

THE EARTH CIRCLES ON ST. MARTHA'S HILL, NEAR GUILDFORD

BY

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This paper deals with the folklore and customs of St. Martha's Hill, near Guildford, and neighbouring places, describes the excavation of an earth circle on the hill, discusses the type, and lists the other archaeological sites and finds of the vicinity.

ST. MARTHA'S HILL is the conspicuous eminence, 573 feet O.D., just north of Chilworth in the Tillingbourne Valley, 2 miles south-east of Guildford (grid reference 51/028483). The so-called Pilgrims Way runs up and down it, east and west, and the hill is crowned by the old church of St. Martha. Near the top of the hill, below the church, on the south side, are four circles, consisting of banks with external ditches, and a fifth is not far away to the south-east. (Fig. 1.)

THE HISTORY OF THE SITE

These circles have been the subject of casual references and intermittent interest for some hundred years, and it may now be useful to set out the known facts about them. The references will be made in chronological order, and the considerations arising from them discussed later.

It is curious, but not necessarily significant, that none of the older histories of Surrey (Aubrey, compiled 1673 onward, published 1719; Salmon, 1736; Camden, 16th century, revised by Gough, 1789; Manning and Bray, 1809; Allen, 1829) mention the circles at all; nor do the earlier works of local topography (Russell, 1801; *Excursions Through Surrey*, c. 1820; Smith, 1828); nor do the usually voracious *Gentleman's Magazine* and its peers. The first notice is that by Brayley in 1850:¹

On the southern side of St. Martha's Hill, are two distinct but small circles; each formed by a single bank and ditch: one of them is about 30 yards in diameter; the other, 28 yards. Whether these circles were ever connected with Druidical rites, or not, must remain questionable. They have not hitherto been noticed in any published work; and the same may be stated with respect to a large Barrow,² enveloped in foliage, and obscured by large trees growing upon it, which is situated about three-quarters of a mile from the hill, in the approach from Guildford.

¹ Brayley, E. W., *Topographical History of Surrey*, Vol. V, 1850, p. 133.

² This barrow is the platform mound at Tyting.

Thistleton Dyer, in 1876,¹ records a folk-custom whose significance will appear shortly:

A custom, the origin of which is lost in the obscurity of time, prevails in the neighbourhood of Guildford of making a pilgrimage to St. Martha's (or Martyr's) Hill on Good Friday. Thither from all the countryside youths and maidens, old folks and children, betake themselves, and gathered together on one of the most beautiful spots in Surrey, in full sight of an old Norman church which crowns the green summit of the hill, beguile the time with music and dancing. Whatever the origin of this pilgrimage to St. Martha's, it is apparently one that commends itself to the taste of the present generation, and is not likely to die out with the lapse of years, but to increase in popular estimation as long as the green hill lasts to attract the worshippers of natural beauty, or to furnish the mere votaries of pleasure with the excuse and the opportunity for a pleasant holiday.

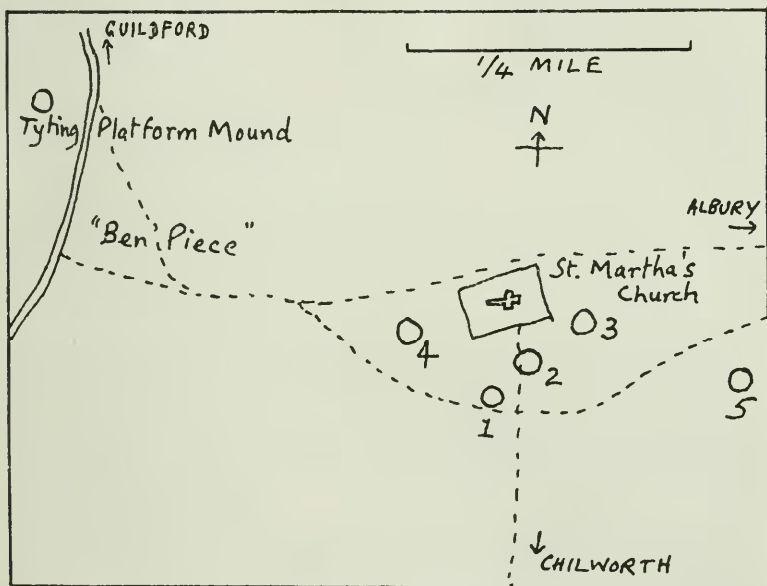


FIG. 1.—ST. MARTHA'S, THE EARTH CIRCLES AND TYTING.

Clinch and Kershaw, in 1895,² repeat this, but add: "It [the custom] clearly has no reference to the solemn event celebrated upon Good Friday by Christians."

Lasham, in the same year,³ may be referring to these descriptions in his note on the circles, but goes a little farther in his interpretation:

¹ Thistleton Dyer, T. F., *British Popular Customs*, 1876, p. 156, quoting *The Times* of April 18, 1870.

² Clinch, G., and Kershaw, S. W., *Bygone Surrey*, 1895, p. 112.

³ Lasham, T., "Camps, Earthworks, Tumuli, etc., in West Surrey," *Sy.A.C.*, Vol. XII, 1895, p. 151.

Covered more or less by furze and undergrowth may be seen four or five earth rings, but as to the origin or date, or use of these, one does not care to hazard an opinion. A theory has been started that they may be remains of Phallic worship (which is far from unlikely). If this is so, it makes the hill with its shrine of the Christian religion of the greatest interest.

Thompson and Moul, in 1902,¹ just touch on the matter, but add nothing:

On St. Martha's Hill there are three curious earth circles, the relics possibly of primitive worship.

Belloc, in his sweeping way, passed by here,² and said, with every appearance of confidence:

It has been conjectured, upon such slight evidence as archæology possesses, that the summit was a place of sacrifice. Certainly great rings of earth stood here before the beginning of history; certainly it was the sacred crown for the refugees of Farley Heath, of Holmbury, of Anstie Bury, and of whatever other stations of war may have crowned these defiant hills.

If it saw rites which the Catholic Church at last subdued, we know nothing of them; we possess only that thread of tradition which has so rarely been broken in Western Europe: the avenue, whereby, until the sixteenth century, all our race could look back into the very origins of their blood.

Much thought was devoted to the problem by Walter Johnson, in three books, published in 1906, 1908 and 1912. From his words it is clear that the Good Friday dancing, in whose future Thistleton Dyer in 1876 had had such faith, must have ceased by the end of the 19th century. Johnson says:

Another custom,³ the origin of which is not ascertainable by the historical method, was the annual pilgrimage of youths and maidens, on Good Friday, to St. Martha's Hill, Guildford. The fact that music and boisterous dancing formed the main features of the proceedings shows that the observances could have no connection with the solemnities of the Christian anniversary. Rather, perhaps, must we look for an explanation in the earth circles on the hill, and the later building of a church in such a conspicuous position. The circles may still be traced amid the bracken (1903), and flakes are abundant near the church, or rather chapel. On the North side, too, are two mounds, which may possibly be small tumuli, so a prehistoric site is indicated. Mrs. Gomme helps us in this matter,⁴ with the information that when the early Christians erected a church where a heathen temple had formerly stood, they performed a dance to their God as the heathen had done to theirs.

On St. Martha's Hill, near Guildford,⁵ are some curious earth-rings, which may represent the remains of a maze. In olden times, the youths and maidens of the district met there on Good Friday, and indulged in music and boisterous dancing. Such observances could have no connection with the solemnities of the Christian anniversary. History tells not the origin of such celebrations. What people carved out the rings is likewise a mystery. Yet a comparison of general customs points to ceremonial dances of painted heathen around some early camp-fire.

¹ Thompson, G., and Moul, D, *Picturesque Surrey*, 1902, p. 130.

² Belloc, H., *The Old Road*, 1904, p. 170.

³ Johnson, W., and Wright, W., *Neolithic Man in North-East Surrey*, 1906, p. 113.

⁴ Gomme, Alice B., *Dictionary of British Folk-lore*, Vol. II, 1898, p. 528.

⁵ Johnson, W., *Folk Memory*, 1908, p. 336.

A similar Good Friday procession¹ [to that at Chilswell Hill, near Oxford] was formerly made to St. Martha's Hill, near Guildford . . . the loud music and the riotous dancing in which the crowd took part were so indecorous that few were found to lament the discontinuance of the custom. There are some curious earth-rings situated to the south of the church, half-hidden by heather, and I have elsewhere suggested [above] that these represent part of a maze, within which the sports were once held. If this be correct, there is an indication of a half-hearted attempt on the part of the church to modify the games, and to turn them to a penitential purpose. Some writers have thought that the morris-dancers made use of such circles for their performances. Here, too, we may have a link which binds these outdoor customs to the practice of dancing in church.

We shall have to return later to the various questions raised in these passages. Meanwhile, we are on firmer ground in the *Victoria County History*, which, while Johnson was speculating, was confining itself to the physical facts:²

On the hill, near the top and towards the southern side, were [*sic*] several curious earth-circles about 28 to 30 yards in diameter marked by a slight mound and ditch. The best was destroyed a few years ago by the Hambledon District Council, who made a reservoir on the hill to which water is pumped to supply houses on Blackheath. The persons responsible for the work made no effort to observe or record any discoveries. The next best marked lies nearly due south of the church. To the south-east is another, fairly well marked, but much overgrown by heather, ferns, and fir trees. The fourth, nearly obliterated, is south-east of the church.

But other writers remained fascinated by the custom: Walsh, in 1914,³ records it, and adds another fact:

At Guildford, in Surrey, many people flock to St. Martha's Hill [on Good Friday]. Formerly they used to spend the day in singing and dancing; but this part of the festivities is no longer retained.

I can find no later mention until 1931, when Whimster produced his survey of the county.⁴ He merely refers to Lasham (see above), and records the laconic note "disc barrows": one would like to know his grounds! Grinsell visited the circles, and gives the dimensions of three of them.⁵

An enigmatic note appears in Kirkham and Lake, 1948:⁶

Possibly the site was of significance, even in pre-Christian times, for Saracen stones there may be the relics of a stone circle, with indications of a circular earthwork.

Presumably Saracen means sarsen, and is used as a generic term for sandstone; but there are no traces, to my knowledge, of a stone circle—the stones are all either outcrops or boulders.

Finally, the new edition of the *Antiquities of Surrey*,⁷ strikes the latest note:

¹ Johnson, W., *Byways in British Archæology*, 1912, p. 195.

² *V.C.H., Surrey*, Vol. III, 1911, p. 104.

³ Walsh, W. S., *Curiosities of Popular Customs*, 1914, p. 484.

⁴ Whimster, D. C., *The Archæology of Surrey*, 1931, p. 235.

⁵ Grinsell, L. V., "An Analysis and List of Surrey Barrows," *Sy.A.C.*, Vol. XLII, 1934, p. 27.

⁶ Kirkham, Nellie, and Lake, W., *The Pilgrims Way*, 1948, p. 57.

⁷ *Antiquities of Surrey* (Surrey County Council, 4th ed., 1951), p. 82.

Curious earthworks of a different character will be found at St. Martha's and on Bullswater Common, Pirbright. These are described by archaeologists as Earth Circles, known from the excavation of similar examples elsewhere, to date *circa* 600–300 B.C., and to be connected with the sites of circular huts of the Ultimate Bronze Age and Early Iron Age periods. Those on Bullswater Common are the better preserved.

(The circles are shown on no map, neither the old ones such as Roque (1775) or Greenwood (1823), nor Estate maps, nor the Ordnance Survey maps in any edition or scale (the relevant 6-inch sheet is Surrey XXXII N.W.). They do not appear either on the O.S. aerial photo map 51/04 N.S. (1948)).

THE GOOD FRIDAY CUSTOMS

It is very evident that the writers cited above have not reached a final or even satisfactory solution to the problem, either of the procession and dancing, or of the earth circles. We must now consider these in turn in more detail.

(i) *Good Friday*. The choice of this day, if it is a choice, is clearly in favour of a pre-Christian origin for the festival. But it is very difficult to get further. Only one similar custom on this day can be traced (see below), and the other Good Friday practices (hot-cross buns, beating an effigy of Judas, etc.) do not help. Good Friday, however, was a general day of meeting for witches in certain parts of England;¹ the connection of witches and the "Old Religion" is well known, and there may have been local reasons for holding the spring festival on this day. Most other comparable customs are on the other days of Easter, although Teignmouth had a Good Friday fair up to the 17th century.²

(ii) *The Procession*. Johnson cites a parallel in Oxfordshire (see above), but it stops there. At St. Martha's there is a link in the Good Friday fair, with stalls,³ which used to take place on the flat green at the foot of the hill on the western side, by Halfpenny Lane above Tyting (the Ben Piece or Bent Piece), and straggling up the hill on both sides of the path, nearly as far as the church.⁴ This seems very poorly documented, but a stall, selling nuts, sweets, oranges, mineral waters, etc., was set up here on Good Fridays as a lone survivor, until about 1900 or very soon after.⁴ The main fair was discontinued before this, and the dancing even earlier. It may have merely grown up to take advantage of the procession and dancing. The procession danced its way from Guildford, over Pewley Down, and passing Tyting; it used a processional dance for

¹ E.g., Pendle, Lancs., see Brand's *Popular Antiquities*, Vol. I, 1853, p. 151; and Murray, Margaret A., *The Witch Cult in Western Europe*, 1921, p. 111; in Germany there is a good deal of evidence for the association of witches with Good Friday, see *Handwörterbuch des deutschen Aberglaubens* (ed. H. Bächtold-Staubli), Vol. IV, 1931–2, s.v. Karfreitag, p. 998.

