

## BERKSHIRE HILL FORTS

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THERE ARE, in Berkshire, some twenty-one earthworks which can be described as hill-forts, in the generally accepted sense of that term (Fig. 1). Arranged in order of size, they are:

### *Hill-forts of 15 acres and over*

- Walbury Camp, *c.* 82 acres.
- Membury Camp, *c.* 34 acres.
- Segsbury Camp or Letcombe Castle, *c.* 26½ acres.
- Caesar's Camp, Easthampstead, *c.* 20 acres.

### *Hill-forts of 3-15 acres*

- Perborough Castle, *c.* 14 acres.
- 'Lysons's' or Little Coxwell Camp, *c.* 12 acres.
- Bussock Wood Camp, *c.* 10-11 acres.
- Blewburton Hill Camp, *c.* 10 acres.
- Sinodun Camp, *c.* 10 acres.
- Cherbury Camp, 9.364 acres.
- Badbury Hill Camp, *c.* 9 acres.
- Uffington Castle, *c.* 8½ acres.
- Grimsbury Castle, *c.* 8 acres.
- Ramsbury Corner, *c.* 7.8 acres.
- Rams Hill Camp, *c.* 7 acres.
- Hardwell Camp, undetermined, but over 5 acres.

### *Hill-forts of under 3 acres*

- Alfred's Castle, *c.* 2 acres, but a much larger enclosure also existed.
- Borough Hill, under 1 acre.

### *Hill-forts of undetermined size*

- ?Camp on Cholsey Hill. Destroyed.
- Oareborough Hill Camp. Destroyed.
- Silsbury Hill, Cholsey. Destroyed.

Details of the location and published information about these sites are given in the Gazetteer of pp. 42-52. Whilst most of these sites are mentioned separately in various publications, they have not been studied as a whole. There is, at present, no report to refer to, prepared by the Royal Commission on Historical Monuments, for the County of Berkshire; the account of these sites in Volume I of the *Victoria County History* for Berkshire dates back to 1906; Peake, in his *Archaeology of Berkshire* (1931),

# Berkshire Hill - Forts

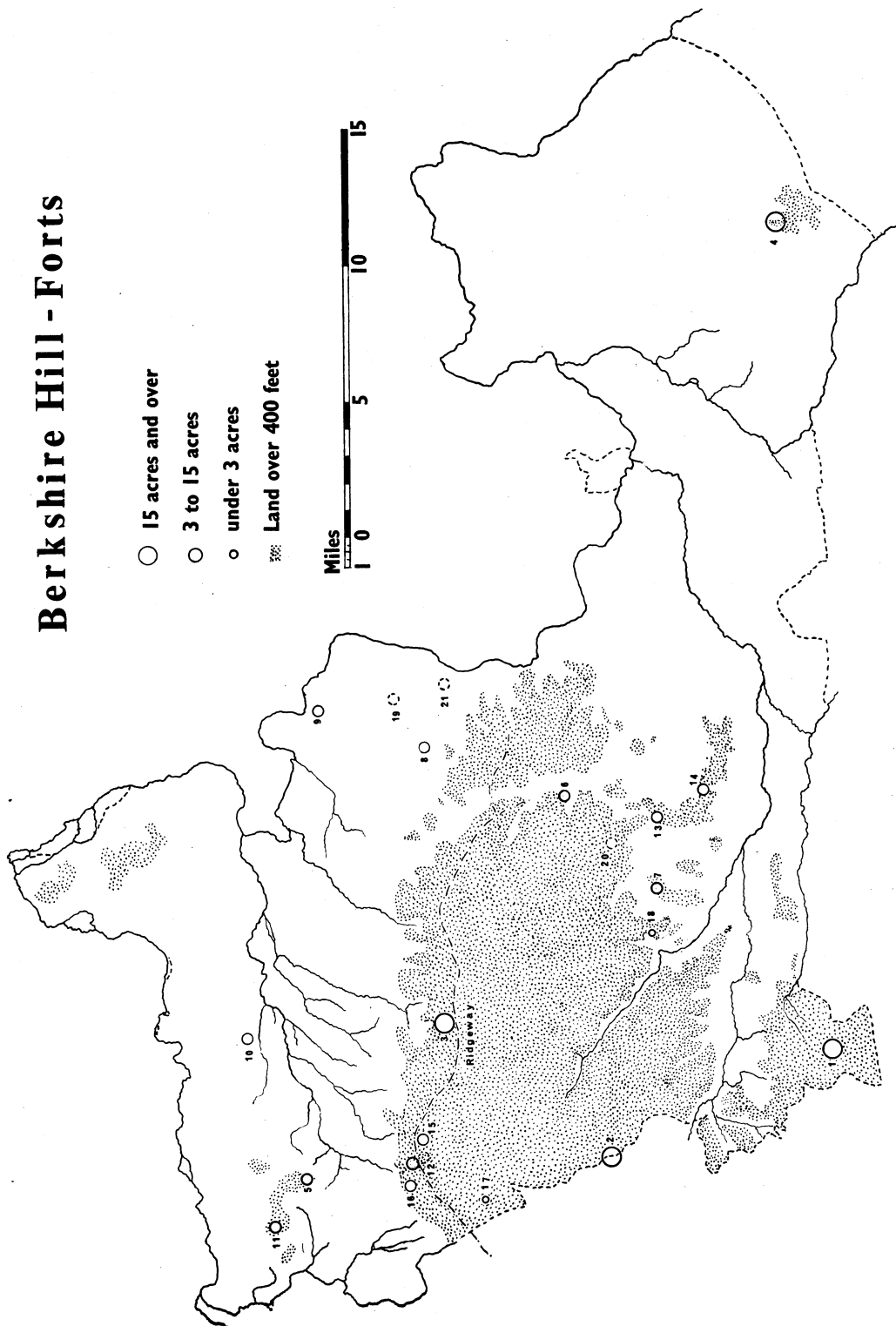


Fig. 1. Distribution of the Hill-forts

had little or no excavation work to help him; and the only other article which treats of a number of these sites is that of Huntingford, for the series in North Berkshire.<sup>1</sup> But this again, written in 1936, lacked excavation evidence. It would seem worthwhile, therefore, armed with such excavation evidence as now exists, small though it may seem to be, to attempt an assessment of our present state of knowledge, or lack of knowledge, of these monuments as a whole, and to see what information has been gained during the last quarter century. Whilst we are in a better position than either Peake or Huntingford, it will be seen that the present position still leaves much scope for improvement.

As these hill-forts are almost all probably datable to the Early Iron Age, one may start by relating the County of Berkshire to the geographical provinces and regions of Professor Hawkes's map for that period.<sup>2</sup> The whole of the County falls within his Southern Province. The greater part of the County is in his Region 12, North Wessex (and even in East Berkshire, we still pay our water rates to a Wessex authority); but the most northern part merges into his Region 6, Upper Thames; whilst the eastern part of the County is clearly related to his Region 10, Thames/Wealden. These Regions are natural divisions, based on geographical and geological considerations, and, as will be seen, the Early Iron Age archaeology of Berkshire, insofar as the hill-forts are concerned, does show local differentiations entirely in agreement with Hawkes's regional divisions. It seems advisable, therefore, in studying the County's hill-forts, to abandon the above grouping of them by size, and to group them primarily on a geological basis, one, which it will be seen, coincides with the regional division postulated by Hawkes. They thus fall into three main groups:

*Group A.* Those situated on the Chalk, which coincide with those occurring in Hawkes's Region 12, North Wessex.

*Group B.* Those situated on the Corallian Rag of the Faringdon Ridgeway, which occur in Hawkes's Region 6, Upper Thames.

*Group C.* Those situated on Plateau Gravels, or other sub-soils, which to some extent coincide with Hawkes's Region 10, Thames/Wealden, though they may extend somewhat farther to the west.

