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**THE FYFOD PROJECT; THE FINDS  
PART 1 OF 3 (cf. FWPs 38a & 38b)  
OVERTON DOWN IRON AGE SETTLEMENT (ODXI)**

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## **ODXI: THE FINDS**

### **The Copper Alloy Objects**

by Andrew Hutcheson

The collection of six copper alloy objects from ODXI is quite a modest one. This seems to be the case for most settlement sites of this period. Gussage All Saints Phases 1 and 2 also had few copper alloy finds (Wainwright 1979, 110), and All Cannings Cross only produced 18 items of copper alloy (Cunnington and Goddard 1934), of which a number appear to be residual. This seems to be a general pattern for Early Iron Age settlement sites, indicating that this was a scarce and not easily parted with commodity.

#### *Socketed axe (Fig. Finds/1, 1)*

This piece appears to be a fragment of a Late Bronze Age socketed axe, originating from the opening edge of the socket. It may represent part of a ploughed-out hoard.

#### *Brooch (Fig. Finds/1, 2)*

A single penannular brooch was found, formed from wire rather than cast and thus representing perhaps a cheap or in any case less robust form of brooch. This brooch can be classified as a very simple form of Fowler's (1960) Type D which, according to Fowler's typology, had been in use in Britain from the 3rd century BC. Stylistically the ODXI penannular brooch is not very diagnostic, and a close dating of such a simple form would probably be misleading as Fowler's typology is dependent on decorative attributes which do not exist for this piece. A similar object was found at Danebury, which is also a wire-formed, rather than cast brooch, though the terminal loops are not clenched on the latter piece (Cunliffe 1984, 342, fig.7.6, 1.29). Two brooches from All Cannings Cross are also of this general form (Cunnington 1923, plate 18, 1 & 2). The fact that such objects have appeared at All Cannings Cross and ODXI, both Early Iron Age sites, indicates that this style of brooch has an earlier beginning than that suggested by Fowler.

#### *Perforated plate (Fig. Finds/1, 3)*

This object, a roughly rectangular sheet with six holes punched through it, was probably originally attached to a piece of leather or cloth. Similar pieces were found at Danebury (Cunliffe 1984, 132, fig.7.6, 1.46 & 1.47).

#### *Sheet fragments*

The remaining three objects are all fragments of sheet, of unknown origin.

#### **List of illustrated objects (Fig. Finds/1)**

1. Socketed axe fragment; from the opening edge of the socket. SF49, GF429, Area A, Cutting South 1, layer 2/3, possibly in Gully 1.
2. Penannular brooch; a simple loop or ring with the pin missing, made from a length of wire. GF211/ SF620, Area A, Cutting North-West 1965 (East 1).
3. Perforated plate; roughly rectangular sheet with six holes punched through it. SF6, GF245, Area B, Cutting West, layer 3, Ploughsoil.

## **The Iron Objects**

by Andrew Hutcheson

With the exception of the relatively large numbers of nails, and the hobnails and cleat, most of which derived from either layer 1 (topsoil) or layer 2, and all probably intrusive Romano-British material, the ironwork from ODXI is a typical collection for a site of the early to mid Iron Age in Wessex. The assemblage is modest for the almost total excavation of an enclosure; compared to All Cannings Cross, for example, there is neither the range nor number of artefacts, a situation which perhaps reflects on the prosperity of the site, or at least its ability to acquire iron. The ODXI assemblage, however, is directly comparable in range and quantity with Gussage All Saints, with which it appears to be directly contemporary.

### *Tools*

Two knives were found, both in pits. The first (*Fig. Finds/1, 4*) was found in close proximity to an ox skull, suggesting a structured or intentionally meaningful deposition. The fact that it was complete and that it appears to have had its handle when put in the ground, and as such was likely to have been a tool that had some remaining value, further supports this interpretation. The depositional circumstances of the second knife (*Fig. Finds/1, 5-6*) are less certain and the object was recovered in a fragmentary state and it may therefore be that its deposition was a less significant act than that of the other knife.

Small crescentic blades are common throughout the Iron Age, but blades of this particular morphology, which appear to have two edges, are more common in the Early Iron Age. Similar objects have been found at Danebury (Cunliffe 1984, 350, fig.7.10, 2.32), All Cannings Cross (Cunnington 1923, plate 20, 11 & 12), and Gussage All Saints (Wainwright 1979, 105, fig.80, 1104). These objects can be categorised, depending on the size of the blade, which side is sharpened and the degree of the curve, as either knives, bill hooks or small sickles, though whether precise functional descriptions are appropriate in this case is debatable. Our knowledge of how such tools might actually have been used is limited, but they could certainly have played a part in a large number of tasks in the spheres of agriculture, food preparation, and craftsmanship (Rees 1979, 450). It seems likely in fact that many of these blades were used as multi-purpose tools, and this might be reflected in the profiles of both blades from ODXI which suggest that both sides of the blade were sharpened, thus increasing the number of functions for which they could be used.

One fragmentary ploughshare (*Fig. Finds/1, 7*) is probably a Rees (1979) type 1a share, common in the Iron Age; it is not possible to be too confident in placing this in a category because the typology depends upon whether there is a tang or a socket and here only the tip is present. Rees suggests that a bow ard was used with this type of share, with the iron tip attached to the end of a wooden foreshare. The date range for such shares is quite long. Morphologically it resembles some shares found at Danebury (Sellwood 1984, 356, fig. 7.14, 2.69) which are dated to ceramic phase 6 (400-300 BC). This is a type thought by Allen (1967) to represent an unused, generally votive class, similar in their usage to currency bars, mainly because large numbers have been recovered from the Thames and from the hoard at Llyn Cerrig Bach. The broken state of the ODXI example, however, suggests that it may have

been broken and discarded during use. This could be significant, since it may represent an episode of ploughing contemporary with the field system post-dating the settlement.

The blade end of a small chisel (*Fig. Finds/1, 8*), probably used in woodworking, is similar to one found at Hod Hill and thought by Manning to be possibly Iron Age in date (Manning 1985, 24). Such objects are rare on British Iron Age sites though there is one other example from Wiltshire, from Casterley Camp (Cunnington and Goddard 1934, 106, pl. XXX, 4). The dating for both these examples is not clear-cut as in both instances the provenance has been lost and both early/middle Iron Age and Romano-British artefacts are mixed within the Museum collections.

A fragment of rod (*Fig. Finds/1, 9*), as with many such objects, is functionally ambiguous. Sellwood has pointed out, in reference to the 13 functionally indistinct, rod-shaped objects from Danebury (which she defines as 'tools manufactured from iron rods'), that classification into tightly defined types would be a mistake as they are simple tools that may have been specifically produced for a single or particular use (Sellwood 1984, 354). Alternatively, these may be simple piercing tools produced for general use.

Two awls (*Fig. Finds/1, 10-11*) were also found, both tapering at both ends in such a way as to suggest that they were meant to be fitted with a handle. Locally, four awls came from All Cannings Cross (Cunnington 1923, 122, plate 19, 7; 130, plate 20, 6,7, & 8), and these were all rod-shaped as opposed to the rectangular sections of the ODXI examples. Only one of the thirteen Danebury objects may be considered as a close parallel (Cunliffe 1984, 355, fig.7.13, 2.65).

#### *Brooches*

Two fibulae brooches (*Fig. Finds/1, 12-13*) both belong to Hull's type 1Cb, stylistically the end of La Tène I or beginning of La Tène II, and are dated on these grounds to the 3rd century BC. This is a type which is specifically British and more commonly produced in iron than bronze (Hull and Hawkes 1987, 123). Similar objects to the second brooch (*Fig. Finds/1, 13*) have been found elsewhere in Wiltshire at Cold Kitchen Hill (Cunnington and Goddard 1934, 118, pl. XXXIII, 17) and in Dorset at Gussage All Saints (Wainwright, 105, fig. 80, 1021). At Gussage the calibrated radiocarbon date range for the relevant phase is 730-420 BC, in other words significantly earlier than Hull's date range for these objects. Therefore the 3rd century BC assignation of this brooch at least can be called into question, and the object could be significantly earlier. The other brooch (*Fig. Finds/1, 12*) is less easy to parallel on strict morphological grounds because of its lack of diagnostic traits, but what does survive of the object has a strong resemblance to a brooch from Ham Hill referred to by Hull in his corpus (Hull and Hawkes 1987, plate 36, 4264). The Ham Hill example has a three-coil spring with an external chord, and its resemblance to the example from ODXI is in the shape of the bow and the angle of the foot.

#### *Nails, hobnails and cleat*

ODXI produced one cleat, four hobnails (e.g. *Fig. Finds/1, 16*) and 16 nails. Most of these objects derived either from topsoil (layer 1) or layer 2, layers which also produced Romano-British pottery, or, in the case of the four hobnails, from the upper

layers of Pit 20 (Cutting East 2), with one nail from posthole 67 (Cutting West) and one from Pit 7 (Cutting East). Posthole 67 produced Romano-British pottery, but Pits 7 and 20 apparently contained no material later than Iron Age.

### *Discussion*

The small size of the Iron Age ironwork assemblage, and the relative absence of well-stratified, diagnostic objects, restricts discussion, but a few points can be made. It may be noted, for example, that stratified objects derive almost entirely from the structural complex in Cutting East2/3. Within this area, one knife came from Pit 19 and one from Pit 20, and one brooch was found in gully 8. This area also produced the greatest concentration of worked bone objects (see **Worked Bone and Antler**, below). Evidence for activities carried out on the site is slight, but the awls, chisel and knives all have some functional significance, and the presence of the ploughshare fragment is particularly interesting given the possibility of a conversion to arable use after the abandonment of the settlement.

