

ONE HUNDRED YEARS OF HAMPSHIRE ARCHAEOLOGY

By RICHARD WHINNEY

INTRODUCTION

This paper is an attempt to review the development of the discipline or science of archaeology in Hampshire over the past century. The papers and articles published since 1885 in the *Proceedings of the Hampshire Field Club and Archaeological Society* are the starting point for this summary. Whilst these published works provide the basic information for much of the following critique and appraisal, clearly not all of the significant changes in the nature of the subject are reflected in *Proceedings*. In particular the past twenty-five years have seen major upheavals in the field, many of which were not directly related to or influenced by the Field Club: therefore other sources have been consulted for this period, and for one or two others, in order to present what is hoped to be as complete and as balanced a picture as possible.

At an early stage in the research for this paper it became clear that the evolution of archaeology in Hampshire since 1885 owes much to a small number of individuals, many of whom began their careers in the County, and then went on to achieve not only national, but in many cases, international acclaim. Their contributions to the County have been highlighted in this paper, as also has something of their effects and roles in the wider archaeological world.

Inevitably, with the range and scope of the subject being so vast, a certain amount of deliberate selection of material has taken place, and is obviously something of a personal choice. Despite this, it is hoped that the overall picture of the general trends, as seen from 1885, is clear. The information so presented has been divided into broad chronological periods, and so again reflects personal choices. However, the periods identified not only reflect the major changes and advances in

archaeology in the County, but also happily coincide with the emergence and establishment of the outstanding individual archaeologists already referred to.

It would be presumptuous to attempt, and almost impossible to achieve, a review of the advances in every major archaeological period over the past one hundred years, and so that is not attempted here. Fortunately, that daunting task was largely accomplished a few years ago by the relevant experts and published as Hampshire Field Club Monograph 1 (Shennan and Schadla-Hall 1981). Although further data could now be added, the basic outlines provided at that time cannot be gainsaid.

1885-1905: THE EARLY YEARS

The first twenty years of the existence of the Field Club owe much to the energies of T W Shore, who was not only instrumental in the Club's formation, but was one of its leading lights and a driving force until his death in 1905 (Taylor 1985). Through his thorough-going interests in all aspects of man's activities in the County, he instilled an enthusiasm and zest for archaeology and local history which continues to the present day. Indeed, his influence in the promotion of archaeology was reflected in the expansion of the formal title of the Club in 1898 to 'The Hampshire Field Club and Archaeological Society'.

It is therefore not altogether surprising to find that Thomas Shore figures prominently as a contributor to the early volumes of *Proceedings*. He wrote papers on a broad spectrum of subjects, covering a wide geographical and chronological range. Some articles were very detailed accounts of a single fairly restricted aspect, whilst others made extensive use of his broad knowledge and were County-wide surveys and appraisals on topics of general interest. For example, on one level,

he presented an appraisal of the prehistory of the Candover valley (Shore 1893); by contrast, a few years later he was writing about prehistoric languages, ancient races and place-names for the whole County (Shore 1898).

After his death in 1905, the Field Club quickly acknowledged its great debt to Shore with the publication of a memorial volume entitled *Hampshire Papers* (Minns 1911). Many of his lectures, articles and other writings were reproduced in this single volume which displayed his wide-ranging interests in all aspects of Hampshire's archaeology and history.

Shore's great friend and close collaborator in the Society was William Dale, who like Shore had a wide range of knowledge and interests (Taylor 1985). His energies and talents caused him to be involved in many activities. Perhaps the most important of these were the watching briefs on building works he kept in and around Southampton, and the collecting of flint implements which now form part of Winchester City Museums' collection. Together, he and Shore were responsible for the establishment of the Field Club as the accepted County society, and in so doing they unstintingly promoted and encouraged the investigation and exploration of archaeological remains, of whatever type.

Much of the research for Shore's and Dale's articles was undertaken as a preliminary to the series of outdoor meetings that the Club held every year. These field trips were an essential part of the activities of the Society and were usually arranged so that as wide a range of topics of interest to members – botanical, geological, ornithological, architectural, archaeological – could be covered in a single excursion. At all of these meetings, at venues around the County, archaeology figured more or less prominently on the itinerary for the day. Almost without exception, the members concerned themselves with the appreciation of visible earthworks, monuments, standing buildings and the like. There are few reports of excavations underway, for such exercises were somewhat rare at the end of the nineteenth-century.

This rather 'antiquarian' outlook of the field meetings – as seen from a modern viewpoint – was also reflected in the general tenor and content of the archaeological papers published in *Proceedings* during these early years. They were dominated by many studies of standing buildings, and the appreciation of their architectural details (eg Eyre 1888; Nisbett 1890). There were, however, reports on the significance of chance discoveries that came to light from time to time during some redevelopment scheme. For example, Skelton reported on the finds of Roman coins around Southampton (Skelton 1887), Darwin similarly described Bronze Age metalwork found in similar circumstances (Darwin 1894), and Dale outlined the importance of the Anglo-Saxon cemetery found during the construction of the Meon valley railway at Droxford (Dale 1904). The major exception to these generally rather small-scale activities was the excavation of the Roman city of Silchester. A comprehensive series of investigations were carried out by Fox and St John Hope for the Society of Antiquaries between 1889 and 1909, with the express purpose of elucidating the plan of the city (Fig 1; *Archaeologia* 52–62). This considerable achievement was the largest excavation to be undertaken up to that time, and was an obvious milestone in British archaeology. Similarly, the work on the organic remains recovered was also one of the earliest forays into what has now become a standard aspect of modern archaeological methodology.