#### GROUP A. HILL-FORTS SITUATED ON A CHALK SUB-SOIL

Thirteen of the hill-forts of Berkshire are sited on the Chalk sub-soil of the Berkshire Downs or their vicinity. They are: Walbury, Membury (partly in Wiltshire), Alfred's Castle, Segsbury, Hardwell, Uffington Castle, Rams Hill, Perborough Castle, Sinodun, Blewburton, Cholsey, Oareborough and Silsbury. The last three sites have been destroyed, or are doubtful, leaving ten examples in this group for consideration. Of these, the most extensively excavated site is that of Blewburton Hill Camp. It may be taken, at present, as the type site for this group, and the excavation results are, therefore, of especial importance for this study. This hill-fort,

<sup>1</sup> *B.A.J.* 40 (1936), 157-175.

<sup>2</sup> *Antiquity* xxxiii (1959), 173, fig. 1.

excavated in 1947-49 by A. E. P. Collins and F. J. Collins, for the Berkshire Archaeological Society and Reading Museum, had a long and varied history, which is summarised here.

*Blewburton IA. Southern Second A. c. 350 B.C.*

The first phase of the occupation of the hill consisted of a small village, or even a farmstead, defended by a timber palisade. Inside the palisade there were found post-holes, probably of several circular huts, and grain storage pits. The associated pottery and finds were typical of the Wessex Second A culture. They included some sherds of cordoned haematite bowls, which suggest an initial date somewhat earlier in date than that of the Southern First B or Marnian invasions of c. 300 B.C.<sup>1</sup>

*Blewburton IB*

A pause in the occupation of the hill-top was detected during which a substantial turf-line grew over the silted-up palisade trench of the deserted farmstead. There was no dating evidence to determine the length of this interval.

*Blewburton IIA. Southern Second A, anti-invasion of Southern First B. c. 300 B.C.*

The hill-top was now defended with a univallate defence which had a western entrance. Rampart I was of Hollingbury type timber-laced build, with a berm and a V-shaped Ditch I. The western entrance was 37 feet wide, flanked by the rampart ends which had a continuation of their timbered structure. The three post-holes for the gate were set just inside the highest point of the rampart, and possibly suggested an overhead footway. It was observed that the inner side of the revetment of Rampart I was masked by a slope of earth, as at Hollingbury in Sussex and Charlbury in Dorset. Neither Rampart I, nor the sealing turf-line between it and Rampart II, produced any distinctive dating material. As Ditch I was recut, there was again no contemporary dating evidence from that source. Only the construction method was available for dating. It is, however, that typical of the Southern Second A culture in use c. 300 B.C. as a defence against the invasions of peoples bearing a Southern First B culture. Collins thought it tempting to suggest that this type of construction is intermediate in date, as it is in type, between the true Hallstatt type and the later glaciis' (or dump construction) type, which dispenses with elaborate timber revetting. Rampart I at Blewburton is analogous to that of Maiden Castle I, Dorset.

*Blewburton IIB*

A turf-line grew over Rampart I, and Ditch I silted up. This interval is indeterminate, but it is likely that it indicates a fairly considerable pause during which the site was either deserted or defences were no longer considered necessary.

<sup>1</sup> Collins used the date c. 250 B.C. for that of the so-called Marnian invasion and suggested c. 300 B.C. as an initial date for the settlement. With Hawkes's

revised date of c. 300 B.C. for the arrival of Southern First B, I have put back Collins's date to conform.

*Blewburton III. Southern Second B. ?Anti-Belgic. ? date*

The site was re-fortified. Rampart II was built by dumping material obtained from Ditch II (a recut of Ditch I) over Rampart I. The western entrance was now narrowed to 25 feet and the ramparts inside the gate were revetted with drystone walling of oolitic limestone. Three large post-holes marked the site of the gate sited somewhat outside that of the earlier gate. On the northern side of the entrance a post-hole associated with Rampart II suggested a possible breastwork on top of the rampart. This dump construction rampart was compared with Phases 1-3 of the extended Maiden Castle. Finds from the occupation level on the tail of Rampart II, and from the silt of Ditch II, were of Southern Second B character. The dating of this phase raised several problems. The prevalence of 'saucepan' pots amongst the pottery indicated early Southern Second B influences, but, on the other hand, some of the decorative motifs on the pottery, and the use of the drystone revetment technique, indicated later influences derived perhaps from Third B sources. It was thought that the Period III occupation was likely to have continued well into the first century A.D. On the dating of this period, Collins wrote:<sup>1</sup> 'It is tempting to ascribe the destruction of the defences at the western entrance to the advancing Romans in or soon after A.D. 43. The evident signs of violence, with corpses of animals strewn about the street and covered by the crashed-in ramparts with their revetment walls, plus abundant traces of charcoal, perhaps from burnt gateway timbers could fit such an explanation. But unlike the eastern entrance at Maiden Castle, there is not a shred of evidence to date the disaster. It could equally well have happened as a result of westward Belgic expansion in the years just prior to the Roman conquest. Against this latter explanation can be set the absence of Belgic pottery and coins . . . . The one salient point which the ditch section makes clear is that it was open and kept clean at the time of the overthrow of the limestone revetment walls behind the gates.'

*Later Occupation*

Blewburton Hill was deserted during the Roman period, but has, in its latest phases, a noteworthy Anglo-Saxon cemetery and a series of lynchet terraces.

Only one other site in this group has been excavated during the last quarter century where, at Rams Hill, Professor and Mrs. Piggott in 1938-39 excavated for the Newbury Field Club. The Early Iron Age hill-fort phase of the successive occupations found on this hill was Ramsbury III, a univallate enclosure of some 7 acres. This is an unfinished hill-fort, now much ploughed down. The rampart was of dump construction, and the ditch, with an internal step, was otherwise V-shaped. The entrances were not determined. The associated culture was of Southern Second A character, the closest analogies quoted being the pottery from Liddington, Wiltshire. With some 15% of the sherds being haematite coated, showing strong Wessex influence, the site was considered as somewhat later than All Cannings Cross (as at Blewburton), and was attributed to the A2 culture. It is possible that the same war scare caused building at both sites. There is, however, a discrepancy

<sup>1</sup> *B.A.J.* 53 (1952-53), 57.

between the type of rampart construction, though the one section taken through what little remained of the Rams Hill bank is not perhaps too secure evidence on which to be quite certain that it too might not belong to the early phase when timber-lacing was the custom.

The remaining eight sites have not been excavated, with the exception of the work of Martin Atkins, at Uffington Castle, about 1850. From the reports, it would seem that the main (inner) bank had a revetting of sarsen stones, and was either timber-laced, or overlay an earlier palisade defence. Walbury, Membury, Segsbury, Hardwell, Uffington, Sinodun and Perborough are all univallate hill-forts with counterscarp banks which are preserved to a greater or lesser degree. The first three are noteworthy for their large size, and Walbury, the only Berkshire hill-fort to the south of the River Kennet, has internal hollows which may be hut-sites, suggesting that it is an occupied site. The main inner ramparts of Segsbury and Uffington seem to have sarsen stone facings. The main entrances at Uffington and Segsbury, and possibly also at Membury, show a heightened rampart flanking the butt ends of the ditch and encircling it to meet the counterscarp bank. Surface finds are best known from Perborough and Sinodun and both suggest a Southern Second A culture, with Romano-British material at Sinodun derived possibly from the adjacent Roman settlement.

Alfred's Castle presents some different features. Less strategically placed on somewhat lower ground, its present fortified area encloses a mere two acres. This badly-robbed, univallate-with-counterscarp-bank defence, does show a sarsen stone facing outside the main bank. But the air photograph of the site shows that a very much larger site once existed. Stray finds from the site and adjacent mounds include pottery of varying dates, and the site is, pending excavation, best excluded from any generalisations.

