

## Excavations on Grim's Dyke, North Oxfordshire

By D. B. HARDEN

**E**ARTHWORKS called Grim's Dykes or Ditches are extant in various parts of SE. England. Two lie within the borders of Oxfordshire, one in the north of the county, between Woodstock and Charlbury, another in the south, between Wallingford and Henley. Others are in Berkshire, in Buckinghamshire and Hertfordshire, and in Middlesex. Perhaps the only thing these Dykes have in common is the name Grim, and since Grim is, in folk-lore, the Devil, we may conclude that in each instance local tradition ascribed these works to non-Christian, and therefore presumably pre-Christian origin. For a closer dating we must appeal to archaeology, and what follows is a reasoned attempt, based on the results of excavation, to assign a fixed date to the north Oxfordshire example.

During the excavation of the Roman villa at Ditchley ('Watts Wells' on map, FIG. 20) in 1935,<sup>1</sup> sections were cut across that Dyke in two places, first in Kiddington parish, east of Ditchley Park, and then in Spelsbury parish, near the Model Farm, Ditchley. The results of this digging were interesting and instructive, but it was not until 1936, when a fortnight was spent in cutting trial-trenches in Blenheim Park, where Akeman Street and the Dyke cross one another, that results were obtained which proved that the Dyke is an earthwork constructed about the middle of the first century A.D.

In all these excavations and in working up the results I have had the constant collaboration and advice of Capt. C. Musgrave, and such conclusions as are here put forward are as much his as mine. Others to whom a word of thanks is due are the many willing members of the Oxford University Archaeological Society who toiled with us; the proprietors and tenants who kindly gave us leave to excavate: Mr. H. M. Gaskell and Mr. Preston of Kiddington; Mr. Ronald Tree of Ditchley; His Grace the Duke of Marlborough and Mr. F. T. Whitlock at Blenheim; and lastly to Mr. J. J. Leeming of the Oxfordshire County Council staff, who readily undertook all the planning and surveying.

<sup>1</sup> *Oxoniensia*, 1, 24 ff.: see especially p. 27 for the excavation of the Dyke.

## GRIM'S DYKE, N. OXON.

All that was known of the Dyke before work began in 1935 has been admirably summed up by Mr. O. G. S. Crawford in an article in *Antiquity* for September, 1930.<sup>1</sup> The major portion of that article is based on a series of ground and aerial reconnaissances made by Crawford in 1930, as a result of which he was able to map the general course of the surviving portions of the earthwork in a far more complete and accurate fashion than had ever been done before, even by the author of the earthworks section of the Victoria County History of Oxfordshire.<sup>2</sup>

Having made his map, however, and placed upon it all the surviving or putative sectors of the Dyke, Crawford proceeded to go beyond the facts and to assume that the gaps in the sequence of the work were not original, but were due to destruction in mediæval or modern times. From this postulate he elaborated a theory that the Dyke was a more or less circular enclosure, about six miles in diameter, which was raised up as a defence of a group of Roman villas against Saxon raiders in the fourth or fifth century A.D. The theory was plausible, more particularly since, when he wrote, no less than six villas had been located within the area enclosed by the Dyke and not one just outside its borders. In 1935, however, Major G. W. G. Allen dealt the first blow to Crawford's argument, when he located from the air a villa-site at Kiddington about 100 yards outside Grim's Dyke at the point where we took our first section (PLATE x, c, and see map, FIG. 20). Doubts about the accuracy of Crawford's theory were therefore arising before any excavation had taken place.

In point of fact (see further p. 90) the field-work and excavation undertaken in 1935 and 1936 have proved beyond a doubt that this north Oxfordshire Dyke, so far from being a continuous circumvallation, was made up of numerous unconnected sectors, often with large gaps in their sequence. It is not yet possible to present a full revision of Crawford's map, because our survey has so far been confined to the northern and eastern portion of the Dyke and is even there not yet complete: the western and southern earthworks, which centre round Ramsden and Northleigh, are not touched upon at all. The following sectors (FIG. 20) have been completely or partially mapped:

1. *Model Farm (Ditchley)*. A sector about one mile long, from the brow of the hill one mile NE. of Charlbury to a point a quarter of a mile W. of Ditchley House. The eastern butt-end of the ditch is clearly visible in the wooded enclosure of the Park near the 'Rosary,' as is recognised by the ordnance surveyors, whose maps mark the Dyke from here for half a mile to a point W. of the buildings of Model Farm. This portion is well preserved and was sectioned

<sup>1</sup> *Antiquity*, IV, 303 ff.: see especially p. 305, fig. 1, for Crawford's map of the Dyke and its relation to other ancient sites in the vicinity. I have to thank Mr. Crawford for kindly putting his MS. notes about the Dyke at my disposal.

<sup>2</sup> *V.C.H. Oxon.*, II, 336 ff.

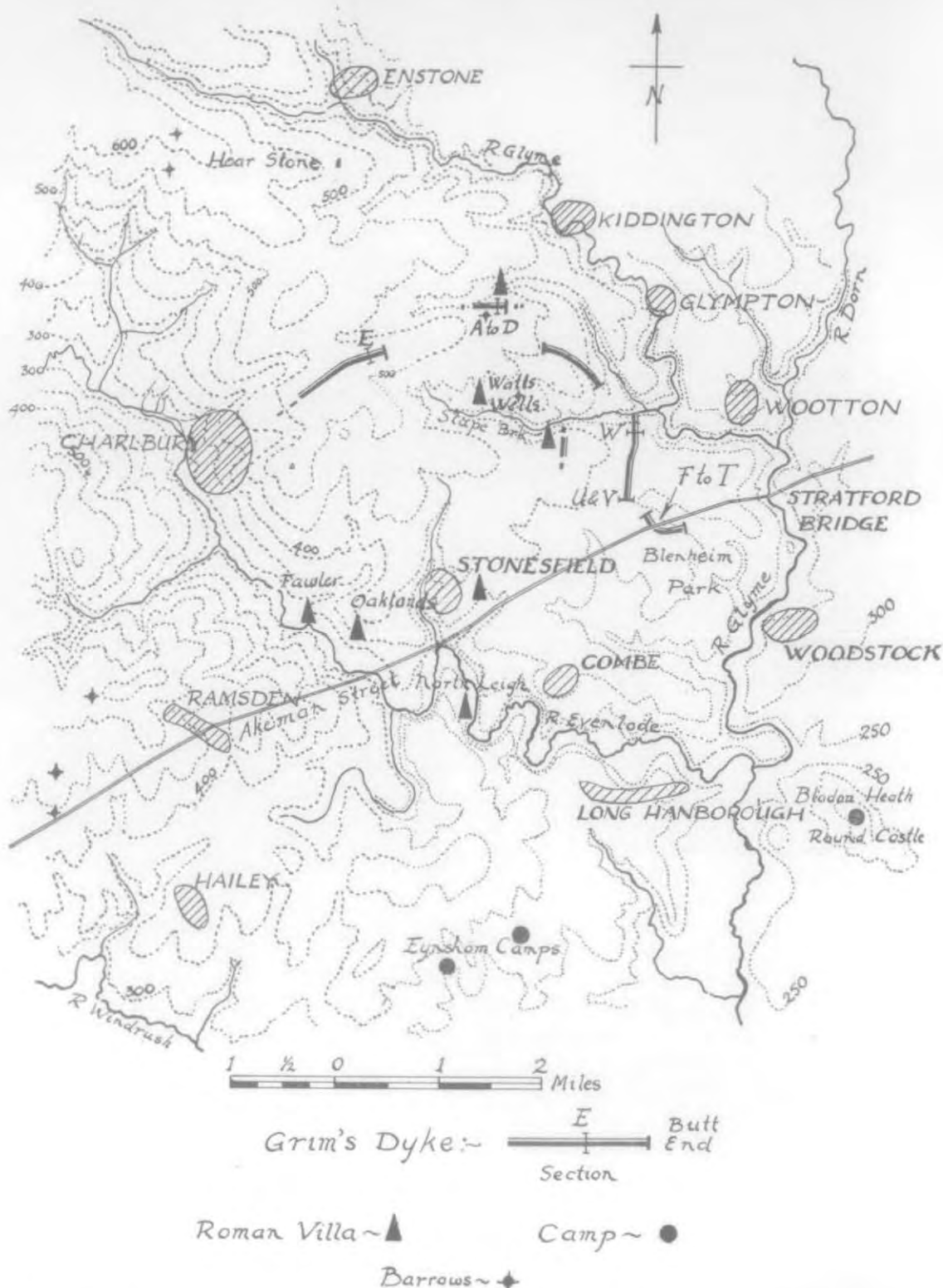


FIG. 20

Sketch-map showing the sectors of Grim's Dyke, N. Oxon., surveyed and mapped to date. Further portions of the Dyke exist, but have not yet been mapped, between Charlbury, Ramsden and Long Hanborough.

Based on the 1-inch O.S. map with the sanction of the Controller of H.M. Stationery Office.

