

ON BIGBURY CAMP AND THE PILGRIMS' WAY.¹

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1. *Introductory.*

The "British Camp" in Bigbury Wood, in the parish of Harbledown, about two miles due west of Canterbury, has long been known. It is briefly described by Hussey in *Archaeologia Cantiana*, and considered by him to stand in direct relation to the ford over the Stour, "Stonesford," about half a mile to the south-east.²

Within it in 1861 iron implements were obtained consisting of a ploughshare, coulter, cattle-goad, horse-bit and tire of a wheel, now in the Canterbury Museum. It has also been mentioned by Payne and other writers on the antiquities of Kent. In 1895 in the course of an examination of it, in company with the Rev. H. H. Winwood, I obtained further evidence as to its antiquity, from the objects obtained by the workmen in the gravel-pits in the part marked A on the map (Fig. 1). Further discoveries have since been made of various articles, mostly of iron, which seem to be of sufficient importance to be brought before the Institute, not merely because they fix

¹ Read May 7th, 1902.

² In the Ordnance Maps, near Tonford farm.

the archaeological age of Bigbury, but also because they prove that the "Pilgrims' Way" is an ancient road of the same age as that of the above settlement.

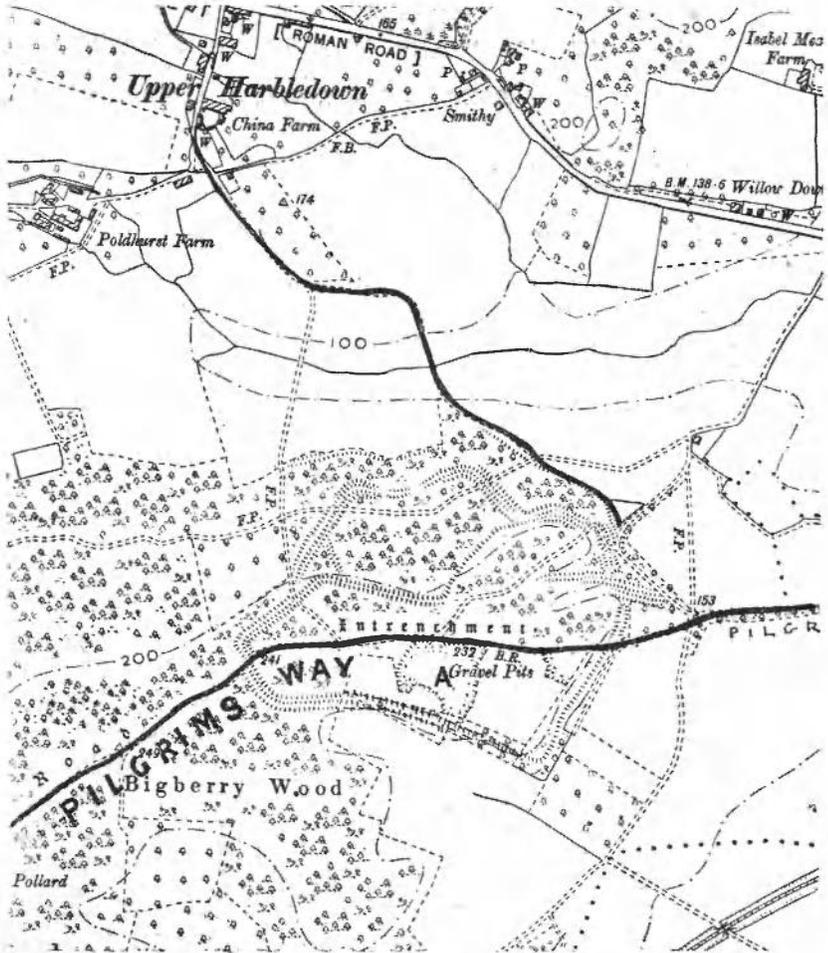


FIG. 1.—PLAN OF BIGBURY CAMP AND PILGRIMS' WAY.