#### *Conclusions for the Group A Hill-forts*

Were it not for the results obtained at Blewburton Hill, it would be impossible to try to draw any conclusions for this group. Geographically, the Chalk Downs of Berkshire are a continuation of those of Wiltshire and Hampshire and belong logically in the Wessex complex. Archaeologically, it appears that there is a close connection between these regions at the start of the Early Iron Age. The Blewburton Hill story starts with a history analogous to that of South or Middle Wessex. Before c. 300 B.C. the tops of the Chalk Downs were occupied in our North Wessex region by villages or farmsteads in the Middle and Late Bronze Age (cf. Rams Hill and possibly Moulsoford and Perborough Castle); and in the Southern Second A cultural phase (cf. Blewburton IA). At present, on hill-fort sites in Berkshire, a Southern First A occupation has not been attested. The only defences known, prior to c. 300 B.C., are palisades (cf. Blewburton IA). The first dated hill-fort defence of the group is that of Blewburton IIA, c. 300 B.C., built presumably by the population with a Southern Second A culture against the threat of the arrivals of immigrants bearing a Southern First B culture, who may have threatened their flocks and grain supplies. It is possible that all the other hill-forts in Group A may prove to have a phase which is comparable to that of Blewburton IIA. Indeed, did one but know, they also

may possess earlier village or farmstead sites. Uffington gives a hint of a timber-laced rampart which may be of Hollingbury type. Its sarsen facing stones, and also those of Segsbury, may form part of such ramparts. It may be possible to show that the entrances of these hill-forts are of a type specific to this phase.

Insofar as the present meagre evidence goes, the hill-fort sites, after this first fortification, seem to have been deserted for a considerable period. At Blewbury the defences were not maintained. During this period, in Hawkes's Region 12, that of our North Wessex group of hill-forts, there developed after *c.* 250 B.C. a Southern AB culture (in which there can be seen to be an intermingling between new B elements and the existing Second A substratum); and after *c.* 200 B.C. a Southern Second B culture (which is an indigenous development in which Second A and First B elements are fused and then develop with local characteristics). This Southern Second B culture persisted in Region 12, with no marked Third B intrusion, until the arrival of the Southern Second C culture, that of the Atrebrates, *c.* 50 B.C. Somewhere about A.D. 25, the Southern First C culture, that of the Catuvellauni, under the Cunobelinus expansion impetus, crossed the Thames and conquered Berkshire territory which had previously belonged or been under the influence of the Commian dynasty. It would seem that the refortification story of the Berkshire hill-forts of Region 12, N. Wessex, now diverged from the pattern known in South Wessex. At Maiden Castle, Dorset, at the end of the Southern Second B phase, dump construction ramparts were built against a new threat, presumably the arrival of the Southern Third B elements; and, later, Third B peoples there built closely-set multivallate ramparts in their hill-forts, against an expansion or arrival of C peoples. It is noteworthy that none of our Group A hill-forts have a multi-vallate phase, and Southern Third B pottery has not been found in them. It would seem that this Third B invasion threat did not reach our Berkshire series.

As things stand, we can only use Blewburton to illustrate the rest of the Iron Age hill-fort story for Region 12. Whilst it was difficult to date Blewburton III, the re-fortification, Collins makes the important point that the narrowed re-built entrance, with its drystone lining walls and set-back gate, indicate Third B influence. Accordingly, he makes Period III later rather than earlier, and leaves open the question as to whether it was refortified against the threat of the Belgae or the Romans. Though the gate was destroyed at a time when the ditch was open and cleaned-out, there were no sherds of either Belgic or Roman type to date its downfall.

One can restate these conclusions against current views on events of the Iron Age and their chronology. The fact that there are Third B influences present suggests that the final refortification did not take place until well after *c.* 150–100 B.C., if those influences were derived from Wessex Third B, or after *c.* 100–50 B.C., if those influences were derived from South-Eastern Third B. Dr. Derek Allen's recent study of the Belgic coinage shows that the primary and overlying waves of Belgic settlers who arrived in this country, from the end of the second century or at least the beginning of the first century B.C. onwards, bringing with them these Gallo-Belgic coin series, do not seem, insofar as the coin distribution shows, to have penetrated our part of Region 12. Other than this first Belgic invasion, the remaining stimuli, therefore, for a refortification at Blewburton are:

- (i) The arrival of the Southern Second C culture, or the Atrebates, in Hampshire, *c.* 50 B.C.
- (ii) The Catuvellaunian expansion to the south of the Thames, which conquered part of the Atrebatian kingdom, *c.* A.D. 25.
- (iii) The Roman conquest of A.D. 43.

It is a matter of choosing which events seem best to fit the available evidence. The overthrow of the entrance, on analogies with Bredon, Worcestershire and Sutton Walls, Herefordshire, could be due to either the Belgae or the Romans. The absence of Belgic pottery is not diagnostic, as the Belgae did not habitually frequent hill-top sites. With no great resolution, it is suggested tentatively that the date of *c.* A.D. 25 may prove to be the most likely, as being in some conformity, from a structural influence angle, with the conclusions reached about the hill-forts in Group B below.

Whether any of the other hill-forts in Group A have two-period ramparts, as does Blewburton, will not be known without excavation. Some surface indications suggest that it may not always be so, for the entrances of Uffington and Segsbury seem to lack the characteristics of the narrow rectangular walled enclosure, with set back gate. But excavation may well prove this slender observation to be wrong.

It should be stressed again that, for Group A, this house of cards is built up on the excavation of Blewburton only. At least one more site from this group requires selective excavation to amplify or to corroborate the evidence. Good candidates are Uffington Castle or Segsbury, both of which have good unobliterated entrances.

#### GROUP B. HILL-FORTS SITUATED ON THE CORALLIAN RAG OF THE FARINGDON RIDGE

The three sites in this group are Cherbury Camp, Badbury Camp and Little Coxwell (or Lysons's) Camp. Little Coxwell Camp is unexcavated, unplanned, partly destroyed and there seem to be no reported finds. The Lysons's described it as having a double ditch on the west side. Badbury Camp is also unexcavated and no finds are recorded. Huntingford wrote that the site originally had two ditches which were levelled sometime in the nineteenth century. It is not clear whether these two sites are completely bi- or multi-vallate or are only partially bivallate. Without further work it would be unwise to relate these two sites to the results obtained at Cherbury, but a possible relationship might be kept in mind.

For Cherbury Camp, however, excavation evidence is available. Excluding the above uncertainties, Cherbury camp is unique amongst the Berkshire series in that it is a true multivallate hill-fort, with closely set ramparts, and that it is sited on low-lying ground, amongst marshes, on the extreme fringe of the Corallian Beds. It had three banks and ditches, and traces of an outer counterscarp bank. The site was approached most easily from the north-east by a causeway, and was in effect a narrow-necked peninsula which was most suitable for fortification. A preliminary season of excavation was undertaken by Mr. J. S. P. Bradford, in 1939, but only an interim report on the results obtained has been published. On the siting of the defence on low-lying ground, the excavator quoted the analogous sites of Gadbury Bank, Worcestershire, and Salmonsbury, Gloucestershire. The main entrance was located on the eastern side; the inner bank had internal and external drystone revetments; whilst the outer banks were of dump construction without stone



revetting. The roadway through the entrance had been remetalled, but the earliest level yielded A2 and AB wares. The entrance was lined with drystone revetment walls, and the gate, situated at the outer extremity of this parallel lining wall, had two major gate-posts, each with satellite supporting posts. The interior was scarcely excavated.

The opinions of the excavator, published as long ago as 1940, on the dating and significance of Cherbury Camp were these. He pointed out, quoting the views then current, that such multiple defences in Britain were mainly confined 'to not much more than a century before the Roman conquest. Probability therefore points to a relatively late date for sites of this nature far from the primary centres of diffusion in south-west England.' He found late survivals of the more angular A2 pottery forms, and but a few sherds with debased haematite coating. These were associated in the filling of the innermost ditch with 'plain AB wares'. The dominant form, from Cherbury, was the modified 'flower-pot', typical of the Iron Age B contribution to the 'AB cultures'. He wrote: 'While it is unlikely that B ceramic influence in this area was uniform in effect or necessarily continuously exerted, the decorative motif of the pendant swag and stamped circlet nevertheless reoccurs with little variation in the Frilford-Cassington-Cherbury complex. Undoubtedly derived from Armorican sources, the stamped circlet in this association is a suggestive 'type fossil'. One of the most readily assimilated elements of this alien influence, and here most probably absorbed indirectly through a SW. medium, it can hardly have found popular expression locally much, if at all, before the last two or three decades prior to the Roman conquest.'

