

Archaeological Reports.

THE PAGAN DANISH BARROW CEMETERY AT HEATH WOOD, INGLEBY.

A Preliminary Excavation Report.

By M. POSNANSKY, B.A.

IN August 1955 the Ministry of Works excavated seven barrows in the barrow cemetery at Heath Wood, Ingleby, in advance of clearance for reafforestation by the Forestry Commission.

The cemetery had first been described by Thomas Bateman¹ who had excavated five barrows on 22nd May 1855, and which he assigned to the period of the Saxo-Danish battles. In 1941 the late William Fraser rediscovered the cemetery and from 1941 to 1945 six barrows were excavated. A full report of these appeared in the *Journal* of the Society for 1946,² by which time the authors had located over sixty mounds in the 31-acre piece of wood. In the winter of 1948/9 a further two barrows were opened.³ Owing to the small size and loose build of the barrows, the effects of reafforestation were likely to prove destructive to the good preservation of the site, and it was agreed between the Forestry Commission, the Ministry of Works and the Derbyshire Archaeological Society that four barrow concentrations should be left unplanted and that the seven outlying barrows should be excavated and levelled preparatory to planting.

No finds or illustrations have survived Bateman's digging, though the report by Leeds of the material from

¹ T. Bateman 1861. *Ten Years' Diggings*, p. 92.

² C. Clarke and W. Fraser 1946, *D.A.J.* LXVI, pp. 1-23.

³ C. Clarke, W. Fraser and F. W. Munslow 1949, *D.A.J.* LXIX.

the six barrows yielding finds in the 1941/9 excavations had established the date of the cemetery as belonging to the last quarter of the 9th century or the very beginning of the 10th.⁴ The presence of obstructing trees and roots had made previous excavation extremely difficult so that on the clearance of the timber preparatory to planting it was hoped that complete excavation of several of the barrows would provide new dating evidence for the cemetery and clearly show the exact structural nature of the individual barrows.

Five barrows (nos. 9 to 13)⁵ were completely excavated and two others (nos. 14 and 15) trenched and the central areas cleared. Of these seven mounds, one was found to be natural (no. 14), one contained a cremation hearth (no. 11), whilst the remaining five were cenotaph barrows. The barrows conformed to a general pattern, consisting of a small earthen mound from 5 to 21 ft. in diameter covered by large irregular blocks of local sandstone, some weighing up to two hundredweight. These "false cairns" were from 18 ins. to 4 ft. in height, and were surrounded by a discontinuous kerb of stones some 3 to 6 ft. from the cairn. The earthen mounds were thrown up from surface scrapings and irregular depressions surrounding the mounds. Mound 11 which contained a cremation hearth conformed to the pattern described in the earlier reports,⁶ a cremation hearth of finely comminuted bone and charcoal up to 2 ins. thick, and some 11 ft. in diameter was covered with stones which had been thrown on the hearth whilst the ashes were still hot: these stones were then covered by the earthen mound and false cairn.

In the hearth were found several iron objects and shield studs all particularly highly corroded and retaining little free iron, together with a fragment of braided silver wire work once perhaps forming part of a headband of a type found in 9th and 10th century Swedish and Viking archaeological contexts. The loose nature of the mound

⁴ Some doubt had at one time been expressed on the exact date of the cemetery and the earliest reports in the *Antiquaries Journal* 1943 and *D.A.J.*, LXII had suggested an Anglian dating of the sixth or seventh century.

⁵ The numbering of the mounds adopted by the previous excavators has been followed.

⁶ W. Fraser and others, *op. cit.*

build up and the consequent disturbance by burrowing creatures made excavation difficult and had considerably displaced the stones.

The final publication of Shetelig's *Viking Antiquities in Great Britain and Ireland*⁷ has shed new light on the Danish Settlement. In his review of the Viking material found in this country the Ingleby cemetery stands out both by its size and its poverty. The large proportion of the finds enumerated are from single inhumation burials and have Norse affinities or are isolated finds. The archaeological poverty and cremation rite at Ingleby point to North Jutish and Swedish affinities.⁸

