

Anglo-Saxon Houses at Chalton, Hampshire

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FIELD-WORK undertaken as part of research into the past use of a typical area of south Hampshire downland has revealed an Anglo-Saxon hill-top village of some 6 hectares (15 acres). In a sample excavation two timber houses set end to end were discovered, with traces of several others and fences associated with them. The two houses, built of posts set in continuous trenches, both superseded buildings of posts set in individual post-holes. The houses each had three entrances, two in the side walls and one in the end wall, and in each the E. end was divided into three small rooms. The overall dimensions of the buildings were 11.40 by 6.30 m. and 11.00 by 6.30 m. (c. 37 by 20 ft. and c. 36 by 20 ft.) respectively. Finds include knives, an arrow-head, bones mainly of sheep and deer, and grass-tempered pottery. Surface finds suggest the 6th to the 8th centuries as the date of the settlement, which is presumably the predecessor of three near-by medieval valley villages.

PROGRESSIVE ploughing of the south Hampshire chalk downland in recent years has revealed a wealth of ancient settlements, and has often begun their denudation. In an attempt to record and examine these sites in the moment of their destruction and to grasp the opportunity to establish detailed and full data about the changing settlement-pattern, population-density and economy of the locality, the Department of Archaeology at the University of Southampton has for some time been undertaking a systematic study of the area around Chalton village, near Petersfield (FIG. 7). Field-walking during the past decade by Professor Cunliffe and Mr. John Budden of Manor Farm, Chalton, has revealed many scores of sites of all periods from neolithic to post-medieval times. The field-work has been supplemented by topographical and historical study, by aerial photography, and by excavation and its general conclusions for the post-Roman period are discussed by Professor Cunliffe in this volume.¹ The present paper describes a sample excavation undertaken as part of the research programme on the one Saxon settlement so far revealed in the survey area. The work was done by the South Hampshire Archaeological Rescue Group.

¹ Barry Cunliffe, 'Saxon and medieval settlement-pattern in the region of Chalton, Hampshire', *supra*, pp. 1-12.

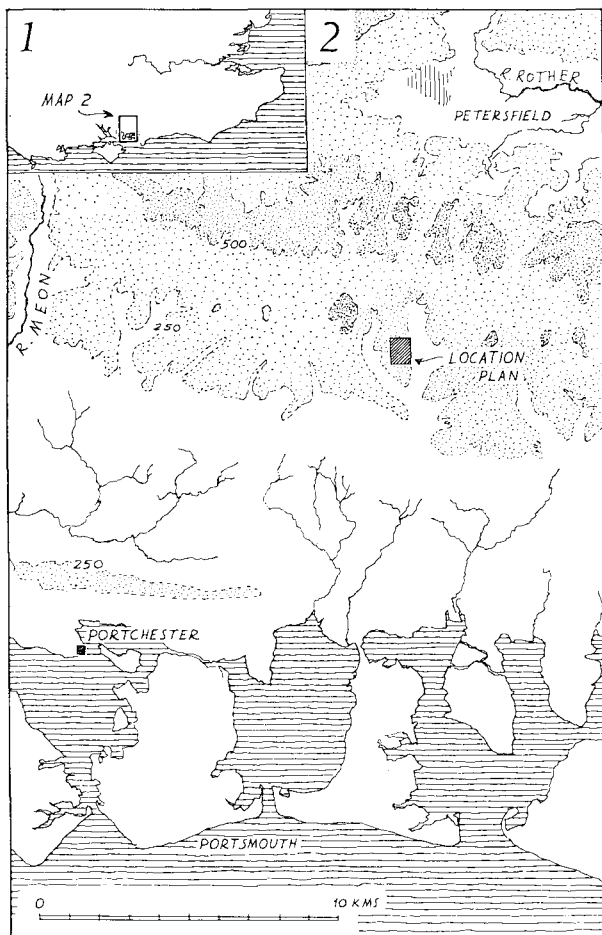


FIG. 7

MAPS SHOWING LOCATION OF SAXON VILLAGE,
CHURCH DOWN, CHALTON, HANTS (p. 13)

For detailed enlargement of area marked 'location plan' see FIG. 8

The settlement lies in an area called Church Down on the southern plateau of Chalton Down, a saddle-backed hill which forms the spine of the parish (FIG. 8). The sides of the down bear traces of ancient cultivation in the form of lynchets or soil-marks of rectangular Celtic fields, and early maps show that for the most part these areas were also cultivated in more recent times; but the top of the down, here at some 450 ft. above O.D., seems to have been untilled both in early and more recent times, though there are perhaps traces of some medieval ploughing. The Saxon settlement does not appear, at least in any readily interpretable form, on air-photographs and is only visible on the ground because of the varying darkness of soil after ploughing. It was discovered through the

extensive spreads of grass-tempered and sandy hand-made pottery visible on the surface after ploughing and by finds of loom-weights, whetstones and fragments of lava. This occupation-material indicates that the settlement extends over the

