

**THE TWYFORD DOWN VILLAGE, THE ABANDONMENT
OF ST. CATHARINE'S HILL, AND THE FIRST
SETTLEMENT OF WINCHESTER**

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OF the various points of particular interest made by the authors of the preceding paper on the Twyford Down village site, the chronology of the La Tène II occupation there, and of its supersession by a La Tène III (Belgic) culture, seems to call for special consideration. Mr. Stuart and Mr. Birkbeck have asked me to contribute a few words on this matter here, as their results have an obvious and direct bearing on the evidence for that same chronology at St. Catharine's Hill, which it fell to me to present in Vol. XI of these *Proceedings* (1930). I submit these lines all the more gladly, because the testimony of the Twyford Down site clearly calls for a revision of the provisional conclusions which I reached on the evidence then available.

It will be recalled that our excavations showed that the earth-work defending St. Catharine's Hill was put up "towards the close of the La Tène I period," "not before the 4th century B.C." (*S.C.H.*, pp. 21, 58), and that in the neighbourhood of the Entrance a pot-rim showing the beginnings of the "incipient bead-rim" type characteristic of La Tène II was found in the material of the original bank (E 28, p. 113; pp. 33-34), suggesting a date in the 3rd century for what we called "Period A" of the history of the Entrance defences (p. 58 ff.). After neglect in Period B, those defences were strengthened in Period C by cleaning out the ditch and heightening the bank (p. 36 ff.) with the material so obtained, which included a pot-rim of more pronounced "incipient bead-rim" character (E 136, p. 113; pp. 39-40) indicating more definitely the La Tène II period. The final Period D, post-dating this reconstruction as was shown by the scraped-out area south of the Entrance, which was used as a rubbish-dump by the inhabitants of the Period D Pit R (pp. 91-92, 113-116, 118-120), was firmly dated in La Tène II by the pottery from both Area (pp. 113-116) and Pit (pp. 118-120), and as this period was directly terminated by the final destruction of the defences (pp. 64-66) and abandonment of the whole site, the date of the latter event obviously turned on that of the pottery in question within this La Tène II period.

We dated it in the early part of La Tène II on typological grounds, and thus came to the provisional conclusion that we could take a date "about 150 B.C. as the safest approximate date for the destruction of the settlement, and" that this was "more likely to be too late than too early" (p. 169). The typological grounds

were, briefly, that the pottery did not show either in modelling or decoration the "advanced" features typical of the later La Tène II wares at such Sussex sites as Park Brow and Findon Park, though these features were shown to have been duly present in Central Hampshire by their occurrence at the neighbouring village site on Worthy Down, where the La Tène II occupation certainly lasted until the appearance of the Belgae with their La Tène III culture in or after about 50 B.C. (pp. 92, 116, 120-122, 138-139, 169). The increased knowledge of Iron Age archaeology obtained during the last few years has been steadily undermining the supposed grounds for these typological scruples. It has been becoming clear that the incidence of curvilinear and swag decoration, and of such other "advanced" features as a projecting foot-moulding, is too inconstant in the La Tène II period to be a reliable index to date. Local variation, and in particular, the varying degree of influence on these later phases of our "Iron Age A" culture, as we now call it, exercised by the partly contemporary "Iron Age B" culture of the West Country, is quite enough to account for such typological differences between the La Tène II pottery of particular Iron Age A sites in Wessex and Sussex, and in short, our terminal date of 150 B.C. for St. Catharine's Hill was already crumbling even before Messrs. Stuart and Birkbeck began to excavate on Twyford Down.

The results of their work seem to decide the matter definitely. The La Tène II culture to which all the dated Twyford Down pits belong is really identical with that of the St. Catharine's Hill Period D, as they very properly point out, and it is also clearly on the same footing as that recognized at Worthy Down, the Trundle and other sites where this late phase of the Iron Age A civilization was prolonged until whatever date in the 1st century B.C. the La Tène III culture of the Belgae took its place. And not only that: whereas at St. Catharine's Hill, as at The Trundle, the Belgic period was one not of re-occupation, but of desolation, at Twyford Down, as at Worthy Down, the La Tène II village was immediately re-settled and occupied until the initial phase of Roman dominion. The evidence for the directness of this sequence presented by Messrs. Stuart and Birkbeck is convincing, and tallies with the observations made at Worthy Down, where, in addition to the survival of La Tène II pottery into Belgic associations, the duration of the La Tène II occupation into the 1st century B.C. is certified by an imported glass bead of that date (*Proc. H. F. C.*, X, pt. 2, p. 184; *S. C. H.*, p. 120). Another piece of evidence is supplied by the pieces of rotary quern from the filling of the Twyford Down Pit IV (pp. 194, 207 above: Fig. IX, 7), *i.e.*, associated with late La Tène II pottery. Dr. E. C. Curwen describes the type of quern that they attest as "certainly a development from the very high

'bee-hive' type that goes with the La Tène II pottery of The Trundle," and would accordingly date it, as quoted above (p. 207) as "late La Tène II—La Tène III."

