

EXCAVATIONS AT TOURNERBURY, HAYLING ISLAND,

1959 and 1971

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INTRODUCTION

TOURNERBURY is a univallate ringwork of 2.6 hectares on the east shoreline of Hayling Island (SZ 732999). The earthwork occupies a raised tongue of land extending between two former tidal inlets and commands the mouth of Chichester Harbour (Fig. 1). With post medieval reclamation the site is now 240m inland. The earthwork is broken by a single original entrance to the west, approached by a ploughed down hollow way, and still stands to a height of up to 4 metres within a small copse which roughly follows the limits of the higher ground in this area (cf. Williams Freeman 1915, 278-79 and 413). The interior of the site is featureless except for furrows from broad rig cultivation which override the tail of the rampart (Fig. 1).

The rampart on the east side of the enclosure was sectioned by Mr. J. R. Boyden in 1959 in an attempt to date this earthwork (Fig. 1, trench 1). His single trench seemed to suggest that this rampart was of dump construction and of only one phase (Fig. 2, section 1). The bank had been built upon a ground surface which showed signs of burning. There was one nondescript sherd in the lower material of the bank but nothing to suggest a date for the enclosure. A shallow intrusion on the forward slope of the rampart produced on excavation two late Roman pots as well as material from a hearth. Their stratigraphic context was never clearly apparent (Fig. 2, section 1) and later work was carried out by the writers at Mr. Boyden's request with the intention of resolving this problem. Work was undertaken by kind permission of the landowner, Mr. F. Snell, and of the then Ministry of Public Building and Works.

THE EXCAVATIONS

Three small areas were examined (Fig. 1). To the north of the original entrance, a limited area of the tail of the rampart was sectioned in the hope that more material might be recovered from the earthwork or the old land surface (Fig. 1, trench 2). Although this area had been badly disturbed by burrowing animals, the tail of the bank was shown to consist of two tips of barren clay, overlying a lens of angular gravel which also included flecks of ash (Fig. 2, section 2). This probably resulted from worm sorting of the overlying rampart and partly covered a layer of clay and wood ash beneath the main part of the bank. One burnt patch within this layer included small fragments from four vessels of Iron Age date (Fig. 3, 3 and 4). There were no features cut into the natural clay.

In view of the contrast between this material and the Roman pottery from the 1959 excavation, it was felt that the context of the latter material needed reconsideration. It had never been clear whether these two vessels had occupied a shallow cutting sealed by the initial collapse of the rampart, or whether instead they belonged to a secondary intrusion cut through a rampart of earlier date. This ambiguity is brought out by the section drawn at the time (Fig. 2, section 1). Accordingly a limited excavation was carried out immediately alongside the crucial area of the original trench (Fig. 1, trench 3). Fortunately, at this point individual tip lines were more evident and it was possible to show that the intrusion found by the earlier excavator was a continuous scarp cut into the earlier rampart and filled by layers of clay and topsoil falling in from the uphill side