² Wright, A. R., *British Calendar Customs*, Vol. I., 1936, p. 85.

³ Information from Mrs. E. Gardener, of Guildford, from her own recollections.

⁴ I owe this fact to Mr. R. H. Tribe, senior.

couples.¹ Johnson's reference to a maze fits a procession, of course, better than the circles do. Ritual dancing fell broadly into two kinds, processional and round.² The processional type, which could take complicated forms, and was often conducted in labyrinths or mazes, appears to have symbolized the passage from life to death and back again. The round³ type represented fertility, and the two ideas were, of course, linked. Both were often danced in churchyards, at the four great quarterly nature festivals. Dr. Murray says:⁴ "The round dance, whether of witches or fairies, was also on foot. The dancing ground was regarded as sacred, and often the dancers assembled in the village and danced their way to the holy spot."

Unfortunately, our descriptions are not too clear; they seem in fact to be reluctant to go into too much detail on something felt to be rather profane. But the dancing appears to have been partly in a mazy pattern, partly in rounds. It was not in the churchyard, but on the open space round it, which may bring it into relation to the circles. There was also dancing on the Fairground (the Ben Piece) but this may have been additional or later—in fact, probably only after it was prohibited round the church.⁵

(iii) *The Dancing*. The nature of this dancing is no doubt highly significant. We are told it was boisterous and unseemly, riotous and noisy. Assuming we have here a spring festival for the purpose of ensuring a good harvest, this fits in perfectly with the type of dancing studied by Miss Jane Harrison,⁶ in which the young men of ancient Crete and Greece danced as high as they could, in imitative magic, for the higher they danced the higher would grow the crops, while the cymbals clashed and the drums beat to make thunder to keep evil spirits away. ("Nine ladies dancing, ten lords a-leaping, twelve drummers drumming," as the carol says.) Naturally, such dancing would tend to get unseemly and boisterous; that, in a

¹ Information from Mrs. K. Burgess, of Guildford, who as a child took part in the fun; the sweet-seller's name was Mr. Cannon. (These two testimonies were sent to me as a result of an appeal for information kindly printed by the *Surrey Times*, September 26, 1953.) Mr. N. J. Sampson also helped.

² Possible comparisons are the Helston Furry Dance (see Sharp, Cecil J., and Butterworth, G., *The Morris Book*, Pt. V, 1913, p. 96), or the Castleton Dance (*ibid.*, p. 104), or Winster (*ibid.*, Pt. III, 1924, p. 76). I owe these references, and help on this subject, to Miss Sara E. Jackson, librarian of the English Folk Dance and Song Society.

³ Murray, M. A., *The God of the Witches*, 1931, 2nd ed., 1952, p. 106.

⁴ Kerenyi, K., *Labyrinth-Studien*, 2nd ed., Zurich, 1950; Lorenzo-Ruza, R. S., *Petroglifas e labirintos*, Revista de Guimarães, Vol. LXI, 1951, p. 378; also *Los Motivos de Labirintos*, Rev. de Guim., Vol. LXII, 1953, p. 56; Levy, G. R., *The Gate of Horn*, 1948, pp. 247, 297.

⁵ It is recorded in a local newspaper (*Surrey Advertiser*, April 8, 1871) that in 1871 a Revivalist meeting in the church was violently broken up by the revellers, and it may have been this sort of thing that led to the banishment of the dancing to the Ben Piece, away from the church. I owe this reference to Miss Heath.

⁶ Harrison, J., *Themis*, 1927 ed., Ch. I and Ch. III; for examples from various places see Frazer, J. G., *The Golden Bough* (cf. 1 vol. ed., 1941, p. 28).

sense, was its object. Games were also played, hockey, shying orange-peel, and particularly "kiss-in-the-ring," which was also played at the Hove barrow (see below). Music was provided, in 1871, by three or four basses, a drum, a blind fiddler and his wife, and an accordion player.

The fact, moreover, that *young* people are expressly stated to be the prime characters in the festival, bears out this comparison. The presence of old people and children (not adults) is difficult to explain, but I think it can be taken as a general phrase covering the rest of the villagers of Chilworth, or townspeople of Guildford, who came up to see, and no doubt join in, the fun.

(iv) *The Church Site.* That the hilltop is an ancient sacred site is evident from the presence of the church itself, which is known to go back to the Saxon period.¹ There is no evidence at all that the earliest church was preceded on its present site by either a "heathen temple," to quote Mrs. Gomme, or another earth circle, but the conjunction of all the indications points to at least a sacred place. There are indeed indications in old prints that, before the churchyard assumed its present squarish shape, it was rounded, if not actually a circle; the present wall was only built about 1890. It may only, of course, have been irregular.

The dedication of the church seems securely rooted in one of the several Saints Martha, but it would not be wise, on that account, to reject out of hand the persistent tradition that Christian martyrs were put to death here.² It seems indeed merely coincidence that St. *Martha's* Church was built on *Martyrs* Hill. The fact of the Good Friday dance itself permits the postulation of pre-Christian fertility rites, which, in their full form, may have involved the annual, or periodical sacrifice of the representative of a god. In the later stages of this phase, the sacrifice might well have been a Christian, and some such event, or series of events, may have given rise to the martyr tradition (see below).

(v) *The Circles.* Not a word, in all this, of the earth circles, and really the evidence by which they can be linked to the dancing or

¹ Heath, O. M., *Notes in the History of St. Martha's*, 1933.

² *Sy.A.C.*, Vol. XLI, 1933, p. 132. The hill is referred to in 1273 as Momartre, "which evidently corresponds to Martirhill (1463) or Martyrhill (1510 and later)." Gough, in Camden, Vol. I, 1789, p. 175: "miscalled St. Martha instead of Sanctorum Martirum." Manning and Bray (Vol. II, p. 120) say the church "was probably erected as a chantry over the graves of some Christians who suffered on this spot; and this supposition is the more reasonable as it is not likely that a place originally intended for the ordinary services of religion would have been erected in a spot difficult of access, and so inconvenient, for the parishioners; and it is further confirmed by the Bishop's indulgence . . . being granted to those who should go there in pilgrimage." This is crystallized in Lewis, S., *A Topographical Dictionary of England*, Vol. III, 1849, p. 267: "This parish is called Martyr Hill from a tradition that in the early ages some Christians were burnt by the Pagan Britons on the site where the church now stands." Wilfred Hooper however (*Sy.A.C.*, Vol. XLIV, 1936, p. 63) was not convinced about this tradition.

to the martyrs is extremely slight. Their age and purpose is actually quite hypothetical, but it is curious that, although they have been recorded only a hundred years, there should be the continuous, if tacit, assumption that they are of great, if not prehistoric, age. Are we justified in continuing to make this assumption, or in continuing to link them with the rites?

(vi) *Weston Wood, Albury*. Before we leave this stage of our survey, a curious site should be mentioned, the circular mound in Weston Wood, about $1\frac{1}{2}$ miles to the east. This is a round platform, about 5 feet high and about 135 feet in diameter¹ (this is discussed below). Its origin is mysterious, but it stands close to an old road, and may therefore be pre-mediæval. And nearby, in a field off Sherborne Lane, Manning and Bray record standing stones or the remains of a circle² (see below). There was a fair at Sherborne, on Palm Sunday; and Miss Heath tells me that "an old parishioner of this parish told me many years ago that his grandfather told him that in old times 'there used to be dancin' and fiddlin' on that there mound'" (Weston Wood).³ The Sherborne Palm Sunday fair was stopped by the Rector in 1810 or 1811, who instituted instead a May Day fair in Weston Wood, with stalls, games and sports. One of the games played here has the appearance of being ancient: it was called "Tingling"—one man had a bell and ran in and out of a ring of people, pursued by others who were blindfolded. A man with a sack of sawdust tripped up anyone who was getting too near the bellman by throwing down the sack, which he fell onto. I am not sure whether the Rector's choice of the Weston Wood mound for the fair reflected a tradition of an earlier fair on this spot, but this, although probable, is unlikely now to be proved.

The coincidence is too great to be ignored. Albury must then have had fertility rites of its own. And here we must recall that Harrows Hill, in the same parish, may contain the Anglo-Saxon element hearh, a holy hill.⁴

(vii) *Comparative Material*. Close parallels to the St. Martha custom and its supposed association with the circles are not easy to find. The folklore of England has not been as methodically recorded as could be wished, and much has no doubt been lost. As it happens, however, the Good Friday customs have been recently studied by Mr. Ralph Merrifield,⁵ who has collected, for England, most of the surviving examples.

The famous tumulus at Hove, which produced the Bronze Age

¹ Grinsell, *loc. cit.*, p. 57.

² M. & B., 1809, Vol. II, p. 123.

³ I owe not only this information, but much else, to Miss O. M. Heath, the historian of St. Martha's and Albury.

⁴ *Sy.A.C.*, Vol. XXXIV, 1921, p. 63.

⁵ Merrifield, R., *Good Friday Customs in Sussex* (*Sx.A.C.*, Vol. LXXXIX, 1950, p. 85); see also *Sussex County Magazine*, 26, 1952, p. 58 and p. 122. Mr. Merrifield has discussed the matter with me.

amber cup, was once the scene, every Good Friday, of gatherings of young people playing "kiss-in-the-ring" round it. This game combines the old round of fertility ritual with a symbolic marriage, on which was later grafted, by the Church, the idea of the kiss of Judas. The great Roman barrows at Bartlow, Essex, were the scene of skipping on Good Friday until after the 1914-18 war;¹ skipping is a relic of the leaping dances mentioned above, and many cases of it are known. The only other close English comparison which can be traced is that at Kirkby Ireleth, Cumberland,² where Easter games took place at or in an earth circle. Dancing also took place at the Three Jumps at Thursley (a pagan Saxon place). All these are some distance from the nearest village, and involved a "pilgrimage." Mr. Merrifield cites other cases of dancing round a church,³ and of Good Friday games with no reference to churches or ancient sites. There was also the practice of "journeying to some selected eminence" on Easter Day morning "to see the sun dance."⁴ The French material has been recorded more fully, and admirably summarized by A. van Gennep;⁵ in many respects it is very instructive, and is of value to us by reason of the close relationship, archaeologically speaking, between the populations of the two countries. No custom is recorded on Good Friday, but, as in England, Easter must be taken as a whole for this purpose, as being the spring festival. Games are reported from all over France, of various kinds, archery, feasting on various kinds of food, and mock-weddings. At Bussy-le-Château (Marne) a custom of drinking red wine out of bottles, and breaking them afterwards, took place on one of the three large hillocks (? barrows) there. But more important perhaps for us is the numerous class of customs involving walks or "pilgrimages" by the people to an ancient or sacred site: at Tulle the mayor and corporation with great pomp went on Easter Day to a chapel of the Sainte Vierge, above a ground where there was a rock with healing associations. On Easter Monday eggs were eaten and dancing took place round the chapel; perhaps a transfer of the rite from the prehistoric stone to the Christian holy place. At Gannat (Allier) the people went to a rock 2 km. away, where there was a footprint of St. Procul, patron of the town (? was this a prehistoric cup and ring or rock carving); there they ate brioches (not eggs); once there had been a chapel or at least an oratory there. In the Pyrénées-Orientales many villages make pilgrimages, with music and jollity; there is a pilgrimage to Notre-Dame-du-Vignal

¹ Unpublished; information from Dr. Margaret Murray; I was led to this by both Mr. Merrifield and Dr. Bonser.

² Allcroft, H., *Earthwork of England*, 1908, p. 139.

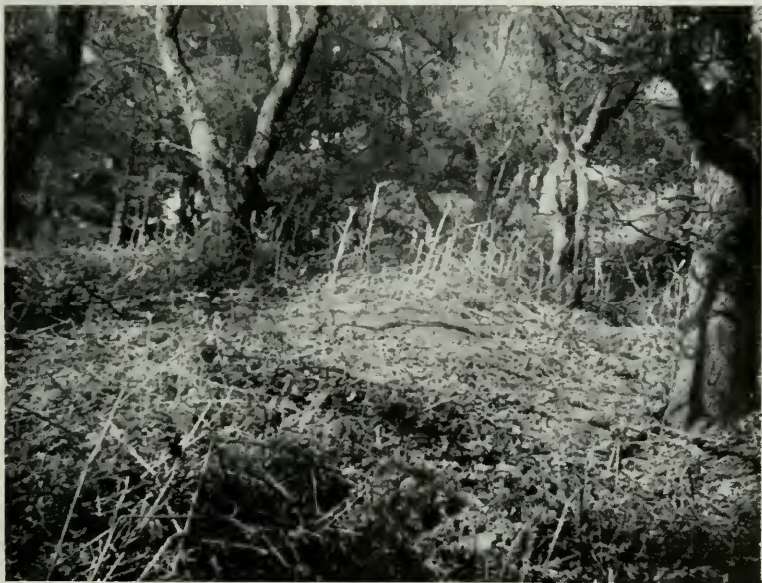
³ The famous Clipping Ceremony at Painswick (Gloucestershire) used to be matched by other similar customs at Easter time.

