

Welcome to the Scheduled Ancient Monument of Oliver Cromwell's Battery



Oliver Cromwell's Battery is an earthwork enclosure defined by a bank and ditch thought to date back to the Iron Age. Its original purpose is not known.

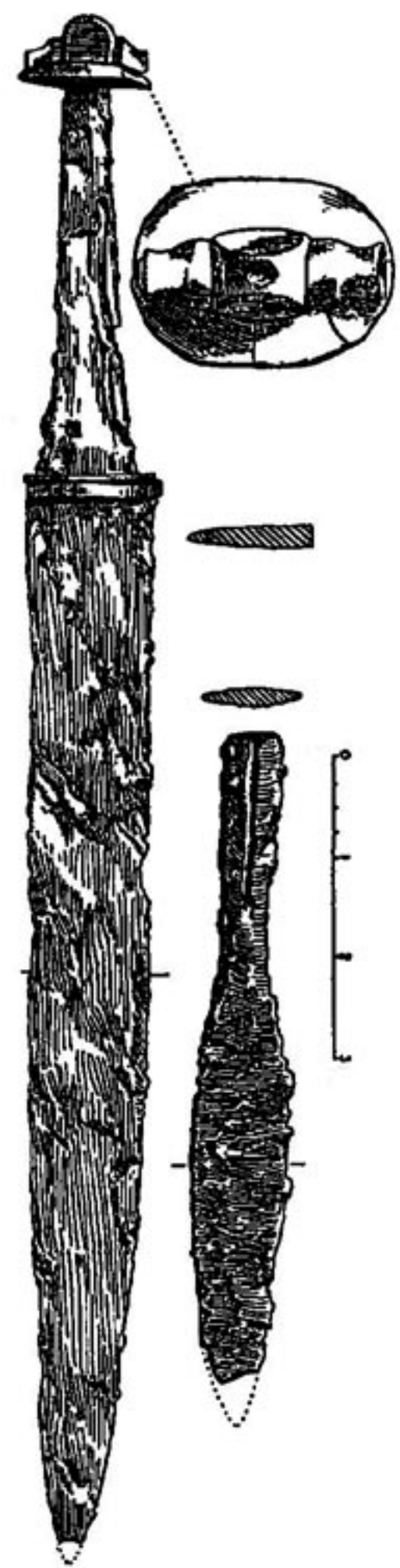
In 1930, a team led by local archaeologist W J Andrew, excavated at the site, finding Iron Age, Roman and Civil War artefacts. More importantly they also found, on the north east side of the enclosure, a Saxon grave. A young male had been buried with a bronze enamelled hanging bowl, a *scramasax* (long knife) and a spear head. The artefacts, dating from the late 7th to early 8th century can now be seen in Winchester City Museum. The remains of the young man were left in situ. He was probably a warrior of some importance, placed here as a 'sentinel burial' and may represent one of the last pre-Christian burials in Winchester.

It is not known what part the enclosure played in the English Civil War. Both Royalists and Parliamentarians may have used the site as a defensive fort. A spur dating to the period was found during the 1930's excavation and the site was known as Cromwell's Camp from c1780. Oliver Cromwell did lay siege to Winchester Castle in October 1645, but from a gun battery on a hill to the west of the Castle.

The Wider Area

A pebble mace head, used by hunter-gatherers from the Mesolithic Age was found close to the site, as were a Neolithic flint axe and knife. The Bronze Age barrow on adjoining land to the north of Downlands Road was also excavated in 1930 and produced as many as eight burial urns and a large number of skeletons. The locals knew the site as 'a burial mound of the great plague at Winchester in 1666', but an archaeological investigation in 2009 identified it as an execution cemetery. Of particular interest were two individuals who were fettered together, which is the first such artefact to be found in a burial context in England. The injuries to the bones were consistent with their being cut down from the gallows that stood on top of the barrow. The bones were carbon dated and found to be from around 980 – 1170 AD.

During the First World War, Oliver Cromwell's Battery became a staging post for horse artillery as they made their way to Southampton, in transit to the battlefields of France. The 6th Reserve Veterinary Hospital (Pitt Corner Camp) was opened here to care for up to 3000 horses at a time. After the war, the layout of the army huts provided the plan for the village that exists today.



Bronze Age cremation urn



The Barrow to the north of Downlands Road was excavated in 2009. The bones of two individuals fettered together, showed injuries consistent with their being cut down from the gallows that stood on top of the barrow.



The Winchester bronze bowl, a detail of the Saxon enamel decoration and find drawings from the Hampshire Field Club Papers and Proceedings recording the 1930 Archaeological Dig.



Timeline

Mesolithic	Neolithic	Bronze Age	Iron Age	Roman	Early Medieval (Saxon)	Medieval	English Civil War	First World War
8000 – 4000 BC	4000 – 2000 BC	2000 – 800 BC	800 BC – AD 43	AD 43 – 410	410 – 1066	1066 – 1485	1642 – 1645	1914 – 1918



OLIVER'S BATTERY PARISH COUNCIL