

Wayland's Smithy, Berkshire.

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

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

(Continued from page 82, Vol. 32, No. 2.)

II. THE EXCAVATIONS OF 1919-20.

MUCH has been revealed by the few days' excavations which were made in 1919 and 1920, but the whole story is not yet told. The present account must be taken as an instalment, which we hope soon to supplement, and may well have to correct. The first season's work was directed primarily to a careful clearing of the passage and burial chambers, but it was also found possible to make progress with the verification of the plan of the barrow and to demonstrate that the theory of a circular setting of facing blocks was untenable. The second season brought the plan to its present state and threw considerable light on the construction of the barrow, leaving for further research the possible discovery of more facing slabs and any evidence which may remain of the north end of the barrow. For the present the estimate of 185 feet for the full length from north to south may stand.

The site is little if at all raised above its immediate surroundings, and the barrow was probably set out on level ground. The wider end, containing the burial chambers, is at the south, towards the Ridgeway. It is 43 feet wide, and in it were set four large standing stones, which now lie prostrate in front of it. Two of these stones were at the east and west angles respectively, the other two irregularly spaced between them, and the entrance to the grave chamber was between these two stones, though not, as it seems, on the long axis of the barrow, and therefore not in the middle of the south end. The stones, like all others in the barrow, are sarsens, and though not to be compared with the great stones of Avebury or Stonehenge, are yet of sufficient size

to have formed an imposing front. The largest is 11 feet long and 8 feet wide, and must have stood between 8 feet and 9 feet high when in position, and all four must have projected above the contour of the barrow if, as there is reason to suppose, the highest capstone of the burial chamber was level with the top of the mound. The construction of the barrow can best be described under three heads: the mound, the revetment, and the facing.

The mound is chiefly composed of the chalky surface soil, but in the southern or head end of the barrow there is a considerable proportion of loose sarsen rubble, and this may have formed the principal material for the first 60 feet from the south, the chalky soil being only used as a substitute when the supply of stone failed. The northern parts show only a few isolated groups of stones, and though this end has been more thoroughly robbed than the rest, it does not appear that they are the remains of a stone filling. One group, set on the original surface on the axis of the barrow, looks rather like part of the original setting out, and this is very nearly midway in the length of the barrow.

The revetment is formed of sarsen rubble, laid flat in irregular courses. A section midway in the barrow (fig. 4) shows it to consist of an inner and an outer face, the former about 2 feet thick and the latter somewhat less, enclosing a core of hard chalk and soil, the whole being about 6 feet thick at the bottom with a batter of about 45° on the outer face: just enough is left of the inner face to show at what angle it rose. Farther to the south, where there is much more stone in the core, the section is less clear, as regards an inner face, though it probably existed. The greatest height of the revetment cannot have exceeded 6 feet at any time, and there are no evidences that it was ever carried right over the top of the mound.

The facing was composed of slabs of stone of an average thickness of 14 inches to 16 inches, set upright along both sides and presumably the north end of the barrow. It will be seen that they were not set parallel to the revetment but, starting against its east and west faces at the south end, diverge from it northward. Eleven stones remain on the east side, of which all

but four have been disclosed by our excavations. One is undisturbed in its original position ; four more are more or less upright, the rest have fallen outwards. On the west side only four stones, all fallen, have been discovered so far. It is notable that the filling between these stones and the revetment is of pure chalk unmixed with earth, in contrast to the material of the mound. The average height of the facing stones above ground-level was about 3 feet.

Is the barrow one work or of several dates ? The divergence of the facing stones from the revetment suggests the possible addition of the former, but the most material argument is found in the section (B—B). It appears that a ditch ran along the west side of the barrow, the revetment being on its inner slope, and at a level which suggests the partial filling in of the ditch when the revetment was built. The facing slabs would have made a further filling in necessary. The ditch was doubtless caused by the making of the mound, and it may be argued that the revetment is an afterthought, for if it had been intended from the first, room would have been left for it within the line of the ditch. On the east side of the barrow no ditch has so far been found, but excavations have not been carried down to the undisturbed soil. The divergent lines of the revetment and facing slabs have already been noted. At the south end of the barrow the revetment, if its general direction continued, would come practically to the east and west angles, and the facing slabs would be set immediately against it. Constructionally, a space between the two is of value, as the slabs are ill-adapted to resist lateral pressure, and the revetment was intended to do the whole work of containing the mound. The chalk filling between the revetment and the slabs serves merely to carry on the contour of the mound. Here, again, it may be argued that if the facing slabs had been part of the original design, a space for them would have been provided in setting out the south end of the barrow, and they would have run parallel to the revetment.