## GRIM'S DYKE, N. OXON.

in 1935 (p. 79 f.). From here westwards its line is less well preserved, but is clearly visible on the surface for about half a mile, being followed first by a foot-path and then by the Ditchley-Charlbury road, the road being on the bank and its northern hedge in the ditch, until that road makes a bend from SW. to W. Here all trace of the Dyke vanishes, and although no definite end is visible on the surface, it probably ended near by, since a few hundred yards W. of this point the ground begins to drop rapidly towards the Charlbury valley.

2. *Kiddington*. A short sector of less than quarter of a mile, running east from a point about 200 yards E. of Kiddington lodge in Ditchley Park. This sector is well preserved along its whole length, and is accurately marked by the O.S. 6-inch map. The western butt-end is no longer visible, and has probably been disturbed and covered over by the northern boundary-hedge of the drive, for there is no trace of the Dyke in the pasture to the north. As the ground drops rapidly here, this is a most likely position for a western end to the sector. The eastern end is accurately marked on the O.S. 6-inch, as was proved by excavation in 1935 (p. 79).

3. *Out Wood—Berring's Wood*. A sector of about two-thirds of a mile running south-eastwards from a point north of the centre of Out Wood, through the southern portion of Hill Wood, to a point near the southern edge of Berring's Wood. Both butt-ends of the ditch are clearly visible in the woods named, and the ditch and bank can be traced all along the sector.

4. *Woodleys*. A sector of about three-quarters of a mile running south from the southern bank of Slape Bottom stream, past Woodley's Farm, to a point some yards south of the northern boundary-wall of Blenheim Park. (PLATE X, D, key plan<sup>1</sup>). The northern butt-end of this sector is not now visible on the south bank of the stream, but the Dyke is very well preserved<sup>2</sup> in a strip of undergrowth running thence up the rise and across two fields, as marked on O.S. maps. From here onwards the existence of the Dyke has escaped the eyes of the ordnance surveyors, but the bank is clearly visible as a slight rise across the field north of Woodleys. It must skirt the farm on the west, for both the bank and ditch are again visible immediately south of the farm, whence they run in a straight line slightly west of due south just inside the boundary hedge of Woodleys park. Southward of this the bank appears as a rise crossing the Woodstock-Charlbury and Woodstock-Stonesfield roads and the angle of the field between them, and both bank and ditch are well preserved in a copse after entering Blenheim Park. The southern end of the sector was discovered by excavation in 1936 in the cultivation south of the copse (PLATE X, D, key plan).

<sup>1</sup> Based on the 25-inch O.S. map with the sanction of the Controller of H.M. Stationery Office.

<sup>2</sup> A surface-section, WW, was plotted across the Dyke here.

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5. *Blenheim Park*. A sector about one-third of a mile long, running first south-east and then east from a point on the eastern garden hedge of North Lodge to a point about 150 yards south-west of Furze Plat. There is a gap in the sector through which Akeman Street passes. The central portion of this sector was carefully investigated by excavation in 1936 (PLATE X, D and pp. 80 ff.) and the existence of two butt-ends on either side of the Street was fully substantiated. Surface-indications render fairly clear the positions of the two ends of the sector. The position of the north-western was in part, though not absolutely, corroborated by two trial-pits (p. 84) : at the other end no excavation was attempted.

The sector marked on the O.S. maps in the valley south of Charlbury, between the Great Western railway line and the Charlbury-Fawler road, is of very doubtful authenticity, as is also the fragment marked on the same maps some yards west of Grimsdyke (Kiddington Assarts) Farm. The sector postulated by Crawford<sup>1</sup> from the Chipping Norton road to the Glyme at Stratford Bridge must also remain doubtful until excavation has corroborated the inconclusive aerial evidence ; while the connexion, if any, between the Woodleys sector, south of Slape Bottom, and the entrenchment in the same alignment north of it in Hark Wood, which Crawford identifies as a promontory fort, must also be elucidated by excavation. The Grimsdyke Farm fragment and the unidentified ends among nos. 1-5 above, are shown on the map (FIG. 20) by dotted lines : the portions certainly identified are indicated by solid lines and their ends by cross-lines. It is hoped that in the future it will prove possible to complete and publish the survey, not only of the main Dyke, but also of Callow Hill 'fort' and the inner lines of defence east of it.

## THE 1935 EXCAVATIONS

*Kiddington*. The first cross-section, AA, was taken about 50 yards SE. of the angle made by the Kiddington drive of Ditchley Park with the road from Kiddington to Lodge Farm (PLATE X, C : FIG. 20). On the surface the bank appears as a slight rise and the ditch as a slight hollow in the field. The sub-soil, as in all the other cross-sections described in this paper, is cornbrash.

The section (PLATE X, A, AA), when complete, showed a truncated V-shaped ditch about 5 feet 3 inches deep (PLATE VII, A). The filling from the bottom upward for about 3 feet 3 inches consisted of a uniform agglomeration of earth and cornbrash stones which had obviously once formed the bank ; above this was a layer, 8 inches thick, of dark soil and mould, representing a surface-silt formed at some time when the ground here was wooded ; above again was about 1 foot 4 inches of top-soil and plough. The bank had been almost denuded. Only a thin layer, not more than 6 inches thick in the centre (PLATE VII, B) remained to show that the bank had once consisted of brash

<sup>1</sup> *Op. cit.*, p. 309.



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stones dug out of the ditch. Above this streak of bank was a covering of about 6 or 7 inches of modern plough-soil; below it was an equal thickness of red earth on top of the natural brash. A similar layer of red earth existed under Grim's bank in all the cross-sections hereafter described: it represents the pre-Grim cultivation-layer.

Small finds in this cutting were sparse. In the lower top-soil (7 inches to 14 inches) behind, that is south of, the bank were some Romano-British sherds. These were mostly indeterminate, but there was one base-fragment of grey ware (FIG. 21, no. 34) probably of the first or early second century A.D. More sherds, equally indeterminate, occurred in the upper fill of the ditch; and in the lower (stony) fill, at 3 feet to 4 feet 6 inches, there were some food bones, further fragments of Romano-British pottery (e.g., FIG. 21, no. 35), and a piece of an *imbrex* tile. It would be hazardous to attempt a close dating for any of these Romano-British sherds.

This Kiddington sector of the Dyke (p. 77) appears to peter out at a point about 40 yards east of where this section was taken, and an end is, indeed, marked here on the 6-inch O.S. map. The Dyke is not again shown on the map until the opposite corner of the field is reached. Some trial-trenches were dug to see whether the ditch and bank really ended where they appeared to do. The first was cut some yards east of the apparent end of the Dyke, and across the line which it must have taken if it were aiming for the next sector on the map. Natural cornbrash was found all along this trench at 1 foot or 1 foot 3 inches depth, and no trace of a ditch or bank appeared. Thereupon a rectangular area was opened up at the putative end of the sector, and a definite end of the ditch was revealed. Its curve sloped up gently eastwards and southwards and more steeply towards the north. At the bottom (PLATE X, A, BB, CC) were two layers of quick filling: the lower, which was thicker on the outside (north) of the ditch, was an inward drift of red clay, and the upper, which was thicker on the south side, was an occupation-layer of grey soil containing some animal bones and Romano-British potsherds. These two layers together were about 14 inches thick at the middle. Above was a stony layer of about 14 inches formed of material from the bank, and above again 14 inches of top-soil. The sherds in the occupation-layer were unfortunately no more closely datable than those in the first section cut; they included part of the rim of an olla of grey ware (FIG. 21, no. 36) and a piece of a pie-dish of black calcite ware (FIG. 21, no. 37), as well as a few indeterminate fragments.

Local knowledge attests that the part of the Kiddington sector which is now under plough was still woodland up to the late eighteenth or early nineteenth century, having remained so since mediæval times, when it formed part of Wychwood Forest.<sup>1</sup> The stratum of dark soil and mould which overlies the stony fill in section AA must belong to the time when the land there was wooded, and corresponds, therefore, precisely to the stratum which forms the top-soil not only in the still wooded sector at Model Farm (p. 75), but also in that part of the Kiddington sector itself, west of the Lodge Farm-Kiddington road, which is still scrub-land. The surface-section (PLATE X, A, DD) plotted across the Dyke here shows a dip and rise comparable not to that of the surface of AA, but to the top of its layer of woodland silt.

*Model Farm, Ditchley.* A section was cut across the Dyke at a point about 725 yards west of Ditchley House and about 425 yards east of the Model Farm (PLATE X, A, EE: and FIG. 20). The cross-section of the bank and ditch (PLATE VII, D) was very similar to the cross-section at Kiddington, except that, being an uncultivated area, both bank

<sup>1</sup> *Archaeologia*, XXXVII, 424 ff.; Salter, *Cartulary of Eynsham* II (O.H.S., vol. 11), 92 ff.

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and ditch were better preserved. The bank was made of loosely packed stones mixed with earth and was still 2 feet high at its apex. Beneath the stones there was a layer of red earth as at Kiddington. The fill of the ditch was about 3 feet deep and comprised a lower stratum about 2 feet 3 inches thick of stones and other material from the bank, and an upper stratum of dark soil and mould, about 9 inches thick.

