

STOKE CLUMP, HOLLINGBURY AND THE EARLY PRE-ROMAN IRON AGE IN SUSSEX

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The purpose of this paper is to put on record two groups of early pre-Roman Iron Age pottery from Sussex and to offer some discussion of their cultural context.

Stoke Clump (Grid ref. SU 833094)

Stoke Clump, three miles north-west of Chichester, is a prominent cluster of trees growing on top of a chalk ridge extending south from the main mass of Bow Hill. For a number of years the Rev. W. A. Shaw, rector of West Stoke, collected pottery from the neighbourhood. On his death his collection was passed by his son, the Rev. Cuthbert Shaw, to Professor S. S. Frere, who eventually invited the present writer to publish it.

Apart from a few earlier sherds,¹ all of the pottery from Stoke Clump belongs to an early phase of the Iron Age and appears to form a uniform cultural group. Unfortunately it is not possible to say how the material was amassed or from precisely which area it was obtained, but it is tolerably certain that most of it came from the extensive Iron Age site known to lie in the field immediately east of the Clump, where ploughing frequently brings to light quantities of Iron Age material.² One small group of sherds, somewhat larger and less weathered than the others, are described as coming from "the entrenchment" or "the entrenchment near the tumulus," which must be the earthwork, still clearly visible, crossing the ridge to the west of the Clump. The fresh nature of these sherds and their recorded provenance suggest that they were recovered by excavation, and furthermore if they were actually found in the body of the earthwork it must imply that it was constructed in the Iron Age or later.

The Shaw collection also contains a few finds from other localities, these include: sherds belonging to the saucepan pot continuum from "below Bow Hill towards first gully," "Stoke West Down" and "field below hanger, Stoke Down"; a lug handle from "Bow Hill, near tumuli" and a small Bronze Age vessel from "tumulus on Bow Hill." Only the group from Stoke Clump is illustrated here (figs. 1 and 2), but the entire collection has been deposited in the Barbican House Museum, Lewes, where other objects from the Shaw collection are already housed.

¹ These include a fragment of a beaker and a small late Neolithic sherd.

² *Sussex Notes and Queries*, XIV, 280.

