Excavations in Barrow Hills Field, Radley, Berks. 1944-45

BARROWS 2, 3 AND 7 AND A ROMANO-BRITISH CEMETERY

By R. J. C. Atkinson

THE following report continues the account of the excavation of the well-known Bronze Age barrow-group at Radley (SU(41)/517984), and brings the total of sites examined to eleven.[1] The work here described was occasioned by the westwards extension of the gravel-pit in the late summer of 1944 into the field containing barrows 2 and 3 (FIG. 8), and by a further extension south-eastwards in the spring of 1945, which threatened to encroach on barrow 7.[2] In the event none of these sites was actually damaged, as the gravel-pit ceased to be economically workable shortly after the end of these excavations, and was abandoned. The work was done by members of the Oxford University Archaeological Society under my direction. The finds are deposited in the Ashmolean Museum (accession nos. 1945. 110-114).

BARROW 2

The existence and approximate position of barrow 2 was known before excavation from the late Major Allen's air-photographs.[3] In August, 1944, its ditch was clearly marked by an annular band of higher growth in a crop of ripe barley, which persisted as a colour-difference in the stubble after the harvest. The centre of the barrow could thus be found without difficulty, and a trench was laid out, 4 ft. wide, along a diameter estimated to pass also, when prolonged, through the centre of barrow 3. A short trench of the same width was cut across the ditch on the SE. side, and, after the discovery of the central grave, two

[1] For previous reports see: *Oxoniensia*, I (1936), 8-14 (no. 14); *ibid.*, III (1938), 31-40 (nos. 16 and 11); *ibid.*, VII (1942), 103 (no. 15); *ibid.*, XIII (1948), 1-17 (nos. 4, 4a, 5, 6 and 17). Brief notes on those dealt with in the present paper have appeared in *Oxoniensia*, VIII/IX (1943-4), 198 f. (nos. 2 and 3). Nos. 1, 8, 9, 10, 12 and 13 have not been excavated.

[2] Thanks are due to Mr. Curtis, the proprietor of the gravel-pit, and to Mr. W. Dockar-Drysdale, of Wick Hall, Radley, for permission to excavate, and to the latter for generously presenting the finds to the Ashmolean Museum.

[3] *Oxoniensia*, XIII (1948), pl. IA.

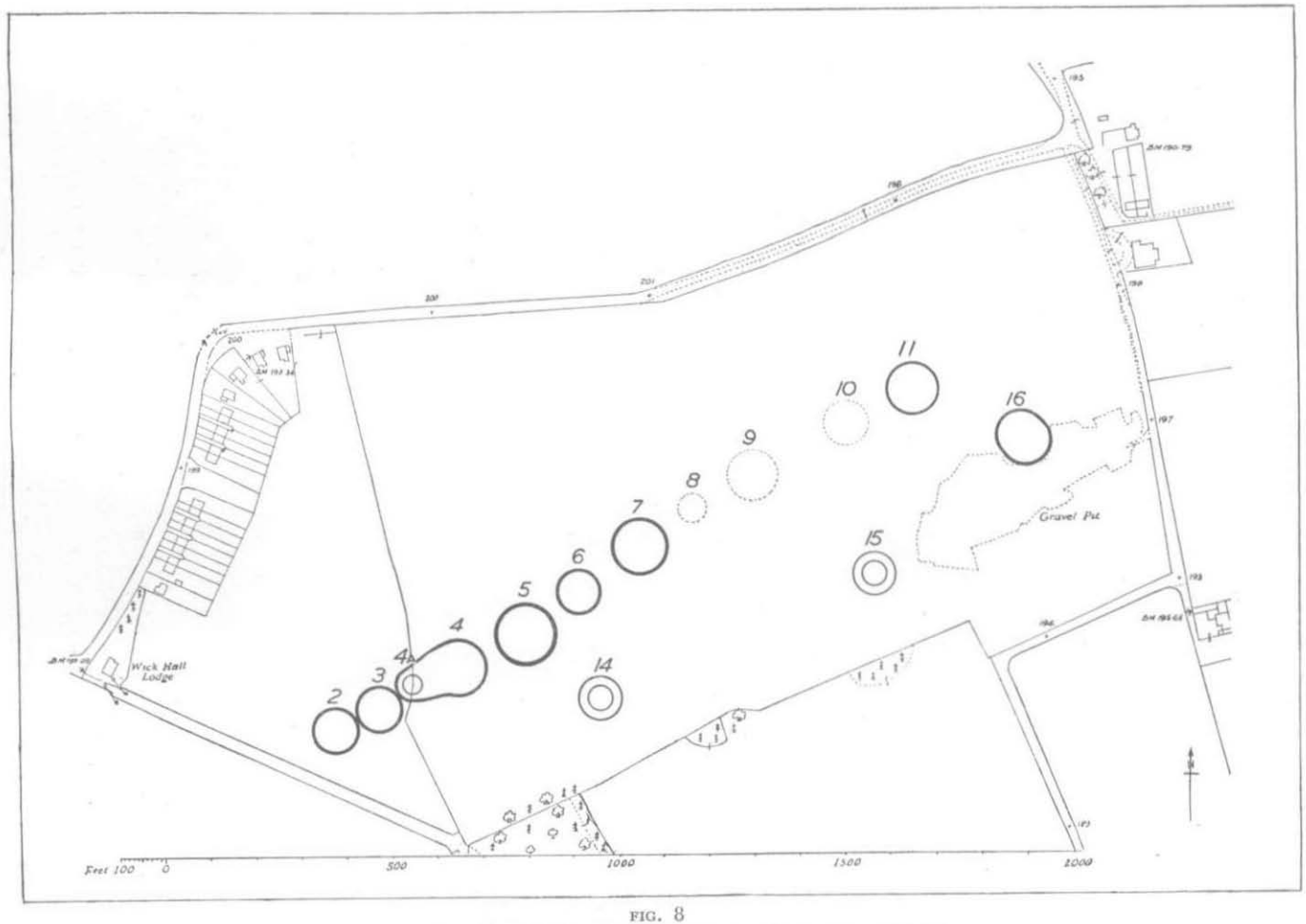


FIG. 8

MAP OF BARROW HILLS FIELD, RADLEY, BERKS.

For the position of the Romano-British cemetery, the centre of which lay 570 ft. N. of barrow 2, see p. 32

Reprinted from *Oxoniensia*, XIII (1948), fig. 1

Based on the O.S. 25 in. map with the sanction of the Controller of H.M. Stationery Office

rectangular cuttings were excavated immediately SE. of the centre (FIG. 9). The features revealed are described below.

THE DITCH

The ditch formed a true circle with an outside diameter of 104 feet. Its width at the level of the natural gravel surface was 12 ft., and its depth below the modern turf was just over 5 feet. In profile it formed a wide round-bottomed V, with a slight shelf on the inner side (FIG. 10).

Except at the NE. end of the main section, at the point of contact with barrow 3, the filling was simple and uniform. The sides were covered by a layer of rapid gravel silting, 9 in. in greatest depth, which did not everywhere cover the bottom. Above this the filling was of fine reddish stoneless soil to within a few inches of the level of the lips of the ditch. Above this again was mixed gravelly top soil, representing the material of the central mound moved outwards by centuries of cultivation.

In the NE. section the filling was more complex (FIG. 10). The primary gravel silting was continuous across the floor of the ditch; a thin scatter of clean gravel ran horizontally half way into the fine soil silting from the outer side; and a layer of markedly gravelly soil separated the fine silting from the mixed top soil above. The differences in the silting here are probably due to the gradual collapse of the narrow ridge of unexcavated gravel which originally divided the ditches of barrows 2 and 3. No stratigraphical evidence of their relative dates was obtainable, but on other grounds (p. 25) it seems likely that barrow 2 was the later.

Apart from a few unidentifiable scraps of animal bone, and a fragment of Romano-British coarse grey ware in the top soil at a depth of 2 ft., no finds were made in the ditch.

