

Chapter 7 - Wroughton Mead Interpretation

Introduction

Pit 6

Mound & B2 Phases I & II

Enclosure B

Introduction - The Corner of a 'Celtic' Field

The earliest recognisable phase of human activity within the Mead are the 'Celtic' field boundaries which criss-cross it. Although these form part of the far wider earlier field system on Fyfield Down, this chapter is concerned with one stretch of 'Celtic' field, and more particularly one corner of such a field which remained an integral part of medieval and post-medieval settlement at Raddon. Why this specific bank and corner were chosen is unclear. Certainly the slight south-westerly slope of the area behind the 'Celtic' field corner is as best a position as one would hope for for sunshine and shelter on the Downs and it is certain the bank's height meant it would remain as a useful land boundary or stock barrier. Moreover, here the topsoil lies on Clay with Flints, as opposed to Chalk, and thus the soil is significantly more fertile. Whatever the reason behind the decision to use this particular field, once it had been chosen, it dictated the subsequent settlement morphology at Raddon throughout the thirteenth century and into the post-medieval period.

This field, in the N, was formed by a bank, which further E forms the N side of Enclosure C, joining a bank which transects Enclosure A and formed the southern two sides of Enclosure B. The E edge of this field was presumably formed by a bank which would have run NW-SE, just beyond B2 and the mound. Indeed, it is evident that by far the greatest proportion of the known settlement of Raddon is confined within the bounds of this 'Celtic' field. Clearly, this field offered the first inhabitants a satisfactory area in which to construct buildings and settle.

Pit 6

Phase I

A pit approximately 8.1m in diameter at present ground level, 3.3m deep into the natural Chalk and *c.* 6m in diameter across its flat bottom was uncovered to the N of B4. Its sides were slightly convex, so that in section the pit appeared rather bell-shaped.

At the very bottom of the pit a layer of thin 'silt-like' material and decayed Chalk lumps was recorded. A substantial amount of red clay, sometimes containing powdered or lumps of Chalk, was noted on the sides of the pit over the natural Chalk walls and pit bottom, similar to Cutting 9

(see p. XX). The presence of Chalk powder or pockets of Chalk lumps in this and the previous layer, may be the result of Chalk fragments falling off the sides and lip of the pit during construction or when open to the elements.

Above this clay and chalk layer, a distinct layer of brown clayey soil with flints approximately 30.5cm in thickness was noted. This was not found to be 'silt-like' and may therefore represent deliberate in-filling rather than natural weathering. When some 2.4m in depth, a massive spill of sarsens was tipped into the pit. The 1.2-1.5m thick layer of sarsens was unloaded onto the layer of brown clayey soil with flints, as most either rest directly on or slightly in it. Around these stones a layer of brown soil and charcoal accumulated. Further sarsen stones, possibly a second dumping, came down on top of this soil and charcoal layer. These stones, on the other hand, were found lying in a layer of weathered Chalk rubble. The skull of an animal, probably a dog, came from this weathered chalk layer (GF697).

Above that, a layer of light brown soil with weathered Chalk and some clay, but no charcoal, was noted. In places this layer was found to be level with the tops of several sarsens. Above that, several thin layers were apparent, most containing black or dark brown soils with charcoal and chalk lumps. A skull, possibly of an ox (GF575), was uncovered in this layering, along with several 13th century coarseware sherds. This distinct change in the consistency of the layers apparent above the stones, was referred to in the site books as 'the midden over the pit'. Clearly the predominantly dark brown and black soils, in which many sherds, bones and a few iron objects were uncovered, represent a period of increased activity, no doubt the occupation of B4, its collapse, the fire-pit and the oven (see B4 p XX).

Discussion

This circular pit was dug near the eastern corner the 'Celtic' field, just to the N of where B4 was later placed, probably to abstract chalk which would subsequently be spread on the fields as a fertilizer. Evidently, the Downland area was coming under the plough again.

