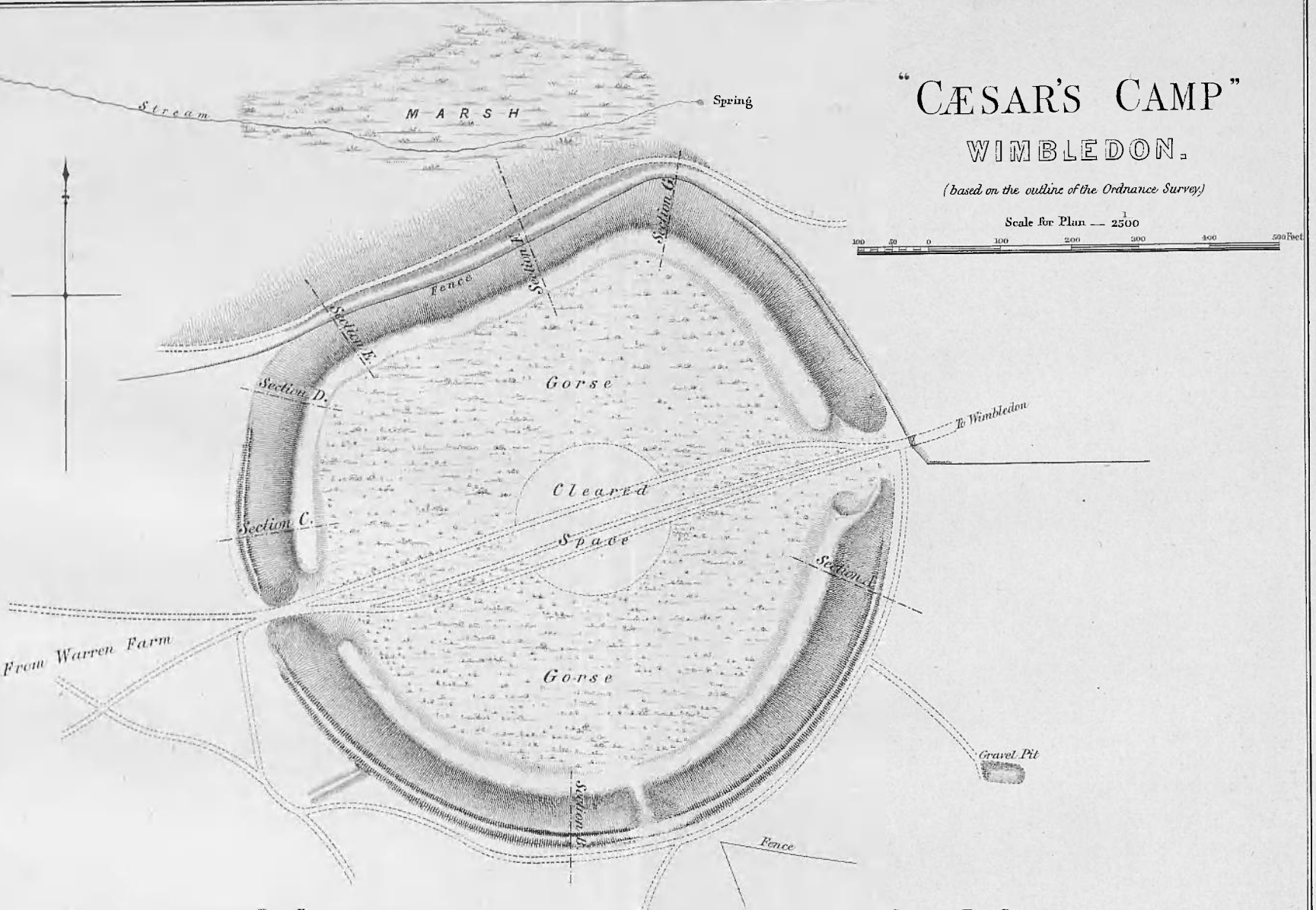
"CÆSAR'S CAMP"

WIMBLEDON.

