

PREHISTORIC RACES AND
THEIR REMAINS IN THE OLD CLERE
COUNTRY OF HAMPSHIRE.

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The country in the north of Hampshire which is known now as the Clere district, comprises the three parishes of Kingsclere, Burghclere, and Highclere.

Two circumstances however show that the district known by this name Clere, was formerly more extensive. The name denotes a clearing or an open space, and the natural features of the chalk downs extending from the comparatively low ground near Basingstoke, to the high ground at Combe Hill or Inkpen Beacon, show that there must naturally always have existed over this area open or clear spaces, where the chalk lies close to the surface, and no trees can grow. The area of the Tertiary clays and loams which exist north of the chalk area, and like it extend from the south-east towards the north-west, was that which was formerly covered by the great forest of North Hampshire. North of Basingstoke, this was known as Pamber forest, near Kingsclere as the forest of Wytingley or Freemantle, and further westward another woodland area was known as the forest of Chute. Clearings were made here and there in this forest area in the early Saxon period, and probably in the time of the Romans. Existing place names also point to the former larger extent of what was known as the Clere area, or forest clearings. Near Basingstoke is a small place now called Cliddesden; but which was named Cleresden at the time of the Norman Survey. In Kingsclere is a tything known by

the forest cutting name of Clerewoodcot, and in the north-west, close to Combe is a hill known as Clarendon Hill, a name also derived from the Saxon word Clere.

The ridge of this area extending from near Basingstoke to Combe Hill, forms the watershed between the drainage basin of the Kennet, and that of the Test. The streams which flow northward to the Kennet are for the most part permanent streams, while the water drainage from the chalk to the southwards is chiefly an underground drainage by which the springs along the course of the Test are fed, supplemented in wet seasons by bourn streams from occasional springs.¹

Before the surface of what is now known as Hampshire acquired its present features, Palæolithic man roamed over this area, and examples of the stone implements used by him have been found in the gravel of several parts of the Clere district, some of which collected by Dr. J. Stevens are in Reading Museum. The wild animals now extinct in this county, whose remains have been found in this area or concerning which references exist in early charters or other documents, are—the red deer, the ox, known as the Celtic shorthorn (*Bos longifrons*), the wolf, the wild cat, and the beaver.

Of the Neolithic or Iberian race many remains have been found. Skeletons in a contracted state, the characteristic relics of Neolithic interments in a sitting position, have been met with near Andover, at Crux Easton, and elsewhere. The remains of one of these skeletons are preserved in the Hartley Museum. Some good examples of longbarrows in which contracted skeletons of this age usually occur, also exist on the chalk downs.

Of Neolithic weapons and implements many examples have been discovered. Some polished celts of this age found on the border of the area under review, are in the possession of Dr. Andrews of Basingstoke, and others are recorded by Dr. Stevens as having been met with in 1866, at St. Mary Bourne,² where polished hatchets, winged and oval scrapers, leaf shaped and barbed arrow heads, halves of polished axes,

¹ See Paper by the author on "The Springs and Streams of Hampshire." Papers and Proceedings of the Hampshire Field Club. Vol. II.

² A Parochial History of St. Mary Bourne by Joseph Stevens, p. 50-51.

cores from which flakes have been struck off, and pot boilers have been found. Other worked stone implements and tools of this age are also recorded by Dr. Stevens as having been found at Egbury, Stoke, Warwick, Upper Week, Hurstbourn Tarrant, Enham, and Finkley farm.¹

That a large population lived within reach of the earth-works which remain, is proved by their size. No remains of permanent buildings have been found within these areas, and as the labour of their construction must have been too great for them to have been constructed for defence by passing bodies of armed men, there is but one other object for which they could have been thrown up, and that is as strongholds for defence, or castles of refuge in case of attack, for the people who lived mainly in the valleys near to them.

We cannot suppose that any prehistoric race would be so forgetful of their own resources, as to construct defences beyond their numerical ability to defend, and the large camps of the old Clere district must have required for their defence a large number of fighting men.

According to the calculation made by General Pitt Rivers in regard to the number required to defend Cissbury Camp in Sussex, Walbury Camp would by the same method of calculation require a defending force of more than five thousand.

