Excavations on Blewburton Hill, 1947.

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INTRODUCTION.

BLEWBURTON HILL (Fig. 1) is an outlier of the chalk escarpment of the North Berkshire Downs. It is a low, whalebacked hill composed of Lower Chalk and is separated by a narrow strip of Upper Greensand from the main escarpment to the south. The hill lies in the parishes of Blewbury and Aston Upthorpe and has long been known to archaeologists for the prominent and presumably mediaeval strip-lynchets on its western end. The fact that one or more slight terraces appear to encircle the hilltop early suggested that the site was, in fact, a " camp " or hill-fort. References to the battle of Ashdown in A.D. 871 between the West Saxons under Alfred and the Danes were sufficient reason for a nineteenth century antiquary[1] to find in it the camp occupied by the Danes the night before the battle ; recent editions of the Ordnance Survey maps perpetuate this identity under the title " Danish Camp." The very slight nature of these encircling terraces, however, led H. J. E. Peake[2] to deny the existence of any hill-fort and to concentrate attention upon the bold lynchets at the western end of the hill.

Nevertheless, for the last 20 years at least, the hill has yielded abundant small finds of a period incompatible with either a Danish or a mediaeval date. Numerous sherds of Early Iron Age pottery have been brought to light over this period by the rabbits which have burrowed in their thousands into the hilltop wherever there is sufficient loose soil for their needs. Various visitors to the hill have made collections of these stray finds and deposited many of them in the Ashmolean Museum, Oxford, the Newbury Museum and the Reading Museum. Since no definite earthworks of Iron Age date were known, it was suspected by some that the hill was the site of an open village of the All Cannings Cross type.[3] Mr. W. A. Smallcombe, the Director of Reading Museum, early felt that the site was worthy of excavation. In 1939 the Berkshire Archæological Society decided to undertake the work. Excavation under the direction of Mrs. C. M. Piggott was planned to take place in August 1939 but the approach of the recent war prevented any work being done. After the war the project was reconsidered and in 1947 Reading Museum and the Society agreed to the joint financing of an excavation which should be directed by the Museum staff. Excavation was planned to begin on

1 " Berkshire Antiquities," *Archaeol. J.*, V, 287–8 (London, 1848).
2 Harold Peake, *The Archaeology of Berkshire*, p. 68 (London, 1931).
3 M. E. Cunnington, *The Early Iron Age Inhabited Site at All Cannings Cross Farm, Wiltshire* (Devizes, 1923).

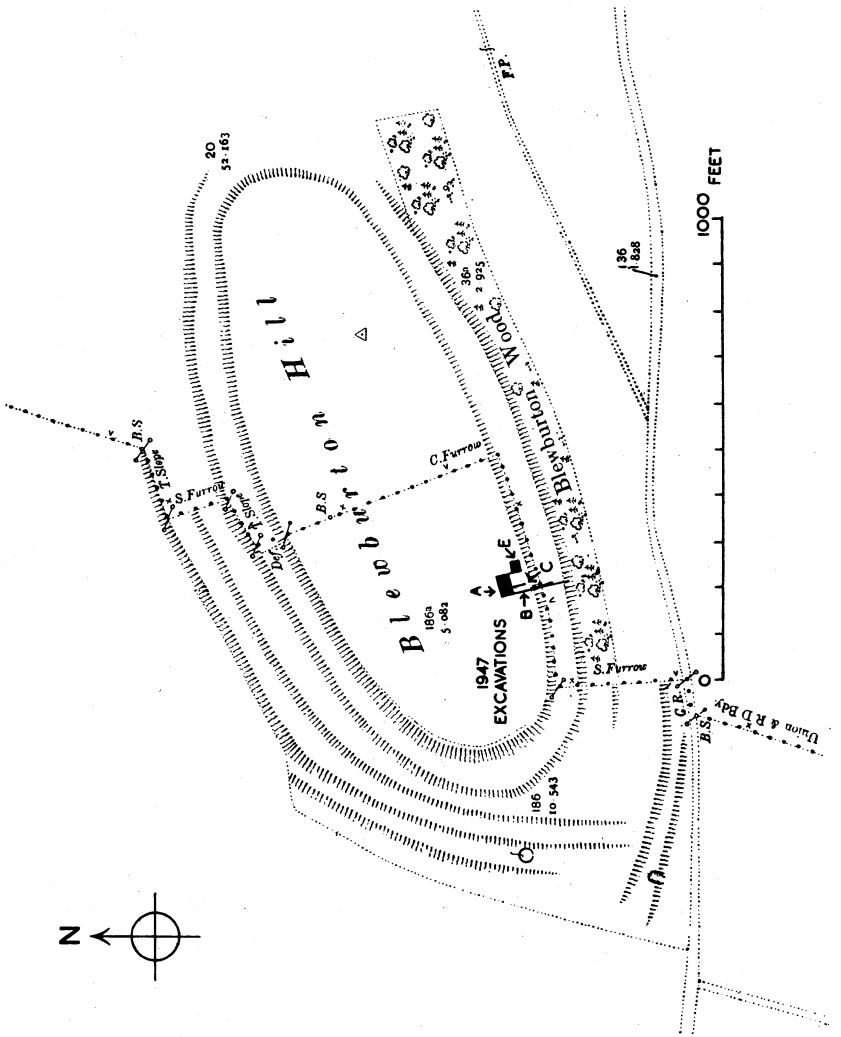

FIG. 1. Blewburton Hill, showing the 1947 excavations. Based on the O.S. 25″ map with the sanction of the Controller of H.M. Stationery Office.

August 11th, and the direction of the work was entrusted to the writer by Mr. Smallcombe. Permission to excavate was kindly granted by the landowners concerned, Mrs. Cundell of Aston Upthorpe and Mr. Wade of London. Great assistance was afforded by the Ashmolean Museum which generously lent a large part of the equipment used on the site. Excavation was undertaken by a small party which included members of the Reading Museum Staff, members of the Society and several undergraduates and schoolboys. I should like to express my thanks to all these, and especially to Mr. R. Patterson, Deputy Director of Reading Museum for his help both in excavation and in photography.

THE EXCAVATION.

CUTTING A.—The aim of the excavation was exploratory—to attempt to strike an area containing adequate occupational debris for cultural and chronological attribution and to try and determine the nature of any Iron Age defences which might have existed around the hilltop. The actual site selected for excavation was chosen with these objects in view. A position on the south-western sector of the hill, just within the innermost of the two " terraces " which apparently encircle it was chosen, since this was perhaps the most sheltered in cold weather. An area (Fig. 2), 42 ft. from east to west and 27 ft. from north to south was marked out and subdivided into 12 ft. squares, separated by 3 ft. baulks. Each of these squares was in turn cleared down to solid chalk and the intervening baulks finally removed to the same level. Clearing was accomplished one spit (*i.e.* 9 in.) at a time and small finds were recorded spit by spit.

Small finds were almost completely absent in the modern turf (layer 1). The first spit (layer 2) beneath the turf consisted of a mixture of chalk fragments, small stones (mostly flint and Bunter pebbles) and earth. It contained few small finds, mostly worn and very small sherds of pottery. The second spit (layer 3) consisted in the northern part of the cutting of material very similar to that of layer 2 ; here this deposit lay on the solid chalk and appeared to be more or less consolidated.