On a more general note, Volume 1 of the *Victoria History for Hampshire and the Isle of Wight* was published in 1900 (Doubleday 1900). A substantial portion was given over to a consideration of the archaeology of the County. The summaries there presented revealed the contemporary ideas about the overall development of man's activities from prehistoric times up to the Norman conquest. The main periods – prehistoric, Romano-British, Anglo-Saxon – were surveyed in general terms by nationally-recognised experts (Boyd-Dawkins 1900; Haverfield 1900; Smith 1900). The exception to this overall approach

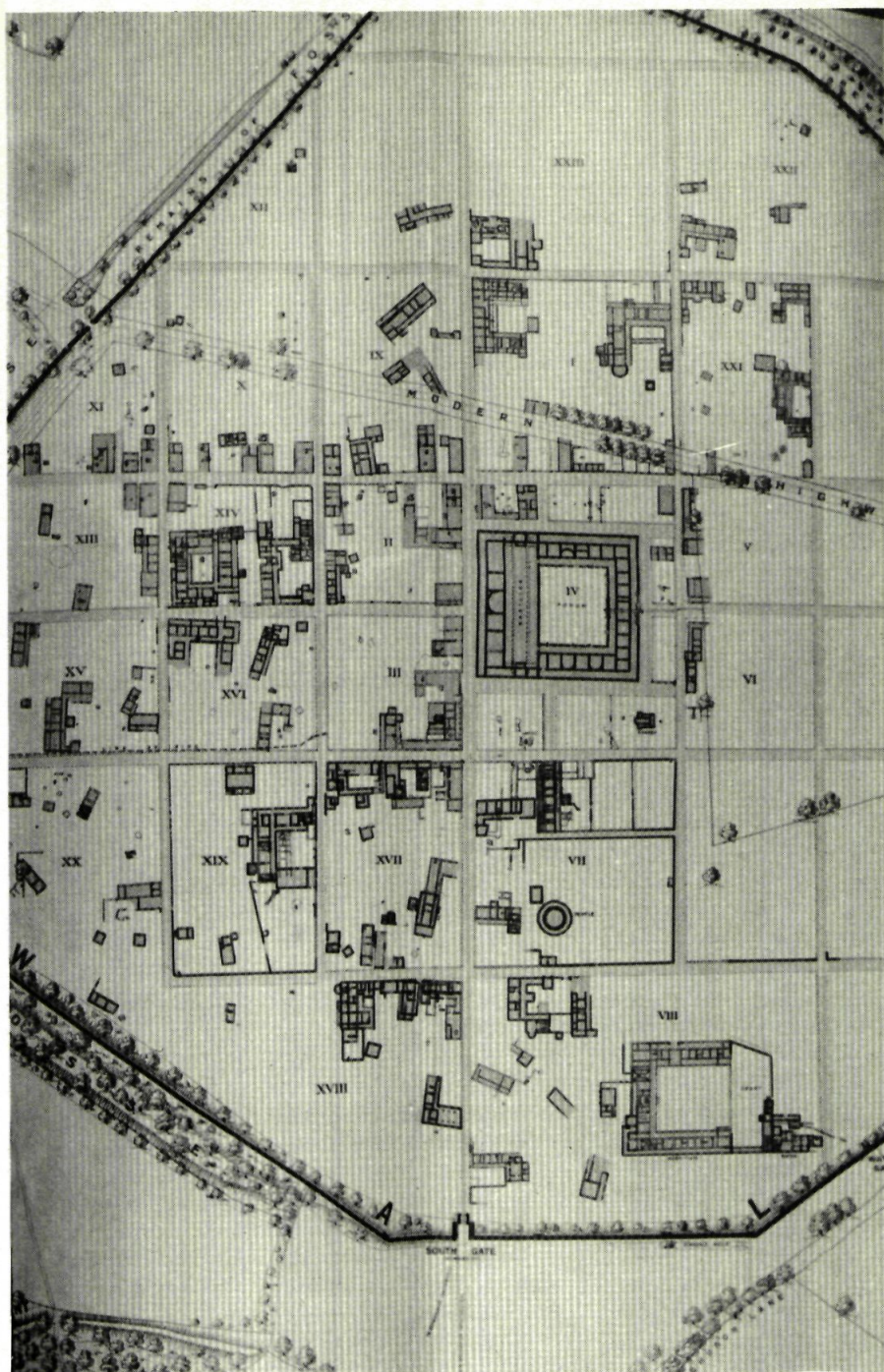


Fig 1. Part of the plan of Silchester (*Calleva Atrebatum*) as known in 1909.

was the account of Silchester which was presented in detail, and provided a summary of the first ten years work at that town (Fox and St John Hope 1900).

