

## BURROUGH CAMP.

BY THE REV. E. HERMITAGE DAY, D.D., F.S.A.

The great earthwork known as Burrough Camp is remarkable for its commanding situation, its evident strength, the excellent state in which the greater part of the work remains, and the simple and yet effective disposition of its parts with a view to military defence.

There are two theories of its origin. Or, rather, one may say that there is an old theory, long in possession of the field, but now discarded in the light of fuller knowledge and investigation, and a new theory which is really a judgement in accordance with facts.

The old theory, which, on account of the eminent names by which it has been supported, and of its currency to the present day, it is desirable to examine, is that the work is of Roman origin, or at least of Roman adaptation and use.

The theory seems to have originated with Camden, great among the fathers of archæology in England. He identifies Burrough with the Roman station Vernometum, and in this he is followed by later writers. Such an error was easy to make in days when the country was unsurveyed, and the maps at the disposal of antiquaries were few and inaccurate. Stukeley, for example, writing in 1724, seems to have had no map, and to have been obliged to guess his distances as he travelled, with the result that as he passed along the Foss Way from Lincoln to Leicester, he made an error of ten miles, placing the Roman station of Margidunum at Willoughby-on-the-Wolds, and then, misled by Camden, making, as he said, an excursion to take in Vernometum, by going several miles off the Foss Way to Burrough. In point of fact, Margidunum is the station now known as Castle Hill, near Bingham in Nottinghamshire, and Vernometum is Willoughby-on-the-Wolds.

Burrough lies indeed far from any Roman road. From the Foss Way at the nearest point westward it is distant nearly nine miles : from the Erming Street, at the northeast corner of Exton Park, about eleven miles : from the Roman road between Leicester and Titchmarsh, the nearest road to the south, about nine miles. The position of Burrough, then, forbids us to suppose it Roman. The camp would have been quite isolated : there is no trace of a Roman road in the vicinity. And though the site appears to us, with our modern ideas, a commanding site from the military point of view, yet it was not necessarily so in the time of the Roman occupation. Then the principal stations were at points which had to be held for the keeping open of communications, positions astride the main

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roads, or at their junction, or at the passage of a river ; and they were at the actual points to be held, in days when fighting was hand to hand.

Starting from the idea that the camp was a Roman station, the earlier antiquaries discerned in it traces of Roman handiwork, especially of masonry. Thus Leland says, "I took it for a camp of men of war, but after I plainly perceived that it had been worked about with stone, and to be sure pulled out some stones at the entering of it, where hath been a great gate, and then found lime betwixt the stone." Leland ought not to have been so sure. What he thought to be mortar, is caused by the disintegration of the limestone. An examination of the construction of the vallum at points where the turf has been removed shows that the stones which are exposed are not set as masonry, but heaped together, and packed with earth ; and it is impossible to discover any trace either of worked stone, or of mortar in which it may have been set.

The plan, too, is against the theory of Roman origin. It is not so square as from a casual glance might at first be thought, for the north-eastern side is far shorter than the south-western. The Roman, wedded to his rectangular camp plan, would not have departed from it on a site so easily adapted to it.

Nor are there any traces of the four gates, which were an invariable feature of the Roman camp. Those who have been along the Roman Wall will remember how the four gates were always made, even when one or more of them would have been almost useless for its purpose, as in the case of the north gate of Borcovicus, which opens upon a precipitous descent.

And such a camp as this, if it were Roman, must have abounded in buildings which would have left traces of their existence. Other Roman camps exhibit, where they have not been excavated, confused heaps and mounds, covering masonry. Sometimes there are traces in the neighbouring churches of the Roman work, the columns from a forum have been set up in a church, as at Chollerton, Roman altars have been hollowed into Christian fonts, as at Staunton, and worked stones bearing inscriptions appear in the walls of mediæval and modern buildings. Here there are no such remains. The surface of the ground is fairly level. The sole Roman discovery is of a few coins. And during the four centuries of the Roman occupation, which have left their record in coins turned up here and there all over England, it would be strange indeed if on such a site as this twelve generations of Romans or Romanised Britons had not between them dropped coins to the value of perhaps half-a-crown.

These, then, are reasons which forbid us to accept the theory of a Roman origin. Singly, they are strong : cumulatively, they are overwhelming. And, on the other hand, we have the clearest evidence to show what the camp really is.

It is a hill-fort, of pre-Roman date, of a well-known type, exhibiting in its main features a strong resemblance to other camps of a similar kind.

The hill-fort of pre-historic man was a strongly fortified camp, intended not for permanent habitation, but as a camp of refuge in any such emergency as a sudden attack by a hostile tribe.

To such camps the inhabitants of the valleys betook themselves, with their cattle and portable possessions, in the hope that an attack might soon be beaten off. That the hill-forts served only this temporary purpose is shown by the fact that in many cases they were without a water supply, as in the promontory forts of Cornwall and South Wales, where a cliff inaccessible from the sea is made defensible by two or three lines of earthwork on the landward side. In the case of Burrough there is no water supply actually within the lines, though there is a guarded path from the camp, giving access to a spring.