2. *The Bigbury Settlement.*

An examination of the irregular series of intrenchments (Fig. 1), and more particularly the fact that the fosse and ramp are not more than 4 feet below and above the ground

level, and the fact that the former is on the inside of the ramp on the west, south, and north sides, prove that it has been the site of a town and not a fortress. It is situated about 200 feet above the sea on a bed of gravel resting on dry Thanet sand. It overlooks the valley of the Stour to the south, and is divided from the heights of Harbledown to the north by a broad valley. The area included in the ramparts is about 1,800 feet from east to west, and varies from 500 to 1,000 feet from north to south. To the north is an annexe about 1,000 feet from east to west and 500 feet from north to south. It is for the most part covered with a dense growth of scrub and hop-pole plantations, and occupies the eastern end of a large wooded tract extending many miles westwards. In its general plan it resembles the Romano-British village of Woodcuts explored by General Pitt-Rivers. There are two entrances, the one on the east being approached by the deep sunk winding Pilgrims' Road from Canterbury. This road passes out on the west in the direction of Chart-ham Hatch and Bridge farm. There is also another old track passing from the eastern entrance northwards to China farm and thence to the Watling Street. It is obvious therefore that Bigbury stands in the closest connection to the roads under consideration, and that both were used by the same people, and may be referred to the same date.

3. *The Discoveries inside the Settlement.*

The following is the list of the discoveries which have been made inside the settlement at point A of the plan Fig. 1. It includes only those which are preserved in the Manchester Museum.

Socketed spear heads of iron.

Tanged iron dagger.

Iron axe.

Iron adze.

Two iron hammers.

Two iron sickles.

Two iron bill-hooks.

Iron coulter.

Two iron ploughshares.

Iron chisel.

Two iron pot-hooks.

Two pairs of iron shackles.

Iron chain.

• One iron snaffle bit.

Iron snaffle bit plated with bronze.

Iron ring, bronze-plated.

Circular iron object plated with bronze.

Brown pottery.

The two small socketed spears (Pl. I, Fig. 2*a*) are about 4 inches long, and leaf-shaped. They are of a type which occurs in the settlements of the Prehistoric Iron Age at Hunsbury near Northampton, and in the Lake Village of Glastonbury.

The tanged dagger (Fig. 2*b*), blade 10 inches long and tang 3 inches, is of the same type as those found in the above-mentioned localities, that from Hunsbury being 13·5 inches long.

The iron axe (Fig. 2*c*), 8·25 inches long, has a cutting edge of 2·4 inches. The adze (*d*) is 10·8 inches long, and has an edge measuring 1·9 inches. Both occur at Hunsbury, and the latter at Glastonbury.

The two hammers (*e*) are respectively 4 inches and 4½ inches long.

→ The larger of the two sickles (Fig. 3*a*) measures on the outer curve 20·5 + inches, the smaller 16·9 + inches. The larger has a blade 2·4 inches wide. The base of each of the blades has been turned over for the reception of a wooden handle which was kept in place also by a nail.

Blades similar to these with the wooden handles in them occur in the Lake Village of Glastonbury.

The two bill-hooks (*b*) measure respectively 11 inches and 10 inches along the outer curve, the blade of the wider of the two being 2 inches across. Both have their bases turned over for the reception of the handle, which was further secured by a nail. This form of bill-hook also occurs at Glastonbury.

