

# GARDEN HILL CAMP, HARTFIELD

By C. F. TEBBUTT, F.S.A.

Garden Hill<sup>1</sup> (TQ 444319) in Hartfield parish is a N.E. pointing spur of the high ground about Wych Cross, where it reaches 650ft. above sea level, the spur itself being about 550ft. It has a steep natural escarpment on the N., S., and E. sides, but a comparatively level approach from the W. On the S. side is an old quarry which once produced 'forest stone', but has not been worked within living memory. The subsoil is the Ashdown Sand. At the foot of the slope, at the S.W. corner, is a pond fed by a spring. The top of the hill is mainly flat, growing luxuriant bracken, but the sides are covered by trees, chiefly sweet chestnut, but including some very ancient yews.

Were the trees cleared the top would command views of both the North and South Downs, and probably of Dry Hill Camp, six miles away to the N. The Roman road between Wych Cross and Coleman's Hatch<sup>2</sup> runs about 700 yards to the N. Before the 17th century enclosures this area formed that part of Ashdown Forest known as Warren Lodge. At present most of it is part of the Pippingford Park Army Training Area.

Early in 1968 I was walking over the top of the hill and noticed what appeared to be a slight bank at the top of the escarpment on the N. side. I followed this and found that, with interruptions, it continued round the top of the hill, although in places it was very slight. There was, however, a convincing interned entrance on the N.E. side, and I found, in a trench dug by the army, pottery of Late Iron Age type.

Following my small excavations, described below, the Ministry of Public Buildings and Works were informed and the site scheduled as an Ancient Monument. On the Ministry's instruction it was fenced, placed out of bounds to troops, and notices to that effect were put up.

As the Ordnance Survey were unable to deal with the site for some time the earthwork was surveyed by E. W. Holden, F.S.A., in March 1969, and to him I am especially grateful. I am also grateful to N. E. S. Norris, F.S.A. for describing the pottery, to Martin Critchell for all the drawings, to Dr. D. B. Harden, F.S.A. for examining the glass, and Henry Cleere, F.S.A., the iron slag. Professor S. S. Frere, F.S.A., J. H. Money, F.S.A., and I. D. Margary, F.S.A., showed their interest and gave me good advice.

<sup>1</sup> Mr. I. D. Margary tells me that this is the old name for this hill, enquiries have not produced any present-day name.

<sup>2</sup> See I. D. Margary, *Sussex Notes & Queries*, vol. 26 (1964-7), p. 330.

## THE EARTHWORK

The shape of the earthwork can best be seen by reference to the plan (Fig. 1) prepared by E. W. Holden; it will be noted that, with the exception of the W. side, it was designed to follow the natural escarpment of Garden Hill. What now remains of artificial banks is slight, except along the N. and E. sides. This fact, added to the presence of trees and luxuriant bracken growth, is probably why it had not been discovered before. The whole area of the earthwork covers approximately seven and a half acres. The following is a description of it as perambulated clockwise from the SW. corner.

The SW. corner itself is rounded and well defined, although the bank is almost non-existent. Almost immediately the corner is turned the natural escarpment becomes less pronounced and flattish ground is soon reached with only a slight bank along the present fence line. In 1968, in the grass meadow outside the fence, darker vegetation plainly showed the course of a wide ditch along this side. Towards the NW. corner, however, more pronounced banks are seen. There are certainly two, with possible indications of the ditch of a third. The two are very impressive at the corner itself but die away rapidly to the S. One might perhaps assume that these represent two, or even three, lines of banks across the only flat approach to the camp, but J. H. Money suggests that the double banking may define a second interned entrance to the camp.