The camps on Beacon Hill and Ladle Hill near Burgclere, although not so large, would each require a force of several thousand defenders.²

The other relics of the newer stone age which have been found within the old Clere area, include sling stones at Walbury camp on Combe Hill, pot boilers at Finkley and St. Mary Bourne, some of which are in the Hartley Museum.

As pioneers in unknown countries at the present time commonly follow the courses of rivers up to their sources, as a convenient means of exploration, so probably it happened in that distant era during which the Neolithic or Iberian settlers in this part of England, coming from the continent,

¹ A Parochial History of St. Mary Bourne by Joseph Stevens, p. 50-53.

² See paper by the author, on "The distribution and density of the old British population of Hampshire." *Journal of the Anthropological Institute* vol. xviii., p. 334.

found their way up the river Test to its sources in the southern parts of the Clere district. Overton and Andover have probably derived part of their names—'over,' or 'ouer' as spelt in some old documents, from the language of the Iberian race, for 'oure' is at the present time a Basque water word, and the Basques of southern France and northern Spain, are the modern representatives of the long skulled people, who buried their dead in a sitting or contracted position in cists or under dolmens, over which they commonly heaped up long barrows.

The old Clere area of north Hampshire has many remains of the Bronze or Celtic period. Some of the earthworks and camps which remain, may possibly in part, be as old as the Neolithic age. They cannot be of later date than the Bronze period. Many examples of bronze implements have been discovered in the Kennet valley adjoining the Clere country on the north.

The round barrows which are the characteristic funeral mounds of the bronze age, and in which remains of cremation of the dead are almost invariably found, are well represented in the old Clere area. The Seven Barrows, south of Burghclere are the most remarkable group of round tumuli in the county. There are remains of another group of Seven Barrows, at South Tidworth, and there is a reference to the former existence of seven barrows in the common fields of Basingstoke, before their enclosure. Round barrows occur also on the downs south of Burghclere and Kingsclere. The remains of several exist within a mile of Ladle Hill. Many have certainly been obliterated since the date of the enclosures, by modern agricultural operations. The mystical number seven, which clings to groups of barrows in this area, and which occurs also in connection with mounds and altars in remote countries, and of remote antiquity, is a circumstance suggestive of widely spread prehistoric migrations of people possessed of similar ideas of veneration.

The Celtic place and water words which still remain in the old Clere district are of both Gaelic and Cymric origin.

The Gaelic word 'larroch,' a place or house site, occurs probably in the name Laverstoke, known as Lavrochestoch, at the time of the Domesday Survey. The words 'ean,' and

'eannagh,' a water source and a marsh, occur in the names Andover, Ampert, Enham (written Eanham in an Anglo-Saxon Charter), Hen-pit, and the Anna manors of Domesday Book.

A curious scrap of pre-historic folk lore occurs in connection with the name Hen-pit, the source of an occasional bourn stream in Vernham Dean, and the name Cock-pit, the source of an occasional bourn stream in Netherton Valley. Cock-pit is evidently a corruption from Ock-pit, and derived from the Celtic word 'ock,' a water source. The phenomena locally known as the meeting of the Cock and Hen, where these occasional streams unite at Hurstbourn Tarrant, is one which seldom occurs, but whose etymological explanation leads us back through the dim ages of the Saxon settlement, and Romano-British time, to that more distant period when one of the Celtic clans in these adjacent valleys named the water source in it 'ean,' and the other clan spoke of a similar source in their valley as 'ock,' a circumstance pointing to a difference in language and the probable existence here of clans descended from two branches of the Celtic race, Gaelic and Cymric.

The Cymric words 'coed,' a wood, and 'pwl,' a pool, survive in the names Quidhampton, Polhampton, and Red Poles pond. Similarly the words 'cwm,' a hollow place, and 'ar' and 'ache,' water, survive in the names Combe, Cerewartune (now Cholverton), and Ashe.

