

Excavations at Beard Mill, Stanton Harcourt, Oxon., 1944

By AUDREY WILLIAMS

THE gravel terrace between the rivers Thames and Windrush in the Stanlake-Stanton Harcourt-Eynsham district of Oxfordshire has proved rich in archaeological remains, many of which have been recognized from crop-markings on air-photographs. One of these sites lies between Stanton Harcourt's Old Vicarage and Beard Mill, on the north side of the road from Stanton Harcourt to Hardwick (O.S. 6-inch Oxon. 38 NW.; FIG. 3, 1). An air-photograph by the late Major G. W. G. Allen (PL. IV)¹ shows on the east half of the field immediately west of the Old Vicarage (now called Vicarage Field) an agglomeration of pits,² a small rectangular enclosure and a series of ditches, some of which appear to form larger enclosures, probably early fields. The air-photograph also shows in this field ten ring-ditches; an eleventh ditch lay south of the road, the whole group indicating considerable Bronze Age or other early activity here.

A gravel pit opened early in 1944 destroyed the ground, containing two of the ring-ditches, south of the area containing the pits and the small enclosure. Further ground to the north had already been mechanically stripped of top-soil, but before gravel-digging proceeded, excavations were carried out by the Ancient Monuments Department of the Ministry of Works.³ The ground available for excavation is shown in FIG. 3, 2. It held half of the small enclosure (PL. V, A), the post-holes of a semi-circular structure (not visible in the air-photograph) and other post-holes, three slight gullies (only one of which appears on the air-photograph), a long gully with post-holes and a number of pits. These features, seen as earthy marks when the surface of the gravel had been cleaned up after the mechanical scraping, are here divided for convenience into

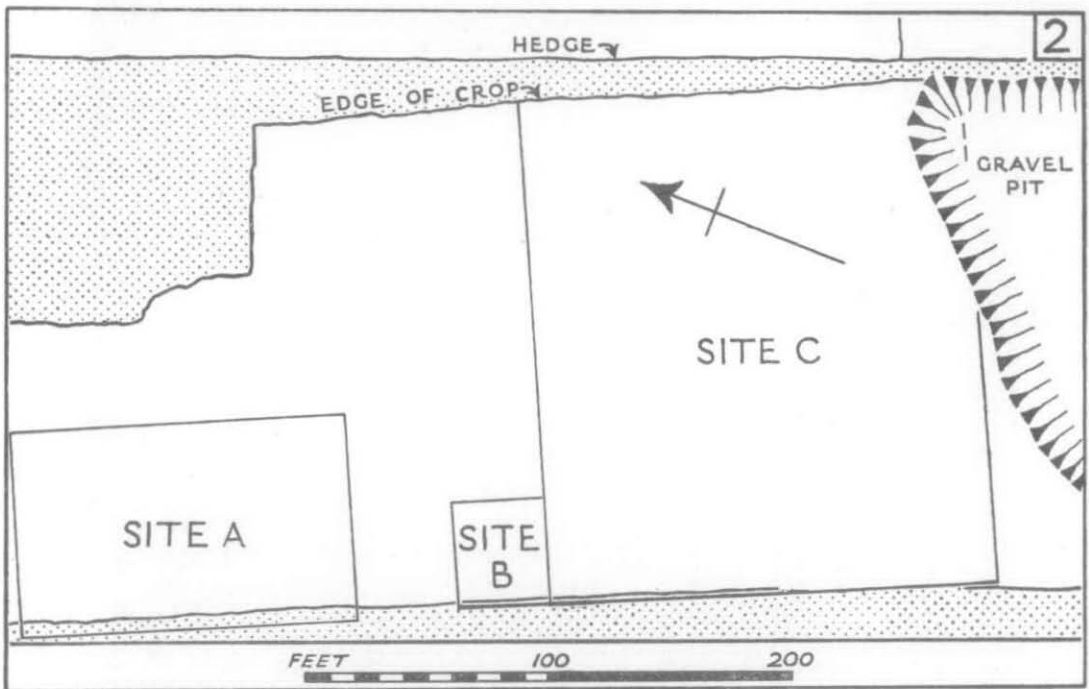
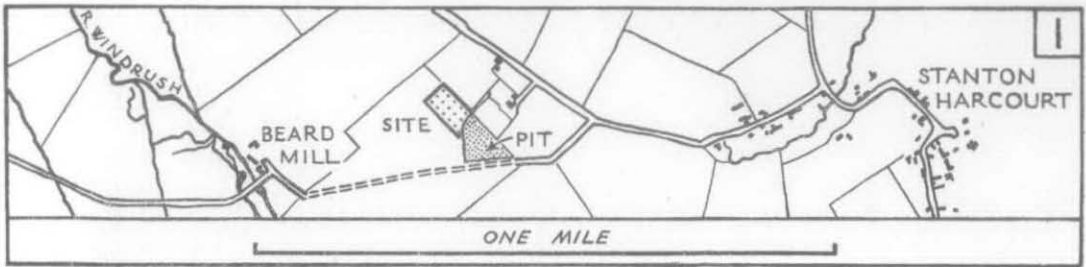
¹ Ashmolean Museum, Allen neg. no. 1132.

² *V.C.H. Oxon.*, I, 252; the pits are there considered to be a settlement, one of three thought to have been detected from the air at Stanton Harcourt between Linch Hill and Beard Mill. One of the other groups, however, was tested during the 1940 excavations at Stanton Harcourt (*Oxoniensia*, viii/ix (1943-44)), when the few 'pits' that were examined proved to be natural hollows in the gravel. The third group was at Linch Hill itself (see *V.C.H. Oxon.*, I, Pl. xiv, B, opp. p. 297).

³ Thanks are due to Miss B. M. Blackwood for examining the human remains and for many other kindnesses; to Mr. L. F. Cowley and Mr. J. C. Maby for identifying animal bones and charcoals; and to members of O.U.A.S. for voluntary labour.

Further extensive gravel-digging has taken place in this field in and since 1951, during which it has been possible for members of the Oxford University Archaeological Society and others to undertake further rescue work, the results of which will be published in a future volume of *Oxoniensia*.

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FIG. 3

BEARD MILL, STANTON HARCOURT, OXON.

