Excavations at Lyncham Camp, Lyncham, Oxon.

By NICHOLAS BAYNE

LYNEHAM CAMP lies four miles south of Chipping Norton, on the ridge of a steep spur jutting south into the Evenlode valley, at approximately 650 feet O.D. (National Grid: 42/299214). It commands a wide view in every direction except north, even as far as Idbury Camp 4 miles to the west. The



FIG. I

LYNEHAM CAMP; ITS NATIONAL AND REGIONAL SETTING. Based on O.S. maps with the sanction of the Controller of H.M. Stationery Office.

visible defences consist of a single rampart enclosing 4.339 acres (FIG. 1). For about a third of the circumference, on the north and east, the rampart survives to a height of 5 feet, with an interruption at the north. On the west it is practically flattened, being inside a plantation, and it has been truncated on the south and south-east by a quarry and the main road. The ditch has

been completely filled in, except in the plantation. The underlying rock is the Great Oolite, covered by only 9 inches to 1 foot of topsoil; it splits easily into small slabs, while the natural surface weathers into angular pebbles. The nearest spring is about 800 yards away, at the outcrop of the Upper Lias on approximately the 500 feet contour. There have been no previous published excavations.¹

Excavations were carried out by members of the Oxford University Archaeological Society in June 1956.² A cutting 45 feet by 6 feet was made at A, and smaller cuttings at B and C (see FIG. 1).

CUTTING A

I. THE DITCH

The ditch was found to be 7 feet deep, U-shaped in section with steeply sloping sides. Its sides were very irregular, and showed marks of uneven quarrying, which had also made the outer lip 2 feet lower than the inner.

The following layers were discovered (FIG. 2): Layer I was yellowishbrown topsoil loam; layer 2 yellowish-brown loam and small stones. Layer 3 was formed of two lenses of darker brown stoneless loam and a mass of loam and small rubble, mostly from the inner edge. Under these layers, layer 4 was a much larger mass of loam and large rubble, probably derived from the rampart, and containing many big slabs, much bigger than any in the core of the rampart (see below, page 3). Midway through this layer, the stones became noticeably smaller, and the proportion of loam greater, but at the bottom the bigger slabs were found again, up to I foot 6 inches long. A minor run of loam and small rubble from the outer edge intruded into this layer.

Layer 5, the primary silting of loam with a few large stones, was mostly confined to the sides of the ditch.

2. THE RAMPART (PL. I, A)

The following layers were discovered (FIG. 2): layer I was darkish brown loam, free from stones. Layer 2 was brown loam, mixed with small stones;

¹ Finds of human bones in 1842 and 1875 are recorded in the Berks, Bucks & Oxon Archeological Journal N.S. IV (1898), 23. Local tradition also tells of excavations made near the road by Lord Moreton, who was responsible for the excavation of Lyneham barrow in 1895; no written records survive.

^a I am extremely grateful to the Hon. Michael Astor of Bruern Abbey, and Mr. D. August of Merriscourt Farm for granting permission to dig : to Mr. H. J. Case and Professor C. F. C. Hawkes for their invaluable assistance and advice over the excavation and the preparation of the report ; and to the Ashmolean Museum for providing transport and equipment. Also to all the members (and non-members) of the Archaeological Society who took part, especially to Mr. A. Hutchins, who took the photographs.



 $f_{E} = \frac{1}{2}$ SECTIONS OF THE RAMPART AND DITCH OF LYNEHAM CAMP IN CUTTING A.

on the inner side, at the base of the slope, it also contained some larger slabs probably derived from above.

Layer 3 formed the rampart, as far as it survived, and consisted principally of a core of small Oolite slabs quarried from the ditch, in a matrix of light brown loam. Below a level of 12–16 inches from the surface the stones were coated with an incrustation of calcium carbonate. Some isolated spreads of topsoil loam occurred, similar to layer 4. Otherwise the core of the rampart was unvaried from top to bottom. At either side, it had been revetted by larger stone slabs. On the inner side the revetment extended 2 feet into the bank, and its external face was finished with a neat kerb of laid slabs. It was only one course thick, but 4–6 courses high (PL. I, B). Fallen slabs and further evidence from cuttings at C (PL. I, D) suggested that the kerb at A had lost its two topmost courses; but the very small amount of fallen material on this inner side indicated that the original slope of the rampart was largely preserved.

On the outer side the revetment was broader. But here a very large part of the rampart had collapsed, taking with it all the probable external facing, with the possible exception of two large stones on the lip of the ditch (shown in section in FIG. 2). No post-holes or other traces of wooden revetment or superstructure were found.