The date for the digging of Pit 6 is unclear. A piece of thirteenth century coarseware pottery, of a type found in abundance throughout the excavation, was uncovered at the bottom of the pit, which otherwise produced 11 RB sherds. Clearly the latest dates the feature, although with comparatively so many RB sherds, in fact 34% of the total RB sherds uncovered at WC, one cannot but wonder whether the 13th century sherd is somehow a contaminant, possibly one which fell into the pit bottom during the extremely arduous task of clearing the pit filling, of which more in a moment. I am tempted to see this as a pit dug during the 1st century AD as part of the widespread 'Roman-induced' reorganisation of the land north of the Kennet.

A certain amount of weathering was evident at the side and bottom of the pit, although there were clearly some periods when deliberate in-filling had occurred. After a fairly brief period of being open to the elements, the pit changed its function, possibly because enough chalk had been excavated, and became a water reservoir, shown by the red clay over its sides and bottom. This reservoir phase came soon after the pit's construction and was thus also part of the RB landscape;

the pottery evidence from below the sarsen spill, if one excludes the 13th century sherd, is all RB. Above this clearly deliberately laid clay lining, various soils built up, consisting of chalk in lumps and in fine powder and brown clayey material, often with flints. As the slope of the soils below the sarsens and their thickness of some 1.5m indicate, these layers represent the gradual natural silting up of the reservoir.

When large scale agricultural activity returned to this area, the reservoir, which would have remained poorly-drained at times and was presumably full of weeds, was a hollow some 2m in depth. It became the obvious place to dump the largest of the stones being cleared from the adjacent fields during a renewed burst of agricultural activity in the Mead. These stones landed in the topsoil of the hollow, some, due to their immense weight, sinking into it. That the sarsens lay in a layer of weathered chalk lumps and chalk silt indicates Chalk rubble was also dumped in the hollow about the same time.

This phase is possibly one which pre-dates any permanent occupation within the Mead and may well be related to the ploughing of the lynchet to the SW of the hollow, as well as the ploughing elsewhere in the Mead. The evidence from this sarsen layer points to a 13th century date for the dumping, though the scant nature of the finds, especially pottery, compared to later phases, suggests no permanent occupation in the vicinity. A thin layer of what appeared to be a short-lived grassed surface amongst and over some of the sarsens indicated a short period of stability before the hollow found itself being used for a different purpose.

Once the field clearance had finished, the hollow was an ideal place into which to dump rubbish. The layer above the sarsens was found to contain a mass of burnt material, animal remains and pottery and clearly demonstrates the pit had taken on a new role; that of a midden for the occupants of B4. This phase, being part of the occupation and post-occupation period at B4, is dealt with below (see B4).

Building 2 & The Mound

Phase I

With increased activity on the Downs, a more permanent shelter, albeit possibly one only used seasonally, was erected. An area *c.* 14.5m (48ft) by 19m (64ft) was thus levelled off, some 250m to the east of the pit, and surrounded by a hawthorn and blackthorn hedge. A timber structure made of elm with hazel panels built in its SE corner, along with a larger enclosure (Enclosure B). The banks of Enclosure B were possibly constructed from some of the material dug up during the levelling of this area. The building was no doubt a penning for sheep and/or a stable for horses, with the two enclosures to contain the animals.

Phase II

This first shelter appears to have burnt down, although perhaps the burning associated with this area reflects the burning of a scrub covering. Undeterred, indeed spurred on by this unfortunate incident, the decision was taken to construct a more substantial timber building. This required further, deeper levelling, which included removing the debris from the first shelter. The soil was thus carted off and dumped 13m to the east. This meant the burnt ground surface material was dumped first onto the ground surface to the east, then the underlying Clay-with-Flints was dug and dumped, and then natural Chalk.

