

## An Excavation at Sharpenhoe Clappers, Streatley, Bedfordshire

BRIAN DIX

### SUMMARY

*Excavation at Sharpenhoe Clappers, Streatley, Bedfordshire, showed that at the point where an archaeological trench was taken across the bank of the supposed Iron Age hillfort, the earthwork was of medieval date. It probably had been constructed as a rabbit warren, whence the name 'Clappers' is perhaps derived. A number of earlier features were sealed beneath the warren, among them a palisade trench and possible ditch terminal, dateable to the Iron Age.*

Sharpenhoe Clappers (NGR : TL 066302) lies in the parish of Streatley, Bedfordshire, 1½ miles south-west of Barton-in-the-Clay and 6 miles north of Luton. The Clappers is the name given to the tip of a spur at the northern edge of the Chilterns. Sloping gently away from the main hill mass to its south, the area forms a natural promontory which commands views on three sides from the east round to the north and to the south-west. A beech wood at the summit adds to the attraction of the hilltop which is a National Trust property.

The wooded area is defined on the south by earthworks at either side of the neck of the promontory (fig. 1). Where the hillslope falls away on the eastern side, the level of the higher ground to the west is continued along the top of a bank, approximately 33m long and 6m to 8m wide. A more substantial, but undulating bank begins 36m to the west and extends to the other side of the promontory where it tips down the naturally steep hillside. It varies in its height from as low as 0.7m to almost 2m tall and ranges between 10m and 13m wide. It is roughly 58m long. A wide, hollowed area is visible in places to its south and accentuates the height of the bank as seen from that side (pl. 1).

Elsewhere, along the east and west sides of the promontory a slight, low bank at the top of the slope was likely formed by the line of trees with which it coincides. Along the north side, the tree line is set back from the top of the slope behind two terraces defined by outward-facing scarps. Other scarps on the south are cultivation earthworks.

The combination of surviving banks and commanding situation led to the identification of the

spur end as the site of a 'British camp' as long ago as 1874.<sup>1</sup> Subsequently, there has been speculation concerning the nature and purpose of any former defences.<sup>2</sup> A scheme for interplanting and replacing timber that had reached its term prompted an investigation of the site which it was hoped would determine the degree of its preservation and suggest a plan for future action. A small excavation team working under the direction of the writer was employed at the site during September and October 1979.

### THE EXCAVATION

The massive beeches which occupy the hilltop today were planted during the second quarter of the nineteenth century as shown by the Tithe Award of 1844 which for the first time referred to a plantation at the promontory.<sup>3</sup> The trees are closely set along the top and at either side of each bank and there are few places where cuttings through both features will not be hindered. In September 1979 a trench was set out across the western bank. It was sited 20.3m from the eastern end of the bank at a point where the tree cover was relatively slight, but even so one tree had to be felled and its stump removed from within the excavated area. Work was concentrated on examining the bank and investigating the state of preservation of the former ground surface and any structures built upon it, especially where these could have been sealed by the tail of the bank. Since space had to be left for access along the line of the hollow on the south side of the bank, only part of that area was available for excavation.

A cutting 26.3m long and 3m wide was made



Plate 1 Sharpenhoe, Bedfordshire. Earthwork seen from south-west.

through the bank and carried beyond it on either side. All excavation was undertaken by hand with a workforce averaging ten experienced persons.<sup>4</sup>

*The bank* (section, fig 2)

The bank stood 1.6m above the surrounding ground level. The materials of which it had been made were exposed across its top surface and to a lesser extent down the sides where they were partly concealed beneath patches of thin vegetation. A series of modern artefacts (see below) found within the humic and partly weathered material which had accumulated at the foot of the slope were evidence of the continuing effect of erosion and soil creep. Tree roots penetrated the upper levels of the earthwork to depths of 0.6 – 0.7m and rabbit holes had disturbed most layers.

The bank was made up of alternate layers of soil and chalk rubble which contained pieces of medieval pottery and earlier, abraded sherds (see below). In some places, the different levels of material had been mixed, perhaps through the collapse of animal burrows. The bank rested on an old ground surface which it covered to a breadth of 12m. Several weathered fragments of Romano-British pottery were found at this boundary which was marked by a discontinuous mat of grass roots, presumably a thin turf line, and also by a clear change to compressed, almost stone-free, very pale-brown soil.

The buried soil was covered by a thin layer of fine chalk which could represent trampling during the early stages of the construction of the bank. Above this, soils appear to have been dumped in

