

# Using elderly data bases

## IRON AGE PIT DEPOSITS AT THE CABURN, EAST SUSSEX, AND RELATED SITES

by Sue Hamilton

*This paper considers the value of Sussex's 'early' excavation archives for reconsidering 'rubbish' deposits on Iron Age sites. The review concentrates on pit deposits from Middle Iron Age prominent enclosures (hillforts). The focal data base of the study comprises the contents of over 140 pits excavated at the Caburn hillfort in the late 19th century by Lane Fox, and in the 1920s under the auspices of E. and E. C. Curwen. The results suggest, particularly on hillfort sites, that rubbish deposition was purposefully structured and that the deposition of highly symbolic artefacts and remains was part of this tradition.*

### INTRODUCTION

Over the last decade it has become apparent that there is structured patterning in the intentional disposal of 1st-millennium BC material culture, previously considered to be 'random rubbish' (Fitzpatrick 1997b; Hill 1989; 1995). While practitioners of Iron Age studies are now beginning to sense that this 'new' topic 'has run its course' (Collis 1997, 299), the regional characteristics of such patterning have hardly begun to be defined. Work in southern Britain has largely concentrated on Wessex sites (Hill 1995). In this review of Sussex material (Fig. 1), I wish to consider its potential for such analysis. I will concentrate on pit deposition, and particularly on deposition practices within prominent hilltop enclosures traditionally called hillforts.

In terms of hillfort excavations, Sussex is distinguished by its substantial 'elderly data bases'. The most extensive excavation of Sussex hillforts took place between the 1920s and 1960s. It is vital to assess the quality of these archives in order to establish whether contemporary debates, such as that on deposition practices, are open to investigation in a Sussex context. Themes of general interest relating to deposition practice include the possible existence of regional-specific patterns of deposition and the character of *domestic deposition practice and ritual* versus *public and community acts of deposition/ritual*. My intention is to address these themes by concentrating on Sussex Middle Iron Age hillforts and associated sites. The reason for this particular choice of site category and period centres upon the

fact that the Caburn hillfort has produced by far the largest Sussex Iron Age data base of excavated pit deposits. Although the Caburn has evidence for earlier 1st-millennium BC use (Drewett & Hamilton 1996), it was not until the Middle Iron Age that it was substantially enclosed. The Caburn is currently undergoing re-analysis (Drewett & Hamilton 1996; Hamilton 1997), and with this in mind, the present discussion is exploratory rather than definitive.

Sussex had four downland prominent enclosures (hillforts) which can be securely dated to the Middle Iron Age. These are the Caburn, Cissbury, Torberry, and the Trundle (Hamilton & Manley 1997). While the provision of a visually prominent barrier may be part of the intention of enclosure, the term hillfort may be deceptive in suggesting that the *raison d'être* of such sites was based on defence (Bowden & McOmish 1989; Hamilton & Manley 1997; Sharples 1991). A consideration of deposition practices at these sites can contribute to a wider illumination of their likely multiple functions. In Sussex, the Middle Iron Age (c. 450–200 BC) coincides with a major reconfiguration of the landscape in which the number of hilltop enclosures in active use was substantially reduced (Hamilton & Manley 1997, figs 2 & 3). The prominent enclosures which were (re)constructed at this time are positioned centrally in the South Downs, in contrast to the preceding hillforts which are mostly situated on the northern and southern edges of the South Downs. The topographic locations of the Middle Iron Age hillforts suggest that they are landmark sites, being highly visible from the outside.

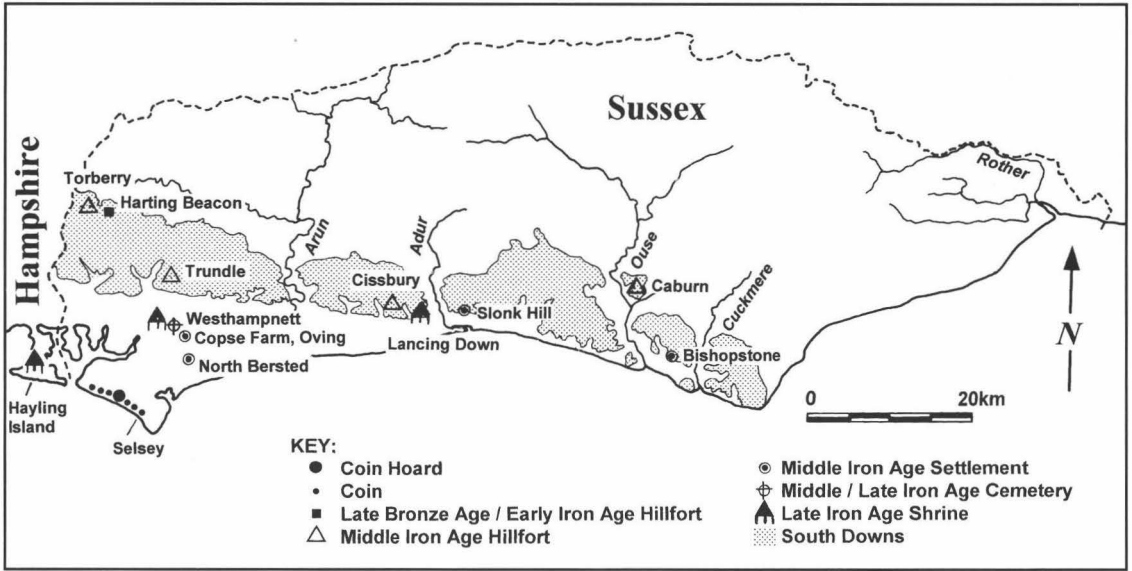


Fig. 1. Location map of sites and findsspots mentioned in the text.

DELIBERATE DEPOSITION AND CEREMONIAL PRACTICES

The interpretation of any individual item of Iron Age material culture in terms of a discrete domestic, mortuary, funerary or ritual function is self-evidently impossible and inappropriate. The meanings and roles of items may have been transmutable according to their changing contexts of use and the 'life stage' of the object/material. The topic has been exhaustively researched by Hill (1989; 1994; 1995), specifically for the ditches and pits found on Iron Age farms in Wessex. Hill notes that such pit deposition would have been infrequent, given that when the number of pits on a site is considered in relationship to the overall occupation of that site, the contents of pits account for only a minor proportion of rubbish potentially generated by such sites. The implications of this are that pit deposition was an unusual event and potentially more susceptible to the deposition of specially curated or selected material. For enclosed settlements Hill (1994, figs 2.3 & 2.4), and Wait (1985) have noted an emphasis on the placement of human remains at boundaries. A list of deposits associated with the bottom of pits at Danebury (Cunliffe 1992, fig. 5) and interpreted as 'special deposits' or 'offerings' includes human remains, animal skulls and limbs, bird bones, querns, iron tools, and sets of clay and chalk weights.

Hill (1995) notes recurrent combinations, such as bird bones with human bones, and fixed sequences of deposition such as human bones after deposits of animal bones and pottery.

For our Sussex data base, by studying the different places and combinations in which items were *deliberately* deposited, it is possible to suggest that certain things were more specifically imbued with ideological or metaphoric meaning. The contexts of deliberate deposition to be considered are i) *the contents of backfilled 'disused' negative features in settlements and enclosures* (pits, large post-holes from dismantled posts, and ditches); ii) *the finds from shrines*; and iii) *grave goods or offerings associated with formal human burials*. Studying the range of sites associated with deliberate deposition has the potential to elucidate the existence of everyday, personal, or public 'rites' of deposition.

THE CABURN ARCHIVE

THE SITE

The Caburn is a prominent enclosure (1.4 ha) placed on a hill of striking topography. The site merits special attention because of its extraordinary data base. The Caburn's interior (Fig. 7) provides a data base of more than 140 totally excavated chalk-cut pits and their contents (Figs 2-4). These almost wholly relate to excavations undertaken in the 1870s

and 1920s. Forty-two pits were excavated by Lane Fox in the summers of 1877 and 1878 (Lane Fox 1881, relic table pits 1–40, and entry 16 labelled ‘twin pits’). Ninety-nine pits were subsequently excavated by Reginald P. R. Williamson, with one labourer (H. Gordon) between October 1925 and January 1926 for E. and E. C. Curwen who ‘were not able to be there ourselves’ (Curwen & Curwen 1927, 2–3, pits 41–147). Some of the Curwens’ pits turned out to be conjoined pairs, although they appeared as a single depression on the surface. These paired pits were distinguished by suffixes (pit 42 east and west; pits 43/43A, 44/44A, 47/47A, 49/49A, 54/54A, 77/77A, 92/92A, 93/93A & 105/105A). Pit 74 proved not to be pit but a platform/terrace devoid of further features. Some 17 pit numbers are absent from the 1–147 pit number sequence on the Curwens’ plan and ‘Table of pits’ (Curwen & Curwen 1927, pl. 1). It must be presumed that these depressions proved not to be pits on excavation (nos 102, 117–19, 123–5, 128, 132, 135, 139–45). Recent excavations have additionally recovered finds from a previously unrecorded pit (Drewett & Hamilton 1996).

