

CHAPTER 9

THE INNER AND OUTER EARTHWORKS

EARLIER PERCEPTIONS

EARLY UNDERSTANDING

The analysis of the complex defences surrounding Silchester has a long history. While they were noted by earlier antiquaries (Kempe 1833, 123), Maclauchlan conducted the first comprehensive survey in 1850 in preparation for a Royal Archaeological Institute meeting in Oxford, after which the members ventured out to Silchester, armed with a freshly printed plan showing both the town itself and the ‘detached lines of intrenchment in the neighbourhood’ superimposed upon the local topography (FIG. 3.6: Maclauchlan 1851, 227). Comparing these earthworks to hillforts Maclauchlan naturally concluded that the outer earthworks were of British origin in contrast to the Roman walls, and this became the dominant narrative surrounding the defences.

Once the Antiquaries’ excavations got underway, Fox guided visitors around, expanding on his idea of the site as a Celtic *oppidum*, with the Romans later adapting the settlement to their own purposes (Anon. 1891c). This narrative was elaborated by Karslake following his excavations in Rampier Copse around 1909 and on his supposed south-east gateway through the Outer Defences in 1912. He envisaged the British *oppidum* as a series of concentric defences, with the inner polygon having the Roman wall built upon it; the outer earthworks forming a ring about 90 m out; then a roadway around; and finally an outer circuit about 2,290 m from the centre, all evident in relics in the landscape fossilised in the line of footpaths, field edges and parish boundaries: ‘not by a ditch and vallum but by a broad track or road, some seventy yards across in places today – a “broadway” – as it was still termed in the seventeenth century. This can be traced today on the north-west and south of the line where it is called “The String”. The whole area enclosed some 4,200 acres’ (Karslake 1920). He revisited this idea 14 years later (Karslake 1933). His interpretation of a multivallate Silchester was never taken up in the mainstream literature and has generally been considered to be somewhat speculative, not helped by his imaginative fieldwork descriptions combined with a lack of published plans or sections of his various excavations.

The next attention that the outer earthworks received was from Cotton, where the results of her 1938–9 excavations, aided by Wheeler, provoked consternation. The Hampshire Field Club reported their alarm at the results that were being unearthed: ‘These excavations have frankly upset the prevailing ideas of the origin and dates both of the stone walls of the later city, and of the outlying earthworks, the latter of which had been attributed to the Belgae, and the reign of Commius, c. 50 BC. When tested by the spade, these earthworks had given no earlier date from pottery evidence than AD 61’ (Anon. 1941–3). Many now wondered where the supposed *oppidum* signified by the inscription CALLEV on the Iron Age coins really was if no earthworks could be attributed to it.

BOON’S INTERPRETATION

Knowledge of the defences was complicated by St Joseph’s discoveries by aerial photography of the ‘Inner Earthwork’ and an extension to the ‘Outer Earthwork’. Boon set out to investigate

these in the 1950s, and in doing so managed to date the new Inner Earthwork to the conquest or earlier; he also dismissed Cotton's Neronian or later dating of the Outer Earthwork and pushed it back a little earlier to the period he associated with the Cogidubnian client kingdom.

Boon created a simple developmental narrative around his interpretation of the earthworks (Boon 1969), with a slight variant of it appearing in Boon (1974, 38–46):

- **Period 1: down to the expulsion of Tincomarus**, where the Frith, Rampier Copse earthwork and Flex ditch might represent early occupation (see FIG. 9.8).

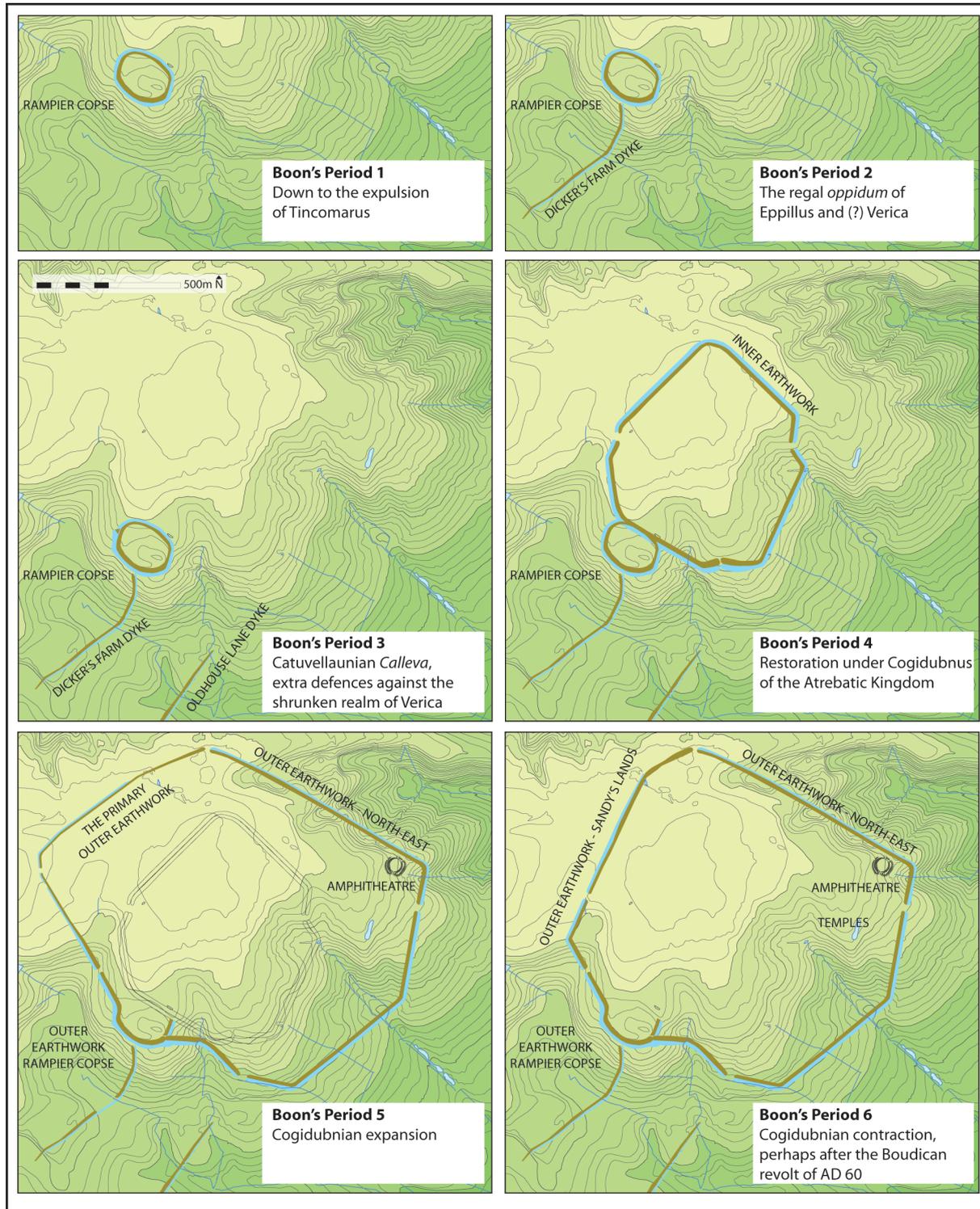


FIG. 9.1. Boon's historical interpretation of the development of the earthworks.

- **Period 2: the regal *oppidum* of Eppillus and (?) Verica**, starting around A.D. 5–10, with Eppillus rebelling against his brother Tincomarus and inscribing CALLEV on his coins. The tension between brothers leading to the provision of the outlying Dicker's Farm Dyke to the south-west of the town.
- **Period 3: Catuvellaunian *Calleva*, where Epaticcus and perhaps Caratacus held reign**, reinforcing the defences facing the shrunken realm of Verica to the south-east with the construction of the Oldhouse Lane Dyke.
- **Period 4: restoration of the Atrebatian kingdom under Cogidubnus**, when the Inner Earthwork was built enclosing 32.5 ha, with three gates to the east, west and south aligning with where the Roman roads were to come in.
- **Period 5: expansion with the construction of the Outer Earthwork** (95 ha).
- **Period 6: post-Boudican contraction** (86 ha), cutting off the westerly projection, with the ditch being re-cut and a flint revetment added later.

Subsequently, Fulford's work in the 1980s cast significant doubt upon the existence of much of the eastern circuit, which had been questioned by others previously. Rapid machine trenches revealed no traces of the hypothesised Outer Earthwork to the east or to the north. This just left the Sandy's Lands and Rampier Copse earthworks cutting off the plateau from the west. Of these, Fulford summed up where this left general opinion: 'the date of the outer earthworks on the northern and western sides is still not certain, but it is very probable that they lie within the late Iron Age' (Fulford 1984, 79–83), making them earlier than either Boon who had placed them in the Cogidubnian era, or Cotton who had believed them later still. This earlier dating was not on the basis of any fresh evidence at this stage; nonetheless this is where orthodoxy has subsequently rested (e.g. Wachter 1995, 274; Wilson 2006a, 12). Fresh evidence came later when Fulford and Timby re-examined the earlier pottery from Boon's trenches, and moved the suggested date of the Inner Earthwork back from the Cogidubnian kingdom to the turn of the millennium, with Fulford associating it with Tincomarus' reorganisation of the *oppidum* (Fulford 2003, 98).

THE EVIDENCE

The survey of views shows a perplexing mix of a desire to see these earthworks as Iron Age, which the Inner Earthwork now seems assured to be, while at least some of the evidence suggests a post-Boudican construction date for part of the Outer Earthwork. It also reveals scepticism

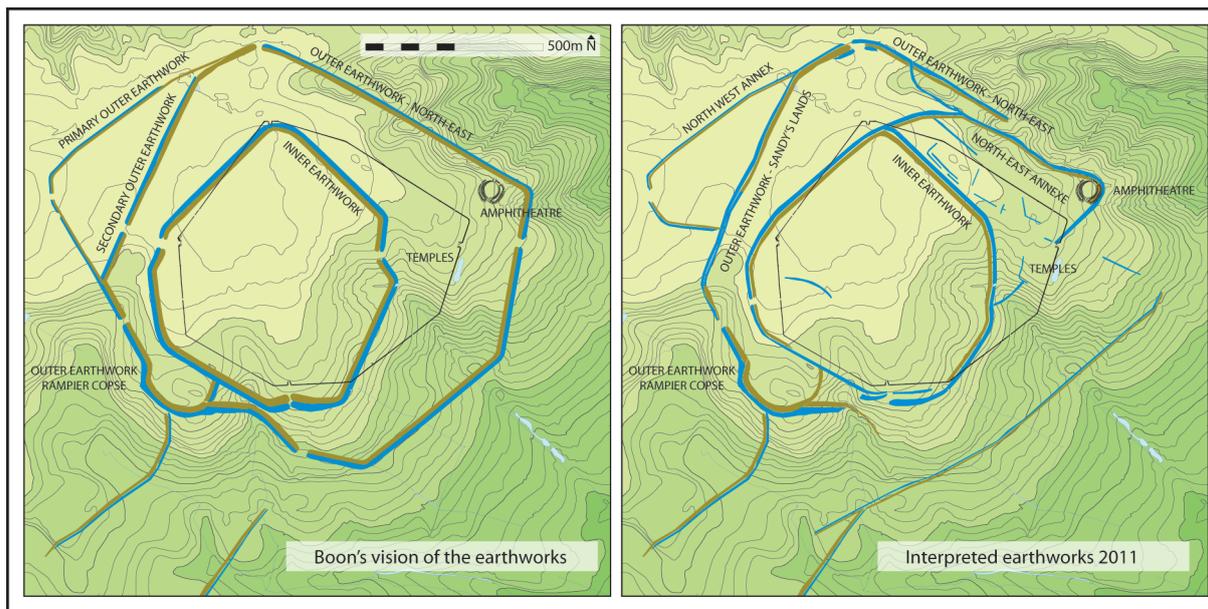


FIG. 9.2. The earthworks as reconstructed by Boon and our current understanding.

