

Enclosure C

A triangular enclosed area in the NE part of Wroughton Mead, named Enclosure C, was investigated during July and August 1961. Excavation examined the Enclosure's W bank (G1 West ext.), the E bank (Cutting 11) and a raised area within the northern part of Enclosure C (Cutting 10). The latter revealed the raised area had been constructed within the already existing enclosure and prior to the erection of a large, rectangular building.

The N bank of Enclosure C measured 60m (200ft), the E bank was 40m (135ft) in length and the S one 46.5m (155ft); a total length of 146.5m (490ft). The enclosure banks were not an uninterrupted length, however. The N and E banks did not join in the N, where a gap some 12m (40ft) was evident, in the E a 2.7m (9ft) gap between the E and S banks was noted and the S and N banks had a gap of approximately 6m (20ft) between them - see Fig. XXX.

The Banks of Enclosure C

Cutting 11

Excavations across the E side of Enclosure C were begun in early July 1961 to obtain dating evidence for the enclosure. The bank consisted of flinty brown soil, over a thinner layer of flints with brown soil, over Clay-with-Flints. A ditch was investigated on the E side of the bank (outside the enclosure) and found to be 37cm.(1'3") in depth. It was filled with a dark humus with flints and chalk lumps, with a small area of chalky humus ('primary silt') at the bottom (AWC269). Presumably the bank had been constructed from the ditch material. A smaller round-bottomed trench, filled with brown soil in contrast to the flinty make-up of the bank, was uncovered on the W side. A depression, observable in section on both sides at the top of the bank, was uncovered below the topsoil.

Pottery evidence from the bank shows it to have been constructed in the 13th century. Of interest are the sherds from a 13th century micaceous coarseware bowl, probably with origins to the west (GFs 730 & 733; TWA, 19). No other sherds of this type were found on the site, suggesting Enclosure C was built with the help of at least one worker brought in from further afield. A possible Romano-British or Iron Age sherd (analysed on site) from the Clay-with-Flints, again demonstrates activity in this area of Downland at an earlier date.

C10 - G1 West extension

The excavation of G1 West, across the W side of Enclosure C, showed that this bank comprised of two phases. A lower (earlier) bank of gingery loam with flints with a sarsen revetment on its downhill side lay on an OGS (Clay-with-Flints). The upper one was of brown loam with flints. The latter had experienced some disturbance at its crest, indicated by an area of gingery loam with flints. To the W, outside the enclosure, a shallow ditch was noted which cut through the earlier bank and into the Clay-with-Flints (AWC268).

Although no dating evidence is available for this cutting, the composition and positioning of both banks indicate the lower one formed part of the 'Celtic' field system within Wroughton

Mead. Indeed, the lower CF lynchet is part of the same system as one which is visible as a low bank in the SW corner of Enclosure A and which, further on, forms part of the external enclosure of Wroughton Mead. The upper one was constructed to heighten the field lynchet, probably in the 13th century, as part of the construction of Enclosure C. It was formed by spoil from the ditch being heaped onto the earlier bank. The shallow depressions along the top of the banks noted in the N and E indicate that Enclosure C was hedged.

The Northern Ditch

Investigation across the gap between the N and E banks uncovered a ditch stretching between the two banks (AWC263). The main ditch (Ditch 1) was 75cm deep and cut into the Chalk. A second, slightly narrower and shallower ditch (Ditch 2), was discovered cutting into Ditch 1 in Areas O3 and O4. Further work established that Ditch 1 was a shallow depression in the OGS when Ditch 2 had been dug.

The relationship between the ditches is a little tricky. Ditch 2 can most probably be regarded as a redigging of Ditch 1, although only the N edge of Ditch 1 was disturbed by Ditch 2 in Area O3, whereas Ditch 2 sat neatly in Ditch 1 in O4, being narrower by about 30cm either side. However only one ditch was observed in the other cuttings (O1, O2 & O5), indicating no redigging there. What is clear is that the ditch ran from the W bank of Enclosure C, continued for some 12m before turning almost 90° to run parallel with, though outside of, the E arm of the triangle.

The bottom of Ditch 1 contained a mass of chalk lumps and loosely packed, flint rubble (AWC267). This material, the evidence suggests, did not gradually erode into the ditch, but was shoved in. It is possibly the remnants of a bank which may have stood at the lip of the pit, either to the S or N, but this is uncertain. This mass at the bottom was covered by a light brown, clayey soil with chalk lumps, this time evidently natural weathering from the material either side of the ditch. Ditch 2 was filled with a similar clay and chalk material to the one it cut, although it was darker in colour. A possible stake-hole, filled with brown-red clay, was apparent at the lip of the pit to the N below a whetstone (GF567). When both ditches were no more than shallow depressions, a dark brown soil and a scatter of flints accumulated over them.

The ditch clearly joined the end of the medieval bank on top of the 'Celtic' field lynchet in the N with the bank to the E (Fig. XX, AWC263) and, as such, was an integral part of Enclosure C. If a bank was associated with Ditch 1, this demonstrates the Enclosure was a continuous length of bank in the N and so the entrance to Enclosure C could not have been here. However, clearly the later ditch certainly did not have a bank associated with it but, it would appear, a fence, placed on the external side of the enclosure. A ditched enclosure with an external barrier strongly suggests Enclosure C was to keep animals in, rather than out. In short, the fence was probably a removable or temporary barrier blocking off the entrance to the N part of Enclosure C when necessary, with the ditch acting as a further 'stop-gap' once livestock were within the enclosure. Perhaps the hurdle barrier across the entrance was placed over the ditch, rather like a draw-bridge, to allow animals in and out of Enclosure C.

