Wayland's Smithy, Berkshire.

By C. R. PEERS and REGINALD A. SMITH, F.S.A.

[This ancient monument is one of Berkshire's most important archæological treasures, and it is fitting that an authoritative description of it should appear in this journal. By the kindness of the Society of Antiquaries and by the permission of the distinguished authors we are permitted to reproduce the papers that were read a few years ago before the Society and published in *The Antiquaries Journal*. The exploration of the monument owes its origin to our member, Mr. H. G. W. d'Almaine, F.S.A., who has also succeeded in securing Wayland's Smithy as a historic monument, so that its future is secure.—EDITOR.]

I. THE HISTORY OF THE MONUMENT.

IN Northern mythology Wayland the Smith corresponds to the Roman Vulcan or the Greek Hephaestus; and his name cannot have been attached to the well-known group of sarsen slabs in Berkshire till the Teutonic invaders reached the upper Thames in the fifth century. This cunning worker in metals appears on the Franks casket in the British Museum, dating from soon after 700; and the monument is mentioned under the name of Wayland's Smithy in a charter of King Eadred to Aelfheh dated 955.

The site is two miles from the western boundary of the county, one mile east of the village of Ashbury, and the same distance south-west of the White Horse, near Uffington. It is now encircled by beech-trees near the brink of the downs, about 700 ft. above the sea; and 220 ft. to the south runs the prehistoric track known as the Ridgeway. The legend connected with the stones is well known, and has been discussed by Thomas Wright in *Archæologia*, xxxii (1847), 315, and *Journ. Brit. Arch. Assoc.*, xvi, 50; also by Dr. Thurnam in *Wilts. Arch. Mag.*, vii, 321.

Mention may also be made of Oehlenschlager's treatment in *Wayland Smith*, from the French of G. B. Depping and F. Michel, with additions by S. W. Singer, published in 1847; but the tradition has been kept alive above all by Sir Walter Scott, who gave a garbled version of it in *Kenilworth*. That the novelist never visited the monument but derived his information in London from Madam Hughes, the wife of the Uffington vicar (who was also canon of St. Paul's) and grandmother of Tom Hughes (the

author of *Tom Brown's Schooldays*), has been established by the researches of Mr. H. G. W. d'Almaine, town clerk of Abingdon, to whose zeal and pertinacity the recent exploration of the site was chiefly due. The Smithy has for years been scheduled as an ancient monument, and the Earl of Craven, as owner, not only readily gave permission but generously provided the labour for the excavations, which were carried out under our own supervision in July, 1919, and June, 1920. Subscriptions towards incidental expenses were thankfully received from the Berkshire Archæological Society and its Honorary Secretary, Rev. P. H. Ditchfield, F.S.A.; also from Rev. E. H. Goddard, Honorary Secretary of the Wiltshire Archæological Society, and from our own Society. Mr. d'Almaine not only took an active part in the arrangements, but made two models; and Rev. Charles Overy of Radley College burdened himself with apparatus, and undertook with success most of the measuring and photography. Subsequently, the human bones discovered were skilfully repaired and fully described by Mr. Dudley Buxton, of the Oxford Anatomical Museum. Lord Craven's agent, Mr. Beresford Heaton, did us great service, and his local representative, Mr. McIver, loyally carried out his instructions to the advantage of the party and the venerable site itself. To all these gentlemen we hasten to convey our thanks, and regret that three beech trees within the enclosure had to be felled, as their roots were interfering with the stones of the chamber.

The earliest illustration known or likely to be found is a rough sketch by John Aubrey about 1670 (fig. 1), reproduced in *Wilts. Arch. Mag.*, vii (1862), 323, from his *Monumenta Britannica* in the Bodleian Library. The chamber and surrounding stones are evidently not on the same scale, but the outline and measurements of the barrow (about 203 ft. by 66 ft.) are approximately correct. The standing stones on the south-east border of the mound are still in position, but most of the others shown as above ground have disappeared; and our excavations have brought to light several that had fallen and been covered up before his time. It may be possible eventually to disclose the stones now lying concealed in his gaps. The chamber is very summarily drawn,

Aubrey perhaps starting the notion that the eastern transept was a cave; and it is curious that most of the illustrations and accounts of the monument published since his time have perpetuated the error, as, for instance, Chambers's *Book of Days*, July 18, vol. ii, 83 (published in 1888).

