

THE EARLY IRON AGE PITS

(Fig. 9 and Plate VIII.)

As may be seen from the general map (Fig. 35), the pits on St. Catharine's Hill fall into two classes, which are distinguished for the purposes of this report by letters and numbers respectively.

The first class, which is lettered from A to Z, includes the larger prehistoric pits, with which alone this section deals. Thirteen of them were excavated: Of these M, V and T are situated in the Entrance area and have been described in the section dealing with it. The remaining ten all lie, as may be seen from Fig. 36, on the comparatively level ground in the north-east part of the enclosure, and mostly between the Clump and the Entrance. It is probable that further trenching would reveal more pits in this neighbourhood, for while all the spots with any surface indications have been examined, many of those discovered had no such indications at all, and in some cases must have been deliberately filled up in prehistoric times. The grass is normally too thick for the method of sounding with a heavy rammer to be used with advantage in their discovery, and further pits could only be located by accident or by clearing the surface soil over the whole area. In the latter case it is not probable that the expense would be justified by the results to be obtained. Moreover the most favourable site is occupied by the Maze, and popular sentiment is not likely to tolerate interference with it without good reason.

There is reason to believe that the number of pit-dwellings discovered in this area is not due simply to the fact that it has been more thoroughly examined than other parts of the Hill. As can be seen from Fig. 36, a large number of trial holes were made north of Pits X and W where slight depressions or luxuriant grass aroused suspicion, but in no case was there any trace of human habitation, and the soil was uniformly clean, and almost entirely free from fragments of pottery and even from animal bones. To the south-east, again, two trial holes near Section 1 across the defensive system showed no sign of occupation, and, as has been pointed out on p. 17, it is probably not without significance that, whereas the old subsoil under the bank in the neighbourhood of the Entrance produced a considerable quantity of pottery, not a single sherd was found in any part of Section 1. Plainly there was little or no habitation

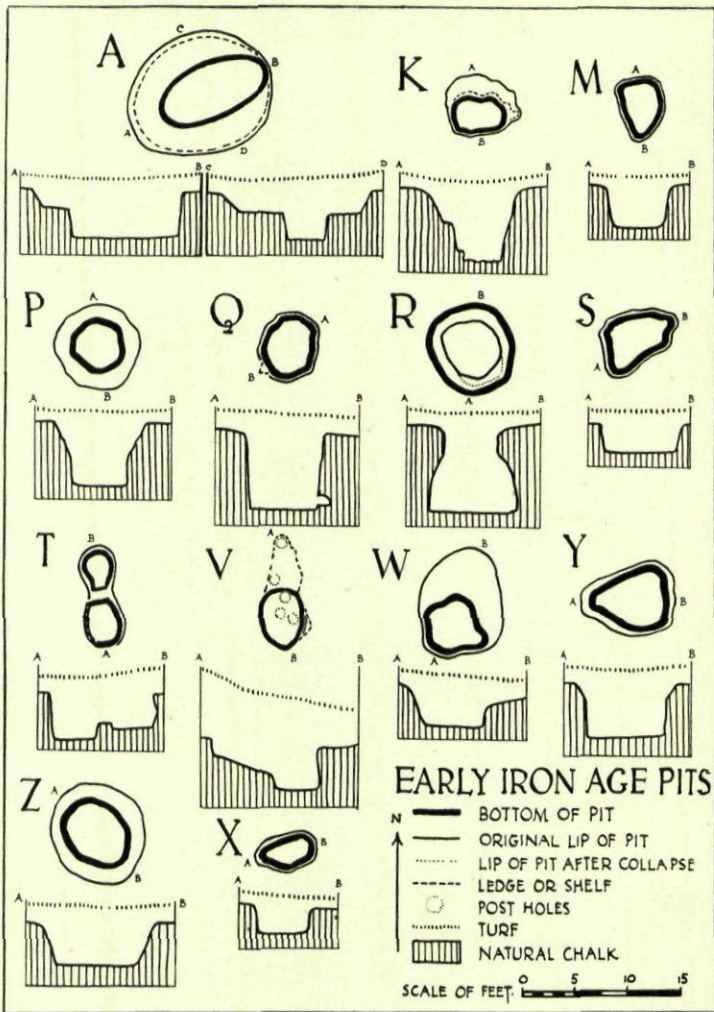


FIG. 9. PLANS AND SECTIONS OF EARLY IRON AGE PITS.