One of the most interesting survivals in the old Clere area which has come down to us from the age of the Celts, is the use of dew ponds as a water supply on the highest parts of the chalk downs. They are in use at the present time, and it was by such ponds, close to the camps or castles of refuge that a temporary water supply for their defenders was obtained.¹ The dew ponds within or near several of the larger camps at the present time are sufficient for the water supply of some hundreds of sheep, even in the heat of summer. A dew pond exists at the west of Wallbury Camp, about 950 feet above the sea level, overlooking the

¹ See paper by the Author on the distribution and density of the old British population of Hampshire,—*Journal of the Anthropological Institute*, Vol. xviii, 336, 7.

village of Combe. Wigmorash pond, 912 feet, is also near this camp. Another example, 700 feet high, occurs south of Beacon Hill, Burghclere. Ladle Hill on the opposite side of the Burghclere valley, has also a dew pond, near to the Celtic earthwork which exists there. It is probable that the ditches of the camps were so constructed as, if necessary, to hold rain water and act as dew ponds.

The old roads or track-ways leading up to the great earthworks on the Clere hills, and on Combe hill, must of course be as old as the camps themselves. The most remarkable old British road of the district is the Harroway, which passes through the county from east to west, and may be seen between Kingsclere and Overton.

The surviving folk-lore of the Clere country includes some references to giants and fairies. The long barrows which still remain, are sometimes spoken of as giant's graves, and the folk-lore of Clere preserves the memory of at least one local giant, who is sometimes mentioned under the name of Den Drovy, and whose habitation was supposed to have been in an earthwork at Woodcot Dower.

The fairy rings which occur in places on the lower slopes of the chalk downs, preserves for us some references to the fairies of tradition. Another more important reference occurs in the Clere place-names in which the syllabic word 'sid' occurs. 'Sid' was the fairy-mound of the Celtic age,¹ and we have still remaining in the Clere country, Sid-on Hill, Sid-monton, and Sid-ley wood south of Ashmansworth, a surviving group of fairy mound-names, such as occurs nowhere else in Hampshire.

The remains of the Roman period in the Clere country include the great Roman road, which passed through it from Silchester to old Sarum. This road is still used as part of the modern highway for a short distance from Whitchurch to Kingsclere, and its line is marked for miles by a plantation of trees, known as Cæsar's belt. It was known as the "herepath," or army path, in Anglo-Saxon time. In the western part of this district this Roman road was also known as Chute causeway. Although the Anglo-Saxon state was built

¹ Origin and Growth of Religion, p. 148, by Professor J. Rhys.

upon the ruin of the past, this road was no doubt utilised until it was worn out.

The great and systematic collection of flints, which must have been made for building the walls of Silchester, in the early period of the Roman occupation, cannot but be regarded as a circumstance connected with the Clere country before the range of history. This accumulation of flints was so great that the whole open parts of the chalk country, within reach of Silchester, must have contributed the flints which lay on the surface of the ground, for that great fortification. It is not improbable that some of the flints were quarried, and some of the numerous chalk pits or quarries, into the Upper Chalk, or chalk with flints, which abound in the Clere area, may have been laid under contribution for this purpose. We know that the chalk-pits were used in Roman time, for Pliny says that the British people marled their land, and Roman coins have been found by Mr. C. Cooksey, a member of this club, on the slopes of an ancient chalk-pit between Basingstoke and Sherborne. These great chalk-pits, some of them disused for centuries, point to a system of agriculture as old as the date of the Roman Conquest. The right of the state, to a certain portion of the produce of mines, saltworks, quarries and chalk-pits, was a recognised Roman tax.

Among the Roman remains which have been discovered in this district, are coins, chiefly of the later empire, which have been found at Overton, on Kingsclere downs, and on Beacon Hill, and the pavements of villas which have been met with at Redenham, Thruxton, and Castlefield, Andover. Other Roman remains of various kinds have been found at St. Mary Bourne, Egbury, and Finkley near Andover. Roman pottery has been met with in various places, and an abundance of it, chiefly in a broken state, on a site near the railway station at Hurstbourn. A Gaulish gold coin and querns of Romano-British date have been found at St. Mary Bourne.

