

## = Worlebury Camp =

Worlebury Camp is the name of the place where an Iron Age hill fort once stood atop Worlebury Hill , which is north of the town of Weston @-@ super @-@ Mare in Somerset , England . This fort was designed for defence , as is evidenced the number of walls and ditches around the site . Archaeologists have found several large triangular platforms around the sides of the fort , lower down on the hillside . They have found nearly one hundred storage pits of various sizes cut into the bedrock , and many of these had human remains , coins , and other artefacts in them . However , in more recent times , the fort has suffered damage and been threatened with complete destruction on multiple occasions . This location has been designated an Scheduled Ancient Monument , and it falls within the Weston Woods Local Nature Reserve which was declared to Natural England by North Somerset Council in 2005 .

## = = History = =

In The Ancient Entrenchments and Camps of Gloucestershire , Edward J. Burrow mentions that probably either the Goidel or Brython people initially built Worlebury Camp . The Belgae people subsequently overthrew the initial inhabitants and occupied the camp for a time , but they were finally destroyed at the hands of the Romans .

Worlebury Camp has been explored at various times over a period of 150 years . From 1851 to 1852 , Charles Dymond , Edwin Martin Atkins , and Francis Warre excavated and surveyed Worlebury Camp . Dymond returned in 1880 to continue the excavation , which lasted until 1881 . Another century passed before the Woodspring Museum from Weston @-@ super @-@ Mare excavated more of Worlebury camp in 1987 to 1988 . Finally , in 1998 , the Avon Extensive Urban Study team performed the latest ( as of 2008 ) assessment of the site .

## = = Hill fort = =

## = = = Background = = =

Hill forts developed in the Late Bronze and Early Iron Age , roughly the start of the first millennium BC . The reason for their emergence in Britain , and their purpose , has been a subject of debate . It has been argued that they could have been military sites constructed in response to invasion from continental Europe , sites built by invaders , or a military reaction to social tensions caused by an increasing population and consequent pressure on agriculture . The dominant view since the 1960s has been that the increasing use of iron led to social changes in Britain . Deposits of iron ore were located in different places to the tin and copper ore necessary to make bronze , and as a result trading patterns shifted and the old elites lost their economic and social status . Power passed into the hands of a new group of people . Archaeologist Barry Cunliffe believes that population increase still played a role and has stated " [ the forts ] provided defensive possibilities for the community at those times when the stress [ of an increasing population ] burst out into open warfare . But I wouldn 't see them as having been built because there was a state of war . They would be functional as defensive strongholds when there were tensions and undoubtedly some of them were attacked and destroyed , but this was not the only , or even the most significant , factor in their construction " .

## = = = Location = = =

The fort is located on the summit of Worlebury Hill , 109 metres ( 358 ft ) above sea level . It is in the present @-@ day North Somerset , above the seaside resort of Weston @-@ super @-@ Mare and close to the village of Worle .

Its occupants would have had a view of the countryside as well as any potential invaders . They would have been able to see out over to Sugar Loaf Mountain , the Black Mountains , the Mendip

Hills , Dunkery Beacon , Sand Point , and Wales . This view is no longer as unobstructed as it once was because there are so many trees spread over the hill .

== Triangular stone platforms ==

There are a number of triangular platforms on the slopes around the hill fort . The apexes of these triangles are flush with the hillside , with the base projecting in the downhill direction . However , the upper surface is approximately level . The front faces of these platforms are about 1 @. @ 7 metres ( 5 @. @ 6 ft ) above the hillside , and they have ditches in front of them to improve their defence . In a letter to Warre , Atkins theorised that the structures were slingers ' platforms or archers ' stations . Several sling stones have been found around them , offering some credence to the theory that slingers stood upon these platforms . Dymond mentions the stones in his book :

Several of them were broken , as though they had been used in the attack [ on the fort ] , as , indeed , many of them probably were .

== Walls and ditches ==

Worlebury Hill is bordered on its north and west sides by steep cliffs dropping down into the Bristol Channel between Weston Bay and Sand Bay . These would have rendered the fort nearly invulnerable to attack from those directions . Nevertheless , the fort still has one wall on its north side and one on its west side , both very near the edge of the cliffs . On the south side , a single rampart and a ditch guarded the fort . The level east side was protected by two stone ramparts and five ditches . Parts of these ramparts were over 11 metres ( 35 ft ) high measuring from the bottom of the ditch as of 1875 .

The walls themselves are around 1 metre ( 3 @. @ 3 ft ) thick . However , because they are dry @-@ laid stone , the removal of a few stones would be sufficient to bring the entire wall collapsing down . To prevent access to the walls themselves , the inhabitants of the fort raised large breastworks around the base of the walls by piling up rock rubble against the bases . These rubble barriers are over 1 @. @ 22 metres ( 4 @. @ 0 ft ) high , and in places they are over 1 @. @ 22 metres ( 4 @. @ 0 ft ) thick . Attackers would have had to clear away the rubble before being able to attack the wall , and all the while they would be under direct fire from defenders on the top of the wall .