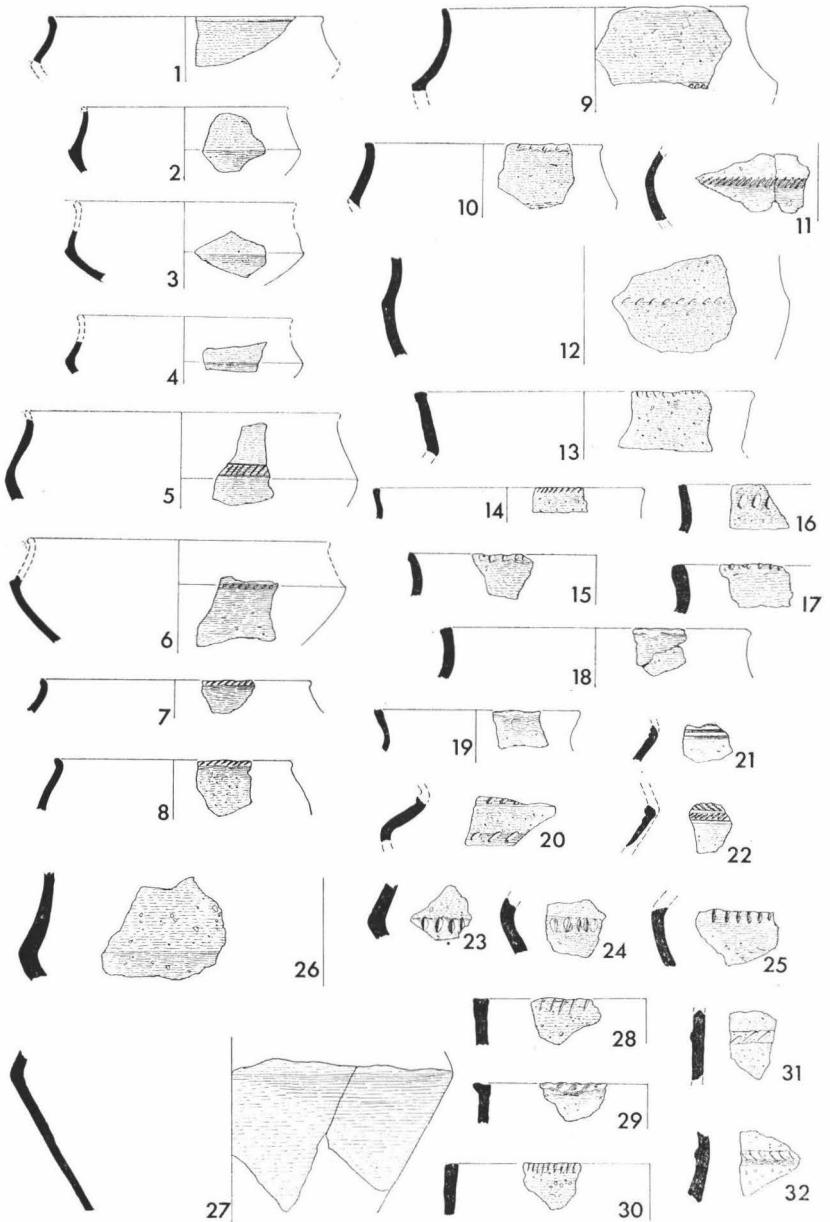


Fig. 1
Pottery from Stoke Clump

Description of the pottery (figs. 1 and 2)

1-6. Bipartite bowls with well-defined shoulder, and, in some cases, beaded rims. The ware is of a fine sandy fabric with some finely-crushed flint grit tempering; it is fired to a reddish or greyish brown. No. 5 is decorated with incised lines above the shoulder, No. 6 with stabs on the shoulder.

7-12. Bipartite bowls similar in form to the above but rather coarser in fabric with coarser flint grit tempering and a less smooth finish. The rim-tops and the shoulders are frequently decorated with rows of stabs.

13-19. Jars with flared rims and probably with angled shoulders. The exact form varies and the rim-top may be decorated. The ware is coarse with medium to large flint grit tempering and is fired to greyish-brown in colour.

20-22. The shoulders of jars similar to the above; 20 and 22 have cordons at the junction of the neck and rim, 21 is grooved at this point. Nos. 21 and 22 are in a finer fabric.

23-25. Shoulders of jars probably of a type similar to Nos. 13-22. The ware is coarse and fired grey-brown. There are six other sherds similar to these, not illustrated.

26-27. Large shouldered jars. No. 26 is in a red-brown flint-gritted ware, No. 27 is a finer grey-brown burnished ware.

28-32. Straight-sided vessels with decorated rim-tops and slashed cordons around the body. The ware is coarse, flint-gritted and fired red-brown. There are five other sherds similar to Nos. 31 and 32.

33-35. Jars with rounded shoulders and beaded rims in coarse flint-gritted grey-brown ware.

36. Jar with upstanding rim in red-brown sandy ware with medium-sized flint grits. The vessel is decorated with incised lines on the body.

37-38. Fragments of jars in dark grey gritty ware decorated with incised lines and dots.

39-55. Decorated sherds belonging to several types of vessels. The exact forms cannot be precisely defined, although it is clear that some of them are from bipartite shouldered bowls. All are in a red-to-grey gritty ware. No. 39 appears to be part of a furrowed bowl; No. 40 is decorated with a stroke-filled triangle; the remainder are ornamented with a combination of lines and areas filled with dot-like impressions.

Of the vessels illustrated, Nos. 6, 7, 8, 11, 27, 33, 37 and 51 were said to have been found in the "earthwork" together with a splinter of a long bone polished and pointed for use. The remainder are merely recorded to have come from "Stoke Down".

