

Excavations on Blewburton Hill, 1953

By A. E. P. COLLINS and F. J. COLLINS

INTRODUCTION

THE excavations carried out jointly by the Berkshire Archaeological Society and Reading Museum in the years 1947-49¹ were directed mainly to the investigation of the Early Iron Age hill-fort which crowns the hill (Fig. 1). Work on the western entrance to the fort and sectioning of the rampart some 50ft. to the S. of the entrance revealed Anglo-Saxon inhumation burials (numbered 1-7 in the 1948-9 Report). Since at each of those points burials were fairly closely concentrated it was felt that the intervening sector of ground between them would probably show a similar density of burials. Some of the skeletons (nos. 5-7) which had

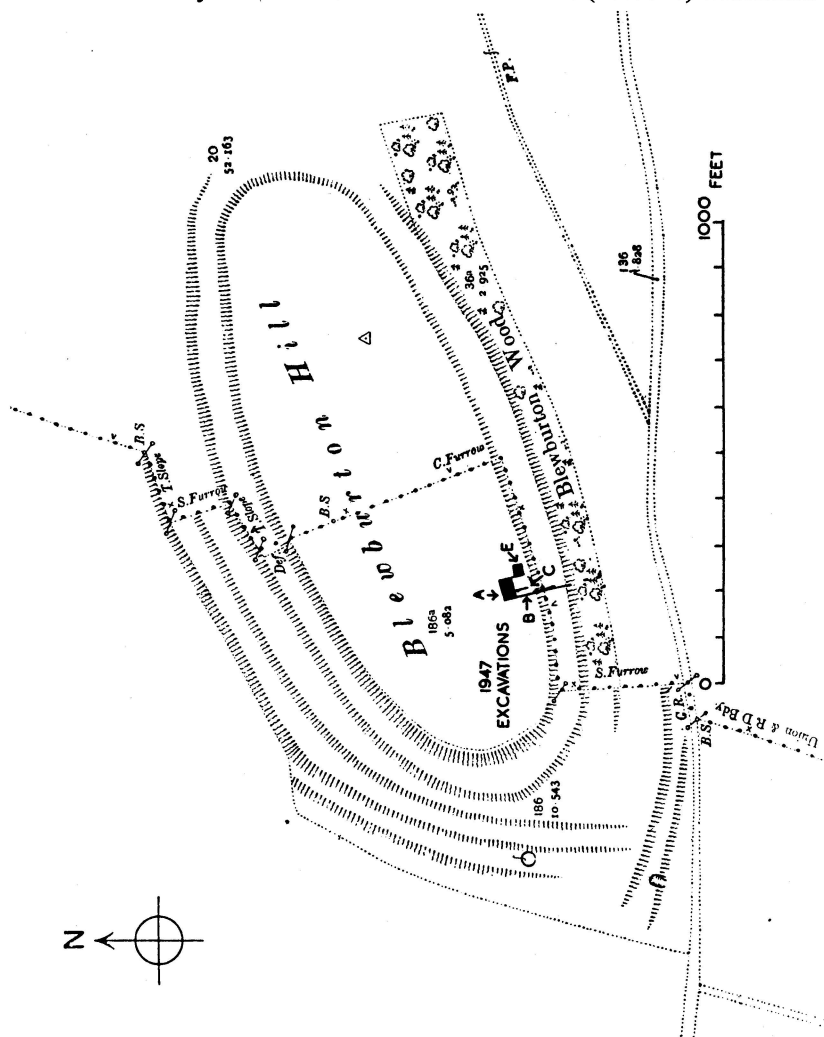


Fig. 1—General Site Plan. (Crown copyright reserved).

BLEWBURTON HILL SAXON CEMETERY

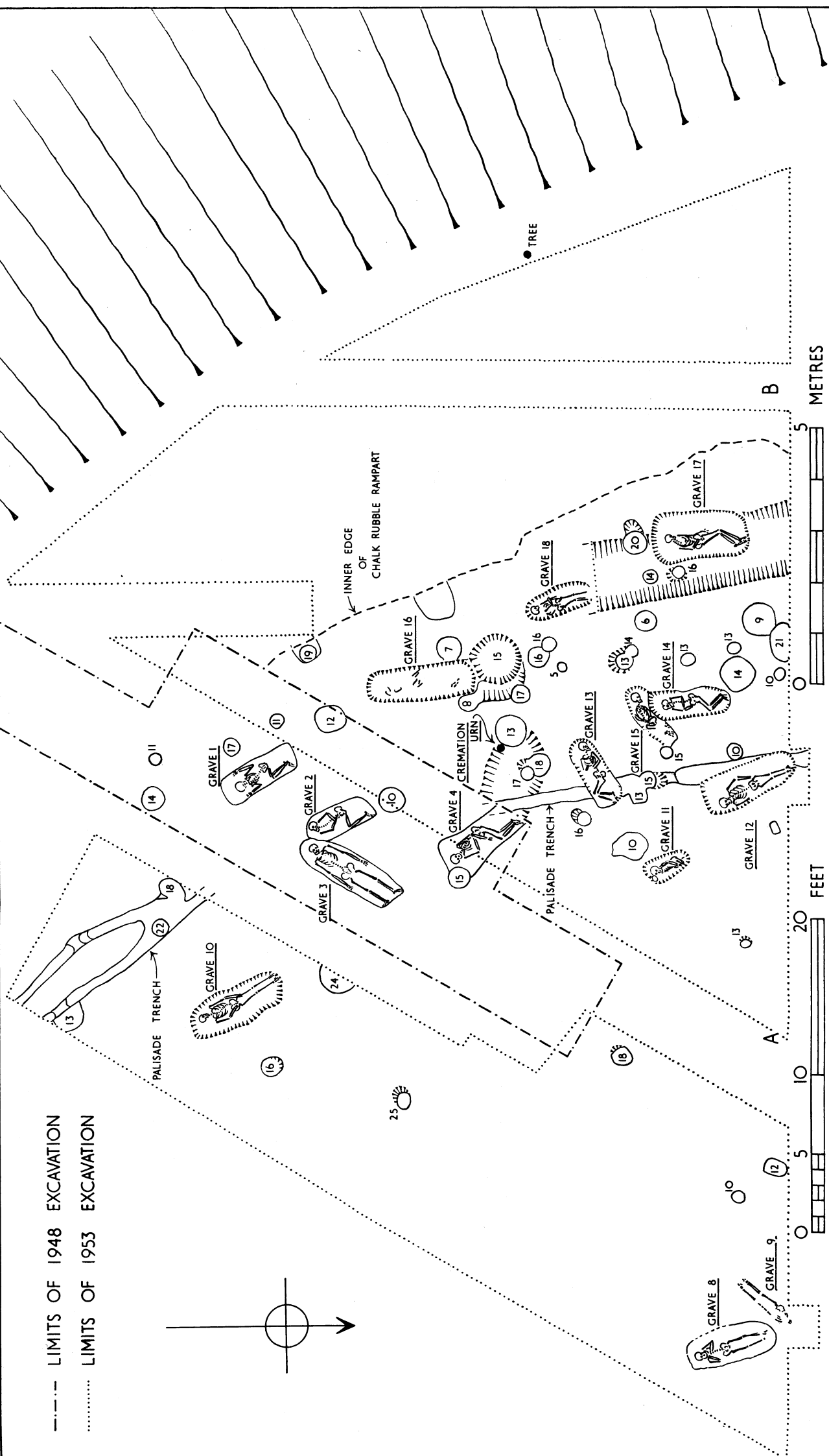


Fig. 2
Plan of Cutting. Figures in and adjacent to post holes and pits indicate their depth in inches below the surface of the solid chalk.

been placed on the southern edge of the Iron Age roadway through the entrance were in graves so shallow as to have suffered damage from recent ploughing. Others (e.g. nos. 1 and 2) were buried deeper in graves that had been cut through the Iron Age occupation earth and into the solid chalk beneath. In view of the shallowness of some of the graves and of the threat of further ploughing of the hilltop it was felt that a further season of excavation aimed at locating as many more Saxon graves as possible would be justified. Work was therefore carried on for a fortnight under our joint charge in August 1953.

