

# EXCAVATIONS AT CARSHALTON, 1961

BY

D. J. TURNER

EXCAVATIONS were carried out by the London Natural History Society, in co-operation with the Beddington, Carshalton and Wallington Archæological Society, on the site of proposed building development in Harrow Road, Carshalton, with the intention of examining the nature of the "camp" described elsewhere in these Collections.<sup>1</sup> Opportunity arose at the same time to make a cutting in the garden of 18 Hillcroome Road and to examine land in Carshalton Road adjacent to the spot where Saxon burials had been found in 1903.<sup>2</sup>

Evidence from the Harrow Road site suggested that the "camp" was not in fact the Iron Age hill fort that some authorities had assumed,<sup>3</sup> but that a field system of indeterminate age had been mistaken for a different class of earthwork by its original recorder. The excavations in Carshalton Road produced no trace of further burials, but the trench cut at 18 Hillcroome Road sectioned a small sterile ditch that it is intended to investigate further at a future date.<sup>4</sup>

## THE HARROW ROAD SITE

### *The "camp"*

The site lies at the north end of a spur of chalk running between two dry valleys and covered today by suburban housing. The spur has produced a variety of finds of the Bronze Age, Romano-British and Anglo-Saxon periods, but no artifacts of the Iron Age have been recorded. The so-called "camp" described by Mrs. Birch appears to resemble a fair-sized bivallate hill-fort (Fig. 1). It is not clear how much was discernible in 1925, when the report was written, and how much had been visible when the original notes had been made by another local resident in about 1905. Examination of the area today reveals no trace of anything resembling this "camp;" but this is not surprising in view of the density of building on the ridge. However, traces of widespread terracing are visible on all three

---

<sup>1</sup> *Sy.A.C.*, XXXVI, 102-6.

<sup>2</sup> *Sy.A.C.*, XXVIII, 213.

<sup>3</sup> *Archæologia*, XC, 169; *Sy.A.C.*, LVI, 135.

<sup>4</sup> The excavators wish to acknowledge their gratitude to the various owners who readily granted permission for the work to be done, viz. to the New Ideal Homesteads Ltd., Fairview Tennis Club, Dr. and Mrs. W. J. Cotton and to Mr. B. Gullen-Whur.

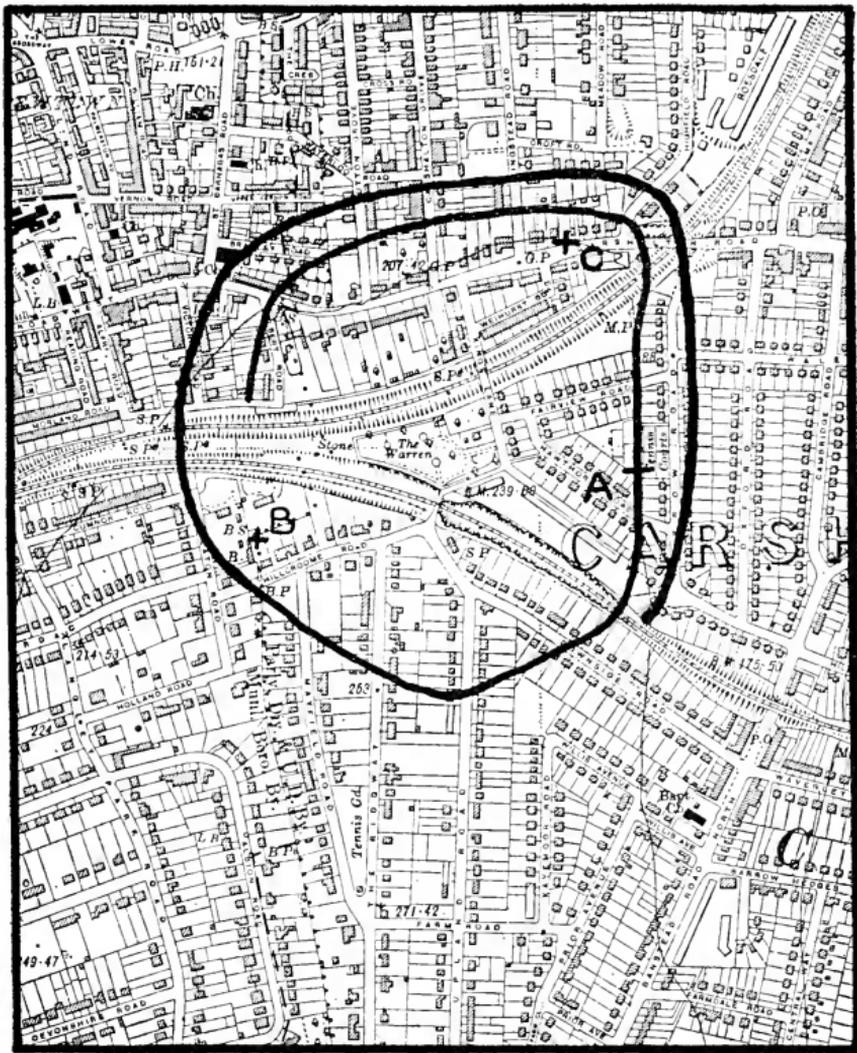


FIG. 1. PLAN OF ALLEGED EARTHWORK, CARSHALTON.

(After Mrs. Birch in *Sy.A.C.*, XXXVI; map p. 105.) Reproduced from the Ordnance Survey 6-inch Map with the sanction of the Director-General.

