

NEW FOREST ROUND BARROWS WHICH DO NOT CONFORM TO EITHER OF THE THREE STANDARD TYPES.

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SINCE Thurnam classified the round barrows under three categories—viz., the "bowl," "bell," and "disc" types—no other type has obtained authoritative and general recognition. Differences, when evident, have been regarded as variations within one or other of the three standard types, or as aberrant and not admitting of classification. This is evidence of the powerful influence of Thurnam's name and of his classic paper on the round barrows.

The object of this paper is to show that in the New Forest there are numerous round barrows of large dimensions, differing from the three standard types, and requiring to be grouped in a separate category. These barrows are distinguished from barrows of the "bowl" and "bell" types chiefly by the flatness of their tops—a feature which has hitherto been disregarded as negligible and having little or no significance. On the contrary, these flat-topped barrows are an outstanding type characteristic of the New Forest. We may refer to them as varieties "A," "B," and "C."

The "A" variety of barrow is perfectly flat, of low elevation, having a slight outside ditch or scarcely any. They are as flat as the top of a table, with some resemblance to a disc barrow, but there is no encircling bank outside the ditch. This type of barrow occurs in Dorset and in Sussex, but it is rare in the New Forest. The writer knows of only one undoubted example, situated in the Hatchet Pond area slightly north of the Stockley to Beaulieu road. It is about 2½ feet high and 54 feet in diameter. Two striking examples in Hampshire which appear to belong to this type are men-

tioned by Dr. Williams Freeman in his "Archæology," p. 276.

The "B" variety is much larger in dimensions, higher in elevation, having a distinctly flat top and (usually) a wide and deep ditch. These barrows are numerous in the New Forest. The largest example is Shirley Barrow, on Sway Common, near Durn's Town. Its over-all measurement across the top is 150 feet, including the ditch, which is 15 feet wide and nearly 3 feet deep. The side of the barrow slopes upwards from the inside border of the ditch at a slight angle of about 10° , forming a sloping terrace about 11 feet wide. Above this terrace the slope is steeper, at an angle of about 15° , up to the border of the level top. Precise measurement of the top is impossible owing to disturbance caused by digging; but approximately the flat top is 50 feet across every way, being one-third of the over-all measurement.¹ The height is about 8 feet above the ground level, and 10 to 11 feet above the bottom of the ditch. The sloping sides of this barrow, with the encircling terrace, are suggestive of the "bell" type; but this is negated by the flat top, by the wide ditch, and also by the absence of any trace of a parapet around the outside of the ditch. Unfortunately, the east-south-east side of this barrow has been dug away, apparently for gravel; and on this side the ditch is nearly filled up, presumably by the gravel siftings.

"Pudding Barrow," near the south-west corner of Stockley Inclosure, is a similarly fine example, having a diameter of about 108 feet. Whether seen in profile or closely examined, the flatness of the top of this barrow is unmistakable; and its measurement approaches half the whole diameter.² Nor can there be any doubt that the flat top is original. The ditch is 15 feet or more wide. Standing at one end of a wide open space in the Forest, this barrow is conspicuous, and the

¹ This is the usual proportional measurement; but in the Pudding Barrow it is greater, being in that example one half.

² See "Ancient Earthworks of the New Forest," Heywood Sumner, Plan XXII, p. 80.

sight of it impressive. Not many yards south of this barrow, close to a field, there is another example 4 or 5 feet high, with an unmistakably flat top.

South of Hatchet Pond, about half a mile along the Lymington road on the right, there is a large barrow. A thick growth of bushes and bracken made accurate examination impossible, but it measured roughly 115 to 120 feet over all, and the top appeared to be flat. There is a wide ditch. On Beaulieu Heath (north-east of Beaulieu), situated west of the Hythe to Beaulieu road, there are three examples, one of them being, in Mr. Heywood Sumner's opinion, an instance of two intersecting round barrows. The flat top of one of these is about 8 yards wide; of another, about 12 yards; and the top of the supposed twin barrows is about 27 yards long and 12 yards wide.¹ North of the Hill Top to Fawley road (east-south-east of Stonyford Pond) there is a group of large barrows.² Time admitted of only a hasty examination. One of these is 30 paces over all, and 10 paces across the flat top. The ditch is nearly filled up. Another is 6 or 7 feet high, 44 paces over all, and the top 14 paces across. Seen in profile, the flat top of the last-mentioned barrow is a conspicuous feature. A third barrow is 7 or 8 feet high, and about 25 paces over all. This tumulus was so thickly overgrown with gorse and bracken that accurate examination was impossible, but the top appeared to be flat. The ditch has been silted up. A fourth example, east of a bank and ditch, is very large and high; but the greater part of the barrow on its north-east side has been dug away, so that its original shape cannot be determined, but the top appears to have been round.

