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CALENDAR

Thurs 11 July

NB Tuesday evenings ... Pot Washing ... see page 2 Sunday mornings ... Field Walking .. see page 2

"Woodland Trades - Their Rise and Decline in North Hampshire and West Berkshire" by Thurs 21 March Dr E.J.T. Collins (Friends of the Willis Museum) 7.30 pm, Willis Museum THE ISLE OF PURBECK: TRADE AND INDUSTRY IN Thurs 11 April ROMAN TIMES by Peter Cox, 7.30 pm, Chute House "Anatolian Encounters", Stephen Scoffham & Thurs 18 April Christopher Trillo (Friends) Willis Museum, 7.30 pm Annual Symposium, Local History Section of. Sat 20 April Hants Field Club, Southampton University Open Meeting: Aspects of Current Building Research & Recording in Hampshire, King Mon 22 April Alfred's College, Winchester, 7.30 (HFC) Wed 8 May Centenary General Meeting, Hampshire Field Club, King Alfred's College, Winchester GEORGE WILLIS by Arthur Attwood, 7.30 pm, Thurs 9 May Chute House SOCIETY OUTING Sat 8 June

Society ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

* Society activity

STOP PRESS Tuesday 9th April visit to Brighton Hill South dig - see page 16

THE ISLE OF PURBECK: TRADE AND INDUSTRY IN ROMAN TIMES Lecture by Peter Cox, 7.30 pm, Thursday 11th April

Ken Qualmann is unable to give his lecture on "New Discoveries for Roman Winchester" on 11th April as planned, but we hope to arrange it for next year. We are lucky that Peter Cox of the Trust for Wessex Archaeology has kindly agreed to give his lecture on that date, also on a Roman theme: trade and industry on the Isle of Purbeck.

GEORGE WILLIS Lecture by Arthur Attwood 7.30 pm, Thursday 9th May

To celebrate the centenary of the Hampshire Field Club, we have asked Arthur Attwood to give a special lecture about Basingstoke's most distinguished member of the Club, George Willis, founder of the Willis Museum. We are pleased that His Worship the Mayor and the Mayoress have accepted our invitation to this lecture.

POT WASHING

Washing and sorting of finds from last year's field-walking is now taking place on Tuesday evenings from 7.30 pm at 3 Milkingpen Lane, Old Basing (opposite the Bolton Arms). Helpers welcome. Ring Basingstoke 24263 for more details.

FIELD WALKING

We have started fieldwalking on Sunday mornings at Brighton Hill South - how long this goes on and in which fields depends on the weather and the state of the crops. Ring Peter Heath (Basingstoke 27713) to check.

SUMMER DIG

Excavations at Brighton Hill South are continuing till 23rd April and are now revealing a Romano-British farmstead and later trackway. After a break they will resume in the summer, when the church area will be investigated. Peter Fasham has agreed to allocate an area for the Society to excavate and we hope to arrange weekend-working so that as many members as possible can take part. Again, the exact dates will depend on the weather and the state of the crops, but if you are interested please keep time free in late July/early August and contact Peter Heath (27713) for more details nearer the time.

AND A FEW MORE THOUGHTS ABOUT BONES!

The correspondence engendered in The Gazette by the archaeological excavations at Hatch Warren (Brighton Hill South) was evidence of the concern shown by many practising Christians that human remains uncovered by such excavations should be re-interred in a consecrated graveyard. It would seem that this is not so important when such remains date back to the pre-Christian era, and many skeletons and part skeletons rest in dusty neglect in the cardboard boxes in museum stores.