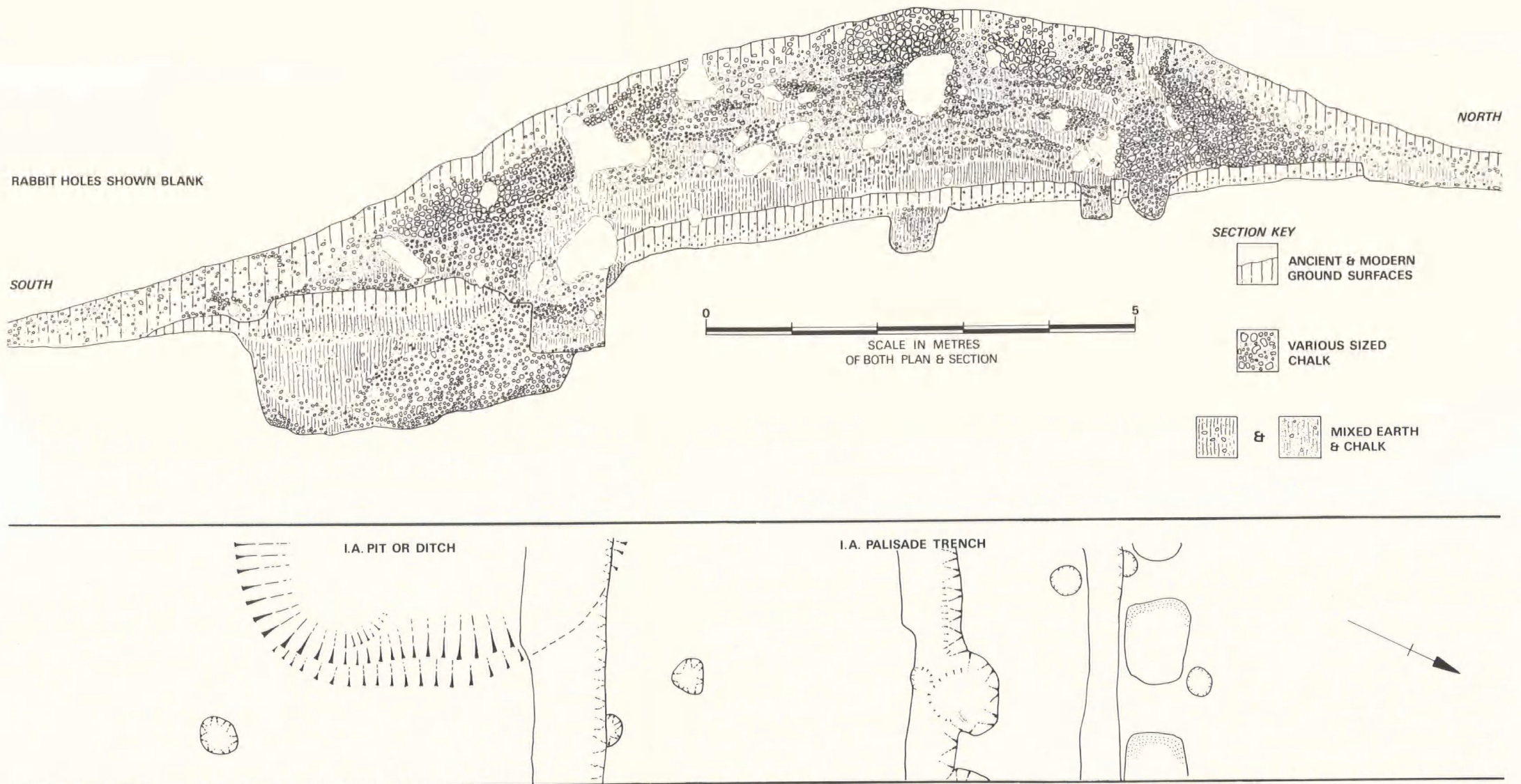


Fig 2 Sharpenhoe Clappers, Bedfordshire. Detail of section across bank with plan of underlying features.

