

PROCEEDINGS
OF THE
CAMBRIDGE ANTIQUARIAN
SOCIETY

(INCORPORATING THE CAMBS & HUNTS ARCHAEOLOGICAL SOCIETY)



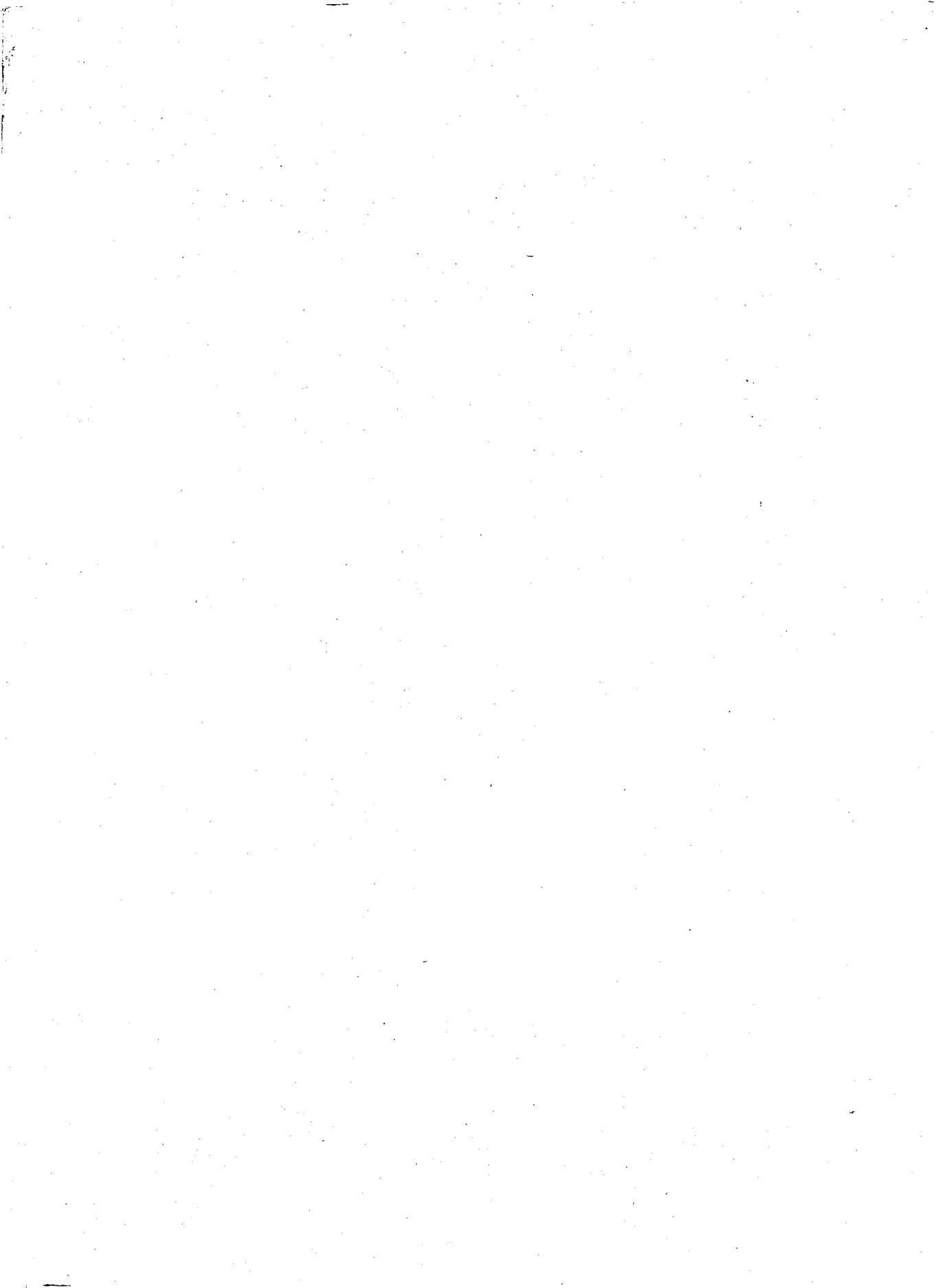
VOLUME LVIII

JANUARY 1965 TO DECEMBER 1965

CAMBRIDGE
DEIGHTON BELL

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ALDWICK, BARLEY: RECENT WORK AT THE IRON AGE SITE

M. D. CRA'STER

SINCE the first report was published in these *Proceedings*,¹ some further work has been done on this site, and on the material excavated from it. Samples of charcoal found in the pits during the 1959 and 1961 excavations have been identified by the Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew (see Appendix III). All are of species still common in the area.

