

Location of the alleged Anglian Cemetery at Foremark.

By WILLIAM FRASER.

IN John Ward's study of "Anglo-Saxon Remains" in Vol. I of the V.C.H. Derbyshire, he includes King's Newton, Foremark and Stapenhill as three known instances of extensive Anglian interments on the Derbyshire Trent. The location of the first and last of these cemeteries seems to be sufficiently well authenticated, but that of the Foremark burial-ground appears to have been completely lost sight of, and over a number of years I have been trying, at odd times, to discover it. No one I questioned, archaeologically-minded or otherwise, could throw any light on the matter.

It was only during last Spring (1941) that I succeeded in my quest.

Thomas Bateman, in his "Ten Years Digging," (pub. 1861), refers to the Foremark cemetery as "numerous tumuli in a plantation called The Ferns, near Foremark Hall." I found that all knowledge of this name had died out locally; even the consulting, at my request, of the Foremark estate plans by the present and late agents, failed to locate The Ferns.

Eventually, by a fortunate chance, I was put into touch with "Granny" Cliff of Ingleby, a wonderful old lady now within a year or two of her century, and it was from information she gave me that I ran the missing graveyard to earth in the heart of the Heath Wood, a considerable plantation crowning the highest point of the ridge above

the Trent, about half way between Foremark Hall and Knowle Hills.

The mounds, which Bateman states number more than fifty, do not shew up to advantage. They are, for the most part, densely overgrown with trees and lesser timber, and any attempt to check Bateman's enumeration would require organised co-operation. Bateman tells us he opened five of the mounds, and found that each covered a number of calcined bones, and that upon each ashy floor "were accumulated stones bearing the marks of fire, which had been first thrown on the glowing embers, and over these earth was heaped to form the bowl-shaped tumulus." The only other finds were a pin and an indefinite fragment of iron.

Scattered stones and other signs of interference indicate the mounds opened by Bateman.

In his "Anglo-Saxon" paper referred to above John Ward states of the King's Newton cemetery: "These interments are without doubt pagan English," and of Stapenhill: "The cinerary urns enclosing the interments appear to have been precisely similar to the King's Newton urns." But with regard to Foremark he sounds a doubtful note: "The similarity of these barrows to those which were designated 'late' in the 'Early Man' section of this work renders it doubtful whether they should not have been referred to there instead of here; but this only shews the need for further comparative study."

In connection with this suggestion of Ward's that the Foremark mounds may be pre-Roman it is worth noting that, despite the great swamps and tangled forest growth that must have invested the Trent valley in early times, there appears to be good evidence of prehistoric human occupancy. The large tumuli called Swarkeston Lows are marked on the Prehistoric Remains map in the V.C.H., and quite recently a cinerary urn of late Bronze Age date was discovered in the gravel near Willington, as recorded

in the 1938 issue of this *Journal*. Ward's hint, therefore, would seem to merit further investigation.

While engaged in searching for the Foremark site I accidentally stumbled upon a solitary mound on a rising bank about half a mile to the east of the Heath Wood, close to Seven Spouts Farm. Whether this "outlier" is contemporary with the large group in the Wood, or whether its provenance must be referred to some other epoch, is a point that probably only the spade can decide.

It would seem that only further digging, undertaken with a strict observance of the precautions now associated with modern scientific excavation, can resolve the distinctly anomalous character assigned to these Foremark mounds by Ward's uncertainty.

Since the foregoing was written, the present writer in collaboration with Mr. Camden Clarke, a fellow-member of the Burton-on-Trent Archæological Society, has excavated one of the grave-mounds at Foremark, and established the fact that it is Anglian. It is intended to carry out further excavations at the earliest opportunity, and to publish results in a future number of this *Journal*.

The result of this preliminary dig is that we found in the centre of the mound, a tightly-packed charcoal floor (remains of the funeral fire) surrounded by a low stone wall, and embedded in it were numerous fragments of burnt bone, several flat pieces of metal, which are assumed to be a broken sword, and some bronze fragments, but no pottery.

These small finds were submitted to Mr. T. D. Kendrick, of the Department of British and Medieval Antiquities at the British Museum, who reports that there seems to be no doubt that the burial is Anglo-Saxon, and that he regards the find as extremely important, above all because it appears to be a primary cremation in a barrow.

As there are at least fifty of these grave-mounds, there is every probability that some interesting finds will be made which will contribute materially to our knowledge of the early settlement of Mercia by the pagan Angles. The fact that cremation was practised by those who used the cemetery proves that it dates from the pagan period, but the question of a definite date will have to await further evidence.