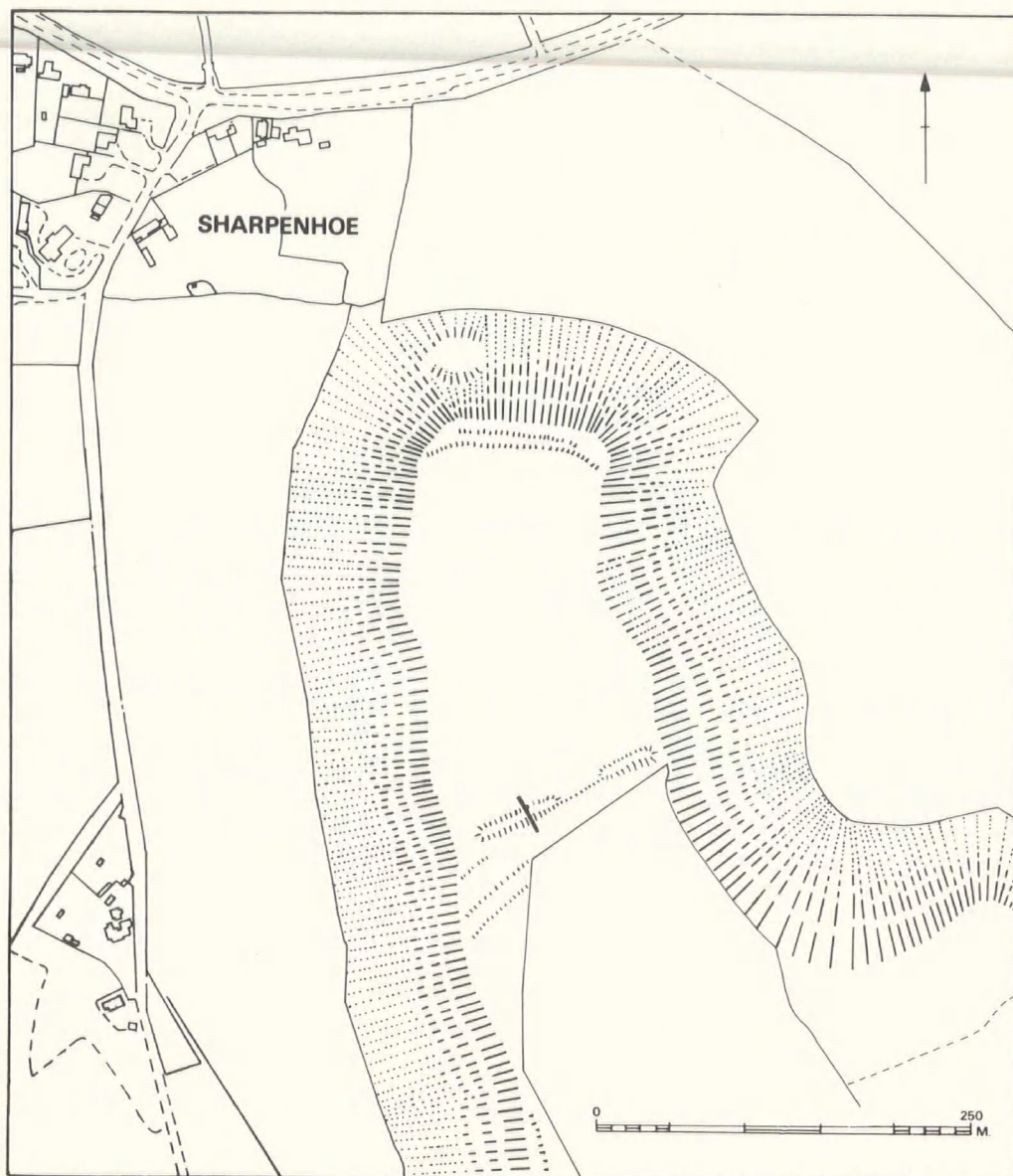


Fig 1 Sharpenhoe, Bedfordshire : The Clappers, showing the position of the 1979 excavation trench.



Plate 2 Sharpenhoe, Bedfordshire. East section-face of trench showing chalk revetment at north side of bank.  
 (scale in half-metres)  
 (Photograph: Beds. C.C.)

the natural order in which they were dug, with the first layer lowermost and subsequent layers on top. Some looser materials had perhaps been trampled or otherwise stabilised before the bank was built too high. Earth and chalky soil were most likely stripped from around the bank and a bare chalk bedrock surface left exposed on its north and south sides. A thin rendsina covers these areas today but beneath it the surface of the chalk substratum has a dirty and eroded appearance. A large regular disturbance located at the southern edge of the archaeological trench could be a related quarry.

The northern side of the bank was revetted. A solid facing or strengthening of rubbly chalk had been piled against the looser materials of the dumped bank. Spilling seems to have been contained by

vertical timbers set closely in a series of roughly rectangular pits, 0.95m long by 0.75 – 0.80m wide, which had been dug 0.7m below the level of the old ground surface. That the posts had been removed before the chalk piled against them could settle was shown by the way in which rubbly chalk filled the void that each had left behind (pl.2).

A fence ran along the top of the bank at an unknown date after its construction. Individual post-holes, roughly 0.5m across and almost as deep, indicate that it was most likely of post-and-rail type.

*Contemporary features* (plan, fig 2)

Two trenches had been dug into the chalk substratum from the surface on which the bank rested. They lay parallel to each other, one at



Plate 3 Sharpenhoe, Bedfordshire. Impression of tool marks.  
 (Scale in centimetres)  
 (Photograph: Beds. C.C.)

either side of the bank, and were at right-angles to the direction of slope of the ground. That on the south or down-slope was the largest. It had been dug with vertical, slightly undercut sides which were widened by chamfering at the top edge of the south wall so as to measure 1.5m or so across. Otherwise, the size of the trench measured approximately 0.8m wide and 1.2 – 1.3m deep. Its bottom was flat, being only slightly uneven where part of its length cut through an earlier feature (compare pl. 4). The trench had been infilled with alternate layers of fine chalky soil and coarse chalk lumps.