A massive hook (Pl. II, Fig. 4*a*), measuring 16·8 inches, and with a short thick cutting edge 6 inches long, is probably the coulter of a plough. It is similar to that figured in Smith's *Dictionary of Antiquities*, under the

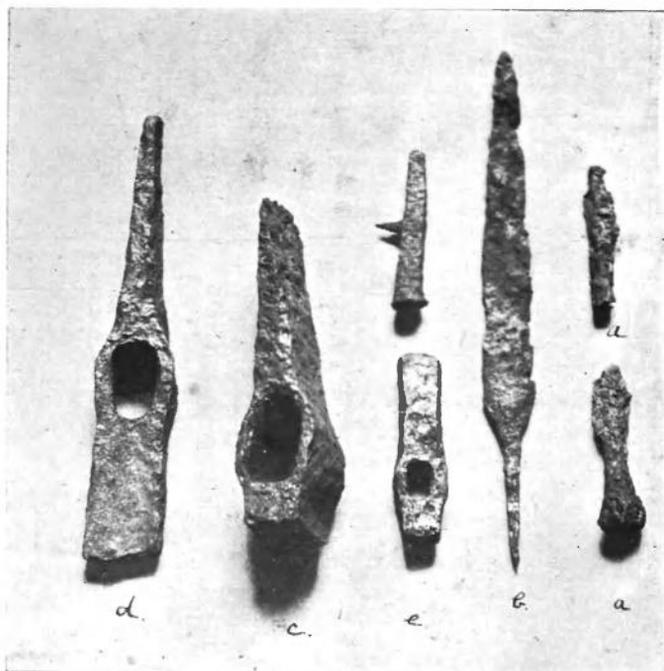


FIG. 2. *a.* SPEARS. *b.* DAGGER. *c.* AXE. *d.* ADZE. *e.* HAMMERS.

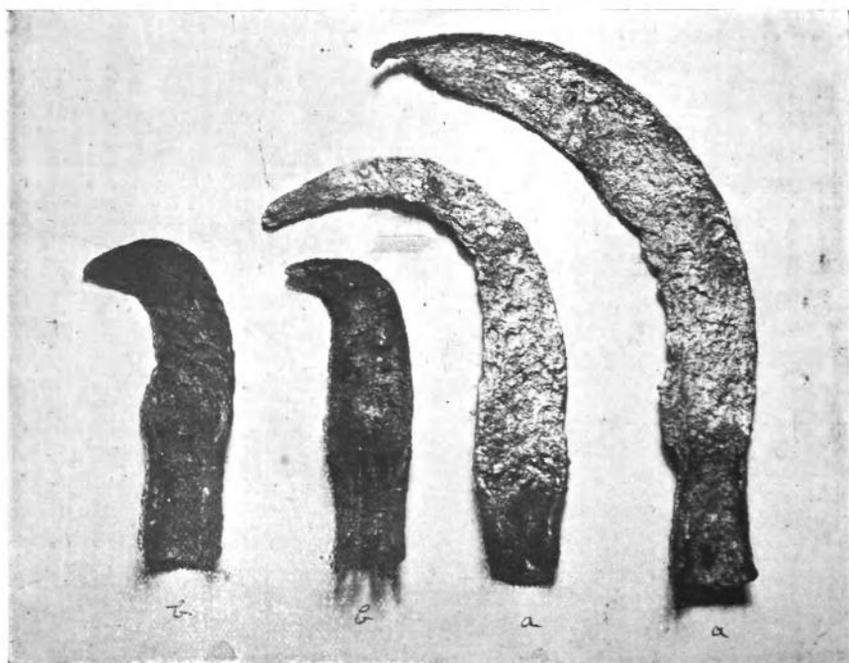


FIG. 3. *a.* SICKLES. *b.* BILLHOOKS.
IRON OBJECTS FOUND IN BIGBURY CAMP.

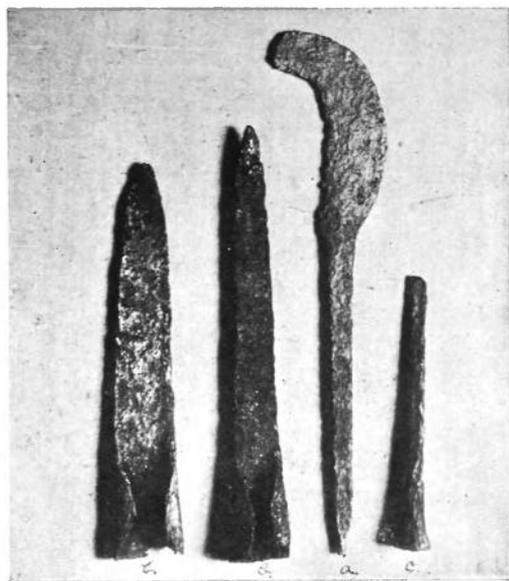


FIG. 4. *a.* COULTER. *b.* PLOUGHSHARES. *c.* CHISEL.