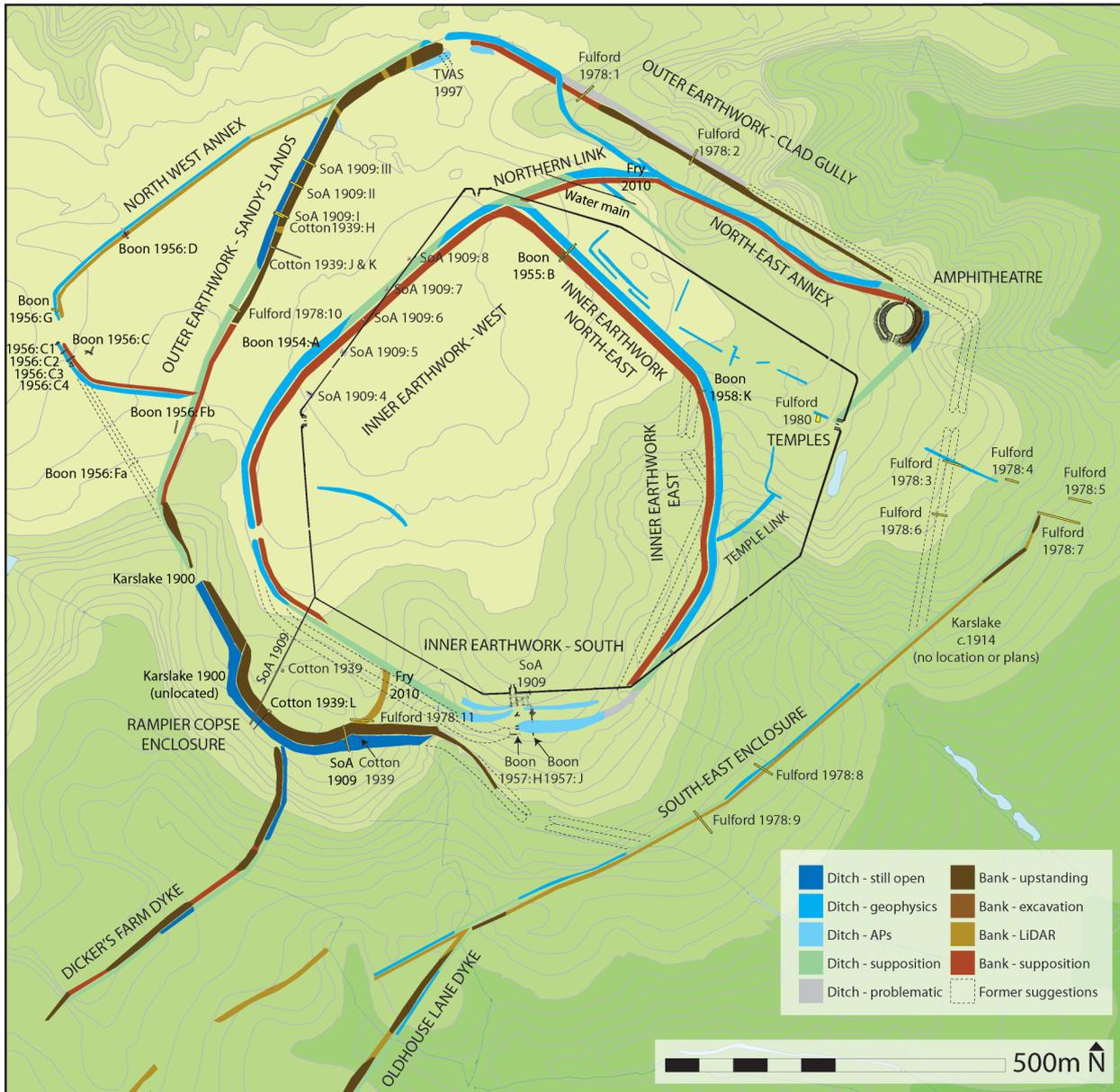


FIG. 9.3. The location of interventions on the Inner and Outer Earthworks, and the sources of evidence for our current understanding.

over whether various sections of the earthworks existed at all or were convenient interpolations or extrapolations.

In order to unravel the complexities, each section of earthwork will be examined in turn, if only because the survey in this volume has added to the complexity and similarly questioned some of the perceived courses of the earthworks. FIG. 9.2 compares previous received wisdom as represented by Boon, to the evidence we have now. FIG. 9.3 identifies the evidence for the outline of the earthworks as currently known (from excavations, geophysics, earthworks, LiDAR and aerial photography), and the nomenclature that has been used throughout this volume to identify them. Below, each section of the earthworks has been dealt with in turn, citing the evidence for their form and date; after which the evidence is collated to provide an alternative interpretation of the development of the earthworks. Sections and profiles of those excavated have been reproduced to scale in FIG. 9.4.

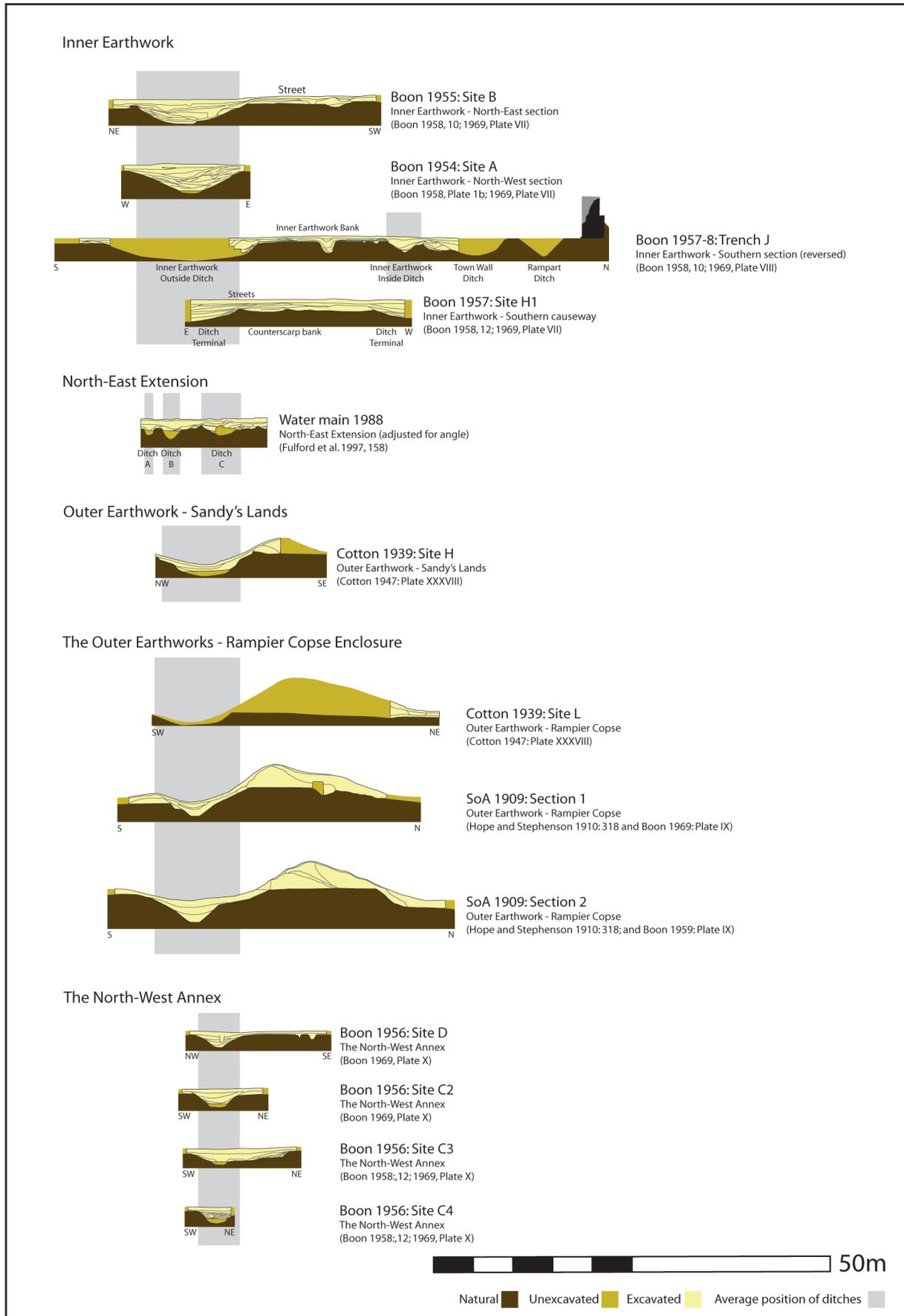


FIG. 9.4. Sections and profiles of the Inner and Outer Earthworks.

THE INNER EARTHWORK – NORTH-EAST

HISTORY OF INTERVENTIONS

- | | |
|------|---|
| 1899 | Unrealised exploration within Insula XXIIa (St John Hope and Fox 1900, 98–101). |
| 1955 | Trench B (Boon 1969, 6–9) and (Boon 1958a, 13–14). |
| 1958 | Trench K (Boon 1969, 9–10, pls Vc, VII). |

DESCRIPTION AND DATING EVIDENCE

The ditch was first dug without realising it by the Antiquaries when they excavated what they believed to be a large cesspit, 3.9 m deep of uncertain limits, in the south-east quarter of Insula XXIIa. Their excavation spread over more than 6.1 m square, and they said it contained: ‘a good many fragments of pottery, but not in sufficient number to enable whole vessels to be recognised from them, and at the bottom was a stratum of animal bones, below which was a malodorous layer of decayed animal and vegetable mater’ (St John Hope and Fox 1900, 99–100).

Within the town the northern section of the Inner Earthwork was first identified from aerial photographs by St Joseph, which was followed by Boon’s excavations examining the ditch and a hypothesised eastern inturned entrance. While he found the ditch, there was no clear evidence for an entrance-way to the east, though there was so much masking activity from the Roman deposits that one could have existed.

Boon Trench B crossed Insulae XXIII and XXIIa, showing the Inner Earthwork ditch to be *c.* 13.1 m wide, with sloping sides and a flat bottom 4.8 m across 3.4 m below the modern surface; the internal bank was 13.7 m wide. There was black organic material at the bottom of the ditch, which had been backfilled with Layers III then IV. III was clean gravel suspected to be from a counterscarp bank, with earthy seams near the base; within III was lots of material including: ‘un-Romanized native wares, five pieces of sigillata, two early “one-piece” brooches, a small piece of human cranium, part of a shale armlet, and a lump of heavy iron-furnace slag. The samian (all plain ...) is Claudio-Neronian at the latest, in view of the absence of ascertainably later varieties of coarse pottery, it is difficult to date the layer later than *c.* A.D. 60 at the outside’ (Boon 1969, 6). Layer IV then came from the bank side and included more material. The dating of this is no later than the Flavian period, and it was sealed by a part of the street-grid. So Boon considered the dating in harmony with Cotton’s dating of the street system to A.D. 90–120 (Cotton 1947, 127) (the road development is discussed pp. 390–4).

Boon Trench K was dug to see if there was an entrance-way through the Inner Defences on alignment with the later Roman road (the main east–west route), but there is a problem here. The location of the trench, as transcribed on his plans of the town, makes it clear it was significantly west of the actual location of the Inner Earthwork as revealed by the geophysics. Boon’s excavation cut through many layers of the hard compacted gravel on the road, and only a small section was opened beneath (*c.* 4 x 1 m), and this appeared to be dipping down slightly to the east into a negative pre-road feature in the section (Boon 1969, pl. VII). However, according to his plan, the trench was on the east side of his hypothesised ditch, so should have been dipping down to the west, which it did not. Boon neglected to mention this. The trench was said to be unproductive of material and discussion of it was kept short. As it happens, the dipping down to the east is exactly what one would expect given the revised location of the Inner Earthwork from the fluxgate gradiometry from this project. So the Inner Earthwork ditch was found and there was not a causeway here for an entrance.

CONCLUSION

The organic matter at its base, followed by the fairly clean fill with ‘earthy seams’ near the base, suggests the ditch was open for an extended period of time. The dating evidence for a Claudio-Neronian infilling of the north-east section was provided by Boon’s Trench B, but there was no dating evidence for its creation.