As a result of this work a further 11 inhumation burials and one urned cremation (the first from this cemetery) were uncovered, as well as additional information provided on both structures and small finds of the Early Iron Age.

THE EXCAVATION

The area (Fig. 2) lying between Cuttings G and J of the 1948-49 excavations is approximately triangular, bounded on the S.W. by some 70 ft. of the curving rampart of the hill-fort and on the N.E.

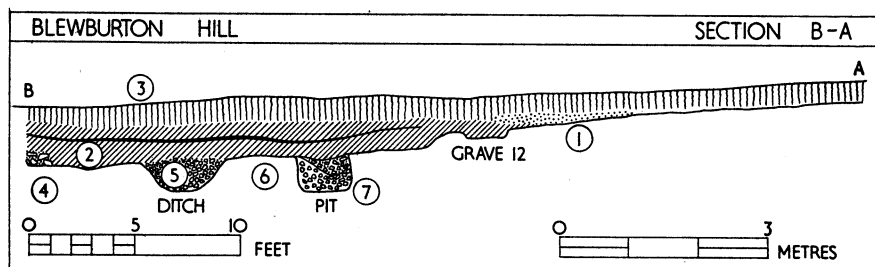


Fig. 3—Section B-A.

by a gap some 14 ft. wide. This triangle was therefore taken as the area to be investigated by means of four parallel cuttings separated by 3 ft. baulks; most of the latter were subsequently removed. A further cutting was added to this layout, extending the area of investigation beyond the line of Cutting G. All these cuttings were excavated down to solid chalk except where the chalk rubble of the rampart was met with. The inner edge of the latter is marked by a broken line on Fig. 2.

The strata removed in the course of this clearance were very uniform. The modern humus had a depth of up to 1 ft. and in the southern part of the area rested directly on up to 2 ft. of dark occupation earth. Clearly seen in section (Fig. 3) in this earth and about 1 ft. above the solid chalk was a thin scatter of pebbles of chalk and Bunter quartzite which almost suggested road metalling,

though this is too high to be related to the road surface recovered in 1949 in the actual entrance through the rampart. Since this thin pebble spread did not extend to the eastern limits of this deposit of occupation soil it cannot be regarded as a sealing deposit. No significant difference was seen in the character of the strata above and below and it is unlikely to indicate any long pause in the growth of this deposit.

The occupation earth contained numerous sherds, animal bones and charcoal, with occasional other small finds. All the pottery of significance was of the AB types found in other seasons on the tail of the rampart. In the eastern end of the area, plough damage to Burials 8 and 9, which were not provided with deep-cut graves shows that here, at least, the occupation earth has been extensively disturbed by cultivation.

Clearance down to solid chalk uncovered the usual maze of post-holes and pits with the addition of two trench features: the pre-rampart palisade trench, as seen in Cuttings B, E and F of previous years²; and a flat-bottomed ditch of moderate proportions just within the rubble of the inner edge of the rampart. The palisade trench is thus attested at a point between Cuttings F and B. Failure to clear through the street cobbling in the entrance (Cutting J)³ prevented its discovery there, though it is surprising that it was not detected in Cutting G⁴, where it must presumably have been cut into by Burials 2 and 3. A new feature is the duplication of its course at the southernmost part uncovered. Its filling throughout was clean and very consolidated chalk rubble.

The trench found just within the inner edge of the rampart is a new feature of the site and is susceptible of at least two interpretations. Clearance of its filling for a length of 12ft. showed a flat-bottomed trench 4 ft. wide at the top and 1 ft. 6 in. to 2 ft. wide at the bottom, dug 1 ft. 6 in. into the solid chalk. In general alignment (if one can judge from so short a length) it is parallel to the palisade trench and so may be related chronologically or functionally to this, the earliest period of Iron Age habitation so far recognised on the hill. If one considers a possible northward extension towards the gateway of the later hill-fort, it seems to be running on a course which would take it just within the two 7 ft.-deep post-holes found under the cobbling of the street in previous excavations⁵. Alternatively, the ditch could perhaps be regarded as a quarry for chalk rubble required in phase 2 of the rampart construction, since it lies almost parallel with and just within the inner edge of the rubble added to the rampart at this period. The latter explanation, however, seems the less likely in view of the fact that the ditch filling was itself clean chalk rubble, clearly distinct from the occupation earth which had accumulated over this portion of the site subsequent to this phase.

The post-holes and shallow pits seen in Fig. 2 give no clear clues to the shape or size of the structures which they imply. This

corner of the hill-fort, just within the entrance, would in any case be likely to show a denser evidence of occupation—convenient proximity to the way in and the probable need for quarters for the gate watchmen would both ensure this. Thus, the increasing number of these holes as one approaches both the inner edge of the rampart on the west and the entrance road on the north could have been expected on *a priori* grounds. It is significant that the depth of occupation earth increases in the angle so formed. Relative dates for the holes are hard to establish. Several sunk into the palisade trench must post-date it. Other paired holes which impinge on one another are clear evidence for structural renewals. The larger and earlier of the paired holes 2 ft. east of the head of Burial 18 seems to have served later as a rubbish pit, since its filling contained numerous large sherds of 'saucepan' type, including nos. 18 and 22 (cf. the similar sherds and iron slag found in 1948 in the hole midway between Burials 1 and 16). The large shallow depression, itself cut into by several post-holes, between Burials 4 and 13 has no obvious function.

THE IRON AGE FINDS

POTTERY.—The fact that the strata moved in 1953 were mostly the occupation earth which had accumulated subsequent to phase 2 of rampart building meant that AB forms predominated. Though pure A forms and fabrics (e.g. no. 32) were met with among these, they may be interpreted in part as rubbish-survivals, but in the main, perhaps, as a conservative element, lingering as store-jars and cooking-pots, all of coarse fabric. The AB forms were mainly either tall jars of 'saucepan' or situlate ancestry (nos. 18, 26, 27) or the very distinctive bead-rim bowls, sometimes with plain burnished exterior (22) but frequently ornamented (nos. 17, 23, 24, 25). Most of these show rectilinear ornament which combines straight shallow-tooled lines and rows of stab impressions of one form or another. A remarkable characteristic of no. 17, which shows a very fine burnished surface, is the delicacy of both lines and semicircular impressions. Technique and design are so close to those on one of the pots found in 1947⁶ that we can only conclude that they are by the same hand.

STONE.—A polished stone axe (no. 20) which has lost its cutting edge and been subsequently used as a pounder, is the second to have come from the hill. We are indebted to Dr. J. Preston of the Dept. of Geology, Queen's University, Belfast, for sectioning and reporting on the rock of which this is made (Appendix 4). The recovery of stone axes on Iron Age sites of pre- and post-Roman date in all parts of the British Isles has occasioned comment on several occasions⁷. In view of the re-use of this specimen, it seems to us more reasonable to suggest that this is a chance find of an earlier antiquity, treasured, perhaps, for magical reasons,⁸ than to regard it

as evidence for the continuing practical use or manufacture of stone axes into the Early Iron Age. The broken chalk disc with badly matched hour-glass perforation (no. 21) recalls other discs found earlier⁹.