With regard to variety "C," these barrows, owing to the wideness of their diameter without proportionate increase in height, are less convex than the ordinary "bowl" and "bell" types; and they have a flattened appearance. The writer suggests that these barrows may originally have had flat tops which have been somewhat altered in shape by sub-aerial denudation. The sandy soil of parts of the Forest

¹ *Ibid.*, p. 82 and Plan XXIII. ² *Ibid.*, Plan XIX.

would have conduced to this result. A typical example is situated at 135 feet above O.D., a quarter of a mile east of the lodge at the south-east corner of Stockley Inclosure, and near to the south side of Beaulieu road. Careful examination showed the over-all measurement of this barrow to be 112 feet. Its height in the centre is about 6 or 7 feet. The distinctly sloping sides surround a wide top of more or less uneven flatness. A barrow of such dimensions must originally have had a ditch both wide and deep; but the ditch is now represented by a merely shallow depression in parts scarcely discernible. The removal of sufficient material from the barrow to fill up the ditch would have rounded off the border of the flat top, and so have converted the tumulus into its present somewhat flattened shape. Notwithstanding its slight convexity, some evidence of its original flatness of top is easily discernible. In varying degrees, the same may be said of all the examples of this variety. Two of three barrows in a row may be instanced $\frac{1}{2}$ mile south-south-west of the Stockley Inclosure lodge.

Another example is situated between Hatchet Pond and Furzey Lodge. This barrow has been much disturbed. It is 33 paces over all, with a wide ditch, and is approximately flat. Another of the comparatively flattened type, which we may designate as Rhinefield Barrow, is just outside a small inclosure midway between Rhinefield House and the fifth milestone on the Lyndhurst road. Near it is a smaller barrow. The larger one measures about 80 feet over all, and is 6 or 7 feet high, with wide ditch. One other may be mentioned, north of Sway, in the angle formed by two roads, near the tenth milestone. Almost certainly this barrow belongs to the flat-topped variety, but it has been disfigured. The sight of these very fine barrows is impressive, and it is evident that at the time of their construction there was a vogue in favour of flatness of top and largeness of circumference. That the circle had some sacred significance in the minds of the early British people is evident from the fact that in the sepulchral wheel-crosses of Wales and Cornwall it passed over into

Christian uses. The perfection of circular form is seen in the "disc" barrows, which are probably later than the flat-topped type of the New Forest ; but in both this form is emphasized. It is not the height, but the circumference, that is impressive.

The change from roundness to flatness of top was probably connected with some alteration of cult or ritual. The flat top may have been intended to serve some functional purpose connected with the religion of their builders, or with some commemorative ceremony. Referring to the "bell" type of barrow, Mr. Hadrian Allcroft says :—"The ditch is usually interrupted at one point, as it were by an entrance" ("Earthwork of England," p. 526), which is suggestive of some ceremonial observance. In a footnote on the same page, referring to a Bronze Age tumulus at Whatcombe, near Blandford, Mr. Allcroft quotes Professor Boyd Dawkins as stating that "the bottom of the ditch, cut in the chalk, was smoothed and polished into a perfectly well-defined track by human feet circling round the burial mound." On the same authority, referring to a curious oaken circle at Bleasdale, near Garstang, Mr. Allcroft says :—"At its actual centre was a slight mound covering interments of the Bronze Age. The ditch, 5 feet in depth, . . . had been carefully floored with poles laid side by side along the line of the ditch, as if to form a sort of processional way." Here, then, we seem to have evidence of ceremonial observances in honour of the dead, giving support to the suggestion that the flat top of the New Forest barrows may have served such a purpose.

Ancestor worship was an essential part of early religion. One of the oldest forms of human sentiment is embodied in the well-known passage beginning "Let us now praise famous men and our fathers that begat us" (Ecclesiasticus, chap. xlv). It was a custom with the early Christians to gather annually for commemorative worship at the graves of the martyrs ; and the Churches of Christendom have their calendars of saints' days. Nelson's Day and Primrose Day are known amongst ourselves. The level top of the barrows under consideration would have served well as a platform

on the occasion of an annual or more frequent commemorative ceremonial, either patriotic or religious. And without doubt such large mounds were raised over the mortal remains of men who were chiefs and leaders amongst their people.

Mr. H. S. Toms has proposed the term "platform," and Mr. Hadrian Allcroft has suggested "table" as descriptive of the type. Mr. Heywood Sumner regards "table barrow" as being "an expressive and informing name for this type." Either term would do; but the flat top, especially of the higher barrows ("B" variety), more resembles a platform than a table; and as this may have been its intended use, and the purpose which it served, it would seem that "platform barrow" is the more suitable designation of the type.