

# EXCAVATIONS IN PEAR WOOD, BROCKLEY HILL, MIDDLESEX, 1948-1973

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The purpose of this report is to summarize the results of excavations conducted in Pear Wood, in 1948-49, 1954-59 and 1973. These excavations were mainly concerned with the sectioning of the large east-west aligned earthwork which runs through the centre of the wood. It has been suggested that it represents an easterly continuation of the linear earthwork Grim's Ditch, which runs from Cuckoo Hill (N.G.R. *c.* TQ: 112895) to Harrow Weald Common (*c.* TQ: 143929), where it disappears (Fig. 1).<sup>1</sup> A valuation of the Manor of Canons of 1535 suggests the existence of an earthwork called 'Grymesdich', in close proximity to Cloister and Pear Woods.<sup>2</sup> Excavations in 1948-49, 1954-59 and 1973 were conducted in the hope of determining the nature, purpose and date of the Pear Wood earthwork.<sup>3</sup> In addition it was thought that they might provide some evidence of Belgic occupation.

Appreciation is expressed to the late Mr. P. G. Suggett for generously permitting the writer to include his findings in this report. Regrettably, however, its scope is limited by certain factors. Firstly, records of the 1948-49 excavations are either lost or mislaid, as also are most of the finds. Secondly, excessive flooding prevented completion of certain trenches cut in 1954 and 1956. Lastly, the pottery selected for publication from the 1955 trench is lost. However, the remaining finds, a section, notes and photographs have been made available for publication.<sup>4</sup> These and information about the other trenches are published below, together with the more conclusive findings from the 1973 excavations.

## LOCATION AND VISIBLE REMAINS OF THE EARTHWORK (FIG. 2).

The earthwork is situated on the southern slope of the hill, which is formed of Claygate Beds (the loamy top of London Clay) in places capped or mixed with pebble gravel, especially in the middle of the wood at Site C. Visible remains extend from the west edge of the wood (*c.* TQ: 172934) to the kink in the west boundary of Field 157 (*c.* TQ: 174937), almost directly on the Ordnance Survey 450ft. a.m.s.l. contour line.

In the pig enclosure at the west edge of the wood there are traces of a low bank with a silted-up ditch on the south side, both in places badly disturbed by 19th-20th century gravel and clay diggings. There is a fine section of the bank and ditch on the east side of footpath 1 and traces of a south outer-bank. The gap between this and the next section is quite possibly a contemporary causeway and the absence of the bank at this point would seem to support this. The section to the east is in fine preservation but with the north bank less apparent. Between footpaths 2 and 3 the north bank is in fine preservation but the outer-bank is less apparent. Footpath 3 crosses the earthwork on a post-ditch causeway, which is probably of medieval date. Beyond, the banks and ditch remain intact and continue to the west edge of the clearing. Here, immediately to the west of a tall holly tree, the earthwork ends and is crossed by a later north-west to south-east bank-with-ditch, which forms the west boundary of the clearing. On the east side of the clearing is a parallel bank and ditch boundary.

It is evident from John Rocque's Map of Middlesex, of 1754, (Sheet 2) that this clearing was a vista or avenue connected with the Duke of Chandos's estate at Canons. At this point on the map the vista, which ends at Wood Lane, is flanked on the west side by the wood and on the east side by two rows of trees. However, the ancient earthwork is not illustrated. Mention is made in the Chandos Papers of 'clearing the grand avenue in Peer's Wood'.<sup>5</sup> This clearing dates from the early 18th century.

The bank of the earthwork reappears immediately to the east of footpath 4 and ends just west of the boundary of Field 157. The ditch is represented by a slight depression on the south side of the bank.

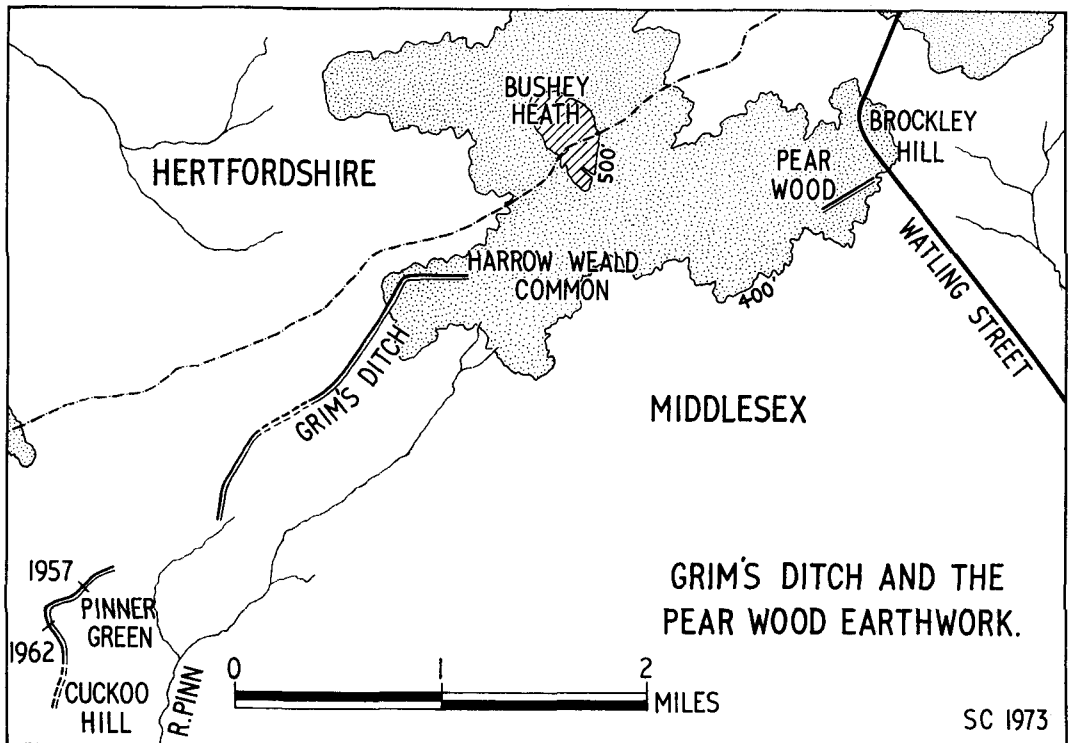


Fig. 1. Grim's Ditch and the Pear Wood earthwork. (Crown Copyright Reserved)

#### THE EXCAVATIONS (FIG. 2).

##### SITE A, 1948-49.

In 1948-49 the late Mr. P. Davenport cut a large trench at right-angles through the bank and ditch, a little to the west of footpath 2.<sup>6</sup> Quantities of Roman coarse pottery, a coin, nails and sherds of native ware were recovered from the ditch, and a sherd, apparently of Iron Age 'A' type,<sup>7</sup> and fragments of burnt clay were recovered from the bank.

