

THE EXCAVATIONS AT CHOSELEY FARM, ODIHAM, 1937 :

A Preliminary Note.

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DURING the winter of 1937-8, the late Miss Dorothy Liddell, F.S.A., did everything possible to advance the preparation of her report on these excavations, carried out by her for the Club in the preceding summer. She was increasingly hampered by failing health, but her determination never failed, and the onset of her last illness only strengthened her resolve that all her notes, drawings, and other documents should be left clear and in good order. She was still working on them only a little while before she died. It was her wish that the report should be compiled from these materials by Miss M. E. de Putron and Miss B. Laidler, who had worked with her on the site, with the help of Mr. C. F. C. Hawkes and Mr. Stuart Piggott, with whom she had begun to discuss its interpretation and dating. Accordingly during 1938 the Council handed over her papers and the finds themselves to Miss de Putron, whose work on them was already approaching completion at the outbreak of war. Miss de Putron has since continued it in what time she has been spared by her Service duties in the W.A.A.F., and it is hoped that the full report will be ready to appear in next year's issue of these *Proceedings*. Meanwhile she and Mr. Hawkes have drafted the following brief summary for publication here.

The site lies in the parish of Odiham, about a mile S.W. of the town (6in. O.S. Hants XIX S.E.), and the excavated area clearly represents only a portion of a rural settlement occupied in the latter part of the Early Iron Age and continuously thereafter into and throughout most of the Romano-British period. The first phase of the occupation to be distinguished is represented by two out of a doubtless much larger number of beehive-shaped pits, dug in the chalk for the storage of grain. At the bottom of these, under a virtually contemporary filling, were found pieces of the hand-made Iron Age pottery often previously referred to as "La Tène II," but now best described as Iron Age AB, as standing for the tradition of the initial British Iron Age A culture modified by influences from Iron Age B sources—the latter answering roughly to the La Tène II culture of the continental Celts. The coarse flint-gritted paste, fired black or grey, has a 'soapy'-feeling burnished outer surface, and both convex or shouldered and

'saucepan' cylindrical forms are represented. Decoration, where present, is in typical broad, rather shallow tooling, the most notable example here having the form of a running spiral. This pottery is discussed in the Bury Hill report (above, pp. 326-7. 334-5), and is best known in the County from its occurrence at St. Catharine's Hill, Worthy Down, and Twyford Down in the Winchester district, and in Miss Liddell's own excavations at Meon Hill, Stockbridge. Its mature form there and elsewhere belongs to the period directly preceding the arrival of the Iron Age C culture of the Belgae, that is, in most of Hampshire, to the first half or three-quarters of the first century B.C.

This is likewise the case at Choseley, where the second phase of the occupation begins abruptly with Belgic bead-rim and other wheel-made pottery, and in the first century A.D. passes without interruption into the third or Romano-British period. Plain (never furrowed) bead-rim vessels range from large coarse to small fine examples in considerable plenty, and, as on other Belgic sites in the County such as Bury Hill (above, p. 327), other Iron Age C forms are comparatively rare. The Iron Age AB tradition was not indeed wholly extinct, and may be traced in a minor degree of survival here throughout Roman times, but on the whole the coming of the Belgae marks a sharp break in the site's material, though the agricultural life of the inhabitants evidently went on in many respects as before. If, as seems reasonable, the beginning of the Belgic occupation here may be equated with the beginning of the series of Belgic coins found in this quarter of Hampshire and its borders, it will be datable not more than twenty years from the assumed mean date for the arrival of the Belgae in Wessex about 50 B.C. An inscribed coin of the Belgic leader Commius, of the tribe of the Atrebates, is known from near Odiham, and such have been dated not later than 30 B.C. by Mr. Derek Allen of the British Museum in a paper recently read before the Society of Antiquaries and soon to be published by them. It may be remarked in passing that there is no numismatic or other evidence that the Atrebates had penetrated as early as this across the Loddon valley from Odiham into the district of their later capital at Silchester; the small bivallate hill-fort of Bullsdown there belongs by type to the native Iron Age AB culture, like Camp II at Bury Hill (above, p. 336), and may have remained an AB stronghold until the opening years of the first century A.D., when, as Mr. Allen shows, Commius' second son Eppillus did establish himself at Silchester, and issued coins bearing its name Calleva. Before his day the Loddon was probably the local Belgic frontier.

With the Belgic occupation at Choseley storage-pits cease (as also, for example, at Twyford Down), but then and on into the Roman period the inhabitants continued to make and use the

peculiar expanses of scooped-out hollowing in the chalk, the prevalence of which in Iron Age A and AB times was well illustrated in Miss Liddell's excavations at Meon Hill, and has since been explained by the Prehistoric Society's work under Dr. G. Bersu at Woodbury near Salisbury (*Proceedings Prehistoric Society* IV, pt. 2 (1938), 311). These hollows are working-places for the hand threshing of grain, and from their gradual extension year by year attained in time a great extent, at Choseley covering the whole of the excavated area of the site, oversailing the earlier pits, and explaining why no remains of buildings were found. However, since their disused portions were continually being filled up, these could sometimes be used for other purposes afterwards, and here contained a number of expanses of secondary chalk flooring, two extended inhumation-burials of late Roman date (one skeleton wearing a bronze bracelet, the other laid on a board or possibly in a coffin), and remains of the distinctive type of flued furnace for the parching of grain for storage, which represents the Romano-British version of a practice associated with these working-places as far back as Iron Age A times. The long duration of the Romano-British occupation is well documented by the pottery, which consists of some locally-made and a great deal of ordinary industrial coarse ware, the types including an especially full series of slant-walled flanged black dishes and bowls (Collingwood 30), which supports the evidence of the Samian, colour-coated, and buff clay wares for a continuous site-history from the first into the fourth century A.D. The brooches likewise range from the first-century Polden Hill form of dolphin-brooch (*cf.* Collingwood 6) to later fan-tail and inverted-fan-tail forms of P-brooch (*cf.* Collingwood 95); the earliest coins are a Republican silver denarius of Marcia (perhaps 120 B.C.) and a copied Claudian bronze, the later are Tetricus radiates and diademed Constantinian types. The site may be summed up as an excellent example of the persistence through the Roman period, here apparently to about the middle of the fourth century, of the basic peasant life of the Belgic and pre-Belgic Iron Age.



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WHERWELL.

Sculptures, formerly lying in the churchyard, removed 1939 and placed in the north-west corner of Wherwell Church.