THE INNER EARTHWORK – EAST

While the north-east side of the enclosure showed relatively clearly in St Joseph's aerial photographs, the east and south-east trajectories were not so obvious. Boon attempted to trace it through an early innovative, but unsuccessful, use of geophysics (p. 33), but his sample transects were too far to the west. The actual course is revealed in the fluxgate gradiometry from this survey. However, the more recent geophysics have revealed various features that can help date the infilling of this revised course of the ditch.

The Public Baths were constructed on top of, or cut into, the bank of the Inner Earthwork (if still standing), with the latrine situated in a perfect position to drain east into the Inner Earthwork ditch. At a later date the drainage was switched to come out of the west of the building. This may relate to early on when the Inner Earthwork was still open, and a later infilling of this relict defensive work. The dating of the Public Baths is generally thought to be early as the front portico was knocked down to build the new east–west road; but the continued use of the ditch as a drainage channel for the cess suggests this section remained open longer than the Claudio-Neronian section of Boon's Trench B.

This impression is supported by the line of a metalled roadway also appearing to curve and respect the line of the Inner Earthwork ditch in Insula XXXIIIb (Interior 17, p. 152), which suggests that when the road system was developed and extended out from the centre, this ditch was also still open. It can be noted that the Inner Earthwork is projected to meet the line of the later Town Rampart, where the South-West Gate (aka the Sluice Gate) was located. So it looks as if the ditch retained a function for some time of removing drained water from the Public Baths, as well as, at this point, from the *Mansio* bathhouse.

CONCLUSION

While we still do not have good dating evidence for the construction of the Inner Earthwork here, the south-east Inner Earthwork ditch remained open into the later first and second century to drain the Public Baths, perhaps until the Town Rampart and V-shaped Ditch were created.

THE INNER EARTHWORK – WEST

HISTORY OF INTERVENTIONS

- 1909 SoA 2–8 (St John Hope and Stephenson 1910).
- pre-1909 Karslake, unlocated near the south-west entrance (Karslake 1910).
- 1954 Trench A (Boon 1958a, 13; 1969, 5–6).

DESCRIPTION AND DATING EVIDENCE

To the north-west the Inner Earthwork passes at a slight angle under the later Town Wall. Without realising what they were excavating, many of the Antiquaries' trenches sampling the later Town Wall Ditches may have revealed evidence of the earlier enclosure. They are described in full in the section on the Town Wall. There were seven trenches between the West Gate and the North Gate, and within two of them the Wall sealed a 1.4 m deep black deposit (SoA 4 and 5) described as a 'great pond' or ditch. Alas the precise location of these trenches was never published. Trench 4 was said to be 30 m from the West Gate, which makes it set back too far from the ditch to be the 'Inner Earthwork', but Trench 5, which is not precisely located, could have struck it.

To the western side of the town the course is reasonably secure from geophysics and aerial photography down to the south-west entrance, though where the course disappears under the woods of Rampier Copse, the true line becomes harder to identify. There were excavations in the vicinity of the south-west gap by Karslake, but no useful details were published.

In Boon's Trench A, the Inner Earthwork ditch was 13.7 m wide with sloping sides and a flat bottom, 3.1 m across, 3.7 m below modern surface, and 1.2 m below the September water table.

Its fill included 'organic matter in quantity, but also horse, ox, pig, sheep, dog as well as oyster shells'. The pottery included Claudio-Flavian sigillata. The material from the very bottom was the earliest. This initial rapid silt was covered by a stagnant build-up in the ditch suggesting it had been open for a considerable period of time. The interim states the first deliberate filling, gravel from the former bank, was Flavian at the earliest, containing a fragment of a Dr. 27 samian cup. The penultimate fills (Layer IV) included two Flavian *aes* and an unworn dupondius of Trajan, mid-second-century Lezoux sigillata, and no necessarily later material. The final fills (Layer V) included worn sestertii of Marcus Aurelius and Faustina II.

CONCLUSION

The evidence of the stagnant build-up after the initial silting suggests a longer period open than Boon's chronological narrative for all the outer earthworks allowed. Boon's dating of the earliest material mentioned was Claudio-Flavian, while the infilling of the ditch from the penultimate layers appears to be late Flavian/Trajanic; later material in the top fill could have been infilling into the settled backfill.

THE INNER EARTHWORK – SOUTH

HISTORY OF INTERVENTIONS

- | | |
|--------|---|
| 1909 | SoA '1000 ft trench' (St John Hope and Stephenson 1910, 318; 1911, 264–5). |
| 1909 | Exploration of ditches south of gate (St John Hope and Stephenson 1910). |
| 1957–8 | Trenches H and J, south of the gate (Boon 1958a, 14–15; 1969, 10–11, 13–14). |
| 1978 | Excavation of corner of Town Wall and ditches (Fulford 1984, 27, 33–4, 58–9, 66). |

DESCRIPTION AND DATING EVIDENCE

The course of the Inner Earthwork becomes obscure from the west of the town round to the South Gate. Boon projected it passing through the pasture of the Rampier Copse field, but four factors militate against this suggestion: it could not be seen there in the geophysics, aerial photography or LiDAR; nor was it picked up by an excavation crossing the field. In 1909 the Society of Antiquaries dug a long trench from the south-west corner of the Town Wall to the Outer Earthwork, 'nearly a thousand feet' long; this is described in two written sources, though there are no published sections of the whole length (FIGS 6.50 and 59). Only the sections close to the Town Wall and through the Outer Earthwork rampart were published. It is probably not a coincidence that Cotton's excavation there in 1939 was adjacent and parallel to this trench, suggesting it was still only partly backfilled within the woods. The section is instructive in two respects: first, there was no mention of any significant finds from within the Rampier Copse enclosure (which correlates with the geophysics which show it being apparently empty); and secondly, if a major ditch *had* been found, one would have hoped it would have been recognised and commented upon.

A solution could be that the Inner Earthwork here is co-terminous with the line of the later Town Rampart and Wall earthworks. One possible clue suggesting this comes from Fulford's 1978 excavation at the south-west corner of the Wall. In his section he noted a Hadrianic gravel horizon (19) making a sharp dip as it headed towards where the later Rampart Ditch was to be dug (see Fulford's section F–G). This makes no sense, unless there was already a ditch or major excavated feature here; but it would make sense if the 'Inner Earthwork' ditch was co-terminous with the later Rampart Ditch at this point.

Around the South Gate the line of the Inner Earthwork and the southern entrance are no less problematic. An apparently clear trace from aerial photographs is neither matched by comparably clear fluxgate gradiometry nor earth resistance survey (see Exterior Sheet 21). There appears to be a wide variety of cuts and recuts creating a confusing jumble of signals. However, this is where the best dating evidence comes from, so the context needs to be unpicked with care.

One fundamental problem is that there is a major discrepancy in Boon's report meaning the precise location of some of his trenches cannot be relied upon. His overall trench location plan, the measurements in his text and the detailed drawing of Trench H all differ. The latter two are consistent with each other, but the overall location plan is the one most often reproduced, and trenches shift around on this, for example H4 is shown 9 m too far north. This level of inaccuracy makes matching up his results with the geophysics and the aerial photography (which has a similar margin of error in its plotting in places) a challenge.

Boon Trench J was the main north–south trench which radiated out from the Town Wall catching two ditches on its way: one 21.3–25.6 m, and another 41.0–60.7 m from the Wall's base. Boon mistakenly identified the inner one as being the Town Wall ditch. This interpretation can be rejected. It is significantly further out from the base of the Wall than in any of the other excavations undertaken (see FIG. 8.2). He interpreted the outer ditch as belonging to his Inner Earthwork. The aerial photographic interpretation, however, showed the 'Inner Earthwork' here as having two ditches on either side of a bank, and it is almost certainly these two ditches that Boon excavated. The locations work reasonably well (Bewley and Fulford 1996). The two parallel ditches with an earthwork in the middle make this boundary rather different in character to the Inner Earthwork to the north-east and north-west; perhaps because the Inner and Outer Earthwork have come together here, or perhaps this is just an elaboration around the southern entrance.

The notion that this feature dug by Boon as the 'Town Wall ditch' was actually an inner ring of the Inner Earthwork, if only as a gravel quarry, correlates with Boon's own description where he found early deposits in the lip of the ditch containing 'early micaceous cooking-pot, ... a small necked bowl very similar to specimens from below the bank of the Inner Earthwork or from Trench B' (Boon 1969, 11), and noticed a layer of 'black material' or black earth which had been seen elsewhere filling the interior of the Inner Earthwork up to its circuit.

Earlier occupation material providing a *terminus post quem* was found under the bank of the Inner Earthwork. No Roman vessels such as sigillata, amphora, Terra Nigra or Terra Rubra were found in the assemblage, except for two small sherds of butt-beaker; but it did include the bases of three pedestal urns of 'quoit' type, which Boon associated with Catuvellaunian penetration into the area, perhaps starting around A.D. 25. Corney re-dated this assemblage, thinking it might have a late Augustan *terminus post quem* (Corney 1984, 251). In the same volume Fulford also considered an even earlier date was possible; for him the absence of Gallo-Belgic and other imports was telling, and except for 'one scrap of butt-beaker ... and three other sherds of non-local, but probably British butt-beaker. Strictly, this material is sufficient to suggest a *terminus post quem* of c. 15/10 B.C. at the very earliest. Among the coarse wares the rarity of Silchester ware (exceedingly common in Claudio-Neronian deposits) and the comparative abundance of soapy (grog-tempered) fabrics was noted' (Fulford 1984, 233). This view was corroborated by Timby's re-examination of the material suggesting a date at the end of the first century B.C. or early first century A.D. for the construction of the earthwork (Fulford and Timby 2000, 308). A post-conquest Cogidubnian date as Boon originally hypothesised is very unlikely (*contra* Wachter 1995, 273–4).

Trenches H1–5 formed a series of east–west trenches at varying distances out from the Town Wall. Trench H1, the most southerly (probably 61 m south of the South Gate), established in Boon's interpretation an uncut causeway of natural between the two ditch terminals of the Inner Earthwork, with the Roman roadway passing slightly off-centre to the east, and with each re-metalling moving progressively further east (FIG. 6.62). The dark soil in the ditch terminal included four pieces of pre-Flavian samian and a Flavian Dr. 18 platter; however, these layers were not sealed. The conclusion reached was that the Roman road was not respecting and therefore post-dated the infilling of the Inner Earthwork. However, this trench is significantly south of the aerial photographic plot of the 'Inner Earthwork' and there is an ambiguity over whether these ditch terminals were the ends of the Inner Earthwork at all.

Trench H4 (probably 33.5 m from the South Gate, though shown closer in on some plans) was dug across the south road and supposedly the Inner Earthwork bank terminal, though little of the 'bank' appeared here at all, which given the ambiguity of its location might not be a

problem. What we can say from the excavation is that the road overlay a black occupation surface associated with a number of post-holes and a small construction slot. Pottery, including a Dr. 36 cup, was indicative of a Flavian date, again suggesting a *terminus post quem* of the Flavian period for the street system.

The fieldwalking data by Corney showed that the Claudio-Neronian pottery was largely delimited by the Inner Earthwork, suggesting it was extant by then; this was also the case for the pre-Claudian pottery, except for a slight scatter south of this line along the now filled-in or ploughed-out return of the Rampier Copse enclosure (see Exterior Sheet 21; Fulford 1984, 79–83).

CONCLUSION

The most recent assessment of the dating of the Inner Earthwork construction here is at the end of the first century B.C. or early first century A.D. from material sealed by the bank. Because Trench J did not bottom the Inner Earthwork, and was too far out and was actually cutting another feature, we do not have a date for the infilling of the ditch here. Ultimately the fine detail of all of the ditches south of the South Gate is very poorly understood.

THE NORTH-EAST ANNEX

HISTORY OF INTERVENTIONS

- 1988 Water main (Fulford *et al.* 1997, 158).
- c. 1979 Amphitheatre contour survey (Fulford 1989c, fig. 2).