THE 1961 SITE

In the spring of 1961 the area immediately south-west of that surveyed in 1959 with the proton-magnetometer was cleared of topsoil by bulldozer (Fig. 1). There were revealed two groups of pits, separated by a small, shallow runnel (Fig. 2).

Pits 133-41 were similar in character to those excavated in 1959, circular with flat bottoms; they contained the same mixture of fills, ranging from chalk to black, ashy earth, with broken pots and discarded food bones (Fig. 3). In Pit 134 substantial sherds of two pots were found neatly stacked inside each other, as if carried out in a pile by the Iron Age housewife after the smash, and placed in the half-filled rubbish pit.

Pits 142-49 were rather more irregular in shape and one or two had not been properly flattened out at the bottom. Whether these were ever in fact used for corn storage it is impossible to tell, but they contained the usual mixture of rubbish. Pit 144 had a layer of black ash near the bottom, just above the pile of loose chalk which formed its bottom layer; the remarkable thing was that the top of the chalk layer contained a cow's jawbone firmly embedded in its upper surface. Where this bone had come in contact with the layer of ash above, it had been quite severely burnt. Thus the ash must either have been burnt *in situ*, or at least have been extremely hot when put into the pit. This case is comparable with that of Pit 67, in the 1959 site, which also contained a layer of ash, apparently burnt in the pit.²

The whole of the western half of the cleared space was occupied by a large area of brown earth, paler and harder than that in the pits; this stretched further westwards, but there was not time to discover its full extent. Five trenches were dug across this area (Fig. 4), and it turned out to be a 'working hollow', as described by Dr Bersu at Little Woodbury,³ with intersecting pits and hollows cutting each other

¹ *Proc. C.A.S.* LIV (1961), pp. 22-46.

² *Ibid.* p. 31.

³ *Proc. Prehist. Soc.* VI (1940).

at different levels. The fill was very homogeneous and it was almost impossible to tell which parts of the hollow had come first in the sequence. A second working hollow, exactly similar in character, but much smaller, was found near the runnel at the south-east corner of the excavation area (Pit 150).

