Proc. Hampsh. Field Club Archaeol. Soc. **42**, *1986, 35–42*

EXCAVATIONS AT BRAMDEAN, HAMPSHIRE, 1983 AND 1984, WITH SOME FURTHER DISCUSSION OF THE 'BANJO' SYNDROME

By BRIAN T PERRY

INTRODUCTION

This report summarises the results of two one-week excavations undertaken in September 1983 and September 1984 at the Iron Age and Romano-British site at Bramdean, Hants (NGR 627 281). The site was previously excavated in 1965 and 1966 (Perry 1972) and from 1973 to 1977 (Perry 1982). As indicated in the reports of these earlier excavations the settlement as a whole (Fig 1) has two main components:

1. an Iron Age 'banjo-shaped' enclosure and associated features,
2. a Romano-British villa.

A number of questions relating to the site were raised by these excavations and also by air photographs taken in the dry summers of 1975 and 1976. Two particular questions prompted the excavations of 1983 and 1984.

1. The first relates to a sub-circular enclosure in broadly the same area as the villa complex. This feature is not visible on any of the air photos taken of the site before 1975, but appeared as a broad light coloured crop mark in a grass meadow in the dry conditions in the summers of 1975 and 1976. It can also be seen on a small scale air photograph taken in 1935 (RCHM NMR air photo No SU 6228/4).
2. Secondly, a question outstanding from earlier excavations at the site relates to (a) the continuation of the ditch, clearly visible in many air photos of the site and located in 1977 by resistivity survey and excavation (Cutting G); and (b) the continuation of the ditch that leads out from the funnel entrance of the 'banjo' enclosure. The assumption, based on analogy with other 'banjo-shaped' enclosures, is that these two features join to form part of a continuous ditch system encompassing the 'banjo' enclosure. This continuation cannot be traced with certainty on any air photographs, nor has it been apparent from resistivity survey.

The 1983 and 1984 excavations therefore had two main objectives:

1. To section (Cutting H) the ditch of the sub-circular enclosure in order to establish:
   (a) the relative date of the 'banjo', the sub-circular enclosure and the villa,
   (b) why this feature, unlike the other main ditch features at the site, is relatively ephemeral, only showing up from the air under very favourable conditions.
2. To find (Cutting J) the continuation of the ditch feature located in 1977 (Cutting G).

Overall, the excavations of 1983 and 1984 have produced sufficient evidence to suggest a relative date for the sub-circular enclosure (Cutting H); have revealed the continuation of the ditch feature (Cutting J); and have provided an explanation for the non-appearance of both these features on air photographs.

THE EXCAVATIONS

Cutting H 1983 and 1984

The excavation consisted, in the first instance, of the digging of a trench 30m x 1m in order to find the exact location of the enclosure ditch and any other features. This trench revealed:

a) a feature which was presumed to be the outer ditch of the sub-circular enclosure. The trench was extended at this point to a 5m × 5m square in order to confirm that

