

LINEAR EARTHWORKS IN THE FROXFIELD, EAST TISTED AND HAYLING WOOD DISTRICT

By STEPHEN COFFIN

WEST of the upper Rother valley is an area (O.S. 6" Sheets SU 62 NW, NE, SE; 63 SE; 72 NW, SW; 73 SW; 1" Sheet 181) extending from near East Tisted at the north to Froxfield and Hayling Wood (near West Meon) at the south. The soil is Upper, and occasionally Middle, Chalk with a clay-with-flints capping. Through the clay capping are two dry valley intersections, where the soil is chalk and sometimes gravel: one from Alton and the north, at first south-west and then east along Basing Dean to the Ashford gorge and the other from the west along the Bramdean valley and Bordean to Bordean gorge. These were the main tracks along open ground through the forest. To the south of the valley

running south-west from Alton, beyond an area of clay of a little less than a mile, is more open chalk giving access west from the Bramdean track.

Extending over this countryside are several earthworks (see Fig. 1, map). They might be regarded as three groups, the main elements of each of which can be reasonably considered to be contemporary. Whether the groups are themselves contemporary is less clear, but it is possible. Their possible dating and function will be considered finally.

The map shows their arrangement against a geological background with spot-heights. I have walked these earthworks and the area



Plate 1. Group II earthwork, ploughed down, crossed by A32 (SU 694313), from NE. Photo. S. Coffin.

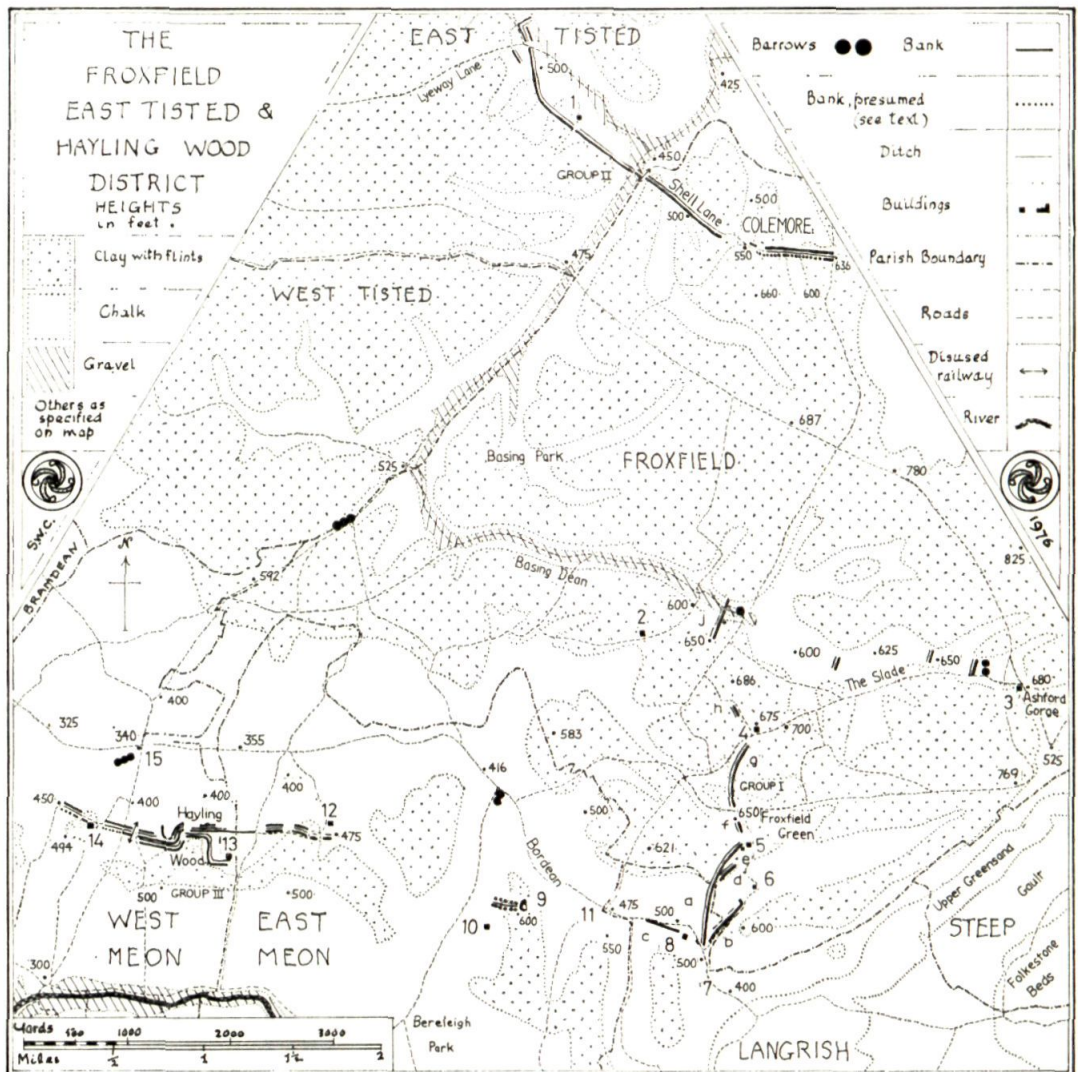


Fig. 1. 1. Plain Farm, 2. Hurst Farm, 3. Week Green Farm, 4. Bydean Farm, 5. Ventom's Farm, 6. Staple Ash Cottages, 7. Bordean Gorge, 8. Bordean House, 9. Mare Pond, 10. Tigwell Farm, 11. Lower Bordean, 12. Peak Farm, 13. Parr's Barn, 14. Marlands, 15. West Meon Hut. Based on the OS 1:25000 Map (Crown Copyright reserved).

over a number of years and the following is a summary of my records and impressions. A longer account has been deposited with the National Monuments Record in London. I have a full cover of air photographs but

more air photography and field work are necessary to expose further the problems posed by the dykes, especially in relation to settlement.

