

EXCAVATIONS AT THE GEORGE INN, PORTSDOWN

By RICHARD BRADLEY AND ELIZABETH LEWIS^{1a}

SUMMARY

Excavation in advance of roadworks led to the discovery of a small Iron Age domestic site. Post holes forming no clear pattern, hearths, and pits were recorded. Two Saxon inhumations were excavated and these and two parallel boundary ditches of this date probably belong to a war cemetery secondary to a long barrow destroyed in the 19th century.

I

INTRODUCTION

This report represents the results of the third of a series of projects carried out upon Portsdown Hill to the north of Portsmouth. In the previous reports on sites I and II located $\frac{1}{4}$ mile and 1 mile to the east, this site has been referred to as site III.

The immediate reason for the excavation of this site was the scheduled diversion of the A3 London Road at the Portsdown junction, where it was planned to cut through the hill east of the George Inn by tunnelling beneath the B2177 road which would then be carried over the A3 by a bridge. This work, which was due to start in February 1967, would destroy the land surface over a very wide area to the north and south of the George Inn to make way for landscaping and the construction of slip roads.

The junction has certainly been subjected to much alteration of this kind since the 19th century, and in addition chalk quarrying on the west side of the road has altered the topography considerably. The spit of land between Drayton Lane and the A3 was lowered and pitted with chalk cuttings, although in George Cole's^{1b} oil painting of 1867 it shows as a fairly high bank. Before the London Road cut its way through the crest of the hill, it would appear that the original land surface here was that represented by the four corners of the cross roads, lying between 280 and 290 feet above sea level. The Upper Chalk falls away from the level area on which the George and the Cottage stood at 290 feet to the projected slip road south of the B2177 at 260 feet.

In the area south of the George is the recorded site of a Neolithic long barrow, first mentioned in an article in the *Hampshire Telegraph* for 1816, in which its location is defined as 'near the Telegraph'². L. V. Grinsell³ in his survey of the barrows of Hampshire took this to mean the area south-east of the cross roads, where a larger mound stood answering in dimensions at least to the description in the *Hampshire Telegraph*⁴. Although the appearance of this mound suggested it to be of modern origin, and it could be explained as the result of widening the B2177 in this century, it was felt that

^{1a} Unless otherwise stated the sections are written by E.L.

^{1b} Portsmouth City Museum. View of Portsmouth from the London Road, Portsdown, by George Cole, 1867.

² See below – Documentary Evidence.

³ *Proc. Hants F.C.*, xiv (1939), 206.

⁴ This site has been adopted by Audrey Meaney for the Saxon burials referred to below in her *Gazeteer of Early Anglo-Saxon Burial Sites in England* (1964).

a full examination of the area south-east of the cross roads and of the mound itself would be necessary in view of the impending roadworks. Butler's account in the *Hundred of Bosmere*⁵ gave good reason to suggest that secondary Saxon burials at least might be expected in this area, for he adds 'This tumulus might originally have extended beyond the turnpike road, as bones have been discovered in an eastern direction and also to the west of the barrow'.

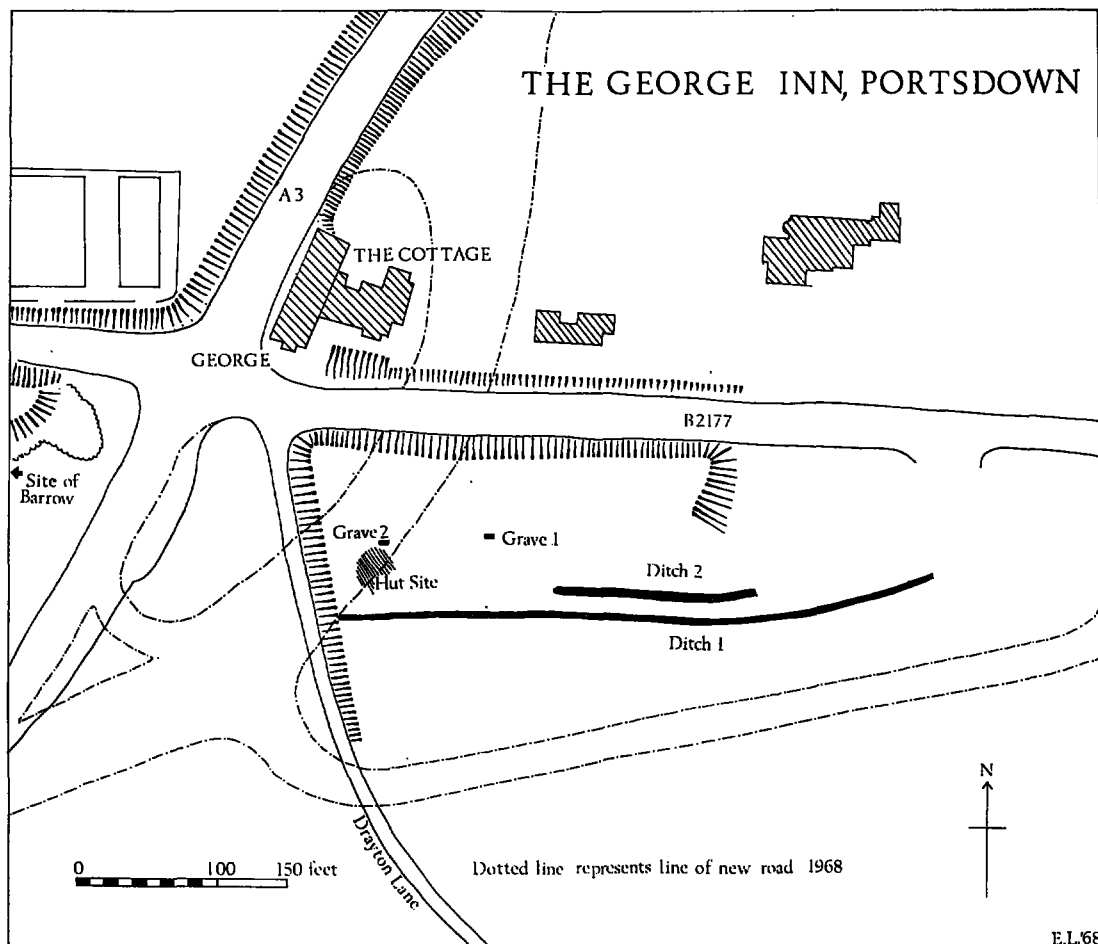


Fig. 13. Portsdown: general plan.

DOCUMENTARY SOURCES

In 1816 burials began to come to light in the course of quarrying for chalk. Since our knowledge of these finds depends entirely upon the reports made at that time, they will be quoted in detail.

⁵ See below – Documentary Evidence.

1. *Hampshire Telegraph and Sussex Chronicle* for Monday, 23rd September, 1816. Page 4, col. 4.

'In working the chalk-pit, near the Naval Telegraph, on Portsdown Hill, in this neighbourhood, a Tumulus, or Barrow has been broken into, and, within these few days, ten human skeletons have been discovered in good preservation. This Tumulus is in form, a parallelogram (*sic*); in the direction east and west about 100 feet, in breadth about 20 feet and the height uniformly about 6 feet. The interments were in distinct graves, about 3 feet apart, some containing more than one skeleton. The graves were in a regular direction, and the bodies placed with the head to the west. It would appear that those inhumed therein, were slain in battle near the spot, as, in the skull of one of them, an iron top of a pike was found, which had entered about three inches: this weapon is preserved.

'The curious of Portsmouth and its vicinity (says another observer) have been much gratified this week in contemplating several remains of human bones uncovered in digging chalk on Portsdown Hill. In one of these receptacles for the dead, just opened, a skeleton was found, which excited a lively interest; the bottom of the grave, in which it must have long laid, was scarce two feet from the surface of what certainly appears a Tumulus; loose flags were laid over the subject, their ends resting on the chalk, preventing the earth disturbing the configuration of the bones in the process of excavation. The radius and ulna of the left arm laid across the frame; at the junction of the temporal bones with the cranium, and on the right side of the head, was inserted an iron instrument, sharp on the one side, and flat on the other, about four inches in length, the sharp edge forming a right line, and the flat one of a convex form, so as to terminate on the rectilinear sharp edge, the broadest part of which is an inch and a quarter; not unlike what we see delineated in the drawings of some of the bells (*sic*) used by our sires in sending each other to Heaven, provided Heaven accepted the introduction. (One part of this skeleton deserves particular attention; the os occipitis, from the action of the lime, has completely changed its nature; its specific gravity is greater than that of bone; in every way it bears strong marks of petrification. The ulna is the only bone entire; it is about half an inch shorter than that of a well-proportioned man of 5 feet 9 inches. The os femosis, the better guide to stature, is quite incomplete.) As the surface for 30 yards, runing (*sic*) east and west, and parallel with the skeleton, bears strong marks of a Tumulus, it surely would not be gratifying an idle curiosity to examine it, as, sooner or later, it must be done in the common process of quarrying; and by raising these curious remains now, decent inhumation might be conferred on them, of which they will be deprived if suffered to lie till the common course of events disturb them.'