1. Map of area, with site of excavations shown stippled
2. Plan (FIGS. 4, 6 and 7) showing position of Sites A, B, and C

Based on 6-in. O.S. map by permission of H.M. Stationery Office

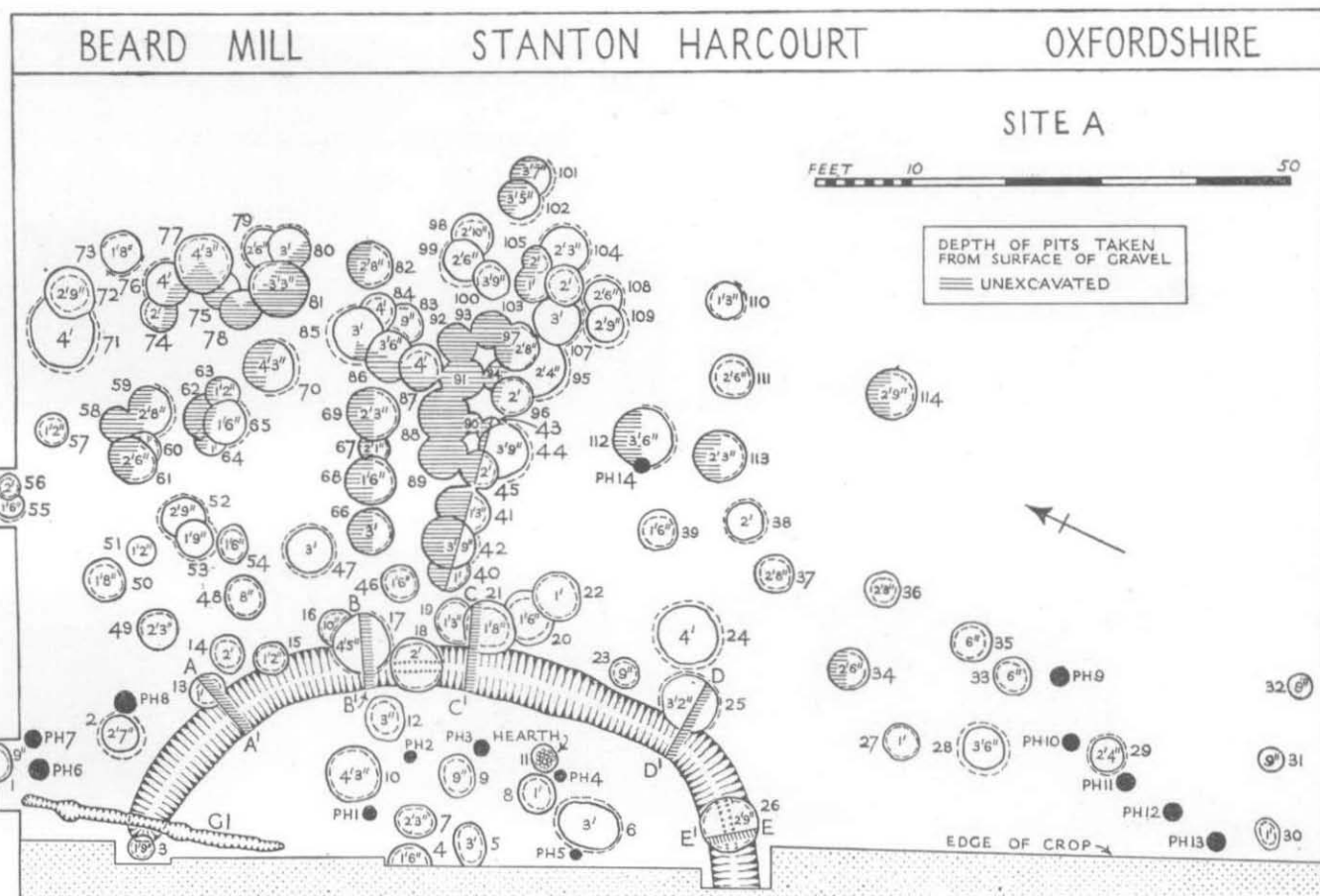


FIG. 4
 BEARD MILL, STANTON HARCOURT, OXON
 Plan of Site A, p. 9

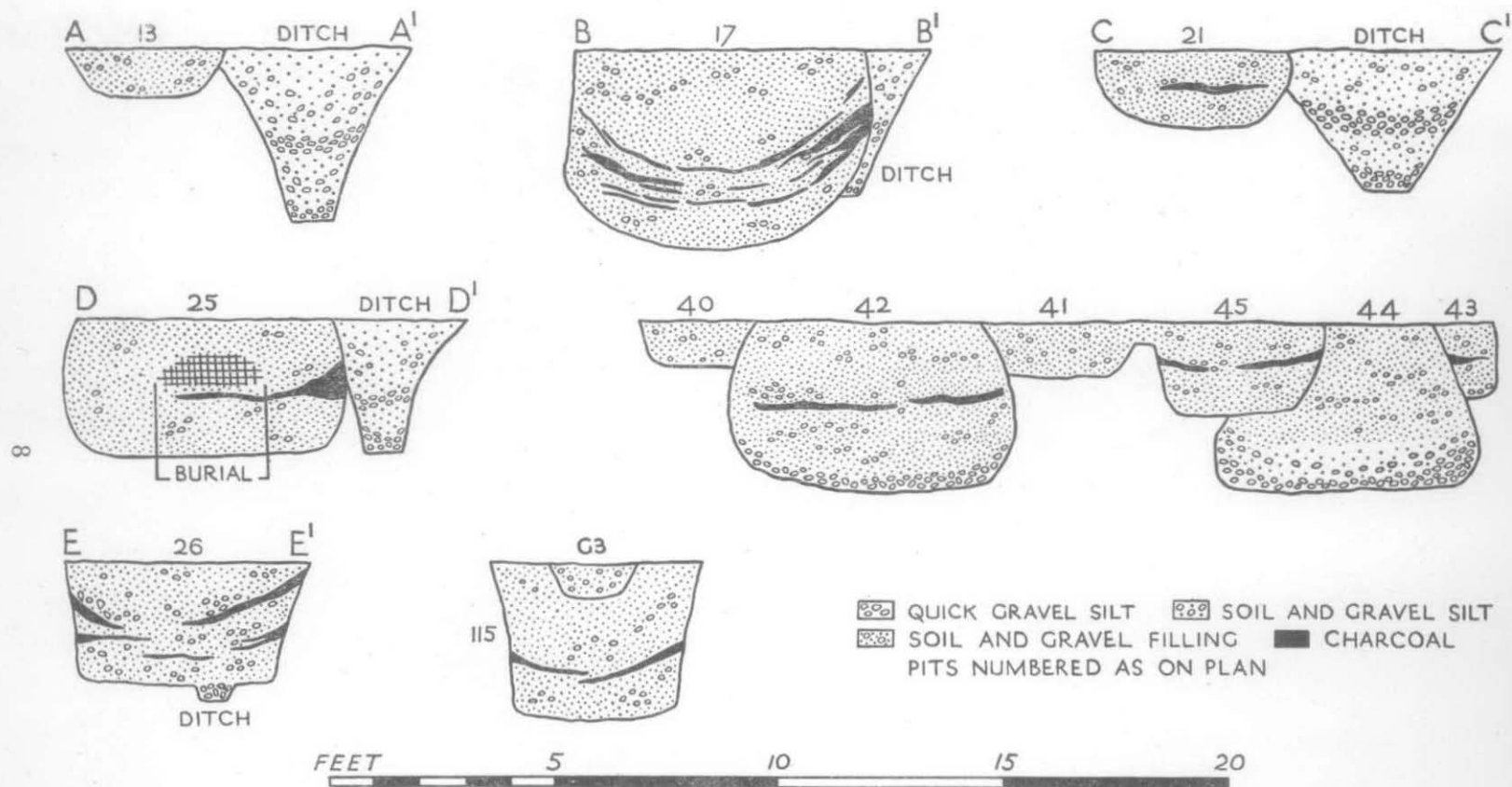


FIG. 5
BEARD MILL, STANTON HARCOURT, OXON.
Sections of pits and ditches, Sites A-C, pp. 9-14

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sites A, B, C and shown on plan in FIGS. 4, 6 and 7. The rest of the stripped area was examined but proved featureless.