This levelling created a low mound, *c.* 6.3m in diameter, with what was described at the time of excavation as a 'reverse stratigraphy'. Meaning that under the topsoil a hard packed layer of flints and brown loam was uncovered, which in turn covered a core of chalk lumps. This disturbed chalk layer lay over redeposited Clay-with-Flints on top of a black humic layer, the burnt OGS from the west, which in turn was lying on a light brown clayey soil, the OGS of the pre-mound phase. The hard packed layer over the redeposited Chalk, which contained several metal items, was a second phase of mound building, maybe as a result of further levelling in the B2 area. The Chalk lumps were found to continue away from the centre of the cutting in a NW direction, that is to say towards B2.

Pit 4

What was at first thought to be part of trench system of the Phase II structure, was found running westwards from the NE corner of B2 *c.* 30cm inside of, and parallel to, the N wall of B2. However this 'trench', about halfway along the N wall, developed into a 0.9m deep pit and 2.4m in diameter (E-W). It had an homogenous fill of large, mostly smooth, rounded Chalk lumps in light brown/yellow clayey soil (AWC225).

The pit was uncovered under the chalk floor level and N wall of B2 and had not been cut down through the upper layers. The late medieval and early modern sherds from the top 6cm of the pit fill must, therefore, be remnants of the previous year's excavation when this area was covered by

spoil from the B2 excavation - GF763 came from the S half of the pit, at approx. 0.3m, but is not on pottery report. Pit 4 must have been filled in before the stone phase of B2 was built, possibly just before as the inside face of the N wall respects the lip of the pit. The function of this large pit, which was either associated with the first shelter or was just N of the timber building of B2 phase 1, is unknown, maybe it was a quarry for daubing material.

Building 2

An earlier, 'pre-stone wall' phase of B2 was inferred from the dateable material evidence, the position of two trenches under the W and E (stone) walls of B2 and two rows of post-holes sunk through the floor level. The E trench was certainly earlier than the wall, as the wall stones were found to be resting on about 15cm of chalky silt trench filling. Both W and E trenches ended in the S at the same point, c. 1.5m from the internal edge of the stone S wall and the E trench was found to end 2.4m short of the NE corner of the stone building; the end of the W trench in the N was not determined. As the E trench no doubt represents the full length of the first building, this gives a structure 4.2m in width (14ft.) by 6.9m in length (23ft.), an internal floor area of approximately 29m².

In the W, the trench was interrupted by a series of shallow holes along its centre and three notches, of unknown size, were uncovered in the E trench. The equidistance nature of the three suggested post-holes in the E trench present a construction with fixed distances between posts and as such may have held timber uprights, set in the trench which was subsequently filled in around the posts to give support. The shallow holes in the W were interpreted as the regular placing and removal of a hurdle across the entrance to the timber building, though the presence of solution hollows confused any definite interpretation.

B2 Post-holes

Two more or less parallel rows of at least twelve holes, 1.5m apart (N-S), 25-30cm apart in the centre (E-W), and 1.5m from the walls were evinced cut into the floor of B2. The proximity of the post-holes, their shallow depth and narrow diameter, indicate these were not holes for wooden uprights. They were more likely, therefore, to be where tethering posts had been or represent the end posts of stalls. The pottery from the holes was 13th century in date, although one RB sherd came from PH2E and two Martincamp (GFs530 & 564) sherds were found in PH1E (see *B2- Post-utilisation phase*). It was unclear as to which Phase of B2 these postholes were associated, though, ignoring PH1E which is later, none were evident N and S of the ends of the trenches, suggesting they went with Phase II.

The Mound & B2 (Phases I & II) - Dating

Layer 4, the black, charcoally layer, being the lowest layer in the mound, gives a *terminus ante quem* for the mound and, therefore, for B2 (and the B1/2/3 complex). This layer contained pieces

of charcoal from hazel, cherry/blackthorn, apple/hawthorn and elm (GF282 & GF311), which indicate that the Phase I penning burnt down. This layer also contained thirteenth century pottery, a 'Norman' horseshoe nail (9th-mid 14th C: GF526), a medieval iron buckle (GF283, TWA, 8), as well as two EG sherds (GFs 268 & 511), all of which suggests the mound was constructed (and thus Phase I of B2) in the late 12th / early 13th century.