2. '*Account of the Tumulus, or Barrow lately opened on Portsdown Hill; an Examination of the various Opinions advanced respecting it, and an Attempt to fix the precise Epoch of its formation*' by Henry Slight. Published in London in 1816. Page 7.

'The tumulus, situated on the southern side of the hill, near the telegraph, was broken into some few weeks since, by labourers quarrying chalk. It is in form a parallelogram, extending east and west about 100 feet, in breadth 20 feet and in height 6 feet. The remains of twelve bodies were discovered; some deposited in cists – others merely placed on the surface of the chalk, and covered by heaping the surrounding

soil upon them. The skeleton last discovered, occupied a distinct grave, but too short for the stature of the person inhumed; loose flags were placed over it, their ends resting on the chalk. The radius and ulna were laid across the frame – the latter is the only bone entire, and is shorter, in a trifling degree, than that of a well proportioned man. The occipital bone bears marks of petrification, and at the junction of the temporal with the parietal bone, on the right side, was found inserted an iron head of a spear.’

The remaining 20 pages of Slight’s treatise are devoted to elegant conjecture, but his final conclusion, like ours, is that the burials were of Saxon date, although he recognises that the mound itself was very comparable to those described by Stukeley in *Barrows of Wiltshire*.

3. ‘*Topographical Account of the Hundred of Bosmere in the County of Southampton*’ by W. Butler, published in 1817.

Butler’s account seems to be derived from the report in the *Hampshire Telegraph*, but with the interesting addition as to the distribution of burials already noted.

The impression given by these reports is of a Neolithic long barrow with secondary Saxon inhumations clustering in and around it, and perhaps distributed over a wide area with the barrow forming the nucleus of the cemetery. The case is paralleled locally by the cemeteries at Southwick cross roads⁶ 1½ miles to the west of the George and at Horndean⁷ where the sites selected had been those of round barrows; and possibly at the long barrow called Bevis’ Grave 1½ miles east of the George along Portsdown⁸.

Our other evidence as to the existence of a Saxon cemetery at the George consisted of purely verbal reports of skeletons being discovered from time to time during the building of the reservoirs, in the widening of Portsdown Road B2177 and during the extension of the churchyard to the north⁹.

EXCAVATION

In December 1966 Mr. Richard Bradley dug a trench through the mound at the south-east angle of the cross roads in order to test Grinsell’s location for the barrow. This proved that the mound was in fact modern, almost certainly the excavated chalk from the B2177 road. At the same time two maps¹⁰ in the Portsmouth City Archives positively located the Telegraph on the west side of the cross roads, above the chalk pits, and the Ordnance Survey for 1964 gave su 66650641 as the National Grid Reference for the barrow itself. However, Mr. Bradley’s cutting revealed a grave cut into the chalk beneath the mound, containing an inhumation with three iron knives and the remains of a small wooden bucket bound in bronze. This confirmed the necessity for a thorough investigation of the area about to be destroyed. It was accordingly decided, with the active and generous co-operation of the Portsmouth City Engineer’s Department to remove the topsoil over the entire area south-east of the road junction by means of a dozer-scraper combination, since it was expected that unlike the shallow graves reported on the barrow, any others in the area would be, like Mr. Bradley’s,

⁶ *Proc. Hants F.C.*, xxiv (1967), 20.

⁷ *Proc. Hants F.C.*, xix (1959), 117.

⁸ Butler, *Topographical Account of the Hundred of Bosmere*; Stukeley, *Iter. Curios* (1776), II, 195; Grinsell, ‘Hampshire Barrows’, *Proc. Hants F.C.*, xiv (1939), 205.

⁹ Correspondence with Reverend Gilmore.

¹⁰ 1803 Lands, the property of C. W. Taylor. 1815 Enclosure Award for Wymering and Widley; both in Portsmouth City Archives.

cut fairly deeply into the chalk. The modern mound was ultimately removed and the surface of the hill beneath could be examined, for which help was provided in the form of a grant from the Ministry of Public Buildings and Works for the employment of an experienced assistant. Before the demolition of the Cottage a further area was searched within the garden, and a close watch kept on the roadworks north of the George, but here nothing of significance was discovered. In the south-east corner however, an area of Iron Age occupation was found, with one other Saxon inhumation and two parallel ditches skirting the hill.

II

THE IRON AGE SITE

The removal of the topsoil in the north-west corner of the area south-east of the cross roads revealed stake and post holes cut into the chalk in a limited area bordering the edge of the cutting above Drayton lane. Little over an inch of occupation debris remained above the chalk, and most of the recovered fragments of pottery were found in the post holes.

The post holes in most cases were cut vertically downwards into the chalk, the depth ranging from 6 to 18 inches. With the stake holes, they form a group concentrated to the west of grave 2 with a smaller group (nos. 1, 2, 3, 4, 5) to the south. The fill was generally of loam, redeposited chalk, burnt clay, charcoal and flint from the packing. Nos. 1 and 2 contained two loom weights used as packing for small posts. Details of the dimensions and depths of the post holes are given in fig. 14 and the location of the finds and pottery will be found in the respective reports.

It will be seen from fig. 14 that the post holes form no coherent pattern or house plan, and the situation is complicated by the density of their distribution and the recutting of some of them. This may imply that two or more successive structures were erected, or that alterations were carried out. All attempts at reconstruction have been abandoned, being based upon conjecture, though it is still tempting to see a circular hut form in the post holes on the east side of the complex. The presence of daub impressed with the marks of wicker work or twigs found in the post holes equally suggests walling or fencing, but the concentration of post holes in an area otherwise devoid of them seems to favour a roofed shelter rather than an open pen or enclosure, and the finds support this. However the presence of free standing structures such as corn ricks or a loom frame is likely.

To the east of the main post hole concentration were two hollows which it would seem incorrect to class as post holes. No. 6 was 3 feet 9 inches long and 1 foot 9 inches wide and 12 inches deep and contained the majority of the pottery and the most varied number of pot types, in addition to three pieces of loom weight and a fragment of quernstone. The fill was very black with fragments of charcoal. At the northern end was a large piece of baked clay with a flat blackened surface uppermost, wedged against the side. No. 7 was roughly circular, 36 inches by 23 inches, 18 inches deep. *In situ* lay pot no. 16, its top sheared off to a height of 16 inches, but some of the rim fallen inside, and its base intact. It was surrounded by the bones of a butchered sheep