(based on the outline of the Ordnance Survey)

Scale for Plan — $\frac{1}{2500}$

100 50 0 100 200 300 400 500 Feet

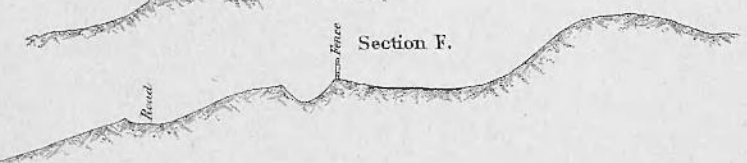


Sections A.B & C.

Section D.

Sections E & G.

Section F.



Scale for Sections 40 feet to an Inch.

10 5 0 10 20 30 40 50 60 70 80 90 100 feet

W.H.T. delt. Feb.y 1866.

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"CÆSAR'S CAMP," WIMBLEDON.

By WALTER H. TREGELLAS.

THE notes for this paper were made at the beginning of 1865, when a rumour was prevalent that the interesting and picturesque old earthwork at Wimbledon was threatened with serious injury by the proposed construction of some new roads. It is said that it was intended to divide the ramparts by two new roads diverging from the centre of the work, and to cut off a third part of the area by the boundary wall or fence of a proposed park—a place of public recreation in which such a feature of interest as the camp might well be made available, and suitably preserved. These rumours, happily, have died away.

It would, no doubt, be a hopeless task to endeavour to settle definitively the period to which these remains may be referred; but it may not be unprofitable to set forth the evidence and the opinions which have been brought forward by various authorities on behalf of each of those nations to one or another of whom we are accustomed to attribute the numerous earthworks scattered throughout our island. Was Wimbledon camp the work of British, of Roman, of Saxon, or of Danish hands? There is something to be said in behalf of each supposition.

The final syllable of Wimbledon will at once suggest a British origin for the name, if not for the camp itself. Conjoined, as it probably has been in this case, to a Saxon name (as has been done in many other instances which will suggest themselves), the syllables *don*, *din*, *dinas*, *dune*, &c., are admitted to be tolerably safe indications of the existence, at some time, of a British stronghold, at the places so named. Brayley, in his "History of Surrey,"[1] after remarking that various authors ascribe it respectively to the Britons, Romans, Saxons and Danes, gives it as his own opinion that

[1] Vol. iii. pp. 499 et seq.

it probably was originally a British stronghold, subsequently occupied by other nations in succession. Mr. W. D. Saull, in a paper read before the Ethnological Society, on the 15th of March, 1848, speaks very decidedly in favour of the British origin of this earthwork; and even goes so far as to distinctly refer it to the "Fourth, or Pastoral Period" of British history, when our rude forefathers kept their herds in enclosures of small extent—but numerous—upon the highlands. But there appears to be no reason why this writer might not, with equal propriety, have referred it to his "Fifth Period," when, as he describes it, large and strong encampments were formed on the downs, superseding the small hill-camps. Mr. Saull, on the supposition that it belongs to his "Fourth Period," refers Wimbledon to the same date as the enclosures at Edge Hill in Warwickshire, at Brailes, at Hooknorton Heath, and at Madmarston and Nadbury Camps. As examples of the "Fifth Period," to which Wimbledon would seem more properly to belong, Mr. Saull cites the earthworks on St. Catherine's Hill near Winchester, the camp on the Downs near Folkestone, and a very fine example at Danesfield near Stockbridge.

Mr. Saull is not alone in his decided opinions on this subject. The Rev. Thomas Hugo, at a meeting of the London and Middlesex Archæological Society, on the 26th of February, 1856, stated that "a large collection of hut circles was distinctly visible on Wimbledon Common a short time ago;" and suggested that Wimbledon was "the fortified fastness to which the Romans pursued Cassivelaunus." In a letter to myself Mr. Hugo writes that the hut-circles to which he referred were numerous and conspicuous some fifteen years ago, in a line between the windmill and the "camp," especially on the brow of the high ground on the north, over against the camp. They were round, and about 4 ft. or 5 ft. deep, the edges overgrown with brake, and at the bottom of each was a mass of large stones. Mr. Hugo was then fresh from some investigations which he had been making into similar remains on Worle Hill, Somersetshire, and is quite clear as to having correctly attributed the pits at Wimbledon. But no recent investigations, either by Mr. Hugo, or by myself, have resulted in a discovery, or rather re-discovery of these remains.