Similar stratification was present in the narrow trench which lay towards the rear of the bank. It was 0.4m wide and up to 0.5m deep below the level of the old ground surface. The sides and bottom preserved clear impressions of the imple-

ment by which they had been cut (fig 3; pl. 3). The tool used appears to have been some kind of narrow-bladed mattock, originally forged with strengthening ribs along the upper surface. The tip of the blade was 6-7cm broad and had become chipped and slightly burred, presumably through use. In addition to breaking up the chalk, the tool had also been used to level and straighten the appearance of the trench as shown by smoothing marks along its bottom and by the edges of oblique strokes cut into the almost vertical walls. The angle of these latter, together with the narrowness of the trench, indicates that each face was rendered straight and vertical by short chopping movements made either from a point at the top of the opposite wall or by the worker squatting in the trench itself. For this reason, the handle of the tool cannot have been very long and, correspond-

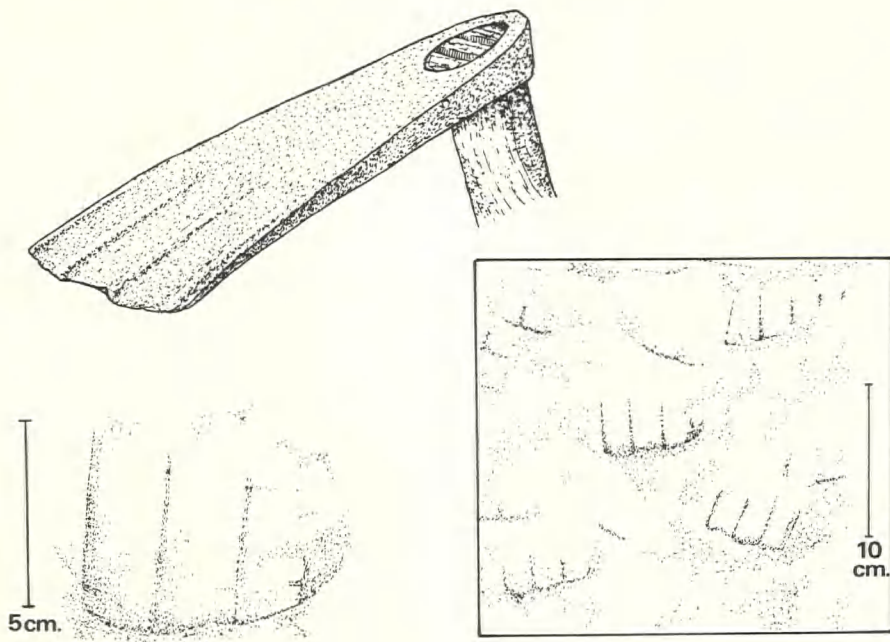


Fig 3 *Bottom right*, traces of tool marks preserved in the chalk floor of one drainage channel, with detail of an individual impression shown *lower left*, and suggested reconstruction of the implement, *centre top*. Compare pl.3.

ingly, the blade must have been of short length.

The sides of both trenches were clean and unweathered, suggesting that each had been filled almost as soon as it had been dug. Both trenches were covered by the materials of the bank. They lay at either side of its central core and, with their distinctive fillings, it is likely that they were designed to facilitate drainage of the soils towards the base of the bank. This would explain the necessity for a broader and deeper channel on the down-slope.

#### *Earlier features*

The soil on which the bank had been built contained body sherds of Romano-British pottery and fragments of earlier, Iron Age vessels. It sealed several features which cut into the chalk substratum.

One of these was a trench which lay across the main axis of the excavated cutting, but on a different alignment to the drainage channels associated with the later bank. It had a roughly U-shaped profile which penetrated the chalk to an average depth of 0.5m; sherds of early Iron Age pottery were

found in the infilling considered below. It had been re-dug, perhaps for the removal of the posts which previously had been set in it. A series of depressions in the floor of the trench marked their former positions. Two of them, larger than the rest, were slightly off-set from the trench edge and could originally have held massive timbers. There was no evidence for a contemporary bank.

Several other post-holes were recorded. Some, perhaps most of them, could have been contemporary since there was general agreement amongst the heights of the horizontal levels to which each had been dug. But in the absence of dateable finds and the lack of stratigraphic links between the individual holes, interpretation is impossible. Additionally, the limited extent of the excavation did not permit individual patterns of post-settings or structures to be identified.

The only other feature sealed beneath the level of the old ground surface was a large disturbance, approximately 4.5m wide, which lay some 3m to the south of the palisade trench (pl. 4). Its rounded, almost squared, edge lay just within the ex-



Plate 4 Sharpenhoe, Bedfordshire. Possible Iron Age ditch terminal cut by drain beneath medieval warren.

(scale in half-metres)

(Photograph: Beds. C.C.)

cavated area. Too small a part of it was exposed to show whether it was merely a pit or part of a larger feature. It had been cut into the chalk to a depth of over 1m. Perforce sectioned close to its edge, the stratigraphy of its infilling suggests that the feature had been re-cut at some time, perhaps indicating that it could represent the terminal of a ditch. Scraps of mostly undistinguished Iron Age pottery were found in the upper layers of its filling, but no stratigraphic link existed between the feature and the palisade trench.

#### THE FINDS<sup>5</sup>

##### *Twentieth century material*

Fragments of broken glass mineral water bottles, a cracked green 'Beetleware' bakelite cup, two empty shell cases spent from fire-arms use and the brass cap

from a cartridge case were among the detritus of modern activity which had become buried in the humic soil that continues to accumulate at the base of the earthwork.