in this neighbourhood. Similarly a trial hole some 400 yards south of the Chapel site showed perfectly clean subsoil and produced no pottery or bones at all. On the other hand, surface pottery of prehistoric date is common all over the Chapel site, and to the west and north-west of it, in the neighbourhood of Ditch 2 and of the mediæval Pit N, and we are led

to the conclusion that the main Early Iron Age occupation area lay roughly between Pits X and W on the north, Pits A and S on the south, the Entrance and adjacent Rampart on the east and a rather indefinite line not far outside Ditch 2 on the west. This area was on all grounds a natural one to choose for intensive occupation. It is the highest, driest, and most level part of the fortified enclosure. It lies between the only Entrance and the top of the Hill. It is the least exposed to the prevalent and rainy south-west winds, and it commands the most extensive outlook in almost every direction.

The pits which have been excavated vary considerably in size and character. Most are oval in shape and have sides either vertical or but slightly tapering inwards towards the bottom. One (Pit R), the biggest, is of beehive type with overhanging walls and the area of the floor larger than that of the mouth.¹ In no case were post-holes found in the floor or elsewhere to give a clue to the construction of the roof, and daub with marks of wattle occurred in only one pit. Some instances of a rough ledge round one or more sides were seen. Floors were found in only two cases, of trodden sand with traces of fire in Pit A and of large flints puddled in chalk in Pit R. In neither case was there more than a single floor. The filling of the pits varied in quality. It consisted in general of chalk rubble with greater or less intermixture of earth, charcoal, animal bones, and fragments of pottery. In some cases the filling was of chalk rubble so clean that the pit must have been deliberately filled up. In others, too, fragments of the same pot found on the floor of the pit and in the surface soil many feet above suggested that the whole filling was contemporaneous and not the effect of slow accumulation. In most cases the rarity of pottery and other objects pointed to the same conclusion. It is remarkable, for instance, that a rib-knife and some fragments of antler were the only objects of worked bone or horn that were found in the pits and that not a single object of metal came from any of them. With one or two exceptions more pottery was found in the surface soil over the pits than in the pits themselves, a fact which again suggests deliberate filling before the end of the occupation.

The purpose for which the pits were dug is in many cases uncertain. Pits A and R with their floors and fires and abundant

1. Dr. Clay gives a restoration of this type of pit from evidence found at Fifield Bavant: *W.A.M.* XLII, p. 457 ff., with pl. I.

pottery were certainly inhabited. Pit X was as certainly used for rubbish. But the others have less obvious indications, and those which have no floors and show no traces of the dirt and fires of human occupation, such as Pit Q, may well have been dug simply for storage.