As at Frilford, Cherbury showed little, if any, Iron Age C influence. 'A gold coin of Cunobeline' (Abingdon Museum) found near Cherbury and strays from Garford, Hanney, Abingdon and Wantage point to little more than a limited measure of late economic penetration.' Bradford argued, therefore, for a date *c.* A.D. 1-20 for the construction of the defences.

Commenting on the structural findings, Bradford noted the dump construction of the ramparts, similar to that of the late A2 phase at Maiden Castle, combined with the free use of stone which he thought was derived from Cotswold B influences, as used at Salmonsbury and Bredon. The pottery showed, he thought, a fusion of A and B traditions, and the composite AB culture evolved was parallel to its developed earlier counterparts in Hampshire and Wiltshire and such Berkshire sites as Southcote and Theale. Important characteristics of the pottery were thus derived before it received the swag and circlet decoration which he described as south-western in origin and distinctly intrusive. Lacking information about the presence or absence of hut-sites in the interior, he left it as uncertain as to whether it should be regarded as 'an independent, rather impoverished, fastness, or as a passing effort of local defence for open village sites in this area—that is, a temporary Iron Age AB group refuge in acquired multiple-rampart technique.'

#### *Conclusions on Group B hill-forts*

Again one has to argue a case from one excavation. The interest and importance of this site is so apparent that it is especially unfortunate that the report is but

interim, for, though accompanied by an air-photograph and photographs of the excavated sites, there are no detailed plans or sections, and no pottery illustrations in print. It would be advantageous to have further work undertaken in the interior of the site, which, when reported on, could perhaps include the material unpublished after the first season. Meanwhile, a few observations can be made.

Situated in Region 6 (Upper Thames), Cherbury is placed fairly centrally in the Southern Second B cultural area, which extends from Sussex to Gloucestershire. Its structural affinities with Salmonsbury may be emphasised, and Bradford's late dating does not conflict with this. During the first part of the first century A.D. the Belgic Dobunni were establishing a kingdom whose eastern boundary is placed along the River Cherwell; they are believed to have become a client kingdom of the Catuvellauni who share this boundary. Catuvellaunian colonists had already moved into an enclave in Oxfordshire. This expansion of two great Belgic peoples seems sufficient cause for the indigenous population in Gloucestershire and North Berkshire (still using Second B pottery, but now showing acquired influences from Third B peoples, more especially structural ones) to build strongholds for their protection on sites, as at Salmonsbury and Cherbury, which had not been previously fortified. This equates the building of Cherbury with both Blewburton III in date—despite the differences in the Third B structural acquisitions—and, as will be seen below, with a postulated second phase of fortification in the Group C camps.

#### GROUP C. HILL-FORTS SITUATED ON PLATEAU GRAVELS OR OTHER SUB-SOILS

There are five hill-forts in this group: Caesar's Camp, Bussock Wood, Grimsbury Castle, Ramsbury Corner and Borough Hill. The sub-soil at Caesar's Camp is of Barton Sands and Plateau Gravel; at Bussock Wood it is of London Clay and Bagshot Sands; at Grimsbury Castle it is of London Clay, Bagshot Sands and Plateau Gravel; at Ramsbury Corner it is of Plateau Gravel and Sand; and at Borough Hill it is of Reading Beds. Caesar's Camp and Bussock Wood are unexcavated.

Grimsbury Castle is a partially bivallate hill-fort. It was re-surveyed, in 1957, by Dr. Wood and students, and a section was cut through the eastern inner bank, ditch and counterscarp bank. In 1960, the slightly inturned western entrance of this inner defence was partially examined. The outer earthwork, which forms an arc on the western side, that of easiest access, has not been sectioned. The results achieved showed that the main inner earthwork is a univallate contour defence consisting of an inner bank, of simple dump construction, with no evidence of either timber-lacing or of stone revetting; a somewhat flat-bottomed U-shaped ditch, with at one place a step on its internal side; and a high counterscarp bank of dump construction. The only finds were a few tiny scraps of pottery, described as of Iron Age A type of late date, and part of a beehive quern, from the lower silt levels in the ditch. The interior, insofar as it was examined, showed no occupation levels. The outer western earthwork is at least 60 yards distant from the inner. It is not clear whether there is an entrance in its length. Details of the work at the western entrance through the inner bank are not yet published, but there were some indications that

it was a two-period structure, which suggests that the outer earthwork, or partial bivallation, was a secondary addition.

The unexcavated and much destroyed nearby hill-fort of Bussock Wood has features comparable with those of Grimsbury Castle. Of slightly larger size, it too is partially bivallate, on the eastern and southern sides, again those of easiest approach. Though the entrance or entrances are undetermined, the possible gaps are on the east and so are protected by the outer earthwork. There is a record which shows that the inner bank was at least as high as that of Grimsbury Castle, though now it is but a tumble of shingle.

The hill-fort at Ramsbury Corner is also much destroyed. Its southern bank was sectioned in 1949. There is no evidence to show that it was partially bivallate and nothing is known of its entrances. The section showed the remains of a ploughed-down rampart, apparently of simple dump construction, and a U-shaped ditch which, like that at Grimsbury Castle, had an internal step. No finds were made, but it was concluded that this might be a prehistoric univallate defence of hill-fort type.

The small site at Borough Hill, perhaps under one acre in area, is again much destroyed and appears to have been univallate. Though unexcavated, pottery sherds of Southern Second A type, including haematite sherds, and of Southern Second B type, have been picked up on the surface. Nothing is known of its entrance or entrances.

Caesar's Camp, however, of some 20 acres area, is a much larger camp than the others in this group, and its strong defences have not been much destroyed. It is the only hill-fort in East Berkshire. It is a univallate contour fort, with in places a counterscarp bank, and a possible partial bivallation on the southern side. Possible original entrances exist on the north and south. Little more can be said about it, but a sherd of haematite pottery was picked up there and an ancient record suggests that a coin of Cunobelinus came from the interior of the camp.

#### *Conclusions on Group C hill-forts*

In considering these five sites, it would seem that Ramsbury Corner and Borough Hill, both somewhat destroyed and believed to be univallate, might be better omitted from these generalisations. They may be more at home in the Region 12 complex. But for Grimsbury Castle, and for Bussock Wood, with their partial bivallation, and possibly also for Caesar's Camp, in spite of the Wessex haematite sherd, there are reasons to suggest that a more easterly influence prevails, and that they have relations with Hawkes's Region 10, the Thames/Wealden area. In Kent, Sussex and Surrey, it can be shown that *c.* 100 B.C., Wealden peoples, with a Southern Second B culture, built hill-forts on the gravels and Greensands (Oldbury I type hill-forts), in contrast to the earlier hill-forts built by the Southern Second A peoples, on the Chalk Downs. Many of these appear to have been given a partial bivallation, with a refortification of the main entrance (Oldbury II type hill-forts), probably during the second quarter of the first century A.D.<sup>1</sup> It has been suggested that the stimuli for these two events was, firstly, a retreat of the Wealden peoples to these sites in face

<sup>1</sup> Cf. Cotton, *Problems of the Iron Age in Southern Britain* (1958), 63-66.

of the threat of the Southern First C, or Belgic invasion of the second century B.C.; and that the secondary refortification of partial bivallation and strengthening of the defences of the main entrance was a response to the Catuvellaunian expansion *c.* A.D. 25. Insofar as rampart structure is concerned, the Oldbury I type hill-forts used a simple dump construction method; in their Phase II works, external stone revetting occurs. For the three Berkshire sites, no excavation has been undertaken in the postulated Period II outer ramparts, but there is considerable drystone work in the latest phase of the western entrance of Grimsbury Castle. The inner bank at Grimsbury appeared to be of one period, and did not seem to have been refurbished. But then much of the first period of Oldbury I, Kent, showed no refurbishing for its period II phase. Two other points of similarity between these Berkshire hill-forts, and the more easterly Oldbury I and II series, may be mentioned. They are all on sites with a gravel or Greensand sub-soil, and tend to be wooded and overgrown, and the choice of site may indicate perhaps a retreat of a population normally occupying river terrace sites, to the nearest high ground, in face of a threat. The Chalk Downs are outside the province of these peoples, in many cases. Secondly, there appears to be but little use of the interior of any of these sites for continuous occupation. Pits, hut-sites, hearths and occupation levels, and pottery finds (other than a meagre amount of sherds associated with the building of the defences) are the exception and not the rule. Indeed, at High Rocks, Kent, it has been shown that, between the first and second fortifications, the site was given over to agriculture. This paucity of material makes it especially difficult to date these sites.