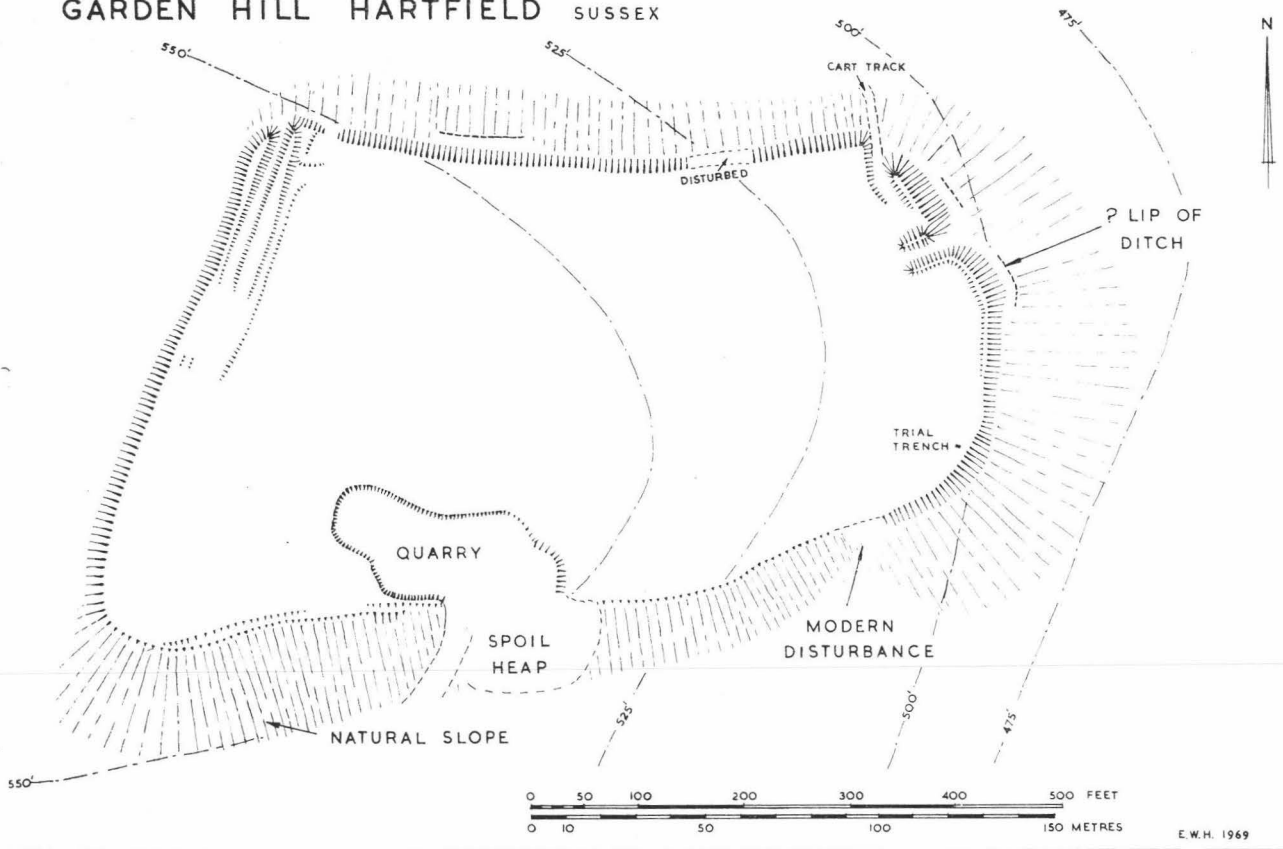
Along the N. side the actual bank appears slight but the artificial steepening of the escarpment is very apparent and, at some places, below the top, a slight flattening of the natural slope may indicate the position of a ditch. Along part of this side the earthwork crosses the present fence into Ashdown Forest. At the NE. corner what appears to be a modern cart track enters the earthwork, and connects with a number of such tracks in the wood on this side.

The short E. side is notable, at its N. end, for what must almost certainly be an original interned entrance to the camp, with its banks well preserved. Digging by the army inside the earthwork, about 25 yards from the W. end of the entrance banks, turned up some pottery, including Samian ware. To about the middle of the E. side a slight bank and indications of a ditch can be seen, but the former disappears as one goes further S. At the S. end of the E. side the ground appears uneven as if the bank had been deliberately removed. It was here that I first found pottery in army diggings, and where my own excavations were done.

The S. side has, at about its middle, the old quarry, with its entrance and spoil heap. All along this side indications of the bank are slight and the natural escarpment is steep. There are no signs of the position of a ditch even in the section cut by the quarry entrance.