##### SITE B, 1954.

In 1954 the late Mr. L. Probert cut a trench 20ft. 6ins. by 4ft. across part of the ditch between footpaths 2 and 3.<sup>8</sup> This trench provided evidence of partial recutting of the ditch, probably in the early 18th century. At the bottom of the recut and at a depth of 5ft. was a layer of peg-tiles resting on a layer of flints. This lining served to facilitate the seepage of water for drainage purposes. Below was the silt and gravel fill of the ditch, from which sherds of Roman coarse pottery were recovered. Bordering the ditch on the north side was part of the dirty gravel bank and below, the old turf line, from which no finds are recorded. Flooding prevented the completion of this trench. However, the ditch was found to be about 14ft. wide and at least 5ft. 6ins. deep.

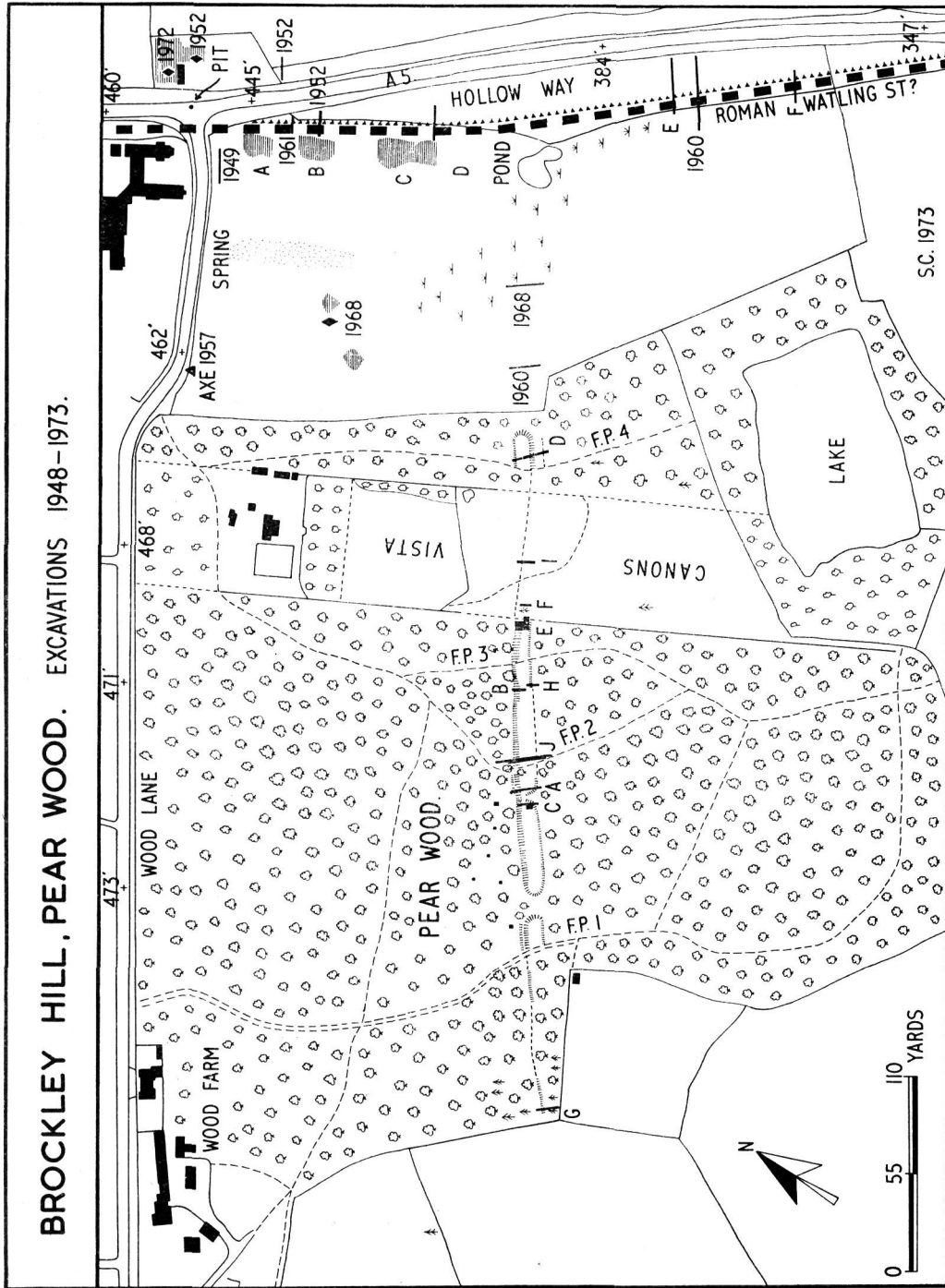


Fig. 2. Sites excavated in Pear Wood, 1948-1973. (Crown Copyright Reserved)

EXCAVATIONS BY MR. P. G. SUGGETT AND THE NORTH MIDDLESEX ARCHAEOLOGICAL RESEARCH COMMITTEE 1955-59.<sup>9</sup>

SITE C, 1955<sup>10</sup> (FIGS. 2-3).

In August 1955, a trench 40ft. by 4ft. was cut across the bank and ditch between footpaths 1 and 2. The ditch was found to be V-shaped with a U-shaped runnel at the bottom and was 14ft. wide by 5ft. 6ins. deep. Part of the bank on the north side was sectioned and found to consist of dirty yellow gravel, as much as 3ft. thick.<sup>11</sup> On the south side of the ditch was found part of the outer-bank, which at the south baulk was 2ft. thick. It also consisted of dirty yellow gravel. Apparently contemporary with the south bank was a hole, possibly a post-hole 9ins. in diameter by 1ft. 3ins. deep and dug into orange clay with gravel, the natural subsoil. If a post-hole, possibly it served with others as a revetment, or a marker for the excavation of the ditch. Surprisingly, no finds were recovered from the north and south banks and ancient turf-lines were not present beneath them.

An extension 12ft. by 8ft. was cut on the west side of the trench. The upper layers of ditch-silting contained sherds of Roman coarse pottery, an iron spearhead (Fig. 4) and tile fragments. Layer 5, smooth grey silt, contained Roman tile fragments, samian ware and coarse pottery sherds including sherds of the neck of a Hofheim type flagon of mid-1st century date.<sup>12</sup> There were also sherds of native ware in this layer. Below, layer 6, primary silting, contained a few sherds of native ware.

In addition, a number of trial trenches were cut to the north, north-west and west but these provided no evidence of Belgic or Roman occupation.