### **List of illustrated objects (Fig. Finds/1)**

4. Knife, complete, with a crescent-shaped blade and a straight tang; not clear from the shape of the blade's section which side was sharpened; mineralised wood on tang. SF19, GF364, Area A, East 2, Pit 20, layer 2.
5. Knife fragment; crescent-shaped, consisting of a small section of blade and a large proportion of a tapering tang. Part of the same object as No. 6. SF25, GF380, Area A, East 2, Pit 19, topsoil.
6. Knife fragment; crescent-shaped blade, part of the same object as No. 5. It is not clear from the shape of the section which side of the blade was sharpened. SF27, GF380, Area A, East 2, Pit 19, topsoil.
7. Ard-tip fragment; tapering bar with a D-shaped profile ending in a blunted point. SF3, GF218, Area A, East 1, layer 2.
8. Chisel fragment; spatulate fragment with a slight curve. Rectangular in section at the thin end and flattened at the blade. GF430, Area A, South 1, layer 2.
9. Rod; one end consists of a blunted point and the other is broken; the shaft is round. SF51, GF433, Area A, South 1, layer 2.
10. Awl; flattened bar, tapering at both ends. SF52, GF434, Area A, East 3, layer 1/2, base of topsoil.
11. Awl; tapering from the centre in both directions towards both ends. Possibly a tanged awl. GF431, Area A, East 4, layer 1/2.
12. Fibula brooch in two parts; fragment of the upper part of the straight bow and the one coil (originally there were probably three); and a fragment of the lower end of the straight bow with the foot attached through a connection at right angles to the bow and the foot bent over so it is parallel with the bow. SF16, GF362, Area A, East 2, top of Gully 8.
13. Fibula brooch in two parts; a mock spring and a part of the pin, the spring corroded but seems to consist of four coils with an internal chord; and a fragment consisting of part of the straight bow and the foot loop, broken where it reverts back towards the bow. SF70, GF504, Area A, South 1, Gully 1, layer 5.
14. Oval loop or link with what appear to be attachments at both ends consisting of a prong and an overhanging catch, possibly a bracelet. GF180, East 1, (SW, 1964), Gully 1 fill.
15. Oval ring made from a rectangular bar. SF5, GF233, Area A, East 1 (North 2), layer 2.
16. Hobnail. SF14B, GF347, Area A, East 2, Pit 20.

## **The Worked and Utilised Stone**

by Nicholas A. Wells

Stone recovered from site XI include sarsen, limestone, and sandstone fragments, some of which are worked. In addition, a number of rounded flint pebbles were recovered, and these have been interpreted as possible slingstones. Unworked stone, chalk fragments, fossiliferous limestone and iron pyrite fragments were also found, but are not discussed below. A full catalogue and description of all worked and utilised objects can be found in the archive.

With the exception of the slingstones, the definitions and functional aspects of the object types below are fully discussed by Gingell (1992), and the range of stone objects from ODX/ODXI can be paralleled from various Late Bronze Age sites on the Marlborough Downs (*ibid.*, figs. 86-8), where a similar, albeit larger, assemblage was recovered. The terms 'floating fabric' and 'grain supported fabric', used here with reference to sarsen follow the definitions used by Summerfield and Goudie (1980).

### *Quernstones* (Fig. 00, 1, 2)

Three quernstone fragments were found, all of sarsen, and all representing saddle querns. Two are bottom stones. The first (*Fig. Finds/2, 1*) is a fragment of floating fabric sarsen, with a worn concave face, found in Pit 5 (Cutting East); the second a fragment of grain supported fabric, again with a worn concave face, found in Pit 1 (Cutting South 2). The third fragment (*Fig. Finds/2, 2*) is a floating fabric top-stone with a worn convex face, found in Post-hole 2 (Cutting SE).

### *Hammerstone* (Fig. Finds/2, 3)

One spherical floating fabric sarsen hammerstone was recovered, found in Pit 5 (Cutting South 1). It shows evidence of heavy abrasion all over its surface.

### *Rubber* (Fig. Finds/2, 4)

One floating fabric rubber was recovered, found in layer 2 (Cutting East). It is rectangular in section, one end of which is smooth and rounded, with some pecking evident. The other end is flat and heavily abraded; this object may have served the dual purpose of rubber and hammerstone.

### *Flakes* (Fig. Finds/2, 5, 6)

Two sarsen flakes were found, both of floating fabric type. The first (*Fig. Finds/2, 5*) is flat and circular and shows slight evidence for pecking around the edges. It may have been intended to be a muller (see below). This object came from layer 2 (Cutting West). The second (*Fig. Finds/2, 6*) is also circular, but shows no evidence of working, being most probably a waste flake. It was found in Pit 20 (Cutting East 2).

### *Muller*

One heavily abraded floating fabric sarsen object was found in the enclosure ditch (ODX/4). It is circular and flattened on both faces, but indicates no wear, and has tentatively been interpreted as a muller.



*Whetstone (Fig. Finds/2, 7)*

One fine-grained, flat, red sandstone whetstone was recovered, found in Post-hole 2 (Cutting SE).

*Spindlewhorl (Fig. Finds/2, 8)*

One worn, circular limestone spindlewhorl was found in Hearth 2 (Cutting East 3). Its diameter is 40mm, the internal perforation being 7mm in diameter.

*Slingstones*

A total of 17 flint pebbles have been interpreted as possible slingstones on the basis of their shape and dimensions. The dimensions and weights of these objects are summarised below (*Table Finds/1*). All the pebbles are oval, measuring on average 30-40mm in length by 20-30mm in width, while weight varies considerably from 8 - 46g. It is difficult to make statistical comparisons with other sites (such as Maiden Castle or Danebury) as the number of slingstones found here is very small. The weight range is similar to that of Maiden Castle (14.17-56.69g), though it is apparent that this very small sample does not represent such a uniform collection in terms of size and shape as was found, for example, at either Maiden Castle or Danebury (Laws 1991). If these pebbles were deliberately collected for use as slingstones the selection was not as rigorous as for those found at the latter sites, which were collected from the Dorset coastline. This perhaps reflects the paucity of the local pebble source, most probably the upper Kennet valley.

No specific concentrations of slingstones have been observed, roughly equal numbers being associated with each of the structures. Four were found in Pit 20 (Cutting East 2), and a further four associated with Cutting South 1, three of which were excavated in Ditch [00]. Three were found in features in Cutting East 3 and two were found in features in Cutting East 1.

*Discussion*

None of these objects are particularly closely datable, although broad parallels can be found within late prehistoric sites in Wessex. The comparable assemblages from Late Bronze Age sites on the Marlborough Downs have already been mentioned (Gingell 1992); parallels are also easily sought within the Iron Age assemblages from Maiden Castle and Danebury.

Functional aspects are perhaps more valuable here than chronological indicators, as well as the indications of sources of raw materials exploited. Querns, whetstones and spindlewhorls have an obvious functional significance. Hammerstones are generally considered as being used in flint-knapping, although the occurrence of the hammerstone from ODXI in an Iron Age pit would suggest an alternative use, perhaps in sarsen working, as has been suggested for similar objects from the Marlborough Downs (Gingell 1992, 118). The muller may also have been used in sarsen working, since it has been observed that they are frequently found in association with sarsen querns (*ibid.*, 118). The fact that some level of sarsen working was taking place here is indicated by the two waste flakes. The locally outcropping sarsen would have been an obvious source of raw materials across the Marlborough Downs and its working is demonstrated, for example, subsequent to the abandonment of the Late Bronze Age settlement at Dean Bottom, and on other contemporary sites in the area (*ibid.*, 30).

No particular patterning was observed in the distribution of the stone objects, although it may be noted that the spindlewhorl came from Hearth 2 within the structural complex of Cutting East 2/3, the area where a clustering of bone implements, possibly connected with textile working, was found (see **The Worked Bone and Antler**, below).

**List of illustrated objects (Fig. Finds/2)**

1. Sarsen bottom quern stone fragment. GF238, Area A, East 1, Pit 5.
2. Sarsen top quern stone fragment. GF270, Area A, East 1 (South-East), Post-hole 2.
3. Spherical sarsen hammerstone. GF482, Area A, South 1, Pit 5, layer 4.
4. Sarsen rubber/hammer stone. GF382, Area A, East 1, layer 2.
5. Possible utilised flake. GF230, Area B, West, layer 2.
6. Sarsen waste 'flake'. GF364, Area A, East 2, Pit 20, layer 2 (below skull).
7. Old Red Sandstone whetstone fragment. GF270, Area A, East 1 (South-East), Post hole 2.
8. Limestone spindle whorl. SF69, Area A, East 3, Hearth 2.

**The Glass Bead**

by Lorraine Mephram

One glass bead (*Fig. Finds/5*, 3) was recovered from the top of Pit 21A (Cutting East). This is a spherical bead in pale green translucent glass with an overall trellis design in opaque yellow. This object falls within Guido's Class 11 Iron Age beads (1978, 81, Fig. 30), which are described as 'Meare variants'. The example from Overton Down is cited as the only example of the trellis design, and is cautiously dated by Guido to the 2nd to 1st century BC (*ibid.*, 83 and fig. 31).

**Illustrated object (Fig. Finds/5)**

3. Spherical bead; pale green glass with overall opaque yellow trellis design. SF55, GF443, Area A, Cutting East 3, Pit 21A.

**The Pottery**

by T.C.S. Gingell

*Introduction*

The pottery assemblage from OD XI consists of 4279 sherds, weighing 30,507 grammes. Of this total, less than 6% by number show any diagnostic traits (e.g. rims, bases, angle and decorated sherds). The assemblage quality is generally poor with most sherds being small and heavily abraded. In consequence, it is difficult to assign definite form types to many of the sherds. Much of the pottery from the site is unprovenanced and it is therefore difficult to give more than broad date ranges for the much of the material.

The assemblage was analysed and recorded following recommended guidelines for the analysis of prehistoric pottery (PCRG 1992). All sherds were assigned a fabric type after macroscopic examination and the use of a hand lens (x10 and x20 power), and the sherds were then counted and weighed to the nearest whole gramme. Surface treatment, evidence of manufacturing technology, decoration etc. were also noted. The

assemblage did not justify the use of further scientific analysis (e.g. thin section analysis).

### *Description of pottery fabrics*

In total 34 fabric types were identified, grouped into eight dominant inclusion types: quartz and glauconite (Group Q), flint (Group F), shell (Group S), iron oxides (Group I), limestone (Group C), organics (Group V), micaceous (Group M) and grog (Group G). *Table Finds/2* shows the quantity and percentage of each fabric type present. In the fabric descriptions below, the terms used to describe the size of inclusions are defined as follows: very fine (up to 0.1mm); fine (0.1-0.25mm); medium (0.25-0.5mm); coarse (0.5-1.0mm); very coarse (1mm+). Terms used to describe the frequency of inclusions are defined thus, based on the density charts devised by Terry and Chilingar (1953): rare (1-3%); sparse (3-10%); moderate (10-20%); common (20-30%); Very common (30-40%); abundant (40%+).