An early 13th century date was also inferred from the material associated with Phase II of B2. One EG sherd (late 12th to mid-13th century) came from under the wall stones of B2 (GF736) and two were recovered from the wall itself (GF382), although 'Coarseware 38' sherds were far more prevalent. Two horseshoes classified as 'Norman', that is to say from the latter part of the 11th century up until the mid-13th century (GF356 & GF548) came from the pre-stone phase trenches; evidence which dates Phase II of B2 to before the mid-13th century.

Of interest are the sherds of a 13th century coarseware bowl (XFit 1) which were uncovered in the trench filling under the E wall of B2 (GF376), inside the E wall (GF293), outside B2 (GF318) and over the top of the ditch in Area 10/O5. This would imply that the ditch in Area 10 was substantially filled before the construction of Phase II of B2 (*i.e.* late 12th to mid-13th century). Consequently, it is more likely that B2 Phase I, that is to say the penning, and the construction of the first phase of Enclosure C were contemporary.

Enclosure B

Several excavations to date and ascertain the construction method for Enclosure B were undertaken (Cuttings 2T/U, 2F/G, 4P, 6Y, 6H(iii), 6H(ii), 6A(i) & trench on its internal side.

The internal trenches of Enclosure B

Investigation uncovered several sections of trench along what is interpreted as part of the original western bank of Enclosure B, under the floor level of B1 South (Cuttings 2T/U & 2F/E) and directly south of B2 (Cuttings 4P). The evidence suggests these ditches were all part of the drainage and/or stock control system for this area. In the east, there was a suggestion of a trench (Cutting 1).

The ditch discovered under B1 South was, in all probability, a continuation of the one uncovered running in a NE-SW direction from the B1/2/3 complex towards B4. In the area south of B2, a trench was also uncovered along with three large sarsens and several smaller ones set on edge in the subsoil in a line E-W across the centre of the cutting. These stones may have acted as some sort of revetment to the ditch (Cuttings 4P). To the west, a ditch 83cm deep was found along the southern edge of the slight bank (6Y), though as it curved south the trench became less evident (6H(iii)) and eventually, at roughly 9 o'clock, was not noted at all in excavation (6H(ii)).

The upper layer of the ditch in the west consisted of a blackish soil with small flints over a line of flints, which itself lay on a layer of weathered material from the bank (Cutting 6Y). Under this was a layer of flinty soil and a further line of flints, which was also noted further south (6h(iii)),

as was a clear vertical line within the fill demonstrating it had been redug. At the bottom of the ditch small, rounded redeposited clay and chalk nodules were apparent, as was much rotten chalk and a deep solution hollow on the east side. The presence of this clayey layer and flint lining may represent part of the water-proofing of the ditch; indeed the rotten chalk suggests waterlogged conditions. Interpretation thus points to the trenches acting as the drainage system within the enclosure, helping to drain the bank, as well as the enclosed land and farm buildings.

The possible relining of the trench in the west (6H(ii)), was not mirrored in the NE corner where it was apparent that the trench gradually filled with rubbish from the activities going on in B2. As such, the ditch would have ceased to have acted as an efficient drainage gully there, suggesting the drainage of Enclosure B was no longer necessary during the latter part of the 13th century. Cross-fit sherds from a 13th century 38CW cooking pot also show there was some activity around the south of B2 and the entrance to B4 during the latter building's post-occupation phase (Xfit 7). This, coupled with the fact B2 (Phase III) and B3 were in use at the same time, indicates B4 continued to have a role during the utilisation phase of B2 & B3, no doubt activity associated with the fire-pit or oven.