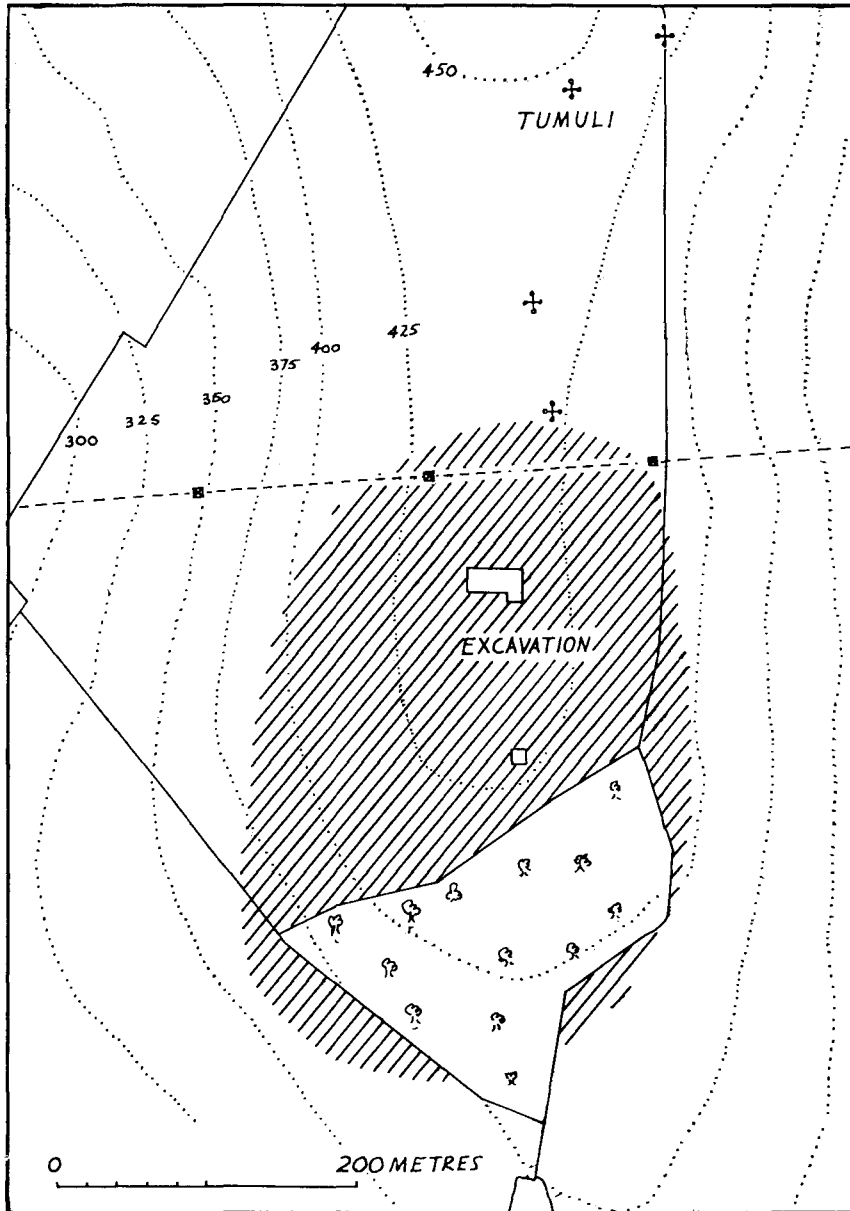


FIG. 8 CHURCH DOWN, CHALTON, HANTS

Position of the excavation within the area (hatched) of the settlement, as defined by a scatter of grass-tempered pottery (pp. 14ff.). Contours in feet.

whole area of the top of the down and for some way down the side slopes. Its southern limit is an extensive area of clay-with-flints in the southern part of the down, now giving rise to woodland, as perhaps it did in antiquity. To the north the occupation-material gradually decreases in quantity as the site approaches a large bronze-age barrow-cemetery along the crest and on the true summit of the down. A less intense spread covers a total of 12 hectares (30 acres). The present excavation sought to test the character of the 6 hectares (15 acres) of the settlement. Two areas were examined, one near the southern limit where in a 10-m. by 10-m. square nothing was found save a few pockets of clay-with-flints, albeit with neolithic flints, mainly waste flakes, in their top layers. A second sample area in the centre revealed complex alignments of post-holes and trenches. The area was extended and ultimately some 618 sq. m. (666 sq. yd.) were investigated (FIG. 9 and PL. II, A). The various timber structures uncovered provide an indication of the types of building to be expected in the settlement, and the finds confirm the representative character of the surface collections. Though the excavation will continue for a number of years, the buildings have an immediate interest and importance. The sample excavation is, therefore, described in detail in this paper, and an attempt is made to interpret the character of the buildings.

THE EXCAVATION

The topsoil over the excavated area had been disturbed by ploughing down to the surface of the natural chalk. It was therefore removed, partly by hand, partly by machine; the natural chalk surface, itself heavily weathered and often much disturbed by cultivation, was then brushed twice, at which stage the features in use in the last period of occupation could be seen clearly (PL. I, A and B), together with many others. Coloured plans were made at this stage, indicating differences in soil colour and texture, flint-packing and differential weathering of the chalk (FIG. 10). The features were excavated in sections or, where possible, quadrants, with intermediate plans to record post-positions and packing materials. A final plan recorded all features as excavated to their original or weathered profile with details of their internal conformation and depth. Far more features occur on the final plan than on the first plan, for the most part representing buildings and structures of early periods of the settlement. All features revealed were Anglo-Saxon, or probably Anglo-Saxon, except three pits, one of which was probably of bronze-age date and another may represent a tree-root hole, perhaps filled when the site was cleared to construct the village.

After initial clearing two main structures, A1 and A2, were immediately apparent. Both were represented by continuous trenches, and were large rectangular structures with opposing doors in the middle of the long sides, an end door, and a wall dividing the interior in the proportion 1/5 to 4/5. The two nearly identical buildings were set end to end, some 3.50 m. (11½ ft.) apart, on slightly differing axes. To east and to west of A1 and A2 were complex groups of post-holes, clearly representing structures of two or more periods. It has been assumed that the structures most evident on initial clearance belonged to the latest period,



CHALTON, HAMPSHIRE
ANGLO SAXON HOUSES

FIG. 9
 PLAN OF THE EXCAVATION AT CHURCH DOWN, CHALTON, HANTS (p. 16)
 showing post-in-trench buildings (A1 and A2, pp. 17, 19 f.), post-and-trench building (A3, p. 20), fences
 (A4 and A5, p. 20), and various post-hole structures (B1-4 and C1, p. 21 f.)
 For interpretation of this composite plan, compare the outlines of the individual buildings in FIG. 12.

and thus a small rectangular building set parallel to the W. end of A2, its long walls the same length as the width of A2, is of the latest period, and the building is therefore designated A3. There were many post-holes east of A1. Those which shared its alignment most closely have been grouped together and designated structures A4 and A5.

A post-built structure, B1, preceded A1. It was on the same site, but was slightly longer, and on a very slightly different axis. There was no similar preceding building on the immediate site of A2, but a post-built building, B2, had once occupied a site immediately to the south-west, and the posts of its NE. corner had been cut away by A2. There was also an earlier building, B3, on the site of A3, probably almost square, and also partly cut away by A2. To the east of the main buildings were various posts which very nearly shared the alignment of B1. This possible structure is tentatively designated B4. East of the main buildings, A1 and B1, the maze of post-holes would allow yet another structure, earlier than both. This is provisionally called C1.

A number of very slight features, stake-holes, shallow narrow trenches and lines of weathering across the face of the chalk, including a double line of stake-holes with associated weathering, apparently belong to structures of quite a different nature, on a different alignment to structures either of period A or period B. They have been designated period D, though it is possible, or even probable, that a number of them are natural in origin.

PERIOD A

Building A1 (FIGS. 9-12, 14-15; PLS. I, A, II, B, V, A, VI, A). This was a large rectangular bipartite house, 11.40 by 6.30 m. ($37\frac{1}{4}$ by $20\frac{1}{2}$ ft.), measured from centre-lines of the walls, with opposed doorways set in the middle of the long sides, and a door in the middle of the W. end. The walls were defined by trenches some 70 cm. ($2\frac{3}{4}$ ft.) wide, varying in depth from 10 to c. 50 cm. (4 to c. 20 in.). The trenches had extremely variable contents, in the main medium brown soil with some chalk and flints. There were, however, occasional concentrations of flints, or of chalk, or both, suggesting packing around timber elements formerly present in the trench. In some places, often within the packing, were patches of very dark soil, occasionally associated with charcoal, and sometimes with very powdery grey chalk, perhaps partly burnt (FIG. 10). Within the building a number of oval post-holes ran across it some 2 m. ($6\frac{1}{2}$ ft.) from the E. end. Two shallow, narrow, flat-bottomed trenches ran from this wall to meet the end wall. This arrangement cut off one-fifth of the interior, and subdivided it into three small rooms some 2 m. square. It is not clear whether there was a door in the middle of the end wall, though by analogy with A2 this seems possible. The doors seem to have been some 0.80 m. (2 ft. 7 in.) wide, and to have had lintels in the wall line with the door hung on a post set within the building. There was no clear indication of a hearth, though a worn hollow in the NE. corner of the main room may indicate its position. The wall-trenches had in places cut through the filling of earlier post-holes, most of which proved to be elements of structure B1 (FIG. 12 and PL. VI, A; p. 21).