### Group Q: Sandy fabrics with probable glauconite

- Q1 A very friable, almost uniquely sandy fabric with abundant amounts of fine to medium grade quartz sand and rare probable glauconite. Some organic voids are present in this fabric, the linear nature of which would suggest them to be formed by grass being burnt out of the vessel during firing. This fabric is usually associated with thick-walled vessels which often show severe erosion due to the sandy nature and poor firing of the fabric.
- Q2 A hard grey/black fabric with moderate amounts of fine to medium grade quartz sand and medium to coarse grade probable glauconite. There is a sparse amount of mica present. This fabric is similar to Q3 but is noticeably harder than that fabric.
- Q3 A soft, sandy fabric with abundant amounts of fine to medium grade quartz sand and moderate amounts of fine to medium grade probable glauconite. Sparse amounts of very fine mica are also visible. This fabric is often severely abraded. Q3 may well represent a more poorly-fired variant of Q2 but as the fabrics are discernibly different in their firing it has been decided to treat the fabrics as different for the purposes of this report.
- Q4 A differentially fired (i.e. the fabric ranges from red to grey/black in colour) coarse sandy fabric with common amounts of fine to very coarse quartz sand and moderate amounts of fine to medium grade probable glauconite. This fabric is commonly associated with thick-walled vessels (cross section 7mm).
- Q5 A soft, unusually coarse glauconitic fabric with moderate amounts of fine to very coarse (6mm) probable glauconite and quartz sand. This fabric also has rare amounts of medium to coarse grade angular flint and iron oxides. This fabric is exclusively associated with thick-walled vessels, usually jars (cross section 10mm).
- Q6 A very fine sandy fabric associated with thin walled 'haematite-coated' vessels. This fabric has sparse to moderate amounts of fine to medium grade sand and probable glauconite. This fabric is similar to Q7 in that it is associated with the distinctive furrowed bowls but Q7 is noticeably coarser than Q6.
- Q7 A soft, reasonably fine sandy ware with moderate to common amounts of medium to coarse sand and probable glauconite. Rare amounts of mica are also visible. This fabric is also associated with furrowed bowls but is distinctively coarser than Q6.
- Q8 A fine, soft barely sandy fabric with sparse amounts of fine to medium grade quartz sand and probable glauconite. Sparse amounts of very fine mica are also present.
- Q9 A reddish coarse sandy fabric with very few finer inclusions. Moderate amounts of quartz sand and probable glauconite are present with sparse amounts of mica also visible.

### Group F: Flint-tempered/flint-gritted fabrics

A distinction is made here between 'flint-tempered' fabrics, i.e. those to which flint has been added deliberately in order to strength and make the clay more workable; and 'flint-gritted' fabrics, i.e. those in which flint inclusions are likely to occur naturally.

- F10 A hard, coarse flint-gritted fabric with limestone; sparse amounts of flint and limestone and moderate amounts of fine to medium grade sand. Rare amounts of iron oxides and mica can also be seen. This fabric is probably later Bronze Age in date and would seem to be associated with residual material on the site.
- F11 A soft, grey/black flint-gritted fabric; moderate amounts of angular medium to coarse grade flint. Sparse amounts of fine grade quartz sand and probable glauconite are also present. This fabric is paralleled with the Potterne fabric FT33 (Morris in prep.) but, unlike the latter fabric, F11 has no visible iron oxides.
- F12 A soft, irregular flint-tempered fabric; common amounts of fine to coarse grade angular flint and moderate amounts of coarse iron oxides. This fabric also contains rare amounts of medium grade probable glauconite and quartz sand. This fabric is very similar to Potterne fabric FT31 (*ibid.*) and possibly represents a very irregular form of this fabric.
- F13 A soft, flint-gritted fabric with sparse amounts of medium to coarse grade angular flint and iron oxides. This fabric also contains sparse amounts of fine grade probable glauconite and quartz sand. Rare amounts of very fine mica are also present. This fabric seems to be mainly associated with thick-walled (cross section 11mm) sherds.
- F14 A very coarse flint-tempered fabric with sparse amounts of coarse to very coarse (4mm) grade flint. This fabric also contains common to moderate amounts of medium grade quartz sand and probable glauconite. There are also sparse amounts of medium grade iron oxides present.
- F15 A moderately flint-gritted fabric with sparse amounts of very coarse (2mm) angular flint. This fabric contains moderate amounts of medium grade sand and probable glauconite. Sparse amounts of medium to very coarse (4mm) grog are also present. The sherds in this fabric are usually highly abraded. This fabric is very similar to Q8 but is different due to the quantities of flint present. It may however, represent a similar clay source to that for Q8.

#### Group S: Shelly fabrics

- S16 A soft, sandy shell fabric with moderate amounts of fine to coarse grade iron rich fossil shell and common amounts of quartz sand and probable glauconite. This fabric also contains rare amounts of medium grade rounded grog. This fabric is similar to S17 but S16 contains larger quantities of quartz sand and probable glauconite. A parallel for this fabric can be found in the Potterne fabric FT42 (Morris in prep.).
- S17 A fine shelly fabric with moderate amounts of fine to very coarse (6mm) grade iron rich fossil shell and sparse amounts of fine to medium grade quartz sand. This fabric is very similar to FT41 from Potterne (*ibid.*).
- S18 A soft fabric with moderate amounts of crushed medium to coarse grade fossil shell and sparse amounts of fine to medium grade limestone. There are also sparse amounts of fine probable glauconite present. This fabric is commonly associated with thin-walled vessels (cross section 5mm).
- S19 A coarse shelly fabric with moderate to common amounts of fine to very coarse (6mm) grade iron rich fossil shell and sparse amounts of similarly sized limestone. This fabric also contains moderate amounts of fine to medium grade quartz sand and probable glauconite. This fabric is similar to Potterne fabric FT46 (*ibid.*).
- S20 A soft shelly fabric with moderate amounts of fine to very coarse grade (6mm) fossil shell and sparse amounts of medium grade flint, grog and probable glauconite. The sherds of this fabric often show smoothing on the exterior surface of the vessel.
- S34 A soft coarse shelly fabric with common amounts of fine to very coarse grade fossil Shell and common amounts of fine to medium grade quartz sand and probable glauconite. Moderate amounts of medium to coarse grade angular flint are also present. This fabric appears in only one sherd from the site. This sherd is decorated with an applied strip cordon and is c.10mm thick in cross section. It is likely that this sherd is from a cordoned urn of the Late Bronze Age Deverel Rimbury tradition (*Fig. Finds/4, 37*).

#### Group I: Fabrics containing iron oxides

- I21 An iron-rich fabric with sparse to moderate amounts of medium to very coarse grade red/brown iron oxides. This fabric also contains rare amounts of coarse grade limestone and probable

glauconite. This fabric is similar to I22 but the pieces of iron oxide in I21 are finer and more fragmentary.

- I22 A sandy, iron rich fabric with scarce, but macroscopically very obvious, medium to very coarse (6mm) grade pieces of spherical red iron oxide. This fabric also contains common amounts of fine to medium grade quartz sand and probable glauconite.

### Group C: Limestone-tempered fabrics

- C23 A soft oolitic fabric containing moderate to common amounts of medium to coarse grade (2mm), iron-rich oolitic limestone. Sparse amounts of coarse fossil shell and medium grade quartz sand are also present. This fabric is paralleled by fabric FT51 from Potterne (Morris in prep.).
- C24 A soft, limestone rich fabric with common amounts of fine to very coarse grade (5mm) limestone and sparse amounts of coarse fossil shell. This fabric also contains moderate amounts of fine quartz sand and probable glauconite. Sparse to rare amounts of coarse angular flint and iron oxides are also present. This fabric is paralleled by fabric FT13 from Potterne (*ibid.*).
- C25 A soft fabric with moderate to common amounts of fine to very coarse grade (6mm) limestone and sparse amounts of fine to medium grade quartz sand. This fabric is similar to Potterne fabric FT17 (*ibid.*) but C25 is not micaceous.
- C26 A soft, fine limestone fabric with sparse amounts of coarse to very coarse grade limestone and sparse to moderate amounts of fine to medium grade quartz sand and probable glauconite. This fabric is usually associated with thin-walled vessels.
- C27 A soft oolitic fabric with sparse to moderate amounts of medium to very coarse grade oolitic limestone and moderate amounts of fine to very coarse fossil shell. This fabric is very similar to C23 but contains a larger quantity of fossil shell.
- C33 A hard fine calcitic sandy fabric with sparse to moderate amounts of angular calcite crystals. This fabric also contains moderate amounts of quartz sand and some fine mica. This fabric, which occurs in three rim sherds only, is heavily burnished to the point of producing a glassy effect to the pottery. This fabric would seem to represent the Late Iron Age Durotrigian Black Burnished Ware of the Poole area.

### Group V: Organic void fabrics

- V28 A soft sandy micaceous fabric with moderate amounts of fine to very coarse grade (6mm) linear voids. This fabric contains common amounts of fine to medium grade quartz sand and probable glauconite. Common amounts of very fine mica can also be seen. The linear nature of the voids in this fabric would suggest them to be caused by the burning out of grass from the vessels during the firing process. This fabric is similar to Potterne fabric FT22 (Morris in prep.).
- V29 A soft coarse sandy fabric with fine to very coarse linear voids. This fabric contains moderate amounts of medium grade quartz sand and probable glauconite. Moderate amounts of very fine mica are also present. This fabric is similar to V28 but is much coarser than that fabric.

### Group M: Micaceous fabrics

- M30 A soft, micaceous sandy ware with common amounts of very fine to fine grade mica and moderate amounts of medium to coarse grade quartz sand and probable glauconite. This fabric is similar to FT21 from Potterne (Morris in prep.). The sherds of this fabric often show burnishing on the exterior surface of the vessels.
- M31 A soft, fine micaceous sandy ware with common amounts of very fine mica and moderate amounts of fine to medium grade quartz sand. This fabric is similar to M30 but is much finer than this fabric. This fabric is generally associated with thin walled vessels (cross section 5-6mm).

### Group G: Grog-tempered fabric

- G32 A soft, grog-tempered sandy fabric with moderate amounts of fine to very coarse grade grog pieces and sparse amounts of medium grade quartz sand and probable glauconite. Very fine inclusions of mica are also present. This fabric is similar to Potterne fabric FT15 (Morris in prep.) and is usually associated with thick-walled vessels (cross section 9mm).

### *Discussion of fabrics*

In general, the fabrics from ODXI represent standard Early Iron Age types. The forms, where recognisable, support this interpretation (e.g. ovoid and shouldered jars, plain and furrowed bowls with wide flat bases). Comparisons can be made with other Early Iron Age sites in Wiltshire such as Groundwell Farm (Gingell 1981) which produced a similar range of fabrics to those found on the Overton Down site. The limestone and shell fabrics are very similar to wares A to E from Budbury, Bradford-upon-Avon (Wainwright 1970). What is worth noting, however, is the comparatively wide range of fabric groups (eight) represented within the Iron Age assemblage, a pattern echoed within the contemporary assemblage from Potterne (Morris 1991; in prep.), and which indicates in both instances the exploitation of a number of different local and non-local resources (see below).