The bank of Enclosure B

The bank was consistently found to be made of a brown, clayey soil with flints. The combined length of the eastern and southern side of Enclosure B measured *c.*70m (230ft) in length, approximately 45m (150ft) of which was made of 'Celtic' field bank. The W bank, however, was less clearly defined as it was later used as a raised trackway to and from the (post-occupation) B4 area. Originally it was about 36m (120ft) in length, bending E at its N tip to form the entrance to the enclosure. With the addition of the ditch S of B2, the total length of Enclosure B's bank and ditch was approximately 114m (380ft).

In the east (Cutting 1), stones along the external edge of the bank appeared to have been a revetment. Investigation also showed the bank consisted of two phases; the upper section 13th century in date, the lower, earlier bank set upon the OGS, of unknown date. This occurrence was not noted elsewhere during sectioning of the enclosure. It is possible that Cutting 1 uncovered an early 13th century bank or a 'Celtic' field bank, heightened, as was so often the case in Wroughton Mead, in the medieval period. The E bank of Enclosure B ended where the level area of B2 began and did not continue westwards.

The western side of Enclosure B is interpreted as the low bank running NE-SW from the B1/2/3 complex towards the entrance of B4. Analysis of the depth and layering within the ditch, uncovered along the bank's western edge, indicated the bank was clearly higher when originally constructed. With the construction of B1 South, part of the bank was destroyed and it is possible that it was also at this date that the trackway to and from B4, presumably when the fire-pit or oven was inserted into the remains of B4, shifted up onto the bank, subsequently 'rubbing-out' the west bank. It is therefore unsurprising that, being a well-used thoroughfare, the bank is now so slight.

The addition of another bank, joining the 'Celtic' field at the SW corner of Enclosure B with the edge of Pit 6, was added for the insertion of B4; thus B4 sat between two banks, with a trackway running west of the W bank of Enclosure B (Fig XX). This bank W of B4 subsequently became the E bank of Enclosure A.

The entrance to Enclosure B

As no gaps in the E, W nor S banks of Enclosure B were evident, the entrance had to have been through the N one. The northern section of the bank of Enclosure B was noted in part, whereas the remnants of ditches were fully investigated. In the west, a ditch was uncovered under B1 South, ending at Pit 1 (see XX; 2T/U). Interestingly this W ditch did not run due E, but NE. In the E, a ditch was found to continue from the NE corner of Enclosure B and to run directly W, c.4m from the S wall of B2 (4P). This area to the south of B2 also produced a paving of sarsen chips, along with the indication of a low wall joining the south-western corner of B2 with the ditch. Thus, across the N side of Enclosure B the entrance was formed by a c.6m (20ft) gap between the ditch (and possible bank) to the W, and a shorter ditch, with no bank to the E. No bank was necessary in the E as the need for its added protection was replaced by a low wall, building and yard to the north.

The investigation of this entrance area reveals the reason behind the positioning of the B1/2/3 complex. Not only were the three buildings at B2 confined to the levelled area, they were erected just to the east of the entrance to Enclosure B. Furthermore, with the discovery of the angle of the W trench under B1 South, the reason for the positioning of B1 Phase I becomes clear. During the initial stages of excavation it was unclear why the NW corner of B1 North cut the low bank at the edge of the level area instead of lying square onto the level platform parallel to B2 and B3. Clearly there had to be a reason why the new farmstead was constructed so and even if B1 had not been envisaged as part of the complex when level area was dug, this still did not explain its alignment. The angle of the W ditch, however, did: B1 North respected it. In addition, B1's angle of alignment, parallel to the ditch (and bank?) of Enclosure B, would have funnelled animals towards B2 and the staggered entrance into Enclosure B. Indeed, it is likely that the gap between the S wall of B1 North and the N side of Enclosure B was easily bridged.

The entrance to Enclosure B remained in the same place, even with the construction of B1 South and a shift in emphasis towards Enclosure A, indicating a change in function for Enclosure B. As such, this area would have experienced a great deal of traffic, which explain the presence of the paving of sarsen chips and the possible sarsen revetement to the trench, both of which would alleviate the erosion problem caused by decades of hooves, barrows and feet.

