

## A Late Bronze Age and Iron Age Site on Standlake Downs, Oxon.

By D. N. RILEY

THE River Windrush, near its confluence with the Thames, flows through country which, probably because of the gravel subsoil, was thickly settled by early man. In recent times ancient remains have been exposed at many places by gravel-working, but a full record has seldom been kept, and much valuable material has probably been unwittingly destroyed. The present paper is based on notes kept in 1943, when gravel was being removed on a particularly large scale for airfield construction.

The first archaeological work at Standlake was that done by Stone in 1857,<sup>1</sup> when he discovered 'not only the graves of the dead, but also their dwelling places when living'. It is interesting to recall that he made full use of crop-marks in locating the ancient remains. Since his day little was done until recent years, when salvage work was carried out by Mr. J. S. P. Bradford and the Oxford University Archaeological Society in 1940<sup>2</sup> and by the present writer and others in 1943.<sup>3</sup>

The site is about one mile north-west of Standlake parish church, and the gravel is of Terrace II or III, lying about 40 or 50 ft. above the present level of the Thames. The remains here described were discovered mainly as a result of the use in one of the pits of a mechanical scraper, which removed the surface soil before the excavation of the gravel, leaving a clean surface and showing up old ditches and pits very distinctly as dark soil-marks in the yellow gravel.

The circular ditches revealed by crop-marks, first found by Stone and later photographed by Major Allen,<sup>4</sup> were seen from the air by the writer in July, 1943. After harvest the mechanical scraper began to encroach on some of the circles, which reappeared as soil-marks and remained visible for a short period before their final destruction. On visiting the site on the

<sup>1</sup> *Archaeologia*, xxxvii, 363 ff.; *Proc. Soc. Ant.*, 1st ser., iv, 92 ff., 213 ff.

<sup>2</sup> *Antiq. Journ.*, xxii, 202 ff.

<sup>3</sup> Circumstances were then rather difficult and the writer wishes to acknowledge with gratitude the help of his wife, Miss B. Blackwood and Miss J. M. Morris. Thanks are also due to Miss Blackwood for reporting on the bones; to Mr. J. S. P. Bradford for examining the pottery found in 1943; and to Mr. R. J. C. Atkinson for providing a note on such of the pottery found by Stone as is now in the Ashmolean.

<sup>4</sup> Reproduced in *Antiq. Journ.*, xxii, pl. 28.

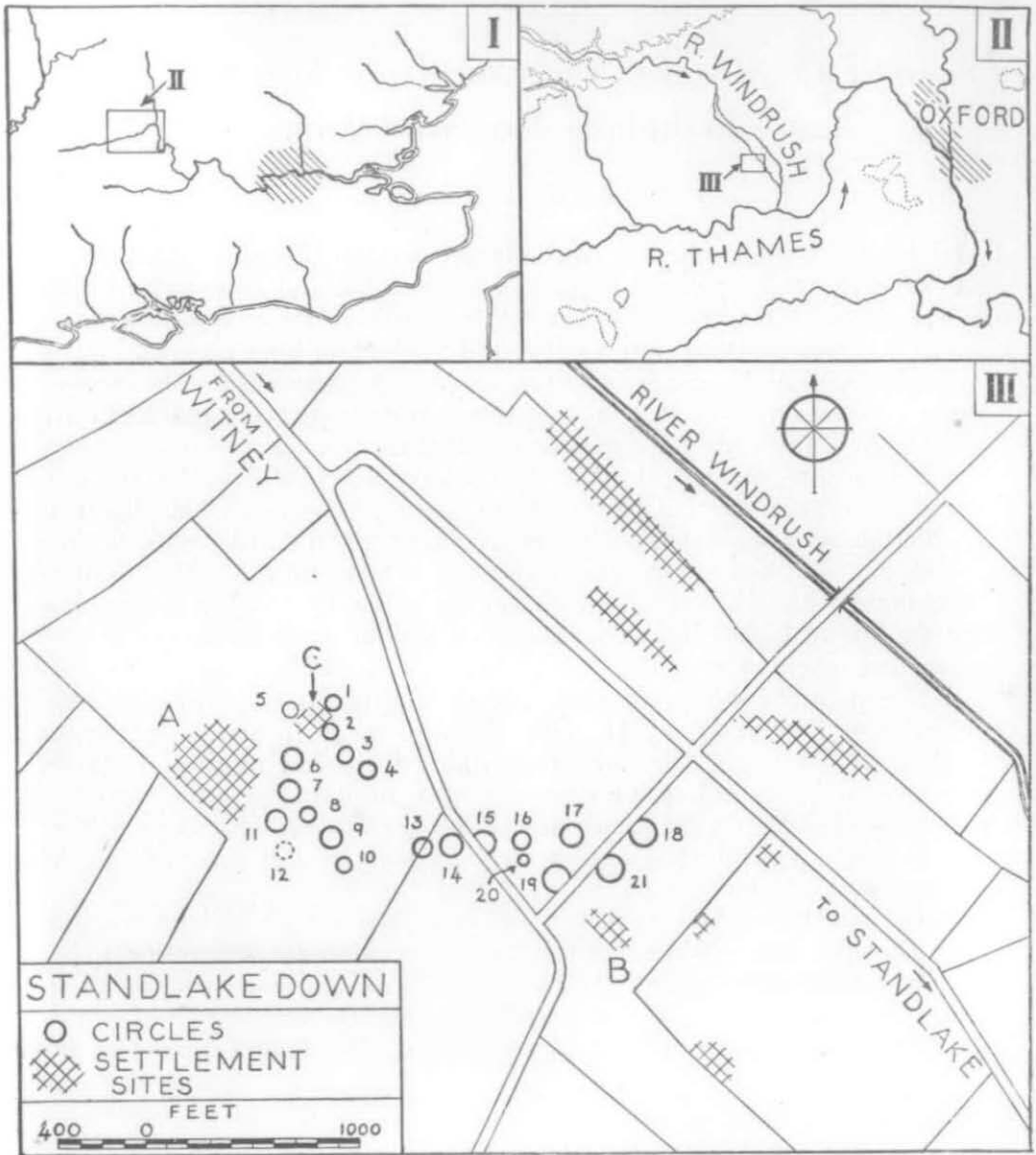


FIG. 6

ANCIENT REMAINS ON STANDLAKE DOWNS, OXON.