Beneath Grim's bank, at the bottom of the layer of red earth, an occupation-floor was encountered, which was about 6 inches thick, composed of carboniferous matter mixed with trodden clay and some refuse (PLATE VII, C, D and see section, PLATE X, A, EE). An area of this floor about 8 feet square was laid bare by extending the original trench on the east side, but we were still unable to find its boundaries except on the north and south. On the northern edge was a shallow trench (PLATE VII, C, D: the position is marked by the shovel) which may have been the emplacement of a sleeper-beam; on the south the floor petered out more gradually. There were no post-holes. Mixed with the debris of this occupation-site were numerous fragments of food bones, burnt and unburnt, much charcoal, burnt stones and other traces of fire, and a few tiny pieces of pot, all except two of which were indeterminate. The two exceptions (FIG. 21, nos. 32-3) were a base-fragment of coarse texture, but wheel-made, and a rim-fragment, hand-made, that is undoubtedly of local Iron Age A2 fabric. The remainder were tiny fragments of coarse hand-made or wheel-made pots, perhaps Iron Age A2 or Belgic in character, and certainly not later than the early first century A.D.

Two subsidiary ditches also existed here:

1. On the outer (northern) lip of Grim's ditch was a low bank which consisted of a layer of stones about 6 inches thick under a less than normal amount of top-soil (PLATE X, A, EE), and above the normal early cultivation-layer of red earth. North of this bank was a small V-shaped ditch whence the stones to make the small bank had obviously been taken. No evidence existed to prove whether this secondary bank and ditch were contemporary with or later than the main Dyke. They may represent a small counter-scarp, with a palisade trench in front (cp. the Blenheim Park sector, p. 81), but they are more likely to be a modern field-boundary.

2. Behind, that is south of, Grim's bank was a V-shaped ditch which was filled uniformly with dark soil and mould, and which appears to have cut through the inner slope of the bank (PLATE X, A, EE). It, like no. 1, is probably of more recent construction.

## THE 1936 EXCAVATIONS

*Blenheim Park.* In 1936 a far more important point in the Dyke's course was attacked, namely where it can be seen meeting and crossing the Akeman Street in Blenheim Park (PLATE X, D and FIG. 20). In 1898 Dr. G. B. Grundy and Prof. F. Haverfield dug two cross-sections of the Akeman Street and also did some trenching on the Dyke itself in this neighbourhood, but they only published<sup>1</sup> a short notice of their excavations, without plans and sections.

The Dyke makes a distinct bend at this point, approaching the Akeman Street from a NW. direction and leaving it in an E. direction. Surface-indications suggested that the Street ran through a gap between two butt-ends of the Dyke, and it was hoped

<sup>1</sup> *Proc. Soc. Ant.*, 2 ser. XVII, 333-5.



A

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C

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B

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D

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GRIM'S DYKE, N. OXON. : SECTIONS AT KIDDINGTON AND MODEL FARM, DITCHLEY.

A. AA (p. 78) looking SE. : the ditch.

B. AA, looking NE. : the denuded bank.

C. EE (p. 80) looking NW. : the bank, with occupation floor below.

D. EE, looking N. : the bank and ditch.



PLATE VIII



A



C



B



D

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GRIM'S DYKE, N. OXON.: SECTIONS IN BLENHEIM PARK.

- A. FF (p. 81) looking S.: the Street, with the Dyke beyond.
- B. FF (p. 81) looking N.: the bank, with the ditch and Street beyond.
- C. KK (p. 83) looking NW.: cobbling with wheel-ruts, marked by trowel and knife ; behind, the 'bank' of silt (p. 84).
- D. LL (p. 84) looking NW.: cobbling with wheel-ruts.

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that excavation would not only show whether this gap in the Dyke was original, but would also establish the relative and absolute dates of the Dyke and of the Street.

The detailed map (PLATE X, D) shows clearly the position of the trenches that were dug to obtain the evidence desired.

1. A complete cross-section (PLATE X, B, FF) was taken through Grim's Dyke S. of Akeman Street, and this trench was continued at a slight angle northwards to take a cross-section of the Street itself. Grim's bank, made of cornbrash stones excavated from the ditch (PLATE VIII, B) lay directly on the pre-existing red plough-soil, and was still extant to a height of about  $2\frac{1}{2}$  feet, with a ditch beside it about 5 feet deep. The original over-all height from the bottom of the ditch to the top of the bank was probably about 11 feet, as at Kiddington and Model Farm (pp. 78 ff.). The filling of the ditch, however, differed considerably from that of previous cross-sections. At the bottom was about 1 foot 8 inches of red silt, and above this about the same thickness of earthy fill; both of these layers contained but few stones; over them lay about 1 foot 6 inches of stony fill below about 6 inches of top-soil. The cross-sections later described, GG and KK, revealed the same stratification, though the layers varied in thickness in each instance. The ditch must have remained open in this sector for a considerable time during which the red silt accumulated in the bottom; some evidence as to the length of time it was open was obtained in section KK (p. 83). Later, at some undetermined date, the two fills of earth and stones were cast in, probably at once and intentionally, in order to lessen the obstacle which the Dyke presented. As nothing like the woodland silt of the Kiddington and Model Farm sectors occurs here, it may be assumed that this area has never been wooded since the Dyke was constructed.

In cross-section FF (PLATE X, B) were two small dips in the natural cornbrash, one underneath the bank and another north of the ditch. The former was quite shallow and flat-bottomed, and was probably natural. The latter looked more like a small V-shaped ditch behind a slight counterscarp (cp. the Model Farm sector, p. 80); it is unlikely, from its position in such a narrow angle between the Street and Dyke, to be a later boundary-ditch, and is probably, therefore, contemporary with the Dyke, and may have been a palisade-trench: much more digging would have been required to investigate it thoroughly.

To complete the cross-section through the Street it would have been necessary to cut through a modern cart-track, in use at the time for harvesting operations. As can be seen in PLATE X, B, FF, a gap 10 feet wide remained unexcavated, and in that gap, unfortunately, lay the north edge of the Street, so that its original width was not ascertained. The portion uncovered was 14 feet wide, and since no sign of it was found north of the modern track, the whole width must have been under 24 feet. The paving of the Street was in two layers (PLATE VIII, A), laid, like Grim's bank, on pre-existing red plough-soil. The lower, about 1 foot thick, was of large stones set in no apparent order; the upper, which had been worn away except on the south side by constant use, was of smaller stones and gravel, about 10 inches thick. This stratification agrees in the main with that of the two cross-sections taken by Grundy and Haverfield in 1898, but there were minor differences of composition. In particular there were no signs of that careful pitching of the larger stones noticed not only by Grundy and Haverfield, but also by more recent excavators at other points along the Street.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *E.g.*, at Asthally: Myres and Stevens, *Antiq. Journal*, vi, 50.

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In the whole of this long trench no objects except one or two potsherds were discovered: in the red soil beneath the Street was one Romano-British sherd; other Romano-British sherds, including part of the lip of a screw-neck flagon (1-2 cent. A.D.) occurred in the top-soil north of the Street.

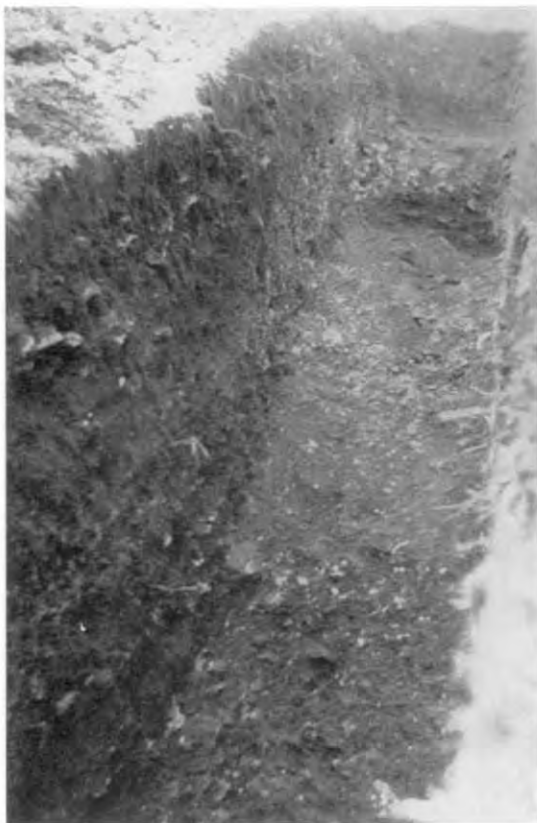
2. A longitudinal section (PLATE X, B, GG) was cut through the butt-end of Grim's ditch and the tail of Grim's bank S. of the Street, from which, later, two branch trenches were made. One (PLATE X, B, HH), running N., revealed the north slope of the ditch; the other (PLATE X, B, JJ) running SE., revealed the tapering and curving end of the bank. PLATE IX, A shows section GG looking W.; PLATE IX, B shows section HH looking S., towards the south face of GG; and the combination of these two views demonstrates well the downward slope of the ditch southward and eastward. PLATE IX, C and D are two views of section JJ, one looking NE. and the other SW. The stones of the tail of the bank can be clearly seen.