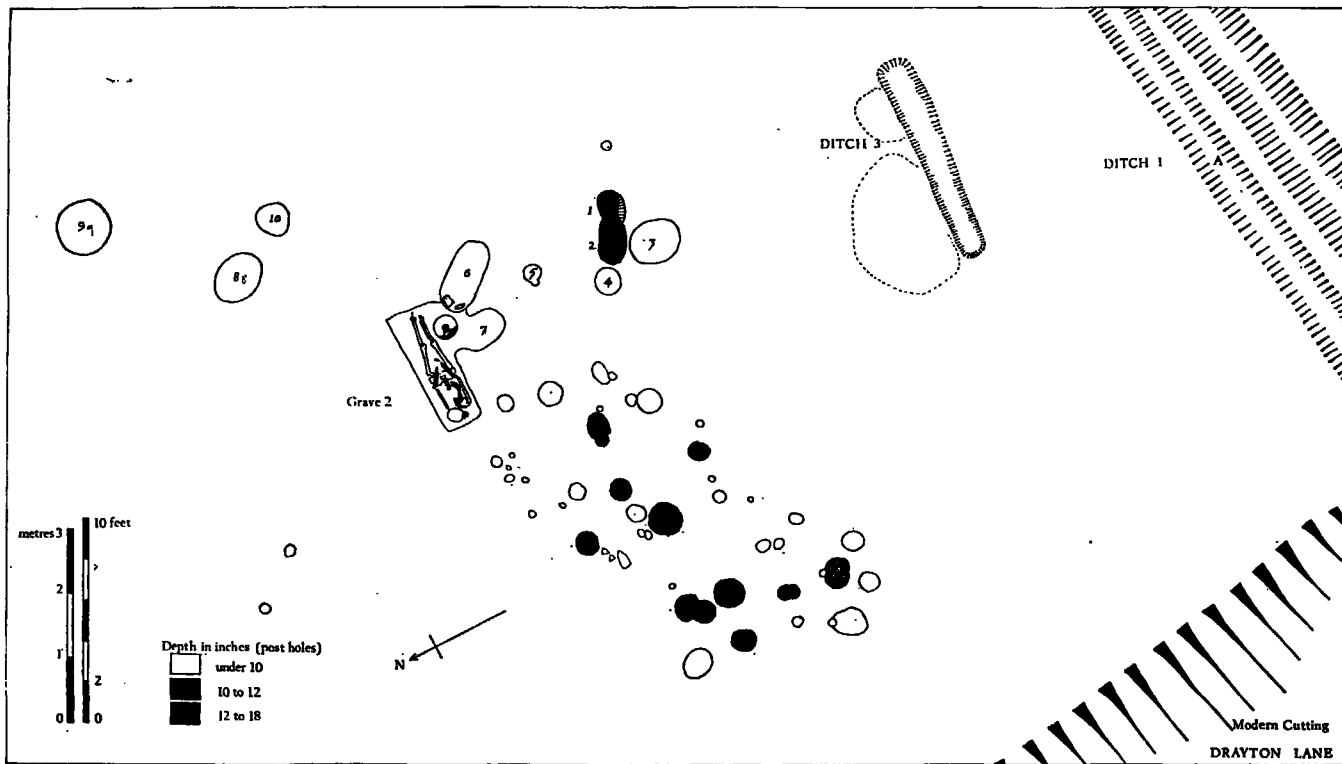


Fig. 14. Portsdown: plan of Iron Age hut site with Saxon grave and ditches.

or goat, of which one vertebra was in the fill of the pot. Grave 2 had been cut through this feature, and several of the bones had been reinterred with the human burial, and mixed with the fill by the feet. The fill of no. 7 was mainly of redeposited chalk, although the pot was filled with dark burnt material. It looks as though this area east of the post hole complex and outside the hut was devoted to cooking, and that no. 6 served as a hearth and subsequently as a rubbish tip. In relation with this it should be noted that the fill of no. 4 close at hand, was exclusively of burnt flint pot boilers and ashes.

Another distinct area seems to have been that occupied by nos. 8, 9 and 10, north of the grave 2. No. 8 was a perfect oval, beautifully cut, with straight sides and a flat bottom 27 inches in depth. No. 9 was circular, 2 feet 6 inches in diameter and 10 inches deep. It contained ash and pot boilers and the chalk spindle whorl (no. 6, fig. 17). No. 10 was not as well made as either of these. The precision and symmetry of nos. 8 and 9 marks them out from the other features, as their isolated position does, and it seems logical that they were used as small storage pits (perhaps to hold water for human or animal consumption).

The Iron Age features are thus domestic in character, and comprise a hearth area, storage area and living or manufacturing area, as suggested by the items of weaving equipment, the pottery and quern fragments. Although not large in itself, the living area need not be seen in isolation, for the cutting of Drayton Lane through the chalk may well have removed others like it.

THE IRON AGE POTTERY

By R. J. BRADLEY

A total of 388 oz. of Iron Age pottery was recovered during work on the site. Apart from several intrusive sherds within the filling of the Saxon graves these came either from the residual occupation layer above the natural chalk or from features cut into the latter layer. It is conceded that further material of this date may have been lost in the initial mechanical stripping of the site. Among sherds found within the fillings of post holes or related features it is possible to distinguish one closed group 1, 2, 7, 10 and 11 found in no. 6. It will however be argued that the pottery can all represent a single phase of occupation within the period.

One almost complete vessel weighing 331 oz. and assorted sherds totalling a further 51 oz. were recovered. These latter may be divided into six fabrics though the narrow range of types on the site is some indication that these need not necessarily be equated with distinct wares produced at separate centres of activity. The complete vessel is omitted from the statistical analysis of these fabrics for reasons to be given below. The relative frequency of each of the first six fabrics is expressed as a percentage of the total weight of loose sherds found. This method cannot of course take account of variations in the size or relative completeness of vessels of which several fragments may be represented, nor can allowance be made for differences in their robustness. On the other hand the method offers fewer hazards than the straightforward counting of sherds. In this context the inclusion of the complete vessel would give a misleading picture. The wares may be best set out as follows:

PROCEEDINGS FOR THE YEAR 1968

<i>Fabric</i>	<i>Weight</i>	<i>% of total</i>	<i>Exterior</i>	<i>Interior</i>	<i>Finish</i>	<i>Filler</i>
A	16 oz.	28%	Orange-buff to grey-buff	Orange-buff to grey-black	Rough	Medium/large flints
B	14 oz.	24%	Black	Black and grey	Rough	Medium/large flints
C	8 oz.	14%	Orange-buff	Orange-buff	Medium smooth	Few medium/small flints
D	7 oz.	12%	Black	Black	Smooth, some formerly burnished?	Fine flints
E	8 oz.	14%	Grey-buff	Grey-buff	Rough chalky	Medium/large flints
F	4 oz.	7%	Black and buff	Black and buff	Fine, burnished	Fine flints

Three basic forms can be distinguished among the excavated material, the shouldered bowl or jar, a more rounded variant in which the shoulder is lost, and possibly an ill defined upright vessel. Details of the illustrated sherds are as follows:

Shouldered jars (figs. 15, 16)

1. Exterior buff to black, interior black, hard fabric with medium to fine flint filler. Burnished externally. No. 6.
3. Exterior grey-black, interior grey-buff, hard rough fabric with medium flint filler. Irregular rim possibly with fingertip impression. Grass impressions in exterior face. Ditch 3.
5. Exterior and interior in rough chalky fabric with medium flint filler. Irregular shoulder but probably not decorated. Post hole.
6. Exterior and interior black, rough fabric with medium large flint filler. Finger impressed rim. Occupation layer.
7. Exterior and interior in hard black fabric with fine flint filler. No. 6.
10. Exterior and interior in smooth orange-buff sandy fabric with rare fine flint filler. No. 6.
11. Exterior grey, interior black, sandy fabric with medium flint filler. No. 6.
12. Exterior orange-buff, interior grey, rough abraded sandy fabric with medium large flint filler. Indistinct finger impressions below shoulder probably not a decorative feature. ? incised lines on shoulder but in so abraded a ware these might be grass impressions. Post hole.
13. Exterior and interior orange-buff, medium smooth sandy fabric with rare medium fine flint filler. Post hole.
15. Exterior and interior buff and grey, rough sandy fabric with medium large flint filler. Occupation layer.
16. Interior dark orange, exterior orange and buff, burnt black in places. Very rough fabric with large coarse flint filler. Finger tip decoration round rim with thumb or finger impressions beneath rim. Grass impressions round shoulder and down body.

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Rounded jars

- 2. Red brown exterior, black interior, smooth hard fabric with medium fine flint filler. No. 6.
- 8. Exterior and interior black, smooth hard fabric with fine flint filler. Occupation layer.
- 9. Exterior and interior black, hard fabric, rare medium flint filler. Finger impressed rim. Occupation layer.