By this stage, excavation showed that the southern edge of the cutting coincided with the inner edge of a partially destroyed rampart faced with chalk rubble. In the southern third of the cutting, adjacent to this rubble facing, the mixture of small stones, chalk fragments and soil gave way to a rich, black, earthy deposit containing a few angular chalk fragments. In it small finds were numerous. Many small and badly weathered sherds of A and AB types were met with as well as a fair quantity of large and, for the most part, fresh sherds of definite AB types (see Figs. 9–12). Other small finds of interest from this layer included a clay spindle-whorl (Fig. 7, No. 6), a bone needle, a small carved bone object

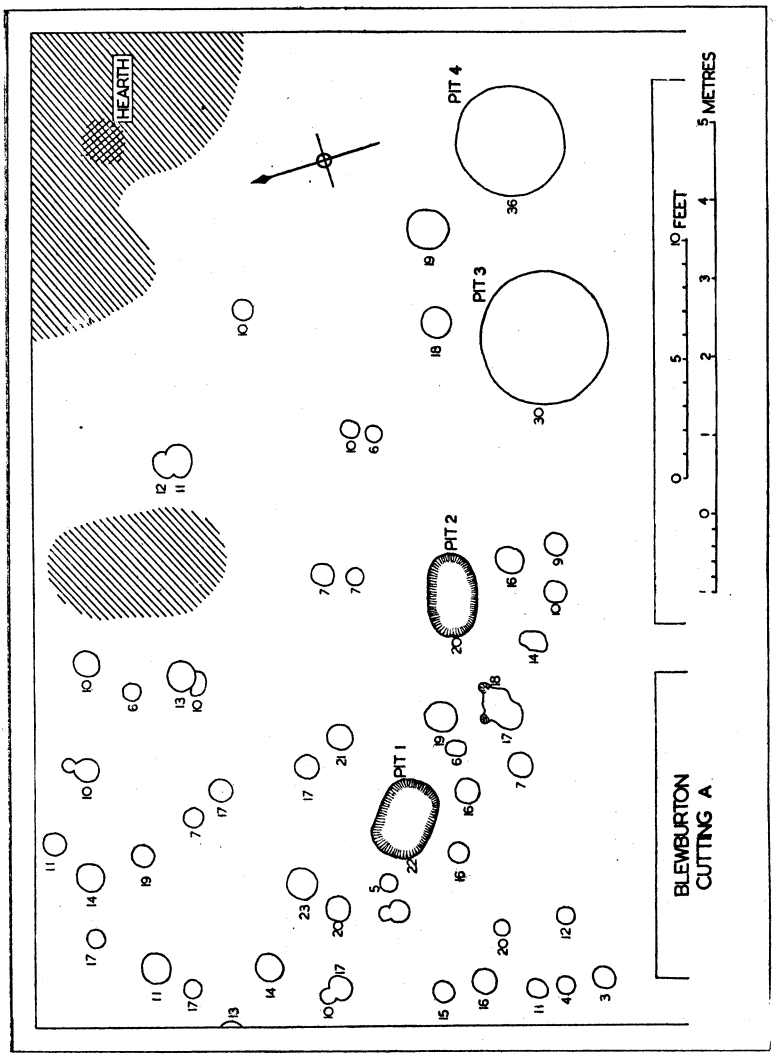

FIG. 2. Cutting A. The areas of natural gravel capping are shown with diagonal shading. Figures alongside post-holes and pits give their depths in inches. The upper ends of Cuttings B, C and D are indicated in the southern side of the cutting.

(Fig. 7, No. 4), and fragments of rotary quern. This rich, black "occupation earth" continued beneath layer 3 in the southern third of Cutting A. Here it occupied a depression in the chalk surface immediately inside the chalk rubble facing of the rampart which bounded the southern edge of the cutting.

The solid chalk underlying these three or four layers presented a fairly level surface (Plate 1), liberally pockmarked with post-holes and pits. In the northern part of the cutting were two areas of hard ochreous gravel, apparently vestiges left in solution pockets of a capping of Pleistocene fluvio-glacial gravel. On one of these patches was a hearth consisting of a mass of charcoal and fire-reddened stones, including numerous fragments of rotary querns. The depression in the chalk surface on the inner side of the rampart apparently marks a small quarry-trench from which had been excavated material for facing the rampart. The post-holes (Fig. 2) ranged in diameter from 6 ins. to 16 ins., and in depth from 3 ins. to 19 ins. All were very regularly cut and were cylindrical in profile. Several of the holes were in pairs, indicating the renewal of existing posts by the erection of new ones alongside the stumps of the old. Many of the holes contained a packing material consisting of puddled chalk, the thickness of which (2–3 ins) indicated that the posts inserted in the holes were often at least 4–6 ins. less in diameter than the holes themselves. Many of the holes contained scraps of charcoal concentrated in the filling near the edge of the hole and thus pointing to the practice of charring the butts of the posts before they were inserted in the ground. The only small finds in the holes consisted of a few scraps of pottery of markedly Iron Age A appearance, and a fragment of saddle quern.

It was hoped during excavation that traces of the holes might be revealed in the deposits overlying the chalk but in no case could they be detected. Later occupation attested by the AB sherds may have destroyed such traces as could have survived from the A settlement.

Attempts to interpret the pattern of holes presented in Fig. 2 have so far proved baffling, as on many comparable sites elsewhere. Nevertheless, the two pairs of small shallow holes seen to the south of the oval patch of gravel are reminiscent of the pairs of holes at Little Woodbury, interpreted by Dr. Bersu[1] as indication of corn-racks.

Besides the post-holes, four larger pits were uncovered in Cutting A. Two of these (numbers 1 and 2 on Fig. 2) were rather small oval holes filled with loose chalk rubble containing a sprinkling of charcoal fragments, A-type sherds and animal bones;

[1] Gerhardt Bersu, "Excavations at Little Woodbury, Wiltshire, Part 1." *Proc. Prehist. Soc.*, 1940, 94–6.

on the bottom of Pit 2 lay an almost perfect ox scapula. The purpose of these pits remains obscure. The remaining two (numbers 3 and 4) are very carefully cut circular holes with vertical sides. They were filled (Fig. 3) with stratified deposits consisting of layers of black earth and charcoal interspersed with layers of fairly clean chalk rubble. Small sherds of A type (including several from hæmatite-coated bowls) and animal bones were fairly abundant throughout the filling of both pits. Although no traces of burnt grain were met with, these two pits conform to the type of pit found on most Iron Age A sites and interpreted at Little Woodbury as storage pits for roasted grain. As at the latter site, their filling can be explained as the result of the frequent sinking of new pits and the filling of the old with debris excavated from nearby new ones.

CUTTING B.—Investigation of the chalk-faced rampart bounding the southern edge of Cutting A was undertaken by cutting through it a 2 ft. wide trench, running downhill from the south-western corner of Cutting A. This at once revealed features of interest in the structure of the rampart. The packed chalk rubble facing was found to be about 3 ft. 6 in. thick and to be inclined at an angle of about 20° with the horizontal. The outer surface of the chalk rubble was consolidated as though by puddling into a kind of chalky conglomerate. Between this and the solid chalk underneath was a continuous black rather greasy layer, apparently an old turf line which sealed in a section of a small trench or channel cut into the solid chalk (Pl. 3). This channel which was filled with a mixture of fine chalk rubble and rather yellowish earth, is paralleled at such sites as Quarley Hill, Hants, where it is interpreted as accommodation for the foot of a timber palisade predating the earthen defences. For 24 ft. beyond the chalk rubble capping, Cutting B traversed a layer 2 ft. thick of loose black soil honeycombed with rabbit burrows. The rabbits had effectively destroyed any traces of stratification. Many sherds of A-type pottery and abundant animal bones occurred throughout the black soil. The lip of a steeply cut trench began at 32 ft. from the beginning of Cutting B. At this point the cutting was widened to 4 ft. for safety and ease of operation. The ditch (Pls. 4 & 5) proved to be 38 ft. across and had a maximum depth of 10 ft. 6 ins. As can be seen in Fig. 4, it departed from the normal truncated V-section in showing on its inner side a well-marked level platform or terrace. The Lower Chalk into which the ditch was cut is much shattered at this point and shows fissures half an inch to an inch in width, approximately following the plane of the steep face above the terrace. The terrace may perhaps be interpreted as a discrepancy between a fissure line (which made for ease of excavation) and the original siting of the ditch planned by the Iron Age excavators. Ditch-line and fault-line which may

have coincided elsewhere on this side of the hill were here separated by 9 ft. Such an interpretation was used by Prof. Hawkes to account for a similar ditch section at Bury Hill, Hants.[1] It is difficult to see that any defensive purpose was served by the terrace, and its size is rather too large for it to have served as an intermediate ledge to facilitate the passing up of baskets of chalk from the ditch for building the rampart. A comparison of the level of the terrace with the ground-level outside the ditch, coupled with the undisturbed stratification of the ditch-filling, shows the terrace cannot have been made by later lynchet construction. The filling at the bottom of the ditch shows very even stratification with alternate layers of fairly clean chalk rubble and black layers presumably indicating turf lines which had grown up in pauses in the silting-up of the ditch. Higher up, the filling consists of a fairly uniform mixture of earth and small chalk rubble. Animal bones and sherds occurred at all levels in the ditch filling. Among the former may be noted a fairly complete ox skull from the rapid rubble silt at a depth of 8 ft. 8 ins. The sherds are of mixed character, containing both A and AB types. Especially important is a large part of an AB " saucepan " pot (Fig. 11, No. 2), found at the same depth in the filling. The absence of any rubble facing to the outer edge of the rampart immediately above the lip of the ditch seems to point to the normal Hallstatt timber-revetted rampart separated from the lip of the ditch by a berm. Timber, or timber-and-wattle, revetment to the outer face of the rampart would obviate the need for chalk facing. The post-hole shown in Fig. 4, could well have held one of the posts of the inner line of such a timber structure.