Among the surviving Latin place names of the old Clere country are the Portway, the local name for the Roman road from Silchester to Old Sarum, and the name 'castle' which clings to a field near Andover, and which is locally applied to some of the camps. Other partly Latin place words are Strat-

ton, a farm north of Kingsclere, Sidminton, and Chementune, the Domesday name for Kimpton. One of the Cold Harbours of Hampshire also, is situated near Egbury, close to the Roman road.

The Domesday name for Itchingswell is Eccleswell, the well or spring near the church, and this place is as remarkable an example of a church being placed close to a spring, as even Holybourn, near Alton, which gets its name from the holy bourn that issues from the churchyard itself.

The traces of early christianity which have come to light in this district, or near it, comprise coins bearing the Chi Rho monogram, the earliest christian symbol, several of which have been found at Silchester, and the crosses found on the Roman pavement at Thruxton, believed to be about the time of Constantine the Great. The site of the old church at Itchingswell, close to the remarkable springs which exist there, cannot have been an accidental circumstance, but was probably chosen from that early reverence for water sources which was derived from pagan time, and continued in christian time far down into the middle ages, if, indeed, it is yet extinct, as emblematical of the fountains of living water, which were revered by Aryan races in general, as well as by the Hebrews. Seneca says "We pay divine honour to the sources of great rivers," and so we well conclude that in Romano-British time, reverence of some kind was paid to such springs as those at Itchingswell.

There is however in the Clere country a more remote example of the prehistoric reverence for water sources. Occasional springs exist close to the Seven Barrows south of Burghclere. For many years in succession you may find no stream there, but occasionally, after long intervals, the water rises so copiously close to these barrows as to form a roaring little torrent through the village of Litchfield: I cannot think that the selection of this remarkable burial site could have been accidental, and have had no reference to the occasional flow of this stream. The springs or fountains of water near the Seven Barrows will certainly flow again, as they did occasionally in the time of the Celts, but we cannot say when, nor exactly how they will flow, nor could they, and it appears

to me that this burial site must have been selected by them as symbolic of a new but unknown life, which the Druids taught according to a contemporary Roman writer,¹ and that in this remarkable group of barrows and occasional springs we may recognise a symbol of the prehistoric Celts, intended to express their belief in a new life, but concerning which they knew neither its time nor its nature.

One of the most ancient church dedications in this country is that to St. Martin, and an example of this dedication occurs at East Woodhay in the Clere country. An ancient church due of corn was payable on St. Martin's day, and was known as *ciric sceat*, or church seed. An old French law book quoted by Lambard thus describes church seed, "fuit un certain de blee batu, que chescun home devoit al temps des Brytons, et des Engles, porter a lour eglise le jour de Saint Martin."²

The continuity of such a custom from British to Saxon time appears to me to point to the continuity of christianity itself from one period to the other.

Of prehistoric Anglo Saxon remains, Clere has many examples. The district possesses to this day two place names connected with Frige or Freya, the goddess of Saxon and Scandinavian mythology, from whom our name Friday is derived. These place names are Freefolk, which is mentioned in Domesday Book as Frigifolc, the place whose folk revered Frige, a circumstance pointing to a survival here of pagan worship, perhaps in a Norse settlement, after the general conversion of the West Saxons, and Freemantle in the parish of Kingsclere. Freemantle is apparently a name compounded partly of the Latin word 'mantellum' a covering or mantle. The worship of Freya was to a large extent that of the "mother earth" of our remote pagan forefathers, and it is certain that at and near Freemantle the earth becomes covered with wood as with a mantle, as the chalk on the surface gives place to clay on which the wood grows.

¹ Lucan, quoted by Matthew Arnold in *Celtic Literature*, p. 51.

² *Ancient laws and Institutions*, ed. by Thorpe, (*Glossary*) and preface to *Archaionomia*, Ed. 1568.

There is also a trace of Woden remaining in the name Wansdyke near Fáccombe. This name must be of Anglo Saxon origin, seeing that similar earthworks were in the middle ages, ascribed not to Saxon mythological personages, but to the devil.