It may be observed that, for Group C, two fortification periods are being postulated during the time when Blewburton shows but one, its refortification of Period III. A possible (though slender) explanation is offered for this situation. In the Oldbury II series, it has been shown that the refortification, ascribed tentatively to *c.* A.D. 25, can have its new work placed either inside or outside the Oldbury I defence, or it may be superimposed on the Oldbury I defence. I suggest that the Group C hill-forts felt the threat of both Belgic movements, and reacted as did the Wealden peoples. On the other hand, the initial arrivals of the Belgae in the second century B.C. may not have caused any reaction as far afield as Blewburton, where it was only the advance of Cunobelinus into their territory which affected them. And, as at Oldbury II, they chose to superimpose their Rampart II on their neglected Rampart I. And, again as at Oldbury II, they used stone revetting methods at their main entrance.

But too much of this is theorising, and too little of it can be related to excavation evidence. For Group C, it would seem that the outstanding aims might be to section the outer ramparts of the partially bivallate camps, or, a major project, to undertake a fairly full-scale selective excavation at the fine site of Caesar's Camp. As this site is now, in part, a public recreation centre, it would be especially valuable to have some concrete information about it, and not merely analogous guess work.

Before starting this study of the Berkshire hill-forts, it had seemed that, with so little excavation, but small use might come of it, and that it would serve only to highlight our ignorance. In retrospect, it would seem that it has at least served one useful purpose, in that, in sorting out these sites into their three regional groups,

the differing influences have become more apparent. It has also served to suggest where work might be undertaken, most profitably, to increase our small store of knowledge about one of our County's most important series of prehistoric monuments.

#### GAZETTEER OF HILL-FORTS IN BERKSHIRE

In accordance with the classification used in the current O.S. map of the Early Iron Age in Britain, the Berkshire hill-forts are here arranged, by size, into the following categories: (Fig. 1)

##### A. HILL-FORTS OF 15 ACRES AND OVER

Four sites belong in this category.

##### 1. *Walbury Camp, West Woodhay, Inkpen and Combe.* SU 374617. c. 82 acres.

Walbury Camp is the largest hill-fort in Berkshire, and the only one which lies to the south of the River Kennet. The old county boundary between Berkshire and Hampshire used to run across it, but it is now wholly in Berkshire. It is situated on Combe Hill, the highest point reached by the Chalk in Britain, where it attains a height of 974 feet. The univallate defence of the camp, placed below the summit on the 925 feet contour line, has in places traces of a counterscarp bank, and is of trapezoid form. The main entrance, slightly inturned, is at the north-western corner, and there is a possible entrance at the south-eastern turn of the rampart. Earthworks connected with hollow-ways run down the hill from the north-western entrance, crossing two slight banks across the neck. The inner one has a slight resemblance to a barbican outwork. To the east of the camp, other banks, rather than an outwork, may again be connected with a hollow-way. Circular depressions in the interior may have been hut-sites. The hill-fort is unexcavated.

*V.C.H. Berks. I* (1906), 259-260. Plan at p. 259.

Williams-Freeman, *Field Arch. of Hants.* (1915), 75, 92-3, 335, 340, 414-5. Plan opp. p. 414.

Peake, *Arch. of Berks.* (1931), 69 and 205, with other earlier references.

Ward Perkins, *Arch.* xc (1944), 170.

Thomas, *A Guide to Prehistoric Britain* (1960), 43.

##### 2. *Membury Camp, Ramsbury (Wilts.) and Lambourne (Berks.)* SU 303753. c. 34 acres.

A univallate camp, with a counterscarp bank, on high level ground on the 675 foot contour line, between the valleys of the rivers Kennet and Lambourne. The greater part of the camp lies in the parish of Ramsbury, Wilts., but the north-western corner is in Lambourn parish, Berks. The site has been destroyed by cultivation, in part, and is much overgrown. There is a main entrance on the north-east, with a flanking outwork on its west side. 150 yards to the south there is a gap through which pass the County and Parish boundaries. No finds have been traced, and the site is unexcavated.

*V.C.H. Berks. I* (1906), 260.

Peake, *Arch. of Berks.* (1931), 68 and 207.

Huntingford, *B.A. J.* 39 (1935), 12.

Thomas, *A Guide to Prehistoric Britain* (1960), 42.

3. *Segsbury Camp or Letcombe Castle, Letcombe Regis.* SU 384845. c. 26½ acres.

Segsbury Camp, also known as Letcombe Castle, is situated on Segsbury Down, a chalk plateau, between the 700 foot contour lines, and about 100 yards to the north of the Ridgeway. The defences consist of a univallate bank with an external ditch and a counterscarp bank for some 200 yards on the north-western side. Like Uffington Camp and Alfred's Castle, the inner bank of Segsbury is credited with having been faced with sarsen stones, which Hearne described as 'vast stones, being a red flint, some of w<sup>ch</sup> a cart will hardly draw'. In 1871, Dr. Phené carried out a restricted excavation for the Newbury Field Club. He found a 'cist' in the south side of the rampart floored with flat stone slabs and walled with flints; it contained fragments of human bones, flint scrapers, the remains of what appeared to be the *umbo* of a shield, and a small fragment of an urn or drinking cup. Grinsell has suggested that this may have been a Saxon burial; its position was marked on the O.S. 25" map as "Altar Stone". Sherds of Southern Second A and Southern Second B pottery have been picked up on the site. In his air photographs, Dr. St. Joseph detected no signs of internal quarry ditches. During a survey exercise in 1959/60 it was observed that the inner bank is well preserved throughout, though flattened on top, and the ditch was shallowed in places by cultivation, but was deeper on the north-west where protected by the remaining counterscarp bank, and was well-marked on each side of the main entrance. This original entrance is flanked by out-turns of the rampart, that on the north being denuded. There are gaps in the inner bank, on the north and south sides, where it has been cut through by the modern surfaced road. A further gap on the north-west, opposite the higher part of the counterscarp bank, does not appear to be original. The interior of the site is ploughed regularly. The eastern entrance leads out to a level plateau, and thence to suitable pasturage and springs.

Hearne, *Diaries LXXIV* (1717), 88. In the Bodleian Library.

Phené, *T. Newbury D.F.C. i* (1870-71), 170 and 183. Burial.

*V.C.H. Berks. I* (1906), 261; *IV* (1924), 222.

Peake, *Arch. of Berks.* (1931), 68 and 209, with other earlier references.

Huntingford, *B.A. J.* 40 (1936), 167-8.

Ward Perkins, *Arch. xc* (1944), 170.

Riley, *Oxon. viii/ix* (1943-44), 82.

Thomas, *A Guide to Prehistoric Britain* (1960), 42-43.

Air photograph by the late Major Allen. In the Ashmolean Museum.

New survey started in 1959/60 by Mrs. S. Kay, Mr. P. Crampton and Mr. Whillock.

4. *Caesar's Camp, Easthampstead.* SU 863657. c. 20 acres.

