

## **Survey of a post-medieval ‘squatter’ occupation site and 19th century military earthworks at Hungry Hill, Upper Hale, near Farnham**

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*A measured survey of a redoubt (centred SU 8456 4978), once part of a complex of practice earthworks situated on a narrow ridge overlooking the Aldershot Ranges in Surrey, was carried out in 2004/5. These earthworks, constructed between and 1855 and 1863, overlie a series of enclosures that relate to a squatter settlement that was abandoned soon after the area passed into military ownership. A similar settlement on low-lying land to the north of the ridge (centred SU 841 508) was also investigated.*

### **Background**

In medieval and later periods the heathlands of south-east England were marginal in agricultural and settlement terms although, as manorial waste, they offered a range of resources that were exploited according to the customs of individual manors. Later, unenclosed heath provided an opportunity to obtain a small plot through encroachment and during the late 18th and early 19th centuries small squatter communities developed on the sandy heaths between Farnham and Aldershot and elsewhere. However, recognition of the need for a permanent military training area led to the purchase by the Government of large areas of heath and the settlements were expunged. On Sandy Hill and Hungry Hill a series of earthworks, once considered prehistoric in origin (Williams Freeman 1915), have more recently been identified as 19th century in date and military in origin (Riall 1983). Map (figs 1 and 2b) and aerial photographic evidence indicates that this complex comprised two redoubts and a number of lines of trenches, although much of the western portion has been destroyed by modern development and quarrying. Detailed survey of the remaining redoubt has been undertaken together with a rapid survey of squatter settlements in the immediate area.

### **Geology, topography and present land use**

The area to the north of Farnham comprises sands and gravels of the Bagshot Formation. Strata of fine-grained, yellow and orange sands are in places interleaved with pebble beds, which have been exploited for use as gravel. Where these have inhibited erosion, high plateaux occur, and between Aldershot and Farnham a steep-sided ridge, about 1km long and 200m wide and reaching a height of 170m OD, provides open views to the north over the Aldershot Ranges and south over Farnham. High ground continues towards the west, but to the east the ridge is curtailed in a spur. Although still in Ministry of Defence (MoD) ownership the ridge is outside the present firing range and used extensively by the public for recreational purposes. The valley to the north of the ridge runs east towards the river Blackwater and contains the bed of a small tributary which was dry during the survey.

At the time of the survey much of the ridge bore heathland vegetation with birch regenerating but the redoubt on the spur was covered with deciduous woodland. In the valley deciduous trees, primarily oak and willow, were predominant with grass as ground cover, although the slopes above were covered with heathland species and conifer woodland.

### **The survey**

The survey of the eastern redoubt was undertaken during 2004/5 using tapes and offsets (fig 3). A circuit of control points was positioned round the inner bank of the redoubt, with