⁴ Wright, A. R., *British Calendar Customs*, Vol. I, 1936, p. 96 (see also p. 107 for "lifting" and p. 110 for minor games).

⁵ van Gennep, A., *Manuel de Folklore français*, I, iii, 1947, pp. 1381-95; the lack of such a compendium for England is deeply felt!



ST. MARTHA'S, CIRCLE NO. 4.
Bank at A, from inside circle.



ST. MARTHA'S, CIRCLE NO. 4.
Bank and ditch at D.



ST. MARTHA'S, CIRCLE NO. 4.
Section at ES, showing humic layer, wash and "buried soil."

(Puy-de-Dôme) where eggs and cakes are eaten; and picnics are taken at Font-Ste. de Bruis (Htes-Alpes). Several places have pilgrimages to holy places or hills, which cannot be so firmly linked to Easter, but are probably cognate—these include Remiremont, Autun, Marseilles and Manosque.

Finally, some places have fêtes or ceremonies belonging to guilds, corporations or young people, and these may have their origin in initiation rites.

So all the elements of the English customs, with much helpful detail, are present in France.

Unfortunately I am unable to trace any corresponding customs in Germany, but it is not likely that they would be confined to France and England.

The dancing that still goes on in Seville Cathedral every Easter is perhaps the supreme example of the continuing significance of this ancient rite.

(viii) *The Martyrs*. We have seen that there is no reason to reject the tradition that Christians were martyred by pagans on the hill. The story is that this was by fire. There are only a few periods when this could have happened:

- (a) under the Romans, before Constantine's edict of 313—*e.g.*, under Diocletian;
- (b) in the sub-Roman period, by Saxon raiders or pagan Celts;
- (c) in the pagan Saxon period, against Augustine's missionaries and successors and their early converts (just after 597);¹
- (d) by Vikings or Danes (9th–10th centuries).

We know nothing really of the hill in the Roman period, nor in the period of the Saxon raids (5th–6th centuries); but a small Saxon pot was found in 1916 in circle No. 2 (see below), which dates from the 5th or 6th centuries, but probably the latter. This then is from the pagan period, and indicates either that the circle was already extant, and significant, or that the Saxons made the circles. Martyrs are more likely to have been made on the hill by its rightful owners, so to speak, than by chance comers; I think the probabilities are that the years around 600 are those in question. This part of Surrey was well settled in pagan times; it has an unusually high proportion of pagan names²—thus Tiw, the sky-god, was worshipped at Tuesley; Thunor or Thor, at Thursley, Thunder Hill, Thunderfield;

¹ For the extent of paganism in S.E. England in the late 6th and early 7th centuries see Sheldon, G., *The Transition from Roman Britain to Christian England*, 1932, p. 131.

² See Stenton, F. M., *Anglo-Saxon England*, 1947, p. 99, and references given, especially the Surrey volume of the English Place-Name Society; also Philippon, E. A., *Germanisches Heidentum bei den Angelsachsen*, 1929 (Kölner Anglistische Arbeiten, IV), pp. 1 and 6 ff.; a convenient list, covering several counties, is in Copley, Gordon J., *The Conquest of Wessex in the Sixth Century*, 1954, pp. 204–7.

and Underslaw (Cranleigh). Holy places were at Peper Harow, Besinga Hearh at Farnham, ?Harrowhill (Albury), Cusanweoh near Churt, Willey at Farnham and perhaps Godley.¹ No goddess names, although Frig or Eostre might be expected on such a hill. Indeed, the female dedication of the church is a reason for supposing that a goddess was formerly worshipped on its site; this is known from a number of sites, churches and holy wells, where a pagan centre was too powerful for the Church to abolish, but was taken over and re-dedicated.² There are also a few local *-ingas* names, representing early settlement, such as Woking, Tyting, Godalming, Eashing, "Bintungas" (Binton Farm, Seale), Dorking and Tooting.³ The presence of the early name Tyting on the slopes of St. Martha's Hill is of course very significant for the present study.

I cannot find that any of the Saxon gods or goddesses demanded sacrifice by fire; nor are there any examples of earth circles, on holy hills or not, in the Anglo-Saxon homeland in North Germany and South Denmark.⁴ So the Saxons must have found our circles there when they came, if they did not bring the idea with them; and this is consistent with the archæological considerations discussed below.

The martyr tradition, then, may have been coloured by later mediæval modes of thought, in using a manner of sacrifice foreign to the Saxons. Yet this is not the only possible solution. The goddess Eostre or Eastre, after whom Easter is named, was goddess of spring, of dawn, of light, and her festival was peculiarly apt for assimilation with that of the Christian Resurrection. Fires (Easter fires) were lit on her holy hills, and her votaries leapt at her festival.⁵

¹ The attribution of Wanborough, Wishanger and Wisley to Woden is no longer tenable.

² For example, St. Helen, the mother of Constantine, was grafted on to Elen Luyddog, goddess of armies and military roads, and absorbed her functions (Rachel Bromwich in N. K. Chadwick: *Studies in Early British History*, 1954, p. 108, note). This no doubt explains the very ancient St. Helen's Well beside the Roman road at Thorp Arch, Yorkshire; many other examples could be quoted. France has even more instances than Britain; at Arles the church of Notre-Dame de la Major succeeded a temple of Bona Dea; the rich and famous sanctuary of Sequana at the source of the Seine was replaced by the church of Notre-Dame des Fontaines; at Melun an altar of Isis was found beneath the church of Notre Dame (Mâle, E., *La Fin du Paganisme en Gaule*, 1950, pp. 33, 37, 41). Although not invariable, it seems a general rule that gods were replaced by male saints, archangels, etc., goddesses by female. Continuity of occupation of places was commoner in France than England, owing to the Saxon settlement of new ground in this country, but the Church's express policy in both countries was to reconsecrate pagan sites to ensure continuity of worship; it may be no coincidence in the case of St. Martha's that this policy was reaffirmed by Pope Gregory when he sent Augustine to England (Gregory, *Epist.*, Vol. XI, p. 56, quoted by Bede, I, XXX; see Mâle, *op. cit.*, p. 33).

³ E.P.-N.S., *Surrey*, 1934, xi.

⁴ Although there are stone circles at the great holy place of Thorsberg (Schleswig-Holstein). See Jankuhn, H., "The Continental Home of the English," *Antiquity*, 1952, p. 14.

⁵ Grimm, J. L. C., *Teutonic Mythology*, 1880-3, p. 291.

Here at once we have the three elements we are looking for, holy hills, fires and leaping. Indeed, Eostre's fires were serious and earnest compared with the gay midsummer fires on St. John's day, which could be lit anywhere, and mountains or hills were essential to them.¹

Curwen has already invoked Eostre in connection with the barrow at Hove² and if the suggestion here made is sound, we have a possible explanation of the martyrs' fires. Maybe certain Christians tried to stop the practice of Easter fires in honour of Eostre, but were thrown into them instead.

At any rate, there we must leave it, and turn now to the archaeological aspects of the hill.

THE EARTH CIRCLES—ARCHÆOLOGICAL ASPECTS

Grinsell examined three of the circles in 1931,³ and I retain his numbering. No. 1 is about 100 feet in diameter, but is so much destroyed by the reservoir that it is now almost impossible to see. No. 2 likewise (105 feet diameter) has suffered; it is on the steep slope immediately below the churchyard wall, and has the misfortune to be across the path from Chilworth. So the action of human feet added to the wash of the rain down the slope has practically obliterated it. No. 3 (also 105 feet diameter) is better preserved, being in the bracken S.E. of the churchyard. Nos. 4 and 5 were pointed out to me by Mr. Carter, the verger of St. Martha's. No. 4 is just inside the trees W.-S.W. of the church and, in its upper part, is well preserved. No. 5 is nearly $\frac{1}{4}$ -mile away to the E.-S.E., 50 yards S. of the lower path to Albury, in a patch of open ground, and contains a clump of ornamental trees, which make its investigation virtually impossible. Fig. 1 shows these five circles. They are scheduled Ancient Monuments.

It was decided to investigate one of these circles, as no previous excavation could be traced and no record of any finds in any of them. No. 4 was selected for this, as being convenient to deal with, typical of the series, well preserved and relatively undisturbed. Permission to dig was granted by Her Grace Helen, Duchess of Northumberland, the ground landlord, and by the Ancient Monuments Inspectorate of the Ministry of Works.

I was assisted by Mr. R. S. Glen, B.A., Dr. M. I. Machin, M.A., Ph.D., and members of Cranleigh School Archæological Society (Hon. Sec. R. G. Seal), who formed a band of able and enthusiastic workers; photographs were taken by Messrs. Seal, Bloy and Sandberg. Mrs. Machin, Mrs. Wood and other friends also helped, and

¹ Grimm, *op. cit.*, p. 626; Macbain, *Celtic Myth and Religion*, quoted by Allcroft; *Circle*, I, p. 164, says that at Callander the St. John's Day rite entailed the construction of a circular trench; in other cases the ashes had to be arranged in a circle marked with stones, one for each person participating.

² Curwen, E. C., *Prehistoric Sussex*, 1930, p. 34.

³ Grinsell, *loc. cit.*, p. 57.

Mr. Carter showed a helpful interest throughout. The excavations took place at weekends from May 1953 throughout the summer and autumn. They were visited by Dr. I. W. Cornwall, of the Department of Environmental Archaeology of the University of London Institute of Archaeology, to whom I am indebted for valuable discussions and help on the pedological aspects of the site.

(i) *The Circle*, being covered in bracken and trees (which have since been cut down), was not easy to photograph, but Plates I

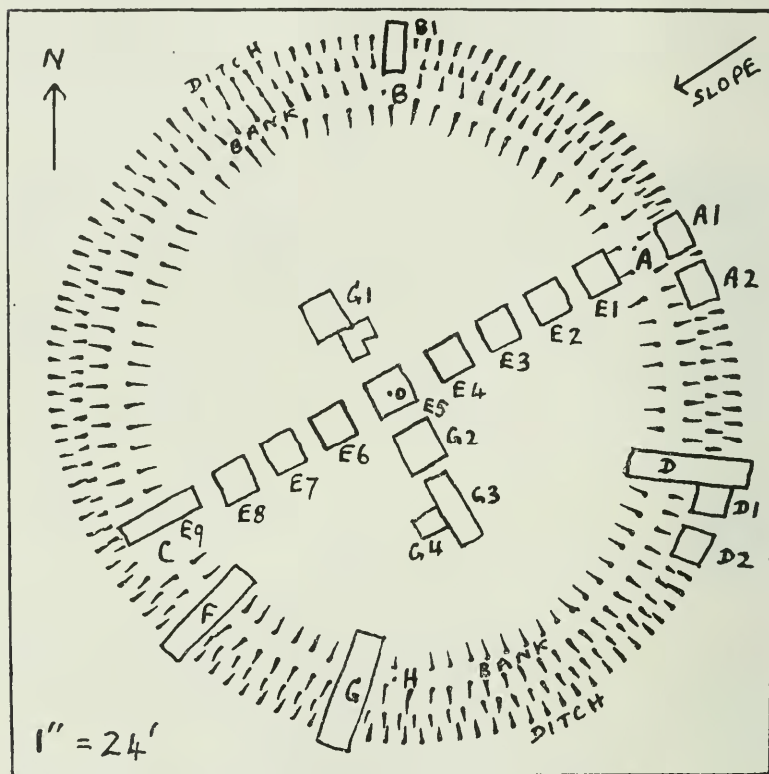


FIG. 2.—ST. MARTHA'S, CIRCLE NO. 4. EXCAVATION PLAN.

and II give views of the bank and ditch. It is on a slope of 1 in 3, which produced special features to be discussed below. Fig. 2, which is based on simple triangulation, and makes no allowance for the slope, gives a plan and shows the various excavations made. The circle is not quite true, being slightly wider from N. to S. than from E. to W. The diameter down the slope, from A to C, is 72 feet between the centres of the bank, that at right angles (B-H) is 77 feet. At D, a typical point along the bank, chosen for its relative

freedom from tree-roots, the bank was 10 inches high and had a spread over 6 feet 8 inches; the ditch (outside it) was 7 inches deep and 4 feet 2 inches wide (Fig. 3). The bank gets lumpy and irregular in the lower half of the circle, but is clearly visible for most of its course.

(ii) *Geology*. It will prove convenient, for a better understanding of the results of excavation, to deal with the geology and pedology of the site at this stage.