In short, the evidence from Twyford Down and Worthy Down carries the La Tène II culture of Central Hampshire definitely down to the date of the Belgic invasion, and this must carry the occupation of St. Catharine's Hill with it. It seems certain (see *Arch. Journal* lxxxvii, 280 ff.; *Antiq. Journal* xii, 411 ff.) that the Belgic invasions south and west of the Weald cannot be earlier than 50 B.C., and these La Tène II occupations can thus safely be taken down at least to that date. The full area which those invasions came to cover may now be divided into two parts, divided by the line of the River Test. West of this line, the country is dotted with the great multiple-ramparted hill-forts or hill-towns due to the spread of "Iron Age B" conquerors from the West,¹ and Belgic penetration cannot be dated before the early 1st Century A.D. East of it, however, "Iron Age B" is attested by influence only (*e.g.* in the decorated pottery just noticed) and the great hill-fort complex is absent. Further, there is here no reason for dating the Belgic invasion as late as the 1st century A.D.; on the contrary, the "British Remic" coins of this area, which Dr. G. C. Brooke identified with its arrival, are on numismatic grounds to be dated about 50—25 B.C.,² and are directly succeeded by the inscribed coins of Commius and his sons. The lands thus identified with the Commian dominions have the Test as their Western frontier, and however late and from whatever quarters Belgic invaders penetrated westward beyond it, there is no reason for putting much after 50 B.C. the arrival of the Belgae in this their primary area of settlement. The matter is discussed in the Report on the Buckland Rings excavations elsewhere in this volume (pp. 125-127); the main landing was probably in the Selsey district, whence the South-Down Ridgeway and its feeders³ lead directly to Winchester and the surrounding downland. Just as the native occupation of The Trundle hill-town above Selsey was thus abruptly stopped, so the same thing happened at the native metropolis of Central Hampshire. St. Catharine's Hill was violently destroyed, and was left as was The Trundle to lie desolate; unfortified villages like Twyford Down and Worthy Down were taken over and re-settled, doubtless, as some of the pottery here has suggested to Mr. Stuart, along with the non-resisting elements—in other words, broadly speaking, the women—in their old populations.

1. Now dated by Dr. Wheeler from c. 100 B.C.; *Antiq. Journal* XVI, 268 with n. 3.

2. Confirmed by Mr. Derek Allen in a paper before the International Congress of Numismatists, London, July 1936.

3. See Dr. Williams-Freeman's map, *H.F.C.*, XII, 2, 124.

It may be convenient to summarize in tabular form the conclusions here advanced for the Iron Age sequence of the Winchester district.

? 550—450 B.C. Unfortified settlement of Iron Age A culture on St. Catharine's Hill begins. (*cf.* Stanmore, Battery Hill.)

About 250—200 B.C. (Late La Tène I—Early La Tène II). St. Catharine's Hill fortified; Period A of the Entrance defences, followed by Period B. Some possible occupation on Twyford Down and Worthy Down.

About 150—100 B.C. (La Tène II). St. Catharine's Hill Entrance re-fortified (Period C, followed by Period D); occupation attested by Pit R and the adjoining Area, of Iron Age A culture in a La Tène II phase showing the influence of the Iron Age B culture of the West Country. Similar occupation at Twyford Down and at Worthy Down.

About or soon after 50 B.C. Belgic invaders, having entered the country as refugees from Northern Gaul, destroy the defences of St. Catharine's Hill and put an end to the occupation (*cf.* The Trundle). The Twyford Down and Worthy Down villages re-settled by them: La Tène III culture, or Iron Age C.

A.D. 43. Roman Conquest: the villages abandoned not long afterwards.

Last of all, a word is called for on the significance of this revised chronology for a proper approach to the question of the origin of the City of Winchester. Pages 169-188 of *S. C. H.* were taken up with an essay on this subject in which an exhaustive review was attempted of all the available evidence. The conclusions were that Belgic occupation followed on that of the earlier Iron Age in the Battery Hill—Stanmore area, which would seem in fact to have a history similar to Twyford Down and Worthy Down; that no safe evidence exists for pre-Roman occupation of the site known as Oram's Arbour; but that within the City itself, while pre-Belgic finds "are neither in quantity nor character such as could afford any grounds for belief in any settled occupation" (p. 182), finds of the Belgic or La Tène III period constitute "a small but noteworthy body of material," on the strength of which a Belgic occupation "may be considered a fairly reasonable working hypothesis" (pp. 186-7). This position still holds good; we are entitled to believe that the Belgic invaders of the 1st century B.C. were the first settlers on the site of the Roman and English City, though there is no reason to suggest that they set up anything in the nature of an *oppidum* or tribal capital there.

To the attractive notion that the establishment of a Belgic settlement at Winchester was the correlative of a Belgic destruction of the pre-existing *oppidum* of St. Catharine's Hill, we were at the time of writing (*S. C. H.*, pp. 169-175) compelled to adopt an attitude of *non possumus*, because, as explained above, we felt we could not bring down the date of the destruction of the Hill *oppidum* late enough to meet the case.¹ This virtuous attitude of reserve may now be abandoned. Review of the comparative material now available, and consideration of the Twyford Down evidence in particular, has here been seen to allow us to advocate quite definitely the identification of the Belgic invaders of the 1st century B.C. with the destroyers of St. Catharine's Hill and its defences. We are therefore at liberty to regard the Belgic settlement of the City site as following, perhaps directly, on the Belgic destruction of the Hill site, about or soon after 50 B.C. In other words, St. Catharine's Hill may now be believed in fact to be what all good citizens and Hampshire folk and all good Wykehamists have always known in their hearts that it was—namely, our first metropolis, and a real if involuntary mother to *Venta Belgarum* and “Wyngester, that joly cité.”

1. Cf. Dr. Curwen's chart in *Antiq. Journal* XII, pl. VII, p. 16, which can now be modified in the sense here advanced.