Fabrics F10 and S34 are represented by an ovoid jar and an applied cordoned vessel respectively and are representative of an earlier phase to the site during the Deverel Rimbury period of the Middle to Late Bronze Age, but the presence of more standard Iron Age fabrics alongside these sherds may suggest a continuation of activity from the Bronze Age into the early Iron Age on the site. A few later sherds (e.g. fabric C33) would suggest later activity on the site in the vicinity of the Pit 1/2/3 complex. However, again the assemblages from these features are not especially distinctive and may represent a fading out of activity rather an abrupt halt.

#### *Resources for the pottery*

It is generally accepted that if suitable resources can be found within 7-10km of a site, the pottery made from those resources can be said to be of local production (Arnold 1985). Clays that derive from outside this area can be treated as non-local.

The presence of probable glauconite throughout the majority of fabrics would suggest a fairly localised utilisation of clay resources, most probably from the Greensand and Gault deposits which surround the site. Fossil shell fabrics (including the Deverel-Rimbury type fabric S34) are likely to have been derived from resources of Kimmeridge clay which outcrop approximately 7km to the north-west of the site. However, the differing amounts of sand within these fabrics would suggest that a number of different sources were being utilised. Flint fabrics are likely to have been derived from flint of the Upper Chalk which is in the immediate vicinity of the site. The micaceous fabrics from the site are likely to have derived from a source in the Gault deposits which lie close to the site.

Of particular interest are the oolitic fabrics which do not have a local source. These fabrics are most likely to derive from clays in close proximity to a weathering Jurassic outcrop of oolitic limestone. The nearest resource of such material lies some 25km to the west of the site in the Bradford-Upon-Avon area. It is also possible that the oolitic material could have come from the deposits of Gault Clay which lie close to the Coral Rag series at approximately 10km to the north-west of the site, but the absence of glauconitic sands within the oolitic fabrics would suggest the former interpretation.

The calcitic fabric C33, falling at the end of the ceramic sequence described here, represents another non-local source, this time probably from the Purbeck area of south Dorset.

### *Vessel forms*

Due to the fragmentary nature and poor quality of many of the sherds it was only possible to identify a very few form types. Diagnostic form sherds are rare: only c.4% of sherds showed any evidence of form (2.5% rims, 1.2% bases, and 0.35% angle sherds). Of these types, it is difficult to assign detailed descriptions to the forms, and it is often only possible to give a generalised form description (e.g. bowl, jar etc.). Numbers of vessels are impossible to estimate and it would be difficult, and misleading, to give approximations.

The majority of forms present would seem to be ovoid and shouldered jars (*Fig. Finds/3, 2, 4-6*), wide mouthed bowls and 'red-finished' furrowed bowls. An illustrated type series was deemed inappropriate for the purposes of this report, but parallel forms from other published series have been given. *Table Finds/3* shows the identifiable forms present. Vessel numbers are based on numbers of rims present.

The forms present are mostly suggestive of standard Early Iron Age types. However the presence of more typically Bronze Age surface treatments and decoration (e.g. finger wiping and finger-tip decoration) would suggest a slightly earlier date to some of the typical forms. The ovoid jars are particularly prone to this approach. It seems that the period represented by some of the forms could be seen as a transitional time where a mix of later Bronze Age and Iron Age pottery trends are blended together.

The bead-rimmed vessels are indicative of a later Iron Age tradition, but are in such small quantities that they are of negligible importance.

Of particular interest is the presence of two distinct forms of furrowed bowl. The first type has a short neck and is generally a more squat vessel (*Fig. Finds/3, 8*). The second form displays a long, flared neck which gives the appearance of a taller, slimmer vessel (*Fig. Finds/3, 9, 11*). It is thought that the short necked form is found from the 9th century BC onward and is gradually superseded by the long necked form towards the middle of the period in around the 7th century BC (Elsdon 1989). The presence of the two types of vessel with apparently indistinct assemblages of Early Iron Age pottery would suggest that the flared neck variety has an earlier date than previously assumed. It is also possible that there is very little change in 'standard' fabric types between the Early and Middle Iron Age periods. There is however a distinct absence of other Middle Iron Age types (e.g. pedestal bases etc.) which would suggest that the former interpretation is more likely. Further research into furrowed bowls will be necessary to help elucidate this problem.

Also of interest is a sherd in fabric C26 (unlocated). This sherd (*Fig. Finds/3, 10*) is very similar to those from a short-necked furrowed bowl. The fabric of the sherd, however, is coarse and the technology of the vessel is crude. The sherd shows no evidence of a haematite coating or burnishing. The fabric, finish and technology of this sherd would all seem to point to an attempt at copying the fine ware furrowed bowl tradition typical of the All Cannings Cross assemblage.

### *Surface treatments and decoration*

A number of different surface treatments were seen in the pottery from the site. The abraded nature of many of the sherds, however, meant that occurrences of such

treatments are rare and it impossible to say how much of the assemblage would have originally showed such treatments. The range of surface treatments includes finger smoothing, grass wiping, burnishing and the application of a red 'coating' to the pottery.

Finger smoothing occurs most often on the large jars. This occurs on 115 of the sherds (c.3% of the total). This trait is more commonly associated with the later Bronze Age pottery tradition and probably represents the final phasing out of this tradition in the earliest Iron Age. Only one sherd shows evidence of grass wiping suggesting that this practice was not common on the site.

Burnishing is the most common form of surface treatment to be found on the site and it occurs on 138 of the sherds (c.3.5% of the total by number). The majority of the burnished examples also show evidence of a 'haematite' coating. On most, the burnishing is restricted to the exterior surface of the vessel usually on the upper three-quarters of the pot, but a few examples (most noticeably the ?**Black Burnished Ware** rim sherds from GF232, 255 and 257) show heavy burnishing on the interior and exterior upper part of the vessel.

'Red finishing' and burnishing can be seen on 113 of the sherds (c.3% of the total by number). The 'red-finished' vessels present an interesting problem. Although previously thought to have been caused by the application of a haematite coating, recent work has established that the finish can be achieved by a number of different methods including the application of a dry powder or a liquid slip (Middleton 1987). The precise mineralogy of the material used has also been disputed and in the absence of any other accepted alternative, the term 'red finishing' has been retained for the purposes of this report. A few of the red-finished examples also show evidence of a chalky white infill in incised decorated examples. A precise mineral identification of the coatings and infills was not possible for the purposes of this report.

Only a few sherds showed evidence of residues, but due to the abraded nature of the sherds this was not surprising. Sooting can be seen on a few sherds from GF226 and GF340 and an internal 'limescale' residue could be seen on a few sherds from GF454 and GF464.

Many of the decorated sherds from ODXI are illustrated (*Fig. Finds/3*, 7-11; *Fig. Finds/4*, 12-37). In addition to these examples, 26 further sherds from furrowed bowls were identified, but the poor condition of these sherds meant that they were not chosen for illustration. In general, decoration occurs only on body sherds which could not be related to specific vessel forms; it was therefore not considered appropriate to produce a detailed correlation of decoration to vessel forms.

The decoration of the vessels can be divided into five distinct techniques, and within each technique are a number of different motifs or styles of decoration. *Table Finds/4* shows the decoration type and the number of sherds of each type. The most commonly occurring technique is the horizontal grooving visible on the shoulders of furrowed bowls (30 examples); all but one example are in the sandy fabrics Q6, Q7 and Q8. Impressed and incised motifs such as dots, circles, wedge shapes, chevrons and lozenges are also relatively popular (*e.g. Fig. Finds/4*, 15-31); these occur in a



variety of fabric types, mainly sandy. The single example of applied decoration comes from a Deverel-Rimbury-type vessel with an applied cordon (*Fig. Finds/4, 37*), and the fingertip impressions found on shoulders and below rims (*Fig. Finds/4, 32-6*) also refer back to late Bronze Age decorative techniques.

Altogether, decorated sherds account for approximately 1.5% of the total assemblage by number of sherds.

#### *The distribution of the pottery*

Although pottery was discovered over much of the site, several areas are of particular importance: the gullies of the huts, the lynchet which runs north-south through the site, the features beneath this lynchet and various pits (particularly Pits 1, 2 and 3). These features can be divided into several phases of activity on the site and all contain pottery crucial to the dating of the site.

#### The Gullies

##### Gully 1, cutting East 1.

This gully contains a standard Early Iron Age assemblage of pottery with shelly, flint and sandy fabrics dominant. This feature has similar types and proportions of fabrics to Gully 2 and is therefore probably contemporary with this feature. The structural evidence from this feature (i.e. the larger, more substantial construction of the building) would suggest that the building is of a later date than Gullies 1 and 2 (East cutting), and represents a Post-3b Phase of occupation.

##### Gully 1, cutting South 1.

This gully cut several indistinct 'working hollows' containing a standard assemblage of Early Iron Age pottery including shelly, sandy and limestone-tempered fabrics. These hollows can be seen to represent Phase 3b on the site and were then later cut by Gully 1 (South 1) in the Post 3b occupation phase.

##### Gully 2

This feature contained standard Early Iron Age pottery with sandy, shelly and flint fabrics prominent. From the pottery present, this feature is probably of a similar date to Gully 1 within Phase 3b of occupation.

##### ?Gully 3

This feature has been reinterpreted and is no longer regarded as a gully. Though little pottery was retrieved from this feature, it would seem that it can be assigned a standard Early Iron Age date with the presence of Q2, Q3, Q6 and F12 fabrics. This feature has a similar assemblage to Gully 2 and is probably of a similar date within Phase 3b of the site.

##### Gully 4, 5, 6 and 8

Gully 5 contained a standard assemblage of fabrics including Q2, Q3, Q6, Q7, F12, S19 and V28. A sherd of a 'red-finished' furrowed bowl was also found. This feature relates to Pit 19, and similar standard fabrics were also found in this feature. This feature also contained a sherd of slack shouldered jar with everted rounded rim. Gully 4 is associated with Gully 5. Pit 13 which is located within the boundaries of Gully 4

may represent the latrine for this feature. Pit 13 has reasonably large quantities of pottery including standard Early Iron Age fabrics and two decorated sherds of an Early Iron Age type (see *Fig. Finds/4*, 16, 27; GF376). It would therefore seem likely that these four features can be reliably dated to this period and probably fall into the earliest phase of occupation on the site, Phase 3a. Gully 6 also shows a similar range of fabric types to Gullies 4 and 5 and is assumed to be of a similar date. However, the material from Gully 8, if compared to the material from Gullies 4, 5 and 6 could be seen to be of a slightly later date in the Early Iron Age. This feature is still of Early Iron Age date but represents the later Phase 3b of the site.