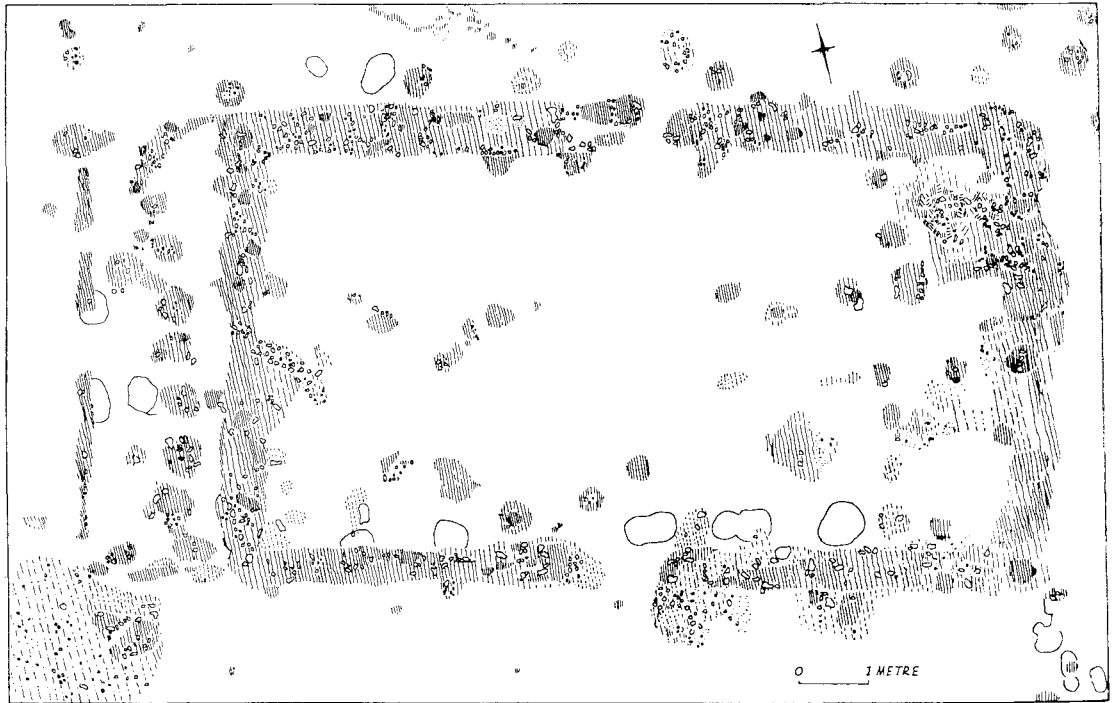


FIG. 10
 CHURCH DOWN, CHALTON, HANTS
 Buildings A1 and B1 before excavation (pp. 16 f., 21)

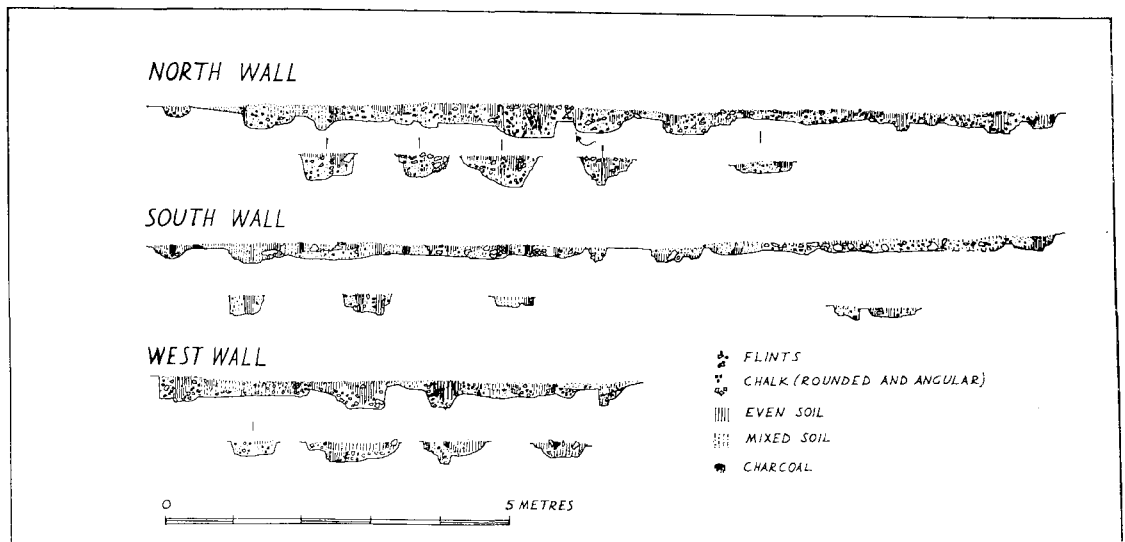


FIG. 11
 CHURCH DOWN, CHALTON, HANTS
 Cross-sections showing main structural elements of Building A1 and stratigraphic relationships between A1 and B1 (pp. 17, 21)

Building A2 (FIGS. 9, 12, 14-15; PLS. I, B, III, B, V, B). This was a second large rectangular bipartite house, 11 by 6.30 m. (36 by 20½ ft.), very similar to Building A1, with opposed doorways in the middle of the long sides, each flanked internally by single post-holes. There was also a door in the middle of the E. end, and there was a strong hint that a similar door may have been present at the W. end. The interior of the building was divided as in A1, in the proportions 1/5 to 4/5. The partition-wall was represented by shallow trenches at right angles to the main walls, with substantial post-holes marking a mid-point doorway. In addition there were two large post-holes flanking the doorway just within the larger room. In these respects the small room in A2 was different from that in A1. A post-hole in the SE. quarter of the main room contained much charcoal, suggesting that the hearth may have been in this area.

Building A2 was set end on to A1, and some 3.50 m. (11½ ft.) from it, though on a slightly different alignment. A fence represented by individual post-holes joined the adjacent corners of the two buildings, and the space between was divided by a wall represented by narrow, shallow trenches (PL. III, B). There were two substantial post-holes marking a door in this wall. It is not clear whether the interspace between A1 and A2 was roofed, but the posts of the four doors



FIG. 12
CHURCH DOWN, CHALTON, HANTS

Interpretation-drawings showing the various buildings that can be recognized (pp. 17, 19 ff.)

in this area were sufficiently well aligned for it to have been possible for someone standing in the main room of A₁ to have seen into the main room of A₂ when all four doors were open.

There was enough evidence, in the form of post 'ghosts', packing stones and post-emplacements in the bottom of the trenches, to make it clear that A₂ had been constructed with individual posts set into the continuous trench. The main posts were at *c.* 1.20 m. (3 ft. 11 in.) centres, but there were apparently many intermediate posts. There were many horizontal voids in the trenches. These were at first interpreted as the former positions of horizontal poles used in wall-construction, and some were indeed very straight. Elsewhere, however, there was evidence that the voids may have been animal burrows, and their interpretation must remain open.