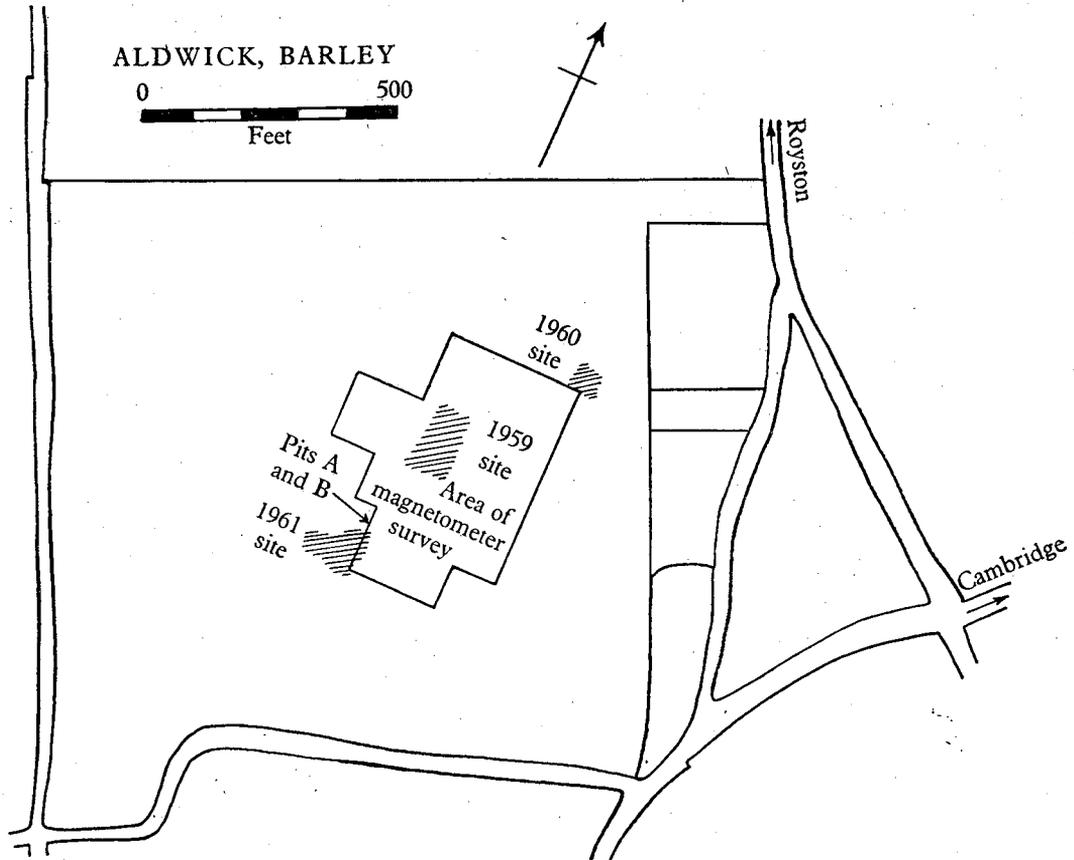


Fig. 1.

Near the northern edge of the big working hollow, only 1 ft. below the stripped surface, the skeletons of two children, aged about 7 and 9, were found (*a* and *b* on plan, Fig. 2). The bones were not all there, and parts of the skeletons had been extensively burnt, but apparently not *in situ* (see Appendix I). They were not in any sort of grave, but just formed part of the fill of the working hollow at this point. This, and their incompleteness, makes them comparable to some of the human skeletons found in the pits at Wandlebury.¹

An attempt was made, with the help of the Department of Quaternary Research at Cambridge, to take pollen samples from the pit fillings, in the hope that it would

¹ *Proc. C.A.S. L* (1957), p. 14.

be possible to work out at what time of year the pits were open, when they were filled with earth and rubbish, and how long this took. Unfortunately, the presence of lime in large quantities had destroyed all remaining pollen. A considerable

