

## WANSDYKE RECONSIDERED

By AILEEN AND CYRIL FOX

Wansdyke, one of the most dramatic earthworks in England, has been strangely neglected by archaeologists in recent years. Perhaps the reason lies in the book written about it in the 1920's, *The Mystery of Wansdyke*, by Albany Major and E. J. Burrow, in which hedgerows and lynchets were identified with running earthwork and which made for confusion. A four page appendix by the late O. G. S. Crawford in his *Archaeology in the Field* in 1953 contributed more to its understanding than the 140 pages of Albany Major's obscurities.

One of us has given much time in the past to the study of linear earthwork in the field, first in East Anglia and then in Wales, and has always had the desire to round off the work with some consideration of the third of the great Dyke systems. An opportunity presented itself in 1955 when an invitation (to Cyril Fox) to address and to demonstrate to the Council of British Archaeology's first Field Survey School at Urchfont, near Devizes, was followed by one from the O'Donnell Trustees to deliver the O'Donnell lectures in the University of Oxford that autumn on the subject of early frontier dykes. The field work was started jointly on Morgan's Hill in May 1955 and the preliminary results incorporated in these two addresses. It has been carried on intermittently in 1956 and 1957, with the aid of a grant (to Aileen Fox) from Exeter University. We are indebted to the O'Donnell Trustees for permission to include material from the lectures in this article.

We should also like to thank Mr. Antony Clarke for so kindly inviting us to see the section that he dug in 1956 in Spye Park : working quite independently in 1955, he had come to much the same conclusions as we had, and since he has put them to the test of the spade, it seemed unnecessary to repeat his work. A preliminary account has been published in *Antiquity*, (1958). We are also indebted to Mr. D. J. Bonney for assistance with the level sections and in unravelling and planning the complex on Morgan's Hill (fig. 2).

We are most grateful to Dr. Kenneth Sisam for his illuminating comments on the relevant entries in the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle (p. 46).

### THE EXTENT OF WANSDYKE

Wansdyke is a linear earthwork, a single massive bank and ditch facing north, which protects the greater part of Wiltshire and north-east Somerset (fig. 1). The Wiltshire portion, from west of Savernake, is aligned where possible along the north-facing crests of the chalk fronting the Kennet valley as far as Morgan's Hill, 4 miles north-west of Devizes ; it covers Pewsey Vale and the approaches to Salisbury Plain. The Somerset portion, less well-known, crosses broken country of the Oolite and Lias formations south of the river Avon at Bath and ends, as Crawford showed, at the Iron Age hill-fort of Maes Knoll<sup>1</sup> : it covers the approaches to central Somerset (fig. 19).

<sup>1</sup> *Archaeology in the Field*, 252. There is no evidence for its continuation to the Severn

estuary at Portishead, as a glance at Albany Major's diagram will show.

Both sectors are referred to in Anglo-Saxon charters of the 9th and 10th centuries as *Wodnesdic* in delineating grants of land in the parishes of Stanton St. Bernard, Overton and North Newton in Wiltshire, and of Bath, South Stoke, Stanton Prior and Marksbury in Somerset<sup>1</sup>. Hence it has been inferred from the common name and generally similar east-west direction that the two parts belong to a single frontier. Since the 18th century it has also been widely held that in the intervening stretch of country, 15 miles broad, comprising the loop of the Avon between Monkton Combe and Lacock, and the greensand ridge farther east, Wansdyke followed, and was in places actually constructed, along the line of the Roman road from *Cunetio* (Mildenhall) in the Kennet valley, through *Verlucio* (Sandy Lane) to *Aquae Sulis* (Bath)<sup>2</sup>.

That great antiquary, Sir Richard Colt Hoare, had his doubts about the identification, which he endeavoured to suppress in his account of the earthwork in *Ancient Wiltshire*<sup>3</sup>, 'Hitherto we have been enabled to trace the course of Wansdyke with certainty and success through Somersetshire, but on approaching the neighbouring county of Wiltshire we enter upon a new and doubtful field of inquiry respecting the direction as well as the formation of this celebrated rampart'. His own observations in the field had shown him that in this central sector 'it bears the decided appearance of a Roman causeway, not of a Belgic or Saxon boundary' and yet he felt obliged to support the current view that road and dyke were identical because he was convinced that the Wansdyke was continuous and he could find no alternative course for it in the area.

General Pitt-Rivers, who established by excavation the post-Roman date of the earthwork in Wiltshire, also had misgivings, 'the Dyke', he comments, in the Heddington region, 'is of very low relief everywhere on this line and it has often been questioned whether it is a dyke or a road', and his suspicions were again aroused at a point west of Morgan's Hill and on Bowden Hill near Lacock<sup>4</sup>.

Albany Major accepted the identification uncritically, whilst O. G. S. Crawford supported it with observations made in the field at Daniel's Wood, Bowden Hill and Spy Park.

On the other hand, it is consistent with the established principles of post-Roman linear earthwork that the crossing of the loop of the Avon valley, in its broadest sense, should have no defence. The ground is generally low-lying, 200-300 ft., (fig. 1), the soils include a 4 mile-wide belt of Oxford clay<sup>5</sup> that would encourage a heavy forest cover, and even in Roman times the district was sparsely inhabited right down to the Frome gap<sup>7</sup>, and on into Selwood Forest beyond. Hostile north to south movement into such an area would be most unlikely. Early armies, it would seem, were not coherent unless under complete visual control by the leader; chieftains of the post-Roman epoch, one may reasonably suppose, had to follow well-known ways, collide head-on as it were, and fight it out; large-scale infiltration was

<sup>1</sup> For Wiltshire, Grundy, *Arch. J.* LXXVI, pp. 187, 210, 240: see also Alton Priors, 159. For Somerset, *idem*, *Saxon Charters of Somerset*, pp. 186, 190, 206, 211.

<sup>2</sup> I. D. Margary, *Roman Roads in Britain*, I, Route 53, p. 124.

<sup>3</sup> Colt Hoare, *A History of Ancient Wiltshire*, II (N. Wilts.), 1819, 16-33. Excerpts are conveniently quoted in Albany Major, *Mystery*

*of Wansdyke*, 154.

<sup>4</sup> Colt Hoare, *loc. cit.*, 27-8.

<sup>5</sup> *Excavations in Cranborne Chase*, III, 245-6, and sections 5-11, 248-9. Note his markings of 'modern ditch' and 'stream'.

<sup>6</sup> From east of Neston Park, Gastard, to Bowden Hill, east of Lacock and River Avon.

<sup>7</sup> See O.S. map of *Roman Britain*, 1956.

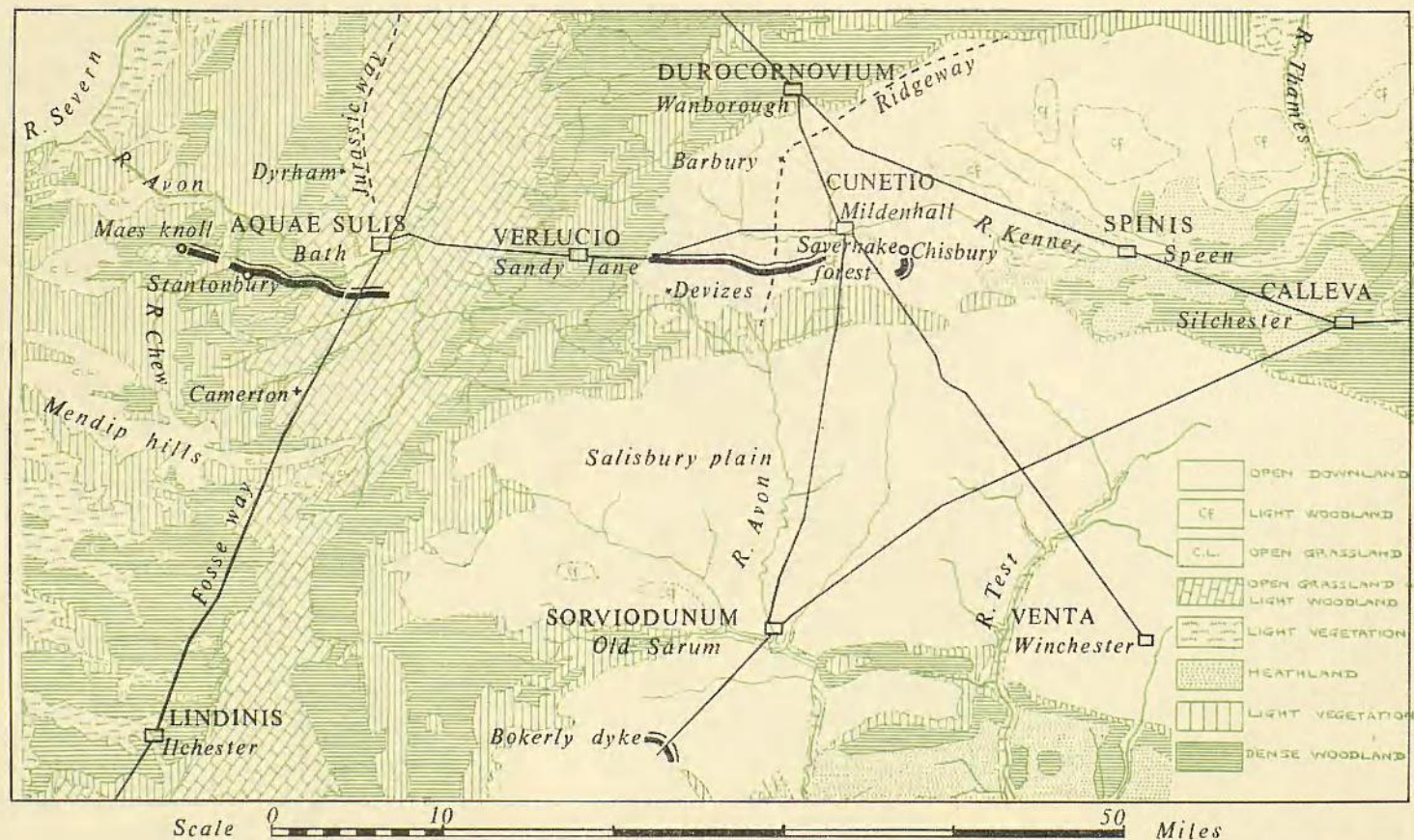


Fig. 1. Wansdyke in relation to soils and vegetation, and to Roman roads and settlements.

(Base map by kind permission of L. V. Grinsell.)

The geological formations symbolized (reading from top to bottom of the key) are : (1) Chalk, (2) Clay-with-flints, (3) Carboniferous Limestone, (4) Oolites, (5) Alluvium, (6) Eocene (sandy) Beds, (7) Coal Measures, Triassic Marls, Corallian, Greensands, (8) Lias, Oxford, Kimmeridge, Gault and London clays.

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not practical tactics. Hence the immense labour devoted to building barrier dykes, as in East Anglia, across the open chalk country, ending on the clayland and the fen, thus covering recognised lines of approach. Wansdyke in Wiltshire, as we shall see, effectively bars the important north-south ridgeway from the Marlborough Downs to Salisbury Plain; Wansdyke in Somerset similarly controls north-south movement along the Fosseway, the Roman version of an older traffic way along the Jurassic formation.<sup>1</sup> There could be no such traffic to counter in the intervening Avon valley.

#### WANSDYKE IN RELATION TO THE ROMAN ROAD TO BATH

With these general considerations in mind, the problem must be examined in more detail on the ground.

The crucial point is on Morgan's Hill, already referred to, where the Roman road and Wansdyke join at the head of a small steep-sided combe (Pl. I and IIA and figs. 2-5).

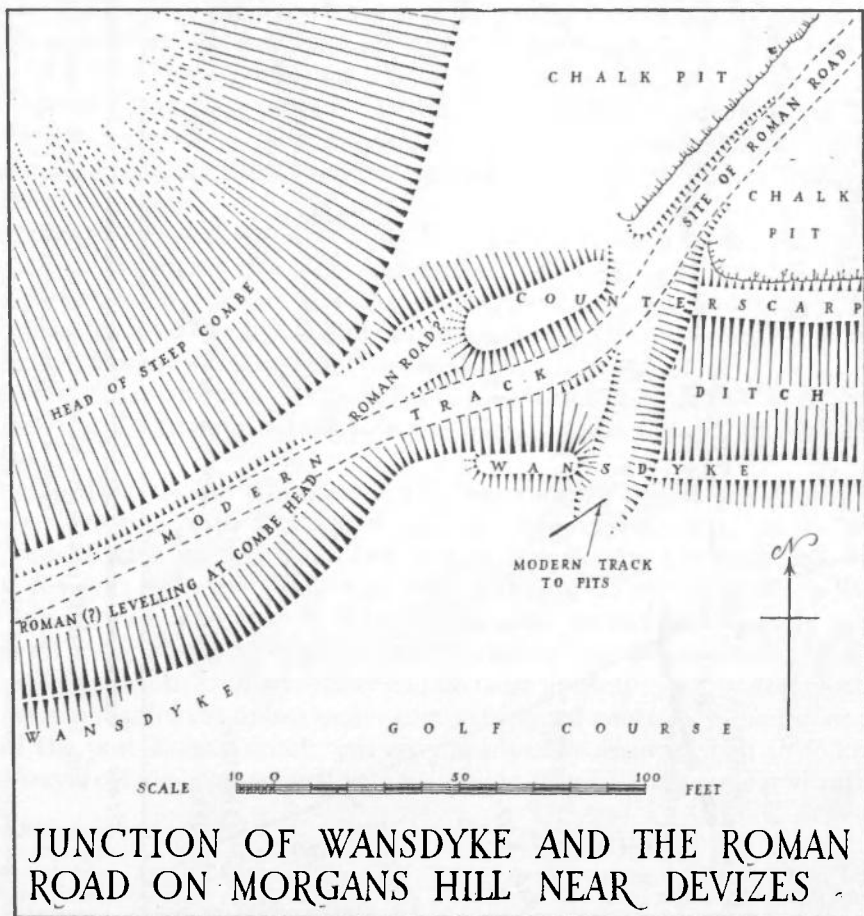


Fig. 2.

<sup>1</sup> W. F. Grimes, *The Jurassic Way*, in *Aspects of Archaeology*, 152.



The Roman road east of the junction is running level along the north slope of the steep chalk hillside as an embanked terraceway, 30 ft. wide, with a well-defined scarp on the outer side. The original surface is now lowered on the inner side by prolonged use as a track, as shown on the level section, fig. 3, R4. It turned inwards to round the combe-head, which was negotiated on a well-engineered levelled flat, as shown on fig. 2, and which remains beside the modern track; similar Roman levelling can be seen where the road passes round the head of Horsecombe,  $\frac{1}{4}$  mile farther east.

Wansdyke descends the western slope of Morgan's Hill as a rampart 36 ft. on the scarp, with ditch to north and traces of a rounded counterscarp bank, measuring 80 ft. overall; the profile 200 ft. east of the junction is shown on fig. 3, D2. The dyke is pointing towards the head of the deep combe, when it is cut through by a modern track leading to a series of old chalk quarries on either side of the Roman road, which makes for confusion at this critical point. Nevertheless, as the plan shows (fig. 2), it is evident that (i) the rampart of Wansdyke originally ended just above the combe head (see p. 10): (ii) the ditch of Wansdyke cut into the line of the Roman road as this turned inwards at the combe-head: (iii) that remains of the counterscarp bank overlies the Roman road east of the combe<sup>1</sup>. These facts show that the Roman road was effectively put out of action at this point.

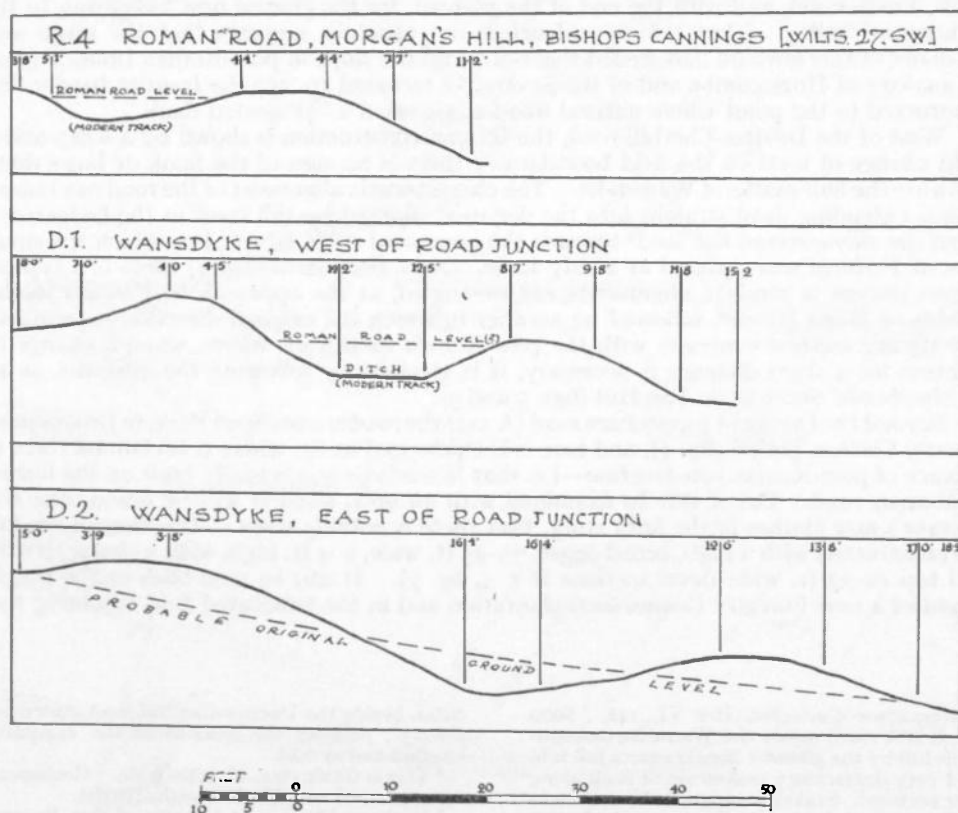


Fig. 3. Level sections of the Roman Road and East Wansdyke on Morgan's Hill: for position see Fig. 5.

<sup>1</sup> There is also extra material heaped up when the track to the quarries was cut through

Wansdyke, and the Roman road, in effect, re-opened.

Once the combe-head is passed, the dyke begins again but on a smaller scale, complete with ditch and prominent counterscarp bank (level section, fig. 3, Dr). The line of the Roman road now lies partly along the floor of the ditch and partly in the counterscarp bank. The inference is clear; the builders of Wansdyke have entirely disregarded the road as a potential boundary, digging half of it away when they made their ditch, and incorporating the remainder in their counterscarp bank, which retains the characteristic angular Roman embankment scarp on the outer side (compare sections R4 and Dr, fig. 3). The fact that there is now a well-used track along the silted-up ditch should not deceive us, as it did William Stukeley<sup>1</sup> and others since, as to the real relationship of the dyke to the Roman road at this point.

A quarter of a mile farther west, just short of the former Smallgrain plantation, (fig. 5) *Wansdyke comes to an end*. A farm track crosses its line and has cut through the counterscarp bank which is conspicuously heaped up in the field<sup>2</sup>. The line of the ditch is continued westwards by a deceptive hollow-way between two hedges down the slope as far as the Devizes-Cherhill road, but there are no further certain remains of the rampart<sup>3</sup>.

Once this fact be accepted, the interpretation of what is seen beyond on this alignment is not difficult, for only the Roman road needs to be looked for west of Morgan's Hill. The end of the earthwork practically coincides with the change from the Middle to the Lower chalk, a richer soil, and with the end of the plateau, for the ground now falls away to the Heddington valley. That the coincidence is not absolute suggests that the scrub and woodland of this lowland had seeded themselves up the slope in post-Roman times, and on the analogy of Horsecombe and of the Savernake terminal (p. 16) the frontier barrier was constructed to the point where natural wood constituted a 'protected flank'.

West of the Devizes-Cherhill road, the Roman construction is shown by a scarp and a slight change of level on the field boundaries; there is no sign of the bank or large ditch which are the hall-marks of Wansdyke. The characteristic alignment of the road can indeed be seen extending dead straight into the distance, marked by tall trees in the hedgerows, across the clay-covered flat land<sup>4</sup> towards the greensand ridge (400 ft.) on which the small town of *Verlucio* was situated at Sandy Lane. Near Bear farm (fig. 4) there is a typical Roman change in straight alignments, obtuse-angled, at the approach to *Verlucio* in the grounds of Wans House<sup>5</sup>, followed by another in which the original direction is resumed. This zig-zag method contrasts with the post-Roman earthwork where, when a change in direction for a short distance is necessary, it is attained by following the contours, as at Old Shepherds' Shore or on Tan Hill (figs. 5 and 9).

Beyond the Devizes-Chippenham road (A 342) the road crosses Spye Park, in Broomham, formerly Chittoe, parish (fig. 4), and here is the principal sector where it is claimed there is evidence of post-Roman construction—i.e. that Wansdyke was actually built on the line of the Roman road. But if this be examined with an open mind it will be found, like the Emperor's new clothes in the fairy story, that there is nothing there. The Roman road is here constructed with a high, broad agger, 35–45 ft. wide, 2–4 ft. high, with a characteristic level top 16–17 ft. wide (level sections R 1–3, fig. 7). It can be seen both in the rough ground of a new Forestry Commission plantation and in the cultivated field adjoining the

<sup>1</sup> *Itinerarium Curiosum*, Iter VI, 142, 'Soon after, it (the road) meets the Wansdyke descending the hill by the gibbet: here it enters full into it and very dexterously makes use of it all along to the bottom'. Stukeley assigned Wansdyke to the Belgic period; hence he assumed that it preceded the Roman road: see Stuart Piggott, *William Stukeley*, 70.

<sup>2</sup> Shown in silhouette on the left of E. J. Burrow's sketch: Albany Major, *Wansdyke*, 91, fig. 62.

<sup>3</sup> There is a broad low bank in the grounds of a

shack beside the Devizes-Cherhill road shown on the 25", possibly the remains of the rampart, levelled and spread.

<sup>4</sup> This is Gault clay, 1½ miles wide. Geological Survey, sheet 266, Marlborough, (Drift).

<sup>5</sup> It seems likely that the site of this Roman station is marked too far north on O.S. 6" map XXVI, S.E., as the ground is beginning to slope considerably. Wans House is an early 19th century residence: the agger of the Roman road is well preserved in an extensive shrubbery.