##### *Medieval pottery* (fig 4, nos. 1 – 5)

Medieval pottery occurred stratified in the layers of earth and chalk of which the bank was composed. Several different vessels were represented by sherds in a series of sandy and gritted fabrics. Some of their forms are not dissimilar to those of vessels in a group of late medieval pottery wasters from Flitwick, Beds., but only the fabric of fig 4, no. 3 is the same.<sup>6</sup>

- 1 Fragment of cooking-pot with rounded body and upright rim. Hard grey gritted fabric similar to Hertfordshire reduced ware. Late thirteenth to early fourteenth centuries,<sup>7</sup> From packed chalk beneath the rubbly



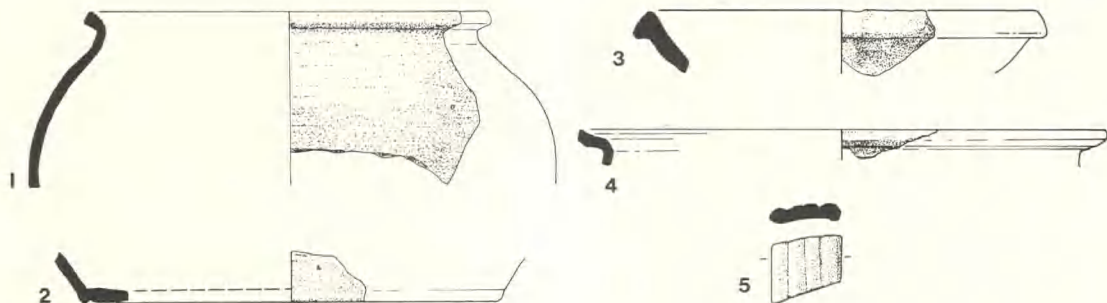


Fig 4 Medieval pottery. (Scale  $\frac{1}{4}$ )

- chalk facing of the bank on its southern side.
- 2 Cooking-pot or storage jar base. Hard grey-brown coarse gritty fabric. Found in brown earth at the base of the bank.
  - 3 Fragment of bowl with simple triangular rim. Hard dark grey coarse gritty fabric like those of wasters from Flitwick. From chalky brown earth towards the base of the bank.
  - 4 Flanged rim of vessel in a moderately hard brown ware containing particles of powdered shell and fine sand. Fourteenth or fifteenth century. From a chalk layer near the top of the bank.
  - 5 Fragment of handle in orange-buff smooth sandy ware. From the same layer as no. 4.

*Romano-British and prehistoric pottery*  
(fig 5, nos. 6 – 12)

- 6 Everted rim of jar or cooking-pot in orange-brown shelly ware. Typically Romano-British. From brown earth at the base of the bank.
- 7 Rim sherd from small jar or beaker in Romano-British grey ware with traces of white coating on the exterior. Found with no. 6.
- 8 Fragment of hand-made pot with everted rim decorated with a row of fine finger-nail impressions along the inner edge. Fired with a brown exterior and grey-black inside. The clay body contains flint grits which protrude from its surfaces. From the palisade trench.
- 9 Rim sherd in dark grey coarse gritted fabric with flints protruding from the surfaces. From yellowish brown slightly chalky soil overlying the large pit or ditch terminal.
- 10 Flat-topped rim in fine grey-brown paste with occasional grits. Found in brown earth at the base of the bank.
- 11 Body sherd in smooth paste, preserving traces of a chevron pattern. Grey-brown outside with orange-brown interior. From chalky brown earth towards the base of the bank.
- 12 Fragment from the body of a pot in a soft black paste, scored on the outside with vertical lines. From the buried soil.

Not illustrated: A number of plain body sherds were found in the upper levels of infill of the large disturbance, in the buried soil, and in the soils which made up the medieval bank. They included flint-gritted pottery as well as sandier and shell-gritted fabrics.

The prehistoric pottery can be compared with early Iron Age material found at Puddlehill, Dunstable,  $5\frac{1}{2}$  miles to the south-west.<sup>8</sup> Fig 5, nos. 8 and 9, and a third unillustrated body sherd in a finer biscuit-coloured fabric which was found with no. 8, are like examples of Group 1 pottery from those excavations. A date in the sixth century B.C. has been suggested for them.<sup>9</sup> At Sharpenhoe this pottery was found in features sealed beneath the buried soil. The occurrence of later styles of pottery decoration, as fig 5, nos. 11 and 12, one of which survived as residual in the medieval bank, suggests that use of the site lasted beyond the beginning of the Iron Age. However, there is nothing in the sample of pottery recovered during excavation which needs to be dated to later than the third century B.C., and it is possible that most, perhaps all of the pieces could have been broken at a much earlier date.<sup>10</sup>

*Animal bones*

The few bones which were found in the earliest features are too fragmentary for identification and the only recognisable remains are those from the bank. With the exception of an eroded *Ovis* metatarsal and the remains of an individual Red fox (*Vulpes vulpes*), all the bones are from rabbits. At least six adults are represented and several younger rabbits also, but their remains had become scattered during burrowing over a long period of time and no complete skeleton was found.

A fragmentary and badly preserved skeleton of a sheep (*Ovis*) lay on the bedrock beneath a thin soil cover to the north of the bank. The date of the burial is uncertain.