I have often thought it would be an interesting, if ghoulish study to find out what happened to the fallen dead in the days when England had its battlefields. Neither side stayed long on the field of battle. Usually one side was fleeing and one pursuing. At the battle of Stamford Bridge in 1066, the Danes fled in their ships, and Harold wasted no time returning South to meet Duke William. The local peasants must have been happy to loot the corpses and pick up any weapons lying about, but must have felt no compulsion to bury them, something which, in any case, must have been an almost impossible task. So local legend says that the bones lay in the fields for years, and the battleground was a place to be avoided, where tattered pieces of clothing fluttered from the thorn bushes and white bones glinted in the ditches and the long grass. It is perhaps easier to believe such tales when they relate to events in the distant past, but I must confess to a momentary shiver of horror when I read in Noel Barber's book Lords of the Golden Horn, the story of the Turkish Empire, a report that, following the Siege of Plevna in 1877 during the second Russian-Turkish War, a paragraph appeared in a British newspaper, in an article dealing with fertilisers, which said:

"Thirty tons of human bones, comprising thirty thousand skeletons, have just been landed at Bristol from Plevna". So it would seem that even one hundred years ago bodies lay on the field of battle until the bones were picked clean by the carnivorous mammals and birds, and the skeletons then became the subject of a commercial transaction. Did the Bristol merchants, good church-goers all, consider that their belief in the resurrection of the dead was not shared by Moslems and Russian Orthodox Christians? How did the clergy of the day justify such transactions? Such questions can lead one into by-ways of historical research which may take up more time than one can spare.

But archaeology is essentially a science which poses questions and demands answers. Suth incursions into the by-ways of history sharpen our critical faculties and train the mind to analyse the stratigraphy of an excavation or the decoration of a sherd. And perhaps help us to answer the lady who considers that the medieval gentleman who lay exposed to public gaze in the Willis Museum, from the Hatch Warm excavation, should be re-interred in a consecrated place when the programme is complete.

ANCIENT EARTHWORK AT ELLISFIELD

Foreword
This earthwork, located at SU629453, originally aroused my interest simply because it existed - an old military work on a commanding site and in a fair state of preservation.

It was, I had noted, about a thousand yards from an ancient church site and close to a straggling village which I already knew was in the Domesday Book. From enquiries, I learned much about the church site, a little about the village and nothing at all about "The Camp" as it seemed to be called. Unlike the church, it apparently had no known history. I decided to investigate. This work seriously started in early 1975 and the main field work was done between then and 1977.

The objects of this article are now to:

(a) describe the site and its immediate surroundings in detail (b) trace the recorded history of the Camp as far back in time

as possible
(c) remark briefly upon any matters which seem to me to be relevant.

No firm conclusions about the origins and purpose of the Camp are offered.

The Camp is recorded as "Ellisfield Castle" in Hampshire Treasures, Basingstoke District East. It is scheduled Ancient Monument No 31 and Ordnance Survey Antiquity No SU64 NW22.

Plan A shows the setting of the Camp in relation to the existing road and other features. The Camp is roughly rectangular, approximately 210 yards (192m) long by 170 yards (154m) wide overall, with its longer axis lying north north west. It is bounded by a ditch outside a bank, with an entrance at the south end to the open inside area. The ditch does not exist at the south end of the eastern side, giving an impression of incompleteness, but two deep depressions (see plan and sections) exist here (Drawings B and C).

The Geological Survey describes the local soil as clay with flints and loam overlying the Upper Chalk (1). A farmer who had worked this soil for forty years described it as "kindly". There is no natural water supply on or near the site but water lies in pools on and around the site after heavy rain. The bank and ditch are overgrown with trees, and a single and notable yew tree of trunk circumference 19 feet (5.8m) at 5 feet (1.5m) about ground level, grows on the bank near the middle of the western side. From a distance, the whole has the appearance of a coppice.

The 600 foot (183m) contour crosses the site from east to west and the ground rises to 650 feet (198m) some 220 yards (200m) to the north. Westwards, after 220 yards (200m) from the ditch, the ground falls steeply away, but to the south, the fall is gentle for about 500 yards (460m). On the eastern side there is rather more than 100 feet (30m) fall in about 180 yards (165m) to White Lane, which is here in a defile.

Accurate contours inside the Camp are not available but from the foot of the bank at the south west corner it is estimated that the ground rises 6 or 8 feet to the north east corner and not so much to the other corners.