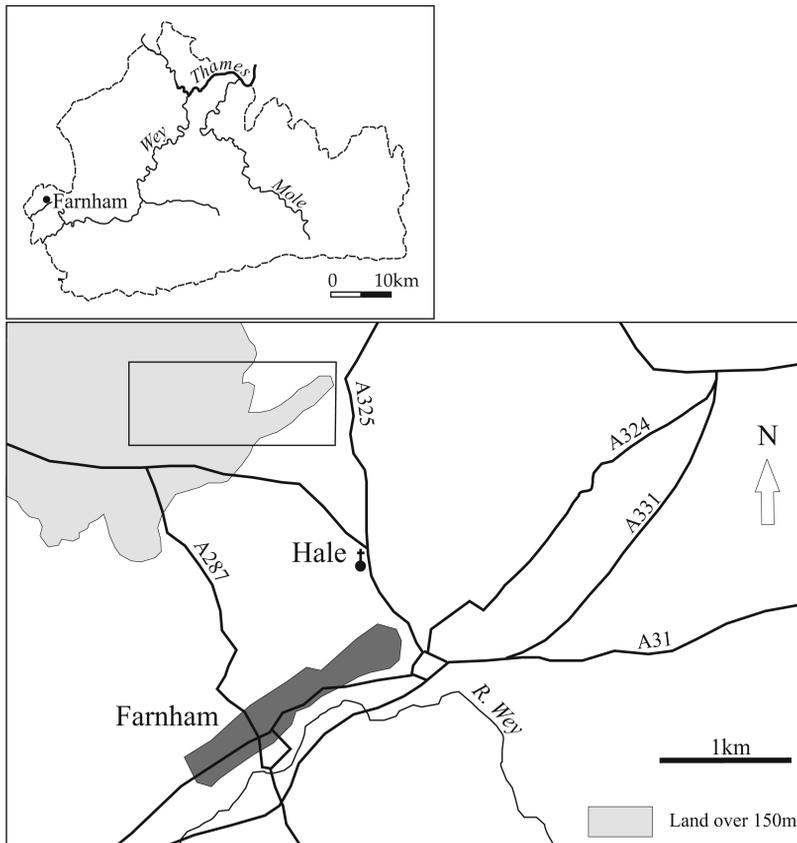


Fig 1 Location of Hungry Hill with area depicted in figures 2a and 2b outlined. (© Crown copyright and/or database right. All rights reserved. Licence number 100014198)

further points where necessary, and located relative to MoD boundary stones marked on Ordnance Survey (OS) maps. The overall accuracy of the survey, calculated as the difference in distances between control points measured by tape and by global positioning system (GPS) was  $6.4 \pm 3.8\%$  (mean  $\pm$  standard deviation,  $n = 158$ ). It should be noted that detailed survey of the area to the west of the redoubt, which has been damaged by gravel extraction, could not be completed owing to thick vegetation cover and some minor earthworks on the northern slope may have been unrecorded for the same reason. There is considerable damage to the northern areas of the earthworks caused by motor cycles but the details of this were not noted.

The earliest features comprise part of a sub-rectangular enclosure defined by a shallow bank to the south and lynchets to the north and west, and situated within the redoubt (a). The probable eastern end of this enclosure has not survived, but at the north-west corner is a raised area approximately 10 x 12m (b<sub>1</sub>) and a similar raised area, largely overlain by part of the redoubt lay to its north-west (b<sub>2</sub>). This complex of enclosures represents squatter occupation that occurred prior to the construction of the military earthwork and is discussed further below (see *Pre-military occupation*, below).

The redoubt, measuring approximately 110 x 80m internally, is situated on the top and south-facing slope at the eastern end of the ridge. The southern and eastern sides are enclosed by a substantial double ditch and ramparts with a narrow hollow cutting the outer rampart in the south-west corner (c). This hollow may be associated with a further bank outside the main defences (d) but damage by quarrying has destroyed any visible relationship. Also in

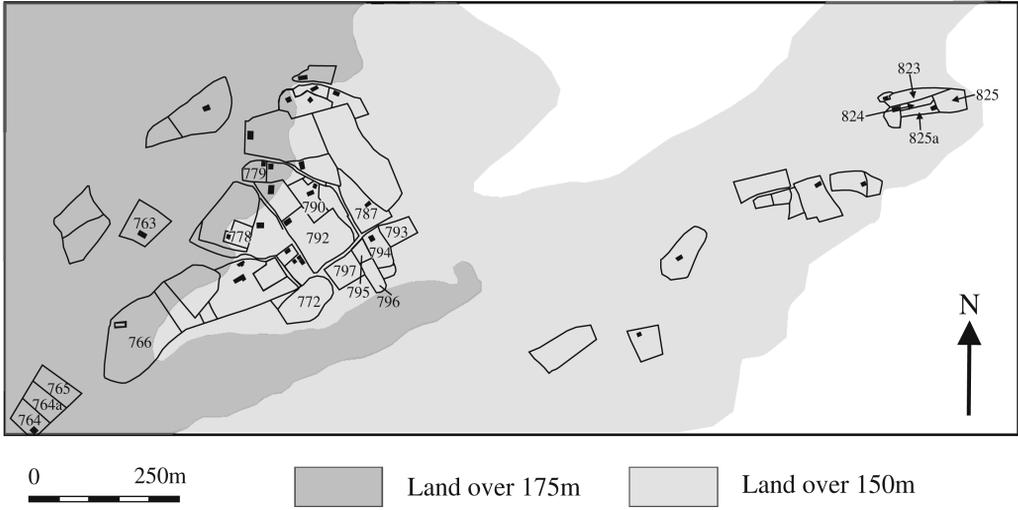


Fig 2a Areas of pre-military settlement at Brixbury and on Hungry Hill derived from the tithe map and tithe award for Farnham parish dated 1841 (some details omitted).

