

FWP 82

THE POTTERY FROM TD VIII AND IX, AND TD 1-111

This is NOT what FWP 82 should be, but is a poor substitute. I simply cannot locate the note I wrote as a result of examining again the small collection of sherds (and a few other objects) from the above cuttings in May 1998. What follows is a piece cobbled together from the penultimate text of LPP, based upon the missing note which, since it was keyed electronically, must lurk somewhere. – pjf 03/10/00

Linear ditch F.4 continued, Totterdown (TD VIII and IX; LPP figs. 5.1, 5.2). The linear ditch and bank F4 were examined on the south west-facing slope of Totterdown on the assumption that this was the same ditch, F.4, as that on Lockeridge Down.

Cutting TD VIII was placed where stone-walled-fields are laid off from the ditch's southern side. Remains of the bank were slight, being represented by a thickening of a layer of small flints and a single sarsen stone in the underlying Clay-with Flints but probably marking the bank front. The inner edge of the ditch cut this layer (49) just in front of the stone. The ditch dimensions were similar to those in cutting OD I (fig. 5.2). The fill was not complex, indicating a long process of deposition (layers 5, 14, 43, 23a), with a progression from a primary fill (7) of coarser soil with large flints to a fine brown (wind-blown?) soil beneath the topsoil (14).

Twelve stratified artefacts were recovered from the ditch fill. Two were small flint blades (find nos. [4,14] in original record: see original archive and Box 99 @ Devizes Museum), presumably Neolithic, one in the primary fill, the other high on a tip-line; both were interpreted as representing pre-ditch activity on the 'natural' Clay-with-Flints, whence they moved into the ditch. The other ten objects formed an homogeneous group of LBA potsherds, all of a sparsely flint-gritted fabric; they were similarly interpreted, not least because five of them were on the disturbed Clay-with-Flints beneath the slight bank. This material should therefore pre-date the ditch at this point, providing a *terminus post quem*; it is most likely to have been scattered in this area through manuring during a phase of activity preceding the digging of the ditch. Given the absence of any later material, the material suggests a ditch/bank construction date in the first half of the first millennium BC. This is somewhat later than a Middle Bronze Age horizon suggested for similar ditches in other places in Wessex but not in any way significantly different from the dating suggested for analogues on Salisbury Plan (Bradley *et al* 1994; *cf.* Gingell 1992).

The third excavation across the bank and ditch was further up Totterdown (TD IX), approximately 140m north east of TD VIII. As with the previous trench, the geology is Clay-with-Flints over Upper Chalk (TD IX, fig.5.1, 5.2). The excavation was planned to demonstrate that the feature existed at this point where it had not previously been noted. This was because its course as a trackway swung off to the south east and becomes a low, double-lynchet trackway (Pl. XIX; fig. 5.3). The ditch itself continues as a slight and overploughed earthwork first beneath a 'Celtic' field lynchet and then beneath a larger, curving scarp.

The bank, still on the south side of the ditch, was relatively well-preserved, having been respected by cultivation associated with the 'Celtic' field. Its southern edge was defined by a sarsen revetment, two courses of which remained. A spread of stones, probably collapse from the sarsen revetment, overlay a very thin layer of flinty soil. In this protected context, four ard-mark grooves had survived, each scratched into the surface of the Chalk for a depth of c 1-1.5 cms. A single grog-tempered (early?) Romano-British sherd on top of layer 2 flints (i.e. at the bottom of the topsoil) was one of only two sherds from TDIX. Three sarsen stones and associated chippings high in the ditch fill along its outer edge almost certainly represent post-medieval sarsen-breaking associated with the other sherd, an externally-glazed potsherd probably of seventeenth/eighteenth century date. There were no other artefacts.

Two other Romano-British sherds came from a sondage (TD IXa), their context the equivalent of fig. 5.2, TD IX, southern end, layer 23a.

The evidence from the three excavations across the linear ditch suggests that it is later than the Neolithic and EBA/MBA (Cuttings OD I, TD VIII) and earlier than Romano-British and post-medieval (TD IX). The complete absence of any sort of EIA pottery from all cuttings may be significant. All the pointers suggest a date in the first half of the first millennium BC, perhaps somewhere in the eighth-sixth century, at least for the ditch on Totterdown.

Due to its value as grazing land over the past seven centuries Totterdown has a relict landscape of well preserved earthworks in addition to the linear ditch (Pl. XX). The aims of another small excavation were to date an apparently discrete field system and to see if its boundaries contained any structural components.

Cutting II, in the middle of a field, provided the baseline against which to compare sections through the boundaries. It showed a straightforward three-layer stratigraphy above the Clay-with Flints, with the top of that subsoil disturbed in layer 3. All of the field edge cuttings showed similar evidence with the addition of an extra layer between

2 and 3, taken to be the remains of a bank or the slight accumulation of ploughsoil against it.

The dating evidence is reasonably clear. A few prehistoric items (but again no EIA sherds) underlay the area, hinting that Bronze Age cultivation may have occurred here as at cutting TD VIII. The field system whose boundaries we excavated was dated by a small number of early Roman sherds, some from particularly significant contexts. There was no later material. At the time of the original investigation it was thought that this morphologically distinct field system was an outlying isolated group on high, marginal land. It can now be seen that it has a context in a general re-arrangement of land allotment and use early in the Roman period.