From the top of the north bank there is an excellent view towards the old church site and beyond; of Grammarsham Lane, and of the top of Farleigh Hill. From the north west corner the view extends south and west to Preston Candover and towards Winchester. The Camp dominates the surrounding area, and from the top of its bank a "killing ground" of at least 150 yards surrounds it, before there is any dead ground to provide cover for an attacking force.

My extensive inquiries about any archaeological or other relevant finds on or near the site yielded no result. The old farmer said that he grew potatoes in the Camp Field during the 1939-45 War and it was necessarily intensively picked over annually during those years. He had never heard or known of any interesting or unusual finds of any kind, but he mentioned treasure supposedly buried there. The present farmer knew of no finds, but when the writer went to him for permission to walk over the site, an old farm hand standing near said "let us know if you find the treasure". This will be referred to later.

A plan of the Camp and 10 approximate sections of the surrounding ditch are appended (Drawings B and C). Flint facing near the north east corner is as shown. Facing of the earthen ramparts of Roman forts with stone is noted by Stephen Johnson (18).

Location

Plan D shows the Camp set in its surrounding area. It is notable that except for the church site ("All Saints" - no longer in existence as a church) there are no ancient monuments, tumuli, barrows, Roman roads or other recorded remants of the past within a couple of miles of the Camp.

An exception is the old trackway marked "Harrow Way" (W) (signifying winter line). In showing it thus, I have followed Timperley and Brill (2, Map 8). These authors acknowledge the previous relevant work of C.F.C. Hawkes (3). The Hon. F. H. Baring's paper on William the Conqueror's March through Hampshire in 1066 (4) is also relevant.

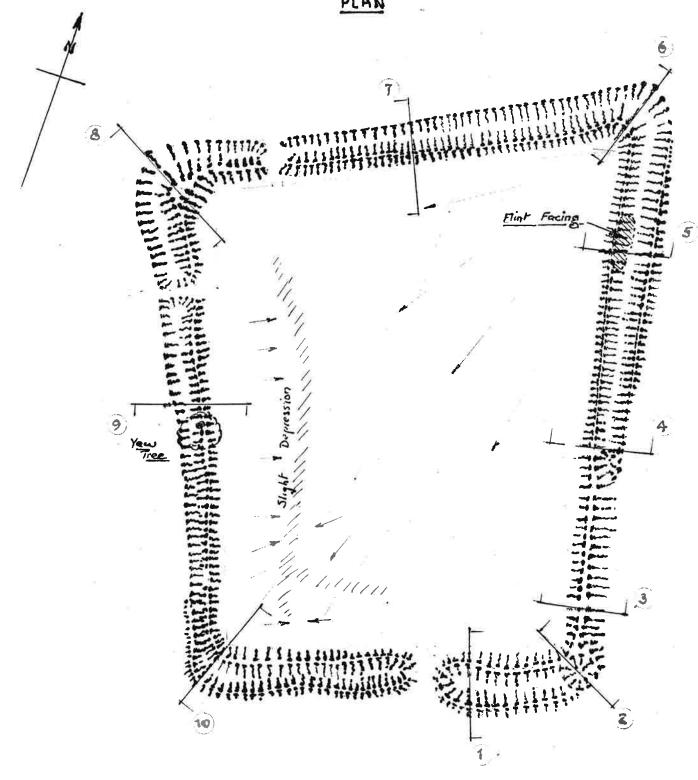
R. Hippisley Cox describes the Camp briefly and sums up its relation to the old trackway rather neatly (5):

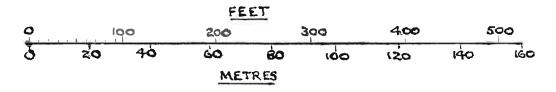
"Ellisfield is a fine specimen of a rectangular camp, enclosed by a single bank and ditch of unusual construction. The north, west and south sides are gently bent inwards with all four corners made higher than the rest of the bank. It is rare to find a rectangular camp on a hill top where a circular contour fort might be expected. Perhaps the importance of the situation as the meeting place of the roads from Inkpen, the Harrow Way and the road from Popham Beacon may account for its being altered and kept up to date by those who succeeded the men of the Stone Age". (page 108)

This suggestion of the great age of the Camp is not argued or supported in the book.