On the summit of the rampart a third accumulation of large stones occurred, in a narrow strip along the top of layer 3 (PL. I, C). There was very little loam between them, but any systematic arrangement had been disturbed by roots. The normal loam and rubble appeared immediately beneath them.

Layer 4 was the buried soil, clayey loam dark reddish-brown in colour, running under the whole width of the rampart and the tumble on the inner side. In it were found numerous small patches of charcoal. No trace remained of the original turf.

In the part of the cutting continued into the interior of the camp, the yellowish brown topsoil of layer 1 was 2-3 inches thicker than on the rampart itself. It immediately overlay the bedrock. There were no signs of occupation.

Originally, the rampart thus would have had a slope on the inner side much as it stands today; this slope was revetted at its base and possibly turfed all over to give additional stability. The mass of rubble in layers 3 and 4 of the ditch suggests that the slope of the outer face of the rampart may have been a continuation of the general slope of the inner side of the ditch. This face was probably also formed of laid courses. The mass of layer 5 against the inner side of the ditch possibly suggests that these courses had a turf jacket, as suspected at Cherbury Camp, Berks.³ But the slightly greater volume of the

3 Oxoniensia, v (1940), 17.

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layer against the outer side of the ditch cannot be explained in this way; here loam probably slipped in from the outside surface.

The original rampart was probably about 6 feet high. The isolated spreads of topsoil, found in the core of the rampart, support to some extent a reconstruction as a truncated irregular triangle. The accumulation of large stones on the summit may have been traces of a paved rampart walk. No signs were found of a wooden palisade, and no indications in the sections of ditch or rampart of more than one building period.

CUTTINGS B AND C

Cuttings B were laid out near the eastern edge of the quarry; B1, 10 feet by 6, and B2, 8 feet by 6 and 6 feet farther east, were cut into the tail of the rampart, here so flattened as to be almost untraceable. Cuttings C were laid out above a sheer quarry face, where the rampart survived only in irregular bumps; C1, 16 feet by 6, was in the interior of the camp, and C2, 6 feet by 4, and 8 feet farther east, cut into the tail of the rampart.

In B1 and 2, topsoil 9–12 inches thick covered a layer of loam and stones about 8–10 inches thick, formed from the collapsed rampart; the collapse of the inner slope was here much more extensive than in cutting A, and all the slabs were broken small by roots. This layer had fallen over the inner kerb of the rampart, which appeared in the south-east corner of B1, and crossed the middle of B2 obliquely, standing 8–11 inches high. The core of the rampart in the southern half of B2 was found to have been disturbed by roots. In both cuttings, the collapsed material sealed the buried soil, in which sherds, animal bones, and charcoal were found, accumulated at the edge of the kerb, none being more than 2 feet away. No other signs of occupation were found.

In C1, the bedrock appeared immediately beneath 9 inches of yellowishbrown topsoil. However, in the interstices of the rock surface, dark brown clayey loam yielded minute fragments of pottery and bone. In C2 the topsoil decreased in depth from 10 to 4 inches, towards the tail of the rampart. Immediately beneath it, the inner kerb was revealed running straight across the south end of the trench, here standing to probably its original height of 1 foot 3 inches, with 8–10 courses (PL. I, D). A small run of loam and stones from the rampart abutted against it and extended over the rest of the cutting, but contained no large slabs at all. This run sealed the buried soil, which again yielded pottery, animal bones, and charcoal accumulated at the edge of the kerb.

THE FINDS

I. POTTERY

Some 12 ounces of sherds were found in cuttings B and C. Most were less than 1 square inch in area, and only a few joined. No bases or carinated or decorated sherds were found. Nearly all showed poorly levigated clay full of large shell fragments up to $\frac{1}{2}$ inch long; a few had stone grit. All but one sherd (FIG. 3, right), came from thin-walled vessels. The surfaces were light brown, or red one side and black the other.

A few finer sherds had better levigated clay, with finer shell grit. These had brown surfaces and grey sections, or were black throughout; a small number had carefully smoothed surfaces, pinkish and blackish, with fractures also showing half pink, half black.



SHERDS AND BONE NEEDLE FROM LYNEHAM CAMP. Scale : 4.

Two rims were found:

1.—A simple rounded rim (FIG. 3, left), found with four other sherds from the same vessel. Better levigated clay and small shell grit, fired to an even black and burnished to a leathery finish. A slight outwards curve may indicate a rudimentary shoulder. Cutting C2. Ashmolean Museum: 1957.62

2.—A large rim bent inwards and flattened (FIG. 3, right), with thick walls. Surface pinkish, the outside blackened by use. Exterior and top of rim slightly burnished. Fracture brown, pinkish near surface, large shell grits. Again a hint of a shoulder. Cutting B1. Ashmolean Museum:1957.62.

