

# EXCAVATIONS ON HIGHDOWN HILL, 1947

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THE outbreak of war in September 1939 stopped the excavations on Highdown Hill, near Goring. An interim report on the incompleting work appeared in these Collections.<sup>1</sup> During the war military forces occupied the hill and erected a number of buildings within a barbed wire entanglement for which many posts were inserted into the ramparts and ditches of the Iron Age hill-fort. In 1947 the Ministry of Works invited me to watch the clearing up of the site with a view to obtaining as much archaeological information as possible. Owing to the extensive nature of the interference with the archaeological features of the hill, the local committee of the National Trust assented to my request for some further excavation while this work was in progress, and the contractors, Messrs. J. T. Mackley & Son, gave every assistance. For the sake of future archaeologists I have recorded on the general plan all the major disturbances made into ramparts, ditches, and the interior of the camp during the war years, together with the cuttings made for archaeological purposes in 1939 and 1947.

## *Cutting VI*

The machine-gun post in the southern defences had brought to light signs of timbering for the Iron Age rampart; but there was so much modern disturbance that I thought it wise to make a new cutting a little to the east of it in order to get a clean section through both ramparts and ditches and thus to solve, if possible, some problems left by the unfinished Cutting IV of 1939.<sup>2</sup> In Cutting VI<sup>3</sup> the outer ditch (*b*) appears much shallower than in Cutting IV.<sup>4</sup> An examination of the ground to the south of the camp shows the remains of a lynchet,

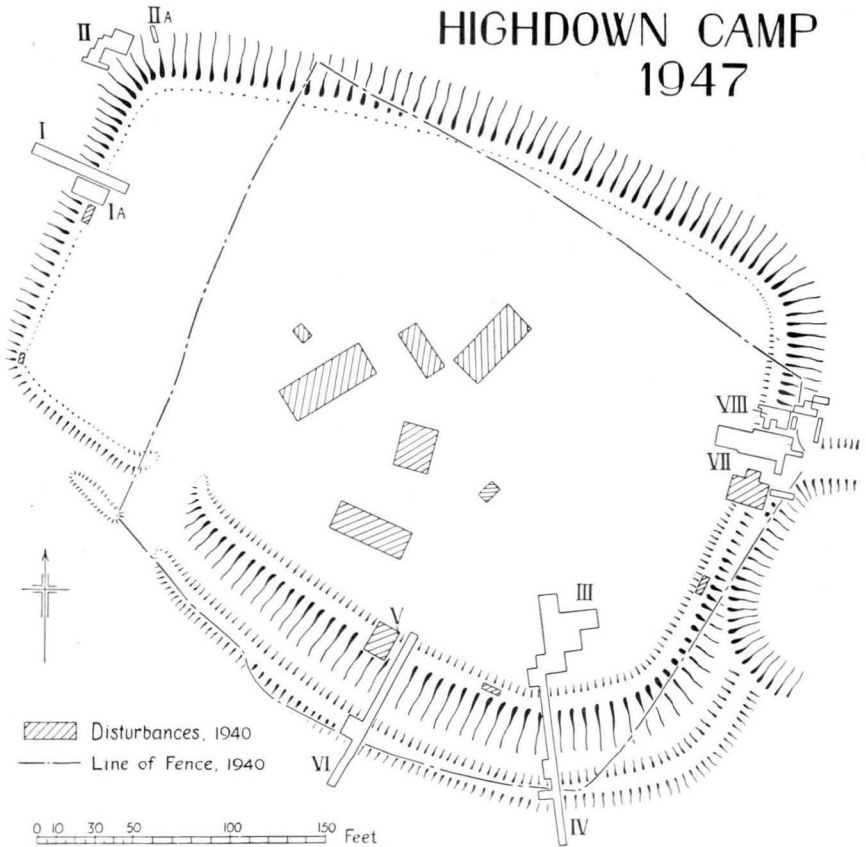
<sup>1</sup> *S.A.C.* LXXXI, pp. 173-203.

<sup>3</sup> Fig. 2.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 182-3.