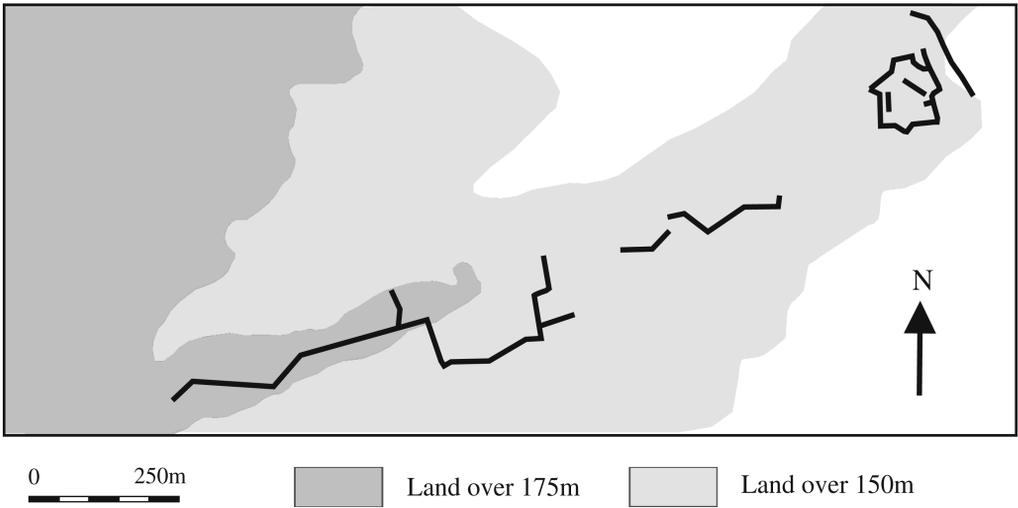


Fig 2b Military earthworks derived from late 19th century OS maps; the redoubt surveyed on Hungry Hill is that on the eastern end of the ridge.

the south-west corner, a ramp is positioned to allow the movement of guns from the interior to the top of the inner rampart (e).

The eastern and northern aspects are protected by a series of terraces cut into the steep slopes; those to the north extending about 160m westwards of the redoubt itself. North and east from the high point at (f) the ground drops naturally approximately 35m in a distance of 70m and four terraces have been cut into the slope to produce steep scarps and a number of gun platforms are positioned. However, the interior of the redoubt lies about 5m lower than the high point and, despite the presence of a number of banks, is fully exposed to any fire from the north.