THE MOUND

Before excavation the central area of the barrow showed a barely perceptible rise above the surrounding surface (FIG. 9). The diametric section (FIG. 10) showed that for a distance of 20 ft. inwards from the ditch the plough-soil covered a uniform layer of gravelly top soil, 12-18 in. in depth. From this point inwards the soil was fine, reddish in colour, and almost free from gravel. The outer edge of this central mass of clean soil tapered downwards to the natural gravel, and was covered by a scatter of earthy gravel.

No distinction could be seen between the upper and lower part of this soil core, but, as is argued below (p. 19), it seems probable that except for the upper-

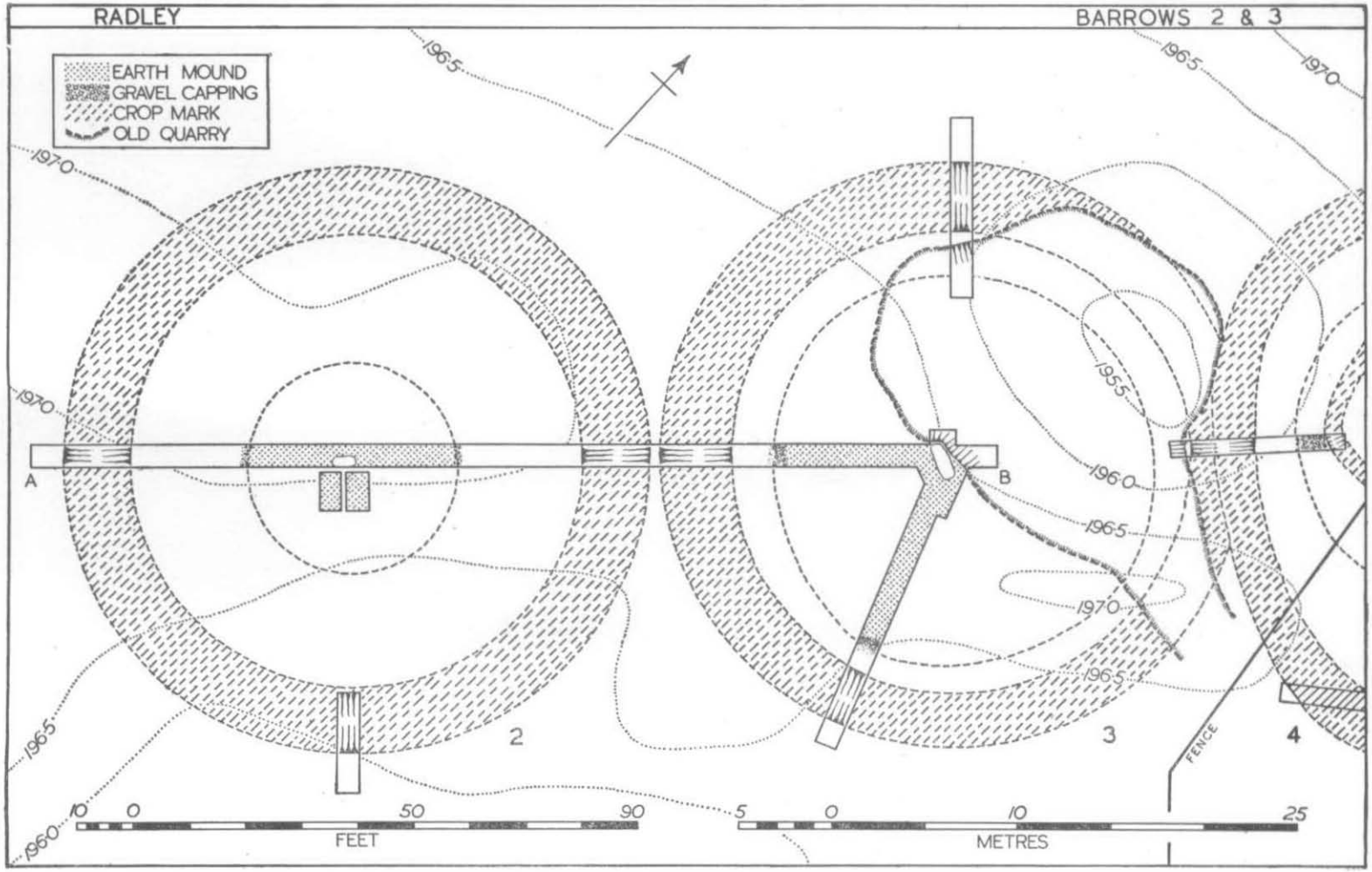


FIG. 9

BARROW HILLS FIELD, RADLEY, BERKS.

Plan of Barrows 2 (pp.14 ff.) and 3 (pp.23 ff.), with contours at vertical intervals of 6 inches above O.D.

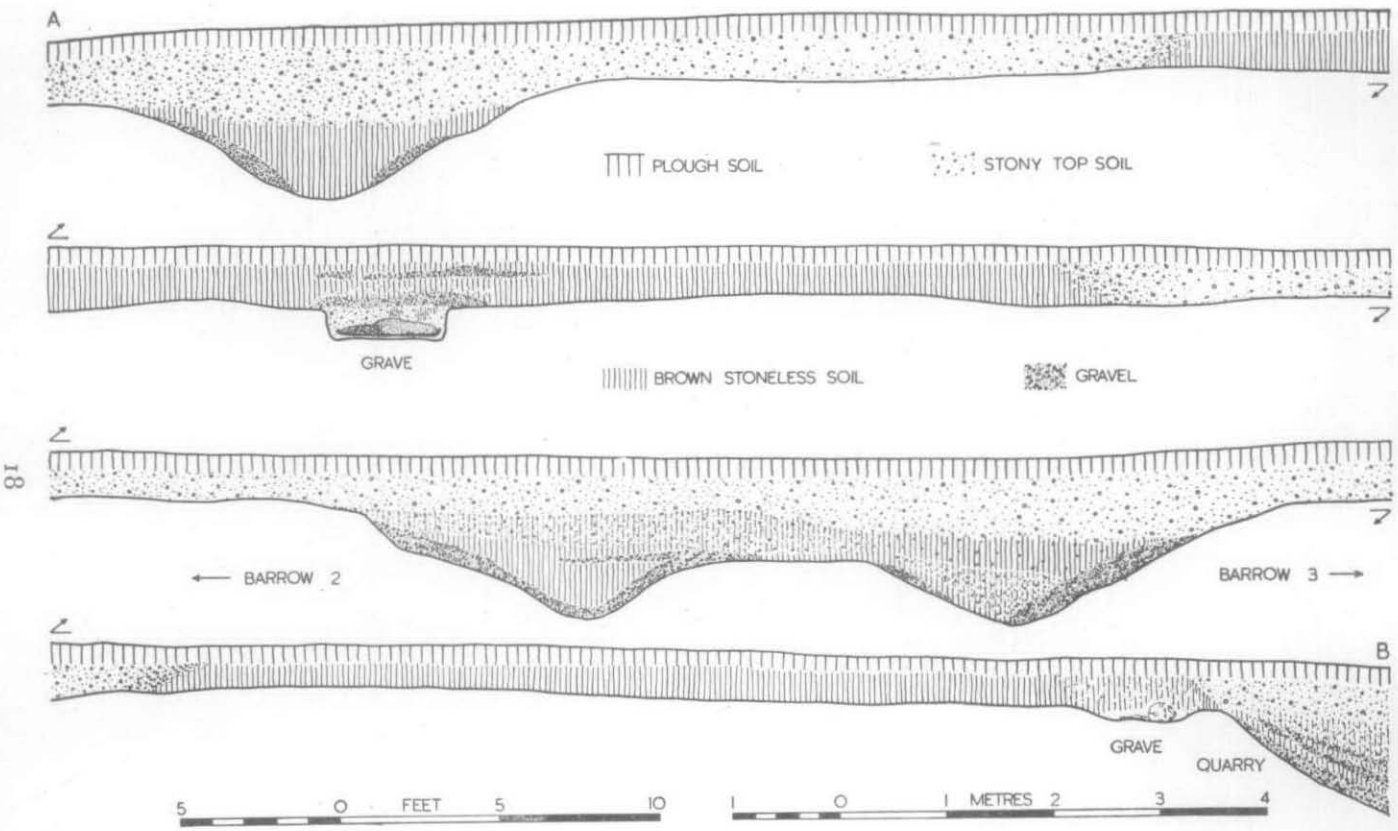


FIG. 10

BARROW HILLS FIELD, RADLEY, BERKS.