ELLISFIELD CAMP







The existence of an ancient trackway here, unmetalled, varying in its precise line but known and used over centuries, can, it is submitted, be accepted. This being so, the old church site of All Saints, disused (with authority) since 1393 and the Camp on high ground barely a mile away commanding church and road alike provides a coherence which cannot be overlooked.

Construction

Some factual information about the Camp with a plan and single section is given by Williams Freeman (6). He gives no conclusions but summarises local traditions and suggestions. He also states that the Camp "follows no considerations of advantageous ground". Having mentioned Alfred and the Danes in possible relation to the Camp, he does not follow this up in his later paper on the Topography of Alfred's wars in Wessex (7).

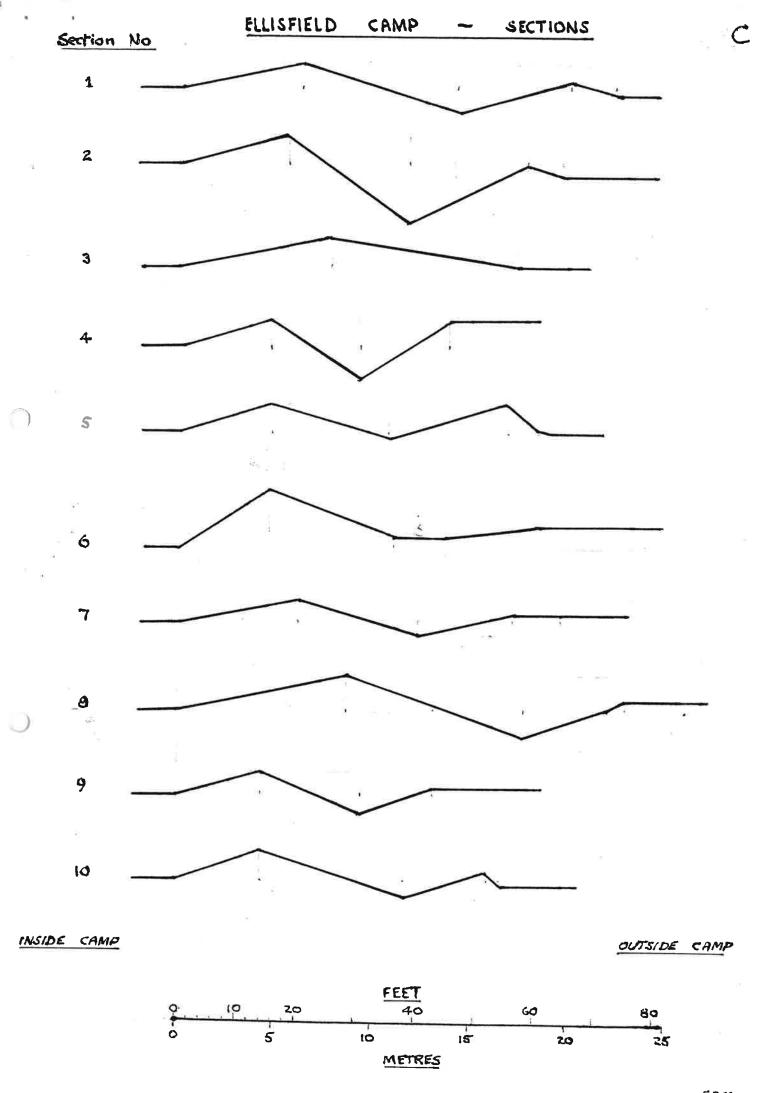
As existing at the date I made the survey, I estimate that the volume of earth moved would be of the order of 7,000 cubic yards. This would in round figures take not less than 10,000 or 12,000 manhours, largely depending on the tools used. The bank would have been eroded by rain and weather over time, so the actual volume of earth moved at the time of construction could well have been considerably (say, at a guess, 50%) more than this. Moreover, the manhours estimate does not allow for any work other than digging the vallum and forming the bank. The whole job, therefore, taken as a unit conceived and constructed over one continuous period would represent a work of considerable magnitude. Moreover it argues a labour force who knew what it was about, and therefore disciplined either by habit or motivated by a common deeply felt threat! More than this, an accepted directing staff would be needed to select the site, mark out the work and supervise the construction.