An extension of Cutting B beyond the main ditch showed no features of interest for 30 ft., but at that distance from the outer lip of the main ditch the surface of the solid chalk fell away again, revealing in section a small ditch 9 ft. wide at the top (Fig. 4). The impending end of excavation prevented a thorough investigation of this feature, but at a depth of 9 ft. from the surface the bottom of the ditch had not been reached. Filling consisted of alternating layers of earth and fine chalk rubble in the upper levels, succeeded at 6 ft. by a black band, probably indicating a turf-line. Below this again was clean and very loose chalk rubble. Scattered through all layers of filling were a few coarse sherds, apparently of A types. The narrowness of this ditch seems to make it of little use for defence. Its position is worthy of remark since it lies just beneath the point where the present gradient of the hillside suddenly steepens ; not the slightest indication of a ditch is visible on the surface.

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[1] C. F. C. Hawkes, " The Excavations at Bury Hill, 1939," *Proc. Hants. F.C.*, XIV., pt. 3, 291–337.

As time was at an end, further prolongation of Cutting B was impossible, though two small trial-holes on the same line were dug at distances of 32 ft. and 66 ft. from its southern end. These showed a perfectly normal profile with a total depth of 2 ft. of mixed soil and chalk rubble overlying the solid chalk.

CUTTING C.—To check the evidence of the chalk rubble rampart capping and the underlying palisade trench found in Cutting B, a parallel cutting, Cutting C, was dug 13 ft. to the east of it. It was continued downhill for a distance of 16 ft. The stratification revealed in the new cutting corroborated that shown in Cutting B. The rampart was again shown to be composed of a core of loose black earth, backed on the inside with a consolidated chalk rubble capping. Once again, under this capping, and separated from it by a turf-line, was the palisade trench. But Cutting C struck this trench at a point where it had been widened out into a circular depression just over 1 ft. in diameter. The "floor" of this depression had been covered with a "pavement" of Bunter quartzite pebbles, each two to three inches in diameter. Resting on these pebbles and separated from them by a thin greasy carbonised layer were the crushed remains of a large inverted pot (Fig. 9, No. 5). The pot had evidently been crushed *before* the chalk rubble of the rampart had been piled on top. The turf-line above the pot was continuous and undisturbed; in it was an animal bone which protruded over the broken edge of the pot. Enough of the rim of the pot remained uncrumbled *in situ* to recover its former diameter of 13 ins.

CUTTING D.—As a further check on the rampart construction, a third parallel trench, Cutting D, was laid out 22 ft. east of Cutting C, and carried down the side of the hill for a distance of 23 ft. A very similar section presented itself with, beneath the chalk rampart facing, a palisade trench (Pl. 7), sealed in by the old turf-line. Here the trench was 1 ft. 6 ins. deep and 1 ft. wide. Its existence had been discovered by the rabbits which had taken advantage of its fine soft filling and had tunnelled along it.

An important feature confirmed by Cutting D was the fact that the southern face of Cutting A did not run parallel with the inner chalk-capped face of the rampart. At its south-eastern, Cutting A was separated by nearly 8 ft. from the rampart.

CUTTING E.—Partly with the aim of uncovering more of the palisade trench and partly in order to search for any post-holes for timber revetment of the rampart, a larger cutting, Cutting E (Fig. 5 and Pl. 6) was opened out from the eastern edge of Cutting D. As a result about 15 ft. of the palisade trench (Pl. 6) were uncovered. It was found to run in an almost straight line and to be very uniformly constructed with a width of 10 to 12 ins. and a

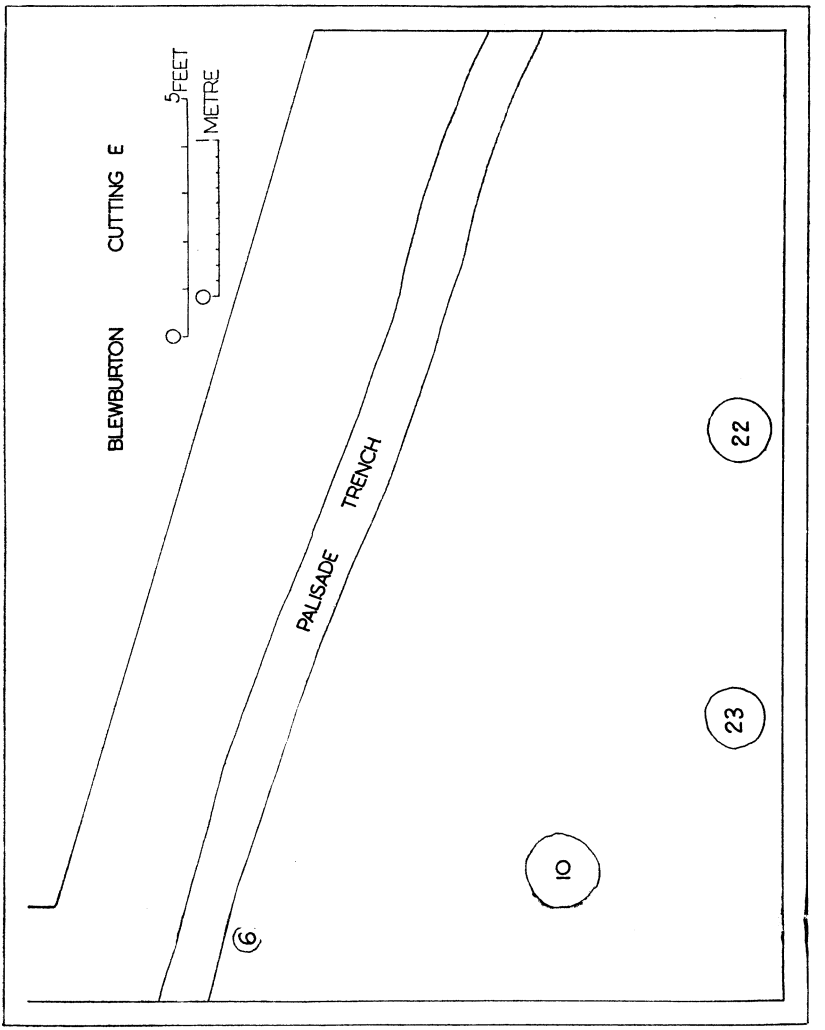


FIG. 5. Cutting E, showing palisade trench and post-holes for rampart revetment. Figures indicate depths of holes in inches.

depth of about 1 ft. 2 ins. Rabbits had cleared out the filling for several feet, but towards the eastern end of the cutting the filling of mixed chalk fragments and yellowish clay was undisturbed. In this filling was the shaft of a very large red deer antler, presumably part of an antler pick. In the southern section of the cutting were three large post-holes, suitably placed for the inner timber revetting of the rampart. They ranged from 1 ft. 2 ins. to 1 ft. 6 ins. in diameter, and from 10 ins. to 1 ft. 10 ins. in depth.

The rampart structure as revealed in Cutting E differed appreciably from that in Cuttings B and C. The chalk rubble capping showing in the western face of Cutting D petered out eastwards and the bulk of Cutting E was found to traverse the loose black soil of the rampart core. As elsewhere, this black soil was full of animal bones and pottery. Stratification was so completely destroyed by rabbit burrows[1] that for recording purposes layers 2 and 3 were amalgamated. The bones included one almost complete human lower jaw. The pottery was exclusively of A types, being a mixture of coarse, gritty *situla* forms and black and brown burnished (and occasionally hæmatite-coated) bowls.

Small finds from the rest of Cutting E were also of considerable interest. Those from the northern part of the cutting, *i.e.* from between its northern edge and the line of the palisade trench, came mostly from the AB occupation layers banked up against the northern face of the rampart. They included AB sherds with everted and bead rims and a bronze finger-ring (Fig. 7, No. 5). This latter, at a depth of 1 ft. 6 ins. was found above an unusual complex consisting of masses of daub from wattle-and-daub and small fragments of daub that had been reinforced with straw. Beneath these again was a heap of quern fragments and other large stones; these appeared to have been dumped against the inner face of the rampart. The querns included both saddle and rotary types.

THE FINDS.

POTTERY.—Before the 1947 excavations, considerable quantities of Early Iron Age A pottery had been collected from the rabbit burrows on the hill. In 1942 this Journal published an analysis[2] of the finds made up to that date. Mr. Bradford divided the pottery into three main groups—coarse ware, burnished ware and hæmatite-coated ware. In form the pots were either well-finished bowls or coarse *situla*-types. On the basis of form and decoration he assigned the pottery to a late phase of the A2 culture. In only

[1] A modern cheap table fork occurred at a depth of about 2 ft.