Building A₃ (FIGS. 9, 12; PL. III, A). This was a small rectangular building west of A₂ with its side wall facing the end wall of A₂. It was 6.25 m. (20½ ft.) long. Its width was difficult to establish, as the line of the fourth wall was uncertain. Though the width was probably 4 m. (13 ft. 1½ in.), it is at least possible that the fourth wall lies outside the limits of the excavation, or that it has been completely destroyed since it would have been shallow and denudation has been severe in this area. Building A₃ had a door in the middle of its E. side, flanked by post-holes. This door seems to have hung on a post on the inner angle of the S. side of the doorway, and the doorway faced the apparent doorway at the W. end of A₂. The wall-construction of A₃ was related to, but differed in an interesting way from, that of A₂. Individual post-holes were clear, but between them there were shallow trenches which, in adjacent stretches, were not always in good alignment. The construction implied must be one of individual structural posts with post-to-post infilling, perhaps of wattle hurdles, or of panels with subsidiary uprights set into sill-beams, or conceivably of thick planks or beams slotted into the uprights.

Buildings A₄ and A₅ (FIGS. 9, 12, 13; PL. IV, B). East of A₁ was a maze of post-holes clearly representing several phases of occupation. Their interpretation must await further excavation, but at least one phase presumably belongs to period A. The most likely candidates are the oval post-holes set *c.* 25 cm. (10 in.) apart in two staggered rows. Associated with these were others, usually oval, set at 3 m. (9 ft. 10 in.) intervals slightly to one side of the main line. The interpretation of this arrangement seems to require close-set split trunks, presumably with flat sides facing inwards, and with planks or saplings dropped in between to form a continuous fence (FIG. 13). The more widely-spaced posts to one side of the fence presumably represent strainers. Miss Jane Holdsworth has kindly drawn our attention to the fine illustration of such a fence in MS. Cotton Julius;² similar fences are known in later contexts in Germany. Another such fence, A₅, seems to be related to the corner of structure A₁, and may provisionally be designated Building A₅.

² British Museum, MS. Cotton Julius A vi, f.8, recto.

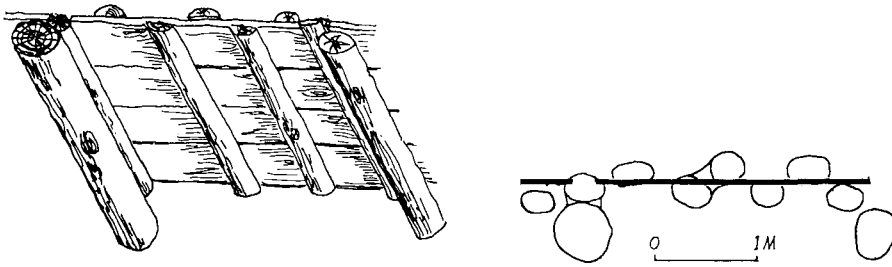


FIG. 13

CHURCH DOWN, CHALTON, HANTS

Possible arrangement of posts and planks in fences A4 and A5 (p. 20)

PERIOD B

Building B1 (FIGS. 9–12, 16; PLS. I, A, II, B, V, A, VI, A). The wall-trenches of Building A1 cut in places through the fillings of various deep post-holes and it became clear that elsewhere the bases of other similar post-holes were preserved below the bottom of the trenches. They clearly represented an earlier structure which proved to have been on the same site, but not quite on the same alignment, as the later building. It was, moreover, some 1·20 m. longer. It was possible to locate or infer the position of every post in the walls of this building (FIG. 9) which was 12·70 by 6·25 m. (41 $\frac{3}{4}$ ft. by 20 $\frac{1}{2}$ ft.) with central doorways in the long sides, flanked by large oval, presumably double, post-holes. There was almost certainly a door in the W. end, though less clearly in the east. The posts, set fairly regularly, were at between 1·20 m. and 1·40 m. (3 ft. 11 in. and 4 ft. 7 in.) centres. They were more or less accurately paired across the building. There was no indication of internal door suspension-posts as in Buildings A1 and A2, nor apparently of any internal subdivision into rooms.

Building B2 (FIGS. 9, 12; PL. IV, A). Building A2 was also preceded by a substantial building constructed on individual post-holes. It was not, however, quite on the same site. The W. part of the S. wall of A2 cut away refilled post-holes representing the N. wall of B2. Even so it was possible to reconstruct the layout of B2, a structure some 8·80 by 4·50 m. (28 ft. 10 in. by 14 ft. 9 in.) with gables of five somewhat insubstantial posts, and in some cases small double posts. The side walls (including corner-posts) were of ten posts, and particularly substantial post-holes flanked a door in the middle of the S. side. A similar door may have existed in the N. side, but it has been too much damaged by A2 for this to be certain. The SW. corner-post of B2 seemed curiously insubstantial, and it can hardly have had a main structural function.

Building B3 (FIGS. 9, 12; PL. III, A). The W. end of A2 cut away much of the E. wall of a rectangular post-built structure, B3, which may have been standing at the same time as B2. It was almost square (3·75 by 4·40 m.; 12 ft. 4 in. by 14 ft. 5 in.) and was constructed entirely of posts in close-set shallow post-

holes, often almost square. There was a door, flanked by large square post-holes, in the middle of the S. side. There may have been another, though less substantially made, in the N. wall.

Building B4 (FIG. 12; PL. IV, B). The maze of post-holes east of A1 represents at least two structures in addition to the fences described above (A4 and A5, p. 20). One of these presumably belongs to period B, and represents a post-built structure, standing in the main outside the excavated area.

PERIOD C

Building C1 (FIGS. 9, 12; PL. IV, B). There is some evidence that a group of post-holes in the confused area east of A1/B1 represents a post-built structure with a W. wall along the line of the E. wall of A1. If so the structure was some 7·80 by 4·50 m. ($25\frac{1}{2}$ ft. by $14\frac{3}{4}$ ft.), with doorways in the middle of the sides. It could be earlier or later than B1, and is clearly earlier than A1.

PERIOD D

Features D1 and D2 (FIG. 12; PL. VI, B). A number of shallow, narrow gullies and fissures in the chalk ran athwart the alignment of the various buildings described above. Some contained pockets of soil which seemed to represent stake-holes. Though many of these features seemed suspiciously to be associated with rotting chalk, it was not clear which was cause and which effect. They are, therefore, recorded here without interpretation, which will doubtless be possible after more extensive excavation. In addition a number of shallow depressions full of small, weathered pieces of chalk were found. One contained crumbs of pottery, almost certainly of the middle or late bronze age. They are most likely to have been tree-holes.

INTERPRETATION

The excavation has chanced on an area of intense occupation within the Church Down settlement. Already it is possible to distinguish two periods of building when posts set in individual post-holes were in use, followed by one when posts in continuous trenches were used. The impression is of close-set buildings which honoured a common alignment. A1 and A2 can almost be described as semi-detached or duplex. There seems no reason to doubt that at least A1/A2 and B1 are dwelling-houses. The subdivisions in A1 and A2 suggest hall and retiring room. The smaller room in A2 must, indeed, have been subdivided into a central passage and two 2-m.-square rooms. It may have supported a first floor, and, if so, the room would have been 2 by 6.40 m., a curious proportion.