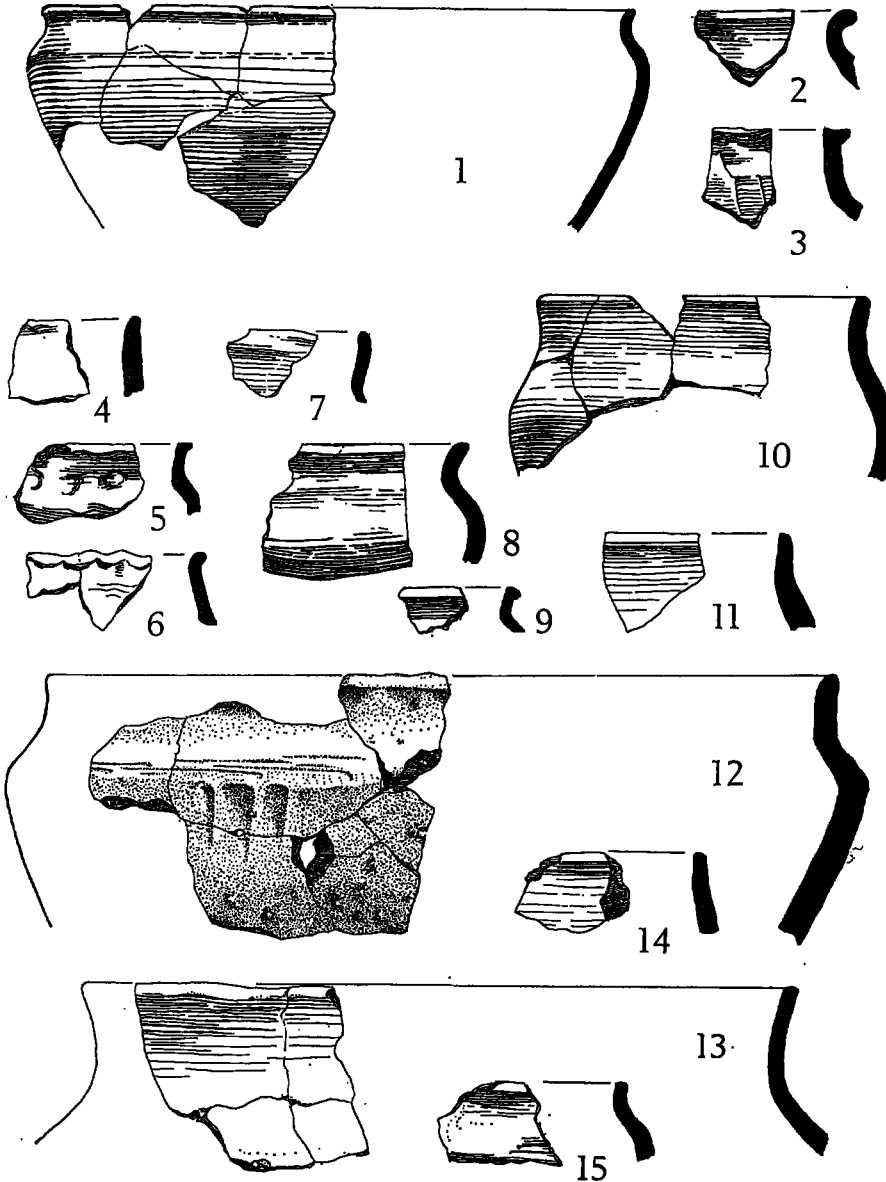


Fig. 15. Portsdown: Iron Age pottery (scale $\frac{1}{2}$).

Upright vessels

4. Exterior buff; interior buff and black, hard fabric, with medium and fine flint filler. Occupation layer.
14. Exterior and interior black, hard fabric with medium and fine flint filler. Occupation layer.

Two points must be made clear at the start. In the first place there is a certain relationship between the first two types set out above and any division must therefore run the risk of seeming arbitrary. Secondly many of the sherds are too fragmentary for the forms of their parent vessels to be decided with any certainty. Thus 6 or 7 might be included in the third category, or conversely those sherds classed there as belonging to upright vessels might represent only the necks of shouldered jars. Whatever the affinities of the latter it remains clear that the shouldered forms and their possible derivatives are the characteristic vessels of this site. Unfortunately these are not particularly closely dateable. While they emerge early in the Iron Age they are still to be found alongside forms characteristic of Iron Age B in a group from Paulsgrove only two miles from the site. Here too the form is found with both the 'early' characteristic of finger impressed rims and also, on I, with the 'later' trait of burnishing. The associations of this sherd will not allow its separation from the bulk. With the latter characteristic may be linked the sharp everted rims of the majority of the vessels on

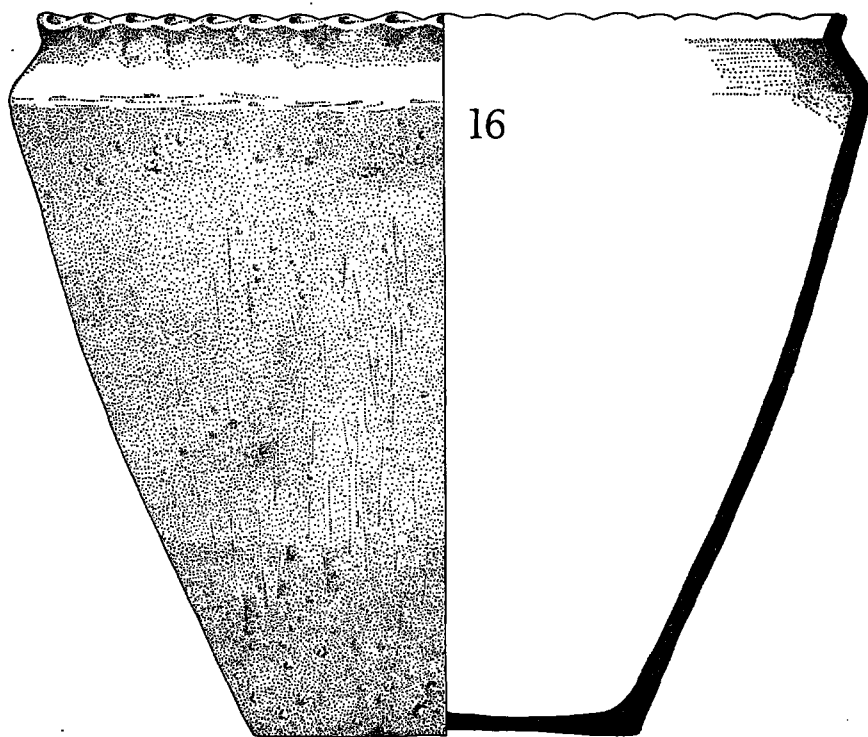


Fig. 16. Portsdown: Iron Age pot (scale $\frac{1}{4}$).

the site and the more rounded bodies which make any division into types so difficult.

Knowing as we do the strength of conservative traditions at such sites as Paulsgrove nearby it would be misleading to pay too much attention to supposedly 'early' characteristics among the vessels here, such characteristics as the fingertip decoration of 6, 9 and 16, the stance of 16 or the less rounded body angle of 11. Though these could give some hint of the duration of occupation there is no reason why they must do so. The distinction may be no more than that between 'fine' and 'coarse' wares on other sites. For more detailed discussion of these points the reader is referred to the writer's analysis of the Paulsgrove assemblage.^{10a}

With this in mind we can say no more than that occupation on the site should have continued as late as the emergence of Iron Age B styles.

The relatively limited typological range of this material also allows some comment. The following discussion is intended to be read alongside the 'functional analysis' offered in the Paulsgrove report.

In the first place the preponderance of shouldered jars or bowls and of related forms presents a sharp contrast with the frequency of upright vessel types on the broadly contemporary site at Paulsgrove. The finding of loom weights in particular is support for the argument that this contrast is one between a domestic assemblage and an industrial one. This basic distinction should remain valid even though it is not possible to suggest the exact nature of either site or the precise function of any particular pot. The force of this contrast is of course limited by the varying quantities of pottery from the two sites and by doubts as to the length of occupation of the Portsdown example.

The basically uniform nature of the present assemblage also provides limited material for calculation of capacity in comparative as opposed to absolute terms. If we take the shouldered jar as a standard type model, then capacity ought to be in direct proportion to rim diameter. The margin of error may be determined by calculating a constant factor composed of the shoulder diameter divided by the rim diameter:

<i>Vessel</i>	<i>Shoulder diameter</i>	<i>Rim diameter</i>	<i>Shoulder/rim</i>
1	9.4"	9"	1.04
10	5.3"	5"	1.06
12	13.1"	12"	1.09
16	20.4"	19.6"	1.04

These vessels therefore show no evidence of carefully scaled capacities and should be seen in contrast to those from the industrial site at Paulsgrove.

OTHER IRON AGE FINDS

Loom Weights (fig. 17, nos. 1-4). Two complete triangular loom weights of baked clay found in post holes 1 and 2a. No. 1 is 35 cm. in length with one hole intact, 15 mm. wide and the other two corners broken off along the incisions made by the holes. There is a depressed triangular area 5 mm. deep on one side. No. 2 is 13 cm. in length,