[2] J. S. P. Bradford, "An Early Iron Age Site on Blewburton Hill, Berkshire," *Berks. Archaeol. J.*, **46**, 97–104 (1942).

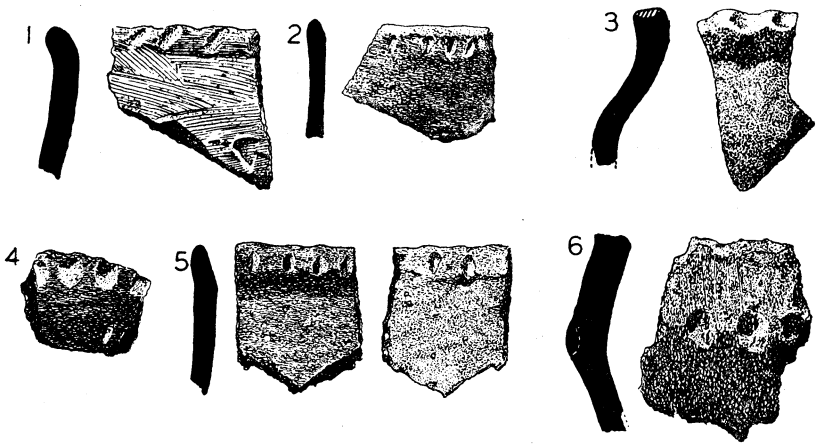


FIG. 6. Examples of coarse *situla* sherds of A type with fingertip and fingernail ornament, from Cutting A, layers 2 and 3. Scale : ½

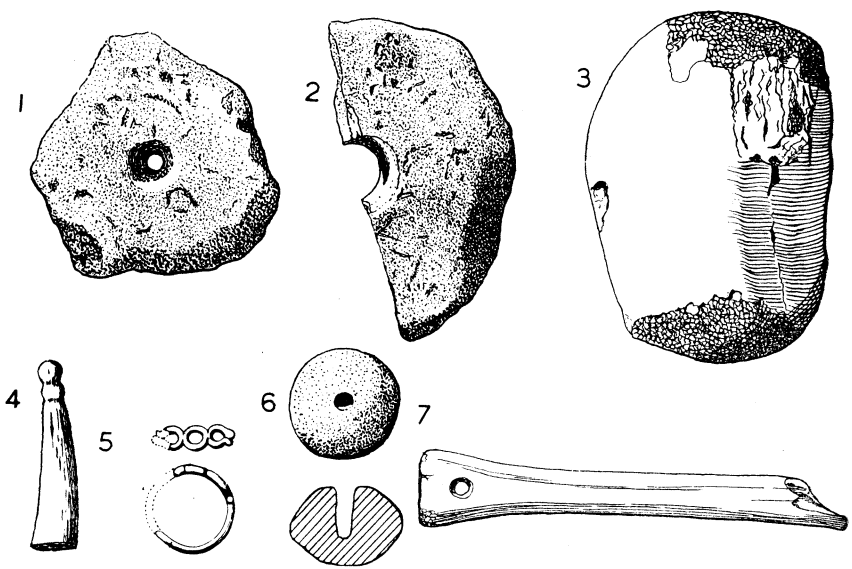


FIG. 7. Miscellaneous small finds. For description see pp. 21–23. Scale : ½.

two vessels did he detect traces of B technique. He therefore concluded that the hill had been occupied at the time of the Marnian invasions of about 250 B.C.

The 1947 excavations have modified this picture of the types present. The late A wares published in 1942 can be matched by many of the excavated pieces (Figs. 6, 8 and 9); the excavations have added to these a large number of definite AB types. The reason why AB wares had not shown up among the surface finds was due entirely to the preference of the rabbits for the softer parts of the hill-top. Most of their burrows occurred in the soft loose earth core of the destroyed rampart, a deposit which contained unmixed A pottery. The AB wares occurred either deep in the filling of the main ditch or in the fairly consolidated AB occupation layers banked up on the inner face of the rampart.

IRON AGE A POTTERY.—Iron Age A wares were found in all the cuttings. In Cutting A they were mingled with AB sherds in layers 2 and 3—either because they survived and continued in use alongside the newer AB types or because they happened to be littering the site during the later occupation and came to be incorporated in the same deposits. The small size and poor state of preservation of most of the A sherds from this cutting favour the latter explanation. Several of the post-holes and all of the pits in Cutting A contained A-type sherds, mostly in small fragments. All of Bradford's three types of fabric were represented. In Cuttings B, C, D and E, similar A wares were found throughout both the loose black soil and the chalk rubble facing of the rampart. A higher proportion of large sherds occurred in both these deposits. Similar types were also found in the ancient turf-line beneath the rampart and sealing in the palisade trench. The coarse gritty and leathery wares (Fig. 6) are very numerous. They are confined to *situla*-type pots, some of which had mouths as much as 10 ins. in diameter. Line decoration is absent. Finger-tip and finger-nail ornament is fairly common, though the finger ornament on applied bands noted by Bradford on two sherds has not turned up. Finger ornament is generally confined to a single row of impressions along the rim or the shoulder. In one case (Fig. 6, No. 3) a "piecrust" effect is given to the rim by finger impressions on its flat top. Some of the shoulders of these pots are sharp but most of them are rather slack in profile.

The bowl forms are carried out in well finished and well fired wares. Many of the sherds are fired to an extreme hardness. Some of the dark grey and black wares are finished apparently by burnishing alone. Others, more frequently of varying shades of brown, are burnished on top of a brown slip which, but for its colour, closely resembles the red hæmatite slip-coating. On several well-worn sherds most of this burnished slip has vanished, revealing the sandy nature of the underlying paste. All the bowls

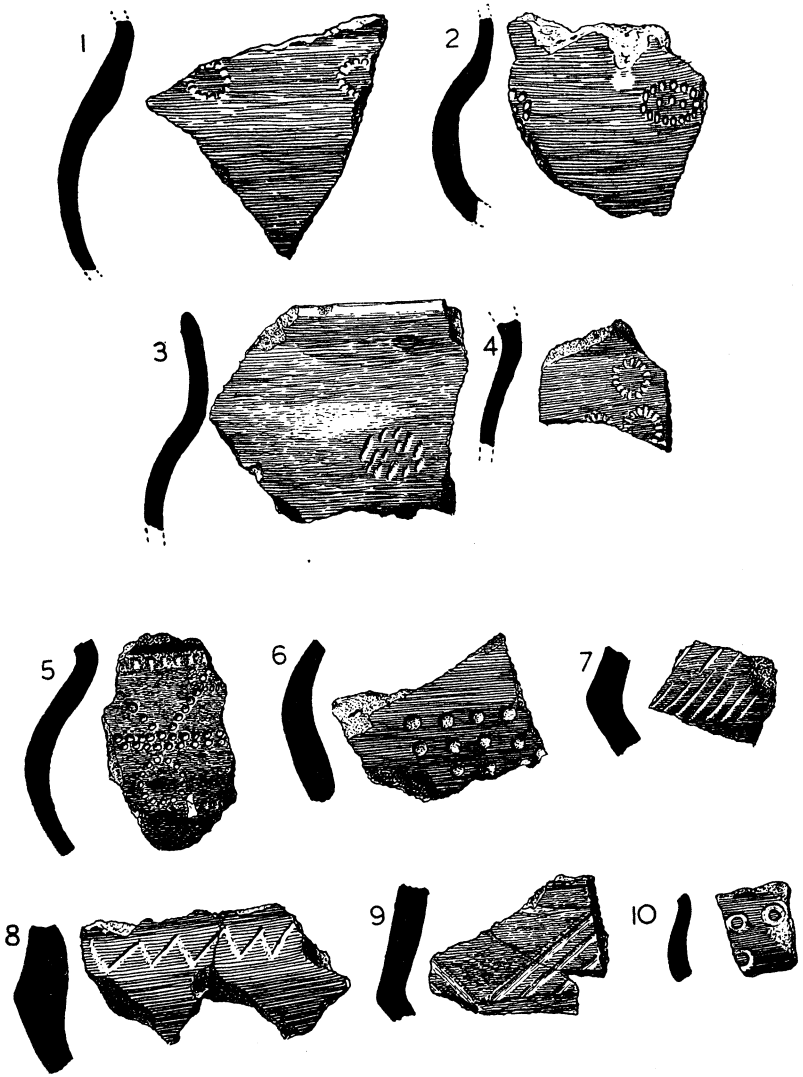


FIG. 8. Examples of decoration on sherds from A-type bowls from the rampart core in Cutting E, layers 2 and 3. All are in burnished black or dark grey wares. Scale : $\frac{1}{2}$.

have flaring rims and constricted necks. Some (cf. Fig. 9, No. 8) have quite sharp carinations below the neck; but most have a much more rounded shoulder. Rim forms are either straight with a rounded top or more or less flattened. Good quality hæmatite coating occurs rarely. The few bowl-bases represented are either flat or possess a slight foot-ring; no omphalos bases were found. One or two had horizontally pierced lug-handles (Fig. 9, No. 3).