'Caesar's Camp' is the only hill-fort in East Berkshire. It is situated on a plateau, with the defences placed approximately on the 400 foot contour line, and in form,

following the shape of the hill, is comparable to an oak-leaf. The sub-soil is of Barton Sand and Plateau Gravel. The defences consist mainly of a high inner bank and ditch, but in places there is a marked counterscarp bank. There are possible entrances to the north and south, with the southern side having a supplementary defence. Breaks in the ramparts on the east and west are probably not original. Hollows inside the inner bank suggest scoops for rampart heightening. The Roman road known as The Devil's Highway passes half a mile to the south of the camp, and a branch road from it, postulated as Roman, leads towards the southern entrance. Wickham Bushes, half way between the Devil's Highway and the hill-fort, though only explored, is perhaps the site of a Roman staging-post, and the area has yielded many Roman coins and other material. The hill-fort is unexcavated. Piggott found there a sherd of haematite pottery, indicative of a Wessex Second A influence. Gough recorded a silver coin of Cunobelinus which may be from the hill-fort, whilst Stukeley referred to British and Roman coins being connected with the site. The north-eastern part of the camp has, since May 12th, 1961, been made available as a public recreation area, by the Crown Estate Commissioners, the Berkshire County Council and the Easthampstead Rural District Council. Beyond the area, a path gives access to the southern end of the camp where the defences can again be viewed.

Narrien, *Arch.* xix (1821), 96-98. Plan at Pl. VII.

Peake, *Arch. of Berks.* (1931), 69 and 194, with earlier references. Add Kempthorne, *B.B. & O.A.J.* 19 (1913), 71-72.

Underhill, *B.A.J.* 41 (1937), 35. Neolithic hammer-stone.

Seaby, *B.A.J.* 43 (1939), 44. Coin of Cunobelinus.

Wheeler, *Maiden Castle* (1943), 192. Maps haematite sherd.

Ward Perkins, *Arch.* xc (1949), 170.

Wood, *B.A.J.* 57 (1959), 82 and map of fig. 1.

Allen, *Problems of the Iron Age in Southern Britain* (1958), 226. Coin of Cunobelinus.

#### B. HILL-FORTS OF 3 TO 15 ACRES

The 12 sites in this category form the majority of the Berkshire series.

##### 5. 'Lysons' or Little Coxwell Camp, Little Coxwell and Fernham. SU 288928. c. 12 acres.

Underhill recorded that a large entrenchment was revealed during tree-cutting on Furze Hill, which lies to the south-west of One Tree Hill. A bank could be seen encircling some three-quarters of the hill from the west to the north-west, and definite entrances were seen at the southern end and north-west corner. The defence would appear to lie in the vicinity of the 450 foot contour line. This was considered to be the site mentioned by Peake and the one called "Lysons Camp" by Huntingford. The site is unexcavated and unplanned and no reports have been traced of any finds. It might be noted that the Lysons's described the site as 'the remains of a camp, which appears to have been of square form. Its double ditch is nearly entire on the west side: few traces of the work remain in other parts. This camp commands a very extensive view of the Vale of White Horse'.

- Lysons's, *Berkshire* (1813), 214.  
 Peake, *Arch. of Berks.* (1931), 67 and 191.  
 Huntingford, *B.A.J.* 40 (1936), 162.  
 Underhill, *B.A.J.* 42 (1938), 25.

6. *Perborough Castle, Cow Down, Compton.* SU 521780. c. 14 acres.

A partially ploughed-out univallate hill-fort lying on a spur from 492 feet high and in part falling to below 448 feet. It is bounded by the Beedon dry valley and the Compton Gap. There is a counterscarp bank on the north and north-eastern sides. The position of the entrance is indeterminate. For details of this site cf. Wood, pp. 53-61.

- Peake, *Arch. of Berks.* (1931), 68-9 and 188, with earlier references.  
 Ward Perkins, *Arch.* xc (1944), 170.  
 Underhill, *B.A.J.* 49 (1946), 51.  
 Rhodes, *Oxon.* xv (1950), 22.  
 New survey by Dr. Peter Wood and students of Reading University, 1961-62.  
 Air photographs by Dr. St. Joseph.

7. *Bussock Wood Camp, Chieveley.* SU 466725. c. 10-11 acres.

An irregular-shaped contour defence, above the 475 foot contour line, on a spur. The site, in the middle of a wood, is on a plateau which faces north and west. On these two sides, a single bank and ditch appears to have served, but on the east and south the camp is bivallate. Situated on a sub-soil of London Clay and Bagshot Beds, in 1872, the ramparts on the north-east and south-west were said to stand 12-20 feet high. They are nowadays, in places, but low spreads of loose gravel. Three possible sites for one or more entrances are all on the eastern side. The site is unexcavated, and the only reported finds are calcined flints.

- V.C.H. Berks. I* (1906), 205 and 254-5. Plan at p. 255.  
 Peake, *Arch. of Berks.* (1931), 68 and 186, with earlier references.  
 Ward Perkins, *Arch.* xc (1944), 170.  
 Wood, *B.A.J.* 57 (1959), 82 and map of fig. 1.

8. *Blewburton Hill or Blewbury Camp, Blewbury and Aston Upthorpe.* SU 546862. c. 7 acres.

The oval hill-fort of Blewbury Camp is situated on Blewburton Hill, a low whale-backed hill composed of Lower Chalk which is separated by a narrow strip of Upper Greensand from the main Chalk escarpment, to its south, of the Berkshire Downs. The site was excavated by A. E. P. Collins in 1947-49, and by A. E. P. Collins and F. J. Collins in 1953, for the Berkshire Archaeological Society and the Reading Museum. This univallate hill-fort, with those of Rams Hill and Cherbury, which are of different character, are the most extensively excavated hill-forts in the County, and are the ones which have produced the greatest amount of information for this present study. The detailed results obtained from the excavations of Blewbury Camp are described in the text at pp. 33-34.



- Peake, *Arch. of Berks.* (1931), 68 and 180, with earlier references.  
 Huntingford, *B.A.J.* 40 (1936), 168.  
 Underhill, *B.A.J.* 41 (1937), 34.  
 Bradford and Goodchild, *Oxon.* iv (1939), 15. For haematite.  
 Bradford, *B.A.J.* 46 (1942), 97-104. Air photograph by Major Allen at Pl. I.  
     Pottery at Figs. 1-5.  
 Wheeler, *Maiden Castle* (1943), 132. Maps haematite.  
 Ward Perkins, *Arch.* xc (1944), 170.  
 Underhill, *B.A.J.* 49 (1946), 50.  
 Collins, *B.A.J.* 50 (1947), 4-29. First excavation report. Plan.  
 Collins, *B.A.J.* 53 (1952-53), 21-64. Second excavation report with air photograph and plan.  
 Radford, *P.P.S.* xx (1954), 26.  
 Collins and Collins, *B.A.J.* 57 (1959), 52-73. Third excavation report, with plan.  
 Wood, *B.A.J.* 57 (1959), 82. Listed.

9. *Sinodun Camp, Castle Hill, Little Wittenham.* SU 569924. c. 10 acres.

The two hills bearing the 'Wittenham Clumps' are landmarks which command a wide view of the Thames valley from the Berkshire side of the river, opposite Dorchester-on-Thames, Oxon. Castle Hill, the site of Sinodun Camp, is a conical hill which has been scarped, partly along the 350 foot contour line, with a heart-shaped univallate defence. This defence is a good example of a 'downward-build' rampart. There is little or no inner bank, a deep ditch and a high counterscarp bank. There appears to be a simple gap entrance on the west. Much of the interior has been ploughed frequently, and the inner bank may have been originally more marked than at present. Surface finds from the ploughed area include Romano-British pottery (there is a Romano-British settlement below the hill) and occasional sherds described as of Iron Age date. The site is unexcavated.

- V.C.H. Berks. I* (1906), 263 with plan.  
 Peake, *Arch. of Berks.* (1931), 67, 75, 110 and 247, with earlier references.  
 Huntingford, *B.A.J.* 40 (1936), 165.  
 Underhill, *B.A.J.* 41 (1937), 37.  
 Rhodes, *Oxon.* xiii (1948), 18.  
 Thomas, *A Guide to Prehistoric Britain* (1960), 41.  
 Air photograph by the late Major Allen in the Ashmolean Museum.

10. *Cherbury Camp, Charney Bassett.* SU 374963. 9.364 acres.

