

SHORT CROSS-VALLEY DYKES.

BY DR. J. P. WILLIAMS-FREEMAN.

Short Cross-Ridge Dykes are familiar to the Field Archaeologist. They occur on most if not all of our chalk ridges which carry a ridgeway, and have been discussed by Dr. Eliot Curwen,¹ Mr. Heywood Sumner² and myself.³

Short Cross-Valley Dykes are not so well known, as the geological conditions which gave rise to them are not so common. They are found across a hard bottom which has an ancient road along it where the sides of the valley were impracticable to travelling in pre-historic days. These conditions are found on the chalk in places where the valley slopes are covered with a deposit of "clay-with-flints" sufficiently thick to grow impenetrable wood and undergrowth and the flints washed down into the bottom have formed a bed hard enough to carry a road, and so stony as to grow nothing but scrub.

In Hampshire, especially in the eastern half where there is much clay, these "deans" are common, as the number of dean place names shew—the four short Froxfield entrenchments, the largest cross-valley dykes known to me, are across the upper end of "Basingdean."

Like cross-ridge dykes, cross-valley dykes may be of univallate or bivallate profile—the Froxfield entrenchments are all strong univallates and obviously defensive in purpose. I propose to describe three weak bivallate sets of cross-ditches whose purpose is by no means so obvious.

PLAN I.

I. **Cross-Valley Ditches 1 mile S.W. of East Tisted.**

These lie across the Gosport—Alton road, 300 yards north of the sixth milestone from Alton and about half-a-mile north of where the main road crosses under the railway. This is undoubtedly an ancient road: it is crossed between Alton and West Meon by no less than four linear earthworks, two of them univallates, and it must have carried the traffic from pre-historic times onwards across the wooded country from Alton to the Meon Valley and straight up from West Meon to the great ridge road of the South Downs by Old Winchester Hill and thence on to Porchester.

1. "Covered Ways on the Sussex Downs," *Sussex Archaeological coll.*, 1918, lix, pp. 35-75.
2. "Earthworks of Cranborne Chase," p 62 *et seq.*
3. "Antiquity," *March*, 1932, pp: 24-35

The Cross-banks are conspicuous objects on the west of the high road and were noted by Aubrey in the 17th century. They lie across a flat stony dean about 100 yards wide which is occupied by the present road on the west, then on the east of the hedge by a narrow field and then by the railway. They are clearly visible up to the railway.

On either side of the flat dean the ground rises rather steeply at about 1 in 8 to the edge of the woods which are about 250 yards apart, the open ground being chalk on the slope and flinty gravel on the flat; the wooded plateau above being of course clay-with-flints. The earthworks ran from wood to wood.

Immediately west of the road they consist of two contiguous bivallate ditches—a “double bivallate”—at right angles to the flat valley, with a broad bank between them; but at the edge of the slope they bend up the hill in a south-westerly direction and soon separate into two single bivallates. The northern one curves up the hill nearly due west and peters out directly it enters the wood, and the southern ditch bends further to the south and ends at the corner of an ancient cultivation area bounded by lynchets at right angles: here the lower bank is lost in a lynchet and the upper dies away as it enters the wooded ground. It is often extremely difficult to be certain which is the older when lynchets and linear earthworks get mixed up in this way, but here from the way two parallel N.S. lynchets stop at the ditch and do not re-appear further along the slope of the valley, and the lower bank is lost and absorbed at the corner of the ancient field, it seems likely that the Celtic cultivation is later than the earthwork.

On the east of the road and between the hedge and the railway the earthworks are quite straight, but, having no slope to exaggerate the size of the banks and preserve them from attrition, are much slighter and are reduced to only a foot or two in height. The central, broad, middle bank spreads out and a third ditch appears in the middle of it, thus converting the entrenchment into a triple bivallate of three ditches and four banks. On the east the ground rises steeply to the wood and the entrenchment disappears on a bank or lynchet running north.

A measurement where the work is most striking gives the vertical height of the banks above the ditches about 7 or 8 feet where the slope of the ground exaggerates it and about 3 feet where the reverse is the case. The overall horizontal measurement being 120. As regards the date of the earthwork, it is probably earlier than the lynchets and a worn fragment of pottery picked out of the bank was of Iron Age, though beyond that, undateable.