Section A-B through Barrows 2 (p. 16) and 3 (p. 23).

most few inches it represents the original surface soil upon which the mound proper was piled.

THE GRAVE[4]

At the centre of the barrow a thin spread of loose sandy gravel was found an inch or two beneath the plough-soil (FIG. 11). It formed a roughly oval patch, 8 ft. by 6 ft., and except at the NE. end lay on the level surface of the fine reddish soil layer, which was here 14 in. deep. Beneath the W. end of this gravel spread the soil was disturbed, and contained scattered particles of gravel and some sand; below this was a well-defined, low, flat-topped mound of loose sandy gravel, covering the mouth of the grave proper.

There seems little doubt that the upper gravel spread marks the position of the dump of material excavated from the grave, not all of which could be returned when it was refilled. If this is so, then the base of this dump must mark the level of the ancient surface on which the barrow was built.

The grave itself was sub-rectangular in plan, measuring 4 ft. 8 in. by 2 ft. 2 in. by 13 in. deep, and was orientated exactly parallel with the sides of the trench in which it lay. The bottom was flat and the sides almost vertical. It was filled with dirty gravel containing a few lumps of fine stoneless soil. Towards its SW. end was a compact heap of cremated bones, free from adherent ashes; and at the other end, partly overlying the bones, was a slightly larger heap of compact wood-ash intimately mixed with crumbs of burnt soil. The upper surface of this heap of ash had been carefully rounded into a smooth dome. The two heaps together formed an oval mound of smooth outline, around the base of which was an annular mark or stain of dark, almost black, soil, about 1½ in. in breadth. This stain continued downwards beneath the ashes and bones, forming a continuous surface on which they rested. There can be little doubt that it represents the remains of a tray or platter of organic material, probably wood, on which the products of cremation were deposited.

The fragments of bone were notable for their large size. There was little evidence of the deliberate crushing or pounding to which prehistoric cremated remains appear frequently to have been subjected.[5] As far as could be ascertained, the whole body was represented among them; it appeared to be that of a young adult, probably a man. When clean, the bones weighed 2,005 grammes (70 ounces).

[4] Unfortunately no photographs of this grave are available. At the time of the excavation reliable photographic materials were unobtainable, and the only film available, of dubious origin, proved entirely defective.

[5] E.g. in the cremation-cemeteries at Dorchester, Oxon. (Zeuner in Atkinson, C. M. Piggott and N. K. Sandars, *Excavations at Dorchester, Oxon.*, I (1951), 126).

Among the bones were three metal objects, the only grave-goods. On the outer edge of the heap on the S. side was a fine bronze awl (A.M. 1945.111), $2\frac{7}{8}$ in. long; one-half was of circular section, tapering to the point from a maximum diameter of $\frac{7}{64}$ in.; the other half, the tang, was square in section, with a

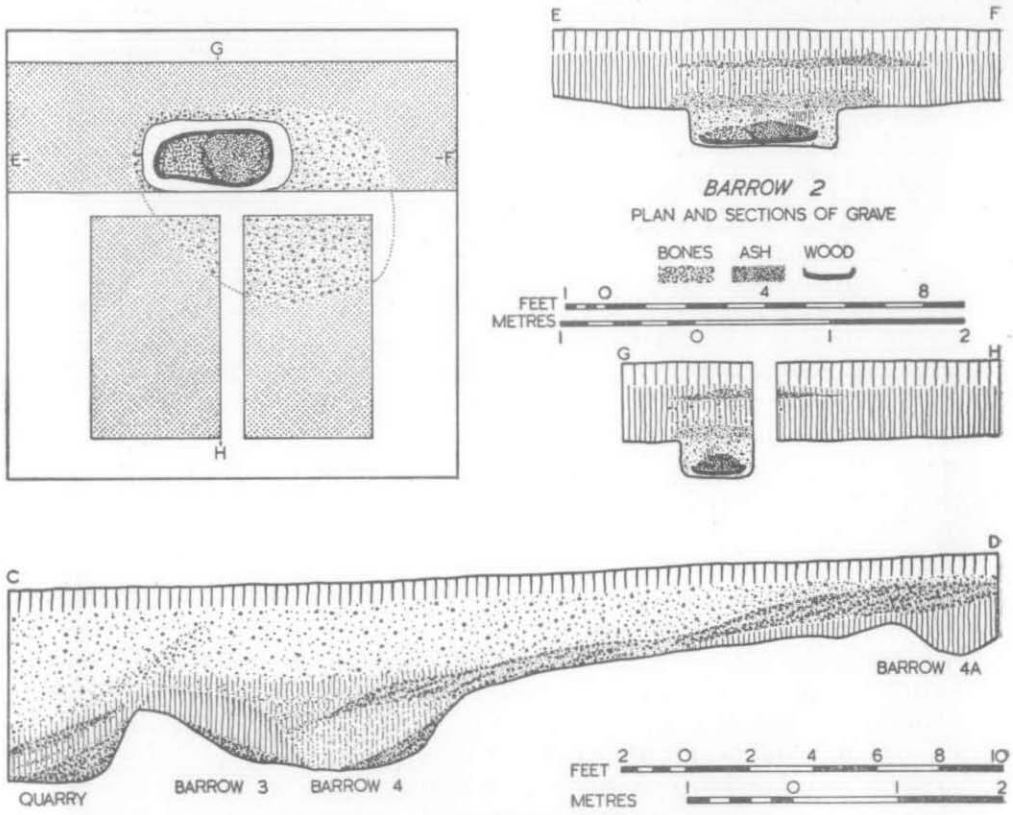


FIG. 11

BARROW HILLS FIELD, RADLEY, BERKS.

Plan and sections of grave in Barrow 2 (p. 19) and section through overlapping ditches of Barrows 3 and 4 (p. 25)

slight taper towards the butt end. No trace was seen of the remains of a handle (FIG. 12).

The other objects were a pair of identical shells of thin gold foil (A.M. 1945.110), in the form of a truncated cone, the upper and lower diameters measuring $\frac{7}{32}$ in. and $\frac{23}{32}$ in. and the height $\frac{3}{8}$ in. (FIG. 12). The upper and lower

margins were decorated with three parallel lines of minute depressions made with a sharp point from the outside. The extreme edge of the lower margin was turned inwards at right-angles. These gold objects evidently formed the outer covering of an axially-perforated biconical bead, and were secured in position by the lower edges, which were pressed into a narrow groove cut round the core at its greatest diameter. When found, the objects lay several inches apart. Both

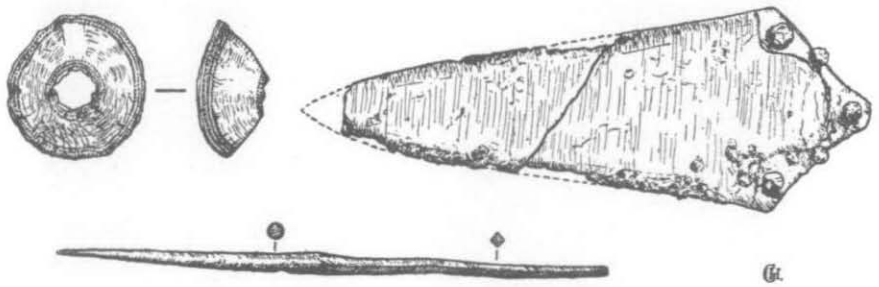


FIG. 12

BARROW HILLS FIELD, RADLEY, BERKS.

Gold-foil bead-cover and bronze awl from Barrow 2 (Scale: $\frac{1}{1}$, p. 20) and bronze dagger from Barrow 3. (Scale : $\frac{1}{2}$, p. 24)

were crushed, and stained by fire, and there was no trace of the core, which is likely to have been of a combustible material, such as amber, shale or wood.