Of land tenures whose origin may be traced to prehistoric date, the Clere country affords examples of two kinds;—1, Colonial tenures, 2, Allodial tenures. The colonial tenures were probably survivals from the Roman period and derived from the Coloni, well known through the old Roman world, who were settlers that could not remove, but otherwise were free tenants. Domesday Book tells us that there were in the time of Edward the Confessor, certain thanes who held land in Ewehurst and Overton, by this tenure; they were free, except that they could not remove.

Allodial tenure was the tenure of the original Teutonic settlement, by which land was given to freemen, subject only to the three obligations of repairing burhs or local fortifications, repairing bridges, and service against an invading enemy. The most remarkable instance of this tenure is that of the Burghclere coliberti or freemen, who gave their name to this place, and of whom as late as the time of Domesday Survey there were twenty four, who were certainly under the obligation of repairing their burh.

Between the hills south of Burghclere there is a road in the valley, which in prehistoric time must have formed a natural pass from the forest land on the north, along the Berkshire border, to the open chalk country on the south. The hills, now named Beacon Hill, and Ladle Hill, on either side of this roadway, both rise to about 700 feet above the sea, and both have the remains of a large Celtic earthwork on the top, so that it must have been a very hazardous undertaking for an enemy to force this pass, when these camps were defended in Celtic time.

The camp on Beacon Hill is in the old manor or parish of Burghclere, and that on Ladle Hill in the parish of Litchfield. The Burghclere coliberti held their land under an obligation to repair their local defences, while the land in the old manor of Litchfield was not held by a similar tenure.

The results of this difference in early land tenure may, I think be seen in these two camps at the present day, for while the banks or ditches of the Ladle Hill camp are partly obliterated, those of the Beacon Hill camp are among the most perfect in the county, a circumstance due, I think, to the comparatively late repairs by the Burghclere coliberti.

Another interesting survival in the extended Clere area of north Hampshire of prehistoric customs, is that connected with the food rent due to the crown at the time of Domesday Survey from the manors of Basingtoke, Kingsclere, and Hurstbourn Tarrant; all royal manors of ancient demesne. These three manors were under the obligation of providing between them, entertainment for the king for one day, *i.e.*, as I understand it, a food rent sufficient for the royal household for one day. Food rents were customary payments as remote in their origin as the Celtic period, when they were common.

Among the traces of the Norse or Danish settlers in the Clere district are the place names ending in the characteristic word 'thorpe.' Edmondsthorpe one of the tythings of Kingsclere, and Ibthorpe in the parish of Hurstbourn Tarrant are examples. There is also Easthorpe close to Basingtoke. All these 'thorpes' were parts of the royal estates and we know that the Saxon kings did allow settlements of Norsemen to be made by grants of land on royal manors separated from each other.

The names Holdrops Hill and Waits applied to farms north of Kingsclere also appear to be derived from the Scandinavian words, 'thorpe' or 'throp,' and 'thwait,' a forest clearing.

Of the early system of Saxon agriculture we find remaining traces in the terraces on the hill sides at Faccombe and elsewhere known as linches, and in the surviving place words linch, Linksfield, Linkenholt, which refer to similar old linches, and also in the word 'doles,' which refers to strips of land.

Since the inclosure of the commons and the extinction of ancient common manorial rights, the aspect of the Clere country has become greatly changed. These common rights were the privileges of the agricultural communities whose organisation was as remote as that of the primitive townships or tythings, which subsequently became for the most part

developed into manors under the administration of lords, in accordance with local customs as decided by the manor courts.

Ibthorpe is however an interesting exception to this general rule. It never had a lord of the manor, the commoners of Ibthorpe being by immemorial custom, lords of their own manor, a circumstance which coupled with the name of the place, points to an early Scandinavian settlement there with peculiar privileges.

The commoners of Pamber were also entitled by ancient custom to elect their own lord of the manor.

The earliest inclosures of any kind of which we find traces, are those of prehistoric Saxon date, when the primitive settlements which became known as the tuns, were formed. The list of these tuns, in the north-west of Hampshire, which have come down to us, include many well known places in the old Clere district, such as Overton, Wolverton, Netherton, Earlston, Wootton, Penton, Shipton, Upton, Easton, Quidhampton, and Polhampton, and these must have been some of the most ancient clearances made in the forest parts of the old Clere country.
