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Archaeological excavations at Anstiebury Camp hillfort, Coldharbour, in 1989 and 1991

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with a contribution by
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Archaeological work undertaken at Anstiebury Camp hillfort, as a consequence of a violent storm in 1987, led to the discovery of material of Neolithic, Bronze Age and Iron Age origin. The two earlier prehistoric periods were represented by pieces of worked flint, and possibly by one feature dated to the Bronze Age or Early Iron Age, while the later period was represented by stratified material occurring within a number of layers, pits, postholes and a ditch. The work suggests that settlement of this site was probably of longer duration and is more complex than has been previously suggested.

Introduction

One of the consequences of the violent storm of October 1987 was the uprooting of the majority of the trees that had covered the interior of Anstiebury Camp hillfort (figs 1 and 2; centred at TQ 1537 4399). Archaeological work in the hillfort was subsequently instigated at the request of the Economic Forestry Group, which manages the land, and wished to replant the area with trees. As reafforestation would require Scheduled Monument Consent, English Heritage commissioned the Surrey County Archaeological Unit (SCAU) to carry out an archaeological evaluation upon which a response to the replanting proposals could be based. Consequently, two short seasons of excavation took place, first in September 1989 and subsequently between 4 and 12 March 1991.

The archive is held by the Surrey County Archaeological Unit, Surrey History Centre, Woking, pending identification of a suitable repository.

Background

Anstiebury is one of a group of Iron Age hillforts that have been identified on the Lower Greensand which fringes the northern Weald. Small-scale excavations were carried out in 1972–3 by F H Thompson (1979) together with a magnetometer survey. The latter revealed very few anomalies and this was regarded as indicative of very sparse occupation of the interior. The excavation concentrated on the defences and a few small trenches in the lee of the inner rampart, from which it was concluded that the hillfort might have been unfinished, was intended only for temporary refuge, and in fact saw very little occupation. This was part of a 'brief episode in the Late Iron Age in Surrey', most probably a defensive response to the threat posed by Caesar's landings in 55 and 54BC. These conclusions have not gone unchallenged and others have seen a wider variety of functions and a longer period of use for the hillforts on the greensand (eg Hanworth 1987, 157–61).

The 1989 season: geophysical survey

It was originally hoped that it would be possible to carry out both magnetic and resistivity survey work and that the information yielded would assist in the location of trenches for sample excavation. In the event, however, difficulties of moving cables over a ground surface with numerous fallen trees and tree stumps meant that resistivity survey was very little used.

The same obstacles slowed down the magnetic survey and made it necessary to rely on 'scanning' rather than gridded survey for many areas, and prevented survey altogether in others.

The extent of the survey work is indicated on the accompanying plan (fig 1). Very few anomalies of potential archaeological significance were encountered, and this accords with the results of the 1972 magnetometer survey (Clark 1979). As noted above, Dr Clark drew the conclusion from that work that the sparsity of anomalies reflected limited usage of the hillfort.

The evidence from trench B (below) was to prove of great importance to the interpretation of the results from the geophysical surveys. It suggested three different ways in which evidence of ancient occupation might have escaped detection by magnetometer:

1 The ancient ground level indicated by the scatter of finds on the surface of layer 115 was very near the present surface. Features such as hearths which were at or above the Iron Age ground level would almost certainly have been destroyed.
2 Postholes and small pits were generally too small to be detected.
3 The ditch, and other similar features, backfilled largely with the material excavated from it, would have provided too small a magnetic contrast to be discerned against 'soil noise'.

A fourth problem was indicated by trench A, which suggested that features behind the ramparts might have become too deeply buried for easy discovery. No great weight should therefore be put on the largely negative results of geophysical survey.

The 1989 season: the excavation and results

The siting of the excavated areas was controlled by four factors:

1 The need to sample each of the topographically distinct areas of the hillfort: the area behind the ramparts, the highest ground near the reservoir, and the more steeply sloping ground in the southern half of the hillfort.
2 A desire to sample different parts to those where Thompson had sited trenches in 1972–3.
3 A wish to test anomalies revealed in geophysical survey.
4 Practical difficulties due to the presence of fallen trees and tree stumps, which largely prevented satisfactory testing of geophysical anomalies.

Four trenches were excavated in areas that satisfied these criteria. A JCB mechanical excavator with a toothless ditching bucket was used to clear the surface vegetation and up to 0.10m of topsoil, root matter and forest litter from each trench, but the remainder of the excavation work was completed by hand.

BEHIND THE RAMPART (figs 1 and 3)

Trench A was sited behind the substantial inner rampart on the north side of the hillfort. South of the trench the surface rises towards the highest ground. The area for some distance around trench A is therefore effectively a hollow, which doubtless accounts for the considerable depth of material (0.65m+) that was found to seal prehistoric levels. After the removal of approximately 0.10m of surface material by machine (layer 101, which yielded one piece of Tudor redware and two tiny fragments of brick/tile), the remaining stratigraphy within this trench was removed in a series of spits (107, 119, 121 and 122), each measuring approximately 0.10–0.15m in depth. During the removal of spit 107 it became apparent that much of the eastern side of the area within this trench had been greatly disturbed by the roots from a fallen tree. In addition, this area was occupied by a large stump.