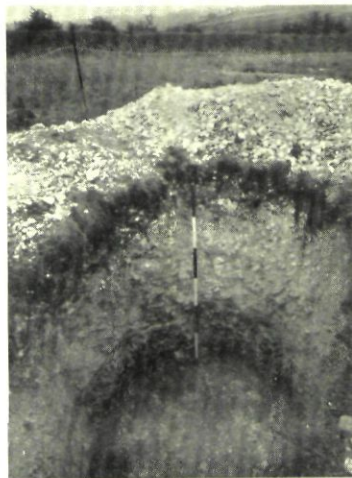
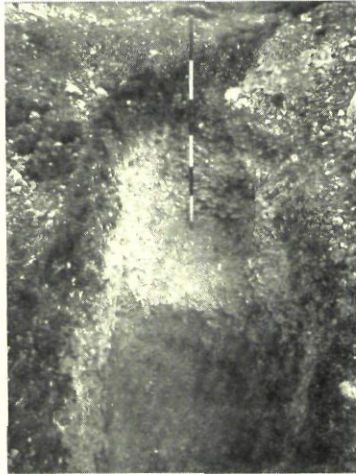
PIT A (Plate VIII, 1) is a long oval in shape surrounded on three sides with a ledge or step three or four feet in width with somewhat sloping sides cut about two feet into the chalk, the floor of the pit itself being 5 ft. 6 ins. deep. Such ledges are a common feature of prehistoric pits and may have served in place of tables, chairs or shelves, or simply to facilitate egress. This pit was certainly used for habitation. The lower parts of its walls were discoloured by fire, and the floor was covered with six inches of trodden sand with traces of charcoal and other indications of burning. There was no regular hearth, and the fires must have been lit when required at any point on the floor. In the sand of which the floor was composed was a group of pottery, illustrated on fig. 10, which has importance as the only group of strictly stratified pottery from any of the pits, for it can only have reached its position during the occupation of the pit and before the filling had accumulated after its disuse. It includes A 1, part of a globular pot with high plain slightly everted rim, of very hard fine burnished orange red paste, parallel both in form and colour to the Hallstatt pottery from Park Brow, and A 3, which with its raised knobs has close parallels at All Cannings Cross probably not much later in date. The other fragments are not so strictly datable, though the wide flat-topped rim (A 2) looks early too, and the bucket-shaped vessel (A 5) is of a type common in both Hallstatt and La Tène I periods. The group as a whole is thus markedly early, and the pit may be considered one of those in use before the construction of the fortifications, which, as has been pointed out on p. 21, were built not earlier than La Tène I to enclose a pre-existent settlement. The pit moreover was probably abandoned at an early date, for its filling, which was fairly homogeneous earthy chalk rubble, contained several hundred fragments of rough pottery, amongst which were numerous rims and shoulders ornamented with finger-print and cabled decoration. Among those illustrated (fig. 11) are A 113, with cabled rim, and A 106, grooved rim with finger-prints on the edge: there are also (fig. 12) A 102, irregular rim, and A 133, uneven flat-topped rim with faint diagonal lines on the

PLATE VIII

1.



2.



3.

4.

1. Pit A from West, shewing ledge.
2. Pit T from South, shewing hour-glass form.
3. Pit P from West. The inside of the Rampart is seen in the background.
4. Pit R from South. The measuring pole is standing vertically, shewing the bee-hive form of the pit.

exterior surface; all of these are of early type. None of the fragments from the filling need in fact be later than La Tène I, and its silty quality, the abundant pottery in it and the fact that the pit is still marked by a pronounced depression in the modern surface all suggest that it was not deliberately filled in, but that after its disuse the present contents accumulated gradually, partly from natural causes and partly from the pit being used for the dumping of refuse by neighbouring families. Bones of ox, pig, sheep or goat, and perhaps red deer, were present.

PIT B is itself a small mediaeval sand or mortar pit of the same type as C and others in its vicinity. Close to its western edge, however, was found a deposit of animal bones, two fragments of sawn red-deer antler, and the rim and shoulder of the remarkable pot illustrated fig. 10. This deposit probably represents a rubbish heap from Pit A or some undiscovered pit in the neighbourhood.