The main defence of the camp is the vallum, or mound, which surrounds the whole camp, with but a slight interruption on the north-western side, where it has been destroyed. From the top of the vallum a sharp slope, called the escarpment, or scarp, descended to the fosse, or ditch. In some places the scarp is interrupted by a platform, called the berm, which afforded room for the defenders to stand to meet the first attack, until, perchance, they were driven back within the vallum. The berm was probably defended by a low rampart, or a stockade, of which no traces remain at any point. The berm here is very perfect on the north-western and south-western faces, and it occurs at intervals at points on the other sides. The rise on the far side of the ditch is termed the counterscarp.

The vallum was constructed of stones small and large, of the natural rock of the hill. In the getting of the stone the hilltop may have been roughly levelled within the camp lines. These stones were set close and packed with earth, and upon the core thus formed the sides of the vallum were moulded. The top of the vallum was defended by a palisade of stakes. Of this no trace has been found, though it is possible that delicate excavation might reveal the signs of holes in which the stakes were set, and the remains of perished wood. Access to the fort was given by the main gate, and by three posterns, each with its own defence. These posterns were necessary in order to give access from the camp to its berms, and also to the water supply.

The main gate of the fortress is defended by two aggers, or mounds, the inturned ends of the vallum. They run inward from the gate about 120 feet. An enemy entering would be assailed by a cross fire of missiles, from each agger. There are also two sets of outworks for the defence of the gate, consisting of small pits, each for a few men. This entrance and its defences are of a simple type. In some camps there are several lines of defence; and in a few

there is an arrangement of blind alleys, false entrances in which an enemy who had successfully overcome the defenders of the gateway might lose his way, and be overwhelmed.

As we follow the line of the vallum northward we see a gap, which is no part of the original plan, but is due to decay or destruction. Between the gateway and this gap, at the point indicated, the measurements of the work show a rise of 23 feet from the level of the inside of the camp, an escarpment of 34 feet, a berm 26 feet wide, and a further scarp of 27 feet.

Near the gap, by the roots of the big tree, a scar in the side of the vallum shows its construction and the stone core, and along the top of the vallum for its whole circuit stones of the core may be found protruding through the turf.

At the north-east corner of the camp we come to the first postern gate. A winding path issues diagonally from the vallum, and descends the scarp. At the point where it clears the vallum a small defence may be noticed, an agger running at an acute angle with the path, and covering a small sunk pit for a body of defenders. Far below, at the base of the scarp, there is an irregular earthwork, which may have been the first line of defence on this side, or may have defended the end of the path.

Following the short side of the camp in a north-westerly direction, we shall see, at the point just short of the fence of the plantation, that the line of the scarp has been advanced, to provide a small berm, and at a lower point on the hill there is a small platform, which may be another outwork.

Above the plantation, turning the north corner of the camp, the vallum has been destroyed for a few yards, but for the whole length of this side the berm is singularly perfect, and where the vallum clears the plantation the postern is traceable which gives access to the berm. It is covered by the vallum. At a point just beyond the postern the vallum is 42 feet on the scarp.

At the south-west corner a postern and sunk path give an approach to the water supply, the path, covered by the ramparts and concealed by its own agger, slanting down the hillside to the springs of which one is visible from the vallum, near the white gate in the hollow.

All along the south-western side the berm is well preserved. In the middle of this side there is another postern, and an interesting defence of the path leading through the postern, in the form of a long pit, opening only on to the path.

We cannot gain any idea of the original strength of these defences unless we continually bear in mind the low rampart which probably defended the berm, and the stockade which crowned the vallum.

Hollings was of opinion that Burrough was the scene of the

decisive victory of Ostorius over the Iceni, in 51, which led to the pacification of the Midlands. And it may be thought that the camp answers to the vague description of the site of the battle given by Tacitus.

But the Iceni inhabited East Anglia, the country which is now Norfolk and Suffolk, and it seems almost certain that the site of the battle is to be placed where the Icknield Street runs through the Fleam Dyke and the Devil's Dyke. Shut in between the lines of defence which they themselves had made, the four or five great dykes which ran between fen and forest, the Iceni found themselves in a death trap, and were mercilessly slaughtered, with a thoroughness which ensured to the Romans a tranquillity of twelve years, until the rising under Boadicea.

With what toil this earthwork was raised, in days when all had to be done with the rudest tools, and by manual labour, we can judge. To primitive man, no less than to us, war was the most costly of occupations. It is hard to picture, even with the liveliest imagination, the scenes which the work has probably witnessed. Upon this level space, perhaps time after time through several centuries, terrified women and children have awaited the event of a struggle which was to determine their fate: these quiet grassy slopes have rung to the shouts of conflict and the clash of weapons, the setting sun has seen them red with blood.

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