The majority of the pottery falls into the Caburn I class, and, as a comparison with fig. 3 will show, all of the major types and forms of decoration typical of Caburn I are represented. Two of

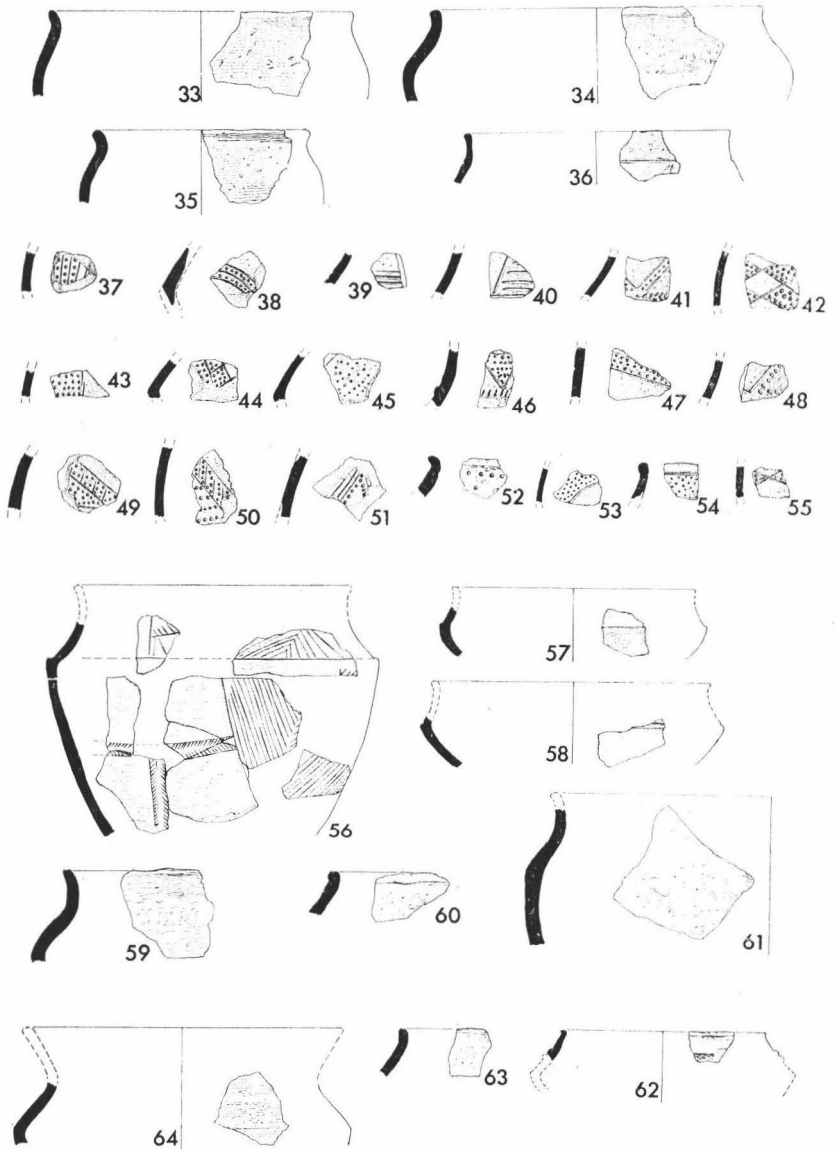


Fig. 2

Pottery from Stoke Clump, nos. 33-55, and Hollingbury, nos. 56-62

the forms, however, deserve further notice: the round-shouldered jars or bowls with beaded rims (Nos. 33-35) and the decorated sherds (Nos. 37-55). The former group, if they can be regarded as contemporary with the remainder, suggests that we are dealing with a typologically developed stage which might be a natural development from the bipartite shouldered bowls. It should be stressed, however, that although this view is reasonable, typological arguments of this kind can be extremely misleading and indeed it could be argued that the form simply represents a contemporary variant.