^{10a} *Proc. Hants F.C.*, forthcoming

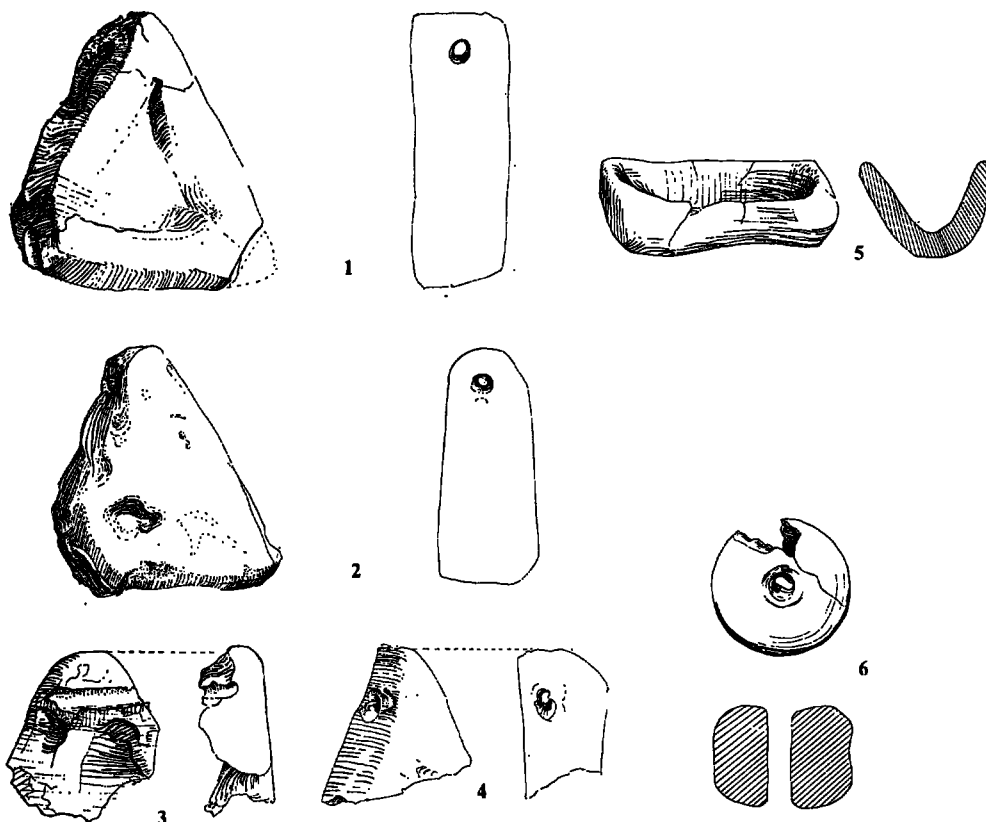


Fig. 17. Portsdown: finds from the Iron Age hut (scale $\frac{1}{4}$).

with two pierced corners, the third unpierced, burnt on one side. Nos. 3 and 4, and one other pierced fragment not illustrated, come from feature 6 and may belong to one weight. No. 4 is particularly interesting for a piece of flint-filled pottery has been incorporated into the fabric, suggestive that the weights were made on this site, or in another domestic environment. The fabric of all these weights is a deep red clay, with no added filler, fired to red, yellow or black, and in some cases subsequently burnt. The total number represented is between four and six.

Spindle Whorl (fig. 17, no. 6). 3.7 cm. in diameter, width 2.5 cm. Hole diameter 0.7 cm. Made of baked clay, found in pit 9. Compare a similar one from Meon Hill¹¹.

Chalk Vessel (fig. 17, no. 5). Overall length 5.5 cm., width 3 cm. Interior 4.8 cm. x 2.7 cm. Carved from one lump of chalk and carefully smoothed, this vessel appears too small to be functional, and shows no traces of its original contents. It may be a child's toy, perhaps a miniature cradle or boat to judge from its narrow base or 'keel'. Found in a post hole.

Daub and burnt clay. Daub fragments totalling a weight of 32 oz. were found in

¹¹ *Proc. Hants F.C.*, xii (1931), 155.

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several of the post holes. The fabric is yellow and buff in colour and contains chalk, flint and ash in the fill. The width of the wattle impressions ranges from 5 mm. to 16 mm., and are all rounded.

Distinct from the heavily grogged daub are the fragments of burnt clay, in fabric nearer the loom weights, but in colour a buff yellow. The largest piece measures 15 x 12 x 5 cm. and has one smooth flat surface, burnt black, with two semi-circular concave sides. The flat surface has straw or grass impressions. It comes from feature 6 and may be from the hearth.

Quern stones. Fragments representing parts of two quern stones were found in feature 6 and in the post holes and were made from two kinds of hard red sandstone.

THE ANIMAL BONES FROM THE IRON AGE SITE

By CHRISTOPHER F. CHESNEY, B.VET.MED., M.R.C.V.S.

The animal bones all come from feature 7 where they were found strewn around pot no. 16. Some had been disturbed and reinterred with the human skeleton in grave 2. The following bones of an adult ovine are represented:

Metacarpals.

Right femur with separated epiphyses.

Right ulna.

Right and left scapula.

Right and left humerus.

Right and left tibia.

Right side of pelvis, including acetabulum showing no fusion lines.

Ribs, with specimens from first to last.

Vertebrae; cervical, thoracic, lumbar and sacral.

Skull bones, horned. Third molar temporary teeth present. Sixth molars about to erupt.

The bones together probably all originate from a single animal. There is no evidence to suggest two or more. The 'clean' nature of the bones, without evidence of osteophyte (bony outgrowth) formation, and the occasional separation of epiphyses, whilst others are retained, suggest that the beast was a young adult. This is confirmed by the dentition, which places the age at 15 months plus or minus 6 or 7 weeks. The animal was horned, but there is insufficient material on which to decide the sex of the beast.

Slight evidence of butchery lies in the straight edge of the condyle of the mandible and right coronoid process, but these could be accidental breaks.

III

THE SAXON FEATURES (fig. 18)

By R. J. BRADLEY AND E. R. LEWIS

The Saxon features comprise two burials lying below the crest of the hill, 70 feet apart, and two parallel ditches running along the contour of the hill to the south.

Grave 1 was a rectangular cutting 8½ feet by 3 feet with near vertical sides and

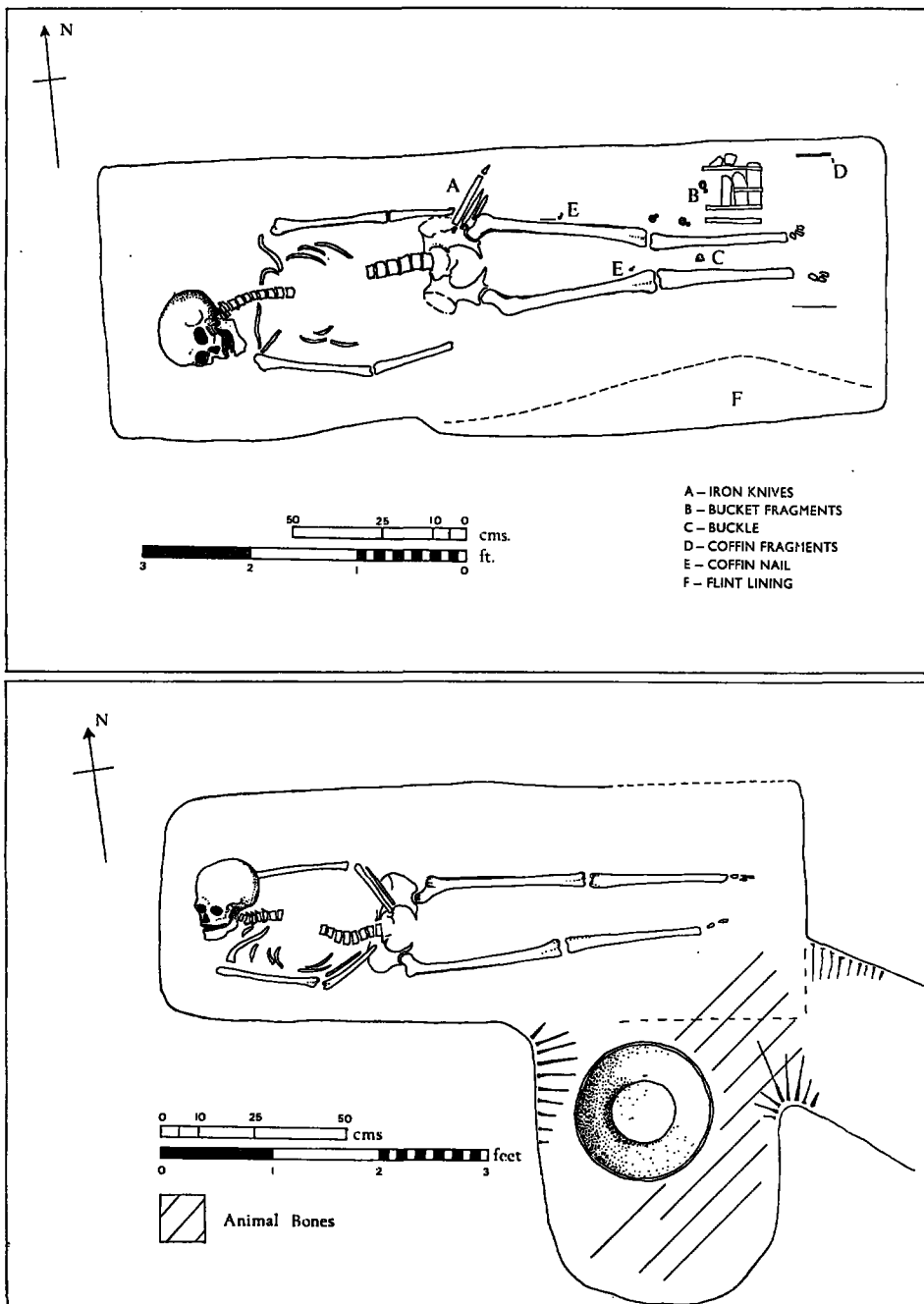


Fig. 18. Portsdown: above, grave 1; below, grave 2 cut through Iron Age features.

aligned roughly east-west. It had been cut from the surface of the topsoil beneath the chalk mound but the absence of a turf line suggests that some depth of surface material had been removed in the nineteenth century. Thus the minimum depth of the grave was 1 foot 7 inches.