#### THE SPEARHEAD (FIG. 4)

DR. W. H. MANNING

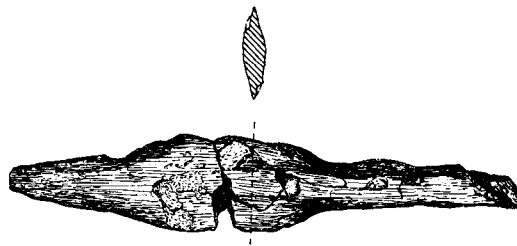


Fig. 4. Pear Wood: Iron Spearhead from Site C, 1955 ( $\frac{1}{4}$ )

It is difficult to be precise about the date of spearheads, but the way in which this example has an almost oval blade, which narrows into an elongated tip, is characteristic of a type of Roman spear and there seems no reason to question a Roman date. Published examples are rare, but a more exaggerated example is known from Richborough.<sup>13</sup> In addition, an interesting group is to be found at the Chesters Museum in Northumberland. Some of these are very exaggerated with almost circular bases to the blades, but others offer a close parallel to this Brockley Hill example.

The type continued into the Saxon period as examples from cemeteries at Highdown, Sussex and Little Wilbraham, Cambridgeshire show.<sup>14</sup>

This spearhead is severely corroded and the socket is partly broken. It is 279 mm long and 54 mm wide at the blade.

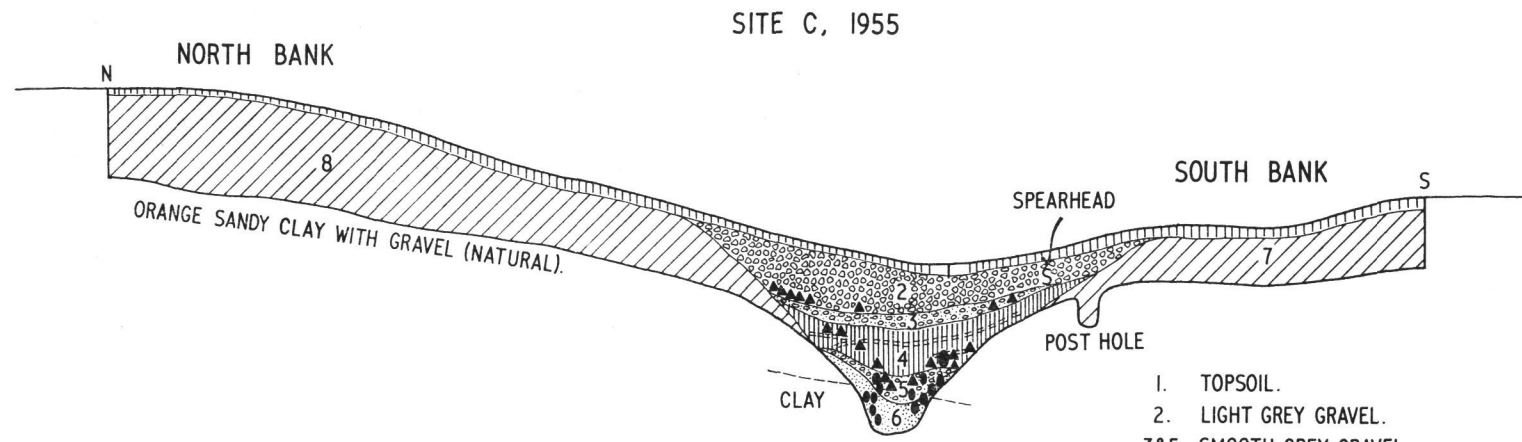
SITE D. 1956.<sup>15</sup>

This trench, 44ft. by 5ft., was cut across the bank immediately to the east of footpath 4, about 50ft. west of the boundary of Field 157. As expected, the ditch was found to lie on the south side of the bank, from the washdown of which were recovered sherds of native ware and 1st-2nd century coarse pottery. Excessive flooding prevented complete excavation and although it was not possible to determine its width, the ditch was at least 5ft. 6ins. deep. A buried turf line containing charcoal fragments was found below the clay and gravel bank, but no finds are recorded from this layer.<sup>16</sup> However, a sherd of native ware was recovered from the bank itself. A small trench was cut immediately to the north, but this provided no finds from the buried turf-line.

SITE E, 1956.

An L-shaped trench was cut across the west boundary of the clearing with the object of sectioning the north-west to south-east bank and ditch and establishing their relationship with the linear earthwork. This cutting revealed a brick culvert of c. early-18th century date, the trench for which had been dug into the silting of the

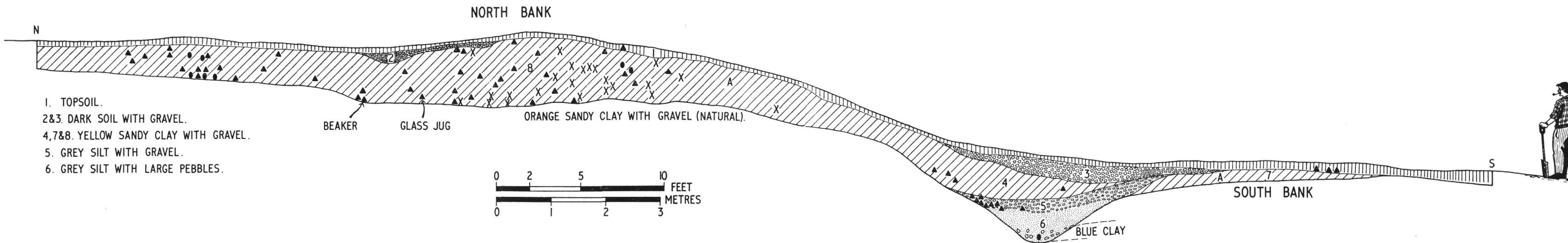
**BROCKLEY HILL, PEAR WOOD.**  
GRIM'S DITCH(?) SECTIONS 1955 & 1973.



- 1. TOPSOIL.
- 2. LIGHT GREY GRAVEL.
- 3&5. SMOOTH GREY GRAVEL.
- 4. COARSE GREY GRAVEL.
- 6. PRIMARY SILT.
- 7. DIRTY YELLOW GRAVEL, S. BANK.
- 8. DIRTY YELLOW GRAVEL, N. BANK.

- NATIVE WARE
- ▲ ROMAN FINDS
- A BURNT CLAY
- X IRON NAILS

SITE J, 1973



- 1. TOPSOIL.
- 2&3. DARK SOIL WITH GRAVEL.
- 4,7&8. YELLOW SANDY CLAY WITH GRAVEL.
- 5. GREY SILT WITH GRAVEL.
- 6. GREY SILT WITH LARGE PEBBLES.