The point-impressed sherds of the second group are otherwise unknown in Sussex, but this method of decoration is relatively common in the early Wessex and Dorset groups.¹ Among the material from the best-known of these, All Cannings Cross, all of the basic Stoke Clump motifs are represented, and there can be little doubt that close cultural connections existed between the two areas. Stoke Clump can therefore best be regarded as lying in the area of overlap between the early Wessex-Dorset Iron Age province and its contemporary Sussex variant, the Caburn I group. That Stoke Clump appears on a distribution map to be isolated from the Wessex-Dorset group is due to the virtual absence of contemporary material from the area covered by the Eocene rocks of the Hampshire Basin and from the Hampshire Downs east of Winchester. More excavation, particularly in the area between Chichester and Winchester, will probably one day fill the gap.

Hollingbury (Grid ref. TQ 322079)

Hollingbury, a well-known hill fort north of Brighton, has yielded pottery on two separate occasions, first in 1908 when a pit was discovered during the construction of a golf-course,² and the second in 1931 when the Brighton and Hove Archaeological Club carried out a series of trial excavations.³ On both occasions the only distinctive ware recovered was of Caburn I type.

The 1908 pit measured 6ft. by 4ft. across and 4ft. deep and lay in the south-west corner of the fort. It yielded, besides pottery, fragments of a quern, flint flakes and utilised pebbles. Since the pottery has never been fully published and is of some significance, it is illustrated here⁴ (fig. 2, 56-61).

56. Bowl or jar in a fine, dark grey-brown sandy ware. The surface is smooth and burnished and is copiously decorated with

¹ Pottery of this early type is found frequently in Dorset, Wiltshire and Hampshire, and its distribution extends into Somerset, Berkshire and Surrey.

² H. S. Toms, 'Notes on a Survey of Hollingbury Camp' in *Brighton and Hove Archaeologist*, I (1914), 17-19.

³ E. C. Curwen, 'Excavations at Hollingbury Camp, Sussex,' in *Antiq. Journ.* XII (1932), 1-16.

⁴ The only previous illustration was a photograph published in the original report, *op. cit.* Pl. III. It was not made clear at that time that all of the sherds belonged to one pot.

incised patterns. The form and ware of the vessel are well within the Caburn I range.¹ It is known that incised decoration occurs at the Caburn and at Stoke Clump, but what is unusual in this example is that the decoration extends to the area below the shoulder. This feature is unique in Sussex and is hard to parallel elsewhere in the country, except on certain East Anglian wares of slightly different form. It would be wrong, however, to emphasise the uniqueness of this form of decoration when so little is known of contemporary Sussex groups.

57. Bowl in grey sandy ware.

58. Bowl in black sandy ware, decorated above the shoulder with a horizontal groove.

Both Nos. 57 and 58 are quite typical of the Caburn I bowls.

59. Jar in smooth coarse red ware; diameter unknown.

60. Jar in very coarse grey gritty ware; diameter unknown.

61. Jar in coarse flint-gritted ware.

The three other sherds (Nos. 62-4) illustrated here in fig. 2 were found during the 1931 excavation and have not previously been illustrated.

62. Bowl in smooth grey ware with some grits. From the palisade trench. A very similar example has been found at the Caburn, e.g. fig. 3, no. 2.

63. Bowl in dark brown sandy ware with some fine flint grits. From the interior of the fort.

64. Jar in fine red-brown sandy ware with some flint grits. From the interior of the fort.

A small quantity of sherds were found when the area inside the fort was trenched, most of it was very fragmentary; in addition to those mentioned above the collection included a bowl similar to No. 63 and two cordoned sherds from bowls or jars.