THE DITCHED ENCLOSURE AND ITS HUT (SITE A: FIG. 4, PLAN; FIG. 5, SECTIONS)

The ditch of the roughly rectilinear enclosure, 5 to 7 feet wide and $3\frac{1}{2}$ to 4 feet deep,⁴ was funnel-shaped with a flat bottom usually 9 to 12 inches wide (PL. v, B, background). Its bottom and the lower parts of its sides were covered with a quick gravelly silt; above came a slow silt of mixed dark brown soil and gravel. Then, fairly constantly at about halfway up the filling, came a layer of clean gravel, sagging with the ditch profile and suggesting excessive weathering of the exposed gravel sides in one particular season. The final filling was again dark brown soil with gravel.

The entrance on the north-west corner of the enclosure is indicated on the air-photograph but its appearance there is misleading in that the ditch seems to be inturned on the east side of the passage. Excavation showed that this effect was due to a short length of gully (G 1) running at a right angle to and crossing the rounded end of the ditch. The entrance was, in fact, a simple break about 6 feet wide, to judge by the mark made by the west end of the ditch in a standing crop. There seems to have been no gate; no post-hole was found near the end of the ditch.

The length of the enclosed area was 60 feet, its width about 40 feet. It was largely occupied by a hut, oval or circular, of which only five post-holes lay within the limit of the excavation. All five holes were dug with vertical sides and flat bottoms (PL. v, c), their diameters ranging from 16 to 21 inches and their depths from 9 to 12 inches. Each hole retained a few small lumps of callas, some still against the sides as placed for packing, others fallen across the bottoms of the holes. The filling was very dark soil, rather soft and flecked with carbonized wood.

The ditch was impinged upon by eight pits (nos. 3, 13, 15, 17, 18, 21, 25 and 26) of various shapes and sizes. Where the relationship could be definitely ascertained, the pits were later than the ditch, which had filled up to within a few inches of the gravel surface before they were dug. Section AA¹ (FIG. 5) showed the very black filling of a small pit (13) cutting into the upper profile of the ditch. Section BB¹ had a large pit (17), with distinctive streaks of reddened soil and charcoal in its filling, destroying the outer half of the ditch. In section CC¹ the junction between pit (21) and ditch came at a high level, but the darker, less pebbly, filling of the pit could be seen above the ridge of undisturbed gravel which separated the two cavities lower down. In two

⁴ Owing to the mechanical scraping of the site all depths here given may be rather less than originally existed.

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places pits (18 and 26) straddled the ditch, and the bottom few inches of the ditch showed below the floors of the pits (Section EE¹ and PL. V, D). Finally the irregular outline of the ditch terminal called for a cutting along rather than across it. In this longitudinal trench the filling of the ditch naturally ran more horizontally than it would have done in a transverse section and was clearly cut into by the sagging profile and finer darker filling of a small pit (3), dug partly into and partly beyond the end of the ditch.

From the floor of the ditch, and, therefore, to be regarded as contemporary with the occupation of the enclosure, came pottery (FIG. 8 and p. 17 below), fragments of a triangular loom-weight of badly-baked clay and a quantity of animal bones.

The animal bones are identified by Mr. L. F. Cowley as remains of horse ox, pig and sheep (or goat) ; all, with the exception of horse, of both adult and immature specimens. The ox, represented by a radius of the right side (measuring 234 mm. and indicating an animal standing about 3 feet 3 inches) and portions of horn-cores, was the small Celtic short-horn (*bos longifrons*) ; a lower jaw bone of ox possessed a tooth row of 120 mm. A similar bone of horse had a tooth row of 158 mm.

THE SEMI-CIRCULAR HOUSE (SITE B: FIG. 6)

About fifty yards south-east of the enclosure lay the post-holes of a semi-circular structure (PL. VI, B), presumably a house.

Nine of the twenty-six post-holes (PH 15-23) form an approximate half-circle with a radius of 12 to 15 feet from a bigger hole (PH 38) halfway along the north side. The intervals between these holes varied from 2½ feet to 8 feet. Post-hole 38 evidently held an upright of some size ; almost 2 feet across and 14 inches deep, it had vertical walls against which pieces of callas still stood upright. The hole (PH 19) halfway round the perimeter of the structure was identical with post-hole 38, suggesting a pair of major roof supports, but the other holes were slighter, 14 to 18 inches across and 10 to 12 inches deep. All holes were flat-bottomed. Some had been renovated (PH 16 and 19) ; this had happened also to one of the internal holes (PH 28) and to one of the holes on the north side (PH 39). Some holes had a second hole in close, or fairly close, support (PH 15, 18 and 21). The structure was evidently in use for a considerable period.

Slightly north-east of PH 38 was a hearth. Ash and a few heat-crazed pebbles filled a shallow oval scoop in the gravel (2 feet by 2 feet 8 inches by 5 inches deep). Much of the hut-floor was of callas, but into its gravel patches dirty soil had been well-trodden. While the west half of the house had reasonable floor-space (18 feet by 15 feet), the east half was much interrupted

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by post-holes for which no chronology can be suggested ; they were presumably dug when extra support for the roof became necessary.

In the softer patches of the floor and in the post-holes were found scraps of pottery similar to those from the ditched enclosure and the pits.

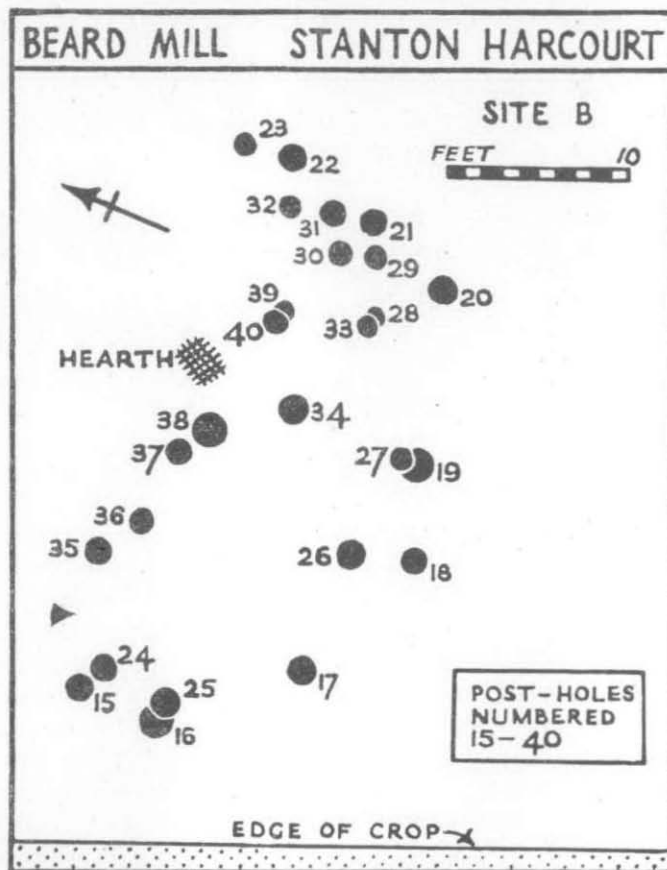


FIG. 6
BEARD MILL, STANTON HARCOURT, OXON.
Plan of Site B, p. 10

With the round houses known at Stanlake,⁵ in the immediate vicinity, at Langford Downs, Oxon.,⁶ and at Woodbury, Wilts.,⁷ in mind, careful search

⁵ Riley, *Oxoniensia*, xi/xii (1946-7), fig. 9.

⁶ Williams, *Oxoniensia*, xi/xii, 54.

⁷ Bersu, *Proc. Prehist. Soc.*, new ser. v (1940), 78.

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was made for further post-holes, but the gravel north of those already uncovered was completely undisturbed. The Beard Mill house was never more than a half-circle.