Enclosure B - dating

The cuttings to the south of B2 found the trench contained 13th century sherds, with the flinty material overlying the trench producing a ?12th to mid 13th century knife, a 12th or 13th century bronze casket key (GF852; TWA, 2), late 13th-early 14th century horseshoe equipment (GFs 837,

840 & 856), five MG sherds and one early modern refined earthenware sherd (GF840). Not only does this diversity of material which accumulated in the area to the south of B2 suggests the trench was used as a dump throughout the 13th century, it also, being trench in-fill material, indicates a mid to late 13th century date for the in-filling of the trench and thus an early to mid-13th century date for its construction. This date range for the construction of Enclosure B is supported by evidence from the other cuttings; Cutting 6Y produced four 'Norman' horseshoe nails (pre-c.1350AD; GFs 681, 717 & 738) and, to the NE, under B1 South, a similar nail was recovered (GF2A), with 13th century sherds coming from Cutting 1.

Interpreting Enclosure B, the Trackway & B2 (Phases I & II)

The position of B2, the level area on which it sits and the eastern bank of Enclosure B, indicate contemporaneity between these features. Thus, in the early 13th century, our 'Celtic' field corner was used as two sides of the pentagonal enclosure, with the necessary extensions on the western side constructed to exclude the Pit 6 and on the eastern side to join the 'Celtic' field lynchet with the levelled area on which B2 sat. The northern half had a ditch dug on the internal side, which acted as both drainage system and part of the stock-control barrier, with the ditch material presumably being thrown up to make the bank. The rest of the bank may well have been constructed from the material removed when the levelling was being done. The entrance to Enclosure B was from the W, up past the ditch and then S, through a gap in the bank and ditch.

Considering the position of B2, it was clearly constructed to stand at the enclosure's entrance, which in turn determined the positioning of the subsequent farm buildings. The need for permanent occupation and animal shelter lead to the building of B4, which meant a bank to the west of Enclosure B was constructed to take the western wall stones of B4. This meant B4 sat between two banks, making roof construction of the byre end simpler, with the gap between Pit 6 and the W bank of Enclosure B being used a trackway to and from B4.

After the temporary abandonment of B4 in the mid to second half of the 13th century and the subsequent insertion of the fire-pit and oven into the northern end of B4, along with the construction of Enclosures A and E, the western bank of Enclosure B was no longer required as a stock-control barrier and thus became the natural place for a raised trackway for carts to reach B4.

In summary, Enclosure B was thus an integral part of the farming activities at Wroughton Mead from the early to late 1200s. Initially, a hazel and elm penning (B2 Phase I) stood in the SE corner of a levelled area at the entrance to Enclosure B, with Enclosures C and D to the north and east. When the penning burnt down, a more substantial timber framed barn (B2 Phase II) was constructed, later to be replaced by a stone-footed one (Phase III). Though the inhabitants moved, from B4 to B1 North, Enclosure B remained in use, judging by the fact that B1 North respected its NW bank and the whole complex respected the entrance. However, with the construction of Enclosure C and the extension south of B1, Enclosure B changed its function.

But what was Enclosure B? Having a ditch on the inside indicates, as previously mentioned, it was to keep animals in, rather than out. It would seem likely that sheep (and some cattle) entered

Enclosure B from the north and west, and were kept in the enclosure waiting their turn to be milked in B2, whence they were sent into Enclosure D to graze. However, with the expansion of the Wroughton Mead homestead towards the end of the 13th century and the suggestion that the trench was redug and possibly lined with the flints and clay, showing it required draining, maybe because the small, now well-manured penning, became the toft. The simple penning was not just for sheep and cattle, however. The discovery of, *inter alia*, horseshoe nails, as well as three iron arrowheads on and under the paved sarsen entrance (GFs 2F/G, 818 & 837) to Enclosure B, show that the enclosure kept horses in it and that these horses were not only used for ranching, as would be expected, but were also used for hunting and, even more unusual, for military activity.