PIT K is roughly oval in shape—with floor dimensions 3 ft. 6 ins. by 5 ft. 3 ins. It is $7\frac{1}{2}$ feet deep from the normal level of the undisturbed chalk. The walls are more roughly hewn than in most pits, especially near the bottom, where on one side a rough ledge has been left about a foot above the floor. The upper part of the same wall has also been cut back to form an irregular step or shelf, which may have been intended to assist descent. At one end on the floor level two or three pot-boilers were found in a natural fissure in the chalk wall which provided a sort of cupboard, but this was the only sign of habitation. There was no laid floor and little sign of burning on the walls. The filling contained about 80 shards of coarse pottery, including K 1 (fig. 12) part of a straight flat-topped rim with faint linear ornament, three shoulder fragments with finger-print decoration K 4 (fig. 11) and K 7 (fig. 14), a fragment of black polished ware from the rim of a pot with a sharply carinated shoulder, which is important as an example of the very uncommon class of La Tène I pottery known as Hengistbury B. It came from fairly high in the filling, about $2\frac{1}{2}$ feet from present surface. Well below it, at a depth of about $4\frac{1}{2}$ feet, were found the fragmentary remains of the three oxen described p. 136. The lower part of the back and hind legs of one lay upside down against the west end of the pit: the skull and six adjoining vertebrae of another lay partly above it, and a further group of vertebrae lay on the northern wall, while other fragments lay indiscriminately in every direction. It was clear that the

pit, which from the character of the pottery in its filling was probably abandoned fairly early in the occupation, had been used when half full for the disposal of parts of these animals and had then been filled up, for above the dark stratum connected with the bones the chalk rubble was fairly clean, and only the slightest depression in the modern surface indicated the site. The rest of the filling contained other bones of ox, and of horse, pig, and sheep or goat.

PIT P (Plate VIII, 3) is roughly circular in shape, 7 ft. deep, with a floor space $5\frac{1}{2}$ ft. across. Its walls were vertical in the lower half and splayed outwards above, but this feature may be due to erosion and disintegration either during the use of the pit or subsequently. There was nothing on the floor but a little dark silt, and apart from the usual flecks of charcoal the filling consisted of practically clean chalk rubble. It contained, however, fairly abundant animal bones but only about 30 fragments of pottery; one showed a finger-print rim and another (P 1, fig. 12) a flat-topped rim of a straight-necked vessel of dark sandy ware. There were also bones of ox, horse, and sheep or goat. The indications here are too slight to justify a guess as to the date or purpose of the pit, but its comparatively clean and homogeneous filling and the almost complete absence of surface indications suggest strongly that it was deliberately filled up after abandonment.

PIT Q adjoins Pit P, and was similar to it though somewhat larger. Roughly circular in shape, its floor had a diameter of $6\frac{1}{2}$ ft., and was $7\frac{1}{2}$ ft. below the surface of the hard chalk and 9 ft. below the modern surface. Since the sides were practically vertical the pit could only have been entered by some kind of ladder. A few marks which might have been made with a deer-horn pick were noticed on the hard sides, and a small recess in the southern wall at floor level may have served, as did that in Pit K, as a cupboard, though here nothing was found in it. The filling was similar to that of Pit P, clean chalk rubble with a little silt on the floor, some flecks of charcoal and fairly abundant bones of ox, horse, and sheep or goat. Pig was also present on the floor. About one hundred fragments of pottery were found, but the greater part came from the surface soil and have therefore no direct connection with the pit itself. This applies especially to Q 1 (fig. 12), part of the rim and side of a heavy grey pot with plain rim and swollen body, and to Q 2 (fig. 10), the lower part of a somewhat larger pot of similar type.

There were also fragments of a rim similar to P 1, of a small rim with cable pattern, of a slightly beaded rim of a small grey-brown shouldered pot, and of a plain buff sandy pot. This pit, like Pit P, was probably deliberately filled up in prehistoric times.