The geology of St. Martha's Hill is well known,¹ and need only be briefly recapitulated. The upper part of the hill is of the Folkestone Bed series of the Lower Greensand, consisting of soft sands with masses of ferruginous sandstone or "carstone," having a "honey-comb" structure simulating a thick, hard bed which has resisted erosion and now forms the top of the hill. The beds are steeply inclined, and calciferous sandstone of the Sandgate beds (Bargate rock) forms a subsidiary scarp slightly south of the Folkestone Beds scarp, and below the latter. But for the carstone, the Bargate

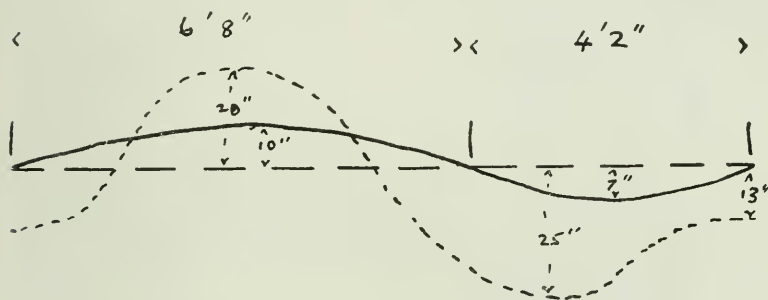


FIG. 3.—ST. MARTHA'S, CIRCLE NO. 4. PROFILES OF BANK AND DITCH AT D.

(Present ground level, dashes; present bank and ditch, continuous line; presumed original profile, dots.)

would probably form the top of a hill which would be considerably lower than the present one.

The presence of a ferruginous "pan" of Pleistocene Age has been noted in connection with Wealden iron-workings, but our excavations revealed a feature on St. Martha's Hill which has not been previously noticed: that is, the presence just below the surface of *two* layers of pan. These may be explained historically as follows: The Greensand was laid down in the Lower Cretaceous; in times just pre-Eocene, and reaching a maximum in the Miocene, earth movements affected the whole Wealden area. A short marine transgression in the Pliocene was followed by re-emergence and sub-aerial action on a planed surface to produce the present outlines. Thus the pan layers can be interpreted: the carstone began to be

¹ See *The Geology of the Country round Aldershot and Guildford*, Geol. Survey Memoirs, Sheet No. 285, 1929, p. 37; *The Wealden District*, Geol. Survey, British Regional Geology, 1948, p. 65.

formed probably when the sands were being laid down (Lower Cretaceous)—they are hard and often massive. The pan, on the other hand, is still soft, and unconsolidated in many places, and could not have begun to form until the strata, tilted, were weathered at their present angle to their present level—*i.e.*, not till the late Pliocene, continuing no doubt into the Pleistocene. This applies, of course, to the lower pan, which represents the concretion of the iron salts, etc., in the original (late Pliocene) topsoil; the upper pan would then relate to the late Pleistocene or (more probably) Recent topsoil. The diagram (Fig. 4) will make this clear. We have, in fact, two superimposed podsoles, of which the pans are the B2 horizons,

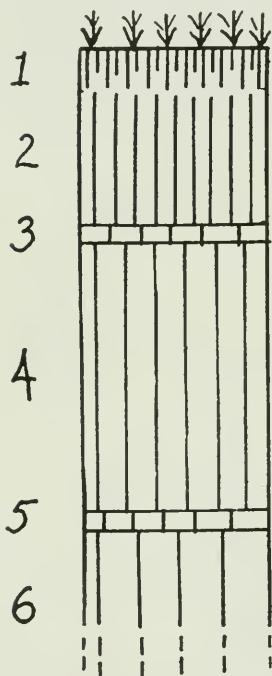


FIG. 4.—ST. MARTHA'S, CIRCLE NO. 4. SOIL DIAGRAM. 1, Surface humic layer (2 inches); 2, dark sandy (7 inches); 3, upper pan (1 inch); 4, yellow sandy (14 inches); 5, lower pan (1 inch); 6, natural greensand.

and of which the A horizons of the lower are missing, presumably through denudation before the upper soil formed.¹

Both pans are in more or less friable slabs averaging 6 inches across, and between 1 and 2 inches thick. They form in some places a continuous and solid layer, but are thin, broken and scattered in others. It is not possible to estimate the rate of growth within useful limits, but it is clear that the pan would take anything up to two thousand years to form. These pans were a useful check as to whether the soil had been undisturbed.

¹ For a definition of podsol see, *e.g.*, *P.P.S.*, Vol. XIX, 1953, p. 130.

That the pan is of relatively recent growth may be shown by the presence of the blade at E7 above it (see below); this flint is of a type which lasted throughout the Mesolithic and is found in Secondary Neolithic contents also. The pan here, on the analogy of Flixton,¹ could have formed later than the deposition of the flint, and, on the shortest view, could therefore not have begun to form before say 2000–1500 B.C., and perhaps much earlier. But as we do not know exactly how long it took to form, this does not help us with the age of the circle; in any case, the pan went below the bank at D, so the circle was built after the pan had finished forming. Again on the shortest view of the pan, the circle *could* have been built about two thousand years ago (or, of course, more recently) and on a longer view anything up to four thousand, but this is, in fact, not nearly precise enough for any conclusions to be drawn from this kind of evidence.

(iii) *The Bank and Ditch.* To return to the circle. A trench cut across the bank and ditch at D (see Figs. 2 and 3) showed that the ditch was round-bottomed, and contained 18 inches of filling (homogeneous dark earth with loose stones), which in turn had piled against the bank and covered the original outside lip of the ditch to a depth of 13 inches. The ditch has been cut through the upper layer of pan, but had not reached the lower. The soil generally is so soft and sandy, being not strictly a soil at all, but still a sand with humic material in suspension, that much slipping and down-washing is to be expected, probably at a fairly rapid rate. The bank then, judging by the depth of ditch silting, must have stood about 9–12 inches higher than now, and have been rounded. There were no signs of supporting stones or posts, and no trace of post-holes on the bank itself.

Fig. 3 shows the reconstructed profile.

To test the presence of a bank and ditch of similar constitution at the lower part of the circle, under the present uniform surface, a trench was cut at F, and the dark ditch-filling was clearly seen.² The bank could not be made out, but had no doubt merged with the surrounding soil piled against and over it.

Trenches across the ditch at B and G, and along it at A and from D, added nothing to our knowledge of it.

(iv) *The Behaviour of the Surface Soil.* It is evident that the exceptional steepness of the slope, coupled with the very soft and mobile soil, will tend rapidly to smooth out the surface indications

¹ At Flixton, Yorkshire, Site 1, a Mesolithic occupation layer was below 2 feet of peat, and in the top foot of clayey soil *above* a layer of pan. Here the evidence showed the podsolization to have begun *after* the Mesolithic occupation. (Cornwall, I. W., thesis, London, 1952: *Soils and Other Deposits from Archaeological Sites in Southern Britain*, p. 205; unpublished; this fact is quoted by kind permission.)

² A sample of soil from this filling was examined by Dr. Cornwall for plant remains, but with no significant result.

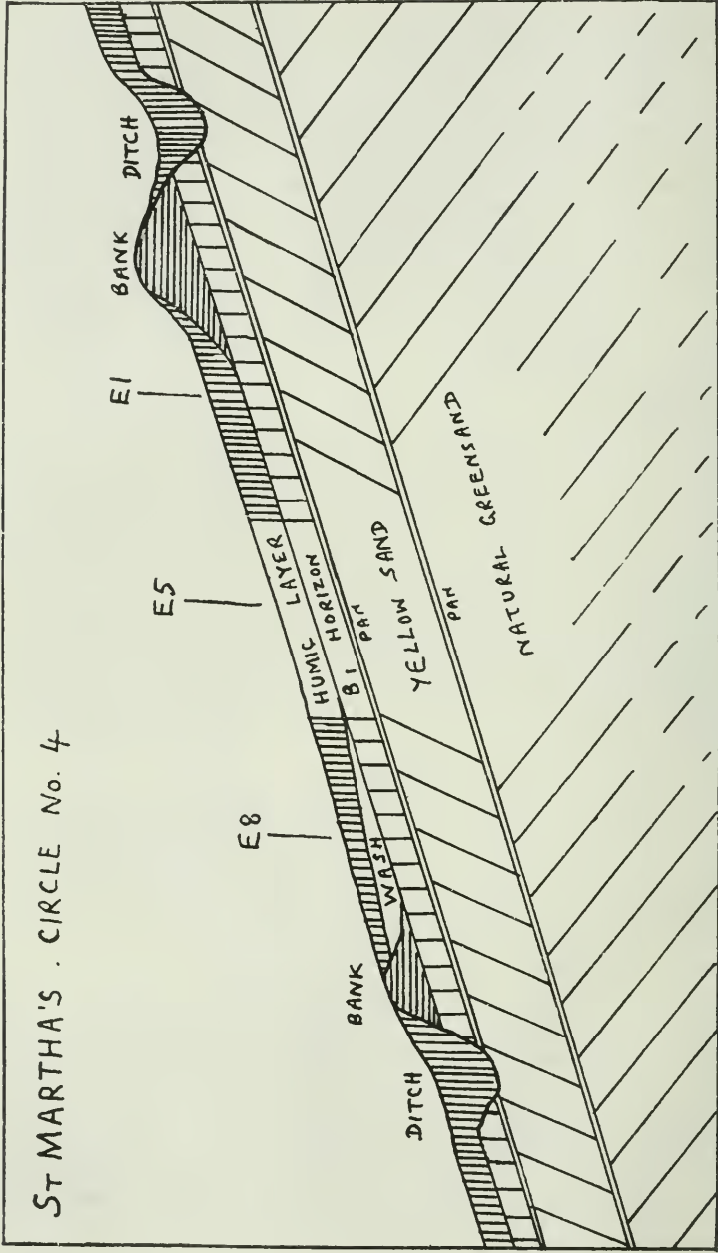


FIG. 5. ST MARTHA'S, CIRCLE No. 4. GENERALISED SECTION ACROSS CIRCLE IN DIRECTION OF SLOPE. (Not to scale.)

of earthworks. From soil-profiles revealed in the cuttings made across the circle from A to C, in the direction of the slope, the following results were obtained:

Above and at the centre (E1 to E4 and E5 on Fig. 2) the soil was:

1. Surface humic layer,	2 inches	vegetation layer
over dark sandy soil	7 inches	top soil (since circle cut)
2. Dark yellow sand tailing	11 inches	"old" topsoil (before circle)
off from top soil,		
with pan, often scat-	—	upper pan
tered at base		
3. Yellow sand,	—	"topsoil" of 4 inches (Ter-
		tiary)
with carstones	15 inches	
pan at base	—	lower pan
4. Firm grey-green	below 3	undisturbed
sand undisturbed	—	Lower Greensand

But at E8, and other cuttings below the centre, this was modified to:

1. Surface humus and dark	11 inches	"new" topsoil
sandy		
2. Dark reddish-yellow	11 inches	hill-wash from upper part of
sandy		bank
3. Dark yellow sandy	10 inches	"old" topsoil
4. Yellow sand (no pan at	—	—
E.8, but evidently		
only a patch without		
it)		
5. Grey-green sand	—	—

Plate III shows this profile. Evidently we have here the result of soil from the upper part of the bank piling against the lower part, and the whole process may be reconstructed as in Fig. 5. This is a good example of a process theoretically obvious, but not often seen. The pan was very patchy here; and it may be that the constant rapid downwash has inhibited its formation to some extent. This is borne out by the presence of pan below the old topsoil under the bank, which may help to point to a rate of growth.

The bank, as at F, could not be distinguished, being completely merged with the soils coming on and over it, but the old topsoil definitely and clearly continued under where the bank was presumed to be (this is true of G also, where a thin dark line ran under the bank).

(v) *Inside the Circle.* The method of excavation was to cut squares, of 4-foot sides, in a line from A to C, leaving 2-foot baulks between them. The squares were cut for convenience in four smaller squares of 2-foot sides, and were taken in every case down to undisturbed sand. At the centre other squares were cut at right angles (G1 and 2). A low mound 10 feet south of the centre was sectioned by a T-shaped trench, 2 feet wide, but found to be quite sterile. This mound was about 10 feet long by 6 feet wide, N.E.-S.W.; it remains quite unexplained. Other lumps and irregularities are also visible, but equally sterile.

The soil was fairly homogeneous, but contained small dark patches, probably due to roots. It is dark, nearly black, at D, and pale brown at F, presumably influenced by the presence or absence of trees. No post-holes, stone-holes or traces of structures were seen. Small pieces of flint occurred at various places, at depths up to —29 inches, and two lumps of chalk. These, although not native, were undoubtedly natural, being derived from the once overlying chalk formations. A few of the flints were calcined, and a fragment of charcoal turned up in E1; these no doubt represent small local heath fires at different times.

A thin flake of brown flint, dull and impregnated with limonite (the ferruginous agent causing the brown colour of the sand), came from E2 at —12 inches; a small chip from E5 at —15 inches; a patinated flake from G3; and a blade from E7. The two latter at least are of human workmanship, but do not of course lend any evidence for the date of the circle itself—they may have been dropped before or even after its construction, and have no demonstrable relation to it.