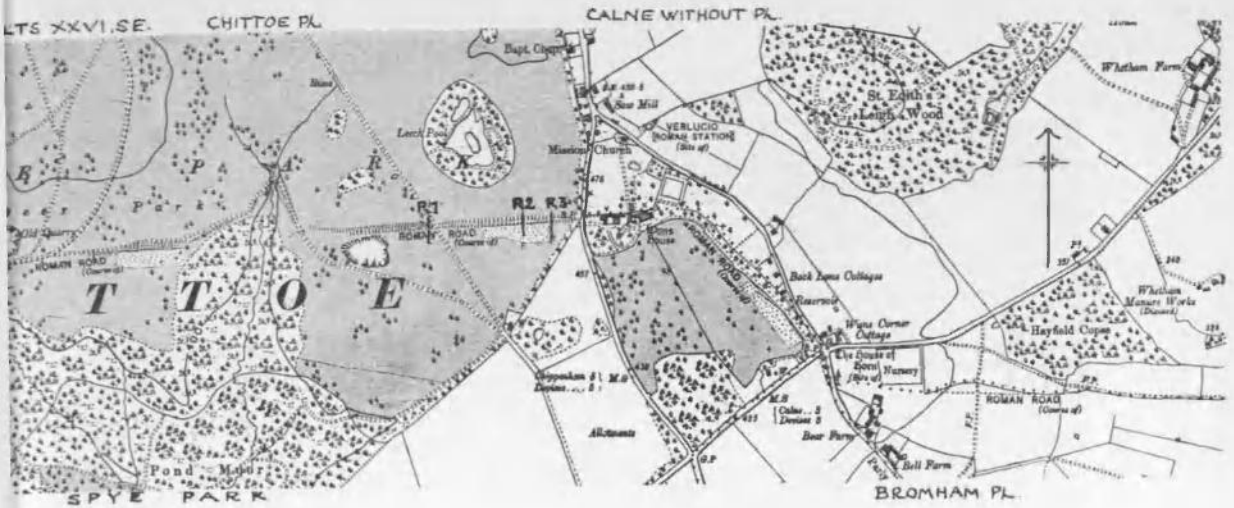


Fig. 4. The Roman road in Spye Park : for level sections R1—3, see fig. 7.

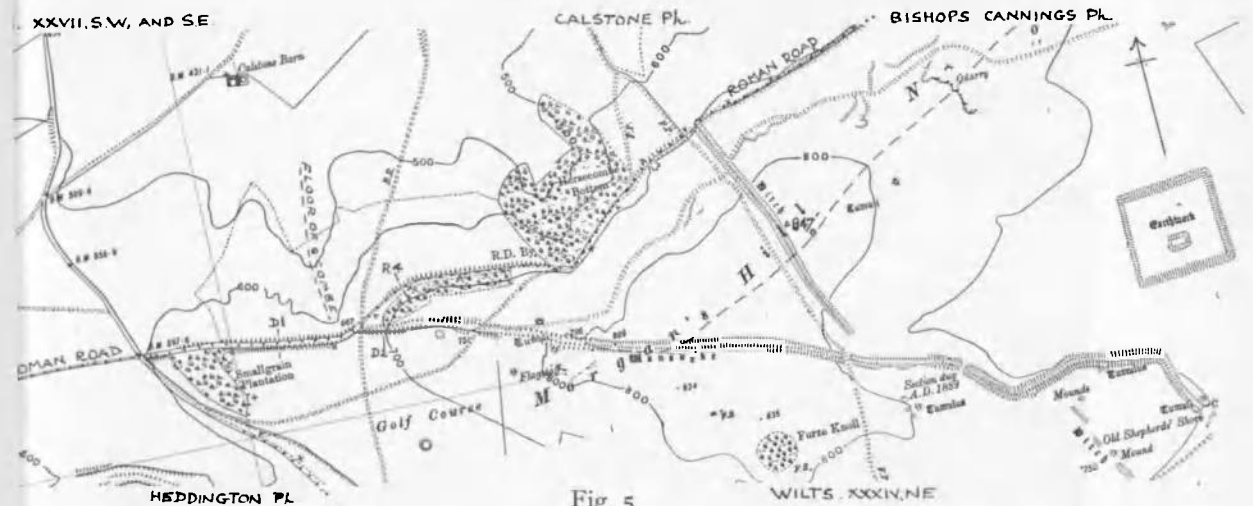


Fig. 5

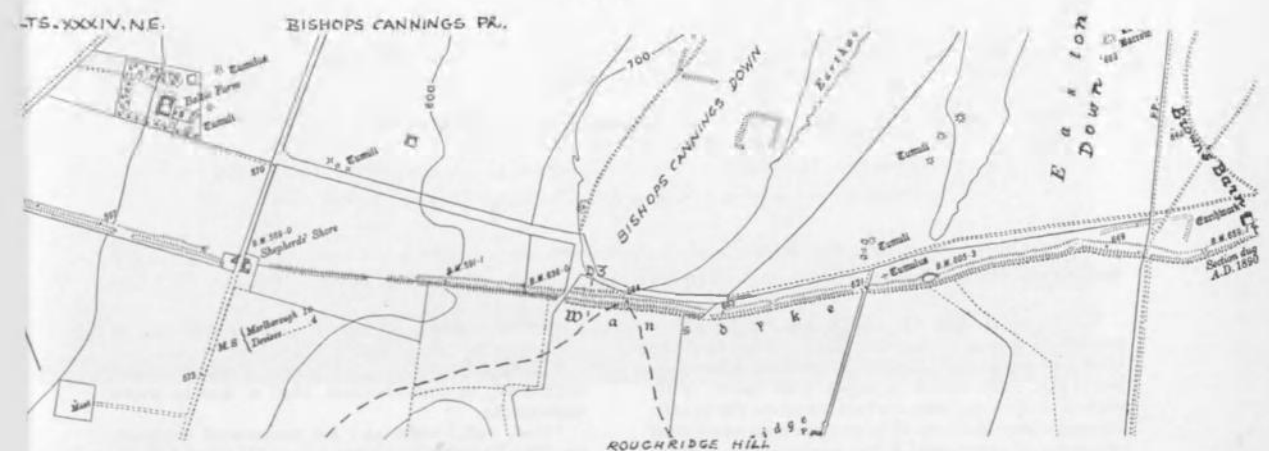


Fig. 6

### THE COURSE OF EAST WANSDYKE

5, 6, 9-15. Portions of the 6 inch O.S. maps arranged to show successive sectors of the Dyke horizontally : the point registers the degree of alteration. Strips are reduced to 4 inches to the mile ; for level sections D9 see Figs. 17, 18, p. 21-2.

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park wall<sup>1</sup>: in neither is there any surface indication of a defensive ditch to the north, which alone would entitle it to be recognized as Wansdyke. The soil here is sandy, derived from the Lower Greensand which is exposed in the old quarries adjoining, and as Mr. Margary has noticed, it is in such poor soils—on open down or heathland—that the Roman road engineers built high embankments for reasons that are not altogether clear<sup>2</sup>. The Spye Park *agger* is nothing out of the way; it can be compared, for instance, with another road whose similar construction has earned it a dyke name, Ackling Dyke, the road from Old Sarum to Badbury<sup>3</sup>. A level section taken on Bottlebush Down at a selected point where apparently the *agger* has been dug only from a north ditch, is shown here for comparison (fig. 7).

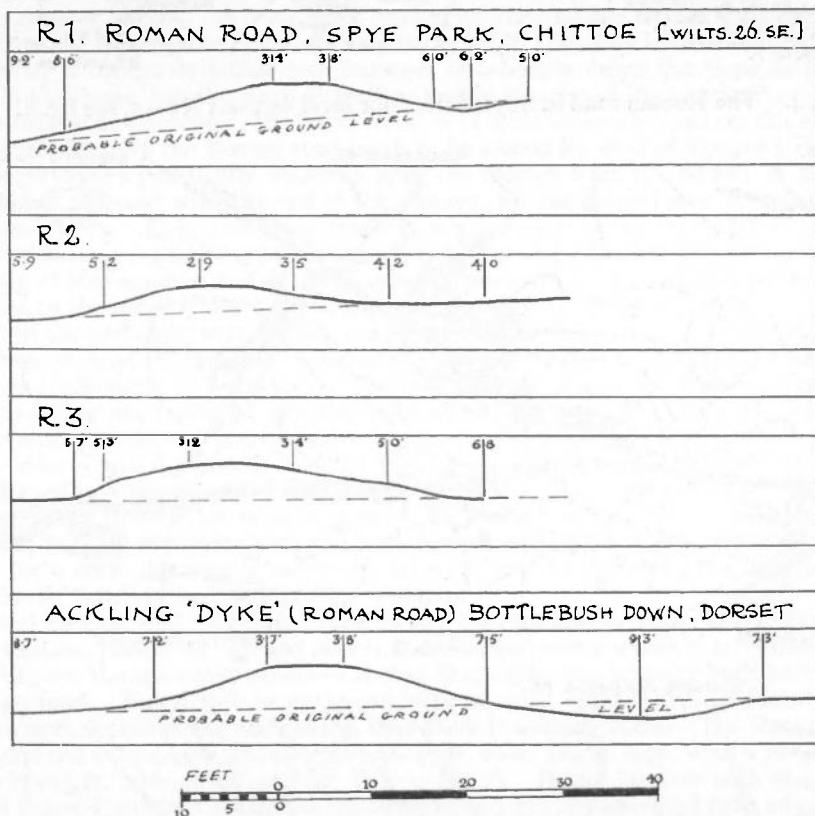


Fig. 7. Level sections R 1-3 across the Roman road in Spye Park: for position see Fig. 4. Compare 'Ackling Dyke', below.

Furthermore, when the Roman road engineers were confronted by a steep-sided little valley on their chosen alignment westwards, they crossed it in a typical zig-zag fashion,

<sup>1</sup> It is here that Mr. Anthony Clarke cut a section in August 1956, which fully confirmed the observations made in our field survey in September 1955. He found a small road-ditch, 5 ft. wide and 2½-3 ft. deep, 10 feet away on the north: the *agger* was built up of layers of clean sand, and of pieces of greensand lying horizontally: there were no tip-lines characteristic of a rampart. We are much indebted to him for allowing us to

see this section, before it was published in *Antiquity* 89, 1955, Fig. 2.

<sup>2</sup> *Roman Roads*, I, p. 14. Prof. Hawkes suggested, in conversation, that it was to avoid snowdrifts.

<sup>3</sup> *ibid.* 96, route 4c: for excavated sections, see Pitt Rivers, *Cranborne Chase* III, Pl. CLXIII, Woodyates, where there are road ditches on either side.



East Wansdyke on Morgan's Hill, Wiltshire, looking east to Tan Hill  
(*Photograph by Major G. Allen, by courtesy of the Ashmolean Museum*)



A. Morgan's Hill ; the junction of the Roman road and East Wansdyke  
(*Photograph : A. Fox*)



B. East Wansdyke at Old Shepherds' Shore  
(*Photograph by Dr. J. K. S. St. Joseph, from the Cambridge University Collection. Crown Copyright*)



descending the slopes diagonally on terraces, and presumably bridging the stream (fig. 4). The west bank is ascended in two alignments; the lower is terraced, the upper embanked. Once the crest is reached the road resumes its former straight alignment, a little south of the present track; here the broad flat-topped *agger* measures 45 ft. overall and is 2-3 ft. high; there is no surface trace of a ditch on the north side.

This method of crossing a valley, so typical of Roman engineering practice, must be contrasted with what we know the builders of West Wansdyke did in Somerset when confronted by a stream such as the river Chew or the Newton brook; as figs. 22-25 show, they went straight across, carrying the earthwork right down on each side in the direct line to the edge of the alluvium. Similar direct alignment can be seen in Wiltshire, where East Wansdyke has to cross a steep-sided dry valley near Shaw farm, West Overton (fig. 11).

It seems almost unnecessary to go farther than Spye Park to disprove the Wansdyke as a constructed frontier in this zone, but O. G. S. Crawford has claimed that 'the deep ditch of Wansdyke is visible south of Bowden Hill house, at the south end of Griffens Wood'<sup>1</sup> (Wilts 26 S.E.) which lies about a mile farther west. The soil here is heavy Oxford clay; the ground is falling south and west from over 400 ft. on Bowden Hill towards the river Avon (120 ft.) south of Lacock. In the field on the crest the road is ploughed out and its course marked only by the parish boundary: at the edge of Griffens Wood (300 ft.) a gully starts, deepening rapidly as it goes down the slope and being joined by another from the north-east. There is no upcast forming a bank to the south of it as there should be if it were an excavated ditch; in fact, in one place the north side is higher than the south. As Pitt-Rivers characteristically pointed out, it is on the reverse slope of the hill 'when a good position was obtainable 300 yards to the north'<sup>2</sup>. It ceases suddenly at the end of the strip of woodland where the slope eases at the 200 ft. contour. We are convinced that it is natural, caused by erosion on the steep clay-covered hillside. It was probably started by the *agger* holding up the natural line of drainage and in course of time the scour carried the Roman embankment away; it was a stream bed in Pitt-Rivers' time.

A mile to the west of the Avon crossing, there is a place beside Daniel's Wood, Gastard, where it has been claimed<sup>3</sup> that Wansdyke and the Roman road diverge for a short distance. North-west of the copse, the *agger* can be traced as an undulation across a rough pasture field on the direct alignment to the river. The position of Wansdyke is supposed to be 50 yards farther north, coinciding with the parish boundary, but no signs of a rampart or ditch construction can be detected in the hedge bank.

The sector crossing Neston Park two miles farther west in the same parish has also been alleged to be Wansdyke. The characteristic broad ridge of the *agger*<sup>4</sup>, measuring 45 ft. overall and 1½ ft. high is visible approaching the park east of the Atworth—Neston road: within the park it has been cut into to make a sunk-fence or ha-ha, which screens the house from traffic; the soil has been thrown up on the south side, increasing the height of the ridge to 3 ft. A section was cut here in 1939 by Mr. Shaw Mellor, who claimed to have found remains of the Dyke on top of the road metal<sup>5</sup>, but he was apparently misled by the road bedding and the throw-out of the ha-ha.

West of the park and the Atworth—Box road (A. 365), Albany Major claimed that the Dyke was recognisable '12 ft. high on the line of the Roman road'<sup>6</sup>. This portion is now in dense wood, but it is clear from the adjoining field that the ground levels have been lowered by shallow quarries, necessitating the building of a retaining wall below the Roman embankment. Opposite Neston Park gates, the normal *agger* can be seen, 3 ft. high and 45-50 ft. wide.

Important negative evidence is also provided for this area by the Monkton Farleigh charter<sup>7</sup>, which records a large tract of land on both sides of the Avon granted to Bradford-

<sup>1</sup> *Archaeology in the Field*, 254.

<sup>2</sup> *Cranborne Chase*, III, p. and Section No. 9.

<sup>3</sup> Albany Major, 84, fig. 55. Crawford, *loc. cit.* and 6" map Wilts. 26, N.W.

<sup>4</sup> As I. D. Margary notes, *Roman Roads* I, 126.

<sup>5</sup> *Wilts. Arch. Mag.* LI, 24 and *J.R.S.* XXX, 176. The section has never been published.

<sup>6</sup> Albany Major, 80 and fig. 53, drawn when the wood was smaller.

<sup>7</sup> Grundy, *Arch. J.* LXXVII (1920), 101, lines 14-24.

on-Avon in the 11th century. In the survey, which is likely to be a 12th century record, the boundary is finally traced north-east from the Midford brook down the Avon to Monkton Farleigh; thence north to Hazelbury in Box parish and to points on the northern boundary of Atworth parish with Corsham, before turning south again to Whitley and thence its starting point near Great Chalfield. In so doing it must have crossed the Roman road twice and on neither occasion is it mentioned, let alone referred to as *Wodnesdic*<sup>1</sup>.

The Roman road finally descends to cross the Avon at Bathford and to join the Fossway going west into Bath (fig. 1). There is no need to search for oddments of Wansdyke among the Celtic fields in the awkward country over Bathampton Down which lies to the south of the river, as so many antiquaries have done, in order to connect the end of the road with the Somerset portion of the Dyke which begins at Horsecombe. East and West Wansdyke are separate entities.

## EAST WANSDYKE

### THE COURSE OF THE DYKE

East Wansdyke, as we have seen, extends from the main chalk escarpment on Morgan's Hill eastward to the western edge of Savernake forest, a distance of 12-13 miles (fig. 8). Its course, from west to east, is illustrated by the series of 6 in. Ordnance Survey map strips (figs. 5-6, 9-14) and by the fine air photographs taken by the late Major Allen and by Dr. J. K. St. Joseph (Pls. I-IV, VI). Magnificently preserved on the downlands, its position is never in doubt and even in the enclosed land beyond it has suffered little from agricultural activities; it is now a scheduled ancient monument. Its course falls naturally into two parts; first across the open chalk plateau and summits, from Morgan's Hill to Milk Hill; and then across the drift-covered lower land, wooded and enclosed, from Milk Hill to Savernake.

Beginning on the west flank of Morgan's Hill (fig. 5) the Dyke is constructed on the forward slope well above the 600 ft. contour, in a commanding military position above the steep fall northwards to Calstone, and with wide views over the downland to the N.E. As previously described, it occupies the line of and incorporates part of, the Roman road to *Cunetio*, up to the head of a steep-sided combe, round which the Dyke is intermitted (fig. 2, Pls. I and IIa)<sup>2</sup>. This combe is a real natural obstacle; it seems likely that it was originally intended as the western terminal of the Dyke since the alignment eastward over Morgan's Hill is conditioned by it. In this case, the previous 300 yards can be regarded as an extension, built on a smaller scale, but designed to put the Roman road completely out of action and to carry the barrier to the end of the open downland (see p. 5).

From the combe-head the Dyke ascends the shoulder of Morgan's Hill (809 ft.) but on the reverse slope, the hill crest (847 ft.) lying 350 yards to the north<sup>3</sup>. It is apparent that the sacrifice of a field of view and command of country was accepted in order to shorten the distance of constructed earthwork: had the forward slope of the hill, shown by the 800 ft. contour, been strictly adhered to, a long and useless salient would have been created in the frontier. The Dyke descends the eastern side of the hill to Old Shepherds' Shore, having rejoined the forward slope, and a wide field of view to the north and east is opened up. It utilises the flank of a small lateral dry valley, pursuing a sinuous course as it follows its

<sup>1</sup> See 1" O.S. map, sheets 156 and 166. We are indebted to L. V. Grinsell for drawing our attention to this point.

<sup>2</sup> William Stukeley noticed the absence of rampart at the combe-head, 'At the place of union is a flexure of Wansdyke so that the Roman road coincides with it directly; in order to raise

it from a ditch into a road, the Roman workmen have thrown down the most part of the rampart . . . ' *Itinerary Curiosum*, 142. His deductions were based on the assumption that Wansdyke was a Belgic earth-work.

<sup>3</sup> See Pitt Rivers' comments, *Excavations in Cranborne Chase*, III, 245.



A. East Wansdyke at Brown's Barn, looking east to Tan Hill :  
the Romano-British enclosure in the foreground



B. East Wansdyke on Tan Hill, looking west to Morgan's Hill

*(Photographs by Dr. J. K. S. St. Joseph, from the Cambridge University Collection. Crown Copyright)*





A. East Wansdyke on Milk Hill, looking west



B. East Wansdyke on Milk Hill, looking east to Westwood and Savernake  
(Dr. J. K. S. St. Joseph, from the Cambridge University Collection. Crown Copyright)

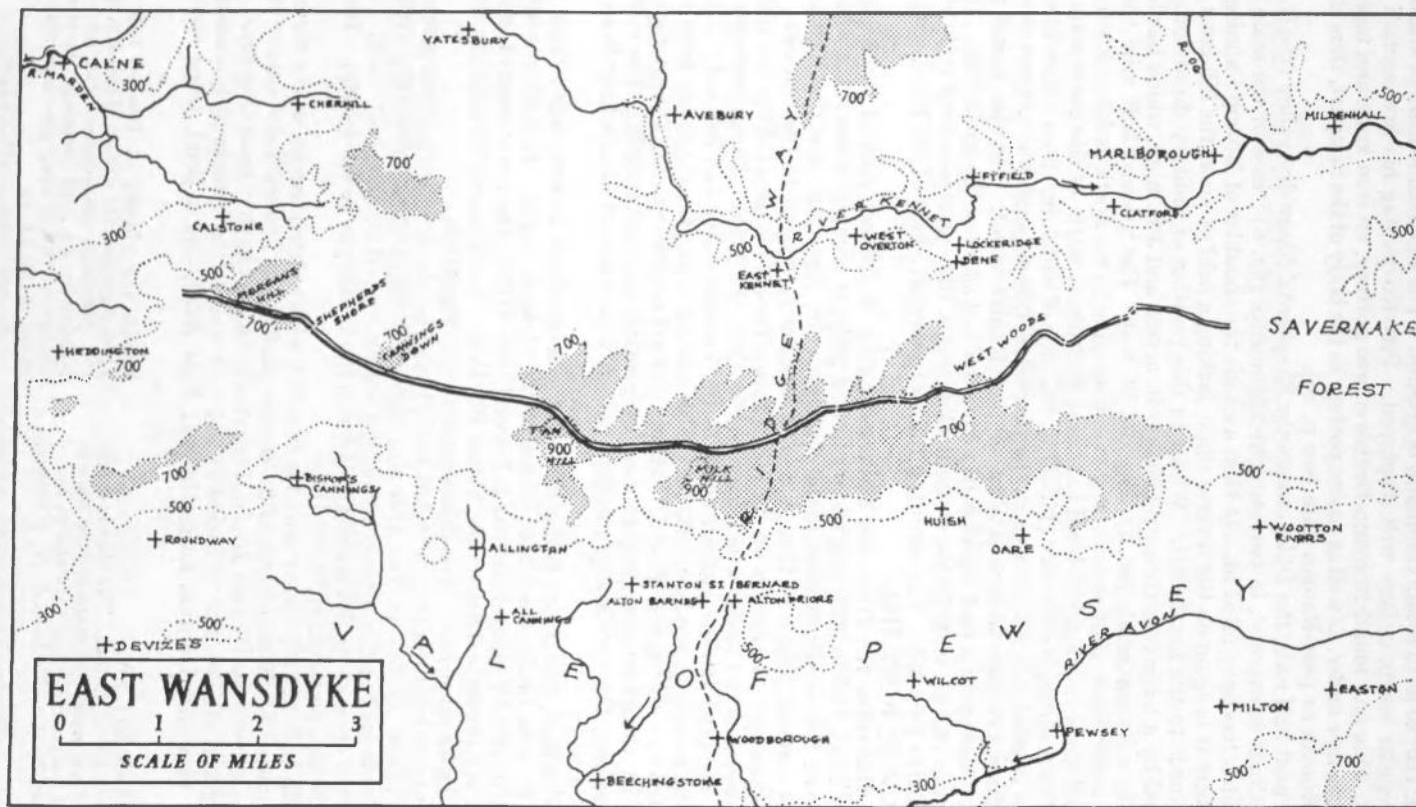


Fig. 8. The course of East Wansdyke. A thick line represents the bank, a thin line the ditch: the Dyke faces north.

contour (Pl. IIB) so as to retain command of ground. The essential feature of Wansdyke, a clean-cut regular scarp, is here well displayed. Pitt-Rivers dug his first section here in 1889<sup>1</sup>, 30 ft. wide and found Romano-British coarse pottery, an iron knife and nails on the old ground surface under, as well as coarse pottery in the body of the rampart, thus establishing a late Roman or post-Roman date (see p. 25).