THE PITS (FIGS. 4 AND 7, PLANS ; FIG. 5, SECTIONS)

The air-photographs showed three main clusters of pits, with others scattered in smaller groups. One of the major concentrations is in and round the ditched enclosure (Site A), another in the south-west corner of the excavated area (Site C). The third heavy distribution, with pits cut into each other time and again, had been lost in the gravel-pit.

Just over eighty pits were emptied wholly or to a section-face halfway across. The plans (FIGS. 4 and 7) give details of these pits. The majority were round, 2 to 5 feet across; comparatively few (5-7, 9, 12, 48, 54, 59, 61, 71 and 122) were oval.

Whether round or oval on plan, the pits were dug to three main patterns—(a) vertical-sided, (b) with sides sloping inwards from mouth to floor, (c) with undercut sides. The shallow pits (6 inches to 2 feet deep) have either vertical sides (FIG. 5, 43) or inward sloping sides (FIG. 5, 13 and 40). Of the deeper pits (2½ feet to 4½ feet deep) some have inward sloping sides (FIG. 5, 26, 45 and 115), but the majority are of beehive form, wider lower down than at the mouth (FIG. 5, 17, 25, 42 and 44).

Here, as at the classic Stanlake site,⁸ fresh pits were frequently cut into infilled earlier pits (FIG. 5, 43-5), sometimes, on plan, to a bewildering degree (FIG. 4, 87-97). The partial nature of the excavation prevents accurate assessment as to whether this is the result of long occupation of the site by a small community or a shorter occupation by a larger population.

The filling of the pits consisted of dark, fairly soft, soil containing household rubbish. Sections showed that some pits, having served their storage purpose, were left empty long enough to acquire a quick silt of gravel from the sides (FIG. 5, 42 and 44). Most of the pits, however, had been filled in as soon as discarded, the dirty filling resting immediately on the gravel floor (FIG. 5, 17, 21, 25, 26, etc.). No clay lining, as recognized at Mount Farm, Dorchester, Oxon.,⁹ and at Frilford, Berks.,¹⁰ appeared in any of these pits.

Debris from hearths—reddish burnt soil, carbonized wood and pebbles crazed by heat—frequently occurred in the pit-fillings (FIG. 5, 17, 21, 25, 26, 42, etc.), but there was only one instance of a pit which had been used as a fire-place. Pit 11 (PL. VI, A), which was 9 inches deep, with surface measurements of 2 feet 8 inches by 3 feet 2 inches, had its floor lined with thin stone

⁸ Stone, *Proc. Soc. Antiq.*, 1 ser. IV (1857), 94 and Bradford, *Antiq. Journ.*, xxii, fig. 1.

⁹ Myres, *Oxoniensia*, II (1937), 24.

¹⁰ Bradford and Goodchild, *Oxoniensia*, IV (1939), 7.

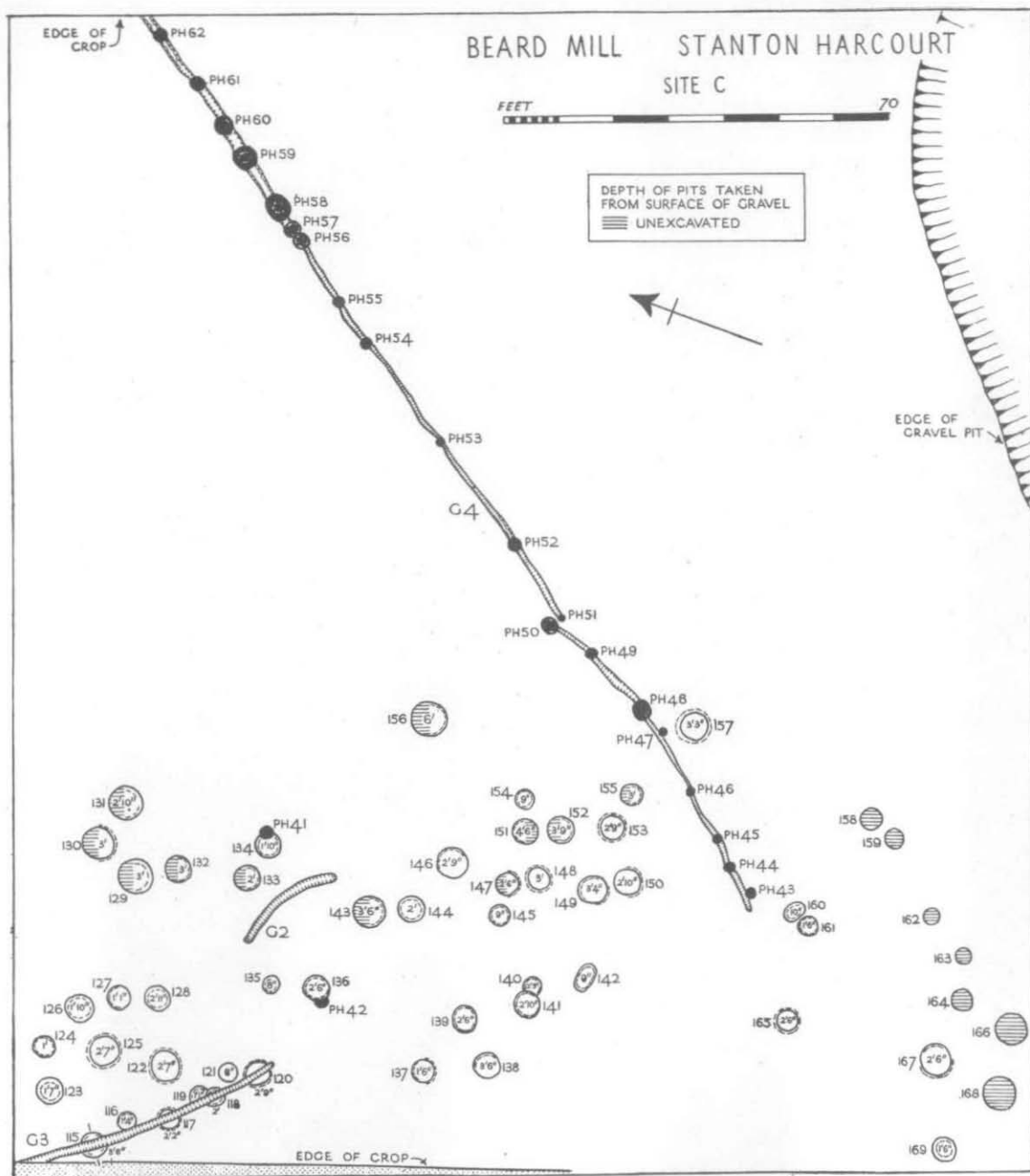


FIG. 7
BEARD MILL, STANTON HARCOURT, OXON.
Plan of Site C, pp. 12 ff.

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slabs, all cracked and discoloured with heat and covered with ash and charcoal of hazel, poplar and common oak.¹¹ This hearth may have belonged to the hut of the ditched enclosure, but only if there were a gap between post-holes 3 and 4, since it lies across the line of the hut-wall suggested by the holes. It may, however, have been in use before or after the occupation of the hut. A somewhat similar pit-hearth occurred at Frilford.¹²

The rubbish in the pits included potsherds and bones. The pottery is illustrated in FIGS. 9 and 10 and is discussed with that from the ditch of the enclosure on p. 16 below. The animal bones were of the same species as those from the ditch. Human bones occurred in pit 25, at about 12 inches down from the top of the filling. The corpse had been dismembered and heaped haphazard in the partly-filled pit; the foot-bones were found articulated but placed on top of a couple of rib-bones; arm and leg bones lay above a badly damaged cranium. Parts of the body were missing and no determination of sex or age was possible.¹³

THE GULLIES (FIGS. 4 AND 7)

Three short gullies and one long gully were found within the excavated area (FIG. 4, G 1; FIG. 7, G 2-4).