### The Pits

#### Pits 1, 2 and 3

Pit 1 was cut by Pit 2, which in turn was cut by Pit 3; itself cut by Gully 1 (East cutting). Gully 1 was later cut by the occupation layer. Pit 1 contained no pottery, but Pit 2 contained standard Early Iron Age fabrics including shelly, sandy and micaceous types (see *Fig. Finds/4*, 24). This pit would therefore appear to be of Phase 3b date but within a local chronology as being later than Gully 1 Pit 3 contained Fabric Q2 sherds and can therefore be dated to the Early Iron Age. This feature could, consequently, be related to the final phase of activity on the site; the construction of the lynchet which overlays Gully 1.

#### Pit 20

This feature cuts Gully 8 and is therefore structurally later than that gully. The material within the pit is of a standard Early Iron Age date with flint, shelly and sandy fabrics present (see *Fig. Finds/4*, 21). This feature represents Phase 3b, but has a later date than the Phase 3b Gully 8.

#### Pits 22 and 23

Pits 22 and 23 are located to the east of Gullies 5, 6 and 8, with Pit 23 situated beneath the proposed bank of the Phase 3b boundary ditch. The pottery from these features is of standard Early Iron Age type and includes shelly, sandy and flint fabrics. Two sherds, however, (GF460 [impressed]; GF461), both grog-tempered, are almost certainly Early Bronze Age in date. GF460 with twisted cord decoration is most likely to derive from a collared urn, although the body wall is unusually thin (it could be from a miniature vessel). The second plain sherd (GF461) may be either Beaker or Collared Urn (pers. comm. Rosamund Cleal). The rest of the pottery from these features best parallels the types found in Gullies 2 and 1 (East). **It is therefore difficult to propose that these features are earlier than most of the buildings and would seem to be part of the Phase 3b activity on the site - check PJF.**

### The Boundary Ditch (Cutting X15)

This cutting produced shelly, sandy, flint and limestone-tempered fabrics indicative of an Early Iron Age date, and can probably be related to the Phase 3b activity on the site.

### The lynchet and ditch

The lynchet produced reasonable quantities of pottery with many of the fabric types represented. This feature contains mostly Early Iron Age material previously associated with a Phase 3b date. This feature does however contain a certain amount of Late Iron Age/Romano-British date pottery in the upper layers but this material can probably be explained as being the result of later ploughing activity on the site. The pottery from the lynchet includes 'red-finished' wares as well as shelly, sandy, limestone-tempered and flint fabrics. The lynchet would seem to be of a secure Early Iron Age date and is cut by Pit 3, which contains Late Iron Age material..

The ditch beneath the lynchet contains similar fabrics of an Early Iron Age date including furrowed bowl sherds. This feature contains one short-necked furrowed bowl (*Fig. Finds/3, 7*). From the pottery evidence in these two features a date of Early Iron Age Phase 3b occupation can be envisaged.

### Postholes at bottom of lynchet, Area B West

Several post holes were excavated in Area B, West, at the bottom of the lynchet: PH50, PH63, PH67, PH69, PH70, PH71, PH72 and PH73. The largest quantities of pottery derived from the top of PH50, which produced 112 sherds, although most seem to derive from the same vessel; an ovaloid jar in Fabric Q2. Apart from this vessel, there are sherds in other coarse sandy wares, including one sherd from a furrowed bowl and single sherds in a flint-gritted and sandy, iron-rich fabric respectively. All of these can be regarded as standard EIA wares. PH 63 contained a standard Early Iron Age group of sand, shell, flint and limestone fabrics. PH69 produced several decorated sherds which can be directly paralleled with examples from All Cannings Cross. Post-holes 67 to 73 contained Early Iron Age pottery (e.g. *Fig. Finds/4, 22, 31*) but also contained sherds more typical of the Deverel-Rimbury tradition of Southern Britain.

While these postholes contain mainly standard EIA wares, there is a small but significant presence of sherds characteristic of a LBA tradition, perhaps residual in this context. PH 69 contained a sherd of finger-smoothed coarse sandy ware, PH70 contained a sherd of F10, PH71 had a coarse flint-gritted sherd which showed finger-smoothing on the exterior surface and PH72 has a coarse sandy sherd showing fingertip impressions. These post-holes would therefore seem to be of an Later Bronze Age tradition and probably represent the earliest phase of activity on the site.

### *Summary*

Although the assemblage from Overton Down XI at first appeared small and abraded the assemblage has offered some interesting decorated examples and has further added to the picture of transitional Bronze Age/Early Iron Age sites within the South West of England. The significance of this assemblage is highlighted by a general lack of well-dated, comparable assemblages in the area, although a good framework is provided by the large Late Bronze Age to Early Iron Age assemblage from Potterne near Devizes which has a series of radiocarbon dates from a stratified midden deposit (Morris 1991; in prep.).

The undiagnostic nature of much of the assemblage has hampered clear-cut dating, but three factors (vessel form, decoration and varying proportions of fabric types) may be used to suggest a maximum date range of 9th to 7th centuries BC.

Vessel forms seem to represent a combination of Late Bronze Age and Early Iron Age traditions. More utilitarian forms such as the ovoid jars, as might be expected, have more affinity with Late Bronze Age traditions while later influences are marked by the occurrence of the furrowed bowls, a standard Early Iron Age form. The two types of furrowed bowl observed at Overton Down may have some chronological significance, the short-necked variety appearing from about the 9th century BC and being gradually superseded by the longer-necked type around the 7th century BC. There is no evidence from Overton Down, however, that these two types were anything other than contemporary here.

Due to the indistinctive quality of much of the pottery, the majority of dating evidence can be found in the decorated sherds. These sherds, although small in number, have reasonable dating affinities with other sites. The decorated sherds are best paralleled with those from Potterne (Morris in prep.) and All Cannings Cross (Cunnington 1923). The dating for the decorated sherds would seem to be within the 8th to 7th centuries BC for the majority of the sherds with a few earlier and later decorated sherds (e.g. the Deverel-Rimbury applied cordon sherd [GF471, S34] and the Late Iron Age decorated bead rim [?C33]).

The analysis of the relative proportions of fabrics from Potterne through time (Morris 1991) would appear to show that certain fabrics are more 'popular' than others at certain times of the site. At Potterne, flint fabrics are replaced by higher proportions of sandy wares and fossil shell fabrics are replaced by more oolitic fabrics. The proportions of fabrics from ODXI, if compared to Potterne, match most closely the later periods on that site and would therefore suggest a maximum date range of 9th to 7th centuries BC for the Overton Down site.

#### **List of illustrated vessels**

##### ***Fig. Finds/3***

1. Base of vessel, form unknown. Fabric M31. GF403, Area A, East 1, near bottom of Pit 6A.
2. Slack-shouldered jar, burnished exterior, ?from same pot. Fabric Q2, C26 or C33. Area A, East 1 (North-West, 1965), bottom of Pit 1 (GF255) and Pit 3 (GF232 and GF257).
3. Base of jar. Fabric M30. GF499, Area A, South 1, Pit 11, layer 7.
4. Slack-shouldered jar with everted, rounded rim. Fabric S16. GF380, Area A, East 2, Pit 19, top fill.
5. Ovoid jar with plain squared rim. Fabric Q3. SF11, Area A, East 1, Pit 7.
6. Ovoid jar with internally thickened rim. Fabric M30. GF331, Area A, East 1, Pit 7, layer 3.
7. Short-necked furrowed bowl, three horizontal furrows (see All Cannings Cross: Cunnington 1923, pl. 28, 16). Fabric Q7, thickness 5mm. GF524, Area A, South 1, Post-hole 40, layer 1.
8. Short-necked furrowed bowl, three horizontal furrows (see All Cannings Cross: Cunnington 1923, pl. 43, 3). Fabric Q8, thickness c.6mm. GF360, Area A, East 1, Pit 6A.
9. Flaring-necked furrowed bowl, three horizontal furrows (see All Cannings Cross: Cunnington 1923, pl. 28, 1). Fabric Q8, thickness 4mm. GF341, Area A, East 1 (North 1), Pit 10, layer 1.
10. Short-necked furrowed bowl, three horizontal furrows (see Potterne: Morris in prep., dwg. 33). Fabric C26, thickness 6mm. Unlocated.
11. Flaring-necked furrowed bowl, four horizontal furrows (see All Cannings Cross: Cunnington 1923, pl. 28, 11). Fabric Q7, thickness 5mm. GF236, Area B, North, Post-hole 3.