Decoration is achieved by four main methods: shallow tooling; punching; stamp impressions and incision. The first three are carried out *before* and the fourth *after* firing.

Shallow Tooling.—This is a rare type of ornamentation. An example employing a straight-line pattern on a sharply carinated bowl is shown in Fig. 8, No. 9.

Punching.—A rare method on the A wares. Fig. 8, No. 6, shows an example executed with a blunt-ended punch about $\frac{1}{8}$ inch in diameter.

Stamp Impressions.—Bradford noticed the prevalence of stamped rosette impressions. These were either employed singly (Fig. 8, No. 1) or grouped in clusters (Fig. 8, No. 4) or combined with straight lines of punched or impressed dots. Fig. 8, No. 5 shows a sherd from a bowl with two rosette stamps joined by rows of circular punch-marks beneath a neck ornamented with impressions from the square-ended teeth of a bone or wooden comb. The stamps for the rosettes were presumably also carved from bone or hard wood. In origin they would appear to be an elaboration of the plain circular or "ring and dot" stamp which occurred at All Cannings Cross. This plain impression, though not present in the material examined by Bradford, occurs at Blewburton (Fig. 8, No. 10). It is perhaps made by impressing into the clay the tubular part of a long bone from a bird or small mammal. The elaborated rosette impressions are very hard to parallel on Iron Age sites, but Miss K. M. Richardson has recently discovered comparable examples on a Chiltern site near Bledlow.[1]

Ornament incised after Firing. Much of the ornament on the A sherds has been incised after firing. An interesting link with the last category is provided by the sherds shown in Fig. 8, Nos. 2 and 3. These have roughly incised imitations of rosette stamps in which all the tooling has been carried out in one direction; no attempt has been made to achieve a radial effect with the individual gashes. A type of ornament present on shoulder sherds from several bowls is the single incised chevron shown in Fig. 8, No 8. It is worth noting that this type occurs on fairly sharp-shouldered (and therefore presumably early) bowls. Plain diagonal slashings on the shoulder are also shown in Fig. 8, No. 7.

[1] The site is called Chinnor in *Oxoniensia* VII. (1942), 108–9.

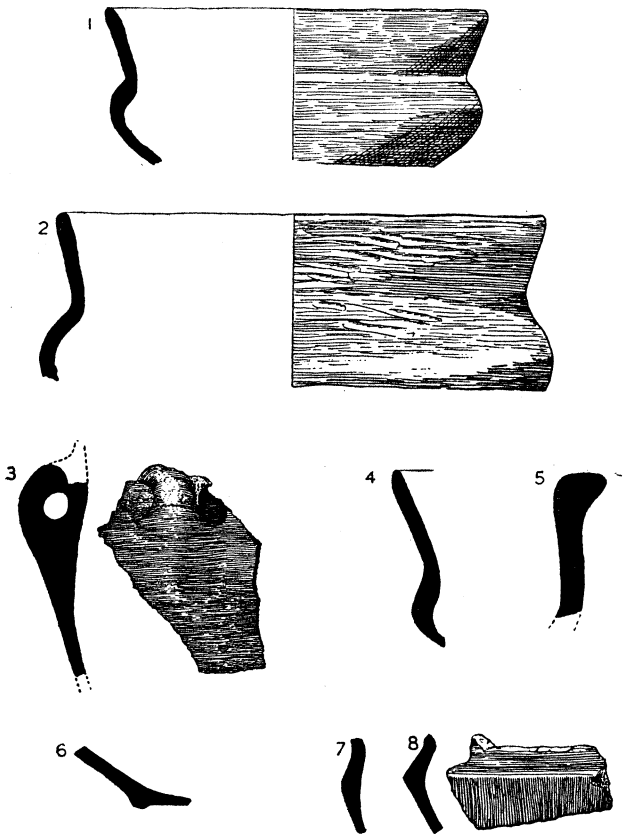


FIG. 9. A-type sherds. All but No. 5 are from burnished black and brown bowls. Scale: $\frac{1}{3}$.

Several of the impressed and incised patterns appear to show traces of white inlay in the Wessex A tradition. But on none of the excavated examples is much inlay preserved; in several cases it is so slight as to suggest the accidental lodging of powdered chalk in the impressions.

IRON AGE AB POTTERY.—The pottery from levels post-dating the construction of the earthen defences shows several features which are strikingly different from those of the Iron Age A wares which pre-date the defences. As noted earlier, these new forms may not have completely supplanted the earlier ones though it seems highly probable that the mixture is due to the incorporation of earlier refuse in the later deposits. Many of the AB sherds are in very good condition with surface burnish unaltered, and with sharp, freshly broken edges; others, however, show signs of considerable exposure to weather. For example, several individual sherds in the reconstructed pots, Fig. 12, Nos. 1 and 2, have completely lost their external burnish. Sherds in Fig. 13, No. 2, show evidence of great frost activity; large flakes have scaled off their surfaces, the process recalling the "potlid" fracture of flint. As these last sherds were all recovered from levels too deep to have been affected by modern frosts, they have, presumably at some period soon after their manufacture, been exposed on the surface of the ground.

Numerous clearly defined characteristics separate the AB from the A wares. The AB pots tend to show an evenly mixed paste with little flint or shell grit included. Few pieces have been fired to the extreme hardness of many of the A sherds. There is little indication of any slip applied to the paste before burnishing. Several of the bowl forms are made from a bright pinkish paste, homogeneous throughout and apparently intentionally fired to produce this pink colour; the dark patches on Fig. 10, No. 4, appear to be accidental. Is it too fanciful to suggest that this pinkish ware is an intentional imitation of the earlier hæmatite-coating technique?

Surface treatment continues some of the A traditions. Pots are still burnished; on the "saucepan" forms the burnishing tends to be treated vertically from top to bottom; on the new bowl forms it is mostly horizontal and appears to have been done while the pot was rotated on a turntable. Decoration shows several innovations: shallow tooling plus dot technique achieved by punching with a small pointed tool becomes the main method. The older methods of incision after firing, and of impressed rosette decoration are abandoned. An interesting feature on some pots decorated by the dot technique is the presence of very delicately tooled guiding lines drawn before the dots were added.

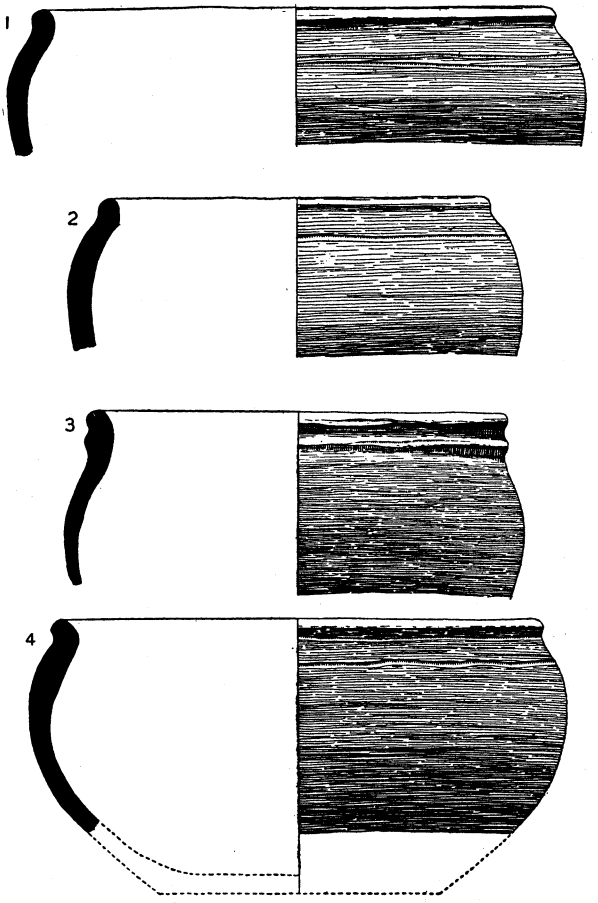


FIG. 10. AB-type bead-rim bowls from Cuttings A and D. Nos. 1, 2 and 4 are in pinkish ware. No. 3 is in pale buff ware. Scale: $\frac{1}{8}$.

