

EXCURSION TO CAMBERLEY.

APRIL 24TH, 1880.

Directors :—The PRESIDENT ; the Rev. A. IRVING, B.A., B.Sc., F.G.S.; and Captain C. COOPER KING, R.M.A., F.G.S.

(*Report by* THE DIRECTORS.)

Some thirty members of the Association, coming from London by way of Woking, were met at the Camberley Station, by the President and some friends. In the first place the party examined maps and geological sections of the district, at the President's house, and also archæological maps and diagrams relating to the Roman Road and British Camp, which would be seen in the course of the day. A collection of stone implements (partly contributed by Captain C. C. King), and some geological specimens, illustrative of local geology, were also looked at.

A start was soon made for the Flint-implement Station, near the Staff College, on the confines of Surrey and Berks. On arriving at the lateral *cul-de-sac* of the Wishmoor Valley, in which the flint station is situated, Captain C. C. King pointed out that, from its shape, and from the line of gravel which lies at an almost regular level along the sides of the existing hills, the area seems to have been at one time a lake, the western barrier of which is now represented by a small hog-backed hill. This has evidently been gradually worn away by the two brooks which still exist, allowing the lacustrine waters to escape. The floor of the valley contains much silty matter, with stems of wood, resting on a thin substratum of clay, and it was in this silty sand that the flint flakes and some flint implements had been found. They are not distributed equally over the valley-bottom, but lie in definite patches. It was therefore probable that the ancient folk occupied either natural or artificial elevations in the marsh or lake. Some sections of the special spots, exposed for the purpose, displayed the sandy and silty nature of the soil with its numerous fragments of decayed woody matter and a few flakes.

Leaving this interesting lacustrine valley, the high road from London to Salisbury was crossed, and Obelisk Hill ascended. It was pointed out that the glen at its foot is continuous with some

of the ancient hollow road-tracks, whilst others pass the southern foot of this small, well-marked, conical hill. The gravel capping the summit is highly ferruginous, forming "pan," and has resisted the denuding agents which carved the numerous valleys all round out of the Post-Tertiary gravel plateau. The many-windowed, empty Obelisk, once roofed and topped with a gilt ball, was built by a family living at Hawley, two miles off on the west side of the Blackwater, who are said to have used it for making signals to friends living away to the north-east, near High Wycombe. The general structure of the country was described by the President, who briefly alluded to the Lower Tertiaries let down in the shallow syncline between the Chalk hills of Surrey and of Bucks, to their having been planed down by marine denudation, and to their coating of gravel, consisting of (1) subangular flint from the Chalk, (2) pebbles from outcrops of the lowest Tertiary beds turned up with the Chalk, (3) water-worn fragments of Neocomian chert from beyond the Guildford gap, (4) more or less worn "Sarsdens," or consolidated blocks of the Upper-Bagshot Sands, (5) numerous small pebbles of quartz, and (6) occasional masses of sand, frozen when embedded. The subsequent erosion of this Post-Tertiary plateau was referred to the action of sea-creeks and streams.

A descent into the valley on the south foot of the hill led across some of the ancient road-tracks, now much obliterated by cultivation, and to openings in the low-level gravel, here thicker than usual, as much as four or five feet, owing perhaps to the iron-topped hill having checked the downflow of winter-ice and gravel-bearing floods. Sarsdens are frequent here, mostly much water-worn: some showing traces of vertical rootlets, some with quartz-pebbles, some with flint fragments, and some showing small concretionary structure, have been met with.

On the top of Crawley (Portesbury) Hill forming the south side of this Camberley Valley, the plateau-gravel, with its overlying loam (loess) and its ferruginous layers, is well seen in the railway-cutting. Here the gravel and loam die out in thin beds on a sloping and eroded floor of Bagshot Sand at the former head of one of the old sea-creeks.

Regaining the high-road, near Hangman's Lane, where one or more of Turpin's friends were executed, the party soon reached the "Jolly Farmer," an inn situated in the angle at the junction

of the Portsmouth and Southampton roads, and succeeding—on a different spot—the “Golden Farmer,” which was on the north side of the road, and formerly associated with the nefarious doings of Dick Turpin, before the present mailcoach-road superseded the many old trackways on the heath. Going northwards the excursionists, on Penny Hill, had a beautiful view over the Bagshot Valley, with the Windsor crest-line in the distance.