General plan, with inset maps showing its geographical position (pp. 30, 35)

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ground, not only were the circles to be seen, but also many post-holes and small pits, Iron Age remains too slight to have formed crop-marks.

The time available was very limited and attention was first given to the preparation of a detailed plan of part of the site. This plan (FIG. 9) is certainly

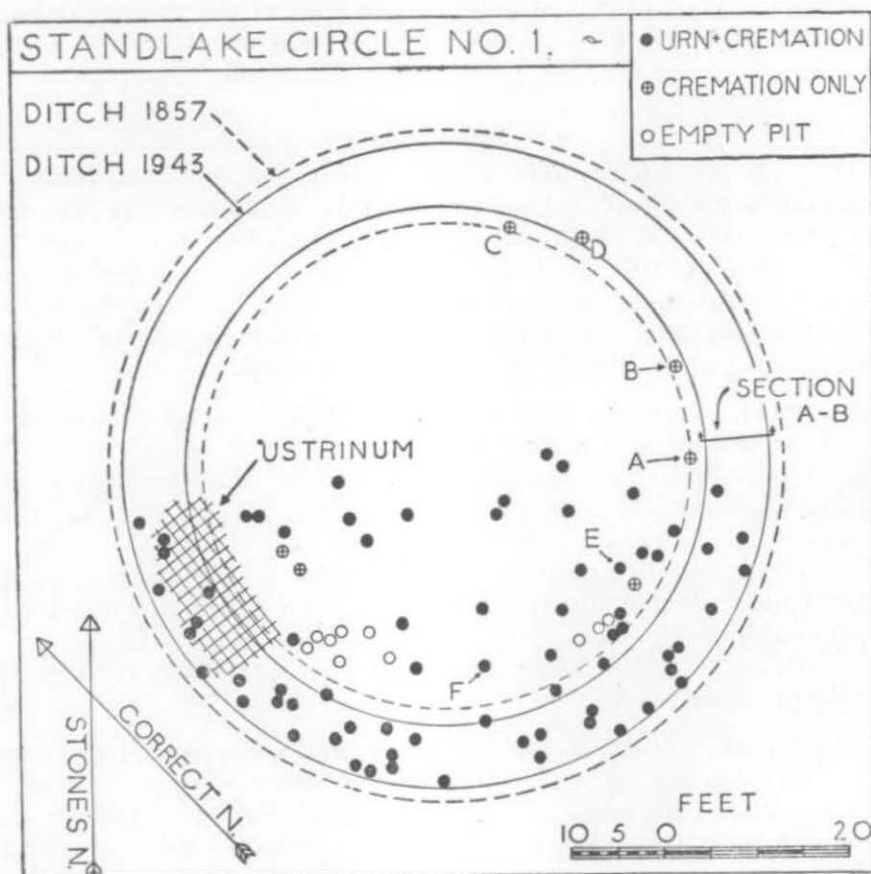


FIG. 7  
STANDLAKE DOWNS, OXON.  
Plan of Circle no. 1 (p. 30)

the most valuable result here recorded. A certain amount of digging was also carried out, but lack of time<sup>5</sup> prevented the investigation of various interesting points which could have been elucidated by a little further work.

<sup>5</sup> Unfortunately the sun was then (October) setting too early to allow work in the evenings.

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### THE CIRCLES

The layout of the circles is shown on the general plan (FIG. 6) which is based on the plan given by Stone,<sup>6</sup> Major Allen's photograph, Bradford's plan<sup>7</sup> and the writer's notes. For convenience of reference the circles have been renumbered. Stone examined nos. 1, 3, 4, 7, 9, 11, 15, 16, 17 and 19 in 1857, Bradford no. 18 in 1940,<sup>8</sup> and salvage work was done on nos. 1, 2 and 3 in 1943.

#### CIRCLE NO. 1

This was the circle within which Stone uncovered an urnfield. On examination of the surface of the gravel inside the circle where many cremation pockets were found in 1857, only four small pits (A-D, FIG. 7) were seen, and these were probably fresh discoveries. All contained ashes and burnt bones, but no remains of urns were seen. Much more might have been found if the scraper had not carried away a thin layer from the surface of the gravel, as well as that portion of each pit which was in the topsoil.

*Pit A.* 1 ft. diameter and 9 in. deep. Contained earth mixed with ashes and small fragments of burnt human bones.

*Pit B.* 1 ft. 6 in. diameter and 1 ft. deep. Contained upper layer of earth, ashes and cremated bones, and beneath, an 8 in. deep layer of black ash containing a few pieces of carbonized wood.

*Pit C.* Shallow depression 1 ft. diameter and only 3 in. deep (evidently only the bottom of a pit) containing cremated bones mixed with earth.

*Pit D.* On the sloping side of the ditch, 1 ft. diameter, 6 in. deep, contents as for pit A.

The diameter of the area enclosed by the circle was 56 ft. and a section cut through the ditch (FIG. 10, A-B), which was flat bottomed, showed it to be 7 ft. wide and 2 ft. 3 in. deep below the gravel surface. The filling here was found to be undisturbed, though Stone stated that this part of the ditch was excavated and a number of cremations found. The explanation is probably that his plan was orientated wrongly. In addition it will be seen from FIG. 7 that the width of the ditch recorded in 1857 was considerably greater than that measured in 1943, 10 ft. against 7 ft. Here the reason seems to be that the scraper had removed the upper part of the ditch and left only the narrower lower part.

<sup>6</sup> *Archaeologia*, xxxvii, opp. p. 364.