Some pots (cf. Fig. 11, Nos. 3 and 4) showed a very loosely co-ordinated combination of dot and line technique with apparently quite asymmetrical meanders of shallow line tooling alongside an independent wavy pattern executed in dot technique.

New types of profiles also appear. The thin-walled carinated or high-shouldered bowls with flaring rims have been replaced by fairly stout swelling bowls with bead-rim mouths. Some (cf. Fig. 13, No. 2) are elaborately ornamented; others have ornament confined to one or two shallow-tooled lines encircling the bowl just below the rim. The bases of those chosen for illustration are unfortunately hypothetical; they are sketched in by comparison with one or two actual bases of other bowls found at Blewburton and by analogy with the comparable bowls from Frilford, Berks.[1] Another new shape which now appears at Blewburton is the "saucepan" form. Most of the examples of this form are unornamented or show at most a shallow tooled line just below the rim to give a bead-rim effect. Fig. 12, 1, with its elaborate "figure-of-eight" scroll and its zones of diagonal tooling is exceptional. This pot is reminiscent of one in the later series from the Caburn, Sussex.[2]

OTHER SMALL FINDS.

WORKED FLINT.—Of the several types of stone objects met with in the excavations, the most numerous consisted of primary flint flakes. These occurred at all levels in the filling of Cutting A and are for the most part quite sharp and unpatinated. Most have no secondary trimming and show a high flaking angle. Two flakes from Cutting A with secondary trimming are patinated white and appear to be Early Bronze Age in type; one is a plano-convex knife and the other an end-scraper on blade.

QUERN STONES.—Both saddle and rotary type querns occurred. Two large pieces of lower stones of saddle querns were included in the heap of quern fragments in Cutting E. The larger of the two has a maximum length of 12 ins. Two pieces of upper stone were found, one in Cutting A and one in the filling of a grain pit. The material of all these is uniform—a coarse-grained calcareous sandstone. Rotary quern fragments were included in the heap in Cutting E and in the hearth in Cutting A (Fig. 2). Several of the fragments have been reassembled and it is possible to give dimensions of one lower stone from the Cutting E group. This had a diameter of 14 ins. and a height of at least 8 ins. The

[1] J. S. P. Bradford and R. G. Goodchild, "Excavations at Frilford, Berks., 1937–8," *Oxoniensia* IV. (1939), 18–19.

[2] C. F. C. Hawkes, "The Caburn Pottery and its Implications," *Sussex Archaeol. Coll., LXXX.*, Fig. J., 70.

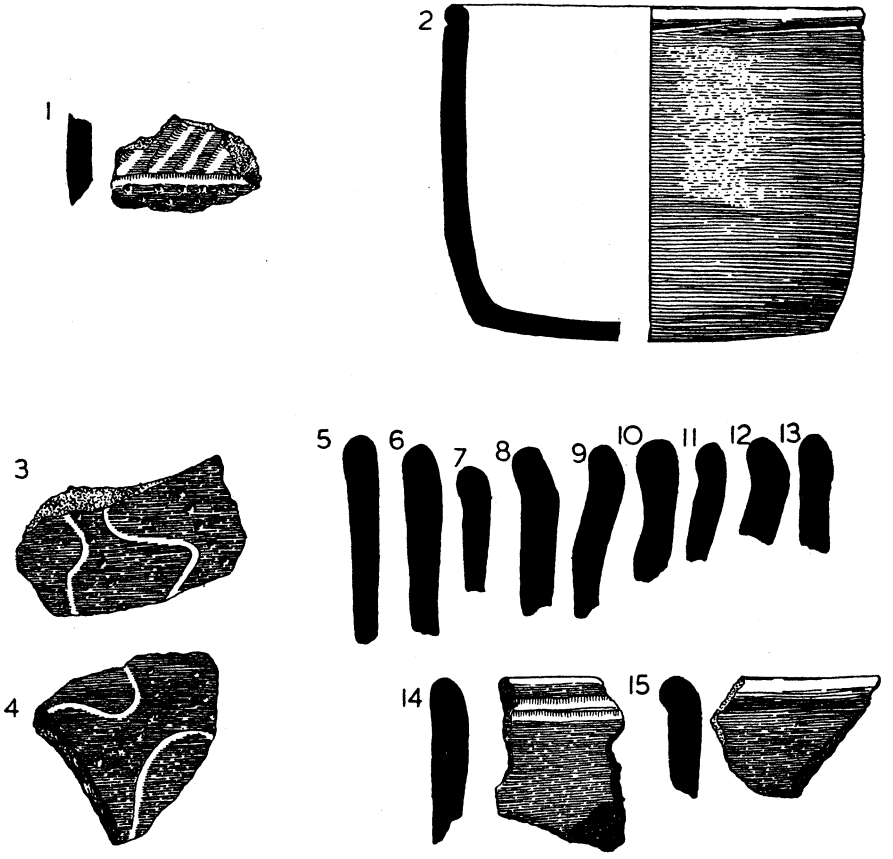


FIG. 11. Examples of AB pottery, including "saucepan" (No. 2) from bottom of main ditch, Cutting B. Scale: $\frac{1}{2}$.

hole for the central pivot was 1½ ins. deep and 1¼ ins. in diameter. All these rotary querns are made of a much finer grained rock, possibly an Upper Greensand chert.[1]

POUNDING STONES.—Several pounding stones were found. All were made from Bunter quartzite pebbles except one which appears to be of sarsen stone. Fig. 7, No. 3 is a typical example of the pebble type. A probable use to which these pounders were put was the crushing of animal bones for the extraction of marrow; nearly all the long bones found had been split into small fragments.

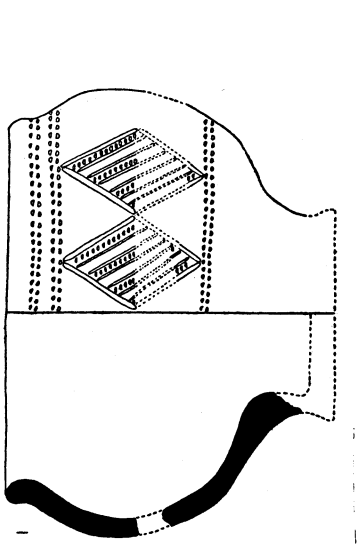
WORKED CHALK.—The only pieces of worked chalk found are illustrated in Fig. 7, Nos. 1 and 2. These two chalk discs with hour-glass perforation can be compared with *All Cannings Cross*, Pl. XXIV, 3, 4. The function of these discs remains obscure; one cannot improve on Mrs. Cunnington's conjecture as to whether they were unfinished spindle-whorls or pivots for bow-drills.

BAKED CLAY.—Apart from the pottery discussed above, the only object of baked clay discovered was a spindle-whorl of biconical profile (Fig. 7, No. 6). It is only partially perforated and is a type that can be paralleled at All Cannings Cross (*op. cit.* Pl. XXVI, 6, 7).

BONE AND ANTLER.—Few pieces of worked bone occurred. Fig. 7, No. 7 shows a broken bone "scoop" of a type which figured prominently at All Cannings Cross. It came from the black earth of the rampart core in Cutting C, and is therefore presumably attributable to the A culture. The socket at the butt end of the tool has been trimmed internally and has had its mouth neatly squared off. From the same deposit in Cutting C came a double-ended bone awl 3½ ins. long. Fig. 7, No. 4 shows a piece of worked deer antler from the AB occupation layer in cutting A. It is apparently the tip of a small tine with a "knob" carved on the end. From the same layer came a broken bone needle very similar in appearance to *All Cannings Cross*, Pl. VI, 11 and 12.

METAL.—Metal objects were very rare. The only piece of bronze found was the ornamental finger ring shown in Fig. 7, No. 5. It was found about 6 ins. above the heap of quern fragments in Cutting E. The decoration consists of a ring (or bezel ?)

[1] I am indebted to Miss P. S. Walder of the Dept. of Geology, Reading University, for opinions on these rocks; lack of really distinctive features prevented her from attributing them with certainty to any specific source.



