

SWEYN'S CAMP, SWANSCOMBE.

BY A. H. A. HOGG.

THIS earthwork is situated in the parish of Swanscombe, Kent. It is marked on both the 1 inch and 6 inch Ordnance Survey Maps. On the 1 inch map, it is shown in Square B.11, sheet 115, Popular Edition, and on the 6 inch sheet 10 NW, Lat. 51° 26' 16" N., Long. 0° 18' 23" E.

The remains consisted of some pits, probably the sites of dwellings, lying to the north of a Motte, which stood slightly above the 200 foot contour line, on a small hill of London clay covered with a layer of clayey gravel about six inches thick, and commanding an extensive view of the river Thames and South Essex. The Roman Watling Street is about half-a-mile to the south, and the river is about one-and-a-half mile distant to the north east and north west, but it is probable that the site was chosen only on account of the proximity of the village, and the ease with which the small hill could be converted into a motte.

The most important references to the site are as follow :

- (i) *Cæsar's Cantian Campaigns*, by A. J. Dunkin (London, 1858), p. 215, under the heading "Stone Park Wood," evidently referring to what is now known as Swanscombe Park Wood : "At the Northernmost extremity of the wood, near the church of Swanscombe, on Mr. Russell's farm, also exists a mighty tumulus, called the Folly."
- (ii) "Dartford Antiquities," by F. C. J. Spurrell, *Arch. Cant.*, Vol. 18 (1889), p. 306 : "There is another (earth-walled enclosure) on the hill top overlooking the Church of Swanscombe, the diameter from the top of the mound is exactly 100 feet, quite circular, with a ditch. At one point are banks and ditches difficult to explain." The earthwork is numbered 49 on the map accompanying the paper, and is described as a "Circle Camp."
- (iii) *Gravesend* (Homeland Handbooks, 1906). Introduction by G. M. Arnold, p. 21 : "The camp of Sweyn is still farther to the west (of Gravesend) in the forest of Swanscombe."

- (iv) *Victoria County History of Kent*, Vol. I (1908), p. 410: A short account under the heading of "Sweyn's Camp" with an inaccurate plan.

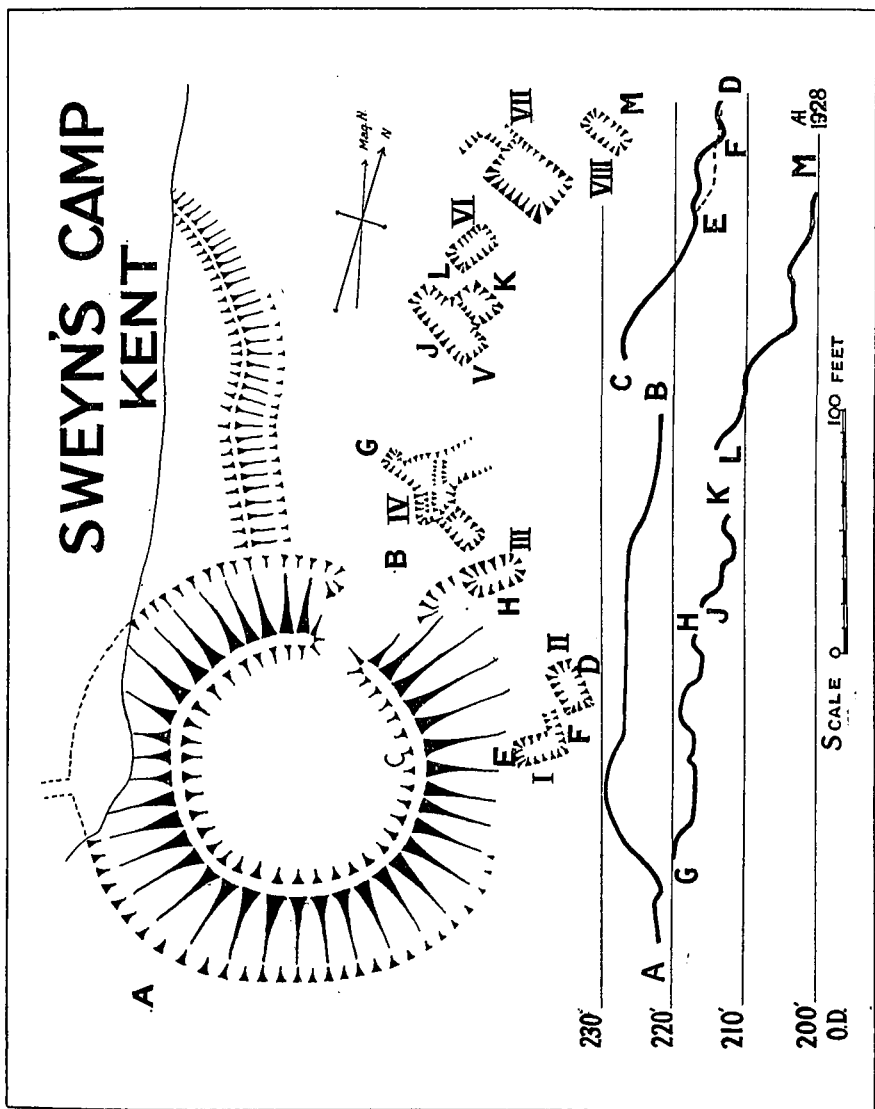
From these extracts it appears almost certain that the site was formerly called "the Folly," and that the name "Sweyn's Camp" has been applied to it since 1890. The third extract probably indicates how this occurred.