DESCRIPTION AND DATING EVIDENCE

A number of early ditches were observed in the water main watching-brief, and the geophysical survey gave these greater form and direction, revealing a new exterior defensive line which followed the contour of the gravel terrace edge. Where the pipeline cut through the defensive line there were three parallel ditches, here called the ‘Northern Link’. Correcting for the angle at which they crossed the pipeline, these were from west to east: [Ditch A] 2 m wide and >3 m deep (309–11 m along the recorded section of pipeline from its north-west end); [Ditch B] 3 m and >3 m deep (314–18 m); and [Ditch C] 8–9 m wide and >3 m deep (323–34 m). None were totally bottomed. Ditch A appears to be stratigraphically later than B.

The fluxgate gradiometry showed the main inner Ditch C continuing into the field and a narrower outer ditch, which could be either A or B. A little additional geophysics was undertaken to clarify matters with an electrical resistance survey and various GPR transects undertaken by Fry (2010) (FIG. 9.5). The main Ditch C can be seen in Transects 1–4 as features 1A, 2B, 3A and 4A. In Transect 1 this appears to be a fairly flat-bottomed ditch, 8 m at the top and c. 2 m wide at the bottom, with an estimated depth of 3 m, which matches well with the water main section. However, the profiles in Transects 2, 3 and 4 were a little narrower reducing to 5 m wide and 1.5 m deep, and suggested a more V-shaped profile (indicated by the ‘bow-tie’ response given). Again only a single outer narrower ditch could be seen in Transect 1 (Feature 1B), as in the magnetic data, and it had a similar depth but more V-shaped.

The only dating evidence was that the ‘uppermost fills of two of the three ditches were of early to mid-second-century date’. Fulford has speculated the ditches might be Early Roman or Late Iron Age in origin. The main Ditch C cut a large charcoal spread about 0.15 m thick.

Perpendicular to these parallel ditches was another aligned north-west to south-east, potentially parallel to the circuit of the Inner Earthwork within the Town Walls. It was seen in the pipeline at 422 m and was c. 6 m wide. This had good dating material recovered from it, with a Nauheim-derivative brooch, and a large ceramic assemblage of mainly pre- and early Flavian material, but with a significant tail of later second- and early third-century pottery.

To the east of the Amphitheatre there is also a major ditch rarely commented on, which is

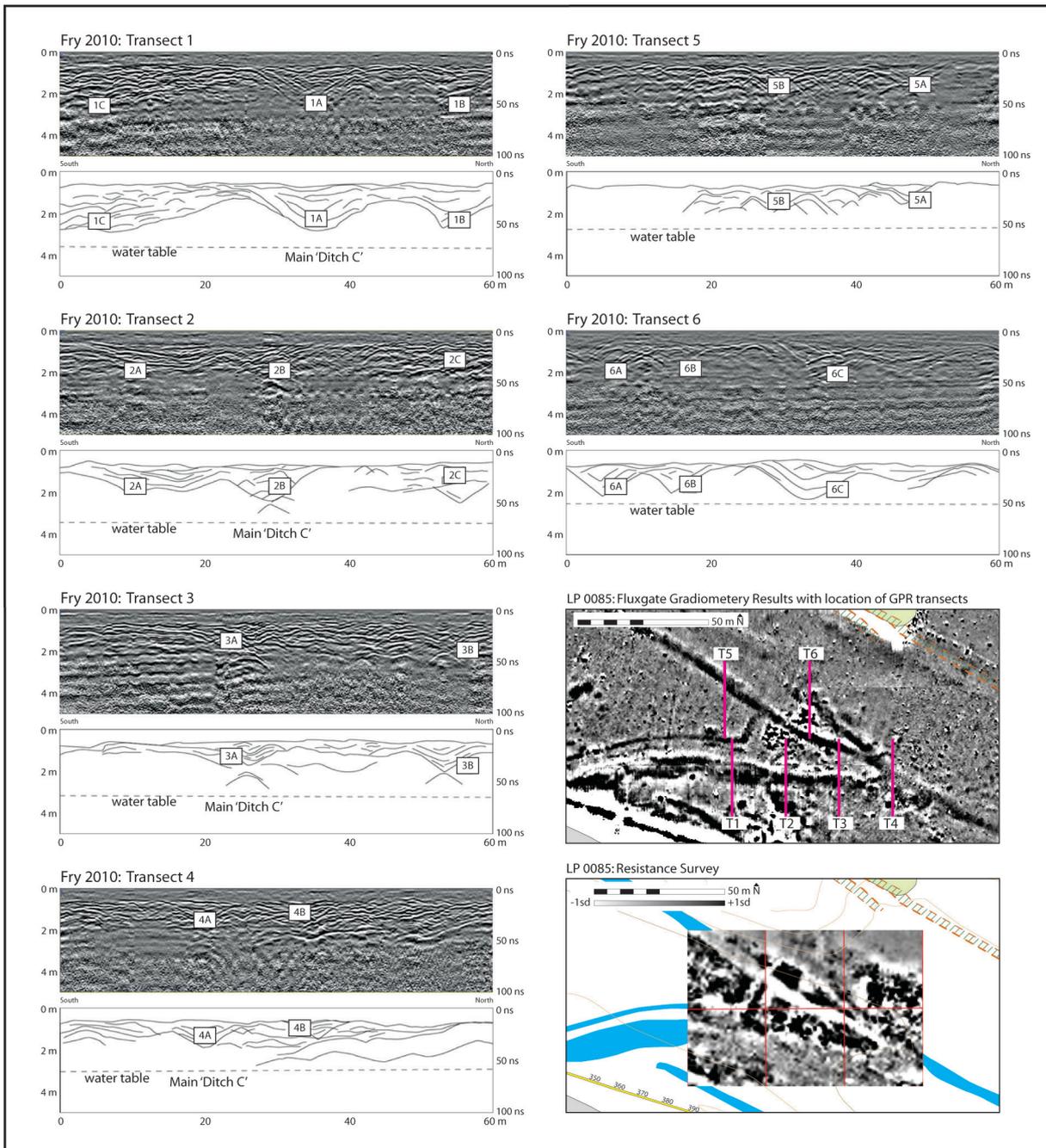


FIG. 9.5. GPR and earth resistance survey of the North-East Extension (after Fry 2010).

still perfectly visible behind the eastern stand. A contour survey conducted during Fulford's excavation shows it clearly (Fulford 1989c, fig. 2). However, a section through the western bank showed that there was no comparable ditch on that side, so its function was not as a quarry for the upcast of the Amphitheatre's banks. This ditch is quite possibly part of a continuation of this outer circuit, hooking around the Amphitheatre, and thereby suggesting it is later in date (though it is just possible the Amphitheatre was constructed later, nestled into the corner of an earthwork). Isaac Taylor's map showed this ditch not only full of water, but also continuing to the south-west, heading towards the Town Wall, though his plan has the Amphitheatre twisted clockwise a little too much (FIG. 3.3). If the ditch headed off in this direction, it would plausibly line up with the extension seen coming off the Inner Earthwork inside the town leading up to the temple area.

CONCLUSION

The 'Northern Link' and North-East Annex appear to create an extension to the Inner Earthwork. Since the earthwork hooks around the Amphitheatre it probably (but not certainly) has a Neronian *terminus post quem*, and it was in another section already being filled in by the early to mid-second century.

THE OUTER EARTHWORKS (SANDY'S LANDS)

HISTORY OF INTERVENTIONS

- | | |
|------|---|
| 1909 | Sections I, II and III (St John Hope and Stephenson 1910). |
| 1939 | Sites H, J and K (Cotton 1947, 137–8). |
| 1952 | Section cut back during road widening of Wall Lane (Boon 1969, 16). |
| 1956 | Trench Fb (Boon 1969, 19). |
| 1978 | Trench 10 (Fulford 1984, 26). |

DESCRIPTION AND DATING EVIDENCE

The earthwork survives in a substantial form in its Sandy's Lands stretch, but is reduced in size to the south, and thereafter there is no surface trace until it re-emerges around Rampier Copse. One question to ask is: was it completed but levelled in this section around the exit to the west, or was it never completed in the first place?

In 1909 three sections were cut through the Outer Earthwork to the north-west of the town. No locations of the trenches were published, but there are clear pencil marks on an OS map in the NMR. 'The ditch on the outside of this earthwork varied considerably in depth: at one point it had been carried down to a depth of [3.35 m], but nothing was found in it except a few fragments of very rotten pottery' (St John Hope and Stephenson 1910, 317–18, fig. 1a–b). While not reported at the time, in Reading Museum some material labelled as coming from the 'Outer Earthwork rampart second cutting' is likely to come from one of these. No context is provided, but it is mainly later first to early second century (sandy wares and sandy grog flint-tempered wares), though it includes four fragments of Silchester ware (pers. comm. J. Timby).

In 1939 Cotton excavated a section through the Outer Earthwork at a location which appears to be identical to one of the Antiquaries' trenches, and may have been a re-excavation of it.

[At Site H] the bank is only [2 m] high, and it was found to be of very simple construction. A small primary mound of dirty gravel formed a core on the old gravel surface, and was capped with layers of clean gravel. The rest of the bank had been built up by tips of mixed gravel and peaty turf which had probably been basketed up from the ditch, or thrown up from scoops or quarries inside the bank. Traces of these quarries still exist in areas which have not been cultivated. On Site H the primary mound finished at a straight line just before the inner lip of the ditch, and originally a small dry-stone wall must have revetted it along this line. This had been found in position in some of the earlier sections, but in others, as in this case, the stones are now in the silt of the ditch. No traces of timbers were found. Only part of the ditch could be excavated owing to the flooded conditions of the ground as in this area it is cut down into London Clay. (Cotton 1947, 137)

No pottery came from the bank; from the late layers of the ditch silt came some early Roman pottery.

Site J–K was excavated on the interior slope of the same bank slightly to the south. In this section the core of the bank was of turf or peat, but with traces of tip-lines comparable to Site H. Again the primary build-up of the bank was devoid of finds. In the ploughed-out tail was found a 'Belgic plate' and 'a small pocket of occupation material lay on the tail of the bank which yielded a little pottery of Claudian date' (Cotton 1947, 138).

1952 saw road widening in Wall Lane. Here Boon observed a humic layer between the two main gravel dumps of the bank, suggesting the earthwork had been deliberately heightened at

some point (Boon 1969, 16 and pl. VIb). This is consistent with Cotton's description of the bank being made from first a dump of dirty gravel, then of much cleaner gravel.

In 1956 Boon's Trench Fb (LP 3540) provided few additional details except for confirming the presence of the counterscarp of the outer enclosure, and a perpendicular modern feature, perhaps an earlier projection of the northern field-boundary of LP 5333, though it pre-dates the tithe maps.

In 1977 Fulford's Trench 10 (LP 4172) revealed 'a wide, flat-bottomed ditch no more than 1.0 m deep below the present ground-surface. The outer edge of this feature was some 12 m west of the fence-line dividing LP 4172 and LP 5859' (Fulford 1984, 82). The shallowness of the ditch, compared with the 3 m depth found by the Antiquaries, made Fulford conclude that the earthwork at this point simply had never been completed. On the other hand, a note of caution is needed about these rapidly cut and backfilled trenches as others dug on the same occasion were under-excavated, failing to observe features cut into the gravel which the geophysics now demonstrate exist (see Fulford Trenches 1, 8, 9, 11).

In terms of dating Fulford believed the Sandy's Lands earthwork was 'almost certainly of pre-Roman date and was definitely in existence before the later first century when the street-grid was laid out' (Fulford 1984, 83). In doing so he was pushing the dating earlier than either Boon or Cotton. The basis of the argument was that the street-grid was perceived as going out to this point and stopping, providing a limit (a view contested below). The other argument was that since there was so little pottery in the earthwork, it was likely to have been constructed earlier rather than later.