**DISCUSSION**

The limited extent of the archaeological work at Sharpenhoe Clappers permits only a few observations, some of which might be shown to be incorrect if excavation is resumed at a future time. No further work is envisaged at the present. Recent

results show unarguably that at the point where it was sectioned, the bank is of medieval or later date. Late medieval pottery was found in the soils of its make-up and it sealed a ground surface from which abraded sherds of Romano-British pottery were found. This level itself sealed a number of earlier features, but from most of them no dating evidence was obtained. Yet a palisade trench lying beneath the old soil contained Iron Age pottery as did also the upper layers of infill of a large disturbance a few metres to its south. There was no evidence for a bank associated with the palisade at this point, but set to one side of it were two large post-pits which by their size must have held massive timbers. No stratigraphic link could be established between the palisade and the other feature which produced pottery of the same period, and unfortunately not sufficient of the last could be excavated to determine if it was the terminal of a ditch. Were this so, and the ditch contemporary with the palisade trench behind, it would suggest that there had formerly existed an entrance in the vicinity. The negative evidence for a bank, then, is perhaps not conclusive; such strengthening behind the palisade may have been set back from the portal. The large post-pits, capable of holding substantial timbers, would certainly be consistent with the identification of an entrance or gateway at this point.

Subsequent to the excavation, a geophysical survey was undertaken to establish whether the palisade trench or the supposed ditch could be traced across the promontory, and so confirm the presence of pre-medieval defences.<sup>11</sup> The existence of an entrance could not be demonstrated by any direct tests on the bank itself because the response from the mixed earth and chalk fill was too erratic and also because of the disturbance caused by the excavation. However, magnetic survey traced a ditch extending to the east from a point next to the bank. It was located roughly in line with the excavated disturbance beneath the foot of the bank and it is possible that there could be an entrance 4 – 5m wide between them.

Assuming this, it might be argued that much of the bank could be of an Iron Age date and origin with only its original entrance infilled by the later earthwork which modern excavation has succeeded in finding. Against this is the fact that the ditch located in the magnetic survey is not precisely aligned with the surviving bank. Also, in order to accept the notion of a defence crossing the neck of the promontory, satisfactory account

must be given for the total removal of what will have been a substantial rampart along a distance of 36m between the two, seemingly complete, banks at either side of the hill. The profiles of the two banks differ and it may be that they are not connected or even contemporary. Additionally, only a simple dump of material should have been found if it had been intended for blocking an existing gap. Yet the bank had been designed to be kept dry by two parallel drains running beneath it and sited lengthwise to the natural ground slope, and a revetment of rubble chalk had been carefully built against its northern side. Such care taken over the design implies purpose and suggests that the entire length of bank is of similar and single build. It may be entirely fortuitous that its presence has preserved earlier features.

An indication of the original nature of the earthwork is perhaps provided by the place-name 'Clappers', by which the area has been known since at least the late sixteenth century. The word appears to be derived from Middle English *clapere* meaning warren and survives in dialect use as a term for rabbit burrows.<sup>12</sup> It occurs as an element in field-names in several different parts of England and is sometimes linked with ME *coni*, 'a rabbit', as at Pauntley, Gloucestershire,<sup>13</sup> and in the sixteenth century field-name *Conyclappers*, recorded from Westmorland.<sup>14</sup>

The earliest discovered use of the term at Sharpenhoe is in a document of 1575,<sup>15</sup> after which it is not found again until 1744.<sup>16</sup> Together, these are the only two documentary references earlier than the nineteenth century, when it appears that the name referred to the whole of the spur top area. Previously, however, it could have been restricted to a smaller part, and the land at the spur end was already regarded as old enclosure. The location, with the steep, probably scrub-covered scarp slopes around three sides, would have been particularly suitable for the establishment of a warren. The earthworks at either side of the neck of the promontory might originally have been constructed to encourage rabbits to inhabit the place and breed there.

Rabbits became a valuable source of food and fur during the later Middle Ages.<sup>17</sup> Individual charters of warren had been granted since the twelfth century, and by the middle of the fourteenth century it is likely that most lords of manors enjoyed exclusive rights of hunting and taking certain beasts in lands specially given to this pur-

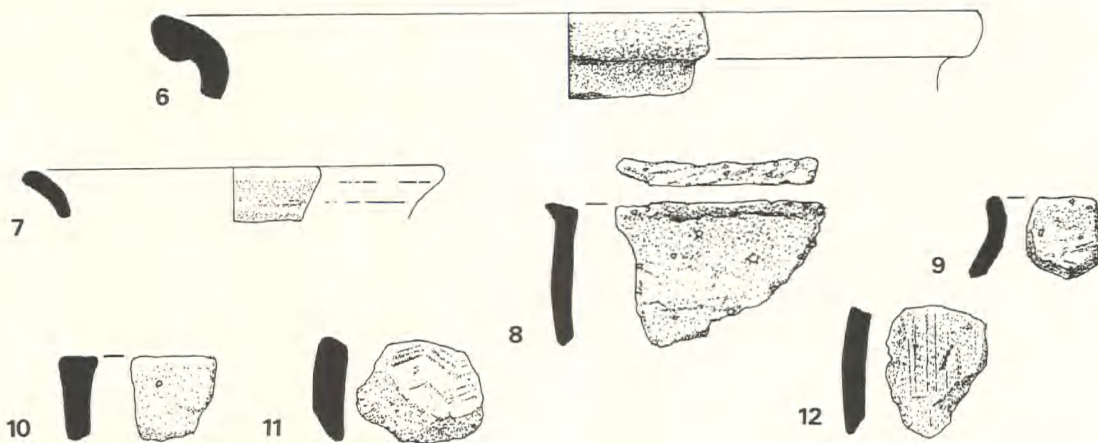


Fig 5 Romano-British and earlier pottery (Scale  $\frac{1}{2}$ )

