

A CARSHALTON CAMP.

BY

MRS. BIRCH.

I SHOULD like to preface these remarks with a word of gratitude to Mr S. Ward Evans, whose people are old residents of Carshalton, and who has always himself taken a keen interest in matters archæological. He has kindly allowed me to make use of his notes and a sketch plan, made some twenty years ago, without which I should have been quite unable to trace a large portion of the earthwork.

The camp is situated on a spur of the chalk uplands, at its northern edge, and overlooks a fairly wide expanse of country towards Streatham and Tooting. This northern scarp shows traces of having been considerably steeper than is suggested by the present contours and has been extensively quarried for chalk by preceding generations. The eastern side is a dry valley and across this, and about a mile to the South, is the site of another camp now covered by Queen Mary's Hospital. This camp was excavated in 1905 under the supervision of Mr Roberts,¹ who dated it from the late Neolithic or Early Bronze age.

The ground on the western side slopes slightly towards Sutton and the centre of the camp appears to have been roughly the site of the present King's Lane bridge. Running due South from the camp was an ancient trackway, called the Rudge way in the Court Rolls for 1574, and now partly incorporated in a modern road; this trackway, after about half a mile, joined the Banstead Road, which appears to have been an equally ancient way. So far, the only visible trace of the camp which has been discovered is that of the north-eastern section; under favourable circumstances a broad ridge can be seen running from Upland Road and curving round to the Wallington branch of the railway; and over this, crossing the

¹ Journal of the Anthropological Institute, xxxv (1905).

ends of Hawthorn and Fairview Roads, are a well-marked bank and ditch of considerable dimensions, which die away shortly before reaching the Carshalton railway line. Below this section a second ridge used to be visible, but the ground has been in constant cultivation and all signs have now disappeared; on laying the sewer, however, in Highfield Road, at the upper end, good sections of a double bank and ditch were crossed and these were well defined to the top of Ringstead Road. From here across the top of Carshalton Grove it was not so clear, but the outer bank and ditch were visible at Victoria Road, and the inner bank at Albert Road. A bank and ditch could also be traced at Eaton Road, running towards The Ridgway.

These sections give a good outline of the camp, and several finds have come to light at various times within its area. About 1866, when the deep cutting was made in the north face of the hill for the Carshalton line, the workmen found a large number of bronze tools and weapons, at about four to five feet below the surface, on what is now the South bank. This find was nearly midway between the King's Lane and Carshalton Road bridges; and below the latter, on the same bank, a number of bronze ingots were also discovered at a depth of something over a foot and in the chalk. The difference in depth may perhaps be explained by the fact that part of the cutting ran through an old chalk pit and some of the subsoil had possibly been moved. At all events the old entrance to the pit was a little west of the second find.

It was difficult, after the lapse of about half a century, to obtain precise details of the bronze implements, but Mr Ward Evans interviewed various old men who had been employed on the excavating work and satisfied himself that there were many axeheads and ordinary spear-heads, and one very long broad spear-head with a marked central rib. Upon one point all the men were agreed, that a gentleman from London, a friend of one of the surveyors, gathered all the weapons together, and one of the labourers took the heavy parcel to Wallington Station for him, and got nothing for his trouble! The ingots apparently were not considered worth bothering about, and just disappeared. They were described as several squarish small ones and one of a roughly oval shape weighing about