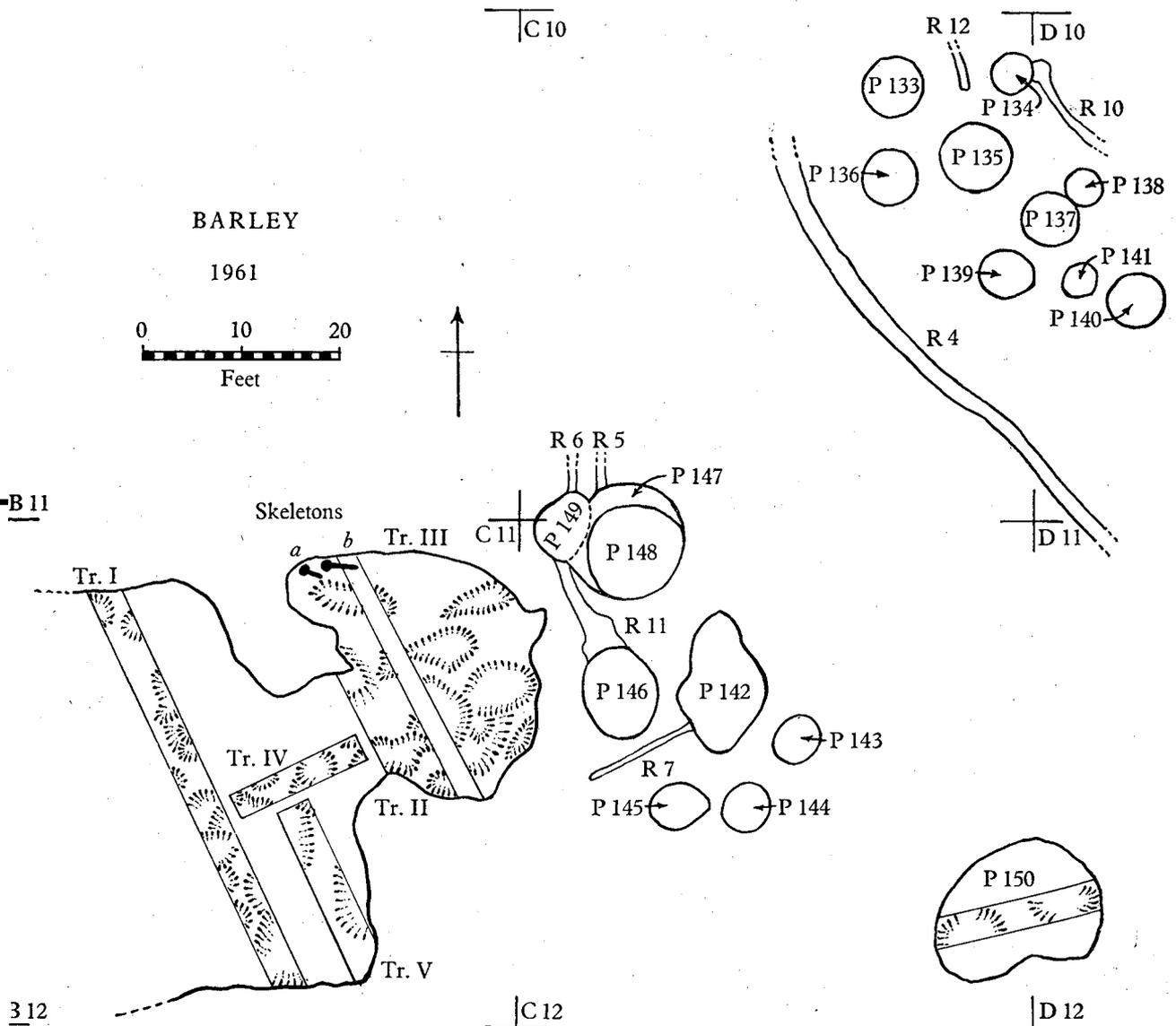


Fig. 2.

quantity of weed seeds were found, however, which might have fulfilled a similar purpose; but since nearly all were those of common weeds of cultivation, which seed continuously throughout the summer, it is doubtful whether they will be of much

use (see Appendix II). A careful watch was kept for any signs of wattle or basket linings to the pits, but none could be seen.

The pottery found during this excavation was exactly similar in style and content to that found in the 1959 and 1960 excavations.¹ It was studied with care for any indication of alterations which might have been caused by a gradual movement of

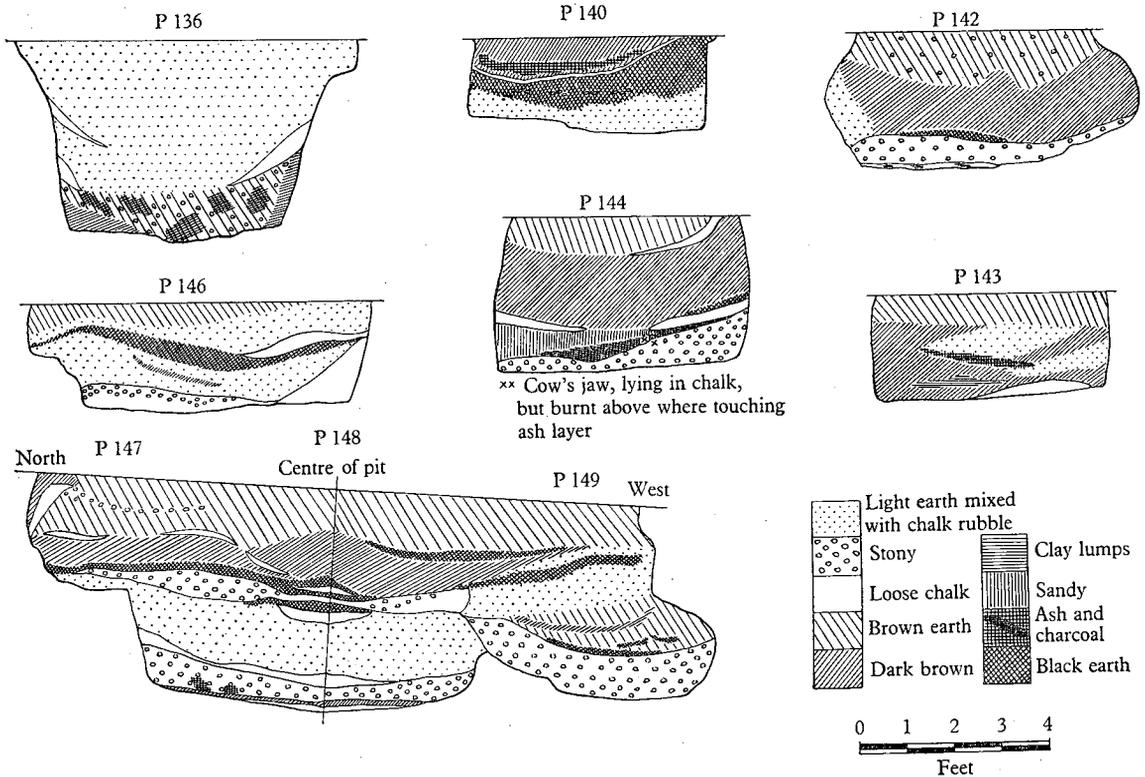


Fig. 3.

inhabitants from one part of the settlement to another during the period of its occupation, but there was nothing to be found. The pottery from all three seasons' work was also checked for grain impressions, and several were discovered. These included emmer wheat, spelt (perhaps), barley (probably of the six-row form), and oats (both *Avena sativa* and the wild *Avena fatua*). A more detailed note on these has been written by Mrs J. Renfrew, comparing them with grain impressions from the Wandlebury pottery (see Appendix IV).