pose.<sup>18</sup> Initially, the hare was the principal beast of the warren but other animals included foxes and rabbits and there were also fowl such as pheasant and other birds.<sup>19</sup> Many early warrens must have comprised nothing more than rough lands perhaps enclosed in some instances by walls or low banks and ditches. Worthless land, like the barren heath or an area of thin, poor soil capable of supporting only the lightest vegetation, might thus be turned to profit.<sup>20</sup> Sir Thomas Tresham of Rushton will not have been alone in drawing valuable income from his warrens. At the beginning of the seventeenth century, carriers travelled between his Northamptonshire estate and London three times a week with boxes of rabbits and skins. Grey coney, or adult rabbits, fetched £3 for the hundred, blacks sold for £5, and 'rich' at £10.<sup>21</sup> The metropolitan trade in coney extended to Hertfordshire, Berkshire and Wiltshire among other counties,<sup>22</sup> and one merchant purchased 26,000 skins at a time for export to Danzig.<sup>23</sup>

As the economic importance of the rabbit increased, so it seems likely that special earthworks were constructed to encourage burrowing.<sup>24</sup> Sometimes existing features such as ancient burial mounds were enclosed as at Winterbourne Stoke, Wiltshire,<sup>25</sup> but in many instances low, flat-topped rectangular banks, between 0.25 and 0.5m tall, were set up and kept dry by shallow ditches surrounding them.<sup>26</sup> Such 'pillow mounds' might exist singly or be arranged in discrete groups, where the individual mounds were often closely sited to enable the rabbits to be netted.

Tall, but irregular mounds occur at Higham Ferrers, Northants., where an area of upcast dug from a fishpond can be identified as the *warrena cuniculorum* of the local court rolls.<sup>27</sup> Longer banks occur at several sites. For example, a pair of long mounds in Rockingham Park, near Corby, Northants., are respectively 100m and 105m long but only 0.6m high.<sup>28</sup> Banks of similar length have also been recorded from Ashdown Forest, Sussex,<sup>29</sup> and some Dartmoor examples are even longer, particularly those which utilise old and crumbling walls.<sup>30</sup> Another Northamptonshire site is the linear earthwork at Stowe Nine Churches, comprising three parallel banks with ditches at their eastern sides, which may represent the remains of an existing field monument that was also used as a warren. The largest bank rises some 1.5m above the bottom of the adjacent ditch.<sup>31</sup> Elsewhere, other banks, most certainly artificial rabbit warrens, up to 1.75m high and almost 8m wide, occur in the Sheepstor and Merrivale warrens on Dartmoor, and provide the closest parallels to the Sharpenhoe example.<sup>32</sup>

If the Sharpenhoe bank was indeed built in order to help rabbits burrow, it explains the disturbed nature of much of its stratification and the otherwise baffling feature of the two drains which lie beneath. The rubblely chalk on the north side of the bank will have presented a solid obstacle to burrowing in that direction, so that most of the entrances to the rabbit holes would easily have been covered at capturing time. In view of the size of the bank, it is most likely that ferrets were sent down the holes,

causing the rabbits to bolt to the surface where they could have been caught in purse-nets placed over the mouths of the burrows.

#### ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The National Trust, as owner of the site, readily gave permission for the work to be carried out and special thanks are owed to the regional land agent, Mr R.H. Mills, M.A. A.R.I.C.S., and to the local warden Mr A. White of Sharpenhoe, for their co-operation and help. John Niles and members of Bedfordshire County Council Forestry Gang, together with Ken Whitbread and Dave Stubbs of the Photographic Unit at County Hall, Bedford, contributed specialist advice and assistance. Excavating at the site was undertaken by persons employed under a Manpower Service Agency's STEP employment scheme operated in conjunction with Bedfordshire County Council. The work was carried out on behalf of the Department of the Environment.