<sup>4</sup> *S.A.C.* LXXXI, p. 177, Pl. IV.

running from east to west, which has cut into the most southerly parts of the camp and removed not only surface soil but some underlying chalk. The scratch



marks of the plough remained in the chalk to the south of the ditch in Cutting VI. At the point where Cutting IV was made, the rampart had turned slightly to the north-east and left the outer ditch in the field to the north of this main lynchet. For this reason the ditch was nearer its original depth. A trial cutting along the line where the war-time electric cable entered the camp in the

south-east confirmed this point. Unfortunately there existed no signs of dating material in any one of these three cuts into this ditch.

As a result of this year's excavations, paragraph 6 on page 183 of the 1939 report needs some revision. It includes a definite mis-statement overlooked in the hasty revision of war-time work. Later ploughing had not obliterated all signs of the outer ditch. The diagram shows it plainly. What has disappeared, however, is the make-up of the outer rampart. Mr. Holleyman, who was in charge of the work on this cutting, paid especial attention to the problems of this outer rampart. The chalk, immediately beneath the turf-line, is undoubtedly undisturbed weathered chalk except in those places where there are later Saxon graves. Moreover, the large post-holes shown in Pl. IV and in Pl. VII B<sup>1</sup> do not occur in or near Cutting VI. To test this conclusion search was made for a further 10 ft. to the west of the main cutting. This revealed further Saxon graves but no post-holes. Those in Cutting IV must have belonged to some local feature. The general gradient of the slope of the hill, the presence of the outer ditch, the contours of the land between the two ditches, all point to the existence of an outer rampart whose surface features have been removed, probably by later ploughing. The superficial remains on this south side of the camp suggested that these outer defences ended near the south-west corner. Further excavation at that point might yield more evidence, though the existence of an eighteenth-century windmill in that area may have destroyed the evidence, especially as there seems to have been a later entrance made there through the ramparts to give easy access to the mill. For the moment the problem of this outer rampart must remain unsolved. The chalk quarry has removed all evidence near the eastern gateway, and it certainly did not extend round the western side.

A comparison of the inner ditch and rampart, as revealed in Cutting VI, with the similar section in Cutting IV, confirms the main conclusions put out in

<sup>1</sup> *S.A.C.* LXXXI, pp. 177 and 184.

# HIGHDOWN 1947

## CUTTING VI

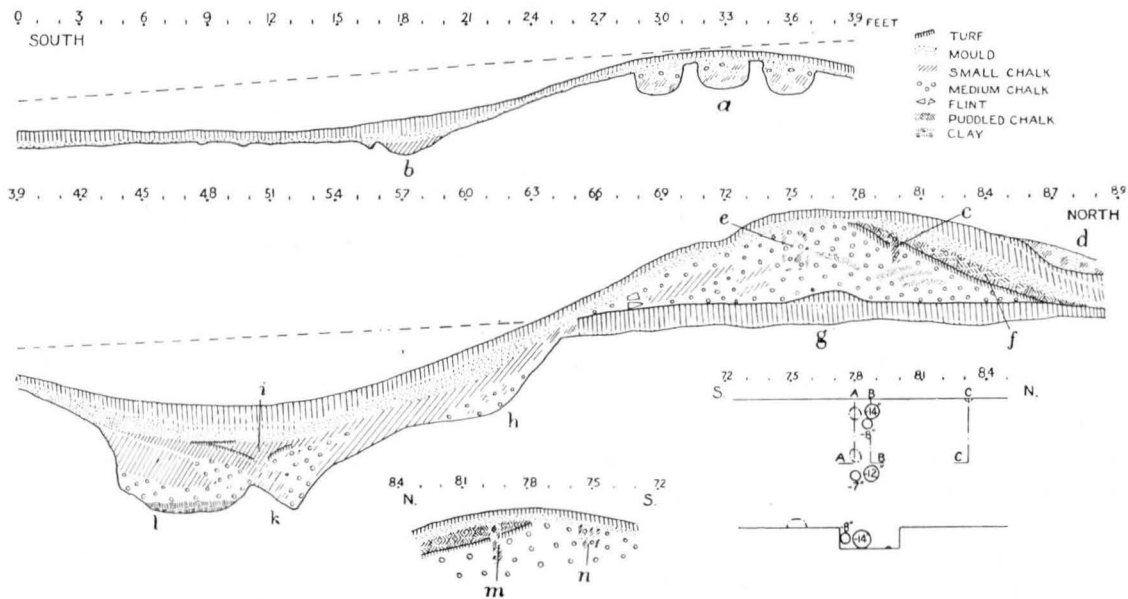


FIG. 2.