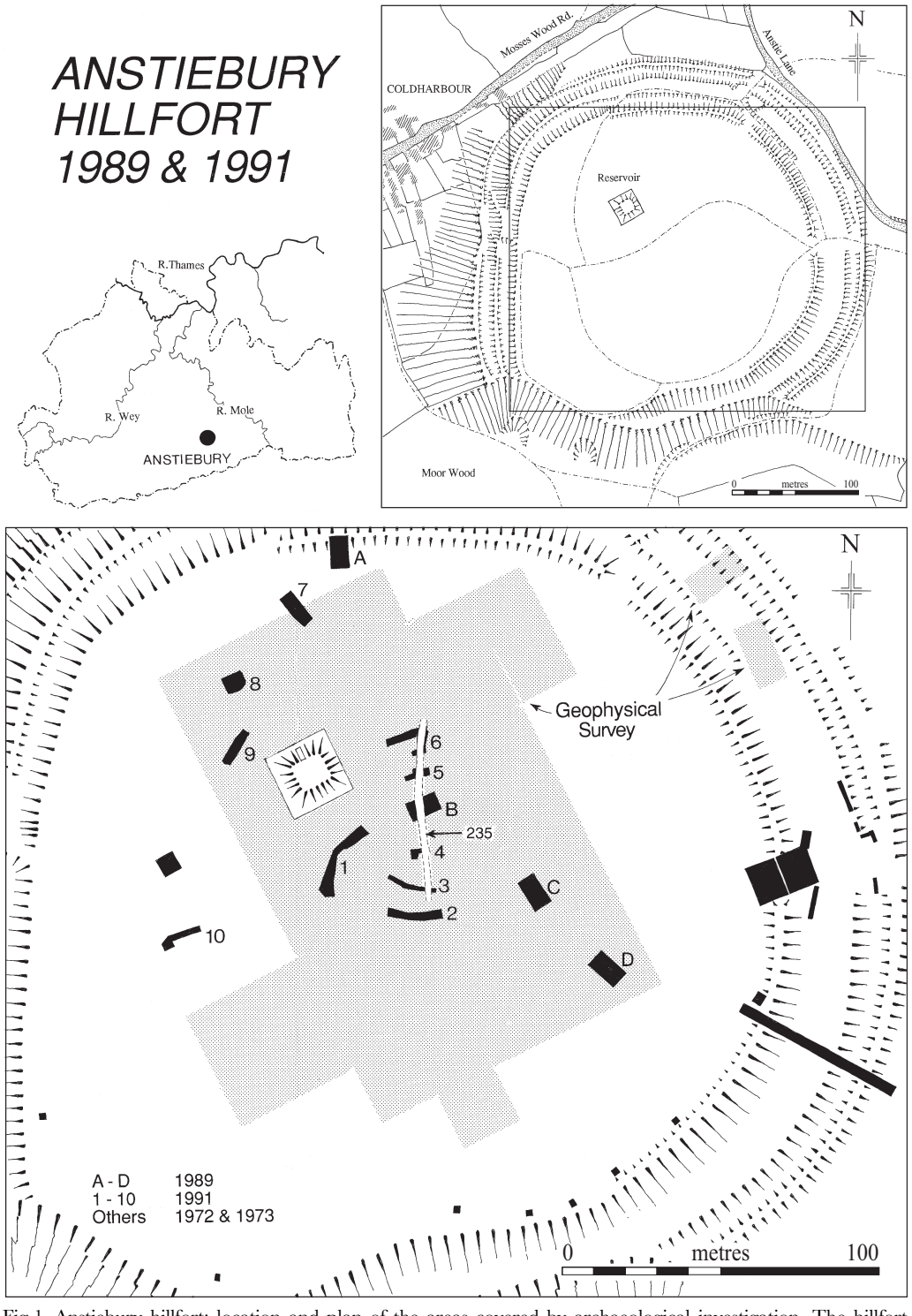

Fig 1 Anstiebury hillfort: location and plan of the areas covered by archaeological investigation. The hillfort defences are as shown by the Ordnance Survey, but figure 2 shows them in greater detail, as mapped by the RCHM(E). (© Crown copyright Ordnance Survey. All rights reserved)

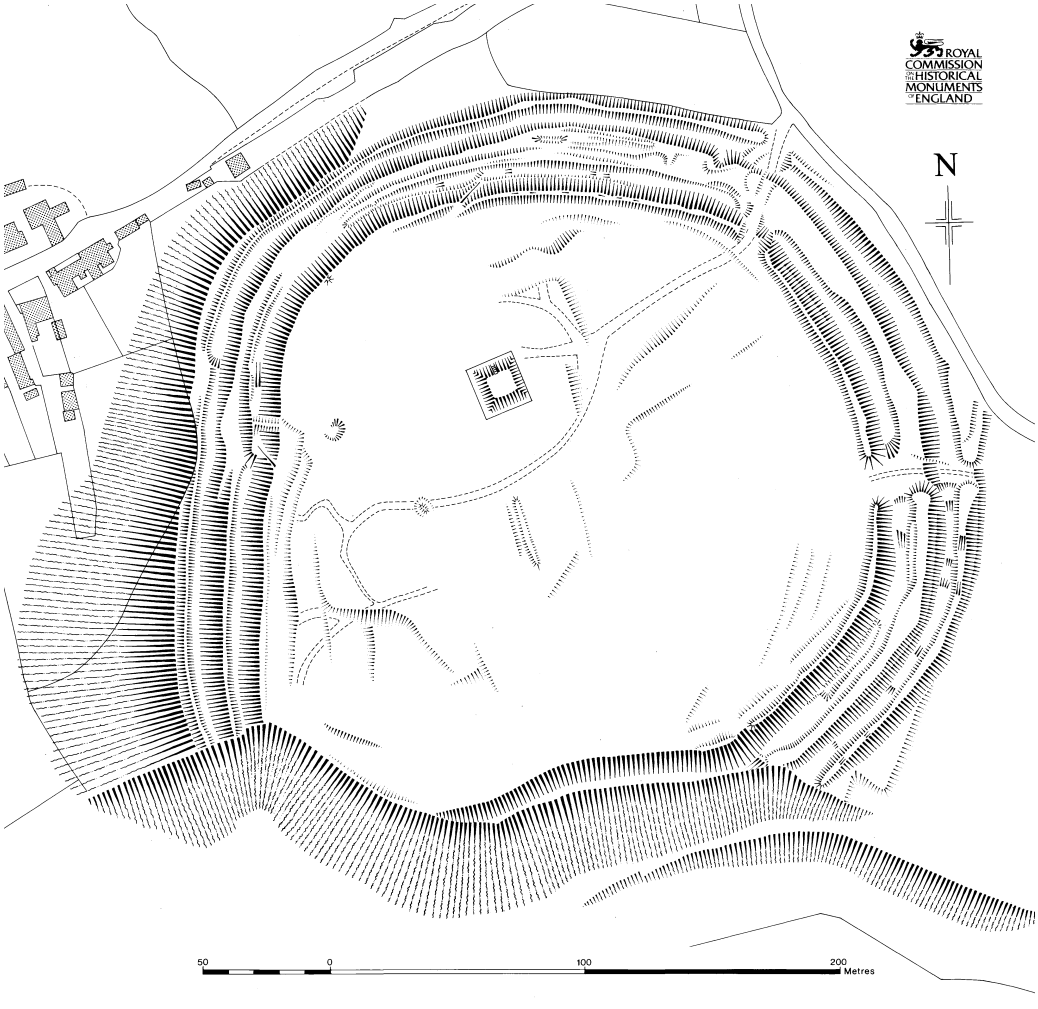

Fig 2 Anstiebury hillfort: survey of the site by RCHM(E) in 1991.

As there was little chance that an undisturbed section would survive on this side of the trench, and also to save time, it was decided to reduce the size of the trench (fig 3). Little difference was observed in the composition of spits 107, 119 and 121 during their excavation, though each was slightly lighter in colour than its predecessor and 121 had a greater content of small stones; these layers were all sandy loams. Apart from the occasional slingshot and waste flint flake, no finds were forthcoming from spits 107, 119 or 121. At the northern end of the trench these layers were found to overlie a layer of yellow sandy soil containing small and large angular pieces of sandstone and greensand. This layer, 118, is believed to consist of slumped and/or *in-situ* bank material from the inner rampart and was not disturbed by excavation.