<sup>7</sup> *Antiq. Journ.*, xxi, 208.

<sup>8</sup> *Oxoniensia*, vi, 88.

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The filling consisted of three main layers: at the base dirty gravel, then a layer of brown earth, and above this fine earth blackened by burnt matter and ashes and containing small fragments of pottery and burnt human bone. The finds of pottery from this upper layer (FIG. 11, no. 2, and Appendix I) were scanty, and it is difficult to express a definite opinion on their date, but they appear to belong to the period of Late Bronze Age—Early Iron Age overlap and probably to the same date as the urns found by Stone.

It was most unfortunate that the circle could not be examined more thoroughly. One would have liked to search for further cremation pockets in the ditch and to locate again the *ustrinum* or burning-place in the ditch, but beyond noting large quantities of charcoal, black earth and scraps of bone on the surface of the south-western arc of the ditch, nothing could be done.

On the plan (FIG. 7) are marked the 1943 results, together with Stone's discoveries, which are inserted in what is deemed to be their correct position, assuming north on his plan (*op. cit.*, opp. p. 365) to be actually north-east. Seventy-four cremations were found in the southern part of the circle in 1857, of which seventy-one were accompanied by whole or fragmentary urns. To judge from the account, most of them were deposited in small holes like those found in 1943 (which appeared to be fresh discoveries), though a pit 2 ft. 8 in. deep is mentioned in one case. Ten empty pits were found; Stone remarks of one, 'it contained not a vestige of urn, bones or ashes; and if designed, as it appeared to be, to receive an urn, the accidents of humanity had defeated the intention'.

The urns, which were found in various positions, upright, inverted or on their sides, were evidently of Deverel-Rimbury type. Stone describes many of them and gives a small illustration.<sup>9</sup> All are now lost except for five (or possibly six) which are preserved in the Ashmolean Museum, and on which Mr. Atkinson has kindly written a note (Appendix II, PL. III).<sup>10</sup> The only other grave-goods found by Stone were a spiral bronze finger-ring of plain bronze wire (FIG. 8, *c*) with burial E and a barbed and tanged flint arrowhead, damaged by fire (FIG. 8, *b*) with burial F.

The position of the cremation-debris high in the ditch filling indicates that the urnfield does not belong to the first stages of the history of the circle, which therefore should be assigned to a date earlier than the Deverel-Rimbury phase. It is well known that Late Bronze Age urnfields were often sited on existing barrows; the urnfields found on a Middle Bronze Age barrow at

<sup>9</sup> On the plan, *op. cit.*, opp. p. 364.

<sup>10</sup> Four of these urns are figured by Abercromby in *B.A.P.*, II, 473-473c.

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Latch Farm, Christchurch, Hants.,<sup>11</sup> and on a Late Bronze Age barrow at Colbury, Hants.,<sup>12</sup> are typical examples.<sup>13</sup> The burials were always concentrated in a restricted part of the barrow, often, as at Standlake, on the southern side,<sup>14</sup> and the remains were buried near the surface in small, individual pockets.

Assuming the urnfield here to be secondary, the next questions are the nature of the primary burial, if any, and the original form of the monument now represented by the circular ditch. No burial recognizable as primary was found in 1857, and in 1943, although the gravel surface cleared by the scraper was carefully examined, there was still no sign of one. However, the

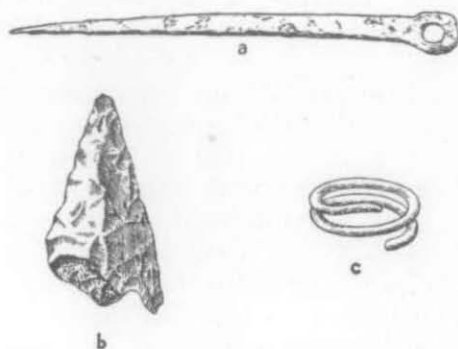


FIG. 8

STANDLAKE DOWNS, OXON.

Small objects found with burials in Circle no. 1 (1857 excavations) (p. 31)  
and Circle no. 3 (p. 34)  
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driver of the excavator informed the writer that when the gravel under the circle was being removed, a human skull rolled down the pit face. This may have come from an inhumation-burial in a pit in the ditch.<sup>15</sup> The skull was unfortunately lost.

It is unlikely that the circular ditch ever surrounded a barrow, unless it was a very low one. The land was originally common and in 1857 had only recently been enclosed, so that its original appearance must have then been

<sup>11</sup> *Proc. Prehist. Soc.*, n.s. iv (1938), 169 ff.

<sup>12</sup> *Antiq. Journ.*, xiii, 414 ff.

<sup>13</sup> Compare also the E.B.A. ring-ditch at Fengate, Peterborough (*Arch. J.*, c, 190) in which were found 130 cremations probably of Late Bronze Age and possibly also Iron Age date. An 'ustrinum' was found in the ditch.

<sup>14</sup> See C. M. Piggott's remarks in *Proc. Prehist. Soc.*, n.s. iv (1938), 179.

<sup>15</sup> Such as the burial at edge of ditch of circle H at Foxley Farm, Eynsham; *Oxoniensia*, vi, 85.

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familiar to many local people, who would have told Stone. As it is, he mentions nothing of any mound. A further indication is given by the positions of the urns. Late Bronze Age burials were often made very superficially, and if within the circle there had been a barrow now levelled, any Late Bronze Age graves in it would probably have been destroyed with the barrow. Stone records several graves near the centre of the circle, and thus the mound, if any, must have been very small. The circle, therefore, probably belongs to Atkinson's ring-ditch category, that is, a circular ditch with no central mound<sup>16</sup> like those still surviving on Port Meadow, Oxford. The other Standlake circles were probably of the same type, except for no. 18, which is known to have surrounded a low mound of earth and gravel.<sup>17</sup> The date of construction of the circle could not be ascertained, but it must have been in existence for some time before being used as a Deverel-Rimbury urnfield.