In the next half mile, the Dyke crosses the Shepherds' Shore dry valley (569 ft.), where the Lower Chalk is exposed, in two straight alignments (fig. 6); east of the main Devizes road, the ditch has been filled in. It then ascends the shoulder of Bishop Cannings Down (684 ft.) where it is again on the reverse slope, lacking a field of view, the hill-crest, 721 ft., being 300 yards to the north-east. Whilst in this position of military disadvantage, it is strengthened by a large counterscarp bank 30 ft. across and 4 ft. high, which has been dug from a ditch on its north side (fig. 17, D.3 and Pl. VA). For the next half mile the course is irregular as it crosses another little dry valley opening to the north as far as Easton Down (649 ft.), and there is a marked bend just west of Brown's Barn, beside the remains of a triangular Romano-British enclosure (Pl. IIIA), one side of which has been obliterated by the Dyke: just beyond this, Pitt-Rivers cut his second section through the rampart in 1890 and again obtained evidence of late Roman or post-Roman date<sup>2</sup>. He also found that the Wansdyke counterscarp had been heaped over the east bank of the enclosure. The Dyke now continues in two remarkable straight alignments (fig. 9) across level country to the foot of Tan Hill (665 ft.). The ascent of the steep western slope of the hill is irregular, up to the crest at 903 ft. (Pl. IIIA).

Up to this point the Dyke has traversed rolling downland, part of the higher chalk plain<sup>3</sup>; from Tan Hill to Milk Hill and on to Red Shore it occupies a much more commanding position on the dominant ridge of the chalk summits (figs. 9-10, and Pls. IIIB and IVA). The Dyke's sinuous course in this section is necessarily related to the contour; running between 800 and 900 ft., always on the north-facing forward slope, it skirts the steep heads of a succession of deep combs which open to the north (Pl. IIIB). Defensively the position is superb: the field of view extends north to the Kennet valley and beyond: indeed on a clear day, approaching armies would be visible coming down the ridgeway from the Marlborough Downs 5 or 6 miles away. The steep-sided combs would prevent rapid lateral movement by attackers and tend to canalise possible lines of assault. The scale of the Dyke throughout this sector suggests that attack was expected over a long front (fig. 17, D 4-5).

Visual control, moreover, is not limited to the northern countryside: from Tan Hill crest (903 ft.) practically the whole course of the Dyke is visible, stretching westwards to Morgan's Hill (Pl. IVA), and eastwards beyond Milk Hill to the lower ground, still darkly wooded, of Westwood and Savernake Forest (Pl. IVB): from here or hereabouts, surely, the line of the Dyke must have been determined by its originator.

It is interesting to notice the scant regard paid by the builders to other earthworks in this area; linear ditches on Tan Hill and Milk Hill and a small cross-ridge dyke facing west by spot level 854 (fig. 9) are submerged where crossed by the great work, leaving, in the case of the cross-ridge dyke, a slight bulge in the Wansdyke counterscarp. They are all on a small scale compared with the Dyke.

On Milk Hill (fig. 10) there comes the first link with written record, where the boundary between Stanton St. Bernard and Alton Barnes parishes in Pewsey Vale<sup>4</sup> crosses the Dyke. It is here referred to as *Wodnes Dic* in three Anglo-Saxon charters recording royal grants of land in Stanton St. Bernard to Ordlaif in 905 A.D. and to the Bishop of Ramsbury in 957 and 960<sup>5</sup>; they also mention an earthwork, *Eald Burh*, and a pond, *Oxna mere*, on the

<sup>1</sup> *loc. cit.* Pl. CCXVI, 252.

<sup>2</sup> *loc. cit.* Pl. CCXIX, 260. The sherds in the Pitt-Rivers Museum at Farnham include ware of 1st, 2nd and 3rd century date: see also p. 25.

<sup>3</sup> As defined by J. Giffard, *V. C. H. Wiltshire*, vol. I, 5.

<sup>4</sup> In common with many Saxon valley settle-

ments, the villages in Pewsey vale possessed upland grazing, the extent of which is revealed by the downland place-names and by the parish boundaries, e.g., All Cannings, Horton, Easton, Allington Down etc.: see also Shaw Mellor, *Wilts. A. M.* LI, 24.

<sup>5</sup> Grundy, *Arch. J.* LXXVI, 210.



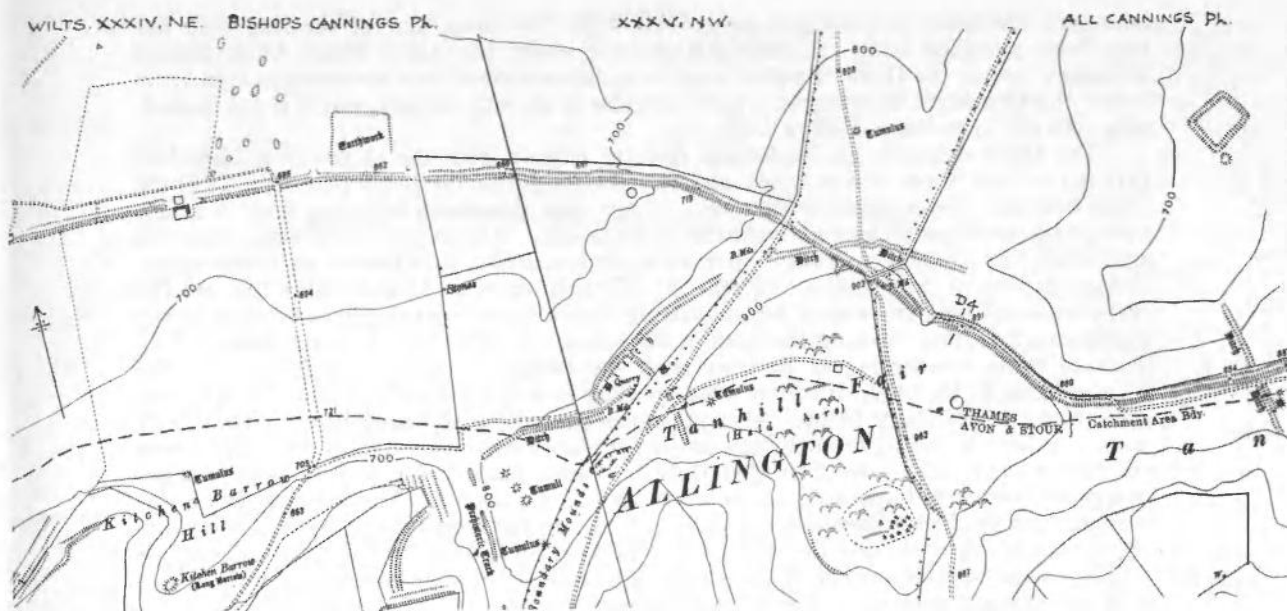


Fig. 9

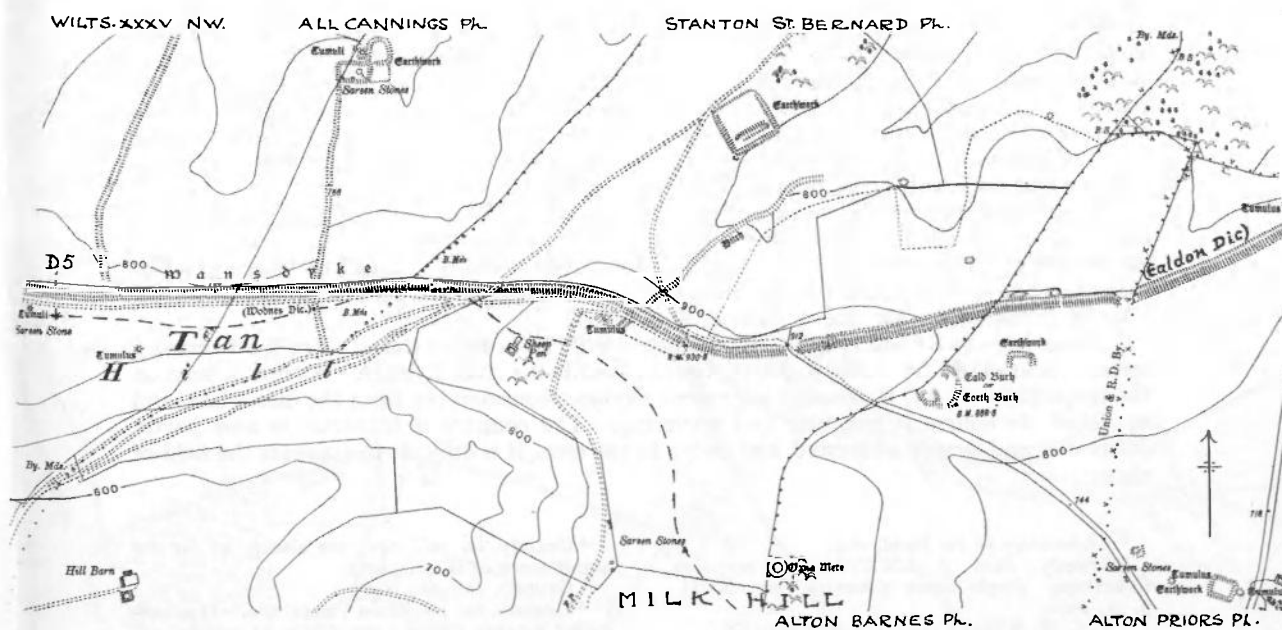


Fig. 10

Figs. 9, 10. The course of East Wansdyke. For details, see Figs. 5, 6.

boundary, identified by Crawford<sup>1</sup> south of the Dyke (see map, fig. 10, the ring-work has now been ploughed out). A little farther east where the Alton Priors-Alton Barnes boundary crosses the Dyke, the earthwork is again mentioned as a landmark in two Alton Priors charters which record grants to Winchester in the 9th century, but it is not named, only referred to as *thaere Ealdan Dic*<sup>2</sup>.

The Dyke descends gradually and directly aligned from the shoulder of Milk Hill (912 ft.) to Red Shore (808 ft.) (figs. 10-11). As is apparent on the air photo (Pl. IVB) the Dyke becomes tree-covered at the point where open downland is giving way to arable fields, and continues so for the remainder of its course. This is because it now enters the area where the chalk is overlaid at first with patches, and a little farther east with a continuous deposit of drift soils, a 'mantle' of clay-with-flints<sup>3</sup>. At Red Shore (fig. 11) the Dyke is crossed by a drove road, which is on the line of the ancient ridgeway south from the Marlborough Downs, crossing the river at East Kennet. This was, in early times, a long distance route, connecting at Barbury with the Berkshire ridgeway going east to the Thames, and, in the other direction, after crossing Pewsey vale and the Avon at Wilsford, going south to Salisbury plain: hence its importance down to Saxon times. That there was a gap here in the Dyke in the 9th century is shown by its mention in the Alton Priors charter as *thæt Riad Geat* (the Red Gate)<sup>4</sup>. Unfortunately the place is now densely overgrown and it is impossible to ascertain its original aspect. The modern drove-way goes through the Dyke diagonally, in a 40-45 ft. gap in the rampart and over a correspondingly wide causeway across the ditch<sup>5</sup>. In the field immediately to the west, there is a hollow on the counterscarp of Wansdyke suggestive of a worn entry into the ditch, which may possibly be the remains of an earlier crossing.

The Dyke now descends to cross a dry valley (650 ft.) opening to the north, still on the major scale (Fig. 18, D.6.) and directly aligned, though in a manner sensitive to the steep contours on either side (fig. 11). This valley was *Wodnesdene* referred to in West Overton (Kennet) charter of A.D. 939, where the Overton parish boundary crosses its northern end near Dene hamlet<sup>6</sup>. Near the Dyke's crossing, there was another boundary mark of Alton Priors 'a great stone lying on the track in the middle of the bottom of the dene that runs to Wodens Gate' (*Thonon on othere Micelne Stan on tham Wege middan on thaere Daene Bytnan the ligeth ut on Woddes Geat*)<sup>7</sup>. Grundy has suggested that this Woden's Gate lies farther south, on the track towards the striking landmark known as Adam's Grave, a long barrow crest-sited on the Alton Priors boundary, that was named *Wodnesbeorge* in the charter<sup>8</sup>. We think it more likely that it designated an opening in the 9th century in the Dyke, *Wodnesdic*, in the valley, *Wodnesdene*; this would be where the present road north to Dene and Lockeridge goes through the Dyke (fig. 28, p. 41).

Continuing eastwards, south of Shaw House, (fig. 11) the Dyke retains its imposing character over the hilltop and round the head of a dry valley (700 ft.) as far as a byre built on the site of the former Shaw farm<sup>9</sup>, where it has been levelled. It can be traced as a low ploughed-down ridge across the adjoining field and re-appears north of the hedgerow but on a much diminished scale (Level section, fig. 18, D7).

From here to its end, 4 miles to the east, the Dyke in this reduced form has to cross a series of four small dry valleys opening north towards the river Kennet. As can be seen on the maps (figs. 11-13) its general alignment deviates considerably from the direct line, and in detail its course is irregular and wavering. The country it traverses is now partly cultivated and largely afforested, and owing to the trees, it is difficult to estimate the field of view.

<sup>1</sup> *Archaeology in the Field*, 254.

<sup>2</sup> Grundy, *Arch. J.* LXXXVI, 159: see also Robertson, *Anglo-Saxon Charters*, no. XVII, p. 31, 291.

<sup>3</sup> V. C. H. Wilts., I (1957), 7, and Map IX.

<sup>4</sup> Grundy, *loc. cit.*, 161.

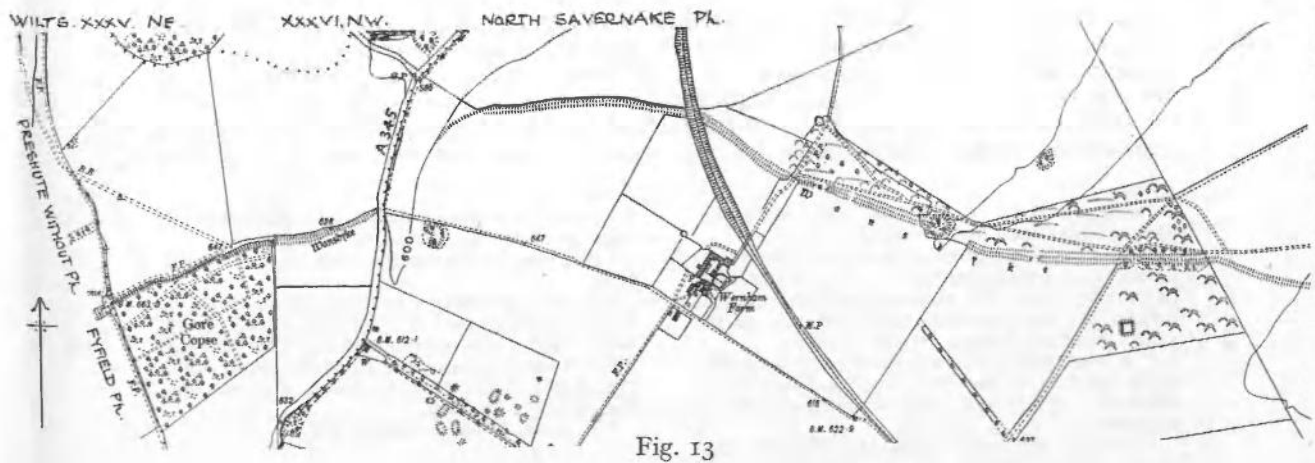
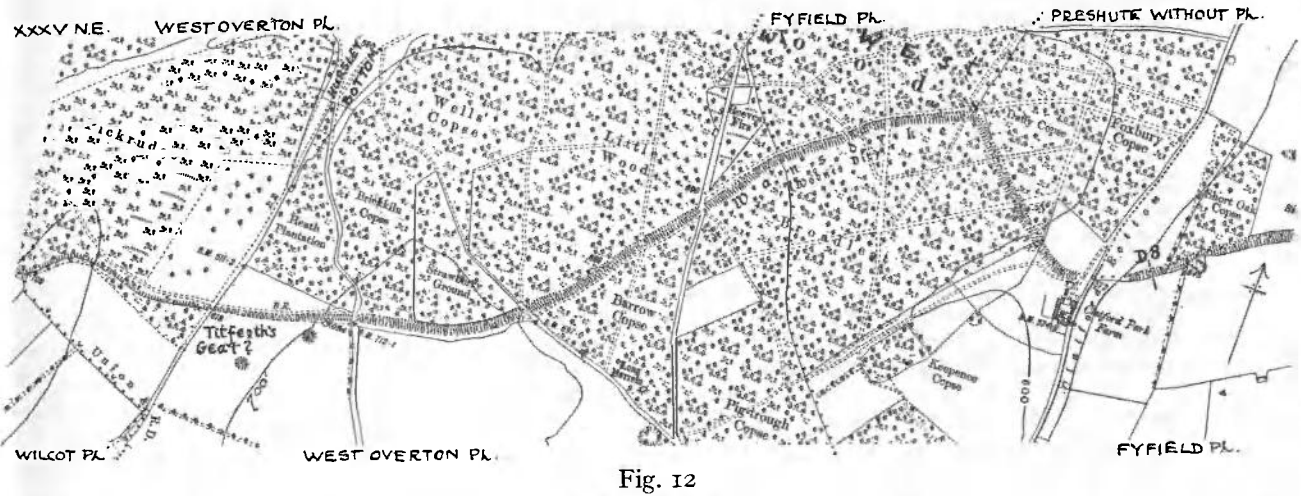
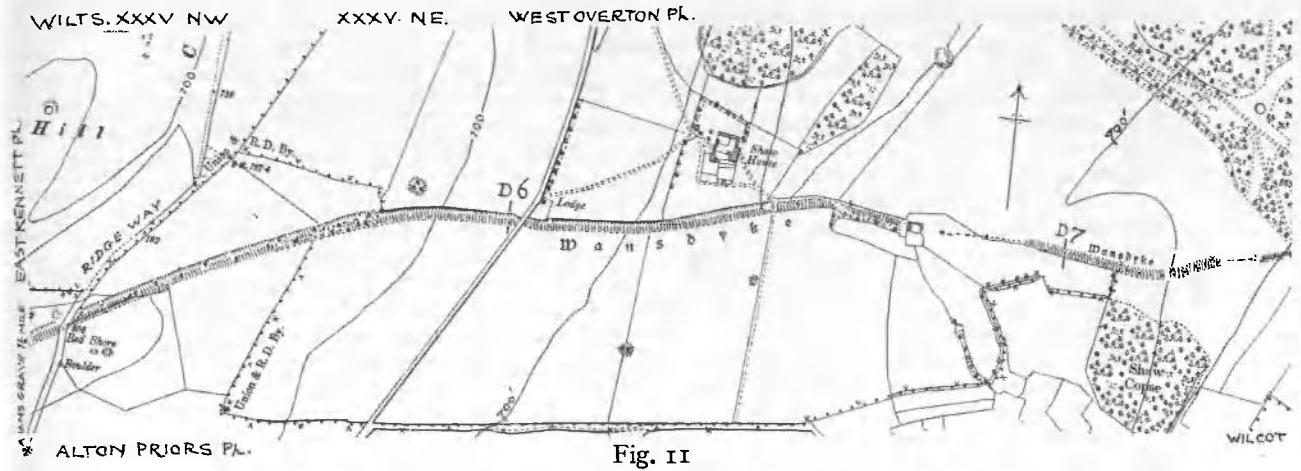
<sup>5</sup> Excavation to test whether the causeway is in part original might usefully be undertaken here.

<sup>6</sup> Grundy, *loc. cit.*, 240: see also p. 40 for the significance of *Wodnesdene*.

<sup>7</sup> Grundy, *loc. cit.*, 162.

<sup>8</sup> Grundy, *loc. cit.* Alton Priors, 160. It is now called Adam's Grave: see also p. 41 and fig. 28.

<sup>9</sup> Crawford's identification, *Archaeology in the Field*, 254.



Figs. 11 to 13. The course of East Wansdyke. For details, see Figs. 5, 6.

The minor uncertainties of alignment are well illustrated at the crossing of the first valley below Shaw Copse (fig. 11) and in Pickrudge wood (709 ft., fig. 12), where the Dyke is very small. In contrast the crossing of the next valley (615 ft.) which opens northwards to Hursley Bottom, is direct. The boundary of West Overton parish came up the valley from Hursley as far as the Dyke in Saxon times, to an opening called Titterth's Gate in the charter of A.D. 939; there is now a bridle road through the Dyke at this point (fig. 12), *Thonne on Hyrs Leage up to Wodnes Dic on Titterthes Geat*<sup>1</sup>.

The course of the Dyke through Westwood and beyond is very sinuous. In the Broad Leat plantations of the Forestry Commission, the Dyke sticks to the hill crest above the 600 ft. contour as far as circumstances permitted—so far indeed that a sharp turn to the S.E. in Daffy Copse<sup>2</sup> to cross Clatford Bottom (572 ft.) was necessary. It is possible that this sharp change in direction, practically through a right angle, was related to an existing land division or clearing, for it coincides with the junction of the Dyke with the boundary of Preshute-Without parish, as fig. 12 shows. Such a correspondence would also explain the curved alignments across Clatford Bottom up to Gore Copse (663 ft.): here the Dyke is larger (fig. 18, Section, D.8), where the chalk is exposed on the slope east of the farmhouse.

Thereafter the general direction through the copse and along a lane (fig. 13) to the next dry valley (below 600 ft.) resumes the north-easterly alignment as far as the Marlborough-Salisbury road (A345). It is possible that there was a small opening in the Dyke hereabouts, for the North Newton charter of A.D. 892 mentions a *crypel geat* (creeping gate<sup>3</sup>), as well as *Wodnes Dic* where it formed part of the boundary of a grant of detached land, *And swa to Wodnes Dic, thonne forth be thaere dic on Crypel Geat*<sup>4</sup>.

East of the main road, the Dyke is ploughed out in the first field but reappears north of the hedgerow and is well preserved on the edge of the arable of Wernham Farm (fig. 13). The land here was former heathland and contains patches of sand and gravel<sup>5</sup> which have resulted in unevenness on slopes of the rampart. To one of us (C.F.) the unevenness suggested that it may have been caused by the felling by the Dyke builders of great trees on the line, the dead stumps of which afterwards rotted away, producing in each case a hollow in the sandy bank. On the adjoining farmlands of New Buildings (fig. 14) the soil is a stiff red clay; the ditch has been ploughed in but as the level section (fig. 18, D9) shows, the rampart is intact and so continues, on a small scale but undiminished, in the belt of trees to its end. The air photo (Pl. VIA) gives no hint that the Dyke ever went farther, though the dark marks of former field boundaries are to be seen in the adjacent arable<sup>6</sup>.

Why does the Dyke end here? The mantle of debris (Eocene drift deposits) extends eastwards across Savernake forest to the Bedwyn valley: in this area there is little evidence of early occupation at any period<sup>7</sup>, and it is likely always to have been wooded. In Roman times, however, it was traversed by two roads (fig. 1) leading south from *Cunetio* (Mildenhall) to *Sorviodunum* (Old Sarum) and to *Venta Belgarum* (Winchester) and it might be expected that the Dyke would continue eastwards to control them. That it does not, must indicate that roads had gone out of use and perhaps were overgrown by the time Wansdyke was constructed, and that no danger from the Kennet valley was anticipated in this zone. We may then conclude, with Crawford, that the Dyke ended where thick forest began.