The number of sherds are too few for exact comparisons. But the coarseness of the paste, the assumed debased shoulders and the rim types compare

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well with the degenerate late A2 pottery from Chastleton and Radley.4 Few sherds, however, are of the thick-walled vessels common at these sites. The inturned and flattened rim occurs notably at Radley,⁵ but is a common type in A2 sites throughout the Oxford region. There is no sign here or at Chastleton of the pottery with B influence from Wessex, called by Bradford ' Upper Thames AB', which occurs in conjunction with degenerate A2 in all the lowland sites near Oxford such as Mount Farm, Frilford, and Allen's Pit,⁶ and in the multivallate camp at Cherbury.7

2. OTHER FINDS

One bone needle (FIG. 3), 15 inches long, missing the tip and half the eye. The piercing appears to have been circular, as in the Chastleton examples.8 Ashmolean Museum: 1957.62.

One egg-shaped fragment of sandy limestone, c. I inch in diameter. It is naturally rounded but, since such rounding is out of geological context inside the camp, it is likely to have been brought from outside by human agency. It may have been intended as a slingstone. I am grateful to Mr. J. M. Edmonds of the Department of Geology and Mineralogy, University Museum, for identifying this specimen. Ashmolean Museum: 1957.62.

3. ANIMAL BONES

Cuttings B and C yielded fragmentary bones of ox (molars, femur, tibia, humerus), of sheep both adult and immature (molars, femur, scapula, carpals, with two vertebrae and fragments of the palatine region of the skull from a single animal), and of dog (molars and incisors), all from the buried soil layers; an isolated carpal of a young sheep was found in cutting A. None showed signs of use; a few small fragments had been burnt.

I am very grateful to Mr. L. Bilton of the Natural History Department of the Birmingham Museum and Art Gallery for identifying these bones.

4. SHELLS

Specimens of snail shells were found only in the layers of Cutting A listed below, and were very kindly identified and commented on as follows by the Rev. Professor L. W. Grensted.

4 Antiquaries Journal, XI (1931), 390-7 (Chastleton) and 400-4 (Radley).

5 Ibid., p. 402 and fig. 2 b.

⁶ Mount Farm, Oxoniensia, II (1937), 26-27 ; Frilford, *ibid.*, IV (1939), 15-17 ; Allen's Pit, *ibid.*, VII (1942), 40-42. See this last reference for a general assessment by Mr. J. S. P. Bradford, with a list of further sites (p. 40, n. 1). On B influence at Chastleton compare Dr. H. N. Savory in V.C.H. Oxon., 1, 256 (for) with Bradford, *loc. cit.*, p. 41, n. 3 (against).

Oxoniensia, v (1940), 19.
Antiquaries Journal, x1 (1931), 389 and fig. 2.

	Helicella itala (L)	Cepaea nemoralis (L)	Trichia hispida (L)	Oxychilus cellarius (Müller)	Helicella virgata (Da Costa)
I. DITCH:		- Automation			
Layer 3; Loam and		224			i and a
small rubble.	-	I	-	-	-
Layer 4; Large rubble.	2	2	-	6	-
Layer 5; Primary silt.	-	4	-	I	-
II. RAMPART:					
Layer 4; Buried soil.	5	7	2	4	I
Total	7	14	2	11	I

These seem quite typical of the locality. As they stand they suggest downland—chalk, or in this case Oolite—at some point where there was long grass, as on a bank or the side of a hedge-row today. *Helicella itala* and *virgata* are typical of the open down-land. The other three species suggest more cover. They are just what would be found among the roots of long grass; perhaps among stones, but not necessarily. The colouring of the banding on *H. itala* and *virgata*, and *C. nemoralis* is quite consistent with an age of about 2,000 years.

I do not see anything suggestive in the sequence, but there is no sign of any freshwater species in the ditch, and the shells there probably fell in as it silted. If it ever held water it did not do so long enough to be colonized.

There is one point of interest. *H. itala* and *virgata* are sometimes known as 'sheep snails', because they occur on downlands grazed hard by sheep. It is probably true that they would not occur in deposits of early date before the clearing of the forests.

5. CHARCOALS

The following samples were kindly identified and commented upon by Dr. G. W. Dimbleby of the University Department of Forestry.

Cutting A Rampart, layer 4, buried soil. Blackthorn (Prunus spinosa). Cutting B1 Layer 3, buried soil. Oak (Quercus); blackthorn; hawthorn (Crataegus).