The weak point in the above argument is the assumption that the job is considered as a unit, beginning from unturned ground. There may have been an older more primitive earthwork existing, and the present Camp built from this in stages. Speculation can go no further.

Routine vertical air photographs show rectangular crop marks at the north west and south west corners outside the Camp and linear marks elsewhere. Crop marks inside the Camp are not clear but suggest at least two circles. Modern air photo technique (infra-red?) may yield more information.

Recorded references to Camp
The detailed reference to the Camp by Williams Freeman has already been noted (6). Before then we have a three line description of "Ellisfield Castle", with a note of its height above sea level of 600 feet in Vol. I of the Proceedings of the Hampshire Field Club which is dated 1885-1889 (8).

T. W. Shore, a writer of about the same time (1892) remarks briefly on the place though it is the buried treasure story and not the Camp as such that he notes: "... at Ellisfield, somewhere near the old Camp, there is a golden throne buried".(9)



Legends of buried gold are not uncommon, Grinsell lists many such (10). He lists specific golden objects - even a wheelbarrow (at Lugbury Long Barrow, Nettleton, Wiltshire ST830785) but does not include either Ellisfield or its reputed golden throne. Shore had presumably picked up local folklore; he may have embroidered it but I think this improbable. He writes as a scholar of his time. Folklore apparently remembered old treasure; great treasure. Metaphorically, could there have been a time when such great treasure as a golden throne, perhaps that of Wessex and ultimately of England depended on Ellisfield Camp? The idea is not unreasonable.

Back to recorded fact. Henry Moody writes nearly fifty years before Shore (11):

"About the distance of four miles directly south of Basingstoke we have the secluded village of Ellisfield which until the reign of Edward III could boast of two churches. The name is said to be derived from Ella, the founder of the kingdom of Sussex or South Saxons who here defeated his enemies the Britons. There are remains of several ancient entrenchments in the neighbourhood, one of which occupies an area of three acres and is surrounded by a deep moat and was according to tradition the site of a regal residence".

No treasure legend this time but a tradition which, if based on fact, could be verified.

The Tithe Commission Map of 1841 including field names transcribed from the rent charges schedule shows the Camp with the field name "Upper Ditchings". The three field names close by which include the name "Whitbury" suggest that the earthwork existed in Saxon times (12) Plan E.

An estate map by W. King dated 1787 gives the Camp site the same name but spells it "Upper Ditchins".

The Earl of Portsmouth bought land in Ellisfield from the Terry family of Dummer, William Thomas Terry, E. Terry and P. Terry. The deed, handwritten on parchment and dated 1773, specifically mentions a parcel named "The Ditchings" of 3 acres 3 roods 20 perches which is the total area of the Camp site, as near as may be. The Little Ditchings is included as a separate parcel. Terry bought the land from William Saltmarsh in 1756. When he had acquired it is not clear (21).

The Camp then was in recognised and recorded existence more than two hundred years ago. The single ancient yew tree in the middle of the west side suggests a greater age for the Camp though assessing a precise age for the tree is not practicable. Monica Edwards remarks (13) "Yew trees are planted for two reasons, to protect a house from the prevailing winds and as a place for the Spirit of the House who would ward off the evil ones. Wherever a fine solitary yew tree is growing there are likely to be footings of some old dwelling to the north east of it". Obviously another matter which could be investigated.

Field Walking
This was done reasonably systematically by a small number of instructed, willing but nevertheless inexperienced young people. The area covered included the Camp site and the surrounding fields within about 100 metres.