### CIRCLE NO. 2

The area enclosed within the ditch measured about 48 ft. in diameter but only the north-western part was bared by the mechanical scraper. One cremation was found in a small oval pit 6 in. deep below the gravel surface left by the scraper. The pit varied between 1 ft. 7 in. and 1 ft. 3 in. across and lay near the edge of the circle (FIG. 9). The contents were burnt crumbly bones, ashes, and many fragments of an urn considered by J. S. P. Bradford to be of Late Bronze Age form and fabric (FIG. 11, no. 1). This burial may be assumed to be secondary.

The section cut through the ditch (FIG. 10, C-D) showed its shape and filling to be similar to that of Circle no. 1. It was 7 ft. wide at the top and 2 ft. 3 in. deep and was flat bottomed. The upper part of the filling was black earth containing small fragments of pottery and burnt human bones. Thus cremation-debris again comes at a late stage in the ditch filling. The associated potsherds were too small to show any recognizable forms, but the fabric suggested a Late Bronze Age date.

It is interesting to note that the inhabitants of the adjacent Iron Age settlement respected this circle and that no storage-pits were dug within it (FIG. 9).<sup>18</sup>

### CIRCLE NO. 3

Stone found this circle really to be an oval, the distance from side to side within the ditch being 87 ft. on the longer axis and 73 ft. on the shorter.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, vii, 34; but see Grimes' remarks, *ibid.*, viii/ix, 21, note 1.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, vi, 88.

<sup>18</sup> According to R. E. M. Wheeler, *Excav. at Maiden Castle* (Res. Rep. Soc. Ant., xii), p. 22, earlier burial mounds in the area of an Iron Age settlement were normally respected by the inhabitants.



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Like Circle no. 2, only part was cleared by the scraper, and again a single burial was found. Twenty-three feet from the inner edge of the ditch, on the northern side, was a small pit dug in the gravel, 16 in. diameter and 10 in. deep. It contained black earth, fragments of burnt bone (mainly

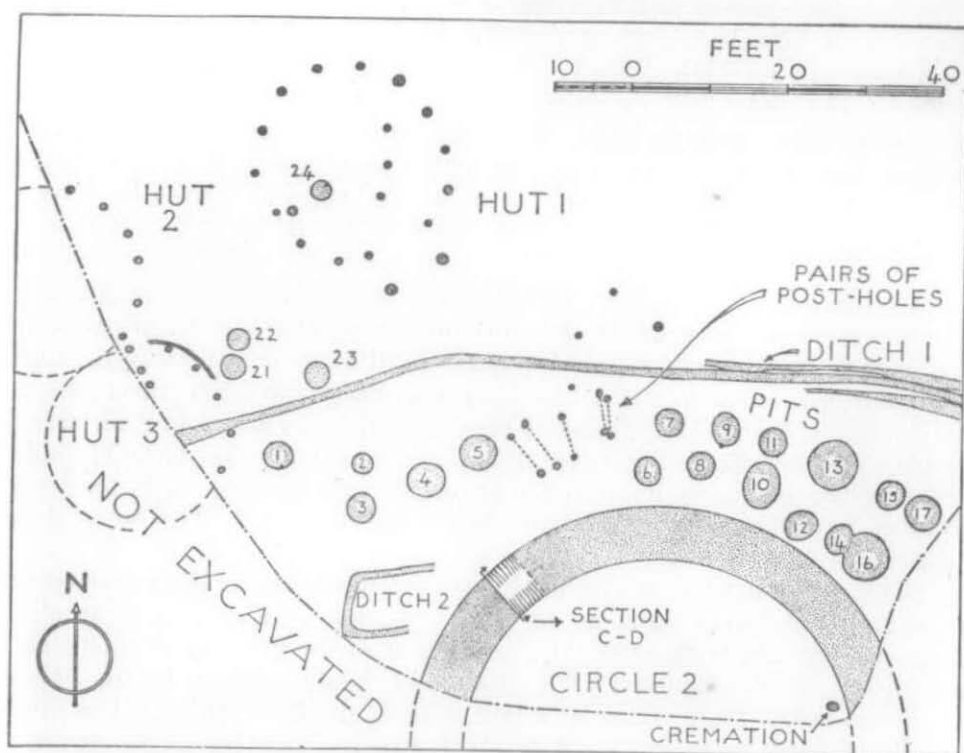


FIG. 9

STANDLAKE DOWNS, OXON.

Plan of Circle no. 2 and the Iron Age settlement-area nearby (p. 35)

concentrated in the centre) and a bone pin (FIG. 8, a), unburnt, 3 in. long and with perforated end.

When the circle was sectioned by the face of the gravel-pit, the ditch filling was seen to consist of reddish brown earth with none of the black earth and remains of cremations seen in the ditches of Circles nos. 1 and 2. The ditch was of V-section, 8 ft. wide and 3 ft. deep.



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### IRON AGE SETTLEMENTS

Remains of Iron Age settlements are widespread at Standlake. Like the circles, they received attention from Stone in 1857 and Bradford and the Oxford University Archaeological Society in 1940. Stone completely excavated a portion of a settlement, the exact position of which is not now known. The recent workers examined and recorded numerous pits and ditches sectioned by gravel-pits.

To these discoveries the following new sites can now be added :

- A. Several small enclosures and lengths of ditch, and a large cluster of probable pits, seen from the air as crop-marks in 1942 and presumed to be of Iron Age date.<sup>19</sup> No photographs were taken.
- B. A concentration of storage-pits cut into by the face of a gravel-pit in 1943. The only datable material recovered was a scrap of pottery of typical Iron Age fabric.
- C. The site near Circle no. 2, described below.

These sites, together with those recorded by Bradford, are marked on FIG. 6. Site A remains intact for future investigation ; B was unfortunately destroyed too rapidly for a record to be kept ; C was also quickly destroyed but it was possible to gather some information because of the clear way in which the mechanical scraper used at this gravel-pit revealed the ancient remains.