It is evident, therefore, that the only pottery so far recovered from Hollingbury fits within the range of types present in the Caburn I group. That nothing of later date was recovered shows that the main occupation lay within this period.

Other Caburn I pottery from Sussex

For the sake of completeness it has been thought desirable to illustrate a selection of Caburn I ware found on other Sussex sites. Nos. 1-8 on fig. 3 are from the Caburn itself and have already been published—they are illustrated here again simply to serve as a basic type-series for the assemblage. The remainder of the vessels, Nos. 9-15, from the Trundle, Castle Hill, Thundersbarrow and Kingston Buci, are either not well-known or have not been previously illustrated. The illustrations by no means cover all of

¹ In the illustration it is reconstructed with a simple beaded rim. This seems reasonable, but it should be remarked that it is not impossible for the vessel to have had a flared rim. The exact angle of the sherds constituting the lower part of the body is not easy to determine.

the available material of this period from Sussex, but they do indicate the wide distribution of the most diagnostic forms.

1. Caburn: *Sussex Archaeological Collections*,¹ 80, p. 225, fig. E, 72. Fine grey ware with a haematite-coated outer surface.

2. Caburn: *S.A.C.*, 80, p. 225, fig. E, 74. Fine grey ware.

3. Caburn: *S.A.C.*, 80, p. 218, fig. B, 7. Red-brown ware with fine flint grits.

4. Caburn: *S.A.C.*, 80, p. 218, fig. A, 5. Fine-textured grey-brown ware.

5. Caburn: *S.A.C.*, 80, p. 225, fig. E, 73. Coarse red flint-gritted ware.

6. Caburn: *S.A.C.*, 80, p. 222, fig. D, 115. Fine grey sandy ware.

7. Caburn: *S.A.C.*, 80, p. 222, fig. D, 117. Fine grey sandy ware.

8. Caburn: *S.A.C.*, 80, p. 222, fig. D, 122. Grey-brown ware. Diameter and reconstruction of upper part uncertain.

9. Castle Hill, Newhaven: not previously illustrated. Smooth grey-brown ware with fine flint gritting.

10. Trundle: *S.A.C.*, 70, Pl. X, 96. Grey sandy ware.

11. Trundle: *S.A.C.*, 70, Pl. X, 97. Red gritty ware.

12. Trundle: not previously illustrated (?). Smooth buff-brown ware.

13. Kingston Bucy: *S.A.C.*, 72, p. 196, 22. Smooth grey ware.

14. Thundersbarrow: not previously illustrated. Brown sandy ware.

15. Thundersbarrow: not previously illustrated. Dark grey ware with fine flint grits.

16. Kingston Bucy: *S.A.C.*, 72, p. 194, 15. Grey sandy ware.

Discussion

The Iron Age finds from Stoke Clump and Hollingbury fall into the same class as the pottery known as Caburn I ware, which was illustrated and discussed in detail by Professor Hawkes in 1939.² At that time early pre-Roman Iron Age pottery from the rest of Sussex was ill-known and scarce. This fact, combined with the relatively large quantity recovered from the extensive excavation of the Caburn, gave the impression that the Caburn was exceptional and it was further suggested that the reason for this lay in the early isolation of East Sussex caused by a "Marnian invasion" into the central region. Isolation, it was argued, led to the intensive local development of traits laid down by a pre-Marnian expansion from Wessex, the result being the Caburn I assemblage. It is nearly 30 years since these views were first put forward. Now that much more

¹ Abbreviated hereafter to *S.A.C.*

² C. F. C. Hawkes, 'The Caburn Pottery and its Implications,' in *S.A.C.*, 80, 217-262, particularly pp. 217-230.