The next publication is dated 1738, and took the form of a letter to Dr. Mead concerning some antiquities in Berkshire, by Francis Wise. His plate opposite p. 20 shows the entire barrow with rather angular outline, highest at the south end and irregularly covered with stones, among which the chamber can be barely identified. There is also a nearer view, taken from the west, and showing the earlier approach from that side, whereas the path from the Ridgeway now leads to the *south* end of the monument. The stones are woefully out of drawing, but roughly represent the present arrangement at the southern end of the barrow.

His distant view is reproduced in *The Mirror of Literature, Amusement, and Instruction*, vol. xxi (1833), p. 88, this and another reference to vol. viii (1826), p. 33, having been furnished by Dr. Eric Gardner, F.S.A. The later view represents the 'Cave' surrounded by fir trees, with water in the foreground (perhaps in the fosse), and a separate stone on either hand (on the west of the chamber). In the interval of nearly ninety years a belt of fir trees had grown up round the barrow; and Thurnam states that firs and beeches were planted about 1810, the former being dead in 1860. No trees are included in Lysons's plate published in 1806 (description in *Magna Britannia*, i, 215 of the 1813 edition).

Sir Richard Colt Hoare wrote of the monument in 1821 (*Ancient Wilts.*, ii, 47):—'It was one of those long barrows, which we meet with occasionally, having a kistvaen of stones within it, to protect the place of interment. Four large stones of a superior size and height to the rest, were placed before the entrance to the adit, two on each side; these now lie prostrate on the ground: one of these measures ten and another eleven feet in height; they are rude and unhewn, like those at Abury. A line of stones, though of much smaller proportions, encircled

the head of the barrow, of which I noticed four standing in their original position; the corresponding four on the opposite side have been displaced. The stones which formed the adit or avenue still remain, as well as the large incumbent stone which covered the kistvaen, and which measures ten feet by nine.' He notices the north and south axis of the barrow as exceptional, but somewhat perversely states that 'the kistvaen is placed towards the east,' not realizing that the whole of the chamber was originally roofed with capstones like that of the eastern transept. It was, however, recognized a hundred years ago that the sarsens once formed the chamber of a long barrow and that the entrance was flanked by two pairs of enormous stones now fallen.

The first careful drawings of the Smithy were published in *Archæologia*, xxxii (1847), 312, pl. xvii. They were the work of C. W. Edmonds and illustrated a paper on the monument by a former secretary of the Society, John Yonge Akerman. The chief merit of this paper is its recognition of the cruciform plan, but in this he was anticipated by Stukeley, who died in 1765 (Surtees Society's vol. lxxvi, 8).

A pointed contrast in method may be seen in *Wilts. Arch. Mag.*, vii (1862), which contains an account and drawing of the monument, both bristling with inaccuracies (p. 315), followed by a sober account from the pen of Dr. Thurnam (p. 321). The latter gives as much information as was possible without systematic excavation, and is fully worthy of one of the greatest names in British archæology. References to the literature of the subject are given in his note on p. 330.

At the International Congress of Prehistoric Archæology at Norwich and London in 1868, the late Mr. A. L. Lewis read a paper 'on certain Druidic monuments in Berkshire' (*Report*, pp. 38, 44). He accepted the cruciform plan of the Smithy and thought the gallery had been cut into two chambers by two of the wall stones being set crosswise. In his opinion the monument was intended for use as a tomb, not as an altar, and the mound that probably covered the supporting stones (leaving the capstones exposed) would not have contained much material. His

plate gives a plan of the stones surrounded by trees, and he refers to the abundance of sarsen stones at Ashdown, two miles to the south, which are said to have been still more numerous before the house was built (Ashmole, *Antiquities of Berks.*, ii, 198).