One short gully (G 1) ran north-south across the end of the ditch on the east side of the entrance to the enclosure. It was straight, 20 feet long, and normally 12 to 18 inches wide and 9 to 10 inches deep. The sides sloped gently inwards to a flat bottom 6 inches across. At two points the sides of the gully bulged to 2 feet in width, suggesting post-holes, but the depth remained uniform and there was no sign of packing. The filling of the gully was darker and finer than that of the ditch across which it passed.

The second gully (G 2) was 21 feet long, 18 inches wide, 7 to 9 inches deep, and cut on a slight curve. In section it was V-shaped at its west end, with a flatter bottom towards the east. Its filling was dark, fine soil with gravel.

The third gully (G 3; PL. VI, c) ran almost straight, east to west. Only the eastern portion could be uncovered, about 30 feet; the rest was visible in the air-photograph. Its width varied from just over 12 inches to 2 feet; its depth was normally about 9 inches, but, like its width, diminished towards its one end, just beyond pit 120. Sloping sides reduced the width of the bottom of the gully to 6 inches; a few lumps of callas adhered to the sides in places. The filling was dark brown, rather stiff, soil with gravel. It could be seen, in sections, running across pits 115, 117-120, proving the gully the later feature.

¹¹ Identified by Mr. J. Cecil Maby.

¹² Bradford and Goodchild, *op. cit.*, 8.

¹³ The bones were examined by Miss B. M. Blackwood.

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These trifling gullies occur frequently on Iron Age sites and evidently served some domestic purpose, possibly slight drainage. Gully 3, with its traces of packing, may have held a windbreak round some kind of shelter, too slight to necessitate post-holes, or a working place, though no 'working-hollow' was present.

G 4, the long gully, was one of several crop-marks interpreted as boundary ditches. It appears to have supported a palisade, probably of brushwood, with timber uprights in the post-holes, which straddled the gully at irregular intervals (FIG. 7, PH 43-62). It appeared on the gravel surface as a ribbon of dirty brown pebbly soil. At its best, on the north-east (PL. VI, D), it was 2 feet wide and just over 12 inches deep, with its sides lined with callas to leave a channel 6 inches wide. To the south-west it dwindled to a mere scrape, 6 inches wide and 2 inches deep. The fence seems to have been constructed in short stretches—65 feet (PH 43-50) slightly curved, at the south-west end; then 82 feet (PH 51-56); then a little more than the 48 feet uncovered. The intervals between these post-holes varied considerably, from 1 to 12 feet (cf. PH 57-58 and PH 53-54); 6 to 8 feet was the average. The post-holes were all roughly circular, with the exception of the oval PH 48. In most cases the post-holes were slightly wider than the gully, and always rather deeper, varying from 9 to 14 inches according to the depth of the gully.

Similar palisade-ditches are known as the boundaries of Iron Age A farmsteads elsewhere, at Mount Farm (the inner of the Little Circle Ditches and Ditch 9),¹⁴ Blewburton Hill, Berks.,¹⁵ and Little Woodbury, Wilts.¹⁶

THE POST-HOLES (FIGS. 4 AND 7)

The occasional post-holes usual on Iron Age A sites were found. There were three (PH 6-8) just north of the entrance to the ditched enclosure, presumably associated with the hut inside the enclosure. These, like the other single holes, must have held substantial uprights; their dimensions were: PH 6, 2 feet 2 inches diameter and 1 foot 10 inches deep; PH 7, 1 foot 9 inches by 2 feet and 1 foot 8 inches deep; PH 8, 2 feet 3 or 4 inches diameter and 2 feet deep.

Post-hole 14 (1 foot 8 inches across and 18 inches deep, with soft filling flecked with carbonized wood) had been cut partly into pit 112.

Just over 12 feet south-east of the ditched enclosure lay five post-holes, four of them aligned north-south (PH 10-13) and one (PH 9) to the north-east of the line. The intervals between these holes were irregular; between PH

¹⁴ Myres, *Oxoniensia*, II, fig. 3.

¹⁵ Collins, *Berks. Arch. Journ.*, vol. 50, 25.

¹⁶ Bersu, *Proc. Prehist. Soc.*, 1940, 46.

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9-10 and PH 10-11, 3 feet ; between PH 11-12, 4 feet ; and between PH 12-13, 3½ feet. All the holes were, however, uniform in size—roughly 2 feet in diameter and 10 inches deep. Their uniformity indicated that they belonged to one structure or several similar structures, possibly a series of corn-drying racks, with a sixth member, or more, outside the limit of the excavation.

On Site C near the boundary fence (FIG. 7) there were two single post-holes ; PH 41 (2½ feet across and 2¼ feet deep) was later than pit 134 ; PH 42, of about the same size, had been cut into pit 136. Such posts are known to have served a variety of domestic and agricultural purposes.

THE POTTERY¹⁷ (FIGS. 8-10)

The pottery from the floor of the ditch of the enclosure and, therefore, contemporary with occupation of the enclosure (1-13) and that from the pits and gullies (14-48) obviously all belongs to one cultural phase. Two kinds of ware, both hand-turned, were found ; the one a gritty, buff-grey-black body, usually smooth surfaced, the other, in smaller quantity, a hard-fired black body with external burnishing.

As a whole the pottery indicates a fairly early Iron Age A 2 culture for the site. Iron Age A 1 survives in the angular situlas (25-27) and the furrowed bowl (20), and in decoration in the All Cannings Cross manner (15 and 19). Finger-print ornament is not here a criterion between A 1 and A 2, in that it occurs on A 2 forms (37 and 44). The absence of haematite-coated ware is characteristic, with a few exceptions, of sites on the north side of the Thames.

Some parallels to pottery found at Allen's Pit, Dorchester, Oxon.,¹⁸ are cited in the following list, but the present series is rather later in Iron Age A 2 ; it has fewer pronouncedly angular situlate jars and less linear ornament. The majority of the pots from Beard Mill are devolved situlate jars, some of them considerably debased ; another popular form, here as elsewhere, is the vertical-sided or barrel-shaped bowl or jar with flat-topped rim (5, 39-42). These forms compare with those of Mount Farm A 2, which is considered to be later in date than Allen's Pit.¹⁹ The Beard Mill pottery compares also with that from Frilford, where the initial settlement is now dated 200-150 B.C. ;²⁰ it lacks the haematite-coated ware and bowls with flaring rims there found, but has other Wessex Iron Age A 1 affinities, mentioned above, there wanting, and may well be rather earlier.

The Beard Mill pottery differs from that from the sites quoted in having no

¹⁷ The finds consisted entirely of pottery (now in the Ashmolean Museum) and bones.

¹⁸ Bradford, *Oxoniensia*, VII (1942), 42 ff.

¹⁹ *ibid.*, 39.

²⁰ *ibid.*, 39.