#### THE NATURE AND QUALITY OF THE CABURN ARCHIVE

The excavation reports of Lane Fox (1881) and E. and E. C. Curwen (1927) notably provide pit ‘relic tables’. In the absence of section drawings of pit fills, and of plans of the pits, these ‘relic tables’ are central to my reconstruction of the pit deposits. In each case, the ‘relic table’ provides written descriptions of pit shapes. These descriptions are tantalizing in that many of the pits appear not to have been of the classic cylindrical and bell shapes traditionally associated with southern British Iron Age pits (Cunliffe 1991, fig. 15.2). Lane Fox’s (1881: ‘Mount Caburn relic table’) descriptions of pit shapes includes ‘oblong’ (45 per cent of pits), ‘oval’ (30 per cent), ‘round/circular’ (15 per cent), ‘square/squarish’ (5 per cent), and ‘heart-shaped’ (3 per cent). E. and E. C. Curwen (1927, ‘Table of Pits’) describe excavated pits which include ‘rectangular’ (44 per cent of pits), ‘oval’ (22 per cent), ‘sub-rectangular’ (9 per cent), ‘circular’ (4 per cent), ‘sub-circular’ (2 per cent), ‘square’ (2 per cent), ‘triangular’ (1 per cent), ‘quadrangular’ (1 per cent), and other more bizarre descriptions such as ‘pyriform’ (3 per cent). It is possible that several of these shapes are constructs of excavation. The descriptions from each report are, however, or perhaps predictably, very

similar. The square/rectangular ascriptions concur with the pits’ shapes recognized in subsequent excavations at the Trundle by E. C. Curwen (1929). The latter were photographed (e.g. plates 5 & 7) and show prehistoric adze marks in the sides of the features, suggesting that in that instance the features were *not* over-cut. While these shape oddities are perplexing and confound interpretation of the original function of the pits, they do not invalidate considering the types of finds and deposits in the Caburn pits and their sequence of deposition.

The Caburn pit finds were exceptionally well-illustrated (Lane Fox 1881; Curwen & Curwen 1927), which greatly aids their identification and interpretation (Figs 2, 3 & 4). The original finds illustrations, and their descriptions, were grouped together by type (e.g. loomweights: Curwen & Curwen 1927, figs 47–9), and not by context, but in conjunction with the tables it has been possible to reconstruct the contents of each pit. Both Lane Fox’s and E. and E. C. Curwen’s ‘relic tables’ list the contents of each pit and the depths (to the nearest inch) at which individual artefact finds, and sometimes shells, antler, boar’s tusks, and certain animal bones were recovered.

Pottery sherds, flint flakes, selected pebbles and fire-cracked flints are less precisely attributed and quantified and cannot be central to our analysis. The pottery is particularly well-illustrated (notably Gurd’s illustrations in Hawkes 1939), but the illustrated pieces do not necessarily reflect the real numbers of sherds from different vessel types and chronological phases. Lane Fox (1881) gives sherd counts (by fabric) for each pit, which facilitates assessment of the number of sherds present in individual pits 1–40. E. and E. C. Curwen omit sherd counts, but there are sometimes statements ascribing pottery and stone finds to a pit’s ‘top’, ‘middle’, or ‘bottom’, or comments such as ‘pottery zone at 12–18” (Curwen & Curwen 1927, table of relics, pits 43A & 45). As part of the recent re-analysis of the Caburn archive (Hamilton 1997) all sherds have been documented. Many of the pits contain exclusively Middle Iron Age sherds (e.g. pits 41, 48, 49, 87, 95 129 & 127). Other pits contain both Middle Iron Age and Late Bronze Age/earlier Iron Age sherds, the latter sherds relating to the ‘pre-rampart’ phase of the site. This suggests the incorporation of previously ‘curated rubbish’ in some of the pits. Late Iron Age and Roman pottery has also been recovered from the pits but, where

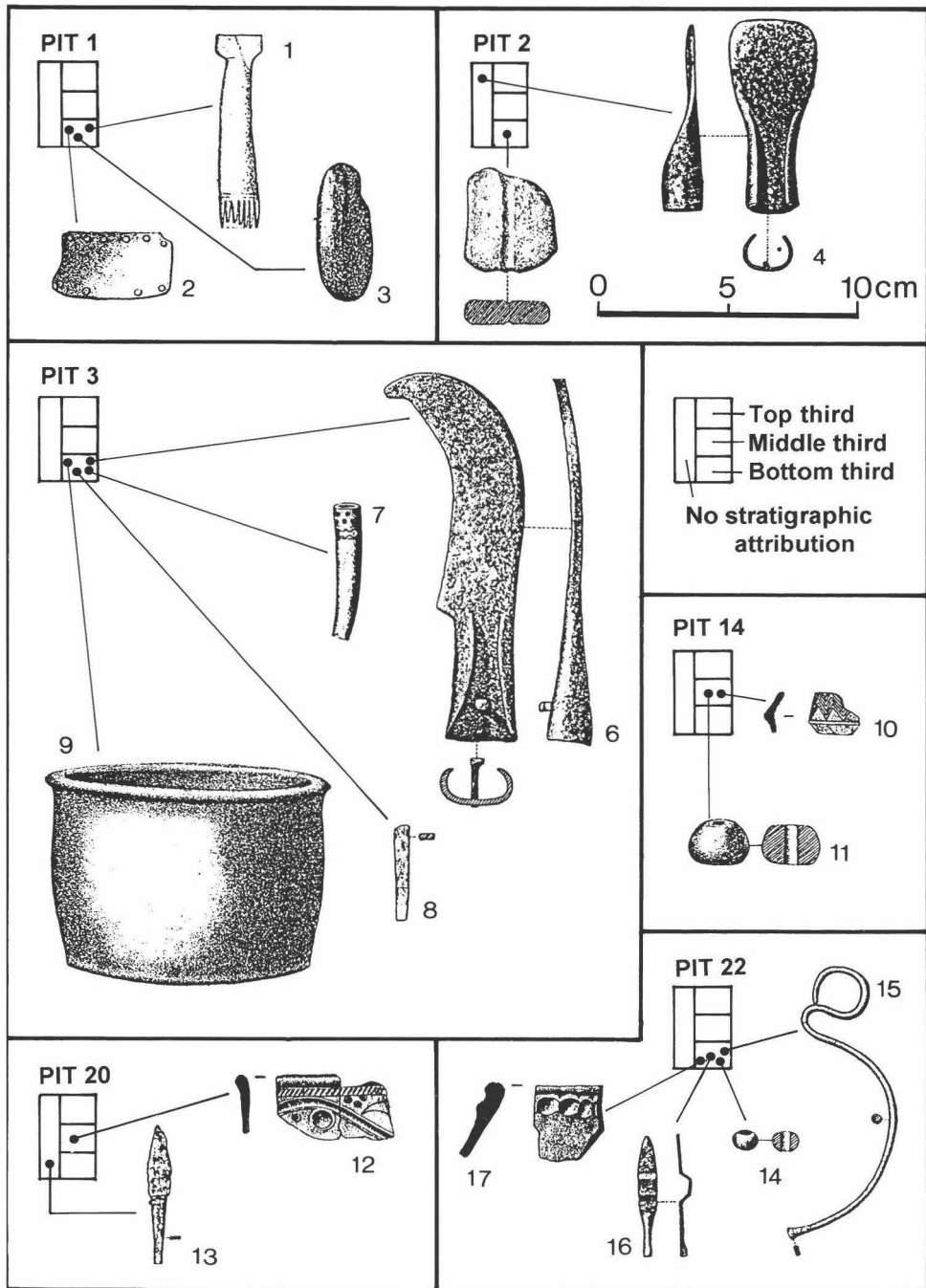


Fig. 2. Examples of Caburn small finds and pottery. (Source: Lane Fox 1881). See Curwen & Curwen 1927, pl. 1 for the locations of all numbered pits. In the present analysis small finds comprise the following categories: antler knife handles; grooved pebbles and pebbles used as burnishers; latch-lifter; personal ornaments, potin coins; iron tools; iron weaponry; loomweights; spindlewhorls; weaving combs; and whetstones.

attributable, this has generally come from the uppermost fills (which are not considered in the present analysis, see below).