Part of the base of the south side of the grave had been lined with large flint nodules packed in powdery or puddled chalk. Within the main area of the grave had been a coffin or an arrangement of planks containing a single burial. This arrangement was traceable in section towards the south-east corner of the grave and in plan in the north-east corner as a stain running parallel to the body. Otherwise its presence was attested only by nails in the lowest filling of the grave.

One extended burial of a man of about 25 was found within the grave with the head to the west. The arms were at the sides and over the left hand were placed three iron knives of varying sizes. A small iron buckle lay between the legs. Against the shin of the left leg were the remains of a bronze bound wooden bucket. Three detached bronze studs each with an associated loop were found alongside it. The vessel lay on its side against the north edge of the grave. The upper side had completely collapsed with the pressure of the soil above and the lower side and the bottom had been entirely lost with the decomposition of the body. The fragmentary wood and bronze of the remainder were recovered intact.

Grave 2 had been cut intrusively through the Iron Age features 6 and 7 and was orientated east-west. The grave measured 6 feet long by 2½ feet wide and was cut rather roughly 1 foot 6 inches below the surface of the chalk. There were no signs of a coffin or coffin fittings. It was not possible to give a sex to the bones with any conviction, and on this subject, and the problem of the physical type represented, the reader is referred to the specialist report. The head was severed from the neck and the shoulders were placed close against the east end of the grave, with the head on top of them, turned to face south. The elbows were bent with the hands laid in the lap. There were no grave goods as in *Grave 1* but a fossil *Echinocorys Scutata* was found in the fill. This type is quite characteristic of the Upper Chalk and may well have been lying in the topsoil when the grave was filled in, but it is a good and clearly marked specimen such as might have appealed to the grave digger who perhaps put it in deliberately. There was in addition a large fragment of chaff tempered pottery (fig. 19, no. 2) similar to that found in *Ditch I*, and small fragments of Iron Age and Roman coarse ware.

The Ditches

Two ditches, revealed by mechanical scraping, were traced to their fullest extent by this means. *Ditch 1* must have started west of the cutting for Drayton Lane, for it was first visible cutting through the eastern verge. Here its depth was 1 foot 6 inches and it was 18 inches wide. The fill was mainly of redeposited chalk with soil with flints in the top 3 inches. Parallel to it, and 12 inches to the north, ran a very shallow depression cut into the chalk (marked A on the map, fig. 14). 55 feet east of Drayton Lane it faded out with the bank of *ditch 1*. Its fill was mainly of large flints and it contained no dateable material. *Ditch 1* continued for a total length of 425 feet. At its extreme eastern end it began to turn north round the increasingly pronounced slope of the hill and faded out at a depth of 3 inches. Another barely traceable shallow groove similar

to 1A was just visible at this end north of ditch 1. A section of ditch 1 was excavated at a point opposite to where ditch 2 begins (see fig. 13). Here the depth was 2 feet where ditch 2 reached a depth of 2 feet 9 inches at the same section. Like ditch 2 the fill consisted of (1) a thin layer of grey silt on the bottom, (2) redeposited chalk fallen from the sides, (3) fine loam with chalk and (4) brown clayey soil. The sides sloped sharply and the bottom was flat, but the profile varied slightly even along the 20 feet section of fill removed, especially where the chalk had fallen away at the top. It seemed from this section, cut more decisively than at the eastern and western ends, that ditch 1 had been recut to the pattern of ditch 2, or that it was intended ultimately to be completed to this depth along its total length and the shallower sections were merely to mark out its course.

Ditch 2 ran parallel to Ditch 1 16 feet to the north, for a distance of 141 feet. Its eastern half terminated in a square end, and its western end was rounded neatly. There is no evidence that it was unfinished though ditch 3 (see fig. 14) might be interpreted as another, barely begun, section of it. The presence of a piece of Iron Age pottery in the fill would not be surprising there in view of its proximity to the domestic site.

Only ditch 1 contained any dateable material, but its similarity to ditch 2 indicates that the construction of both was contemporary. The top of a Roman pitcher (fig. 19, no. 4) was found on the surface of the far eastern section of ditch 1. The fragments of a Saxon cooking pot (fig. 19, no. 1) were found with a bronze stud (fig. 19, no. 3) on the top of layer (3) in the excavated section of ditch 1. These were thus lying above the layer of redeposited chalk and must have been discarded after the ditch had fallen into disuse.

The purpose of the ditches is not clear. If a Saxon date is accepted for them it is suggested that they form a boundary, probably unfinished, to the cemetery of which graves 1 and 2 are the most easterly outliers. In this case the cemetery must have gone out of use before it was completely filled and its length must have been at least 550 feet, if the position of long barrow is, as proposed, on the west side of the A3.

SAXON POTTERY

No. 1 (fig. 19). Hand-made cooking pot of globular form with a narrow neck and everted rim rather flattened on the top. The base is uneven but has the suggestion of an omphalos form. The fabric is black, though some fragments have been oxydised orange on the exterior subsequent to breakage. The filler is of chaff, very occasional pieces of flint and chalk particles dissolved on the interior leaving a pitted surface. The finish is smooth and soapy to the touch. The many small fragments were found in layer 3 of ditch 1 but all appear to come from this one pot.

No. 2 (fig. 19). A single sherd came from the fill of grave 2. The fabric is slightly coarser than that of no. 1 and charred grains are visible incorporated into the chaff temper. J. R. B. Arthur, F.L.S., offers this note:

'On the external surface spikelets of the ear of Rye (unthreshed) had been pressed into the clay, and also a number of Rye grain impressions. Throughout the fabric, but concentrated from the centre towards the internal surface, is the greatest density of

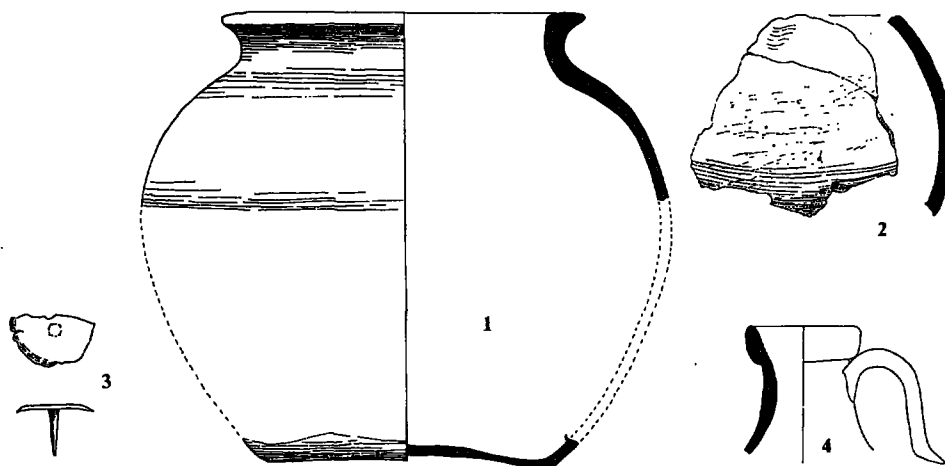


Fig. 19. Portsdown: finds from ditch 1 (scale $\frac{1}{4}$).

vegetable material including cereals, of which the following have been identified: Oats – *Avena strigosa* Schreb *Avena* sp. Rye – *Secale cereale* L. It would appear that the above cereals when harvested were chopped into small pieces in an unthreshed state.’

The size, thickness and shape suggests that this sherd comes from a cooking pot probably larger in capacity than no. 1 but there is great similarity between the two wares.

SAXON OBJECTS

A neck belonging to a Roman jug of New Forest origin was found in the latest fill of ditch 1 at its eastern end (fig. 19, no. 4). Hard grey sandy ware.

Bronze stud (fig. 19, no. 3). From ditch 1 associated with no. 1. It does not seem sufficiently robust to belong to a shield boss.