DISCUSSION

The geophysics added a new dimension to the dating of this earthwork. Fulford had concluded it must pre-date the laying out of the Roman street-grid since Boon's reconstruction showed roads filling out the whole area Cotton had explored up to the Outer Defences (LP 5567, 6472 and 6667). Cotton had carefully traced the streets here, starting with the cross-roads of a north-south and an east-west street, and then traced the road to the west which seemed to go off at a slightly imperfect angle to the grid deviating to the south (Exterior 9). This she followed with exploratory Sites J and K which appeared to show the road continuing undiminished right up to the bank and not obviously terminating. Alas, no excavation was undertaken to see if it went under the bank. The geophysical evidence suggests it did.

The gravel roads unfortunately do not show up directly on the fluxgate gradiometry as their metalling has exactly the same magnetic signature as the gravels of the plateau from where it was derived. Instead, the best way to trace a road is by searching for road-side ditches. Within the results a faint linear feature can be seen continuing along the same line as the southern side of the roadway on the western side of Sandy's Lands bank (Exterior 13, LP 4172, FIG. 6.40, Feature 9). This linear also appears to have at least two features running off it at 90 degrees; these relate to the late first- to early second-century cremation cemetery which was excavated in 1979 by Corney (1984, 293-7). Curiously the distance apart of these two perpendicular linears is the same as the width of the insulae which were being laid out in the Flavian era within the town. The rectilinear enclosure with the cremations to the west and the small shrine-like buildings within it show a planned layout pre-dating the enclosures and paddocks constructed later aligning with the main road to the west (FIGS 6.38-40, 17.1-2; see also discussion of Exterior 13, p. 210).

Since the earthwork is still upstanding over the line of the road, it would appear logical to argue that it post-dates this road extension to the street-grid; this suggests the bank is post late first to early second century.

CONCLUSION

Cotton observed that her sections at Site H showed no major variation from those excavated by Karslake and Challoner-Smith around Rampier Copse, leading her to assume they were 'of one build and plan' (Cotton 1947, 138; see FIG. 9.4). The ditch is certainly of a similar form, though

the banks around Rampier Copse are larger in one place where Cotton sectioned it, but Fulford's work would suggest not all of it had been excavated to such a depth.

The key evidence for the dating of this part of the Outer Earthwork is its intersection with the Roman street extending out from the grid which Cotton excavated. Since traces of it can be seen on either side of the still-upstanding bank, it suggests the bank is later than the road. If the road is an extension of the street-grid then it is Flavian or later in date. The cremation cemetery that is positioned in relation to the road is also late first to early second century in date, which would be consistent with the street, making the bank later. Late first- and early second-century material was found from the Antiquaries' section of the rampart; this would also be consistent with this dating. However, it would not fit as well with Cotton finding just Claudian material on the tail of the bank. Some modern excavation to corroborate this would be highly desirable.

THE NORTH-WEST ANNEX (aka 'THE PRIMARY EARTHWORK')

HISTORY OF INTERVENTIONS

1956 Trenches D, F, G and Site C (Boon 1958a, 17–20) and (Boon 1969).

DESCRIPTION AND DATING EVIDENCE

This defensive line in LP 4172 had already been recorded on Maclauchlan's plan with hachure marks, suggesting it was still a visible earthwork in the mid-nineteenth century (Maclauchlan 1851). It has long since been ploughed almost flat, but is still just visible in the LiDAR data. Boon envisaged it as the earlier outer circuit of the town, which at a later date was reduced in size by the construction of the Sandy's Lands bank; however, the geophysical survey has cast the existence of the southern section of Boon's 'primary earthwork' into doubt. The fluxgate gradiometry data would tend to suggest the feature turns back into the town to rejoin the Sandy's Lands earthwork making it unquestionably a secondary feature or annex. However, the case is not watertight as the RCHME aerial photograph published by Boon does faintly suggest its continuation on his proposed line through LP 3540 (Boon 1969, pl. IIb), though no trace of it appears in another which otherwise shows lots of negative features (Boon 1974, 52, pl. 9).

From Boon's Trenches C1 and D we can see the ditch is 6.7–7.3 m wide and 1.75–1.98 m deep, V-shaped with a short flat bottom (FIG. 9.4), so much smaller than the other sections of the Outer Earthwork. The bank was on the inside, and 'about [6.1 m] to the rear of the scarp lip of the ditch appeared two irregular, trench-like features, probably construction-slots for some kind of timber building at the rear of the bank, since a few iron nails, up to [0.09 m] long, were recovered from the filling of the larger hollow, and others lay around the smaller one' (Boon 1969, 18–19). The geophysics suggest that in some areas pits were dug into the rear of the bank.

Trench G (LP 4172) was dug to confirm the line of the ditch. The upper filling yielded later Roman pottery (Boon 1969, 19).

Trench Fa (LP 3540) was dug by Boon to confirm the line of the earthwork in a direction which is now contested. No linear feature shows up here on the geophysics (see Exteriors 13 and 17). Three small sondages were dug which revealed material, but the evidence for the presence of a major ditch and bank is decidedly ambiguous and based on significant interpolation. No full ditch or bank profile was sectioned, though negative features were discovered and some Claudio-Neronian pottery recovered suggesting occupation in the area (Boon 1969, 19, pl. X). The trench was barely mentioned in his other interim statement (Boon 1958a).

The best dating evidence for the ditch came from Site C, a series of five trenches dug for Boon by Arthur ApSimon. While no published plan exists, their location and shape has been reconstructed from the published sections, partial plans, some measurements provided, and the position of geophysical anomalies; everything seems to fit together reasonably well. Trenches C1–4 were sited to establish the relationship between the road and the 'primary' Outer Earthwork. Here the dating evidence suggested the infilling material of the ditch included Antonine to fourth-century material (C1). In Trench C2 an early filling included early to mid-third-century material (Boon 1969, 20).

CONCLUSION

The construction of the V-shaped ditch with a narrow flat bottom and a wooden rampart is undated. Logically, given its revised course, curving back on to the Sandy's Lands Outer Earthwork, it should post-date the latter. The Antonine and later material in the ditch fill may suggest a Flavian or earlier date, but it is a very moveable feast.

THE OUTER EARTHWORKS (CLAD GULLY)

HISTORY OF INTERVENTIONS

1978 Trenches 1–2 (Fulford 1984, 26, 81).

DESCRIPTION AND DATING EVIDENCE

The earthwork was observed by Maclauchlan (1851) and represented as a straight dyke along the north-east edge of the plateau, although the actual edge of the gravel terrace wavered around a bit and was more closely followed by the newly revealed North-East Annex earthwork. With the path of the latter now shown, the former looks like a 'tidying up' or straightening of the former. Maclauchlan showed it running the full length of the copse from the Amphitheatre to the northern point and possible gate; however, he only dotted it in for the final northerly stretch to a gap after which it becomes the Sandy's Lands earthwork on the other side. Two rapid trenches were excavated to investigate this during Fulford's brief campaign in 1978.

Trench 1 (LP 0004) was 15.5 m long; but though it was dug to 1.6 m, the profile of the clays and gravels only suggested to Fulford 'the kind of soil profile to be expected where the plateau-gravel has been eroded to expose the underlying clay', rather than a bank and ditch (Fulford 1984, 81). However, the geophysics allow little doubt that there was an earthwork complex linking the upstanding bank to the immediate south-east of the trench to the entrance seen in the geophysics and aerial photography to the north-west.

Trench 2 (LP 0085/LP 2088) was further to the east, revealing a ditch 6 m wide and 1.7 m deep; however, this was inside rather than outside the presumed course of the bank. Charcoal from a layer at the bottom of the ditch from mature oak and hazel or alder gave a radiocarbon date of 930 ± 80 bp (A.D. 1020) (HAR3422). The interior ditch is therefore late Anglo-Saxon or just post-Norman conquest in date (Fulford 1984, 81), and with the Town Walls to the south would have made a large solid stock enclosure which it would be tempting to associate with the twelfth-century re-use of the Amphitheatre (Fulford 1989c, 193–5). The presence of such an enclosure would not be entirely dissimilar to the deer pale to the south-east of the town. However, the key question is: was there ever a major ditch on the north side of the supposed line of the bank? None was found in this rapid digging and backfilling of a trench within a single day. Is it possible an outer ditch was simply not recognised? This appears to have happened in Trench 1, and it certainly happened in Trenches 8 and 9 towards the south-east of the town; and relatively clean re-deposited gravels can be very hard to identify sometimes. The geophysics do not suggest a major earthwork comparable to that at Sandy's Lands or Rampier Copse continuing across the stretch where Fulford's Trench 2 was; but the LiDAR does show a straight bank along this alignment, and a small earthwork is visible along parts of the field-boundary.

CONCLUSION

A straight linear earthwork probably but not definitely existed along the north-east edge of the gravel terrace. Inference for date does not come from direct evidence, but from seeing it as linking up to the Sandy's Lands earthwork at the north-west end, and running down to the Amphitheatre, suggesting it post-dates the latter.

THE OUTER EARTHWORKS (RAMPIER COPSE)

HISTORY OF INTERVENTIONS

- | | |
|------|---|
| 1900 | Unlocated excavations (Karslake 1910). |
| 1909 | Two trenches (St John Hope and Stephenson 1910, 318; 1911, 264–5; Boon 1969, pl. IX). |
| 1939 | Site L, 3 locations (Cotton 1947, 138–40). |
| 1978 | Trench 11 (Fulford 1984, 26). |

DESCRIPTION AND DATING EVIDENCE

These earthworks are the largest surviving and are significant in scale. Here the outer earthwork stands at its best some 5.5 m high with a deep ditch and a marked counterscarp, covered in trees. Cotton noted that in living memory it had always been thus; there was no prior record of cultivation in the copse. The main questions regarding the earthworks are: first, what date is the circuit which is presumed to continue round from the Sandy's Lands earthwork; and secondly, does the bulge in the earthwork represent the inclusion of an earlier enclosure, or is it just a salient projecting out?

The 'enclosure' was first recorded in the mid-nineteenth century: 'on the south side is a very large earth-work, extending in a half circle from the walls, and enclosing a considerable space. It is so considerable, that, although it seems hitherto to have escaped the notice of antiquaries, it no doubt filled an important place in the military defences of the town' (Wright and Fairholt 1845, 151). The way they were first mapped by Maclauchlan (1851, reproduced in FIG. 3.6) appears slightly different to the way they are represented on the current generation of OS maps. Over time the projection of the hypothesised Rampier Copse enclosure has got more and more exaggerated, with sharper angles.

The positioning of the Antiquaries' trenches varies slightly from that on Boon and Cotton's plans, as the locations shown here of the Antiquaries' trenches have been taken directly from pencil marks on the original Antiquaries' OS map now archived in the Historic England Archive (Hugh Braun Collection).

Karslake excavated at unmarked locations in 1900, though he did not publish until ten years later, and the Antiquaries were silent about his work in their lectures. He dug between LP 5333 and LP 2900, which he believed to be an entrance through the Outer Earthwork through which the road to Old Sarum went. He described the entrance as being '... protected by a crescent-shaped outwork. The original roadway passed round this outwork and ascended by a fairly steep slope over the inner embankment' (Karslake 1910, 331). It is difficult to know what he was observing to interpret this outwork, as usual his failure to publish plans make evaluation of his work difficult. He also dug into the main defences, saying that 'burials seem almost continuous on the inner slope of the mound'. His report described one cremation or pyre site, containing a cinerary urn, glass bottle and hobnail boots; this was said to be 'typical of the rest'. He also mentioned some wickerwork retaining walls for the earthwork in the vicinity of springs appearing at the bottom of the ditches. That there were cremations cut into the bank suggests a *terminus ante quem* of perhaps the later first/second centuries A.D. (Karslake 1910, 330).