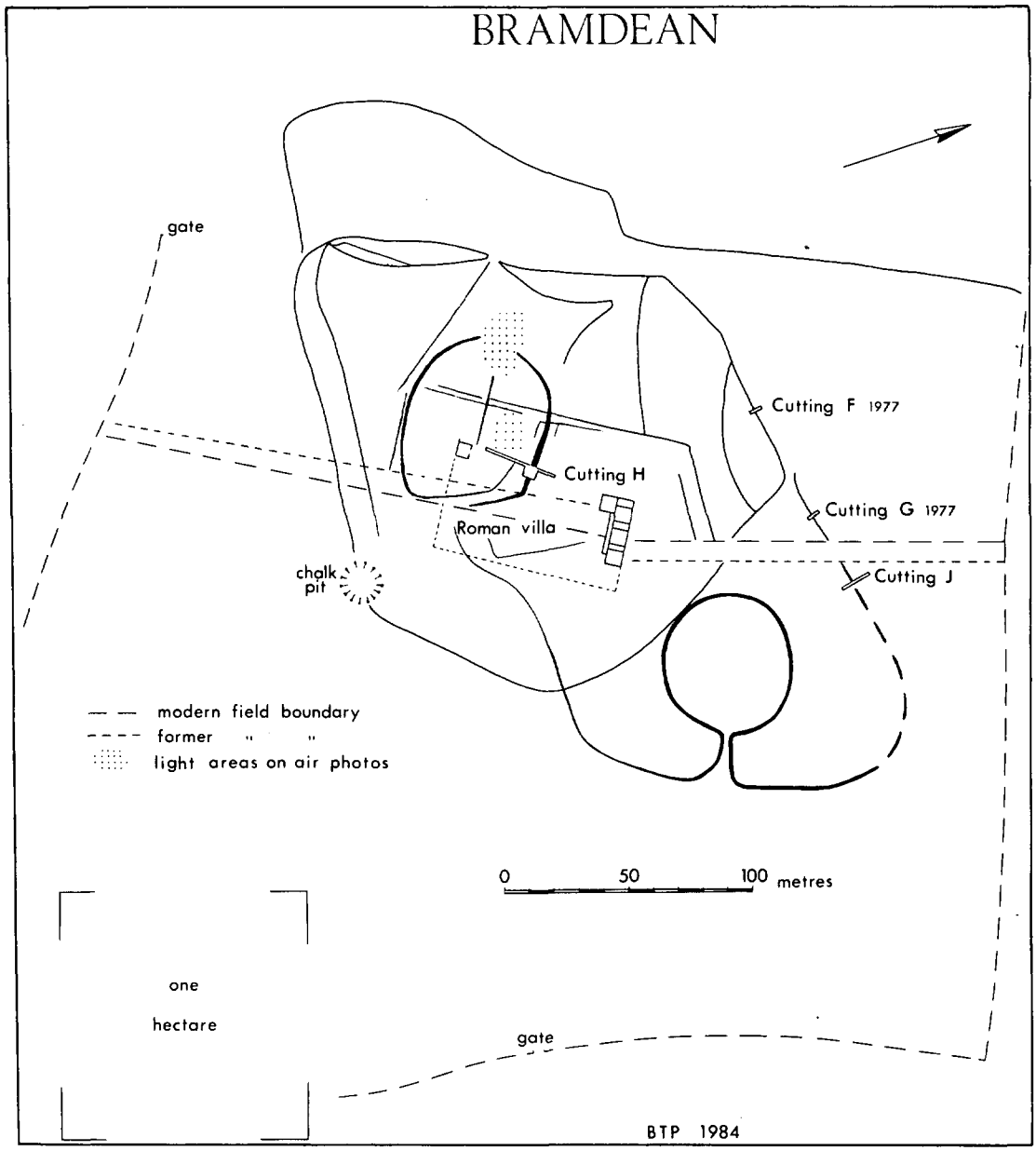

Fig 1. Bramdean: location plan of Cuttings F–J.

the feature was linear. Two parallel sections, each 1m in width, were cut through it, one in 1983 and one in 1984.

b) the top of another, probably linear, feature, believed to be related to the sub-circular enclosure. Only the upper levels of this were excavated.

c) an amorphous layer with very mixed variegated fill which was interpreted as backfill (or refuse) from the ninetenth century excavations on the villa site. Neither (a) or (b) had been disturbed by these excavations (a brief summary of which is given in earlier site reports; Perry 1972; 1982).

A composite section through the main ditch of the sub-circular enclosure is shown in Fig 2. In broad terms, the excavation clearly revealed two main periods of activity:

a) a shallow layer (maximum 30cm deep below the chalk surface) containing an accumulation of Romano-British material of first century AD type, separated by a layer of very hard compacted chalk from:

b) a triple feature, consisting of a V-shaped ditch flanked by two irregular U-shaped ditches. The two bottom layers of the V-shaped ditch were clearly distinguishable but the upper level of this feature merged into the main fill of the two flanking ditches.

Within this broad framework, seven main layers can be defined.