The burial chamber consists of a passage 21 feet long by 2 feet 1 inch wide, open at the south end. Near the inner or north end

lateral chambers open from it west and east, making a cruciform plan. The floor, where undisturbed, seems to be at the original level of the ground. The largest stones are the four which flank the openings to the east and west chambers, and the passage at this point would have been 6 feet high to the under side of the capstone. The rest of the passage averages 4 feet 6 inches in height, while the eastern chamber, the only part in which the capstone is still in position, was less than 4 feet high. Seeing that this chamber is the origin of the cave legend, and the sole inspirer of Sir Walter Scott's romance, the value of imagination in archæological matters is here aptly illustrated.

When it is remembered how much the body of the barrow has suffered, it is a most fortunate thing that so many of the stones of the grave are preserved. Of the uprights only one is missing and one displaced, while of the seven—or possibly eight—coverstones five are in existence, and one of them still in position. The stone which covered the north end of the passage is wedged in between the north-east upright of the 'crossing' and the capstone of the east chamber, which is still in position, though somewhat shifted in a north-easterly direction.

The capstones of the crossing and of the western chamber lie on the ground north of the grave, while the southernmost coverstone of the passage is now half buried in the ground in front of the original entrance.

The construction of the grave is on the usual lines. The upright stones are set in holes in the original ground surface, which, as far as we ascertained the depth, are comparatively shallow, but the strength to sustain the pressure of the mound against their sides was probably adequate when the monument was complete. The spaces between the stones were evidently filled with small dry-set rubble as usual. The northern stones of the two chambers and of the passage now lean inwards, but this has probably occurred since the grave has been exposed. The construction of the southern part of the passage is interesting, there being on each side a stone set at an acute angle with the direction of the passage, and on the west side, at any rate, so much

taller than the stones next it that it could not have served to carry a coverstone. I think that their object was to stiffen the side of the passage against lateral pressure, to which they obviously offer a greater resistance than the stones set with their long sides in the direction of the passage.

The one upright stone which is missing is the third from the south on the east side of the passage, and from the displacement of the soil here, and of the diagonal stone next to it on the south, and also from the loss of the coverstones on this part of the passage, it seems that at some time an entrance has been forced into the grave at this point. There is nothing now to show how the passage was closed at the south end, but the outward curves of the two end stones are to be noted. The development of this feature is to be seen in the curves of dry-built walling flanking the entrances to the burial chambers at Stony Littleton, Uley, St. Nicholas, and elsewhere.. It must be presumed that the south end of the barrow was built up in dry rubble between the standing stones, and there may have been, as at Uley, a deep lintel-stone over the mouth of the passage.

In a few instances, particularly on the inner faces of the east chamber, the stones have been carefully worked to a true face, with results which are precisely those obtained at Stonehenge.

We can hardly expect to bring the study of prehistoric tooling to anything like an exact science, as, within limits, we can do with medieval tooling ; but instances of this sort multiply, and it would be interesting to compare the dressing with the tooling at Maeshowe in the Orkneys and elsewhere. We may suppose that flints or hard stone would be the means by which such marks were produced.