1905–1920

If the first twenty years of the Society may be regarded principally as a formative period under the influential, oligarchical gaze of T W Shore and his contemporaries, then the next fifteen or so years should be viewed as a period of considerable consolidation, both in the internal organisation and in the external role of the Club. The underlying pattern of both meetings and publication of works in *Proceedings*, established by Shore and Dale, continued more or less in the same vein until after the First World War. The overriding approach to archaeology in the County, as outlined above and reflected by *Proceedings*, was generally continued, although there was a gradual increase in detailed field surveys and work, particularly, on the surviving earthworks. This progressive broadening of interest in a topic already noted in the first volume of *Proceedings* (Shore 1887), was given a substantial boost by the election to the Society in 1906 of a local doctor, John Peere Williams-Freeman. This remarkable and indefatigable individual quickly established himself as a force within the Society and took on an important role which continued for close on forty years until his death in 1943. His impact on the Club as a whole was summarized in his obituary (Crawford 1944, Gibson 1944) and is reiterated in this volume (Taylor 1985).

Although, like Shore and Dale, Williams-Freeman's interests in his native County were wide-ranging, he is best known for his pioneering work on the surveying, recording and interpretation of the surviving earthworks in the County. His over-riding interest in this group of field monuments was first made manifest in 1909, when he contributed a major study on the Danebury hillfort to *Proceedings* (Williams-Freeman 1909). This passion for the study of earthworks culminated in the publication of his seminal work *Field Archaeology as illustrated by Hampshire* (Williams-Freeman

1915). This book was the first general appraisal of the visible archaeology of Hampshire, and remains an indispensable source to this day. The subject matter is extremely varied and covers a broad chronological band from the Neolithic period through to the Civil War. Geographically, the County is covered by twenty-three separate itineraries. All the major earthworks in Hampshire were surveyed by Williams-Freeman, and the majority of them were illustrated by meticulous plans and sections in *Field Archaeology*. His guide to the methodical surveying and recording of such monuments shows how it was possible for one person to carry out what must have been, at least in a good number of cases, a quite daunting exercise (Williams-Freeman 1915, 329–33).

Shortly before his own death in 1943, Williams-Freeman wrote the obituary for his great friend and contemporary, George Heywood Maunoir Sumner who died in 1940 (Williams-Freeman 1941). Sumner's involvement with Hampshire's archaeology almost exactly paralleled that of Williams-Freeman in terms of calendar years. However, Sumner's lifestyle after 1905 appears to have become much more limited, so much so that he confined himself to the detailed examination of the archaeology of a more restricted area of the County. His published work reflects his love of his adopted New Forest and its immediate surroundings. From the point of view of Hampshire archaeology his *Ancient Earthworks of the New Forest* must be regarded as the most important of his writings (Sumner 1917). Like *Field Archaeology* (Williams-Freeman 1915), this survey was equally wide in chronological extent, but was much more restricted in its geographical scope. The text was beautifully punctuated by sketches, reconstructions and surveys, all in Sumner's inimitable style.

Sumner was also an excavator, and carried out, almost single-handedly, the first investigation of a Romano-British farm on Rockbourne Down (Sumner 1914; Williams-Freeman 1941, 126–7), but he is undoubtedly best remembered, in this sphere at least, for

his work on the Romano-British pottery kilns in the New Forest (Sumner 1917, 33–44; 1927).

The third person whose presence was beginning to be felt in Hampshire during the second decade of the twentieth-century was Osbert Guy Stanhope Crawford. His archaeological interests took root in about 1904, while he was at Oxford. The first obvious indications of this interest were reflected in his first 'dig' at Walbury Camp in 1907 (Crawford 1955, 39), near his home at East Woodhay in the north-west corner of the County. He first met Williams-Freeman in 1909, but a prolonged field-trip to the western part of the County with him in 1911 seems to have crystallised his hitherto rather vague thoughts about becoming an archaeologist (Crawford 1955, 74–7).

Crawford began his long association with the Field Club just before the First World War, when he presented a number of short notes and articles to *Proceedings* (Crawford 1912a; 1912b). During the early part of the War he was attached to a field unit in France whose task was to map the front lines. His duties also included the taking of panoramic photographs to aid the map-making processes (Crawford 1955, 114); thus was he introduced to the concept of aerial photography. He subsequently joined the Royal Flying Corps as an observer for the latter part of the War (Crawford 1955, 123–47). After the War he returned to Hampshire and continued his rather intermittent career in archaeology until 1920, when he was appointed as the first Archaeology Officer to the Ordnance Survey.

A fourth individual working at this time was George Willis. He was acquainted with Sumner and Williams-Freeman and, like the latter, was a field archaeologist rather than an excavator. He collected extensively in the north-east part of the County; today the Willis collection of flint implements is the largest single collection of its kind held by the County Museum Service. The museum in Basingstoke was renamed in his honour and in recognition of his work.