Layer 1, occupying approximately the bottom 35cm of the V-shaped ditch, consisted of loose chalk rubble with fine chalky silt and some large flints but containing no dateable finds.

Layer 2 was a well-marked layer of fine dark earth with chalk and burnt flint and a localised deposit of burnt flint and charcoal. The bottom of this layer contained the pedestal base of a jar in hard red/black burnished ware with decorated sides and a lightly drawn cross on the underside (Fig 2, no 9). The charcoal layer produced several pieces of very coarse flint-gritted ware and one crudely decorated body sherd (Fig 2, no 8). The pedestal base jar at the bottom of layer 2, in association with crudely made coarse pottery, seem to belong to a relatively early phase of Iron Age occupation of this site, represented in the earlier pits within the 'banjo' enclosure (Perry 1972, 56, Fig 25, no 47; 1982, 68). It is attributed to the 'Park Brow/Caesar's Camp Group' (Cunliffe 1978, 40) which predates the development of the saucepan pot styles in this part of Hampshire and Sussex.

Layer 3, a broad band of compact clayey earth and chalk fill was indistinguishable from the bulk of the fill of the two flanking ditches. It produced, mainly from the top of the layer, two rims of jars in coarse flint-gritted ware (Fig 2, nos 1 and 2) and several coarse body sherds including one piece of burnished ware with lightly tooled decoration (Fig 2, no 10).

The fill of the two flanking ditches consisted of compact clayey earth and chalk, on top of looser chalk rubble. This produced very little in the way of dateable finds other than a small concentration of very coarse flint-gritted pot of Iron Age type in association with a platter in hard grey sandy ware (Fig 2, no 11).

Layer 4 was a very clearly distinguishable band of hard compact chalk extending across the whole of the feature, distinctly separating layer 3 from layer 5. Within and immediately below layer 4 were found several pieces of large coarse storage jar (Fig 2, no 7) and a number of rims belonging to the Iron Age 'saucepan pot and jar' type (Fig 2, nos 3–6) together with a few fragments of coarse sandy ware.

It is layer 4 which is of particular interest from the point of view of the interpretation of the air photographs. The surface of this layer was so uniformly hard and compact when first excavated that it was mistaken for natural chalk. It was only as the result of heavy rain that the layer was loosened sufficiently for it to be distinguished from the surrounding natural chalk and it is presumably the presence of this layer which prevents the feature from showing up on air photographs. The layer is thought to represent a deliberate compaction and levelling of the feature probably during the early Romano-British occupation of the site.

Layer 5 consisted of dark brown earth with small flints and chalk, well stratified between