The Antiquaries dug two sections in 1909 which the excavators felt were 'unsatisfactory' in answering their questions. The second more eastern one had the longest description:

on its northern face nearly at the base was found a hole ringed with flints, the floor covered with burnt ash, and filled with broken pottery, no two pieces of which would join together ... on the southern face of the mound were indications of a cremation, a platform having been cut in the side of the mound for the reception of the body. On this platform was a layer of wood ashes in which were calcinated bones and numerous fragments of bronze burnt out of all shape. ... the ditch outside the mound, although carried down to a depth of [3.3 m], yielded nothing but a few fragments of coarse sandy pottery, very decayed and rotten. (St John Hope and Stephenson 1910, 326–7)

While published as a generalised profile in the original report, Boon recovered the original 1909 wash-drawings in Reading Museum and redrew them (Boon 1969, 17, pl. IX).

Cotton excavated into the back of the Rampier Copse earthwork in 1939, in one of her three Site L trenches (Cotton 1947, 138). Her evidence is fundamental to the dating of the bank, so is worth quoting in full:

In this area a small hearth pit had been cut into the tail of the earthwork. It contained charcoal, a piece of hard tile, a few fragments of the hand-made native ware, and part of a rim of a butt-beaker, apparently of local manufacture. However, the evidence obtained from this pit cannot be used in determining the building date of the earthwork, as the pit must have been cut after the bank was built, even if the interval was short. But underlying this pit, and over an area extending beyond it, a scoop or hollow occurred which contained pottery. This occupation displaced the original turf, was contemporary with it, and was sealed in part by the tail of the bank. It was probably a temporary bivouac of the builders of the earthwork. No small finds, brick, or red-glazed wares were found. The pottery though having a most pronounced native and Belgic *facies* did contain the base of a Claudian jug in association with the butt-beakers. The pottery from the 'old turf' in the area was small in quantity and was associated with two sherds of soft red-glazed ware that could not be dated, and with much hard red brick. The wash of the bank over these levels contained a little pottery and much red brick, and in addition a rim of soft red-glazed ware.

The tail layers of the bank contained no pottery, but many pieces of well-baked red Roman brick were found. This brick is in position in the primary build of the bank ... The evidence of this brick, taken with that of the pottery, even though this is so small in amount, precludes a pre-Claudian date for the foundation of the outer earthwork. (Cotton 1947, 138–40)

Cotton concluded that the earthworks were Claudian at the earliest, and possibly Boudican. Boon rejected and countered this by suggesting that Cotton's trench had only dug into a secondary phase of the bank, suggesting that the 1909 sections showed a possible earlier primary bank which Cotton had not dug into (Boon 1969, 17, pl. IX). Fulford re-examining Cotton's pottery said it included a jar of Alice Holt type which would now be dated A.D. 60–150. But again this may all be from the quarry scoop or secondary phase to the bank rather than a sealed deposit dating the bank (Fulford 1984, 80).

Cotton also dug a smaller trench to the east-south-east where a modern path passed through the earthwork and showed that the outer ditch continued there, so it was unlikely to have been an ancient entrance.

Fulford's 27 m long Trench 11 (LP 6805) tested the possible south-eastern side of the hypothesised Rampier Copse enclosure. No clear ditch was found, though the high-point of the ridge it crossed comprised a 1.5 m-deep layer of grey sandy loam with flecks of charcoal for a 12 m stretch, suggesting it was not entirely natural. Fulford also cited infra-red photographs from the National Monuments Record which showed a discolouration along this ridge: 'Whether this marks a natural or man-made feature not recognised in the 1978 section remains unclear' (Fulford 1984, 82–3).

The fluxgate gradiometry did not show a clear bank and ditch, but was suggestive of a boundary, if only because the hypothesised 'interior' was markedly free of features in comparison to the 'exterior'; like the Frith, superficially there seemed to be little within it. LiDAR data suggested a raised bank originally forming an earlier enclosure, but again there was no trace of a ditch. Five GPR transects were undertaken to investigate this by Fry (2010) (FIG. 9.6). One (T15) crossed the supposed bank close to Fulford's 1978 excavation trench. In the middle of the transect an increase in noise consisting of many hyperbolae might represent the compacted gravel of a bank (Feature 15A). This was corroborated by a small earth resistance survey which showed a high resistance feature running through this area. There were also tentative traces in the GPR of ditches on either side of this (15B and 15C).

The transect to the north of this (T14) similarly showed a potential compacted hard-core bank (14A), and also another negative feature (14B) which correlated with a large magnetic pit in the fluxgate gradiometry results.

However, the possible bank was absent from the next transect to the north (T13). This transect

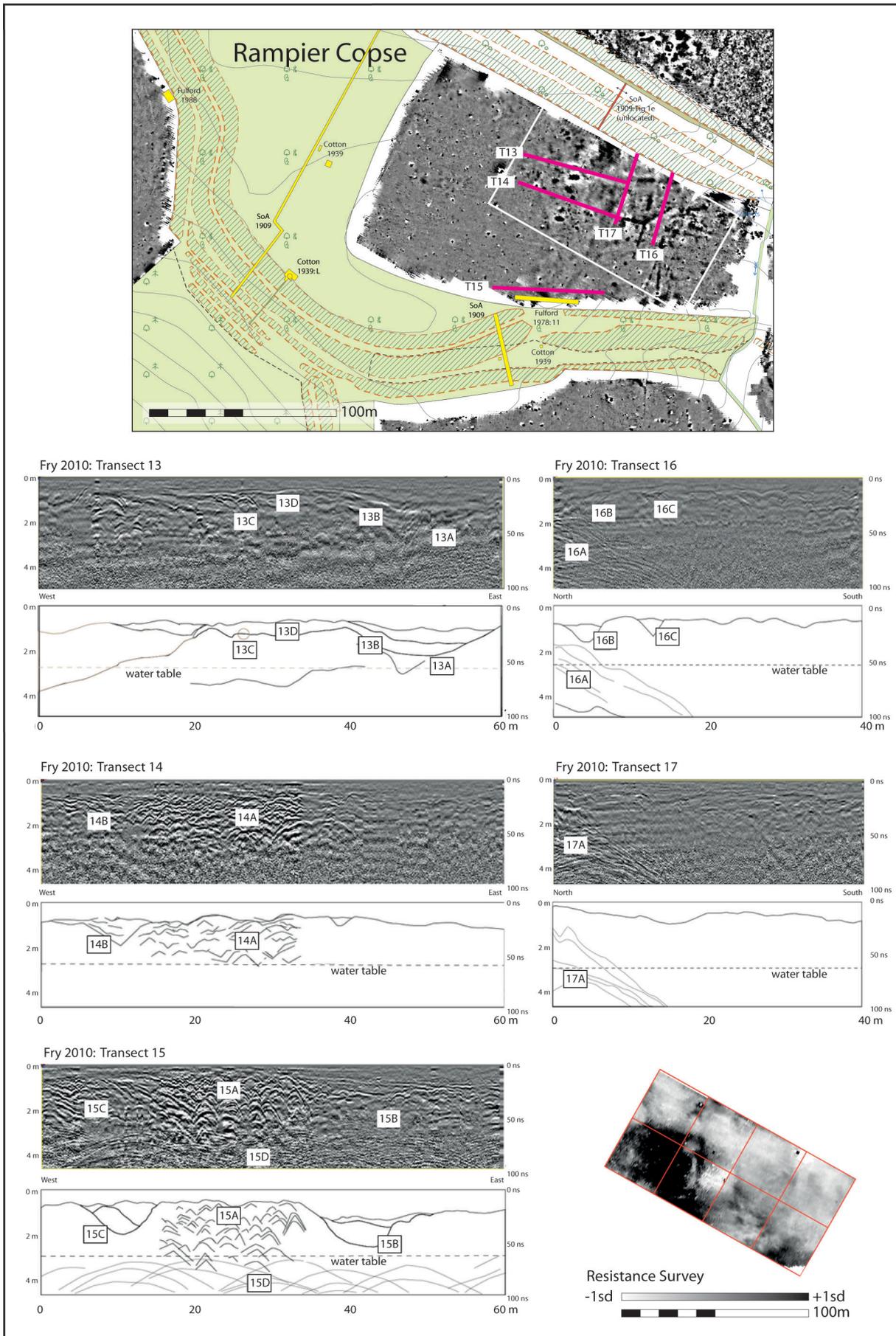


FIG. 9.6. GPR and earth resistance survey within the Rampier Copse Enclosure (after Fry 2010).

had been deliberately positioned to capture the area where a projected corner of the Roman street-grid, subsequently cut off by the construction of the Town Wall, intersected with the possible Rampier Copse enclosure boundary. There are hints of these streets in the fluxgate gradiometry, and there was the possibility that here the road might have come to an entrance to the enclosure, with two large pits perhaps indicative of some kind of entrance structure. This transect (T13) was positioned to pass through this location. The road did not show in the resistivity and neither did the surface of a road show in the eastern end of the GPR transect. A road might have been expected to look like high-amplitude noise, but instead a negative feature was seen, possibly representing the elusive ditch of the enclosure (13B). While no road surface could be confirmed, neither could the trace of a compacted gravel bank be seen in the data (13C) in contrast to the other two transects (Features 14A and 15A), suggesting there may yet have been an unmetalled entrance-way.

CONCLUSION

The first question is: was there an earlier Rampier Copse enclosure? The answer is ‘probably’, though the south-west side is clearer than the north-east one. The geophysical data texture within is quiet and qualitatively different from that around, suggesting a distinctive use of space; and there is the hint from the GPR and resistivity data of an entrance-way on the eastern side. Given that, the incorporation of this enclosure into a larger defensive circuit would suggest that a secondary refurbishment of the south-western part of the earthwork upon incorporation would not be unlikely, and this is what Boon claimed he could see in both Cotton’s and the Antiquaries’ excavations. However, from Cotton, it is quite clear that this secondary phase incorporated brick, making it post-conquest in her eyes (though some earlier brick was found in the pre-conquest phases of the Basilica excavation); and the A.D. 60–150 *terminus post quem* provided by the Alice Holt jar provides a comparable date to that of the Sandy’s Lands earthwork. This runs counter to Fulford’s preferred narrative; like Boon, he would like to see a pre-conquest date for the outer earthworks as a whole (Fulford 1984, 83).

THE SOUTH-EAST ENCLOSURE

HISTORY OF INTERVENTIONS

- c. 1914 The Beeches ‘entrance-way’ (Karslake 1914).
- 1978 Trenches 3–9 (Fulford 1984, 26, 82).

DESCRIPTION AND DATING EVIDENCE

There has occasionally been imagined to be a major defensive circuit to the south and east completing the ring created by the Clad Gully – Sandy’s Lands – Rampier Copse circuit. This idea arose around 1914. Maclauchlan (1851, 230) had never seen any evidence for earthworks to the east and south-east; this view had been echoed in the final Antiquaries’ season where they recorded ‘on the east there are no definite remains’ of an outer defensive work, possibly because they lay under the later Town Wall on that side (St John Hope and Stephenson 1910, 317). This view was repeated by Williams-Freeman in his plan of the Silchester entrenchments which showed no such earthwork; but in his description he asserted that ‘a strong bank and ditch ... encircled the Roman city on all sides ... embracing an area of about 200 acres’ (Williams-Freeman 1915, 318–19).

Meanwhile, Karslake was continuing his investigations. Having excavated around Rampier Copse in 1900 and explored what he believed to be an Iron Age entrance-way there, he went on to excavate what he believed to be a gateway through the hard-to-find (and perhaps imaginary) eastern Outer Defences. The site for this was ‘The Beeches’, a small copse, where excavations began some time shortly before 1914. His work firmly established his belief in a series of encirclements around Silchester, with the Town Walls being the innermost circuit, surrounded by

a road, then by the outer earthwork, and finally by an even larger circuit fossilised in the Silchester parish border, which had been neatly reproduced with the entrenchments by Williams-Freeman. This thesis Karslake developed in a series of articles, starting with a lecture to the Antiquaries in 1920 (Karslake 1920) and embellished over the years where he added Grim's Bank to his interpretation (Karslake 1933).