#### NOTES

- 1 *PSA*<sup>2</sup>, VI (1874), 186. Additional printed and unpublished references to the site are given in Bedfordshire County Council Sites & Monuments Record, PRN 238.
- 2 As, for example, James F. Dyer, 'Bedfordshire Earthworks IV : The Hill-Forts of Bedfordshire', *Bedfordshire Magazine*, VIII (1961-3), 114.
- 3 Beds. CRO : MAT 42/1, Tithe Map.
- 4 Field records and full details relating to the excavation are contained in the excavation archive deposited at Luton Museum, Wardown Park, Luton.
- 5 Deposited at Luton Museum.
- 6 D.C. Mynard, M.R. Petchey & P. Tilson, 'A medieval pottery at Church End, Flitwick', *Bedfordshire Archaeol. Journ.*, 16, 75-84. I am grateful to Dennis Mynard and Martin Petchey for discussing these finds with me.
- 7 Cf. J.G. Hurst, 'The Kitchen Area of Northolt Manor, Middlesex', *Medieval Archaeol.*, V (1961), 267-70, Group K.
- 8 C.L. Matthews, *Occupation Sites on a Chiltern Ridge, Part 1 : Neolithic Bronze Age and Early Iron Age*, BAR 29 (1976).
- 9 C.F.C. Hawkes in Matthews *op. cit.*, 'Foreword and Summary', iv.
- 10 For discussion of contemporary pottery in the Chilterns see C. Saunders, 'The Pre-Belgic Iron Age in the Central and Western Chilterns', *Archaeol. Journ.*, CXXVIII (1971), 1-30. Mr. Saunders kindly commented on the prehistoric pottery at an early stage after excavation.
- 11 This work was carried out in February 1980 by Messrs. A. Bartlett and A. David of DOE AM Laboratory. The results given here are a summary of their report, *Geophysics G 2/80, Sharpenhoe*, (December 1980). A copy is deposited at Luton Museum.
- 12 Cf. Margaret Gelling, *The Place-Names of Berkshire, part III*, EPNS vol. LI (1976), 858.
- 13 A.H. Smith, *The Place-Names of Gloucestershire, part III*, EPNS vol. XL (1964), 184.
- 14 *Idem*, *The Place-Names of Westmorland, part II*, EPNS vol. XLIII (1967), 241.
- 15 Beds. CRO : SM 23.
- 16 Beds. CRO : A 56.
- 17 See Elspeth M. Veale, *The English Fur Trade in the later Middle Ages*, Oxford (1966), 176-8 and 'Appendix B : The Rabbit in England', 209-14.
- 18 G.J. Turner, ed., *Select Pleas of the Forest*, Selden Society vol. XIII for 1899 (1901; reprinted 1978), 'Introduction', cxxiii-cxxxiv. The medieval lords of Sharpenhoe manor received grants of free warren regarding their demesne lands in 1253, 1266, 1316 and 1349 : see Stephen R. Coleman, *Streatley with Sharpenhoe*, unpublished manuscript, Conservation Section, Beds. CC. (April 1980), 16. Which animals were to be reserved to the owners were not specified.
- 19 Turner, *op. cit.*, cxxviii-cxxxii.
- 20 Alan R.H. Baker and Robin A. Butlin, *Studies of Field Systems in the British Isles*, Cambridge (1973), 241.
- 21 Mary E. Finch, *The Wealth of Five Northamptonshire Families 1540-1640*, Northamptonshire Record Society vol. XIX (1956), 75-6. 'Rich' presumably refers to the skins of silver-grey rabbits.
- 22 Joan Thirsk, ed., *The Agrarian History of England & Wales, vol. IV 1500-1640*, Cambridge (1967), 509.
- 23 *Ibid.*, 529.
- 24 As also, for different reasons, during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. See John Sheail, *Rabbits and their history*, Newton Abbot (1971), 41-3.
- 25 Christopher Taylor, *Fieldwork in Medieval Archaeology*, London (1974), 108.
- 26 As, for example, at Fotheringhay, Northants. See RCHM (England), *An Inventory of the Historical Monuments in the County of Northampton. Vol. I : Archaeological Sites in North-East Northamptonshire*, London (1975), 47 and fig 58.
- 27 A.E. Brown, 'Higham Ferrers Castle - or otherwise', *Northamptonshire Past and Present*, V.2 (1974), 79-84; Rev. W.J.B. Kerr, *Higham Ferrers and its Ducal and Royal Castle and Park*, Northampton (n.d., but 1925), 115-7.
- 28 A.E. Brown and C.C. Taylor, 'The Earthworks of Rockingham and its Neighbourhood', *Northamptonshire Archaeol.*, 9 (1974), 71.
- 29 *Medieval Archaeol.*, XIII (1969), 285.
- 30 R.G. Haynes, 'Vermin Traps and Rabbit Warrens on Dartmoor', *Post-Medieval Archaeol.*, 4 (1970), 148.
- 31 W.R.G. Moore, 'Stowe Nine Churches', *Northamptonshire Archaeol.*, 8 (1973), 27-8; James Pickering, 'The Jurassic Spine', *Current Archaeol.*, VI.5 (1978), 140-1. See also RCHM (England), *An Inventory of the Historical Monuments in the County of Northampton. Vol. III : Archaeological Sites in North-West Northamptonshire*, London (1981), 182 and fig 136.
- 32 Catherine D. Linehan, 'Deserted Sites and Rabbit Warrens on Dartmoor, Devon', *Medieval Archaeol.*, X (1966), 141.

*The Bedfordshire Archaeological Council is indebted to the Department of the Environment for a grant towards the costs of this paper.*