The two main period-A houses are almost identical in size and layout. They are similar in their regularity and similar in their symmetry. They must represent a type in the village, and presumably in the locality. Their distinctive opposed doors, a reminder of the well-known passage in Bede which implies such an

arrangement,³ have been noted in other Anglo-Saxon buildings⁴ and may well represent a normal layout. Many of the structural features of the houses have already been noted in other settlements and are quite at home in an Anglo-Saxon milieu of the 6th and 7th centuries. Even the principles of layout have analogies, for they must follow principles now discovered by Hope-Taylor for the buildings at Yeavinger, Northumberland, with the latest of which A1 and A2 have more than a passing similarity.⁵

If it is possible to generalize on the basis of so limited an excavation, it seems that post-in-trench buildings succeed those in which posts are set in individual post-holes. The technique is, indeed, well known in contexts which could be contemporary.⁶ The doorway arrangement, of three posts together, has also been noted in middle Saxon contexts,⁷ and such distinctive sets of six posts may henceforth almost on their own constitute evidence for the presence of a building. It is of some interest that the doors were hung inside the building and close against the back of the door frame. They could, thus, be made extremely secure from inside without recourse to anything more than a drawbar or hasp, though they would have been less easy to secure from outside, and no contemporary door-furniture is known.⁸

The earlier buildings are also regular. The approximate pairing of posts may seem significant, as may the apparent relative lightness of the gable-posts, and the frequent lack of emphasis on the corner-post. It might suggest some sort of trussing or at least coupling across the building. Though some of the post-holes in B2 are double, this is almost certainly through replacement, and even here, therefore, there is no question of cruck-framing. The wall-posts are so well aligned that there is every possibility that a wall-plate rested on the tops, and almost any structure is possible thereafter, though a common-rafter roof is, when all is taken into account, most likely.

The post-hole buildings have many analogies amongst recently excavated early Saxon and middle Saxon structures. Those at West Stow provide very close parallels for the smaller Chalton buildings, as has been demonstrated elsewhere.⁹ The square building, B3, finds analogies both at New Wintles Farm, Eynsham, Oxon., and at Cheddar, Somerset, and clearly represents a common and long-lived Anglo-Saxon type tentatively identified by Rahtz as a *bur* or bower.¹⁰ The siting of B3 in relation to other buildings of period B suggests that

³ Bede, *Ecclesiastical History of the English Nation*, II, 13.

⁴ P. V. Addyman, 'The Anglo-Saxon house: a new review' in *Anglo-Saxon England*, I (Cambridge, 1972), 304, a paper which reviews the evidence against which Chalton must be set.

⁵ B. K. Hope-Taylor, 'The site of *Ad Gefrin*: an investigation of its archaeological and historical significance' (unpubl. Ph.D. thesis, Cambridge, 1961). The main point of similarity apart from proportions is the provision of a separate private room. The Chalton buildings are much more modest.

⁶ Dorchester-on-Thames, *Archaeol. J.*, CXIX (1962), 125-8, fig. 9; Maxey, somewhat later, P. V. Addyman, 'A dark-age settlement at Maxey, Northants.', *Med. Archaeol.*, VIII (1964), 29-30.

⁷ Addyman, *op. cit.* in note 6, 42. In view of the Chalton evidence there seems to be no reason why the Northolt posts should not have been door-posts.

⁸ Stave-church doors are set within the building in this manner.

⁹ *Op. cit.* in note 4, 279 (fig. 3).

¹⁰ Philip Rahtz, 'The Saxon and medieval palaces at Cheddar, Somerset—an interim report of excavations in 1960-62', *Med. Archaeol.*, VI-VII (1962-3), 57-61, Buildings P and N.

it may have had this function here, though, considering the position of its doorway, it is by no means certainly contemporary with B2, and it may, indeed, even have had an extension southwards.

The Chalton excavation is far from complete, but the character of the settlement is now clear. Its main dwellings were certainly substantial 'halls' and must lay, once and for all, the spectre which still stalks, in otherwise sagacious accounts,¹¹ of Anglo-Saxons normally living in hovels. The date of the Chalton settlement is by no means certain, but the predominance of grass-tempered pottery among the finds and the absence of distinctively early traits in the pots suggest a date within the 6th or 7th century for the main period of occupation. It is an early Saxon village of large houses: whether explicitly the village of *ceorls*,¹² or whether merely in fact, it provides welcome evidence, complementary to that revealed for East Anglia by the West Stow excavations, for the normal dwelling of the freeman, holder of one hide.

RECONSTRUCTION OF THE BUILDINGS

By R. Warmington

Buildings A1 and A2 (FIGS. 14-15). For any attempt to reconstruct the superstructure of this distinctive type of building the following points noted in excavation are important:

1. There were structural posts at the angles of the building and along the perimeter wall at regular intervals which indicated a 5-bay structure with each bay approximately 2 m. wide.
2. Between the structural posts there were apparently intermediates at about 0.60 m. centres. These were double posts suggesting that the perimeter wall was of horizontal boards passing between the two posts and behind the structural posts.
3. The first bay of the structure was partitioned off either as a lobby or as a private room. The doorways in the end wall and partition-wall were centrally placed and their posts apparently structural, most probably to support a plate.
4. The pair of posts within the doorway in the partition in A2 were not related to the plate and could therefore have risen to the roof structure.
5. The doorways in the middle of the side walls were flanked by semi-structural posts, perhaps to support a plate.
6. In each building there were slight depressions or shallow post-holes on the inside face of the structural posts, apparently flanking the third

¹¹ For instance H. P. R. Finberg (ed.), *The Agrarian History of England and Wales*, I-II, A.D. 43-1042 (Cambridge, 1972), 428: 'It appears that in this early period comparatively few Anglo-Saxon countrymen occupied houses of any size; the majority lived rather squalid lives in sunken huts.'

¹² *Op. cit.* in note 11, 453-5, though the early spelling *Cealhton* (D. Whitelock, *English Historical Documents*, I (London, 1968), 549, in the will of the Atheling Athelstan, 1015), might suggest a different derivation, referring to the position of the settlement on a chalk down.