¹ *Proc. C.A.S.* LIV (1961), pp. 36-45.

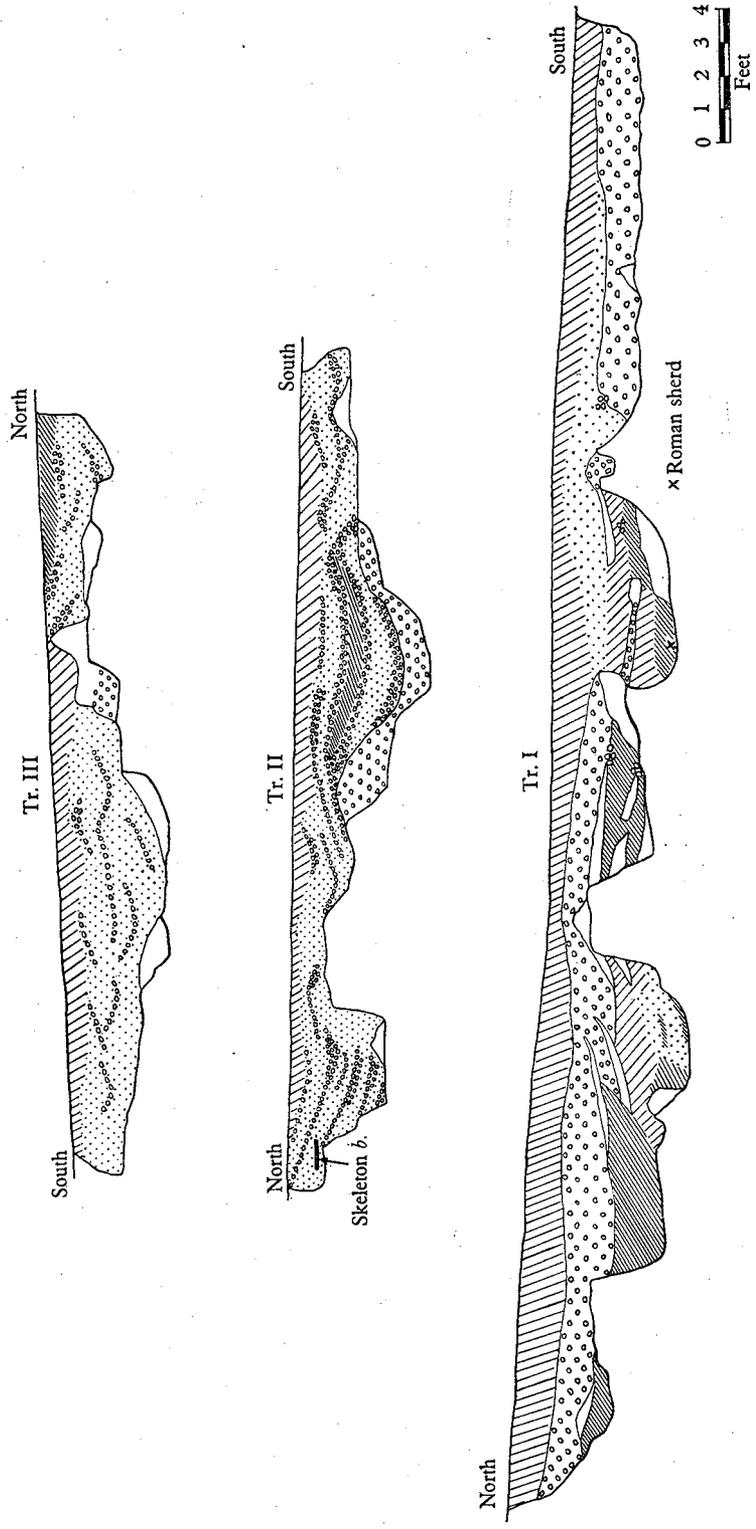
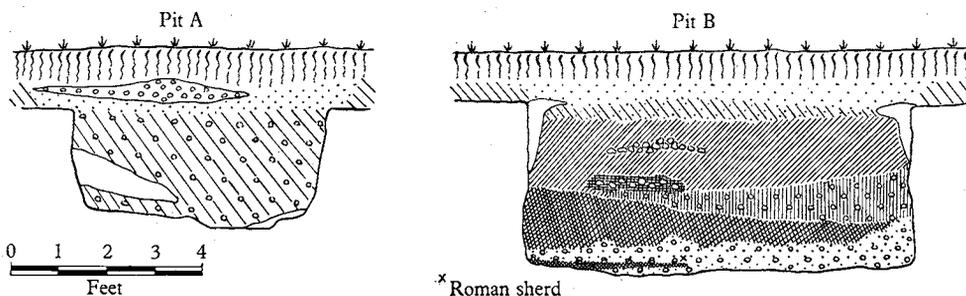