DISCUSSION

It seems clear that, structurally, the site was originally a bell-barrow, consisting of a central mound separated from the ditch by a flat berm 20 ft. wide. Probably at least some of the original surface soil was stripped from the berm and piled in the centre over the grave, after which the mound was capped with the gravel from the surrounding ditch. In the course of centuries of cultivation almost the whole of the original mound has been spread outwards over the berm and ditch.

The section showed no trace of a bank outside the ditch, such as is often found in bell-barrows, and the proximity of the ditch to that of barrow 3 suggests that in fact no such bank was ever built. Had it existed, there would have been a greater interval between the two barrows.

The bell form of the barrow implies a date in the second half of the 2nd millennium B.C., and a connexion with the Wessex Culture of the Early Bronze Age, first defined by Piggott.[6] This is strikingly confirmed by the grave-goods.

6 *Proc. Preh. Soc.*, IV (1938), 52-106.

Cremation burials in which the bones have been separated from the ashes of the pyre, both being interred together, appear to be characteristic of the Wessex Culture. A nearby example of this practice occurred in the Stanton Harcourt barrow, where the ashes were placed in a separate small pit, and were heaped up over its mouth in a smooth dome.[7] In both cases the appearance of the ash left no doubt that it had been deposited in a wet state; very probably the separation of bone from ash had been effected by immersing the whole residue of the funeral pyre in water, whereupon the bones would sink and the ash would float to the top.

The practice of placing the cremated remains on a wooden plank, or in a wooden box or coffin, is also recorded from burials of the Wessex Culture.[8] In the present instance the object appears to have been a shallow boat-shaped tray or platter, with a flat bottom and slightly upturned edges.

The gold foil caps represent a type of personal ornament which has been recorded in a variety of forms from Wessex Culture graves. The closest parallel comes from Colt Hoare's barrow 156 at Normanton, Wilts.,[9] where an almost identical bead of shale, covered by two gold foil caps, was found in association with a grape-cup, a double-axe pendant of shale, and other beads of shale and amber. A gold-covered shale cone from an adjoining barrow (Colt Hoare's no. 155)[10] indicates the technique employed in decorating these objects. Colt Hoare records that the shale core of the cone carried ornament identical with that on the gold foil covering. It seems probable that the pattern was first engraved or punched on the surface of the core, and that the gold was then burnished over it, so that the design showed through, the ornament being finally sharpened and defined by impressing it firmly against the matrix with a suitable fine tool.

It is clear that the Radley bead, unlike the majority of such gold ornaments in Wessex, was burned with the body on the pyre, the core being destroyed in the process.

The bronze awl is a particularly fine example of a type which is, again, characteristic of the Wessex Culture. This type is relatively narrow in proportion to its length, and has a rounded tapering point and a square tang, occasionally separated by a projecting shoulder. The closest parallel to the Radley example comes from the Gold Barrow at Upton Lovel, Wilts.,[11] one of the richest Wessex Culture graves yet discovered.

Upon this evidence barrow 2 may unhesitatingly be ascribed to the Wessex Culture, and must accordingly belong to the third quarter of the 2nd millennium B.C. Together with barrow 16 at Radley, and the Stanton Harcourt

[7] *Oxoniensia*, X (1945), 24-30.
[8] See Piggott's list of Wessex Culture burials, with reference, *Proc. Preh. Soc.*, IV (1938), 102-6.
[9] Colt Hoare, *Ancient Wilts.*, I (1812), 202, pl. XXV.
[10] Colt Hoare, *op. cit.*, 201, pl. XXV.
[11] J. Evans, *Ancient Bronze Implements* (1881), fig. 223.

barrow, it provides clear evidence for the penetration of that culture into the upper Thames valley.

The chronological relationship of barrow 2 to its neighbour is discussed below (p. 25).

BARROW 3

Barrow 3, like barrow 2, was already known from air-photographs before excavation. Its centre was estimated by plotting the crop-mark of its ditch, and two radial cuttings, 4 ft. wide, were set out, one of which was a continuation of the main section across barrow 2 (FIG. 9). A third cutting was made across the ditch on the NW. side, and a fourth on the NE. to determine the relation of the ditch to that surrounding barrows 4 and 4*a*, excavated shortly before by Mrs. Audrey Williams.[12] Excavation showed that most of the northern half of the site had been destroyed by a quarry, later refilled, which was still marked by a slight depression of the surface (FIG. 9). The boundary of the quarry was found by probing.

THE DITCH

The ditch was approximately circular, with an outside diameter of 105 feet. It varied in width at its lips from 12 ft. on the NW. to 10 ft. on the S.; its depth and profile resembled those of barrow 2, and its filling also was similar (FIG. 10). It was noticeable, however, that there was a thicker deposit of gravel on the inner side of the ditch, and that the secondary earthy silt contained a higher proportion of gravel, owing, no doubt, to the greater proximity of the gravel-capped mound of the barrow. No finds occurred in the excavated portions of the ditch.

THE MOUND

As in barrow 2, the remains of the barrow in the central area consisted of fine stoneless soil, with a tapering outer margin capped with earthy gravel. Here, however, the berm between mound and ditch was much narrower, with a maximum width of 6 feet. The barrow is thus likely to have been originally of bowl, rather than bell, form. Like barrow 2, also, there was nothing to distinguish the old surface soil from the earthen mound deposited on it, and it is likely, in fact, that cultivation had removed the whole of the original mound.

THE GRAVE

The grave lay at the centre of the barrow, and was a shallow, approximately sub-rectangular depression scooped about 6 in. deep in the natural

[12] *Oxoniensia*, XIII (1948), 1ff.

gravel; the sides sloped gently inwards and the edge was ill-defined. It was orientated WNW.-ESE.

On the floor of the grave, with the head to the WNW., was the much-decayed skeleton of an adult man[13] (PLATE I, A). He lay on his back, with both shoulders touching the floor. The legs were partially flexed to the left, the left arm was tightly bent at the elbow to bring the hand below the face, which was turned to the left. The right arm was bent across the chest, and the hand had clearly grasped the haft of a bronze knife-dagger (A.M. 1945.112), whose blade lay between the ribs and the left elbow (PLATE I, B). Apart from the dagger, there were no other grave-goods.

The dagger is of bronze,[14] kite-shaped in outline, quite flat in section except for the bevels at the edges, and less than $\frac{1}{20}$ in. in thickness. Its original length was $5\frac{7}{8}$ in., and its width at the shoulder $2\frac{1}{8}$ in. When first uncovered the blade was complete, but when lifted from the soil the point and portions of the edges collapsed into minute fragments of corroded metal.

At the base of the blade three rivets remain in position. Two others, of similar size, did not pierce the blade, but fitted into semicircular notches cut in the edges of the shoulders (FIG. 12). The haft appears to have been of horn, a few fragments of which adhered to the metal. The corrosion of the blade shows that the base of the haft was shaped to a broad semicircular notch following closely the line of the five rivets.

When the blade was lifted, traces were observed beneath it of a fragmentary black flaky substance, probably the remains of a leather sheath.

DISCUSSION

The grave and its contents just described appear to belong to a class of burials which has yet to be studied in detail. This class may be referred as a whole to the second quarter of the 2nd millennium B.C. It is characterized by the use of the inhumation rite under a large round mound, the body not infrequently being on its back, the limbs extended or only partially flexed. The accompanying grave-goods include flat riveted bronze knife-daggers[15] (as here), perforated stone battle-axes, and jet buttons and rings with V-borings. These are all types which elsewhere occur in association with necked beakers[16] of Abercromby's type A. There is, indeed, every reason for supposing that inhumations with necked beakers on the one hand, and inhumations without pottery,

[13] For the report on this skeleton, see *Oxoniensia*, XIII (1948) 15-17, under Field No. MH. 55 and Laboratory No. Eu. 1.4.5.

[14] Probably; no metallurgical analysis has yet been made.