#### THE SETTLEMENT SITE NEAR CIRCLE NO. 2 (SITE C)

The mechanical scraper revealed a large part of the plan of an Iron Age homestead (FIG. 9). Salvage work was very hasty, but luckily the careful investigations made by Dr. G. Bersu just before the war at the Iron Age site at Little Woodbury, near Salisbury,<sup>20</sup> throw much light on the Standlake discoveries, some of which might otherwise be difficult to interpret.

The plan shows the following features :

- (a) twenty-four pits of the usual type found at Iron Age settlements,
- (b) several small ditches,
- (c) a group of post-holes, apparently disposed in pairs,
- (d) a large ring of post-holes and parts of two other rings, representing round huts.

<sup>19</sup> *Oxoniensis*, VII, 113, site 37.

<sup>20</sup> *Proc. Prehist. Soc.*, n.s. VI (1940), 30 ff.

Signs of an orderly arrangement are clear. The rings of post-holes lie close together, the pits are more or less in lines and the pairs of post-holes are in a space between two groups of pits.

(a) *The Pits.* Nearly all the pits lay in a strip of ground about 20 ft. wide, between circle no. 2 and a long ditch (ditch 1). Pits 6-17 are in pairs and in line. There are only two overlapping pits (nos. 14 and 16). None

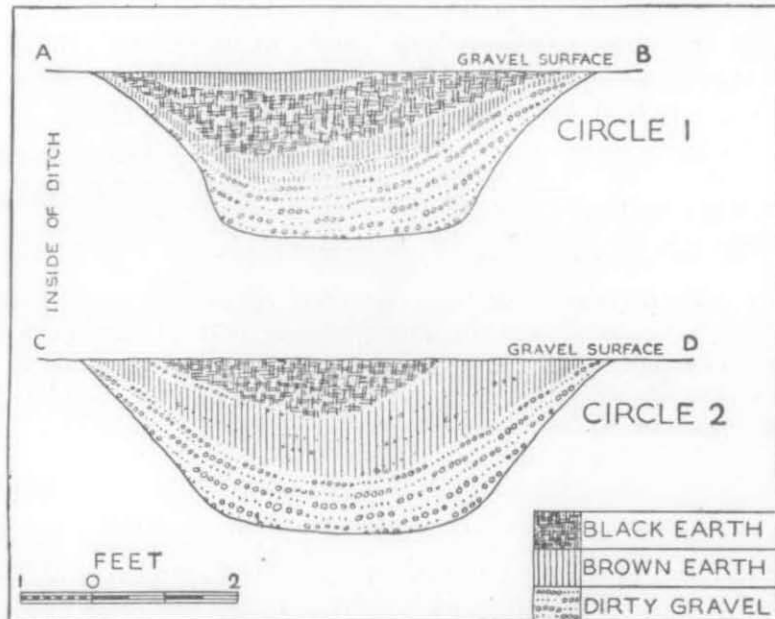


FIG. 10

STANDLAKE DOWNS, OXON.

Sections through ditches of Circles nos. 1 and 2 (pp. 30, 33)

lay within the circle. Compared with the confused mass of pits seen at a normal Iron Age site, these pits are disposed in a very orderly manner. The reason perhaps may be that the pits here were used in pairs, and periodically the old ones refilled and a new pair dug.

It was only possible to empty two of the pits. The dimensions of two more were taken (at some risk to the writer's neck) when sectioned by the face of the gravel-pit. The following dimensions were recorded :

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Pit 2	39	in. wide at the top and 15 in. deep.						
9	44 × 50	"	"	"	"	"	24	"
5	55	"	"	"	"	"	45	"
7	44	"	"	"	"	"	50	"

Allowing for the surface soil and the thin layer of gravel removed by the scraper, perhaps 12 in. should be added to obtain the original depths of the pits. The shape was roughly cylindrical, with a base flat as far as the loose gravel allowed it.

There appear to be two types of pit here, shallow and deep, respectively about 2 ft. and 4 ft. in depth. Different types of pits were noticed at Little Woodbury,<sup>21</sup> where type A corresponded to the shallow pits 2 and 9, and type C to the deeper pits 5 and 7.<sup>22</sup> Pits dug in the gravel of the upper Thames were shallower than those at sites on the chalk of Wiltshire or Dorset. At Maiden Castle they reached a depth of as much as 11 ft.,<sup>23</sup> which would have been most unsafe if dug in gravel instead of chalk.

The four pits examined had been refilled with dirty gravel, after what was evidently a short life. There were no signs of collapse of the sides, as would have occurred if the pits had been left to silt up naturally. Small sherds of Iron Age pottery, including a fragment of a typical AB rim (FIG. 11, no. 3), a few flint flakes and fragments of animal bone were found in pit 5. Further examples of deliberate refilling were seen on site B, where many pits had been cut into by the gravel face. One very large pit, 6 ft. wide and 4 ft. 6 in. deep, was entirely filled by clean gravel except for a small pile of earth at the bottom.

Elsewhere in the upper Thames country the Iron Age pits had the same earth and gravel filling, though at several places (Chadlington,<sup>24</sup> Cassington<sup>25</sup> and Hatford<sup>26</sup>) the contents of certain pits were found also to include quantities of burnt stones, some of considerable size, and at Stanton Harcourt, burnt stones, ashes and remains of corn were found in pits excavated by Stone.<sup>27</sup> Comparing the contents of the pits at Standlake and the upper Thames sites with those from Little Woodbury there are many resemblances. The short life and intentional refilling are common to all and the burnt stones and ashes mentioned at upper Thames sites are paralleled in the Little Woodbury pits by thick layers of ash and large quantities of burnt flints.<sup>28</sup> Many pieces

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 49.

<sup>22</sup> See also Bradford's remarks, *Antiq. Journ.*, xxii, 204-206.

<sup>23</sup> R. E. M. Wheeler, *op. cit.*, p. 51.

<sup>24</sup> *Antiq. Journ.*, xv, 32.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 34, 37.

