



DUMMER.¹

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¹Extension of a Paper read before the Hants Field Club on its visit in September, 1901.

Dummer, a quiet village in the hills of North Hants, affords a good example of how ancient and mediæval history can be rescued from oblivion. Its history shows the connection of North with South Hants; with other counties, as Somerset and Northampton; possibly with Scotland; with the national glories of the Peninsular and Continental conflicts; with the mastery of the Ocean, and with the Anglo-Saxon brotherhood across the Atlantic.

Dummer is situated near the high road from London to Southampton, close by the 50th milestone from the former place. Merely an agricultural village to-day, it has had a notable history which can best be understood by investigating its past condition step by step, by looking at it as it was in the yesterday of agriculture, which ended with its Commons Enclosure Act of 1734, or as it was in that long mediæval day which began with the Norman dawn of English history; preceded by days of Saxon, Roman, and Celtic life, almost destitute of written history, though each stage left some more or less recognisable traces.

Before noting in fuller detail the influences of man on this site, we may fairly speculate on the circumstances that induced his settling and continuing here. Much has been written about "Early Man" in England, but nothing leads us to suppose that he differed from modern specimens of the species in needing food and drink and some shelter from climate. As is the case with the modern man, it was

necessary for him to make provision for neighbourly actions not wholly of a friendly character. In what respects then was this a suitable spot on which to obtain his necessities?

There are not sufficient data to warrant dogmatic assertions; but it is most probable that the geologic period between the Palæolithic (or Early Stone) Age, and the Neolithic (or Late Stone) Age, whether occupied here by glacial action or by less violent sub-aerial denudation only, did not produce very great changes in the hill and valley distribution, or great variation in the soil contrasts of North Hampshire.

Thus we may presume that this neighbourhood was found by early man in a condition geologically resembling that of the present day, and that, when first the round-headed Stone Age man arrived here as a hunter, he found a wide area of primeval downland with short herbage, a scrub of juniper gorse, and broom, and occasional stunted tree-clumps, kept low by the wild winds and shallow soil. The reason for this may be seen geologically in the scanty proportion of surface soil, clothing the grand back-bone of south and middle England, the Chalk of the Secondary Geologic Period. At this easterly end of Hampshire, the South Downs of Sussex and the North Downs of Surrey enclosing the Weald, have united to form the main northern part of the county, and they together run westward to join the Wiltshire hills. On the hills of North Hants, the denudation of later imposed Tertiaries is complete, and even of the upper layers of chalk, only patches are found. Yet occasionally on a hill, as at Farleigh, $1\frac{1}{4}$ miles east by south, and on Dummer Hill itself, patches of a thicker clay may be seen, considered by competent judges to be the "Clay with Flints" layer of upper Chalk strata. It is to this patch of clay on the hills, that I venture to attribute the presence here of Primæval Man. With the open chalk downs as the only natural site for human life, all valley hollows being occupied with woodland, thicket, marsh, and swamp in varying density (a suitable, but dangerous hunting-ground), the home of beasts of prey, of wildfowl, and the more useful but still wild form of deer. The need for some form of cereal culture, would

compel life on open and light land, which could be tilled by the rough husbandry of the Stone Age. I may remark in passing, that polished stones, perhaps used as hoes, have been found in a similar village near. Universal need for water would lead to choice of sites, where it could be obtained without danger, as in springs from the hill-side. A clay soil would give unusual opportunities for artificial storage, whether like the dew pond often met with in some large Celtic Camps, or the more casual and less elaborate pools, such as develop later into village ponds. Such clay-capped hills would also invite early efforts in clearing, through their not being so densely wooded, and through their possessing a soil which, as it came under cultivation, would show a better return for labour than the bare hillsides. This then is the geological condition of the neighbourhood. The early occupation by men is also supported by the place-name. Dummer, variously spelt, not infrequently and most probably, Dunmere, may be thus explained: "Dun"—Celtic Hill-fort; "Mere"—marsh, wet ground; indicating an Early British centre, tribal, or sub-tribal, or family, in as marked a situation as Silchester, the camp in the woodland. Thus, it would appear that Dummer was originally a hill-fort of the Goidels, that branch of the Celtic family generally considered to be the first to settle in England, later represented by the Gaels of Scotland, and possibly not wholly antecedent, but partly co-existent with the Brythons or Belgic Celts, till lately called the Cymry. The Goidel, of course, is not the Stone Age, Pre-Aryan man, whom we should have expected to be here first, but as there are no certain traces of his language, and as his dwelling sites would suitably be retained by later comers, we may from the meaning of this place-name, ascribe the earliest demonstrable occupation to him. In the burial-place near the east border of the parish, we have evidences of his near neighbourhood. This burial place was discovered in 1888, and it has since been partly examined. No fewer than twenty specimens of burial urns were found, of hand-made earthenware, some of which have been given by Sir Nelson Rycroft and Sir Richard Rycroft to the British Museum, and