##### ***Fig. Finds/4***

12. Upright rim sherd, incised horizontal parallel lines below rim (see Potterne: Morris in prep., dwg 25). Fabric C27, thickness 7mm. GF233, Area B, North, Post-hole 1.
13. Body sherd, incised irregular linear motifs on shoulder (see All Cannings Cross: Cunnington 1923, pl. 36, 1a). Fabric Q8, thickness 6mm. GF326, Area A, East 1 (North 1), Pit 9, layer 1.
14. Body sherd, incised diagonal lines above shoulder (see Potterne: Morris in prep., dwg 4). Fabric V28, thickness 5mm. GF209, Area A, East 1 (North-East, baulk), post-hole fill or Area A, East 1 (North-West, 1965), layer 3.
15. Body sherd, incised diagonal lines above shoulder (see Potterne: Morris in prep., dwg 4). Fabric Q8, thickness 8mm. GF471, Area A, South 1, Pits 8 and 9, layer 3. Same context as Nos. 23, 26 and 37.
16. Body sherd, parallel incised lines and stabbed pin pricks (see All Cannings Cross: Cunnington 1923, pl. 35, 10). Fabric M31, thickness 5mm. GF376, Area A, East 2, Pit 13, top fill.
17. Body sherd, incised lozenges in horizontal row. Fabric Q7, thickness 4mm. GF267, Area A, East 1 (South-East, 1965), Gully 1 fill.
18. Rim/shoulder sherds, incised linear motifs and chevrons below rim. Fabric F11, thickness 5mm. GF344, Area A, East 1, Pit 7, topsoil.
19. Body sherd, stabbed and linear incised motifs (see Potterne: Morris in prep., dwg 173). Fabric Q8, thickness 7mm. GF208, Area B, North, layer 3.
20. Body sherd, impressed leaf shape (see Potterne: Morris in prep., dwg 171). Fabric Q6, thickness 6mm. GF330, Area A, East 1, Pit 8, top fill.
21. Body sherd, impressed wedge shapes on shoulder (see Potterne: Morris in prep., dwgs 11, 169). Fabric M31, thickness 4mm. GF364, Area A, East 2, Pit 20, layer 2.
22. Body sherd, incised circles (see Potterne: Morris in prep., dwg 134). Fabric Q3, thickness 7mm. GF224 (same vessel as No. 25?), Area B, West, Post-hole 67.
23. Body sherd, incised circles with central stabbed dots on shoulder (see Potterne: Morris in prep., dwg 134). Fabric Q2, thickness 7mm. GF471, Area A, South 1, Pits 8 and 9, layer 3. Same context as Nos. 15, 26 and 37.
24. Body sherd, impressed circles (see Potterne: Morris in prep., dwg 156). Fabric Q7, thickness 5mm. GF246, Area A, East 1 (North-West), Pit 2, or Area C, layer 2.
25. Body sherd, incised circles and lines (see Potterne: Morris in prep., dwg 134). Fabric Q3, thickness 7mm. GF230 (same vessel as No. 22?), Area B, West, layer 2.
26. Body sherd, impressed concentric circles with traces of white chalky infill (see All Cannings Cross: Cunnington 1923, pl. 36, 2, 3). Fabric Q7, thickness 8mm. GF471, Area A, South 1, Pits 8 and 9, layer 3. Same context as Nos. 15, 23 and 37.
27. Body sherd, impressed circles (see Potterne: Morris in prep., dwg 156). Fabric Q7, thickness 6mm. GF376, Area A, East 2, Pit 13, top fill.
28. Body sherd, stamped dots and diagonal incised lines with traces of white chalky infill (see All Cannings Cross: Cunnington 1923, pl. 32, 1; pl. 32, 2). Fabric Q2, thickness 7mm. GF230, Area A, East 1 (North-West), topsoil, or Area B, West, layer 2, bottom of lynchet. ?Same context as No. 25
29. Body sherd, single stamped dot. Fabric Q2, thickness 7mm. GF233, Area A, East 1 (North 2), layer 2, or Area B, Post-hole 1 (at base of lynchet).
30. Body sherd, single stamped dot. Fabric F10, thickness 6mm. GF233, Area A, East 1 (North 2), layer 2, or Area B, Post-hole 1 (at base of lynchet).
31. Body sherd, worn stamped dots (see Potterne: Morris in prep., dwgs 7, 80). Fabric Q3, thickness 6mm. GF224, Area A, East 1 (South-East), layer 1/2.
32. Upright rim sherd, finger-tipping just below rim (see Potterne: Morris in prep., dwg 95). Fabric Q3, thickness 7mm. GF237, Area B (North 1), Post-hole 6.
33. Body sherd, finger-tipping along shoulder (see Potterne: Morris in prep., dwg 89). Fabric Q3, thickness 8mm. GF397, ODX/4, Post-hole II (unlocated post-hole).
34. Body sherd, finger-tipping along shoulder (see Potterne: Morris in prep., dwg 89). Fabric Q2, thickness 10mm. GF232; Area A, East 1, Pit 3. Same context as No. 2.
35. Body sherd, finger-tipping along shoulder (see Potterne: Morris in prep., dwg 89). Fabric Q2, thickness 7mm. GF219, Area A, East 1 (North-West), Gully 1, or Area B, West, Ploughsoil/layer 3, bottom of lynchet.
36. Body sherd, finger-tipping along shoulder (see Potterne: Morris in prep., dwg 89). Fabric Q3, thickness 10mm. GF385, Area A, East 1 (West 1), layer 3.
37. Body sherd, applied horizontal cordon, plain. Fabric S34, thickness 10mm. GF471, Area A, South 1, Pits 8 and 9, layer 3. Same context as Nos. 15, 23 and 26.

## **The Fired Clay**

by Nicholas A. Wells

A total of 77 fragments of fired clay (266g) was recovered. Only three showed any degree of shaping, the remainder being completely featureless and undiagnostic.

The three objects comprise two slingstones, and one bead. The slingstones are both ovoid and are very similar to those found in Iron Age contexts at Danebury (Poole 1984, 398), Maiden Castle (Poole 1991, 210) and Gussage All Saints (Wainwright 1979, 101). The first is 43 mm long with a diameter of 26mm and a weight of 28g (*Fig. Finds/5, 1*). This object came from the working hollow in Cutting South 1. The second, almost identical, is 41mm long with a diameter of 25mm and a weight of 23g. This object came from Pit 11 (Cutting South 1). It is worth noting that these finds do not coincide with any of the flint pebbles interpreted as possible slingstones (see **The Worked and Utilised Stone**, above).

The bead (*Fig. Finds/5, 2*) is spherical, with a diameter of 16mm and a partial perforation running three-quarters of the way through. Again, this object may be paralleled at Danebury (Poole 1984, 398). It was found at the base of the topsoil in Cutting East 2.

### **List of illustrated objects (*Fig. Finds/5*)**

1. Baked clay slingshot. SF56, GF449, Area A, South 1, Working Hollow, layer 4/ clay silt.
2. Baked clay bead. SF606, ?GF335, Area A, East 2, topsoil.

## **The Worked Bone and Antler**

by Nicholas A. Wells

A total of 17 worked bone objects and one worked antler object have been examined, and are discussed by type below. A discussion of the functional aspects of the definitions used below can be found in Sellwood (1984).

### *Points and Splinters*

Three bone points were found, one of which is formed from a splinter of a *tibia* from an animal of unidentified species. This object came from Pit 23 in Cutting East 3, The other two are worn smooth (*Fig. Finds/6, 1*); these derived, respectively, from Pit 21A in Cutting East, and Pit 20 in Cutting East 2.

### *Awls*

Four awls were found, all made from the proximal end of the bone, with the point exhibiting an high degree of polishing. Two are made from the second or fourth metapodial of an horse and were very similar to each other in form, except that one exhibited wear marks just beneath the proximal articulation (*Fig. Finds/6, 2*). This is analogous to one found at Maiden Castle (Laws 1991, no. 25), the wear marks being interpreted as the result of a possible thread tying-off area. One of these pieces came from a ditch fill in ODX Cutting 4, the other from Pit 8 in Cutting East. The remaining two are fashioned from the proximal ulna of a horse and sheep/goat

respectively, and conform to the awl categories (classes I and III respectively) outlined in Sellwood (1984). The horse ulna came from Pit 8 in Cutting East 1, and the other object from Pit 19 in Cutting East 2.

#### *Needles*

Two needles were found, neither complete. Both are polished, one (*Fig. Finds/6, 3*) heavily so, and both are broken mid-way through the perforation. One came from Post-Hole 18 in Cutting West 1, and the other from Gully 5 in Cutting East 2.

#### *Gouges*

Two gouges were found, both from the same context (Pit 20 in Cutting East 2). One was made from the radius of a sheep/goat, its tip having been broken off. The other is from the metapodial of a fallow deer, with one perforation, and another incomplete bore hole adjacent (*Fig. Finds/6, 4*). This latter object conforms to Sellwood's class I gouge (1984).

#### *Incised Bone*

Three rib bones were found to have lateral incisions scratched into them. In all cases the incisions were on one face and at one end, and the rib bone had been broken at both ends. None of the incisions were evenly spaced. It seems likely that they represent butchering marks. Two of these objects were from Pit 20 in Cutting East, and the third from Pit 6A in Cutting East 1.

A further bone, the tibia of a roe deer with the proximal end broken off, shows a series of lateral incisions running along one face. Again, these may also be butchering marks. This object came from the base of the topsoil in Cutting South 1.

#### *Antler Object*

An antler tine point was found in Pit 8 (Cutting East), with some faintly incised decoration along one side (*Fig. Finds/6, 5*). It had been hacked off from the rest of the antler, to judge from the amount and depth of cut marks in and around the broken end.

#### *Miscellaneous Objects*

Two worked bone objects have been grouped together in this heading. The first, from Pit 20 (Cutting East) is a worn sheep/goat metatarsal with two pairs of grooves set into the sides of the bone (*Fig. Finds/6, 6*). The deeper pair are nearer to the (broken) distal end while the shallower pair are the same distance from the proximal end. A series of 'ripples' occur in one of the grooves from each pair, diagonally opposite each other. This has a parallel with Sellwood's sheep long bone class IV (1984), and the grooves have been possibly identified as places where thread could be wound without slipping, the grooves providing further grip.

The second object (*Fig. Finds/6, 7*), found at the base of the topsoil in Cutting East 3, is made from the distal end of a tibia, again from a sheep/goat. The bone has been cut neatly across, and the cut smoothed down. This may be similar to those objects interpreted as manufacturing waste by Sellwood (1984).

#### *Discussion*

While none of these objects are closely datable, the range of pointed tools and implements finds general parallels on other Iron Age sites such as Maiden Castle and Danebury; and a very similar range of artefacts is illustrated for the Late Bronze Age site at Burderop Down on the Marlborough Downs (Gingell 1992, fig. 83). The value of these objects lies more in their functional significance to the site, and in the indications of the range of animal species exploited. Many of these pointed implements could have been used in textile working, for example the awls and needles. The gouges are less easily linked to any one activity and are most likely to have been multi-functional. A few objects seem to represent bone- or antler-working waste.

Of the identifiable bones, those of sheep/goat form the largest single group, followed by horse, chiefly represented by 2nd/4th metapodial awls, with fallow and roe deer bones as isolated examples.

The distribution of the objects reveals some interesting patterning. It is noticeable that many of these objects were found in pit fills, and there is a marked concentration within the structural complex of Cuttings East 2 and East 3, where five objects (two gouges, one point and two cut ribs) were found in Pit 20, one awl from Pit 19 and a needle from Gully 5. One further point came from the outlying Pit 23. This might suggest that textile-working activities were concentrated in this area, a suggestion further supported by the presence of a stone spindlewhorl in Hearth 2 within the inner structure. If so, at least some of this activity must post-date the use of the innermost structure represented by Gully 8, since this is cut by Pit 20.