The three strata forming the filling of the ditch in sections GG and HH were the same as in section FF (p. 81), although, as was to be expected in a butt-end, there was here a deeper layer of red silt and less of overlying earthy and stony fill. The tail of the bank (sections GG, JJ) consisted of a layer of cornbrash stones, 1 foot 6 inches in its thickest part, underneath which was the usual stratum of red plough-soil. Above the stones of the bank on the inner face, and below the top-soil, was a 'slide' of stony material which was for the most part indistinguishable from the uppermost (stony) fill of the ditch; on the outer face of the bank, below the top-soil, was an even thinner layer of 'slide,' such as occurred also on the outer (southern) face of the bank in section FF.

The most important discovery in this cross-section was the occupation-site under the tail of the bank, revealed in trench JJ. The full extent of the occupation was not discovered, but as far as it was excavated it consisted of a portion of an occupation-floor composed of black soil. This in part overlay a V-shaped ditch (PLATE X, D) which had been cut about 10 or 12 inches into the natural cornbrash, and was filled with the red plough-soil of the pre-Grim cultivation. The V-shaped ditch ran roughly NE. to SW. across the lip of the butt-end of Grim's ditch, and may then have bent E. under the bank; the northern end of the portion excavated had been disturbed by the cutting of Grim's ditch, and had lost its eastern slope; its western slope is clearly visible in section GG (PLATE X, B) at about the 23-foot mark. That the V-shaped ditch and the occupation-floor above it were contemporary was evident, because not only similar pottery, but even different fragments of the same pot were found in the one and in the other, though sherds were more sparse in the ditch than on the occupation-floor above. The difference in the colour of the soil, which gradually changed from black to red as the excavation proceeded deeper, shows that there was greater density of occupation in the upper level. The occupation-débris consisted not only of potsherds, but also of numerous fragments of daub, perhaps from the roof or walls of a hut, burnt stones from hearths, numerous food bones, and bits of charcoal.

The potsherds (pp. 85 ff.; FIG. 21) were numerous and determinate enough to prove beyond a doubt that this occupation-layer belonged to a date during the first half of the first century A.D. They are mostly Belgic (Iron Age C) of the later style, with some admixture of local Iron Age A2-B elements. The stones of Grim's bank were thrown immediately on top of this occupation-area and there was no trace of an intervening turf-line or other sterile layer. It is clear that this sector of Grim's Dyke was constructed not long, if at all, after the occupation-area was disused.

PLATE IX



A

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C

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B

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D

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GRIM'S DYKE, N. OXON.: SECTIONS IN BLENHEIM PARK.

- A. GG (p. 82) looking W. : butt-end of the ditch S. of the Street.
- B. HH (p. 82) looking S. : butt-end of the ditch, S. of the Street.
- C. JJ (p. 82) looking NE. : tail of the bank.
- D. JJ (p. 82) looking SW. : occupation-ditch under the bank.

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These trenches elsewhere produced other significant sherds and small objects. In the red silt at the eastern end of GG, and in HH, were a few pieces of Romano-British hard grey ware. None was determinate enough to repay illustration, but they give an indication of the period at which the ditch was still open. In the eastern end of GG, also in the red silt, were an iron cleat, nail, and hob-nail, all of Romano-British type, and a rough flint flake of human workmanship. A rim-fragment (FIG. 21, no. 17), of a shape and ware contemporary with the pottery from the occupation-area in section GG, was found in the red soil under the tail of the bank in the western end of the same trench.

3. A long trench (PLATE X, B, KK) was driven across the gap between the butt-ends of the Dyke from the W. end of section GG, and continued at a slight angle through the end of the ditch north of the Street. Along this line, as in section FF (p. 81) a portion 10 feet wide had to be left unexcavated on account of the modern cart-track.

The stratification of the southern portion of the trench was simple. At the bottom lay the normal early plough-soil: above this, at the extreme south end, was the tip of Grim's bank over which was the same 'slide' of stony material as in sections FF and GG; 6 feet from the southern end, however, there was a sudden change to a thin layer of rounded cobbles, and the division between these and the 'slide' material was vertical and distinct. Above the cobbles was a layer of top-soil, in places only 2 or 3 inches thick.

The stratification of the much longer northern portion was more complicated. No trace of Akeman Street or of its paving was found, and it cannot have lurked hidden in the gap of 10 feet—a gap far too narrow to conceal the whole of it. The small V-shaped dip at the 60-foot mark (PLATE X, B, KK) was at first thought to be the northern ditch of the Street, but it proved to be merely an uneven dip in the subsoil. It, like the other dip 8 feet farther north, was filled with red earth. The cobbled area continuing from the southern portion of the section extended for about 18 feet N. of the gap and across it ran two wheel-ruts (PLATE VIII, C: position marked by trowel and knife) with their centres 4 feet 6 inches apart.

The remainder of the section was cut through the butt-end of Grim's ditch. The filling consisted of the same three strata—red silt, earthy fill and stony fill—as were found in the ditch S. of the Street, and in the same order. Below the red silt of the ditch between the 11-foot and 32-foot marks (PLATE X, B, KK) there was an occupation-level (marked on the section by cross-hatching). Owing to lack of time and the presence of trees, it was not possible to widen the trench sufficiently to lay bare the whole of this occupation. It appeared to be the site of a large hut or shallow pit excavated to uneven depths in the cornbrash: in one small portion the bottom was not probed. Potsherds, food bones, and other débris of occupation were scattered in no particular order, and much of the filling consisted of large boulders so closely packed that it was only after a time that it was realized that they were not natural undisturbed cornbrash. The pottery (pp. 85 ff.) was exactly similar in type and date to that of the occupation-area below the bank in section GG-JJ, and was sufficient to show that the two occupations were contemporary.

Above this occupation-level, and separated from it by a layer of 6 inches of the normal red silt of the ditch, was a second, consisting mainly of a large and well-used hearth. The pottery in this second level was all Romano-British, mostly hard grey ware, including many fragments of the lower half of one olla. At a higher level in this same red silt were two other very significant sherds (FIG. 21, nos. 39-40), a fragment of a mortarium-stamp MATVGENVS, and a portion of the base-ring of a red Belgic



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platter. These occurred close together, about 18 inches and 2 feet, respectively, above the bottom, between the 30-foot and 35-foot marks.

The hump which was visible in the surface of the ground over the 35-foot mark was composed, not of the remains of a stony bank, as was naturally to be expected, but of a large and unbroken expanse of red silt belonging to the ditch. The northern end of the cobbled area ended vertically (as its southern end also did, p. 83) at the 41-foot mark, and cut into this 'bank' of red silt.

From the wide expanse of this cobbled area, with ruts, and the fact that the cobbles cut into the 'slide' from Grim's bank on the S. and the red silt of Grim's ditch on the N., it was apparent that at some time after the disuse of the Dyke there had been cobbled cart-tracks leading in all directions from this gap in the earthwork. As no trace remained here of Akeman Street or its paving, and as the cobbled tracks lay either on the early red earth or on natural cornbrash, we can only assume that the built-up roadway of the Romans had been purposely removed by the makers of the tracks. They had, indeed, removed more than the Street itself, for the tail of the bank, against which the hump of primary silt originally lay, must also have been taken away by them. These tracks, being quite near the surface, and only surmounted by a thin layer of top-soil, were presumably made after Blenheim Park was laid out about 200 years ago. Until then there was perhaps only an E.-W. track through the gap in the Dyke, and that gap therefore, need not have been wider than one road's width, but the more modern tracks ran in many directions and would demand a much greater space at their intersection. Two such tracks still exist, one from east to west and one from north-east to south-west, but they are now grass-grown and only used for farm-work.

4. In a trench, LL (PLATE X, D), parallel to section KK and between it and the neighbouring field-fence, one more attempt was made to pick up the line of the Street near the gap in the earthwork. As no trace of the Street was found, but only more cobbles with ruts (PLATE VIII, D) in the same alignment as those of section KK, the trench was abandoned unfinished.

5. The exact alignment of Akeman Street E. and W. of the gap in the Dyke was determined by six small trial-holes (M-R, PLATE X, D). In all except the last, R, the S. edge of the metalling of the Street appeared, but only one of the holes, M, was continued far enough to allow a partial section through the Street to be plotted. The stratification (PLATE X, B, MM) only differed in minor points of measurement from that already obtained in section FF (p. 81). The S. edge of the Street in the three holes M-O west of the gap proved to be in straight alignment, and the S. edge of the Street east of the gap in section FF and trial-holes P and Q was also in straight alignment, but these two alignments differed slightly and would meet in a wide obtuse-angle 14 feet W. of the field gate between the arable and the pasture-land. Akeman Street makes a definite turn at this point.

6. Two trial-pits, S and T (PLATE X, D) were dug just E. of the eastern garden-fence of North Lodge, at the point where surface-indications suggested that the northern end of this sector of the Dyke lay. Pit S seemed, from its stratification, to lie in the butt-end of the ditch and pit T to cut through the returning tail of the bank, but there had been a certain amount of later disturbance here, perhaps at the time when North Lodge was built, and more extensive digging would be necessary to establish the facts beyond dispute.