The removal of spit 121 revealed a more distinctive mixed orange/yellow/brown layer (122), which was removed as a single context. This layer produced several small sherds of Iron Age pottery, most of which came from close to the base of 118. It was not possible in the time available and/or without the excavation of 118, for which there was no justification as far as the overall objectives of the evaluation were concerned, to establish a relationship between layers 118 and 121. The removal of 122 revealed natural sand with sandstone and greensand throughout much of the trench, which was also the case with layer 123 and

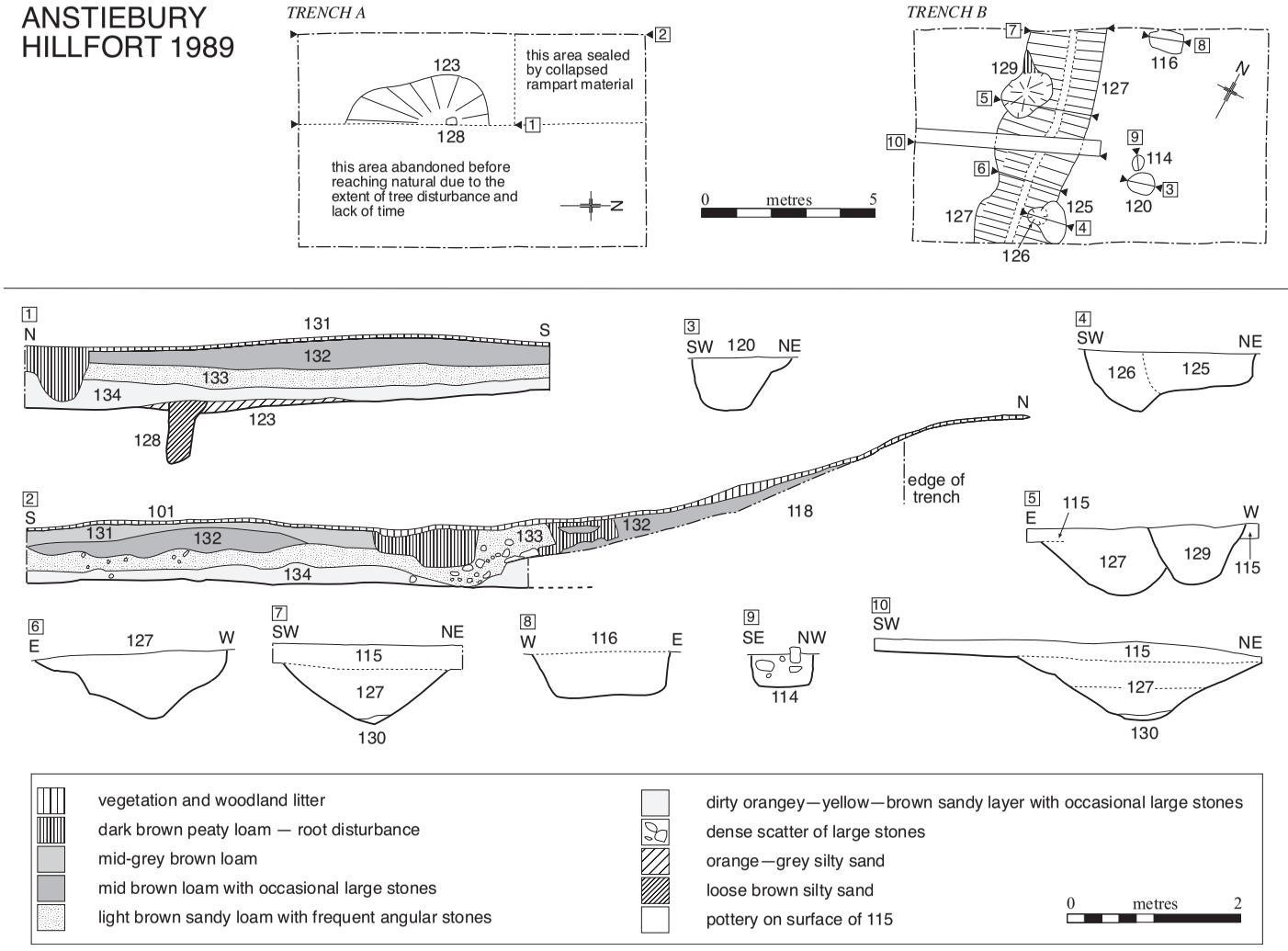

Fig 3 Anstiebury hillfort: the 1989 season plans and section drawings.

posthole 128. Context 123 was an orange/grey silty soil layer that might have been the remains of a shallow feature, but was more probably part of a former ground surface filling a slight dip in the natural. This layer appeared to have been cut by posthole 128, a deep straight-sided feature with a loose fill, which suggested the post may have decomposed *in situ*. One sherd of pottery of Iron Age date was removed from 123, and two sherds probably of Late Iron Age date were recovered from 128.

The excavation of this trench concluded with the detailed examination of each north–south section. This indicated that although few clear distinctions had been observed during excavation, particularly in the upper stratigraphy, some degree of layering (much disturbed by root activity at all levels) was probably present. These layers were subsequently numbered 131–134, with 131 being equivalent to 101, 132 being more or less equivalent to 107 and 119, 133 being more or less equivalent to 121, and 134 being equivalent to 122 – the layer numbers, not the spit numbers, appear in section (fig 3: sections 1 and 2). As 122/134 was recognised as a distinct layer prior to its excavation its finds were collected under the layer number 134.

THE TOP (figs 1 and 3)

Trench B was sited near the highest ground around the reservoir. The removal of approximately 0.10m of topsoil and root matter by machine (layer 102) was followed by the removal of a clearance spit of similar depth (112). Layer 112, still essentially topsoil, overlay a mid–light brown silty sandy subsoil containing small angular stones (115). The removal of 112 yielded several pieces of Iron Age pottery together with occasional pieces of baked clay and a few pieces of struck flint. As much of the pottery appeared to originate from a localised area on the surface of 115 this horizon was carefully trowelled and the finds collected as context 113. Much of the pottery recovered could be of Middle Iron Age origin. Trowelling revealed a concentration of pottery sherds with several fragments of baked clay on the surface of 115, and the outline of several features (114, 116, 120, 125, 126 and 129) that cut the layer (fig 3: sections 3–10).

Features 114, 116, 120 and 126 all appeared to be postholes. Posthole 114 had a fill of medium–dark brown sandy soil that was heavily flecked with charcoal and yielded frequent sherds of Iron Age pottery. The fill also contained a number of large fist-sized stones that might have been dislodged packing stones, or have been used to backfill the posthole. Feature 116 had a fill of yellow/grey sandy clay that yielded no finds, leaving the feature of uncertain date. The fill of this feature was unlike that of any other excavated here, possibly indicating that it served a function other than that suggested or that it was not of contemporary origin. Feature 120 had a fill of grey/brown sandy soil that was flecked with charcoal and contained quite frequent fist-sized and smaller angular stones. Most of the stones were found in the upper two-thirds of the fill and appeared to represent deliberate backfilling of the feature. The fill of 120 produced five sherds of Iron Age pottery including one base sherd identified as being of Late Iron Age date. Feature 126 was cut by pit 125 and had a fill of brown/grey sandy soil that was flecked with charcoal and contained occasional angular stones. No finds were recovered from this feature.