THE SAXON CEMETERY

Burials 1-7 found in 1948 and 1949 are shown on Fig. 2. To them can now be added nos. 8-18, plus one cremation in urn. It must be recalled, too, that the inhumed skeleton of a girl was found close to the tree shown on the rampart crest in 1945¹⁰. How many more burials or cremations await discovery cannot be guessed at. Their relative scarcity towards the east of the cleared area may reflect an actual lessening in their numbers in this direction, though the destructive effects of ploughing have certainly interfered with such as nos. 5 and 9. It is possible that many centuries of cultivation may have cut into the surface of the solid chalk over this higher part of the site and so have removed both graves and their contents, though in view of the gentle slope of the hill this seems unlikely.

DEPTH AND OTHER DIMENSIONS OF GRAVES.—A marked preference is noticeable for graves cut into the solid chalk. Exceptions are Burials 5 and 18, both of young persons. Where the chalk is near the surface, as towards the eastern part of the excavated area, no deep digging was involved, but where graves were sited just within the rampart of the hill-fort a considerable thickness of occupation earth had to be gone through before solid was reached; grave-diggers for Burial 17 preferred to go through the rubble filling of the small Iron Age ditch and continued till they had cut the floor of their grave about 1 inch into the solid chalk of the ditch bottom. In this case depth below the modern surface was nearly 4 ft. That a solid, level floor to the grave was desirable is shown by no. 12, where the grave excavation met the Iron Age palisade trench; digging was continued to just below the level of the bottom of the trench. The shape and plan dimensions of the graves tended towards a rectangle about 6 ft. by 2 ft. In most cases these were adequate to contain the body in an extended position, though the flexed skeletons of Burials 1, 2, 13 and 14 were placed in graves which were too short to have contained the bodies extended.

ORIENTATION AND SEQUENCE OF BURIALS.—The majority of the skeletons were orientated with their heads towards the south-east. The compass point may have significance but it seems to be of almost equal significance that these graves have their longer axes parallel with the crest of the Iron Age rampart. A significant minority (nos. 3, 5, 9, 13 and 15) are arranged more nearly radially to the curve of the rampart. In two instances these radial graves impinged on graves placed parallel with the rampart. From a comparison of depths in these pairs of graves and from the fact that the skeleton in Burial 15 was damaged by the digging of the grave for Burial 14,

it is clear that the radial layout (at least in these two instances) was the earlier. All these radially arranged burials with the exception of No. 9 had their heads towards the west or south-west (i.e. towards the rampart).

DESCRIPTION OF BURIALS.—(For a description of Burials 1–7 see *Berks. Arch. J.* 53 (1952–3), 51–4).

BURIAL 8.—Adult male (?). Grave cut 4 in. into solid chalk. Body supine with face upwards, arms folded across chest and legs extended. At waist to left of spine—*iron buckle*.

BURIAL 9.—Female (?), aged 18–20 years. Grave floor on surface of solid chalk. Body supine with legs extended. As result of ploughing mandible alone survives from skull. Arms and most of thorax missing.

On some ribs—*bronze staining*, suggesting brooch.

Among ribs—*iron buckle* (broken).

BURIAL 10.—Adult male, aged 25–35 years; height c. 5 ft. 6 in. (?). Grave cut 6 in. to 9 in. into solid chalk. Body supine, head on right side, left arm extended at side and right crossed over pelvis, legs extended.

No associated objects.

BURIAL 11.—Child, aged c. 3 years. Grave cut 5 in. to 6 in. into solid chalk. Body on right side with head thrown slightly back, hands meeting near knees of flexed legs.

Against left side of frontal bone—*vase* with 3 pierced lugs (no. 31) placed with mouth upwards.

BURIAL 12.—Female, aged 30–40 years; height c. 5 ft. 4 in. Grave cut 9 in. into solid chalk at head end and 6 in. at foot. Body supine with head turned slightly to right, right arm straight at side and left arm slightly flexed with hand on pelvis, legs extended. It was noticeable that the feet were pressed against the end of the grave; two toe bones had been displaced and lay c. 6 in. to the right of the feet.

On clavicles—pair of bronze *applied brooches* (no. 3 from left side).

At waist on right—bronze *toilet set* (no. 4).

By crest of right pelvis—bronze *buckle* (no. 1), presumably from a belt.

By crest of left pelvis—bronze *double loop* (no. 2); a bronze *ring* (no. 5); a rectangular piece of *sheet bronze* with traces of gilding; two Roman *bronze coins*; *strip* of iron c. $\frac{3}{4}$ in. by $\frac{1}{8}$ in. and $4\frac{1}{2}$ in. long, one end bent over and the other bluntly pointed; iron *knife* (no. 9).

On lumbar vertebrae—three *rings* of bronze wire (nos. 6–8); two of three-strand twist and one plain.

BURIAL 13.—(?) Male, aged *c.* 50 years. Grave cut 8 in. into solid chalk, squared off at foot and rounded at head and too short to allow of extended burial. Body supine with head to left, right arm bent with forearm on chest, left bent with hand across abdomen, legs bent with knees standing well above level of surrounding solid chalk.

On left clavicle—a pair of small bronze *disc-brooches* (one illustrated, no. 15).

Below ribs—glass beads.

BURIAL 14.—Adolescent, aged *c.* 16–18 years. Grave cut 2 in. to 8 in. into solid chalk. Body supine with head to right, right arm slightly flexed at side, left forearm folded across waist; legs bent to right.

Below chin—a pair of *penannular iron brooches*, $1\frac{3}{8}$ in. diam.

Below right wrist—a corroded mass of iron, apparently including an *annular brooch* $2\frac{1}{4}$ in. diam. with pin $2\frac{3}{4}$ in. long, an iron *knife* $3\frac{1}{2}$ in. long, an iron *ring* (? brooch or buckle) $1\frac{1}{4}$ in. diam.

BURIAL 15.—Female, aged 18–25 years. Grave cut 2 in. to 6 in. into solid chalk. Burial slightly contracted on left side, legs probably originally bent but now missing owing to damage in cutting grave of Burial 14.

No associated objects.

BURIAL 16.—Adult. Rectangular grave cut 12 in. to 14 in. into solid chalk. An instance of early disturbance; right foot, left forearm and hand still articulated; the only other bones surviving were 3 displaced ribs, 6 in. to 10 in. above floor of grave and close to where head would be expected.

On centreline of grave and close to forearm—iron *key* (no. 10); iron *ear-scoop* (no. 11); iron *pricker* (no. 12) and iron *knife* (no. 16).

Close to W. edge of grave and perhaps looted from it—bronze *penannular brooch* (no. 13).

BURIAL 17.—Young adult female. Grave cut through ditch filling and 2 in. to 6 in. into bottom of Iron Age ditch. Body supine with head to left, left arm by side and right forearm flexed over pelvis, legs flexed to left.

On shoulders—a pair of bronze *disc-brooches* (one illustrated, no. 14).

On left ribs—iron *pin* 5 in. long and small piece of *bronze strip* looped at each end.

BURIAL 18.—Child aged *c.* 10–12 years in shallow grave cut into filling of Iron Age ditch. Body supine with head to left, left arm extended by side and right bent with forearm across left elbow, hands and feet missing.

No associated objects.

BURIAL 19.—For completeness, the burial investigated in 1945 by Mr. R. J. C. Atkinson is given this number. Adolescent female. Grave cut into crest of Iron Age rampart, just beneath modern turf. Burial extended.

Two bronze *small-long brooches* and 9 glass beads.

CREMATION.—A small undecorated urn placed upright in Iron Age occupation earth at 1 ft. 9 in. below the surface. Contents—cremated remains of one individual (Appendix I).