Karslake purported to find within the Beeches both clear evidence for 140 m of the Outer Entrenchment, and also a new entrance-way. Alas no plan was published, and all we have is a curious description of an in-turned entrance-way with the earthwork projecting inwards 15 m, and the ditch similarly turning in, with one, or perhaps two circular entrenched enclosures, 15 m diameter, serving as 'a sort of stockade tower guarding the entrance; in advance of it' (Karslake 1914). Williams-Freeman visiting the site not long after saw three parallel banks about a metre high and lots of broken brick similar to those used to build Silchester Manor Farm. Given the adjoining field was then called Kiln Close he suggested there might have been medieval brick-kilns and clay-pits there. He was unable to relate his observations to Karslake's findings and expressed some scepticism about them (Williams-Freeman 1915, 324–5). Fulford thought Karslake might have been confused by the conflation of the medieval Park Pale and the cutting of the brook passing through here (Fulford 1984, 80), while Boon (1974) simply avoided mentioning it at all. Karslake said he found Roman pottery including amphora, so there may well have been genuine deposits there, or he could have confused the medieval brick with Roman brick and amphora. Visiting the Beeches Copse today, the earthworks he mentions are not obvious, and without his plans the LiDAR offers no consolation or revelation.

Whatever the reality or unreality of Karslake's entrance, the concept of a complete encirclement became established in the thinking on Silchester. Cotton tacitly accepted the assumption of a continuous outer earthwork enclosing *c.* 93 ha, but recognised the line to the east was 'somewhat obliterated' (Cotton 1947, 137). Boon himself was a firm believer: an Outer Earthwork towards the east appeared on all the major plans of the site he had prepared. He was confident in it along the south-east section through LP 1100 and 3000 and between 4426 and 6530 (the latter being along the same line as the Park Pale), but thereafter admitted the traces were unclear (Boon 1969, 15). Various alternative suggestions were made for the concluding line of the hypothesised earthwork from The Beeches copse to the Amphitheatre, including by Corney (Goodburn *et al.* 1976, 370).

It was hoped Fulford's campaign in 1978 testing the line of the various suggestions with rapid machine-cut trenches would provide conclusive evidence for the earthwork's presence. Seven trenches were excavated in this area (Fulford 1984, 82).

Trenches 3 (LP 6346) and 6 (LP 4426/LP 6530) tested the northern section of Boon's suggested line and proved negative, both just coming down onto gravel subsoil, even though Trench 6 probably crossed the line of the medieval Park Pale. Trenches 4 (LP 6346) and 5 (LP 6346) tested an old lynchet to see if it was an earthwork, following a suggestion by Goodburn; again both just came down onto clay and gravel subsoil. The final three, Trenches 7, 8 and 9, crossed the line of the earthwork which clearly does exist, to which we now turn.

The aerial photography and the geophysics clearly show a linear earthwork crossing LP 1100 and 3000; but rather than being seen as a continuation of the Outer Earthwork to the east, this appears to be a separate feature. To start with it is less substantial than the Sandy's Lands or Rampier Copse defences; secondly, and most importantly, the ditch would appear to be on the inside of the earthwork, not the outside, putting into question its entire interpretation as a defensive structure.

The earthwork can be traced from LP 7468 passing through Churchlane Copse, and on through LP 0068, 1100 and 3000. The geophysical survey displays the line of the ditch from the contrast between the ditch fill and the surrounding clay or gravel deposits. However, within Churchlane Copse there is a section of upstanding bank surviving; matching up the alignments, it appears to be positioned on the OS to the south of the ditch (FIG. 15.2). This means that rather than interpreting the ditch as part of an outer defensive work, it is perhaps better to see it as a large stock enclosure (see p. 419). On the other hand, a close-up of the LiDAR suggests the OS map might be inaccurate and only some on-the-ground survey and excavation will confirm one way of the other (see Exterior 23).

Returning to Fulford's trenches, three cut across this feature. Trench 7 (LP 6530) found nothing, while Trenches 8 and 9 (LP 1100) found nothing other than a field-drain. This resulted in Fulford dismissing Boon's concept of an Outer Defensive earthwork on this line. The excavations were presumably just too shallow and too rapidly machine-cut and backfilled; the geophysics clearly show the feature exists as a *c.* 5 m wide ditch.

CONCLUSION

To the east and south-east there is no evidence for a defensive work, but there is an earthwork of unknown date with the bank on the inside, significant, but smaller in scale than the Outer Defences surviving to the south-west or north-west. The earthwork is essentially undated, but appears to relate to a rectilinear field-system to the south and is ignored by the medieval Park Pale, so is presumably earlier and therefore either Roman or early Anglo-Saxon in date.

INTERPRETATION

The number of sections dug to examine the earthworks has been numerous, but the quality of evidence is mixed at best. Some trenches are hard to locate; others failed to dig deep enough to find the features; most failed to provide any significant dating evidence. This project has now further complicated the network of earthworks in the immediate vicinity of the town by adding to them. A major new earthwork has now been found north of the town, linking in with a feature discovered during the 1988 water main excavation. The shape of the old 'Primary Outer Earthwork', renamed here the North-West Annex, has changed significantly. The course of the old 'Inner Earthwork' has been revised in its passage in the vicinity of Rampier Copse, as it has in the vicinity of the Public Baths. Finally, earthworks on the south-east and north sides once dismissed by Fulford have been reinstated, if not dated.

It is now appropriate to provide a re-reading of the evidence and to offer a hypothesis of the sequence of development, even if only to provide a model to be disproved or adapted as new evidence comes to light. A summary of the key dating evidence has been provided in FIG. 9.7.

STAGE 1: THE TERRACE-EDGE ENCLOSURES

FIG. 9.8 shows Rampier Copse along with two other enclosures on the gravel terrace edge, that of the Frith (sometime referred to as Pond Farm) and the spur cut off by Flex Ditch. All have very prominent positions on the edge of the gravel terrace.

Rampier Copse

It looks as if there was originally a Rampier Copse enclosure to judge by the reinstated south-east side revealed in the LiDAR, GPR and faintly in the fluxgate gradiometry. It was shown clearly in Colt Hoare's plan of 1818, but needed verification (FIG. 3.4). The northern side of it is unclear. There are two possibilities: the most probable is that its north-eastern side is where the later Town Wall Ditch is, which would make the enclosure around 2.2 ha. However, there is also a slight possibility that the enclosure was much larger; a curved linear anomaly within the geophysical data in the interior of the town could just possibly represent the northern side of it, which would make it *c.* 5.0 ha, but it is probably unrelated. Otherwise this curved feature does not appear to relate to anything Roman in date. The former is more likely. Nothing comes from within the enclosure, but we know cremations and cremation burials took place in the bank.

The Frith (also known as Pond Farm)

Very little is known about The Frith (FIG. 9.8), though it appears to be an oval univallate enclosure, *c.* 160 x 120 m (1.9 ha), with a single entrance guarded by a curved bank on the south-west side. There is no direct dating evidence, but it is assumed to be Iron Age (Williams-Freeman 1915, 326; 1934, 109). There have not been any known excavations, nor does aerial photography or

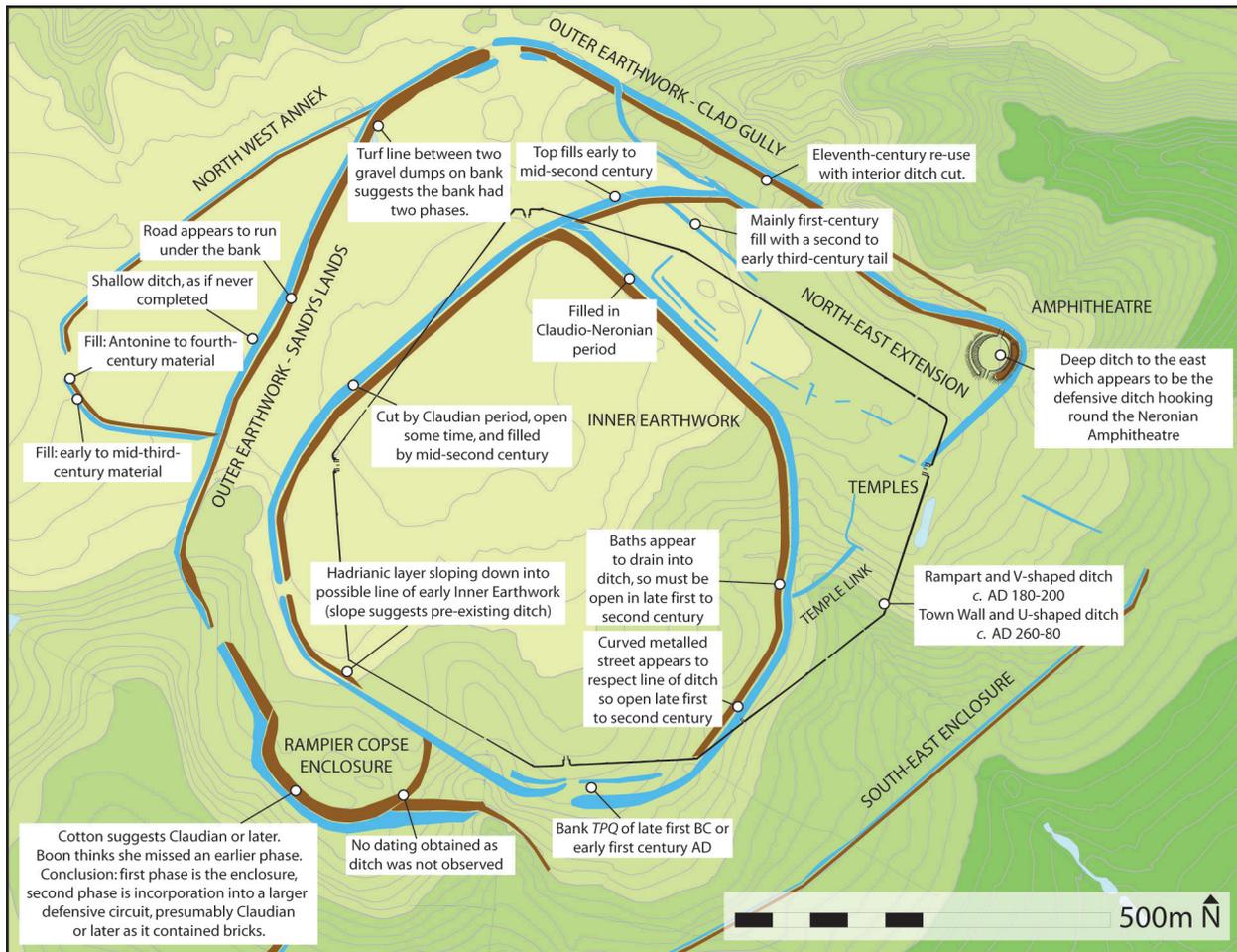


FIG. 9.7. Summary of dating evidence for the earthworks.

geophysics reveal much in the interior. Scheduling notes associated it with Later Bronze Age or Early Iron Age hillforts, though it is not quite the simple oval shape with two opposing entrances of many early hillforts in the region (cf. Cunliffe 1991, 349). Two coins (Gallo-Belgic E and British QA) came from nearby, but not actually from the Frith. Both date to around the Gallic Wars and a little after, so shortly before the foundation of *Calleva* in the late first century B.C.; but both types of coin remained in circulation for a while and are found in later hoards, so they cannot on their own be used as proof of earlier activity (Boon in Fulford and Timby 2000, 163–4, nos 1 and 11).