Features 125 and 129 were both pits and each had a similar fill of dark grey/brown sandy soil with occasional small angular stones. Pit 125 was heavily flecked with charcoal and it was this, together with the overall darker colour of the fill, which allowed its relationship with posthole 126 to be determined. The north-eastern edge of 129 had been disturbed by the roots of a recently fallen tree. Two sherds of Iron Age pottery were recovered from pit 125 and four sherds, also of Iron Age date, were recovered from layer 129B of pit 129.

Layer 115, a mid–light brown sandy soil, measuring 0.18–0.25m deep, was removed once those features seen to cut it had been recorded. This yielded only five additional sherds of pottery, of which four were of Iron Age date and one, an Earlswood sherd, was of medieval date (and was most probably intrusive at this level). The removal of layer 115 revealed the

edges of ditch 127, to the east of which lay natural reddish-brown and yellow clay and to the west of which lay natural orange/yellow clay. The presence of 127 had been suspected during the excavation of features 125, 126 and 129, which cut it, but this feature was not seen to cut layer 115. The excavation of two segments of the ditch showed it to be a substantial feature that contained a main fill of mid-brown sandy soil (also numbered 127), and a shallow primary fill layer of grey silty clay (130). Sherds of Late Iron Age pottery, and several pieces of fired clay, including part of a loomweight, were recovered from layer 127, but no finds were collected from 130. Two of the sherds recovered during the removal of layer 115 may also have come from 127. In section (fig 3: section 5) there was no visible distinction between 115 and 127, so although the ditch was not observed to cut the layer the possibility remains that it might have done so.

THE SLOPES (fig 1)

Trenches C and D were placed on the sloping ground in the southern half of the hillfort, but neither revealed anything of significance. In each case a thin layer of disturbed topsoil (0.05–0.10m thick) covered a *c* 0.35m thick layer of loose and slightly silty sand mixed with stones, presumably the result of hillwash accumulating over natural subsoil. This layer, which was directly above the undisturbed natural, was essentially sterile, although scattered within it, especially in the upper part, were a few 'slingshots' (rounded pebbles) and flint waste flakes.

The 1991 season: excavation and results

The work undertaken during 1989 allowed certain conclusions to be drawn and provisional recommendations to be made concerning the future management of the site (see p206). However, it also established the need for further evaluation of the high ground around the reservoir, particularly with consideration of the suggestion that the ditch discovered in trench B might relate to an early phase of Iron Age activity, perhaps even encircling a defined area, and some trenches were deliberately cut across the projected line of the ditch. This relatively flat area was also seen as a likely place to find evidence of prehistoric occupation, and additional trenches were opened to explore that potential further.

It was intended that four 50m^2 trenches would be excavated, but for practical reasons this was not possible. Very few accessible areas remained within the interior of the hillfort and most of those that outwardly appeared free from upstanding or fallen trees were 'fouled' by tree stumps, some of which were of considerable size. Consequently, a larger number of smaller trenches had to be dug between and around the obstacles to provide a reasonable sample of the area involved (fig 1). These same problems also made it impossible to obtain any coherent results from attempts at a resistivity survey.

Trenches were opened up using a JCB and in all cases the spoil was carefully scrutinised for stray archaeological finds. The layers removed by machine were of a consistent composition with roughly 0.05–0.15m of highly organic forest litter (200A) being removed over 0.15–0.35m of clay-rich topsoil/subsoil containing many roots (200B). An interface layer some 0.10m thick (200C) was observed in certain trenches between 200B and clean natural.

ARCHAEOLOGICALLY SIGNIFICANT TRENCHES: 1–5 AND 6 (figs 1, 4 and 5)

Trench 1

Trench 1 produced the first definite archaeological feature (201) and several possible features (202–205). Feature 201 contained six layers of fill (206–211) the uppermost of which (206) appeared no different in section to the subsoil layer 200B (fig 5: section 1). Beneath was an orange/grey clay layer apparently formed from a mixture of soil and redeposited natural

(207), a grey/brown silty clay with frequent stones (208), a grey/brown silty clay (209) and two 'grubby' grey clay layers which appeared to consist mainly of redeposited natural (210 and 211). Three sherds of prehistoric pottery with calcined flint inclusions were recovered from 206, and one small pottery sherd of Iron Age date and two pieces of struck flint (one of which had been used as an awl) were recovered from 209.

The excavation of feature 201 was made difficult by numerous small tree roots. There are three possible interpretations: first, it might have been the terminal of a potentially important linear feature running for an unknown distance southwards; secondly, it might have been part of an elongated pit running outside the limits of the trench; thirdly, it is possible that two pits were present as is suggested by slight base-level variations and the fact that layer 210 (fig 5: section 1) only appeared in the southern part of the feature in the slight bulge shown on the western side – any subtle distinction between two similarly filled intercutting features could well have been lost by root disturbance. The few finds recovered from feature 201 suggest that it might be of Early Iron Age or even Bronze Age date.

Feature 202 was a shallow oval pit no more than 0.12m deep but with a distinct 'grubby' grey/brown clay fill that showed clearly against the natural orange clay encountered in this trench. Little more can be said about this feature except that the sole find recovered from it was a small piece of struck flint.

Features 203/204 and 205 initially appeared as slightly irregular but probably genuine features with a 'grubby' grey/brown clayey fill similar to 202. It is possible that 203 and 204 were parts of the same linear feature and that 205 was either connected with, cut, or cut by these, but the general irregularity of the base and sides of these features coupled with the complete lack of archaeological finds leave doubts as to whether they were man-made.

Trench 2

This trench was of interest primarily because of the negative information derived from its excavation and from the questions arising from this. It will be seen from figure 1 and the plans for trenches 3–6 (fig 4), that several trenches were cut across a projected line of the ditch discovered in trench B (1989). With the exception of trench 2, these all revealed a further segment of the ditch (designated 127 in 1989, but now renumbered 235), giving an indication of at least part of its course. However, although a deep segment of 235 was excavated in trench 3 no trace of the ditch was found in trench 2 which lies about 6m further to the south. The area between these trenches was occupied by a large pile of felled trees and could not be further investigated, but clearly what happens to the ditch at this point could be of great interest. One possible feature was examined at the far eastern end of trench 2 but this appeared to be no more than a small localised disturbance and elsewhere clean natural was revealed throughout the trench.

Trenches 3–6

These trenches revealed only further segments (212, 216, 219, 225, 227 and 231) of ditch 235 and no finds were recovered other than from the ditch fills. Since 235 is absent from trench 2 it is possible that it is continuous for approximately 50m between trenches 3 and 6. For the most part the ditch sections showed few variations (figs 4 and 5) and those observed were mainly minor colour or stone content variations rather than distinct layer differences. The typical fill was a medium brown sandy clay soil. In segment 216, trench 3, a clearer colour distinction between the upper fill (217) and the darker lower fill (218) allowed two layers to be excavated, but elsewhere distinctions were not so clear, with the minor variations that were drawn being inconsistent between opposing sections and were often only visible when the complete section could be examined; these segments were excavated in spits. The profile of the ditch showed some variation, being deep and V-shaped further to the north (segments 212, 225, 227 and 231).