THE ASSOCIATED OBJECTS AND THEIR SIGNIFICANCE.—In discussing the objects found in 1953 it is necessary to consider some of the objects found in 1948 and 1949. For illustrations and descriptions of these discoveries the reader is referred back to the 1948–49 Report. The total number of burials discovered up to the end of the 1953 excavation was 19 inhumations and 1 urned cremation, plus one or two stray beads and sherds which might indicate other inhumations destroyed by ploughing or other means. The distribution of associated objects is shown below in tabular form. From this it will be seen that most of the skeletons were provided with some accompanying objects; only 3 (16%) were unaccompanied. This figure compares with 46 (38%) at the Abingdon cemetery. None of the objects was evidence of any great wealth; gilt bronze applied brooches or tin-dipped bronze disc brooches represented the maximum of wealth.

As in most cemeteries, the commonest single find (apart from beads) is the belt buckle; belts and the knives carried on them seem to have been normal equipment for both men and women. Weapons are limited to a single iron spearhead. Any attempt at cultural or chronological attribution must, on the nature of the Blewburton evidence, be based on the forms of brooch found and on their styles of ornament.

BROOCHES.—The preponderance of circular forms, both disc and applied is noteworthy and in keeping with the proportions in other cemeteries of the Oxford region. (At Abingdon the circular forms—i.e. disc, saucer and applied—outnumbered the small-long brooches by seven to one). We have been able to add only one small-long brooch to the two found by Atkinson¹¹ with Burial 19. Ours, from Burial 5 compares well with others from Bidford-on-Avon.¹² Disc-brooches found in 1943 comprise two pairs. The larger (Fig. 5 no. 14) is closely matched by a pair from Abingdon, Grave 93.¹³ The fortunate preservation of a small fold of cloth on the back of one of our pair has made possible the detailed consideration of weave by Miss Henshall in Appendix II. The smaller pair (Fig. 5, no. 15), undecorated save for a central punch dot and a few random incisions round the edge, is a simpler version of the same general type. The more elaborately ornamented pair from Burial 4,¹⁴ with

TABLE OF GRAVE-GOODS

Burial No.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	Totals
Brooches:																					
Small-Long					1																
Disc				2								2					2		2		3
Applied (Geometric)		1																			6
Applied (unclassifiable)			1																		1
Applied (Zoomorphic)																					1
Annular & Penannular	2		1									2		2	1						6
Buckles:																					
Bronze	1											1									2
Iron		1	1				2	1	1			1		2							9
Bronze Rings												4									4
'Toilet Articles'												3									5
? Purse Mount												1									1
Keys			1	1																	1
Knives						1						1		1							7
Spears							1														1
'Amulets'																					1
Combs				1																	1
Glass Beads					10							+							9		19+
Amber Beads	3																				3
Bangles																					1
Roman Coins					2							2									4
Iron Pins	1				1												1				2
'Other Iron Objects'												1									1
Metal Beads					3																3
Pottery							1				1									1	3
TOTALS	3	5	4	5	17	1	6	1	1	Nil	1	16	2+	5	Nil	5	3	Nil	11	1	1

* Several glass beads were present

EXCAVATIONS ON BLEWBURTON HILL, 1953



PLATE I—General view of cutting from N.

EXCAVATIONS ON BLEWBURTON HILL, 1953



PLATE IIa—Textile on brooch (5/4 scale)



PLATE IIb—Burial 12

EXCAVATIONS ON BLEWBURTON HILL, 1953



PLATE IIIa—Applied brooch from Burial 12 (4/3 scale)



PLATE IIIb—Applied brooch from Barrington, Cambs. (4/3 scale)

Photograph by courtesy of Cambridge University Museum of Archaeology and Ethnology

quincunx arrangement of ring-and-dot designs is of the type which Leeds saw as a possible descendant of Romano-British enamelled disc-brooches.¹⁵

The pair of large applied brooches with zoomorphic ornament (Fig. 4, no. 3) can be added to the geometrically ornamented example from Burial 2 and a fourth, lacking its applied repoussé disc, from Burial 3.¹⁶ Each of the pair from Burial 12 is from the same die; each is built up entirely from pieces of bronze sheet soldered together: the hinge plate and catch plate for the iron pin (missing) are inserted through slits in the main saucer plate; each has its inserted tongue split in half and the two tabs so formed bent through 90° away from each other; the rim is formed of a single strip bent round and lap-jointed; a roughly rectangular sheet of bronze is used between the saucer plate and the repoussé disc to retain the blue glass hemisphere set projecting through a hole in the latter. The gilt repoussé plate bears ornament consisting of three animals, each with head, body, foreleg(s) and hind (legs). The stylisation bears a close resemblance to that of the similarly treated three animals on a pair of brooches from Barrington, Cambs.¹⁷ Yet the Blewburton and Barrington brooches are clearly from different dies, as the central boss is differently treated in each. A parallel almost as close as this is to be seen in the animal design on a pair of brooches from Abingdon, Grave 119.¹⁸ The great similarity of these designs from Abingdon, Blewburton and Barrington is additional evidence for the cultural unity of the Upper Thames—South Cambridgeshire region, through which the Icknield Way passes, yet they are too late in date to influence arguments relative to the original colonisation of the Upper Thames region from the direction of Cambridge; a date late in the 6th or even early in the 7th Century¹⁹ has been suggested for the Abingdon pair.

The bronze penannular brooch (Fig. 5, no. 13) is, so far as can be traced, without exact parallels in any Saxon context. Its probable association with Burial 16 has been noted above (p. 58). This brooch is certainly a Celtic piece, though exact parallels in the Highland Zone are hard to find. The plain moulded terminals to the ring are clearly outside the well-known zoomorphic series²⁰ which begins with Romano-British prototypes. A feature marking it off from the Romano-British and pagan Saxon penannular brooches is the relatively great length of the pin which projects well beyond the ring; this is a characteristic of later developments in the Celtic zoomorphic brooches. The bending of the pin over the ring is seen in one from Castle Collen, Radnor.²¹ The ring lacks the furrowing seen on many of the Welsh examples cited by Savory.²² Whether the Blewburton brooch is to be regarded as a piece of Celtic work from as far away as Ireland or even from the Welsh marches, it strengthens the evidence of Celtic material from south Midland cemeteries. Apart from hanging bowls such as that from