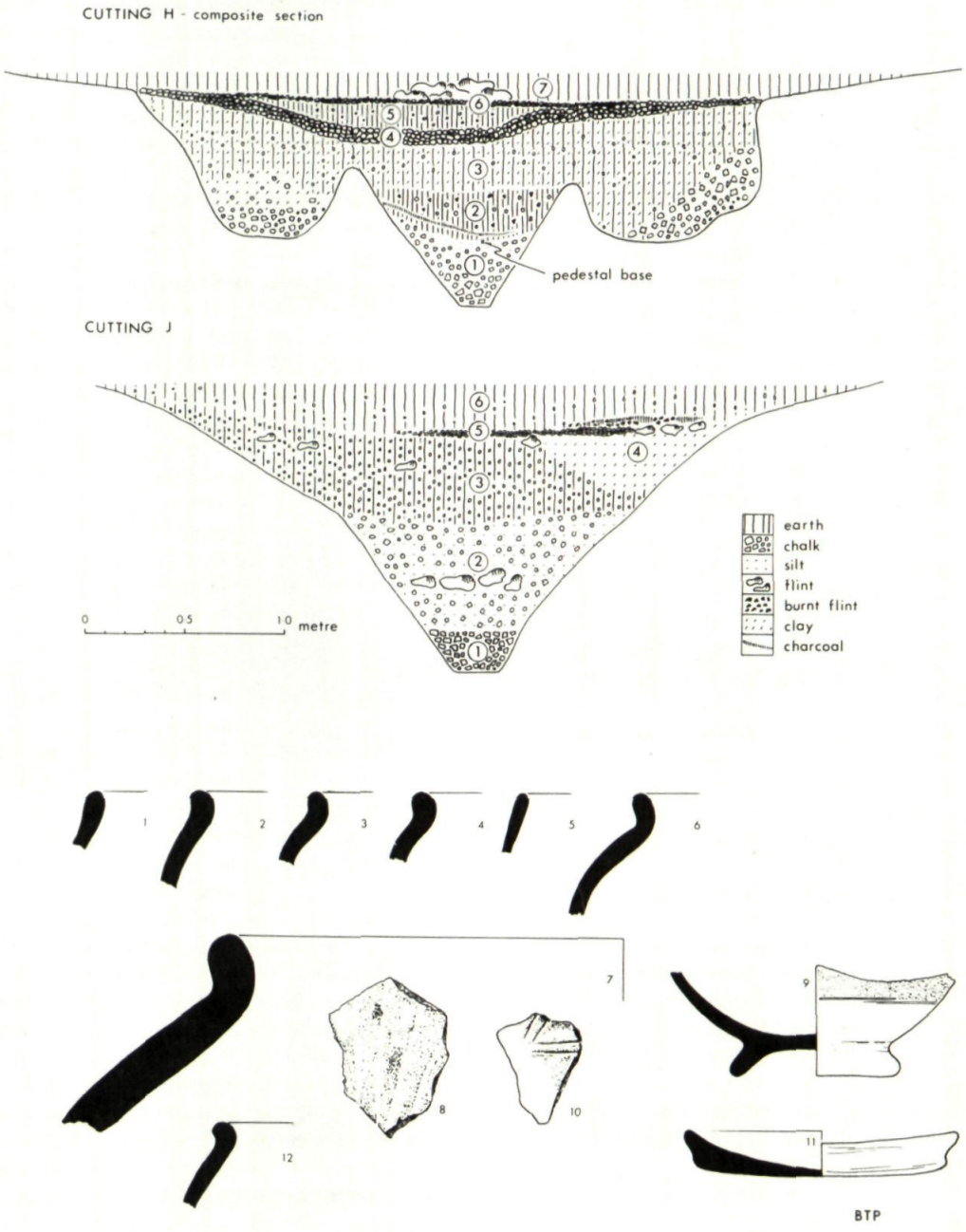

Fig 2. Bramdean: sections across the ditches in Cuttings H and J, and associated pottery.

layer 4 and a 'gritty' layer of compact flints, *layer 6*. Finds from these layers consisted mainly of Romano-British coarse wares with a few fragments of coarse flint-gritted wares including the rim of a large jar comparable to that from layer 4 (Fig 2, no 7).

Layer 7 consisted of a uniform fill of dark earth with concentrations of large flints. Pottery from this layer comprised bead rim jars, wide-mouthed jars, necked and cordoned jars and platters in black/grey sandy ware. They are similar to those found in other parts of the site, notably Cutting B (Perry 1972, Fig 26) and comparable to forms from, e.g., Winchester, where they are attributed to the first century AD (Cunliffe 1964, Figs 13, 16, 17). The same layer produced three pieces of decorated samian ware probably belonging to the end of the first century AD.

Small finds associated with this layer included two bronze nails/rivets, a quantity of iron nails, glass fragments and some broken tile suggesting the existence of an early version of the villa at the time when this layer accumulated.

The animal bone from Cutting H

A small quantity of animal bone was recovered from Cutting H and the identifiable fragments are listed in the table below. Much of the bone was too fragmentary for identification.