[15] For a list of graves in this class which contained flat riveted knife-daggers, see *Arch. Camb.*, LXXXIII (1928), 161-74. From this list nos. 21, 24, 25, 27, 28, 29, 31, 35, 56, and 95 should be omitted, as the daggers are grooved, and generally of later date.

[16] A term recently introduced to include and replace Abercromby's A and C classes of beaker.

of the class defined above, on the other, are really only two aspects or subdivisions of a single British culture whose roots lie in the Corded Ware—Battle-Axe—Single Grave cultures of the North European plain.

Among the nearest parallels to the Radley dagger is the well-known example with three rivets and a wooden haft with lunate notch from Corston Beacon, Pembrokeshire,[17] likewise found with an extended inhumation. Another, from Carder Low, Hartington, Derbyshire,[18] found with a slightly contracted inhumation, has the same angular kite-shaped outline, but has been reduced in length by constant whetting.

The extreme thinness of the Radley blade, its fine condition, and the absence of any signs of wear or sharpening, suggest the possibility that it is a funerary piece made expressly to accompany the burial. It is doubtful whether so thin a blade would survive intact for long in everyday use.

If a date in the second quarter of the 2nd millennium B.C. is accepted for barrow 3, it must have been constructed before barrow 2; the interval is not likely to have been more than a century, since the latter burial is probably to be dated before rather than after 1400 B.C. This sequence is perhaps confirmed by the obvious alignment of the grave in barrow 2 upon the centre of barrow 3. This can hardly be a mere coincidence, and implies the pre-existence of barrow 3.

A single section was cut to determine the relationship of barrow 3 to the adjoining barrows 4 and 4A (FIGS 9 and 11 (bottom)). This showed that at the point of contact the ditch surrounding barrows 4 and 4A had cut through and largely obliterated the filling of the ditch of barrow 3. The priority of barrow 3 is thus clearly demonstrated.

It is not necessary to suppose, however, that barrow 4A, as well as barrow 4, is later than barrow 3. This would be so only if barrows 4 and 4A could be shown to be strictly contemporary. Their excavator, Mrs. Williams, has in fact, suggested that this was the case,[19] arguing from the fact that, at their closest approach, the margins of both barrows are sealed beneath a common layer of soil capped with gravel, forming a 'bridge' or 'isthmus' between them. I would suggest, however, with all respect, that this need imply no more than that when the 'bridge' was deposited (presumably at the time when the encircling ditch was dug) both mounds were *in existence;* there is nothing to suggest that both were *built* simultaneously.

If this reinterpretation be accepted, it follows that while barrow 4, with which the ditch must be associated, is necessarily later than barrow 3, barrow 4A with its bell-beaker burial may be contemporary with barrow 3, or earlier.

[17] *Arch. Camb.*, LXXXIII (1928), 140-43, figs. 5 and 6.
[18] Sheffield Museum, *Catalogue of Bateman Coll.* (1899), 65.
[19] *Oxoniensia*, XIII (1948), 8-9.

BARROW 7

Barrow 7[20] is the largest site so far excavated in the group, with an outside diameter of about 150 feet. Before excavation it appeared as a broad low mound with a maximum height of just over one foot. The SE. margin of the site extended into cultivated ground, and could not be examined. The work done included the cutting of three radial sections each 5 ft. wide, the clearing of a 40 ft. square at the centre, and the excavation of some 50 ft. of ditch-filling on the N. side (FIGS. 8, 13 and 14).

The ditch was approximately circular in plan, with an overall diameter of 150 ft. and an average width and depth of 14 ft. and 6½ ft. respectively. Its profile was flat-bottomed and fairly steep-sided. In all sections examined there occurred at a depth of 4 ft. from the surface a layer of indurated gravel rock or conglomerate, about 12 in. thick, which projected from the side of the ditch.[21] At some places the looser gravel below this layer had weathered away to leave an overhang of 6-9 inches.

The obstacle presented to the barrow-builders by this layer of rock must have been considerable. In the autumn of 1947 the writer was present at the digging of pits close to the site for the erection of electric power pylons. Those engaged in the work had the utmost difficulty, even with heavy modern steel tools, in penetrating the rock.

The filling of the ditch was uniform in all sections (FIG. 14 and PL. I, E), and consisted of primary gravel silt on the bottom and sides, covered by a deep layer of almost stoneless soil reaching to the level of the lips of the ditch. Above this was the usual stony topsoil.

THE MOUND

The mound of the barrow exhibited in section three clearly defined layers, apart from the plough- and top-soil (FIG. 14). At the bottom, resting on the natural gravel, was a layer of fine stoneless soil, rather grey in colour, averaging 1 ft. in depth. Its outer margin tapered downwards to the gravel, and ended 10-11 ft. within the inner lip of the ditch.

The upper layer consisted of brown soil, containing a fair proportion of uniformly scattered gravel, and was from 6-12 in. in depth. At the margins of the mound it overlapped the tail of the bottom layer, and extended outwards, lying directly on the natural gravel, to the inner lip of the ditch.

The line of division between these two layers was everywhere sharp and distinct, particularly in the centre, where they were separated by a third layer.

[20] Thanks are due to Mr. and Mrs. J. N. L. Myres for generously providing accommodation for the undergraduate members of the excavation.

[21] Compare the ditch of the neighbouring barrow 14 (*Oxoniensia*, 1 (1936), 10, fig. 2).