PIT R (Plate VIII, 4) is the largest and best preserved of the pits excavated, and may confidently be described as intended for habitation. It is of beehive form with overhanging sides providing an aperture of about $5\frac{1}{4}$ by 6 ft. and a floor space of $8\frac{1}{2}$ by 9 ft. at a depth of 9 ft. from the present surface. On the south side the wall is at present vertical, but this is certainly due to disintegration of the overhanging portion after the disuse of the pit, the clean chalk of the fallen wall on this side being easily distinguishable from the earthy chalk rubble of the rest of the filling. The floor was covered with very large rough flints, some more than a foot across, the interstices between them being filled with puddled chalk. Discoloration on one side may have been due to a fire, but there was no regular hearth. The chalk rubble filling was abnormally dirty, and contained a good deal of charred wood, mostly from small sticks, but animal bones (ox, horse, and pig) were not very frequent. There were a few small fragments of clay impressed with wattle marks, which may have come from the roof or walls. Pottery throughout the filling was especially abundant, several hundreds of fragments being found, and they included many of the most perfect examples from the site (fig. 14). It is significant that in many cases the fragments had been severely burnt after the pots in question had been broken. Thus adjacent parts of the same vessel vary sharply in colour along the lines of present fracture from glossy black to a light brick red or chocolate brown. This was especially noticeable in the case of highly burnished pots such as R 1, R 2, R 10. The pottery came from all levels in the pit, and the contemporaneity of the whole filling is indicated by the fact that fragments of the same vessel were found in the surface soil and on the floor of the pit many feet below. There is therefore no reason to doubt that the pottery is all of approximately the same date, and it is very probable that it was shovelled into the pit on its abandonment from a rubbish-heap in the near neighbourhood, which was probably that of Pit R itself.

Another rubbish-heap which can be directly related to Pit R and its contents was happily found more than 50 yards away in the hollow formed by the scraping of the surface soil for the

building of the main rampart just south of the point where it turns inwards to flank the entrance roadway. In the angle behind the curving rampart and enclosed by it on two sides was a mass of pottery lying in the surface soil over an area of about 400 sq. ft. Among the shards was one which came from a highly burnished black vessel (R 3), of which the remaining pieces had been found close together near the bottom of Pit R. The fragment from the rubbish-heap, which for convenience is referred to as the Area in this Report, had lost its burnish, but fitted into its place when the pot was reconstructed, and it provides evidence that the pottery from the Area (fig. 13) can be treated as substantially a contemporary group with that from Pit R (fig. 14).

This fact is of some importance not merely in establishing the date of Pit R, but in throwing additional light on the date of the Rampart and the building of the Entrance defences. For the Area pottery, lying as it does in the hollow formed by the scraping of the surface soil to build the Rampart and the Entrance, can only have reached its position after the construction of the defences, and provides therefore a substantial block of material in connection with that from Pit R which we have seen to be contemporary with it, the whole of which should be subsequent to the date of the fortifications.

A detailed account of the pottery from these two sources will be found below, pp. 113-6, 118-20, and figs. 13 and 14. It is sufficient here to indicate that the evidence for its date is entirely in accord with the conclusions arrived at from the evidence of the Entrance and Rampart themselves, which (pp. 21, 33) we have seen reason to place not earlier than the middle of La Tène I. The bulk of this pottery can be safely attributed to the late La Tène I and earlier La Tène II periods;¹ it is in fact with the exception of two chance shards the latest pottery of the Early Iron Age which has been found anywhere on St. Catharine's Hill, and that it does not extend into late La Tène II and has no affinities with that of the Belgic period is a fact whose significance is discussed in the section on the origin of Winchester itself (p. 169 ff.).

1. The features chiefly to be noted are (a) the bucket-shaped or straight-sided vessels with plain or almost beaded rims and decorated if at all with a zone of shallow horizontal or diagonal grooves, e.g. R. 1, AR. 1, 2, 3, 6, 11.

(b) The heavy storage vessels with upright or everted rims: R. 5, 7, 8, 10.

(c) The dot and line decoration in shallow tooling, e.g. R. 10, 17, AR. 7.

(d) Almost complete absence of finger-print decoration and pots of the high-shouldered type associated with it.