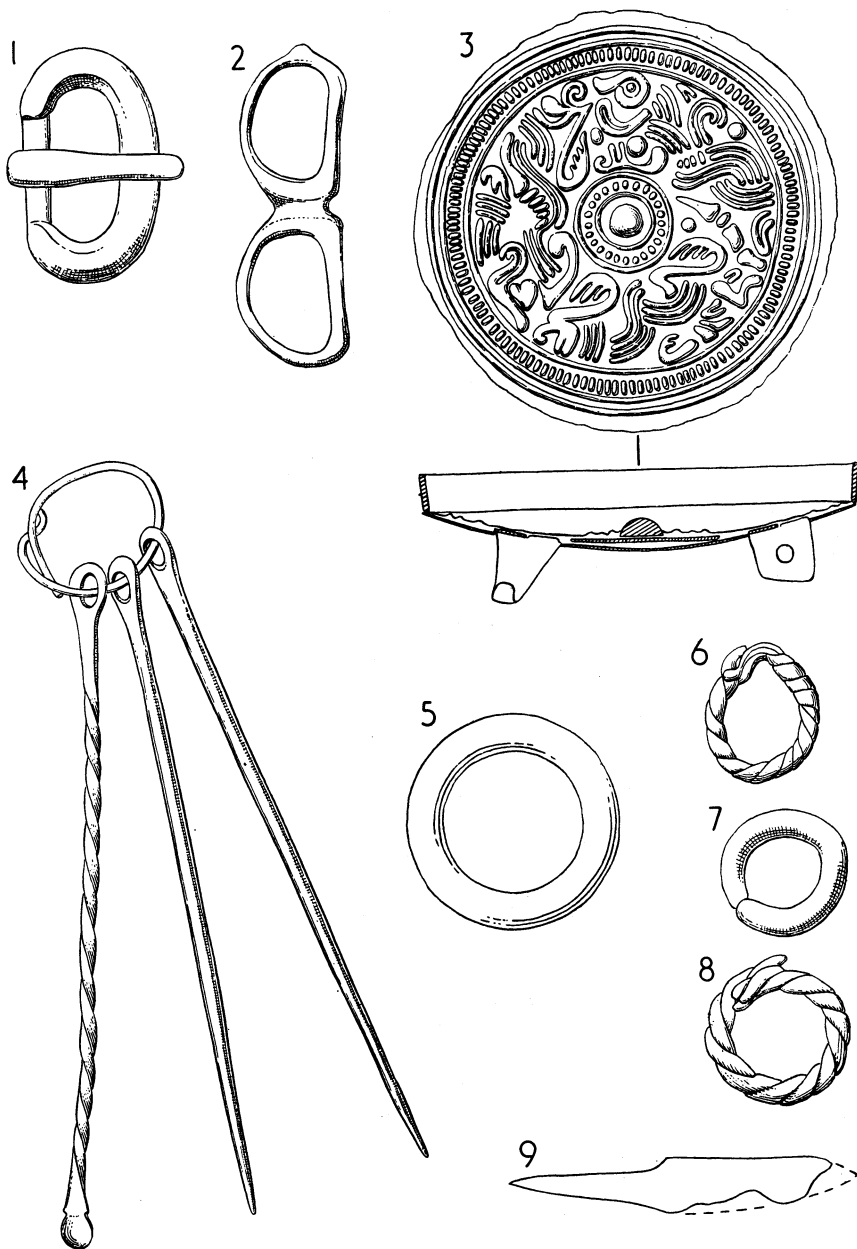


Fig. 4—Associated objects from Burial 12. 1–8 are of bronze and 9 of iron.
(Scales: 1–8 are 1/1; 9 is 1/2.)

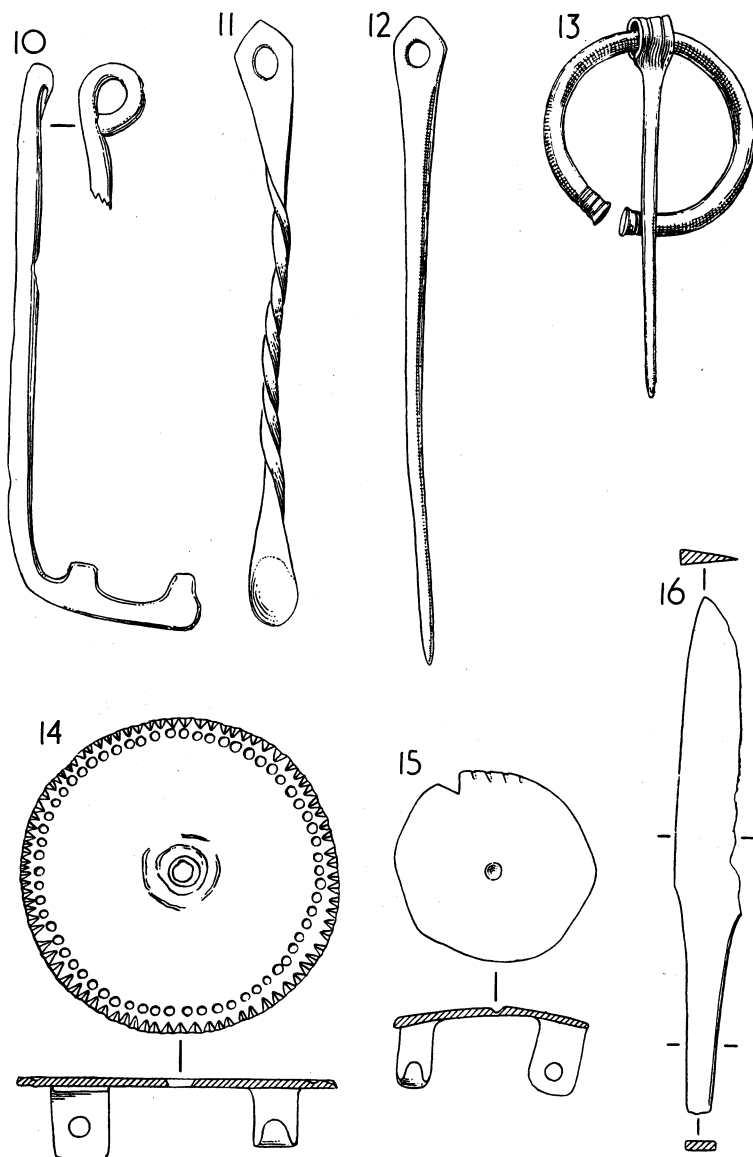


Fig. 5—Associated objects from Burial 13 (no. 15); from Burial 16 (nos. 10-13 and 16); and from Burial 17 (no. 14) (Scales: 10 is 1/2; 11-16 are 1/1).

Lowbury²³ we have a pin from a penannular brooch from Nassington, Northants,²⁴ and a Celtic pin with enamelled head from Cassington, Oxon.²⁵ Simpler penannular brooches made from iron wire are also recorded from Burials 1, 2 and 14 and lend emphasis to arguments in favour of a continuity into Saxon times in this part of England of Celtic methods of dress-fastening and perhaps, by implication, of Celtic styles of dress. A further example of a bronze penannular brooch from a southern English hill-fort has been brought to our notice from Oldbury Camp, Wilts (*Devizes Museum Catalogue* (1934), 112).

OTHER METALWORK.—While buckles of iron, as noted above (p. 59) are some of the commoner finds, there is only one of bronze, from Burial 12. The 3 bronze rings (Fig. 4, nos. 6–8), found on the lumbar vertebrae in the same grave call for comment: they seem by their position to have formed some kind of dress fastening or ornament below the waist; those formed of 3-strand twist are more readily paralleled among bracelets than among such small rings. The double bronze loop, a casting, (Fig. 4, no. 2) from the same grave is difficult to interpret: found with two Roman bronze coins and the bronze ring (Fig. 4, no. 5), it is more likely to be some form of purse mount than the more obvious knuckleduster! The 'toilet set' (Fig. 4, no. 4) shows traces of gilding. A common feature in Saxon graves, these seem to be descendants of the familiar Romano-British instruments. It is almost exactly paralleled at Abingdon²⁶ and Long Wittenham, Berks,²⁷ and at Holywell Row, Suffolk.²⁸ It is interesting to compare with these bronze outfits their extremely well preserved iron counterparts of 'ear-scoop' (Fig. 5, no. 11) and pricker (no. 12) from Burial 16. Another iron item from this grave (no. 10) is presumably an iron key of a type that survived from Roman times²⁹ and is seen closely paralleled at Holywell Row, Suffolk.³⁰

The knives found call for little comment, being of a type current throughout Dark Age Britain.

POTTERY.—The urn (no. 30) which contained the only cremation found at Blewbarton, is typical in form of the unornamented urns from Abingdon, though these are all rather larger in size. It is hand-made from a dark grey, well-fired paste which contained much chaff backing.