Probably the most important excavations to take place during this period, apart from those

at Silchester, were carried out in 1911–12 at Hengistbury Head, near Christchurch (Bushe-Fox 1915). These investigations did much to reveal, for the first time, the importance and potential of the area, and to open up the whole subject of cross-Channel trade in pre-Roman times (Cunliffe 1978, 44 ff). It is worth briefly mentioning that this work may be regarded as an early example of 'rescue archaeology'.

1920–1940

These twenty years were the most significant in the development of Hampshire's archaeology, for they saw the blossoming of two major elements of modern field archaeology – aerial photography and excavation. Once again the influence of two individuals working in the County in these fields was directly responsible for the considerable progress made. The use of air photographs as an archaeological tool was the direct result of the work of O G S Crawford in the Wessex area in the 1920s, whilst improved techniques and methods of archaeological excavation were developed and refined, on sites identified by the Field Club within the County, by C F C Hawkes.

It is clear that meetings with Williams-Freeman resulted in Crawford's cognisance of the potential importance of aerial photography to archaeologists (Crawford 1944, 104; Cunliffe 1981, 1). By making use of his wartime experience of photography and flying, and permitted by his first full time archaeological post at the Ordnance Survey, Crawford embarked upon a scheme – almost a crusade – which promoted the use of judiciously taken aerial photographs of sites and monuments as an essential aid and adjunct to excavators and surveyors. This plan culminated, in 1928, with the publication of *Air Survey and Archaeology* (Crawford 1928) and, in collaboration with Alexander Keiller, *Wessex from the Air* (Crawford and Keiller 1928). These works established within the archaeological fraternity the acceptance of air photographs as part of their repertoire of essential techniques; they also established Crawford, a Hampshire man, 'a man of strong individuality and prickly

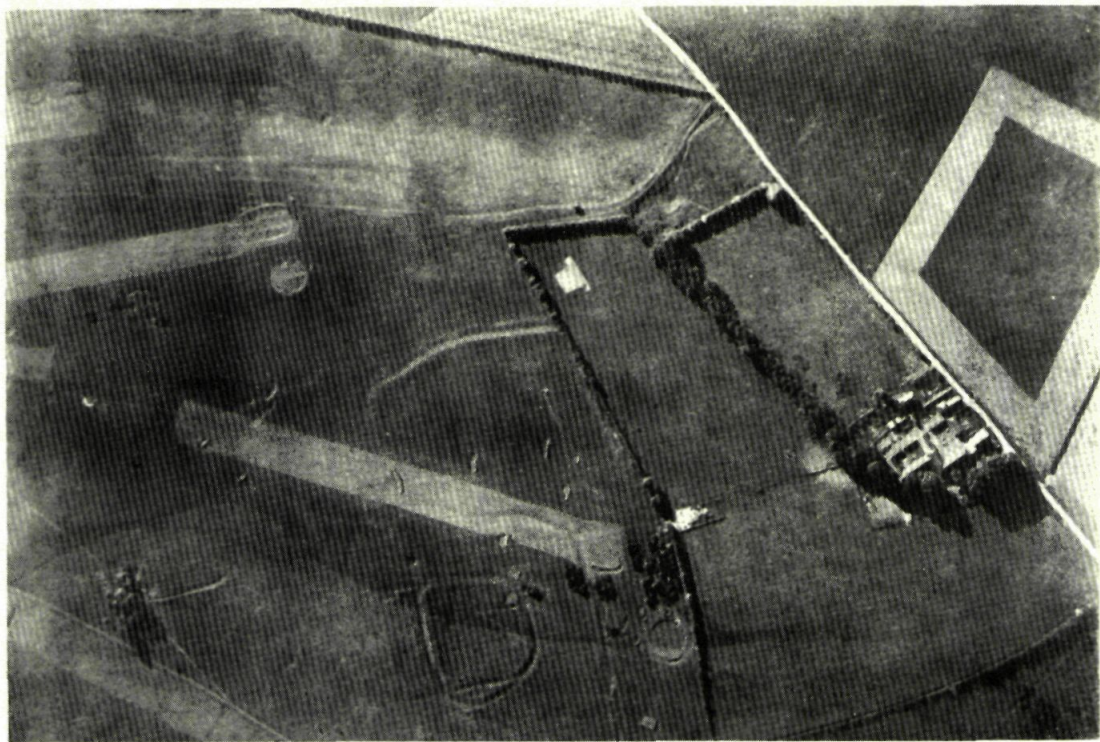


Fig 2. Teg Down, Winchester: an aerial photograph taken by O G S Crawford, showing the Iron Age enclosures to the west of the city.

independence of spirit' (Seymour 1980, 237), as a figure of both national and international repute.

It has been recently remarked that, up to about 1925, Hampshire was not primarily a County with a long tradition of archaeological excavation (Cunliffe 1981, 1), although there was the notable exception of Silchester (see above). It was the decision of the Field Club to support and assist the archaeological investigation of the remains on St Catherine's Hill, Winchester, which gave rise to a new interest in excavations in the County and which has continued ever since. The excavators of the Iron Age and medieval remains on St Catherine's Hill were three Old Wykehamists, C F C Hawkes, J N L Myres and C G Stevens. Under the watchful gaze of Williams-Freeman and Crawford, the four seasons' excavations were completed in 1928, and the results were rapidly published by the Field Club as Volume

11 of *Proceedings* (Hawkes, Myres and Stevens 1930). This excavation and report provided a new insight into the Iron Age in this country, and also marked the beginning of a long and continuing series of excavations and publications of archaeological sites in the County.