Fig. 3. Pear Wood earthwork sections, Site C, 1955 and Site J, 1973

ancient ditch. The cross-bank above the culvert is the hedge line and west boundary of the clearing and it is clear that both were associated with the Canons vista. Clearly the culvert was constructed to drain the water from the ancient ditch into the later boundary ditch of the vista and there can be little doubt that it is contemporary with the recut of the ditch further to the west at Site B.

SITE F, 1956.

This trench, 18ft. by 2ft. 6ins., was cut in October–November, 1956, 15ft. east of the previous trench and on the line of the ancient ditch. As mentioned above, there are no surface remains of the bank and ditch in the clearing. As at Site B, there was a recut, at the bottom of which, at a depth of 5ft., was a layer of tiles, bricks and flints. The infill of the recut comprised a layer of grey silt, above which was a thick layer of pebbly soil. The ancient ditch at this point is 14ft. wide and the bank has been levelled.

SITE G, 1956.

In August–November, 1956, a trench 50ft. 6ins. by 4ft. was cut at the west edge of Pear Wood. It revealed a westerly continuation of the ditch, in the presumed middle silting of which were two Roman sestertii and sherds of native and Roman pottery. As at Sites B and D excessive flooding prevented complete excavation.<sup>17</sup>

THE COINS: Presumed middle silting of the ditch.

1. Ae sestertius, almost completely illegible. c.A.D. 150–200?

Obv. Head right, Marcus Aurelius?

Rev. Standing figure.

2. Ae sestertius, c.1st–2nd century.

Obverse and reverse illegible.

It is evident from the marks of corrosion on these two sestertii that they had been in contact with other coins in the ground and presumably represent part of a dispersed hoard.

SITE H, 1958.

In 1958 a trench was cut immediately to the south-west of Site B in order to section part of the ditch and its south lip. The outer-bank was found, containing sherds of native ware and Roman coarse pottery. A few small sherds of native ware were also recovered from the old ground surface below this bank. It is clear that the outer-bank is not pre-Roman.

SITE I, 1959.<sup>18</sup>

In the Summer of 1959 a final trench, 34ft. by 3ft. 4ins., was cut in the clearing, 105ft. east of Site F. At the bottom of the ditch was a thin layer of gravel, above which was a layer of silt 1ft. 3ins. thick containing sherds of Roman coarse pottery. The bank on the north side had been levelled and part of it, consisting of yellow clay, had apparently been tipped forward into the top of the ditch. There can be little doubt that this took place during the making of the Canons vista. The ditch was found to be 5ft. deep by an estimated 20ft. wide.

EXCAVATIONS IN 1973.<sup>19</sup>

SITE J, 1973 (PLATES I-3 AND FIGS. 2-3).

The inconclusive dating evidence from the excavations described above prompted the writer to cut a further trench in March–May, 1973. This trench, which was 87ft. long by 6ft. wide, was cut at right-angles across the bank and ditch immediately to the east of footpath 2. The earthwork was found to consist of a V-shaped ditch, an unexpected 23ft. wide by 5ft. 4ins. deep, with on its north side a bank 4ft. thick and on its south side a minor outer-bank, 15ft. 6ins. wide by 8ins. thick. Although not completely sectioned the earthwork is an estimated 90ft. wide but clearly the north bank was originally narrower and more pronounced. Both the north and south banks comprise sandy yellow clay with gravel, containing charcoal fragments, and as at Site C, ancient turf-lines were not present beneath them. Layer 4 (Fig. 3), also comprising sandy yellow clay with gravel, represented washdown from the north bank, layer 8, into the ditch. However, it was not found possible to detect a division between this washdown and the bank remains *in situ*, and this was in no way helped by the presence of numerous tree roots. Although there was no evidence of revetting, a gully-like feature on top of the north bank and parallel with the ditch may represent a palisade slot. However, no finds were recovered from this feature and its date cannot be certain. The natural subsoil consists of stiff orange sandy clay-with-gravel, below which at one point is a bed of blue clay.

A quantity of native ware, Roman tile fragments, iron nails, glass and Roman coarse pottery sherds was recovered from the north bank (Figs. 5–6). Notable finds include sherds of a colour-coated beaker, 4th-century, the rim of a black-burnished platter, c.mid-3rd–4th century (Fig. 5, 3) and fragments of a glass jug (Fig. 6). A fragment of burnt clay was recovered from the south bank. A small sherd of native ware was recovered from layer 6, grey silt, the primary silting of the ditch, different from layer 5 above only in that it

contained large flint pebbles. Layer 5, which contained Roman coarse pottery sherds (Fig. 5, 7-10) and tile fragments, was sealed by layer 4, the washdown of the north bank into the ditch. A few Roman coarse pottery sherds, including the rim of an amphora (Fig. 5, 11), were recovered from this layer. From the topsoil and resting on the north bank was a flanged-bowl sherd of 4th century date (Fig. 5, 12) and, on the south bank, sherds of a late Roman wide-mouthed jar (Fig. 5, 13).

Throughout the period of excavation, the ditch, which slopes from west to east, was subject to severe flooding and the water table, which lay at a depth of 1ft. 6ins. remained constant.