The identification of the animal bones is the most problematic. Lane Fox's 'relic tables' give species' identifications, whereas E. and E. C. Curwen's 'relic tables' often merely state 'bones present'. Relatively few of the bones have been deposited in the museum archive (Barbican House, Lewes).

#### 'PIT THIRDS'

Both 'relic tables' give the depth and dimensions of each pit. Hill's (1995) concept of grouping pit deposits into sequential 'pit thirds' is ideal for the lack of detailed stratigraphic information associated with the Caburn pits. When deposition is considered at a gross scale, irrespective of the placement angle of individual pit deposits and fills, the lowest third of a pit fill must have been largely deposited before the middle fill, and the middle third of a pit deposit likewise before the uppermost third. The Caburn pits were excavated in horizontal spits, thus where the depths of finds have been recorded they bear no precise relationship to discrete stratigraphic layers or events. The recorded finds depths do, however, allow artefacts to be ascribed to the bottom, middle or top of each pit. The simple method I employed was to divide the recorded depth of each pit into 'pit thirds', and to allocate finds to the top, middle or bottom 'third' according to which 'pit third' the recorded 'finds depth' fell within (Fig. 5). In the case of E. and E. C. Curwen's (1927) 'Table of Contents' some pits' depths are given a depth range, because these pits are markedly not flat-bottomed. In these instances the median figure in the depth range was taken for the calculation of 'pit thirds'. Lane Fox's 'relic table' gives the depth of 'surface mould' for each pit, which can be taken to be the looser topsoil and most recent infill. In each case, the 'surface mould' depth reassuringly corresponds with the top third calculation. My analysis ignores finds from the top 'pit third' for the purposes of considering secure patterns of deliberate deposition. It is, however, recognized that the artefact contents of the top 'pit third' may have implications for the longer-term chronology of on-site activity.

#### Catalogue of selected, illustrated finds from the Caburn pit archive (Figs 2, 3 & 4)

##### Figure 2

1. From Lane Fox 1881, pl. 24:11. Weaving comb (seven teeth) of deer antler. Pit 1.
2. From Lane Fox 1881, pl. 24:8. Iron scale of armour, or fragment of cheek-piece of helmet. Pit 1.
3. From Lane Fox 1881, pl. 24:21. Pebble worn along the edge by friction. Pit 1.
4. From Lane Fox 1881, pl. 24:5. Iron spud. Pit 2.
5. From Lane Fox 1881, pl. 24:20. Pebble with shallow groove on both sides and top, and marks of hammering at the three prominent corners. Pit 2.
6. From Lane Fox 1881, pl. 24:13. Iron billhook. Pit 3.
7. From Lane Fox 1881, pl. 24:25. Knife handle? Deer antler tine cut at one end and broken at the small end. Pierced at the big end as if to receive a blade. Ornamented with a dot and circle pattern. Pierced laterally at 12 mm from the big end with a 6 mm hole. Pit 3.
8. From Lane Fox 1881, pl. 24:14. Iron bar. Pit 3.
9. From Lane Fox 1881, pl. 25:56. Rim, base and body sherds from a plain Middle Iron Age saucepan pot. Fabric not known. Pit 3.
10. From Lane Fox 1881, pl. 25:46. Thin-walled early Iron Age sherd with dark grey/black unoxidized surfaces (and core?). The fabric is described as 'fine' and is probably iron-oxide rich, based on comparisons with the pottery in the Curwen's archive (Barbican House). The sherd has a raised cordon at the shoulder angle and an incised herringbone pattern decoration above the shoulder. In the original publication, the sherd appears to have been drawn upside down. Pit 14.
11. From Lane Fox 1881, pl. 25:54. Clay spindlewhorl. Pit 14.
12. From Lane Fox 1881, pl. 25:40. Decorated sherd from a Middle Iron Age saucepan pot ornamented with a tooled curvilinear line, and impressed dots. The fabric is greyish brown in colour and of a smooth, 'grainless' fabric (grog-tempered?). Pit 20.
13. From Lane Fox 1881, pl. 24:15. Tanged iron knife. Pit 20.
14. From Lane Fox 1881, pl. 25:49. Opaque, dark blue glass bead, with a cylindrical hole. Pit 22.
15. From Lane Fox 1881, pl. 24:17. Iron ring-headed pin, flat at the end opposite the loop. Pit 22.
16. From Lane Fox 1881, pl. 24:9. Iron loop, possibly the loop of a scabbard for the passage of a sword belt. Pit 22.
17. From Lane Fox 1881, pl. 25:33. Late Bronze Age/

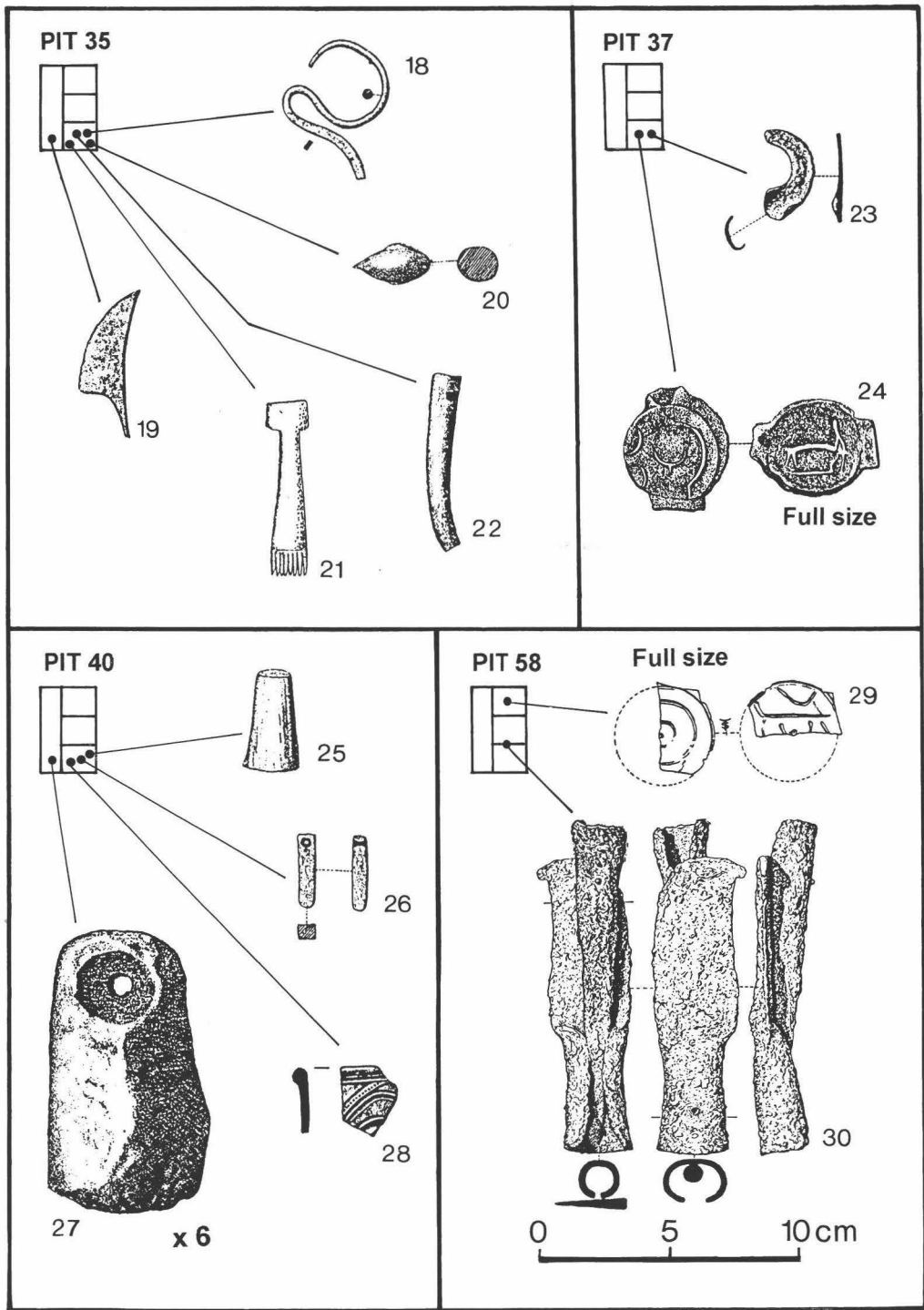


Fig. 3. Examples of Caburn small finds and pottery. (Sources: Lane Fox 1881; Curwen & Curwen 1927.)