More specimens were collected from the Camp than from the fields. About 60 specimens were collected and bagged with a note of approximate location of find. Few, if any, appear to have archaeological significance; many are dark coloured fine-grain ferruginous sandstone. Geologically speaking their appearance is unremarkable in the area, except that some are of tile-like, worn appearance. The specimens include four baked red tile pieces from four different locations inside the Camp. Two pieces of irregular shaped cream-coloured medium-grain silicious sandstone are obvious strangers in the collection. An attempt to classify the specimens, geologically or otherwise, has not been very satisfactory.

Perhaps more field walking by experienced people would yield significant results.

Inferences from place and field names
Moody quoted above states (11) a belief that the name Ellisfield
is derived from Ella, founder of Sussex. The Anglo-Saxon
Chronicle (Parker Crhonicle A) mentions Aelle in annals for
AD 477, 485 and 491. The "Aelle" origin for Ellisfield (and
hence presumably the Camp) seems still to have local credence.
The connection seems facile, but if folklore extends to a
golden throne, why not also to Aelle?

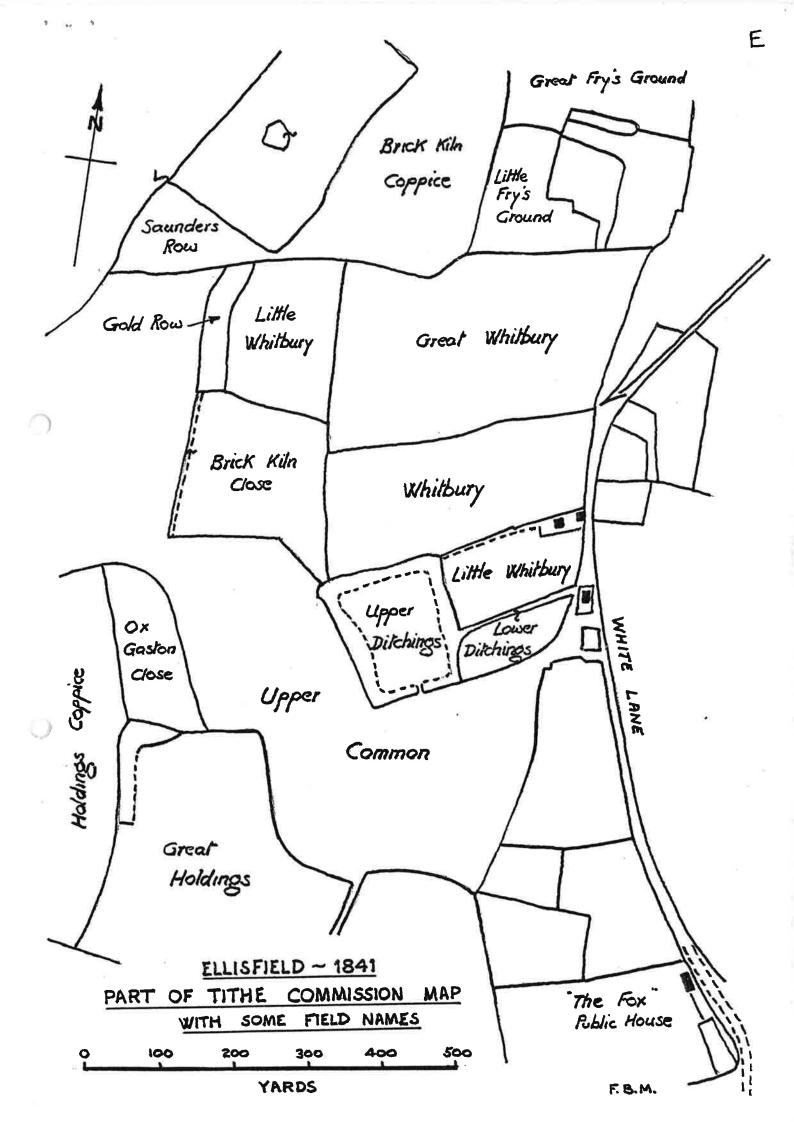
However, Ekwall (14) says Ellisfield is "Esewalle" in Domesday and adds "the first element may be Old English Aelfsige or a short form of it ... the O.E. base would be Ielfsiges (or Ielfsan) feld". Ekwall is not exhaustive; the Portsmouth-Terry deed quoted above gives in addition to Ellisfield, the alternatives Ilesfield, Ilsfield, Ellesfield and Elesfield, which would be 18th century variants of the name.