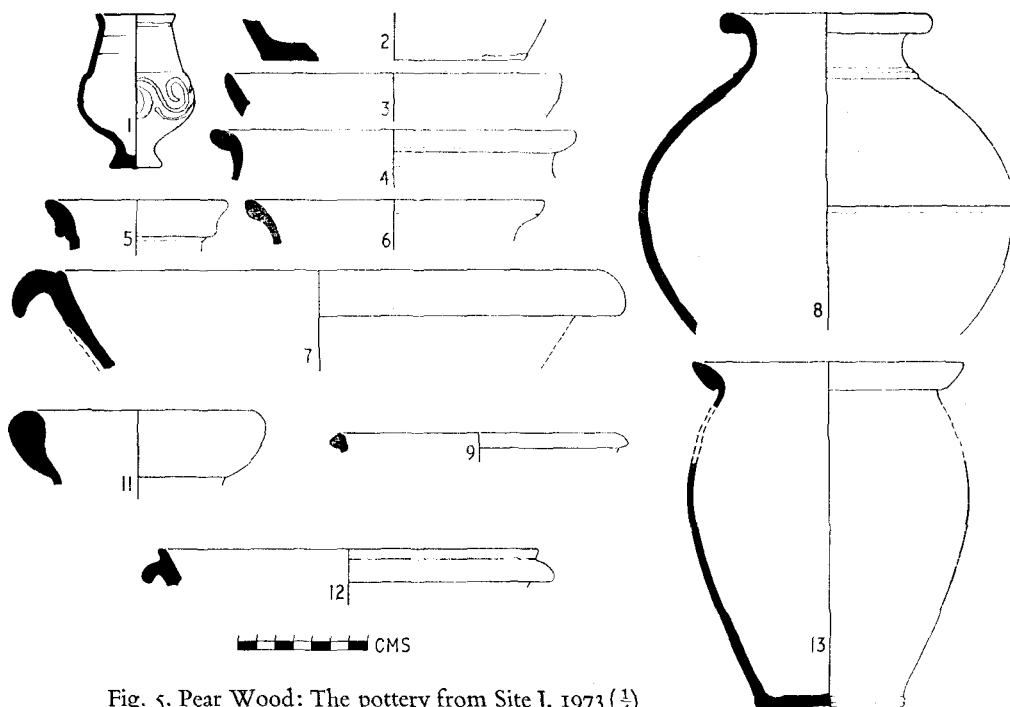


Fig. 5. Pear Wood: The pottery from Site J, 1973 ( $\frac{1}{4}$ )

**THE FINDS I: POTTERY (FIG. 5).**

The pots sherds described below are in worn or weathered condition and with the possible exception of vessel No. 13 all may be regarded as residual.

**NORTH BANK. LAYER 8, YELLOW SANDY CLAY WITH GRAVEL.**

1. Narrow-mouthed, colour-coated beaker in hard fine-textured brownish-orange ware with brownish-black slip and white painted scroll decoration. This vessel, which was probably manufactured at the Nene Valley potteries, is datable to the first half of the 4th century.<sup>20</sup> Cf. Form basically similar to Gillam,<sup>21</sup> 226, 57. 4th century.
2. Base of a large jar or flagon in granular greyish-buff ware. 1st-2nd century.
3. Platter in fine sandy grey ware with black-burnished exterior. Cf. Brockley Hill, 1970,<sup>22</sup> 154, 26-28. 4th century.
4. Wide-mouthed jar in granular pink ware. 1st-2nd century.
5. Hofheim type flagon in hard granular buff ware. Cf. Brockley Hill, 1972<sup>23</sup>, 38, 17-46. Mid-first century.
6. Wide-mouthed jar in brownish-orange vesicular ware with smooth exterior and dark grey gritty core. Some combed sherds in identical ware are probably from the same vessel. Probably 3rd-4th century.

**DITCH. LAYER 5, GREY SILT WITH GRAVEL.**

7. Weathered sherds of a mortarium in reddish-brown ware containing flint grits. Neronian-Flavian date is likely.
8. Cordonned jar in fine sandy grey ware with traces of a darker slip.
9. Roll-rimmed bowl in sandy grey ware. Cf. Brockley Hill, 1970, 154, 22-23. Late 3rd-4th century.
10. (Not illustrated). A sherd of the base of a bowl or platter in light grey ware with black-burnished exterior. 3rd-4th century.

**DITCH. LAYER 4, WASHDOWN FROM THE NORTH BANK; YELLOW SANDY CLAY WITH GRAVEL.**

11. Roman amphora rim in granular brownish-buff ware containing grey flint grits. Date difficult to determine.

**TOPSOIL. LAYER 1, RESTING ON THE NORTH BANK.**

12. Flanged bowl in fine sandy grey ware with black-burnished exterior. Cf. Brockley Hill, 1970, 154, 29-32. 4th century.

**TOPSOIL. LAYER 1, RESTING ON SOUTH BANK.**

13. Sherds of a wide-mouthed jar with undercut rim, in sandy buff ware containing pink translucent grits. Parts of the rim, walls and base are burnt black. A late Roman date is indicated.

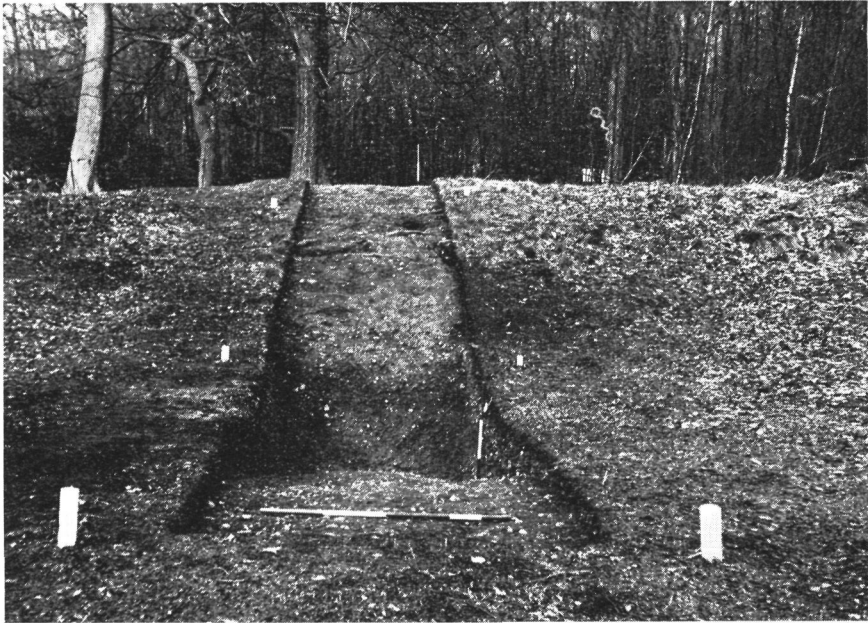


Plate 1. Excavations in Pear Wood: Site J, 1973. View to north before removal of the north and south banks

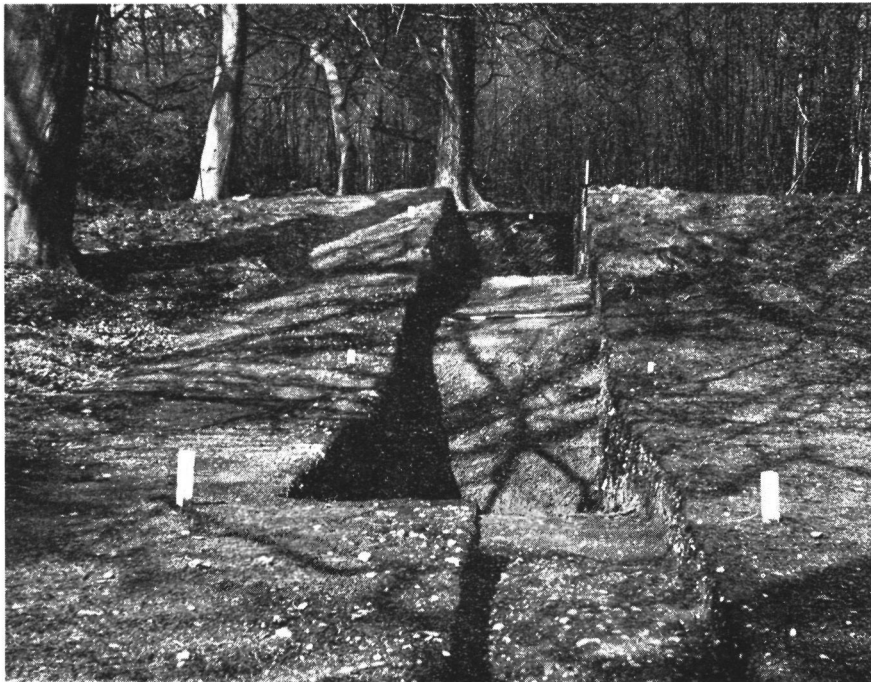


Plate 2. Excavations in Pear Wood: Site J, 1973. View to north following removal of the banks and before cutting of extension to the north