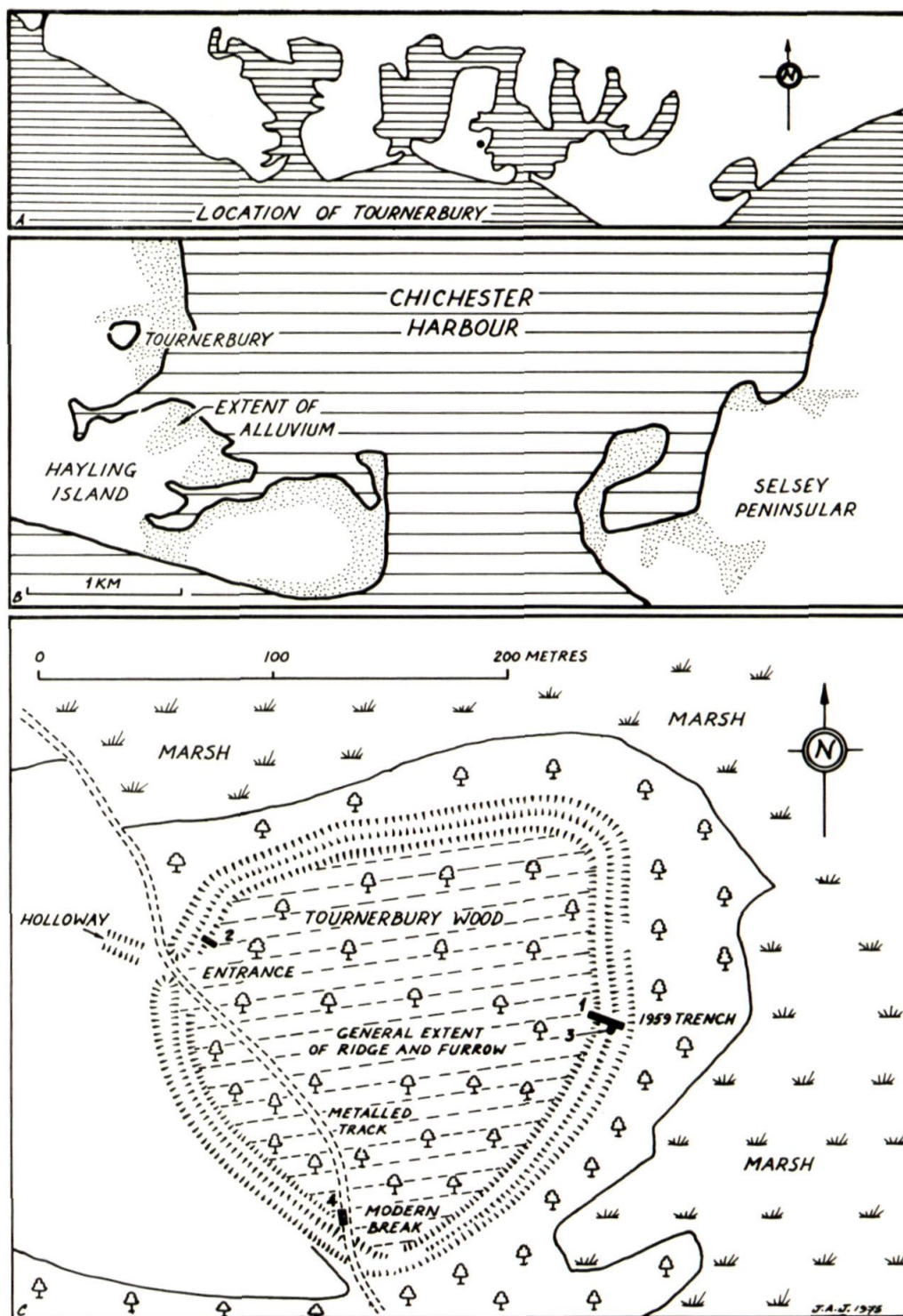


Fig 1. Site plan, location of Tournerbury and location of the excavated trenches. Drawing: John Johnston.