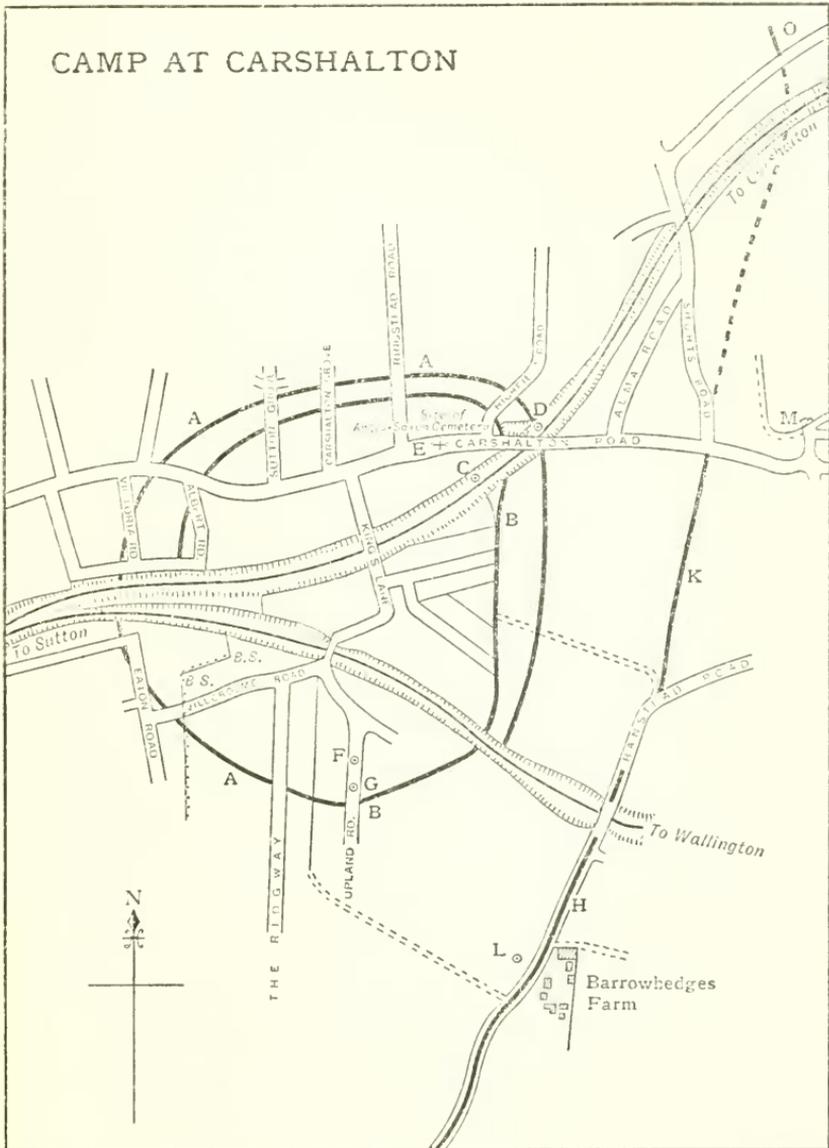
6 or 7 lbs; the latter was in use for some time in the foreman's shed for holding papers in place but was finally thrown away or lost. When widening Carshalton Road for the trams, near the South end of Ringstead Road, several Anglo-Saxon graves were uncovered at a depth of about 2 ft. 6 in. below the present surface. The site is now marked on the Ordnance maps, and there is a description by Mr George Clinch in our Collections.¹ In June 1920 a small Roman pot was found near the North end of Uplands Road; a sewer was being laid in the middle of the road and cut through a trench in the solid chalk. The trench was filled with a reddish rubble and the pot lay near the middle at a depth of 2½ ft; there was something that looked like old decayed bones near the pot. This summer a drain was put in from a new house to the sewer at a point a little further South, but still within the apparent line of the camp; the cutting ran across two and part of a third trenches in the chalk, all of them appearing to taper to the South, but rather suggesting squares cut diagonally by the drain. A few pot-boilers came out, but no pottery and only two or three fragments of white encrusted bone. Mr Ward Evans spoke to many residents, whose grounds extended over the site of the camp, with a view to obtaining any evidence that might be forthcoming, but only succeeded in securing a fragment of a dress fastener of coiled bronze wire, a broken bronze arrowhead, some fragments of bronze age domestic pottery, and a number of Roman coins of the 2nd and 3rd centuries. This covers all the present known facts, and it only remains to add that the camp would lie within a quarter mile of copious springs of water.

The Banstead Road, mentioned above, is undoubtedly an ancient trackway and appears to have continued Southwards on a line with the beginning of Short's Lane; quite close to this, and a little to the East is the Lodge and drive to Carshalton House² of which Aubrey writes—

‘ John Fellowes, in levelling the road to make a handsome Avenue to his Seat, discovered a great Quantity of Bones, mostly human, which seem to hint that here was formerly a Cemetery or that it was a Field of Battle.’

¹ S.A.C. xxiii, p. 213.

² See a Note on this house below, p. 120.



Further South still, not far from Carshalton Station, a piece of Roman road has come to light on about the same line; and this, if continued, more or less coincides with a very old lane, now little used, leading towards Mitcham. The authenticity of this direction has not been in any way tested, but is mentioned as it seems rather suggestive in relation to the camp.

Close to Barrow Hedges Farm, on the opposite side of the old Banstead road, were found some years ago two large fragments of Samian bowls, and Roman coins have also been turned up in the neighbourhood from time to time.

There are traces in Carshalton Park of an old track leading from The Square and curving in a South-Westerly direction, which would bring it out opposite the Park Hill end of the present Banstead road, but the antiquity of this is hard to determine; the older maps however show a foot path continuing the same line from the conjectured fork, and making direct for the centre of the camp.

KEY TO MAP.

- A, A, A Approximate extent of camp.
- B, B Portion still visible.
- C Find of bronze implements.
- D Find of ingots.
- E Saxon burials.
- F Situation of Roman pot.
- G Trenches in Chalk.
- H Ancient trackway.
- K Bank and possible continuation of above.
- L Samian ware (approximate only).
- M Lodge and drive of Carshalton House.
- O Recently discovered section of Roman road (approx.).