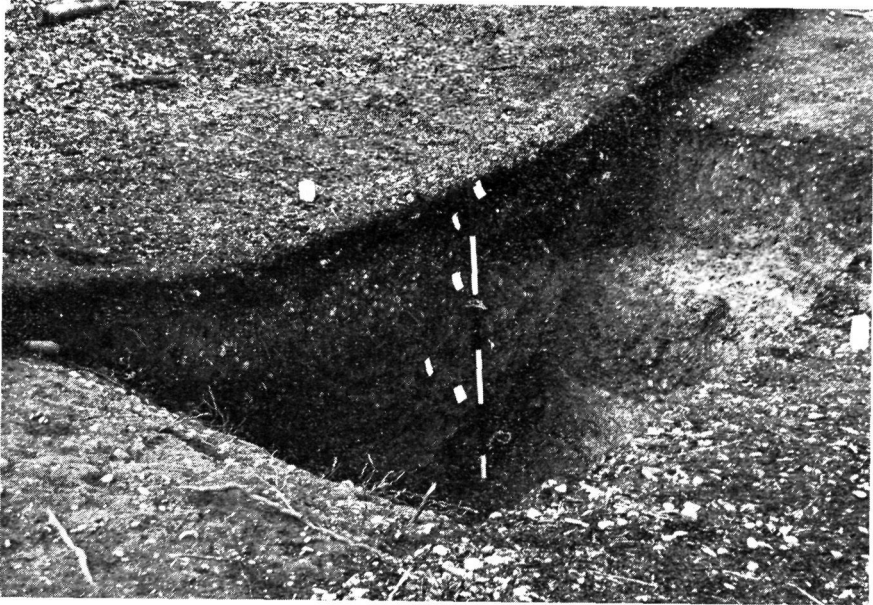
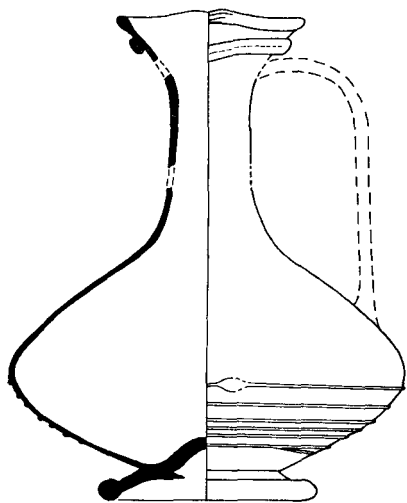


Plate 3. Excavations in Pear Wood: Site J, 1973. View of ditch to south-east, before removal of south bank

Fig. 6. Pear Wood: Glass jug from Site J, 1973 ( $\frac{1}{2}$ )

## GLASS JUG (FIG. 6)

DR. D. B. HARDEN

## THE FINDS II:

FROM THE BOTTOM OF THE NORTH BANK, LAYER 8.

*Description*

Bottom, most of lower body, some portions of the shoulder and base of neck, two fragments of neck and one fragment preserving the pincer lip of the jug. Squat, angular body, tallish neck. Pourer-lip probably set at right angles to a handle (which must have been present though none of it is preserved). Olive-green glass without weathering.

Rim splayed, lip rounded and slightly thickened, and pincer out on one side; tall, cylindrical neck, curving out at the base to meet shoulder in simple curve; squat, carinated body; pushed-in, tubular base-ring, with deep, blunt-ended kick, under which is the mark of a ring punty-wad. Beneath the rim a thick strengthening trail; on lower half of body a much thinner sevenfold spiral horizontal trail, dropped on at carination and winding downward; both trails in relief and self-coloured.

The extant fragments leave us in no doubt about the general shape of the vessel and that it belongs to form 53 of Morin-Jean and form 88c of Isings. The profile is clear from the base of the neck downward; what is in doubt is the

height of the neck and the size and shape of the handle, for as can be seen from Morin-Jean's illustrations (Morin-Jean *La Verrierie en Gaule sous l'empire Romain*, Paris (1913), 112 figs. 134-7) the handles on this type can be of very different shapes and styles. A characteristic of the type, however, is that the handle is set at right angles to the pourer-lip.

There are useful discussions of the type by Morin-Jean (*loc. cit.*) and also by Isings (C. Isings, *Roman Glass from Dated Finds*, Groningen (1957) 106, form 88c), who cites many parallels that are claimed to range in date from the late-2nd to the 4th century. The type is wholly north-western and seems to be more at home in Gaul than in the Rhineland, to judge from the find-spots listed by Morin-Jean and Isings. Isings cites an example from Colchester (T. May, *Catal. Roman Pottery in Colchester and Essex Museum*, Cambridge (1930) 178, pl. 86, no. 91), and the only other example from Britain that springs to mind is a fragmentary one in the British Museum (1900.6 - 14.1), which is said to come from Icklingham, Suffolk.

I do not think that any of these jugs can be early 3rd century, let alone 2nd century; the type began, perhaps, in the 3rd century, but is primarily a 4th century one.

## THE CHARCOAL FRAGMENTS

DR. M. Y. STANT

*Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew*

DITCH. LAYER 4, WASHDOWN OF NORTH BANK.

Unidentifiable carbonized fruit.

DITCH. LAYER 5, GREY SILT WITH GRAVEL.

Badly compressed fragments, probably all Oak, *Quercus robur* type.

SOUTH BANK. LAYER 7, YELLOW SANDY CLAY WITH GRAVEL.

Fragments of Oak, *Quercus robur* type and fragments ofHazel, *Corylus avellana* L.

NORTH BANK. LAYER 8, YELLOW SANDY CLAY WITH GRAVEL.