Layer	*Sheep/Goat*	*Ox*	*Horse*	*Pig*	*Unidentified*
7	13 teeth	—	2 metapodial (cannonbone) 1 incisor	—	19 fragments
6	—	—	—	—	—
5	2 teeth	—	—	1 fragment lower jaw 1 phalanx	7 fragments
4	7 teeth 1 jaw	3 teeth	—	1 fragment lower jaw	19 fragments
3	1 tooth 1 footbone 5 jawbones 1 metapodial	2 teeth	—	1 lower jaw	38 fragments
2	—	—	—	—	—
1	1 jawbone	—	—	—	—

The sample is too small to have any statistical significance, but the identifiable bone recovered from layers 1 to 3 does support the evidence from many sites in central southern England that sheep raising was of prime importance in the 'Middle Iron Age' (Grant 1983, 128), and confirms similar evidence from excavations within the 'banjo' enclosure (Perry 1982, 72).

Summary of Cutting H

The available dating evidence from Cutting H therefore suggests that the V-shaped ditch of this enclosure originated during the Phase 1 occupation of the site (Perry 1982, 57, 71) when layers 1 and 2 accumulated, and that occupation of this part of the site continued during Phase 2 when pottery of the 'saucepan pot and jar' type was in use and to which the main 'banjo' enclosure ditch and many of the pits within it belong. The site then seems to have been deliberately levelled during or prior to an early phase in the Romano–British occupation of the site. A substantial amount of activity seems to have taken place on the site in the early first century AD.

Cutting J 1984

This part of the excavation consisted simply of a trench 12.5m x 1m laid out to find the continuation of the ditch revealed in 1977 (Cutting G).

As explained above, this ditch failed to show on any air photographs of the site, nor did it respond to resistivity survey.

The excavation revealed a relatively simple ditch section in which 6 layers can be distinguished.

Layer 1 consisted of compact chalk below a more friable chalky silt of *layer 2*, neither of which produced any dateable material; likewise, *layer 3*, a substantial deposit of uniformly hard, compact chalk with clay and flints. At the northerly end of the section the fill became a softer clay, *layer 4*, which produced a rim of a jar in flint-gritted ware (Fig 2, no 12) and fragments of a footring base.

Overlying both layers 3 and 4 was a clearly defined 'gritty' layer, *layer 5*, made up of compacted flints and burnt flint with some charcoal. Above this, *layer 6* consisted of hard, compacted clayey earth with many large flints, and a quantity of coarse sandy ware of early Romano-British type. The top of this layer produced a coin (the only coin from the site from eight seasons of excavation). This was badly corroded but appears to be of late first/early second century date (kindly identified by R W Bartlett of Harlow Museum).

Overall, the V-shaped profile of the ditch and the limited dating evidence from layer 4 indicate an initial Iron Age date. A suggested interpretation of the ditch as a whole is that layers 1 and 2 represent a rapid natural infill. Layers 3 and 4 may represent a deliberate infilling. The lack of finds, both pottery and animal bone, suggests relatively little human activity in the vicinity of this ditch during Iron Age occupation of the site. This confirms the similar impression gained in previous excavations from Cuttings F and G, 1977.

Layer 5 suggests a compaction of the infilled ditch on top of which layer 6 accumulated during occupation in the first century AD.

The excavation left little doubt as to the reason for the failure of this ditch to respond to either air photography or resistivity survey. The substantial layer of compact chalky infill of layer 3 and the absence of organic material would readily account for this.

SOME FURTHER DISCUSSION OF THE 'BANJO' SYNDROME

Bramdean clearly belongs to the class of site for which the term 'banjo' enclosure has become widely accepted. The term was first used by the writer (1966, 39; 1970, 37) and Bowen and Fowler (1966, 45) when it became clear that these enclosures were one of the most distinctive settlement forms in Wessex attributable to the Iron Age. An attempt at a precise definition, agreed between the writer and Collin Bowen, appears in Perry (1982, 57–59). They have since been described in many standard texts dealing in one way or another with aspects of Iron Age settlement and agriculture in southern England (Adkins & Adkins 1982, 79; Bradley 1978, 48; Cunliffe 1978, 165–6; Fowler 1983, 63–4; Harding 1974, 83; Megaw & Simpson 1979, 353–4; Palmer 1984, 59). Their position within the wider context of Iron Age settlement patterns has more recently been discussed by Cunliffe (1984, 554) and their relation to social change during the Iron Age has been considered in Cunliffe and Miles (1984, 30, 34). Alternative functions of the 'banjo' as part of settlement/arable/pastoral complexes have been discussed by Hingley (1984, 73–4, 80–2).