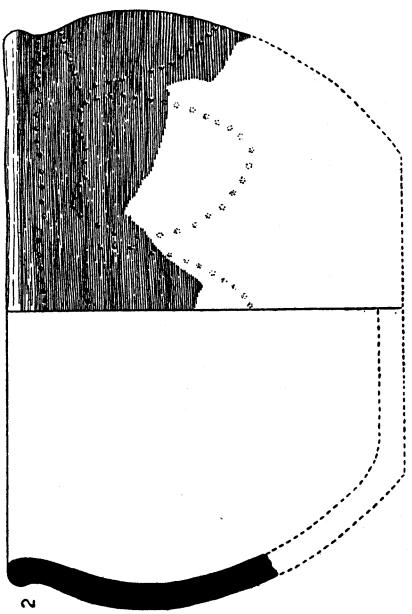
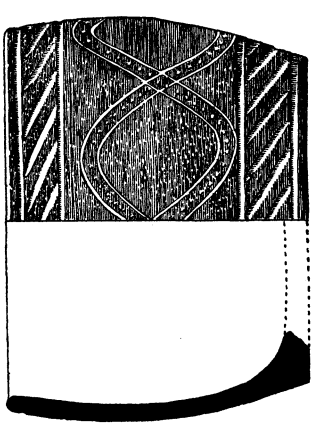


FIG. 13.
AB-type bowls from Cutting A. The reconstruction of the pedestal base on No. 1 is conjectural. Scale : ⅓



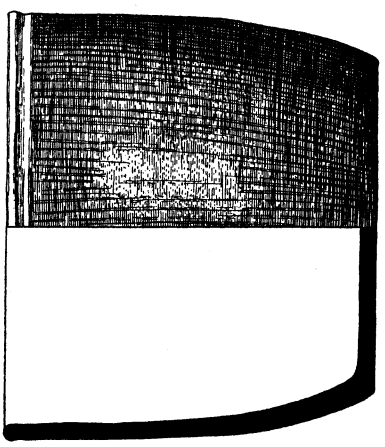


FIG. 12.
AB "saucepan" pots from Cutting A. Scale : ⅓.

flanked on either side by loops with outcurved terminals. The ring has been burnt and nearly a third of it is missing. Parallels to this type have not so far been found. The only iron objects found were a couple of small pins or awls like *All Cannings Cross*, Pl. XX, 6 and 7., and a small piece of a flat iron blade, perhaps part of a knife or razor. The awls occurred in Cuttings A and C and the blade in the silting of the main ditch in Cutting B.

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS.

Before the 1947 excavations, Blewburton Hill was known as a site littered with Iron Age A pottery. It was conjectured that the hilltop had been protected by earthen defences, but their presence was by no means certain. Nor was the date of these defences known in relation to that of the pottery. On the basis of an analysis of the pottery forms, Bradford estimated that the date of the Iron Age occupation coincided with the Marnian invasions of c. 250 B.C. He based this estimate partly on the absence of really early A ceramic features—*e.g.* sharp-shouldered *situlae* or sharply carinated bowls with furrowed ornament—and partly on hints of B features on one or two pots, notably his Fig. 5, No. 49, where an A potter had attempted to reproduce on a normal hæmatite-coated bowl the La Tène continuous spiral motif. Last season's excavations have produced quantities of A pottery strictly comparable with the series analysed by Bradford, and have shown that they were associated with a settlement evidenced by post-holes and grain storage pits and presumably contemporary with the timber palisade whose trench was revealed. Evidence for dating the pre-earthwork palisade trench is not quite so certain. No sherds were recovered from the normal sections of the trench, though the large pot with flattened rim (Fig. 9, No. 5), found in an enlarged part of this ditch is A2 both in form and fabric. Its collapse before the building of the later rampart has been demonstrated above. Such a palisade has numerous parallels elsewhere as the boundary of an A village or farmstead. The depth and width of the Blewburton example are identical with the dimensions of that found at Little Woodbury, Wilts. Sufficient time elapsed between the excavation of this palisade trench and the building of the rampart for a turf-line 6 ins. thick to establish itself.

As has been shown above, the exact nature of the earthen defences has not yet been established. Cuttings B and E have between them shown the former existence of a fairly massive rampart, since destroyed, overlooking a V-sectioned ditch more than 10 ft. deep. The type of the rampart is not certain; destruction by later cultivation and by rabbits has prevented our learning exactly where its outer edge came in relation to the inner lip of the ditch. The holes for massive posts seen in both Cuttings B and E are suitably placed for the inner timber revetment of a

classical Hallstatt-type rampart, separated from the ditch by a distinct berm. The reconstruction in Fig. 4 is based on this interpretation. This type of construction is typical of that large class of single rampart and ditch hill-forts which sprang up over the chalk hills of southern England, apparently as a response to the Marnian invaders. One of the main problems to be cleared up by further excavation at Blewburton is the question of whether there were multiple ramparts. The narrow V-section ditch sectioned by Cutting B at a distance of 30 ft. outside the main ditch may be explained as part of an outer line of defence, the corresponding rampart of which left no traces in Cutting B. Surface indications further west on the hillside certainly support the existence of such a rampart.

The dating of the construction of the main rampart and ditch is reasonably well established by pottery evidence. Sherds from the earthen core of the rampart are exclusively of A types. They indicate that this deposit is the sweepings of the old A occupation levels associated with the post-holes and grain-pits seen in Cutting A. Prominent among the sherds from the ditch-filling and from the occupation layers banked up against the inner edge of the rampart are the definite AB forms described above. The "saucepan" shown in Fig. 11, No. 2, is specially significant; the interrupted character of the bead on the rim seems to show a lack of familiarity with the newly-introduced bead-rim fashion and would seem to indicate a date at the very beginning of the AB series of wares. Its position, almost in the very bottom of the main ditch thus corroborates the theory that the earth-works were constructed during that very series of invasions which inaugurated the new ceramic fashions.

Further occupation of the site after the construction of earthworks is attested by the finds of AB pottery in the higher occupation layers inside the rampart. No AB sherds were found in any of the post-holes or pits in the area cleared by Cutting A. It is thus not possible to say what type of permanent structures for dwelling or storage were erected by the AB occupants of the hill-fort. It may well be that as at Bury Hill, Hants, the AB occupation was of a short-lived character. The curvilinear decoration on the ornamented AB pots is not sufficiently close to that on the South-Western or South-Eastern B wares to indicate a really late date. Ornament like that on Fig. 12, No. 1, is a very weak reflection of such a design as the true La Tène returning spiral. A lower date for the AB occupation can perhaps be provided by the rotary querns found in Cuttings A and E. These appear to be relatively tall in proportions and are therefore presumably fairly near the beginning of the British series. A date of about 100 B.C. has been suggested for the introduction of the type.[1] If this date can be

[1] E. C. Curwen, *Plough and Pasture*, p. 109 (London, 1946).

applied to the Blewburton examples, the AB occupation may have continued until around 100 B.C. but did not survive until the advent of the pure B cultures in the south-east and south-west, about 50 B.C.

The history of the site after the AB occupation is obscure. The only Romano British finds were three small sherds, including one of Samian ware, from high levels inside the rampart. Settlement at that period was apparently on the lower ground to the north of the hill. Abundant Romano-British pottery has been found in a gravel pit just to the north of Aston Tirrold.

For subsequent periods there is even less evidence. A Pagan Saxon inhumation burial was found in 1945 on the western end of Blewburton Hill.[1] The dating of the lynchets has not yet been established; nor has the period at which the Iron Age defences were ploughed flat. Presumably the main ditch revealed in Cutting B was not completely filled-in when the present parish boundaries were fixed, since the boundary fence is now sited immediately over it (Fig. 4).

Having summarised the sequence of events in the occupation of the hilltop it is time to consider the cultural relationships of the occupants. In the absence of significant metal objects, such a consideration must be based on the pottery. The situation of Blewburton on the frontiers of two provinces of the A culture has been clearly brought out by work on such sites as Frilford, Lowbury and Ram's Hill on the one hand and at Long Wittenham, Radley, Mount Farm (nr. Dorchester), etc., on the other. As Dr. H. N. Savory has pointed out,[2] some of the earliest Iron Age sites in the upper Thames valley were occupied by people possessing a culture quite distinct from that of their contemporaries on the Wessex downs. A characteristic feature of the Upper Thames valley element is a sharp-shouldered *situla* with flaring rim which differs markedly from the more round-shouldered form with short vertical rim from the Wessex type-station of All Cannings Cross. The carinated bowls of the upper Thames valley element differ from their All Cannings counterparts in lacking hæmatite-coating and furrowing. The upper Thames valley culture, represented at its purest at Long Wittenham, has been traced to a Continental origin in Picardy and Artois. Its nearest British parallels are to be found further down the Thames valley and in sites bordering the fens. The sites on the chalk and limestone escarpments of north Berkshire contrast with this Thames valley culture, and belong to the "Wessex A" cultural province in that they have all produced hæmatite-coated bowls. The close correlation between sites with Wessex-type culture and chalk terrain is well

[1] *Oxoniensia X.* (1945), 93.