The converging single bivallates on the west side and the additional ditch at the bottom bring the earthwork into the class

of multiple groups of cross-dykes such as are found on the ridge of the South Downs west of the Arun the purpose of which is not known, but they fit well with the suggestion that I have made elsewhere that they may have served the purpose of penning and sorting cattle driven into an open space from the wooded ground around them, as well as dealing with animals travelling along the road.

There is a univallate bank and ditch of slight profile facing north which runs across the valley about half-a-mile further north. It runs from near Gillswold Farm on the southern slope of a side valley facing north and can be traced to near Colemore, a distance of over two miles—from its form and position, evidently a true boundary ditch of some sort. It may well have been the boundary of the territory to which the multiple group of cross-valley ditches belonged.

There are two other similar fragments each about half-a-mile long which appear to be connected, one crossing the road and the other further east. They are about half way between Chawton and Faringdon and if joined up would be about a mile and a half long. They are of the same univallate profile, but face south. These, and the above mentioned long cross-dyke have been recently discovered by Mr. O. G. S. Crawford.

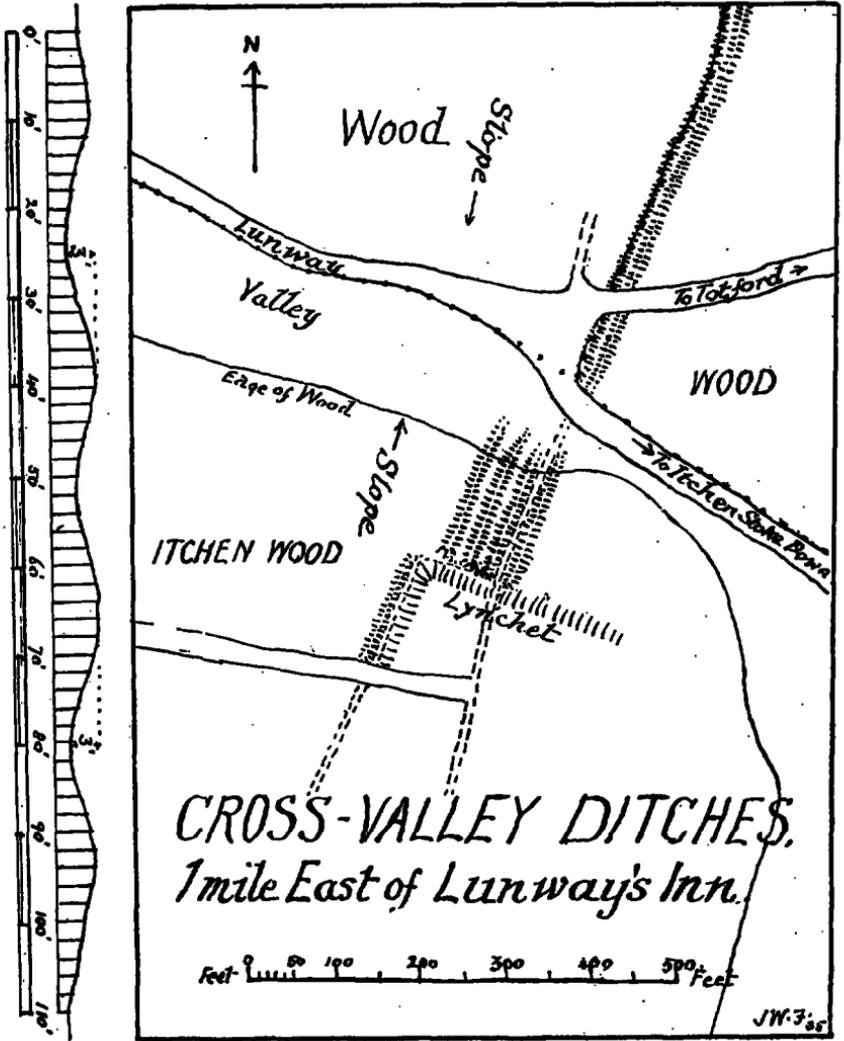
PLAN II.