But yet another trace of supposed British occupation has

vanished from this neighbourhood. Mr. T. Stackhouse, who, in the early part of this century, wrote a course of lectures (of which only two I believe were published) on the architectural and other remains of Britain, states [2] that "near an old single-trenched camp at the south-west corner of Wimbledon Common, is a very small flat barrow, cut in the form of a cross. I do not know if it has been mentioned by any other writer." [3]

Those who know Wimbledon Camp will admit that it agrees pretty well with Cæsar's well-known description of the British oppidum :

"Oppidum autem Britanni vocant, quum sylvas impeditas vallo atque fossâ munierunt," especially when taken in connection with Strabo's echo of it : [4]

"Πολεις δ'αὐτῶν εἰσιν οἱ δρυμοὶ· περιφράξαντες γὰρ δένδρεσι καταβεβλημένοις εὐρυχωρή κύκλον ἐνταῦθα καὶ αὐτοὶ καλυβοποιουνται καὶ τὰ βοσκηματα κατασταθμένουσιν οὐ πρὸς πολὺν χρόνον."

Mr. A. J. Kempe, F.S.A.,[5] another of those who are unwilling that any but the Britons should have the merit of having formed this work, observes that its construction is somewhat peculiar, and that the indications, which still exist, of a second or outer *vallum*, occasioned the erroneous conclusion formed by some authors, that there was a double *fosse*. He remarks that writers on British military antiquities have considered that it was one of the principles of British tactics to use concentric rings of ramparts, rising one above the other, and he finds such an arrangement faintly indicated at Wimbledon.

The accompanying plan and sections show the character of this interesting enclosure, about which so much has been written and so little is actually known. Constructed with the gravelly soil obtained from the excavation of the fosse, it consists of an entrenchment which would have been quite circular, but for the rapid fall of the ground on the north side : on that side it follows the contour of the surface,—an arrangement which seems to indicate that much importance was attached to the occupation of this precise site. The fosse is deeper and bolder at some parts than at others, but its average depth may be stated at about 12 ft., and the

[2] Lecture ii. f. 49.

[3] Some supplementary remarks on the subject of cruciform tumuli will be found at the close of this paper.

[4] Lib. iv. cap. v. sec. 2 (Kramer, p. 313).

[5] Archæologia, vol. xxxi. p. 519 (1846).

height of the vallum at from 10 ft. to 20 ft. above the ground immediately beyond it. The outer vallum to which Mr. Kempe refers is more easily to be traced on the southern side than on any other; but the outworks noticed by Brayley (p. 506), are now almost, if not entirely, erased: they also were probably on the southern side, where the ground is, from a military point of view, not so strong as on the northern side.

Allen, in his "History of Surrey" (vol. i. p. 475), describes it as a round camp surrounded by a double ditch, including about seven acres, the inner trench, in his time, deep and perfect. The true area of the enclosure is about fourteen acres.

Salmon (p. 31) remarks that it is not on very advantageous ground (though it certainly appears to me to be on one of the best military positions in the neighbourhood), and that it was too small to contain an army.

The interior has been ploughed, and any traces which might formerly have existed of huts, &c., are of course gone; there is consequently little left, beyond its form and situation, and the conflicting pages of late writers, to give a clue to its origin.