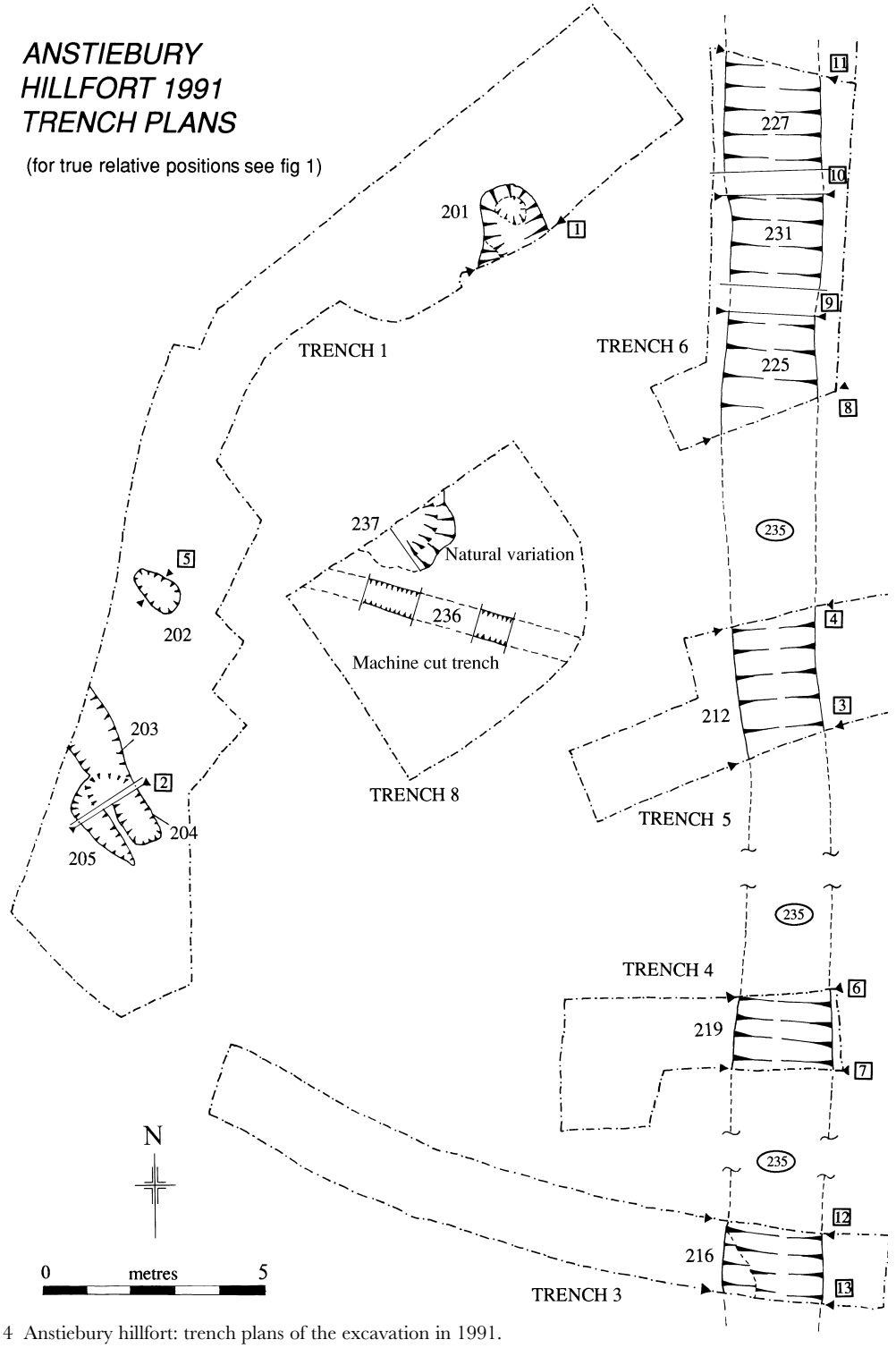

Fig 4 Anstiebury hillfort: trench plans of the excavation in 1991.