The chambered long barrows of England may be said to agree in type, but each has its peculiarities, and Wayland's Smithy has more than usual. Thurnam states in his paper on Long Barrows (*Archæologia*, xlii, 205) that two out of three, perhaps four out of five, have their long axes approximately east and west: the rest are about north and south, and both Nympsfield near Dursley, Gloucestershire, and Nempnet in Somerset, nine miles S.S.W. of Bristol, like Wayland, have their chamber at the south end. His plate xiv is useful as showing side by side the plans of several such chambers, but no true parallel for the simple cruciform arrangement of the stones is there given. Borlase (*Dolmens of Ireland*, ii, 457–8) saw a resemblance to the long barrow at West Kennet, Wilts., which had squarish ends (*Archæologia*, xxxviii, 409) and a stone enclosure, according to Aubrey's drawing of 1665. The dimensions in this case were 336 ft. by 75 ft., the narrow end being 40 ft. across.

In the *Archæological Review*, ii (1889), 314, Sir Arthur Evans compared Wayland's Smithy with one of the monuments at Moytura, Co. Sligo, of which a view and plan are given in Fergusson's *Rude Stone Monuments*, pp. 182, 183. The lower limb of the cross is imperfect, but there were evidently two rings round the chamber, the inner being of small stones; and the opening in the outer, opposite the base of the cross, is flanked by two stones that may be door jambs or the rudiments of an avenue, or (as Fergusson preferred) an external interment. The diameter of the outer circle is 60 ft.; the monument is No. 27 in Petrie's list.

A good foreign example of a chamber with massive jambs at the entrance was excavated by Gustafson in 1887 in Bohuslen and illustrated in his *Norges Oldtid*, p. 33, fig. 113 and p. 38, figs. 132, 133. English examples are not so definite, but Thurnam

speaks of 'the two large stones which in the best marked examples of these chambers form the door-jambs to the entrance,' and gives some references in *Archæologia*, xlii, 222, note *b*.

The four prostrate slabs at the south end of the barrow proved, when completely laid bare, of imposing dimensions; and an east and west trench was dug to discover their original purpose. Not only were the sockets made for them in the chalk discovered with small lumps of sarsen to act as wedges at their feet, but on the northern edge of the trench, opposite the foot of the slab immediately west of the entrance, two flat rods of iron were taken out together (fig. 2). They were lying parallel to the foot of the jamb, 1 ft. from the present surface, and looked like door hinges, but the only perforations are in the expanded end of each, and another interpretation was needed. Though a novel variety of the type, they are evidently currency-bars of Early British origin, such as Julius Caesar described (*Bell. Gall.* v. 12), and no doubt saw during his invasions in B.C. 55–54. Apart from the expanded end the section is oblong and quite normal, the longer weighing when found 11¾ oz. and the shorter just over 12½ oz. After cleaning and treatment to prevent further rust by Dr. Alexander Scott, F.R.S., at the British Museum, the weights are respectively 11 oz. 30 grains and 12 oz. 20 grains. The standard based on independent evidence is 11 oz. (4,770 grains=309 grammes). Several papers have been published on the subject (*Proc. Soc. Ant.*, xx, 179, xxii, 338, xxvii, 69; *Archæological Journal*, lxix, 424; and *Classical Review*, 1905, 206).

The discovery of currency on such a site inevitably leads to speculation. According to the legend, a traveller whose horse had cast a shoe on the adjacent Ridgeway had only to leave a groat on the capstone, and return to find his horse shod and the money no longer there. But the invisible smith may have been in possession centuries before the Saxons recognized him as Wayland, and the ancient Britons of Caesar's time may have been in the habit of offering money here either in return for farrier's work or merely as a votive offering to the local god or hero. In Sicily a similar tradition can perhaps be traced back to the classical period (*Archæologia*, xxxii, 324).

Whatever the motive, we have to explain how the currency-bars came to be buried at that particular spot, which was on the inner side of the enormous jamb and not accessible, even from the passage, when the mound was in existence. As matters now are, there is no reason why treasure should have been buried there rather than inside the chamber; but a votive offering deposited at the base of the largest standing stone would have been most appropriate, and the suggestion is that one of the jambs at least was standing about 2,000 years ago. On that theory we must also presume that the surface was then much as it is now, else the position would have been unapproachable without a deep excavation. In other words, the find of currency-bars not only points to a British predecessor of Wayland, but indicates that although this particular jamb was still standing, the long barrow had been already denuded to its present level in the first century before Christ.