to the Museums at Reading, Winchester, and Southampton. Their being found in an inverted position in damp clay ground, will account for the difficulty of removal in a whole state. The plough, moreover, had frequently broken off portions of them. They contained generally blackened earth, with some traces of calcined bone, but no signs of a bone pin, or a brooch or a button. No art, in any form, except a fanciful wicker pattern impressed on the outside of some of the vessels, was evident. Some were as large as a two-gallon basket, some the size and shape of a Stilton cheese, and many intermediate. One of about 4 inches in depth and diameter, of harder material, found on the top of another, of coarser make, may probably be classed as a food-vessel. There are no traces of a burial mound near this interment site, but a bank and ditch in the copse bounding the field, may be the remains of an old work. The position is lofty, and commands a view of distant country on all sides. Some few worked flints have been picked up in the same field, chiefly of a rough character, but Neolithic. One of them, a good specimen of hammer-stone, is now in the Reading Museum on loan. These are not polished stones, and were considered by Dr. Stevens, of St. Mary Bourne, as Paleolithic in type, although Neolithic in position. This burial site is distinct of its class, yet it is not far distant from the other sort of early burial, viz., the Tumulus or Mound. In Farleigh parish, about a mile east, is a small round barrow, at the very top of the Candover valley. Three-quarters of a mile further, in the same direction, is a larger round one, with a northerly outlook over Basing and the upper Loddon valley; half a mile south of the southern border of the parish of Dummer, is a large round tree-planted tumulus on the summit of the next hill, known as Winchester Plain Clump—a name which recalls the time when this district was as little cultivated as modern Salisbury Plain, although enjoying greater fertility. In the north-eastern corner of the parish, now forming part of Kempshott Park, a degraded tumulus—perhaps more than one—can be seen, and old inhabitants have described pottery turned out from it some fifty years ago, as similar to

the urns of our burial site. On the top of Kempshott Hill, are two degraded tumuli, which are recorded as containing nothing but black ash some fifty years ago. These are two of from twelve to twenty found in the upper Loddon valley, on Basingstoke Down and Battledown and Bull's Bushes Farms, many nearly worn out; one very decided one at Newfound, near the Railway Junction, and all round in pattern, pointing to the occupation of this, the watershed between Loddon and Test, by early Britons. One of these, however, nearer Basingstoke, is a long Barrow.

From the Watershed character and situation of this Dummer burial site, it seems fair to consider it to have been occupied, and used as such, by Neolithic men, either by those living near in the Dun, or else in the upper Candover valley; or possibly important enough to be the burying-place of those who first made *oppida* or duns on the North Hants hills, of which Winklebury, Woodgarston, Cottington, Sidbury, Beacon Hill, Egbury, Walbury, and many more are in view from here. These might well have brought their mighty dead hither, to a place whence the funeral pyre would be widely visible; and a community with its local Dun, at that part of the village still called Tower Hill, would naturally select the more favourable soil whereon to settle, while they in turn became the proper guardians of the site.