Christopher Hawkes was a scholar at Winchester College from 1918 to 1924; while he was in residence his love for archaeology developed. In the mid 1920s this love took on a more practical mantle which manifested itself initially on St Catherine's Hill, and eventually led to a series of investigations on behalf of the Field Club. His work on some of the hillforts of the County, over a period of about fifteen years, added flesh to the skeleton of the British Iron Age as outlined by Williams-Freeman in *Field Archaeology* some twenty years before (Williams-Freeman 1915). His pioneering work on St Catherine's Hill in

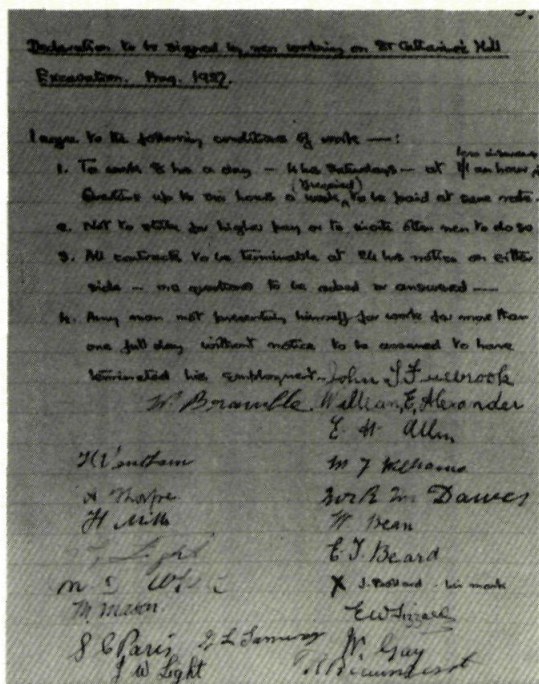


Fig 3. Conditions of employment on St Catharine's Hill, Winchester, as set out by Christopher Hawkes in 1928.

the 1920s was followed by further excavations at Buckland Rings, Lymington (Hawkes 1936), Quarley Hill (Hawkes 1939) and Bury Hill (Hawkes 1940), despite his ever broadening interests and commitments elsewhere. As a direct result of his Hampshire experiences (Hawkes 1955) he developed the 'ABC of the British Iron Age', a chronological classification of the period which remained the standard for many years (Hawkes 1931, 1959).

The Field Club's encouragement of excavations on hillforts in the County prompted other investigations of different types of site during this period. The work on the Iron Age and Romano-British rural farms and occupation sites at Worthy Down (Hooley 1929) and at Twyford Down (Stuart and Birkbeck 1936) perfectly complemented the St Catherine's Hill efforts, whilst the Oliver's Battery excavations produced exciting finds

from the Saxon period (Andrew 1930, 1931).

The less spectacular, but equally important, task of archaeological survey was not forgotten; indeed the concept of mapping and deciphering the archaeological landscape was being actively pursued by Crawford in his role as Archaeology Officer at the Ordnance Survey in Southampton. The procedures which he instigated in the 1920s for the recording and indexing of all known sites and monuments, on a national scale, and their plotting on 6" map sheets via a scheme utilizing honorary local correspondants, provided the very core of all subsequent archaeological surveys, up to and including the present day. Once again, Crawford's work in mapping and recording the local archaeological palimpsest in Hampshire allowed him to formulate his methodology and his ideas which were then applied on a larger, national scale (Crawford 1953).

Two classes of surviving earthworks that were not surveyed by Williams-Freeman in the early years of the century were the Neolithic and Bronze Age burial mounds. This lack was rectified by an evaluation of the extant Hampshire barrows carried out in the 1930s by Leslie Grinsell, and subsequently published in three parts in Volume 14 of *Proceedings* (Grinsell 1938, 1939, 1940). Building on the field survey traditions of Williams-Freeman and Crawford, Grinsell visited, surveyed and mapped all the known barrows in Hampshire. His work established the earliest complete record of this class of monument for the County and thus provided a valuable yardstick against which to judge the state of Hampshire's barrows in 1985.

