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INVESTIGATIONS AND EXCAVATIONS DURING THE YEAR

I. REPORT ON EXCAVATIONS SUPPORTED BY THE SOCIETY

Interim Report by Mr F.H. Thompson, M.C., M.A., F.S.A., on the excavations at Oldbury.

A second and final season of excavation was carried out at the hill-fort of Oldbury, near Ightham, from 27th July to 16th August, 1984: a section of the defences near the north-east entrance for comparison with the pre-war results and further investigation of two magnetic anomalies in the southern half, which had been partially explored in 1983.

Trench 1, 10 ft. (3 m.) wide and 80 ft. (24 m.) long, was set out 35 ft. (10.5 m.) south of the 1938 section (Site 4) and was designed to include the rampart and ditch. The rampart itself was set on a 'raft' of sandstone rubble and survived to a height of 9 ft. (2.7 m.) as opposed to the mere 4 ft. (1.2 m.) in the 1938 section. A stone revetment was encountered at the front of the rampart, as in 1938. Then, it was regarded as a secondary re-fortification of an earlier unrevetted bank, but in 1984 it seemed to be the remains of a primary revetment. No trace of post-holes in the rampart crest was detected and, in fact, the suggested secondary palisade of 1938 is by no means convincing.

The inner face of the rock-cut ditch was encountered 10 ft. (3 m.) in advance of the stone revetment. It was 8 ft. (2.4 m.) deep, but a deep make-up of clay, brick and stone for a recent trackway made it impossible to establish the original profile. There were no finds.

Beyond the disused but recent track, the ground rises and falls again as if for an outer bank. In the 1938 section this feature had been interpreted as defensive outworks. To clarify the matter, Trench 2, 65 ft. 6 in. (20 m.) long by 4 ft. (1.2 m.) wide, was cut as an extension from Trench 1 across the feature. Sand-filled pits interspersed with dumps of flaggy sandstone, lying at different angles, suggest that the area had been deliberately quarried for sandstone

(and possibly the revetment of the hill-fort defences also); pottery from the quarry pits extended from the mid-first to the third century A.D.

In the southern half of the northern interior of the hill-fort, Trench 3 of 1983 had uncovered a possible iron-smelting site behind the rampart, and this was exposed on a larger scale (Trench 4). A pair of linked smelting furnaces seems likely, fed from a single stoke-hole. No dating material was recovered. Trench 9 of 1983 had revealed a hearth and length of gully, thought to be a possible hut site. The original trench was enlarged to a 20 ft. (6 m.) square to show that the gully was a shallow linear feature running diagonally across the trench, though probably contemporary with the hearth. More pottery was recovered from the gully, all falling within the bracket 150–50 B.C. A radiocarbon date for charcoal from the hearth (BM-2292) emerges as A.D. 40 ± 80 .

The defence sections of 1983 and 1984 yielded no clear evidence for two periods at Oldbury, and the suggestion of Belgic re-fortification seems untenable. It seems better to class it with other Greensand hill-forts to the west and to argue that it was rapidly constructed on a massive scale, never occupied in a permanent fashion and abandoned by c. 50 B.C. What later activity there is can probably be related to occupation in the area by a Romanised native population, which regarded the site as a convenient quarry.

II. REPORTS FROM LOCAL SECRETARIES AND GROUPS

Dover Archaeological Group. Mr. K. Parfitt reports:

The Group has continued its work in the Dover/Deal area, with regular surveillance of farming and building operations, and it has also assisted the Kent Archaeological Rescue Unit with several important projects in other parts of the County. Our efforts have been mainly concentrated on investigating prehistoric finds from the marshland to the north of Deal known as the Lydden Valley, which once formed the southern end of the Wantsum Channel. Work here during the 1970s led to the discovery of prehistoric struck flints in the marsh clays.