One other feature of the neighbourhood, although much less speculative, demands notice now, as contributing part of the unwritten history of the place. The Roman road which forms the western boundary, may be readily seen, at least with the assistance of any map founded on Ordnance Survey. This road is parallel with, or on the site of, the modern Turnpike road from London to Winchester, via Basingstoke. An old inhabitant has claimed for this the name of Popham Lane, not only where all use that name at the cross turning to North Waltham, but along the Dummer parish border, and even passing it as far as Blind Man's Oak, (of which more later). It seems natural for the road from Winchester to Popham, which diverges but little from this line of Roman road, to get the name of Popham Lane from connecting the Abbey of Hyde with its property of

Popham Manor, whence they obtained one of their four knights to pay the crown dues. On this side of Popham, it might still have that name, if representing the oldest and later tracks to that centre, and, if so, it would very probably cease, not at Blind Man's Oak, but at Ganderdown (against the milestone), where the modern road diverges from the Roman road, which about a mile further on, is marked in a map of 1760, as Salt Lane.

A due allowance of scepticism, is healthy in such matters as this, and on my first coming into Hampshire, I used this road as a scapegoat for general unbelief. I made it prove itself to be what it claimed to be, and this is how the evidence worked out. Like Dummer itself, the Roman road demands consideration, not locally only, but generally, not in small sections, but relative to other surroundings. It has somehow become an aphorism that Roman roads are straight. Some have moralised on this and adduced from it a peculiar directness in the Roman mind. A marked exception, however, occurs in the road leading from Winchester to Portsmouth, where the contour of the hills probably compelled the Romans to cut out the now curved road round Chilcombe. Other examples, too, are known. On the Dummer western boundary we have a straight line stretching south to Winchester and north to Silchester. Yet taken in detail, at rather more than half a mile from the Dummer parish, northerly, can be found a decided angle in construction, due, I would suggest, to the necessity of striking the line for this and such roads, by means of the distance-signalling of beacon fires. In this district, fires at Winchester, on Popham Hill, at Kempshott, and at Silchester, would not fall into exactly direct line, but to keep within sight of each other, the line would be driven into the hollow occupied by Southwood Farm, and even then would develop an angle such as is still to be seen in the line of beeches bounding the Kempshott estate. This line might have been modern and accidental, as far as Dummer is concerned, but that its antiquity is indicated without doubt by its being in use as a parish boundary. It is necessary to note that not merely is this line, this so-called Roman Road, a boundary to the

parish now being considered, but that it also is used as such by many other parishes close by, some of which seem to go out of their way to reach across the country, in order to be bounded by it. Surely this proves an antiquity quite venerable; for it must have existed as a marked feature, albeit artificial, in the country, at least as early as the Saxon Settlement, when the boundaries of contiguous properties would gladly seize on a definition so marked. Now, if it were a marked feature then, and one of so artificial a character, what people other than the Romans, or the Britons under their orders, could have constructed it? In the parish itself, no other traces of Roman life have been noted. But it is possible that its nearness to this previously discussed road, made it, as was the case at Popham, a suitable site for *Mansio* or for *Statio*, of which, however, no traces remain.

One more question may be referred to, and it is one which needs extensive acquaintance with Roman Roads to answer. This is the section of road over which much burning of heart has been experienced, in the attempt to prove that *Calleva* was not Silchester. Taking Antonine's *Iter* No. 9, the distance by this road is too short between *Calleva Atrebatium* (Silchester), and *Venta Belgarum* (Winchester). But (vide Stevens, *S. Mary Bourne*), the mileage falls correctly by supposing journey No. 9, was taken from *Calleva* (Silchester), by way of *Vindomis* (Finkley), where by a southerly turn on the Gloucester to Winchester road it duly reaches the latter, thus missing our section altogether. *Iter* No. 4; corroborates the position of *Vindomis* at Finkley, and so incidentally supports the explanation of No. 9. But if *Iter* No. 9, from Silchester to Winchester were not direct, is it too much to infer that this direct line which now forms a boundary of this parish was not then in existence? A point in favour of this is obtained by noting some of the outer earthworks of Silchester of an uncommon character. Two or three of these can hardly be defensive, as they are centripetally placed with the city as centre, and appear to be the remains of beginnings from the Silchester end of roads, towards Winchester and Salisbury, not completed because

not in a line with those that were used, and are now traceable. On the other hand, we have no data by which the successive formation of these roads could be fixed. Possibly something might be adduced from a branch road beginning near this parish, and being the antecessor of the present Stockbridge Road, leading on to Broughton and Sarum.