== Archaeological findings ==

== Storage pits ==

The area inside the outer wall has a series of hut circles and 93 storage pits cut directly into the bedrock , which is only around 60 centimetres ( 2 @. @ 0 ft ) beneath the surface of the soil in most places . Eighteen of the Storage pits are in what Dymond calls the " keep " , one is in the transverse fosse ( a fosse is a ditch usually dug for protection ) , and seventy @-@ four of the pits are outside the " keep " but still enclosed within the exterior walls . The average size of the pits is around 2 metres ( 6 @. @ 6 ft ) long by 2 metres wide and 1 @. @ 5 metres ( 4 @. @ 9 ft ) deep . The largest pit is roughly triangular , with sides measuring 3 metres ( 9 @. @ 8 ft ) , 2 @. @ 7 metres ( 8 @. @ 9 ft ) , and 2 @. @ 4 metres ( 7 @. @ 9 ft ) long . The smallest pit is 1 metre ( 3 @. @ 3 ft ) long by .7 metres ( 2 @. @ 3 ft ) wide . The inhabitants used them to store grain , as is evidenced by the kernels of barley and wheat and the shards of pots that were found in the pits . Several of the pits contained the remnants of peas and the remains of burned woven baskets . In addition , researchers also found sling stones and spindle whorls dated to the 1st or 2nd century BC in them .

Eighteen of these pits were found to contain the remains of human skeletons , which are now stored in the Weston @-@ super @-@ Mare Museum in Weston @-@ super @-@ Mare . Eighteen full skeletons were found , of which ten show evidence of a violent death ( including sword cuts in

the skulls ) . It is possible that the Romans or the Belgic raiders attacked the fort and killed the inhabitants .

= = = Artefacts = = =

A cast copper alloy penannular collar of special interest to archaeologists has been found at the campsite . It may indicate that this hilltop site was used even before the Iron Age , since related artefacts tend to be found with Bronze Age items , and it was the first of its type found in Britain . In 2006 , a related copper penannular brooch dating to the 5th or 6th century AD was found in a spring between Brecon Beacons and the Black Mountains in Wales . A gold penannular bracelet was found in the Perry River .

Roman coins have been found at Worlebury Camp since the Romans had established a presence by the end of the 1st century AD . Many of the Roman coins bear the image of the Western Roman Emperor Honorius . This was inside the fort proper . Another coin was located by Trinity Path which leads towards the fort .

Other findings at the Worlebury campsite include animal remains , including the bones of pigs , oxen , horses , deer , goats , and even small birds . Limpet shells have also been found near the bones . Archaeologists found iron objects , adding further credibility to the idea that this fort is from the Iron Age . These objects include a chisel or borer , several spearheads and javelin heads , and an iron cone with charred wood inside and a rivet hole through the cone . Dymond assumes that this cone was once a plowshare . Stone artefacts , mainly slingstones and scrapers , have been discovered at the site . Just less than 36 flint chips have been found , of which some may be arrowheads . One good @-@ quality arrowhead has been found . In addition to these , Dymond recorded finding a lead lump about the size of a walnut that he decided was probably a sling bullet . Glastonbury type bead @-@ rim pottery was also found at this site . A socketed bronze axe from the late Bronze Age , which was found at Worlebury Hill in 1883 , is in the Ashmolean Museum .

= = Damage to the site = =

= = = 19th century = = =

Development of Weston @-@ super @-@ Mare since the 19th century has resulted in three episodes of potentially irreversible damage to the site . A quarry started operation in the southern side of Worlebury Hill in 1815 to mine for galena , calamine , and stone . The Bristol and Exeter Railway arrived in Weston @-@ super @-@ Mare in 1841 , making it profitable to expand the village into a town . In 1842 , Weston @-@ super @-@ Mare became a town with the granting of the Improvement and Market Act of May 1842 . This act also proposed developing houses right over the brow of the hill . This would have gone straight through Worlebury Camp ; however , the actual expansion never reached the site . By 1853 , some development had occurred according to the proposed expansion , but it had skirted the hillfort and continued to the east .

= = = 20th century = = =

In the early 20th century , the Worlebury fort itself was damaged by boys rolling stones , including some from the walls of the fort , down the hill on which it stands . The Axbridge District of the Somerset Archaeological Society was taking steps to prevent such damage from happening again .

Some of the trees planted in the early 19th century had become very large , and their roots were growing into the archaeological structures . In 2005 , the Forestry Commission gave permission for North Somerset Council to fell 300 trees to reduce the subsequent risks . A member of the North Somerset Council , Christopher Richards , said : " If we had a storm up here and these trees came down , then the entire hillfort could be destroyed . "