PIT S is a small pit of irregular shape nearly 8 ft. in greatest breadth, and only $2\frac{3}{4}$ ft. in depth below the normal chalk surface, 4 ft. below present turf. Its walls were roughly vertical, but owing to the softness of the chalk and its consequent disintegration their exact line could be only approximately determined. There was no floor or other indication of habitation. The filling, which was very clean, contained only five shards of pottery, but was remarkable for producing a rib-knife and a group of pieces of deer antler (fig. 15), the raw material perhaps from the bag of some worker in horn and bone. Among the pottery was S 1 (fig. 11), a fragment of the lower part of side and base of a pot of brown gritty ware decorated with incised lines of a type not found elsewhere on the site, and S 2 (fig. 12), a fragment of very coarse ware with a peculiar rim also unique in these excavations: the former at least is probably not of the latest period of the settlement. Bones of ox, pig, and sheep or goat occurred scantily.

PIT W is of irregular quadrilateral form with rounded corners and floor-space about 6 ft. by 6 ft., at a maximum depth below the modern surface of 5 ft. It has sloping walls and on the north side a wide shelving ledge covered with a layer of sand. The pit itself had no floor. The filling, which was noticeably dirty, contained 25 shards of pottery, rather abundant animal bones (ox, horse, pig, and sheep or goat) and at about 18 inches from the bottom a saddle quern of sarsen (fig. 15, 3). Among the pottery fragments was W 3 (fig. 12), a circular counter $\frac{3}{4}$ -inch in diameter cut from a sandy dark shard, a small piece of a cabled rim from a red-shouldered pot, a piece of a shoulder from a very abraded coarse brown pot with a line of finger-tip decoration, and three plain rims. A thin layer of charcoal and burnt earth overlaid the filling of the pit close below the present turf, but this must be due to some later fire after the pit was filled and probably forgotten.

PIT X is a small oval pit with floor $3\frac{1}{2}$ ft. below the turf, dimensions 3 ft. by 5 ft., and a depth of only $2\frac{1}{2}$ ft. below the normal surface of the chalk. It was filled with a mass of kitchen refuse, burnt bones of ox, pig, and sheep or goat, etc., and was probably never intended to serve any purpose but that of an incinerator. The contents included about 100 shards of pottery, all of early type, but mostly so small as to make useful reconstructions impossible. They included two fragments showing finger-print decorations on the shoulder of a grey-brown pot, X 5

(fig. 11), to which apparently some 26 other fragments belonged, but none of them joined so as to increase the known shape of the vessel. There were also X 1 (fig. 12), part of the swollen and flattened rim of a heavy dark shallow bowl, two flat-topped straight rims, and parts of the neck of two brown shouldered pots. The whole group suggests an early date for this pit.

PIT Y is roughly triangular in shape with floor area of 6 ft. by nearly 8 ft. at a depth of 5 ft. below the hard chalk surface, $6\frac{1}{2}$ ft. below the turf. The walls sloped inwards in the upper part and became vertical lower down. The filling, floor, and walls of this pit were remarkably clean; it contained only 36 shards of pottery, and ox, horse, pig, and sheep or goat bones in small quantities. It is hard to believe that it could have been in use for any long period, and the cleanness of the filling and the absence of indications of its position on the modern surface suggest that it was deliberately filled up. Among the pottery were rim fragments of two globular pots with narrow mouths (as Y 2, fig. 12), and also Y 1 (*ibid.*), the upper part of a vessel of dark sandy ware with tall slightly everted tapering rim and rounded body. This suggests a decadent form of the Hallstatt type exemplified here by A 1 (p. 97), and is probably of La Tène I date.