The plateau inside the earthwork is fairly flat, with a general slope towards the E. In some parts of the E. end, especially inside the

GARDEN HILL HARTFIELD SUSSEX



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FIG. 1

E.W.H. 1969

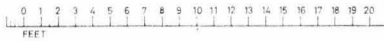
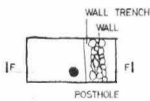
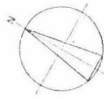
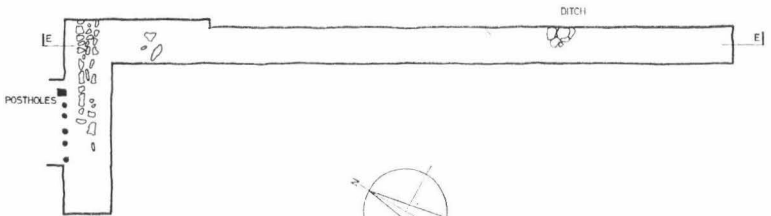
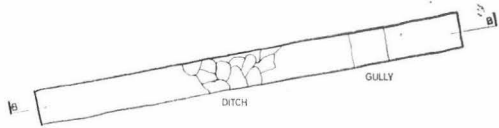
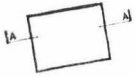


FIG. 2. Plan of excavations

interned entrance, it has the appearance of having been artificially levelled.

### THE EXCAVATION

In an attempt to discover a date for this earthwork and its occupation I decided to re-dig the army slit trench from which the pottery first found had come (Fig. 2). This had been dug along what appeared to be the line of the earthwork bank, but at a point where it had been removed. In the filling of the army trench were many large stones, but by extending the trench to the N., into ground undisturbed in recent times, it was apparent that these stones came from the foundations of a drystone wall. This was about 16in. wide and ran parallel to, or possibly under, the earthwork bank. The line of this wall was checked by trial holes, and found to continue for at least 40ft. (Fig. 2). It seems evident that this wall, neatly and carefully made and set in a shallow trench in the undisturbed subsoil, played some part in the revetment of the defensive bank. This idea was supported by the finding, at one place, of post holes, close to and following its line, on the inner side.

The undisturbed vertical ground section above the wall foundation (Fig. 3) showed that under the turf and top soil lay about 14in. of

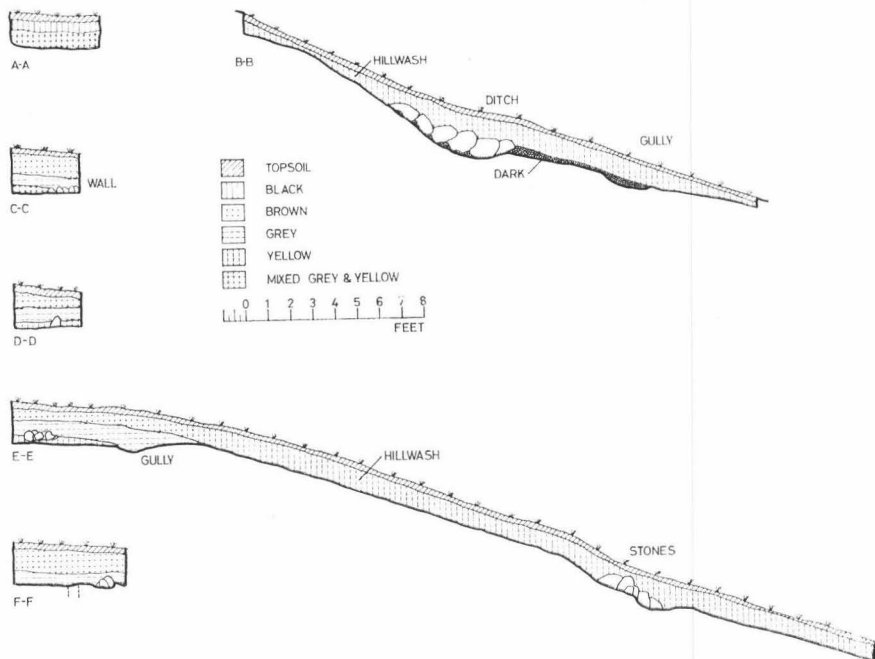


FIG. 3. Sections

loose dry sandy soil containing pottery and iron slag. This was so loose that I suspect it to represent some form of cultivation. It was noticeable that in trenches cut later, down the slope of the escarpment, it got thinner and finally disappeared as the distance from the top increased. Below the brown layer was a grey layer, in striking contrast to it, being hard and compact, and containing much wood ash. In it, too, was pottery and iron slag and cinder, especially at the junction of the two layers. Some of the sherds were on edge as if the deposit had been tipped into position. Its thickness varied up to a maximum of about 14 inches. The grey layer covered the top of the wall foundation, and occurred on each side of it, and would thus appear to have been deposited after the removal of both bank and all but the foundations of the wall at this spot.