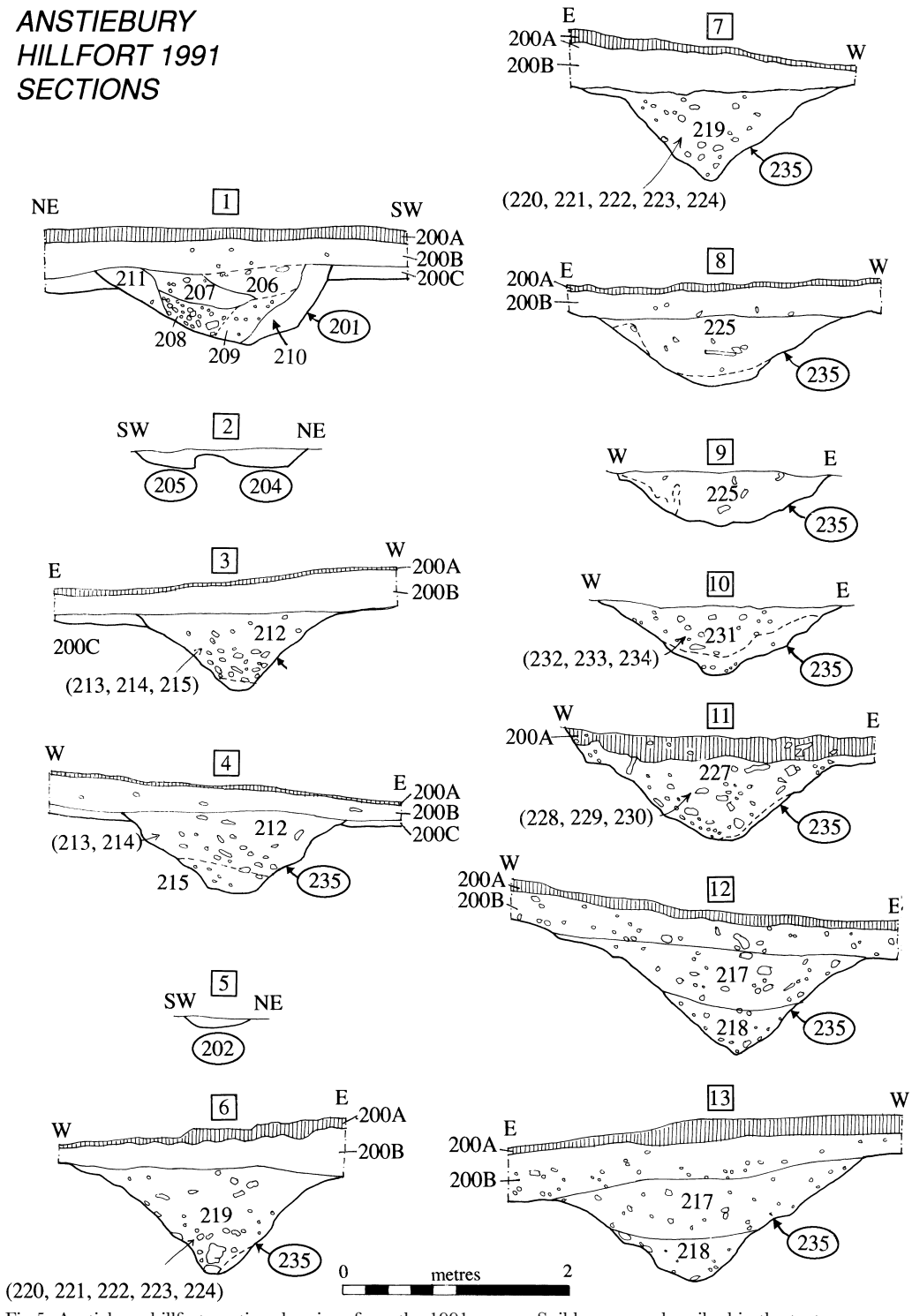

Fig 5 Anstiebury hillfort: section drawings from the 1991 season. Soil layers are described in the text.

The finds recovered from contexts relating to ditch 235 were fairly evenly distributed throughout the fills of the various segments and consisted of pottery sherds, small pieces of fired clay, a struck flint flake, and three pieces of burnt bone at least two of which are thought to have come from a human child (215). The majority of the 68 sherds recovered were of Iron Age date and those that were diagnostic on the basis of fabric or form belonged to the Late Iron Age. These included the finer wares and vesiculated sherds, and an almost complete vessel recovered in many fragments from spit 233 (segment 231); this had a vesiculated fabric and was of recognisable Late Iron Age form. Among the finer wares are three sherds from a butt beaker with comb-impressed decoration (one from spit 229 of segment 227, and two from spit 230, the lowest spit of the same segment). These sherds could be of Late Iron Age or early Roman date, but in the absence of other Roman material – save for a single undistinguishable piece of greyware from the uppermost spit (213) of segment 212 – it seems more likely that they belong to the earlier period. The positions of other diagnostic sherds within the segments excavated provide a further indication that ditch 235 is of later Iron Age date. Sherds of earlier Iron Age origin were probably present residually.

OTHER TRENCHES: 7–10 (fig 1)

Trenches 7, 9 and 10

Trenches 7, 9 and 10 were reduced to clean natural, revealing no archaeological features and producing no finds; these trenches were immediately backfilled.

Trench 8 (fig 3)

Trench 8 revealed a linear feature, 236, roughly 0.60m wide running in a north-westerly/south-easterly direction. Examination of two hand-dug segments showed this feature to be vertically sided and excavation was halted at a depth of 1m; the feature had not been bottomed at this depth and was clearly a machine-cut trench, presumably associated with the reservoir. A further possible feature, 237, which appeared as an irregularly shaped light grey patch running under the northern edge of the trench, was also examined. Excavation revealed a sterile and very stony fill, which indicated that this 'feature' was no more than a variation in the natural or at most the site of some natural (arboreal?) disturbance.

The pottery, by Phil Jones

A near-complete pot (672g) and 184 sherds (973g) were recovered during the two seasons of work on the hilltop. The near-complete pot, as well as between one-quarter and one-third of the rest of the sherds, constitute the largest feature assemblage recovered, which was from ditch 235. This had, almost certainly, been in use during the Late Iron Age, but may not have been sealed until the early Roman period. Pottery was also sampled from three postholes and three pits of Iron Age date (114, 120, 125, 128, 129, and 201 (contexts 206/9)), although it is suspected that some sherds in their assemblages are redeposited sherds of Bronze Age date. More prehistoric material was recovered from top and subsoil layers of the site (101, 112, 113, 115, 123, 134, 200); one of these contained the only medieval sherd from the site (115), and another contained the only one that is post-medieval (101). Between one and four sherds of Roman pottery were collected, and all were from ditch 235.

Because of the small size of the assemblage, it was considered inappropriate to classify the pottery according to any rigid type series of fabrics and wares, although each sherd was examined at x20 magnification, and the number of perceived types in the collection is shown in the tables that quantify them for each context or feature (tables 1 and 2, see *Endnote*).

The more important fabric types are those with the acronyms CALC (tempered only with calcined flint), which may be Bronze Age if they are not Early Iron Age; SAND/CALC/GROG (with moderate quantities of quartz sand and calcined flint, and sparse to moderate inclusions of grog); CHALK (once tempered with a limestone that was probably chalk, but which has long since dissolved in the acid soils of the hilltop); GROG (tempered only with crushed baked clay fragments); and SAND and COARSE SAND (with sub-rounded quartz sand, but in different grades).

The SAND/CALC/GROG-tempered sherds are usually thick-walled (up to 12mm) and, when their surfaces have not been eroded, are often burnished. The fabric constitutes between 28% (by count) and 63% (by weight) of all sherds (except the complete vessel), and may be a Middle–Late Iron Age type. The CHALK-tempered ware is represented by at least two vessels in the Late Iron Age to early Roman ditch 235: the near-complete vessel which is a simple jar with inturned rim and incipient beading (fig 6, no 2), and the other a bead-rimmed jar represented by a heavily eroded rim sherd (fig 6, no 3). The only other context with CHALK ware was layer 134 with a few fragments of the type amounting to only 7g.

There would have been only eleven sherds of GROG from the site were it not for the inclusion of 22 sherds of a vessel (fig 6, no 1) in posthole 114. This is relatively thin-walled, like most other sherds of GROG, and is decorated with a burnished tooling of oblique strokes above a horizontal line. The external surface is also burnished, although this has been eroded from its lower parts. The vessel has vertical walls and, despite it having a more attenuated beaded rim than is usual, can only be classified as a saucepan pot. As such it probably dates to the period from the 3rd to the 1st centuries BC.

There are only 85g of the quartz SAND- and COARSE SAND-tempered fabrics from the site, and about half the sherds are from the fills of ditch 235. Those that are not too fragmentary to be certain are relatively thin walled, usually dark grey/black in colour, and burnished externally and sometimes internally. At least three sand-tempered sherds from ditch 235 (contexts 229 and 230) are from a carefully made, and possibly wheel-thrown, vessel (fig 6, no 4), with thin walls decorated with rouletted zones that are interrupted by plain bands demarcated by horizontal tooling. They are, most probably, from a butt beaker, but it is less certain whether it had been a pre-conquest or an early Roman vessel.