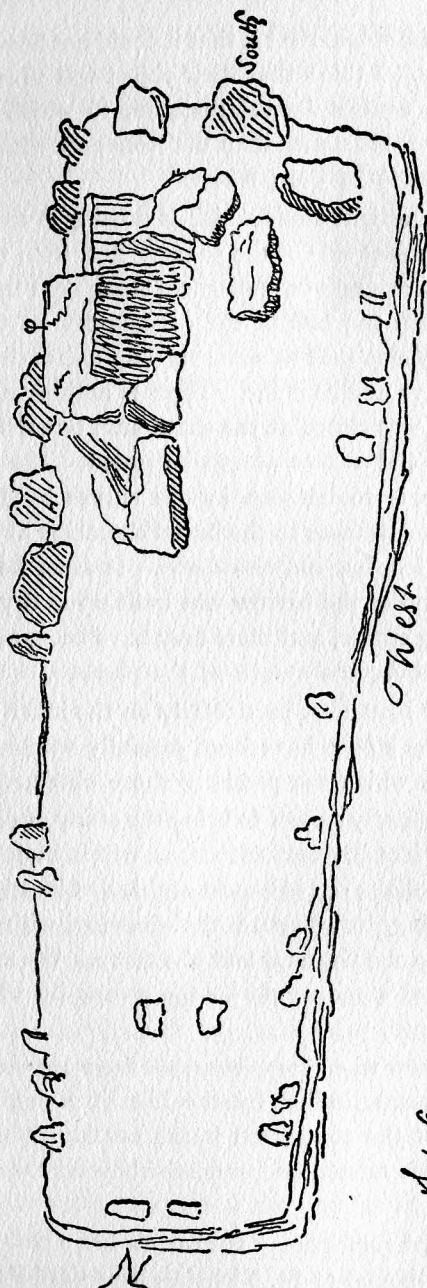
The barrow when complete must have appeared as a very low and flat mount limited by the line of facing slabs. But the discovery of the contracted burial outside this line shows that the soil of the mound had extended beyond the slabs at an early date.

The rectangular plan of the barrow has a parallel in that of the chambered mound at St. Nicholas, near Cardiff, which was fully

Wayland-Smithy.

This Sepulchre is 74 paces long
24 wide

East



These stones are 4, 5, 6, 7, 8 feet.

of a Cave like that by Holyhead.

Fig. 1.—Aubrey's Sketch of Wayland's Smithy, about 1670.

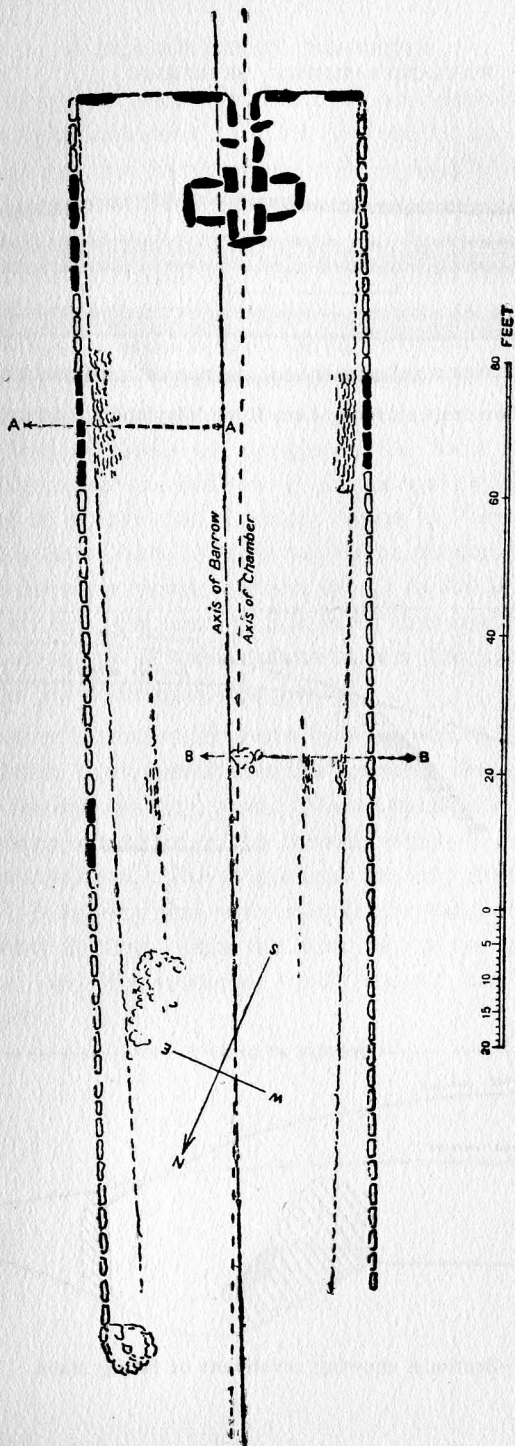


Fig. 3.—Plan of Wayland's Smithy, as far as at present ascertained. Existing stones are shown in black, inferred stones in outline. The plan is based on a survey by the Rev. Charles Overy.