Two trenches were then dug down the natural slope of the hill, approximately at right angles to the trench described above, to see if a ditch existed outside the perimeter bank. In the S. trench the ditch was found 25ft. from the wall. It was a very small ditch but it had served to catch a number of large stones that had obviously rolled down from above. Between the ditch and the wall both the brown and grey layers disappeared at about 6ft. from the wall. The N. trench disclosed a rather more impressive ditch section, but owing to tree roots it could not be continued up as far as the wall. Here, no doubt owing to its greater depth, the ditch was full of even larger stones, some only just liftable. They must have rolled down from some quite formidable stone structure above. It was also apparent, as in the S. trench, that the stones had filled the ditch before almost any silting could take place. Only in one place did a stone cover a small pocket of dark soil containing a few pottery sherds, all of types found in the above brown and grey layers. Elsewhere the stones lay on a clean ditch bottom. In the trenches above the ditches a few sherds together with iron nails were found lying on the undisturbed subsoil.

A further trial hole, 4ft. square, was dug N. of the above described excavations. This seemed to cut into the side of some sort of pit. It contained much pottery of the same type as from the brown and grey layers as well as several fragments of Roman hypocaust tiles.

In this small area of excavation over 300 pottery sherds were found as well as glass, Roman roof and hypocaust tiles, nails, and iron slag and cinder. It was felt that enough had been done to prove the existence of the earthwork and its occupation, and to throw some light on its construction and the character of its inhabitants. The finds will be placed in the Barbican House Museum at Lewes.

## CONCLUSIONS

The results of the survey and excavation should perhaps be summarised and some tentative conclusions offered.

A new hill-top camp or fort has been discovered on Ashdown Forest which, from its external form and construction, appears to be of Late Iron Age rather than of Roman type. In one place, at least, a narrow dry stone wall, backed by close-set wooden posts, played some part in the building of the defensive rampart, as did nailed woodwork, and another, more impressive, stone wall. On the steep natural escarpment only a slight ditch exists. From the limited evidence of two sections of this ditch it would appear that the earthwork had an extremely short life as a defensive work.

It seems that, at the place of excavation, immediately after the destruction of the rampart, rubbish from nearby human occupation and an iron industry was dumped over the site. This occupation, from the date of the pottery and glass appears to be from before the middle to the end of the 1st century A.D. The upper part of this rubbish dump seems to have been ploughed at some later date and its contents mixed with the plough tilth.

During this period of occupation someone of wealth must have lived here, able to afford a Roman-type house and to buy imported Gallo-Roman and Samian pottery and continental glass vessels. Contemporary with this luxury others here were still using coarse Late Iron Age type pottery.

A few vital questions regarding this earthwork have been answered, but many more remain. I would suggest two. Why, if my conclusions are correct, was a defensive earthwork constructed, so quickly destroyed, and yet continued in occupation, at about the time of the Roman invasion, or soon after? Also, why would a man of wealth wish to live on a windy hill-top surrounded by barren and agriculturally worthless land? I can only hope that a larger and more comprehensive excavation will, in the near future, be able to test my tentative conclusions and give answers to these fascinating questions.

## REPORT ON THE POTTERY

By N. E. S. Norris, F.S.A.

Of the considerable number of sherds of pottery which have been submitted for examination a large percentage appear to be of native or local manufacture, having the characteristic 'soapy' and oatmeal feel and appearance of what was formerly known as 'La Tene III' pottery. The remainder consists of several Samian sherds, identifiable ones being of 1st century date, a few sherds of imported Gallo-Belgic fine wares, and the balance is made up of fine hard imported grey ware from the Continent. All these can comfortably be contained within the 1st century A.D. and most are more likely to have been made in the middle of that century.

There is a large proportion of Roman copies of late Belgic types, for instance Fig. 4 (16) which is a platter of true Belgic form made in Roman sandy ware, and also several jars with debased cordons on the shoulder. An unusual type represented in this group of pottery is the tripod cooking pot Fig. 4 (12) which is not common on British sites, and quite rare in the native paste of which our example is made. The following examples have been chosen for description and the numbers correspond with the numbers on Fig. 4.

### *Samian Ware*

1. Worn sherd of side of Form 30 Drag. (Decorated cylindrical bowl). Small example in South Gaulish ware. The decoration consists of a panel with the St. Andrew's cross motif and part of an adjacent panel probably enclosing a figure. 1st century A.D.

