

## A Section of 'Celtic' Field Terraces at Streatley Warren, Berkshire.

By ALISON MILLS.

**D**URING December 1948 and January 1949 a section was dug through a "celtic" field terrace at Streatley Warren, near Aldworth, Berkshire (Nat. Grid ref. 41/555808). The whole area is shown in Major Allen's air-photo, Pl. A. The detailed report on the excavation is in the care of the University of Reading.

Streatley Warren is on upper chalk, being the head of a dry valley which forms grazing land and thorn scrub. Cultivation terraces, or lynchets, delineating plots of a shape and size generally regarded as characteristic of Celtic fields, show that the area was cultivated in ancient times.

The Terrace which was sectioned runs transversely across the bottom of a steep-sided dry valley. It is 115 feet broad and is bounded by lynchets 2 or 3 feet high. The line of section was at right angles to the lynchets and parallel with the valley sides, and extended from 5 feet above the crest of the upper lynchet to 20 feet below the crest of the lower lynchet (both measurements being along the ground). Four main layers were revealed lying above the surface of the natural chalk, as illustrated in diagram B.

Finds included a Roman bronze fibula, part of a Roman mortarium and other sherds of Roman pottery in layer (2), sherds of Roman pottery from layer (3), and fragments of Iron Age pottery from layer (4).

The analysis of material from layer 4 supports the theory that it is an old soil level which was under cultivation in Iron Age times.

The stone layer (4a in the diagram) of local occurrence beneath the crest of each lynchet and between layers 3 and 4, can perhaps be explained as having been collected from the field and thrown on to its boundary at the period of Iron Age cultivation. Below the termination of layer 3 in the lower lynchet, layer 4a became indistinguishable in the field from layer 2 above it.

Neither layer 2 nor layer 3 could have been derived from the layer below; they must therefore have been deposited since Iron Age times as a result of natural or human agency. It is unlikely that the deposit of layer 3 was by a natural agency. It also seems unlikely that it was the result of deliberate action by man, for the labour required to put it there would have been very great and infertility would probably have resulted. It is therefore most reasonable to suppose that this layer was spread unintentionally as the result of cultivation on a slope. It could have come from the valley sides, which appear to be steeper at their

bases as if undercut, or it could have come from higher up the valley. The fact that this layer terminates beneath the crest of the lower lynchet but is continuous beneath the upper lynchet is puzzling. It is perhaps an indication that at the period during which layer 3 was deposited the upper lynchet was no longer regarded as a field boundary and ploughing was carried right across it.

Layer 2 occurs throughout the area and there is some evidence that it is in part derived from Tertiary clay with flint deposits. It appears to have been under cultivation in Roman times.

On the whole it does not seem possible to explain satisfactorily the origin of layers 2 and 3 on the present amount of evidence.

It is a pleasure to express my thanks to Professor A. A. Miller for his support, to Mr. P. E. Walters for permission to dig, to Mr. W. A. Smallcombe of Reading Museum for the loan of the implements, to Mr. A. E. P. Collins for invaluable help, and to the many friends who helped with the excavation.

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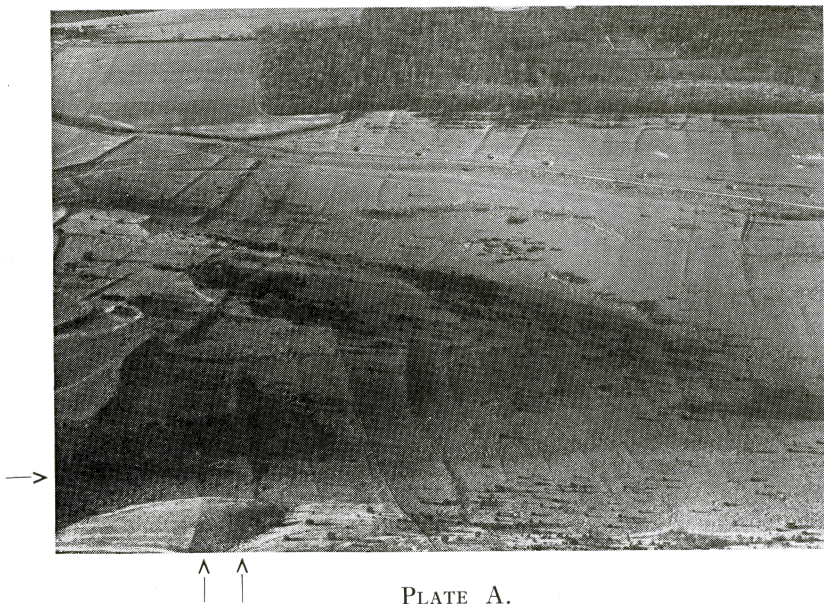


PLATE A.

An aerial view of Streatley Warren seen from the South, showing the field terraces. The arrows indicate the terrace which was sectioned.

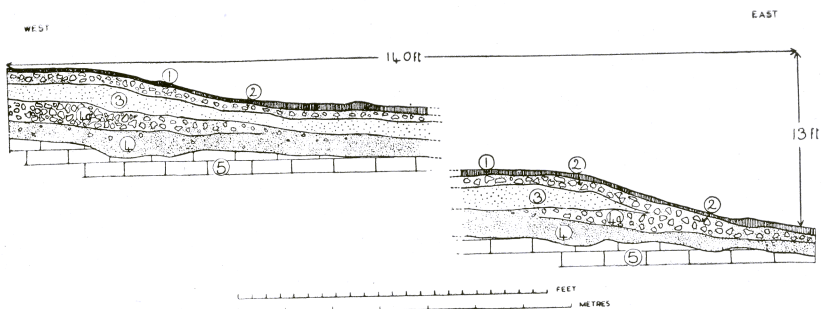


DIAGRAM B.

Upper and lower segments of the Section through Celtic Field Terraces at Streatley Warren, Berks

*Key to Strata :*

- |                            |                             |
|----------------------------|-----------------------------|
| 1. Modern turf.            | 4a. Flints with brown soil. |
| 2. Flints with brown soil. | 4. Brown soil.              |
| 3. Chalky soil.            | 5. Clean chalk rubble.      |