During the winter months of 1983/84, Mr. Bill Stevens of Minnis Farm, Worth, began re-cutting and clearing the drainage dykes around his fields on Worth Minnis, which forms a substantial part of the Lydden Valley to the south-east of Worth village. At the same time a number of fields in this area were ploughed and these events provided an excellent opportunity for the Group to carry out more

detailed research into the prehistoric remains on this part of the marsh.

A programme of field walking, trial trenching and observation of dyke clearings, carried out over many week-ends has provided much new information about the prehistoric remains in this area. It can now be seen that prehistoric material comes from an ancient land surface and is spread across much of the marsh. A total of fifteen areas producing flint-work has been recorded. Finds have included large amounts of 'pot-boiler' and much flint waste, as well as implements including a fine barbed and tanged arrowhead, a single chipped and polished axe together with several fragments, many scrapers and other utilized pieces. All of these are in a sharp, unworn condition. A preliminary examination of the flint material suggests that most of it belongs to a single industry, characterised by relatively crude working techniques. Four of the new flint sites produced associated Beaker pottery, with some probable late-Neolithic wares. A quantity of Iron Age sherds was also recovered on the surface near Hacklinge, and a rare, late Iron Age glass bead was discovered close by. (KAR, no. 76, 135-6).

Field walking on the higher areas of ground adjoining the marshland has produced scatters of struck flints of identical type to those found in the marsh, and shows that there are extensive spreads of lithic material in this region. The discovery of an ancient land surface, sealed under alluvium is of some considerable importance and it is hoped to carry out more work in the area. A more detailed interim report on the work will appear in the *Kent Archaeological Review*.

Maidstone Area Archaeological Group. Mr. R.J. Cruse reports:

CUXTON

Early in 1984, the Group carried out a limited investigation of the gravel deposits in the garden of 15 Rochester Road, Cuxton (N.G.R. TQ 71126655), in advance of the construction of a driveway. The trench yielded a 3.2 m. sequence of gravels containing thirteen Palaeolithic handaxes and 150 flakes in the upper layers and a further 100 flakes and six bone fragments in a limited exploration of the lower layers.

Although the axe density was clearly more modest than that observed across the road in the 1962 excavations by Mr. P.J. Tester¹

¹ P.J. Tester, 'An Acheulian Site at Cuxton', *Arch. Cant.*, xxx (1965), 30-60.

the greater depth of deposits in the 1984 trench has provided an opportunity to carry out a programme of pollen analysis, together with faunal and mineralogical sampling which may enable the important 1962 finds to be set in a more detailed context.

Sevenoaks District Architectural History Group. Mr A.D. Stoyel reports:

Since the Group's last report, we have been concerned with thirty buildings in eleven parishes, the great majority being inspected only briefly to assess the effect of planning proposals and to enable recommendations to be made where desirable to the appropriate authorities, either direct or through the Kent Historic Buildings Committee on which we are represented.

Work was continued at some of the buildings mentioned in our previous reports and no fresh ones have been recorded to date. Unfortunately, we were refused permission to examine the barn of Dynes Farm, Kemsing, an unlisted single-aisled example which appears to be of considerable interest and possibly pre-seventeenth-century date.

Administrative difficulties not yet overcome seriously hampered progress in producing detailed accounts of numerous buildings already recorded, in some cases several years ago, and we are deeply conscious of the increasing urgency of this outstanding obligation. We were, nonetheless, able to complete the preparation and distribution of the following studies, the second of which is the longest and most ambitious yet achieved by the Group:

Otford Study No. 2: David Asprey, 'The Barn of "The Bull" Public House, High Street, Otford' (15 pp. text, 7 figs., 1 pl.). *Sevenoaks Study No. 1:* Anthony D. Stoyel, 'Nos. 99 and 101, High Street, Sevenoaks, and the former Market Place' (33 pp. text, 13 figs., 12 pls.).

A copy of each is now in the K.A.S. Library and summaries of their contents will appear in the next volume of *Archaeologia Cantiana*.