Early Iron Age rim sherd with raised, applied, finger-impressed cordon. Dark brown fabric with 'white quartz or shell tempering'. Pit 22.

*Figure 3*

18. From Lane Fox 1881, pl. 24:16. Iron, ring-headed pin, flat at the end opposite the loop. Pit 35.
19. From Lane Fox 1881, pl. 24:7. Tanged, iron knife with curved blade. Pit 35.
20. From Lane Fox 1881, pl. 25:47. Baked clay slingstone. Pit 35.
21. From Lane Fox 1881, pl. 24:12. Weaving comb (eight teeth) of deer antler. Pit 35.
22. From Lane Fox 1881, pl. 24:24. Tine of deer antler cut at both ends and pierced near the bigger end by a cylindrical hole. Pit 35.
23. From Lane Fox 1881, pl. 24:10. Iron sickle blade. Pit 37.
24. From Lane Fox 1881, pl. 25:61. Potin coin, on the obverse a schematic head; on the reverse side the figure of an animal (horse?, bull?). From a 'string' of castings, the runlets having been cut through with a chisel. Pit 37.
25. From Lane Fox 1881, pl. 24:27. Deer antler tine which has been cut flat at both ends with a metal saw. Pit 40.
26. From Lane Fox 1881, pl. 24:29. Sandstone whetstone, with a hole for suspension. Pit 40.
27. From Lane Fox 1881, pl. 24:28. Chalk loomweight, bored with a hole 12 mm in diameter in the centre and enlarging at both ends. Found with six other loomweights at the bottom of pit 40.
28. From Lane Fox 1881, pl. 25:35. Beaded rim sherd from a Middle Iron Age saucepan pot. Decorated with both linear and curvilinear tooled lines. Smooth brown fabric with no inclusions noted (grog-tempered?). Pit 40.
29. From Curwen & Curwen 1927, pl. 2:5. Part of a potin coin (similar to Fig. 24) with a schematic representation of a human head on the obverse and of a bull or horse on the reverse. Pit 58.
30. From Curwen & Curwen 1927, pl. 3:12. Iron billhook with a socket formed by beating flanges around the former wooden haft. Between the two flanges a long pointed iron tool, interpreted as the ferrule end of a spear, has been driven and jammed (to slight the tool?). The 'conjoined' tools were found lying on sticks or wood shavings, which were preserved owing to iron impregnation. Pit 58.

*Figure 4*

31. From Curwen & Curwen 1927, pl. 4:15. Iron ploughshare made from a flat triangular-shaped piece of metal, with the basal angles beaten round to form a flange-socket. Pit 77.
32. From Curwen & Curwen 1927, pl. 4:22. Iron knife with curved blade, and the stump of a tang remaining. Pit 77A.
33. From Curwen & Curwen 1927, pl. 4:14. Leaf-shaped iron dagger blade with mid-rib. Pit 80.
34. From Curwen & Curwen 1927, pl. 4:19. Iron razor, with curved tang providing a notch for the finger. Pit 87.
35. From Curwen & Curwen 1927, pl. 4:23. Small iron blade, probably from a razor. Pit 97.
36. From Curwen & Curwen 1927, pl. 4:24. Iron, narrow blade from a knife. The point is missing, but a hafting tang is present. Pit 97.
37. From Curwen & Curwen 1927, pl. 4:16. Small iron hammer-head, perforated in the middle for hafting. One end has been burred out (through use, or deliberately slighted). Pit 101.
38. From Curwen & Curwen 1927, pl. 3:11. Part of an iron sword including the tang of the handle and the greater part of the blade. Found lying on sticks or wood shavings (preserved through iron impregnation) on the bottom of Pit 129.
39. From Curwen & Curwen 1927, pl. 3:13. Iron sickle blade with a flanged socket and a rivet hole. Pit 138A.

#### SEQUENCES OF DEPOSITION (Figs 5 & 6)

Four of the Caburn pit bottoms produced weapons (pit 9: a piece of a bronze sword; pit 22: an iron staple loop for a sword scabbard; pit 31: an iron spearhead; and pit 80: an iron dagger blade). The remaining weapon finds came from close to the bottom/middle 'pit third' interface. Other metal finds consistently occurring in the bottom 'pit third' include iron knives/razors (pits 11, 77A & 87). All three finds of weaving combs came from pit bases (pits 1, 35 & 131). With the exception of three loomweights, all other stratified loomweights (a total of 35, including seven loomweights from pit 40, and a further seven loomweights from pit 47) also came from the bottom of pits. Of the 18 quern fragments recovered from the pits, we only have stratigraphic information on one of them, which came from the base of pit 81. The only stratified latch-lifter came from the bottom of pit 105A.

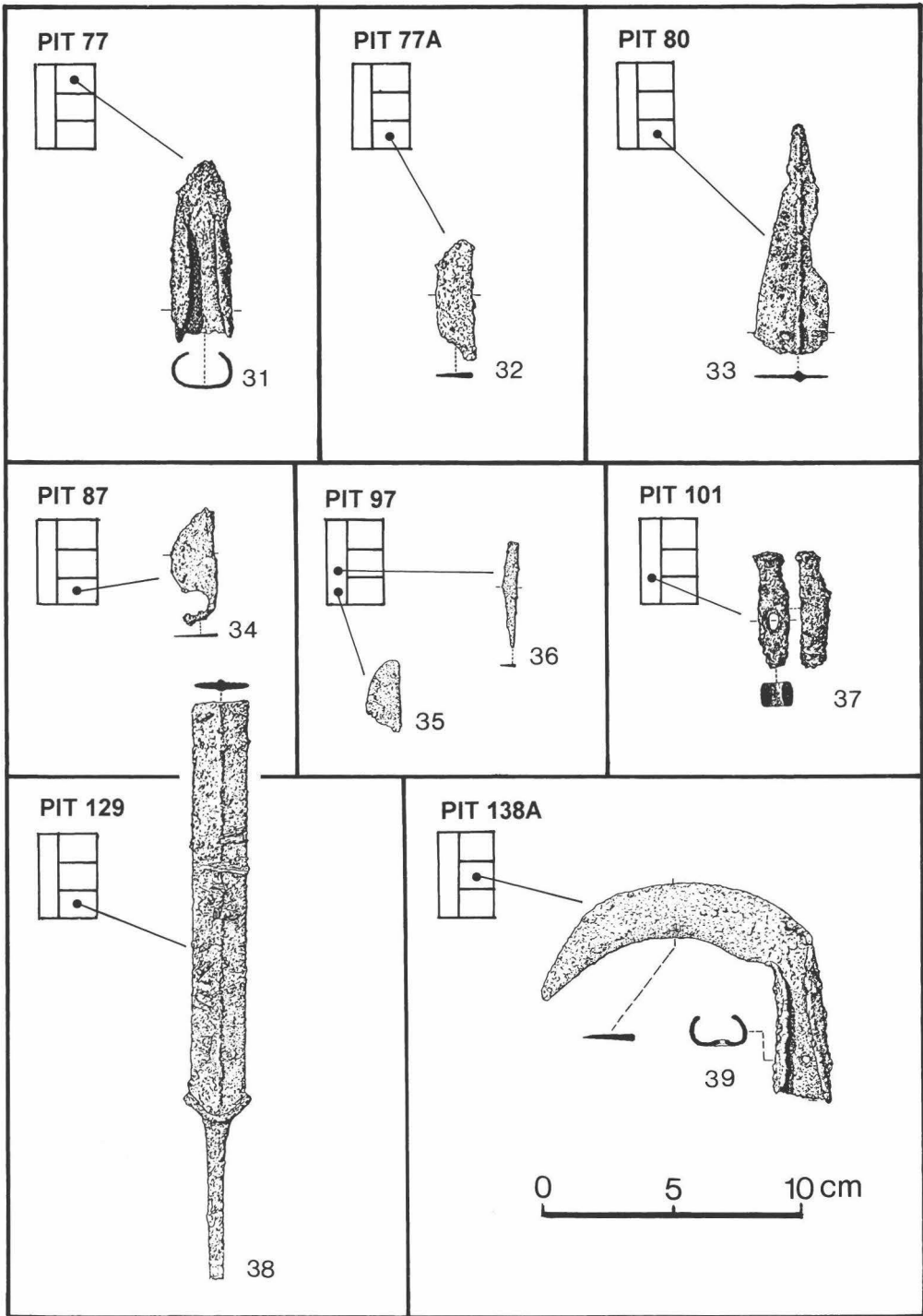


Fig. 4. Examples of Caburn small finds. (Source: Curwen & Curwen 1927.)