2. Worn sherd of side of Form 37 Drag. (Decorated hemispherical bowl). Small example, with part of figure probably of Hercules. Late 1st century A.D.

### *Coarse Ware*

3. Rim sherd of jar. Soft light grey oatmealy native ware with dark surface. Everted rim and carination above shoulder. 1st century copy of Belgic type.

4. Another rim sherd, similar but with undercut on lip.

5. Rim sherd of large cooking pot. Coarse oatmealy native ware. (Cp. Kingston Buci, *Sussex Archaeological Collections*<sup>1</sup> 72, p. 206, Fig. 37; mid 1st century A.D.).

6. Rim sherd of bowl. Light brown oatmealy native ware with everted rim and rudimentary cordon on shoulder. A typical mid-1st century A.D. type.

7. Rim sherd of jar. Grey to black soft oatmealy native ware with sharp everted rim. Probably mid-1st century.

8. Rim sherd of small bowl. Soft grey native ware with chalky admixture.

9. Sherd from periphery of base of large vessel with hollow base. Soapy, oatmealy native ware. (Cp. Omphalos bases of the South Eastern "B" ware from Horsted Keynes *S.A.C.*, vol. 78. p. 255 *et seq.*).

10. Sherd from shoulder of jar. Sandy grey ware, fired red externally. With rouletted decoration. Probably imported Gallo-Belgic ware of the early 1st century.

11. Part of the side of a large jar with bold decorated cordon. Grey to pink soapy native ware with chalky admixture. (See *S.A.C.*, vol. 87 'The Evolution of Sussex Iron Age Pottery' by A. E. Wilson and G. P. Burstow, pp. 105-108, where this raised band decoration is discussed and dated to c. 1-50 A.D.).