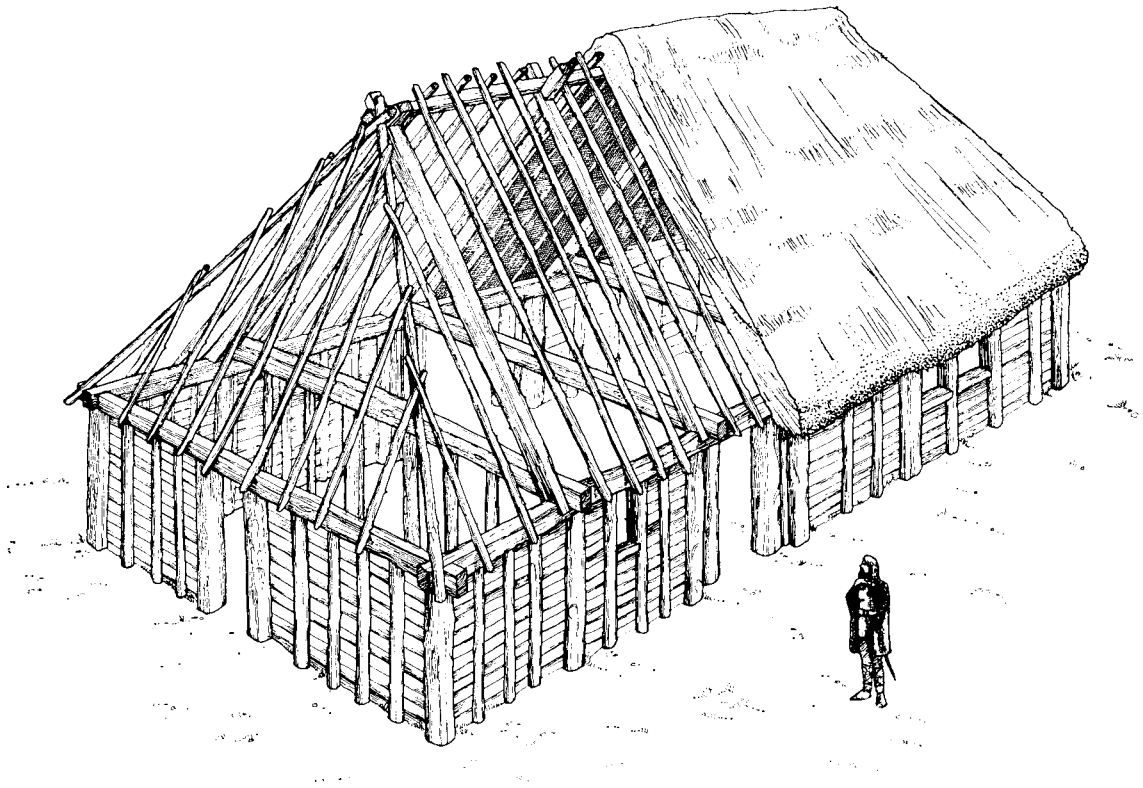


FIG. 14

CHURCH DOWN, CHALTON, HANTS

Hypothetical reconstruction of house based on combined evidence of Buildings A1 and A2, with posts in continuous trenches (pp. 17, 19 f., 24 ff.)

bay. If these are not wholly explicable in terms of the door-structure it seems at least possible that they represent a pair of crucks or of raking struts to the roof.

The hypothetical reconstructions (FIGS. 14-15) both employ boards for the walls, held between posts, and a wall-plate. The superstructure of the roof is more problematical. FIG. 14 shows tie-beams notched across the wall-plate, and principal rafters at each bay-division, assuming that the larger post-emplacements imply principal posts. A ridge-piece is used. The roof was probably fully hipped: the length of the roof-rafters, about 7 m. (23 ft.), would not demand a purlin, and timbers of 0·75 by 0·20 m. scantling would take the roof load. This arrangement, with, at most, braces at the foot of the structural posts, obviates the need for a truss to support the ridge, but would have been quite stable. In FIG. 15 these principles have been followed, but the pair of posts associated with the partition-door have been projected to roof level and taken to imply a gablet left open as a smoke-vent and a half-hipped roof. The gablet would have discharged

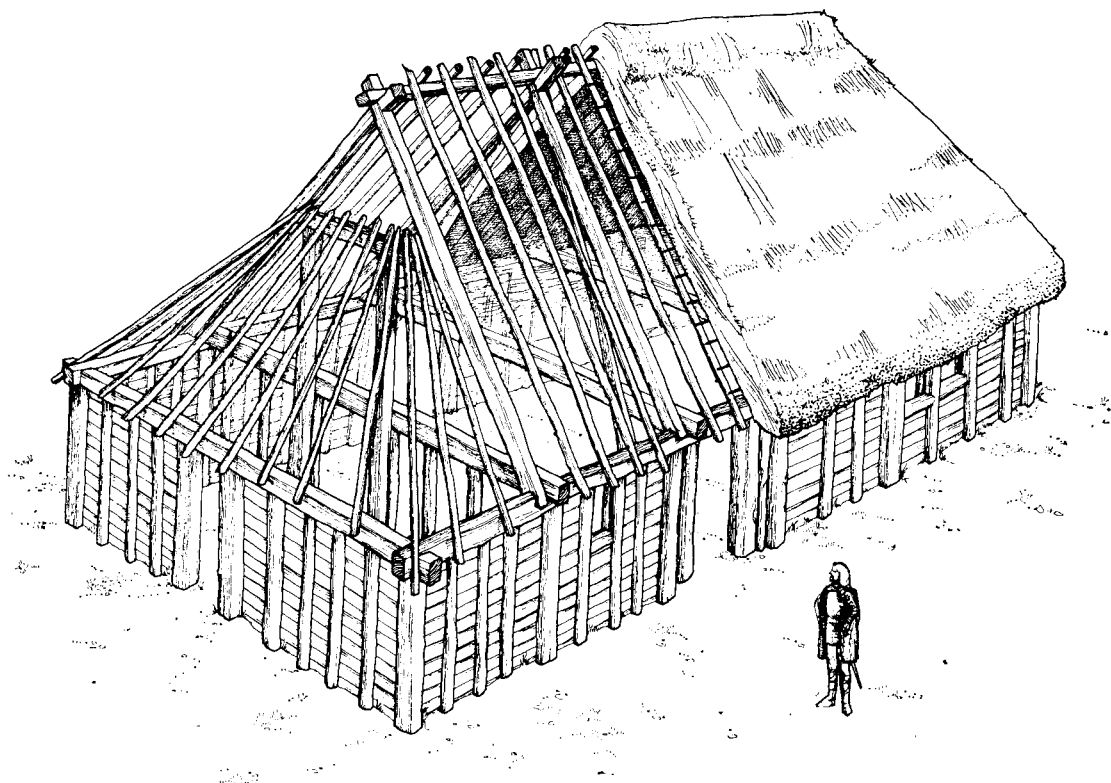


FIG. 15

CHURCH DOWN, CHALTON, HANTS

Second hypothetical reconstruction of house based on combined evidence of Buildings A1 and A2
(pp. 17, 19 f., 24 ff.)

smoke with the prevailing air-flow and become an efficient extract flue. FIG. 15 also uses raking struts braced against the principal posts flanking the main door: two pairs of crucks might have been used in this position. If placed here the strut or cruck would have braced the tie. Though it would doubtless provide additional strength and stability, it is most doubtful that this is the correct explanation. On the one hand it is structurally unnecessary: and on the other it would have restricted internal clearance severely. The remainder of the details are entirely hypothetical. There was no indication of wall-materials, roof-material or structural metalwork, and the reconstruction employs only non-durable materials.

Buildings B1 and B2 (FIG. 16). These structures clearly had perimeter walls of structural posts, set at approximately 1-m. intervals, with corner-posts, often insubstantial, skewed at 45 degrees. There was apparently no other internal or external structural timberwork. This suggests a simple construction system in which the roof load is taken on a substantial perimeter structure. The regular spacing of posts suggests that the roof load was distributed along the full length

