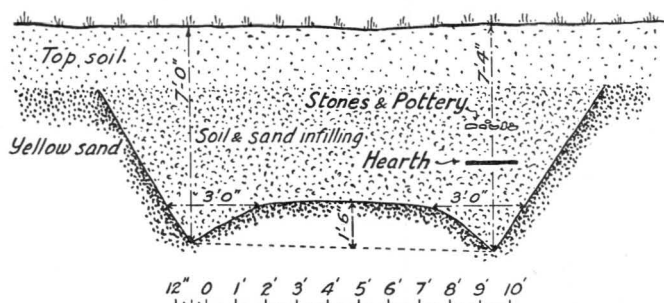


# LATE BRONZE AGE DITCHES AT SELMESTON

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THE Selmeston sand-pit has been greatly enlarged since Dr. Grahame Clark excavated portions of three Mesolithic pit-dwellings in 1933.<sup>1</sup> What was then a promontory of sand, left because of the difficulty of dealing with a group of big trees on it, was an island in December 1936,



the neck having been cut through and the trees cut down. On a visit paid in that month a section of what at first seemed to be a double pit appeared on the east face, 10 ft. to the south-east of Clark's Pit I. With the help of Mr. Davis we partially cleared the northern side of this section in horizontal spits of about a foot, while Mr. Boys and his mate dealt similarly with the southern half. At a point 3 ft. 4 in. below the turf lay a clutter of a dozen or so big Downland flints with some gravel and ferruginous sandstone. On it rested fragments of a Late Bronze Age bucket urn with finger impressions on a raised band, and a portion of the rim of the same vessel, and with them one large calcined flint. A microlith had slipped down and come to rest among the big flints.

<sup>1</sup> *Antiq. Journ.* xiv (1934), 134.

There was no charcoal at this level. In the upper part of the fifth spit, 14 in. lower than the big flints and almost directly below them, was a hearth 2 to 3 in. thick consisting of 'fine yellow sand mixed with numerous fragments of calcined flint, both darkened by fire, and some more finely divided silicates and charcoal dust and wood charcoal fragments, as from a hearth' (J. C. Maby). The charcoal was of oak and hawthorn. The flint implements and flakes removed in the different spits are shown in the table:

	<i>Spits</i>							<i>Totals</i>
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
Microoliths . . . . .	..	3	3	3	2	..	..	11
Microburins . . . . .	..	..	..	1	1	..	..	2
Axe-sharpening flakes . . . . .	..	..	1	1	..	2	..	4
Saw . . . . .	..	..	1	..	..	..	..	1
Scrapers, convex . . . . .	1	..	..	4	..	..	..	5
"    concave . . . . .	..	..	..	1	..	..	..	1
Cores . . . . .	3	4	2	17	7	3	1	37
Core-trimming flakes . . . . .	..	2	2	2	2	..	..	8
Trimmed flakes . . . . .	3	12	6	3	3	2	1	30
Flakes . . . . .	65	112	158	230	93	72	28	758
Calcined flints . . . . .	4	14	7	15	9	5	4	58
Burnt flints . . . . .	..	4	2	4	2	..	..	12

It is greatly to be regretted that our visits to this pit were necessarily very infrequent and consequently our supervision very slight, and, further, that no one was found to keep a watchful eye on it during the removal of the top-soil and sand for commercial purposes.

At our next visit a month later (January 1937) we found that the ground had been cut back some 6 or 8 ft., and that the section of what we had thought might be a double pit was more clearly marked. Its mouth was 16½ ft. wide under about 2 ft. of top-soil, the bottom 10 ft. wide, and 7 ft. to 7 ft. 4 in. below the turf. The bottom was peculiar in that it was V-shaped at each side with a ridge rising 18 in. in the middle. The more we examined the section the less it looked like that of a double pit, and we came to the conclusion that it must be a ditch or two parallel ditches. Though 6 or 8 ft. had been cut back the section remained the same as a month before, and on examining the west face of the island of sand,

9 yards away, we found a continuation of it in the disturbed soil among the roots of the elms. Moreover, the bottom of the cutting was quite unlike the broad concave flooring of pits hitherto found, and the contents (11 microliths only to 758 flakes) quite unlike also.

It is indeed unfortunate that the short winter days prevented our carrying our inquiry farther, and that it was not possible to revisit the site for some months. Mr. Davis tells us that during the subsequent and almost complete removal of the remains of the island he saw the section of two more pits, one 12 ft. from Dr. Clark's Pit I, and the other a like distance from our ditch section. In one of them he noted two hearths, one 5 ft. 3 in. below the turf, and the other 2 ft. 3 in. lower down, but did not see any pottery. The sand in these hearths was blackened by firing, but was otherwise fairly pure.

This island site was the highest spot on the low hill now being rapidly removed, and it seems clear that Mesolithic man concentrated a number of his dwellings and workshop pits there. It would appear that one or more ditches were subsequently dug across the hill-top by Late Bronze Age folk. This last seems a necessary deduction to account for the presence of bucket-urn pottery spread out in the fourth spit. It is a fact, however, worthy of note that although typical flakes were found distributed in each layer of the filling, nearly a third of the whole number, and almost half of the cores, were found in the same layer as the pottery. This seems to suggest that the users of the pottery may have also been responsible for the flint working—and yet this latter is definitely of Mesolithic facies. Can it be that we are dealing here with a community that started in the Tardenoisean era, and lasted as in a backwater throughout the Neolithic and Bronze Ages? The evidence as it stands is too slender to allow us to do more than raise the question; a distinct community living in 'the bush' seems to be not inherently improbable.

From the dumps of top-soil removed from these pits and ditch and their immediate neighbourhood were subsequently recovered: 2 tranchet axes and 3 broken

specimens, 5 axe-sharpening flakes, 22 microliths, 8 points with bulbs, 3 microburins, 1 petit tranchet arrow-head, 2 saws, 10 convex, 7 concave, 9 square-ended, 1 small-ended and 1 double-ended scrapers, a quartzite rubbing-stone, and a variety of cores, core-sharpening flakes, borers, and flakes showing various degrees of trimming.