Iron knives (fig. 20, nos. 1-3). The knives were found over the left hand, and the left hip of the skeleton in grave 1. The illustration shows an adaptation of an X-ray negative of them taken prior to cleaning, the hatched area indicating the less dense areas of metal along the cutting edge. The knives lay in a close group, possibly originally in one sheath, although no other metal fittings survive.

The largest, no. 1, is 11 cm. long, and is broken at the point and the haft, with possibly the end of the haft missing.

No. 2 has a broken point and its length is 12 cm.

No. 3 is 9 cm. long. Both no. 2 and no. 3 bear the faint traces of a handle, both apparently overlapping a short way up the blade.

Iron Buckle plate (fig. 20, no. 4), from between the knees of the skeleton in grave 1. This has been made by bending sheet metal around the ring of the buckle, leaving a hole for the pin. Only short protruding ends remain of the buckle ring itself, so that no overall idea of size can be estimated, but the shape would probably have been a flattened oval.

Bucket (fig. 21). The bucket was recovered in very fragmentary condition with either the top or bottom lying against the left leg of the skeleton in grave 1. The weight of soil had crushed the bucket and the bronze bands were detached from the wood and lay in four groups in small pieces. Reconstruction suggests that in fact the bucket had only three bands and the fourth represented a further broken segment of one of them. The bands were joined by copper rivets through the bronze, arranged in two ways; either one above the other or side by side.

The loop attachments, of a low tin bronze are made in four pieces; a disc head with a hook curving up over the rim, a round headed rivet through the centre of the disc, piercing both the wood and the top bronze band and fastened on the inside with a flat round plate, and a round-sectioned loop. A pin through the hook could be secured either directly down through the thickness of the wood, or at an angle through the inside of the stave outward as shown in fig. 21, inset A. This latter method would prevent the wood splitting and accords well with the shape of the hook.¹² One extra pin suggests that there were originally four attachments, which were fastened to four points around the rim, perhaps to hold a handle of which no trace survives.

The wooden staves are of yew, *taxus baccata*¹³ and vary in width from 2.5 to 3 cm. Originally there were probably ten in number. The sides were neatly chamfered so that a total diameter of 9 cm. externally and 8.2 cm. internally could be calculated. Two fragments appear to represent almost the total length of the staves, approximately

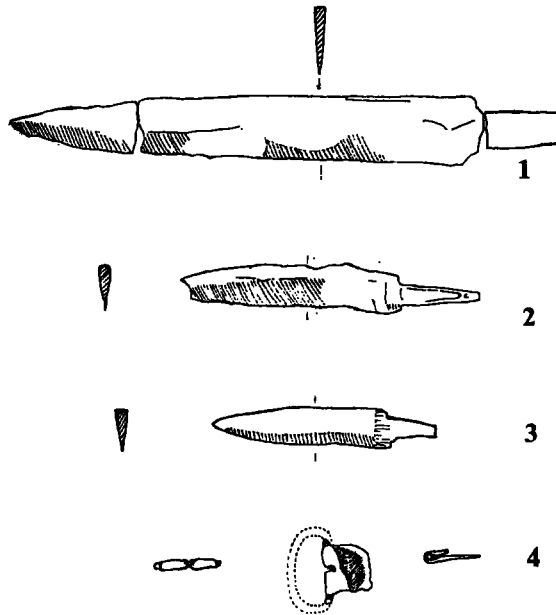


Fig. 20. Portsdown; Saxon finds from grave 1 (scale $\frac{1}{2}$).

¹² Miss Vera Evison has made some helpful suggestions on this.

¹³ I am indebted to the Forest Products Research Laboratory for this information.

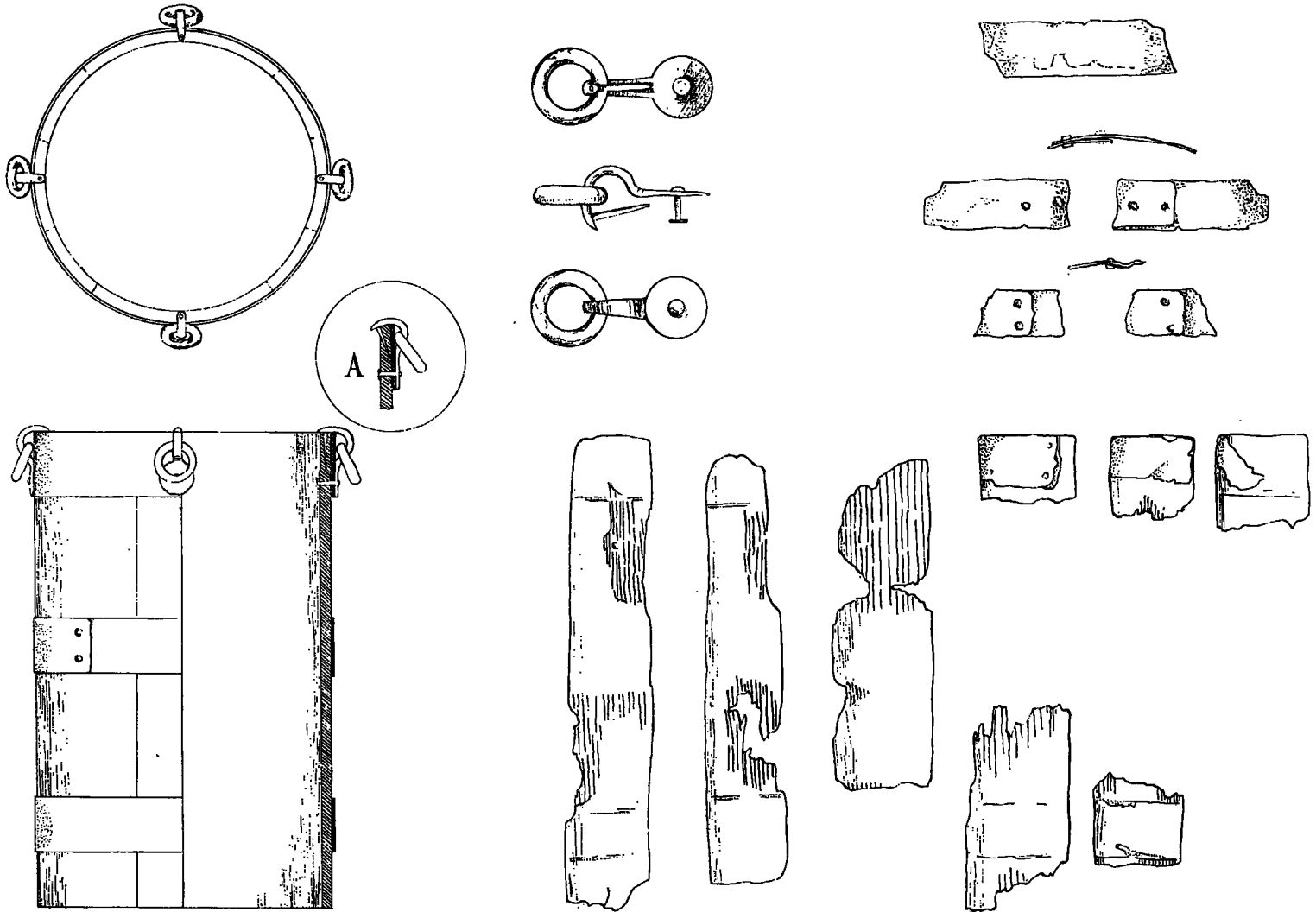


Fig. 21. Portsdown: bucket from grave 1. A reconstruction from the stave and hoop fragments (right).
All $\frac{1}{2}$ except loop attachments which are actual size.

15 cm., though broken at the ends. Slight grooves and well preserved patches on the surface of the wood show the position of the bronze bands, but there are no marks internally to show how the bottom was secured.

There are no known English parallels for this curious vessel. The term 'bucket' is applicable only to its construction, of wooden staves with metal binding strips; and it is only in this feature that it resembles other buckets from Anglo Saxon graves¹⁴. The normal flat-sectioned handle hinging on fittings rivetted to two metal strengthening ribs is here absent; instead there are the four loop attachments presumably attached to the top bronze band. If anything, they are reminiscent of the fittings for the bronze hanging bowls,¹⁵ with the addition of two rivets in place of solder. The circular plate might then serve as a very meagre form of escutcheon. However, though they are neatly made, the presence of these small fittings on the vessel seems quite unnecessary as a means of support, and makes its function obscure.