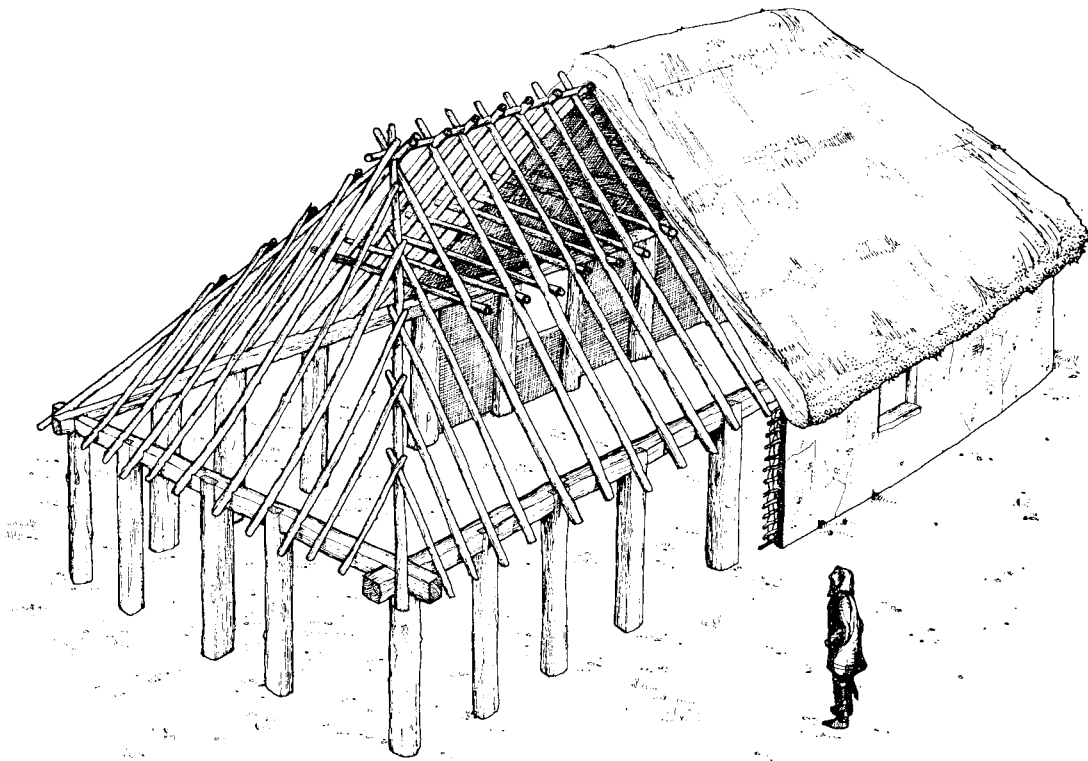


FIG. 16

CHURCH DOWN, CHALTON, HANTS

Hypothetical reconstruction of Building B1, with posts in individual post-holes (pp. 21, 26 f.)

of the wall-plate, without a system of tie-beams. If a minimum roof-structure is assumed, this would be feasible, particularly if the roof was hipped. The skewed corner-posts and the lack of any central post-holes to take a gable-ridge-post, together with the absence of any evidence for knowledge of a truss system, tend to indicate a hipped roof. Such a system would stabilize the roof-structure without recourse to large-section timbers, simply by structural triangulation producing a very efficient roof-form. The roof would, therefore, consist of a series of rafters notched and lashed to the plate and to a ridge-pole, the whole braced at each end by the simple expediency of the tripod principle. The doors are set at the middle of the long sides. The wall-infilling must have been lightweight, and fastened either to the back or front of the structural posts, or slotted between. The material shown here, wattle-and-daub, applied to give a flush external face, would have provided maximum resistance to wind pressure.

These reconstructions, it may be stressed, are the merest hypotheses. Their

value lies mainly in stimulating reaction from other scholars, and in raising points which could be checked in subsequent excavations.

THE FINDS

Whilst none of the finds is sufficiently distinctive to allow accurate dating, taken together they would fit well into an early or middle Saxon context. The piece of scrap bronze and the surface finds of slag from the same field both suggest metal-working, further evidence of which might be expected from future excavations.

POTTERY (FIG. 17)

Only about thirty sherds were found in the excavation. These correspond closely, however, in general character with the considerable series of small sherds picked up on the surface over the years, and there is little doubt that the whole collection may be regarded as having come from the village, with the exception of a few Romano-British and prehistoric sherds. All except the Romano-British sherds are hand-made. There is a preponderance of grass-tempered pottery, ranging from fairly thin-walled pots with slightly everted rims through more substantial cooking-pots of similar form to very large thick-walled storage vessels with flat-topped, clubbed rims. In addition

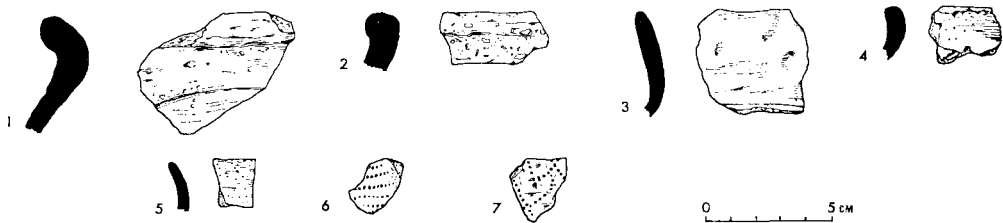


FIG. 17

SOME TYPICAL POTTERY FROM CHURCH DOWN, CHALTON, HANTS (p. 28 f.). Sc. $\frac{1}{2}$

there are smaller quantities of pottery in sandy fabric often with a partial or total external burnish. The vessels are usually small or of medium size, and they too, like the grass-tempered ware, have slightly everted rims. Virtually none of the pottery is decorated, and the few sherds with comb-impressions (FIG. 17, nos. 6-7) are conceivably Beaker sherds, though 7th-century parallels for such decoration have been suggested in a personal communication from Dr. J. N. L. Myres. There are in addition a few sherds of pottery with inclusions of coarse flint grit. These too may be prehistoric, though local sites have produced pots in such fabric. Loom-weights from the site are usually of the intermediate type.

The features of the pottery are so generalized that it is possible to say no more than that the collection must belong to an early part of the Anglo-Saxon period. There are no distinctively early features which might suggest a date near the invasion period. On the other hand grass-tempered pottery has been shown to have disappeared from the ceramic spectrum at Portchester by the 8th century, and at Hamwih by the late 7th century. It seems likely, therefore, particularly in view of the possible date of the few decorated sherds, that the assemblage should be placed in the 6th and 7th centuries. It is hoped that carbon-14 determinations will be available in due course.

FIG. 17, 1. Large cooking-pot with everted, heavy rim in gritty grey fabric with some grass-tempering.

2. Heavy, squared rim with large flint grits; ostensibly prehistoric but from a Saxon feature.
3. Medium-sized cooking-pot in gritty, hard fabric. The slightly everted rim can be paralleled in various local middle Saxon contexts.
4. Small cooking-pot in lightly burnished gritty fabric. A large proportion of the sherds collected on the surface must have come from vessels of a form akin to this.
5. Very small pot in sandy fabric. Several examples of sherds from such pots have been found on the surface.
- 6, 7. Small sherds in thin sandy or slightly gritty fabrics, decorated with impressions of a toothed comb. Perhaps early-bronze-age Beaker-ware, though an Anglo-Saxon date seems possible.

COPPER ALLOY

FIG. 18

1. *Small scrap cutting*, about 0·2 mm. thick. One edge is bent through 45 degrees and broken. At the internal apex the metal is twisted in such a way as to suggest the use of metal shears. Faint lines 0·1 mm. inside and parallel to two of the edges (visible at $\times 6$ magnification) are most probably scored marking-out lines.

IRON

FIG. 18

- 2-4. *Knives*. These examples all fit into the pattern of common Anglo-Saxon knives, a pattern that is not yet sufficiently well studied to enable a close dating to be adduced here. Nos. 3 and 4 are bent (to the left if held as for use in the right hand).

