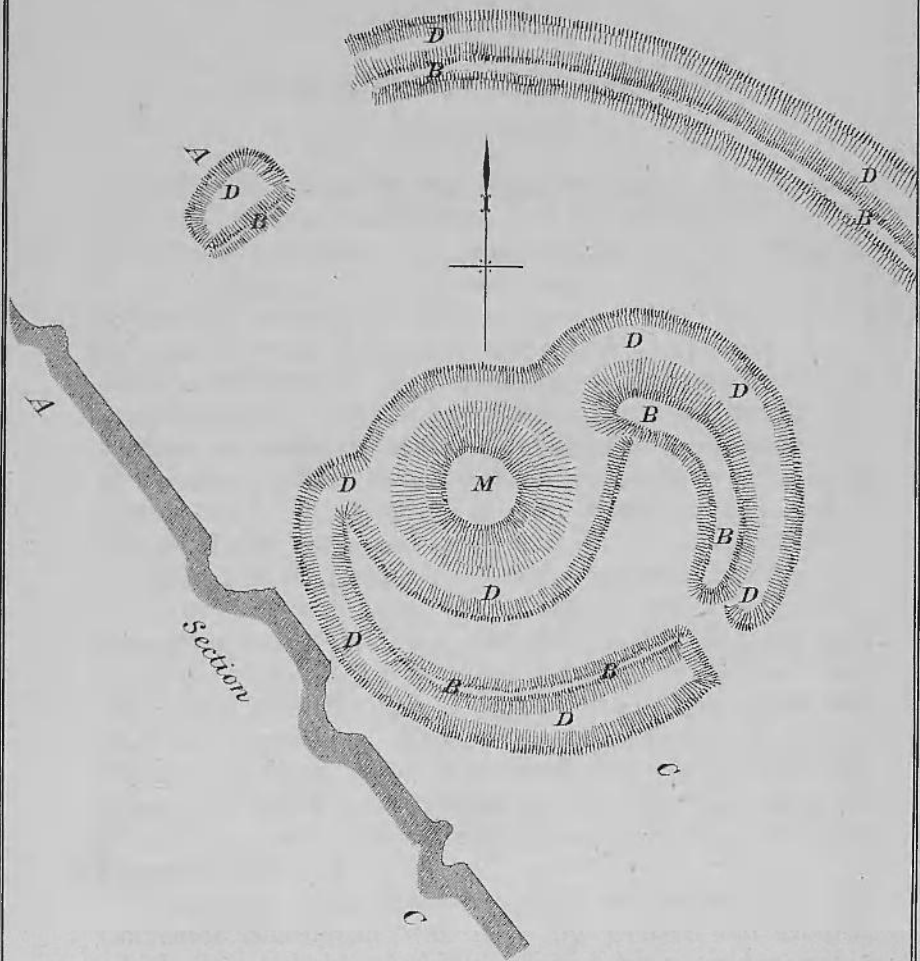
By G. T. CLARK.

Sekington, or as it was formerly, and it may be more correctly written Seccandune, and Sekingdon, is a village four miles north-east of Tamworth, on the Ashby-de-la-Zouch road, on the extreme north of the county of Warwick, on its Staffordshire border. The district is of an entirely rural character, removed from the advantages and disadvantages of minerals and manufactures, and presenting no very remarkable natural features. The surface is moulded into a number of low rounded hills and shallow vallies, down each of which flows a nameless brook, contributing either to the Mease or the Anker, and so to the Tame and the Trent.

Sekington is classed by Kemble as the mark or settlement of the Secgingas. It is not, however, without a special record of its own, for here, at Seccandune, took place a bloody battle between Cuthred of Wessex and Æthelbald the Mercian king, in which the latter was slain by treachery. Bede, the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle, Ethelwerd, Florence of Worcester, and Henry of Huntingdon all mention the battle, though Florence calls the place Segeswalde. Ethelwerd gives as the date A.D. 757, the other four 755.

It appears from Domesday that in the reign of the Confessor Sekington was held by Celred and Godric, which latter held  $2\frac{1}{2}$  hides of the king, and possibly dwelt upon the Burh. The Conqueror seems to have granted the manor to the Earl of Mellent, from whom it came to the Camvilles, a powerful Baronial family, commemorated in the adjacent parish of Clifton-Camville. The heiress of Camville, in the reign of Edward III.,

SECKINGTON MOUND.