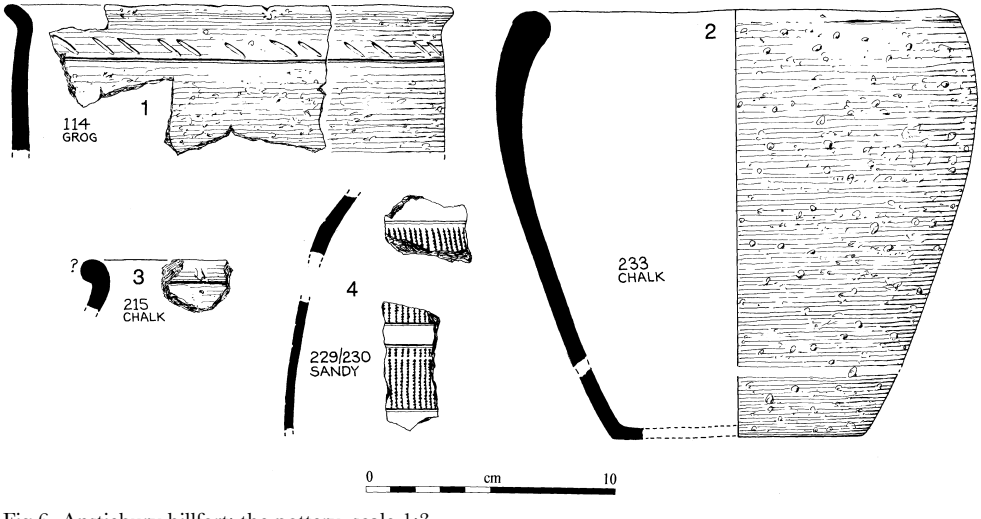

Fig 6 Anstiebury hillfort: the pottery, scale 1:3.

SOME DETAILS OF THE CONTEXT ASSEMBLAGES (SEE TABLES 1 AND 2 FOR QUANTIFICATION)

Layer 112: The twenty sherds of SAND/CALC/GROG are generally thick (*c*12mm), have grey cores and red/brown surfaces, and are burnished externally and smoothed internally. The five sherds of SAND/some GROG are all thin (4–5mm), and the sherd of fine SAND also contains much mica.

Layer 113: The SAND/CALC/GROG sherds are similar to those described above, and the FINE SAND sherds also contain much visible mica.

Posthole 114: The GROG sherds are from one vessel: a decorated saucepan pot with an attenuated bead rim (fig 6, no 1). The FINE SAND sherds contain much mica.

Layer 115: In addition to three sherds of SAND/CALC/GROG of Iron Age date and one of CALC that might be earlier, there is a sherd of Earlswood-type orange/brown sandy ware with an external white slip and green glaze splashes that belongs to the period from the late 12th to the 15th centuries AD.

Posthole 120: The three sherds of GROG include a plain base angle with smoothed surfaces that is not very thick walled.

Layer 123: A tiny fragment of SAND-tempered ware of Iron Age type.

Layer 124: A sherd of SAND/some GROG that is 10mm thick and burnished internally.

Pit 125: Two sherds of SAND/CALC/GROG, similar to those in 112 and 113.

Posthole 128: Two COARSE SAND sherds, dark grey, 6mm thick, and burnished inside and out.

Layer 134: The COARSE SAND sherds are burnished inside and out.

Pit 201: The three CALC sherds contain very coarse fragments of flint. The presence of a GROG sherd makes it more likely that the feature is of Iron Age date rather than any earlier.

Ditch 235: (Contexts 127, 213–15, 217, 220–1, 223–6, 228–30, 233–4). The sample is of 68 sherds (256g) as well as the sherds of a near-complete pot (fig 6, no 2) in the CHALK ware (672g). Twenty-four of the 68 sherds are also of CHALK, including the rim of a bead-rimmed jar (fig 6, no 3). A single sherd from context 213 is of Roman wheel-thrown greyware, as might be three sherds from a dark grey sandy butt beaker with rouletted decoration, from contexts 229 and 230 (fig 6, no 4). It is conceivable, however, that the beaker is pre-Roman, since the form belonged to the repertoire of Aylesford–Swarling pottery, and that the Roman greyware sherd was intrusive. The feature had, therefore, been sealed either during the Late Iron Age or the early Roman period.

Other finds, by Phil Jones

BAKED CLAY

Sixty-two fragments were recovered from ditch 235 and four of these could be identified as having belonged to loomweights. One of these includes part of a circular piercing that is at 45° from an extant surface of the fragment (from ditch 127), and the form, therefore, was probably that of a typical Iron Age triangular loom- or roof weight with piercings through each corner. Many of the other fragments could also have belonged to the loomweights but this is not certain. The same, or another, loomweight was represented by one of two fragments of baked clay from pit 125. It too has part of a piercing at 45° to the adjacent surface. Other pieces of baked clay were found in the soil and subsoil layers 112 (one fragment), and 113 (two fragments including one with part of a flat surface).

CALCINED FLINT

Single pieces were recovered from contexts 105, 107, 109 and 115; two pieces came from ditch 127, and posthole 120 yielded the largest quantity, of twenty small fragments (73g).

SLINGSHOT PEBBLES

Eighteen round and sub-rounded flint pebbles came from various excavated contexts (100, 102, 105, 107, 109, 110, 112 and 126), but none from any of the cut features that contained pottery sherds. They are, presumably, the same type of sling-stone that has been found

previously at Anstiebury, also of hen's egg size, and of the same non-local material. The probable source of the slingshot was either the Netley Heath Pebble Beds or the Woolwich/Reading Beds, which outcrop 9.5km to the north of the site (Thompson 1979, 262).

WORKED FLINT

Sixty pieces were recovered, of which 44 are unretouched flakes, five are flakes with peripheral retouch, and one is a blade. Flint tool production on the hilltop is indicated by four cores of which two are asymmetrical, another is a single platform drum core, and the other is irregular, although two extant areas of ground surface indicate that it had originally been a Neolithic polished axe. Unlike the other flints from the site that are blue/grey to dark grey/black in colour, the axe, later utilised as a core, is an even pale grey/cream colour. Three scrapers are included in the collection, including two convex end-scrapers and a similar but much smaller horseshoe end-scraper that is a Bronze Age type. Two of the flakes with peripheral retouch may also have been used as scrapers. Another Bronze Age type may be represented by a broken tool that may once have been a knife with retouch along both edges; there is also a robust awl made on a large flake. Flints from the buried features include two small flakes from pit 125, a flake and the small horseshoe scraper from pit 129, the awl and a flake from pit 206/9, and a single flake from ditch 235; but all are, almost certainly, redeposited earlier material.

WHETSTONE

A fragment of a long mica-schist whetstone with an oval cross-section was recovered from the topsoil (context 112). Such stones were imported from Scandinavia during the medieval period.

CHARCOAL

Small fragments of less than 1g were recovered from layer 123 and pit 125. Ditch 235 contained a small fragment of less than 1g in context 233, *c* 2g of fragments in 214 and 17g from 127.

BURNT BONE

Three small fragments were recovered from context 215 within segment 212 of ditch 235. Theya Molleson (pers comm) has commented that one looks like a cranial fragment, and another looks like a pelvic fragment of a young child; the last is a possible epiphysis, although whether of a human or other animal is uncertain.

Conclusions

The results from both seasons are disappointing in one sense as little information about the pattern or density of settlement within the hillfort was forthcoming. On a more positive note, however, the results are of considerable interest since they indicate that well-preserved remains belonging to several periods of occupational use survive in certain areas within the ramparts.