But our survey has shown that the Dyke had been constructed—albeit on a reduced scale—from Woden's Dene (Shaw Lodge) onwards across land that was equally drift

<sup>1</sup> Grundy, *Arch. J.* LXXVI, 241: Titterth's gate was identified by Crawford.

<sup>2</sup> We located the angle with some difficulty in dense young beech plantation, near the junction of two new rides: the earthwork, which has been lowered by the planting, measures only 28 ft. across, the bank being 12 ft. on the scarp.

<sup>3</sup> 'A low opening that will allow animals to pass from one field to another', *English Place-Name Elements* I, (1956) 118: not a burrow, as Grundy suggests.

<sup>4</sup> Grundy, *loc. cit.*, 190. It refers to the

boundary of a detached piece of land 'at the hill slope' probably near Oare, in Wilcot parish.

<sup>5</sup> Outlying Eocene debris: see *V. C. H. Wilts.* I, 8.

<sup>6</sup> It was probably one of these that H. C. Brentnall excavated in 1923; see *Wilts. A. M.* XLII, 497. His account shows that he had difficulty in determining the line of natural soil in the clay, and the ditch he found, if it was one, was only 1-2 ft. deep.

<sup>7</sup> *V. C. H. Wilts.* I, Maps I-IX.





covered and potentially wooded. Unlike the western terminal on Morgan's Hill, it does not stop where the chalk gives way to heavier soils. We suggest that the Dyke was constructed far enough into the forest to cover existing clearings made by the Wiltshire folk and that it indicates the tentative limits of settlement at the time Wansdyke was built.

### THE BEDWYN DYKE

#### AND OTHER EARTHWORKS EAST OF SAVERNAKE FOREST

It has been generally held since the time of Colt Hoare that the defensive system of East Wansdyke continued eastwards beyond Savernake Forest to cover the approaches to central Wiltshire, over the Pewsey col at Burbage. It is admitted that the earthwork is here difficult to trace and there is considerable divergence of opinion concerning its course and termination. Crawford concluded that the Dyke was intermittent and consisted at its eastern end of disjointed fragments and it is so shown on the Ordnance Survey maps.

The first fragment marked as Wansdyke (Wilts. XXXVI, N.E.) is in Little Bedwyn parish, on the gentle slope of a dry valley opening to the north, on the eastern fringe of the Savernake Forest below Birch Copse. It consists of a low bank, facing N.E., heavily and irregularly ploughed down, extending along the contour for about 200 yards. Although impressive at a distance, when examined at close quarters the ground is seen to be very disturbed: there are artificial hollows as well as old field boundaries near the alleged dyke scarp and it seems likely that this isolated bank in an extensive smooth-floored and smooth-scarped valley is an accidental product of a levelling-up after surface quarrying (? for chalk). Crawford in 1953 concluded that it was unlikely to be Wansdyke<sup>1</sup>.

The next so-called Wansdyke is in the north end of Chisbury Wood, also in Little Bedwyn parish (Wilts. XXXVII, N.W. and fig. 15). It is a low bank, 24 ft. overall, which shows no trace of emerging from the wood into the arable on either side; so far as it can be studied in a dense plantation, it is negligible in scale, character and extent. Crawford latterly considered it doubtful.

We come now to a much more imposing structure, the Bedwyn Dyke (figs. 15, 16). This earthwork, defensive in character, consists of a bank and ditch facing N.E. and with a good field of view for nearly all its 1½ mile length. It begins on the north side of the road well below Chisbury hill-fort<sup>2</sup> and where best preserved, near the Bedwyn road, measures 55 ft. overall and 20 ft. on the scarp, comparable, that is, with East Wansdyke in the Westwood area.

Crossing the Bedwyn road, it descends the valley slopes directly aligned S.E. to the Bedwyn stream (interrupted now by the railway and canal), and can be traced as a broad, low ridge up the farther side in arable fields. As it nears the crest, it is sited on a reverse slope, but it pulls forward a little to counter this, and from the original height of the rampart the builders would retain a northward field of view. Along the edge of Jockey copse and Foxbury wood, the earthwork is once more crest-sited and is well marked, measuring 40 ft. overall and 20 ft. on the scarp. On Burrige Heath (500 ft.) formerly Merrill Down and now arable, the Dyke has been ploughed out; when Crawford saw it in 1953<sup>3</sup> in grass, it showed as a ditch between two banks, 70 ft. overall, indicating a counterscarp construction. It is visible thus on the R.A.F. air-photograph, on the left of Pl. VIB. Traces now remain of a double undulation, showing as orange soil-marks, turning southward to the head of a little wooded combe adjoining Round Copse. Here, as a major defensive structure, the earthwork ends: there is no surface indication that the dyke divided at this point and that a branch went eastwards, as Colt Hoare originally suggested and Albany Major tried to make out<sup>4</sup>.

When it resumes, on the other side of the combe-head, it is only a small flat-topped bank and ditch, 25 ft. overall, that is aligned S.W. and that curves downhill through the

<sup>1</sup> *Wills. A. M. LV*, 119.

<sup>2</sup> It may originally have extended further up the hill to terminate on the massive defences flanking the entrance of the Iron Age hill-fort, but the modern road and an ancient hollow-way

have confused the issue.

<sup>3</sup> *Wills. A. M. LV*, 121.

<sup>4</sup> Colt Hoare, *Ancient Wilts.* II, p. 32, A. Major, 115.

copse on the reverse slope : it increases in scale, 45 ft. overall, as it nears the Bedwyn-Shalburne road (by spot level 409) in the valley, which runs N.W. to Great Bedwyn village. In Late Saxon times the valley was named *Harandene* (the hoar valley), on the evidence of the Bedwyn charters, as Crawford pointed out<sup>1</sup>, and it would appear from the mention of a gate in the Dyke (*thaere dices geat æt Harandene*) that the earthwork continued across the valley. Crawford mapped it in 1921<sup>2</sup> up to the Bedwyn Brail woodland below the 500ft. contour at Brail Cottage. The R.A.F. air-photo (Pl. VI B)<sup>3</sup> shows a distinct diagonal white soil-mark, which can be followed as an undulation 55 ft. wide across the field, to end just short of the wood, as shown by the dotted line of the ditch on fig. 15.

There is no valid reason, in our opinion, for calling any of this earthwork Wansdyke. In the Great Bedwyn charter of A.D. 968, quoted above, the Dyke is nameless and in the Little Bedwyn charter of A.D. 778 it is similarly anonymous, *quoddam vallum in harandene*<sup>4</sup>. Moreover, the course of the Dyke with its pronounced curve S.W. across the Harandene valley shows that it was a local defence work, covering Great Bedwyn and its hinter-

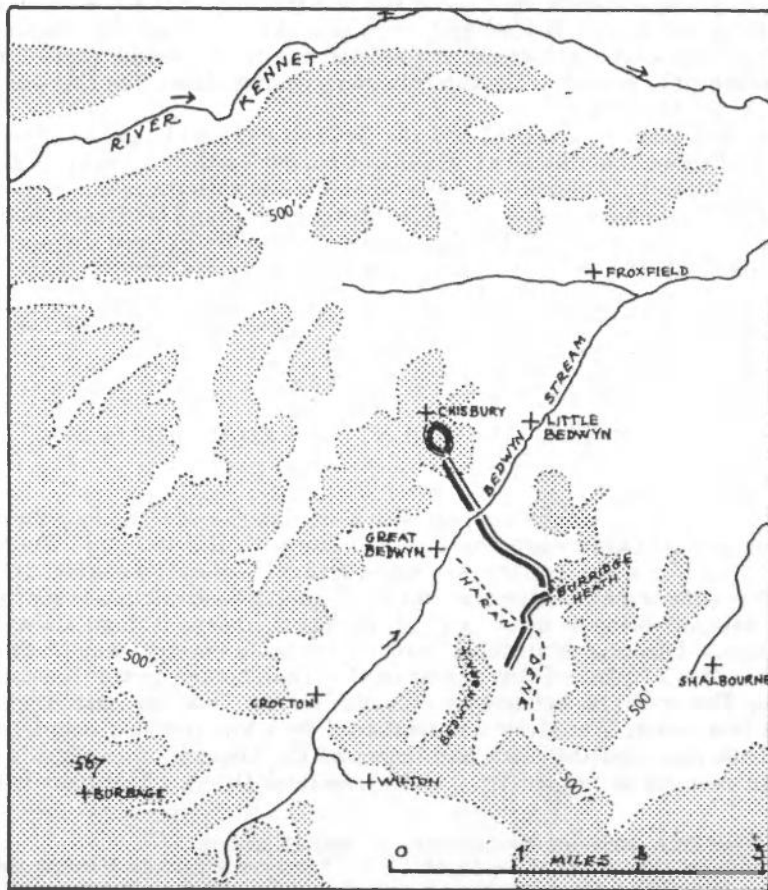


Fig. 16. The Bedwyn Dyke : see also Fig. 15.

<sup>1</sup> *Wilt. A. M.* XLI (1921) 281 and map.

<sup>2</sup> *idem.*—It is not shown on his map in *Archaeology in the Field*, 257, fig. 43.

<sup>3</sup> UK/CPE 1821, no. 4119. Also seen by A. H. Burne in 1953, *Wilt. A. M.* LV, 128.

<sup>4</sup> Grundy, *Arch. J.*, LXXVI, 151.

land. That it was throughout the greater part of its length, a well-placed work of defensive character is only to be expected, by analogy with other short dykes of the period: in essence, it is a cross-valley dyke<sup>1</sup>, beginning and ending on the valley flanks, probably at a point where uncleared woodland remained, on the drift-covered hill tops (fig. 16).

A possible clue to its historical context is to be found in the Abingdon Chronicle, where, as Crawford noticed, Bedwyn is described as 'the metropolis' of a West Saxon ruler called Cissa, whom the Abingdon monks knew as the uncle of Hean (*Haeha*) their founder and first Abbot. '*Regnante Kinuino rege West-Saxonum erat quidam nobilis vir Cissa nomine, et hic erat regulus, in cuius dominio erat Willesire et pars maxima de Berkshire . . . Metropolis vero urbs regni ipsius erat Bedewinde. In australi etiam parte urbis illius construxit castellum quod ex nomine suo Cyssebu[r]i vocabatur*'<sup>2</sup>.

Sir Frank Stenton has shown<sup>3</sup> that Cissa is likely to be an historical personage, an under-king (*sub-regulus*) in Wessex in the late 7th or early 8th century; Chisbury hill-fort, as is recognised, incorporates his name<sup>4</sup>. The Iron Age date of the hill-fort is not in question, but the cross-valley dyke close beside it is a characteristic Saxon work: the entry in the monastic chronicle must surely reflect a tradition of the building of defences by a Saxon ruler in the area<sup>5</sup>. It therefore seems probable to us that the Bedwyn dyke was constructed to define and to defend, if need be, the north-eastern part of the original Bedwyn settlement or estate<sup>6</sup>. The Little Bedwyn charter shows that this was in being by the middle of the 8th century.

If this explanation be accepted and the Bedwyn dyke no longer regarded as part of Wansdyke, it follows that the short lengths of barrier earthwork in West Berkshire, in Shalbourne parish and at Inkpen, can have no connection with the major defensive work in N. Wiltshire. Their identification with Wansdyke stems from Colt Hoare<sup>7</sup> and it does not appear that there is any early record which justifies it; the Inkpen dyke, indeed, has a name of its own; it was the Red Dyke (*readan dic*) in the Buttermere charter of the 9th century<sup>8</sup>.

We conclude therefore that Wansdyke ended on the west side of Savernake Forest.

## EAST WANSDYKE,

### CHARACTER, ALIGNMENT AND CONSTRUCTION

#### CHARACTER

East Wansdyke consists of a rampart with a ditch to the north and for the greater part of its course, with a counterscarp bank. From Morgan's Hill to E. of 'Wodnesdene', at Shaw House, (fig. 8) it is constructed on a major scale. As the level sections D1-6 (figs. 3, 17-18) and the table of measurements show (p. 47), rampart and ditch measure from 62-92 ft. overall, the rampart being at most 43 ft. on the scarp, and 10 ft. high above the present ground surface. This is a formidable barrier; the scale exceeds that of the far longer Mercian dykes, Wat's Dyke and Offa's Dyke on the Welsh border, and of the shorter Bokerly Dyke on the Dorset-Wilts. boundary: only the Devil's Dyke in East Anglia is larger. Throughout this sector, Wansdyke was reinforced by a low rounded counterscarp bank, which has both deepened the ditch and increased the breadth of an already formidable earthwork to as much as 130 ft. (fig. 3 and 17, sections D1-5). This bank is not present

<sup>1</sup> Compare Rowe ditch, Hereford, for a similar alignment; Cyril Fox, *Offa's Dyke*, 161-4, fig. 68.

<sup>2</sup> *Chronicon Monasterii de Abingdon*, J. Stevenson, Rolls series II, 268.

<sup>3</sup> F. Stenton, *The early history of Abingdon Abbey* (1913) 14-18.

<sup>4</sup> *Place-Names, Wilts.*, p. 334.

<sup>5</sup> There is an inhumation cemetery at Crofton, 1½ miles south of Great Bedwyn that is assigned to the late VI or VII century. V. C. H. Wills. I,

Map IX and 73.

<sup>6</sup> Bedwyn remained a place of some importance in Late Saxon times: it was a royal borough and coins were struck there (F. Stenton, *Anglo-Saxon England*, 475, 526). Its renewed brief connection with the Abingdon monastery is shown in another Abingdon charter (Dorothy Whitelock, *Eng. Hist. Doc. I*, no. 123, p. 537).

<sup>7</sup> *History of Ancient Wiltshire* II, 32.

<sup>8</sup> Grundy, *Arch. J.* LXXVI, 186-7.



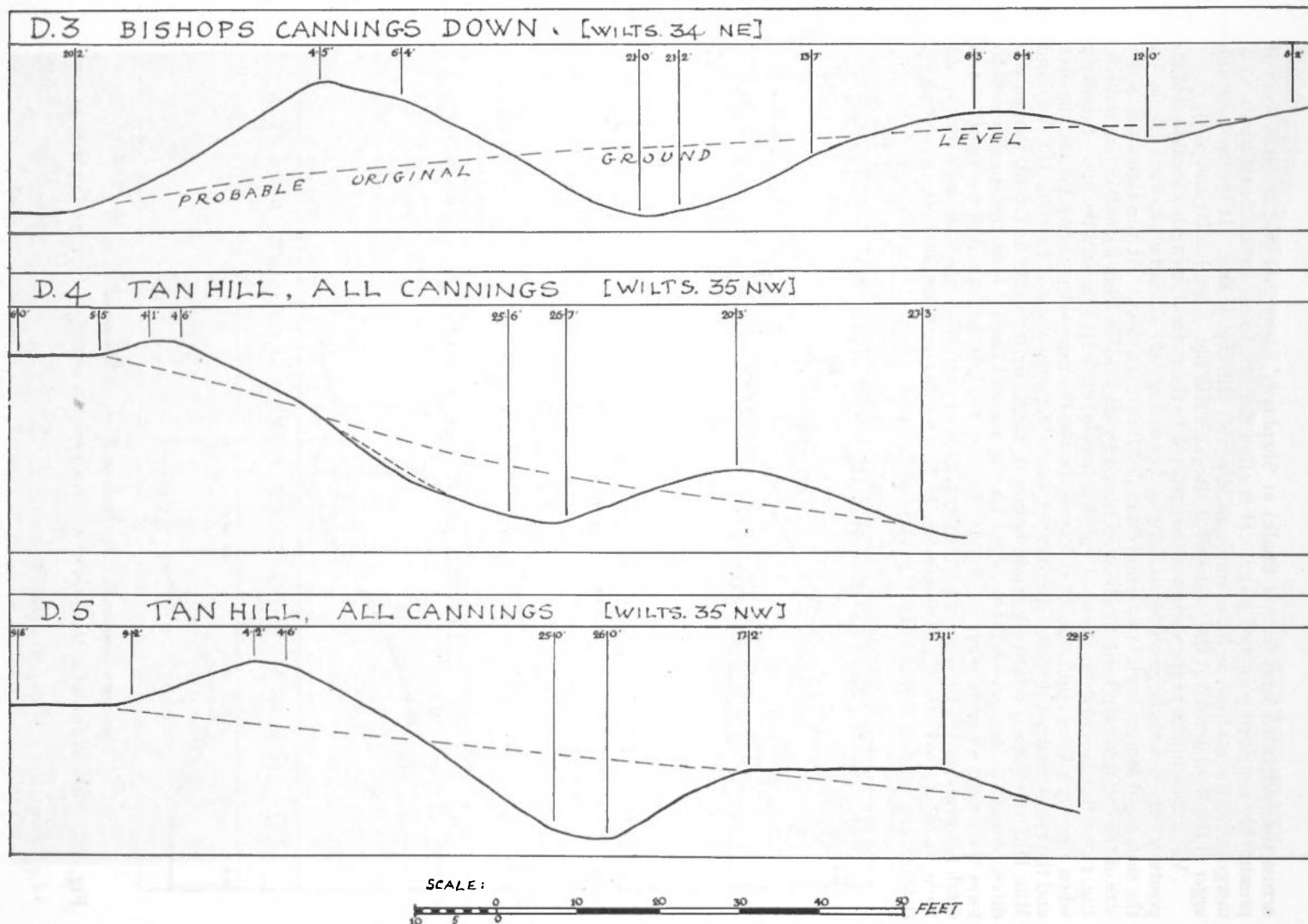


Fig. 17. East Wansdyke, level sections : for position see Figs. 9 and 10, p. 13.

across the cultivated land (Lower Chalk) at Shepherds' Shore, nor east of Milk Hill: it presumably has been ploughed away. It is often difficult to be certain of its limits as it merges with the contour, as for example on Morgan's Hill (fig. 3, D2). It incorporates the *agger* of the Roman road at the west end of Morgan's Hill (fig. 3, section D1 and p. 6).

Variations in size of the earthwork are related to the natural strength or weakness of its position: the dyke is largest where a reverse slope siting gave advantage to attackers, as on the summit of Morgan's Hill or Bishop Cannings Down (Pl. VA). At the latter place the size of the counterscarp bank has been increased by excavating from a small external ditch, (fig. 17, section D3) to cover the most vulnerable point under the brow of the hill. Similarly when there is a level approach, as at Easton Down, the rampart is very high and massive and the counterscarp is broad. In contrast, on the forward slope of Tan Hill (Pl. VB) and Milk Hill, the bank is relatively small, only 3 ft. high, (fig. 17, sections D5-6), though the ditch remains as big as ever, the greater part of the soil having been thrown downhill to form the massive counterscarp bank. In this way the length of scarp of the rampart and ditch has been kept fairly constant; the steep slope of exposed or piled-up chalk that would have to be crossed by attackers exceeds 40 ft. Similar economical methods of digging defences can be seen at many Iron Age hill-forts<sup>1</sup>.

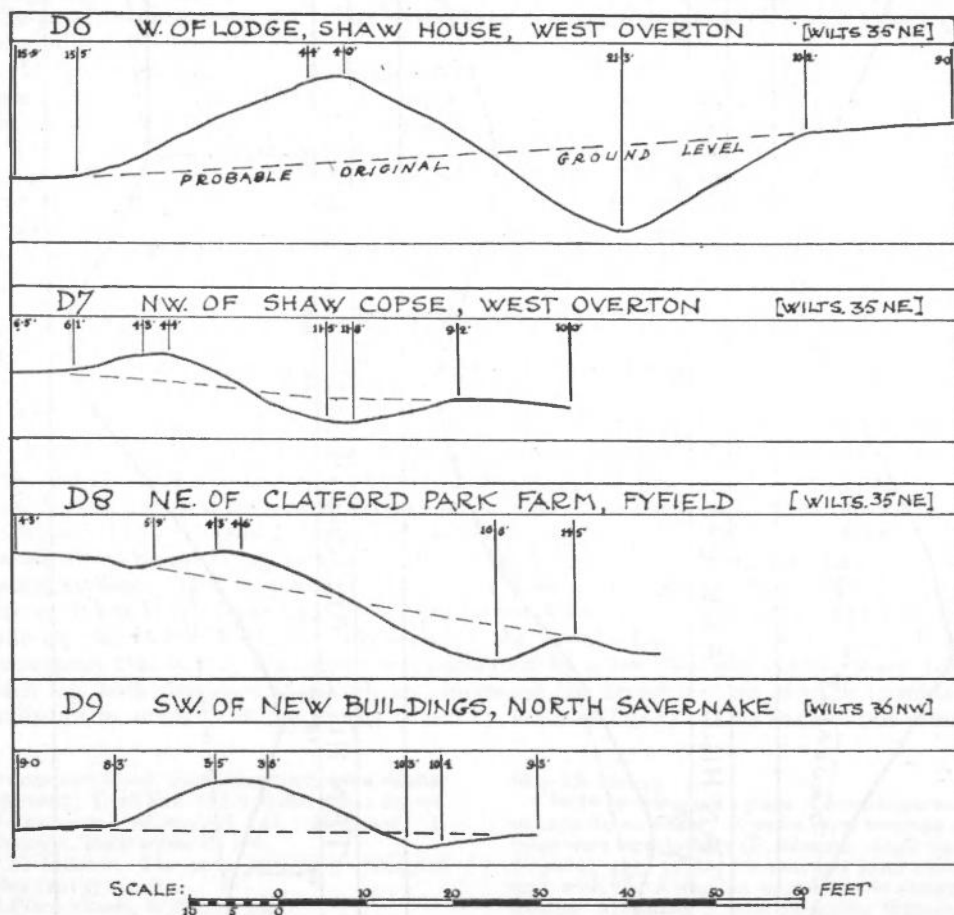


Fig. 18. East Wansdyke, level sections: for position see Figs. 11, 12 and 14, pp. 15, 17.

<sup>1</sup> e.g. Scratchbury, Wilts.; Hembury, Devon.



A. East Wansdyke, on Bishop Cannings Down



B. East Wansdyke, on Tan Hill  
(*Photographs : C. and A. Fox*)



A. New Buildings, N. Savernake : terminal of East Wansdyke  
(*Photograph by Major G. Allen, by courtesy of the Ashmolean Museum*)



B. The Bedwyn Dyke at *Harandene*, Great Bedwyn  
(*Photograph by the R.A.F. Crown Copyright*)



East of Shaw House to its end, S.W. of New Buildings on the edge of Savernake (Pl. VI A), the Dyke is built on a much reduced scale, measuring about 50 ft. overall, and with the rampart rarely exceeding 20 ft. on the scarp and 4½ ft. high : there is no trace of a counter-scarp bank. The change is sudden, taking place within 300 yards, on the site of old Shaw House (fig. 11) ; the contrast is well shown by the level sections D6 and D7 (fig. 18). The junction, where it might have been possible to have detected a sequence of construction, has unfortunately been destroyed by farm buildings. The change in character of the dyke corresponds, however, with a change in surface soil, from the upper chalk to the clay-with-flints (Drift)<sup>1</sup>, which continues with minor exposures of the chalk in little valleys through Westwood up to the end of the dyke and in Savernake beyond (fig. 1). Such soil, as is generally recognised, carried a heavy forest which explains the small size of the earthwork ; it is interesting to note in this connection that the only large portion of the dyke in Westwood is situated on an exposed chalk slope facing west, by Clatford Park farm (fig. 18, section D8).