With one exception I am not aware of any relics having ever been found nearer to the camp than on the top of Kingston Hill, a mile or two off, where some British and Roman pottery, spear-heads, &c., have been discovered.[6] I have been favoured with a communication from Mr. Albert Way, who tells me that he has a note of a singular relic, possibly a sling-shot, found some years ago *at the Camp*, consisting of a large perforated object of baked clay. It was shaped like a cheese, was $5\frac{1}{4}$ in. in diameter, $3\frac{3}{4}$ in. thick, and the hole was $\frac{3}{4}$ in. in diameter.

Bearing in mind, then, that the earthwork is situated on an elevated spot commanding an extensive view—is of a circular form—is near springs of water, and was probably in former times surrounded by a forest (a supposition strengthened by the presence of the oaks which still grow on its ramparts), we cannot deny that the *situation* and *form* of Wimbledon Camp fulfil most of the characteristics which

[6] Including a fragment of a cinerary urn, or of a corn-pot, discovered by the writer, and now deposited in the British Museum. See Arch. Journ. vol. xx. p. 372.

Cæsar and Strabo give, as distinguishing the oppida of the ancient Britons.

Its *form* certainly does not belie the supposition that the entrenchment is of British origin. In looking through the Ordnance Maps, it is very noticeable that, along the Roman roads, and in their immediate vicinity, there is, as might be expected, a marked tendency towards the rectangular outline which distinguishes, almost invariably, the camps of the Romans. But it must not be forgotten that square camps are also to be met with, occasionally, in the fastnesses of Cornwall and North Wales, though generally the "camps" in these parts are either circular or elliptical; nor, as is well known, are instances wanting, both of undoubtedly British and Roman works, when the advantages of a strong and irregular position superseded the ordinary practice, and the vallum followed more or less closely the figure of the ground on which the camp was formed.

Such, then, appears to be the evidence in favour of the British origin of the camp at Wimbledon. Let us now examine what has been urged in favour of its having been a Roman work.

It will be remembered that Surrey was long held by the Regni, and was probably governed by a Romano-British king; and that it also lay in the line of march between the south-east coast of England and the passage of the Thames.

Gale, in his "Antonini Iter Britanniarum,"[7] thus argues in favour of a Roman road having passed through Wimbledon; and his views seem to have been accepted by Mr. W. Hughes, who, in his Map of Roman Britain, published in 1848, gives Wimbledon as the site of a Roman camp. Gale says, "*Noviomago.* Nunc *Woodcote Warren.* A Londinio ubi decesseris ad Austrum, post CIↃ CIↃ Pass. vel circiter, via publica dispescit se in tres semitas; quarum Occidentalior per *Wimbledune* (i. e. *Windledune*, ad Vindilin fluvium) & Vallum Germanorum, qui hic sub A. Plautio meruere, pergit ad Kingstonium, vetus oppidum (sed & sedem, & nomen mutabit) haud dubiè a primis Romanorum victoriis, firmatum præsidiis quemadmodum & *Gatton, Bensbury, Wimbledune,* & *Burrow super Bensteed Downs,* aliaque circumjacentia ad *Thamisin* loca; id situs,

[7] Iter. ii. pp. 71-2, ed. 1709.

& Provinciæ tutela postulabant. hîc Romani primo *Thamesin* per pontem trajiciebant, & fortè Claudius ipse. hic in dunis proximis ad Combe CIO Pass. ab hodierno *Kingstonio* multi Romanorum imperatorum nummi sunt effossi."

Dr. Roots,[8] the well-known collector of the Roman antiquities found at Kingston Hill, and in the bed of the Thames (who is followed by Biden,[9] the historian of Kingston), was also of opinion that Cæsar occupied this entrenchment, if indeed he did not form it, whilst preparing for his conflict with Cassivelaunus, on the banks of the river; and he urges, in support of these views, the Roman remains which have been found in this neighbourhood. The great objection, however, to this theory, appears to lie in the circular *form* of the enclosure. Its smallness, which gives Salmon his grounds for stating that it could not be of Roman construction, is, as has been shown, no valid objection.