The Flex Ditch

The Flex Ditch cut off a spur from the plateau top, though the ditch is on the southern side. The ditch is 160 m long and it separated an area of c. 7.2 ha. It is now partly built over, and has been repeatedly truncated; no recorded excavation has taken place and there is no dating evidence other than the presumption it is Iron Age. On the southern tip of the spur an excavation revealed a rectangular enclosure, potentially the earliest Late Iron Age occupation in the area. It was excavated by TVAS in 2001–3 (Moore 2011). The ceramics predominantly dated from the first century B.C. to the later first century A.D., though with a small amount of later unstratified material. However, the earliest pottery, early handmade calcareous ware, is not found in published early Silchester assemblages, so suggests this site might pre-date the establishment of *Calleva*. There was only slight evidence for activities within, but that included a smithing hearth and other evidence for secondary smithying. Even though there was no significant occupation debris,

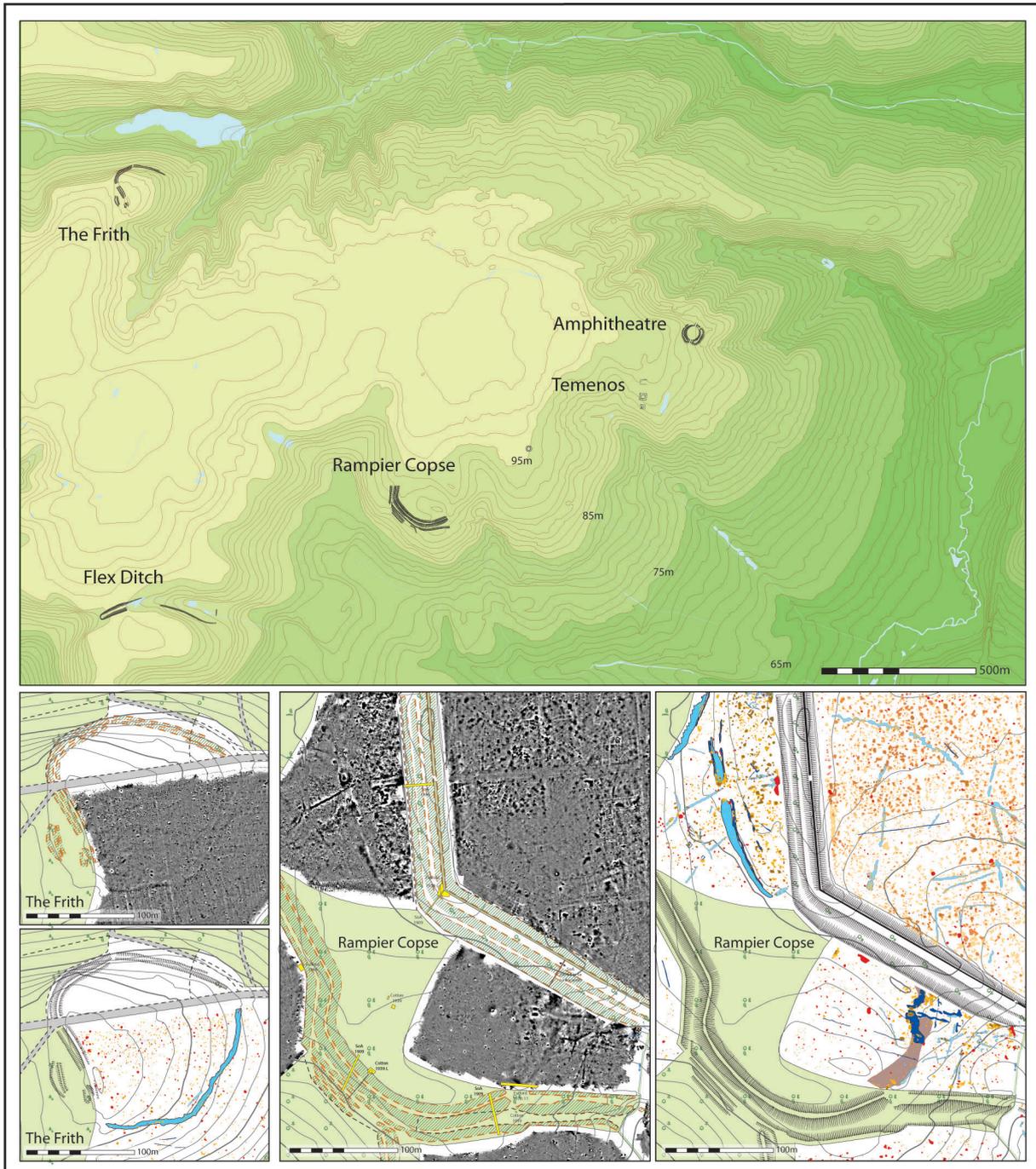


FIG. 9.8. Rampier Copse and the other peripheral enclosures.

ceramics included a number of fragments Timby identified as Campanian black sand amphora, Dr 2-4 or just possibly Dr 1 sp.

The terrace edge

FIG. 9.8 shows how similar the positioning of these three enclosures is on the gravel terrace edge. Both the Frith and Rampier Copse showed virtually nothing within their interiors in the geophysics, suggesting dense occupation was not their purpose. The Insula XXX temple precinct and the Amphitheatre are in comparable positions so have been marked on the figure. Some work on the East Gate on the edge of the temple site produced a British B coin (Boon in

Fulford and Timby 2000, 163, no. 6). The type is important because these gold coins stopped circulating and disappeared from hoards around the time of the Gallic Wars. They are hoarded with earlier coins but never with post-Caesarean coins, as if all earlier, higher-gold content coins were withdrawn from circulation (Creighton 2000, 67–8). It is therefore most unlikely to date to the late first-century B.C. foundation of *Calleva*, but rather represents some activity beforehand. There is nothing pre-conquest known from the Amphitheatre site. In conclusion, the earliest evidence is for a series of non-settlement enclosures on the terrace edge, possibly from the Mid- to Late Iron Age.

STAGE 2: THE CONSTRUCTION OF THE INNER EARTHWORK (LATE FIRST CENTURY B.C.?)

The bank near the southern entrance had a *terminus post quem* of the late first century B.C. or early first century A.D. This is the first large enclosure on the terrace top, slightly slipping off to the south-east. The precise relationship between it and Rampier Copse is not clear, and any evidence has long since been dug away by the Town Wall and Rampart Ditches. It may have been incorporated as a salient projecting out from the Inner Earthwork, or it may have retained its original shape and integrity (as shown in FIG. 9.8).

Several Late Iron Age or Early Roman burial enclosures developed outside the earthwork on the north-west side and possibly also on the north-east side if the two temple compounds are burials, based on analogy with Gosbecks (see p. 380).

STAGE 3: THE NORTH-EAST EXTENSION (NERONIAN?)

The north-eastern stretch of the Inner Earthwork was filled in with Claudio-Neronian material, yet elsewhere the ditch remained open longer. The potentially Neronian Public Baths drained into the ditch in the south-east; to the north-west fills continued to be accumulated into the mid-second century; in the south-west a slope of Hadrianic material suggests a pre-existing ditch was open then at the south-west corner of where the Town Wall was later to be built. It looks as if the defences were enlarged to encompass an additional part of the terrace. I have called this the north-east extension. It is clearest from where it leaves the line of the Inner Earthwork close to the later North Gate and continues across the modern road where it was seen in the water main trench of 1988, and across the fields to the north where it shows clearly in the geophysics. It heads towards the Amphitheatre, and probably curved round it, where a wider ditch is still visible on its south-east side. From there it would have run under modern housing, so is hypothetical, running under Manor Farm and the churchyard until it re-emerges on alignment with another fainter geophysical feature that joins the Inner Earthwork again a little to the south of the Public Baths.

The infilling of Boon's Trench B section of the Inner Earthwork would suggest this was Claudio-Neronian (p. 307). If the defences hooked around it, the *c.* A.D. 55–77 construction date of the Amphitheatre also provides dating evidence for this change. Also the construction of the Public Baths into a now redundant section of the Inner Earthwork bank, but utilising the still-open ditch, would fit comfortably with a Neronian date.

This extension included within it the two temple compounds which may have been Late Iron Age or Early Roman high-status burials. This was happening at the time that the Roman street-grid was developing, with the main north–south street already established, but other lanes still existing on earlier alignments (see p. 347).

STAGE 4: THE EXTENSION OF THE STREET-GRID (LATE FLAVIAN–TRAJANIC?)

At some point development of the new Roman street-grid expanded out of the confines of the Inner Earthwork to the north-west (detail discussed in Chapter 14). The roads, excavated by Cotton, ran over the infilled ditch, marking out an irregular double insula so as to leave the burial enclosures in this area intact without a new east–west road running between them. The



FIG. 9.9. Hypothetical sequence for the development of the earthworks and roads.

infill of the Inner Enclosure a little to the south of where the street-grid extension ran over it was Claudian at the bottom and mid-second century towards the top (Boon Trench A, p. 308).

To the west of this a cremation cemetery was established with a boundary at right-angles to a road leading out to the west, so contemporary or later than it. The cremation cemetery dates to A.D. 80–130 (see p. 375; Corney 1984, 293–7). A later first-century date can be given for this stage of road development.

STAGE 5: ADDITION OF THE SANDY'S LANDS OUTER EARTHWORK (SECOND CENTURY?)

The Sandy's Lands earthwork then cut across the road heading west, cutting it off. The bank still remains over 2 m high at this point, demonstrating that it is later. This provided a new linear earthwork barrier to be seen from the west, cutting off almost the entirety of the top of the terrace. At various points, particularly to the north, it is an impressive monument, fronted with a dry stone wall (p. 313), but at other locations the ditch is shallow at 1 m rather than the 3 m elsewhere, as if it was never properly completed as a defensive line (cf. Fulford's Trench 10). It appears to be protecting the major burial enclosures as development within the town never seemed to come out this far.

When Cotton dug her section through Rampier Copse, she determined it must be post-Claudian because of the bricks caught up within it. Boon believed she was mistaken and must have missed a second phase in which the bank was refurbished, contemporary with the construction of Sandy's Lands Earthwork (Site L, p. 317). The sealing of the road suggests it must be later than the establishment of the cremation cemetery and road in the later first century A.D., but it cannot be dated closer.

The incomplete nature of the work, observed by Fulford, is matched by the observation that by this stage other parts of the old circuit to the south-east had also partly been built over during the extension of the street-grid, so this was never a complete circuit. It remains a puzzle.

STAGE 6: FINAL ELABORATIONS OF THE EARTHWORKS

To the north-east the line of the North-East Extension was straightened by the construction of the Clad Gully Outer Earthwork. Originally a small link appears to have been constructed from the north-east extension bank and ditch to the new outer perimeter following the contours of the hill, but the new straight-line gully probably replaced this. However, the feature is not unproblematic given that Fulford's excavation showed its use or re-use as an eleventh-century boundary, and the earthwork seen in the LiDAR is not large. Like the Sandy's Lands Earthwork, it may not have been completed to full effect.

To the west an annex was built (once called the 'Primary Outer Earthwork' by Boon). By the way it curves back to the line of the Sandy's Lands bank it clearly must post-date it. Its fills, in Boon's excavations, were early to mid-third to fourth century. The turns in the enclosure appear to relate to where the roads to *Spinis* and the west pass through. However, it is also noticeable that the paddocks parallel and adjacent to the road seem to ignore the defensive line, suggesting a chronological mismatch between the two. I believe it makes most sense for them to be late, but ultimately without excavation we cannot be sure. The stretches of the annex earthwork in LP 4172 had a lot of pits dug into their rear; so the likely presence of material culture in pits cut into the bank provides a promising location to excavate to gain dating evidence for the earthwork.

STAGE 7: CONSTRUCTION OF THE TOWN RAMPART (A.D. 180–200) AND TOWN WALL (A.D. 160–80)

Eventually this long circuit was replaced with the much tighter line of the Town Rampart and Ditch which eventually became the Town Wall (see Chapter 8). Some of the earlier Outer Earthworks remained standing to be seen by antiquarians or remain to this day.

CONCLUSION

This reconstruction of the sequence at Silchester, showing incremental development, and making much of the Outer Earthwork later rather than earlier, is rather different to the prevailing notion which sees it as predominantly Later Iron Age. Nonetheless, the evidence to date has been surveyed and presented to support the later date (FIG. 9.7). However, this interpretation is prone to new discoveries and better dating, which is still exceptionally fragmentary; judicious excavation here and there could create a rather different picture.

Pushing the construction of some of the Outer Defences into the Flavian era is not totally atypical. Just to the south in Winchester a later first-century earthwork has been traced under the later second-century rampart on three sides of the town (Esmonde Cleary 2003, 80), and at *Verulamium* there is the Flavian '1955' ditch protecting the developing post-Boudican town (Niblett and Thompson 2005, 53, 150).