A pleasant walk through the heather and pine-woods of East-hampstead Plain, and across the Wishmoor Valley, with nothing more exciting than the capture of a snake, brought the party, by Hermitage Hill, to the intersection of five forest-rides, known as “Wishmoor Cross,” a name transferred from the old Hermitage *Cross* to these cross-roads. Their further progress soon led them across the old Roman Road, from ad-Pontes (Staines) to Calleva (Silchester), known as “the Devil’s Highway,” and “the Nine Miles Ride.” Where this ancient highway is crossed by a set of forest-rides is a small grassy mound marking the place of a former gallows-stem, on which some highwaymen suffered death.

One of these forest-rides led direct to the south entrance of the old British Camp, known (like others about the country) as “Cæsar’s Camp.” The Rev. Alex. Irving, of Wellington College, having joined the party, here gave an account of what was known of the Camp. The name by which it is known is a misnomer. The spot may have been occupied temporarily by a Roman legion at some time or other; but its outline is of such a form as to preclude all belief in the possibility of its adaptation to the requirements of the Roman legion, which had its rules for encamping as distinctly understood as those for marching; and nothing which the site presents would suggest its having been the scene of a Roman occupation. Much better was it adapted for the rude methods of defence practised by a more primitive race; and there is every reason to believe that it was an important point of vantage to the early British tribes of the south, not so much, perhaps, in any stand they made against their Roman conquerors as in the many inter-tribal feuds which prevailed among themselves. Tools of the most primitive description would suffice for the construction of the double rampart, which now almost encircles this, one of the largest of fortified enclosures in the country. Its form is roughly elliptical, with a sinuous out-

line, so that it has been compared to an oak-leaf in form; the major axis of the ellipse, which runs north and south, is about one-third of a mile in length. The "Camp" occupies the northernmost spur of the Easthampstead Plain, near Bracknell, and, as a military position, would enable an army holding it to command a considerable portion of the Valley of the Thames. At its northern end it is capped with the usual gravels of the country, as indeed are most of the spurs of the plateau. These gravels have become in many instances so closely bound together by oxide of iron as to form the most effective protection to the soft and incoherent strata of the Bagshot country; and it is to these that the peculiar contour of the country about Wellington College is due. The conical hills of Edgbarrow and Ambarrow, and the various long lines of hills, known locally as "Ridges," owe their preservation against erosive agencies to the presence of such gravels and conglomerates.

Crossing over to the western side of the Camp, where, on the steep slope of the hill, the so-called double ditches and valla were well-defined, Captain C. C. King remarked that it seemed doubtful whether these earth-walls or valla could be looked on as successive lines of defence. Owing to the short range of the early missiles, it would be almost impossible to hold both ridges at the same time, the command of one over the other being so slight; and, further, the retreat from the outer banks into the body of the fortress would scarcely be effected by a direct run from one to the other, as such retreat might be accompanied by a rush of the enemy, entering the "Camp" perhaps with the defenders. As probably, also, the inner vallum was crowned by a wicker breast-work (which would be impervious to most of the missiles), the retreat would naturally be made by the gates, and to do this the defenders of the outer vallum would have to find their way round to these entrances, exposed to the enemy's attacks during the movement. It therefore seemed more likely that the object of the outer vallum was only to provide sufficient earth to make the inner ditch a more formidable obstacle to an assault. The Camp, from its "trace" and simplicity, was evidently British. Some fragments of Brit-Roman pottery were afterwards found in the black soil of one portion of the interior. In the Bagshot Sand, below the gravel, in the sunken way on the north side of the Camp, Capt. King discovered, by earnest search, a pretty little valve of

Lucina (?). A few of the party here left for the Bracknell Station, so as to reach London quickly.

Returning to the south side of the Camp, the party, under the guidance of the Rev. A. Irving, visited an interesting area of grassy ground, among the extensive fir-plantations, which is called "Wickham Bushes." One part is planted with oak, and is regarded as the site of a Roman town. Another portion is picturesque, with scattered old thorn-trees; and this also yields abundant fragments of Roman and Romano-British pottery, but is regarded by some as having been the site of a British town, some of the old hut-pits being still visible.

The Rev. Mr. Irving referred to the excavations that had been made there, which had resulted in the discovery of some Roman coins and pieces of metal, but not in any quantity.