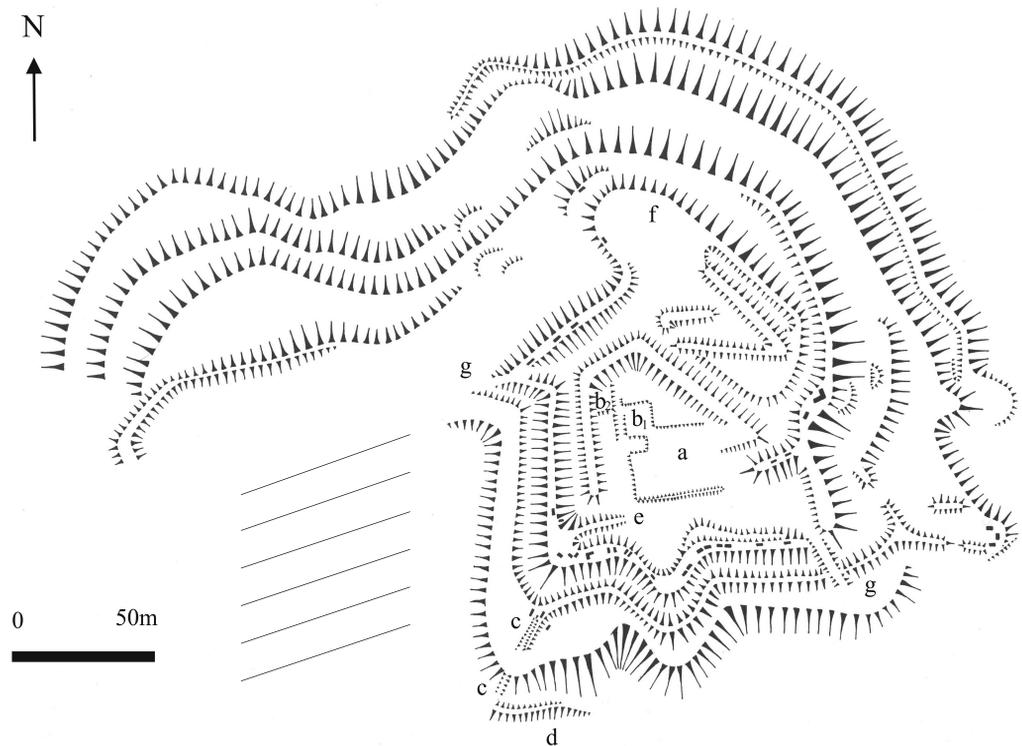


Fig 3 Analytical survey of redoubt at the eastern end of Hungry Hill. The hatched area was not surveyed owing to vegetation density.

The level approaches to the southern and western flanks of the redoubt are protected by a series of bank and ditch ramparts. In each case the inner rampart stands between 3m and 3.5m above the inner ditch and the outer rampart about 4m above the outer ditch. Flanking positions are placed at the south-west and south-eastern corners, and mid-way along the southern side of the inner rampart a redan-like feature provides additional flanking fire. A number of slit trenches are dug into the inner rampart, with a concentration on the southern side of the redoubt, but the date of these relative to the main period of construction is unclear.

The position of any original entrance, if such existed, could not be determined with certainty. Modern entrances have been cut through the ramparts in the south-east and north-west corners (g) and a simple gap in the ramparts at the position of the former is shown on a map dated 1862/3 (see *Military earthworks*, below). Two protected routes lead from the high point into the interior but neither have any obvious connection with the area outside the redoubt. The topography suggests an approach along the ridge from the west.

During early 2005, the settlement to the north of the ridge, named Brixbury on contemporary OS maps, was subjected to a level 1 survey (Bowden 1999, 190), comparing the present earthworks with the enclosures depicted on the tithe map for Farnham parish (SHC: 864/1/63) (fig 2a). With the exception of parcels numbered 764, 764a and 765, which have been destroyed by the construction of a modern motor cycle facility, all the enclosures could be located. Enclosure number 763 had been partially truncated by the construction of a military track.

The majority of the settlement lay on the south-facing slope of a small valley. Both the depth of topsoil exposed in rabbit burrows, and the presence of grasses as dominant ground cover contrasting with the heathland vegetation of the surrounding area, suggest that an area

of relatively fertile land had been selected. The northern end of enclosure number 778 lay at the top of the slope and the enclosures further north spread across an exposed plateau of infertile, podzolised sand. The track running through the southern portion of the settlement, between parcels 793 to 797 and 787 and 792 was positioned slightly to the north of a small streambed, now dry. However, a 6-inch map produced by the OS in 1855 to indicate the extent of the land then owned by the army (HRO: DP/139A) shows that the settlement drew much of its water supply from a number of wells. The enclosure boundaries were marked either by banks or by lynchets varying between 0.4 and 0.8m in height and the tracks were holloways running between the enclosures. A number of oak trees marked corners of the enclosures and trackways and these appeared to be roughly contemporary with the settlement.

Most of the positions of buildings shown on the tithe map were only marked by slight building platforms and, in some cases, small amounts of flint and tile rubble, but occasionally the remains of walls were visible. In enclosures 778 and 779 fragments of walls up to 0.3m high constructed of unmortared flint nodules are present; their smooth flat tops suggesting that they may have been sill walls supporting a timber superstructure. Roof tiles were also found in the area. The most substantial remains were those of the building in enclosure number 790. Here walls remaining to a height of 0.8m and with a width of 0.6m had been constructed of coursed flint nodules on either face with a flint rubble core. In this case the plot itself was also walled on its track frontage.

Within the north-eastern extremity of enclosure number 766 several parallel ditches up to 2m deep had been dug and the soil used to construct large banks. This may represent military activity, but the map of 1855 (HRO: DP139/A) shows a number of small huts in this area and both a clay pit and a brick kiln within the same enclosure suggesting an industrial origin for the earthworks. No remains of the brick kiln are visible, but defined and possibly metallised tracks could be seen in the vicinity of its site. The sandpit marked on the 1855 map at the western end of enclosure number 772 is clearly visible. An area to the south-west of enclosure number 766 contained a complex of earthworks which appeared to result from military utilisation of earlier sand and gravel pits, but these were not recorded in detail.