Perhaps this Aelle matter calls for authoritative comment from modern place-name specialists. The Saxon origin of the "bury" field names appears more secure.

Parallels to Ellisfield Camp
The Camp does not fit obviously into any category or age.
I have examined and considered many sites to find those apparently comparable.

The nearest is Egbury (439518), north east of St Mary Bourne and half a mile from a Roman road. According to Williams Freeman there have been Roman finds here (6). King Alfred later owned land at the Hurstbournes, both Tarrant and Priors and including Stoke (15).

Chisbury (279660) near Great Bedwyn in Wiltshire is worth considering. It is larger than Ellisfield Camp, and situated on an isolated hill which rises from 400 feet above sea level



to 525 feet in a distance of 500 yards. The total area enclosed is about 15 acres and buildings on the site include the Old Manor, the Farm and a 13th century stone chapel dedicated to St Martin. There is also a pond. This site has the distinction of being named as a Burh in the Burghal Hidage (16). The tenant farmer told me that flint and bone implements and Roman and Saxon coins had been found on the site (not by him). He said he is required to give notice to the County Archaeologist prior to doing any excavation work. The site was probably a settlement long before the 10th century.

Another site inside an older settlement is at Hod Hill (ST857106), Dorset. The rectangular Roman fort inside the Iron Age hillfort is mentioned by O.G.S. Crawford (17). It is rectangular and occupies 11 acres (4.5 ha). It was excavated in 1951-8 and is considered to have been built AD 43-51, following the Claudian invasion.

Origins - some speculations
Perhaps the paradox of Ellisfield Camp is its roughly Roman
"playing card" shape. But this would reflect no great credit
on any Roman Army unit of the forties or fifties AD, which
is the period when Roman Army units were on active service in
or near this area and possibly in AD 296, which was a short,
sharp campaign. Alternatively and later, intensely motivated
men could have built it to cope with a desperate emergency and
they remembered traditional Roman origins. They had even
forgotten that a circle encloses maximum area with minimum
circumference.

That Saxon war bands were probably active in the area is supported by the reputed barrow (now vanished) of Cissa, Aelle's companion leader near Overton at 516511 (19). But the style of Saxon raiding warfare at that time seems unlikely to have included earthwork building. Conversely a Romano-British outpost of Winchester guarding an ancient trackway and a Roman road against mobile invaders lacks plausibility. Relevant and dateable finds apart (and there are none so far) this adds a dubious (to me anyway) complication to a variant on the Arthurian legend theme.

Apart from the "sloppy" (by Roman standards) shape of the Camp, a purely Roman origin for Ellisfield analogous to Hod Hill would require a strong reason.

Militarily it could have served as a temporary base for a Roman army unit or even a cohort. The object could presumably be to guard the old trackway approaches to Winchester and Silchester with the road construction work between the two places and the area generally in the late forties and early fifties AD. If Roman coins had been or were found on the site that would be good evidence, but none have, so far as I can ascertain. Ellisfield Camp and Rome do not convincingly fit together, for me, anyway.

The origins of Egbury are apparently as obscure as those of Ellisfield; the two may even have been contemporary. But

Chisbury is a named "burh" on an Iron Age site in an area of considerable strategic significance and possibly owned by King Alfred (15) at the time of the Danish campaign of AD 871 and after. Ellisfield Camp would fit the same pattern and so would Egbury. Moreover, Ellisfield is literally within striking distance and commands the scene of some of the events of AD 871. Militarily this makes sense; Alfred had seen the value of a Danish earthwork at Reading; a well-sited defendable concentration ares for his forces would have been invaluable to him in those despearate days.