The association of the "Camp" with the name of Cæsar is no doubt due to the presumed Roman settlement or town, of which numerous traces have been found, about half a mile to the south of the Camp. The site of this, long known as "Wickham Bushes," has been lately re-explored by W. Goodchild, Esq., one of the Masters of Wellington College, who has been aided in the work of digging by some of the Sixth Form. Very numerous fragments of pottery, and many specimens of roofing tiles, both of undoubted Roman origin, have been exhumed, and a coin of the reign of Probus has been discovered. The original name of this colony has been lost, it would seem, altogether; but everything that has come to light shows that it must have been a station of no small importance on the great road which runs from the ancient town of Silchester to the *Pontes* over the Thames. This road, into which several others from the west appear to have converged, is still distinctly visible in places. Though much older than the Roman occupation, it was, no doubt, improved by the Romans, both as to width and straightness. After the capture of Silchester by the West Saxons, the town was burnt; and the whole district appears to have been for a time almost depopulated. The importance of the road, as a line of communication between the West and London declined from this time. To quote words of Mr. Goodchild—"Silchester had disappeared, probably the bridge at Staines was burnt down, and such traffic as went on amid the struggles of the Heptarchy got diverted up to the new town of

Rædingas, which we now call Reading, where there was communication by water with the sea for the Saxon sea-rovers. The old road was deserted and grass-grown, and fancy fixed upon its present name of 'Devil's Highway,' as upon a road that led to nowhere, and was of no use to ordinary mortals. After the conversion of the Saxons to Christianity, it was a common thing to look upon Roman remains, which up to the thirteenth century were prominent objects in many parts of England, as works of the Devil; they had been made by heathen, or at least by unsound Christians of the Irish school, so true Churchmen would do well to keep clear of them."*

Capt. C. Cooper King remarked of Wickham Bushes that, although the grassy area, dotted with ancient thorn-trees and oaks, contained much Brit-Roman pottery (a fragment of a mortarium was picked up by Major Fothergill), it does not therefore follow in the least that the settlement was formed, or even occupied by Romans. The circular hollows which dot the ground at varying intervals would seem to indicate the sites of pit-dwellings anterior to the Roman invasion; and the presence of Roman remains may only indicate that the village existed up to Roman times, and that Roman loot was brought thither from other places.

The excursionists had then to leave the plateau, and the beautiful view, comprising both the northern and the southern Chalk-hills bounding the Bagshot district, and crossing the Roman road at a point eastward of the former transit, they dipped into a narrow wooded valley, and then descended Lodge Hill, on which the Broadmoor Lunatic Convict Prison is situated. Here they saw a pit in the high-level gravel, with striking evidences of the intervention of floating ice in modifying the constituent layers of gravel, sand, and loam, during and after their deposition. For want of time the Rev. Mr. Irving could not take the party up Edgbarrow Hill, the summit of which is fortified by ferruginous "pan" (as in the case of Obelisk Hill already mentioned), and in consequence retains a conical form.

Time did not admit of an inspection of the sections exposed in the brickfields of Wellington College and in the adjoining railway cutting. The Bagshot strata are characterised here, as elsewhere

* See a lecture by W. Goodchild, Esq., M.A., of Wellington College, entitled "Fragments of Local Legend and History," published by George Bishop, Wellington College Station.

on the same horizon, by the great abundance of well-rolled pebbles of black flint, which are scattered through the sand, with the rarest possible occurrence of any material from a more distant source than the Cretaceous formations. So well defined, in fact, is this deposit that it may well serve as a basement for the Upper Bagshot Series. The railway close by cuts through these beds; and here, though they could not be walked on, being too wet with the water soaking out on the clays, the side-banks showed clear sections of this part of the formation as the hungry geologists hurried by to the well-laid refreshment-table at the Wellington Hotel close to the station.

Having fully appreciated the caterer's judicious and provident care, and having voted hearty thanks to their Directors, the Members and their friends availed themselves of a train by the South-Eastern Railway, either for Croydon (as did some) or to Blackwater (as more did), thence to walk to Camberley, either through the grounds of the Royal Military College, or by the high-road. After a farewell call at the President's house, about twenty assembled at the station to return to London by Woking, after having usefully and pleasantly spent a most delightful day among the firs and heaths of the very interesting "Bagshot District."

ORDINARY MEETING.

MAY 7TH, 1880.

W. H. HUDLESTON, Esq., M.A., F.G.S., &c., Vice-President, in the Chair.

The Donations to the Library, received since the previous meeting, were announced, and the donors received the thanks of the Association.

The following were elected Members of the Association :—

George Powie Cochrane, Esq.; Franklin J. Curst, Esq.; N. W. Holmes, Esq.; W. Hull, Esq.; Charles Mayhill, Esq.; James