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Iron Age B element, apart from the slight B influence responsible for a few incipient bead-rims (7, 13). The burnished bowls and distinctive decoration of true B tradition, as at Mount Farm and Frilford, are absent.

Neither Belgic nor Romano-British pottery occurred anywhere on the site.

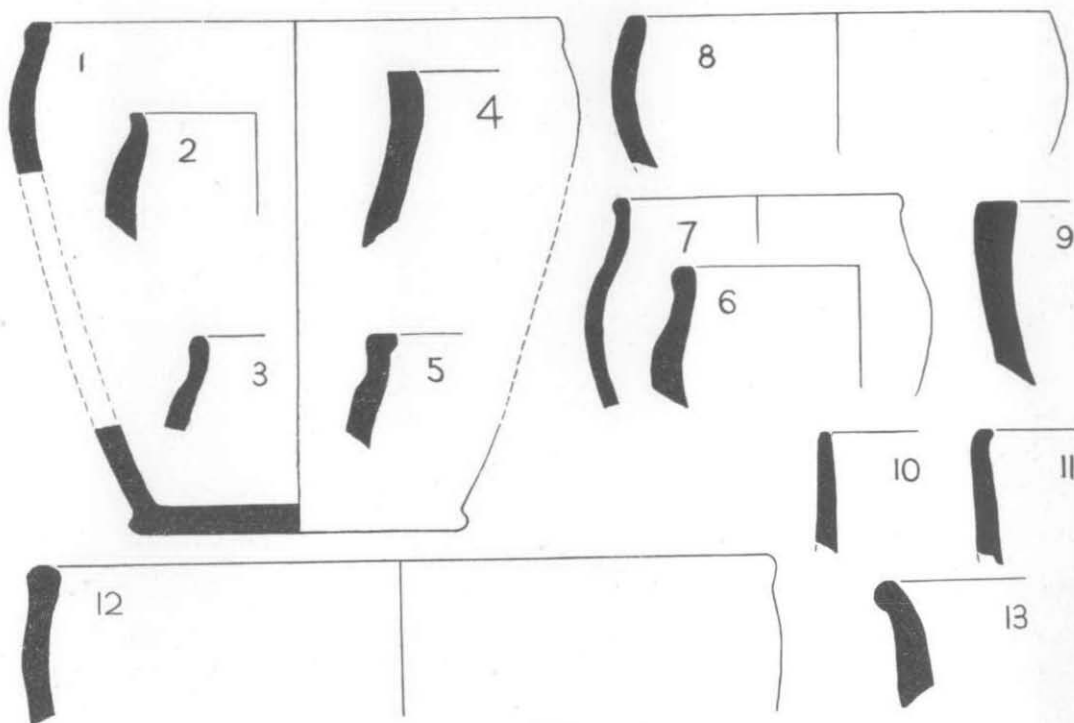


FIG. 8
BEARD MILL, STANTON HARCOURT, OXON.
Iron Age pottery from the ditch of the enclosure, p. 10
Scale : $\frac{1}{4}$

FIG. 8. POTTERY FROM THE FLOOR OF THE DITCH OF THE ENCLOSURE

(1) Derived situlate jar with vertical flat-topped rim ; buff well-gritted ware partially smoke-blackened. Cf. Yarnton 38 (*Oxoniensia*, VII, fig. 12).

(2) Similar type ; poor buff-grey ware, smoke-blackened externally. Cf. Mount Farm A I 17 (*Oxoniensia*, II, fig. 8).

(3) Similar type with rounded top to rim ; good smooth buff ware with blackened inner face.

(4) Vertical flat-topped rim ; shoulder less pronounced than that of nos. 1-3 ; hard-fired buff ware.

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(5) Derived situlate jar with vertical flat-topped rim thickened internally; reddish-buff well-gritted ware with smooth surface; related to nos. 1-3. Cf. Mount Farm for similar thickening of rim in both jars and bowls.

(6) Derived situlate jar with vertical rim with incipient external bead; coarse, gritty, buff ware; related to nos. 1-3. Cf. Wytham 31 (*Oxoniensia*, VII, fig. 12).

(7) Similar type but in thinner, smooth-faced buff-grey ware.

(8) Barrel-shaped with flat-topped rim; probably a bowl; hard black ware with reddish inner face and traces of external burnishing. Cf. Stanton Harcourt 9 (*Oxoniensia*, VII, fig. 13).

(9) Simple bowl with flat-topped rim; heavy reddish-buff ware. Cf. Frilford 28 (*Oxoniensia*, IV, fig. 6).

(10) Vertically-walled 'flower-pot'; buff ware, smoke-blackened. Cf. Yarnton 36, 37 (*Oxoniensia*, VII, fig. 12).

(11) Similar type with flat-topped rim thickened internally; gritty buff-grey ware, smoke-blackened. Cf. Allen's Pit (*Oxoniensia*, VII, fig. 10, 18).

(12) Jar, more or less vertically-sided, with thickened round-topped rim; crude buff ware with coarse grit backing. Cf. Mount Farm, LCD B VIII 2 (*Oxoniensia*, VII, fig. 9).

(13) Bowl with slightly everted bead-rim; smooth-faced reddish gritty ware, black internally. Cf. Eynsham 7 (*Oxoniensia*, VII, fig. 12), for rim form but at a different angle.

FIG. 9. POTTERY FROM THE PITS

(14) Fragment from angular jar or bowl, probably the latter; fine-black ware with burnished surface; decorated above shoulder with groups of incised horizontal chevrons. For similar technique cf. *All Cannings Cross*, pl. 28, 7, 10. *Site A*; *pit 25*.

(15) Fragment (angle uncertain), of smooth-surfaced grey-black ware; decorated with incised chevrons infilled with small triangular stabs containing white clay. Cf. *All Cannings Cross*, pl. 29, 1 and Wytham 27 (*Oxoniensia*, VII, fig. 12). *Site A*; *pit 37*.

(16) Fragment from neck of angular vessel, probably a bowl; decorated with incised chevrons between horizontal grooves; gritty black ware. Cf. *All Cannings Cross*, pl. 28, 5. *Site A*; *pit 27*.

(17) Fragment from shoulder of situlate vessel; red-purple gritty ware; decorated with oblique finger-nail impressions above angle. Cf. *All Cannings Cross*, pl. 29, 5, 6 and Adwell Cop 33 (*Oxoniensia*, VII, fig. 13). *Site A*; *pit 24*.

(18) Rim fragment, thickened internally; red-black ware with coarse backing; decorated with finger-nail imprints. Mount Farm A19 (*Oxoniensia*, II, fig. 7) and Woodeaton 17 (*Oxoniensia*, VII, fig. 13). *Site A*; *pit 42*.

(19) Small fragment of flat-topped rim of smooth buff ware, burnished black externally; decorated on and below rim with circular punch-marks in the *All Cannings Cross* manner, but not exactly paralleled there. Cf. Long Wittenham 11-14 (*Oxoniensia*, II, fig. 2). *Site C*; *pit 120*.

(20) Fragment from neck and angular shoulder of bowl; buff-grey ware, decorated with wide horizontal grooves above shoulder. Cf. *All Cannings Cross*, pl. 28, 1; the furrowed bowl is unusual in the Oxford district (*Oxoniensia*, II, p. 7) but cf. *V.C.H. Oxon.* I, pl. XI, c, from Allen's Pit, Dorchester. *Site A*; *pit 27*.