Mostly Oak, *Quercus robur* type, a few fragments of Hazel, *Corylus avellana* L. and a small fragment of a species of *Acer* probably the Field Maple, *Acer campestre* L.

## SUMMARY OF RESULTS

Excavations have shown that this earthwork is about 90ft. wide and consists of a V-shaped ditch varying from 14–23ft. wide and 5–6ft. deep, with a large bank on its north side and a minor outer-bank on its south side. A notable feature is the size of the north bank in relation to the ditch and it is evident that the excavation of the latter would not have provided sufficient material for the construction of the former. Indeed, it appears that the construction of this earthwork did not comply with the normal practice of ditch dug as a quarry to provide material for the bank. Clearly additional clay-with-gravel was quarried from elsewhere, arguably fairly nearby. A suggestion that the earthwork may have been constructed in two stages these perhaps close in date, may provide the answer.<sup>24</sup> Stage I, would have represented the construction of the north bank, the material for which was quarried from an area nearby, where there was a scatter of occupation debris. A large number of disused quarries are situated at various points in the wood and it is not unreasonable to assume that clay-with-gravel was extracted from this general area. Following the completion of the north bank it became desirable to further emphasise the appearance of the earthwork by cutting a parallel ditch on its south side, the spoil from which was thrown up on the south downhill side to form the outer-bank; thus Stage II.

The earthwork is situated on a gentle southerly slope which greatly enhances the appearance of its north bank. Excavations have as yet provided no clear evidence of palisading or re-vetting, and it may be doubted whether either was necessary for the function which the earthwork served. Grass, weeds, thorns, brambles and the like would have served to consolidate the north and south banks at least for the foreseeable future. That this earthwork is at least a quarter of a mile long is now quite clear. However, excavation and observation in Field 157 in 1960 and 1968 confirms that it ends at the east edge of Pear Wood, about 200 yards west of Watling Street. Doubtless the marshy conditions to the east in the central area of the field made it unnecessary for the earthwork to be continued farther and there is no evidence of it on the east side of Watling Street.<sup>25</sup> Clearly it possessed obstructive qualities, however, to judge from its dimensions it can hardly be described as a formidable defensive barrier.

A satisfactory result of the 1973 excavation is that it has provided evidence which indicates that this earthwork is of late or post-Roman date. It is earlier than the early-18th century Canons vista which cuts across it and, if at one time called 'Grymesdich', is presumably earlier than 1535, the date of the valuation of the Manor of Canons. Moreover, if it represents an easterly continuation of the Harrow and Pinner Grim's Ditch it is surely earlier than 1306.<sup>26</sup> Satisfactory explanation is now provided for the presence of Roman coarse pottery near the bottom of the ditch in the trench cut at Site 1, in 1959. The small quantities of native ware and early Roman finds recovered from the excavations in 1948–59 and 1973 are clearly residual and are derived from occupation debris disturbed during the construction of the earthwork. In addition, it should be stressed that the 4th century finds from the bottom of the north bank merely provide a *terminus post quem* for the construction of the earthwork, and also appear to be residual. Indeed if this earthwork is of 4th century date, it is difficult to speculate what function such an ambitious undertaking might have served then. The problem is in no way helped by the present limited knowledge of late Roman occupation at the nearby settlement of Sulloniacaec (?) adjacent to Watling Street and it may be doubted whether the two were in anyway related. However, it is possible that a late Roman settlement was situated just to the north of the earthwork.

The question is again raised, is the earthwork an easterly continuation of the Harrow and Pinner Grim's Ditch? The documentary evidence mentioned above would seem to support its being so. Furthermore it is noteworthy that both Grim's Ditch and the Pear Wood earthwork have the characteristic large low bank with comparatively small ditch on the south side and are of similar dimensions. It is hoped that the question will be solved when further trenches are cut at points between the two; in particular in the field to the west of Pear Wood. Regrettably it was not possible to excavate in this field at the time of writing due to precautions against swine vesicular disease at nearby Wood Farm. A wide dark line visible on an aerial photograph of this field,<sup>27</sup> continuing westwards from the boundary of the wood at Site G, appears to represent a continuation of the earthwork. However, only excavation will show whether or not this is so.

If then the Pear Wood earthwork represents an easterly continuation of Grim's Ditch its function can be seen as forming part of a territorial boundary at least 6 miles long, crossing both low-lying fertile clay-land and gravel upland. It would imply that the small quantity of Iron Age pottery recovered from the bank and ditch of Grim's Ditch at Pinner Green in 1957<sup>28</sup> is residual, being in no way associated with the construction of the earthwork.

The name Grim, meaning the Devil, suggests a pre-Christian Saxon origin, so by inference the dating for the boundary would seem to be limited to sometime in the 4th-6th centuries A.D. Sir Mortimer Wheeler in his detailed discussion of the Grim's Ditch complex of Middlesex, Hertfordshire and Buckinghamshire<sup>29</sup> suggests amongst other inferences, that it "cannot be pre-Saxon, is unlikely to be later than 6th century and may be supposed therefore to represent a phase during the Saxon settlement of the 5th or 6th century when Teutonic farmers on the northerly fringe of the London Basin found it necessary to define their claims against occupants of the Basin or at least the encircling uplands". Assuming again that the Pear Wood earthwork is part of Grim's Ditch, it may be said that the 1973 excavation has provided evidence which appears to support a 5th or 6th century date, at least for the Middlesex earthwork. However, not a single artifact from these or previous excavations is assignable to this early Saxon period. Indeed the absence to date of recognizable 5th-6th century Saxon artifacts in South-West Hertfordshire,<sup>30</sup> the Vale of St. Albans<sup>31</sup> and North Middlesex<sup>32</sup> is noteworthy and surely significant. It may be doubted, therefore, whether this region was subject to Anglo-Saxon domination until the late 6th-early 7th century, following Cuthwulf's decisive victory over a British force at Bedcanford (Bedeanford for modern Bedford mis-spelt?) in 571, the capture of Limbury (nr. Luton), Aylesbury, Bensington and Eynsham,<sup>33</sup> and the subsequent Saxon encroachment southwards. St. Germanus, Bishop of Auxerre, visited Verulamium (St. Albans) in A.D. 429 and again in *c.* A.D. 447 and found it still run on Roman lines. He is said to have visited the shrine of St. Alban and to have helped repel a barbarian attack. Excavations at Verulamium in 1959<sup>34</sup> provided evidence of sub-Roman survival as late as *c.* A.D. 450, if not later. The Alban tradition suggests that Christianity survived throughout the Dark Ages in the Vale of St. Albans and that transition to Anglo-Saxon culture, arguably by intermarriage, was a slow process. Late survival of Romano-British culture in the London region is perhaps suggested by the statement that in A.D. 456-57 'the Britons then forsook Kent, and in great terror fled to London'.<sup>35</sup> Perhaps Grim's Ditch dates from sometime in the 5th century and was constructed as a political boundary<sup>36</sup> between the territories of the sub-Roman communities occupying London and Verulamium. Its eastern sector would have been ideally situated, lying near to

Roman Watling Street and near to the highest land between London and Verulamium. However, such speculation requires adequate confirmation, which can only be provided by further excavations in the two regions.