PIT Z is a blunt oval in shape, with floor-space 6 ft. by $7\frac{1}{2}$ ft. at a depth of 4 ft. below the normal chalk surface. The walls taper inwards fairly uniformly towards the bottom, and though there was no made-up floor, it seems probable that the pit was occupied for some time. Both walls and floor were very discoloured and the filling was especially dirty. It contained a good deal of charcoal, especially on the west side, animal bones of the same species as in Pit Y, but more numerous, and about 60 shards of pottery. A piece of deer antler from this pit (fig. 15, 4) had apparently been used for testing the sharpness of metal tools, since it was covered with scratches of knives and unfinished saw-cuts apparently quite at random, some being even on the butt end. A cylindrical spindle whorl of chalk was found, and several lumps of clay with plentiful admixture of grit and flint, apparently the raw material of pottery-making accidentally baked by some chance fire. Among the pottery fragments were Z 1, part of neck and shoulder of a high-shouldered vessel of hard dark sandy ware, Z 4 part of the rim and side of a coarse red steep-sided bowl (both fig. 12), and a small fragment of shoulder of a red pot with line of finger-print

decoration. So far as fragments go, they would suggest an early date, but it would be rash to speak definitely on such slight evidence.

It is worth emphasizing again in conclusion of this section that the pits which have been excavated are probably only a small proportion of those which could be discovered by really exhaustive search. Their number is obviously inadequate to account for a population capable of raising the fortifications of the hill. But few as they are, they do appear to cover the whole range of occupation so far as that can be gathered from the use of the Entrance and the fortifications, and their contents, so far as they go, do confirm the conclusions which have already been drawn from the evidence of the defences. Thus in Pit A we have in the floor stratified pottery of definitely Hallstatt affinities, and material in the filling over it which is in every way parallel to that obtained from the old surface soil below the rampart in Section 2, providing additional evidence of habitation which antedates the building of the defences. All the material from the various phases of the Entrance can be paralleled from one or more of the pit-dwellings, and we have finally in Pit R another habitation-site which is contemporary with the last period in the Entrance, and definitely related to the rubbish-heap Area by the discovery of fragments of the same pot in each. And the Area pottery, as we have seen, can only have reached its position well after the defences had been finished. The pottery from the pits is therefore parallel in every stage to that from the Entrance, and the evidence from each provides a coherent story, which the discovery and excavation of additional pits which no doubt exist is unlikely to extend appreciably in either direction.

DITCH 4.

The minor earthworks of the Hill will be seen below (pp. 227-31) to be mediæval or modern, with one exception. This is Ditch 4 (fig. 36), which produced enough evidence to make it advisable to describe it here as of Early Iron Age date.

It presented a roughly V-shaped section with a flattish bottom (see below, fig. 25, no. 4), having a depth of 4 ft. 4 ins. below the subsoil and a width at the top of about 4 ft. 6 ins. It shows on the modern surface as a depression under 1 ft. deep on the average.

It was found to run in a gentle curve from south-west to north-east; in the former direction the discovery of its end was prevented by the Maze, but in the latter it ran right up against the back of the main rampart some 170 ft. north-west of the Entrance, and there stopped. In the rounded end of the ditch there were found quite a number of featureless shards of coarse pottery of characteristic Early Iron Age type, and some of which were right on the bottom. Mingled with those that were lying in the silt at higher levels were about 10 small fragments of Romano-British pottery, representing at least four different pots, and a few bones of ox and pig.

No other finds were made in this ditch, and there was no recognizable stratification in the earthy chalk silt which filled it, but it is reasonable to believe it was dug during the Early Iron Age occupation and only partially silted up in the Roman period. Its position relative to the pits suggests that it formed a partial boundary to the main inhabited area, and thus it recalls the ditch similarly situated at the contemporary village on Swallowcliffe Down, which resembles it fairly closely in section.¹

All the actual vestiges of the settlement and its fortifications have now been described as revealed by excavation. The culture of the inhabitants was clearly fairly primitive, and the pit-dwelling may be taken as the typical habitation, as it must certainly have been the typical place of storage. Hut-sites like those excavated at Park Brow near Cissbury, though they are likely to have existed, were not found, and the guard-houses in the Entrance provided the only instances of habitations on the surface level. A clearer notion of the people's degree of civilisation can only be gained by a detailed survey of their pottery and implements.

1. Clay in *W.A.M.* XLIII, pp. 59-93, plates I, II.