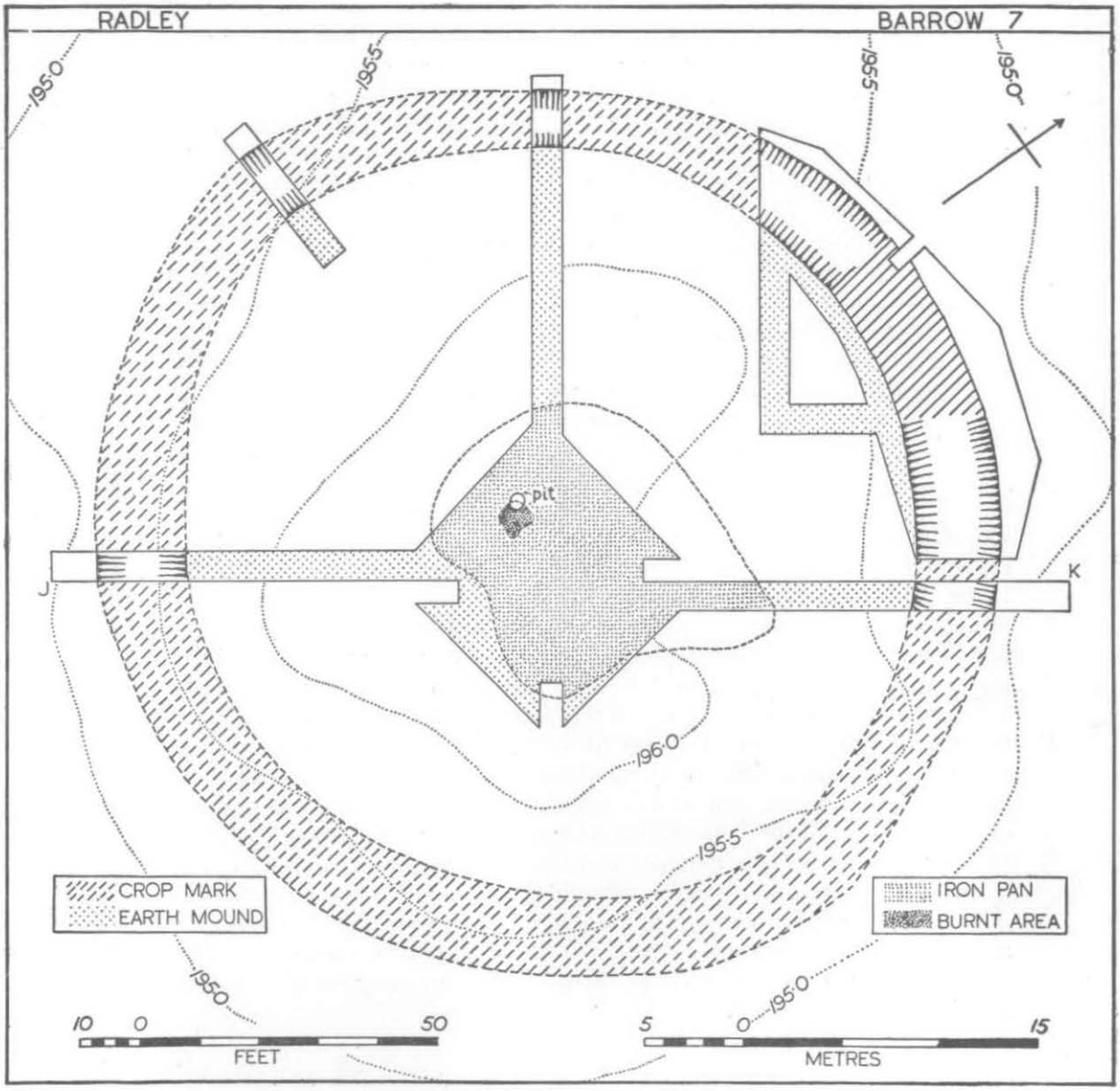


FIG. 13

BARROW HILLS FIELD, RADLEY, BERKS.

Plan of Barrow 7, pp. 26 ff. with contours at vertical intervals of 6 inches above O.D.

This was from 1 to 2 in. thick, and highly coloured, being a brilliant orange above and below and a pale blue-green in the centre. The soil of the uppermost layer came away cleanly in many places from the upper orange surface. There can be no doubt that this narrow, coloured layer is an iron-pan formed by the deposition on a consolidated surface of mineral salts leached out from above by percolating surface-water. This iron-pan was irregular in outline, and was not concentric with the ditch, being displaced somewhat towards the N. of the centre of the barrow.

At a number of places, five of which appear in the section (FIG. 14), the stratification was broken by disturbed areas. These contained a high proportion of gravel, which must have been derived from above, as none of the disturbances penetrated the natural gravel. It was noticeable also that the topsoil covering the outer tail of the mound was very gravelly, and became less so over the ditch-filling, suggesting the presence originally of a gravel capping over the mound, from which the gravel in the disturbed areas must have come.

THE CENTRAL AREA

The area at the centre of the barrow was stripped initially to the level of the iron-pan. No structural feature was found at the actual centre, but a few feet to the SW. there was an area, some 5 ft. square, which had been reddened by fire. At the NW. corner of this burnt area the soil was greyish-black in colour, and further excavation at this point revealed a small pit, approximately circular and a little over 2 ft. in diameter, with sloping sides and a rounded bottom (FIGS. 13 and 14 and PL. I, C, D). It was cut into the lowest layer of soil, to a maximum depth of 6 in., and was filled with dark soil containing many fragments of burnt wood, and a very small quantity of cremated human bones.

The bones, when washed and dried, weighed 44 grammes, or just over $1\frac{1}{2}$ oz. They were uniformly distributed throughout the filling, and clearly had not been separated from the material in which they were contained. Most of the fragments were very small in size, and they should, perhaps, be regarded as the uncollected residue of a cremation, rather than as a cremation-burial properly speaking. As far as can be judged from the small size and quantity, the bones belonged to a person in late adolescence or early adult life, possibly a female or a slightly-built young male.

THE FINDS

Apart from the contents of the pit just described, the finds were scanty. The clean soil of the middle filling of the ditch yielded a few animal bones, including

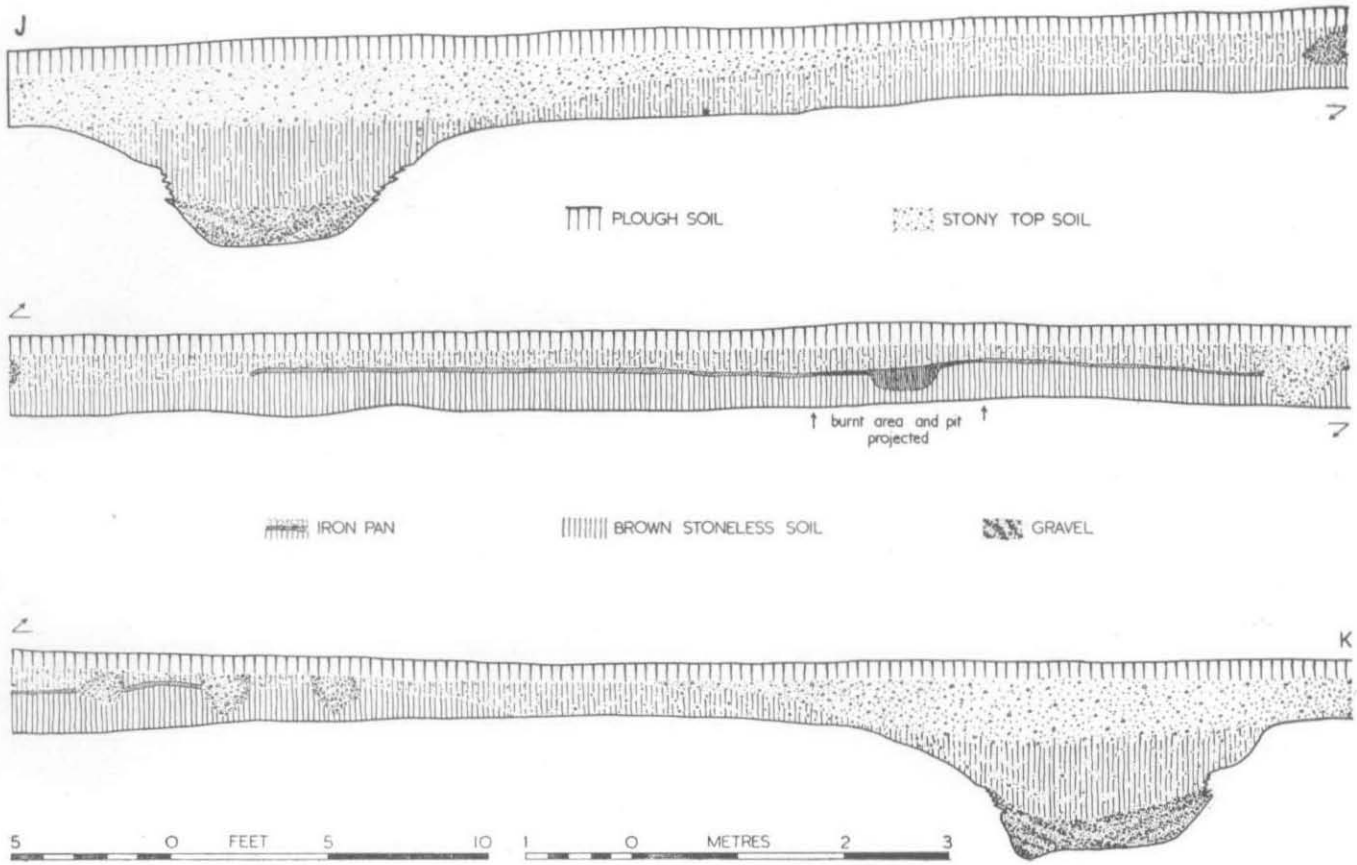


FIG. 14

BARROW HILLS FIELD, RADLEY, BERKS.

Section J-K through Barrow 7, pp. 26 ff.

part of a lower jaw (probably ox, but much broken and decayed), and the molar tooth of a pig. A sherd of coarse Iron Age ware occurred near the top of this layer, and an early Romano-British coarse rim-sherd a few inches higher, in the gravelly top soil at the level of the lips of the ditch.

From the surface of the iron-pan in the central area and from a few inches beneath it came two flint flakes, one with slight secondary working, and a *petit-tranchet* derivative arrowhead, the latter probably a stray already present on the site before the construction of the barrow.