Cherbury Camp is an oval-shaped multivallate earthwork situated on the extreme fringe of the Corallian beds, where they dip below the heavy clays of the Vale. Its low-lying situation had been puzzling until it was explained by Arkell's research work on the site. It is one of the most strongly fortified of the Berkshire Iron Age earthworks. On its north-west side, where they are best preserved, there are three ramparts separated by ditches and an outer slight counterscarp bank. The peculiarity

of the site is that it is located on a hardly perceptible rise in low flat country, and is almost surrounded by slightly higher ground. Arkell showed that on the west, north-west and north, Cherbury Camp is encircled by a brook which flows through marshy ground which, before the days of land drainage, would have presented an obstacle to attack from these sides. On the south, south-east and east, however, the camp seems to be vulnerable from a plain only a few feet lower than the inside of the enclosure. Arkell saw this plain when it was but newly-ploughed, and observed that the rich dark earth ploughed up was alluvial and was almost white with snail shells. He estimated that there must have been something over 500 million of these shells lying on the surface alone. Evidently, therefore, this side of Cherbury Camp had been a marsh or swamp, varying in width from 300 yards due east to 500 yards due south. The only direction from which there was access to the camp on dry land was from the north-east. The site was, in fact, quite exceptionally defensible; a narrow-necked peninsula, inviting fortification. Cherbury Camp was excavated, for five weeks during the summer of 1939, by Mr. J. S. P. Bradford. This season was planned only as preliminary, but, owing to the advent of war, later seasons were not possible, and the excavation report was designated as 'interim'. The excavator quoted similarities between the low-lying position of Cherbury Camp and those of Gadbury Bank (*V.C.H. Worcs. I*, 188) and Salmonsbury, Gloucestershire. Excavation showed the ditches to be broad and fairly shallow, and the inner rampart of dump material scooped from behind its tail, or excavated from the ditch, with internal and external drystone revetments. The body of the rampart, though mostly barren, yielded a few sherds of A2 pottery, derived possibly from an earlier open-village site. The outer banks showed no signs of revetment work. On the pottery finds from the defences, the excavator wrote: 'Pottery from the silt and rapid silt of the innermost ditch, though fairly sparse, was almost entirely of blunt, internally bevelled, somewhat everted rim-forms of Iron Age AB ware, relatively homogeneous in composition and already familiar in their full range of fabrics among the Frilford-Cassington series, accompanied by sherds of late A2 ware, already in the final stages of degeneration'. Excavation showed that gaps in the north and south sides of the fort were not original entrances. The one original entrance was midway along the eastern side. The original roadway through the entrance had been metalled, but this had worn away in the centre, leaving cart-ruts cut into the oolite, suggesting a wheel-gauge of five feet, or a little less. At least one re-metalling had occurred, but the earliest level had yielded A2 and AB wares. Inside the gateway this lightly metalled road gave way to a heavily cobbled street. The entrance was lined by drystone revetment walls. The gate was situated at the outer extremity of this parallel lining-wall; it had possessed two major gate-posts, each with satellite supporting posts. In 1939, the interior of the camp was not available for excavation, except for an area just within the gateway. This produced but a meagre amount of occupation material. The dating and significance of the site are discussed at pp. 37-38.

*V.C.H. Berks. I* (1906), 262. Plan at p. 262.

Peake, *Arch. of Berks.* (1931), 67, 70 and 185, with earlier references.

Hawkes, *Antiquity*, v (1931), 95.

- Huntingford, *B.A.J.* xxv (1920), 12; *ibid.* xxxix (1935), 12; *ibid.* xl (1936), 162-3 and 171.  
 Underhill, *B.A.J.* xlii (1938), 22; *ibid.* xliii (1939), 143.  
 Arkell, *Oxon.* iv (1939), 196-197.  
 Bradford and Goodchild, *Oxon.* iv (1939), 15.  
 Bradford, *Oxon.* v (1940), 13-20. Interim excavation report. Plan at Fig. 4. Air photograph at Pl. IVA.  
 Wheeler, *Maiden Castle* (1943), 192. Maps haematite.  
 Wood, *Oxon.* viii/ix (1943-44), 82. Air survey.  
 Thomas, *A Guide to Prehistoric Britain* (1960), 41-42.

11. *Badbury Hill Camp, Great Coxwell.* SU 262947. c. 9 acres.

This hill-fort, on the Corallian of the Faringdon Ridgeway, is a contour defence lying below the 525 foot contour line. In its centre is the copse called Badbury Clump. The site is unexcavated and no records have been traced of any datable finds. Huntingford writes that the site originally had two ditches which were levelled sometime in the nineteenth century, and that Gough mentions finds of human bones and 'coals' (?charcoal) from the north rampart.

- Peake, *Arch. of Berks.* (1931), 67 and 171, with earlier references.  
 Huntingford, *B.A.J.* 40 (1936), 161-2.

12. *Uffington Castle, White Horse Hill.* SU 299864. c. 8 acres.

Uffington Castle is a univallate hill-fort, with a counterscarp bank, situated on White Horse Hill of the Chalk Downs above the 800 foot contour. There is a single entrance, facing north-west. The inner rampart turns out to flank the causeway and appears to turn back round the butt end of the ditch on each side to join the counterscarp bank. There is a pronounced holloway through this entrance. The famous chalk-cut figure of the White Horse is situated on the north side of the hill, and the Ridgeway or Icknield Way runs close by the south side of the earthwork. The site is virtually unexcavated but for some work by Martin Atkyns about 1850. The inner bank seems to have a facing of sarsen stones. Post-holes, associated with this rampart, are said to run all round the hill, but whether incorporated into the sarsen facing, or part of a separate palisade defence, is uncertain. A silver coin of the Dobunni, found within the camp, may be associated with the nearby White Horse rather than with the camp itself.

- V.C.H. Berks. I* (1906), 262. Plan.  
 Hawkes, Myres and Stevens, *P. Hants F.C.* xi (1930), 38 and 67-71.  
 Peake, *Arch. of Berks.* (1931), 68 and 236, with earlier references.  
 Hawkes, *Antiquity* x (1931), 71-2 and 95. Attributed to 'A'.  
 Huntingford, *B.A.J.* 40 (1936), 166.  
 Thomas, *A Guide to Prehistoric Britain* (1960), 43.  
 Air photographs by the late Major Allen. In Ashmolean Museum.

13. *Grimsbury Castle, Grimsbury Wood, Hampstead Norris.* SU 513723. c. 8 acres.

Grimsbury Castle is a partially bivallate plateau hill-fort, on a sub-soil of London Clay, Bagshot Sand and Plateau Gravel, situated on the highest point between the Thames, Kennet and Berkshire Downs. Its higher part, at the north, is at 518 feet, and it slopes down to 425 feet on the south-west towards Bucklebury Common. The defences consist of a main inner bank, a ditch of a roughly triangular form, with a high counterscarp bank. There are three possible sites for entrances, two of which, on the north and west, have auxiliary outworks. The third gap is at the south-eastern corner. The western entrance is slightly incurved, with a hollow-way leading down the hill. The northern entrance is a simple gap and has a hollow-way running down hill to the north. A narrow causeway across the ditch at the south-eastern corner may indicate a minor entrance which led to nearby springs. The easiest line of approach to the camp is northwards along the ridge to the south-west corner, or from the west towards the western entrance. On the west side, 60 yards or more from the inner bank there is a second defence. This sweeps round in an arc, and consists of a terrace at its northern end, a bank in the middle, and a bank and ditch further south. In 1957, Dr. Wood, with students of Reading University, cut a section through the defences of the main camp on its eastern side. In 1960, the western entrance was examined in part. The outer defence has not been excavated. The results at present available show that the inner bank and counterscarp bank were of simple dump construction, and that the ditch was of wide U-shaped form, with an internal step. Finds were very sparse. Three minute sherds from low-down in the ditch silt were considered to be centrally or fairly late in the Iron Age A tradition. Part of a beehive quern came from the lower silt of the ditch.

Peake, *Arch. of Berks.* (1931), 68 and 199, with earlier references.

Ward Perkins, *Arch.* xc (1944), 170.

Thomas, *A Guide to Prehistoric Britain* (1960), 42.