7. Two trial-pits, U and V, were dug in the cultivated field just S. of the copse that bounds the Park on the N. (PLATE X, D, key plan), and some 230 yards SW. of the Ditchley

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gate. Crop-marks in the corn suggested that the Woodleys sector of the Dyke ended here, and this surmise proved correct. In pit U, the more northerly, the sloping end of the ditch was laid bare. In pit V, 2 feet 4 inches to the south, natural cornbrash was found 9 inches below the surface.

### THE POTTERY

The pottery (FIG. 21) found during the excavations was all extremely fragmentary, but it was nevertheless of the utmost importance in helping to determine the date and history of the Dyke. It may be divided into two categories, pre-Conquest and post-Conquest: the former includes the sherds from the pre-Grim occupation-sites in sections EE (Model Farm), and GG-JJ and KK (Blenheim); the latter, which was much less prolific, consists of sherds from the filling of Grim's ditch in sections AA and BB-CC (Kiddington), and KK (Blenheim). For the notes on the pre-Conquest sherds I am indebted to the kindness of Mr. H. N. Savory.

#### PRE-CONQUEST SHERDS

1. Olla: brown, shelly ware; flattened, everted, undercut rim with slight groove on edge, ovoid body. D.  $8\frac{3}{4}$  inches. GG-JJ, pre-Grim occupation.
2. Bowl: dark grey, gritty ware; inturned bead-rim with slight groove on edge, bulging body. GG-JJ, pre-Grim occupation.
3. Store-jar: hard, grey ware, smooth matt surface; heavy rim, thickened and everted. KK, pre-Grim occupation.
4. Beaker or Olla: grey, with cold buff surface; concave rim, horizontal corrugations on body. D. of rim 6 inches. GG-JJ, pre-Grim occupation.
5. Beaker (?): finely-levigated, orange ware; concave rim. GG-JJ, pre-Grim occupation.
6. Beaker (?): finely-levigated, grey ware; concave rim. GG-JJ, pre-Grim occupation.
7. Bowl or Olla (?): dark grey, gritty ware; concave rim. KK, pre-Grim occupation.
8. Bowl or Olla: dark grey, gritty ware; concave rim. GG-JJ, pre-Grim occupation.
9. Barrel-beaker: finely-levigated, orange ware, grey in centre; beaded rim, concave neck. D. of rim  $4\frac{3}{4}$  inches. GG-JJ, pre-Grim occupation.
10. Beaker: finely-levigated, orange ware, grey in centre, traces of dark wash; everted bead-rim, flattened on top. GG-JJ, pre-Grim occupation.
11. Beaker: finely-levigated, orange ware; flattened, everted rim. GG-JJ, pre-Grim occupation.
12. Beaker: finely-levigated, orange ware, dark grey in centre, traces of dark wash; everted bead-rim, concave neck. GG-JJ, pre-Grim occupation.
13. Bowl: finely-levigated, orange ware, fired grey in parts; everted bead-rim, concave neck. GG-JJ, pre-Grim occupation.
14. Olla: finely-levigated, orange ware, dark grey in centre, traces of dark wash; tipped-out rim, vertical neck. KK, pre-Grim occupation.
15. Olla: finely-levigated, orange ware; flattened, everted rim, concave neck. GG-JJ, pre-Grim occupation.
16. Beaker: finely-levigated, orange ware, fired grey in parts, traces of dark wash; everted rim, concave neck, slight step at junction of rim and neck. GG-JJ, pre-Grim occupation.

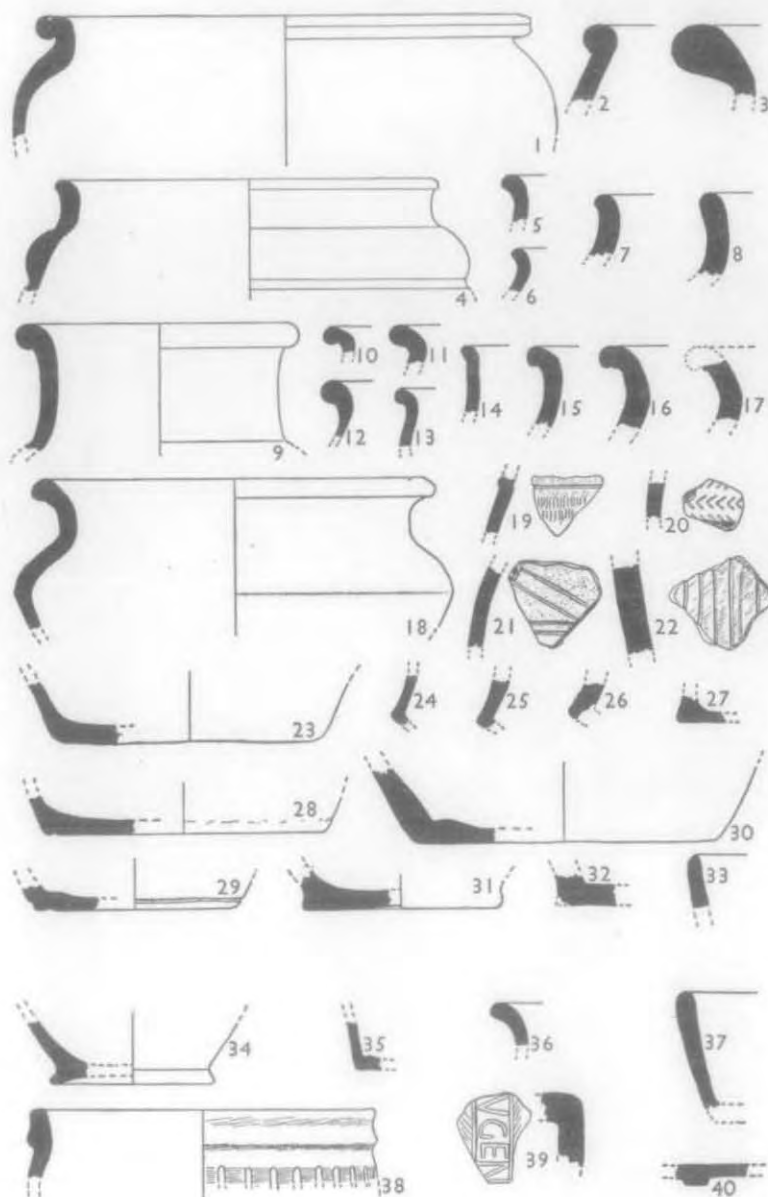


FIG. 21

Pre-Conquest (nos. 1-33) and post-Conquest (nos. 34-40) pottery  
from Grim's Dyke, N. Oxon. Scale,  $\frac{1}{2}$ .

# GRIM'S DYKE, N. OXON.

17. Beaker: as last, but tip of rim missing; probably from the same vessel. GG, under Grim's bank.
18. Olla: finely-levigated, orange ware, fired dark grey in parts on exterior; thickened, everted rim, concave neck, ovoid body with slight carination at greatest diameter. D. 7 inches. KK, pre-Grim occupation.
19. Barrel-beaker: finely-levigated, orange ware, fired dark grey in parts, traces of dark wash; at top of fragment a cordon and groove; below, rouletting in two bands. GG-JJ, pre-Grim occupation.
20. Beaker (?): finely-levigated ware, buff on exterior, dark grey on interior; three horizontal bands of impressed wreath-decoration. GG-JJ, pre-Grim occupation.
21. Olla (?): dark grey, gritty ware; fragment of shoulder; unburnished frieze crossed by two sloping burnished lines and bordered at the bottom by two more; below the latter the surface of the pot is burnished. GG-JJ, pre-Grim occupation.
22. Store-jar: dark grey, gritty ware; fragment of body with vertical furrowing. KK, pre-Grim occupation.
23. Olla: dark grey, soapy ware; unevenly potted. D. base 4 inches. GG-JJ, pre-Grim occupation.
24. Carinated bowl: finely-levigated, orange ware, grey in centre, traces of dark wash; fragment with carination. KK, pre-Grim occupation.
25. Carinated bowl: finely-levigated ware, dark grey on interior, orange on exterior, with traces of dark wash; fragment with carination. GG-JJ, pre-Grim occupation.
26. Carinated bowl: dark grey, gritty ware, soapy burnish on exterior; fragment with carination and slight grooves above. KK, pre-Grim occupation.
27. Base-fragment of bowl (?): finely-levigated ware, red on surfaces, dark grey in centre; flat base. KK, pre-Grim occupation.
28. Base-fragment of olla (?): finely-levigated ware, brownish-grey on surfaces, dark grey in centre; deep groove on under side of base and faint furrow at bottom of side; flat base. D.  $4\frac{3}{8}$  inches. GG-JJ, pre-Grim occupation.
29. Base-fragment of olla (?): finely-levigated, orange ware, traces of dark wash on exterior; groove at bottom of side and another on under side of base; flat base. D.  $3\frac{1}{8}$  inches. GG-JJ, pre-Grim occupation.
30. Base-fragment of store-jar (?): coarse, gritty ware, red on surfaces, dark grey in centre, traces of dark wash on exterior; flat base. D.  $4\frac{3}{4}$  inches. GG-JJ, pre-Grim occupation.
31. Base-fragment of olla (?): finely-levigated ware, dark grey on exterior, reddish-brown on interior; offset base, slightly concave on under side. D.  $3\frac{1}{8}$  inches. GG-JJ, pre-Grim occupation.
32. Base-fragment of store-jar (?): coarse, gritty ware, red on surface inside and out, dark grey in centre; flat base. EE, pre-Grim occupation.
33. Bowl, hand-made: gritty ware, patchy light grey and orange surface; plain rim, straight side. EE, pre-Grim occupation.