Except for two capstones to cover part of the lower limb of the cross, all the stones of the chamber are accounted for. Though there is nothing to show when the capstones were displaced, it is probable that much of the damage was done on one occasion, possibly without the intervention of man. The capstone of the crossing was on a higher level than the rest, and probably was the only one visible on the original surface of the barrow. This huge slab has fallen and sunk into the ground on the north-east of the chamber. In its fall it also disturbed its neighbours, forcing the capstone of the northern arm between the eastern upright of that chamber and the northern upright of the eastern transept. In sliding down to the north-east it also tilted towards the south the northern upright of the northern limb of the cross, and depressed the north-west angle of the vast capstone that still covers the eastern transept. The weight of the central capstone is estimated at 1½ tons, that still in position being about 3½ tons. The capstone of the western transept has slipped off to the north where it now lies, and the last capstone to the south has fallen and partly closed up the entrance to the chamber, its dimensions being 3 ft. 9 in. by 3 ft. 8 in.

It should be noted also that the capstone of the northern arm of the cross originally rested on top of the north and east uprights, but on a ledge cut on the inner face of the western upright, 9 in. from the top, on a level with the top of the others. The northern capstone was thus accommodated under the projecting edge of the large central capstone, to which it gave additional support. On the inner face of the south-east pier of what may be called the central tower were observed four circular depressions that might rank as 'cup-markings,' but in any case they are not good examples, nor can their date be determined in relation to the chamber.

Wayland's Smithy may thus be said to have a history, certainly more than the later and more celebrated Stonehenge; and recent excavations have added largely to our knowledge of both monuments. Wayland, however, still retains some of his secrets; and if and when the omens are favourable, more may be done to lift the veil. For the present all concerned have done their best to answer King Alfred's question in his free translation of the *Consolations* of Boethius:

Ubi nunc fidelis ossa Fabricii manent?
quid Brutus, aut rigidus Cato?

'Where are now the bones of the celebrated and wise goldsmith Weland? Where are now the bones of Weland, or who knows now where they were?'

In the report on the human remains by Mr. Dudley Buxton, detailed measurements are recorded that need not be published in full. As will be seen later, nearly all the interior of the chamber had been previously dug over, but the lower levels of the western transept still contained some human bones in groups, though not in anatomical order. Here, as elsewhere, skeletons had been disturbed to make room for other burials, and it is probable that the dead were first buried outside and after a time disinterred, for the bones to be laid in the tomb reserved no doubt for the greatest of their time.

Here we found remains of perhaps eight skeletons, including one of a child, but their incompleteness points to a previous disturbance perhaps in neolithic times. The absence of thigh-

bones in this case is remarkable, and only a few conclusions can be drawn. The best preserved skull belonged to an adult of middle age, probably male, with a cephalic index of 78·19, the mean indices of long and round barrow subjects being 74·93 and 76·70 respectively. It is therefore broader in proportion than the average brachycephalic Bronze Age skull, and may belong to an intrusive burial after the introduction of metal. In Mr. Buxton's opinion the people buried in Wayland's Smithy did not differ to any great extent in physique from the more recent inhabitants of Berkshire. Certain differences from modern bones, due to habit, are striking, namely, the pressure facets which may be all attributed to squatting, and the wear of the teeth, both of which are characteristics shared by primitive man and by modern savages.

Near the middle of the western skirt of the barrow, 3 ft. outside the line of standing stones and on the line of our trench BB, was found a skeleton buried in a crouched position, and lying on its right side, with the head to the north. It was only 18 in. below the surface, and had been partly destroyed, probably in digging for rabbits. It is pronounced to be that of a man of about 5 ft. $2\frac{1}{2}$ in., below the average height therefore, but with a cranium larger than usual. The muscular development is slight, and the teeth are less worn than those found in the chamber, with no trace of caries. The cephalic index is 77·72, indicating a slightly longer type of head than before, though both belong to a type living in England both in neolithic and modern times. In spite of a careful search, no grave furniture was found to give a clue to the date.

R.A.S.

(*To be continued*).