

OD XI: THE ARDMARKS Description and discussion

This is a paper written by pjf specifically on the ardmaks once all the plans were finally drawn up and it was possible to carry out a detailed metrical and axionometric analysis. The file has, however, been lost electronically, and there does not appear to be a paper printout; but I leave the slot, in the hope that it will turn up, not least since my memory is that it contained data not used in either LPP or earlier drafts. – pjf 02/10/00.

In the meantime, there follows the few paras. on ardmaks from the July 1997 draft monograph, but these are based on the missing document:

ARD-MARKS (figs. 6.00, .00, .00)

Slight, shallow linear depressions c 60 cms apart were first noted in the surface of the rotten chalk where no occupation layer existed *in situ* over the SE area of Building 1 beneath the flints. Similar lines appeared in then appeared to the NE, with grooves running at right-angles to them. The marks showed up partly as slight grooves in the crumbly surface of subsoil Chalk but mainly as earthy lines; they also showed as lines of flints, often small shattered flints set on edge or an irregular line of larger ones. These marks proved to be c 8-15 cms across and at the most 3 cms deep. They were on average 23-30 cms apart but overall appeared extremely irregular.

Within the overall plan, sufficient relationships were established for a palimpsest of intersecting grooves to be built up. This showed several phases of cultivation, the two main ones being slightly at an angle to one another. Marks running N-S down the slope were easier to observe. All were plotted before other features such as post-holes, most of which only became visible when the crumbly Chalk surface was trowelled off. In general the ard-marks were presumably later than other features; in some cases ard-marks visibly cut features (as shown on fig. 6.00).

The significant fact about the ard-marks on the east side of East 3 may well be, not their relationship to a ditch line, but their preservation. There are nearly as many marks, several of them close together as if from the same ploughings, on the line of the presumed settlement enclosure bank as there are for the rest of East 1 and 2 i.e. they are exceptionally well-preserved exactly where the bank could have been. The question is, therefore, whether they were well-preserved because they had been protected by the presence of a bank over them. If so, they were earlier than it, and we therefore have unambiguous evidence from the east side of the excavation, as there is from the west (*above p. 00*) of the site having been cultivated before it became an enclosed settlement area. Conversely, the fact of the ard-marks' good preservation could be used to support the argument that the enclosure ditch was likely to have been accompanied by a bank and such was most probably on its inside as indicated

by the ard-marks preserved by it (as well as the circumstantial evidence from cutting X/4, *below* p. 00).

The only comparable extent of well-preserved ard-marks on-site is towards the west side of Building 1. There, to an extent the Chalk surface was protected by the build-up of the tail of the lynchet, an observation which very much strengthens **both** arguments above. This preservative factor of overlying soil up here on the exposed SW slope of Overton Down is, incidentally, one good reason why the **absence** of ard-marks underneath the main N-S lynchet can be taken as good negative evidence that they really did not exist there. This too re-inforces the argument that the ard-marks on the north-east side of the lynchet respect the line of the field fence because ploughing and boundary were contemporary and space was needed between ard and fence in which to turn an ox-team round.

The evidence of the ard-marks alone, then, suggests that the site of OD XI was cultivated in enclosed fields, occupied (in two phases? - see p. 00), and then abandoned and re-cultivated in fenced fields. The argument about the sequence is of course circumstantial, and to an extent circular, but doubts about it should not detract from the fact of extensive areas of ardmaks overlaying EIA occupation features. That they are later than EIA occupation, however, leads on to the other question about the possibility of them being Roman or later. That some respect the fence, itself much earlier than the early Roman re-marking and enlargement of the lynchet, clearly indicates that some ard-marks belong the EIA phase of cultivation immediately after the settlement's end; but some could still belong to the re-cultivation of the same area in the first century AD.

That all the ard-marks seem to belong to repeated cultivations in criss-cross-patterns, arguably stretching from LBA-early Roman, denies the argument that some could be medieval. Ridge-and furrow overlies the site on axes close to those of the NW-SE ard-marks and it respects the main north-south lynchet across the site; but it could not have been created by cross-ploughing. We must therefore allow for another, post-Roman phase of cultivation to create the rig, presumably with one-way ploughs with coulter. The few medieval (12th-13th century) sherds from OD XI presumably relate to this activity.

The ards which produced the palimpsest of ard-marks on OD XI would have been equipped with shares at best tipped with small iron sockets like the example found on the site (fig. 6.00). It would be a strange co-incidence indeed if at least some of the ard-marks recorded in one of the more extensive examples of their occurrence on Chalk were not made by the ard-tip found among them (SF3, fig. 6. 00). Possibly broken (and discarded?) in use here, the fragment may, like the nails and some of the

pottery, also be of Romano-British date and use but, like the bulk of the artefacts in layer 2, it could equally well, and more probably, be of EIA date, used during the post-settlement cultivation associated with the fence and the bulk of the ard-marks. Disturbed from its original context, like so much of the EIA settlement material, by cultivation in the first century AD, it came to rest with Romano-British artefacts.