- A. Excavations at Harrow Road.
- B. Excavations at 18 Hillcroome Road.
- C. Excavations at 165 Carshalton Road.

sides of the ridge. The site available for excavation on the west side of Harrow Road was one point where the description was most categoric, specifying a "well-marked bank and ditch of considerable dimensions" here. Today the line of this bank and ditch is marked

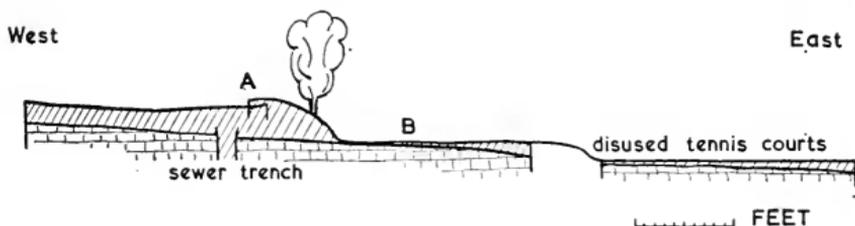


FIG. 2.—PROFILE ACROSS TERRACE, HARROW ROAD.

by a clear terrace which forms the western boundary of property to the west of Harrow Road.

### *The excavations*

The terrace to the west of Harrow Road was sectioned by means of three cuttings.<sup>5</sup> It was not possible because of obstructions to

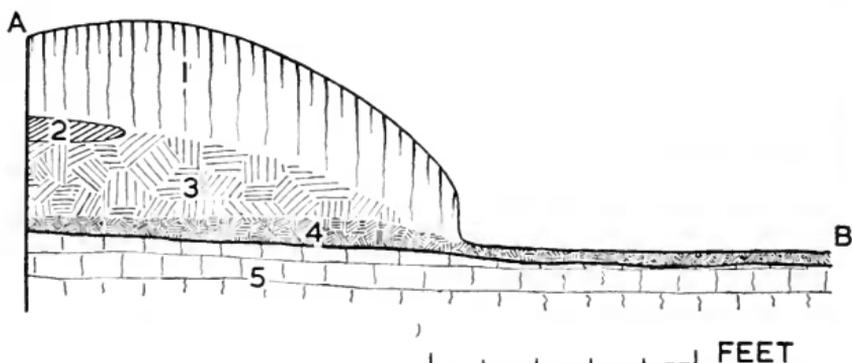


FIG. 3.—DETAIL OF SECTION OF TERRACE.

1. Loose grey topsoil containing fragments of twentieth-century rubbish, disturbed by roots and animal burrows.
2. Hard rammed chalk. The edge of this layer was found to be parallel to that of the tennis court to the west of the terrace on two sides of the court, and it appeared to be the foundation of the court.
3. Loose brown loam.
4. Compact brown loam.
5. Undisturbed chalk.

lay out one continuous section, but the three cuttings were the equivalent of an eighty-foot section straddling the terrace (Fig. 2). The main discovery was that there was no trace of a ditch at this point. A fourth cutting made some fifty yards away, at the northern end of the area available for excavation, confirmed this result. The

<sup>5</sup> National Grid Reference TQ (51) 2712 6396.

bank was earthen (Fig. 3), and appeared to be a positive lynchet surmounted by extra soil laid down during the construction of the tennis courts of the Fairview Tennis Club to the west of the terrace. There was no trace of a negative lynchet. A layer of darker, more compact loam at the base of the lynchet resembled fossil soil and may indicate that the terrace did not form as a result of ploughing but was constructed deliberately.

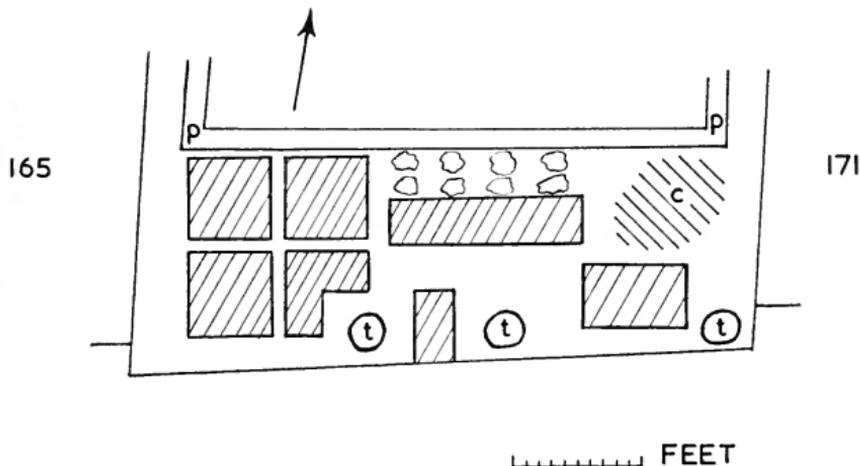


FIG. 4.—PLAN OF CUTTINGS AT 165 CARSHALTON ROAD.

c = concrete. p = path. t = trees.

### THE CARSHALTON ROAD SITE

When Carshalton Road was widened in 1903, a number of burials were found which were ascribed to the Anglo-Saxon period. The current O.S. plans mark the find spot as opposite the land between 165 and 171 Carshalton Road.<sup>6</sup> Excavation was permitted on this land adjacent to the road, but although most of the available area (Fig. 4) was excavated down to undisturbed chalk, no traces of further graves were found. As no other burials have been reported from the vicinity, it seems probable that the original find was of an isolated group of burials. Small groups of Anglo-Saxon graves have been reported frequently from this part of the county and are rarely shown to be part of a large cemetery.<sup>7</sup>

<sup>6</sup> National Grid Reference TQ (51) 2703 6424.

<sup>7</sup> *Sy.A.C.*, LVI, 132-58.