Three excavated examples now exist at Blagden Copse (Stead, 1969), Bramdean (Perry 1972; 1982) and Micheldever Wood (Monk & Fasham 1980; Fasham forthcoming).

The excavations at Micheldever, in which two thirds of the interior of the 'core' enclosure were excavated, provided close parallels with Bramdean and led to a similar conclusion in each case, namely that whilst the idiosyncratic nature of the enclosure suggests an association with livestock management, the site is to be seen as part of a settlement associated with an integrated system of crop and animal husbandry (Perry 1972, 72; 1982, 73; Monk & Fasham 1980, 341; Fasham forthcoming).

Although limited in scale, the 1983 and 1984 excavations at Bramdean invite some further discussion of the site as a whole and the 'banjo' syndrome generally.

The evidence from Cutting H suggests that the initial construction of the sub-circular enclo-

sure probably belongs to a phase of earlier Iron Age activity on the site (Phase 1) represented by pottery of the 'Park Brow – Caesar's Camp' style. It is therefore presumably contemporary with some of the pits excavated in the interior of the 'banjo' (Perry 1982, 71). It appears to be earlier than the construction of the main banjo enclosure ditch and most of the pits and related internal features which undoubtedly belong to the 'Middle Iron Age' 'saucepan pot' era (Phase 2).

The evidence from Cutting J suggests the existence of a continuous ditch system encompassing the 'core' enclosure of the 'banjo'. Its presumed alignment is shown by the hatched symbol in Fig 1.

The distribution of these sites in Wessex has been noted to be broadly coincident with the 'linear ditch' systems and many of the 'banjos' are clearly linked to them. Blagden Copse prvides the only such excavated example but many others exist; for example Warren Farm, Tichbourne (Perry 1972, Fig 28; Cunliffe 1978, 166), and a multiple example occurs at New Farm, Weston Patrick (Perry 1972, 66). Further convincing examples based on the interpretation of air photographs have been illustrated by Palmer (1984, 35, 51, 115, 117) at Woodlease Copse, Dunkirk Barn and Rowbury Copse A.

Whilst many 'banjos' are therefore clearly linked to linear ditch systems, the writer still believes, as was suggested in an earlier paper (Perry 1970, 37), that a useful distinction can be made between these and others, like Bramdean and Micheldever Wood, where the 'banjo' is part of a much larger settlement complex. This distinction seems to be compatible with the suggestion by Hingley (1984, 74, 80) that 'banjo' enclosures may have at least two distinct functions; firstly as 'settlement component' in which the 'banjo' may have a specialised 'livestock' function within a settlement complex; and secondly as 'settlement enclosure' in which the settlement lies within the 'banjo' enclosure surrounded by arable land – the neck of the enclosure pointing towards pasture.

In relation to sites such as Bramdean and Micheldever Wood a distinction can be made between the 'banjo' syndrome as a whole and the 'core' enclosure. Such a distinction is made by Fasham in relation to Micheldever Wood. In many of the published summaries that have appeared, the illustrations have been based either on Blagden Copse (Bowen & Fowler 1966, 44; Fowler 1983, 64; Harding 1974, 83; Taylor 1983, 65) or have emphasised only the 'core' enclosure rather than the syndrome as a whole. Inevitably, this has led to an emphasis on their small size in comparison to other contemporary settlement forms. This may be misleading when considering their function and their place within a 'hierarchy' of settlements. Whilst the 'core' enclosure at Bramdean is indeed relatively small the site as a whole covers up to 3½ hectares, and excavation suggests two main phases of Iron Age occupation on the site. Similarly Palmer has shown that what appear to be 'banjo' enclosures frequently form part of much larger settlement complexes (Palmer 1984, 49; 1983, 50).