This pottery from the occupation-layers under the Dyke in sections EE, GG-JJ and KK, though sometimes exhibiting an affinity to the Iron Age A2 and B wares of Oxfordshire, and, in form at least, if not in fabric, to early Romano-British ware, is in fact a unit to which the term 'Belgic,' in its broadest sense, is applicable. Several of the forms are unknown outside pre-Roman Belgic cultures, and every fragment except no. 33 has been made on a wheel or, at least, a turn-table.

*Belgic ware.* Most of the fine sherds belong to an orange fabric, the best pieces preserving this colour throughout their thickness, the others having a grey centre, presumably because of less intense firing. The clay of these sherds is relatively fine. Some (e.g., nos. 10, 12, 14, 16, 19) have traces of a dark wash, soapy to the feel; others may once have had it, to judge from the worn condition of the wash in places where it still exists. Nos. 5, 9, 11, 15 show no trace of wash, and have a harder feel.

This ware, especially when devoid of wash, seems to correspond to the finer pottery from Prae Wood (Wheeler, *Verulamium*, pp. 152 ff.) but does not appear at the earlier Belgic settlement of Wheathampstead: it reflects a wave of importation from continental Belgic potteries which began about the beginning of the Christian Era.

No. 9, the most considerable fragment found, belongs to a barrel-beaker, a characteristic form of continental Belgic pottery. It is hard to match the rim among the numerous examples from Prae Wood (Wheeler, *op. cit.*, fig. 14), but there is an example from Folkestone (Bushe-Fox, *Swarling*, pl. xi, 5). On nos. 16 and 17 the step at the junction between the rim and neck is a feature of barrel-beakers at Prae Wood (Wheeler, *op. cit.*, fig. 14, nos. 31 b, d) and the presence of barrel-beakers on the site is confirmed by no. 19, which bears the rouletted decoration often associated with this shape. Other rims of this orange-coloured ware belong to the finer type of olla, and are of normal Belgic shapes: cp. e.g., nos. 14 and 15 with Wheathampstead, types 10, 14, 15 (Wheeler, *op. cit.*, pls. xlix-l) and no. 14 also with Prae Wood, type 62 (*ibid.*, fig. 20). The corrugated beaker or olla, no. 4, is again characteristically Belgic; its ware is typical 'Wheathampstead' pottery, and corrugation on the shoulder already appears at Wheathampstead (Wheeler, *op. cit.*, pl. xlix, type 1), though it is more frequent at Prae Wood (*ibid.*, figs. 16-17, types 46a and 51). Of the three carinated fragments, nos. 24-26, the first two, of orange clay with a dark soapy wash, probably belong to bowls like one found in a grave-group near Colchester accompanied by a Roman flagon of Claudian date (Bushe-Fox, *Swarling*, p. 22, pl. xi, 3); compare also carinated bowls of continental type from Prae Wood (Wheeler, *op. cit.*, fig. 15). The third, with its wholly grey ware, may be compared with a Belgic bowl of Claudian date from Richborough (Bushe-Fox, *Richborough*, I, p. 12, pl. xx, 3). Bowls of roughly similar type have been found nearer to Oxfordshire, e.g., at Abbot's Langley, Herts., *Antiq. J.*, II, 259. Finally the wreath-decoration on the small fragment no. 20, though hard to parallel in British Belgic (cp. perhaps Prae Wood, type 67, Wheeler, *op. cit.*, fig. 21: May, *Colchester Pottery*, p. 26, pl. VII A, from East Tilbury), is known on La Tène II-III coarse jars in the Upper Rhine basin (e.g., at Basel, *Anzeiger für Schweizerische Altertumskunde*, 1917, pl. XXIII, 3) and occurs also on early Romano-British coarse jars (e.g., at Alchester, *Antiq. J.*, VII, 178, fig. 8, 6: *id.*, IX, 124, fig. 7, 4) though with much coarser execution.

Examples of Belgic coarse ware also occurred. The rim, no. 3, comes from a jar generally resembling Wheathampstead, type 20 (Wheeler, *op. cit.*, pl. li), and the parallel furrowing on no. 22 is characteristic of such jars both at Wheathampstead and Prae Wood; its furrows, however, are vertical, though at Prae Wood horizontal furrowing is universal, and only one example of vertical furrowing at Wheathampstead is figured (*ibid.*, pl. I, type 14). The decoration on no. 21 is very like that on an olla from Swarling (Bushe-Fox, *Swarling*, p. 12, pl. viii, 20) which, though not found in scientific excavation, is obviously Belgic in character.

*Local Iron Age A2-B elements.* The sherd with the most obvious A2 affinities is no. 33, from the pre-Grim occupation-site in section EE: it is hand-made, it is patchy light grey and orange in colour, and it has a rim characteristic of the finds at Radley



## GRIM'S DYKE, N. OXON.

(*Antiq. J.*, xi, 401, fig. 2 a) and other sites in the Oxford district. The base-fragment, no. 30, and the rims, nos. 2, 7 and 8, all of which contain a high proportion of coarsely-ground shell and quartz, seem to reflect the local A2-B tradition, though it might be argued that any potter, whatever his cultural connexions, would use the material available locally for stiffening coarse pottery. The three rims are more characteristic of the local Iron Age B culture in shape (but cp. no. 2 with Prae Wood, type 66 a, Wheeler, *op. cit.*, fig. 21) and all can be paralleled among unpublished material from Cassington. On nos. 28 and 29 the furrows or grooves near the angle of side and base are again not typically Belgic, but occur in the Iron Age B of Oxfordshire, e.g., at Mount Farm, Dorchester (*supra*, p. 36) and on an unpublished base from Cassington.

*Sherds with Romano-British affinities.* Two of the more considerable fragments found, nos. 1 and 18, are not so easy to match on pre-Conquest sites, but occur frequently on immediately post-Conquest ones. No. 1 with its everted rim and undercutting suggests the influence of a form such as that of Bushe-Fox, *Richborough*, III, pl. xxxvii, 262; and no. 18 resembles in general shape *id.*, I, pl. xxiv, 41. It is, however, always possible that these forms were developing just before the Roman invasion, for some continental Belgic barrel-beakers have undercutting of the lip and flattening on top, e.g., Bushe-Fox, *Swarling*, pl. ix, 34.

To sum up: most of the more accurately datable of these pre-Conquest fragments belong to a period which is certainly not earlier than Prae Wood (c. A.D. 1-40), and is, if anything, rather later, since several of them suggest the localization of forms which appear as continental imports at Prae Wood. The group as a whole is not likely to begin earlier than a decade or two before the Roman invasion, and, in view of the possible Romano-British influence seen in nos. 1 and 18 and the Claudian date of the carinated bowls cited as parallels to nos. 24-26, it may well have lasted up to the time of that invasion, or even a bit later.

### POST-CONQUEST SHERDS

34. Base-fragment of olla: dark grey, gritty ware, soapy burnish; splayed base-ring. D. of ring  $2\frac{1}{2}$  inches. AA, top-soil behind Grim's bank. The shape of the base-ring is typical of the first and early second centuries A.D.: *Wroxeter*, II, fig. 18, 45 and 54; *Richborough*, I, pl. xxii, 24; *id.* II, pl. xxx, 144; Alchester I (*Antiq. J.*, VII), 177, fig. 8, 2 and 5.
35. Base-fragment of olla: hard ware, red on surfaces light grey in centre; flat base. AA, in filling of Grim's ditch at 4 feet 4 inches.
36. Olla: hard, light grey ware: thickened rim, concave neck. BB-CC, in filling of butt-end of Grim's ditch at 2 feet.
37. Pie-dish: dark grey, calcite-gritted, burnished ware; curvilinear burnished lines on exterior; plain rounded rim, convex sides, flat base. BB-CC, in filling of butt-end of Grim's ditch at 2 feet. The shape is common throughout the Roman period; the decoration is typical of the second and third centuries A.D.: Collingwood, *Arch. of R. Britain*, p. 226, no. 36.
38. Bowl: dark grey, calcite-gritted, burnished ware; vertical burnished lines on exterior; moulded rim, slightly bulging body. D. of rim  $5\frac{1}{2}$  inches. KK, post-Grim occupation in butt-end of ditch. Parallels to this piece are not readily forthcoming.