GROUP I, FROXFIELD. This mainly consists of a number of dykes more or less end-on, but describing three rough arcs convex to the west and a series of very unusual cross-valley dykes.

The Froxfield Long Entrenchment: bank typically 7 to 16 ft. above ditch to west of it, 40–80 ft. overall. This begins (a), see map, just north of Bordean House (7000 2445) and curves, mostly at the edge of woodland near the summit of ground falling east, towards Ventom's Farm where (e) the interested occupier has, I am informed, found objects between thirteenth and sixteenth centuries. There is a notable angle in the dyke's run at this point where some predecessors of the present finds, significant to the dykes, might be detected by further working of the ground. The relationship with the slighter stretch of ditch (d) extending north-east towards or among these finds cannot be determined on the ground because of disturbance. Stretch (b) is separated from (a) by a re-entrant valley: the bank is 10 ft. high. It ends in a sharp angle to north-west. North-west from Ventom's Farm begins another curving stretch (f) (g), less in dimensions than (a), broken at first (f) then well defined in a spinney near Green Farm, curving like (a) much ploughed down (g), to Bydean Farm; for the last section the ground falls gently west from it and at approximately 7025 2602, some 26 yards west of the dyke's summit, is an emergent sarsen, about 14 ft. by 12 ft. This is partly excavated and reported elsewhere (Sarsen symposium 1975). The direction of the dyke changes again at Bydean Farm, where the interested occupier has finds, seemingly of no significance: further working here might be helpful. The run, north-west of Bydean Farm, is broken but a trace occurs at (h) and is well shown across Basing Dean (j) where the bank varies between 6 and 10 ft. above the ditch on west and in parts 80 ft. overall (7017 2740).

Short Cross-valley dykes: typically with bank 16 ft. above ditch on west, 80 to 90 ft. overall. Three dykes span the narrow bottom of a dry

valley, doubtless wet on occasion as the nearby name 'The Slade' suggests (OE *Slaed*, 'valley, dell.') In one part where the road dips it is known as 'Slade Dell'. The two eastern are in spinneys. Quarrying across the westernmost shows horizontal banks of flint forming courses in the clay-with-flint bank.

GROUP II, *East Tisted – Colemore*, over 2 miles north of Group I: mainly straight stretches, $2\frac{1}{2}$ miles long, with the ends curving slightly forward; extending across one valley bottom (where it is very ploughed down), (see Pl. 1), and following along the south slope above another valley, at right angles to the first, then at its north-west end turning sharp north-east across the valley floor. The bank in parts is 20 ft. above ditch on north-east (with occasional counterscarp) 90 ft. overall, much lying in woodland. From the ploughed down valley bottom it runs south-easterly, with gaps and in parts levelled, and at its easterly portion near Colemore it shows as a lane where the originally higher southern bank has been obliterated by the lynchet-like result of ploughing.

GROUP III, *Hayling Wood*; 2 miles west of Group I, extending from a short distance west of Marlands farm (6445 2545) (possibly 'The landed property . . . or estate on the boundary', Mawer 1924, 44 – land, 46 – maere; Ekwall 1928, 288 – Mere), bank typically 4–7 ft. above ditch on north – (at the farm the bank is 15 ft.) and 50 ft. overall; it then crosses a north-south valley as a lane where obliteration of an originally higher south bank is seen as at Colemore. Easterly multiple and sinuous, along the edge of Hayling Wood (see Pl. 2), and in Hayling Wood (see Pl. 3), with multiple banks typically 10–15 ft. above ditch to north and 50 ft. overall. Then cast of wood, in parts of smaller dimensions; in a spinney west of Peak Farm is a 6–8 ft. bank above ditch, with counterscarp, extending to Peak Farm (6665 2545) where bank and ditch end. An isolated sunken lane near Mare



Plate 2. Group III, earthwork along edge of Hayling Wood (SU 653253), from SW. Photo. S. Coffin.



Plate 3. Group III, earthwork entering Hayling Wood (SU 654254). Photo. S. Coffin.

Pond (6838 2472) could conceivably mark a link between the Peak Farm dyke and a 10 ft. high scarp (c) near Bordean House running east to the south end of the Froxfield Long Entrenchment (Group I).

The dykes are seen to be varied in form (Hayling Wood is notably different because multiple). One can only guess at their significance. If regarded as a group the 30 square miles embraced is more than can be considered as an economic unit. The Hayling Wood group could fit the role of boundary or possibly defensive dykes to the north of

Jutish territory, but the other two groups seem unsuited to a boundary function; being massive they could to that extent be considered as defensive. They may be of a different phase.

The dykes as a whole are seen to vary in form and are quite dissimilar from so-called 'ranch boundaries' (*Celtic Earthworks on Salisbury Plain* (Old Sarum Sheet), 1934). Their situation and design could be compatible with a Sussex/Wessex confrontation in the seventh century A.D.

REFERENCES

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