In conclusion the aim of this report has been essentially to place on record the work conducted to date and it is stressed that further, large-scale excavations, on Grim's Ditch and the Pear Wood earthwork are clearly desirable.

## NOTES

- <sup>1</sup> H. J. W. Stone, 'The Pinner Grim's Dyke,' *Trans. London Middlesex Archaeol. Soc.* (1935) 284-301. See also H. Braun, 'Some earthworks of North-West Middlesex,' *Trans. London Middlesex Archaeol. Soc.* (1936) 379-88.
- <sup>2</sup> 'A valuation of the Manor of Canons, Little Stanmore, made in 1535, mentions "2 fields called Grymesdich." The approximate locality of these fields is suggested by their being named in conjunction with Cloister and Pear Woods.' H. Braun, *op. cit.*, 381-382. Source, Misc. Accounts, Henry VIII, 2396.
- <sup>3</sup> Excavations in 1948-49, conducted on behalf of the Brockley Hill Excavation Committee and in 1954-59, the North Middlesex Archaeological Research Committee.
- <sup>4</sup> Mr. P. G. Suggett's excavation files.
- <sup>5</sup> C. H. C. Baker, *The life and circumstances of James Brydges, First Duke of Chandos* (Oxford 1949).
- <sup>6</sup> P. Davenport, 'Sulloniaca Excavations,' *Trans. London Middlesex Archaeol. Soc.* (1949-50) 172-74.
- <sup>7</sup> A few of the Roman sherds are housed in the Museum of London. Information about the Iron Age sherd from P. G. Suggett.
- <sup>8</sup> Section and plan with the writer.
- <sup>9</sup> Information from P. G. Suggett's files.
- <sup>10</sup> A cine film of the 1955 excavations has been deposited in Harrow Reference Library. The finds selected for inclusion in the report were lost following the death of Mr. F. H. S. Grant and an exhaustive search has failed to locate them. Cf. Minutes of the North Middlesex Archaeological Research Committee.
- <sup>11</sup> A trial trench cut near Site C in 1973, revealed charcoal in the north bank.
- <sup>12</sup> Now lost, however, it is shown on the cine film and listed in the finds register.
- <sup>13</sup> J. P. Bushe-Fox, *Richborough IV* (London 1949) pl. LVIII, 279.
- <sup>14</sup> G. B. Brown, *The arts in early England*, III (London 1903-37).
- <sup>15</sup> Section not completed and, therefore, not worth publishing.
- <sup>16</sup> Soil samples analysed by Dr. I. W. Cornwall.
- <sup>17</sup> As 15.
- <sup>18</sup> Duplicated report in the files of the North Middlesex Archaeological Research Committee.
- <sup>19</sup> Excavations by the writer on behalf of the Brockley Hill Excavation and Field-work Group.
- <sup>20</sup> I am indebted to Mr. G. B. Dannell for examining and dating this vessel.
- <sup>21</sup> J. P. Gillam, 'Types of Roman coarse pottery vessels in Northern Britain,' *Archaeol. Aeliana* (1957).
- <sup>22</sup> S. A. Castle, 'Excavations at Brockley Hill, Middlesex, Sulloniaca, 1970,' *Trans. London Middlesex Archaeol. Soc.* (1972) 148-159.
- <sup>23</sup> S. A. Castle, 'Trial excavations in Field 410, Brockley Hill Part 1', *London Archaeologist* (Spring 1973) 36-39.
- <sup>24</sup> I am indebted to Dr. J. P. C. Kent for this suggestion.
- <sup>25</sup> A bank in Field 413, on the east side of Watling Street, believed to have been a continuation of the earthwork was excavated by Dr. J. P. C. Kent in 1959 and was found to be a lynchet no earlier than c.1800.
- <sup>26</sup> 'Grymesdich' is mentioned in the 1306 rental of the Priory of St. Bartholomew the Great, London, which is preserved in the Bodleian Library.
- <sup>27</sup> An aerial photograph in Harrow Reference Library.
- <sup>28</sup> Excavations on Grim's Ditch at Montesole Playing Fields, Pinner Green, (c. TQ: 114905) in 1957 showed that the earthwork consists of a wide low bank with a relatively small ditch on the south side. Quantities of Belgic pottery were recovered from the ditch and a hearth below the bank and sherds of hand-made jars of Iron Age 'A' type from the bank itself. In addition a small flint arrowhead of Beaker type was found to the south of the ditch. With the exception of the arrowhead and a flake, these finds, together with those from Pear Wood, 1955, are lost cf. footnote 10. The problematical section is housed in the Museum of London, as are the excavation notes and photographs.  
A rescue excavation on Grim's Ditch at Mill Farm Housing Site, Pinner Green, (c. TQ: 111902) in 1962, provided a section of the ditch with a bank on its west side. Evidence was found to suggest that the ditch was probably originally 30ft. wide by 8ft. deep. There was no dating evidence. Cf. Report by A. Adam in the files of N.M.A.R.C.
- <sup>29</sup> R. E. M. Wheeler, 'London and the Saxons,' *London Museum Catalogues: No. 6* (London 1935) 72-73.
- <sup>30</sup> S. A. Castle, 'Archaeological Survey of South-West Hertfordshire', *Watford and South-West Herts. Archaeol. Soc. Bulletin* No. 14 (1971)
- <sup>31</sup> Excavations at King Harry Lane, St. Albans in 1966-68 disclosed a Saxon inhumation cemetery, which appears to belong to the 7th century or the end of the 6th century. I. M. Stead, 'Verulamium 1966-1968', *Antiquity*, 43 (1969) 46-47.
- <sup>32</sup> *V. C. H. Middlesex*, 1 (London, 1969) 75.
- <sup>33</sup> Anglo-Saxon Chronicle. These dates are questionable.
- <sup>34</sup> S. S. Frere, 'Excavations at Verulamium 1959, Fifth Interim Report,' *Antiq. J.* 40, 1, 2 (1960) 20-21.
- <sup>35</sup> Anglo-Saxon Chronicle. Dates questionable.
- <sup>36</sup> That Grim's Ditch was not a defensive work is clear from the section at Harrow Weald Common, where the earthwork faces higher ground to the south.

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