39. Flange of mortarium, Wroxeter, mortarium-type 38: hard ware, buff on surfaces, reddish in centre; fragmentary stamp [MAT]VGEN [VS] flanked by wreath-decoration. KK, in silt of butt-end of ditch at 2 feet. The stamp MATVGENVS is common on mortaria of the late first and early second centuries A.D.: *Wroxeter*, I, fig. 16, 8 (on type 38) and 14 (on type 34), both dated 80-120 A.D.; Alchester III (*Antiq. J.*, xii), 62, pl. xvi, no. vii (on type 38). None of these stamps corresponds in design to that of the Blenheim piece, but two exact parallels to it are listed from Silchester, both on mortaria of Silchester, type 2 b (=Wroxeter 34-38): May, *Silchester Pottery*, pl. lxxxiii, 12-13, p. 276.
40. Base-fragment of platter: red Belgic ware; rectangular base-ring. KK, in silt of butt-end of ditch, at 2½ feet. For the shape, though in metallic grey ware, cp. Wheeler, *Verulamium*, fig. 12, no. 18, from Prae Wood; and for the shape in red ware, May, *Colchester Pottery*, p. 24, no. 59 a. The type belongs to the middle of the first century A.D.

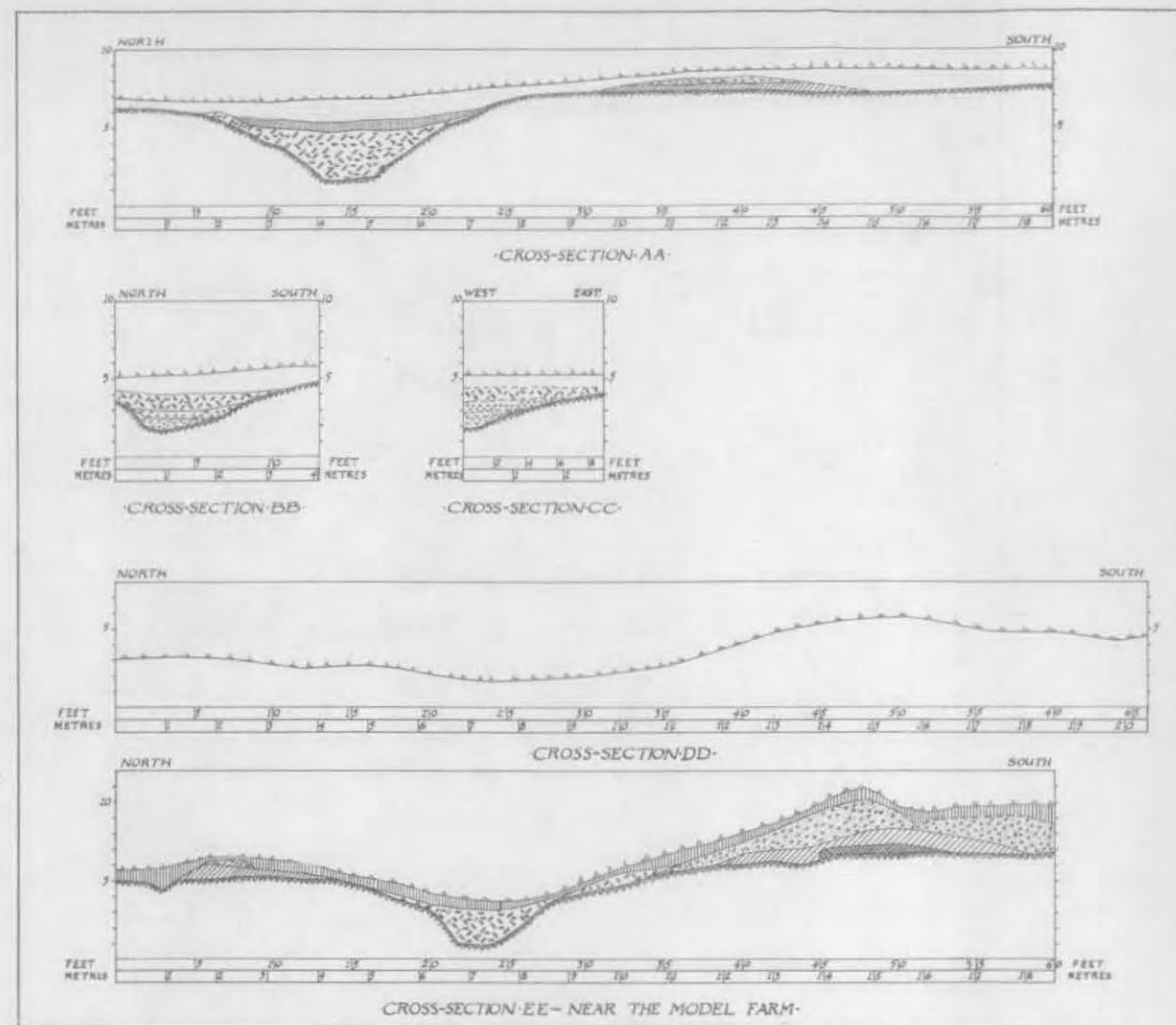
### CONCLUSIONS

The north Oxfordshire Grim's Dyke, in each of the three cross-sections taken—Kiddington, Model Farm, and Blenheim—proved to be uniform. It consisted of a ditch about 5 feet deep and 16 feet across, behind which was a bank that must originally have attained these same dimensions. There was no berm to speak of between ditch and bank. No traces of post-holes for a palisade or other superstructure were found, but in the two latter cross-sections there was a small V-shaped ditch outside a low counterscarp bank on the outer lip of the main ditch. The amount of excavation accomplished was not enough to show whether this small ditch and bank were contemporary with, or later than, the main earthwork; their absence in the Kiddington cross-section suggests that they were not part of the original plan.

The discovery by excavation of an eastern end of the Kiddington sector and a southern end of the Woodleys sector, as well as a probable northern end of the Blenheim sector outside North Lodge, confirms the evidence provided by surface-indications in those places and elsewhere (p. 75) that the Dyke was not a continuous earthwork, as Crawford maintained,<sup>1</sup> but was built in sectors of varying lengths with large intervening gaps. The red plough-soil which underlay the bank in every cross-section showed that the Dyke was constructed in cultivated country. It is probable, therefore, that the gaps in the Dyke were occasioned by the existence of woodland areas across which it would be neither necessary nor possible to build the earthwork.

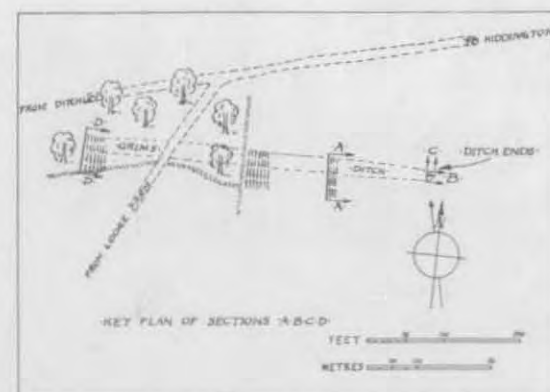
The Early Iron Age sherds (p. 80) in the occupation-site under the bank in cross-section EE at Model Farm showed that the Dyke was not built long before Roman times. This dating was corroborated and narrowed down by the

<sup>1</sup> *Antiquity*, IV, 309-10.