THE HUMAN SKELETON REMAINS

By BARI HOOPER

Burial 1. Fragmentary skull and mandible; axis and four cervical vertebrae and fragments of a number of thoracic and lumbar vertebrae; clavicles and scapulae; rib fragments. Appendicular skeleton represented by femora, left tibia, left fibula and humeri, all in very attenuated and fragmentary condition.

The skull is masculine in character with well developed nuchal crest. The lamboid suture is still well defined on both tables, but the sagittal suture is partially obliterated. The facial and occipital bones have eroded away.

Despite the absence of the maxilla, most of the upper teeth are present (except for left medial incisor and right third molar), with all teeth showing some crown-wear and slight exposure of the underlying dentine. The mandible is fragmentary, but with one exception (left medial incisor), all of the teeth are present and exhibit similar wear to the uppers.

The long bones are in very poor condition, but the linea aspera on each femur suggest a well developed male.

None of the bones are suitable for metrical analysis.

Burial 2. Fragmentary skull and mandible; vertebral column represented by seven cervical and six thoracic vertebrae incomplete and fragmentary condition and the sacrum; seventeen rib fragments; right scapula and clavicle; humeri, radii, alnae, metacarpals, carpals and phalanges; femora, tibiae, patellae, fibulae, calcanea, tali, metatarsals, tarsals and phalanges.

The skull is too fragmentary for complete metrical analysis, but its general morphology is mesocephalic. It has a sharply angled frontal with moderately developed supra-orbital ridges, giving a high forehead. The muscle impressions are slight. All of

¹⁴ For example the buckets from Petersfinger - (*An Anglo-Saxon Cemetery at Petersfinger near Salisbury*, by E. T. Leeds and H. de Shortt, 1953); and Droxford - (*The Arts in Early England*, G. Baldwin Brown, 464).

¹⁵ 'Hanging Bowls' by Elizabeth Fowler, *Studies in Ancient Europe, essays presented to Stuart Piggott* (1968). There is a small bowl in the British Museum from the Gibbs Collection from Faversham, Kent, the loops of which approximate in size to the Portsdown example.

EXCAVATIONS AT THE GEORGE INN, PORTSDOWN

the sutures are clearly defined with no anomalous bones or signs of obliteration on either table. The mastoid processes and notches are small.

The palate is symmetrical, highly arched and slightly compressed at the premolars. The teeth are in good condition with slight crown-wear, resulting in a little dentine exposure to the incisors and first molars. The third upper molars are in process of eruption. There is some over-crowding in the mandible and the jaws occlude with a slight over-bite. The mandible is small with shallow notches between condyles and coronoid processes and the chin is angular and prominent.

The long bones are gracile with moderate muscle impressions. The epiphyses are all united, but epiphyseal lines are still recognisable on the femora, tibiae and radii. The epiphyseal rings of the vertebrae are clearly defined. The crest of the iliac of the pelvis is only partially fused.

The skeleton is clearly that of an immature adult, but establishing its sex has proved difficult. This is due largely to the ambiguous nature of the normal sexing criteria and its immaturity. In order to obtain a second opinion on this important question, D. R. Brothwell and R. Powers at the British Museum (Natural History), were consulted. These authorities were unable to come to a firm conclusion, but the former suggested it might well be an atypical male.

PATHOLOGY

Dental. A moderate infection of periodontal disease has caused some alveolar resorption and slight deposits of calculus coat the lingual surfaces of the anterior teeth. A cyst cavity is evident at the root of the lower left third molar. The upper left canine has been chipped ante-mortem.

General. The third cervical vertebra has been cleanly cut through by a sword or similar weapon, with a portion of the body and right inferior articular facet being severed. The blow was delivered laterally and probably resulted in complete decapitation. (The position of the head in relation to the body in the grave tends to confirm this.) Another lesion caused by a sharp instrument can be seen on the left side of the mandible. This was caused by a relatively moderate blow which cut the cortical layer of bone but did not sever it. However the force was sufficient to fracture the jaw at its weakest point, i.e. the angle of the mandible already weakened internally by the cyst cavity.

OSTEOMETRICAL DATA

Skull

Frontal arc	135 mm.
Palatal length	50 mm.
Palatal breadth	37 mm.

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<i>Long bones</i>	<i>Right</i>	<i>Left</i>
Femur, length	471 mm.	470 mm.
„ oblique length	464 mm.	464 mm.
„ trochanteric length	445 mm.	443 mm.
„ bi-condylar breadth	80 mm.	80 mm.
„ minimum antero-posterior diameter	25 mm.	25 mm.
„ transverse diameter	35 mm.	34 mm.
Platymetric index	71.4	73.5
Tibia, length	378 mm.	378 mm.
„ maximum antero-posterior diameter	35 mm.	33 mm.
„ projective transverse diameter	22 mm.	22 mm.
Platynemic index	62.8	66.6
Fibula, length	366 mm.	367 mm.
Humerus, length	338 mm.	—
„ maximum diameter	23 mm.	21 mm.
„ minimum diameter	16 mm.	16 mm.
Radius, length	—	243 mm.
Ulna, length	—	—

Estimated stature (calculated on right femur and fibula) 5 feet 8 inches.

Estimated age at death about 20 years.

THE MOLLUSCA

By DR. R. A. CAMERON

The following snail shells were found during excavation or were sieved and floated from soil taken from the Saxon ditch 1.

<i>Species</i>	<i>Numbers</i>
<i>Helicella itala</i>	41
<i>Vertigo pygmaea</i>	13
<i>Pupilla muscorum</i>	219
<i>Discus rotundatus</i>	14
<i>Vallonia pulchella/excentrica</i>	99
<i>Pomatias elegans</i>	49
<i>Carychium tridentatum</i>	52
<i>Cepaea</i> sp (juveniles)	3
<i>Caecilioides acicula</i>	6
<i>Cochlicopa</i> sp	15
<i>Clausilia bidentatum</i>	3
<i>Hygromia hispida</i>	12
<i>Helix aspersa</i>	8

Numerous unidentifiable shells, mostly juveniles, were also found.

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Many of these species are usually found today in short grass (e.g. sheep grazed downland). Most of them could probably be found today on Portsdown Hill, with the possible exception of the *Cepaea*. Some of the species – e.g. *Pomatias elegans*, *Clausilia bidentata* and *Discus rotundatus* would probably have succeeded in the area as a result of the ditch being made – which would disturb the soil and allow thicker vegetation to develop. Because many of the species found here are found in a wide variety of habitats, it is impossible to do more than suggest that the area around the ditch was reasonably open ground – probably sheep-growing, but with some longer vegetation.

A soil sample from Iron Age post holes contained the following snail shells:

Capaea nemoralis	2
Pupilla muscorum	44
Cochlicopa lubrica	13
Hygromia hispida	5
Helicella itala	1
Clausilia bidentata	2
Carychium sp	2
Vallonia sp	19
Caecilioides acicula	12

Total	100
+ 27 unidentified	

This sample is even more characteristically from grasslands than the Saxon one – and probably indicates less disturbance. The species missing from this list but present in the Saxon list include some which would benefit from the making of the ditch – e.g. *Pomatias elegans* and *Discus rotundatus*.

This evidence for grassland is of interest in the light of the evidence for Iron Age pastoralism from Portsdown I to the east. In the same way mollusc samples from Portsdown II further to the east indicate arable land turned over to a final phase of open grassland during the period. (RJB)

IV

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

1. The Neolithic mound is certainly not in the position suggested by Grinsell. The siting 'near the telegraph' indicates a position on the west side of the road above the chalk cutting. There is no surface indication of it visible and it is probable that most of it was removed during quarrying.

2. The small Iron Age settlement in the area south-east of the road A3 was domestic in character, with hearth and storage areas. The pottery suggests an Iron Age B context for associated structures which though perhaps rebuilt on occasion, give no indication of prolonged occupation. The environment suggested accords well with the nature of previously reported Iron Age sites on the hill.

3. In the 19th century Saxon burials were found cut into the barrow and distributed widely around it. The two burials found in 1966 and 1967 to the east of the site of the

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barrow were supposedly part of this cemetery, although remote from its nucleus. The condition of the skeleton in grave 2 would substantiate the 19th century evidence of a battle cemetery, though formal execution is a possible alternative explanation. The similarity between the pottery in the ditch and the single sherd in grave 2 gives some weight to the theory that the ditch was constructed as a boundary to the cemetery and indeed the absence of any other signs of Saxon occupation makes its function otherwise inexplicable.

The cutting of the A3 in the 19th century has clearly destroyed a great deal of evidence both of Iron Age and Saxon features, and finds made in the 1966-7 excavations, though interesting and various, are only indications of the original extent of both sites.

The finds are deposited in the Portsmouth City Museum.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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