**List of illustrated objects (Fig. Finds.6)**

1. Worn bone point with flattened head. SF54, GF443, Area A, East 1, Pit 21A, top of filling.
2. Bone awl. Wear marks below proximal articulation. SF610, GF330, Area A, East 1, Pit 8, top fill.
3. Bone needle. Highly polished. GF407, East 1 (West 1), near bottom of Post-hole 18.
4. Bone gouge. Perforated, with incomplete bore hole adjacent. GF364, Area A, East 2, Pit 20, below skull, part of deposit.
5. Antler tine point. Faint decoration. SF13, GF340, Area A, East 1, Pit 8, near bottom of pit.
6. Bone object. GF364, Area A, East 2, Pit 20, layer 2, below skull, part of deposit.
7. Bone object. GF434, Area A, East 3, topsoil.

## **The Animal Bones**

*by Barbara Noddle*

*Introductory note*

by Michael J. Allen

The following report is extracted from three archive reports prepared by Barbara Noddle in the early 1970s. These were summaries of the faunal remains from the Overton Down sites and Wroughton Copse. The data for ODXI has been extracted largely from her reports and although some further bone that may not have been reported upon was found, this was assessed (see archive) and does not significantly add to the overall interpretation provided by Noddle. Barbara Noddle's original work was written as a combined report of the animal bone from both the sites on Overton Down and that at Wroughton Copse. The aim of her reports was to assess animal husbandry over time, rather than provide detailed information about the disposal patterns and spatial variation on each site. The detailed information of material by context does not survive in the current archive. The faunal report below is accompanied by the short report on the non domestic and amphibian bones extracted from an original



report by N E King and P J Fowler. The full discussion of all the animal bone material from Overton Down and Wroughton Copse is presented separately (Chpt. 13).

### *Introduction*

A total of 986 bones were examined from ODXI and are dealt with here as a single assemblage with the exception of a few of the better preserved deposits in pits. This total excludes the small mammal and amphibian bones discussed below.

The material was analysed in a number of different ways after the initial identification; proportion of fragments per species, minimum number of individuals, percentage of species, proportions of certain anatomical fragments and the age of those individuals (where possible) were calculated (*Table Finds/5*). The bones were also measured where appropriate, to determine both the size and weight of the animals, and to compare populations at different periods. The number of recognisable fragments is not used as a term in this report; since one bone may be broken into a number of recognisable fragments.

The aim of the bone analysis from this project was to detect changes in agricultural practice and dietary habits with the defined study area. All the site analysis was undertaken to this aim and an overview of the material is discussed in Chapter 13.

### *Preservation and recovery*

The preservation of the bone was variable, but much tended to be fragmentary. Loose teeth are all that may survive when the bones are subjected to heavy weathering or mechanical erosion. These make up about one third of the bovine fragments and between a quarter and a half of all the sheep fragments and a third of pig. This indicates that preservation was generally not good but that the recovery of material was good. The lack of phalanxes may be partially a taphonomic problem (see Anatomical Distribution below), but might also reflect that not all were recovered by manual excavation.

### *Results*

#### Proportions of species (common domestic animals) (Tables Finds/5 and Finds/7)

Sheep and cattle are the most frequently occurring animal, whether they are assessed from fragment numbers or as individuals. Sheep represents about 35% while cattle is about 25% when assessed as minimum number of individuals (*Table Finds/5*). Pig and horse are the other main domestic animals with pig being more common (16%) than horse.

*Cattle.* The remains from a minimum of 22 individuals were found, of which only c 40% were mature (over four years old.). Both waste and edible bones are well represented, indicating that animals were butchered on the same site that they were eaten upon. Very few phalanges were found, so perhaps the hooves were removed with the hides or were not recovered. All horn cores were of the same type, short (about 10 cm outer circumference). Pit 2 contained three complete skulls, elsewhere two almost complete hind limbs were recovered; it is considered that these do not represent the normal processes of butchery and consumption, and may be evidence of some ritual activity. None of the skulls showed any sign of poleaxing on the frontal bones. The cattle appear to have been of the 'Celtic shorthorn' type.

*Sheep.* The remains from a minimum of 30 individuals were found, of which less than 30% were mature (over four years old). If these animals were culled from a flock kept primarily for wool, one would expect a much higher percentage. The proportion of waste bones to edible bones is high, and possible some of the joints particularly the forequarters, were eaten off site. Most of the metapodials were represented by proximal half only, and there were few phalanges, so presumably the distal metapodials and hooves were removed with the hides. Two of the astragalus found were from rams; this and the predominance of choice hind limb joints again indicate local consumption whereas the head and feet of a single three-year-old animal (layer 268) may represent the discard of primary butchery waste. The sheep were probably of the short-tailed Northern race typified by the present day Soay of the Outer Hebrides. The polled specimen of Pit 454 may also be of this type, since its form of horn is so variable. Two larger horn cores were however found and these are similar to two specimens were from medieval deposits at Wroughton Copse.

*Horse.* The remains of eight individuals were found, which included a skull from Pit 3, wedged inside which there was a fairly large flint, and also the nearly complete hind limbs of another individual; the bones of this were about half the size and bulk of the modern Clydesdale. Ritual slaughter is suggested.

*Pig.* The remains of a minimum of 14 pigs were found, one of which was new-born and could have been stillborn. Several more were under two years old. All parts of the skeleton are represented including the phalanges.

*Less common domestic animals and wild animals.* It is always difficult to distinguish the bones of sheep from goats, and it is probable that goat is underestimated throughout but the remain of at least one goat were identified. Also found were the remains of two dogs, two cats, two red deer and three roe deer. The last indicates that hunting was carried out as well as stock rearing.

Deer was found in low occurrences across the site; one bone of roe deer was found from a palisade trench and two from a pit.

The dogs are largely of alsatian, mastiff to greyhound size (see archive); it seems likely that these animals were sheep dogs. However, modern representatives of the Soay race of sheep will not be driven by dogs; it is possible that their prehistoric counterparts, which were probably the same race of sheep, exhibited the same behaviour pattern (Morton *et al.* 1958).

Cat is very uncommon and its presence here is notable. It is generally supposed that the domestic cat did not occur in Britain before the Roman period, but Harcourt (personal communication) has recently found animals which he believes to be domestic at an Iron Age site in Dorset (check GUSSAGE); it is possible the Overton Down animals were of the wild variety (*Felis sylvestris*), for the fragments could not be measured.

#### Age of animals at death

Ageing followed the methods provided by Silver (1953) based on dental evidence and that of epiphysical closure. It is recognised by the author (BN) that there are

limitations of using this data. It is unlikely that livestock grew and matured at the same rate as the modern livestock on which Silver bases his figures; indeed for pig dental and epiphyseal evidence are always at variance if Silver's data are employed.

The age at which an animal is killed gives some indication of its economic function. Young animals under the age of about one year by modern standards are probably casualties or the victims of winter shortage; animals killed between the ages of 1½ and 4 years are probably being slaughtered for their meat and or hides, whereas animals older than this, although they of course provide meat and hides also have produced other economic returns such as offspring, wool, or labour (the pig is of course limited in this respect, providing meat, hide and offspring only). Thus the proportions of mature individuals are summarised in *Table Finds/6* and can provide some information about the agricultural systems in use. In the case of cattle, the proportion of mature individuals is about 40% and this might indicate that some cattle were being used for traction or dairy production. For sheep over c 30% were mature animals which may suggest they were primarily kept for their meat rather than wood of milk.

#### Anatomical distribution

Anatomical analysis of the bone fragments may give some information about what has happened to the bones after the animals' death, and is more concerned with the consumer than the agricultural system. In any carcass the bones of the head and lower limb provide a very small proportion of the meat. The phalanges are frequently removed with the hide, and may be absent except where tanning was carried on, but also may not all be recovered by manual archaeological excavation. Loose teeth are all that may survive when the bones are subjected to heavy weathering or mechanical erosion. Where meat is cooked on the bone the small bones of the carpus and tarsus and patella may be lost (they are rather too large to be overlooked in cattle) whereas if the limb is fleshed and discarded in an articulated state, or buried, they should be present.

The proportions of loose teeth, carpals, etc., metapodials and phalanges was calculated for each site (archive). The analysis of the limb bones showed that the proportion of this bone is low, and for the majority of the animals the feet were probably removed with the hide. Larger proportions of all the bone groups of sheep suggest that whole limbs were present. The majority of the carcasses were probably skinned and the feet removed.

The main assemblage (pre-1968) contained two complete bovine limbs and the entire hind quarters of a horse. There were three complete bovine femora, a fragile bone which rarely survives intact. These bones were not only deposited intact, but were spared the fragmentation processes; it seems likely that they were buried. Jackson (1948) observed a similar phenomenon at Little Woodbury, and Harcourt at another Iron Age site in Wiltshire (pers. comm.). Harcourt suggests that the process of butchery was to hand up a whole limb and cut strips of flesh from it, after which the still articulated bones were discarded, but it is also possible that the limbs were buried with the flesh still on.

#### Contents of the Pits

A few pits contained well preserved deposits, some of which are summarised below. All are detailed in the archive.

*Pit 27.* Portions of the skull of a cow (frontal bone and horn core) typical 'Celtic shorthorn' appearance (Jackson 1936). The portion of horn core was 105mm in circumference and 89mm in length along outer curvature. Other bone included a horn core of young cattle, sheep scapula fragment and teeth, and horse teeth. Pit 27 appears in East 2/3, but no finds were recorded in it. It is unlikely to be PH27 of East 1.

*Pit 2.* Pit 2 contained three complete skulls and other parts of the site produced two almost complete hind limbs; it is considered that these do not represent the normal processes of butchery and consumption, and may be evidence of some ritual activity. None of the skulls showed any sign of poleaxing on the frontal bones. Portions of a cow skull (frontal bone of skull bearing round horn core) enabled the horn to be measured. The horn core was 82mm in circumference and a second, oval horn core was 115mm in and 55mm long. Other bone included a skull fragment of an elderly horse and a pelvis fragment.

*Pit 3.* Horse skull containing a flint *c.* 8cm x 5cm. The skull of the horse in Pit 3 was shattered, so that the flint may have gained entry by natural means, but it was found just below the frontal bone and therefore could have been inserted deliberately. The hind limbs of another individual were also recovered.