## Discussion

### PRE-MILITARY OCCUPATION

The slight earthworks visible within the redoubt on Hungry Hill represent the enclosures and building platforms of part of a squatter settlement called Long Bottom in the census returns of 1841 and 1851. Comparison with the tithe map and award for Farnham parish (fig 2a) shows them to be parcels described as cottages and land (numbers 823–825a, fig 2a). Earthwork remains of the settlement area in the valley corresponded with the settlement shown on both the tithe map for Farnham parish and the map of 1855, and in the census returns called Brixbury or Bricksbury.

Squatting on common land began in the 16th century and was often tolerated by landowners. Rent could not be charged since the enclosures were illegal, but yearly fines provided some income from what was otherwise, in financial terms for the landowner, often non-productive land. Within these enclosures the squatters were able to cultivate small parcels of land and graze stock on the commons but they also participated in small-scale industries based on the resources available locally. On heathland bracken, furze, birch for besom brooms, peat for fuel and carstone for building, provided material both for the squatters to use themselves and, in some cases, the bases for cottage industries whose products could be sold for cash. During the 18th century squatter settlements developed in areas such as the Black Country and the Forest of Dean where the availability of labour assisted the development of large-scale industry (Trinder 1997, 48). In the latter location settlements of around 30 cottages in 1680 had grown to 696 by 1803 and 785 housing around 1100 individuals by 1813 (Ward 2002, 85).

The settlements at Long Bottom and Brixbury appear to have originated on land which was part of the bishop of Winchester's Farnham estate in the last decades of the 18th century. There are no buildings shown on Rocque's map published in *c* 1768 but surveys conducted by Lindley and Crossley (published in 1793) and by Mudge for the OS, which was published in 1816, show clusters of buildings at both locations. The earliest documentary evidence of settlement dates to 1780 when Briant Budd was granted the right to enclose  $\frac{1}{4}$  acre of waste and build a cottage for his 'aged and infirm father' in order to 'keep him from the Parish' (HRO: 11M59/E2/153263). Pre-existing copyhold properties in the same area are mentioned in this document but no details given.

In 1831 the settlement was extended by means of a grant of waste made by Bishop Sumner to a number of trustees for the benefit of the poor of Farnham (HRO: 11M59/Bp8). This scheme appears similar to one suggested in the same year by William Cobbett for the parish of Bishop's Waltham (Hampshire). There, Cobbett proposed that the vestry should request the right to enclose common land owned by the bishop of Winchester and to dole it out in small amounts to married labourers, giving them legal title. This scheme met opposition from copyholders of the manor who would have lost part of the common land where they had grazing rights, and from the farmers, since the gift of legal title would carry with it a right to relief from the poor rates (Biddell 1999, 18). The Bishop's Waltham scheme does not appear to have been activated but at Farnham nineteen parcels of land were enclosed and made available 'to such honest, industrious and deserving poor persons belonging to the parish [...] as are or have been married, in allotments not exceeding one acre to each individual'. The holders were to pay 2s per annum rent of which half was allotted to defray the trustees' costs and the remainder paid to the bishop. Those renting the land were prohibited from planting hops, building dwellings or sub-letting their holdings and leases could only be made for one year at a time (HRO: 11M59/Bp8). A further enclosure of 20 acres, intended for subdivision, only attracted a single tenant and 19 acres remained undisposed. Under this scheme legal title would have remained with the trustees, thus both preventing the development of permanent settlement and denying the squatters right to poor relief.

In 1841 the census return recorded nine heads of household living in Long Bottom and a further nine at Brixbury. A decade later, while the population in Long Bottom remained static, that at Brixbury decreased to only seven families. The majority of those listed in the census returns were described as agricultural labourers, though by no means all; in 1841 William Knight, a road surveyor, lived at Brixbury and in Long Bottom one of the extensive Pharo family was a brickmaker.