Mrs. GAH. and J.R.H.

1939. The chief doubts arose over the existence of the small recut ditch 3,<sup>1</sup> and the interpretation of 'ditch 4'. Since the 1939 report appeared, Professor Mortimer Wheeler has published his report on Maiden Castle which throws much light on Iron Age fortifications and helps greatly in the interpretation of the first two phases

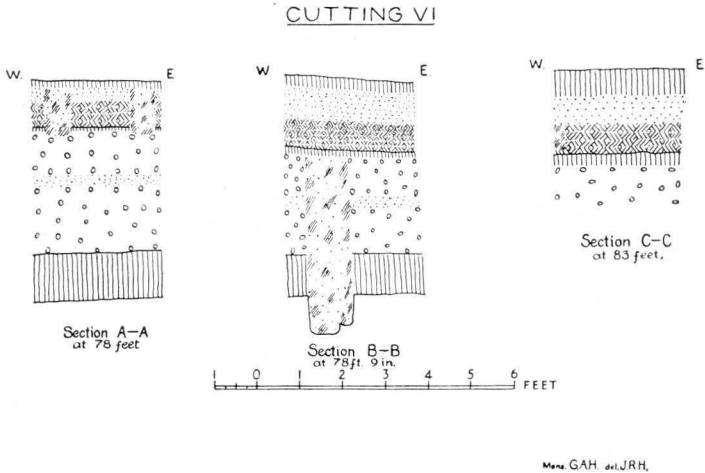


FIG. 3.

FIGS. 2 AND 3. [The small plan from 72' to 84' indicates positions of various post-holes and the sections through them shown in Fig. 3.] (a) Saxon graves; (b) outer ditch diminished by later ploughing; (c, e, m, n) post-holes in the remains of earlier ramparts—probably of Roman period; (f) trampled chalk, shown also in sections in Fig. 3; (g) turf line before erection of 1st rampart; (h) inner edge of 4th ditch, shallow and wide; (i) attempted recut, 3rd period; (k) 2nd ditch; (l) 1st ditch.

on Highdown. The first fortification of the hill, dated by the pottery found in 1939 to the beginning of Iron Age A 1, consisted of a wide, steep-sided, flat-bottomed ditch (l) separated from the first rampart by a berm.<sup>2</sup> The forward revetment was a wall of flint or chalk blocks laid in a channel without any post-holes so far as can be traced. The suggested post-hole in Cutting IV<sup>3</sup> is really the remains of a channel, which can be traced in other parts of the rampart where the later ditch has not

<sup>1</sup> S.A.C. LXXXI, p. 179, Pl. VI.B. [N.B. Caption should read 'Recut' not 'Recent'.]

<sup>2</sup> Figs. 2 and 10.

<sup>3</sup> S.A.C. LXXXI, p. 177, Pl. IV, P.H. 1.

cut it out. A line of timbers helped to retain the inner face of the rampart. In this position there are two series of post-holes close together. After the first posts had collapsed, the rampart remained neglected for some time. When the time for refortification came the builders dug into the tumble of the rampart and erected new posts practically on the line of the older ones and supported this second line with an earth ramp giving easy access to a walk just inside the breastwork.<sup>1</sup> The evidence suggests that there may not have been a ramp to the first rampart. The early line of posts nowhere shows above the original turf-line, whereas the second line is traceable well up into the filling of the rampart. There is, of course, the possible alternative solution that the clearing of the earth for the second line of post-holes, for which Cutting VI gives evidence, may have removed all traces of the earlier posts above turf level. Evidence from the gateway, to be discussed later, proves that this rebuilding of the rampart took place at the same time as the digging of the second ditch.

On the south side of the fort the makers of this second ditch dug partly into the filling of the first ditch and partly into the remains of the berm in front of the rampart. This time they cleared out a V-shaped ditch with a rather steep-sided bottom and dressed up their new material into a sloping or 'glacis' front on lines similar to those suggested by Professor Mortimer Wheeler in his Maiden Castle Report. At Highdown this would give a 25-ft. steep scramble from the ditch to the breastwork.