From a point 2 ft. within the centre of the E. side of the central cutting, scattered over an area about 10 in. in diameter, were recovered ten fragments of cremated human bone, lying just above the level of the iron-pan; an eleventh fragment was found at the same level 2 ft. away towards the centre. The fragments were much larger than those from the pit, and appeared to be less thoroughly calcined. The mound in this area had been extensively burrowed by animals, and it seems probable that these bones had been carried downwards from a cremation originally deposited higher in the mound, and since destroyed by cultivation. There is no means of telling whether this cremation is that whose residue was deposited in the pit.

DISCUSSION

The section through the barrow leaves little doubt that the lowest, grey, layer of earth in the mound represents the original surface soil, upon which the iron-pan formed. The sequence of construction appears to have been as follows. After the burial ceremonies were complete, during which the surface near the centre became consolidated in some way, the top soil was stripped from the area later to be occupied by the outer edge of the mound and by the ditch; this soil, with some gravel admixed, was piled up in the primary mound, presumably of no great thickness; and this in turn was covered by the gravel excavated from the ditch.

During the course of time surface-water percolating downwards deposited on the consolidated area of the old ground surface, where percolation would be impeded, mineral salts dissolved from higher levels of the mound, thus forming the iron-pan layer.

At some time after the construction of the barrow, but before its gravel capping had been removed by cultivation, various small disturbances of the mound took place. The existence of this gravel capping over the whole mound, and not merely at its margins, is confirmed by the high proportion of gravel in these disturbed areas.

The burnt area and the pit near the centre presumably represent the site

and the remains of a cremation-pyre.[22] It must be supposed, however, that the calcined bones were deposited elsewhere, either in the mound at a level now destroyed by cultivation, or at a point in the surviving mound outside the limit of excavation, or outside the barrow altogether. It is clear that the pit was dug only after the fire was extinguished, as the reddened patch on the old surface extended right to its edges, but did not cover it. The site of the fire must have been swept after use, as no ash remained on it.

As has been mentioned already (p. 28), the formation of the iron-pan implies the previous consolidation of the ground surface where it occurred. The most likely cause of such consolidation is trampling by human feet, but not, be it noted, the trampling of those bearing baskets of soil for the building of the mound. A circular mound of this kind would be built from the centre outwards, and it is consequently the outer margins of the area which would be exposed longest and trampled most. The absence of any iron pan beneath the outer parts of the mound suggests, however, that the mere passage of basket-carriers was not enough to consolidate the surface to the degree necessary for the subsequent formation of an iron-pan. It follows, therefore, that if trampling took place at the centre, it must have been both intense and prolonged.

It is tempting to suggest that what in fact took place at the centre was dancing, as a part of the funeral ritual. That it is likely to have preceded rather than to have followed the actual cremation is suggested by the fact that the iron pan was traceable right to the edges of the burnt area, and that even beneath the latter the same highly-coloured formation could be observed in patches, though less strongly developed than elsewhere. This implies that the pyre was lit upon a surface that had already been consolidated.

In the absence of any grave-goods or other datable finds the date of the barrow must remain conjectural. It may be noted, however, that the barrow is a particularly large one (probably among the half-dozen largest in the whole of the upper Thames valley), and that, although apparently bowl-shaped in its final form, it contained an element of bell-barrow construction in the berm from which the original surface-soil had been stripped. These two facts suggest a connexion, even if a tenuous one, with the Wessex Culture; and this is perhaps supported by the presence of the pit containing the separated ashes of a cremation pyre. As already noted in connexion with barrow 2 (p. 22), the practice of ash-burial appears to be characteristic of the Wessex culture.

[22] Compare the burnt area and ash pit in the centre of the Stanton Harcourt barrow (*Oxoniensia*, x (1945), 24-30).

THE ROMANO-BRITISH INHUMATION-CEMETERY

The westwards extension of the gravel-pit already referred to (p. 14) revealed in the spring of 1945 an inhumation-cemetery of 35 graves. The centre of this cemetery (FIG. 15, grave 16) lay 110 ft. perpendicularly westwards of the hedge which divided Barrow Hills Field (and passes further S. through barrow 4) and 570 ft. N. of the centre of barrow 2 (FIG. 8). When first uncovered by the mechanical removal of topsoil the graves showed as oblong patches of brown soil against the exposed surface of the yellow gravel. With the exception of three graves (FIG. 15, nos. 6A, 12, 16A), which had been totally wrecked by the mechanical excavator, the whole cemetery was excavated by my wife and myself in three weeks of the Easter vacation, 1945.

The plan (FIG. 15) represents the full extent of the cemetery. Although the top soil had been stripped from a wide margin around the recorded graves, a careful search revealed no others.

All the thirty-five graves were fairly uniform in size, shape and orientation. In length they averaged 6¼ ft. and in width 2½ feet. Depths could not be determined with accuracy, owing to the removal of varying amounts of gravel by the mechanical excavator. It was clear, however, that all the graves were very shallow, so much so that in most cases the skulls had been damaged by the excavator. In shape, the graves were uniformly rectangular, with well-defined corners and nearly vertical sides.

A similar uniformity was noticeable in the orientation of the graves. All of them lay approximately N.-S., and the mean figure for the group is within one degree of True North. In the western part of the cemetery the majority of the graves were set slightly to the E. of True North, whereas on the E. side a group of twelve, separated from the remainder by a noticeable interval, all had very uniform orientations some 10° W. of True North. The distinction between these may perhaps imply some difference of custom or family, or even of date.

There was a tendency for the graves to be arranged in regular rows running E.-W., which implies that their position was marked on the surface in some way, either by a superficial mound or by some other means, as in a modern cemetery.

The occupants of the graves were all adults, as far as could be ascertained,[23] the majority having died between the ages of 20 and 40. In most cases the body had been laid on the back, with the legs extended or slightly flexed, and the hands straight by the sides, or clasped over the pelvis. In one grave (no. 16) the body lay face downwards, partly on the left side, and in two others

[23] In many cases the bones had been severely crushed by the mechanical excavator. The remains which were sufficiently complete to justify preservation have been deposited in the British Museum (Natural History), but it has been impossible to arrange for their examination by a trained physical anthropologist.

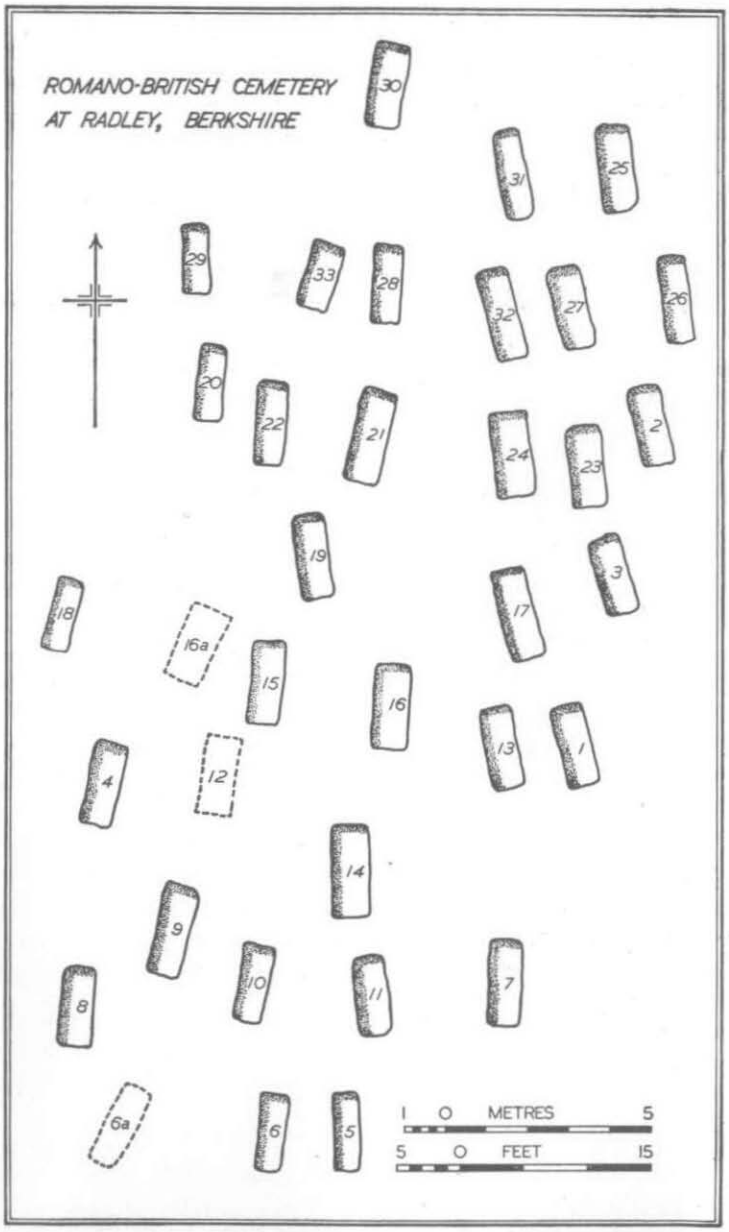


FIG. 15

BARROW HILLS FIELD, RADLEY, BERKS.