Fig. 4.

PIT B

In 1962 two large pits were located, on the edge of the original magnetometer survey area (A and B on Fig. 1). Pit A was large, irregular, and filled with virtually sterile chalk (Fig. 5). Pit B was 8 ft. across, 5 ft. deep and of regular shape (Pl. VI). It was excavated in quadrants, layer by layer, and the finds from each layer kept separate; this was in order to check that the pits had really been filled artificially and rapidly, within the space of a few months or, more probably, weeks. It also provided an opportunity for excavating two pits from modern surface level, without prior stripping of the topsoil.



* Roman sherd

Fig. 5.

Nothing was found to suggest that the layers were not formed by deliberate tipping of rubbish, and the lie of the surface of several showed that they had not been left exposed long enough to settle in their natural angle of rest. Additional confirmation of the rapidity with which Pit B was filled came from two sherds which fitted neatly together, found, one in the top layer of fill, the other in the black layer near the bottom of the pit.

Further work is being done, both on the site and in connection with the detailed study of the animal bones, which it is hoped to publish soon.¹ It only remains for me to thank once again all those who have helped me, and in particular Mr Wilkerson, for his continued interest and co-operation.

APPENDIX I

HUMAN SKELETAL REMAINS

C. B. DENSTON

Duckworth Laboratory of Physical Anthropology

BARLEY, TRENCH II

(a) Bones represented (Eu. I. 3. 224):

Pelvis, femur, humerus, radius, ulna, fibula, clavicle, ribs, vertebrae and cranium (fragmentary).

¹ For a preliminary note on the animal bones, see 'Sheep in the Iron Age: a Method of Study', *Proc. Prehist. Soc.* xxx (1964), pp. 423-6.

The cranial fragments number about 22, all of parietal and frontal bones; 16 show signs of burning.

The only complete post-cranial bones are a few vertebrae, the others being only shafts and fragments.

Six of the long bones show signs of burning:

- right humerus shaft, completely burnt;
- left humerus shaft, slightly burnt at the distal end;
- left ulna shaft, burnt at the proximal end;
- left radius shaft, slightly burnt at the (incomplete) proximal end;
- right femur shaft, slightly burnt at the proximal end;
- right fibula shaft, burnt at the proximal end.

Four long bone fragments, six fragments of ribs, and the body of the first vertebra of the sacrum also showed slight traces of burning.

The sex of the skeleton is unidentifiable, but the age would seem to be approximately 8 to 9 years.

With these remains was found another right humerus shaft, which showed a small area of burning in the middle of the shaft. This bone probably belongs to skeleton *b* (Eu. 1. 3. 223).

(*b*) Bones represented (Eu. 1. 3. 223):

A nearly complete skull, pelvis, vertebrae, ribs, scapula and clavicle, and one epiphysis of a femur head.

Sex: unidentifiable. Age: 7 to 8 years.

The skull had been broken during excavation, but is now restored; it is complete, except for the left zygomatic bone and a few very small fragments of the vault.

The first upper deciduous molar tooth of the right side of the maxilla has a large carie on the distal surface of the crown; all the other teeth are sound. The two permanent upper incisors and the four lower incisors, which are in process of erupting, show slight to medium evidence of enamel hypoplasia.

The post-cranial bones are rather fragmentary, with no obvious signs of disease or injury.

APPENDIX II

WEED SEEDS

C. A. LAMBERT

Department of Quaternary Research, School of Botany

The macroscopic remains listed below were sieved from the infilling of Iron Age storage pits at Aldwick, Barley, dug out of the chalk. The samples come from both the 1959 and the 1961 excavation sites, and were as far as possible segregated from any modern topsoil.