Costume items (glass beads and pins) occur at the bottom of four pits. All stratigraphically attributable animal skulls (two sheep skulls, pit 6), and human remains (one jaw, and one mandible) can also be ascribed to pit bases (pits 27 & 80). Middle 'pit thirds' evidence less intense deposition and are most recurrently characterized by the presence of tools, including an iron hammerhead (pit 7), an iron billhook (pit 58), an iron spud (pit 2), and spindlewhorls. Sickle blades (and billhooks) occur in both middle and lower pit thirds (Fig. 5).

HIGHLY SPECIAL DEPOSITS AND THEIR SPATIAL LOCATION

SPECIAL DEPOSITS

It is difficult to be objective on what might characterize a highly ritually charged 'special deposit'. Finds from other 'local' contemporary and indisputably ritual contexts are relevant to such an assessment, together with the patterning suggested by the Wessex material. For Sussex, Middle and later Iron Age sites which incontrovertibly fall within a ritual sphere are the Iron Age temple sites at Hayling Island (just over the 'border' in Hampshire) and Lancing Down (Bedwin 1981), and the cremation cemetery at Westhampnett (Fitzpatrick 1997a). These various data bases allow the following categories of Caburn finds to be isolated as being particularly 'special':

1. Selected animal bones

On the basis of the patterning observed on Wessex sites, animal skulls and remains of wild and 'work' animals were considered to be of particular significance. At the Caburn the following fall within these categories: i) *horse bones* (pits 2, 17, 26, 38 & 40); ii) *dog bones* (pit 27); iii) *wild boar tusks* (pits 4, 29 & 54); iv) *wild mammal bones*: roe deer (pit 5); badger bones (pit 9); bones from two foxes (pit 27); v) *bird bones*: bird of unknown type (pit 32); raven (pit 32); fowl (pit 35); duck (pit 35); and curlew (pit 35); vi) *animal skulls*: two sheep skulls (pit 6); one *bos* skull (pit 89).

2. Weapons

Finds of iron, or copper alloy weapons are generally rare in Iron Age burials in southern Britain (Collis 1973). Weapons are almost wholly absent from the Westhampnett cemetery (Fitzpatrick 1997a, 221). They do, however, have a long tradition of being

	PIT THIRD:	
	Middle	Bottom
<i>Costume items</i>		
glass bead	0	2
iron ring-headed pin	0	2
iron fibula	1	0
<i>Weaving equipment</i>		
loomweight	3	35
weaving comb	0	3
<i>Other personal items</i>		
latch key	0	1
iron knife/razor	0	3
<i>Human remains and animal skulls</i>		
sheep skulls	0	2
human remains	0	1 mandible
	0	1 jaw
<i>Agricultural</i>		
iron ploughshare	0	1
quern	0	1
iron sickle	1	1
<i>Military equipment</i>		
bronze spearhead	0	1
bronze sword fragment	0	1
staple for sword scabbard	0	1
scale of iron armour	0	1
or helmet cheek-piece		
bronze armour ring	0	1
iron dagger	0	1
iron spearhead	1	2
<i>Spinning</i>		
spindlewhorls	6	1
<i>Other tools</i>		
iron bill hook	1	1
iron hammerhead	1	0
iron spud	1	0
<i>Other 'special finds'</i>		
coins	5	4
boar's tusk	1	1
<i>Other items</i>		
bronze T-stop	1	0
bone toggle/ bridle cheek-piece	0	1
See Fig. 2 for a definition of small finds. See text for elucidation of 'special finds'.		

Fig. 5. The Caburn archive: small finds and 'special finds' which can be attributed to middle and bottom 'pit thirds'.

an important component of ritual deposition in rivers and bogs (Bradley 1990; Fitzpatrick 1984), and are associated with Iron Age shrines (Woodward 1992). Offerings at the Hayling Island Iron Age temple included numerous spearheads, together with the remains of scabbards, shield bindings, belt loops, and chain mail (Downey *et al.* 1980; King & Soffe 1994). The Caburn's weaponry finds comprise part of a bronze sword or spearhead (pit 9); an iron staple for a sword scabbard loop (pit 22); two iron spearheads (pits 13 & 31); an iron 'point' (pit 58); an iron dagger (pit 80), and a 'snapped' iron sword (pit 129).

### 3. Human remains

Articulated human inhumation burials are rare on southern British Iron Age sites. Many of the Westhampnett burials can be regarded as 'token burials' in that there is rarely an attempt to collect all of the cremated bone, and in some cases extremely small quantities are present (Fitzpatrick 1997a, 71). The presence of any intentionally deposited human remains on sites might be seen as a token of ritual/human burial. The votive deposits at the Hayling Island Iron Age temple, for instance, included a token representation of human remains in the form of a human cranium, and mandible (Fitzpatrick 1997a, table 30). Human remains were identified for three of the Caburn pits: a femur bone (pit 16), a jaw bone (pit 27) and a male mandible (pit 80). These human remains are notably associated with bird bones or the bones of other wild animals (Curwen & Curwen 1927, 28; Lane Fox 1881).

### 4. Coins

There are indications that the deposition of coins as votive or religious deposits emerged during the Middle/late Iron Age of southern Britain. The deposition of *c.* 170 Celtic coins in the main courtyard and outer boundary area at the Iron Age temple on Hayling is indicative of the importance of coinage in votive deposition (King & Soffe 1994, 115). Similarly, the large number of Iron Age coins eroded out of the Selsey Bill cliffs (Fitzpatrick 1997a, fig. 4) has been explained as a series of votive deposits (Haselgrove 1987, 149, 458–61). In Britain, it is rare to find coins in Iron Age graves. Fitzpatrick (1997a, 88), however, notes three definite examples including a gold stater from Westhampnett grave 20493. Fitzpatrick (1997a, 89) also notes several examples of coins in burials from northern France and central Europe where they are associated with female burials. Ten of the Caburn pits produced

potin coins: pits 22, 23, 29, 37 (2 coins), 43, 48, 58, 106, 133 (Curwen & Curwen 1927, pl. II; Lane Fox 1881, pl. 25), and one from the pit excavated in 1996 (Drewett & Hamilton 1996). Haselgrove (1987, 461) suggests the possibility of an 'early', Middle Iron Age dating for these coins.

### 5. Special placements, and/or deliberately slighted objects

Finds which can be placed under this heading are the iron point jammed into an iron bill hook and placed on a pile of wood shavings or sticks (preserved as a result of iron impregnation) in pit 58 (Curwen & Curwen 1927, 11, pl. 3: fig. 12), a broken sword similarly placed on sticks in pit 129 (Curwen & Curwen 1927), and a burred hammer from pit 101 (Curwen & Curwen 1927, 12, pl. 4: fig. 16). A Late Bronze Age/Iron Age tradition of ritually slighting weapons is well-attested both on the Continent (Brunaux 1988), and on British sites such as Flag Fen, Cambridgeshire (Pryor 1991). Several of the weapons from the Hayling Island temple were slighted.

At the Caburn, the joining parts of a broken quern distributed between pits 49 and 49A might also be considered within the category of ritually broken objects. The ritual symbolism of querns is uncertain, but in this context it is perhaps relevant to note the quern fragments derived from three of the post-holes of the Late Iron Age shrine at Lancing Down (Bedwin 1981, 46).