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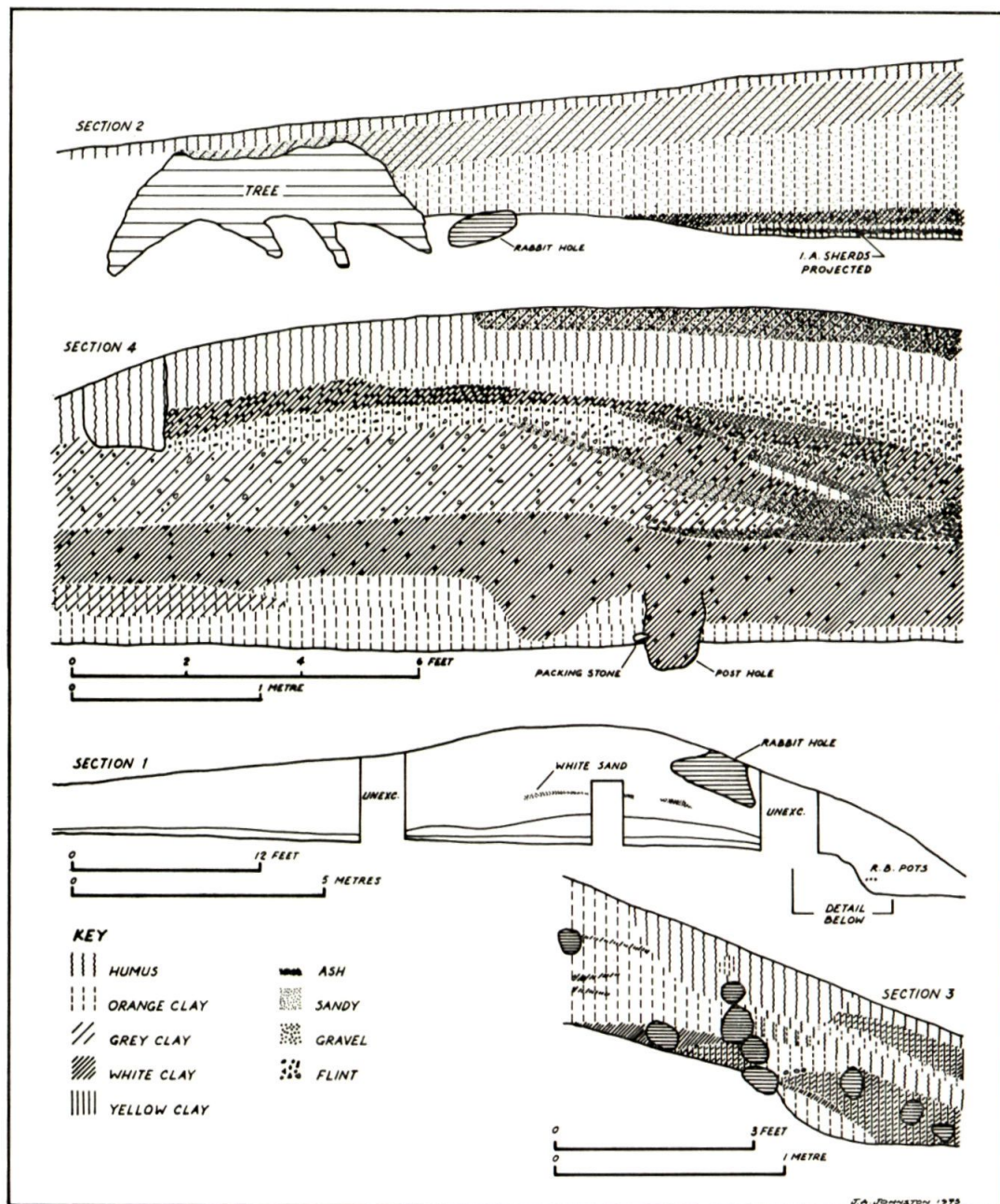


Fig 2. Sections of the excavated trenches. Drawing: John Johnston.

(Fig. 2, section 3). This scarp had crossed both trenches but its further extent on the site remains unknown. No more pottery was recovered from its filling.

This of course raised the possibility that more than one phase of activity might be represented elsewhere, and it was decided to re-examine the main body of the rampart in the hope that detailed tip lines might once again be apparent. With this in mind, the cutting where a nineteenth-century cart road had breached the earthwork was cleared and a partial section of the rampart core was drawn (Fig. 1, trench 4 and Fig. 2, section 4). While no archaeological material came to light, it is possible to argue that two successive ramparts are present, the earlier represented by thick, homogenous tips of barren sandy clay and the later by a series of thinner layers of similar composition. A single post hole appeared in this section associated with only the lowest tips of clay. This *could* have been part of a line of buried struts used to tie back the front of a revetted rampart. It was not possible to extend the excavation to test this further and the results of this section must be regarded as inconclusive.

POTTERY (Fig. 3)

Pre-Roman Sherds from four vessels were found beneath the tail of the bank and a single sherd was recovered from the lower part of the rampart core in 1959.

Sherds sealed by the tail of the rampart.

3. Rim sherd, grey-black externally and internally with buff core. Some fine flint filler and many voids. Exterior surface smoothed and slightly burnished. 'Soapy' feel. The diameter is approximate as drawn.

4. Joining fragments of a simple upright rim. Hard, light brown to buff body with large and medium flint filler. Rough exterior surface.

(Unillustrated). Fragmentary? shoulder sherd. Interior surface flaked away, exterior red-buff with patches of fine or medium flint filler.