While dealing with the parish boundaries it seems wise to point out some further details of unwritten history, partly of Saxon but possibly of earlier date, which they record. The west side we have seen is well defined by the Roman Road, the east side seems equally so by a hollow, and in the upper part by a bank and ditch, marking off the field wherein is the Neolithic Burial Ground. Although this bank and ditch, now within and on the edge of the copse is not very conspicuous, yet it is sufficiently evident to warrant the induction that it was a defence to the burial place, and that the hollow leading up to it was a naturally chosen track from the Candover side of the country. These two features together would be sufficiently prominent to serve the first Saxon settlers as boundary marks. The south side is equally clearly marked, but by natural rather than by artificial features, for it follows the lie of the country, the hollow of a subsidiary valley of the Candover system of hollows which at some very early date may have contained a stream gently winding yet fairly straight among the hills from North Waltham village down to Axford, and so flowing into the Itchen. At the present day this may be traced by its levels, and it can be seen that the village pond of North Waltham near by, needs only another three to five feet elevation to run in this direction instead of finding its way, as it does now, into the Test river. This southern boundary has a southern diversion to enable it to include Downland. The northern limit is much more arbitrary, and does not contain characters of so distinct a nature.

Before leaving this, the early dawn of Dummer's history, there is one word more to be said about North Waltham, (North as distinct from South or Bishop's Waltham, both being Episcopal manors). A recent writer in a book on

Essex, ventures to oppose the usual derivation of Waltham as the Ham in the clearing or wood (a meaning which Professor Skeat also disallows) by getting the word from the Wealas or Welsh, settlers there, which he explains in a manner very suitable to Waltham in North Hants, and possibly to the other in South Hants... Thus it may be the especial home or settlement of those British Celts who had so strongly resisted the Saxon invasion, that although dispossessed of their own special centre (as at Dun-mere), they were strong enough to resist being exterminated, or even enslaved, and to retain power to form a new settlement for themselves. We know that "Wealas" was a title by which Saxon writers described these aboriginals, and it is a marked coincidence that a Celtic centre of such importance as Dun-mere should have a late Celt or Welsh name on its border.

Yet one more word is due to this early period of Saxon history recorded not in document but in existing relic. A reference to a small scale map¹ will show the shape of the parish to be roughly square. Its boundaries have been referred to as N.S.E. and W.

If you look at the shapes of parishes in North Hants, at least in this part of it, on the Chalk Down, you will find this squareness very uncommon. For the most part the parishes are in strips, broad or narrow. But Dummer, with its two neighbours, Farleigh and North Waltham, are irregular or squarish blocks, and it seems fair to suggest a possibility from this circumstance, perhaps in conjunction with known soil conditions, &c., that they were the earliest formed among Saxon demesnes or properties (the predecessors of parishes) being picked out as personal holdings at an earlier period than the large area round; and secondly, that the rest of the country, folkland at a later date, was subsequently parcelled out in strips of varying breadth, but all containing a proportion of fertile valley and bare down land.

It is foreign to this special subject to notice more fully how so many of these ancient holdings are bounded at their extremities by the Roman roads of Hampshire.

¹See facing page 53.

With the Saxon period it might have been hoped that we should obtain some definite written history, but there is no record at present made public of any Saxon charters relating to this parish. Nor, although burials with metal weapons have been spoken of by report, are there sufficient data to lead us to consider these as Saxon in date. The nearest approach to Saxon record is to be obtained from that grand source of domestic and local history, known as Domesday Book, and that only by reading its statements as throwing a faint light on the period anterior to its compilation, to which I hope to return on a future occasion.