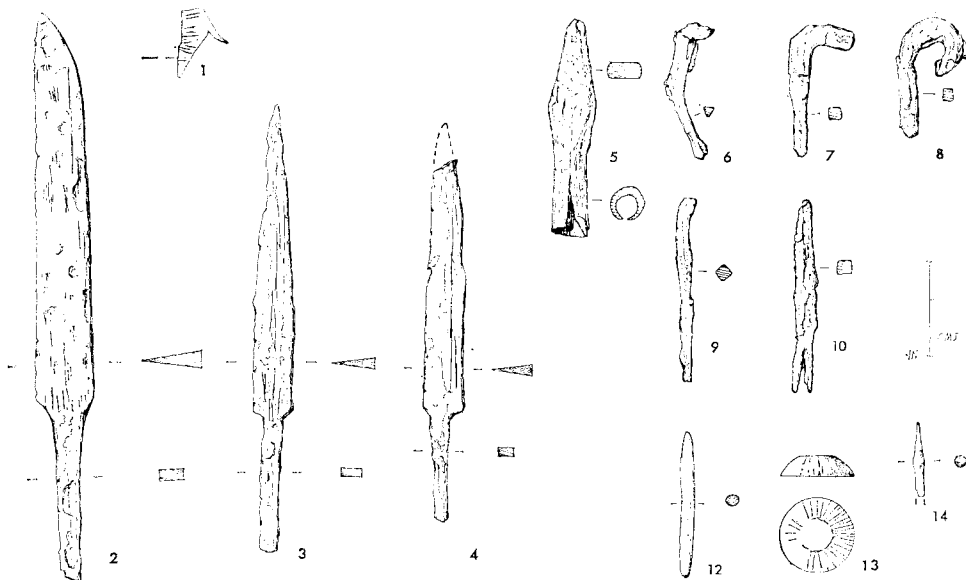


FIG. 18

SMALL OBJECTS FROM CHURCH DOWN, CHALTON, HANTS

1. Copper alloy; 2-10. Iron; 12-14. Bone (pp. 29 ff.). Sc. $\frac{1}{2}$

If the damage occurred before burial, as seems likely, they may either have been deliberately discarded into the trench in which they were found, perhaps after use in construction, or they may have slipped in from superincumbent rubbish.

No. 2, L. 153 mm., is in exceptionally good condition. The back of the blade curves gently towards the tip. A knife of somewhat greater length but similar shape comes from an early barrow burial at Hardown Hill, Dorset;¹³ others of similar shape were found in the cemetery at Snell's Corner, Horndean (which is probably late),¹⁴ and the 7th-century cemetery at Winnall,¹⁵ both in Hants, and an early burial at Strood, Kent.¹⁶

No. 3, L. 112 mm. The back is straight, but the cutting edge slopes or possibly curves towards the tip. Wood remains on the tang. Of many similar examples, we may cite one each from Winterbourne Gunner, Wilts.,¹⁷ and Winnall, Hants.¹⁸

No. 4, L. 98 mm. The blade tapers evenly towards the tip, which is now missing. Wood remains on the tang. The form of this piece is so much like that of many other Anglo-Saxon knives, equally lacking in distinctive features, that comparison becomes meaningless.

5. *Small arrow-head*, L. 57 mm., W. 13.9 mm. The pointed end is flat in section, but the socket is circular. A larger example, also with a flattened tip, was found at Maxey, Northants,¹⁹ and others, even larger, at Buttsole, near Eastry, Kent,²⁰ with 6th-century material.

- 6-10. *Nails*. Five objects bear more or less close resemblances to nails. No. 6 is triangular in section, the other four are square in section.

No. 6, L. 38 mm. This, the most easily recognizable, has a roughly square, flattened head and a broken tip.

No. 7, L. 36 mm., tip to bend. It tapers towards the tip and has a hammered-over head.

No. 8, L. 31 mm., tip to bend. Its head has been hammered over more sharply to make a hook.

No. 9, L. 48 mm. This is only slightly hammered at the head.

No. 10, L. 53 mm. Its shank is split at one end and it may perhaps be a rivet.

COIN (not illustrated)

11. *Bronze coin*, very worn. Mr. Richard Reece has very kindly identified it as a radiate of Tetricus I minted between A.D. 270 and 273, with the reverse showing a soldier with spear and shield. Mr. Reece comments that other coins of the 3rd century turn up in Saxon contexts as sporadic losses and little significance can be attached to this chance survival.

BONE

FIG. 18

12. A 'pin beater', L. 38 mm. Similar to others from Anglo-Saxon settlements. They cover a wide span of time.
13. 'Counter', in the form of a severely truncated solid cone, D. base 20 mm. The upper circumference is smoothly rounded off, and the lower edge is also well-smoothed,

¹³ *Proc. Dorset Nat. Hist. and Archaeol. Soc.*, xc (1968), 237, fig. 2(a).

¹⁴ *Proc. Hants Field Club and Archaeol. Soc.*, xix (1956), 138, fig. 11, s 17.

¹⁵ A. L. Meaney and S. C. Hawkes, *Two Anglo-Saxon Cemeteries at Winnall, Winchester, Hampshire* (Soc. Med. Archaeol. monograph series, no. 4, London, 1970), 28, fig. 13, no. 11 (gr. 32).

¹⁶ V. I. Evison, *Fifth Century Invasions South of the Thames* (London, 1965), 34, fig. 14, 4.

¹⁷ *Wilts. Archaeol. Mag.*, lxx (1964), 90, fig. 5(a), gr. v.

¹⁸ *Op. cit.* in note 15, 27, fig. 12, gr. 31, no. 1.

¹⁹ *Med. Archaeol.*, viii (1964), 61, fig. 16, no. 12.

²⁰ G. Baldwin Brown, *The Arts in Early England*, iii (1915), 242, pl. xxxii, 1.

either by design or use. The surface lacks any tooling-marks, even at $\times 50$ magnification. It is perfectly symmetrical and speaks of workmanship of a high order.

14. *Pointed object*, L. 20 mm., presumably the tip of a pin. Its surface is very smooth and shows no signs of marks of tooling or wear, even at $\times 50$ magnification. Like no. 13, it is very well made. Pins with a swelling near the tip are a common form in copper alloy, in middle Saxon contexts, and some bone examples are known.

ANIMAL BONES

The excavation has produced only a few hundred animal bones, and it is clear that conclusions from so small a sample could mean very little. It is hoped that future excavations may produce a better sample. Nevertheless it is worth remarking on the frequency of bones of sheep, deer and pig, and the relative infrequency of ox. If these indications can be trusted the economy of the Chalton village depended more on hunting and sheep-farming than on cattle-raising.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The excavation arose from the intensive field-work and investigations of Professor Barry Cunliffe and Mr. John Budden and we are most grateful to both for their continuous help and advice. Mr. Budden, besides allowing excavation to take place on his land, has helped with machinery and in many other ways to make the excavation possible. Of the £130 spent in 1970-71 some £100 came from the Department of the Environment and £30 from the Department of Archaeology, University of Southampton. The work was in the main done by members of the South Hampshire Archaeological Rescue Group. We are grateful to these volunteers, to Mr. Trevor Hurst who did much of the photography, to Miss Jane Holdsworth who drew figs. 17 and 18, and to many others who have helped in various ways.

NOTE

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