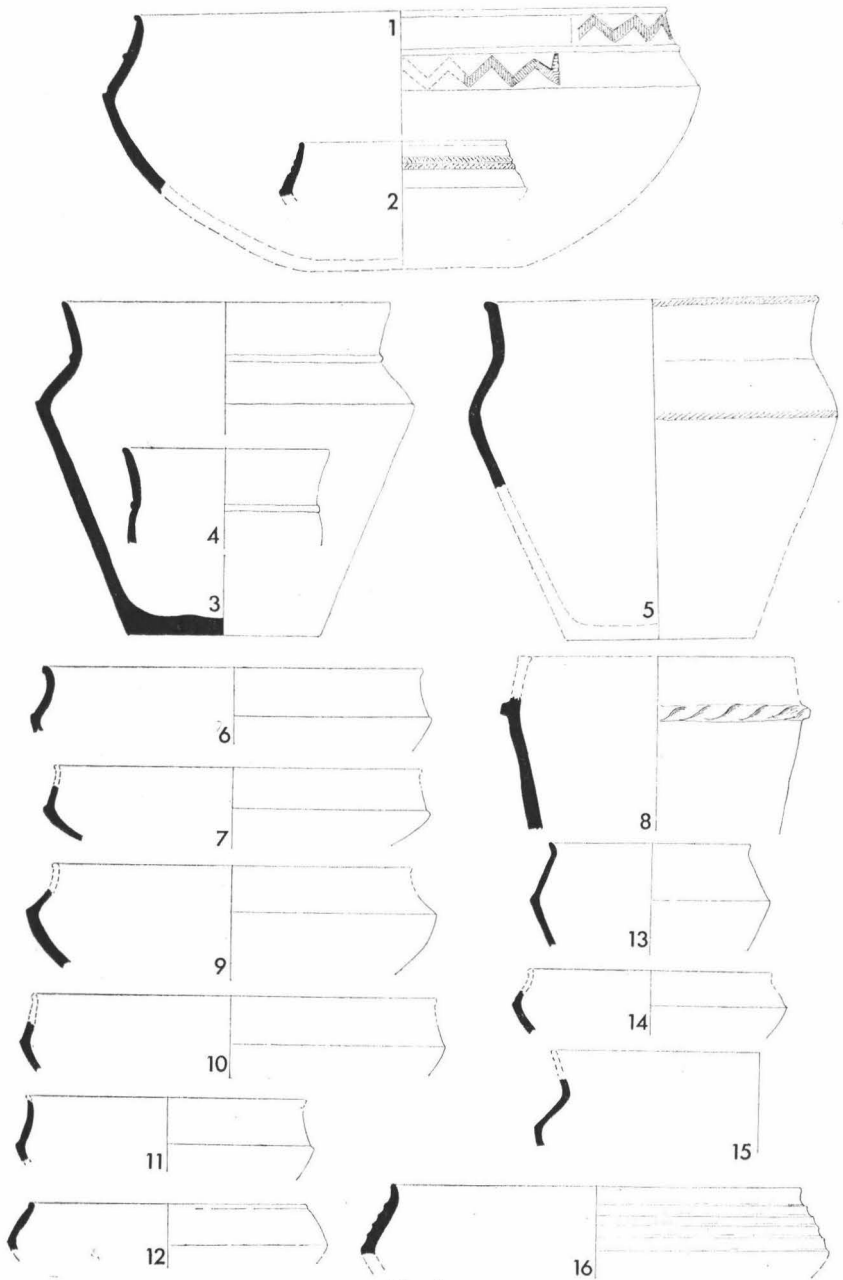


Fig. 3

Caburn I, pottery from various Sussex sites

is known of the Iron Age, particularly in the adjacent areas, it has been thought worthwhile to re-examine the evidence for this phase in Sussex.

It is first necessary to define what is meant by Caburn I ware. For the purpose of this discussion the Caburn I assemblage is taken to be composed of the following ceramic elements:

1. Bipartite bowl with a sharp shoulder, frequently emphasised with an offset. The bowl often has a beaded lip, which is sometimes nail-impressed, and the upper part of the body is occasionally decorated with incised or punched motifs or with single or paired cordons; the latter may be "cabled". The ware varies but is usually fine and may occasionally be coated with haematite.