Fragments of red roofing tile turned up at E4 (—6 inches), E3 (top humus), E6 (curved, like a Roman imbrex), and B1 (—6 inches), and a thin brick at A1. These, although some have a vaguely Roman appearance, are more probably rubbish thrown down the hill when the church was restored in 1848, and again partly re-roofed about thirty years ago. This is not certain; however, an old print in the church, of 1763, shows a tiled barn-like building built on to the ruined church which Mr. Carter, the vergers, thinks was built in the 16th or even 15th century. The present church is tiled, except the tower, which is roofed with Horsham stone with tiled ridges. In Mr. Carter's view it is unlikely that tiles from the church should have got as far as circle 4, although they are plentiful on the slope below the church. He says Roman tiles have been found nearer the church, also oyster shells. True, Roman coins are also said to have been found, but whether a Roman building stood on the site of the church is quite unknown, and the tiles and the shells could equally well be mediæval, or even quite recent. I leave the question open, but incline to a "recent" explanation. The tiles found in the circle and those lying about on the slopes round the church look very similar, if not identical, but this is not of course necessarily conclusive.¹

In connection with the absence of organic remains it should be remembered, as Dr. Cornwall has said,² with the Surrey Greensands, *inter alia*, in mind, that "Finds of any period made in acid permeable soils are conspicuous by their poverty. Unlike a lake or bog site

¹ Miss Heath tells me that tiles from the re-roofing of the church were thrown into one of the circles, but I am not sure which one, probably not No. 4.

² Cornwall, I. W., Ph.D. Thesis, London, 1952, *op. cit.*, p. 132. Quoted by permission.

(which may be equally acid) these soils are porous and abundantly aerated. Practically nothing is preserved save flint and other acid-resisting rocks and such organic remains as have been carbonized by fire. Even wood and plant remains do not persist unless they happen to lie in the B-horizon of the podsol, where there is already an excess of humic matter and a partial blockage of the drainage owing to pan-formation. Bone disappears without trace and, with no bases to fix the phosphoric acid as an insoluble, even chemical tests often fail to detect its former presence. The use of fire may be shown only by blackened stones, reddened earth and the presence of charcoal, all traces of ash having been leached out. Even turf structures, such as the core of a barrow built out of sods, may be hard to recognize as such owing to the persistent oxidation and leaching, whereby originally humic matter tends to become degraded by the general bleaching of the podsol."

These conditions are strongly present on this site, and the disappearance of evidence by chemical means cannot therefore be ruled out.

DISCUSSION

At this point we might pause to review the various possibilities concerning the circles.

(a) There is a general, if tacit, assumption of great age on the part of all the authorities. Circles 1 and 4 are inside the line of mature and fairly thick trees (pine, oak and birch) which clothe most of the hill; circles 2, 3 and 5 are outside the trees, but circle 5 has an ornamental clump inside it. It looks therefore as if the wood has encroached over circles 1 and 4, and is later than they, whether planted or natural. It is difficult to ascertain whether all the pine trees were planted in the last hundred or two hundred years or not—these trees can be indigenous on sandy soils even in the south of England.¹ Mr. Bruce, the late Head Forester of Albury, thought they were planted (and some indeed were in 1874), but no records of planting were kept by the Estate Office until recent years, and trees are shown on a map of Chilworth Estate dated 1845. In any event, the oaks and birches would have come naturally in the lee of the pines, thus forming a largely natural mixed forest. Scots pines have a normal life of say 150 years, but the total age of the wood is not capable of ascertainment.

(b) Arguments from rate of silting, rate of growth of topsoil, or of pan, all fail for lack of reliable data, leaving general considerations, and broad comparisons, as our only help in finding a solution.

(c) *The Other Local Earth Circles.*

(i) *Bullswater Common, Pirbright.* Grinsell refers to the two ring-ditches here, with that at Puttenham, as of the same type

¹ Tansley, Sir A. G., *The British Islands and their Vegetation*, 1939, p. 254.

as those at St. Martha's.¹ His description of them, however, reveals a certain hesitation as to the precise nature of the Bulls-water circles. I am by no means certain that these circles are in fact the same type as St. Martha's. The ditches are wide and deep, no banks are visible either inside or outside them, and one of the rings has a gap or causeway in its ditch about 20 feet wide on the south-west side. This may of course be a quite recent addition if the circle was used, say, as a stock-enclosure; I am not aware that the circle has been excavated, or the problem solved. The *Antiquities of Surrey* (1951 edition) takes for granted that the circles are Iron Age huts, but gives no evidence in support.² Whimster³ refers to "two round barrows, earthworks" here, and these may all, of course, be an associated group after all.

(ii) *Puttenham Heath* (100 yards S. of Frowbury tumulus). The circle here, as Grinsell's sectional diagram shows, is certainly of the St. Martha's type. Nothing seems to be known about it. It is now not easy to trace; the golf course has almost obliterated its northern part, except for a small piece of ditch where the grass shows brighter. The bank and ditch are visible on the southern (slope) side. A monkey-puzzle tree, railed in, is in the middle of the circle.

(d) *The General Question of Ring-ditches*. Comparative material on earth circles is scattered and unco-ordinated, and no recent general study has been made. But before this is discussed further we must clear the ground of various theories which have been put forward to account for the St. Martha's circles.

(i) *Hut-circles*. These have two features not observed in our examples, entrances and hearths.⁴ They are also normally much smaller.⁵ Remains of wooden structures could not be expected in the soil conditions at St. Martha's. The slope is steep enough also to make the presence of huts unlikely.

(ii) *Farm enclosures*, as at Little Woodbury,⁶ which enclosed

¹ *Sy.A.C.*, Vol. XLII, 1934, p. 48 and p. 56.

² Indeed, from correspondence with the Clerk to the Surrey County Council it is clear that the passage relating to these circles need not be taken as authoritative.

³ Whimster, D. C., *Arch. Surrey*, 1931, p. 234.

⁴ But there is a rare type having continuous circular drainage ditches just outside the walls—e.g., Braidwood, Midlothian, *P.S.A.S.*, Vol. LXXXIII, 1951, p. 1.

⁵ E.g., the mean internal diameter of the hundreds of huts on Dartmoor is 17 feet, and the median value 15½ feet; see Hansford Worth, R., *Dartmoor*, 1953, p. 103.

⁶ *P.P.S.*, Vol. VI, 1940, p. 30. Rotherly Down, on the other hand, "has for nucleus a very regular circular precinct 120 feet diameter" (Allcroft, H., *The Circle and the Cross*, Vol. I, 1927, p. 70; Pitt-Rivers, *Cranborne Chase*, Vol. II, p. 51), and similar cases occur at Woodcuts, Oakley Lane, near Farnham (Dorset), and S. Tarrant Hinton Down; but these are clearly not circles of our class. At Castle Frazer is a circle, 70 feet diameter, containing hut-circles. (*P.S.A.S.*, Vol. XXXV, p. 199.)

huts and other farm structures. Here again the absence of entrances and internal features can rule this out.¹ Moreover, few farm enclosures are circular, and most are ditches only, without banks.

(iii) *Cattle pounds* need entrances.

(iv) *Tree-rings*. Circle 5 is certainly now *used* as a tree-ring, but need not have begun as such. It may, on the other hand, actually be one, and not part of the same group 1-4 at all. The general situation of circles 1-4, particularly 1 and 4, makes this theory unlikely. Crawford,² however, contrasts hut-circles with disc-barrows and tree-rings, and implies that all unbroken circles are either of the two latter types!

(v) *Forts*. This, I think, has only to be mentioned to be rejected. True, there is a class of forts built on slopes,³ but these are quite different in appearance and size. Allcroft gives examples of miscellaneous-sited "ring-forts" and "plateau-forts" also.⁴ Forts, of course, are rarely in groups, and even temporary skirmishes would demand something more effective, and not necessarily circular. Entrances are a necessity to forts.

(vi) *Disc-barrows*. These are monuments of a class peculiar to the Wessex culture of the Middle Bronze Age;⁵ they consist of a circular bank, with ditch *inside* it, and one or more small mounds on the space enclosed. They appear to be the graves of women, and may well have obscure links with henges and the Secondary Neolithic substratum of the Wessex culture (one actually has entrances, and the location of the mounds also shows significant correlations). They are often found in groups, with other barrows.

St. Martha's lay just inside the Wessex culture area in this period; there is in fact a disc-barrow, with three mounds, a rare type, as near as Elstead,⁶ while the bell-barrow in Deerleap Wood, Wotton,⁶ is the most easterly example of its class (also peculiar to the Wessex culture).

The inside ditch is, however, a regular feature of disc-barrows; only two Wessex examples are known with ditch outside, and they are suspected of being really tree-rings round earlier barrows. So the St. Martha's circles must be rejected as disc-barrows. All the same it would not be wise to ignore the vaguely sensed but

¹ Caution is necessary; at Playden, Rye, was a ring-ditch with a hut inside, but no apparent entrance. This is a Middle Bronze Age type, surviving probably into the local Late Bronze Age. (*Ant. J.*, Vol. XV, 1935, p. 152 and p. 467; Curwen, E. C., *The Archaeology of Sussex*, 1954 edition, p. 185; cf. "Sutton Courtenay," *Arch.*, 76, 1927, p. 59.)

² Crawford, O. G. S., *Archæology in the Field*, 1953, p. 147.

³ *Arch. J.*, Vol. CIX, 1952 (153), 1.

⁴ Allcroft, H., *Earthwork of England*, 1908, p. 136 and p. 143.

⁵ See, for a general description, Grinsell, *The Ancient Burial Mounds of England*, 1953 ed., p. 21.

⁶ "Elstead," *Sy.A.C.*, Vol. XL., 1932, p. 58; "Wotton," *ibid.*, p. 62.

no doubt profound link between all earth circles, barrow circles or henges, of whatever type.

Other Circles. Apart from disc-barrows, henges¹ and stone circles,¹ there is another class of circles which also seems to embody the same idea of a sacred enclosure, and to come from the same period and cultural complex. This is the "ring-ditch," a continuous earth circle with outer ditch, that is, just the class with which the St. Martha's circles would appear at first sight to belong. It must be said at once that no positive evidence seems to have come from any of them, so there is no proof that they are all of the same age or purpose; none the less, there is a strong likeness between most of them, particularly when, as so often, they are close to barrows or other Bronze Age monuments.

Greenwell records, at Askham, Westmorland, "a circular space, 68 feet in diameter, enclosed with an earthen mound of very slight elevation, the entire area being paved with water-rolled stones. At the south-east side of it is a monolith, called the Cop-stone, 5 feet high."²

A ring at Torver Beck, Cumberland, "is but 54 feet in diameter, without discernible fosse or entrance." A circle at Kirkby Moor, Cumberland, 75 feet across, with bank 3 feet high, was associated with Easter games.³ In some cases there seems to be a link between circles and churches; circular churchyards are found all over Western and Northern Europe.⁴ The famous circles at Knowlton, Dorset,⁵ consist of three circles, one 750 feet in diameter, with external bank; the middle one has the ruins of a church (12th century) within it. But just N.E. of this is a monument called The Old Churchyard, which is sub-rectangular and with bank internal to its ditch. Whether this was built before or after the rest of the group, or is contemporary, is not known. At Highworth, Wilts., are about forty circles in five or six groups, having no entrances, but internal ditches.⁶

At Silk Hill, Milston, Wilts., is a group of disc-barrows, some of which have little or no central mound; there is also here a large circular mound with vallum and outer ditch, which does not seem to be a barrow.⁷ A circular vallum about 40 yards in diameter was standing in 1788 just north of the camp of Cambs Farm, Farnsfield, Notts.;⁸ Warne records a circle 117 feet in diameter at Slight, Winfrith Newburgh, Dorset.⁹

¹ Which will not be discussed here.

² Greenwell and Rolleston, *British Barrows*, 1877, p. 400.

³ Allcroft, *Earthwork of England*, 1908, p. 138 and p. 139 (see above).

⁴ Examples will be found in Allcroft, *The Circle and the Cross*, Vol. I, 1927, pp. 14 ff.

⁵ *Arch. J.*, Vol. CIV, 1947 (1948), p. 1; see also *Antiquity*, 1939, p. 138 (which also deals with a ring-ditch at Litton Cheney, Dorset).

⁶ *P.P.S.*, Vol. II, 1936, p. 51, note 1.

⁷ Grinsell, *loc. cit.*, 1953, p. 171.

⁸ *Arch.*, Vol. IX, 1839, p. 200; *V.C.H.*, "Notts.," Vol. II, p. 26.

⁹ Warne, *Ancient Dorset*, 1865, p. 25.

The most spectacular examples are the four great circles at Priddy, Somerset, each about 200 yards in diameter, consisting essentially therefore of a flat area enclosed by a bank and outer ditch. These are "called by the peasants 'The Castles'." Their bank is low; they are near two groups of barrows. There is another at Beacon Hill, north of Shepton Mallet and just east of the Fosse Way; Grinsell says of all these: "Their period and purpose have yet to be discovered."¹ Clark excludes them from the henge family, as having external ditches and no entrances.²

The oval earthwork in connection with certain disc-barrows may come within the same class;³ a few enigmatic oblong enclosures have also been recorded.