Details of both settlements were depicted on the tithe map of 1841 (fig 2a) and recorded in the accompanying award. Most of the enclosures were described as arable land; one landowner, William Mitchell, given the occupation of farmer in 1841, also grew a small area of hops. Some seasonal work would have been available around Farnham to augment the living available from this poor land, particularly tying in the hop vines and harvesting their product (Batey 1965, 24). By 1855 small-scale exploitation of sand, gravel and clay was being undertaken, possibly for the squatters' own use, but the brick kiln shown (HRO: DP139/A) was probably part of the extensive brick-making industry of the Hale area.

For some at least, existence on Hungry Hill was well above subsistence level. The Farnham tithe award records Mary Pharo occupying encroachments on the bishop of Winchester's land totalling over 110 acres and in her will dated 1874 she left £525 in monetary bequests (HRO: 50M63/B43/6).

Many squatter settlements on agriculturally marginal land were depopulated due to enclosure of the commons during the late 18th century and early 19th centuries, in the drive to bring new land into production to feed a rapidly increasing population. This loss of settlements was noted at the time (Brodrick 1881, 57):

On the wild heaths which still cover the borders of Surrey, Hampshire and Sussex, as well as in the great woods of the southern and midland counties, there abode a race of

'squatters' or 'hutmen', which has since almost retired before advancing civilisation. Some few of them may have established by prescription a claim to property in their little tenements and become peasant-farmers, but the great majority were ousted as trespassers, with the progress of enclosure, and must have passed into the ranks as mere labourers, if indeed they did not swell those of poachers and other semi-criminal vagrants.

The reference here is to the Prescription Act of 1832 which gave legitimacy to occupation that had been enjoyed for an uninterrupted period of twenty years (Jessel 1998, 168).

At Hungry Hill, however, it was sale of the land to the government for military use that resulted in desertion of the settlements at Brixbury and Long Bottom. Those who had legal title to their land or who had common rights on the manorial waste sold their rights to Her Majesty's Ordnance officers and by 1861 both settlements had been extinguished.

#### MILITARY OCCUPATION

Areas of heathland in north-west Surrey and the adjoining counties have been used on a temporary basis for military camps since the late 18th century (Smith 1995) and in 1853 some 7000 men, under the direction of the Commander-in-Chief, Lord Hardinge, attended summer manoeuvres at Chobham (Cole 1980, 26). Concern had been expressed for some time about the relative state of preparedness of the British Army when compared with those on the Continent. The year 1852 saw publication of a number of alarmist articles including *The Invasion of England* by 'an Englishman and a Civilian', *Notes on the Defensive Resources of Great Britain* by a 'half-pay Royal Artillery captain' and *The Peril of Portsmouth* by James Fergusson (Longmate 1991, 312). A combination of patriotic sentiment engendered by the death of Wellington in September, and perceived danger from Louis Napoleon's elevation to the status of Emperor, in contravention of a declaration made after Waterloo, in December of the same year, created an impetus towards public expenditure on the Army (*ibid.*, 312–16).

The success of the Great Camp on Chobham Common encouraged Lord Hardinge to press for the purchase of land for a permanent training ground rather than attempt to hire a suitable venue each year, and emphasised the necessity, since a large proportion of the infantry could not 'even be instructed in Ball Cartridge firing, on account of the difficulty of finding proper ranges'. Reigate Heath was one possibility considered for the purpose but insufficient common land was available for purchase and, with the strong backing of the Prince Consort, the decision to use heath and common land around Aldershot for this purpose was taken in 1853 (Cole 1991, 25). At the time it was estimated that 25,000 acres could be bought at £12 per acre and by 1861 between 7000 and 8000 had been acquired. In 1853 some 25,000 troops assembled for training at Aldershot and work on the permanent barracks started in 1854. The population of Aldershot, 875 in 1851, expanded over the next decade to 16,720 (*ibid.*, 29).

In 1871 the 'Aldershot Encampment and Autumn Manoeuvres' saw the first assemblage of a mixed force of any size and provided a great public spectacle, and in 1885 the first exercises in long-distance signalling by heliograph involved a base station on Hungry Hill and receiving stations at Hindhead and on Meroo Downs (*ibid.*, 98).