Compared to the Anglo-Saxon settlement of England there is very little archaeological material available for a study of the Danish Settlement. This fact Shetelig explains by suggesting that "the armies that invaded England during the latter half of the 9th century . . . consisted chiefly of warriors who had already been fighting on the continent for years as adventurers and mercenaries and consequently were not filled with the primitive reverence of pagan funeral customs . . . we are inclined to suspect that the sporadic survival of pagan funeral rites in that country partially was due to new immigrants arriving in England after the conquest of Northumbria and the Five Boroughs",⁹ and instances Ingleby as belonging to that category. He concludes that the cemetery "must belong to the period after the peace of 878 . . . and should be, most probably, explained as evidence of a Danish colony coming directly from the north of Jutland." This conclusion as to the date of the cemetery was also reached by Leeds and Wainwright.¹⁰

By 917 this part of the Danelaw had been annexed by Edward the Elder, whilst it would appear that there was a wide acceptance of a new faith in Eastern Danelaw, at least, by 900.¹¹

⁷ H. Shetelig 1954, *Viking Antiquities in Great Britain and Ireland*, Oslo, Part VI.

⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 68.

⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 86, 91.

¹⁰ F. T. Wainwright 1947, "Early Scandinavian Settlement in Derbyshire", *D.A.J.* LXVII, p. 97.

¹¹ D. Whitelock 1941, "The Conversion of the Eastern Danelaw", *Saga-Book of the Viking Society*, Vol. XII, Pt. III, p. 175.

The barrows excavated in 1955 all lie away from the crest of the woodland where the main concentrations lie. If as seems probable the crest was chosen for the first barrows, the later ones would be peripheral to the crest. With the increase of Christian influences the pagan rites of cremation would come to be frowned upon, yet these Jutish born Danes must still have wanted to commemorate their dead as in their original homeland, which they did by means of cenotaph barrows. These cenotaph barrows are as regards to cairn structure much more carefully built than those containing the cremations. The former care expended on the cremation rites was diverted to the building of the mounds. If this premise be accepted, we must answer the question of where were these immigrant Danes buried at the time of the cenotaph barrows. The evidence of Danish burials in church grounds with grave goods as at Repton,¹² Rampside and Ornside could explain this transitional stage between pagan and Christian burial customs.

Underlying two of the mounds was found a V-shaped ditch running downslope in a north-south direction and cut into the Keuper Marl. The ditch which had been for the most part carefully dug was some 3 ft. 6 ins. deep at its deepest and 9 ft. wide at the surface. It had been filled in by fresh material and Keuper sandstones which made it difficult to recognise its existence when first found. The absence of a complementary bank and the freshness of the marl filling, together with the sharp clean-cut sides suggest that the ditch was short-lived and filled in with the original marl dug from the ditch. Its position was picked out between the two barrows but no date or purpose can be assigned to it.

A full report will appear in a future *Journal*, when the results of work now being undertaken by the Ministry of Works Laboratory on soil samples and the metal objects will be available. Professor A. J. E. Cave will report on the osseous remains and Mr. J. F. Levy of Imperial College, London, on the charcoals.

The author is indebted to Mr. Munslow for information

¹² *D.A.J.* 1923, XLVI.

on the Ingleby site and for help and advice throughout the excavation.

ADDENDUM.

Since the above was written the silver wire-work has been identified by Mrs. G. M. Crowfoot as being worked in what Geijer calls "Osenstich".¹³ The stitch was employed on headbands and caps made of silk, and ten examples are known from inhumation burials at the 9th-10th century Swedish site at Birka and six from other burials in Gotland and Smaland in SE. Sweden.

EXCAVATIONS ON RYKNIELD STREET NEAR CHESTERFIELD, 1953 AND 1954.

By R. H. OAKLEY, M.A.

IN 1953 and 1954 two excavations were carried out with the object of proving the course of Rykniel Street at some points between Chesterfield and Clay Cross, described by 18th and 19th century writers but never previously tested by digging.

1. The aim of the first excavation was to obtain definite evidence of the course of the Street north of Tupton, following clues in John Gratton's account, written in 1829. Gratton, a correspondent of Stephen Glover, lived at Wingerworth, and wrote the only detailed description of the course of the Street in this area that has come down to us. He tells us that north of Old Tupton it "crosses the Mansfield and Bakewell road at a farm-house in the occupation of William Hodgkinson; after passing through the orchard there, it keeps the line of the hedge, at one field distance (still on the east side of the road)¹ for several fields in succession, crosses the avenue in front of Wingerworth hall, and still keeping

¹³ Agnes Geijer 1938, Birka III, Die Textilfunde aus den Grabern, Upp sala pp. 109-111, Abb. 25.

¹ i.e. the main road from Clay Cross to Chesterfield.