It seems then quite permissible to include the circles at Puttenham and St. Martha's⁴ with these monuments; they have the same general characteristics and are near barrows. This fits well with the Secondary Neolithic concentration in West Surrey whose presence was deduced mainly from the flint industry in an earlier study.⁵

Actually, of course, the line between sepulchral, ritual and secular circles is hard to draw; and even the presence of burials inside a circle does not necessarily prove it to have been originally built as a barrow—they may be dedicatory or intrusive. Some circles indeed have central graves (*e.g.*, on Danby Rigg, N.R., Yorkshire),⁶ and here there is a presumption of purpose, but more evidence is needed before the whole problem can be clarified.⁷

The above are only a few of the recorded examples. The aerial survey of Great Britain, and the archæological air photographs of Major Allen, Dr. St. Joseph, etc., show innumerable circular ditches all over the country, some of which have no obvious burial mound or pit inside them, and may well be monuments of the type under discussion. The circles best and most recently studied are those of

¹ Grinsell, *loc. cit.*, 1953, p. 141; *Arch. J.*, 1859, p. 150 and p. 157.

² *P.P.S.*, Vol. II, 1936, p. 50.

³ The oval bank at Grassington, W.R.Y., made much of by Allcroft and Elgee, seems on the evidence adduced by Raistrick to have been one of many enclosures inside the Iron Age fields there, whose purpose was no doubt domestic or agricultural. Villy's plan in Allcroft, *Circle*, p. 220, indeed, shows a (conjectural) entrance. (Allcroft, *Earthwork of England*, p. 592; Elgee, *Archæology of Yorkshire*, 1933, p. 114; Raistrick, A., in *Y.A.J.*, Vol. XXXIII, 1937, p. 166).

⁴ Pirbright is a more doubtful case—see above.

⁵ *Sy.A.C.*, Vol. LII, 1952, p. 25.

⁶ Elgee, *op. cit.*, 1933, p. 82.

⁷ Stonehenge has its ditch *outside* the bank, exceptionally for the henge series of monuments. This forms part of Phase I, which consisted of a ring of ritual pits (the Aubrey Holes), the ditch and internal bank, and is dated by Grooved Ware to the Secondary Neolithic (Piggott, S., "Stonehenge Reviewed," in *Aspects of Archæology*, 1951, p. 275 and p. 278). Atkinson, however, in *Excavations at Dorchester, Oxon.*, 1st Report, 1951, p. 87, thinks the Stonehenge ditch to have been possibly just a quarry for the building of the bank.

Oxfordshire and Berkshire—Stanton Harcourt, Abingdon, Cassington, Langford Downs, Clifton Hampden, North Stoke and Standlake—which are strictly comparable in size, form and proximity to barrows with the St. Martha's and Puttenham rings. Most of them have been shown to contain primary burials, some of Beaker age; but some had either no burial, or, like Standlake, were clearly old sacred monuments used for burials at a later date.¹ In any case, this is the class of monument into which our circles best fit.

It is to be regretted that the St. Martha's circles have not contributed to a solution of the problem, which remains as intractable as ever; all that can be said is that, where dating can be inferred at all for any of these circles, it seems to lie between the Secondary Neolithic² and the Late Bronze Age, or, say, 1800 to 500 B.C., with perhaps 1500 as a central point; and that the circles were primarily sacred and not secular monuments (if such a distinction can be made at all). But precision is not yet possible, and Grimes, speaking of Stanton Harcourt,³ has probably said the last word for a long time: "The results from these two sites are therefore consistent with those obtained from other ring-ditches⁴ in the Thames Valley. Those which have been definitely used as burial places cover the whole of the Bronze Age. The dates, as well as the purpose of those which have not been used (at any rate in the 'normal' way) for burial call for further consideration."⁵

CONCLUSIONS

- (i) Such evidence as there is points to the earth circles on St. Martha's Hill as being sacred enclosures of the Bronze Age, with a Secondary Neolithic element in their background.
- (ii) In the Saxon period they seem to have been used as sacred places, and fertility dances were either taken over from earlier times or begun then.
- (iii) The martyr tradition may be centralized round A.D. 600, but no definite deity to whom the hill was dedicated can be proposed, although Eostre fits the requirements best.

¹ See *Oxoniensia*, Vol. I, 1936, p. 7; Vol. III, 1938, p. 31; Vol. XIII, 1948, p. 1 (Radley); Vols. XI–XII, 1946–7, p. 27 and p. 44; *Arch.*, Vol. XXXVII, 1857, p. 363 (Standlake); Vol. XVI, 1951, p. 1 (Cassington). The whole series of this journal is a mine of research and thought on the subject of ring-ditches. I owe the Standlake reference to Mr. H. J. Case.

² Site XIV at Dorchester (Oxon.) is a ring-ditch overlaid by the banks of a henge (*P.P.S.*, Vol. XIX, 1953, p. 141).

³ *Oxoniensia*, Vols. VIII–IX, 1943–4, p. 47.

⁴ Ring-ditches, for Grimes, mean any *closed* circular ditch, with or without a bank, as opposed to Atkinson, who proposed the name for those with external bank only.

⁵ *Oxoniensia*, Vol. VII, 1942, p. 34; Vols. VIII–IX, 1943–4, p. 21, note 1.

THE OTHER ANTIQUITIES OF THE HILL AND DISTRICT

It may be found useful here to summarize the other finds and sites on the hill, and in the adjacent parishes of Albury, Merrow, the Chilworth part of Wonersh, and West Clandon. No connection is implied between any of these and the circles. (General map at Fig. 6.)

(a) *Earthworks*

(i) *Platform mound, Tyting*.¹ Not excavated, and not certainly a barrow, or prehistoric; it may yet prove to be a tree-ring, as Grinsell thought. Or was it the moot-hill of the Tytingas? Investigation is desirable to solve the problem.

(ii) *Two mounds, N. of church*.² Johnson and Wright said these may be small tumuli. Two slight mounds about 10 feet across and 1 foot high, 15 feet N. of the church wall, and about 20 feet apart, may be these, but investigation is necessary. The matter looks doubtful.

(iii) ? *Hut-circles*. *V.C.H.*³ says: "South-west of the church marks in the ground visible in a dry season may indicate nearly obliterated hut-circles. Small flint implements are to be found in them scratched out by rabbits." I have not been able to verify this.

(iv) The conspicuous *pits and mounds* just east of the churchyard wall I take to be the remains of quarries for stone used in building or restoring the church.

(v) Mr. Carter, the verger, pointed out to me a *large mound* $\frac{1}{4}$ mile east of the church along the path to Albury. It is oval or wedge-shaped, about 40–50 feet long, and about 3 feet high. It lies N.W.-S.E., and the path cuts across its S. edge. It has a somewhat artificial appearance, and might repay investigation.

(vi) *Merrow Downs*. Banks and a well near the keeper's cottage in the valley have been taken for Roman, but need investigation.⁴ There are a few small banks and hollows elsewhere on the Downs which may be worth examining.

(b) *Flint Implements*

These are common all over the upper part of the hill, and range from Mesolithic (backed blades, micro-burins, etc.) onwards. Most are nondescript flakes of Neolithic or Bronze Age character, but polished axes, cores and arrows have also turned up.⁵ Blackheath,

¹ *V.C.H.*, Vol. III, 1911, p. 104, and Vol. IV, 1912, p. 405 in list of Tumuli; Grinsell, *Sy.A.C.*, Vol. XLII, 1934, p. 56 (quoting *Sy.A.C.*, Vol. XXXIV 1921, p. 17, which adds nothing).

² Johnson and Wright, *loc. cit.* (note 8 above).

³ *V.C.H.*, Vol. III, 1911, p. 104.

⁴ *Sy.A.C.*, Vol. XII, p. 155, and Vol. XIII, p. 27.

⁵ Johnson and Wright, *loc. cit.* (note 8 above; *V.C.H.*, Vol. I, 1902, p. 253; Vol. III, 1911, p. 104; Whimster, *Arch. Surrey*, 1931, p. 235, quoting *Sy.A.C.*, Vol. XI (Lasham, p. 244) and Vol. XII, p. 232 (Merrow).

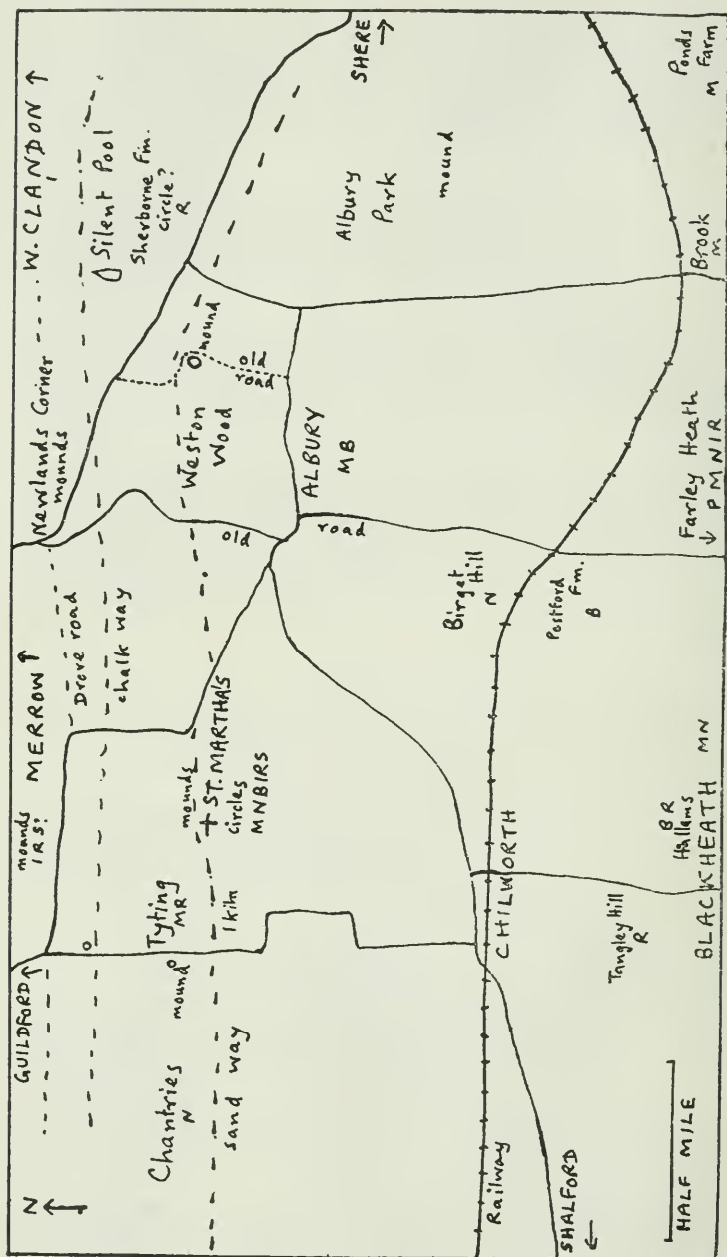


FIG. 6.—SITES AND FINDS IN THE NEIGHBOURHOOD OF ST. MARTHA'S.

(P = palaeolithic, M = mesolithic, N = neolithic, B = bronze age, I = early iron age, R = Romano-British, S = Saxon.)

with a great range of Mesolithic and Neolithic settlement, is not far away.¹ Mesolithic flints also came from Tyting (sand pit) and Brook.² A flint axe was found in 1874 at the top of the hill.³ Mr. J. Booth, the late vergier of the church, found a pointed blade, two blades, one side scraper, one round-ended blade, a rough blade and a sharpening flake (Mesolithic), and five Neolithic flakes, on the eastern slope of the hill.⁴ Whimster also mentions Neolithic flints from Merrow Downs. Tranchet axes are reported from Tyting (near the barrow) and Albury (Ponds Farm).⁵ Mr. and Mrs. Russell, of Shere, have found part of a Neolithic polished stone axe on Birget Hill, Albury (unpublished). A perforated "mace head" also comes from Albury (? quartzite), a scraper from the foot of St. Martha's Hill, a tanged and barbed arrowhead from Postford Farm, and a Neolithic settlement site (various flint implements) is likely at the West end of the Chantryes.⁶ Flints are, of course, constantly turning up all over the area.

(c) *Bronze and Iron*

(i) Whimster mentions a *palstave* from *Albury*, in the Charterhouse Museum.⁷

(ii) Iron Age and Roman *spears* are recorded from *Merrow Downs*⁸ (also a British skull).

(d) *Pottery*

(i) *Late Bronze Age and Roman, Blackheath*. A biconical urn with high shoulder with five lugs accompanied a cremation at the Hallams. (This is Late Bronze Age 2, not Middle, as in the original publication.)⁹ Also from here, under a small barrow, was a cremation with a bucket urn of similar date, with an applied band under the rim decorated with round depressions. With it were two flint implements. Guildford Museum has also from this area a probably 2nd century A.D. pot, used as a cinerary urn, of dark grey burnished ware with lattice decoration.

(ii) *Iron Age A Kiln, St. Martha's*. This came to light in 1933 during the building of a house ("St. Martha's Priory") off Halfpenny Lane, at the western foot of the hill.¹⁰ The circumstances of this find

¹ See Rankine, W. F., "A Mesolithic Survey of the West Surrey Greensand" (*Sy.A.C.*, Res. Papers No. 2, p. 5 and p. 25; also *Sy.A.C.*, Vol. LII, 1952, p. 26 and p. 28.