1940–1960

The previous twenty years of interest, activity and expansion in so many aspects of the archaeological discipline were not surprisingly sharply curtailed by the outbreak of World War Two. During the War years, excavations in the County were almost non-existent but, throughout, the Field Club continued to publish the results of field surveys (eg Winbolt and Winbolt 1942, 1943)

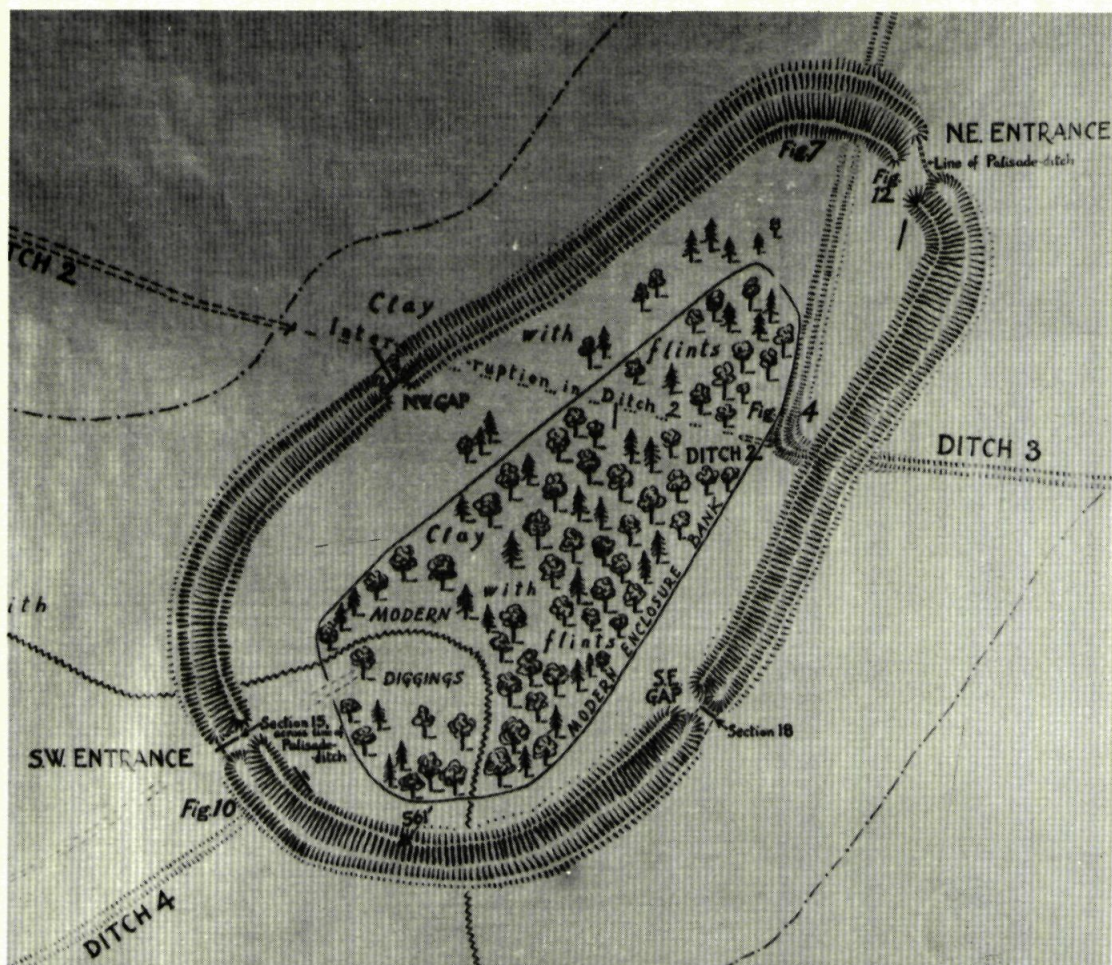


Fig 4. Part of the Quarley Hill and its immediate area drawn by Christopher Hawkes.

and other articles of interest. One noteworthy exception was the work of C M Piggott in the New Forest. Under very trying conditions, she was able to carry out rescue excavations on fifteen round barrows (Piggott 1943).

A great deal of previously undisturbed land was of necessity utilized during the War; this occasionally resulted in the discovery of new archaeological sites. One of the most significant of these discoveries was the Anglo-Saxon cemetery at Worthy Park, Kings Worthy, just north of Winchester, in 1944.

After the War the situation improved only

very slowly, and the level of archaeological activity increased only gradually. This post-War stagnation was also paralleled by a decline in the fortunes of the Field Club, co-inciding with the disappearance from the scene of both Williams-Freeman, who died in 1943, and Crawford who retired in 1946 and died in 1957. Following the loss of these eminent figures, the Society apparently had little direction in the archaeological field, although it continued to support, albeit in a small way, some of the work in the County (Taylor 1985). For example, post-War redevelopment of

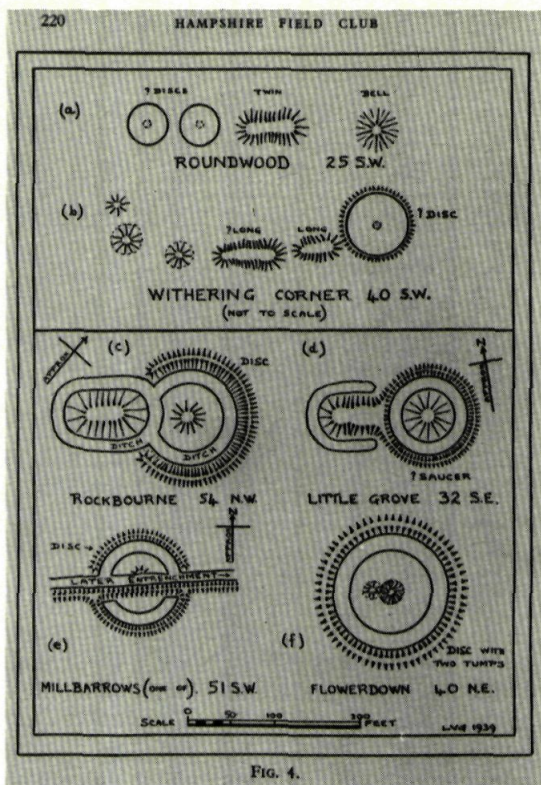


FIG. 4.