### SPATIAL PATTERNS AT THE CABURN

Having isolated certain Caburn pit deposits as being of possible heightened metamorphic and ritual status (e.g. Fig. 6: pits 1, 9, 22, 27, 31, 35, 37 & 80), it is interesting to consider their spatial location. To do so prompts questions about how such things were deposited. Was deposition, whatever its secular or ritual meaning, a public or private event? Is there any spatial pattern suggesting that parts of the site were designated for distinct categories of deposition? More prosaically, one might ask 'who owns a pit?' and 'can "fly tipping" take place?'

Two spatial patterns are of interest: *first*, when the distribution of number of artefacts per pit is plotted, it is evident that the pits with the greatest number of finds (Fig. 7) are situated on either side of the entrance, and in the centre (i.e. the highest locations) of the site (Fig. 8); *second*, if the distribution of 'highly ritually charged deposits' is plotted (Fig. 8) a similar pattern emerges. Proximate

<b>PIT 1</b>	Middle 'pit third'	<b>PIT 2</b>	Middle 'pit third'	<b>PIT 31</b>	Middle 'pit third'	<b>PIT 35</b>	Middle 'pit third'
No stratigraphic attribution	no attributable finds	No stratigraphic attribution	iron spud spindlewhorl	No stratigraphic attribution remains of: bos	no attributable finds	No stratigraphic attribution iron knife remains of: sheep bos fowl duck curlew	pottery
none	Lower 'pit third' weaving comb helmet cheek-piece/ piece of armour bos horn	remains of: bos pig sheep/goat horse	Lower 'pit third' grooved pebble	pottery	Lower 'pit third' iron spearhead pottery piece of bent iron		Lower 'pit third' weaving comb cut deer antler bronze swan-necked pin boar's tusk pottery
<b>PIT 3</b>	Middle 'pit third'	<b>PIT 7</b>	Middle 'pit third'	<b>PIT 37</b>	Middle 'pit third'	<b>PIT 80</b>	Middle 'pit third'
No stratigraphic attribution remains of: bos pig goat	no attributable finds	No stratigraphic attribution	iron hammer bone implement	No stratigraphic attribution remains of: bos, goat cut deer antler iron knife pottery pebbles	no attributable finds	No stratigraphic attribution pottery quern	loomweight
	Lower 'pit third' iron bill hook deer horn knife handle iron bar pottery pebble	remains of: bos, sheep pig mussel shells pebbles	Lower 'pit third' no attributable finds	sickle 2 potin coins	Lower 'pit third' oyster shell cores of cow horn		Lower 'pit third' human mandible iron dagger blade scapula bone
<b>PIT 9</b>	Middle 'pit third'	<b>PIT 14</b>	Middle 'pit third'	<b>PIT 87</b>	Middle 'pit third'	<b>PIT 95</b>	Middle 'pit third'
No stratigraphic attribution remains of: badgers pig sheep, bos	no attributable finds	No stratigraphic attribution remains of: calf bos	2 spindlewhorls pottery	No stratigraphic attribution pottery spindlewhorl pebble, oyster & limpet shells	no attributable finds	No stratigraphic attribution pottery	bronze 'T'stop
goat horn pebbles pottery whetstone	Lower 'pit third' piece of bronze sword/ spearhead bronze ring from armour? pottery cup deer antler knife handle	pieces of wattle-impressed clay	Lower 'pit third' hammerstone	Lower 'pit third' razor daub			Lower 'pit third' loomweight
<b>PIT 22</b>	Middle 'pit third'	<b>PIT 27</b>	Middle 'pit third'	<b>PIT 120</b>	Middle 'pit third'	<b>PIT 129</b>	Middle 'pit third'
No stratigraphic attribution remains of: bos sheep limpet shells	flint flakes	No stratigraphic attribution remains of: 2 foxes dog horse pig goat sheep bos	no attributable finds	No stratigraphic attribution pottery	no attributable finds	No stratigraphic attribution pottery	no attributable finds
	Lower 'pit third' iron staple for sword scabbard iron ring-headed pin flat piece of iron potin coin glass bead pottery	human jaw piece of bent iron pottery	Lower 'pit third' human jaw piece of bent iron pottery	Lower 'pit third' 4 loomweights			Lower 'pit third' sword
		pottery		<b>PIT 131</b>	Middle 'pit third'	<b>PIT 138A</b>	Middle 'pit third'
				No stratigraphic attribution pebbles clay sling bullet	loomweight dog coprolites	No stratigraphic attribution 'bones' mussel shells	iron fibula iron sickle iron nails pottery
					Lower 'pit third' weaving comb pottery		Lower 'pit third' no attributable finds

Fig. 6. The contents of selected Caburn pits (middle and bottom 'pit thirds').

to the high, central cluster is a basin-like depression some 10.5 m in diameter with a 3.3 m deep shaft in its base. This was excavated by Lane Fox (1881) and interpreted as a well, or cistern. Its dating is problematic, and its stratigraphy vague. It certainly contained numerous Iron Age sherds, but also two sherds of Romano-British grey ware in its lowest fill. As Webster (1997, 135) notes 'wells and shafts are firmly entrenched within the "Celtic ritual" corpus', and it may be that the location of this 'shaft' is governed by the 'symbolically charged' meaning of

this part of the Caburn site. Given that its Iron Age, or Roman, dating is equivocal and that it contained no clear evidence for special deposits (Lane Fox 1881, 'relic table': 17), its 'meaning' must remain unresolved.

Overall, it would seem that some parts of the enclosed area of the Caburn had an 'elevated *cachet*' and were focal zones for prestigious/symbolic deposits in pits. The apparent interest in pits located near the entrances and rampart circumference mirrors the interest in entrances and boundaries as