² Rankine, *op. cit.*, p. 30.

³ Information from Pitt-Rivers Museum, Oxford.

⁴ Information from his son, Mr. T. A. Booth, who most kindly gave these flints to the Society.

⁵ Rankine, W. F., "Tranchet Axes of South-western Surrey," *Sy.A.C.*, Vol. XLVI, 1938, p. 112.

⁶ *Sy.A.C.*, Vol. XI, pp. 244-9. "Maceheads" may be weights for digging-sticks (*B.S.P.F.*, Vol. LI (8), 1954, p. 89.)

⁷ *Arch. S'y.*, p. 244.

⁸ *Sy.A.C.*, Vol. XXV, p. 139 (Whimster, p. 232).

⁹ *Sy.A.C.*, Vol. XXXV, p. 15, and Plate IVB, p. 26.

¹⁰ Lowther, A. W. G., in *Sy.A.C.*, Vol. XLIII, 1935, p. 113.

were such that few details or material could be obtained; but the flue was largely constructed of loom-weights, and sherds of pottery were recovered. Some, from the oven, could be reconstructed into a pot with wide outsplayed rim and prominent high shoulder; the

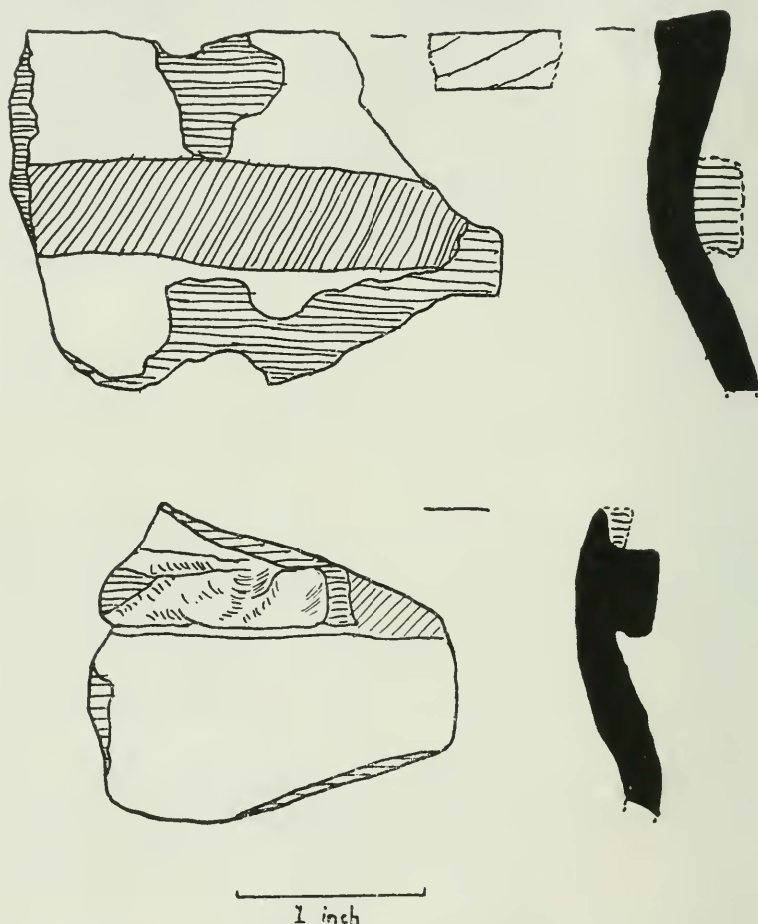


FIG. 7.—IRON AGE A SHERDS FROM TOP OF ST. MARTHA'S HILL, FOUND BY PITT-RIVERS (LANE-FOX), c. 1874.

(Reproduced by kind permission of the Pitt-Rivers Museum, Oxford.)

paste is grey with red-brown soapy surfaces, and gritted. Two sherds also found in the oven are redder, more gritted, and not soapy; they may form part of an urn, parts of which were found a few yards away (now at Castle Arch). This latter pot is comparable to some from Park Brow, the former being of a more local form.

Dr. Kathleen Kenyon has recently studied the Iron Age A pottery of Southern England,¹ and has fitted these pots into the general picture for Surrey; the Iron Age A pottery of Surrey (*e.g.*, Cobham, Clandon,² Wisley, Esher, St. Catherine's Hill) dates from late in the phase, and already shows Marnian influences, although retaining many of its ancestral traits from the Late Bronze Age. It dates from between the 3rd and 1st centuries B.C.

(iii) *Iron Age A Sherds, St. Martha's*. Fragments from the hill are in the Pitt-Rivers Museum, Oxford.³ These were found about 2 feet below the surface by A. Lane Fox in 1874, while planting trees on the top of the hill. The Museum records are unable to throw any more light on the exact location of the find, or on any associations; but its Secretary, Mr. R. C. Gurden, was kind enough to lend me a selection of five representative sherds, two of which (the decorated ones) are reproduced, by permission, in Fig. 7.

All five pieces appear to come from one and the same pot, and it can be assumed that only one pot is involved.

The sherds are of an irregularly-fired corky paste, with plentiful white flinty backing of various sizes up to 5 mm. ($\frac{3}{16}$ inch) across; black inside, and outside varying from grey to grey-brown, brick-red, to dark red. The pot is $\frac{3}{16}$ inch (5 mm.) thick. Fig. 7 shows two pieces, one a rim, the other from the same part of the pot, just below the rim. The rim is flat, with diagonal finger impressions. Within an inch below the rim the body of the pot begins swelling away to a rounded shoulder; in the hollow so formed is an applied ornamental band of clay, up to $\frac{1}{2}$ inch (1.2 cm.) across and 5 mm. ($\frac{7}{32}$ inch) thick (broken off on one of the sherds, leaving a dark grey band on the brick-red surface). This is pinched into diagonal ridges. The inside of the sherds, along the shoulder, is marked by faint vertical flutings. This pot fits comfortably into the known picture of Early Iron Age pottery in the South-east of England (see above).

The band below the rim is unusual, but not out of character; and the impressions on the flat rim can be paralleled from as near as Cobham.⁴ It is not impossible, of course, that this pot is a product of the contemporary oven found on the western slopes of the hill (see above). The paste is very similar.

The previous attributions of these sherds to the Neolithic or Bronze Age must be abandoned.

(iv) *Iron Age Site, West Clandon*. See (ii) above, and note 2.

¹ Kenyon, Dr. Kathleen M., *A Survey of the Evidence Concerning the Chronology and Origins of Iron Age A in Southern and Midland Britain*, Institute of Archaeology 8th Annual Report, 1952, pp. 58-67.

² This site need not be further discussed here. See Frere, S. S., in *Arch. J.*, Vol. CI, 1944, p. 50, for details.

³ Whimster, *Arch. Surrey*, 1931, p. 235.

⁴ Actually, this type of ornament lasted long; Mr. Bruce-Mitford excavated an example from a late 10th century A.D. context at Mawgan Porth, Cornwall.

(v) *Romano-British, Tyting*. In 1929 some local boys uncovered, on the sloping ground between the platform-mound (see above) and the road, three Roman cinerary urns and the base of a fourth. The matter was investigated by the Society, and a trench dug near the spot by Miss O. M. Heath (who communicated these facts to me), Col. North and Messrs. Noone, but without result. The urns are now in Guildford Museum (Nos. S2219-22), and are somewhat misleadingly noted in *Sy.A.C.*, 39 (1931), xii. They are of buff ware, with everted flattened rims over high shoulders tapering to narrow, flat, slightly projecting bases. S2220 is typical: it is 6 inches

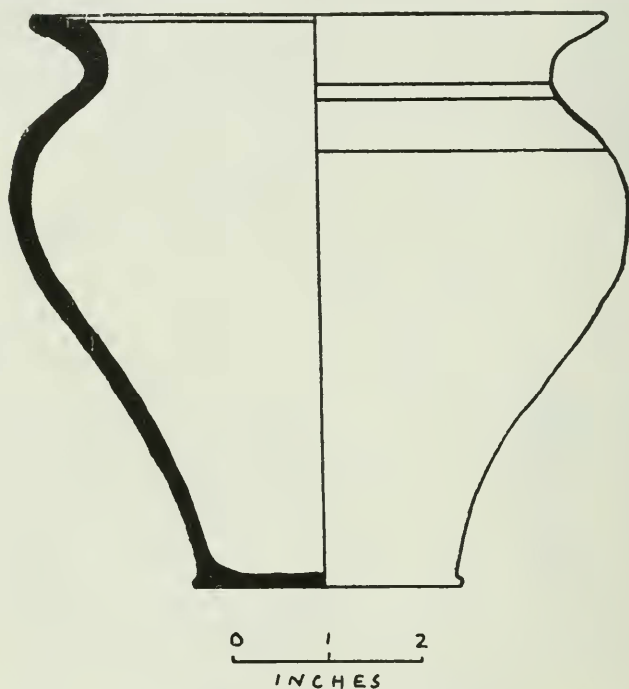


FIG. 8.—TYTING. POT, 1ST CENTURY A.D.

high, 5 inches diameter inside rim, $6\frac{1}{4}$ inches at shoulder, $2\frac{7}{8}$ inches at base; the flat rim is $\frac{1}{2}$ inch wide; there are three girth grooves on neck and shoulder, and one on the base (Fig. 8). The others are similar but larger. Two still contain ashes and burnt bones, and one a piece of charcoal.

The exact type is not readily identifiable in the literature, but a close analogue is from 260B from Colchester, which dates from the 1st century A.D.¹

¹ Hawkes and Hull, 1st Report on Camulodunum, 1947, p. 270 and Plate LXXXIII.

(vi) *Romano-British, Tangley Hill, Blackheath*. Two pots, used as cinerary urns, and one "rustic" pot, 2nd century A.D. (Guildford Museum).¹

(vii) *Romano-British, Merrow*. Trenching in a field next to Merrow Downs revealed a large number of urns, of at least twelve types, with cremations.² Mid-2nd century A.D. (Two of these are in Guildford Museum.)

(viii) *Saxon Pot, St. Martha's*. Guildford Museum has a small pot found in 1916 by Mr. T. A. Booth, of Chilworth, "on the site of a supposed pre-Christian burying place."³ This was submitted to Mr. Reginald Smith, of the British Museum, who pronounced the pot to be 5th or 6th century, but more probably 6th than 5th. The published note gives no very precise details of the finding of this pot, and in view of the crucial importance of this to the present enquiry, I discussed the matter with the finder, Mr. T. A. Booth. The facts are that Mr. Booth, when a boy, helping his father, then verger, strayed outside the churchyard and penetrated circle No. 3. Inside the circle he stumbled on the pot, which was lying on the surface not far from a rabbit-hole. This was later examined, but nothing was found in it. The bracken was high at the time, and Mr. Booth is unable to recall exactly where, within the circle, the pot lay. He himself is undecided as to whether it came from the rabbit-hole, or whether it was thrown from the churchyard by the workmen who were at that time digging holes to receive trees for the wartime camouflaging of the church (this was done because of the nearness of the then powder factory at Chilworth). Either provenance is possible, and it therefore seems that this pot has an insufficient claim to throw light on the origin of the circles, or even on their use in Saxon times.

The pot itself is thick and heavy, with globular body and everted rim with rounded lip. Base flattened but not sharply so. Paste black with dark grey patches and one rusty one; gritty. Surface smooth, but not burnished like most of the plain pots from the 6th century cemetery at Guildown, only 2 miles away.⁴ There are signs on one side and on the base that the pot had been cut smooth with a knife, when leather-hard before firing, perhaps to remove unwanted excrescences. Height $2\frac{7}{8}$ inches; diameters, rim $2\frac{3}{16}$ inches, inside neck $1\frac{1}{2}$ inches, outside neck 2 inches, body $2\frac{3}{4}$ inches, base c. $1\frac{1}{4}$ inches. (Guildford Museum, No. S6999.) (Fig. 9.)

This pot may now be recognized as belonging to a type represented at Wotton (site close to Deerleap Wood), Farnham (dated "perhaps 6th to 7th centuries"), and Ewell, dated by associated

¹ *Sy.A.C.*, Vol. XXXVII, p. 231.

² *Sy.A.C.*, Vol. XIII, p. 26.

³ *Sy.A.C.*, Vol. XXIX, 1916, p. 152.

⁴ *Sy.A.C.*, Vol. XXXIX, 1931, p. 30.

brooches to the "end of the 6th century or even later."¹ The similar pottery of Lincolnshire, of which a pot from Ruskington is particularly comparable to this one, also dates from the late 6th to early 7th century.² With these analogies we might then be justified in advancing the date of the St. Martha's pot to nearer the end than the beginning of the 6th century.