It may be concluded that on the chalk downland Wansdyke was conceived and constructed as a military barrier, whereas on the clays it was built as a territorial boundary. It appears likely that the initial conception was of a large earthwork barrier covering the *Wodnesdene* valley and ending at the edge of the forest ; and that this was then extended to protect partly cleared lands farther east (p. 16).

#### ALIGNMENTS

' The term alignment in connection with a travelling earthwork has a dual significance : primarily it concerns the plan and general layout in relation to the main features of the country, secondarily the mode in which the course is set out, and the earthwork constructed from point to point . . . we have, in short, to consider major and minor alignments<sup>2</sup> '. In these terms, East Wansdyke will now be considered.

The major alignment of East Wansdyke, as might be expected, was largely conditioned by topography. As already noticed in following the course of the dyke (p. 12) the earthwork in general is placed on the forward slope of the chalk uplands to command a view of the country to the north. The alignment therefore is not direct, but forms an arc bending southward to a maximum depth of 2 miles where it follows the curve of the chalk summits above Pewsey Vale (fig. 8). It gained thereby a position of natural strength in the centre, utilising the heads of a series of steep-sided combes opening north between Tan Hill and Milk Hill in the direction of the Kennet. Had a direct line been followed, the dyke would have had to cross these switch-back fashion, adding greatly to the amount of earthwork constructed in difficult country. The chosen alignment on the summit was mainly level ; rapid deployment or concentration by the defenders to meet the threat of an attack over an extended front would be facilitated. From the top (903 ft.) of Tan Hill, behind the dyke, the line of attack could be anticipated, for on a clear day not only are the Kennet valley and the Marlborough Downs in view but practically the whole course of the dyke, from Morgan's Hill on the west to the edge of Westwood on the east (Pls. IV A and B). Such advantages must be considered to have outweighed the disadvantages of limited ground for manoeuvre—the strip of land behind the dyke, before the steep fall to Pewsey Vale, is here and there very narrow (Pl. III B).

The layout of the western part of the dyke was conditioned by the position of thecombe head on the far side of Morgan's Hill and by the Roman road intersection. This necessitated the line of dyke over the hill-top being on a slight reverse slope (Pl. I). The dyke was extended, as we have seen, on the line of the road as far as the beginning of the slope to the Heddington valley and of the change of soil from Middle to Lower Chalk. Both at the combe-head and on the slope, the alignment was aimed at a protected flank (pp. 5, 10).

On the east the dyke continued on a major scale as far as the edge of Westwood and the change from chalk to clay-with-flints ; here too natural woodland would have constituted a

<sup>1</sup> Geological Survey map, sheet 266 (Marlborough).

<sup>2</sup> Cyril Fox, *Offa's Dyke*, 278.

protected flank. As we have seen, the dyke on a reduced scale and far less defensively aligned, was extended for 5 miles into the forest; we have suggested that the layout in this area was related to clearings, and the dyke built to define rights of settlement (p. 16).

#### MINOR ALIGNMENTS

Three varieties of minor alignment have been noticed in the survey, corresponding in general to those on the Mercian Dykes<sup>1</sup>.

1. *Straight*. These consist of lengths where the earthwork is dead straight and of uniform size and slope. These are very striking: the appearance is as regular as a railway embankment and is witness to the early engineers' fine technique in marrying upcast to chalk rock. Examples will be found at Shepherds' Shore, two lengths of  $\frac{1}{2}$  mile on either side of main road, (fig. 6), between Brown's Barn and the foot of Tan Hill for  $\frac{1}{2}$  mile (fig. 9) and from the shoulder of Milk Hill eastwards nearly to the bottom of the dene for three quarters of a mile, (figs. 10, 11). Similar straightness and smoothness of contour is characteristic of the alignment of the East Anglian dykes across open chalk country.

2. *Sinuuous*. This occurs when the course of the Dyke is conforming to or is conditioned by contour. The best examples are the bold curves at Milk Hill and Tan Hill where the dyke sweeps round the head of the combs or breasts the forward slopes (Pls. III B and IV A). Similarly on the steep east side of Morgan's Hill, the earthwork has been negotiated round the side of a dry valley in a striking S curve (Pl. II B).

3. *Irregular*. This comprises short lengths of dyke where the general direction is maintained but the alignment deviates slightly all the time from the straight line. Such irregularities, it is considered, are due to human weakness in the face of physical difficulties. For example the difficulty of maintaining a straight line on a steep slope are well known to every excavator and afford the most likely explanation of the irregular course of the dyke on the west side of Tan Hill (Pl. III A) and Morgan's Hill (Pl. I). Again in the claylands of Westwood, where the existence of a countryside only partly cleared of heavy timber can be assumed, the alignment of the dyke is irregular and wavering as well as indirect in general layout<sup>2</sup> (figs. 12-13).

There is, however, one short stretch where there is no obvious reason for indifferent workmanship, a length of about quarter of a mile across open chalk<sup>3</sup> between Bishop Cannings Down and Easton Down. The irregularity is most marked at the approach to the Romano-British enclosure (the entrenchment) at Brown's Barn (Pl. III A and fig. 6), one side of which has been cut away by the Wansdyke ditch. Since this length is sandwiched in between two straight alignments, it suggests that the earthwork was built in short lengths by different labour gangs, not all of the same competence. Indications of similar methods of construction have been noticed on the Mercian dykes<sup>4</sup>; it has there been deduced that the labour force was related to the system of land ownership and to the existence of settled communities behind the line of the dyke. In the case of East Wansdyke, such settlements should lie in Pewsey Vale, and farther south.

#### GAPS IN THE DYKE

There are a succession of openings in the Dyke, most of which allow passage from the Pewsey Vale villages to the upland grazings within their parishes: examples will be seen at the approaches to Bishop Cannings Down, and All Cannings Down. More important is the gap which gives passage to the Ridgeway at Red Shore (p. 14 and fig. 11); it is now a broad diagonal cut, hence the name shear or shore, but in the 9th century Alton Priors charter it is the Red Gate, so-called from the patch of tertiary deposits on the chalk hereabouts.

<sup>1</sup> *Offa's Dyke*, 119, fig. 51: Straight=type I, sinuous=type III, irregular=type II; see also 264.

<sup>2</sup> Compare *Offa's Dyke* at St. Briavels in the Wye valley 'the builders were, no doubt, feeling their way from point to point by sensing the

contour, shut out by the tree canopy from the general view'; *op. cit.* 219 and 283.

<sup>3</sup> There is no soil change apparently at this point which might indicate a patch of scrub; a yew wood is a possibility.

<sup>4</sup> *Offa's Dyke*, 282.



A. New Farm, Compton Dando



B. East of Bathford Brook, Stanton Prior



C. Manor Farm, English Combe



D. Odd Down, Bath

West Wansdyke, Somerset  
(Photographs : A. Fox)



A. Maes Knoll ; West Wansdyke and hill-fort. The course of the dyke is shown by a broken white line



B. Stantonbury ; West Wansdyke, and hill-fort. The direction of the Dyke is indicated by arrows

(Photographs by Dr. J. K. S. St. Joseph, from the Cambridge University Collection. Crown Copyright)



There is also 10th century charter evidence for openings in the West Wood sector, Titferth's Gate, now a track at the head of Hursley Bottom (p. 16 and fig. 12) and Cryppel Gate, unlocated in North Newnton parish, as well as Woddes Gate on the valley floor near Shaw House, now a metalled road (p. 14 and fig. 11). Since none of these have been tested for a causeway by excavation, it is uncertain whether any of them date from the original construction.

### CONSTRUCTION

The information we possess in detail about the construction of East Wansdyke is derived from Pitt-River's two sections on Morgan's Hill (fig. 5) and at Brown's Barn (fig. 6)<sup>1</sup>: both were dug at places where there was previous Roman occupation which has complicated the stratification. On Morgan's Hill, as Crawford has pointed out<sup>2</sup>, Wansdyke is imposed on a small Romano-British linear earthwork, a double bank and ditch, one bank of which was present in Pitt-River's section beneath a thick turf-line in the counterscarp. At Brown's Barn, however, the constructional sequence is apparent; a layer of chalk rubble extending 12-15 ft. from the south lip of the ditch represents the material thrown up initially by the digging party; above it is a layer of dark brown soil containing Roman-British pottery<sup>3</sup>, that represents old surface soil, and this is covered by more chalk mould and rubble, which are soils from the far side and lower layers in the ditch; all these will have been carried up and tipped from baskets. There are no signs of sods or timber being used as a revetment, nor of a cresting or palisade. The top of the rampart in both sections is rounded and there are no surface indications elsewhere to suggest it was designed or used as a patrol track.

The ditch was probably flat-floored, 4-5 ft. wide on the rather unsatisfactory evidence of the Shepherds' Shore section<sup>4</sup>. In this respect it differs from the Bokerly Dyke which is V-shaped, narrowing to 1 ft. 6 ins. in the Roman manner<sup>5</sup>. The East Anglian and the Mercian dykes have flat ditches, ranging from the moat-like Devil's Dyke which is 19-25 ft. wide, to the Fleam or Offa's Dyke<sup>6</sup>, which are 6-7 ft. wide. Wansdyke is thus an intermediate form between the known examples of Romano-British and Anglian construction.

The sides of the ditch were cut to the unusually steep angle of 30° in the Shepherds' Shore section, and every effort was made to continue this incline in the piling of the rampart, so as to create a long and even slope, most difficult to climb. On the downland sectors, this characteristic can be detected from surface inspection, as is shown in the level section on Tan Hill (fig. 17, D5) where the angle of slope is 35°. Such unbroken slopes are maintained for quite long distances as on Tan Hill and Milk Hill, or east of Brown's Barn, where looking along the earthwork, it seems as though it had been smoothed off by a spoke-shave! It may be that after the rampart chalk had settled, the whole of the scarp was worked over by the labour gang to produce this uniform plane surface.

### WEST WANSDYKE

Wansdyke West crosses North Somerset from west to east, from Maes Knoll in Norton Malreward parish to Horsecombe in South Stoke parish, a distance of nearly nine miles in the direct line (fig. 19). There are, however, several gaps in the earthwork to-day, and, as will be shown, its course may have originally been intermittent.

<sup>1</sup> *Cranborne Chase III*, 252, Pl. CCXVI-VII, CCXIX. Both were 30 ft. wide.

<sup>2</sup> *Antiquity* (1932), 349.

<sup>3</sup> This dark layer was probably what Colt Hoare recorded near Shepherds' Shore, which suggested to him that the earthwork was of two periods. (*Anct. Wills*, II, 29n.). Pitt-Rivers' sections show that it was only constructional.

<sup>4</sup> The chalk was rotten here and the General found it difficult to determine the profile: *loc. cit.*, 255. The section on Pl. 217 is the more correct.

<sup>5</sup> Pitt-Rivers, *loc. cit.*, Pls. 163-4.

<sup>6</sup> Cyril Fox, *Proc. Camb. Antiq. Soc.* XXVI, 90, Pl. IV; XXIV, 28, Pl. 1. *Offa's Dyke*, 76 and figs. 31 and 89.

The Dyke faces north or north-east throughout, running more or less parallel with the Avon valley, 2-5 miles distant to the north. The countryside is undulating and structurally confused; hence the general course of the earthwork is sinuous. The normal level is between 200 and 300 ft., rising to 500-600 at either end, and in the centre to 550 ft. at Stantonbury hill-fort, whilst the streams and tributaries of the Avon are crossed below 100 ft. Maes Knoll, Stantonbury and Odd Down apart, the situation chosen is not a commanding one, the field of view being frequently restricted by higher ground flanking the Avon valley.

Geologically the countryside has considerable range of character within the limits of the Jurassic formation<sup>1</sup>. Maes Knoll on the west, Stantonbury in the centre, and English Combe, Odd Down and Horsecombe in the east are on the Oolites; a narrow belt of the Coal Measures is crossed at Compton Dando in the Chew valley; elsewhere the Dyke is on the Lias formations which here produce a clay soil over the rock.

Our survey begins at the western end. The Dyke was examined—that is, we have walked along it throughout its length, returning to difficult sectors—in 1955 and 1957. Since it is little known and its course is not easy, we have provided a more detailed account than of East Wansdyke. The injury done to it of recent years is serious: at our urgent request the best preserved portions were scheduled by the Ministry of Works in 1956.

### THE COURSE OF THE DYKE

*From Maes Knoll, Norton Malreward to Cottle's Farm, Publow (figs. 20-21).* A ridge of the Inferior Oolite extends from Dundry Hill to Maes Knoll, having a steep scarp to the north, and commanding a fine view over the lower Avon, here a wide flat above the Clifton Gorge, to the Cotswold escarpment. On the end of Maes Knoll (642 ft.) is a hill-fort, triangular in shape, tapering southwards to an entrance approached from the direction of the present Norton Malreward village. The western approach to the fort by the ridgeway from Dundry is dominated by a cross-bank and ditch of enormous dimensions, Maes Knoll Tump. This measures 200 ft. overall, 89 ft. on the scarp, 25 ft. vertical above the interior of the fort and 50 ft. above the bottom of the ditch, and is well seen on the air-photo, (Pl. VIII A). Of the northern defences only a trace of the bank remains: in our opinion it has slid down the scarp, producing the characteristic undulations visible below. The remainder of the defences are comparatively slight, a single bank and rock-cut ditch, heavily ploughed down on the south, with an outer bank on the eastern slope at the hedge line, which may represent a defensible annexe.

West Wansdyke begins (or ends) a few yards below this outer bank<sup>2</sup>, as a ploughed-down ridge, 80 ft. overall, in a pasture field (field 1 on fig. 20). A little further down the slope it converges on an overgrown and sunken lane and continues along its southern edge to the road; this lane must be the eroded ditch of the Dyke, but it begins higher up than the bank referred to, and diverging from it, can be traced continuing diagonally up to the inner fort ditch. Previous observers, including the Ordnance Survey, have regarded this track as here representing Wansdyke and as indicating that the hill-fort was included in the later work. The great western 'tump' already referred to is held to be the end of the Dyke.

In our opinion this does not square with the facts. The track is a typical hollow-way; it starts as a shallow depression below the fort ditch at the top of the slope, deepening and widening rapidly as it descends the hillside. The broad bank of Wansdyke, on the contrary,

<sup>1</sup> See Geological Survey Sheet and V. C. H. Somerset, I, Pl. 2.

<sup>2</sup> The possibility that it is a large lynchet cannot be disregarded; it is now a field boundary.

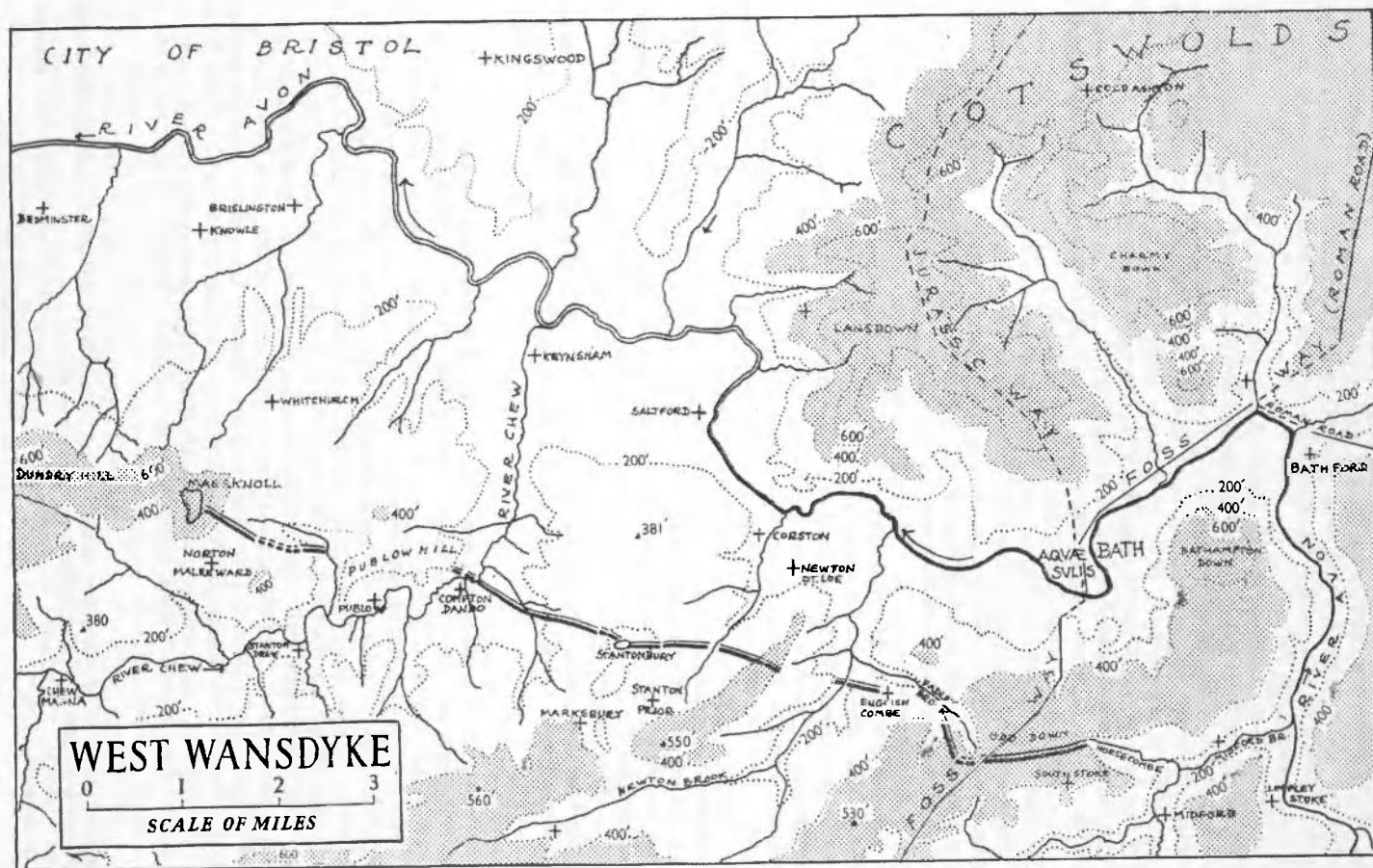


Fig. 19. The course of West Wansdyke. A thick line represents the bank, a thin line the ditch : the Dyke faces north.

does not touch the Iron Age defences at any point. At Stantonbury, the other hill-fort on the line, (Pl. VIII B), the frontier earthwork ceases in a similar way just outside the Iron Age defences. Furthermore, there is no gap<sup>1</sup> through the inner fort rampart on this east side, such as would be necessary if the fort defences were part of the Wansdyke frontier, to permit movement along its line.

Wansdyke, then, starts on, and descends the eastern slope of Maes Knoll and continues in a direct alignment across the Norton Malreward-Whitchurch road. The same broad rounded bank can be traced through field 2; in field 3, belonging to New Barn farm, it is reduced to a scarp of a former field division; in field 4 the ploughed-down bank reappears, better preserved and measuring 60 ft. overall; it continues to a stream-head in a marshy declivity beside a wood, where it ends (Pl. VIII A, broken white line).

From here to the railway bridge over the main road to Bristol (A 37) practically no trace of the Dyke survives to-day (fig. 21). There is, however, good evidence for its continuation, since Colt Hoare described it circumstantially in 1830:

'Its track', he wrote<sup>2</sup>, 'is marked with certainty over an arable field by a white stratum of soil occasioned by the plough. Leaving a copse wood a little to the left, it ascends through one pasture field and descends through another to the turnpike road, leading on the right to Pensford and on the left to Whitechurch . . . On this spot the bank and ditch are very visible and strongly marked on each side of the road'. The building of the North Dorset railway embankment destroyed part of it in the late 19th century, and there are old workings also on the probable line, but a well-marked scarp in the coppice by the 300 ft. contour represents a relic of the forward slope (fig. 21).

East of the railway bridge on land that was common in Colt Hoare's time and is now arable belonging to Cottle's Farm, the Dyke reappears beside the hedgerow in field 5. It is interrupted at a patch of marshy ground—a former stream-head—and continues across field 6 (B.M. 241) as a massive bank and ditch, 24 ft. on the scarp and 79 ft. overall (see section I, fig. 27). In field 7 the ploughed-down bank carries along behind the hedge, whilst the ditch becomes an eroded farm track down the slope to the Publow road. In field 8, north of Cottle's farmhouse, the Dyke continues in heavy Lias clay which has recently been cut up by ploughing, to end on the Publow brook, flowing south to join the river Chew. The rampart was constructed undiminished as far as was possible down the slope, and the ditch continued to the edge of the alluvium.

Throughout this sector the alignment is direct, in straight stretches; once below the slopes of Maes Knoll, the field of view northwards is limited to the valley of the Publow brook.

*From the Publow brook to the river Chew: the Publow Hill gap* (figs. 21 and 22). The next portion of the Dyke is in the Chew valley, 1¼ miles east of Cottle's Farm and separated from it by Publow Hill, rising to 382 ft. There is no trace of the Dyke on this upland, nor is there anything visible on the air-photographs which we have examined by courtesy of the Air Ministry<sup>3</sup>. The absence of the earthwork is very remarkable when one looks at the western-facing smooth hill slope across the Publow brook from the end of the Dyke at Cottle's Farm, where the frontier alignment can hardly be in doubt<sup>4</sup>. The most likely explanation is that Publow Hill was thick woodland at the time the Dyke was constructed: this problem will recur farther along the Dyke, and the same solution will be offered (p. 37). Crawford's suggestion<sup>5</sup> that the river Chew and its tributary formed the frontier line as far as Compton Dando is not acceptable having regard to the undoubted portion of the Dyke at Peppershells (fig. 22). Colt Hoare next recognised the Dyke descending from Knowle Farm to the road leading from Chewton Keynsham to Compton Dando. A shadow in the field

<sup>1</sup> The gap between the Tump and the northern scarp is probably original, though enlarged.

<sup>2</sup> *Ancient Wilts.* II, 23. Quoted by Albany Major in an appendix, 156.

<sup>3</sup> Air-cover, CPE/U.K.—1899. Nos. 4223-4: and 1225-7.

<sup>4</sup> The earthworks on Publow Hill, planned by Albany Major, are strip-lynchets, *loc. cit.* 48.

<sup>5</sup> *Archaeology in the Field*, 253.