Its claims to Saxon parentage appear to be as follows. Surrey was at one time under the dominion of the South Saxon kings; and, as Holinshed informs us, the first battle between the Saxons themselves was fought at Wimbledon (A.D. 568), between the forces of Ethelbert, King of Kent (then a child), under his generals, Oslac and Cnebba, and Ceaulin, King of the West Saxons, "for the dignity of Bretwalda." Camden says of "Wibbandune, now commonly called Wimbledon," that "it is possible the military fortification I saw here, of a circular form, called Bensbury, might take its name" from Cnebben, who was slain here.

The first two syllables of the name seem to point to a Saxon origin, for at least that part of the word. Wimbaldus, Lysons says,[1] was a Saxon name; and indeed most of the names under which it has gone have a Saxon sound: such are Wipandune,[2] Wiphandune, Wilbandune, Wibbandune, Wilbaldowne,[3] Wubbandune, Wibbandune,[4] &c.[5] The word was, however, sometimes spelt as it now is in 1313—1327, as the Registers of Archbishop Walter Reynolds testify.[6]

[8] See Archæologia, vol. xxx. pp. 490-2, and vol. xxxi. pp. 518-21.

[9] Biden's History of Kingston (1852), p. 3.

[1] Environs of London, vol. i. p. 519.

[2] Henry of Huntingdon.

[3] Grafton's Chronicle, vol. i. p. 111.

[4] Camden.

[5] See Symmes's MS. Collections for Surrey, 6167, Plut. clxxix.-c., Brit. Mus., for other modes quoted of spelling the word.

[6] Brayley's Surrey, vol. iii. pp. 499 et seq.

Nor should we omit the consideration that, so far as we are acquainted with the earthworks of the Saxons, there is little in the camp at Wimbledon which conflicts with the received notions on the subject. Fosbrooke,[7] quoting Strutt, ascribes to the Saxons those earthworks with a raised interior surface, surrounded with a broad ditch, and encompassed with an earthen vallum; and he instances the small, double-trenched circular work at Mount Caburn, near Lewes, as a perfect specimen. High valla and deep ditches may generally, he thinks, be referred to the Saxons; and the profile of the ramparts at Wimbledon may perhaps be considered bold enough to fulfil these conditions.

It now only remains to consider the probabilities of the Danes having constructed this encampment. Aubrey, in his "Natural History and Antiquities of Surrey," vol. i. p. 16, says it was made by the Danes, "as appears by the Chronicle." It certainly appears that after Surrey passed into the hands of the West Saxons, this part of the country was much ravaged by Turkill and Swaine, Danish warriors; but I have not succeeded in finding the authority for Aubrey's positive statement; and the only other evidence that occurs to me as bearing, however remotely, on the Danish origin of this entrenchment is the statement in Spelman's "Life of Alfred," that "the Danish camps were always round, and with one entrance;" a statement, the accuracy of which would (not to multiply instances) be sufficiently disproved by the harp-shaped camp at Bratton, Wilts,—one of the best ascertained of the Danish positions. Perhaps the utmost that could be said on this part of the subject is, that, so far as I am aware, there is nothing in the form of the work to entirely preclude the possibility of its being of Danish origin.

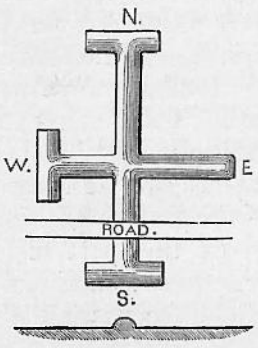
In concluding these remarks, it may not be out of place to notice, that the earthwork now under consideration has, at different times, borne for its name the various forms of the word Wimbledon which have already been mentioned; that Camden knew it as Bensbury; and that Mr. Kempe tells us that, in 1846, it was called Warren Bulwarks. Of course it is also sometimes called "The Rounds;" and, equally of course, its most usual name is "Cæsar's Camp."

[7] Encyclopædia of Antiquities, vol. ii. pp. 554, &c.