<sup>26</sup> Noted by the writer in the sand-pit NW. of the village.

<sup>27</sup> *Proc. Soc. Ant.*, 1st ser., iv, 215.

<sup>28</sup> *Proc. Prehist. Soc.*, n.s. vi (1940), 52.

of burnt clay daub were also found in the Little Woodbury pits and Bersu suggested that these, the burnt flints and the ashes, came from ovens in which corn was parched to preserve it for the winter.<sup>29</sup> Some such explanation no doubt also holds good for the upper Thames sites generally, though at Standlake the ashes and burnt stones were absent.

Pits of this type were, and in some places<sup>30</sup> still are, used for storage. When foul they were refilled and fresh ones dug, and in the case of the line of pairs of pits (nos. 6-17) it rather looks as if a fresh pair were dug every year or two. For the storage of corn the pits were probably sealed, or roofed, and lined, but as no traces of any superstructure or lining were found, it may be assumed that these were flimsy. They must also have been protected from animals and passers-by, who might have trodden near their crumbly walls, and this was probably the purpose of ditch 1.

The excavations at Mount Farm, Dorchester, suggested that storage-pits became obsolete towards the end of the Iron Age,<sup>31</sup> possibly because of Belgic influence,<sup>32</sup> but in the upper Thames A2 and AB phases, to which this Standlake settlement probably belonged, the use of storage-pits seems to have been a recognized part of the routine of rural life.

(b) *The ditches.* Ditch 1, which stretched across the site, appeared to bound one side of the area of the pits. It varied between 1 ft. and 2 ft. in width and at its eastern end had clearly been re-cut three times. The ditch intersected hut 3, but it was not possible to determine which was the earlier.

Ditch 2 formed a small open-ended enclosure measuring about 8 ft. by 10 ft. near Circle no. 2. The purpose is unexplained.

(c) *The post-holes in pairs.* In a space between two groups of pits were a number of post-holes arranged in pairs, the individual holes of which were 5 to 6 ft. apart and about 1 ft. in diameter. There were seven pairs, several of which were close together and two almost superimposed. Little Woodbury provides an almost exact parallel, numerous pairs of post-holes about 6 to 8 ft. apart having been found there. In one case as many as fifteen pairs had been dug in almost the same position.<sup>33</sup> Bersu suggests that these pairs of posts supported frames for drying sheaves of corn, such as are still used in some places where the climate is damp. The occurrence of pairs of post-holes nearly superimposed on others is due to one frame having rotted and been renewed on the same site.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 62.

<sup>30</sup> *Antiquity*, x, 25 ff.

<sup>31</sup> *Oxoniensis*, II, 22.

<sup>32</sup> At Maiden Castle pits of various types were used very extensively till the onset of the Belgic occupation, when they were swept away: R. E. M. Wheeler, *op. cit.*, p. 58.

<sup>33</sup> *Proc. Prehist. Soc.*, n.s. VI (1940), 94.

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The post-holes of one pair lie on opposite sides of Ditch 1 and may indicate that this 'drying-frame' preceded or followed the period of use of the ditch. Alternatively the post-holes on the north side of the ditch may not have belonged to drying-frames, but formed part of a different structure, such as one of the supposed granaries at Little Woodbury, which were supported by four posts in a square.<sup>34</sup>

(d) *The round huts.* A complete ring of post-holes and portions of two other rings are shown on the plan and another ring was destroyed before being measured. They mark the sites of round huts, no doubt the homes of the people who used the storage-pits and drying-frames.

Hut no. 1 was about 24 ft. in diameter. The post-holes were 12 to 15 in. diameter and about 5 ft. 6 in. apart, except on the south-east side, where a gap, 9 ft. wide, marked the entrance. In front of the entrance was a porch supported on two posts in 19 in. diameter holes. Within the hut were four extra post-holes, three in a line, probably to support a partition, and a fourth near one of the post-holes of the outer ring. There was no centre-post. Two post-holes were emptied (one in the porch and one in the ring) and found to be 1 ft. deep, though the original depth, allowing for the surface soil and gravel removed by the scraper, must have been considerably more. A fragment of a vessel of Iron Age fabric was found in one post-hole. There was a pit (no. 24) inside the hut, but it was not possible to investigate it.

Only parts of Huts nos. 2 and 3 were exposed, the rest having been either destroyed or not uncovered by the scraper. The diameters were about 25 ft. (Hut 2) and about 24 ft. (Hut 3). The post-holes were slightly smaller (11 to 14 in.) and closer together (4 ft. 10 in. average) than in Hut 1. The two circles of post-holes were practically tangential and one wonders if the two huts were in use simultaneously or if one were built when the other had decayed; if simultaneously, the two extra post-holes inside Hut 3 probably belonged to a corridor connecting the two; if at different periods, these post-holes may have formed part of an entrance passage to Hut 2. Round the outside of Hut 3 ran a small sleeper-trench 5 in. wide and about 2 in. from the edges of the post-holes. It had probably been dug to take the bottom of the hut wall. Similar trenches round the other huts may possibly have been obliterated by the scraper.

Hut no. 4, which was approximately 27 ft. in diameter, and similar to the others, lay about 40 ft. to the north of Hut 2 in a part of the site unfortunately destroyed before measurements were taken. No porch was seen. A fragment of the base-angle of a pot of Iron Age fabric was found in the filling of one post-hole.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 97.

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The Little Woodbury report publishes the only two huts yet known in this country which closely resemble the Standlake ones. House I<sup>35</sup> consisted of two concentric rings of post-holes, respectively 48½ ft. and 38½ ft. in diameter. At the centre were four post-holes in a square. The entrance, 10 ft. wide, had a porch and an entrance passage. House II<sup>36</sup> had a 32 ft. diameter ring of post-holes with a 10 ft. wide entrance, outside which there seems to have been a porch.