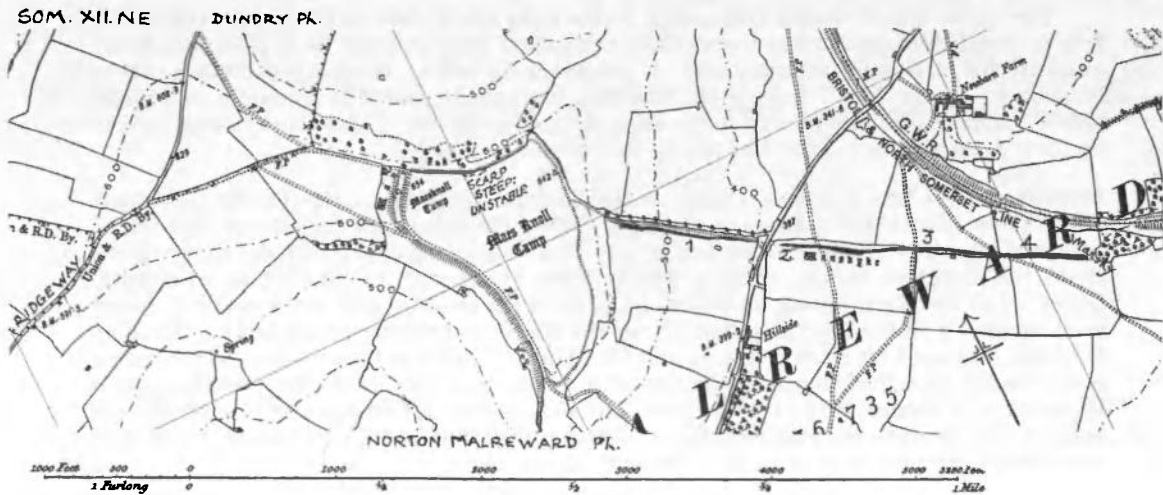


Fig. 20

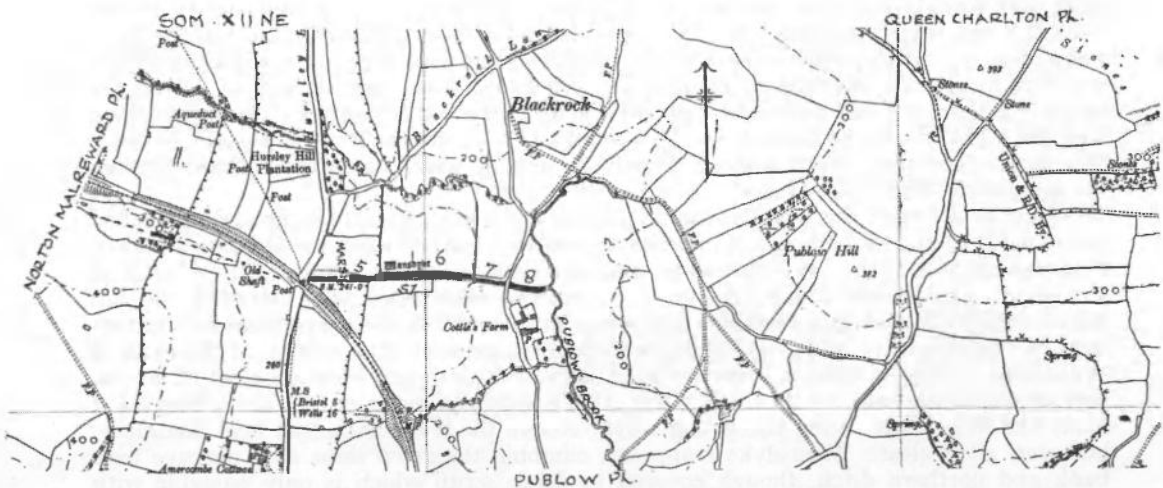


Fig. 21

### THE COURSE OF WEST WANSDYKE

Figs. 20-26 Portions of the 6 inch O.S. maps arranged to show successive sectors of the Dyke horizontally: a north point registers the degree of alteration. A black line, varying in thickness with the size of the Dyke today, has been drawn along the bank: a broken line records evidence of its former existence. Strips are reduced to 4 inches to the mile: for level sections, S1 to 4, see Fig. 27, p. 34.



below the farm on an air-photo (No. 1223) may well be the ploughed-out remains. It is shown by a broken line across field 9A on fig. 22.

The Dyke is next visible descending to the river Chew close to the 200 ft. contour in field 9, just below the 19th century plantation called Peppershells: it is ploughed down, measuring 46 ft. overall, on heavy soil. It disappears in field 10, where a new house has been built on its former line. East of the Chewton-Keynsham road it is traceable as a slight rise in a sloping field, continuing to the edge of the alluvial flat. This short stretch west of the river is on a reverse slope, and has no field of view.

*From the river Chew, Compton Dando, to the Bathford Brook* (fig. 22). On the right bank of the Chew, Wansdyke appears on the edge of the alluvium in the orchard of New Farm, Compton Dando. It extends for half a mile in a direct alignment to a tributary of the river, the Bathford brook, crossing gently rising ground at 120 ft. It is excellently preserved at the start, having an overall of 45 ft. at the rounded end in the orchard, whilst level section 2 in the adjoining field shows the massive character of the bank; the ditch has been deepened by erosion (fig. 27 and Pl. VIIA). The Dyke then carries on on a major scale, though ploughed down, to the Compton Green lane; its course beyond the road is apparent in a narrow strip of waste land, but little is left. It emerges in a small pasture field leading down to the Bathford brook, with an overall of 41 ft., diminishing to 32 ft. at its terminal, which is only 40 ft. from the edge of the stream.

*From the Bathford Brook to Stantonbury hill-fort, Stanton Prior* (figs. 22, 23). On the right bank of the brook the Dyke is in a coppice at the roadside, fronted by a small tributary; ditch and bank are well preserved, the overall is 53 ft., the bank being 26 ft. on the forward scarp. The Dyke now takes up a new alignment, nearly due east, traversing ground rising to about 350 ft. at Wansdyke House and over 550 ft. at Stantonbury. Its course for the most part is slightly sinuous and much of it is ploughed down but the line marked on the 6 ins. O.S. map can be accepted (fig. 23). In field 12 the bank is ploughed out but the ditch was visible in 1956 as a dark growth in the corn alongside the hedge. In field 13 the scarp survives, increasing eastwards. There is no trace in the lower part of field 14, but in the upper half there is a well preserved short stretch up to the 300 ft. contour. Here, by a lone tree (Pl. VIIB) the Dyke measures 68 ft. overall and 23 ft. on the forward slope. In fields 15 and 16 it survives only as a broad ridge 83 ft. overall, which can also be traced through the grounds of Wansdyke House<sup>1</sup>.

East of the main Bath-Wells road (A 39) the Dyke is apparently completely ploughed out in fields 17 and 18, although it must have been well marked when the Ordnance Survey map was made in 1882. It is this sector that is mentioned in the Stanton Prior charter of A.D. 963<sup>2</sup>. Colt Hoare saw it here in 1830 'crossing *three* fields as it mounted the hill towards the earthwork'<sup>3</sup>. The third field is now in the wood on the steep ascent to Stantonbury hill-fort (field 19 on fig. 23) and like its fellows contains little vestige of the bank of Wansdyke. But the ditch is there in the undergrowth, deepened by erosion, 42 ft. across, with a plantation bank on its north side. This is very confusing at first sight, because it looks like Wansdyke facing the wrong way. Above the level of the old field boundary, however, all is clear. Wansdyke reappears, climbing the steep slope as a massive high bank and northern ditch, though covered in dense scrub which is only passable with difficulty. Measured above the 500 ft. contour it is 70 ft. overall, 24 ft. on the scarp, with a flattish top to the bank. If this stretch of earthwork was on an open hillside its magnitude would be appreciated<sup>4</sup>. Bank and ditch die out as the summit (530 ft.) is reached and can be seen ending in an open patch of ground below the former Iron Age defences (Pl. VIIIB).

<sup>1</sup> This was called Goss Farm in Colt Hoare's time; *Ancient Wilts.* II, 23.

<sup>2</sup> Grundy, *Saxon Charters of Somerset* (1935), 191. 'Thonne forþ a be Wyril Truman, Th'on Wodnesdic. Thanne of Wodnesdic on tha Byrug northwearde andlang Gemaeres'. See also the

Marksbury charter of A.D. 936, of land adjoining, *loc. cit.* 188. 'Of Wondes Dich by Wirtwalen'.

<sup>3</sup> *Ancient Wilts.* II, 23.

<sup>4</sup> See Pitt River's section No. 16, reproduced Albany Major, 153.

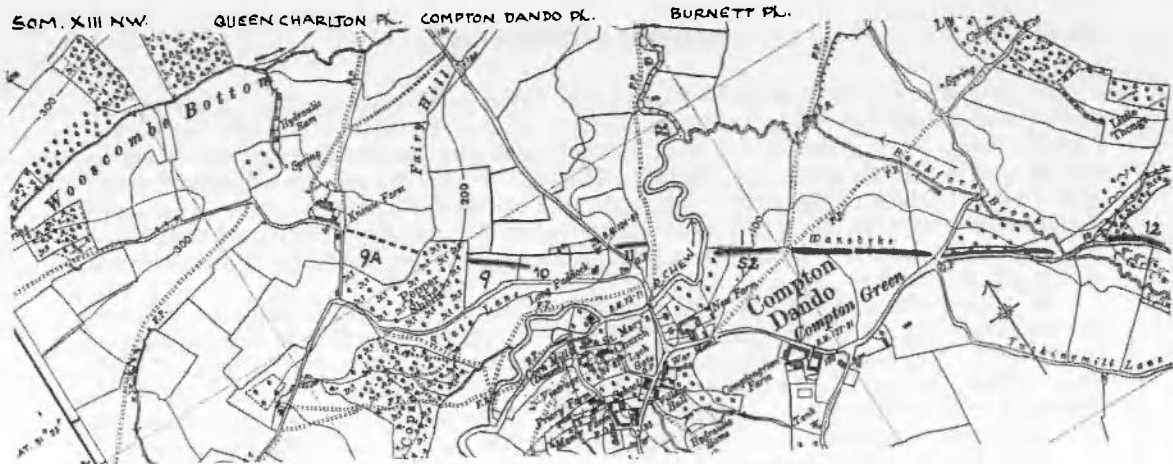


Fig. 22

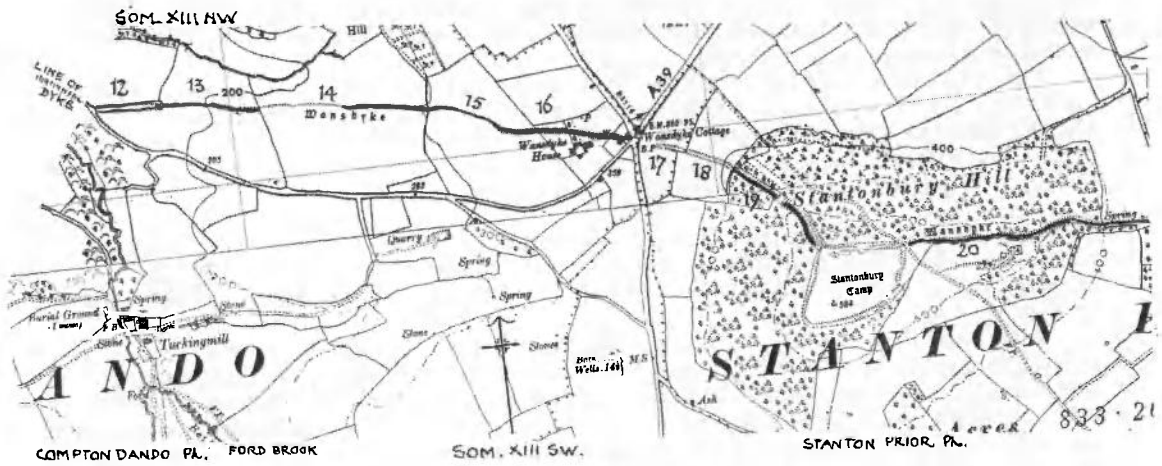


Fig. 23

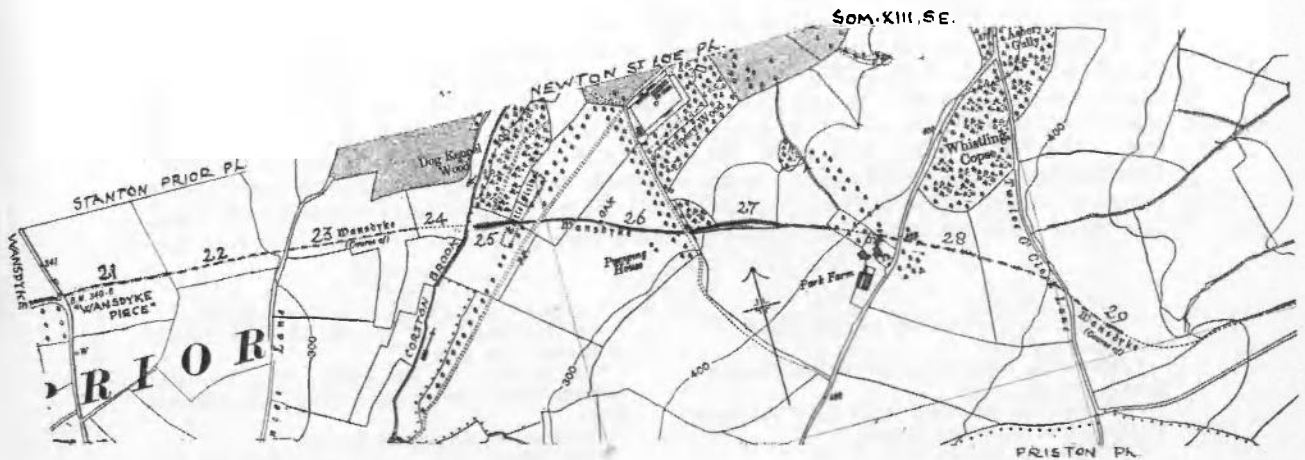


Fig. 24

Figs. 22 to 24. The course of West Wansdyke. For details, see Figs. 20, 21, p. 29.

*From Stantonbury to the Corston brook, Stanton Prior parish* (figs 23, 24). Stantonbury is a univallate Iron Age hill-fort enclosing some 30 acres on the crest of the hill: until very recently it was waste ground going back to thorn scrub and islanded in dense woodland, as can be seen on the air-photo (Pl. VIII B). The hill top (580 ft.) commands a wide view: from here the whole of the countryside traversed by West Wansdyke can be seen, Maes Knoll to the west, Odd Down to the east, as well as an uninterrupted stretch northwards to the Avon valley and the Cotswolds beyond. From here, the major alignment was probably planned (fig. 19 and p. 37).

In 1956-7 the hill top has been ploughed again, and the much reduced Iron Age defences are visible on the edge of the cultivation. It appears to us that Wansdyke was not constructed along the north-facing hill slope, and that as at Old Oswestry hill-fort, on Wat's Dyke in Montgomery<sup>1</sup>, the Iron Age defences were deemed sufficient. There is, however, as General Pitt-River's level section shows<sup>2</sup>, a steep scarp below the traces of the ploughed-in Iron Age ditch, which may be artificial and post-date the hill-fort, but this is uncertain.

East of the fort, in field 20, which is now occupied by a plantation and a pheasantry, the Dyke continues as a scarp for as far as we were able to trace it through the nettles and undergrowth. Below the 500 ft. contour, the large bank and ditch reappear in the dense woodland, and emerge beside the lane leading to the road to Stanton Prior, where the earthwork measures 75 ft. overall<sup>3</sup>.

Beyond the Stanton Prior road in fields 21-24 (fig. 24) there is another gap as far as the Corston brook. It must have been ploughed out during the 19th century because in Colt Hoare's time the Dyke was visible in field 21<sup>4</sup>, which was known as Wansdyke Piece, and could also be traced in fields 22-23, though not in field 24, which slopes steeply to the stream<sup>5</sup>. The Ordnance Survey marks its course by a dotted line.

*From the Corston brook to the Newton brook, Newton St. Loe parish* (figs. 24, 25). The Dyke on the east side of the Corston brook begins just above the alluvium (200 ft.) and mounts the steep side of the little valley in field 25 (fig. 24); the terminal is rounded and measures 47 ft. overall.

After crossing the remains of some ancient cultivation, the Dyke increases in size and in field 26 is visible as a broad, low undulation measuring 72 ft. overall, with a conspicuous solitary oak tree on its crest that was there in Colt Hoare's time<sup>6</sup>. It follows an irregular course uphill, through a spinney into field 27 where, beside a new orchard, bank and ditch are well preserved and measure 79 ft. overall. The earthwork can be traced faintly beside the track up to Park Farm (formerly Newton Farm) on the crest (428 ft.) of the hill. From the brook to this point, the Dyke was the boundary of Stanton Prior in the charter of A.D. 963<sup>7</sup>. The line of the dyke is now crossed by an ancient ridgeway, one of the branches of the Jurassic Way<sup>8</sup>, that was mentioned in a Bath Abbey charter of A.D. 963 as a *herepath*<sup>9</sup>. East of the road, the Dyke is no longer traceable on the ground, but its line is shown on the R.A.F. air photo (C.P.E.-U.K. 1869 Nos. 3227-28) in shadowed low relief across fields 28-9, approximately the course dotted on the 6" maps (fig. 24). In field 29 the problem of its whereabouts is complicated by old field banks and other disturbances<sup>10</sup> but there is a 100 ft. length of bank, 28 ft. on scarp, on the O.S. alignment that looks like a remnant of the dyke. It is directed towards the head of a small re-entrant valley, where it probably ended, since there are no traces west of Pennsylvania Farm<sup>11</sup>. It may well be there was originally a gap here, filled with woodland as surmised on Publow Hill (p. 28) and in Breach Wood (p. 35).

<sup>1</sup> *Offa's Dyke*, 249.

<sup>2</sup> Section 15, reproduced Albany Major, 151 and No. 37, p. 156.

<sup>3</sup> Section 14, reproduced *loc. cit.* and Burrow's sketch, No. 38, p. 57.

<sup>4</sup> Field 21 was ploughed in in 1955 but there was no colour change in the soil.

<sup>5</sup> Colt Hoare, *Ancient Wills*, II, 24.

<sup>6</sup> *ibid.* 25.

<sup>7</sup> Grundy, *Saxon Charters of Somerset*, 190.

<sup>8</sup> W. F. Grimes, The Jurassic Way, in *Aspects of Archaeology*, 152.

<sup>9</sup> *Archaeology in the Field*, 253. See also Grundy, *Saxon Charters of Somerset*, 192, Stanton Prior.

<sup>10</sup> Mapped by Albany Major, 59.

<sup>11</sup> Colt Hoare could find no traces here, *loc. cit.*, 25.



Figs. 25 and 26. The course of West Wansdyke. For details see Figs. 20, 21, p. 29.

The next certain portion of the Dyke lies in the valley of the Newton brook, 170 yards S.E. of Pennsylvania farmhouse (fig. 25). It consists of a ploughed-down bank and ditch in field 30 which continue to the very edge of the brook, where the stream forms a loop in the same alignment.

*From the Newton brook to Vernham Wood, English Combe parish (figs. 25-26).* On the east side the Dyke recommences with a characteristic terminal, only 10 ft. above the brook : here it measures 50 ft. overall and 17 ft. on the scarp, including a spoil-hole on the reverse slope. Across the fields of Manor Farm, English Combe, the earthwork continues on a major scale, 80-90 ft. overall, and is well preserved. In field 31, where the level section was taken (fig. 27, section 3) the scarp is steep and the ditch silted ; it is shown by weed

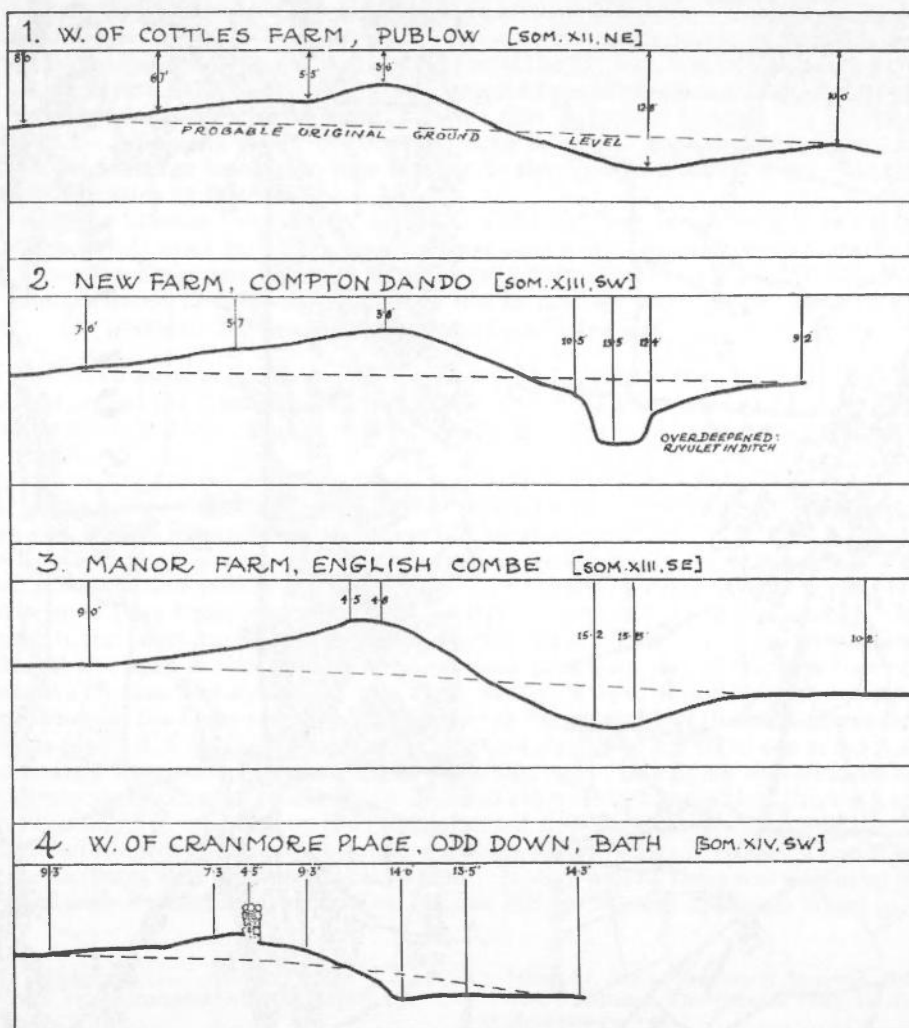


Fig. 27. West Wansdyke, level sections : for position, see S1-4, Figs. 21, 22, 25 and 26.



growth on Pl. VIIc. A small earthwork in Manor Farm orchard is unrelated to the Dyke and probably later<sup>1</sup>. Throughout this section the alignment is direct, though a north-flowing lateral of the Padley brook has to be crossed (Pl. VIIc) and there are marked changes in level.

All traces of the Dyke are lost again through English Combe village and to beyond Breach Wood. A possible indication in field 32, adjoining the village school, was investigated: there is a length of stony bank, 172 ft. long, on the alignment but it appeared to be no more than a former field boundary since no trace of the ditch was there.

The ground hereabouts slopes to the north and the Dyke is running parallel to the floor of the deep combe known as Padley Bottom, about  $\frac{1}{4}$  mile away; no doubt it was the combe from which the village originally took its name of English Combe. It would be a formidable barrier to be crossed under primitive conditions, when its clay-covered slopes would be densely wooded, as they are in part to-day, and it may explain the absence of Wansdyke in this sector. Field 33, under pasture in 1957, for instance, showed no trace whatever on its smooth and uniform slope of the swell which betrays a ploughed-out earthwork; nor is there any hint of it on the west side of the little dry valley flanking Breach Wood<sup>2</sup>.