A Norman horseshoe (GF299) from the loamy filling of Ditch 1, coupled with the CW38 ceramic evidence, gives an early to mid 13th century date for Ditch 1 and allows us a

terminus ante quem for Ditch 2. As Ditch 2 cut the fill of Ditch 1, then several decades may well have elapsed before the redigging. The occurrence of cross-fitting sherds from the timber phase of B2 and Ditch 1 strongly suggest the two were contemporary (X-Fit1). With the sherd from B4 inside Enclosure C, one can postulate that B2 (timber-phase), Enclosure B, B4 (occupation) and Enclosure C were contemporary features in Wroughton Mead in the middle of the 13th century.

Area M/N

What went on in this area is indeterminate, but it appears that stones which appeared initially to simply have had accumulated where the flinty terrace came to an end, were, upon subsequent investigation considered to be part of the wall of a further building in Wroughton Mead (AWC263 & 264). The stones lay on a chalky layer, possibly the spoil from the digging of Ditch 1/2 or the natural Chalk of a levelled area. Indeed, the site notes mention close parallels to 'house 2' [B2] with similarities in construction techniques and the presence of a foundation trench under the walls containing 'chalk silt'. The cross-fitting sherds of an unusual later 13th century glazed jug (XFit 5) from the wall stones of Building M/N and the later phase of B2 suggest contemporaneity with B2 (stone-phase) and BM/N. The whole area was greatly disturbed, however, when the platform was constructed, which is why the layers above and even around the walls of Building M/N contained material from the 15th century to the Early Modern.

Enclosure C - Conclusions

As the bank and ditch of Enclosure C in the N, E and S were most probably contemporary, the construction of this enclosure can be dated to the early 13th century. This interpretation is strengthened by the indication that Enclosure C may have been in use at the same time as B4 (Xfit 16) and B2 (timber phase - XFit 1). It was in use, however, throughout the 13th century until the abandonment of the Wroughton Mead settlement in the early 14th. In the later 15th century, however, a platform was built inside the old Enclosure (see below). The entrances to Enclosure C were situated in the N, which leads out to the cultivated lands to the E of Wroughton Mead, a smaller one to the E into Enclosure D and a third in the S, towards the settlement area and the grazing land to the W. Its shape suggest it was used as a penning for sheep with Building M/N being a *bercaria*.

The Platform

A raised area 60m (200ft) in length (N-S), 6m (20ft) in width and 15cm high, giving an area of 360m², lay within Enclosure C. The slightly longer W edge of this platform backed up against the W bank on the triangular enclosure. Excavation across this raised area in Enclosure C revealed it to be of a light brown loam with many flints, referred to at the time as a 'flint terrace'. Stones, many of them large enough to protrude through the topsoil, were uncovered on and below this flinty layer. The stones at the E edge of the platform had been deliberately positioned so as to have the terrace laid backing up to them. A second line of sarsens was uncovered 4.2m (14ft) to 4.8m (16ft) to the west.

The Building on the Platform (B10)

Those stones to the E, along the outside edge of the platform, were not only positioned to act as a revetment to the raised area, however, as they appeared in obvious concentrations approximately 4.8m (16ft) from one another. As such, they were not simply part of the revetment, but stone footings for timber uprights, although nothing was recovered of these posts. The line 4.2m to 4.8m to the west, with corresponding concentrations of sarsens, indicates where the other set of uprights would have been. Fragments of roofile (GF242, 255 & 279 - not in Report) were recovered, but no stone slates, indicating the roof was thatched, with tiles to protect the ridge. The N bank of Enclosure C may well have acted as further support for the roof, with the sloping rafters resting on the earlier bank(s). Clearly, the length of the platform and the large quantity of sherds, bone and metal objects, demonstrates a large, rectangular building had stood on the platform. Indeed, the platform was undoubtedly built specifically to take such a building.

The spacing between the two lines of post-footings gives B10 a width of between 4.2m and 4.8m. Although excavation did not reveal B10's S end, the revetment stones visible through the turf were noted as ending some 16.2m (54ft) from the curved S end of the platform. If this absence of an obvious line of large sarsens can be taken as the S end of B10, then B10 measured *c.*43.2m (144ft) in length. Given that the post-footings were 4.8m apart, B10 would therefore have had ten uprights, giving a nine bay structure.

The flinty platform was scattered with sherds and metal objects dating over several centuries. Though a few 13th century sherds were recovered from the flinty floor surface, these are considered contaminants from the ground surface which would have been dug up to create the platform. The earliest evidence associated with the utilisation of B10 included horse equipment (e.g. GFs216, 229, 277 & 379) and a sherd from a rare Normandy French jar (GF239), showing the platform and a building were built there in the late 15th century. A building, though not necessarily the same one, continued to be used during the 16th and 17th centuries (e.g. GFs 258, 297 & 379) and into the early modern period (e.g. GFs 253 & 307). The nature of the finds on the flint terrace (numerous nails, large door nails or studs and fragments of horseshoes) point to B10 having been well-constructed. We thus have a nine-bay, probably open-fronted grange, sheepcote and stable built in the 15th century and in use until the late 17th, possibly later.

Enclosure D

To the south of Enclosure C lay a large enclosed area (Enclosure D). The banks of this enclosure measured *c.*497m (1,656ft). Enclosures C and D were obviously integral parts of the sheep farming activities within the Mead, with Enclosure C incorporating the sheepcote (BM/N) and Enclosure D being grazing land for the flock either overnight or whilst they waited to be sheared and milked. This area has also experienced some form of ploughing, and as such it is suggested that this was also part of the Raddon toft, to be cultivated as the inhabitants wished.