2. Bipartite bowl with a sharp shoulder and a horizontally furrowed neck. Only two examples of this kind, from Kingston Buci and Stoke Clump, are at present known in Sussex.

3. Tripartite jar with a sharp shoulder and straight flared rim. The shoulder and neck angles are usually sharp, they are often decorated with cordons which may be doubled and/or cabled; frequently, however, the shoulder and the rim-top are ornamented with finger-nail impressions. The vessels are of two main qualities: fine hard fabrics, usually with cordons, and coarser gritty wares, usually with finger-nail decoration.

4. Jars with flared rims and slightly restricted necks bounded with a cordon. The ware is usually fine.

5. Straight-sided vessels with finger-impressed cordons below the rim and usually with finger-nail or "pie-crust" rims. The ware is usually coarse. A pot of this class occurs in pit 90 at the Caburn without the cordon, but with bosses on the body.

The above summary of the content of the ceramic assemblage is based (with the exception of No. 3) on a consideration of the Caburn site itself and includes all of the major types originally grouped under the heading of "Caburn I ware" in the 1939 reports. As defined, the assemblage occurs at Stoke Clump, Trundle,¹ Highdown,² Hollingbury, Thundersbarrow³ and probably also at Castle Hill⁴ and Kingston Buci.⁵ The sites are evenly spread over the whole of Sussex and allowing for the fact that the total excavation at each site (except the Caburn) was small, there is no reason to

¹ E. C. Curwen, 'Excavations at the Trundle, Goodwood, 1928,' in *S.A.C.*, 70, opposite page 53, particularly Nos. 91-8.

² A. E. Wilson, *Report on the Excavations on Highdown Hill, Sussex, August, 1939*. All of the pottery on figs 3-6 falls within the Caburn I range, when it is admitted that the Caburn I assemblage contains both fine and coarse ware.

³ E. C. Curwen, 'Excavations on Thundersbarrow Hill, Sussex,' in *Antiq. Journ.*, XIII (1933), 109-133. The Iron Age pottery was not published in the report.

⁴ C. F. C. Hawkes, 'The Pottery from Castle Hill, Newhaven,' in *S.A.C.*, 80, 269-292. See particularly figs. 2 and 3.

⁵ E. Curwen and C. F. C. Hawkes, 'Prehistoric Remains from Kingston Buci,' in *S.A.C.*, 72, 185-217, particularly figs. 15, 17, 18 and 19-24.

suppose that occupation and development in any one area was more intensive than in any other.

Fortunately, because of considerable archaeological activity in the county, it is possible to reconstruct something of the other aspects of the Caburn I culture. At the type site a settlement, consisting of at least two huts and a number of pits, was found to lie beneath the later hill fort; and below the counterscarp bank, sectioned in cutting XIII, a continuous palisade trench of early date was uncovered which may well have belonged to a defence surrounding the first settlement. Immediately inside the palisade was a cremation burial placed in a large jar buried in a pit and covered by a slight mound. It is quite likely that Stoke Clump, the Trundle and probably Kingston Buci and Castle Hill were at this time open settlements similar to Caburn I.

The nature of the early occupation at Hollingbury is rather more problematical. The largest group of Caburn I pottery came from the 1908 pit and was unassociated with the defence, but the excavations of 1931 did produce a sherd of a cordoned bowl from one of the holes for the posts revetting the rampart of the camp, and another from the palisade trench. Indeed, in the complete absence of later pottery it may well be that the main sub-rectangular Hollingbury fort with timber-cased rampart, berm, U-shaped ditch and simple entrance belongs to Caburn I times. The point is at present beyond proof. Further west, at the sub-rectangular fort of Highdown, which is closely similar in construction to Hollingbury in its first stage, the relatively abundant Caburn I ware found in the ditch fills is a strong indication that, in its early phase at least, the fort belongs to the Caburn I culture. Of the other sub-rectangular Sussex forts, Thundersbarrow and Harrow Hill, only Thundersbarrow has produced Caburn I pottery, but not demonstrably related to the construction of the defensive works. Harrow Hill, though structurally of the same type as Hollingbury and Highdown, was almost devoid of recognizable finds.¹