Smoothed external surface. The shoulder angle is uncertain.

(Unillustrated). Body sherd. Soft untempered body with some medium and small voids. Buff externally and grey internally.

Within the base of the rampart 1959:

(Unillustrated.) Small body sherd. Hard grey body throughout with some fine flint filler in the core.

There is very little to suggest a close date for this material. The simple upright form represented here by Fig. 3,4 could as well be later Bronze Age as Iron Age, although the form itself is certainly present in this area into the middle Iron Age, when it occurs with comparable fabrics in an apparently closed deposit at Paulsgrove (Bradley and Hooper 1974). Fig. 3,3 probably does belong to the middle or later Iron Age, judging from its distinctive fabric and from what appears of its form, which may relate to the 'saucepan' type-series. The other sherds add nothing to this outline but in no way contradict this view. A context in the third to first centuries B.C. would probably be acceptable, but fresh excavation would be needed to achieve a closer dating.

Roman: Parts of two vessels were recovered from the filling of the secondary scarp in the 1959 excavation.

1. Profile conjectural, based on restored rim and base fragments which do not themselves join. Large, coil-built, everted rim jar in a soft brown micaceous fabric, tempered with grog and some charcoal. Rough burnishing has been applied horizontally on the upper and lower surfaces of the rim and a few centimetres above the base. Vertical burnishing has been applied over the rest of the body, more densely towards the base. Over the latter burnished zone, a broad lattice pattern has been scored. The interior is roughened and finger marks are faintly visible. In fabric and style this vessel compares well with types commonly found in south Hampshire in the later Roman period;