In Pit 147 the samples were taken from 4 ft. 6 in. below the present surface. On the other hand, several seeds were carbonized, and must therefore date from the original filling of the pits.

The fruits and seeds are of interest, since *Hyoscyamus niger* and *Lithospermum arvense* have not hitherto been recorded from pre-Roman deposits; it would therefore be useful to know to which part of the Iron Age this site belongs.

Lithospermum arvense is a characteristic plant of arable fields on chalk; *Fumaria officinalis* is common on cultivated ground on lighter soils, especially in East Anglia. With the exception of *Prunus padus*, the other plants represented here are generally associated with cultivation.

All these plants would be fruiting during the summer months, especially during the late summer and early autumn.

Ditch 1	<i>Atriplex hastata</i>	—	Common Orach
	<i>A. cf. patula</i>	—	
Pit 29 }	<i>Atriplex cf. patula</i>	11 seeds	—
Pit 30 }	<i>Fumaria cf. officinalis</i>	3 seeds	Fumitory
	<i>Lithospermum arvense</i>	26 nutlets	Corn Gromwell
	<i>Polygonum aviculare</i>	9 fruits	Knotgrass
	<i>Prunus padus</i>	1 fruit stone	Bird cherry
	Fragments of <i>cf. Triticum</i> and <i>Hordeum</i> grains (common); also other cereal grains or wild grass caryopses; all carbonized.		
Pit 67	<i>Atriplex hastata</i> or <i>patula</i>	4 seeds	—
(ash	<i>Chenopodium cf. album</i>	1 seed	Fat-hen
layer)	<i>Fumaria officinalis</i>	1 seed	—
	<i>Galium</i> spp.	2 fruits	Bedstraw
	<i>Lithospermum arvense</i>	Abundant nutlets	—
	<i>Polygonum convolvulus</i>	1 fruit	Persicaria
	<i>P. cf. aviculare</i>	9 fruits	—
	<i>Rumex</i> sp.	1 nutlet	Dock or Sorrel
	<i>Sherardia arvensis</i>	1 fruit	Field Madder
	<i>Veronica hederifolia</i>	2 seeds	Speedwell
	Cerealia and Gramineae	16 grains and caryopses	
Pit 133	<i>Atriplex cf. patula</i>	1 seed	—
	<i>Fumaria officinalis</i>	4 seeds	—
	<i>Veronica hederifolia</i>	2 seeds	—
Pit 134	<i>Fumaria officinalis</i>	4 seeds	—
Pit 137	<i>Atriplex hastata</i> or <i>patula</i>	3 seeds	—
	<i>Prunus cf. padus</i>	1 fruit stone (fragmentary)	
Pit 147	<i>Aethusa cynapium</i>	1 fruit	Fool's Parsley
	<i>Atriplex cf. patula</i>	1 seed	—
	<i>Fumaria officinalis</i>	Over 50 seeds (1 germinated)	
	<i>Veronica hederifolia</i>	1 seed	—
Pit 148	<i>Atriplex hastata</i> or <i>patula</i>	2 seeds	—
	<i>Fumaria officinalis</i>	8 seeds	—
	<i>Veronica hederifolia</i>	1 seed	—
	Cerealia	1 grain	—
Pit 149	<i>Hyoscyamus niger</i>	—	Henbane, carbonized
	<i>Lithospermum arvense</i>	—	—
	<i>Papaver cf. rhoeas</i>	—	Field Poppy, carbonized
	<i>Torilis nodosa</i>	—	Hedge Parsley, carbonized
	Cerealia and Gramineae		

In addition to the seeds, small fragments of charcoal, *Mollusca* and the *Diptera* pupae were found. Amongst the *Mollusca* were 9 shells of *Caecilianella acicula*, the agate snail, which burrows into graves or anywhere that decaying meat or bones are accessible. In view of the large quantity of discarded food bones in the filling of the pits at Barley, their presence is not surprising.

APPENDIX III
CHARCOAL SAMPLES

*Report by members of the staff of the Jodrell Laboratory,
Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew*

Some of the material from the pits of the Iron age settlement, Aldwick, Barley, Herts., has been identified as nearly as possible, and the findings are set out below.

The samples examined were taken at random from amongst those submitted; furthermore, they represent between one third and a half of those sent. In the circumstances, it seems that the material examined represents a sound statistical sample of the whole.

The material sent consisted of all recognizable pieces of charcoal, found in pits from the 1959, 1960 and 1961 excavation sites. The charcoal samples identified came from the following pits in the 1959 site: 23, 25, 27, 29, 31, 35, 36, 39, 41, 49, 67, 68, 71, 87, and from Pit 149 in the 1961 site.