Wood, *B.A.J.* 57 (1959), 74-82. Excavation report with plans and maps.

14. *Ramsbury Corner, Bucklebury, Thatcham.* SU 525696. c. 7-8 acres.

In 1948, an air-photograph showed a semi-circular crop-mark in a field on a ridge, to the south of the road from Cold Ash to Upper Bucklebury, at a level above the 480 foot contour line. In 1949, this site was excavated by the monks of Douai Abbey, under Messrs. Coghlan and Hadcock and Mrs. Melville. No finds were made. The site, on Plateau Gravel and Sand, showed, in the east field, surface features of a well-marked bank and possible ditch. In the west field, to the south of the road leading westwards towards Laurence's Lane, there was a large bank well away from the road as it runs to Ramsbury Corner. The south-western part of the earth-work had almost vanished owing to continuous ploughing of the west field. A trench, 62 feet by 6 feet, was cut across the south bank, where it was well marked, in the east field to the east of the hedge between the two fields. This was excavated to a depth of six feet. A ditch was found,  $5\frac{1}{2}$  feet deep from ground level, or 8 feet deep from the bank on its northern side. The ditch was dug into flint gravel and sand levels. A medieval drain-pipe ran along the lower part of the ditch. Though

no finds were made to help to date the earthwork, it was concluded that it had been a univallate prehistoric earthwork of considerable size (with a length of *c.* 900 feet). It had the appearance of a hill-fort, but it could not be said whether it had been completed for this purpose.

Hadcock, *T. Newbury D.F.C.* ix. 2-4 (1951), 24. Plan at p. 25.

Wood, *B.A.J.* 57 (1959), 82 and map of fig. 1.

15. *Rams Hill, Kingston Lisle.* SU 314863. *c.* 7 acres.

Rams Hill is an inconspicuous knoll of the Chalk Downs on the ridge overlooking the Vale of the White Horse. It lies within the 700 foot contour, with the ground sloping gently to the south and falling steeply to 400 feet on the northern escarpment. The ploughed-out earthworks on this hill were first identified by Grundy, from a Saxon charter, and then confirmed by air photographs by the late Major Allen. Mr. and Mrs. Piggott excavated the site, for the Newbury Field Club, in 1938-39. They distinguished five periods of occupation on the hill-top:

I. The smaller oval-shaped inner enclosure, which proved to be of Middle Bronze Age date.

II. A trodden surface, hearth and post-holes over the silted-up ditch of the above enclosure, which was of Late Bronze Age date.

III. The main (Camp) enclosure, of some 7 acres area.

IV. The rectangular enclosure, of Belgic and first century date (cf. Cotton, *B.A.J.* 59 (1962), 25-27).

V. Burials in the cleaned-out ditch of the rectangular enclosure, one with silver coins of the fifth century A.D.

Only the Period III main camp is relevant to this paper. This proved to be a univallate unfinished hill-fort which had been greatly ploughed-out. It had a flat-bottomed ditch with sloping sides, and in one place a step had been left on the inner side. In general, the features suggested an unfinished V-shaped ditch. The position and form of the entrances could not be determined without further extensive excavation. The remains of the destroyed rampart suggested that it had been of simple dump construction. There was little evidence of intensive occupation in the interior. The excavators concluded that either the fort was begun hurriedly in the face of a war scare (as at Quarley Hill and other sites) or that for some reason work was abandoned on Rams Hill, and a new site chosen and a fort completed at Uffington Castle. The earthwork was dated by pottery found immediately above the primary silt of its ditch. Some 15% of the sherds found were haematite coated, including a rim of a haematite furrowed bowl. Other sherds had white inlay decoration, and parts of situlate jars with finger-tip decoration on the shoulder, and on and below the rim, occurred. The character of this pottery was described as typically Iron Age A, with its closest analogies in the sherds from Liddington Castle, N. Wiltshire, and connections with that from the Knighton Hill site west of Uffington Castle. The report states: 'Geographically it is more likely that the connections implied by this pottery belong to the Chalk Uplands of the south rather than to the

Oxford Vale to the north. To suggest anything like a close dating would be hazardous, as all too little is known about the Iron Age in this district, but the pottery from Liddington (*Wilts. Arch. Mag.* xxxviii, 576) rather suggests a later date than that from All Cannings itself, while the nearest finds to Rams Hill, Knighton Hill and Hatford, both appear to belong to the later (A2) phase of the Early Iron Age. It is to be hoped that one or more of the North Wiltshire hill-forts—Barbury, Oldbury, or Martinsell for instance—or the Berkshire forts of Uffington or Alfred's Castle will some day be excavated, and so help to bridge over a blank area in our Iron Age pottery series in North Wessex and the South Midlands.'

Piggott, S. and C. M., *Ant. Journ.* xx (1940), 465-480. Excavation report with plans and air photographs and with earlier references.

Wheeler, *Maiden Castle* (1943), 192. Maps haematite.

Radford, *P.P.S.* xx (1954), 26.

Rhodes, *Oxon.* xv (1950), 21.

16. *Hardwell Camp, Compton Beauchamp.* c. SU 287868. Size undetermined, but over 5 acres.

No adequate description, or large-scale plan has been traced for this hill-fort. It lies between the 625 feet and 550 feet contour lines, covered by thick woods and undergrowth, and slopes down in a north-western direction.

Peake, *Arch. of Berks.* (1931), 68 and 188, with earlier references.

Huntingford, *B.A. J.* 40 (1936), 166 and 171-172.

#### C. HILL-FORTS OF UNDER 3 ACRES

Only two sites belong in this category:

17. *Alfred's Castle, Swinley Down, Ashbury.* SU 278823. c. 2 acres.

Such information as is available for this site has been published recently, with a new survey, and the late Major Allen's air photograph of the site. The present earthworks include only some two acres of land, which, as will be seen from this arrangement of the sites by size, is unusual in Berkshire. If the crop-mark seen on the air photograph of a much larger ploughed-out enclosure is taken into account, this site would belong in Category B. The site is unexcavated. Surface finds are of varying dates but include Iron Age material, some of Southern Second A type with a haematite sherd. Sarsen stones have been used in the build of the rampart of the small enclosure, though this defence is at present undated.

Cotton and Wood, *B.A. J.* 58 (1960), 44-48, with full bibliography, new plan and the air photograph of the site.

Thomas, *A Guide to Prehistoric Britain* (1960), 41.

18. *Borough Hill, Boxford.* SU 440726. Under 1 acre.

This very small site is on the highest point of the ridge which divides the Lambourn and Winterbourne valleys, at c. 487 feet. The sub-soil is Reading Beds. It is much

destroyed, but was probably univallate. When, in 1837, the banks could still be seen, it was said to measure 210 by 180 feet, an area of rather less than one acre. The site is unexcavated but has produced pottery sherds possibly of Southern Second A, including haematite, and Southern Second B types.

*V.C.H. Berks. I* (1906), 254, with plan.

Peake, *Arch. of Berks.* (1931), 68 and 181, with earlier references.

Ward Perkins, *Arch. xc* (1944), 170.

Wood, *B.A.J.* 57 (1959), 82 and map of fig. 1.

#### D. HILL-FORTS OF UNDETERMINED SIZE

The size of these three destroyed hill-forts is undetermined.

##### 19. ?*Camp on Cholsey Hill, Cholsey.* SU 573879.

Peake mentions 'traces of a camp' on this hill.

Peake, *Arch. of Berks.* (1931), 187.

##### 20. *Oareborough Hill Camp, Hampstead Norris.* SU 494752 (for Oareborough Hill).

A destroyed hill-fort has been conjectured on Oareborough Hill, of which no vestiges are said to remain. The site lies to the north-west of the line of Old Street.

Peake, *Arch. of Berks.* (1931), 68 and 200, with earlier references.

Ward Perkins, *Arch. xc* (1944), 170.

##### 21. *Silsbury Hill, Cholsey.* SU 587853.

An air photograph taken by Dr. St. Joseph showed a ploughed-out earthwork, possibly a small hill-fort, at this site, perhaps around the 250 foot contour line.