Speculation has been taken far enough; Ellisfield Camp is a very striking ancient earthwork.

Acknowledgements The library facilities and archives of the Portsmouth Estates were freely made available to me by the late Mr A. P. Rowland the Agent, who himself had valuable local knowledge. I am grateful for this. I now wish to thank the present Earl for permission to use information thus obtained.

Mr R.D. Fordham of Farleigh Valoines gave me permission to visit the site as and when I wished. My wife gave me considerable help with research and work at the Archive Office in Winchester and with the site survey. My son, Hugh, discussed with me the Drift geology of the area. Shirley Williams visited the site, inspected trees, especially the yew tree, and discussed the flora of the area with me.

For all this help I am very grateful. The speculations are my own.

F. D. MAYO

References:

Abbreviations used

OS Ordnance Survey GS Geological Survey Proc. HFC Hampshire Field Club Proceedings ASC Anglo-Saxon Chronicle VCH Victoria County History: Hampshire

1 GS sheet 284 drift, 1 inch to 1 mile 2 H. W. Timperley and E. Brill: Ancient Trackways of Wessex (Phoenix House - J M Dent & Sons Ltd, 1965) See also C. Cochrane: The Lost Roads of Wessex (David & Charles, 1959 page 52)

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L.V. Grinsell Folklore of Prehistoric Sites in Britain (David & Charles 1976)

- 10 L. V. Grinsell: Folklore of Prehistoric Sites in Britain (David & Charles 1976)
- 11 Henry Moody: Antiquarian and Topographical Sketches in Hampshire (Winchester 1846) page 150
- 12 A letter dated 5th November 1975 from the Hampshire County Museum Service to the writer
- 13 Monica Edwards: The Badgers of Punchbowl Farm (Michael Joseph 1966) page 113
- 14 Eilert Ekwall: Dictionary of English Place Names, 4th ed (0xford 1960)
- 15 Asser: Alfred The Great (Penguin 1983) King Alfred's Will also H.P.R. Finbury: The Formation of England 550 to 1042 (Paladin 1976) pages 131-4
- 16 David Hill: "The Burghal Hidage: the Establishment of a Text", Medieval Archaeology 13, 1969 (pages 84-92)
 17 O.G.S. Crawford Wessex from the Air (Oxford 1928) pp 36-40
 18 Stephen Johnson: Later Roman Britain (Granada 1980) p 97

- 19 Proc HFC Vol. 14, 1938-40 (page 31)
- 20 Grace Simpson: Britons and the Roman Army (Gregg, 2nd ed 1966)
- 21 VCH

YOUNG ARCHAEOLOGISTS

Peggy Drury has offered to start a local group of Young Archaeologists and would be glad to know of anyone who is interested (12 upwards). Once she knows how much interest there is, she is planning to arrange regular meetings (probably on Saturday mornings), trips etc. There is a regular and interesting newsletter. Please ring Basingstoke 52084.

VIABLES REPORT

Offprints of the report by Martin Millett of the Excavations at Viables Farm conducted by the Society in 1974-6 are available shortly, price £1.50. Mary Oliver can place a bulk order if you let her know by the beginning of April. Please ring Basingstoke 24263.

LEAR'S MAGICAL LANTERNS

Barbara Lovell has given us advance notice of another showing at the Central Studio on Friday June 7th. As well as being a spectacular and fascinating show, this has some historical interest as it is based on hand-painted and photographic pictures made between 1820 and 1900 and uses the Stewart Triunial Lantern which was made in 1885 of rosewood, mahogany, brass, enamelled tin, platinum and gold leaf.

VISIT TO BRIGHTON HILL SOUTH EXCAVATIONS

Stephen Rendell has offered to show our members and Friends of the Willis Museum round the site at 6.30 pm on Tuesday, 9th April.