The small V-shaped depression in Cutting IV, shown again at *i*, in Cutting VI,<sup>2</sup> could hardly represent the surface after the silting up of the second ditch. It stands in the wrong relationship to the bottom of that ditch. It is too insignificant to represent a full recutting of a third ditch. In this year's work there was no scatter of A 2 pottery similar to that found in 1939, but after the end of the excavation two visitors, scratching about in

<sup>1</sup> Signs of this remain as trampled chalk or clay; cf. Figs. 2, *f* and 3, Sections A-A'; B-B'; C-C'; and *S.A.C.* LXXXI, p. 174, Pl. II.

<sup>2</sup> Fig. 2.

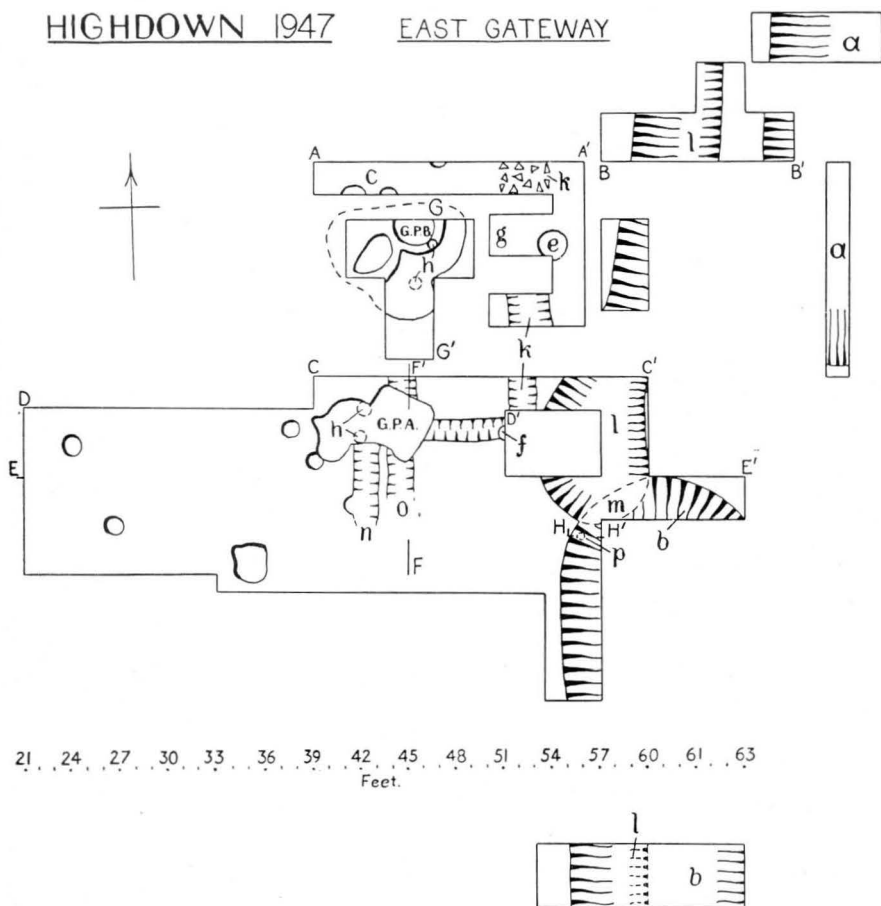


FIG. 4. (*a* and *b*) Ends of 1st ditch; (*e*) post-holes, 1st period; (*e* and *f*) post-holes in revetment; (*g*) place where 'dirty' remains of rampart extension meets clean white chalk of 1st rampart; (*h*) post-holes for 2nd rampart; (*k*) channel of flints for rampart face; (*l*) 2nd ditch; (*m*) 2nd ditch cuts across original track to the end of the 1st ditch; (*o*) channel connected with 2nd rampart; (*p*) charred post supporting causeway across 1st ditch.

the side of the cutting to remove some animal bones, pulled out of the south edge of this recut two sherds of Marnian pottery like those, from a similar position, discussed in the previous report.<sup>1</sup> This evidence confirms the original suggestion that there was the beginning of a refortification at the time of the Marnian Invasion,