*Pit 22. GF 436:* Mandible fragments and loose teeth of two cattle (one juvenile and one lacking third premolar, a condition not uncommon in Romano-British cattle (Meek and Gray 1911; Rixson 1972) and said to be hereditary (Ohtaishi 1972)). Various sheep bones including a mandible fragment, tooth, radius and scapula, and a mandible and loose teeth of an immature pig. Long bones of horse (radius, ulna, tibia fragments) were also found. *GF 435:* Mandible fragments of a juvenile cow and pelvis fragments, sheep tibia and new-born sheep metacarpal, and juvenile pig mandible. *GF 454:* Immature cattle mandible, sheep skull fragment (polled animal) and immature juvenile pig mandible. This also produced a maxilla from large cat, probably *Felis sylvestris*, the wild cat.

The majority of these pits thus contain the waste parts, mainly head, or one or more young animals. In modern terms, juvenile indicates under about one year, immature indicates under four years old. The skull of the horse in Pit 3 was shattered, so that the flint may have gained entry by natural means, but it was found just below the frontal bone and therefore could have been inserted deliberately.

#### *Small mammal and amphibian bones*

Note (MJA): A report on the non-domestic mammalian and amphibian bones from pre-Roman and Roman Iron Age settlements on Overton Down, was prepared by NE King and PJ Fowler. The identifications discussed below are extracted from that report.

The bones of small mammal and amphibians have not been fully quantified. The species recorded included weasel (*Mustela nivalis*), short-tailed vole (*Microtus agrestis*), harvest mouse (*Micromys minutus*), water vole (*Arvicola amphibius*), frog (*Rana temporaria*) and toad (*Bufo bufo*). Many skeletal fragments of most species were recovered (i.e. skulls and limb bones etc.) the exceptions being the frog (no skulls)

and the weasel for which only two skulls were recovered. Nearly all the animals were recovered from low down in pits with one pit (*no. unknown*) in particular having toad, frog, weasel and harvest mouse. These are almost certainly pit-fall victims, only the weasel skulls are more dubious. Nevertheless even they might be pit-fall victims and the meat scavenged by dogs.

The range of animals present is typical of open downland pasture and fields; frogs and toads migrate from dew ponds and are often pit-fall victims. Only the water vole is more unusual in this context.

### *Conclusions*

There are few meat joints and evidence of food waste. The presence of whole skulls and whole limbs, and the number of young male sheep (particularly in pits) seems to indicate the disposal of primary butchery waste and of young animals that may have died naturally.

The food waste may not have survived if scavenged by other animals (e.g. dogs) or may have been disposed of elsewhere on the site. Horses were fairly common, and a portion of a whole burial was recovered. The type of cattle was probably the Celtic Shorthorn, and the sheep not easily distinguishable from the modern Soay.

## **The Mollusca**

by Sarah F. Wyles

### *Introduction*

The ditch surrounding the settlement at ODXI was sampled at Cutting 15 along the south-eastern edge of the site (Fig 00). The ditch is thought to be contemporary with phase 3b of the site. The sampled ditch sediments have been described as primary, secondary and tertiary fills following Evans (1972, 321-332) and Limbrey (1975, 290-300). A series of eight spot samples was taken from this section to provide a sequence through the deposits.

The aims of the mollusc analysis were to attempt to provide a broad landscape history, an environmental history for the site and to attempt to elucidate when the site was ploughed, as indicated by the occurrence of the lynchet and plough marks here. The location of the sampling point means that the analysed molluscan assemblages are likely to provide a broad indication of the general landscape environment with a more detailed, site-specific environmental history.

### *Methodology*

The processing and analytical methods employed follow those outlined by Evans (1972), and nomenclature follows Kerney (1976). The results are presented in *Table Finds/8* and as standard histograms of relative abundance (Fig 00). Some species have been grouped for this purpose; the shade-loving species group includes *Aegopinella pura*, *A. nitidula*, *Oxychilus cellarius*, *Vitrina pellucida*, *Carychium tridentatum*, *Punctum pygmaeum*, *Discus rotundatus* and *Clausilia bidentata*; and the other catholic species group includes *Pomatias elegans*, *Cochlicopa*, *Cepaea* and *Arianta*.

Three molluscan groups were recognised, which appear to equate with the primary, secondary and tertiary fills described by context as follows. Therefore these mollusc groups are discussed by these fills.

<i>Ditch fill</i>	<i>Context no</i>	<i>Description</i>
<i>Tertiary fill</i>		
0 - 0.15m	1	Brown humus with few flints in top of enclosure ditch fill beneath. Plough soil.
0.15 - 0.31m	2	Brown humus with common flints in top of enclosure ditch fill beneath. Plough soil. (Early Iron Age pottery).
0.31 - 0.55m	3	Brown humus with few flints in top of enclosure ditch fill beneath. Plough soil
<i>Secondary fill</i>		
0.55 - 0.66m	4	Soil, chalk lumps and flints.
0.66 - 0.82m	5	Light brown soil with flint and chalk flakes. (Early Iron Age pottery; Phase 3b and 3c).
0.82 - 1.03m	6	Soil with few chalk and flint inclusions. Stabilisation.
1.03 - 1.13m	7	Fine light brown chalky soil with common chalk and flint inclusions. Section notes this is 'top of silt'.
1.13 - 1.32m	8	Fine light brown chalk soil with large flint inclusions. (Early Iron Age pottery).
<i>Primary fill</i>		
1.32 - 1.56m	9	Soil with frequent flint and chalk inclusions. Stabilisation.
1.56 - 1.76m	10	Soil with very frequent chalk inclusions, common flint inclusions and decomposed natural. (Early Iron Age phase 3b).

#### *The molluscan evidence*

Although some of the sample sizes were low (>350g), shell numbers were, however, high, with the mollusc per kilogram range being 77 to 849 shells, and preservation was good.

#### Primary Fills

The assemblages of the primary fills are characterised by a predominance of *Trichia hispida* and *Vallonia costata*, with its congener, *V. excentrica* occurring in low numbers. Shade-loving species were present, but only represent upto 10% of the assemblages.

The molluscan assemblages are indicative of well-established open grassland. This is likely to be ungrazed, thus providing some more humid micro environments for the shade-loving element. The high mollusc numbers at the top of the primary fills may represent some degree of stabilisation and slower sedimentation in the ditch. The openness of the environment shown by these assemblages indicate that the ditch was likely to have been constructed in a long established open landscape rather than a recently cleared area.

#### Secondary Fills

These assemblages are dominated by *Trichia hispida*, *Vallonia costata* and *V. excentrica*, *Helicella itala* and *Pupilla muscorum*. The shade-loving species, observed in the primary fill assemblages, have declined.

This seems to reflect an environment of short-turfed grazed grassland. The presence of *Pupilla muscorum*, a species favouring broken ground, may reflect areas of trample as

well as grazed grassland and thus the occupation. In areas of trample, the xerophilic proportion of the assemblage is thought to increase while shade-loving species decline. As a result of low trampling pressure, some herbs thicken to create greater resistance and thus develop patches of increasingly 'closed' habitats (Chappell *et al.* 1971). These patches would provide a humid micro environment for *Trichia hispida*, if it was not exploiting a mesic micro environment within the ditch or along the ditch edge. The high shell numbers in the upper part of the secondary fills may be indicative of stabilisation and slow rates of sedimentation.

### Tertiary Fills

The molluscan assemblages of the tertiary fills are characterised by the virtual absence of the shade-loving species, a decline in *Pupilla muscorum* and an increase in *Limicidae*. The predominant species are *Trichia hispida*, *Vallonia costata* and *excentrica* and *Helicella itala*.

The molluscan and sedimentary evidence appear to indicate an arable environment and these fills completely seal the ditch. An increase in *Vallonia excentrica*, *Helicella itala* and *Limacidae* is typical of molluscan assemblages of arable contexts (*cf* Bell 1983). Ploughing was likely to have been taking place across the settlement area and the ditch at this time.

### *Discussion*

The ditch was dug in an area of long established open grassland in the 'Mainstream' Early Iron Age, phase 3b. The molluscan evidence for the secondary fills, which are attributed to phase 3b and phase 3c, 'Late' Early Iron Age, indicates that this grassland was being grazed and that there were possible areas of trample, reflecting the occupation. The sediments and molluscan assemblages of the tertiary fills indicate arable and plough wash. These fills, however, only produced a single very worn sherd of Early Iron Age pot and are thus insecurely dated.

As the ditch was sampled downslope of the settlement, the mollusc sequence provides a very local environmental history of the site. The landscape of the general area, however, was an open one and is likely to have been a mixture of arable and grassland, as indicated by the numerous field boundaries in the area and the presumed rate of infilling of the ditch.

There is no indication of an arable environment on the site predating the phase 3a unenclosed settlement and the molluscan assemblages reflect an area of well established, but not intensively grazed, grassland in existence by phase 3b. The first indication of arable in the mollusc sequence is from the undated tertiary fills. This arable event may be contemporary with that reflected by the plough marks across the site. It can, therefore, be argued that this arable episode is in phase 4, the possible razing of the settlement. The field lynchet, orientated SE-NW across the middle of the settlement, is also attributed to this phase. Evans's molluscan evidence shows that this lynchet, attributed to the Pre-Roman Iron Age, formed in an area of mixed arable and grassland (Evans 1972; Fowler and Evans 1967). However, as the pre-lynchet soil had been severely disrupted by ploughing, it is possible that these plough marks and the tertiary ditch fills may pre-date the lynchet.

The settlement, may therefore, have been enclosed, abandoned and ploughed over within the Iron Age. The lack of detailed dating evidence does not allow this arable episode to be more closely dated than probably occurring between the 'Late' Early Iron Age, phase 3c, and the Pre-Roman Iron Age.

## **The Charcoal**

by Rowena Gale

The identification of charcoal fragments was undertaken on 20 samples from ODXI, all deriving from feature fills. The charcoal was prepared and identified using standard techniques. Where possible the presence of stem, sapwood or heartwood was noted. Results are summarised in *Table Finds/9*. The structure of one sample (1024) was too poorly preserved to identify, and one sample (1048) included insufficient material to identify. The following taxa were identified:

*Acer* sp., maple

*Corylus* sp., hazel

*Fraxinus* sp., ash

Pomoideae, subfamily of the Rosaceae which includes *Crataegus* sp., hawthorn, *Malus* sp., apple, *Pyrus* sp., pear and *Sorbus* sp., rowan, whitebeam and wild service. These genera are anatomically similar.

*Prunus* sp., which includes *P. avium*, wild cherry, *P. padus*, bird cherry, *P. spinosa*, blackthorn. It is not usually possible to separate the members of this genus using anatomical methods.

*Quercus* sp., oak

Rosaceae which includes the Pomoideae and *Prunus* (see above). Samples in poor condition (as in this instance) may not be identifiable beyond family level.