In trench A, a substantial posthole, most probably of Late Iron Age date, was located, together with a surrounding layer that produced a further scrap of Iron Age pottery and may represent occupation material. Unfortunately, the depth of overburden, much of which probably consisted of material eroded from the bank of the inner rampart, and difficulties with tree roots, prevented the clearing of a sufficient area to the depth necessary to appreciate the precise significance of these discoveries.

In trench B, a thin layer of disturbed topsoil sealed deposits that were essentially undisturbed since the Iron Age. This was shown by the scatter of Iron Age pottery at this level, which is presumably that of the ancient ground surface (top of 115). At this point too, a number of pits and postholes were found to have been cut into layer 115. Later the fill of a north–south ditch (127/235) was discovered, the edges of which could only be defined after the removal of 115, but the relationship of the ditch to this layer was not satisfactorily determined. The ditch had clearly been filled in, or had infilled naturally, before features 125, 126 and 129 were dug. Subsequent work in 1991 allowed the course of this ditch to be traced over a distance of approximately 50m, and indicated that the feature most probably became sealed during the Late Iron Age. Measuring up to 2.8m wide and 0.90m deep (segment 216, trench 3) the ditch is substantial, but its function remains uncertain and its course largely unknown. It is possible that the feature may enclose or divide-off a specific part of the interior and figure 1 may indicate a slight easterly tendency towards an area that has not been archaeologically sampled. The apparent disappearance of 235 between trenches 2 and 3 could be of great interest as it suggests that the feature either changes direction sharply (perhaps in accordance with a change in ground slope at this point) or stops abruptly (possibly even as one side of an entrance, although this is unlikely in view of the topography).

Trenches to the north, south and west of the reservoir provide little significant information with the exception of trench A close to the ramparts, but the Iron Age pottery recovered from ditch 235 together with the scatter of Middle Iron Age pottery recovered from the prehistoric ground surface in trench B suggests some Iron Age occupational activity in the vicinity of this feature. Other features contemporary with, or later than (perhaps contemporary with 125, 126 and 129 which cut it), its suggested date of origin may also be present nearby. In addition, the pottery recovered from feature 201 suggests that this feature might be of Early Iron Age or even Bronze Age date and, in general, finds of pieces of struck flint collected in 1989 and 1991 further indicate Early or pre-Iron Age activity on this site. It is interesting to note in passing that apart from the material recovered from stratified contexts, a fragment of a Neolithic polished axe, utilised as a core to produce flakes, was recovered with pieces of struck flint from exposed parts of the present ground surface within the hillfort. It may be that the absence of archaeological finds or features in trenches 7–10 suggests that there was little activity in this part of the hillfort although a substantial area of relatively flat ground to the north and east of 235 remains uninvestigated.

As a result of the work undertaken in 1972–3 Thompson reached a number of conclusions, and he tentatively suggested that the hillfort was constructed within the 2nd to 1st centuries BC on pottery evidence, and that there was a brief re-occupation, probably of a peaceful character, in the pre-Flavian period (Thompson 1979, 258). He further assessed this against the historical evidence and concluded that taken together they point to construction in 55/54 BC. The work undertaken in 1989 and 1991 can contribute little to the question of the construction date, though it is interesting to note that a posthole (128) containing Late Iron Age pottery was located close to the ramparts in trench A. The discovery of sherds tentatively identified as being of Middle and possibly Early Iron Age date within the hillfort area indicates some degree of activity here during that period, but as yet these finds cannot be related to any of the major earthworks that surround the site and lead to its identification as a 'hillfort'. There is the possibility that Iron Age occupation might have followed on from settlement in the Bronze Age. Little can be added about the final phase of occupation of the site, though Late Iron Age pottery was recovered from ditch 235, and this ditch was itself cut by several small features which, although of unknown date, might have been dug during or shortly after this period. The presence of burnt human bone in this ditch is a small, but interesting, indicator of funerary activity. Overall, the indications resulting from the work undertaken in 1989 and 1991 are that the settlement of the site was probably of longer duration and more complex than was originally suspected.

Management recommendations

Recommendations made in 1989 remained largely unchanged by the work in 1991, although the latter led to some further recommendations for points to be considered before permission to plant trees was granted: the combined recommendations were as follows:

1 There should be no further disturbance of the hillfort defences or of a *c*10m belt within the entire circumference of the inner rampart. The reason for protecting the banks and ditches is obvious, while the reason for the 10m strip emerges from the occupation evidence found in the majority of trenches behind the ramparts, in the present work and Thompson's earlier investigations (1979).
2 The sloping ground in the southern half of the hillfort might well have seen very little occupation. It would not seem to be a very appropriate location for buildings, and geophysical survey would surely have detected any substantial rubbish pits. The sterility of trenches C and D tended to confirm this view. This was, however, very limited evidence on which to disregard *c* 50% of the hillfort and some further machine-dug trenches would need to be excavated before doing so. Otherwise, it was concluded that tree planting would be acceptable in this area, subject to archaeological observation of the work.
3 Iron Age occupation was undoubtedly present in the higher ground to the north and east of ditch 235 and the whole of this should be considered as a potential source of occupation evidence and should not be regarded as sterile without appropriate investigation.
4 The close proximity of known archaeological features and material to the present ground surface should be considered. Similar remains would be seriously threatened by a replanting programme, which may entail deep ploughing, stump removal and the general use of heavy machinery.
5 As little is known of the Iron Age and early Roman period in this part of the county any potential areas of occupation should be considered important and should be protected where possible.
6 It would be of immense help in understanding the topography of the hillfort if a detailed contour survey was available. It was recommended that RCHM(E) be asked to undertake this before renewed tree planting made it very difficult.

Outcome of recommendations made in 1989 and 1991

As a result of work undertaken by the Surrey County Archaeological Unit and following discussions between the Economic Forestry Group and English Heritage it was agreed that much of the interior of the hillfort would be laid down to pasture. The ground clearance preparations required for this would be achieved with the minimum of ground disturbance. This has since been implemented and would seem to be an appropriate and most satisfying outcome to the project.

The survey by RCHM(E)

The Royal Commission on Historical Monuments (England) (RCHM(E)) carried out a detailed topographic survey of the hillfort in 1991 (fig 2). This has proved extremely valuable in clarifying the nature of the defences. A major point of interest is their identification of the defences as continuous through the north-eastern sector, where it had been suggested by Thompson (1979, fig 2) that they and the hillfort were unfinished.

Endnote

The tables listed below are available on the Archaeology Data Service website (http://ads.ahds.ac.uk/catalogue/library/syac/v94.cfm). Copies of this material will also be deposited with the Society's library, Guildford and the Historic Environment Record, Woking. Photocopies can also be supplied by post – enquiries should be addressed to the Hon Editors, Surrey Archaeological Society, Castle Arch, Guildford GU1 3SX.

TABLES

1 Pottery sherd count by context and ware type
2 Pottery weight by context and ware type

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