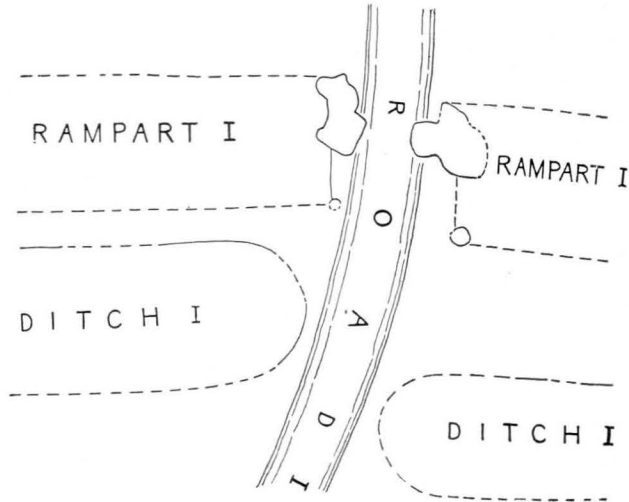


FIG. 5. SKETCH PLAN OF FIRST GATEWAY.

about 250 B.C., after which the camp was deserted until comparatively late in Roman times.

The main reason for the new full cutting was to investigate again the problem of the fourth ditch. Some critics had held that this did not represent a ditch but was the result of later ploughing. I felt that I had probably been prejudiced by my experience the previous year in excavating The Caburn and comparing it with Oldbury in Kent and Cissbury. The long arguments about Roman flat-bottomed ditches and the discovery of flanged bowls and other late-third-century pottery in the top of the rampart and the top filling of the ditch in 1939, and the presence of a Roman hut inside the camp had perhaps led me astray here. I was, therefore, particularly glad to entrust the work here to Mr. Holleyman,

<sup>1</sup> *S.A.C.* LXXXI, pp. 182 and 194, Fig. 4.



who had been inclined to accept the view of the critics. He now agrees with me that later ploughing could hardly have cut out the intermediate turf-lines in the way shown in the sections, and have scooped out a depression like *h*. Moreover, plough scratches were not evident here as they were in the chalk to the south of the outer

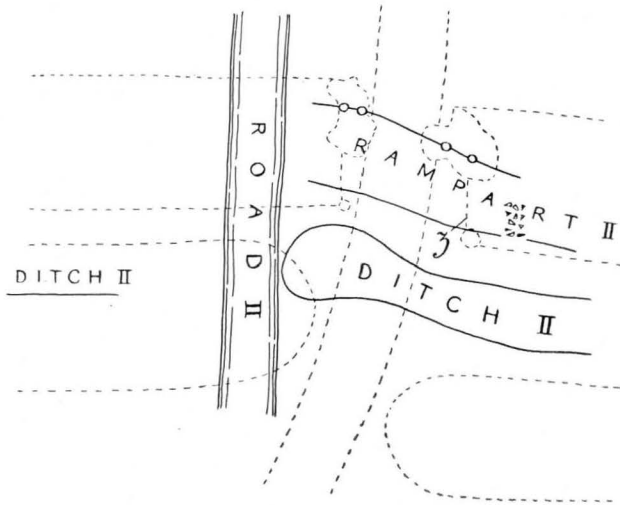


FIG. 6. SKETCH PLAN OF SECOND ENTRANCE—all evidence on south side destroyed in 1940-5 (see Fig. 1).

rampart. The main rampart also shows signs of re-fortification with a new set of timbers set into the top of the remains of the decayed rampart and penetrating the old turf-line and the previous walk behind the breast-work.<sup>1</sup> No Roman pottery was found this year in significant positions.

#### *The Gateway (Fig. 4)*

During the war the military had removed over 20 ft. of the rampart to the south of the east gateway to build a guard-house, had laid down two concrete tracks through the entrance, and dug numerous holes both for the barbed-wire entanglement and for rubbish-pits.

<sup>1</sup> Fig. 2, *c, e, m,* and *n,* and similarly situated P.H.G. in Cuttings II and IV S.A.C. LXXXI, Pl. II and Pl. IV.

Under these circumstances I decided to recover what information remained possible during the clearing up and reconstitution of the rampart ends. For the extremely difficult work here I owe a lot to Mr. Burstow and Mr. E. Hockings who obtained excellent results by their very careful attention to the minutest detail. Gradually we began to sort out the remains of each period from the Iron Age down to the 1939-45 War.