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(21) Fragment from angular shoulder of bowl ; gritty black ware, decorated with oblique grooves above (and below) horizontal groove(s). *Site C ; pit 130.*

(22) Fragment from angle of situlate jar ; reddish-buff smooth ware, decorated as No. 21. *Site C ; pit 126.*

(23) Fragment from angle of (?) bowl ; smooth buff ware, blackened internally ; oblique groove(s) above horizontal groove. *Site C ; pit 128.*

(24) Rim fragment, probably from bowl ; flat-topped ; gritty buff ware ; decorated with horizontal grooves. *Site A ; pit 129.*

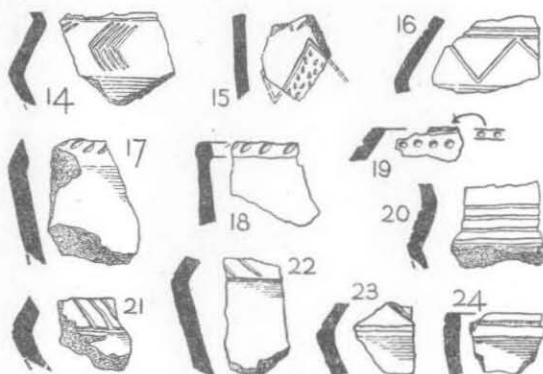


FIG. 9

BEARD MILL, STANTON HARCOURT, OXON.

Iron Age pottery from the pits, p. 14

Scale : $\frac{1}{2}$

FIG. 10. POTTERY FROM THE PITS AND GULLIES

(25) Situlate jar, pronouncedly angular ; hard-fired black ware with burnished surface. Typologically the earliest situlate jar from the site. Cf. Allen's Pit (*Oxoniensis*, vii, fig. 9, 2). *Site A ; pit 47.*

(26) Neck and shoulder of similar type ; reddish-buff-black ware with smooth surface. *Site C ; pit 124.*

(27) Similar type but less angular ; red-brown ware, lower part burnished black. *Site C ; G4 ; PH 60.*

(28) Related to No. 27 ; gritty pink-buff ware with grey inner surface. *Site A ; pit 6.*

(29) Derived situlate jar with vertical flat-topped rim ; buff gritty ware, partly smoke-blackened. Cf. nos. 1-3 above and parallel there cited. *Site A ; pits 6 and 13.*

(30) Similar type ; smooth-surfaced red-buff ware with black inner face. *Site A ; pit 25.*

(31) Fragment of rim of similar type ; top decorated with finger-nail impressions, gritty buff ware. *Site A ; pit 71.*

(32) Jar similar to No. 1 above ; crude buff ware. *Site C ; pit 124.*

(33) Vertical-rimmed jar with profile on a smoother curve than nos. 29-32 ; good black ware with traces of external burnishing. Cf. nos. 4-5 above. *Site A ; pit 7.*

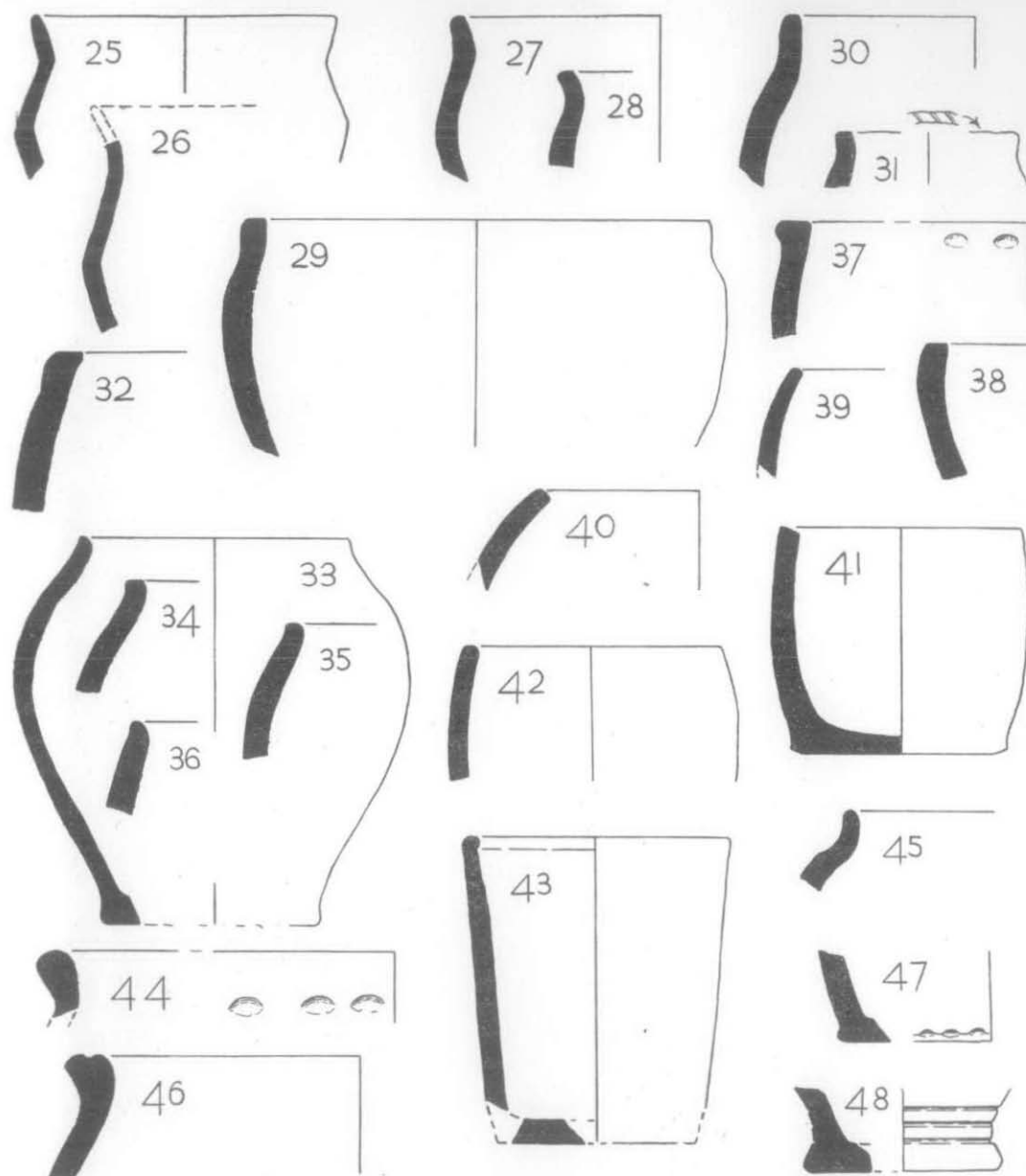


FIG. 10
 BEARD MILL, STANTON HARCOURT, OXON.
 Iron Age pottery from the pits and gullies, p. 14
 Scale : $\frac{1}{2}$