The small cup (no. 31) with 3 perforated lugs from Burial 11 can be fairly closely matched from a grave at Abingdon (Burial 51)³¹ and also, less closely, from House 1 in the Saxon village at Sutton Courtney, Berks.³² It is of dark grey ware with less obvious vegetable backing than no. 30. Hardly any grits are noticeable. The 3 equidistant lugs are pierced by holes $\frac{1}{16}$ – $\frac{1}{8}$ in. diameter.

The finds are deposited in Reading Museum.

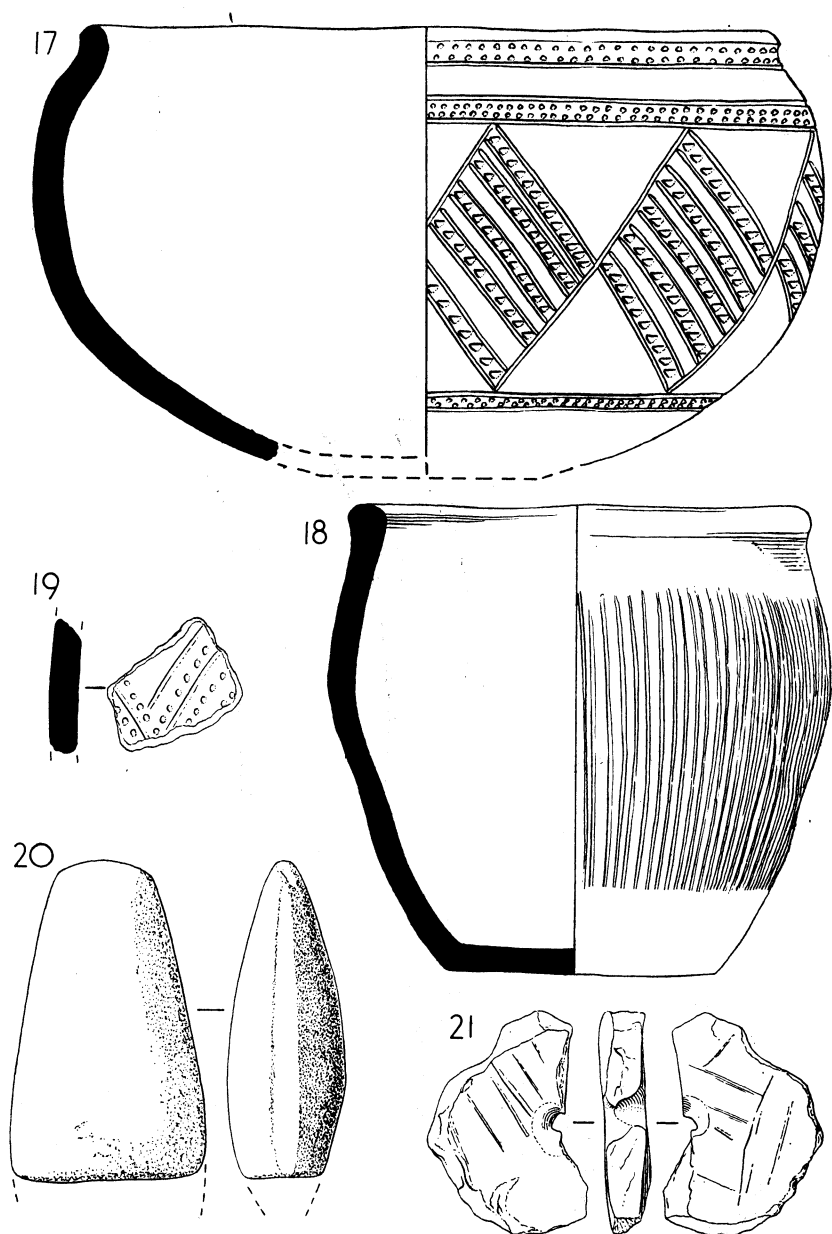


Fig. 6—Early Iron Age finds: 17–19, pottery; 20, re-used stone axe; 21, broken perforated chalk disc (scales of all are 1/2)

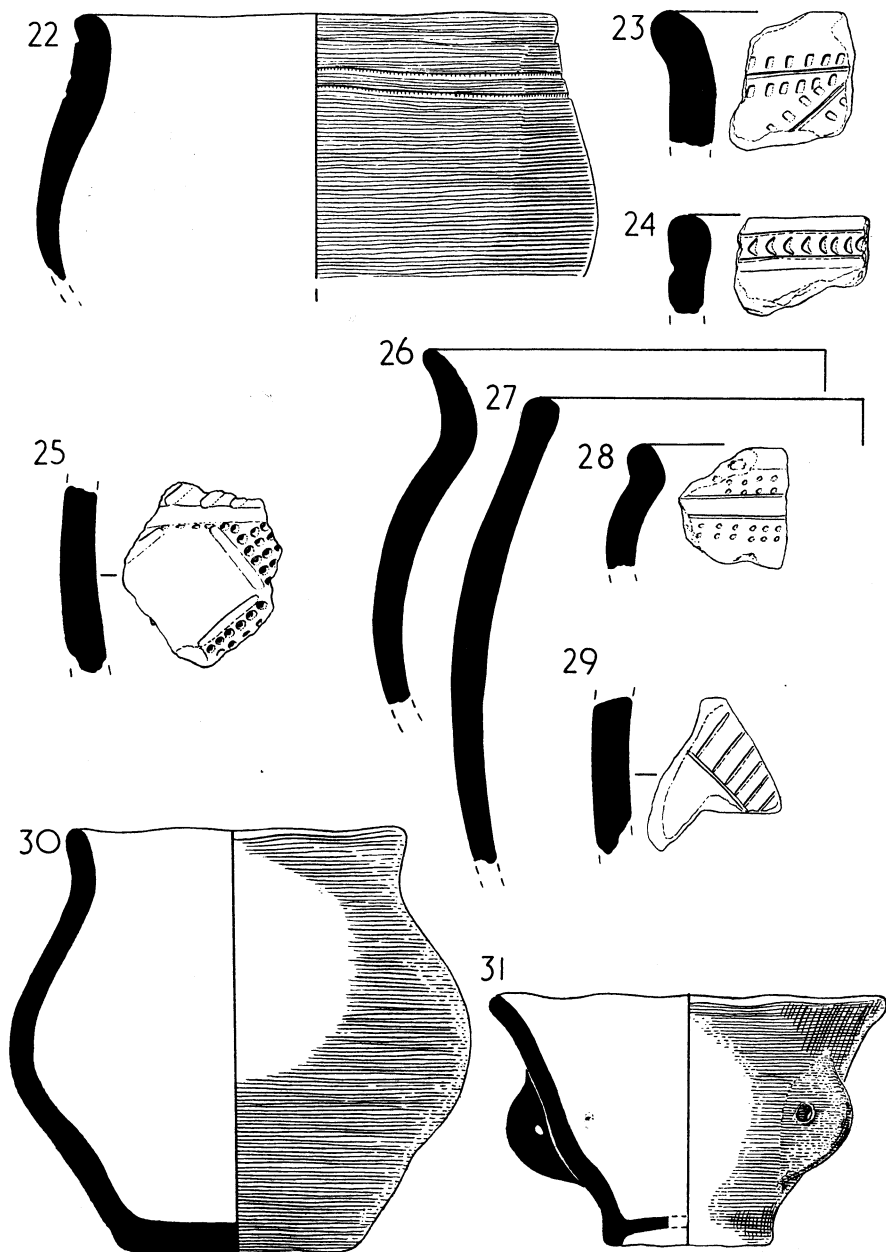


Fig. 7—Early Iron Age sherds (nos. 22–29) and Saxon pots (nos. 30 and 31)
(scales of all are 1/2)

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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REFERENCES

N.B.—Works frequently referred to are given abbreviated titles, as follows:

Blewbarton 1. A. E. P. Collins, 'Excavations on Blewbarton Hill, 1947', *Berks. Arch. J.*, **50** (1947) 4–29.