#### MILITARY EARTHWORKS

The British Army had long used earthen defence systems and both the linking of redoubts by trench systems and the use of good topographical positions were established practices. A century before the construction of the system under study it had been noted (Pleydell 1768) that:

As the faces of square redoubts have only their own fire to trust to, not being defended by any other part, this inconvenience ought to be in some measure obviated by placing

them so as to procure some advantage from their situation, that is by constructing them on heights, or having one or more sides covered by a river, morass, ravine etc or strengthening them with abbatis, chevaux de frise, trous de loup, fougasses etc. [...] In some cases it may be necessary to strengthen the redoubts of this kind by lines, carried to where the access is almost impracticable to prevent the enemy's turning them, and attacking the garrison in the rear; changing the direction from that of a straight line in order to obtain a cross fire.

The military earthworks in Crowthorne Wood are thought to date to 1792 (Smith 1995). The redoubts there were small and approximately square, and surrounded by a single bank and ditch with the bank rising only 1.5–2m above the ditch bottom. Neither entrances nor gun platforms could be detected and the redoubts were detached from any trench system.

This type of system had been used to great effect in 1809 by Wellington, who used 152 strategically positioned redoubts to create the Lines of Torres Vedras and defend the approach to Lisbon (Hughes 1987). Rapidly constructed, non-permanent, earthwork defences were to remain a characteristic of British tactical thought throughout the late 19th and early 20th centuries and may be contrasted with the Continental preference for permanent, masonry-built lines.

The redoubts and trench system on Sandy and Hungry Hills is not depicted on the OS 6-inch map of 1855 (HRO: DP139/A) but is shown on a map surveyed in 1862/3 by a detachment of the Royal Engineers under the direction of Lt Col W F Drummond Jervois and drawn by Capt J Festing (SHC). Although later defence lines for London were constructed along the North Downs, no evidence has been found of a strategic motive for the system under study. In contrast to the slightly later 'hillforts' on Ash ranges (English 2004), the morphology of this system does not suggest an experimental purpose and as an entity it may simply have been constructed as an exercise in defending a position in this topographical location. However, there are clear difficulties in regarding the eastern redoubt as a single, tactical entity. If attacked from the north then only the terraces enhancing the steep slope act as an effective defence since the interior of the redoubt would have been vulnerable to artillery or even rifle fire from the high point to its north. It may be that the topography was used to provide practice zones for two different techniques. The northern and eastern defences provided the opportunity to practise defence from and attack up a steep slope while the southern and western sections allowed practice in the use of major earthwork defences across a relatively level approach. Certainly the larger size and greater complexity of the redoubts on Sandy and Hungry Hills, and their incorporation in a trench system running along the ridge, contrasts with the small size and detached nature of the earlier remains in Crowthorne Wood.

It may, however, be relevant that Lt Col Jervois, former Secretary of the Royal Commission appointed in 1859 to assess the existing defences of the country and to suggest improvements and which reported the next year (Longmate 1991, 334), directed the survey of areas including that round Hungry Hill in 1862/3 mentioned above. Jervois was also in overall direction of design and construction of new defences for Portsmouth including the Gosport Advanced Line in the late 1850s and the Portsdown forts in the succeeding decade. These masonry forts are polygonal in plan, a design whose straight faces were favoured by Jervois, and, while being dissimilar to most of their predecessors (*ibid*, 340), resemble the earthwork redoubt on Hungry Hill. It may be that the earthworks described here were constructed specifically as a practice fieldwork of this new development in military engineering.

The earthworks seem to have been in use for only a short period. Constructed between 1855 and 1862/3 they are depicted on the OS 25-inch map dated 1896 as partially destroyed by gravel quarries and it may have been that the development of ranges which placed the northern slopes within the live fire range militated against tactical use of the ridge.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Access to Defence Estates land was facilitated by Steve Ashwood and Claire Dalton, and the survey undertaken by Rose Hooker, Pauline Hulse, Jenny Newell, Geoff Stonehouse and Hugh Wilson. Thanks are due to the staff of The Prince Consort Library, Aldershot and the Royal Engineer's Library, Chatham for their kind assistance and to Peggy Parks for information on documents held by Hampshire Record Office; I am also grateful to Dave Field and Graham Brown for their cogent comments on various drafts of this paper, and to one of the anonymous referees for bringing to my attention similarities between the redoubt surveyed here and the forts near Portsmouth.

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