EXCAVATIONS AT BEARD MILL, STANTON HARCOURT, 1944

- (34) Similar type, but heavier and top of rim flatter ; gritty pink-buff ware. *Site A ; pit 17.*
- (35) Similar type ; good brown-black burnished ware. *Site C ; pit 153.*
- (36) Small rim fragment similar to, but heavier than, no. 33 ; gritty red ware. *Site A ; pit 18.*
- (37) Probably a variant of no. 33 ; bowl rather than jar ; external thickening of rim ; gritty buff-black ware with finger-tip decoration below rim. *Site C ; G3.*
- (38) Bowl with flat-topped rim. *Cf. no. 9 above. Site C ; pit 136.*
- (39) Barrel-shaped jar ; gritty buff ware. *Cf. no. 8 above and Yarnton 44 (Oxoniensia, VII, fig. 12). Site A ; pit 12.*
- (40) Similar jar ; smooth grey-black ware. *Cf. All Cannings Cross, pl. 29, 9. Site A ; pit 30.*
- (41) Similar jar, but less globular ; gritty buff ware, smoke-blackened, with marks of vertical smoothing. *Cf. nos. 10-11 above and Yarnton 36 (Oxoniensia, VII, fig. 12). Site C ; G4 ; PH 45.*
- (42) Similar jar of the less globular type. *Site C ; pit 156.*
- (43) Vertically-rimmed 'flower-pot', rim thickened internally ; buff ware. *Cf. nos. 10-11 above. Site C ; G4 ; PH 45.*
- (44) Small rim fragment, probably a rounded version of no. 25 ; red-buff ware, smooth-surfaced, with finger-tip decoration. *Site A ; pit 12.*
- (45) Small vertical rim fragment, showing influence of nos. 1-3, but more globular. *Site A ; pit 9.*
- (46) Fragment of jar with unusual flat-topped grooved rim ; finely-gritted buff ware, black burnished within. *Site A ; pit 2.*
- (47) Base of jar, probably type 33, with intermittent finger-tip frilling ; smooth red gritty ware. *Site A ; pit 60.*
- (48) Base of jar, with grooves ; smoke-blackened gritty red ware. *Site A ; PH 8.*

SUMMARY

The Beard Mill site makes a contribution to the archaeology of the upper Thames valley in that, despite the necessarily partial nature of this excavation, it demonstrates a dwelling associated with a small rectilinear enclosure. The wattle-and-daub, oval or circular, hut here found confirms surmises that these small enclosures constituted the homesteads of the communities farming the fields with which the enclosures are so often, in air-photographs, associated. At Allen's Pit, Dorchester,²¹ where the enclosure was much larger, at Mount Farm, Dorchester,²² and at Linch Hill Corner, Stanton Harcourt,²³ merely a mile from the present site, no evidence as to the internal lay-out of the enclosure could be obtained. At Langford Downs a ditched enclosure, again much bigger, contained an oval hut, but was dated by combined Iron Age A 2 and Belgic pottery to the first half of the 1st century A.D.²⁴ The Beard Mill site shows that enclosed huts were in vogue before Belgic times.

While the survival strength of Iron Age A in the Oxford area is well

²¹ *Oxoniensia*, VII, fig. 37. ²² *Id.*, II, fig. 3. ²³ Grimes, *id.*, VIII/IX, fig. 23. ²⁴ *Id.*, XI/XII, fig. 16.

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recognized, the total absence of Iron Age B and Belgic elements from the Beard Mill pottery indicates that the settlement belongs entirely to Iron Age A 2 and, by comparison with other sites in the area, to fairly early Iron Age A 2. Its comparatively short life is further evidenced by the fact that there was no sign of successive renewals of the enclosure ditch, as at Linch Hill Corner, Langford Downs, and, more loosely, at Mount Farm. The site evidently had no attraction for later inhabitants of the Stanton Harcourt district, who preferred the Linch Hill area. A small series of sherds salvaged from storage-pits in Linch Hill gravel-pit in 1936 range from A 2-AC,²⁵ while the adjacent Linch Hill occupation site excavated in 1940 is of Belgic origin.²⁶

In view of the homogeneity of the pottery from the Beard Mill site, it is impossible to suggest any chronological difference between the various features of the settlement. Whether any of the storage-pits were earlier than the ditched enclosure remains an open question. Some would naturally be associated with the hut of the enclosure. Certainly some were dug after the abandonment of that hut, both in the enclosed area and, as section cuttings showed, across or verging on the infilled ditch; two sherds from the same pot (FIG. 10, 29) were found in two separate, but evidently contemporary, pits (6 and 13), one dug into the hut floor, the other cutting the upper filling of the ditch. Again, some pits, possibly those encroaching on the deserted hut-site, must have been associated with the unusual semi-circular hut, for, with its provision for roofing and its hearth, this structure would seem to have been a house rather than a cattle-pound. It is, however, quite uncertain whether the house preceded or superseded the enclosed hut; there can have been little difference in time in the construction of the two dwellings.

Without excavation of further sites, it is not yet possible to define the route by which the Beard Mill settlers and their like arrived at their destinations in the upper Thames valley. It is accepted that Wigbald's Farm, Long Wittenham, the unadulterated Iron Age A 1 site of the Oxford region, was reached direct from the Continent by way of the Thames, a movement independent of the contemporary All Cannings Cross settlement in Wessex.²⁷ During Iron Age A 2, however, the Oxford area appears to have been receptive of Wessex influences;²⁸ haematite-coated ware may have had difficulty in crossing the Thames, but that there were other very marked affinities with the All Cannings Cross culture in the ceramic of the settlements north of the Thames is well evidenced. Beard Mill, as an early Iron Age A 2 site, confirms this link with Wessex. It is worth noting, incidentally, that in common with other sites of the earlier phases of the Iron Age in Oxfordshire and elsewhere, Beard Mill shows a striking poverty in metal objects.

²⁵ *Oxoniensia*, VII, 57. ²⁶ *Id.*, VIII/IX, 59. ²⁷ Savory, *id.*, II, 6-11. ²⁸ Bradford, *id.*, VII, 39.



BEARD MILL, STANTON HARCOURT, OXON.

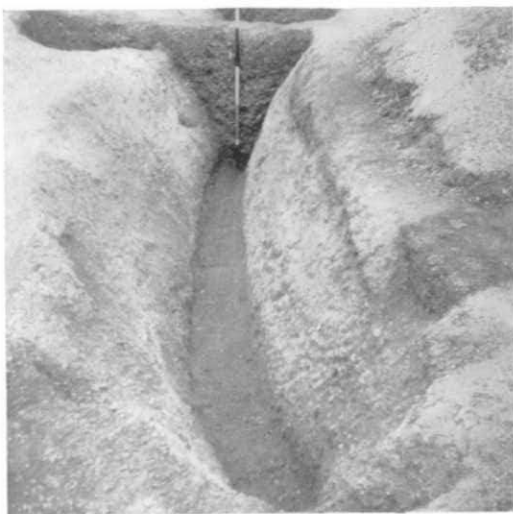
Air-view of Vicarage Field from the E., July, 1933, showing extensive agglomeration of pits, ditches and circles (pp. 5-22.)

Ph. : the late Major G. W. G. Allen

PLATE V



A



B



C



D

BEARD MILL, STANTON HARCOURT, OXON., SITE A (pp. 5-10)

- A. The site before excavation.
- B. Ditch of enclosure, E. of entrance gap.
- C. Post-hole 2 of hut within ditched enclosure.
- D. Ditch floor below pit 26 (section EE¹ on plan, FIG. 2).

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PLATE VI



A



B



C



D

BEARD MILL, STANTON HARCOURT, OXON., SITES A, B and C.

- A. Site A: the hearth-pit (Pit 11 on plan, FIG. 2) (p. 12).
- B. Site B: the semi-circular house, from the E. (p. 10).
- C. Site C: Gully 3, from the W. (p. 14).
- D. Site C: The NE. end of Gully 4 (p. 15).

Phh. : A. Williams