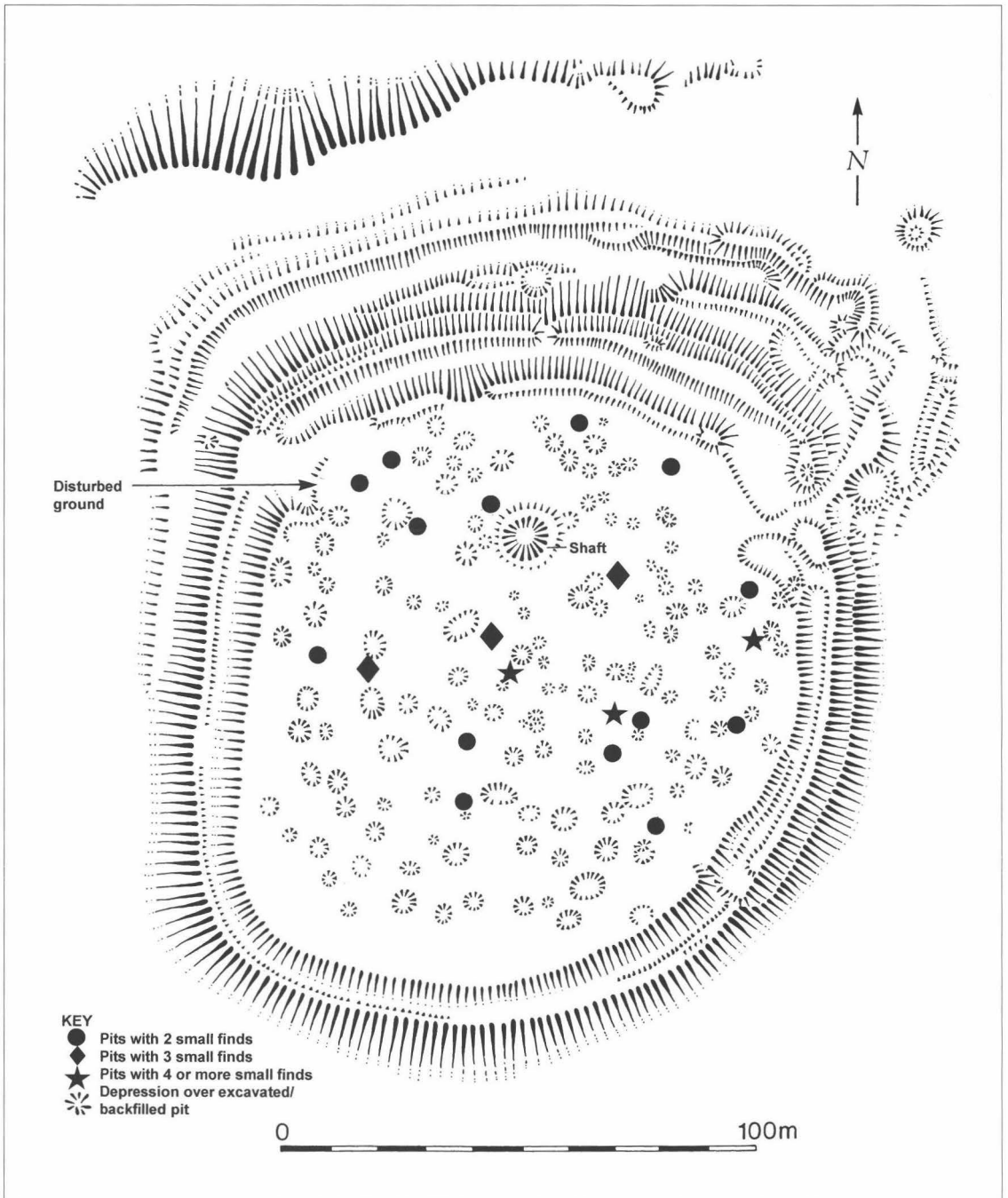


Fig. 7. Distribution map of Caburn pits with more than two small finds attributable to middle and lower 'pit thirds'.

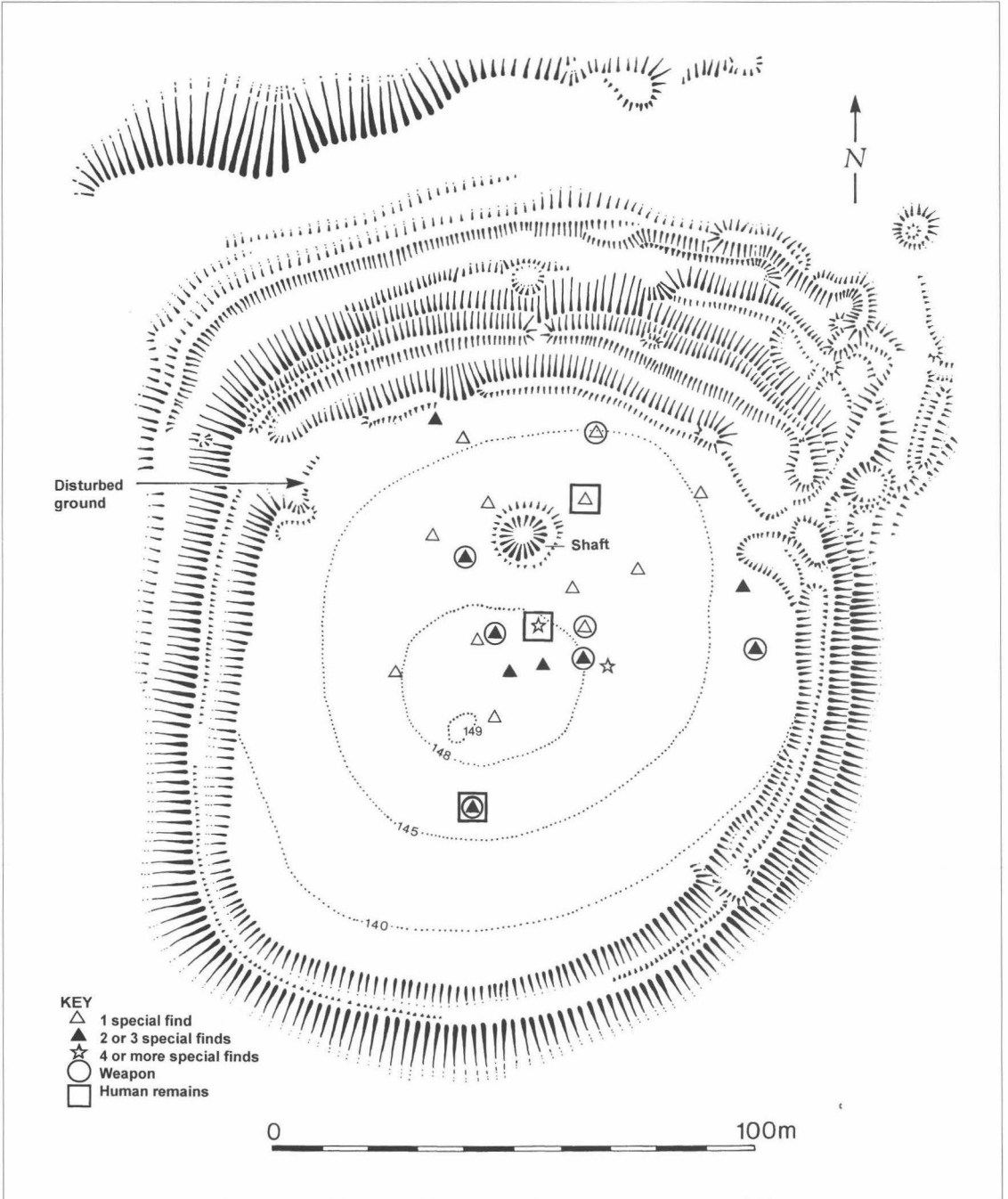


Fig. 8. Distribution of Caburn pits with 'special finds'. See text for definition of a 'special find'.

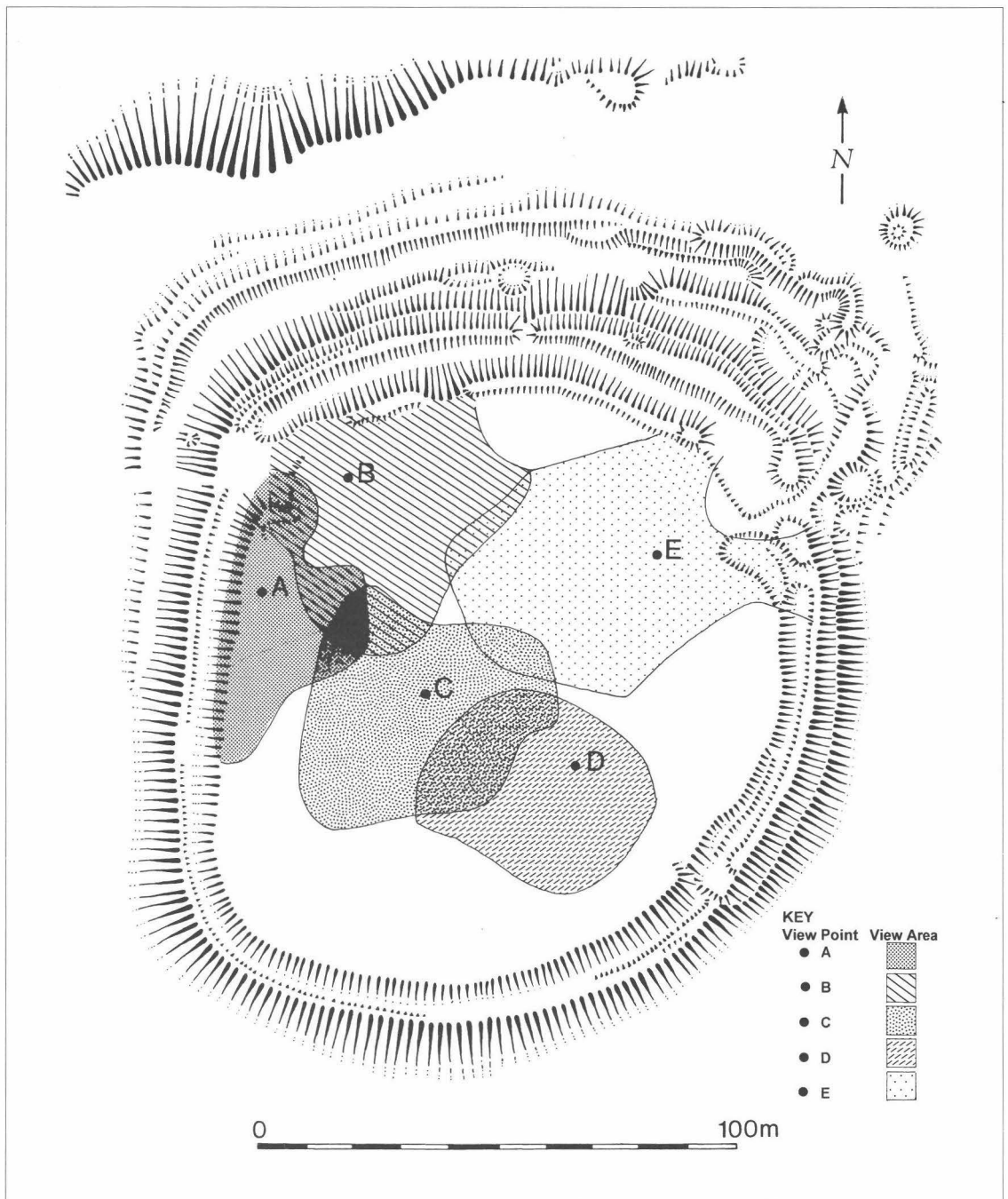


Fig. 9. Caburn intra-site 'visibility map'. The map plots the maximal distance of five optimal points (A-E) from which a person's head and shoulders (height of person used was 1.65 m) can be fully seen by someone 1.50 m tall.