The Dyke begins again clearly in open pasture on the east side of this valley, rising steeply from the floor on a course bearing S.S.E. It follows the southward curve of the combe but rises steadily up to the plateau (500 ft.) near Vernham Wood. In field 34, near its beginning, it measures 53 ft. overall and 16 ft. on the scarp: midway across the field the earthwork has suffered from clay digging. In field 35 it is heavily ploughed down, being visible only as a broad undulation alongside Middle Wood and fades out as the crest is reached. Old clay pits in field 36 (fig. 26) adjoining have destroyed any further traces.

The Dyke has now reached the Oolite plateau along which the Roman road, the Fosseway, runs from Bath to Ilchester, 350 yards away. Topographically it is clear that the frontier line here must have been drawn along the top of the scarp, just above the 500 contour in the edges of Vernham wood<sup>3</sup>. On the line shown by the O.S. there are intermittent undulations that simulate a bank or an artificial scarp, but nothing continuous and no vestige of a ditch. They have more the appearance of subsidence of clay on the steep slope than of a constructed earthwork, and it may well be that the Dyke was not built here and that the steep wooded slopes at the head of the combe were a sufficient barrier.

A strong spring, the source of the Padley brook, rises in the steep pasture field 38, east of the wood and on it the final stretch of West Wansdyke is aligned.

*From Vernham Wood to Horsecombe, Bath and South Stoke parish* (fig. 26). The last sector of the Dyke,  $\frac{3}{4}$  mile long, crosses the plateau on an E.-W. alignment on the fringes of the modern Bath suburb of Odd Down and since the 10th century has formed the boundary between the city and the parish of South Stoke<sup>4</sup>. Its beginning, east of the lane which skirts the head of the combe, is lost in a quarry, but a small piece, 57 ft. long, survives on the western side of the Fosseway (A 367); it is a rounded bank 39 ft. across, 3 ft. high, capped by a hedge between two plots, with indications of the ploughed-in ditch on its northern side. Boundary stones of 1912 and the 1827 turnpike mark its line to the east of the modern road which is, of course, wider than its Roman and medieval predecessors. A small rise at the end of field 39 indicates its line. East of the Combe Hay road the earthwork is immediately visible, 6 ft. high in the hedge bounding the footpath through field 40, and there is a slight change in direction as fig. 26 shows. From here onwards the filled-in ditch and the forward slope of the bank lie in the gardens of numerous small houses, the crest usually beneath the footpath, whilst the reverse slope is visible as a gentle rise in the field, spread by ploughing. At its best the forward slope now measures 22 ft. (Pl. VIIId); the character can best be appreciated from the level section on fig. 27, S. 4, taken in the open field 41 near the

<sup>1</sup> Albany Major, 63: shown in red.

<sup>2</sup> Colt Hoare states that its track to Breach Wood was known, but obviously he never went there: *loc. cit.*, 25.

<sup>3</sup> Albany Major's line on the footpath in field 37 is obviously wrong, 62.

<sup>4</sup> It is so referred to in two grants of land to Bath Abbey in A.D. 961 (South Stoke) and A.D. 970 (Cliftune, Bath); Grundy, *loc. cit.*, 206, 211.

school. It is a very great pity that this fine stretch of historic earthwork was not isolated from all the recent development and that a national monument has been allowed to be cut up, made into rock gardens and the like, by so many owners who show little signs of appreciating it<sup>1</sup>.

The Dyke thus continues up to the South Stoke cross-roads by the Cross Keys public house: its course beyond is marked once more by boundary and turnpike stones, for a small piece of the bank can be seen in the hedge dividing two villas immediately behind the stones. This property division, which is also a parish boundary, extends downhill to the 500 ft. contour, where the gardens end and a spring rises which is the source of the Horsecombe brook (accessible from the quarries to the east). There is no doubt that the earthwork ended, as on the west of the plateau, a little above the springhead<sup>2</sup> and the 500 ft. contour, but the actual terminal has not survived the modern building developments. It must have been this piece that Colt Hoare described at Cross Keys in 1830: 'a small fragment of the Dyke is visible to the S.E. of the great (Turnpike) road, as if bearing along the eastern side of the (Horsecombe) valley towards the river (Avon)'.

There is no evidence that the Dyke went farther. The Bath charter, which includes a boundary line across the Prior Park—Bathampton upland significantly makes no mention of a *dic* until Horsecombe. The ground now falls away to Horsecombe Vale, which with its steep sides and 200 ft. descent must have been a formidable obstacle to N.-S. movement. This natural barrier is continued eastwards by the valley of the Midford brook at Monkton Coombe to the river Avon (fig. 19).

## WEST WANSDYKE: GENERAL CONSIDERATIONS

### THE MAJOR ALIGNMENT

The military importance of West Wansdyke is determined by its power of protection of the south-west from incursions from the Avon valley and the Cotswolds beyond. The main traffic route in Roman times was the Fosseway, coming from Cirencester (*Corinium*), crossing the Avon by a bridge at Bath (*Aquae Sulis*) and proceeding S.W. for Ilchester (*Lindinis*). At Bath it was joined by the Jurassic Way<sup>3</sup>, the Cotswold ridge-road of pre-historic origin that was also a thoroughfare in Roman times<sup>4</sup>. Control of this dual traffic was essential (figs. 1 and 19).

The point selected by the Dyke builders was on Odd Down, two miles south of the river crossing, on the oolite plateau (500–550 ft.) where there is still a gentle fall to the north before the steep descent to the river, and thus a considerable command over any line of approach. On the west, the end of the Dyke rests on a steep clayey slope above a spring at the head of Padley Bottom; on the east, on the equally steep Horsecombe, with a spring-head high up on the scarp. The streams which issue flow in different directions to the Avon, and their valleys, with the vegetation natural to them in the soft western climate, provide serious obstacles to any coherent military force. Between these two combe-heads the Dyke was built in straight alignments for nearly a mile across the level plateau, to intercept the Fosseway at its nearest point to the Padley combe (fig. 26). Thus effective control was provided where the upland was narrowest: the line chosen, moreover, is the best defensive position in the area for a people who had lost control of, or who were denied access to the Avon crossing. The design of this sector shows that it would be capable of standing alone, in the manner of a cross-ridge dyke<sup>5</sup>; it is, therefore, likely to have been the primary construction.

<sup>1</sup> In 1957, in one of the remaining open sectors east of Mendip Gardens, the bottom of the bank had been recently cut away by a machine.

<sup>2</sup> It is clear from the South Stoke charter that Wansdyke ended above the springhead 'Aerest westan northan hyt maereth Wodnes Dic; thonne on Horscum Wyllan' Grundy, *loc. cit.*, 207.

<sup>3</sup> W. F. Grimes in *Aspects of Archaeology*, 152, and fig. 39; there is an alternative track, a spurway which crossed the Avon a mile lower down.

<sup>4</sup> I. D. Margary, *Roman Roads*, I Route 542, p. 131. This identification is supported by the string of finds on the O.S. *Roman Britain* map.

<sup>5</sup> Compare *Offa's Dyke*, 160 for the Welsh Marches.

The position of the Dyke in the Odd Down sector conditioned the major alignment of the rest of the Dyke (fig. 19) : instead of following the forward slope of the hills flanking the Avon valley, the earthwork was continued on the south side of Padley Bottom to English Combe, utilising that deep valley as a natural defence, but losing visual control of the country to the north in the descent. Farther west in the region of the Bathford brook and of the Publow stream where the Dyke diverges farther from the Avon, the field of view is similarly limited by higher ground flanking the river. Here again the alignment suggests the selection of the second-best from the military point of view, and demonstrates the exclusion of the builders from the navigable reaches of the river Avon.

The line chosen for the Dyke had the asset of two prominent oolite hills, Stantonbury, 584 ft. and Maes Knoll, 654 ft. (Pls. VIIIA and B). Each commands a wide and distant view extending northwards beyond the Avon valley ; from Stantonbury it is possible to see practically the whole course of the Dyke, whilst from Maes Knoll on a clear day, the chalk escarpment in the Morgan's Hill region is visible on the horizon, 20 miles away to the east. Both hills were fortified in the Iron Age, and it has often been said that the course of West Wansdyke well south of the Avon was in order that the builders might avail themselves of these two hill-forts. Our survey does not bear this out ; at both places the Dyke diminishes in scale and actually stops several yards away from the Iron Age defences (p. 30 and Pl. VIIIB) : nor is there any sign of alteration or addition to the fortifications on the north side which, in theory, incorporates the Dyke. It may be concluded that, as at Old Oswestry hill-fort, on the line of Wat's Dyke in Montgomeryshire<sup>1</sup>, the builders were not interested in occupying the hill-fort as a strong point but only in the visual control obtained from the high ground it occupied.

West Wansdyke does not continue west of Maes Knoll, although there was an obvious defensive line for it on the forward slope of Dundry Hill (fig. 19). The reason is not difficult to see : the Cotswold escarpment has been outflanked, and the danger of an incursion from the north overcome. Saltford, a mile above Keynsham, would appear to be the last practical crossing of the river at the head of tidal water<sup>2</sup>; below this, the valley opens out into a flat land dissected by many streams extending to the foot of Maes Knoll, before narrowing again to the Clifton gorge at Bristol. The combination of tidal water and the broad alluvial flat would deter any lateral movement by an army. The Dyke, therefore, was constructed only so far as was necessary to guard against feasible lines of approach.

#### THE GAPS IN THE DYKE

There are three places where it appears that the construction of West Wansdyke was intermitted for a short distance ; over Publow Hill for one mile, from Cottle's Farm to Knowle Farm (figs. 21-2 and p. 28), east of English Combe for  $\frac{2}{3}$  of a mile to the Breach Wood valley, (fig. 25 and p. 35), and less certainly, for  $\frac{1}{4}$  of a mile at Pennsylvania Farm, Newton St. Loe (fig. 24 and p. 32). In these places neither air photography nor field-work by the writers or any other reliable archaeologists has succeeded in finding any real trace. Excavation, however, is required before an absolute negative is established ; in particular, the gap at Pennsylvania might be closed in this way.

It must be admitted that there is no straightforward physical solution to the problem of these gaps, such as has been established by one of us in the case of Offa's Dyke in Herefordshire<sup>3</sup>. The gaps do not coincide with a change of soil, for the course followed throughout is on the Lias clay (fig. 1). This is well illustrated at Cottle's Farm, adjoining the Publow Hill gap, where the full-sized Dyke is constructed in very sticky clay right down to the brook. Similarly at English Combe, the Dyke is built on a major scale across the fields of Manor Farm west of the village (Pl. VIIc), but on apparently similar soil east of the

<sup>1</sup> *Offa's Dyke*, 250, 260 and fig. 110.

<sup>2</sup> Saltford, as its name implies, may reasonably be identified as the crossing at the top of the tide. The strong tides penetrate the River Wye on the opposite side of the Severn for 10 miles or more

inland to Llandogo : they are likely to have reached a similar distance up the Avon before the building of the locks and weirs at Bristol. See Collinson, *History of Somerset* ii, 431.

<sup>3</sup> *Offa's Dyke*, 204 ff.

village it cannot be traced, although a suitable alignment on the forward slope to Breach Wood is obvious.

The solution then, does not lie in the physiography. Crawford suggested that at Publow the boundary line was continued south and then east along the brook and the river Chew to Compton Dando, but the lengths of Dyke west of the river at Peppershells (p. 30) makes this impossible. At English Combe, it can be argued that the steep-sided Padley Bottom was a natural boundary line to account for the absence of the Dyke at Breach Wood, but this is just as applicable to the adjoining slopes to Middle Wood, where the earthwork exists.

A tentative explanation must be sought, therefore, in human terms. The Lias clay readily produces natural woodland, predominantly ash: clearance of such soil is unlikely before Roman times and the distribution of Roman settlement and of Celtic fields in the area is sparse, except in the neighbourhood of Bath and the Fosseway<sup>1</sup>, indicating that clearance was partial. It can therefore be surmised that the gaps in the Dyke, which now seem haphazard, coincided with belts of uncleared woodland, or land that had reverted to forest in post-Roman times. It is significant that these are not confined to the valley bottoms, but occur on hill tops.

#### CONSTRUCTION

West Wansdyke consists throughout of a single bank and ditch facing north. Its size (Pl. VII and fig. 27) is much smaller than that of East Wansdyke on the downland, but compares with that of the sectors on the wooded claylands (fig. 18 and p. 23). The rampart measures from 22 to 27 ft. on the scarp, at best it is 4 ft. high, whilst the overall is between 55 to 80 ft.; as the terrain is mainly arable, these measurements are necessarily imprecise; a rampart standing 6 to 7 ft. high and an overall measurement of 50 to 60 ft. is a fair estimate of the original dimensions. The scale of the Dyke usually is reduced at the terminations on the banks of streams, as recorded in the Table of Measurements (p. 48).

No excavated sections are on record to the best of our belief. When the rampart has been cut into as on Odd Down, or ploughed over, there are no signs of a stone revetment.

#### MINOR ALIGNMENTS

As in East Wansdyke, three types can be detected, straight, sinuous, and irregular (p. 23).

(a) *Straight*. The only example of any length is the Odd Down sector, nearly a mile long across the oolite from Padley to Horsecombe, which is made up of two straight stretches (fig. 26). Its significance has already been stressed. Elsewhere the alignments are short, as west of English Combe (fig. 25), east of Compton Dando (fig. 22) and east of Maes Knoll (fig. 20), each approximately for a third of a mile. On the analogy of the Mercian dykes<sup>2</sup> these are indicative of open country, probably arable, at the time of construction; it is worth noting that they occur in the valleys as well as on the oolite plateau.

(b) *Sinuuous*. Conforming to contour, as over Stantonbury hill, and in descending to the Bathford brook (fig. 23).

(c) *Irregular*. Much of the Dyke is now of this character but it must be remembered that a ploughed-down earthwork may appear irregular because it has been unevenly spread. Typical minor deviations in alignment can be seen on Cottle's Farm, Publow (fig. 21), Park Farm, Newton St. Loe (fig. 24) or Middle Wood, English Combe (fig. 25). All are on the Lias clay and are signs of the difficulties inherent in dyke building in scrub or woodland.

In detail, the setting-out of the Dyke across the grain of this undulating countryside appears to have been determined partly by hill-crests, principally Stantonbury and Maes Knoll, and partly by streams. At the river Chew, and at each little brook which the Dyke

<sup>1</sup> See Ordnance Survey *Roman Britain* map. There are Celtic fields in the lower Newton Brook valley, which the Dyke crosses, probably belong-

ing to farms on the Newton St. Loe villa estate.

<sup>2</sup> Cyril Fox, *Offa's Dyke*, 283.



had to cross at right angles, the diminished earthwork has been carried down the bank to the edge of the alluvium, and the rampart ended with a rounded terminal. This suggests that the streams formed the boundaries of communities and that dyke work was allotted accordingly. Moreover the construction of the Dyke in such positions is good evidence that clearance of the valley floors had proceeded in the area, and in some places, as on the west bank of the river Chew at Peppershells, (p. 28), did not extend to the hill top. These facts will be taken into consideration when the date and identity of the builders of West Wansdyke are discussed. (p. 44).

### WANSDYKE : ITS DATE AND PURPOSE

Our survey has made clear that Wansdyke can no longer be regarded as the remains of a single frontier, and in consequence it is no longer necessary to search for a moment in time when a frontier was established in Britain extending from Inkpen to the Severn, as Oman once thought<sup>1</sup>, or to Maes Knoll, as Crawford more recently conceived it<sup>2</sup>.

Instead, we have to find a meaning for two Dyke systems<sup>3</sup>, independent in space and therefore perhaps also in time, and yet identical in name over a thousand years ago ; no solution can be acceptable that does not take this identity into account.

#### EAST WANSDYKE

This, the greater work, must first be considered. It is, of course, generally accepted ever since Pitt-Rivers dug his two sections on Morgan's Hill and at Brown's Barn<sup>4</sup> that the Dyke must be of late Roman, or more likely of post-Roman date. The pottery and other finds (in the Pitt-Rivers Museum at Farnham) in the rampart and from the underlying Roman occupation layers imply a date after the mid-3rd century. To this we can now add the destruction of the Roman road on Morgan's Hill (p. 5) which must carry the date down to a period when traffic between *Cunetio* and *Verlucio* was given up. This would seem to take us to the end of the Roman epoch and to strengthen the case for either a sub-Roman or Saxon construction.

Bokerly Dyke, on the present Dorset-Wiltshire border, shows that the surviving Romano-British populations in Wessex were competent to build an earthwork on the major scale in the 5th century. This defensive frontier dyke extends in its final form from the edge of the New Forest at Blagdon Hill to the Cranborne Chase woodlands, a distance of nearly 4 miles, facing N.E. and barring the Roman road from Old Sarum (*Sorviodunum*) to Badbury (fig. 1). Pitt-Rivers' excavations at Woodyates established that the Dyke was built over Roman occupation<sup>5</sup>. Professor Hawkes' penetrating analysis of the General's work and of the coin evidence<sup>6</sup> have made clear that it is a composite construction, started as a defensive boundary of a Roman estate c. A.D. 330 (The A Dyke) ; extended in the emergency of the barbarian incursion of A.D. 367 to bar the Roman road (the B or Rear Dyke), and then re-opened ; and finally reconstructed partly on a new line (the C or Fore Dyke) as a

<sup>1</sup> Sir Charles Oman, *Arch. J.* LXXXVII (1930), 60.

<sup>2</sup> Crawford, *Archaeology in the Field*, 252.

<sup>3</sup> Both East and West Wansdyke, as we have shown, embody lengths of different constructional technique that may imply more than one

building period : see p. 23.

<sup>4</sup> *Cranborne Chase* III, 252 ff. See also p 25 of this article.

<sup>5</sup> *Cranborne Chase* III, 14.

<sup>6</sup> *Arch. J.* CIV, 62.



frontier barrier, probably under Stilicho (A.D. 395-405), possibly later. Its alignment across the chalk saddle from forest to forest, its scale and the high technique it presents in its carefully-cut scarps and profile show that it is clearly related in concept and construction to East Wansdyke.

Historically the time when a British defensive frontier on the line of East Wansdyke was needed in N. Wiltshire would be in the late 5th century, as E. T. Leeds<sup>1</sup> and C. Hawkes<sup>2</sup> have pointed out, when the early Anglo-Saxon settlement of the upper Thames valley had taken place by way of the Icknield Way and the river. Hawkes, indeed, once went farther and ascribed the Dyke to the British leader Ambrosius Aurelianus of this epoch, who figures in Gildas and in Bede. On this reckoning, East Wansdyke would be a forgotten frontier by the time the West Saxons, Cynric and his war band, reached the area from the south after the capture of Old Sarum (*Searobyrig*) in A.D. 552, according to the Annals of the Wessex royal house embodied in the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle.

Certainly Wansdyke was ignored in one respect by the Saxon settlers in this area: as we have seen from the Anglo-Saxon charter references, the villages of Pewsey Vale and the upper Kennet valley do not use it as their boundary. The upland grazings on the high chalk downland extend across it, as G. M. Young<sup>3</sup> and Shaw Mellor<sup>4</sup> have pointed out, and the Dyke is only mentioned as a landmark in passing over it.

Nevertheless the case for a Saxon construction needs serious consideration for the Dyke was known as *Wodnesdic* in Saxon times and was therefore named after the dominant god of the pagan period<sup>5</sup>. It is the only dyke in Britain that has this name attached to it and it is that of the god from whom the Wessex royal house, in company with several others<sup>6</sup>, traced their descent. It is surely improbable, to say the least, that such a sacred name should be given by the Saxons to any obsolete defence of their British enemy, as Sir Charles Oman rather naively suggested<sup>7</sup>.

Furthermore, the dyke name does not stand alone: near the most important point on the earthwork, where the ridgeway from the Middle Thames valley and the Berkshire Downs crosses it, (fig. 28) there are three other Woden place-names recorded in the early charters, *Wodnes beorge*, *Wodnes dene* and *Woddes geat*, as we have already mentioned in our survey (p. 14). *Wodnes beorge*, Woden's Hill or mound, is a chambered long barrow with flanking ditches now called Adam's Grave<sup>8</sup> about  $\frac{3}{4}$  of a mile south of the dyke. It is sited on the crest of Walker's Hill on the chalk escarpment, overlooking Alton Priors village in Pewsey Vale, and occupies a dominant position on the skyline from many directions. From its summit the ridgeway can be seen traversing the plateau southwards from the dyke at Red Shore and passing diagonally down the steep hillside. *Wodnes beorge* is recorded in the Chronicle as the site of Ceawlin's and Ine's battles in A.D. 594 and 715, fought, no doubt, on the plateau where there was room for the forces to engage. *Wodnes dene* is

<sup>1</sup> *Antiq. J.* XIII, 227; *History X*, 97.

<sup>2</sup> *Arch. J.* CIV, 77.

<sup>3</sup> *Wilts. A. M.* XLIX (1939), 32.

<sup>4</sup> *Wilts. A. M.* LI, 24.

<sup>5</sup> For Woden-Odin see H. M. Chadwick, *The Heroic Age*, 394-7, 408-9.

<sup>6</sup> Bede commented on this: *Ecclesiastical History I*, 15.

<sup>7</sup> *Arch. J.* LXXXVII, 69. It is significant that Grim, the familiar nickname for Woden, was not used, though attached to earth-works elsewhere: see *Eng. Place-Name Elements*, I, 210 (Grim); II, 272 (Woden).

<sup>8</sup> It is 200 ft. long, 12 ft. high, ditched and with remains of sarsen walling: see *Archaeologia* 38, 410 (Thurnam).

a dry valley opening northward to the Kennet at Lockeridge; it begins near the ridgeway east of *Wodnes beorge*, where New Town farm now stands in Alton Priors parish. Where the dyke crosses the valley floor a mile farther to the N.E., below Shaw House, we have suggested, was *Woddes geat* (p. 14).