At the Iron Age site exposed in a gravel-pit at Langford Downs, near Lechlade, Glos.,<sup>37</sup> there was a circle of post-holes 50 ft. in diameter, but there was no centre-post and the diameter is too great for the area to have been roofed without a central support, so this structure was probably somewhat different from the Standlake huts. Elsewhere, various kinds of Iron Age dwellings have been found, but none closely comparable with the Standlake examples.<sup>38</sup>

*General Remarks.* The Iron Age settlements here recorded are perhaps chiefly of interest as a foretaste of what scientific excavation in the future may be expected to reveal in the upper Thames country. The site is probably much the same as many others where gravel-workings have been observed cutting into Iron Age storage-pits, but this time, as at Langford Downs, the method of working revealed the plan instead of a rather meaningless section of the settlement.

The most closely related site so far available elsewhere is Little Woodbury, near Salisbury, where houses, pits and drying frames were very like those at Standlake. There are certain differences between the two sites, the most important of which is that Little Woodbury was encircled by a palisade,<sup>39</sup> whereas the Standlake settlement seems to have been open. The ground covered by the various Iron Age sites on Standlake Downs is considerable, and, unrestricted by any boundary, the inhabitants may have shifted their dwelling place (or places) from time to time. Further points are that the large hollows, prominent at Little Woodbury<sup>40</sup> have no counterpart at Standlake, where they would certainly have been revealed by air photography if in

<sup>35</sup> *Proc. Prehist. Soc.*, n.s. vi (1940), 78.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 92.

<sup>37</sup> See Mrs. Williams's report, *infra*, p. 54: this site was also uncovered by a scraper.

<sup>38</sup> Bersu suggests (*op. cit.*, p. 90, note 3) that the hut on site A at Frilford, Berks., (*Oxoniensia*, iv, 10) was part of an incompletely excavated hut like House I at Little Woodbury, but this appears unlikely to the present writer. The penannular trench with entrance barred by several postholes, probably the site of a hut, investigated at Cassington by E. T. Leeds (*Antiq. Journ.*, xiv, 269) is comparable in size (25 × 30 ft.), but quite different in other respects.

<sup>39</sup> The large ditch encircling Little Woodbury was dug in some emergency, but was not finished and fell into disuse. The palisade appears to have been the permanent boundary (Bersu, *op. cit.*, pp. 35 ff.). If there had been a palisade at this Standlake site it would almost certainly have been revealed by the scraper.

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 64.

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existence, and that no traces occurred of the supposed drying ovens, the debris of which occurred in such quantities in the filling of pits at the Wiltshire site. In general, however, the resemblances between Little Woodbury and Standlake are striking, and indicate a considerable measure of uniformity in the Iron Age A2-AB culture of Southern Britain.

Two small ditched enclosures of Dyke Hills type were seen from the air at site A,<sup>41</sup> but apart from this the numerous enclosures, large and small, which are seen at many crop-mark sites, and some of which are of Iron Age date<sup>42</sup> are conspicuous by their absence on Standlake Downs. Many enclosures have been observed at two places near Standlake village<sup>43</sup> but their character can be determined only by excavation. The relationship of such sites to the one here described is at present unknown.

### APPENDIX I

#### THE POTTERY (1943)

The scanty finds of pottery made in 1943 are listed below. A few comments made by Mr. J. S. P. Bradford on the dates of individual fragments are also given.

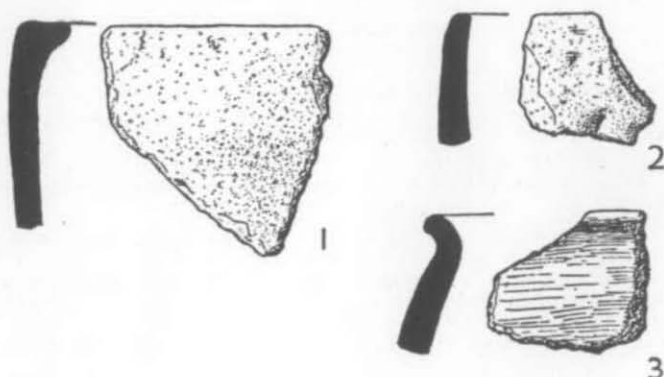


FIG. 11

#### STANDLAKE DOWNS, OXON.

Pottery from : (1) Circle no. 2 (p. 42) ; (2) Circle no. 1 (p. 41) ;  
(3) Pit in settlement-site C (p. 42)

Sc.  $\frac{1}{2}$

Circle no. 1, upper part of ditch filling. Rim fragment from vessel with finger-tip decoration, made of brown surfaced ware with brown core and containing shell grit (FIG. 11, no. 2). Base angle of coarse black ware with shell grit. Several small scraps of red or black ware containing shell grit.

<sup>41</sup> *Oxoniensis*, VIII/IX, 97, site 24 (c).

<sup>42</sup> E.g. those at Dorchester, Oxon. (*ibid.*, VII, 36) and Langford Downs, Oxon. (*infra*, pp. 44 ff.).

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.*, VIII/IX, 98, sites 25, 26.



## D. N. RILEY

*Circle no. 2, upper part of ditch filling.* Many small fragments of red ware, some with black core, hard and sometimes fine texture, much shell grit.

*Ibid., surface find from ditch filling.* Fragment with furrowed surface made of hard black ware with much shell grit.

*Ibid., burial in pit inside circle.* Numerous fragments of an urn, roughly made with uneven surface, flat-topped incurved rim, rather friable and sandy ware, buff outer and black inner surface (FIG. 11, no. 1). Late Bronze Age form and fabric.

*Pit 5.* Outcurved rim of fine, hard, black ware, no grit (FIG. 11, no. 3), typical Iron Age AB form. Large piece of thick, coarse, red ware with black core and shell grit.

*Post-hole of hut 1.* Large fragment of thick, coarse, hard, red ware with much shell grit. Iron Age fabric.

*Post-hole of hut 4.* Base angle of thick, coarse, red ware, black inner surface and core, little shell grit. Iron Age type fabric.

