

## **An Extract from a Booklet "Country Ramblers" by Edgar Brookes Published in 1908**

"A Medieval Moat Interesting Relics Near Shirley"

At the present time the interest of local antiquarians is being drawn to an ancient moat which is situated at Monks Hall, between Shirley Racecourse and Earlswood. Although noted on the Ordnance maps and mentioned in Dugdale, the moat appears to have escaped general attention for a long time, in consequence of the place having become overgrown and obscured by thick undergrowth.

The moat, which embraces a space not far short of a couple of acres, is situated on the Mount Estate, to which the public has recently been given access for the enjoyment of fresh air and recreation.

When the undergrowth was cut away the sweep of the old moat was revealed, also the embankment, which in some places rises as high as 20 feet.

There is a path round the top of the embankment, and the centre of the enclosure has evidently been a pool for the supply of water for persons inhabiting the encampment.

This moat at Monks Path, which stood close to Arden Forrest, is larger than those usually found; moreover, the banks are higher. It would seem, therefore, that it was a more important encampment than the others in the locality. Mr Cossins, the well-known local antiquarian, who inspected the place, thinks that it is of the period of the thirteenth or fourteenth century.

It is, he says, not of Norman origin, nor early British, and he adds that its object doubtless was to afford protection against marauders and robbers who frequented the woodlands, and against whom protective measures had to be adopted by the owners of cattle and other property.

Such moated encampments were usually found only a little way removed from one of the old roads or streets which traversed the country, and the proximity of the moat to the Monks Path Street was therefore quite in accordance with the practice which was generally observed in the construction of these moated resorts.

Professor Windle's interesting book entitled "A School History of Warwickshire" contains a reference to "the Mount" encampment near Shirley. "Within what were clearly the limits of the Forest of Arden one would hardly expect to find examples of these early earthworks, but there are one or two circular examples which may have been village enclosures of some of the Celtic bands who inhabited its fastnesses when driven from other parts by the invading hordes of Saxons. One of them called "the Mount" is situated near Cheswick Green, a little off the main road - Birmingham and Stratford-on-Avon. It is of the simplest character, consisting of a circular enclosure surrounded by a mount or vallum, which again is encircled by a ditch or fosse."

Professor Windle is of the opinion that these so-called British camps were constructed by people of the Bronze age, and possibly of the Neolithic ages.

Dugdale's Antiquities of Warwickshire, dated 1656, page 549, and says: "Cheswike. - This is a kind of old fortification, whereof the grounds wherein 'tis situate assume the Name, and by the Form of it, and Depth of the Trenches (though the circuit thereof be not large) seems to have been a Roman work, the latter syllable 'Wyke' importing no less, which signifieth in our old English a Castle or Fortification.

"In 29 Ed. I., John de Broughton had a Charter of free Warren granted to him in all his Demesn Lands here: and that, in 43 Ed. III., Sir Thomas Broughton, Kt., Sold it unto John Waryng and Ric. Gower."

The old mount may be reached from Solihull Station (two Miles), or by omnibus to the "Saracen's Head." Shirley, from whence it is about a three miles' walk.

It is certainly a very interesting spot, and visitors are cordially invited to inspect the ancient moated encampment.

Apartments are available at the Mount Dairy Farm, Tanworth Lane, near Shirley. There is also a "Holiday Camp" for young men, where the "Simple Life" may be enjoyed and participants thereby become more fitted for the defence of our Empire, besides laying by store of good health.