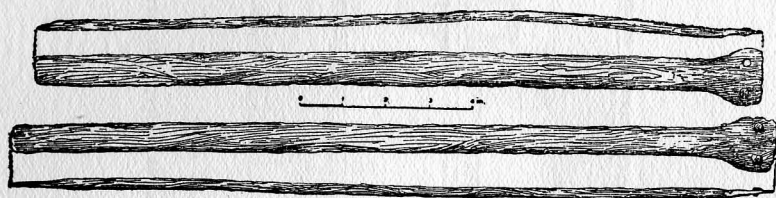


Fig. 2.—Two iron currency-bars from Wayland's Smithy.

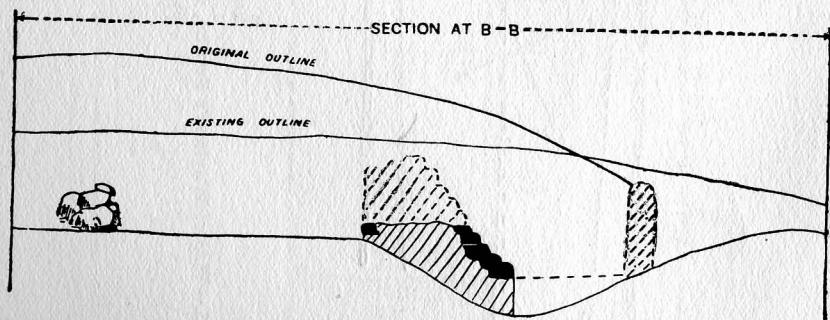
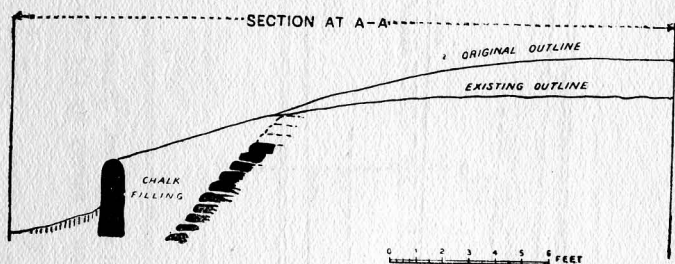


Fig. 4.—Sections, showing revetment of facing slabs.

explored by Mr. John Ward, F.S.A., and described by him in *Archæologia Cambrensis*, 1915, 6th Ser., vol. xv, pp. 253-320. The barrow, being in a district where stone is plentiful, is composed of stone slabs of various sizes throughout, and has a dry-stone revetment built in level courses to contain the substance of the mound, with a vertical outer face, the upright slabs which are so noticeable a feature at Wayland's Smithy being absent. The construction is less calculated to sustain a thrust than the battering revetment described above, and Mr. Ward found that it had been pushed outward in many places. In the St. Nicholas barrow occur lines of stones set upright in the body of the mound, evidently to serve as stiffeners to the mass of rubble, and though nothing of exactly this character occurs in Wayland's Smithy, certain isolated heaps of stone may be the remains of some setting out of the same nature. Stone, except in the form of sarsens, is absent from the district, and earth and chalk formed a far larger proportion of the Berkshire barrow than the soil and clay found in its Glamorganshire parallel.

Another barrow which seems to have been rectangular is that of Coldrum, Kent, described in the *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute* for 1913, p. 76. There appear to have been facing slabs along the sides of the mound, which is now in a very ruinous condition. The proportions are very different from the normal ; it appears that with a width of some 50 feet the length was about 80 feet. Only the inner end of the grave chamber remains, and the entrance, which was at the east, is quite destroyed.

C.R.P.