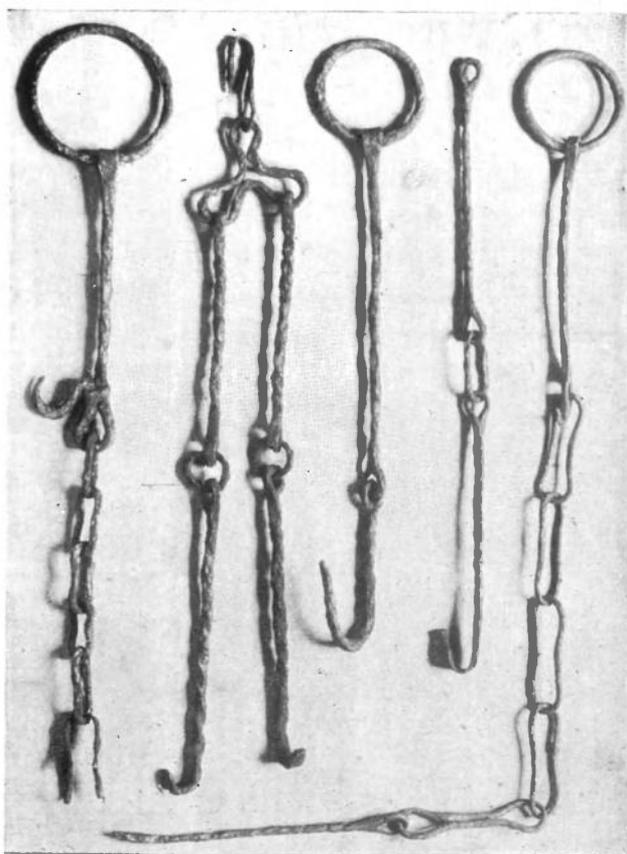


FIG. 5. POTHOOKS.
IRON OBJECTS FOUND IN BLOODY CAMP

head of *aratrum*. A somewhat similar implement to this has been met with at Glastonbury. The tang is oblong in section, the long side measuring .75 inches, and must, from its size, have been fixed in a massive piece of wood.

The two ploughshares (*b*) are respectively 18.6 inches and 12.3 inches long, and 1.3 inches and 2 inches broad. They consist of an obtusely-pointed bar of iron with the base hammered out and turned over so as to receive the end of the wooden share.

Iron ploughshares of this form have been met with in settlements of the Prehistoric Iron Age at Hunsbury, and at Mount Caburn near Lewes (described by General Pitt-Rivers).

The iron chisel (*c*) measures 8.8 inches, and is similar to those found at Hunsbury.

The five pot-hooks (Fig. 5) vary in length from 15 to 44 inches, and have from 1 to 3 hooks. They are made of twisted lengths of iron connected by links, mostly of hour-glass shape, and each has a circular ring for suspension. I am not aware that any pot-hooks of this kind have been recorded. It may, however, be noted that a pot-hook more elaborate than these, with a sliding attachment, and with one twisted iron bar like the above, has been discovered at Hunsbury.

The two pairs of iron shackles (Pl. III, Fig. 6) are made of two triangular links connected together with an hour-glass link, the two other angles of the triangle bearing two movable bars bent so as to form a segment of a circle. The end of one of these bars fits into a loop in the other so as to form a circle of about 3 inches in diameter. The more perfect of the two is 15.5 inches long. They are too large for handcuffs, and were probably used for fetters for men or for hobbles for horses.