- M. Mound*
- B. Banks*
- D. Ditches*

*134 ft = 1 Inch.*

married Burdet, in whose descendants in the male line the property has since remained, and the late Sir Robert Burdet was here buried. There are not many estates remaining, even in Warwickshire, which have descended in a direct line from the reign of Henry II., and in a direct male line from that of Edward III. The ancient church is now being rebuilt, and the heavily burdened local residents are hoping that the expense may be borne by Lady Burdet Coutts and her nephew.

Sekington is however mainly remarkable for its Burh or Moated Mound, which is of large dimensions, and as perfect or nearly so, as Brinklow, and more perfect than, though scarcely so large as, Ælfeda's Burh at Tamworth.

The Burh stands a furlong north-north-west of the parish church, on high ground, commanding a rather rich panoramic view. Its principal feature is a large conical mound, wholly artificial, truncated, having very steep slopes, and encircled by a ditch, out of which it rises, and whence it was in part formed. The mound is about 50 ft. diameter at the top, and about 140 to 150 ft. at its base. Its height is rather over 30 ft. Dugdale states its top diameter at 23 ft., and its height at 42 ft., so that it probably has been reduced somewhat since his time. The ditch is about 30 ft. wide, and from 10 to 12 ft. deep, and was no doubt originally somewhat deeper.

From this proper ditch of the mound there springs on the western side a second ditch, which passes southwards until, sweeping round towards the east, it includes a semilunar court or ward, and again joins the ditch of the mound on its east side. This court covers and protects about two-thirds of the area of the mound, and the content of its ditch being thrown inwards, forms a bank along its scarp. This bank begins at nothing towards the south-west, and increases gradually in breadth and height towards the east until it ends in a substantial mound, about two-thirds of the height of the great mound, and divided from it by its ditch. The entrance to this court was towards the south-east, and is indicated by a cutting in the bank, and a slight causeway across the ditch. The ditch varies in depth and breadth, being greatest where the bank is highest and broadest.

Outside these works, towards the north-north-east,

and east, are clear traces of an exterior bank and ditch, in part containing water. It is probable that this defence was carried all round the inner works, so as to include a spacious annular court. The edge of this bank, to the north, is shown by the slight but marked deflexion of the high road, a very old one, to avoid it.

The disposition of this, as of every other Burh, shows that the lord of the soil, whose house of timber occupied the summit of the mound, provided protection, not only against an extensive foe, but against his own dependents; or it may be against the foeman, supposing him to have carried the outer defences. The bank, which, regarded merely as a defence against those on the outside, had better have been carried across the ditch so as to abut upon the mound, is separated from it, leaving the ditch of the mound, as a citadel, unbroken. It is also to be observed that the mound forms a part of the exterior defence of the work; and this on the side of the higher ground, and consequently more exposed front. If we suppose the lord's house on the summit to be enclosed within a circle of stout piles or planks, as shown in the Bayeux tapestry, and a similar palisade to be erected along the crest of the bank within the ditch, the only addition needed to make the defence complete would be to carry the line of palisades across the ditch of the mound until it abutted on each side upon the lord's house. This no doubt is what was done. At least it was what the Normans did when they replaced by a keep and curtains of masonry the structures of timber and lines of palisades upon these older earthworks. This may be seen at Tamworth, where an early Norman wall crosses the ditch and runs into the mound; or at Lincoln, Arundel, Hawarden, Tickhill, Tonbridge and many other early castles, where the curtain wall of the court is carried across the ditch of the mound, so as to abut upon the keep, with which, however, its ramparts have no communication. In this way the strongest part or citadel of the castle was placed upon its naturally weakest front; and, at the same time, its proper defences as a citadel were unbroken, and the enemy who had obtained possession of the court was still a long way from mastering the whole fortress.

It is to be hoped that the long descended owner of

this very interesting Burh will direct his tenants to abstain from injuring it. Very recently a large excavation has been made in the south side of the mound, evidently for some rural purpose.

A short distance north of Sekington, between it and Thorpe-Constantine, on the west of the high-road, in an angle of the Staffordshire border, is a small low or tumulus, much trimmed and modernized, but probably old and sepulchral. It is not shewn on the ordnance map.

At Elford, also in Staffordshire, also by the road-side, is another small low, rather injured by the road, here in slight cutting. This is set down correctly on the map.

A third mound, no doubt also sepulchral, and not noticed in the map, stands in the adjacent village of Edengale, at the meeting of three ways. On it are three or four old trees, and it is not unlikely to have been surmounted by a later cross. None of these mounds could ever be mistaken for a Burh.