(e) "*Interments*"

V.C.H.³ says: "Neolithic or Bronze Age interments found in 1874." I can find no details of these—they do not seem to be repre-

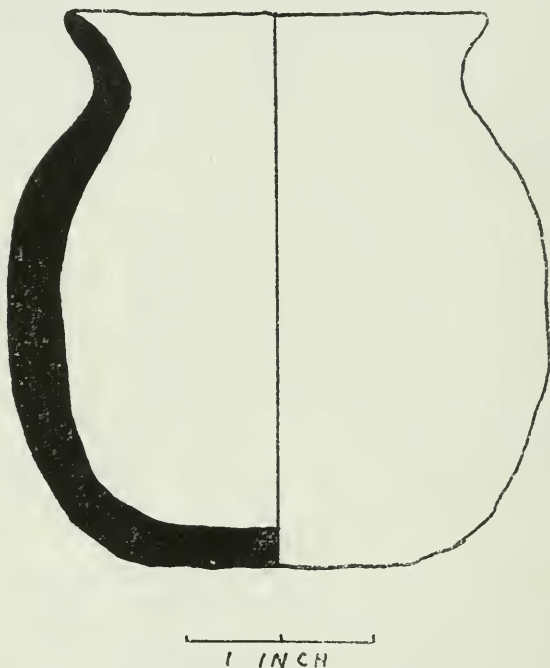


FIG. 9.—ST. MARTHA'S. SAXON POT.

sented by the Iron Age A sherds at Oxford (see above), although Lane-Fox was on the hill in this year. The records at the Pitt-Rivers Museum, Oxford, do not help, and I cannot clear up the matter.

(f) *Roads*

The so-called Pilgrims Way, the Greensand track, crosses the top of the hill from east to west. The two parallel ways, known to be

¹ (Wotton) *Ant. J.*, Vol. XIX, p. 325, Fig. 3; (Farnham) *Sy. A. S. Farnham Volume*, p. 259; (Ewell) Wheeler, R. E. M., *London and the Saxons* (London Museum Cat. No. 6 (1935)), p. 134, Fig. 17.

² *Arch. J.*, Vol. CVIII, 1951, p. 90, Fig. 10 (6).

³ V.C.H., Vol. I, 1902, p. 253.

prehistoric, pass not far to the north, the lower terrace-way, and the upper Drove Road.¹ The Iron Age or Roman "iron way" from Farley Heath over Newlands Corner passes across the eastern foot of the hill.²

(g) *Other Neighbouring Sites*

(i) *Barrow at Newlands Corner*.³ Nothing seems to be known about this, and excavation is desirable. It, or they (there may be two), are described as "rifled" by *V.C.H.* Whimster's statement that Pitt-Rivers excavated it does not seem to be true—confusion with the Merrow Downs barrow seems to have occurred. Presumably Pitt-Rivers found it already "rifled," and spent no time on it.

(ii) *Barrow on Merrow Downs*.³ The site of this is now not precisely known; it was probably levelled by the golf course. Excavation by Col. Lane Fox in the 1870's revealed holes, filled with chalk rubble, on the original floor of the barrow. Grinsell and *V.C.H.* refer to an "urn," but I can find no details of this. The Pitt-Rivers Museum has "a small tanged two-edged pointed iron knife" and two flint flakes, presumably from this tumulus; they have no "urn."

(iii) "certain mounds or tumuli within *Albury Park*."⁴ I cannot find where or what these may be (but see below).

(iv) *Mound in Weston Wood, Albury*.⁵ This is a circular mound, 5 feet high and about 135 feet in diameter. The top is quite flat. It lies on the edge of a steep slope falling away to the north; round it on two sides is a kind of wide trench, with a bank on its outer side. This represents the old (at least mediæval) road linking Albury with the cross-ridge⁶ which links the Greensand ridgeway from St. Martha's to the chalk terraceway, and using it to climb to Newlands Corner and so to London. Fig. 6 shows these relationships, and makes clear the chronological priority of the mound over the road, which makes a detour and a right-angled turn round it. This is well shown in a terrier of Weston Manor, *temp.* William Man Godschall, LL.D., F.R.S. (lord of the manor 1729–42); the mound appears as a round clump of dark trees. That of *temp.* Robert Godschall (lord ?1793–1821), and the fine one by Abr. Walter of 1701, do not show the mound.⁷

Its age and purpose is uncertain, although Grinsell compares it to

¹ Margary, I. D., "The North Downs Main Trackway and the Pilgrims Way," *Arch. J.*, Vol. CIX, 1952 (1953), p. 39.

² Margary, I. D., *Roman Ways in the Weald*, 1948, p. 82; *Roman Roads in Britain*, Vol. I., 1955, p. 67.

³ Grinsell, *loc. cit.*, p. 50 and p. 57; (Merrow) *J.R.A.I.*, Vol. VI, 1877, p. 281; *V.C.H.*, Vol. III, p. 357 gives Walnut Tree Bottom as the location of this barrow.

⁴ *Sy.A.C.*, Vol. XXXIV, 1921, p. 62.

⁵ Grinsell, *Sy.A.C.*, Vol. XLII, 1934, p. 57; the *Sy.A.C.* "Prehistory of Farnham," 1939.

⁶ Margary, I. D., in *Arch. J.*, Vol. CIX, 1952 (1953), p. 44.

⁷ I owe this information to the Agent of the Albury Estate, who allowed me to inspect the terriers.

"similar" mounds on Crooksbury Hill, and on Botany Hill, near Farnham.¹ The latter however have distinct low banks outside a circular ditch, while the platform inside the ditch has itself a bank, giving a "dished" appearance to the top of the platform: I suspect that these are a different type of monument.

The Weston Wood mound was excavated in the early 1920's by Mr. Nevill, who cut a trench right through it; he found a few nondescript undatable objects,² but I cannot trace their present whereabouts.

Flat-topped mounds are sometimes barrows, but are often moots or local assembly-places. The classic examples are those at Old Uppsala and Husby, Sweden.³ British examples are few, but the Tynwald Hill, Isle of Man, has a flat top 6 feet in diameter.⁴ The barrows of New Grange, and Silbury Hill, whose purpose is still unknown, also have flat tops,⁵ but these should perhaps not be adduced as good comparisons here. Less grandiose and perhaps closer comparisons are in Derbyshire, where "a large flat barrow, called Moot-Lowe, is situated in a field of considerable elevation, the tumulus being about 15 yards in diameter and about 4 feet high, with a level summit." Another with the same name, the same height, and double the circumference, with the same flat level top, is half-way between Alsop Moore and Dovedale.⁶ At Hamilton, "in the haugh, to the north of the palace, there is an ancient moat-hill or seat of justice. It appears to be about 30 feet in diameter at the base, and about 15 or 16 feet high, and is flat at the top."⁷ The Mote-Hill at Stirling "is also known by the name of the Hurly-Haaky, probably from its being the scene of a childish sport known to have been practised at a later time."⁸ This is interesting, because the mound in Weston Wood was the scene of games and dancing which may be of ancient origin (see above).

Greenwell records a flat-topped tumulus at Gilling (N.R.Y.) and a platform with ditch at Fylingdales (N.R.Y.), but both these had central cremations in graves, and can be regarded as aberrant Bronze Age barrows. Some flat-topped tumuli at Brimpton, Berks., seemed to Greenwell not to be barrows, but he could not be sure of their purpose.⁹

¹ Classified as Iron Age A "camps" in *Sy.A.C.*, "Prehistory of Farnham," 1939, p. 204.

² Per Miss O. M. Heath.

³ Allcroft, *The Circle and the Cross*, Vol. I, 1927, p. 128; Ellis, H. R., *The Road to Hel*, 1943, p. 110.

⁴ Gomme, G. L., *Primitive Folk-Moots*, 1880, p. 92.

⁵ The comparison of these two mounds is made, and an affinity of function suggested, by Robert Graves in *The White Goddess*, 1952 ed., p. 294.

⁶ Gomme, *ibid.*, p. 236; Bateman, *Antiquities of Derbyshire*, p. 51 and p. 68.

⁷ Gomme, *ibid.*, p. 268; *New Statistical Account of Scotland*, Vol. VI, 1845, p. 270.

⁸ Gomme, *ibid.*, p. 269; *New S.A. of Scotland*, Vol. VIII, 1845, p. 403. This seems however to be not a mound of the kind under discussion.

⁹ *British Barrows*, 1877 (BB CXXIII and CCLXVII); *Arch.* 52, 1890 (BB CCXCIV-V).

Although the above comparisons may appear scanty and inconclusive, I think this the most plausible explanation for the mound. It is unlikely to be a motte, or a mediæval manor-house site; or a mill emplacement or the like; or, apparently, a hill-fort; or a tumulus (in any case this shape is highly abnormal).¹ But it does fit into a definite class of monuments, here and abroad, and has clearly ancient associations. Excavation is perhaps unlikely to produce conclusive evidence, but until this is properly done the above suggestion seems as reasonable as any.^{2,3}

(v) *Former Stone Circle (?) in Sherborne Lane.*⁴ There do indeed seem to have been stones in the field, S. of the road, opposite the entrance to the Silent Pool, but there is no certainty that these were a circle, or standing stones, or a barrow. They seem to have been demolished by the farmer, because they were in his way; a fragment of one is in the garden of Albury House, one near Wood Barn, one near the sandpit. There is also a possibility of a group above Sherborne Pools, but I am very doubtful of the whole matter, and cannot locate a genuine circle, if such ever existed.

(vi) *Mound in Jubilee Ride, Albury Park.* My knowledge of this unrecorded mound is due to Her Grace Helen, Duchess of Northumberland. It is circular, about 2 feet high, and about 30 feet in diameter. It carries a clump of tall firs and a yew. No apparent ditch; higher in centre—i.e., not a platform like that at Tyting. Mr. Bruce, the late head forester at Albury, did not regard it as a tree-ring. This will be investigated.

¹ Allcroft, *The Circle and the Cross*, Vol. I, 1927, p. 36, mentions what he calls "table barrows," which are circular platforms with a level summit—they have a fosse, with commonly no entrance. They may be up to 10 feet high. Unfortunately he gives no examples, and I can find none.

² There is however another possible explanation: that of a mound formed from the earth thrown up in the 18th century, laying out of the paths in the wood, some of which are excavated in the slopes. This is on the whole, I think, unlikely, in view of the lie of the mediæval road, but should be mentioned for completeness.

³ I am indebted to Dr. Gordon Copley for the comment that many Roman and Anglo-Saxon barrows in the S.E. of England are flat-topped. Further, the use of barrows as moots is well exemplified in this area—e.g., Thunderlow (Bulmer, Essex); "Spelberghe" (Littlebury, Essex); Mutlow Hill (Wendens Ambo, Essex); Sperberry Hill (Ippolitts, Herts.); Thurstable (Tolleshunt Major, Essex); Netley Hill (Cams.); Swanborough Tump (Wilts.); Cuckhamsley (Berks.); "Mudborow" (Harlow, Essex).

⁴ Manning and Bray, Vol. II, p. 123: "In a meadow of Mr. Thornton's, by the side of Shireburn Lane, and in an adjacent field, and a wood of Mr. Godschall's, are some remarkable stones, such as are not found elsewhere in the neighbourhood. In the meadow are five, three of them standing together, the other two are single, at a small distance from the three, and from each other. The largest is one of the three, which is 10 feet long, 5 feet 8 inches over, 4 feet 4 inches out of the ground. The one in Mr. Godschall's adjoining field is 10 feet 10 inches long, 4 feet 9 inches broad, and is little higher than the surface of the ground, lying in a hollow, which perhaps has been cleared out to shew it. The others are smaller."

(h) Various

(i) *Farley Heath*. The archæological riches of this area are outside the scope of this paper. They range from the Palæolithic onwards, culminating in the British and Roman temple and settlement. Accounts will be found in the Society's *Collections* from Vol. I on, particularly Vols. XXXVII and XLII.

(ii) *Coins*. Apart from the hundreds of British and Roman coins from Farley Heath (from Verica to Honorius), Roman coins have turned up in various parts of the area, including St. Martha's Hill itself. A first brass of Macrinus (A.D. 217-18) (Guildford Museum) comes from the Silent Pool or nearby.

(iii) *Sherborne Upper Pond (The Silent Pool), Albury*. This pool has been the centre of popular interest for a long time, and many legends have grown round it. The most spectacular is that of King John's instrumentality in causing the drowning of a girl there; this, if true, would be undeniably attractive, for John was a queer Christian, whence might arise the story that he sacrificed a girl to the spirit of the lake, or had this done on his behalf.¹ The incident is described by Martin Tupper in *Stephan Langton* (1858), and has since then been repeated as fact or legend in local guide books and the like. Miss Heath, however, who knew Tupper and several of his friends personally, is quite categoric that the story was a pure invention of the novelist's; and there we must somewhat reluctantly leave it.

The local tradition that the lake is bottomless may mean it was one of the entrances to the underworld; that a stone thrown into it makes no ripples is less easily explicable, but looks early. Lastly, that its water was of unusual value is shown by the custom of those attending the Palm Sunday fair at Sherborne (see above), not only of plucking palms locally, but of buying "Roman water" from the Pool.² For "Roman" is it permissible to read "pre-Roman"?

All things considered, it is highly probable that this was an ancient sacred lake.

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¹ I owe this suggestion to Dr. Margaret Murray.

² Heath, O. M., *Walks Round Albury*.