An iron chain (Fig. 7), 17.9 feet in length, is mostly formed of two kinds of links, hour-glass shaped (*a*) and plain (*b*). At each end of it are two bars of iron (*c*), so bent as to form a circle 7 inches in diameter when they are fastened together. At intervals of 32 inches are other bars, each bent into a half circle (*d*), terminating in a link (*e*), so arranged as to pass through a plain link (*b*) in the chain, and form a circle of the same diameter

as those at the end. In each of these lateral circles the rest of the circumference is formed of three hour-glass links of the chain. Each of these half-circles is fastened by the free link (*e*) at the end of the bent bar passing through the plain link (*b*) in the chain, and being secured by a staple or padlock. The circles may have been used as iron collars for a body of prisoners or for a chain gang. They are obviously unfitted to secure horses or cattle, as they are too large for the feet, and too small for the necks. I am not aware of the discovery of any similar chain to throw light on the question.

The two snaffle bits (Fig. 8) are each formed of three pieces, with large rings for the reception of the reins, measuring 2·8 inches and 2·9 inches in diameter. One of these is exactly like a bit found at Hunsbury. The other consists of two iron rings attached to the two outer bars of the bit, the middle portion being gone. These are plated with bronze. Their form is graceful and belongs to the art known in Great Britain as Late Celtic.

A bronze-plated ring for a strap ornamented in imitation of the sewing on leather obviously belongs to harness.

The only fragment of pottery which I have been able to rescue is the flat bottom of a vessel of grey ware, of a type commonly met with in association with the remains of the Prehistoric Iron Age. It was also used in Roman times in Britain, and is abundantly represented in the various refuse heaps. I was informed by one of the men, Samuel Bowdick, that they had found pottery along with the iron implements, some time before my visit in 1896. The fragment which I obtained, along with several of the above iron implements, had been thrown away by the men and buried in the gravel pit. Fortunately they remembered the exact spot and dug it out before my eyes. This led to the other articles being preserved, which are now recorded in this paper. It is to be hoped that a systematic exploration will be undertaken of this interesting site.

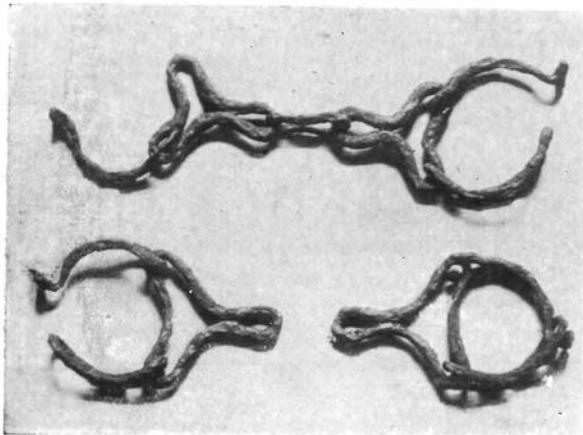


FIG. 6. SHACKLES.



FIG. 8. SNAFFLE BITS.