A. The Dyke at Kiddington and Model Farm—Sections.

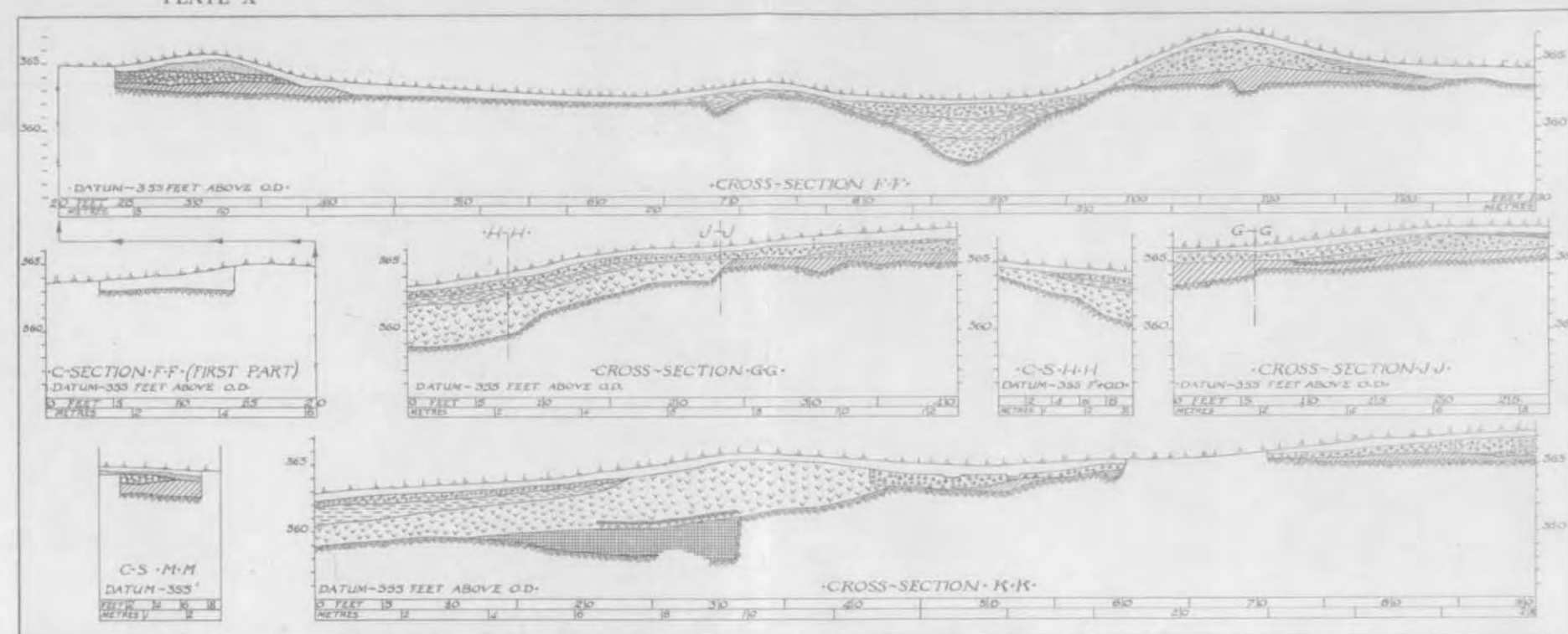
# GRIM'S DYKE, N. OXON. PLANS AND SECTIONS



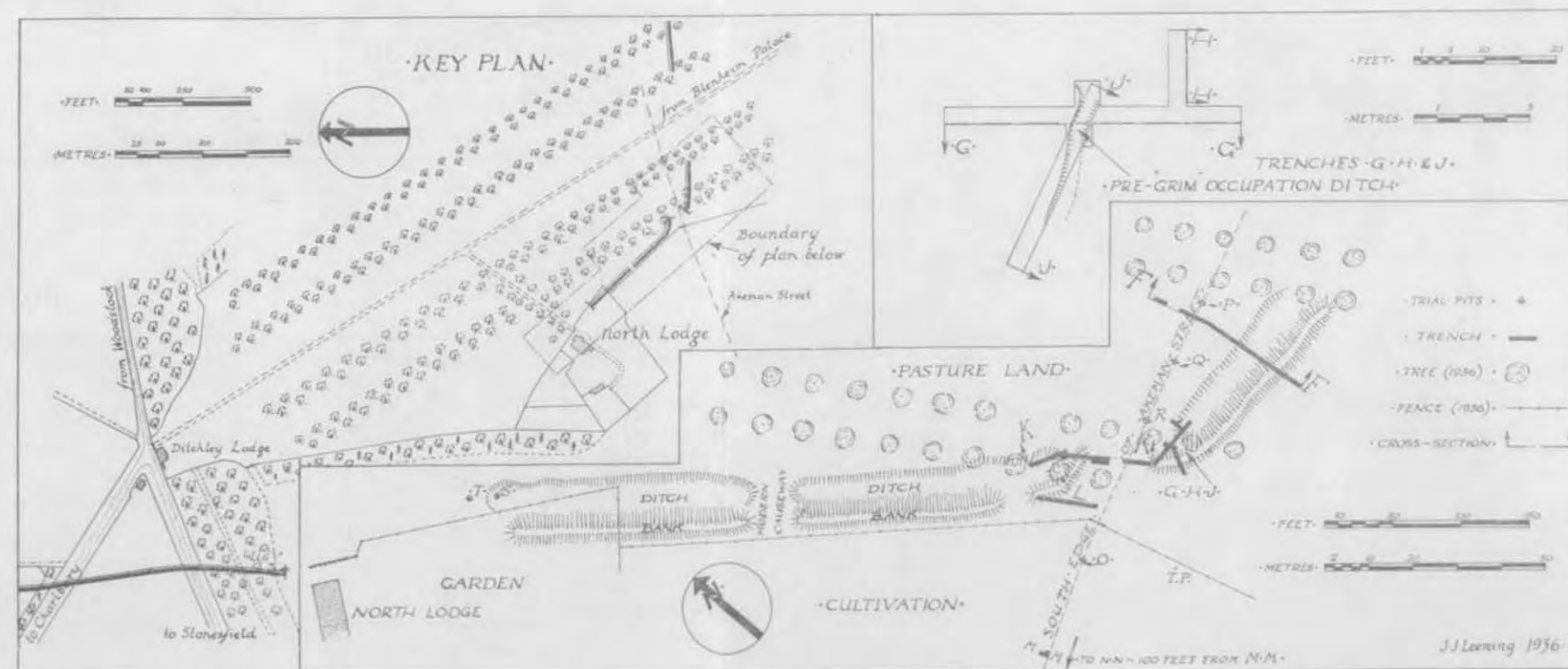
C. Key-plan—Kiddington Sector.



## PLATE X



B. The Dyke in Blenheim Park—Sections.



D. The Dyke in Blenheim Park—Plans.

## GRIM'S DYKE, N. OXON.

pottery from the two occupation-sites under the Blenheim Park sector (cross-sections GG-JJ and KK): this pottery can be dated to the second quarter of the first century A.D. There was not only an absence of any turf-line or other accumulation between this pre-Grim occupation and the bottom of the bank in section JJ, but there was, as well, evidence that the occupation-site under the ditch, KK, so far from being gradually filled up, had been purposely blocked with large stones in order to give an even slope to the floor of the ditch. These two considerations are a proof that the Dyke was constructed over two occupation-sites which were almost contemporary with it. We cannot be far wrong in claiming that it was built about the middle of the first century A.D., that is, about the time of the Roman conquest.

In the Kiddington and Model Farm cross-sections the absence of a distinct layer of silt in the ditch, and the occurrence in its place of a uniform stony filling from the bottom upwards for  $2\frac{1}{2}$  or 3 feet, showed that the Dyke soon fell into disuse, and that part of the material of the bank was intentionally cast back into the ditch. The ditch in the Blenheim sector must have lain open for a longer period, for there, in each cross-section, a considerable accumulation of red silt had been deposited below the earthy and stony fills which must represent the intentional demolition of the bank. All the sherds that occurred in the filling of the ditch were of Roman date, and the few examples that were at all closely datable proved to be early rather than late Roman: in particular neither the fragment of a Belgic platter nor the mortarium-stamp MATVGENVS found in the red silt in section KK (p. 83) can be dated much if at all after the turn of the first century A.D. The life of the Dyke must therefore have been comparatively short, perhaps fifty years at most.

The gap which existed in the Dyke through which Akeman Street passed, and the change in the alignment of the Street immediately west of that gap proves that the paved Street is later than the Dyke. It is reasonable to assume that the Roman Street was constructed from east to west. This being so, the Dyke was here first, and the Street must have been driven straight towards the gap, after which the builders discovered that it had shifted a bit from its true alignment. Had the Dyke not preceded the Street, it would be curious for the latter to take a bend just at this point, where it is passing along rising ground and has not yet reached the crest. On the other hand the existence of the gap shows that there was an unpaved track here the course of which was approximately followed by the Street. Why, otherwise, should this very narrow gap have been made in such a comparatively short earthwork?

It seems certain that a discontinuous earthwork of this size, especially in view of its short life, must have been built for defensive purposes, and not as a boundary-dyke. If, as has been shown, the Blenheim Park sector was built



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across a pre-Roman trackway, and had a narrow gap in it through which all users of the trackway must pass, there can be no doubt that the earthwork, at least in this sector, was intended as a defence against attackers advancing westwards across the Glyme valley: that it was built in the shape and in the situation it was, and not on the immediate crest overlooking Stratford bridge, is probably due to geographical considerations of the time, such as the position of woodland, which are now difficult to estimate. There is evidence that in immediately pre-Roman times there was an advance of people using Belgic pottery-forms along the line of this trackway: their pottery has been found at Blackthorn Hill<sup>1</sup> and at Alchester;<sup>2</sup> but it cannot be these people against whom the Dyke was built, because it is *their* pottery that has been found in the pre-Grim occupation-layers beneath the Dyke. The next wave of invaders along this trackway were the Romans themselves. They must have reached this neighbourhood well before A.D. 47, in view of Collingwood's claim<sup>3</sup> that the line of the Fosse Way (Leicester-Cirencester-Bath) was the frontier by that date. The ceramic evidence dates the construction of the Dyke to the middle of the first century, and it looks therefore as if these were the antagonists against whom the Dyke was built. Its builders were consequently British, and were in all probability those very Belgic people who had advanced along the same route not long before, and whose pottery was predominant in the occupation-sites under the bank and ditch. That the Belgic peoples were inveterate believers in the efficacy of dykes as means of defence we know from the recent discoveries at Colchester, Wheathampstead, and St. Albans.

<sup>1</sup> *Archaeologia*, LXXI, 236.

<sup>2</sup> *Antiq. Journ.*, VII, 176 and fig. 8: *id.*, IX, 126 and fig. 7.

<sup>3</sup> *Archaeology of Roman Britain*, pp. 65-6: *Roman Britain and the English Settlements*, p. 91.