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Cutting B2 Layer 3, buried soil. Blackthorn; hawthorn; alder buckthorn (Frangula alnus). A fourth sample was probably also alder buckthorn, but was too distorted by fire for certain identification.

Note: The charcoal of hawthorn is practically indistinguishable from that of apple (Malus) or pear (Pirus), which must therefore be regarded as alternatively although less likely to occur.

The charcoals form an interesting ecological group of thorn-scrub species, with little suggestion of true forest species, apart from a few scraps of oak.

CONCLUSIONS

Only Chastleton⁹ is available for comparison as a contemporary nearby stone-built camp. There the earth and rubble core was confined by massive walls surviving up to 4 feet high inside, and built of blocks in places 4-6 feet long. Lyncham is a simplified version, with packed rubble substituted for walls, and coursed stone-work on a much smaller scale. Cherbury Camp¹⁰, Berks., also yielded A2 pottery (mixed with AB), and its inner rampart had a facing of small slabs, surviving 3 feet high, possibly originally 2 feet higher. But Cherbury's shape, size, and multivallate form show a closer relationship to Wittenham Clumps and Madmarston, and to the Iron Age B camps of the west than to Lyneham.

At Lyncham, the position of the outer facing of the rampart is peculiar, for it stood, apparently, less than two feet from the lip of the ditch. At Chastleton no ditch was discovered, but facings of laid courses known from Iron Age B camps11 (at Llanmelin surviving to 8 feet high) have generally been found to have a wide berm to their fronts. Leckhampton12 is an exception, but here the coursed facing was built into an earlier Iron Age A rampart. I am not aware of another example of revetment by rubble and laid courses as at Lyncham. Further excavation in the Cotswolds will probably provide parallels.

Apart from the details of its construction, Lyncham belongs to a small group of single-rampart camps in the Eastern Cotswolds, comprising Chastleton, Lyneham, Idbury, and Tadmarton. They are distinguished by their

 ¹⁰ Oxoniensia, v (1940), 17, 19.
¹¹ e.g. Bredon Hill, Archaeological Journal, XCV (1938), 36-37, and pl. XII; Minchinhampton, Transactions of the Bristol & Gloucestershire Archaeological Society, LIX (1937), 295-6; Llanmelin, Archaeologia Cambrensis, LXXXVIII (1933), 250-2 and fig. VII. ¹² Transactions of the Bristol & Gloucestershire Archeological Society, XLVII (1925), 96-98, figs. VI, VII

and pl. m, 1.

⁹ Ibid., pp. 384-9.

circular form, small size, and remarkably little use of natural slopes as defence. Neither of the two excavated, Chastleton and Lyncham, has yielded traces of buildings or of any intensive occupation. They were possibly only used as temporary places of refuge for local farmers and their herds in times of crisis. Their construction and use seem to have been confined to the late Iron Age A2 phase. Later, they may have been abandoned, and superseded by the larger contour forts of Madmarston and Ilbury.

Lyneham is conceivably later than Chastleton on the evidence of the simplified building technique and the inturned pottery rim (absent in fully developed form from Chastleton). The lack of AB pottery does not necessarily prove that either was built or abandoned earlier than the impact of B influence; for this influence appears in lowland sites, such as Radley and Frilford, associated with A2 pottery identical with Chastleton and Lyneham.13 At present no sign exists of B influence any nearer the Cotswolds than Eynsham and Cassington,14 with an isolated sherd from Minster Lovell;15 but further excavation may change the picture.

The persistent association of degenerate A2 with AB in the lowlands complicates the dating of the upland sites where no B influence has been found. With only a single period represented from the Cotswolds, conjectures are hardly justified. Lyncham may, however, be roughly contemporary with the settlement site at Radley, dated by Bradford not earlier than 200-150 B.C.¹⁶

13 One must bear in mind that Iron Age pottery from the eastern Cotswolds is rare. A little A2

came from pits at Chadlington. Antiquaries Journal, XV (1935), 31-3. ¹⁴ The Oxford Region, a Scientific and Historical Survey (1954), 82, fig. 26 (distribution map of Iron Age finds).

15 Oxoniensia, VII (1942), 60.

¹⁶ Ibid., p. 39, n. 1. This date is given for A2 at Frilford, and hence for Radley and Chastleton. Leeds (*Antiquaries Journal*, XI (1931), 403) put Radley after Chastleton on the evidence of the inturned rim.

PLATE I



 \mathbf{C}

LYNEHAM CAMP, OXON.

A. Section of the rampart in Cutting A, from the south. B. Section of the inner revetment and kerb of the rampart in Cutting A. C. Large stones on the summit of the rampart in Cutting A. D. Kerb of the rampart in Cutting C2.

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