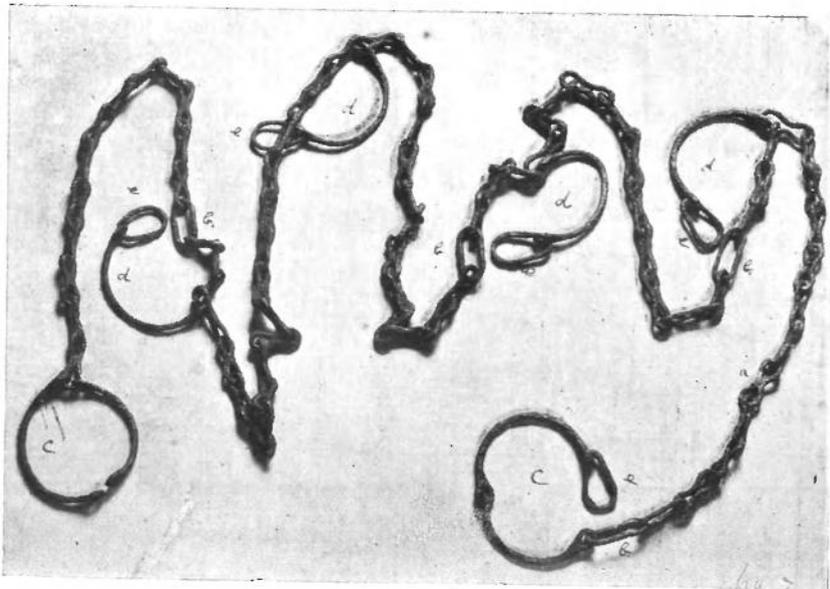


FIG. 7. CHAIN.
FROM OBJECTS FOUND IN BIGBURY CAMP.

4. *The Settlement of Prehistoric Iron Age.*

The examination of the whole of these remains indicates clearly the archaeological age of the Bigbury settlement. It falls into line with a series of settlements of Prehistoric Iron Age, such as Mount Caburn explored by the late General Pitt-Rivers, the Lake Village of Glastonbury explored by Mr. Bulleid, and Hunsbury, the remains from which are preserved in the museum at Northampton. They are pre-Roman, and probably belong to a period ranging from one to two centuries before the invasion of Britain by Caesar.

5. *The Pilgrims' Way, also of Prehistoric Iron Age.*

If, however, the Bigbury settlement belongs to the Prehistoric Iron Age, it is obvious that its position on the Pilgrims' Way (Fig. 1) proves that the latter must be assigned to the same remote period. The Pilgrims' Way passes westward and southwards from its junction with the Watling Street near Canterbury through the settlement of Bigbury, past Chartham Hatch, through Chilham, and Godmersham Park, to Boughton Aluph and Eastwell Park. From this point it runs along the bare chalk, on the southern side of the crest of the Downs, by Charing, Lenham, Hollingbourn, Detling, to the River Medway, passing Kits Coty House on the right, and the cemetery of the Prehistoric Iron Age at Aylesford on the left at a distance of about a mile. It crosses the Medway at Lower Halling, thence sweeping westward on the southern slope of the Downs through Wrotham and Kemsing to Otford, the ford over the Darent. To the west of this river it passes through Chevening Park to Merstham and Reigate, crossing the River Mole to the north of Dorking. From this it runs through Shere and Guildford, crossing the Wey at the latter place. Thence it runs due west along the line of the Hog's Back to Farnham, to join still further to the west the network of trackways of Surrey, Hampshire and Berkshire. It belongs to the same system of roads

which in other parts of Britain are clearly proved to belong to the Prehistoric Iron Age. It was undoubtedly used by the pilgrims to Canterbury, long after the settlements which it linked together had utterly perished. Throughout its course it is represented by fragments of existing roads and tracks, locally known as "The Pilgrims' Way."

There is nothing exceptional in the use of these ancient lines of communication, long after the prehistoric settlements which they linked together had perished. It is mainly a question of the easiest road. In this case, as in the Ickniel Way, passing southwards from near Bury St. Edmunds along the edge of the chalk Downs into Berkshire, the line of travel would be dry and without forest or morass. For these reasons these roads would be used for communication between centres of later origin. In some cases, however, their persistent use long after the making of later and better roads is very remarkable. The track way, for example, known in Northamptonshire as "the Welsh Way," passing by Hunsbury Camp, Northampton, to Banbury, and thence to the Cotswolds and into Wales, has been used by Welsh drovers within the last half of the nineteenth century, although it is, in portions of its course, a mere track through open fields, and in spite of the existence of good roads. There is, therefore, nothing exceptional in the fact that the Pilgrims' Way should have been used by the pilgrims to Canterbury, and that it should be known by their name, although it forms part of a system of roads made to connect settlements and fortresses of the Prehistoric Iron Age, the names of which had perished before the English conquest of Britain.