Fig 5. Some Hampshire barrows as illustrated by Leslie Grinsell in 1939.

Southampton allowed the investigation of parts of the Saxon town and medieval city to begin in earnest (Maitland Muller 1949, 1951; Wachter 1957). In Winchester, Frank Cottrill, the Museums Curator, was co-ordinating the 'rescue' operations on the archaeological remains which were exposed and destroyed during large-scale, city centre redevelopments (Bennet-Clark 1954, Butcher 1955, Cunliffe 1964, Collis 1978). George Boon conducted a further series of excavations at Silchester and brought together much of the previous work on the site of *Calleva Atrebatum* into a single appraisal of the city (Boon 1957, 1958).

This post-War period is difficult to categorize but it is probably fair to regard it not as one of stagnation or decline, but rather as a time of gentle activity and assessment after the heady days of the 1920s and 1930s.

1960–1985: THE MODERN ERA

This period is also extremely difficult to categorize, not because of lack of activity or direction in the archaeology in the County, but because the opposite is true. The last twenty-five years have been so frenetic and interesting, so involved and innovative, that it is almost impossible to adequately describe or characterize them.

However, as so often in the past, it is to Hampshire that we can look as the centre of important new developments in the archaeological world, not just locally, but nationally and ultimately internationally. Taking advantage of the farsighted and enlightened attitude of the Winchester City authorities and public, and building on the pioneering work of Frank Cottrill, the Winchester Excavations Committee, under the direction of Martin Biddle, embarked in the 1960s upon a series of rescue and research excavations in Winchester. These investigations not only benefitted the City itself, but also set off a tidal wave of awareness and support for archaeology which has only recently begun to abate.

Biddle's methods revolutionised the practice of archaeological excavation and recording, not just in Britain, but all over the world (Biddle and Kjolbye-Biddle 1969). His work in Winchester (Biddle 1965, 1975) was not only extremely important in its own right, but was also instrumental in provoking a national consciousness and concern about the destruction of the remnants of the past, particularly within the urban context. As a result of the efforts of Biddle and a small group of vociferous and influential archaeologists, the 1960s and 1970s saw a dramatic increase in the number of sites being dug in advance of redevelopments in towns and cities, in the financial provisions for such work, and in the number of full-time professional archaeologists recruited (Heighway 1972).

Although perhaps on a smaller scale initially, the Winchester experience was paralleled in Southampton. Following the post-War salvage work of the 1950s, the carefully designed programme of work on

