

SCRATCHBURY CAMP.¹

By the REV. PREBENDARY SCARTH, M.A.

This earthwork is situated north-west of Haytesbury, South Wilts (see Sir R. C. Hoare's *Ancient Wilts*, p. 69), and is supposed to derive its name from Creech, or Crechin, a Hill, being placed on an isolated eminence, which is fortified with a ditch and rampart all round the summit.

The word "Scratchy" is sometimes applied to land where the rock is only thinly covered with earth, and this has been given as the origin of the word "Scratchbury," but the late Canon Jones would derive the name of the camp from the Scandinavian word "Scratti," a Demon (see *Wiltshire Mag.*, vol. xv., p. 96; also Smith's *B. and R. Antiq. of N. W.*, p. 224). Canon Jones observes that the idea was common in ancient times that great works, like that of the fortifications at Scratchbury, were carried out by the help of evil spirits.

The fortified space has three entrances. The south-east entrance is approached by a narrow neck of land called Burberry. The camp is ancient British, and the area comprised within the foss and vallum exceeds 40 acres. The circuit of the outer rampart is one mile and eighty-six yards. The greatest height of vallum, 66 ft. Within the circuit are several tumuli, and an inner earthwork of circular form.

On the north-west side is the appearance of an entrance and a large circular barrow, which, on being opened, was found to contain an interment of burned bones and a small bronze dagger, a large amber ring, 50 beads of amber, a piece of brass 2 in. or 3 in. long, shaped like a screw. The barrow was opened by Sir R. C. Hoare. Flint celts were also found, and broken British and Roman pottery; also, a stone celt. A drawing of the amber bead is given in the Rev. A. C. Smith's *B. and Rom. Antiq. of N. Wilts*, p. 10 (actual size).

Of the entrances two are to the east and one to the west. That to the south-east has marks of an outer fortification on each side, as lines of earth-work are traceable. The more northern has none, nor the eastern, where the rampart is stronger, and the southern portion is made to project into the camp, so as more effectually to protect the entrance. There is one gate of entrance to the inner line of fortification, and within this is a barrow. There are also six barrows within the outer rampart, making a total of seven within the whole area of the camp. In three places to the north, in the circuit between the two northern principal entrances, three smaller openings occur; but these may have been made at a later period, and for agricultural or other purposes.

This camp is a fine specimen of an ancient British fortress, for the

¹ Read on the spot, before the Members of the Institute, August 8th, 1887.

remains found within it prove it to be such. It is similar in construction to another not far distant to the north, called Battlebury, which is nearer to Warminster.

The material of these ramparts is chalk and earth, obtained from the fosses, and firmly bedded together; unlike the works of a similar kind in Somerset, which are formed of fragments of lime-stone worked out of the foss, or collected from the surrounding land. These latter must have required much greater labour, but they are equally elaborate, and shew the same irregularity in the rampart, quite unlike Roman work, which bears much stronger marks of scientific arrangement, and is noted for its straight lines.

Such ancient fortresses of a primitive and simple people are features in the history of the races that have peopled this island well worth preserving, and it is to be hoped they will always be respected and cared for.