It is clear, therefore, that some of the Caburn I occupation sites were either completely open or were at best defended by a simple palisade. Furthermore, it is suggested here that the small sub-rectangular forts with timber-encased ramparts also belong to the Caburn I culture. Admittedly, stratigraphically the evidence is not strong, but from three out of the four the only recognisable assemblages are exclusively of Caburn I type. It would be wrong to be too dogmatic about this point, but in the present state of knowledge it is reasonable to interpret the available facts in this way.

Caburn I influence can now be seen to be more widespread in Sussex than was previously appreciated, but what of its origin and date? In 1939 Hawkes, while preferring a Wessex origin, remarked

¹ G. Holleyman, 'Harrow Hill Excavations, 1936,' in *S.A.C.*, 78, 230-251. For the Iron Age pottery, see 244.

that similar pottery had been found in the East of England. With increasing numbers of discoveries in this area since then attention has again been drawn to it, first by Kenyon¹ and later by Hodson.² Indeed, a survey of the available material, much of it unpublished, has led the present writer to support Hodson's suggestion that the coastal regions of England from Dorset to East Anglia were closely connected culturally and that the Caburn I assemblage is simply part of this wider continuum. The distribution pattern is certainly suggestive of marine contact and possibly even of coastal colonisation, but the details and origin of such a movement, if indeed it is as simple as this, have still to be worked out. To stress these coastal relationships is not to deny some contact with Wessex—in fact the absence of such contact would be surprising—but the evidence is such that we can no longer accept that Caburn I arose directly and solely as the result of a movement from the Salisbury Plain area.

The problems involved in dating the origins of this coastal group are considerable, but evidence from Staple Howe (Yorks.), and less certain associations from Minnis Bay (Kent), tentatively suggest an early date in the sixth-fifth century for the beginnings of some of the similar sites. This bracket would be quite acceptable for Sussex and indeed it is this period to which the sub-rectangular forts are usually assigned. The presence of coarse bucket-shaped vessels with body cordons (type 5 above) in pit 90 at the Caburn and elsewhere on Caburn I sites is also suggestive of an early date, since the form must be derived from the late Bronze Age tradition. If we can accept these early origins, there is no need to suppose that the culture quickly died out—in all probability it developed for a considerable period, perhaps even into the third century and during just such a time span contacts with Wessex could have occurred. There is no positive evidence for how long development continued. At the Caburn a thick turf-line between Caburn I and Caburn II and a total dissimilarity between the pottery of these two phases suggest a break, but for how long is unknown and will remain so until more evidence is available for this and subsequent phases of the Sussex Iron Age.

Acknowledgements

I would like to express my thanks to Professor S. S. Frere for offering to allow me to publish this interesting group of pottery from Stoke Clump, and for kindly reading the typescript of this article. My interest in the Iron Age was first encouraged some years ago by my friends, G. P. Burstow and G. A. Holleyman, with whom I have since enjoyed many happy discussions and from whom I have received much encouragement, not the least in the

¹ K. M. Kenyon, 'The Chronology of Iron Age A,' in *London Institute of Archaeology, Report No. 8*.

² F. R. Hodson, 'Reflections on "The ABC of the British Iron Age"', in *Antiquity*, XXXIV (1960), 318-9.

preparation of this paper. Finally, I would like to express my gratitude to the Committee and staff of the Brighton Museum for allowing me to study the Hollingbury pottery, and to Mr. N. E. S. Norris, curator of the Barbican House Museum, for making the county collection available to me on a number of occasions.