## HIGHDOWN 1947

## CUTTING VIII

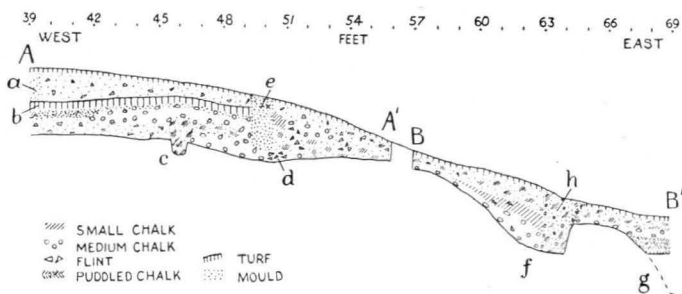
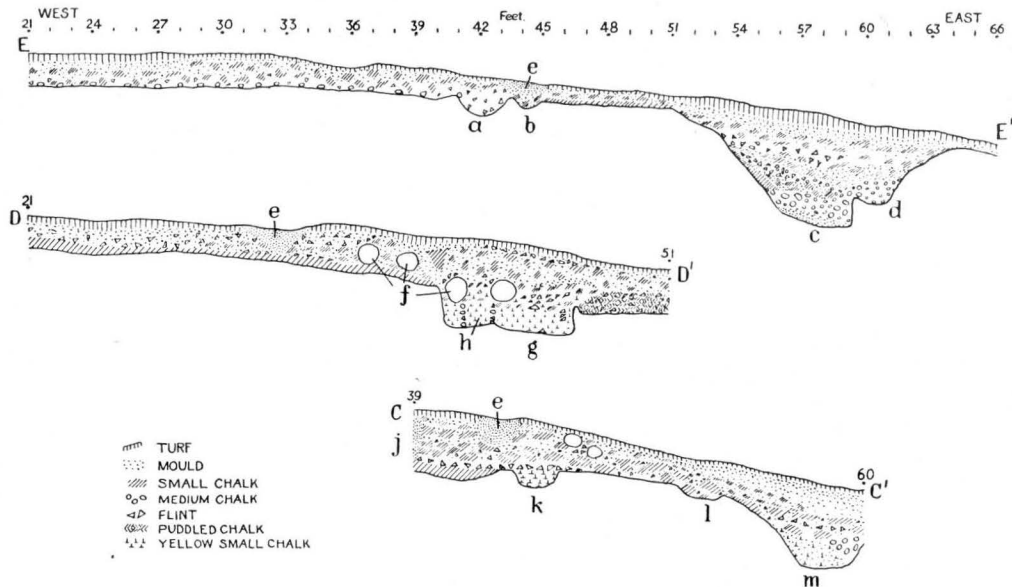


FIG. 7. SECTIONS A-A' AND B-B' TO THE NORTH OF FIRST GATEWAY. (a) Remains of 1st rampart; (b) remains of 2nd rampart; (c) post-hole, 1st period; (d) flints of 2nd rampart; (f) 2nd ditch; (g) inner edge of 1st ditch.

All work had to be done on the north side of the existing roadway into the camp. By sheer good fortune it turned out that the first gateway had been a few feet to the north and lay buried under a later extension of the rampart.

To the north of a base line running along the middle of the existing track, squares were stripped to reveal the remains of a flint road cut into by the modern concrete tracks. This road was easily traceable from inside the camp between the ends of the ramparts and eventually over the end of the first ditch but between the ends of the second ditch. This gave the first clue to the existence of an earlier gateway and determined the method of working.

Between 41 ft. and 45 ft. there came to light two



Mesa GPB. and JRH.

FIG. 8. SECTIONS IN GATEWAY (see Fig. 4). E-E' along northern edge of existing track into camp. (a and b) Channels marked *m* and *o* in Fig. 4, connected with 2nd period; (c) 2nd ditch; (d) end of 1st ditch. D-D' through S. gatepost hole of 1st entrance. (f) Rabbit holes; (g) main gate post-hole; (h) post-holes for timbering of 2nd rampart. C-C' through 1st gateway. (k and l) Channels connected with 2nd rampart; (m) 2nd ditch.

gullies separated by a chalk baulk, running in a northerly direction until they reached the first great post-hole,<sup>1</sup> which occupied an area from 39 ft. to 46 ft. 6 in. The clearing of this showed that it had contained two large posts well packed with flints and rammed chalk in its early period. Into this filling, in line with the gullies just described, had been cut later small post-holes (*h*) for posts set up when the rampart had been carried across the original gateway. From the eastern end of the main post-hole a channel filled with flints leads to a post-hole (*f*). This channel and the flints formed part of the revetment of the rampart. To the west of the gate-post hole at 37 ft. lay the skeleton of a Saxon child of six months, buried with a glass bead.