## APPENDIX II

### SIX URNS IN THE ASHMOLEAN MUSEUM FROM THE 1857 EXCAVATIONS

By R. J. C. ATKINSON

Among the Ashmolean Museum's collection of Bronze Age pottery are five urns known to survive from the very great number originally excavated by Stone and a sixth which, although it is incomplete and bears no Museum number or label, is so similar to the others in shape and texture that it almost certainly belongs to the same group. These urns are illustrated in PLATE III, A-F.

- A. Height 10 in.; Diameter (rim)  $7\frac{1}{2}$  in. (Abercromby, *Bronze Age Pottery*, II, pl. xcv, 473a.) The ware is pinkish-brown in colour and rough in texture, with a large admixture of coarse grit. Below the rim is a very irregular line of finger impressions; the rim itself is slightly inturned. On one side a deep crack extends downwards from the rim, on either side of which is a small perforation, 1 in. below the rim, presumably made in order to pull the sides of the crack together by means of a binding. A similar crack and perforations occur on an urn of roughly the same type from Mill Hill Park, Acton, Middlesex. (Abercromby, *loc. cit.*, 470c.)
- B. Height  $11\frac{1}{2}$  in.; Diameter (rim) 10 in. (Abercromby, *loc. cit.*, 473.) The ware of this urn is similar to that of Urn A. An irregular line of finger-tip impressions runs round the urn  $2\frac{1}{2}$  in. below the rim, which is slightly inbent.
- C. Height 10 in.; Diameter (rim)  $8\frac{1}{2}$  in. The ware of this urn is similar to that of urn A, but coarser, with more grit. Two irregular bands of finger-tip impressions encircle the urn below the rim, with a third similar but discontinuous band between them. The rim itself is decorated with impressions of a finger-nail. A long crack extends from rim to base down the side of the urn, on either side of which are three pairs of perforations similar to those already noticed on urn A, at  $\frac{1}{2}$  in.,  $3\frac{1}{2}$  in., and  $6\frac{1}{2}$  in. respectively, below the rim (PLATE III, c).
- D. Height  $5\frac{3}{4}$  in.; Diameter (rim)  $5\frac{1}{2}$  in. (Abercromby, *loc. cit.*, 473b.) The ware is similar to that of urn C, but the surface is very irregular, with many traces of rough modelling with the fingers. The upper and lower parts of the body meet in a shoulder marked by a very slight raised band.
- E. Height  $9\frac{3}{4}$  in.; Diameter (rim) 7 in. (Abercromby, *loc. cit.*, 473c.) The ware is very coarse and gritty, and contains stones up to  $\frac{1}{2}$  in. in diameter. The very rough and irregular waist cord,  $2\frac{1}{2}$  in. below the rim, divides the body into two parts.
- F. Incomplete; Diameter (base) 7 in. The ware is similar to that of urn D.

These urns, though they must clearly fall within the Deverel-Rimbury phase of the Late Bronze Age, do not in fact exhibit the features characteristic of true barrel-and-bucket urns of this period. They must be regarded as extremely degenerate urns of the overhanging rim series, in the later stages of which the urn becomes biconical. Here even the biconical shape has largely disappeared, though the division between the upper and lower elements is preserved by the lines of finger-tip impressions.

# BRONZE AGE AND IRON AGE SITE ON STANDLAKE DOWNS

## APPENDIX III

### THE HUMAN REMAINS (1943)

By Miss B. M. BLACKWOOD

#### CIRCLE NO. 1.

*Ditch section, upper part of filling.* Two small portions of skull, portion of parietal bone, upper part of femur and portion of shaft of tibia, all probably of child; four indeterminate fragments of long bones; broken tibia of rabbit, not calcined.

*Cremation A.* Portion of skull and skeleton of adult female, including many recognizable bones, less broken and less calcined than the other burials.

*Cremation B.* Fragments of skull and skeleton of child, sex indeterminate.

*Cremation C.* Two fragments of adult skull, sex doubtful; other indeterminate fragments.

#### CIRCLE NO. 2.

*Ditch section.* Portions of skull and long bones of child, age and sex indeterminate.

*Cremation.* Small and much calcined fragments of skull and skeleton, probably adult, sex indeterminate.

#### CIRCLE NO. 3.

*Cremation.* Small fragments of skull and skeleton of very young baby.

PLATE III

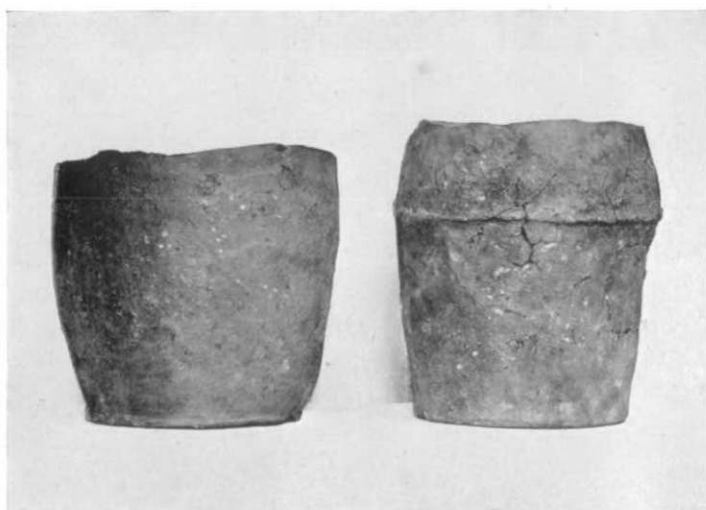


A

B

C

D



F

E



G

STANDLAKE DOWNS, OXON.

A-F. Six Late Bronze Age urns from Stone's excavations (1857) in Circle no. 1, now in the Ashmolean Museum (p. 42)

G. Close-up view showing repair on urn C (p. 42)

A-F: Sc.  $\frac{1}{8}$ ; G: Sc. c.  $\frac{2}{5}$

*Phh. Ashmolean Museum.*