Blewbarton 2. A. E. P. Collins, 'Excavations on Blewbarton Hill, 1948 and 1949', *Berks. Arch. J.*, **53** (1952–3) 21–64.

Abingdon E. T. Leeds and D. B. Harden, *The Anglo-Saxon Cemetery at Abingdon*, *Berkshire* (Oxford, 1936).

¹*Blewbarton 1* and *Blewbarton 2*.

²*Blewbarton 1*, Figs. 4 and 5.

³*Blewbarton 2*, 26, Fig. 10.

⁴*Blewbarton 2*, Fig. 6.

⁵*Blewbarton 2*, 24, Fig. 7.

⁶*Blewbarton 1*, Fig. 13, 1.

⁷cf. J. F. S. Stone, *Wilts Archaeol. Mag.* **54** (1951) 162–3 with numerous references to finds of stone axes in contexts from Late Bronze Age to post-Roman times, interpreted as evidence for a ritual value surviving, perhaps unbroken, from the axe-cult of Minoan Crete.

⁸It must be recalled that Iron Age cultivators has as good an opportunity as modern ploughmen of discovering such things as stone axes in the course of tillage.

⁹*Blewbarton 1*, 14, Fig. 7, 1.

¹⁰*Oxoniensis* **10** (1945), 93.

¹¹*ibid.*

¹²*Archæologia* **73** (1922–3) Pl. 13, Fig. 1.

¹³*Abingdon*, Pl. 16.

¹⁴*Blewbarton 2*, Fig. 19, 1 and 2.

¹⁵*Archæologia* **91** (1945), 52.

¹⁶*Blewbarton 2*, 51, wrongly described as a plain disc brooch.

¹⁷*Archæologia* **63** (1911–2), 178 and Pl. 27, 4.

¹⁸*Abingdon*, Pl. 17.

¹⁹*ibid.*, 56–7.

²⁰*Proc. Roy. Irish Acad.* **43C** and H. N. Savory, 'Some sub-Roman Brooches from South Wales' in *Dark Age Britain* (London, 1956).

²¹*Arch. Cambrensis* 6th. Ser. **14** (1914), 43, Fig. 14, 4.

²²H. N. Savory, *op. cit.*, 53–4.

²³D. Atkinson, *The Romano-British Site on Lowbury Hill in Berkshire*, (1916).

²⁴*Antiq. J.* **24** (1944), 124 and Pl. 30.

- ²⁵*Oxoniensia* 7 (1942), 70 and Fig. 16.
²⁶*Abingdon*, Pl. 6.
²⁷G. Baldwin Brown, *The Arts in Early England*, 2, (1915), Pl. 87, 2.
²⁸T. C. Lethbridge, *Recent Excavations in Anglo-Saxon Cemeteries* . . . (1931), Fig. 14, F2.
²⁹cf. example from villa at Hartlip, Kent, illustrated by Baldwin Brown, *op. cit.*, Pl. 88, 1.
³⁰T. C. Lethbridge, *op. cit.*, Fig. 7, C3.
³¹*Abingdon*, Fig. 6.
³²*Archæologia* 73 (1922-3), Pl. 22, Fig. 1B.

APPENDIX I

The contents of the cremation urn

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The material consists of a mass of whitish-grey bone fragments intermingled with a blackish-grey earthy deposit. Numerous fragments of calvarial bone could be identified and a portion of the right petrous temporal bone, including the internal auditory meatus but not the mastoid region, was also found. This petrous bone was small and delicate and probably was not fully developed. Two other bone fragments containing foramina possibly came from the skull but their exact sites or origin could not be determined.

Three masses of cancellous bone with some overlying cortical bone possibly represent tarsal bones and one similar mass resembles the carpal capitate bone; its side is uncertain.

One small bone fragment about 2 inches long may represent a lower rib and if so came from a child.

No teeth were found and the bone had the characteristic ring of cremated bone.

Conclusion: the bones are human and formed part of one individual, probably a child, who had been cremated. The smallness of the fragments suggest that they were broken up after firing.

APPENDIX II

Textiles on the back of a brooch from Blewburton Hill, Berks.

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The brooch is of bronze, in a good state of preservation, with a bronze catchplate, but an iron pin. This is much corroded and the ferric oxide has been deposited from it onto the cloth immediately in its vicinity, replacing it and thus preserving its structure.¹ When examination of the textile began the underside of the brooch appeared as a corroded mass, though a tiny well-preserved area against the brooch itself was projecting and showed clearly a twill cloth and tablet-woven border. It was evident that a number of layers of cloth were present, and each layer had to be cleaned as far as possible, recorded, and picked away to examine the next layer.

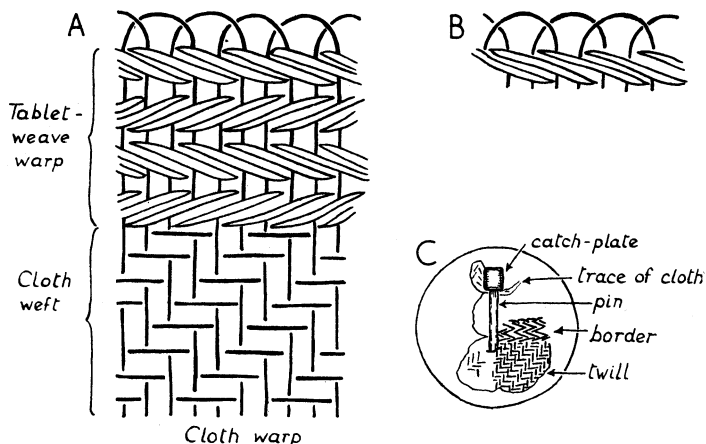


Fig. 8—Textile diagrams: A, diagram of textile from Blewbarton brooch; B, diagram of edge of corselitze cloth (after Hald); C, sketch of cloth, lowest layer, on Blewbarton brooch (1/2 scale)

In the following descriptions of the cloths the counts of the threads per inch are very approximate, as it is only possible to count a very small area, and this does not lie flat but is raised over the hinge. There is no sign of the original colouring of the textiles. The remains of the upper two layers were so slight it was not possible even to guess whether the cloth was made from animal or vegetable fibres, but the two lower layers appear to have been wool.

Layer 1—the uppermost cloth and first examined, but the innermost as worn—was too corroded to decipher the weave, but had about 32 threads per inch in one direction.

Layer 2—was a finer cloth, a $2/2$ twill, Z-spun, with about 36 threads per inch in one direction. The threads lay at an oblique angle to the pin, unlike the other cloths.

These two cloths lay over the pin and catchplate.

Layer 3—(fig. 8A) appeared to be the same cloth as the lowest layer which was better preserved. Both lay over the hinge with the pin passing through them, their edges at right angles to the pin and lying short of the catchplate. The cloth was a $2/2$ twill, Z-spun, about 24 warp threads and 28 weft threads per inch (assigning the former count to the warp in anticipation of the argument set out below). The tablet-woven border,² of Z-spun yarn, was made with four 4-hole tablets (i.e. 16 warp threads) threaded alternately from either side. The space between the innermost tablet and the cloth was too indistinct to see their junction, and the very edge of the border was rubbed away so that the turn of the threads forming the outer edge of the border could not be traced. When layer 3 was being removed it was possible to see in one instance a weft thread of the tablet weave

continuing as one of the woven threads of the cloth, thus proving that the tablet-woven border was an integral part of the whole web and not sewn on to the cloth subsequently.