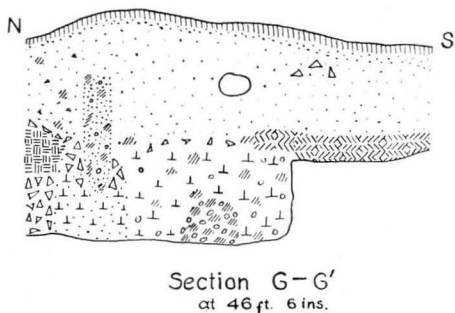
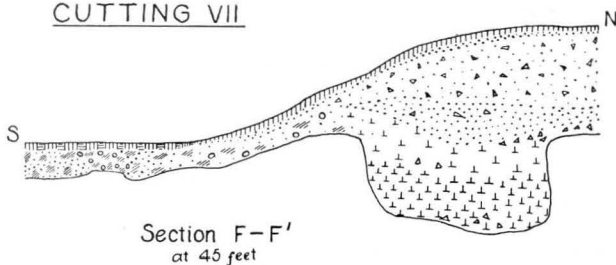
Further excavation to the north exposed the remains of the other post of the main gate together with ample signs of the track passing through it. Here again the filling contained packing for more than one main post, and signs of later small posts (*h*) inserted after the main gate had gone out of use. At *g* it was possible to see the line where the dirty material used for the extension of the rampart lay over the clean white chalk of the first rampart. Post-hole *e* seems to compare with *f* and be connected with the revetment holding the first ramparts back from the gateway. When the second rampart was extended a channel (*k*) was cut to take the foundations of a flint wall used to help retain the new rampart on the rather awkward slope above the new V-shaped ditch *l*.

A series of cuttings displayed the relationship of the two ditches near the gateway. The edge and end of the first flat-bottomed ditch (*a*) were found to the north of the gateway where it was separated from the original rampart by a wider berm than on the other side of the gateway (*b*). This had the effect of making the track enter the camp at a slight angle to the line of the rampart.<sup>2</sup> Also, for the same reason, the second ditch to the north of the gateway was cut entirely out of the solid chalk of the berm and did not interfere with the filling of the first ditch. Cutting VIII, sections A-A' and

<sup>1</sup> G.P.A., Fig. 4.

<sup>2</sup> Fig. 5.

CUTTING VII



- ||||| TURF
- ..... MOULD
- ////// SMALL CHALK
- MEDIUM CHALK
- ◁▷ FLINT
- ⟨⟩ PUDDLED CHALK
- + + + YELLOW SMALL CHALK
- ⊠⊠ CHARCOAL
- ≡≡≡ CLAY



FIG. 9. SECTION F-F' (see Fig. 4). Section across 2nd entrance on to rampart showing rampart over 1st period gatepost hole. G-G' across gatepost hole B of 1st period, showing 2nd rampart and post-hole for timbering of 2nd rampart. H-H' showing burnt post *p* of the causeway carrying 2nd roadway over 1st ditch.

B-B',<sup>1</sup> illustrates these points, showing the solid chalk between the second ditch *f* and the inner edge of the original ditch at *g*.

The new ditch was carried right across the original entrance and its end just cut (*m*) into the end of the original ditch coming from the southern face of the camp.<sup>2</sup> Section E-E' shows this well, where the new ditch at *c* can be seen cutting into the lip of the old ditch at *d*.<sup>3</sup> The second entrance presents some problems. The track could be traced over the first ditch into the interior of the camp, but there is little evidence of a gateway.<sup>4</sup> The only hint comes from the two channels *n* and *o*, where the second line of revetment posts crosses the original gateway, and these may be connected with the rampart rather than the gateway. There is the possibility that this second track was originally made when the site was an open village. In Cutting II of the 1939 excavation, in the north-west corner of the camp there was a similar flint trackway carried over the silted-up ditch. Post-holes were found going down the side of the ditch to the solid chalk.<sup>5</sup> Remains of a charred post (*p*) were found in position at the gateway in the 1947 excavation resting almost against the side of the ditch at 56-ft. mark.<sup>6</sup> Whatever gate there was in this period must have been a simple affair requiring no major post-holes.