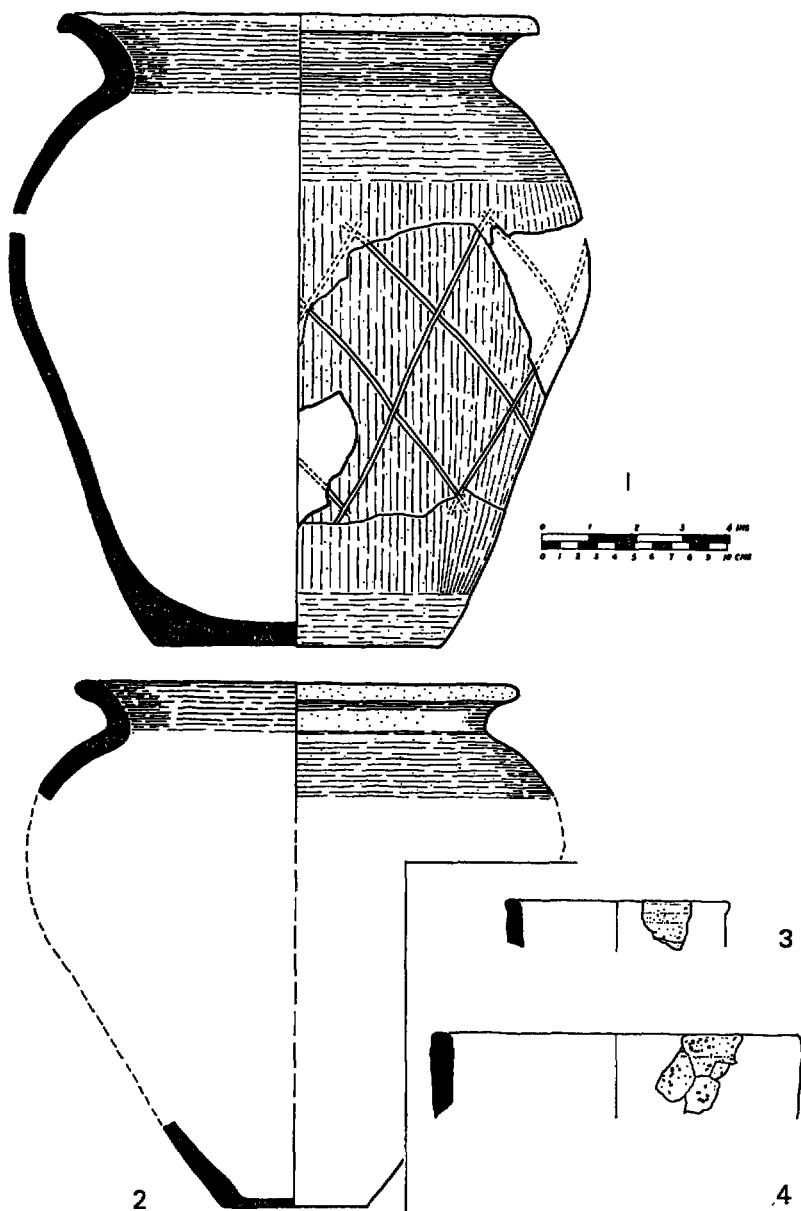


Fig 3. Iron Age and Roman pottery from the excavation. Drawing: John Johnston.

and at Portchester sherds in this fabric occurred from c.280 to the late fourth or early fifth century (Fulford, 1975).

2. The second vessel cannot be reconstructed. Indeed, but for the colour and the fabric, the rim and base do not seem to belong to the same pot. Fabric is red-brown, dense, medium sandy filler, with occasional inclusions of large clay pellets. The burnished zones are very similar to those on the first pot although little can be restored; like the latter vessel, it appears to have been hand-built.

HEAVY MINERAL ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

The two Roman vessels were analysed for their heavy mineral content (Peacock 1967), in order to ascertain whether the visual resemblance of Fig. 3,1, to the Hampshire grog-tempered series could be substantiated and whether this technique might allow a closer identification of the other pot. In view of the possibility that the site had been reused in the post-Roman period, it seemed important to decide if the fabrics, and not merely the styles, had connections with those of known late third- and fourth-century date.

Analysis was inconclusive, but there appear to be differences from other samples of grog-tempered wares (discussion in Fulford, 1975, 286-92), and these may indicate another source or, possibly, a different date. With Fig. 3,2, however the high tenor of tourmaline suggests a connection with the black-burnished pottery of Dorset, and this attribution is supported by the form and decoration of the vessel. Like Fig. 3,1, this type occurred at Portchester (type 126), where it cannot be dated more closely than c.280-400. For the present, therefore, both pots do not seem to differ significantly from quite common late Roman types and fabrics. They are unlikely to date outside the period c.250/80-c.400. The full results of heavy mineral analysis are given in the table which follows.

Vessels	1	2
Zircon	51.2	16.9
Tourmaline	2.0	69.2
Rutile	7.9	1.0
Garnet	9.2	—
Kyanite	8.4	—
Staurolite	1.0	1.0
Andalusite	7.1	3.9
Sillimanite	1.0	—
Epidote	1.0	1.5
Anatase	4.3	2.3
Apatite	7.9	1.5
Cassiterite	—	1.5
Total No. of grains counted	393	130

GENERAL CONSIDERATIONS

Tournerbury has some features in common with other small ringworks in the Hampshire Basin, both those in comparable positions, like Ampress Hole (Williams Freeman 1915), and others which lie further inland. One particular group occupy the sands and gravels of the Itchen - Test watershed, close to the head of Southampton Water. Unfortunately, these sites are completely undated and the evidence from Tournerbury itself is far too slight to be applied elsewhere. Similarly, the coastal promontory forts of this region are still undated.

It has been argued that a date in the third to first centuries B.C. might be appropriate for the scraps of pottery sealed under the rampart, but these only constitute a *terminus post quem* for the earthwork. The fact that the bank overlay burnt material on opposing sides of the site may suggest, however, that ground was being cleared before building the enclosure. The main group of salt production sites in the immediate area also produce pottery of this date and we believe that intensive use of the shoreline was only beginning at this stage of the Iron Age (Bradley 1975).

The function of this enclosure remains unknown, although this was also a major period of development for the hill forts on the downland chalk.

There is not enough evidence to suggest a major refurbishment of this earthwork in the late Roman period, but reuse of some type is in evidence on the seaward side of the enclosure. Despite a superficial appearance

which suggested a sub-Roman context, both typology and scientific analysis favour a date range of about 250–400 AD for the associated pottery. This being the case, any reuse of this fortification might be connected not with the Roman withdrawal but with the threats which led to the building and maintenance of the Saxon shore defences. This process began in the later third century.

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