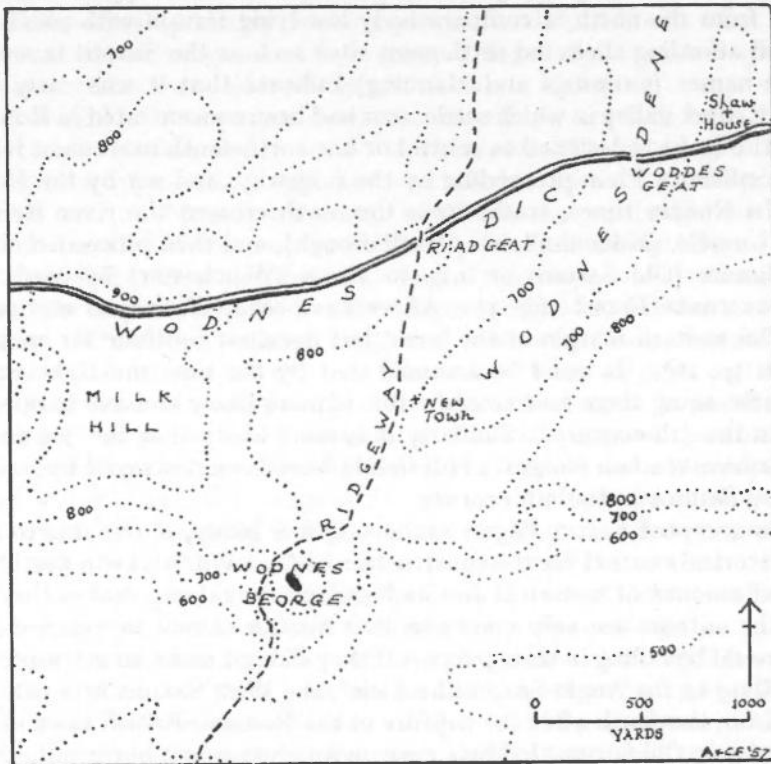


Fig. 28. Woden place-names in relation to East Wansdyke.

The concentration of these Germanic God names in a small area (fig. 28) points to the existence of a sacred precinct or heathen sanctuary in the locality. Archaeologically little is known of such sites in Britain, though they are attested by place-names and in the literature<sup>1</sup>. There is a striking instance of the use of a barrow (*tumulus*) by a pagan priest of the South Saxons when opposing Wilfrid's landing in A.D. 666, which shows the part such mounds might play in time of battle and implies that some acquired a sacred character<sup>2</sup>.

At *Wodnes beorge* the existence of a sanctuary becomes intelligible if it be regarded as intimately connected with the building of the dyke. The initiation of a great work of defence, involving years of labour and hardship for the Wessex people,

<sup>1</sup> D. M. Whitelock, *The beginnings of English Society*, 23 (Pelican Bks.).

<sup>2</sup> Eddius Stephanus, Ch. XIII. 'The chief priest of their idolatrous worship also took up his stand in front of the pagans on a high mound

(*in tumulo excelsis*) and like Balaam, attempted to curse the people of God and to bind their hands by means of his magical arts'. (Colgrave's trans.: 29).

would be a fitting occasion for the dedication of a sanctuary to their most powerful god, the god who gave victory in battle, at the point where trouble was most to be expected from the north; dedication, too, of the dyke to the deity.

The case for a Pagan-Saxon origin is strengthened by consideration of the general situation of the Dyke (fig. 8). It is sited to cover the approaches to the Vale of Pewsey from the north, a comparatively low-lying terrain with patches of well-drained soil affording sheltered settlement sites such as the Saxons favoured. The ING place-names (Cannings and Manning) indicate that it was early inhabited, unlike the Kennet valley in which settlement had been concentrated in Roman times<sup>1</sup>. Moreover the Dyke is designed to control or bar north-south movement into Pewsey and on to Salisbury Plain proceeding by the ridgeway, and not by the Roman road system. In Roman times, traffic from the north crossed the river Kennet at its namesake *Cunetio*, (Mildenhall, near Marlborough), and then proceeded either south to *Sorviodunum* (Old Sarum) or S.E. to *Venta* (Winchester) by roads diverging through Savernake Forest (fig. 1). As we have seen, Wansdyke was constructed well into the western margin of the forest but does not continue far enough to bar these roads (p. 16). It must be assumed that by the time the Dyke was needed, regular traffic along them had ceased; this is more likely to have happened in the 6th than in the 5th century. Similarly it is more likely that the 300 yards of the *Cunetio-Verlucio* road on Morgan's Hill should have been destroyed by Saxons in the 6th than by Britons in the 5th century.

If it is accepted that a Pagan-Saxon origin is likely, it remains to look for a possible historical context for the construction of East Wansdyke in north Wiltshire. The limited amount of historical and archaeological evidence makes this a difficult task and the authors are very conscious that finality cannot be reached; yet they feel they would be failing in their purpose if they did not make an attempt.

According to the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle<sup>2</sup>, the West Saxons first entered North Wiltshire from the south after the capture of the Romano-British town of *Sorviodunum* (*Searobyrig*, Old Sarum) led by Cynric in A.D. 552, a fact borne out, as has long been recognised, by the absence of early Saxon cemeteries or cremations in the area<sup>3</sup>. The distribution of burials and chance finds assignable to the 6th and 7th centuries recently mapped by Professor Hawkes<sup>4</sup> shows a pattern centred on the Salisbury Avon which bears out the well-known story of the southerly origin of the Wessex royal house.

The dates assigned to the rapid conquest which follows in the Chronicle's account are probably schematic, but it is clear that there was no occasion for a prolonged pause and consolidation north of Pewsey Vale on the Wansdyke line. By A.D. 556 Cynric and his son Ceawlin, the successors of the founder Cerdic (the Wessex dynasty stuck to alliterative C names until the 7th century<sup>5</sup>) were fighting with and defeating the Britons at Barbury (*Bearobyrig*), 6 miles north up the ridgeway on the Marl-

<sup>1</sup> V. C. H. Wills., I, Maps VIII and IX.

<sup>2</sup> Text, Earle and Plummer, *Two Saxon Chronicles*; translation in D. Whitelock, *English Historical Documents*, I, 136.

<sup>3</sup> See Joan Kirk, *Cremation and Inhumation in the Upper Thames valley*, in *Dark Age Britain*,

123 and fig. 24.

<sup>4</sup> V. C. H. Wills. I, Map IX.

<sup>5</sup> K. Sisam, *Anglo-Saxon Royal Genealogies*, *Proc. Brit. Acad.* XXXIX, 299. R. W. Chambers in *Beowulf* (1932), 316, has argued for the authenticity of the early Wessex genealogy.

borough Downs. After securing their right flank against their Kentish and Saxon neighbours, at 'Wibbandun' and 'Bedcanford', Ceawlin, now associated with Cutha, his brother, turned north and west to attack the Britons in the Cotswolds, defeating them at Dyrham in A.D. 577 and capturing the three Roman cities of *Corinium* (Cirencester), *Glevum* (Gloucester) and *Aquae Sulis* (Bath). In A.D. 584 came a check at *Fethansleag* (probably Stoke Lyne in N. Oxfordshire<sup>1</sup>) when Cutha was slain and Ceawlin, in vengeance 'took many villages and countless spoils, and in anger returned to his own' (*ierre he hwearf thanan to his agnum*).

A withdrawal after a serious defeat is here clearly implied, back to Ceawlin's own land, to his own kin, the *Gewissae*, in Wiltshire. The phrasing of the entry is poetic<sup>2</sup>, as is even apparent in the translation: the use of *ierre* is startling, as Kenneth Sisam points out (p. 46) and occurs only in this passage of the Chronicle. Such a reversal of fortune for Wessex, obviously deeply felt from the wording of the record, provides a possible context for the delimiting of a frontier in a spectacular way, by building a dyke dedicated to Woden, the all-powerful god and divine ancestor of the royal house. With this, we have suggested that the *Wodnesbeorge-Wodnesdene* sanctuary should be associated, sited near the crucial defensive point on the ridgeway.

Eight years later, in A.D. 592, the Chronicle records again in poetically heightened language<sup>3</sup> 'there was great slaughter at *Wodnesbeorge* and Ceawlin was driven out' (*Her micel waelfill waes aet Woddesbeorge, Ceawlin waes ut adrifan*). If the dyke was then in being, as we suggest, the phrase *ut adrifan* takes on a new significance. Ceawlin was defeated beside the *Wodnesbeorge* sanctuary, presumably in civil war<sup>4</sup>, and driven out over the frontier he had himself delimited. His death is recorded in the following year, A.D. 593, and the succession then passed significantly to another branch, to Ceol, son of the Cutha killed at *Fethansleag*.

Reckoning in conformity with the Chronicle, Ceawlin had eight years<sup>5</sup> after the defeat in the north in which to plan and to build the essential eight miles of major earthwork from *Wodnesdene* to Morgan's Hill before his expulsion. British labour was no doubt ruthlessly used, captives and slaves from lands newly overrun and recently settled, which would account for the structural resemblances between Bokerly and Wansdyke. Such a frontier could only have been short-lived, since in less than 40 years the West Saxons under Cynegils were back again in the Thames valley. This, and the fact that Ceawlin's great career terminated in unhappy circumstances, may be the reasons why the Dyke and its builder were forgotten and dropped out of the Anglo-Saxon record<sup>6</sup>.

<sup>1</sup> See Jean Cook, *Antiq. J.* XXXVIII, 78, *n* for an alternative near Stratford-on-Avon.

<sup>2</sup> See Appendix by Dr. Kenneth Sisam, p. 46, for discussion of an English verse source for this entry.

<sup>3</sup> Hence the unique *micel waelfill*, a phrase otherwise found only in poetry. Dr. K. Sisam also indicates that the spelling of '*Woddesbeorge*' is an error, Appendix, p. 46.

<sup>4</sup> His opponents presumably were Saxons from the Thames valley, aided by a revolt among the hard-driven *Gewissae*: hence the *micel waelfill*, appropriate to slaughter of Saxon by Saxon.

<sup>5</sup> This can be compared with the building of Hadrian's Wall, 70 miles of elaborate frontier with highly organised military labour: it took 6 years approximately. Builders of frontier defences do not dally.

<sup>6</sup> It is possible that when Mercia gained control over the Thames valley in VII and VIII and when Winchester replaced Dorchester-on-Thames as the principal see of the West Saxons, that East Wansdyke functioned again as a northern boundary. Cenwealh is reported to have sustained great losses in his kingdom from his enemies (Bede, *E. H. III*, Ch. 7) and Ine fought the Mercians at *Wodnesburh* in A.D. 715.

## WEST WANSDYKE

It is, we think, necessary to regard the western dyke (figs. 1, 19) as a work of a different and probably later period. As has been made clear, its alignment is that of people who are denied access to the Avon valley and who are anxious to guard against attack from the Cotswolds by the Fosseway (p. 36). If it be regarded as a British work, the obvious occasion is after the battle of Dyrham<sup>1</sup> A.D. 567, when Bath as well as the Cotswolds were lost by the Britons to Ceawlin and his West Saxons and with them the control, we may assume, of river traffic on the Avon.

On the other hand, the Dyke's name once more indicates a Pagan-Saxon origin and hence West-Saxon workmanship. By the early 7th century there was Saxon occupation in the area, as the inhumation cemetery of late type at Camerton on the Fosseway shows<sup>2</sup>. Colonists pushing farther west would characteristically have begun clearance of the valleys and of the Lias claylands, as the course of the Dyke implies. The occasion when a defined frontier south of the Avon would have been appropriate is after A.D. 628, when the West Saxons had to give way to the growing power of Mercia. Their kings Cynegils and Cwichelm, it is recorded in the Chronicle, fought against King Penda of Mercia at Cirencester and there came to terms (*gethingo-don tha*). These terms, it is generally recognised, involved the loss of territory on the Cotswolds won by Ceawlin and, it may be inferred, of the Avon valley also.

King Cynegils<sup>3</sup> was baptized at Dorchester-on-Thames in A.D. 635: he had thus seven years of paganism during which he could have constructed the western dyke and dedicated it to Woden, as Ceawlin the Bretwalda had done two generations earlier father west. The Somerset dyke was a less ambitious work, but if we are right in our analysis it was built to define a frontier agreed by treaty with Mercia<sup>4</sup>. We can perceive that it proved its value, since during the next hundred years the West Saxons were able to turn their backs on Mercia and to expand their kingdom south and west at the expense of the Britons in Somerset and Devon.

## SUMMARY

(1) East Wansdyke in Wiltshire and West Wansdyke in Somerset are separate earthworks. In the intervening Avon valley, the *agger* of the Roman road from *Cunetio* to *Aquae Sulis* (Bath) via *Verlucio* has been wrongly identified with Wansdyke. There is no evidence that this *agger* has at any point been modified to serve as a defensive work.

(2) East Wansdyke extends only from Morgan's Hill, Devizes, to New Buildings, west of Savernake. The Bedwyn cross-valley dyke and other linear earthworks east of Savernake forest are independent constructions, that are not named Wansdyke in late Saxon documents.

<sup>1</sup> As J. N. L. Myres presciently suggested in 1936, *The English Settlement*, 403, footnote.

<sup>2</sup> *Proc. Somerset A.S.* 79, p. 39: see also Leeds, *Anglo-Saxon Art & Archaeology*, p. 111. There are also pagan Saxon brooches found at Ilchester;

D. Dobson, *Arch. of Somerset*, p. 182.

<sup>3</sup> Cynegils was the great-nephew of Ceawlin.

<sup>4</sup> Compare the evidence from Offa's Dyke on the lower Wye, and in Powys, for a similar arrangement; *Offa's Dyke*, 279.



(3) The purpose of East Wansdyke was to bar incursions from the north into Pewsey Vale and Salisbury plain, proceeding by the Berkshire ridgeway and other hill-tracks, and not by the Roman road system.

(4) The character and alignment of East Wansdyke on the chalk downland show that it was designed as a military barrier ; on the claylands at the western margin of Savernake, that it was conceived as a territorial boundary, in country unsuited to early warfare ; it may be a secondary construction.

(5) The name *Wodnesdic* given to the dyke in charters of the 8th-10th centuries implies a Pagan Saxon origin. Its topographical relationship with a probable heathen sanctuary at *Wodnesbeorge* strengthens the case.

(6) Historically East Wansdyke is most likely to be a West Saxon construction, using British labour, by Ceawlin, ruler of the *Gewissae* and overlord, *Bretwalda*, against the Saxons of the middle Thames valley after his defeat at *Fethansleag* in A.D. 584.

(7) West Wansdyke in Somerset extends only from Maes Knoll to the head of Horsecombe. The gaps in the earthwork are held to be due to belts of uncleared or regenerated woodland on hill-sides in the Lias clay.

(8) The purpose of West Wansdyke was to control traffic and incursions from the Cotswolds and lower Avon valley, proceeding south-west principally by the Fossway Roman road. The construction of a well-sited straightly aligned cross-ridge dyke to bar this road at Odd Down was probably primary.

(9) The alignment of much of West Wansdyke is militarily weak, lacking visual control of the Avon valley. It indicates that the builders were not wholly free to choose their position.

(10) A Pagan-Saxon origin is implied by the name *Wodnesdic* in late Saxon charters; the ascription is strengthened by the clearance of valley floors which the course of the earthwork implies.

(11) Historically West Wansdyke is likely to be a West-Saxon construction, by King Cynegils on a line imposed by Penda of Mercia after A.D. 628.

## APPENDIX A

The 584 and 592 A.D. entries in the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle. Dr. Kenneth Sisam writes :

A.D. 584. *ierre he hwearf thonan to his agnum*

- (i) *to his agnum* occurs only here in the Chronicle but is good West Saxon idiom from Alfred to Aelfric. In *Orosius* it is used of exiles restored (*restituti*) by the Romans. In the West Saxon Gospels it translates John I. 11, (*In propria venit, et sui eum non receperunt*). Perhaps the nearest example is from Aelfric's rhythmical *Lives of the Saints* (Bosworth—Toller Supplement), where a rich widow after being cured by St. Eugenia (Sermon II, l. 144) *gewende . . . ham to hyre agenum*. In this substantival use *agen* covers everything one can call one's own. It is not possible to distinguish in the annal such shades of meaning as 'own land', 'people', 'dwelling', but for a king coming back from an expedition into allied or hostile territory, 'home' perhaps conveys the meaning best.
- (ii) *ierre* or *yrre*, adj., is common enough in prose and verse but occurs only here in the Chronicle, so the possibility that it is just a stock phrase with the compiler can be ruled out. You have noted the unexpected sign of feeling, but *ierre* is quite as much out of style as out of time. When I read the Chronicle as continuous prose this *ierre*, placed oddly at the head of its clause, is so startling that it gives the impression of something wrong with the text. The only explanation I can see is that there is an outcrop from a source in the phrasing here. A Latin source, e.g. *iratus rediit* might explain *ierre*, but as *Ceawlin* and *Cutha*, *ierre* and *agnum*, *waelfill* and *Wod*-alliterate; and as *ierre*, *agnum* and *waelfill* (see below) occur only here in the Chronicle; and as we should expect the greatest heathen king of the West Saxons to be celebrated in English rather than Latin, the natural explanation is an English verse source. I cannot think of another place where that explanation will serve so well.

A.D. 592. *Her micel waelfill waes at Woddesbeorge ond Ceawlin waes ut adrifan*

- (i) *Waelfill* occurs only here in the Chronicle and nowhere else in consecutive prose. It is recorded four or five times in poetry but also (twice) in glosses to *caedes*, *strages*. The singular *wael* serves in prose, so the word may well be derived (as suggested above) from an alliterative source. But I would not say it is alien to the style of the Chronicle, which also uses *micel waelshiht* (A.D. 839, 871) and constantly uses *micel wael geslogen*.
- (ii) *Woddesbeorge* (MSS. A.B.C.). I take this as a mere error for *Wodnes*, though A and B texts are usually good evidence for the text of the Chronicle issued about 892. The other texts, including Aethelweard's have *Wodnes* and I know of no evidence for an early change from *dn* to *dd*''.

## APPENDIX B

## TABLE OF MEASUREMENTS

## EAST WANSDYKE

## (a) on downland

<i>Location</i>	<i>Fig. Ref.</i>	<i>Overall*</i>	<i>Scarp</i>	<i>Height† of Bank</i>	<i>Remarks</i>
W. of Morgan's Hill junction	Fig. 3, D.1. ; Fig. 5	47, 62 *	23	3 ft.	Roman road in counter- scarp
E. of Morgan's Hill junction	Fig. 3, D.2 ; Fig. 5	73, 87 *	36	2 ft. 6 ins.	
Morgan's Hill, crest	Fig. 5	81, 113 *	42	12 ft. 6 ins.	
Old Shepherd Shore, W. of	<i>Cranborne Chase</i> III	70, 90 *	34	6 ft.	Pitt-Rivers section
Shepherds Shore, E. of road	Pl. 217, Fig. 5	—	37	n.m.	Ditch filled in
Bishop Cannings Down, W. of	Fig. 6	92	41	n.m.	
" " " crest	Fig. 6, & Fig. 17, D.3	105, 150 *	41	15 ft. 6 ins.	Includes ditch of counter- scarp
Brown's Barn, W. of	Fig. 6	118 *	32	n.m.	
" " Entrenchment	Fig. 6	84, 130 *	42	10 ft. 6 ins.	
Brown's Barn, E. of	Fig. 9	76,	35	n.m.	
Tan Hill, crest	Fig. 9 & Fig. 17, D.4	80, 113 *	50	2 ft.	
" " E. of cross-dyke	Fig. 10 & Fig. 17, D.5.	79, 105 *	42	5 ft.	
Milk Hill, crest	Fig. 10	73, 94 *	42	7 ft.	
Milk Hill, N.E. of <i>Eald Burh</i>	Fig. 10	81	47	9 ft.	No counter- scarp
Red Shore	Fig. 11	77	32-3	n.m.	
Shaw Lodge, W. of	Fig. 11 & Fig. 18, D.6.	82	37	15 ft. 6 ins.	
Shaw Lodge, E. of	Fig. 11	70	39	n.m.	

## (b) in forest

Shaw Copse, N.W. of	Fig. 11 & Fig. 18, D.7.	44	22	2 ft.	
" " "	Fig. 11	53	19	n.m.	
Pickrudge Wood	Fig. 12	36	15	n.m.	
E. of Titferth's Gate	Fig. 12	35	21	n.m.	No counter- scarp
Strawberry Ground	Fig. 12	50	24	n.m.	" "
Daffy Copse angle	Fig. 12	28	12	1 ft. 6 ins.	" "
Clatford Park farm, W. of	Fig. 12	43	18	n.m.	" "
" " " E. of	Fig. 12 & Fig. 18, D.8.	50	29	1 ft. 9 ins.	" "
Wernham farm, N. of	Fig. 13	54	22	n.m.	" "
" " " E. of	Fig. 13	50	19	n.m.	" "
New Buildings	Fig. 14 & Fig. 18, D.9.	50	19	5 ft.	" "

## THE BEDWYN DYKE

N. of Bedwyn road	Fig. 15	55	21' 6"	n.m.	Ditch en- larged
S. of " "	Fig. 15	50	20	—	Reverse slope ploughed
Jockey Copse	Fig. 15	40	20	n.m.	
Burridge Heath	Fig. 15	54 *	—	—	Ploughed out counter- scarp in- cluded
Round Copse, N.E. side	Fig. 15	35	16' 6"		
" " " S.W. side	Fig. 15	45	18' 6"	2ft. 6 ins.	
' Harandene '	Fig. 15	55	—		Soil mark

## WEST WANSDYKE

<i>Location</i>	<i>Fig. Ref.</i>	<i>Overall*</i>	<i>Scarp</i>	<i>Height†</i>	<i>Remarks</i>
Maes Knoll, E. of	Fig. 20, field 1	80	—	—	Ploughed down
W. of Cottle's farm, Publow	Fig. 21 & Fig. 27, S.1	79	25	4 ft.	
Peppershells, Compton Dando	Fig. 22, field 9	46	—	—	Ploughed down
New Farm, Compton Dando	Fig. 22 & Fig. 27, S.2	76	25	4 ft.	
Bathford brook, W. of	Fig. 22	41	20	—	Terminal
" " E. of	Fig. 22, field 12	53	26	n.m.	
Wansdyke House, E. of	Fig. 23, field 14	68	23	n.m.	
Stantonbury, N.W. of fort	Fig. 23	70	24	n.m.	
Corston Brook, E. of	Fig. 24, field 25	47	16	n.m.	Terminal
Park Farm, orchard W. of	Fig. 24, field 27	79	23	n.m.	
Newton Brook, E. of	Fig. 25	50	17	n.m.	Terminal
Manor Farm, English Combe	Fig. 25, & Fig. 27 S.3	71	27	4 ft. 6 ins.	
Breach Wood, E. of	Fig. 25, field 34	53	16	n.m.	Terminal
" " " "	Fig. 25, field 34	61	19	n.m.	
Foss Way, "W. of "	Fig. 26	39	—	—	Ditch filled in
Odd Down, Bath	Fig. 26, field 40	50	19		Ditch partly filled in
" " "	Fig. 26, & Fig. 27 S.4	55	22	5 ft.	" "

## COMPARATIVE SIZES OF SAXON DYKES

<i>Location</i>	<i>Reference</i>	<i>Overall</i>	<i>Scarp</i>	<i>Height</i>	<i>Remarks</i>
Bokerly Dyke, Wilts.	<i>Cranborne Chase</i> III, Pl. 163	68	26	6—7 ft.	
Devil's Dyke, Camb.	<i>Camb. A.S.</i> 26, p. 119	120	55—60	15 ft.	
Fleam Dyke, Camb.	<i>Camb. A.S.</i> 24, p. 34	103	44	10—11 ft.	
Offa's Dyke, Wales	<i>Offa's Dyke</i> p. 154	68	29—30	8 ft.	
Wat's Dyke, Wales	<i>Offa's Dyke</i> p. 258	48	20	4 ft.	

\* The starred measurements include a counterscarp bank

† n.m., not measured