Whether Wimbledon Camp was originally merely the scene of a fortified village and cattle-enclosure of the ancient Britons — or an encampment of Roman legions — or a fortress of either Saxon or Danish warriors—or whether it has been the stronghold of each in succession, it is obviously a site round which historic suggestions richly cluster; and it is earnestly to be hoped, that, in making any future arrangements for the allotment of the Common and its vicinity, this interesting piece of antiquity may be judiciously conserved.[8]

The subject of cruciform tumuli is one of much interest. The notices which exist of such remains are, I believe, few, and the subjects of them appear to be of very uncertain origin. Besides the very short account given by Stackhouse of that at Wimbledon, I have hitherto been unable to find more than the following instances:—

First, a large example on the top of a mountain at Margam, Port Talbot, South Wales (described in the Arch. Camb. vol. iii. p. 223), each arm of which is 70 ft. long and 18 ft. wide. It is not figured anywhere, I believe, but of this work I hope to be able to procure a plan and further information.



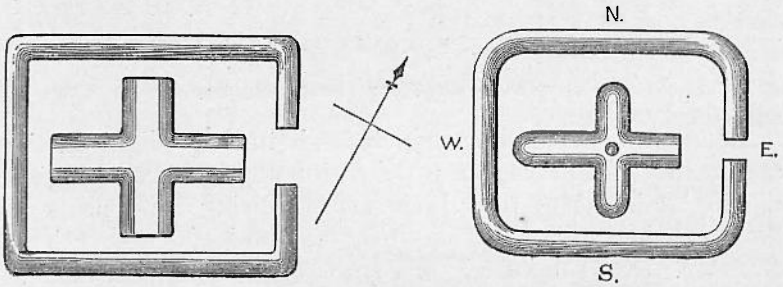
Cruciform barrow, St. Margarets, Hereford. Dimension of width 15 ft., height 4 ft.

The second example is at St. Margaret's Park, eleven miles west-south-west of Hereford, and half-a-mile east of St. Margaret's church. It is noticed in the Journal of the Archaeological Institute, vol. x. p. 358, and vol. xi. p. 55, and is also fully described and figured in the Gentleman's Magazine for October, 1853, p. 387. (See plan and Section.) No results were obtained by excavations made in the tumulus itself, but

[8] Though not, perhaps, immediately connected with an account of "Cæsar's Camp," it may be desirable to refer the reader to a description of twenty-three barrows which existed, up to 1786, on Wimbledon Common, about a mile to the north of the Camp; it will be found in Douglas's Nenia Britannica, p. 93. The only relic discovered by Mr. Douglas appears to have been a small earthen vessel; but it is probable that the barrows had been opened, about twenty-eight years before, by Dr. Stukeley.

traces of ancient habitations and pottery, and some remarkable bronze instruments have been found in the vicinity.

A third additional example, near Banwell in Somersetshire, between Bristol and Bridgwater, is described and figured in Hoare's Ancient Wiltshire, vol. ii. p. 43 (under *Roman era*). Of this work also plans are here given. A



(Hoare's Anc. Wilts, vol. ii. p. 43.) (Seyer's Bristol, vol. i. p. 85.)
Cruciform barrow, Banwell, Somerset.

further description of this barrow will be found in Seyer's Memoirs of Bristol, vol. i. p. 85. Mr. Seyer describes the enclosing rampart as only about 3 ft. high, and surrounded by a slight ditch. It measures 35 yards from east to west, and 45 yards from north to south. The cross ridge, he says, is about 2 ft. high and 4 ft. or 5 ft. wide, also edged on all sides by a slight ditch or trench, scarcely 6 in. deep; and in the middle of the cross an excavation, apparently, he thinks, the mouth of an old well.

Nothing, so far as I am aware, seems to be known positively, at present, of the origin or history of these singular remains, except that they are doubtless of great antiquity. It is interesting to know that there is some reason for supposing that an example existed, not very many years ago, near Wimbledon Camp; and it is to be hoped that any fresh light which may be thrown upon cruciform tumuli *generally*, may also cast a ray upon the now obscure history of the Camp at Wimbledon.