

AN UNRECORDED IRON AGE ENCLOSURE ON ROCKBOURNE DOWN, HANTS.

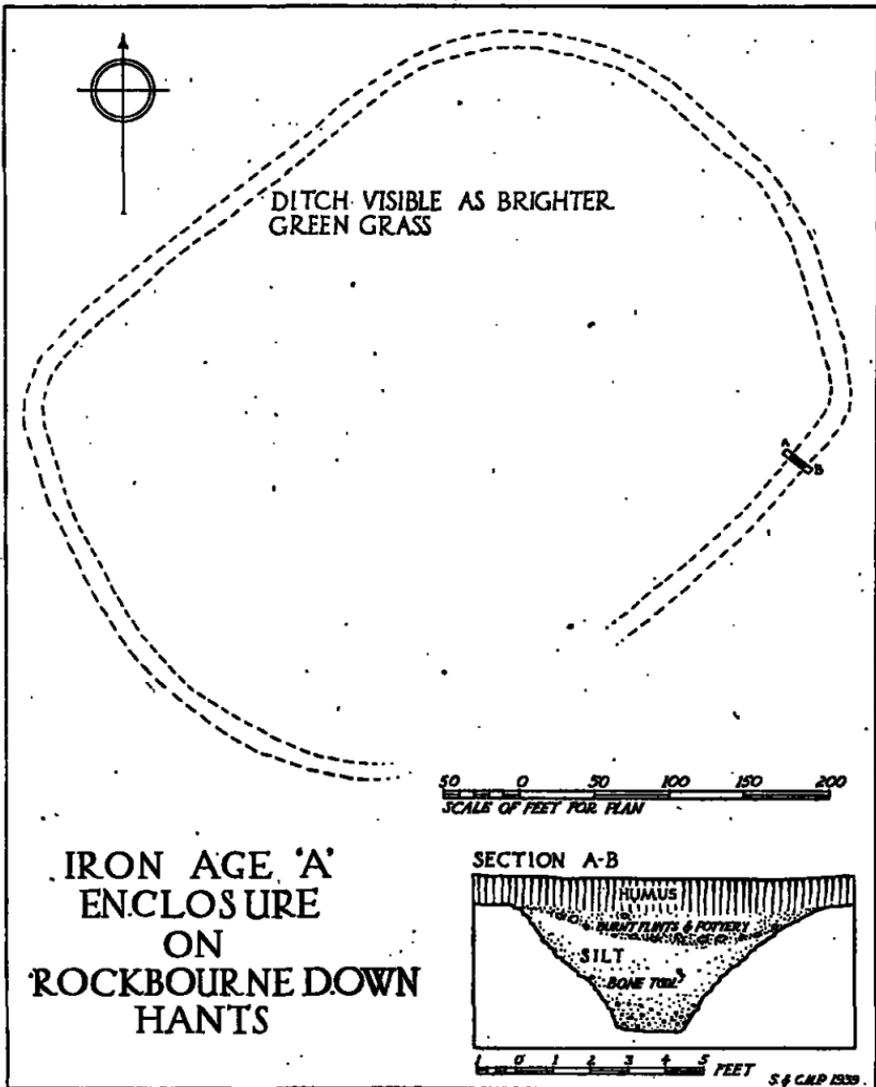
By STUART PIGGOTT, F.S.A.

WHILE walking over Rockbourne Down with the writer early in May, 1939, Sir Cyril Fox observed a band of brighter green turf which suggested a growth due to the presence of a filled-up ditch, which appeared to form an enclosure of some size. A few weeks later this difference in colour had become more marked, and it was possible to trace the almost complete circuit of an oval enclosure. There was no perceptible depression on the line of the suspected ditch, which lay on open turf-covered downland, but it, and, for part of the enclosure, the site of an internal bank, were visible solely as bands of differing growth and colour of grass.

The site (O.S. 6in. Hants LIV. N.W. ; Lat. $50^{\circ} 58' 58''$, Long. $1^{\circ} 51' 10''$) lies immediately west of the 'Duck's Nest' long barrow (*Map of Neolithic Wessex*, No. 177) on a ridge between the 200ft. contours, rising to a recorded level of 274ft. at a trig. station near the south-east corner of the enclosure. In the valley to the north lies the Romano-British farmstead excavated by Heywood Sumner in 1912. Lynchets on the west slopes of the ridge show that it was at least partially cultivated in Early Iron Age or Roman times, and traces of ridge-and-furrow ploughing indicate cultivation perhaps a century ago or more, since the site is now reverted to fine down turf.

The enclosure is oval, with slightly flattened sides, with its long axis north-east—south-west, and measuring some 500 by 370 feet. A part of the circuit on the south-east could not be traced owing to trackways cutting obliquely across it, and the entrance may have been whereabouts, since the ditch appeared continuous elsewhere.

With the consent of the owner of the site, Mr. Frank Wallis, a cutting was dug across the line of the suspected ditch, which was found to be V-shaped, 3ft. 3in. deep below the solid chalk, 8ft. wide at the top and 1ft. 9in. across the flat bottom. The filling consisted of fine chalk silt to within a foot of the top, where there was a layer of earthy rubble with numerous burnt flints and small sherds of pottery. This layer must represent material from inside the enclosure ploughed into the hollow of the nearly filled-up ditch. The recognisable sherds from this layer and from the silt were uniformly of Iron Age 'A' date, exactly comparable with those from Woodbury (*Proceedings, Prehistoric Society*, IV (1938), 308-313),



and a rough bone digging-tool, made of a split leg-bone of an ox, sharpened and showing considerable signs of wear at the cut end, was found in the silt at a depth of 1ft. 9in. below the solid chalk. Mixed with the burnt flints were lumps of burnt clay, recognisable on the evidence of Woodbury as fragments of corn-drying ovens in which the flints had also played their part. From this evidence we may conclude that the ditch enclosed a farm settlement of Woodbury type, the whole being ploughed out either in Roman or later times.

The finds from the cutting have been deposited in the Museum at Salisbury.