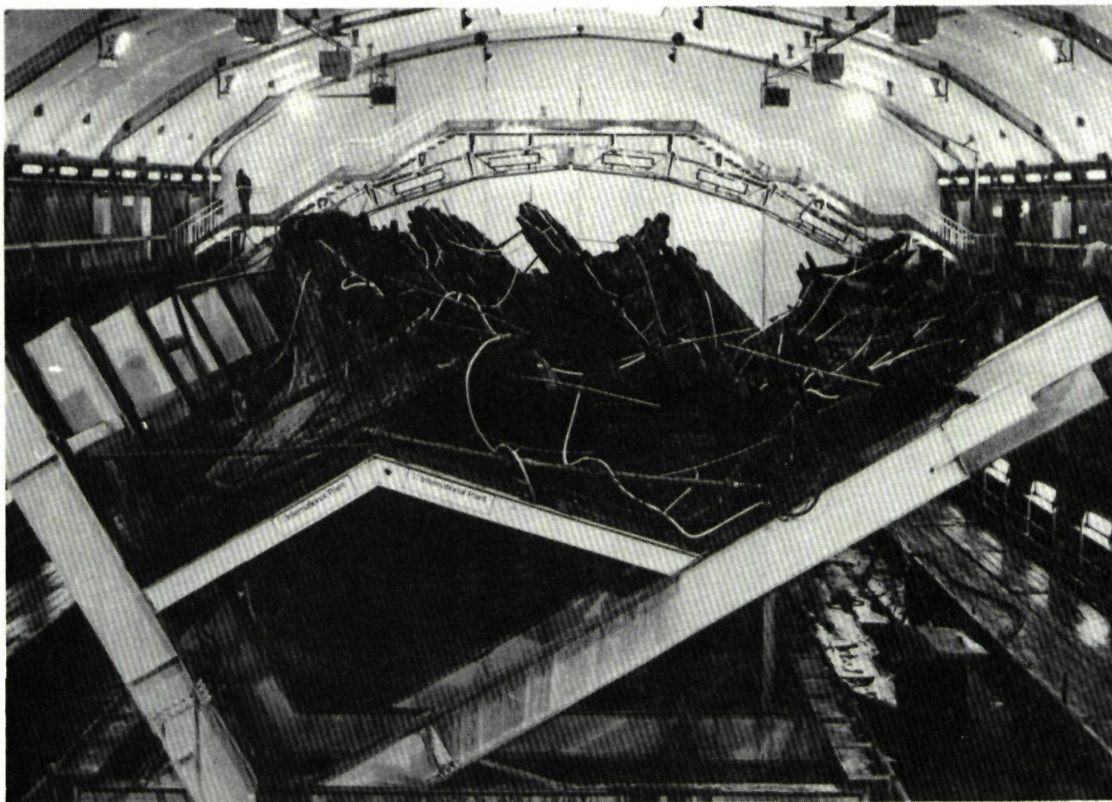


Fig 7. The Mary Rose under cover, after her lifting from the Solent in 1982.

industrial – which has directly resulted from the arousal of interest in the discipline in the 1960s. Today there are some twenty or so local societies and groups in Hampshire who are more or less actively involved in some aspect of archaeology. Indeed, it is pleasing to note that many of the investigations that have taken place in the smaller towns – Alton, Basingstoke, Andover, Romsey – have been largely the work of these local societies. This upsurge of support was in part responsible for the creation of the Hampshire Archaeological Committee in 1974. Alongside the increase in amateur support has been an increase in support given to the discipline by both the County and District Councils, to such an extent that the County can now boast one of the largest totals of full-time archaeologists in the country.

Although the main thrust of the expansion of archaeological resources in Hampshire has been within the urban areas of Southampton and Winchester, it has not been totally confined to these centres. The overall level of support and activity within the smaller towns, and in the countryside as a whole, has also risen, although not on such a spectacular scale. Once again, one individual has been in the van. Barry Cunliffe, a native of Portsmouth, began his archaeological involvement with the County in the early 1960s when he published a number of short reports in *Proceedings* (Cunliffe 1961a, 1961b, 1962, 1965). This interest has been maintained, despite his ever broadening range of interests and commitments. He instigated landscape survey in the Chalton area early in the 1960s (Cunliffe 1981, 2), directed exca-

vations on the extremely important multi-period site at Portchester Castle (Cunliffe 1975, 1976, 1977) and since 1979 has been working on the very important sites of Hengistbury Head (Cunliffe 1978; 1981, 3), and Danebury hillfort.

The Danebury Hillfort project is perhaps the most important ever to be undertaken in rural Hampshire. Conceived 16 years ago (Bowen and Cunliffe 1973), this scheme is much more than just the excavation of the hillfort defences and interior. Whilst the investigation of these extremely complex remains represents one of the major aspects of the project, it is supplemented by the detailed survey of the late prehistoric landscape of the surrounding chalk downlands by means of fieldwalking, surveying and aerial photography. By utilizing such techniques, Cunliffe and his co-workers are building up a complete picture of the complexity of the area in the Iron Age (Cunliffe 1984, Palmer 1984). In doing so, they are not only continuing the magnificent archaeological tradition of the County of Hampshire, but are utilizing in one study all the methods, techniques, ideas and concepts that have originated and developed in this County. The Danebury project can perhaps justifiably be seen as the culmination of a century of archaeology in Hampshire.

Because of the general increase in national awareness and support for archaeology, and because of the birth and prosperity of the local groups and amateur societies, the role of the Field Club as an instigator of archaeological excavation and fieldwork has gradually diminished over the past twenty five years. By contrast, however, the Club's well-established and respected role as a vehicle for the publication of archaeological papers of all kinds has continued, and indeed has expanded in response to the overall increase in archaeological activity. Despite a few minor hiccups and setbacks, the *Proceedings* are now firmly established as the publication outlet for the majority of the one-off reports on archaeological excavations and associated work within the County. This situation is certain to continue, as the long-awaited



Fig 8. John Collis excavating a skeleton in the cemetery at Owlesbury.

monograph series gets off the ground. This new venture, concentrating on works too long and detailed for normal publication in *Proceedings*, will fill a much needed gap in Hampshire archaeology and can do nothing but enhance the wider reputation of the Society as a whole.

In Conclusion

The past one hundred years has seen the growth and development of archaeology from its origins as something closely akin to an antiquarian pursuit and part-time hobby, to the highly-developed and exact science that we know today. To its credit, the County of Hampshire has always been in the forefront of these changes and has often acted as the testing ground and sounding board for new ideas and improvements. This brief summary has outlined something of these improvements and expansions.

This paper has also drawn attention to the vitally important role that a small number of individuals have played in the conception, growth and development of the subject in the County, and to the wider and more far-reaching influences that their pioneering work in Hampshire has had. Without the dedication, enthusiasm, insight and innovations of Shore and Dale, Williams-Freeman and Sumner, Crawford and Hawkes, Biddle and Cunliffe, not only Hampshire archaeology, but also British archaeology would be so much the poorer.

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