Plan of Romano-British inhumation cemetery, pp. 32 ff.

(Nos. 10 and 14) the body had been decapitated, apparently after death, and the head placed between the knees.

Only three graves yielded any finds apart from the bodies themselves. In no. 15 the remains of five much-corroded iron nails and some slight staining of the gravel floor suggested the former presence of a coffin. In grave 8 a small red colour-coated beaker (A.M.1945. 114) with white slip decoration lay on its side by the right shoulder of the skeleton. The type (FIG. 16) is common in the late third and fourth centuries A.D.[24]

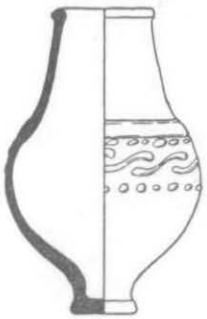


FIG. 16
Red coloured-coated beaker from grave 8, Radley, Berks.
Scale: ¼

In grave 9, occupied by a young adult, a group of nine coins lay by the left elbow. They were stacked in a roll, and had been tightly sewn up in a piece of coarse linen cloth (A.M. 1945.113). The cloth, though somewhat brittle, was very well preserved, doubtless owing to the proximity of metal and to the fact that it lay in loose gravel on the floor of the grave and was not in contact with the soil filling. The weave is a plain "tabby" with approximately 28 threads to the inch.

The coins, on which a report kindly contributed by Mr. Colin Kraay, Assistant Keeper of Coins, Ashmolean Museum, is printed below, were in mint condition, and had evidently been selected for their fine state and for the variety of their reverses. The burial with which they were associated cannot be much later than A.D. 330.

The scarcity of grave-goods makes it difficult to estimate the period covered by the cemetery. The settlement which it served has yet to be located. Air-photographs of the district show no traces of occupation immediately to the N., E. and S. of the site, but to the W. the land is covered by modern buildings, the outskirts of Abingdon, and it is in this direction that the settlement should probably be sought.

[24] E.g. *Richborough*, I (1926), 102, no. 96, pl. XXVII (4th cent.); *ibid.*, II (1928), 164, no. 185, pl. XXIV (with hare and hound *en barbotine*; end 3rd cent.); *ibid.*, III (1932), 182, no. 326, pl. XL (with late 3rd cent. coins); *Wroxeter*, II (1913), 53, no. 69, fig. 19 (3rd or early 4th cent.).

EXCAVATIONS IN BARROW HILLS FIELD, RADLEY, BERKS.

APPENDIX

THE COINS FROM GRAVE 9

By C. M. KRAAY

1, 2. Constantine I. Obv. CONSTANTINVS AVG. Rev. VICTORIAE LAETAE PRINC. PERP. 2 victories holding shield inscribed VOT PR. over altar, on which is a wreath. Mint mark $\frac{\text{I}}{\text{PLN}}$ = mint of London. Cohen, 634 var. A.D. 317-324.

3. Crispus. Obv. CRISPVS NOB CAES. Rev. VIRTVS EXERCIT. 2 captives seated at foot of *vexillum* inscribed VOT XX. Mint mark $\frac{\text{I}}{\text{PLN}}$ = mint of London. Cohen, 172. A.D. 320-324.

4. Crispus. Obv. IVL CRISPVS NOB CAES. Rev. BEATA TRANQVILLITAS. Altar inscribed VOTIS XX. Mint mark $\frac{\text{I}}{\text{STR}}$ = mint of Treveri. Cohen, 22. A.D. 320-324.

5. Constantine II. Obv. CONSTANTINVS IVN NOB C. Rev. BEATA TRANQVILLITAS. Altar inscribed VOTIS XX. Mint mark $\frac{\text{I}}{\text{PTR}}$ = mint of Treveri. Cohen, 12. A.D. 320-324.

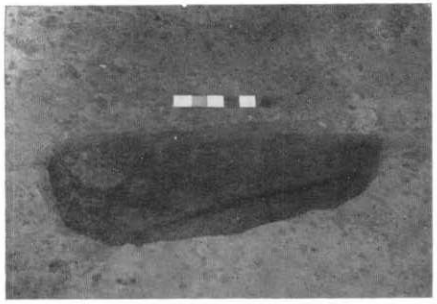
6, 7. Constantine II. Obv. CONSTANTINVS IVN NOBC. Rev. BEATTRANQLITAS. Altar inscribed VOTIS XX. Mint mark $\frac{\text{I}}{\text{PLON}}$ = mint of London. Cohen, 10. A.D. 320-324.

8. Crispus. Obv. FL IVL CRISPVS NOB CAES. Rev. CAESARVM NOSTRORVM. VOT V within wreath. Mint mark $\frac{\text{I}}{\text{TS}\triangle\text{VI}}$ = mint of Thessalonica. Cohen, 35. A.D. 320-324.

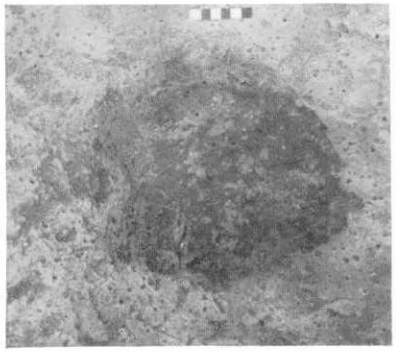
9. Constantine I. Obv. CONSTANTINVS AVG. Rev. BEATA TRANQVILLITAS. Altar inscribed VOTIS XX. Mint mark $\frac{\text{I}}{\text{.STR.}}$ = mint of Treveri. Cohen, 17. A.D. 320-324.

A

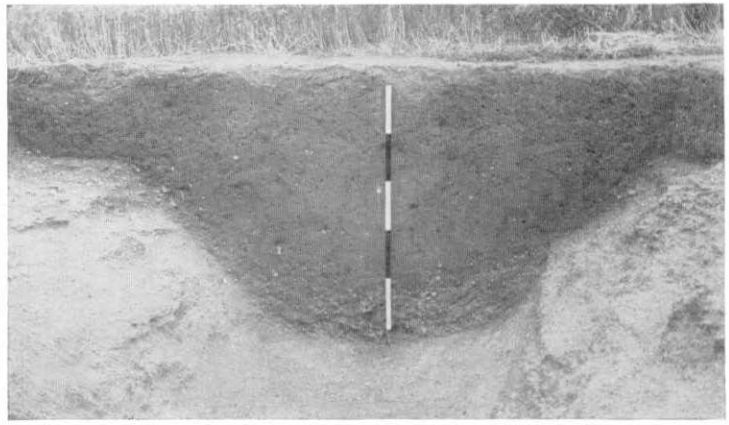
B



C



D



E

BARROW HILLS FIELD, RADLEY, BERKS.

A. Skeleton in grave, Barrow 3, p. 23. B. The same, showing bronze dagger between ribs and left elbow, p. 24.
C. D. Small pit near centre of Barrow 7, p. 28. E. View showing section of ditch, Barrow 7, p. 26.

Phh.: R. J. C. Atkinson