<sup>1</sup> Abbreviated hereafter to *S.A.C.*



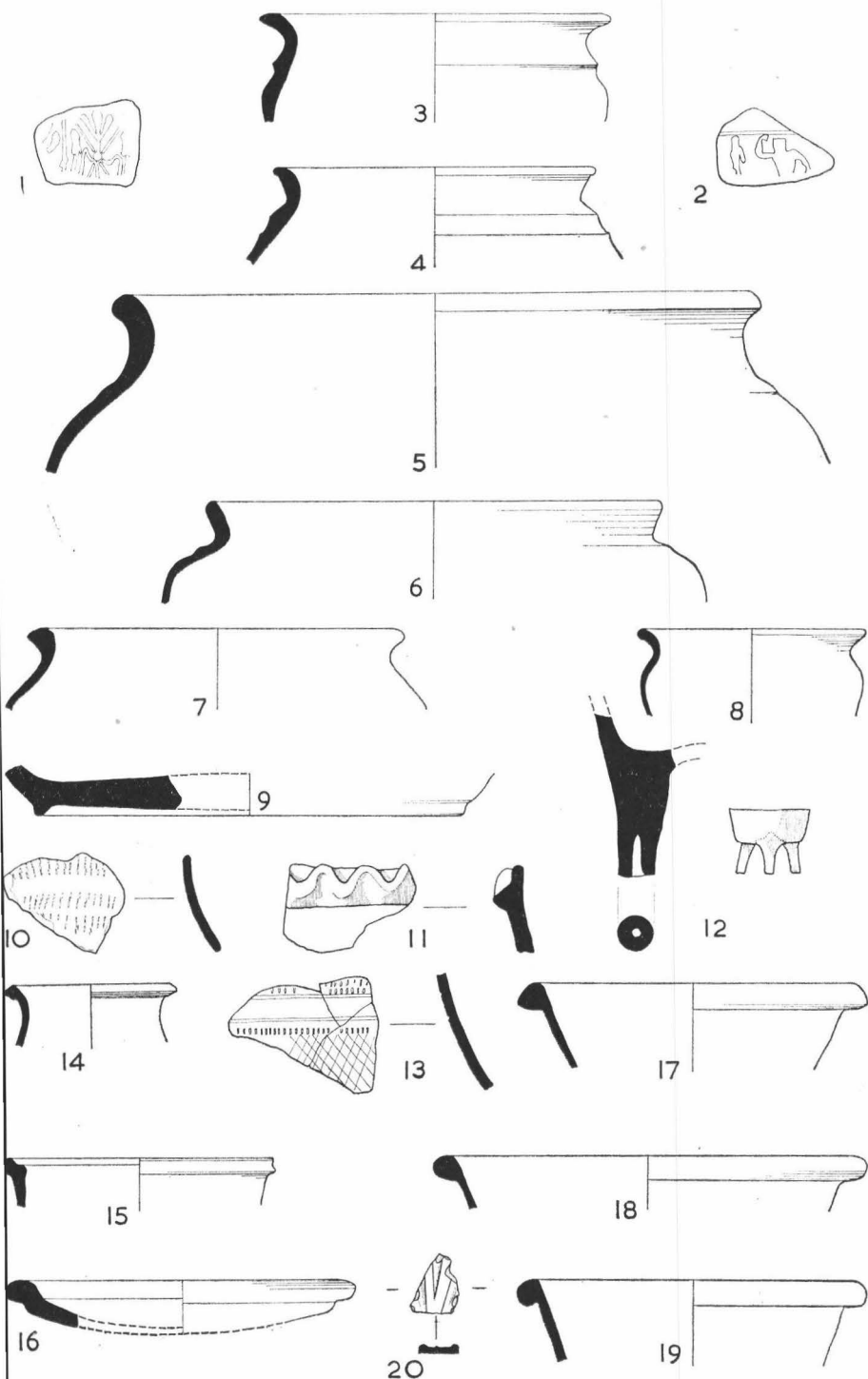


FIG. 4. Pottery (scale 1:3½)

12. A leg of tripod cooking pot. Soft native ware with chalky admixture and remains of bituminous black coating on exterior. This is a native copy of a vessel fairly common in Europe during the early first century A.D. It occurred at Mont Beuvray, at the earlier site at Hofheim where it is dated to 40-51 A.D. but was not found at the later Hofheim (70-83 A.D.), and also at Silchester. (See T. May, *Pottery found at Silchester* (1916), Plate 49, no. 68; for photograph see *Archaeologia*, vol. 61, p. 210, fig. 6.

13. Lower part of wall of large jug decorated with girth grooves, rouletting, and obtuse latticing. Hard grey fumed ware with pink core. A 1st century import.

14. Part of rim and neck of Gallo-Belgic butt beaker. Sandy pink ware with mica content and grey core. First half of 1st century A.D.

15. Small rim sherd of groove-lipped bowl. Fine hard grey fumed ware with pink core. A 1st century import.

16. Peripheral fragment of platter. Hard coarse sandy ware. Romano-British copy of a Belgic platter.

17. Rim sherd of bowl. Hard grey sandy ware. Probably a late version of the carinated bowl. Late first to early 2nd century A.D.

18. Another example similar to No. 17. Hard fine sandy grey ware with mica content and probably imported.

19. Another similar. Grey sandy ware.

### Glass

A few glass fragments were found in the grey layer and four of these were submitted to Dr. D. B. Harden, who reported as follows:

'Mercifully one of the fragments (Fig. 4, 20) is readily identifiable as part of a pillar-moulded bowl of the type which I published in *Camulodunum*,<sup>1</sup> Plate LXXXXVIII, nos. 61 and 62. It will be from a very shallow variety, more like 61 and 62, because the bottom of the bowl is absolutely flat. The fragment shows not only the ribs on the underside but the wheel-ground surface on the inside of the bowl, which is so characteristic of this type. For my discussion on pillar-moulded bowls see p. 301 ff. in that article. What I say about the date still holds good, as far as I know, and these pieces should, therefore, belong to the middle and third quarter of the 1st century A.D.

<sup>1</sup> C. F. C. Hawkes and M. R. Hull, *Report of Research Committee of Soc. Ant.*, no. XIV (1947).

The other pieces are featureless but there is no reason why they should not all be more or less of the same date as the fragment of the pillar-moulded bowl. I think it is probable that one fragment is from the bottom of a flask or jug showing part of the central kick.'

In the article, referred to above, Dr. Harden says that pillar-moulded bowls were imports from either Gaul or Italy.

#### *Nails*

Nine iron nails were found, several coming from the slope above the ditch. All were badly corroded but they appeared to be of varying length up to 2½in. One was clenched.

#### *Iron Slag*

About 35 pieces of iron slag were found, both in the brown and grey layers. Samples were shown to H. F. Cleere, who recognised them as types commonly found in the waste from bloomery furnaces of Roman date.