[2] H. N. Savory, "An Early Iron Age Site at Long Wittenham, Berks," *Oxoniensia II.* (1937), 6–11.

illustrated by Blewburton and by a newly discovered site near Wittenham Clumps.[1] Both these are on outliers of the chalk, separated from the main mass of the Berkshire downs.

Although judged by the presence of hæmatite-coated bowls Blewburton is clearly of the Wessex A" province it belongs to a relatively late stage in that culture. As has been shown above, the classical All Cannings Cross furrowed and cordoned bowls are both absent; so too are the pots decorated with elaborate incised chevron patterns. The simple chevrons of *e.g.* Fig. 8, No. 8, are far removed from the All Cannings Cross chevrons filled out with punched decoration with white inlay; they may well be a later degeneration. Yet it must not be thought that such cultural impulses originating in Wessex had slowly weakened until their arrival after a considerable interval as far north-east as Blewburton. The sherds from Bampton[2] and recent discoveries[3] near Bledlow, on the Chilterns clearly indicate that elaborate chevron designs were a regular feature in the early A culture on sites at both ends of the upper Thames valley, and that degeneration such as is postulated at Blewburton took place locally.

Thus, in summing up, it can be said that the A inhabitants of Blewburton possessed ceramically a somewhat late and simplified form of the Wessex-type A culture, and that, though on the extreme borders of the Wessex province, their pottery had been relatively uninfluenced by that of the earlier element of Iron Age A folk, whose type-station at Long Wittenham is only 4 or 5 miles to the north. Indeed, what cultural contact had taken place on this frontier had been in the reverse direction: the later valley sites such as Frilford, Hatford and Mount Farm, Dorchester, have yielded stray hæmatite sherds.

An appraisal of the AB culture of the later period of occupation at Blewburton is less easy, for lack of comparative material. Here again, the analysis must rest on pottery. The distinctive features are new pottery forms (" saucepans " and bead-rim bowls). The site with closest affinities to these is Frilford, where occupation apparently was continuous from the end of the local A2 phase to Romano-British times. But at Frilford the AB ware shows several distinctly late features not present at Blewburton. Bead-rim bowls comparable in form with the Blewburton series were found there and are shown in Bradford's[4] Fig. 7, Nos. 77, 78, 84 and 85. But the fabric is markedly different, being a burnished black. The decoration also differs; a feature of the last two

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[1] Discovered and excavated by Mr. P. Rhodes who has very kindly kept the writer in touch with his work.

[2] V.C.H. Oxon., I., pl. XIa.

[3] Kindly shown to me by Miss K. M. Richardson.

[4] *Oxoniensia, IV.* (1939), p. 22.

examples and of several other small sherds is the pendant swag combined with ring-and-dot impressions at the points of meeting of the swags. This feature has been shown by Mr. J. B. Ward Perkins[1] to be a characteristic of the South-Eastern B culture, an easterly contemporary of the Glastonbury B culture of the south-west. The nearest approach to this motif at Blewburton is the sherd figured by Bradford in his Fig. 1, No. 24.[2] Here it is carried out on a wide-mouthed bowl of A tradition; the rings are rosette impressions, while the swags are executed in single triangular punch marks. But its possession of A characteristics seems to point to an earlier origin for this pot, independent of any later contacts with South-Eastern B people.

[1] J. B. Ward Perkins, "An Early Iron Age Site at Crayford, Kent," *Proc. Prehist. Soc.*, 1938, 155–6.
[2] *Berks. Arch. Journ.*, 46, (1942), 99.

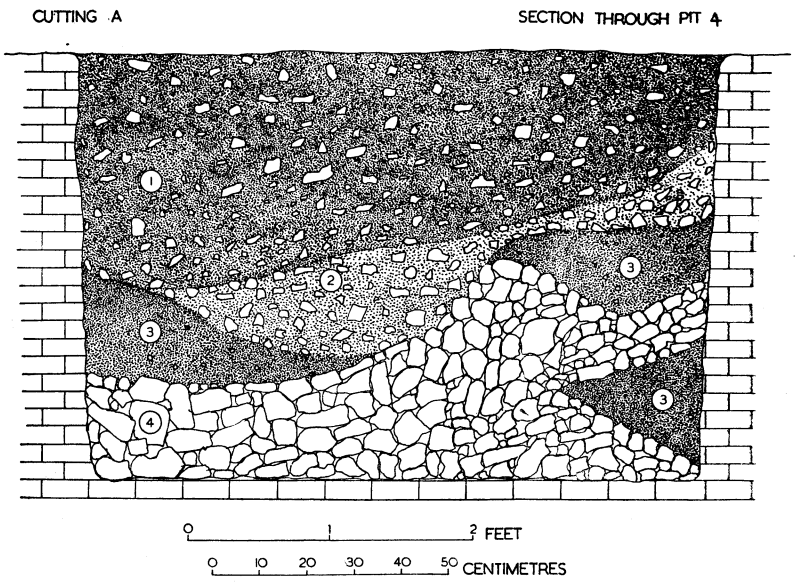

FIG. 3.

Section showing filling in Pit 4, Cutting A. Key to stratification: 1—loose black earth with large angular chalk fragments; 2—lighter earth with chalk fragments; 3—almost pure black earth; 4—clean chalk rubble.

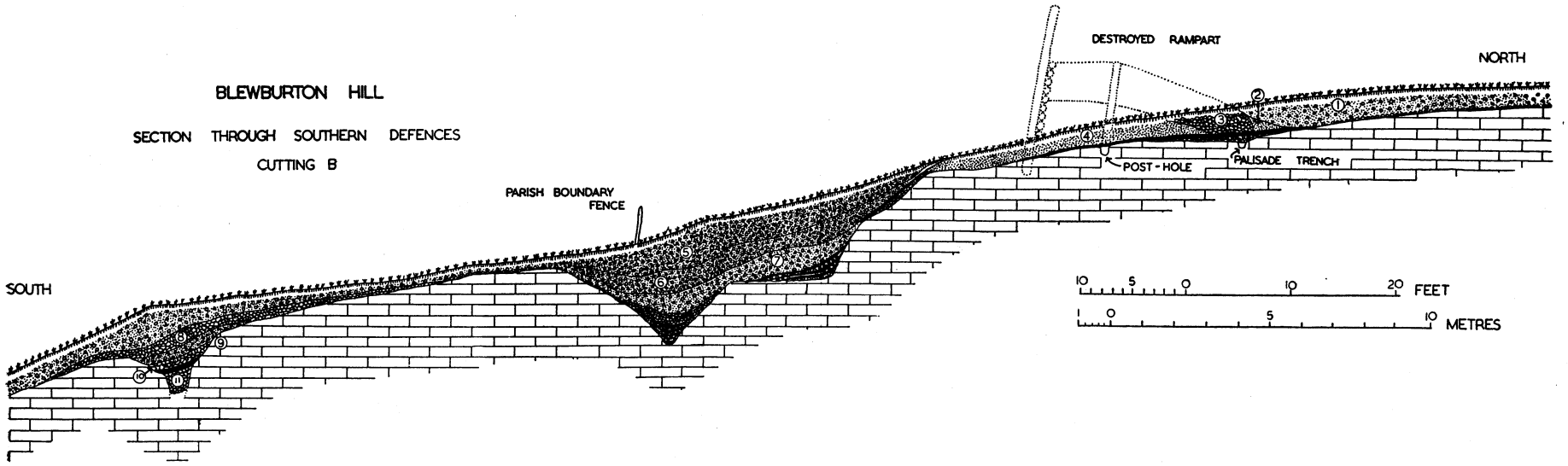

FIG. 4.

Section through southern defences, Cuttings A & B. Key to Stratification:

1. Plough soil full of chalk fragments and flint and quartzite pebbles.
2. Loose, dark "occupation earth" containing AB sherds, etc.
3. Clean chalk rubble rampart capping
4. Loose black soil containing A sherds, etc.
5. Light brown plough soil full of chalk fragnents.
6. Darker plough soil with chalk fragments.
7. Brown plough soil with many chalk fragments.
8. Compact angular chalk rubble.
9. Yellowish soil with chalk fragments.
10. Large chalk fragments in yellowish soil.
11. Loose chalk rubble.

Turf-lines are shown in solid black.