There is a considerable number of ancient deeds, etc., relating to Swanscombe in the British Museum, and these might throw some light on the remains.

During 1928 the clay of which the hill was formed was removed for the manufacture of cement, and the earthworks were destroyed. Owing to the thick undergrowth no complete plan of the site existed, and advantage was taken of the clearance of the wood to prepare the accompanying survey. The heights above Ordnance Datum are only approximate, but the relative levels of the sections are correct.

The circular earthwork is evidently a motte, and was probably crowned with a wooden castle. There is no indication of a Bailey. No dateable objects have been found within it, but it is almost certainly Norman. The four sections cut through it by the mechanical navvy were carefully examined. They showed that the bank was composed of material from the ditch thrown up on to the original surface, and that the interior of the camp represented the original ground level. The greatest depth of made earth was generally about a foot. The section at B showed that the bank had formerly crossed this gap, but that there had never been a ditch here. The original form of the ditch could nowhere be determined, the filling passing imperceptibly into the undisturbed clay. There was a small channel to drain the ditch on the west side. It was destroyed before the survey was made, but its approximate position is shown.

The only objects found in this part of the site were three fragments of baked clay, one of which seems to be a portion of a brick or thick tile, and an iron nail about an inch long



associated with a few small fragments of charcoal and burnt clay. The baked clay was found on the west side of the camp at a depth of about a foot from the top of the bank by a workman and the nail at a similar depth from the top of the bank almost on the spot marked C.

The small bank running north from the camp appears to have been a hedge bank. The northern end was destroyed before the site was surveyed. It continued along the crest of the hill for some distance and gradually died out. Its maximum height was about two feet above the bottom of the ditch.

The pits to the north of the camp are probably the sites of dwellings. It is most unlikely that they were gravel or clay pits. Their form is too regular, and the material from them has been heaped up at their sides. They bear a distinct resemblance to the houses found in the Saxon village at Sutton Courtenay,¹ but must be of much later date. This is quite possible, as cottages of this type were in use at Athelney, Somerset, as late as the middle of the last century.²

Pits I and III at least are probably contemporary with or earlier than the camp, as its ditch seems to have been omitted owing to their presence.

The western end of pit V and the southern end of pit VI were excavated to the undisturbed clay. In pit V this occurred at a depth of about two feet, but its boundary was very indefinite. On and in it lay the fragments of a costrel and a few fragments of iron. All the iron was corroded away, but the clay preserved the form of one piece. This was a bladelike object about three inches long and half an inch broad. The costrel is of hard red ware, unglazed. Its body is almost spherical, $5\frac{1}{2}$ inches in diameter, with a spout $2\frac{1}{2}$ inches long at the side. It is of fifteenth century date. A small piece of the base of another pot of coarse red ware with a grey centre was also found. Nothing was found in pit VI, but at a depth of about $2\frac{1}{2}$ feet a layer of gravel mixed with clay 4 inches thick lay on the undisturbed clay.

¹ *Archæologia*, lxxiii, 147; lxxvi, 59.

² *Proc. Somerset Arch. Soc.*, iv, 175.

Since the plan was prepared another pit has been found about 80 feet north east of pit VIII. It is L-shaped, with limbs pointing north east and north west, and seems to be similar to the rest in character and size, but is too overgrown for its dimensions to be certain.

Thanks are due to Mr. Brazier for obtaining permission for me to examine the site, to Mr. Elliston Erwood for much help and advice, to Mr. L. H. Mann for assistance in preparing the sections, and to Mr. Hobson of the British Museum for dating the pottery.