The number of different kinds of charcoal is quite small, and they are all derived from species which are presumably still quite common in the area.

<i>Prunus</i> sp. (various)	{ (Sloe) (Gean)	<i>Prunus spinosa</i>	Pits
			25
		<i>Prunus avium</i>	27
			29
		<i>Prunus avium</i>	31
			35
			36
			39
			41
			49
			68
			71
			87
<i>Quercus</i> sp.	(Oak)		23
			27
			29
			39
			68
			87
			149
			149
<i>Fraxinus excelsior</i>	(Ash)		27
			29
			36
			39
			67
			67
<i>Crataegus</i> sp.	(Hawthorn)		27
			35
<i>Malus</i> (? <i>sylvestris</i>)	(Crab apple)		29
			35
<i>Ulex</i> sp.	(Gorse)		35
			49
<i>Rhamnus cathartica</i>	(Common Buckthorn)		71
<i>Sambucus nigra</i>	(Elder)		25

APPENDIX IV
GRAIN IMPRESSIONS FROM THE IRON AGE SITES
OF WANDLEBURY AND BARLEY

JANE RENFREW

Aldwick, Barley, Hertfordshire:¹

During a recent examination of sherds from this settlement site, excavated in 1959-62, the following grain impressions were discovered.

Wheat. Four impressions; two of the dorsal view, one of the ventral view, and one of the lateral view, this last being enclosed in strongly nerved glumes.

Barley. Three impressions of hulled barley—a dorsal, a ventral, and a lateral view; all are of average size for the species.

Oats. Three impressions; one is possibly of *Avena fatua* (Wild Oat)—a ventral view. The other two are both of lateral views of naked grains, possibly of *Avena sativa*.

Wandlebury, Cambridgeshire:²

Sherds excavated in 1956 from the settlement inside the hill-fort were examined, and a few grain impressions were found.

Wheat. One impression, showing a distinct ventral crease and rounded dorsal side.

Barley. One impression of the dorsal view of hulled barley, of medium size.

Oats. Three impressions of oats, probably all *Avena sativa*. One shows the remains of the lemma on the dorsal side and the wide ventral crease, at the base of which are the remains of a rachilla. The other two are impressions of naked grains, one of the ventral view, the other viewed from the side.

The following measurements were obtained from the impressions:

		Length (mm.)	Breadth (mm.)	Thickness (mm.)
Wheat	(Aldwick)	4.95	2.25	—
		—	—	2.7
		6.3	2.7	—
Barley	(Wandlebury)	5.4	3.15	—
		5.58	2.48	—
		6.75	3.33	—
Barley	(Aldwick)	6.3	2.7	—
		7.2	2.34	—
		7.65	2.7	—
Oats	(Wandlebury)	5.58	2.25	—
		6.48	—	1.98
		4.95	—	1.8
Oats	(Aldwick)	5.4	1.8	—
		5.85	2.34	—
		5.58	—	2.25
		—	—	—

The wheat represented seems to be mainly Emmer, but it is noticeably smaller than the dimensions given by Dr Hans Helback for the Neolithic impressions from Windmill Hill.³ The glumed

¹ *Proc. C.A.S. L* (1957), pp. 1-28.

³ Hans Helback, *Proc. Prehist. Soc.* XVIII (1952), p. 203.

² *Ibid.* LIV (1961), pp. 22-46.

impression from Aldwick, Barley, might, on account of the strongly nerved glume, be attributed to spelt, although the diagnostic S-shaped glume apex is missing.¹ The barley in this collection is all hulled, and is probably of the six-row form, although there are not enough ventral views to be sure of this. The lengths fall roughly into the measurements Helbaek gives for the Late Bronze Age hulled barley,² although some are a little shorter; the breadths correspond very closely. Oats first appear in Britain in the Early Iron Age,³ and it is difficult to know from these few impressions whether it was cultivated as a separate crop, or grown together with Emmer. It is thought to have originated as a weed in wheat fields, and later to have been deliberately cultivated on account of its preference for cool, damp climates. The presence of a possible grain of the wild *Avena fatua* might suggest it was grown together with Emmer.

¹ Jessen and Helbaek, *Cereals in Great Britain* (Copenhagen, 1944), p. 38.

² Helbaek, *Proc. Prehist. Soc. loc. cit.* p. 206.

³ Jessen and Helbaek, *op. cit.* p. 48.

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