### *Conclusions*

1. In the areas examined in 1947 there were no signs of the Late Bronze Age occupation found under the western rampart in 1939.

2. The first fortification made at the outset of the Iron Age A I period during the fifth century B.C. consisted of a single rampart separated from a wide steep-sided, flat-bottomed ditch by a berm. This rampart had a flint or chalk block wall as its forward revetment. A line of timbers helped to retain the inner face of the rampart, but there probably existed no ramp. The

<sup>1</sup> Fig. 7, cf. 4.

<sup>2</sup> Fig. 4.

<sup>3</sup> Fig. 8.

<sup>4</sup> Figs. 2 and 6.

<sup>5</sup> *S.A.C.* LXXXI, Pl. II, p. 174.

<sup>6</sup> Fig. 4 and Sect. H-H' in Fig. 9.

major post-holes found under the later rampart served for the timbering of the first gateway, through which a slightly curving track entered. The ends of the original ditch were not directly in line.

3. After the ditch had silted up and the rampart had decayed, but still in Iron Age A 1 times, the inhabitants

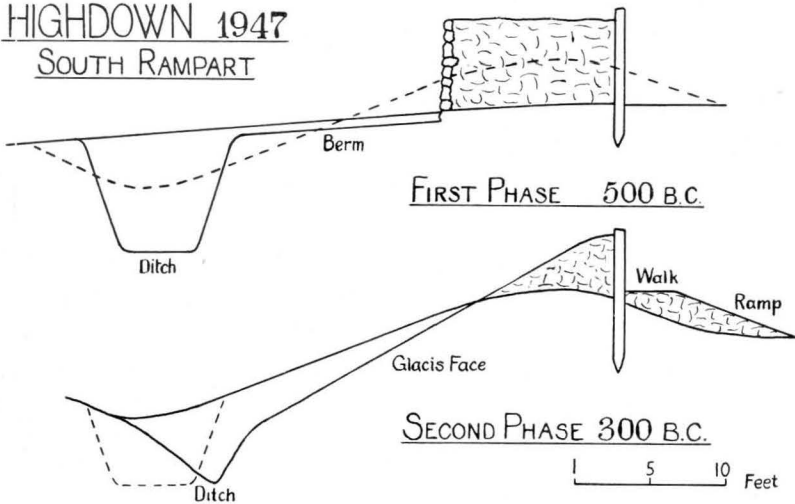


FIG. 10. SKETCH RECONSTRUCTIONS OF FIRST AND SECOND PERIOD RAMPARTS AND DITCHES OF INNER SOUTHERN DEFENCES.

reconstructed the camp. They dug into the remains of the rampart, inserted new timbers practically on the line of the previous ones, erected a ramp, and built a walk along it, inside the breastwork. They cut a fresh V-shaped ditch, and gave the earthwork a sloping or glacis front very similar to the one at Maiden Castle. At the same time they carried the rampart from the north across the original entrance and used a new trackway which crossed the silted-up end of the first ditch by a causeway supported by timbers. No certain signs remain of the type of gateway they used.

4. At the time of the Marnian Invasion (*c.* 250 B.C.) there seems to have been some attempt at a refortification as indicated by the slight recut into the filling of the second ditch.

5. The date of the construction of the second ditch and rampart on the south side remains unsolved.

6. At some date within Roman times, probably at the time of the disturbances at the end of the third century, there was a further refortification when the rampart was heightened, a palisade built, and the wide shallow ditch constructed.

7. Finally, in 1940-4, most of the camp was surrounded by a barbed-wire entanglement; guard-houses, slit trenches, dug-outs, and machine-gun posts were built to protect the radar station erected within the camp.

### *Acknowledgements*

I express my grateful thanks to the many people who made this excavation possible; to the Worthing Archaeological Society and its officers for making the arrangements and for financing the work; to the Ministry of Works, the National Trust, and Worthing Corporation for permission to dig; to Messrs. Guiton and Parrott for the survey; to Messrs. Merrifield and Roberts for photography; to Mr. J. R. Hockings for his drawings for publication; to the following, who with many others helping occasionally, carried out the main work on the hill, the Misses Adams and Groombridge, Messrs. Amphlett, Clifford, Fellows, French, Hockings, Houlder, Merrifield, and Myerscough; finally to Messrs. Burstow and Holleyman who took charge of the two main cuttings and did the main drawings on the site.