Layer 4—(fig. 8C), although measuring 0.6×1 in. was the best preserved piece of textile. The cloth is a $2/2$ twill, though only 11 weft and 17 warp threads can be clearly traced, and it is of course possible that the cloth is part of a herringbone or diamond twill with a larger pattern repeat. The yarn is Z-spun with little difference in thickness or amount of spin in the warp and weft, about 28 warp threads and 30 wefts per inch.

The tablet-woven border was worked with four 4-hole tablets threaded alternately from either side and revolved by $\frac{1}{4}$ turns, with two threads through each shed. Although this layer was not dissected there is little doubt that one set of threads of the cloth continue to form the weft of the tablet weaving as in layer 3, for there is no sign of sewing at the junction of the cloth and border, or of a selvedge at the edge of the twill. The arrangement of the weft of the tablet weave can be seen at the edge of the border, and this curious system probably indicates that the border is in fact the starting edge of a warp woven on an upright loom. If so the threads of the cloth running parallel to the border are wefts, and these at right angles to it are the cloth warp.

The tablet-woven starting edge. With the use of vertical looms, which were probably general in Europe from prehistoric to mediaeval times or even to the 18th century in remoter areas,³ the warp had to be suspended from the top of the loom, and the weaving, which was beaten upwards, was pushed to the very beginning of the warp. To make a firm edge to stand the strain of the loom weights and weaving process, the warp sometimes was prepared with a specially woven narrow band which was afterwards transferred to the top of the loom for the weaving of the cloth. This band was occasionally made by tablet-weaving, which is especially suitable due to its very firm character.

Among the range of early cloths from Scandinavia and North Germany, M. Hald defines a group which have a tablet-woven starting edge as one of their characteristic features, another feature being the use of Z-spun yarn for part of or the whole cloth. Most of the cloths cannot be precisely dated, except that from Corselitze, Denmark, which comes from a burial containing a fibula and beads of about 400 A.D.⁴ One of the cloths from this find is actually most nearly comparable to the Blewbarton Hill cloth, for it is an entirely Z-spun $2/2$ twill, with an identical tablet-woven border with two threads in each shed. The only slight difference is that in the turn of the wefts at the edge of the Corselitze example alternate pairs always overlie their neighbours,⁵ whilst in the Blewbarton Hill example the wefts are interlocked (see diag. 8B). In the Corselitze cloth this arrangement in what is demonstrably the starting edge is taken to

indicate that the warp was made by working with two threads; but the arrangement of the Blewburton Hill edge, though it could be worked with two threads, seems much better adapted to warping with three. However, this point could only be resolved finally by the preservation of the bottom edge of a cloth.

In M. Hald's Corselitze group of cloths tablet-woven starting borders also occur on pieces from Vrangstrup, Thorsbjerg and Vejen, Denmark,⁶ and on a 2/2 twill cloth from Tegle, Norway.⁷ This find comes from what appears to be a votive deposit, and includes a very interesting item in the form of a warp prepared with a tablet-woven starting border, but never woven.⁸

It is technically possible that the Blewburton Hill border is in fact the selvedge or side edge of the cloth, for instance tablet-woven selvedges appear in the case of the Vejen blanket mentioned above. The use of two or more threads in the weft does not entirely disprove this contention, for there is an instance of a similar arrangement in a side border (though not tablet-woven) in an undated cape from Rønbjerg Mose, Denmark.⁹ Further, if the Blewburton Hill border had hung at the top of the loom one might expect the turn of the threads at the edge to form definite loops due to their having received the strain of the hanging warp. These loops are clearly visible in the case of the Tegle cloth, but, on the other hand, not in the Corselitze cloth; and it is equally likely that the band was 'whipped' on to the top of the loom by stout cord passing through or below it.

The very close resemblance of the Blewburton Hill cloth in almost every other point to that from Corselitze argues the same construction and utilitarian considerations behind the very interesting warping and weaving techniques which can be traced in these two textiles. The only other certain starting edge known in the British Isles occurs on a Late Bronze Age cloth from Armoy, Co. Antrim,¹⁰ where cloth and border are plain weave. Small fragments of 4-hole tablet-woven bands have survived from the Saxon period in England; at Finglesham, Kent, a fragment of woollen twill cloth survives with a side border of at least six tablets, 4-holed and threaded from alternate sides with Z-spun yarn; at Sutton Hoo (SH 14) there is a fragment of 2-hole tablet weaving which seems to come from the corner formed by two borders; at Broomfield Barrow there is part of a closing border of a woollen twill cloth.¹¹ Other Saxon tablet-woven bands, such as are preserved inside wrist-clasps, have been woven as entities and used as applied ornamental features.¹²

Textile fragments from a second brooch are very small and in a similar state to those already described. They appear to be of similar cloth: (a) fragment of 2/2 twill, Z-spun; (b) fragment of tablet-woven border, Z-spun warp and weft; there appear to be five 4-hole tablets threaded alternately from either side, rotated by $\frac{1}{4}$ turns; (c) smaller fragment similar to (b).

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- ¹Ciba Review, 5, 1941-2, for a note on the preservation of textiles by metals.
²For an explanation of the tablet-weave technique see M. Hald, *Olddanske Tekstiler, Nordiske Fortidsminder*, V, Copenhagen, 1950, 453, or P.P.S., 1950, 148-9, or P.S.A.S., LXXXVI, 5-6.
³M. Hald, 445-53.
⁴M. Hald, 438 and 415-6.
⁵*ibid.*, figs. 57 and 170.
⁶*ibid.*, 419, Fig. 78-9; 415; Fig. 48.
⁷H. Dedekam in *Stavanger Museums Aarshefte*, 1921-4, 3-32, Fig. 7.
⁸*ibid.*, Figs. 4-5.
⁹M. Hald, 414, Fig. 160.
¹⁰*Proc. Prehist. Soc.* 16 (1950), 134-5.
¹¹*Medieval Archaeology* II (1958), 36-7.
¹²E.g. from Mildenhall, Suffolk. *Proc. Cambridge Ant. Soc.*, XLIV (1951), 26-28, Pl. V.

APPENDIX III

The coins from Burial 12

By W. A. SEABY

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1. (coin with two perforations). Roman: early 4th century. Period of Constantine I or his sons (c. 306-340). Commemorative issue of the period.
 Obv. VRBS) ROMA. Helmeted bust of Rome 1.
 Rev. No legend. Wolf suckling the twins Romulus and Remus.
 Exergue. Mint marks quite worn away.
2. (coin with one perforation). Roman: early 4th century. Period of Constantine I (306-337). Helena, mother of Constantine.
 Obv. FL. HELENA AVGVSTA. Bust of Helena r.
 Rev. SECVRITAS REIPUBLICAE. Security veiled, standing 1., holding branch.
 Exergue. STRV=Treveri, second workshop.

These are probably two of the commonest types of the early 4th century, and could have been picked up almost anywhere in a Romano-British or Gaulish settlement or a hoard of the period. Treveri (Treves) was almost the commonest source of supply of supply for coins found in Britain, although these were supplemented with coinage from London, Lugdunum (Lyons) and other W. European mints.

Besides the normal wear in Roman times and supplementary wear and perforations by the Saxons, the coins have a number of cuts on both faces and are otherwise defaced.

APPENDIX IV**The stone axe**

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The axe is made from a medium-grained grey-blue rock which has weathered to a stone-grey colour. It is a pyroxene granodiorite and composed essentially of pyroxene with a little hornblende, oligoclastic plagioclase and a little alkali felspar, usually in graphic intergrowth with quartz.