places for 'ritual' deposition noted by Hill (1994) for Wessex settlement enclosures, and by Bowden and McOmish (1987) for Wessex hillforts. The importance of height at the Caburn (Fig. 8) may have something to do with the view from the outside. The Caburn is a domed hill. Looking at the Caburn from the outside, the ramparts are situated well below the crown of the hill and the locations of many of the pits are extremely visible. From the inside, by contrast, the Caburn offers visibility over very short distances (Fig. 9). Indeed, from the top, virtually nothing can be seen of the 'ramparts' and lower parts of the site. Likewise, from the entrances there is minimal visibility into the centre of the site. Whatever meaning we ascribe to the pit deposits at the Caburn, they provide the interesting topographic paradox that from the inside what would 'appear' to be a private act of deposition, is actually a highly public action to any observer outside the site, albeit one situated at a distance.

#### DEPOSITION TRADITIONS ON SUSSEX MIDDLE IRON AGE SETTLEMENTS AND 'HILLFORTS'

##### SETTLEMENTS

The large number of pits at the Caburn interestingly contrasts with the persistent lack of contemporary evidence for 'houses' on the site. Wilson's excavations in the 1930s located two putative round houses ('Hut Sites' A and B, Wilson 1939). These are associated with Late Bronze Age/Early Iron Age pottery and predate the Middle Iron Age rampart and dating of the majority of the pits on the Caburn. If we wish to consider the Caburn pit finds in the context of unequivocal settlement sites and their deposits we must look to other sites.

Evidence for Middle Iron Age settlements in Sussex is scant compared to that of the earlier 1st millennium BC (Hamilton forthcoming). For East and central Sussex the best data bases come from the Slonk Hill and Bishopstone. Slonk Hill (Hartridge 1978) lacks extensive stratigraphic details, but it is possible to deduce from the 18 excavated pits attributed to the Middle and Later Iron Age that querns and weights were placed in the lowermost parts of pits, also a horse skull and a weaving comb (pits 13, 19, 57 & 73). It is difficult to ascertain the exact stratigraphic position of the Bishopstone pit finds (Bell 1977: a total of 22 later Iron Age pits), but querns again occur on the base of pits (pits 228,

920, and possibly 737), and also in the enclosure ditch near to the entrance. The above patterning is not dissimilar to the Caburn's.

The Middle Iron Age sites of West Sussex are primarily located on the coastal plain, and lack a tradition of storage pits. Human skeletal remains have, however, been recognized on some of these sites. Middle Iron Age settlement deposits from Copse Farm, Oving, produced legs and skulls from three individuals (from the enclosure ditch: Bedwin & Holgate 1985). Nine fragments of human bone were recovered from North Bersted (from ditch 20, probably from a single skull, Bedwin & Pitts 1978, 339-40). The 'body parts' concerned again mirror the Caburn finds.

The evidence for 'formal' burials from these settlement sites, perhaps significantly, seems not to repeat these patterns. Articulated burials dating to the Middle Iron Age occur in two of the Slonk Hill pits (Hartridge 1978, 80) and one of the Bishopstone pits (Bell 1977, 78). The associated 'grave deposits' comprised mussel shells (grave 1, Slonk Hill), a shale bracelet, quern fragment, an involuted iron brooch and an ox sacrum (grave 2, Slonk Hill), and a chalk spindlewhorl and a bone object (burial 1, Bishopstone). None of these grave goods/deposits are particularly characteristic of the finds from pit and ditch deposits.

##### PROMINENT ENCLOSURES

The Middle Iron Age hillforts contemporary with the Caburn provide uneven data bases. Excavation of Cissbury has been very limited, but includes one Iron Age pit with a range of finds located stratigraphically on a section drawing (Curwen & Williamson 1931, pit 29, pls. III & V). Of note are an iron knife and quern fragment from the bottom 'pit third' (which mirrors the Caburn pattern), and two loomweights (mostly found on pit bases at the Caburn), and an iron rod from the middle 'pit third'. Evidence for Torberry's use in the Middle Iron Age comes from the excavation of the east entrance, but we have minimal evidence of the nature of use of its interior (Cunliffe 1976).

The Trundle provides more detailed data, specifically from six Iron Age pits within its interior (dug in spits and detailed in 'relic tables'), and from the east entrance (Curwen 1929). The pits produced similar finds to the Caburn and largely replicate the Caburn patterning of deposition. Human remains were found in the lower parts of pits (pit 3, middle

fill: a human cranium; pit 5, middle or bottom fill: part of a left human ulna; pit 6, middle or bottom fill: a left human femur). Pit 1 produced a small iron knife from its bottom 'third', while the bottom 'third' of pit 6 produced an iron spearhead and ferrule together with two chalk loomweights and possibly the left human femur noted above. The east gate area also produced part of a human jaw, together with the greater part of a rotary quern (deliberately? broken by fire), and a perforated boar's tusk from a gate post-hole (post-hole 9). At Harting Beacon hillfort the entrance gateway was dismantled in the Middle Iron Age (Bedwin 1979, 25; Hamilton & Manley 1997), and the post-holes were backfilled with deposits suggestive of a similar repertoire of special deposits, namely quern fragments, a boar's tusk, and human teeth.

### CONCLUSION

It is clear from the above that there is a multitude of items that can occur in both putative ritual and domestic contexts. The finds from the Westhampnett cemetery, for instance, included 'everyday' items of clothing and personal ornamentation (iron, and copper alloy brooches, bracelets, and a bone toggle), personal tools (iron razors/knives), and a latch-lifter or key (grave 2071). It is therefore difficult to ascribe meanings to deposits based *solely* on their context, or on their artefact type. What is more interesting is the repetition of specific types of deposition across the boundaries of overtly ritual and supposedly domestic contexts. This suggests that the symbolism of beliefs manifested itself at different scales of daily life and public ceremony.

With these comments in mind, the above review of pit deposits at the Caburn and related sites suggests the emergence in Sussex, by the Middle Iron Age, of centrally placed prominent enclosures where intensive structured deposition took place in pits and gateway entrance areas. In contrast to the observation that the greater proportion of Wessex hillfort pits were left to infill naturally (Fitzpatrick 1997b, 79), the majority of pits on Sussex hillforts appear to have been deliberately backfilled. A correlation between the visibility, from the outside, of the interiors of the enclosure sites and the loci of

'special' pit deposits, suggests that there was an element of overt public display/action involved in the deposition.

Highly special deposits include human remains, slighted and carefully placed weapons and tools, coins, and wild animal bones. More generally, recurrent patterns of deposition include querns placed on pit bottoms, and human remains combined with bird or wild animal bones and placed in the lower part of pit fills. While contemporary settlement sites partially mirrored these finds, the deposition of objects and animal remains was less intense. There was a lesser emphasis on tools, and weaponry was absent. Collectively this points to a duality of low-level 'everyday' rites and traditions of deposition on settlement sites versus more intense public and community ritual of prominent enclosures such as the Caburn.

It would seem that notably in the case of the Caburn we cannot merely abandon elderly archives, particularly when we are dealing with sites which remain potentially present in today's landscape. Further excavation is clearly part of understanding such sites. There is, additionally, the vastly untapped resource of the topographic emplacement of places of deposition. The latter is readily available to investigation in the present.

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