2. Long and Short Cross-Valley Dykes on the Lunway, one mile east of the Inn.

The Lunway is an old pre-historic track coming across the downs from Stockbridge and the West. It crosses the Winchester—Basingstoke road at the fifth milestone from Winchester where stands the lonely old drover's Inn—the Lunways Inn—hardly recognisable in its modern guise. Half-a-mile east of this, the road gets into the clay-with-flints country and runs along a stony dean between Micheldever and Itchen Woods, and about a mile from the Inn it forks, the true Lunway going to the left over Northington Down and crossing the Candover stream at Totford, and on by the sheep-way and maulth-way to London. The right-hand track, still an unmade drift-way, goes over Itchen Stoke Down to join Mr. Belloc's "Pilgrim's Way" up the Itchen Valley.

It is at this fork that the valley is crossed by a single bivallate ditch (another discovery of Mr. Crawford's) with two remarkable additions on one side.

The dean at the point where the road forks consists of a flat flinty bottom about 75 yards wide covered with a very light scrub and bounded on either side by a rather gentle slope of clay growing fairly thick wood and undergrowth.



PLAN II.

The single bivallate begins on the wooded plateau 150 yards north of the Lunway, a parish boundary running along its western bank which now serves as a fence of the standing wood. It continues the line of a very weak single bank and ditch which may or may not be ancient. On the east of where it begins there are several low banks and irregular ground which rather suggest an ancient settlement, but I have found no pottery or other evidence to confirm it.

Where the ditch crosses the tongue of wood between the forks of the road its bivallate character is extremely well-marked, and it proceeds up the wooded slope to the south as a holloway going through a well-marked lynchet to the plateau where it is continued as a level track. It is to the right (west) of its course up the slope that the two remarkable short double-banked ditches are constructed, forming with it a very complete example of a triple bivallate entrenchment.

These two short ditches begin at the side of the dean a few yards outside of the edge of the wood and are only 39 yards long. The middle one of the group of three ditches so formed, with its banks, stops very abruptly about 6 feet from the foot of the lynchet, the western one and its outer bank rather less so.

The lynchet is a well-marked one with a slope of 15 feet horizontal and $4\frac{1}{2}$ feet vertical and an extremely well-marked right-angled corner about opposite the western bank of the trifossate system. There is a 6 foot space along the northern face of the lynchet which may have carried a track, for round the corner along its western face runs a well-marked holloway, with a definite bank on the west, which runs south for a long distance. Whether this holloway was a continuation of the outer ditch of the system or whether the latter originally stopped as dead as the middle ditch it is impossible to be certain; there is no doubt whatever about the abrupt end of the middle ditch.

Now what was the date and purpose of these ditches? As to date, the fact that the long bivallate cuts through the lynchet and the short ones conform to it would make one think that they are later, but it is quite possible to argue that the ditches may have been constructed first, stopping on the top of the slope and the lynchet and square corner of the ancient field made to conform to them, the track up the eastern bivallate having cut through the lynchet at a later date.

As to the purpose of the ditches, the long single bivallate may have been a cattleway used as a boundary to territory and an obstruction and toll bar to the traffic along the Lunway. For the use of the short ditches I can think of no explanation except that they were used as penning ditches for cattle.

3. Cross-Valley Ditch 1 mile S. of Netherton.

The Netherton valley runs down from Combe to Hurstbourne Tarrant, one of the most beautiful dry valleys in Hampshire. It carries the old road from Hungerford and Inkpen, crossing the high ridge of the North Downs in front of the western entrance of Walbury Camp close to Combe Gibbet. It must always have been an important road for cattle between the lower country and the ridgeway.

A mile south of Netherton it runs in a typical open flinty dean about 70 or 80 yards wide between wooded slopes, and is crossed by "Wodens Dyke"—a name of very doubtful antiquity.

West of the valley the dyke can be traced on the high ground as a single bivallate ditch for about a mile as far as near Wilster Copse and perhaps further, but where it crosses the dean it is a typical double bivallate somewhat wasted. On the eastern slope it is lost in the wood and has not been traced further. A section taken to the west of the road shows the highest C.D. vert. to be $3\frac{1}{2}$ feet and the overall horizontal measurement to be about 68 feet.

Nothing has been found to suggest its age, but it compares with other short bivallate cross-ridge dykes, such as that, for instance, on Hockley Golf Course, near Winchester, though in that case an air photograph seems to indicate an enclosure connected with it, or with the triple bivallate cross-ridge ditches at Leydean on the South Downs near East Meon.

As to use and purpose, one must be content to say that it is probably the same as that of the other short cross-dykes.



THE NETHERTON VALLEY.



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'WODEN'S DYKE' CROSSING THE NETHERTON VALLEY.