Excavation at Bramdean in 1983 and 1984 has confirmed the need to consider the 'banjo' syndrome as a whole and future work on the site will aim to do this.

Finally, it is thought appropriate to consider briefly the likely social context for the construction of the 'banjo' form. Available evidence from Bramdean, Micheldever and elsewhere suggests that the 'banjos' as a group belong to the 'Middle Iron Age' and their construction is associated with the introduction of the 'saucepan pot and jar' pottery group. The 1983/84 excavations at Bramdean indicate that the construction of the 'banjo' postdates earlier Iron Age activity on the site. Cunliffe has suggested that the period from 400 BC saw the emergence of a new 'reordered' socio-economic system (Cunliffe & Miles 1984, 30, 38). This was associated with the emergence of 'developed hillforts' and the abandonment of others, as well as with the development of 'farmsteads of varying kinds, optimally sited so as to utilise a range of farming resources', and associated with changes in land ownership in the face of increasing population. This, combined with the need to demarcate land boundaries and different forms of land ownership and land use more clearly, may well provide the social context for the

development of the 'banjo' syndrome.

It is possible that the 'banjos' survived the subsequent social upheavals of about 100 BC which affected the major hillforts and led to the abandonment of the 'Little Woodbury' type farms (Cunliffe 1984, 554; Cunliffe & Miles 1984, 34). However, by the time that early Romano-British pottery was in use at Bramdean, pre-existing earth works had ceased to exist in any recognisable or functioning form.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I am very much indebted to those who have worked as volunteers on the site and have contributed in other ways; in particular I should like to thank Mr W Silk, the owner of the land, for permission to continue the excavations, Mr Terry Norman for his hospitality, Mr Lewis Conquer for kindly identifying the animal bone and Mrs Nicola Greenwood for typing up an unruly manuscript and commenting on the draft text. Continued work on the site is made possible by a grant from the Hampshire County Council Archaeology Fund for which I am very grateful.

REFERENCES

Adkins, L & Adkins, R A 1982 *The Handbook of British Archaeology*, Newton Abbot: David and Charles.

Bowen, H C & Fowler, P J 1966 Romano British Rural Settlements in Dorset and Wiltshire, in Thomas, C (ed) *Rural Settlement in Roman Britain*, London: CBA Res Rep **7** 43–67.

Bradley, R 1978 *The Prehistoric Settlement of Britain*, London: Routledge and Kegan Paul.

Cunliffe, B W 1964 *Winchester Excavations, 1949–1960* **1**, Winchester: City of Winchester Museums and Libraries Committee.

———— 1978 *Iron Age Communities in Britain*, 2nd ed, London: Routledge and Kegan Paul.

———— 1983 *Danebury: Anatomy of an Iron Age Hillfort*, London: B T Batsford.

———— 1984 *Danebury – an Iron Age Hillfort in Hampshire, vol. 2, The Excavations 1969–1978: The Finds*, London: CBA Res Rep **52**.

———— & Miles, D 1984 (ed) *Aspects of the Iron Age in Central Southern Britain*, Oxford: University of Oxford Committee for Archaeology, Monograph **2**.

Fasham, P J forthcoming A 'banjo' enclosure in Micheldever Wood, Hampshire (MARC 3 Site R27), *Hampshire Field Club and Archaeological Society Monograph*, forthcoming.

Fowler, P J 1983 *The Farming of Prehistoric Britain*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Grant, A 1984 Animal husbandry in Wessex and the Thames Valley in Cunliffe & Miles 1984.

Harding, D W 1974 *The Iron Age in Lowland Britain*, London: Routledge and Kegan Paul.

Hingley, R 1984 Towards Social Analysis in Archaeology: Celtic Society in the Iron Age of the Upper Thames Valley (400–0 BC) in Cunliffe & Miles 1984.

Megaw, J V S & Simpson, D D A 1979 (ed), *Introduction to British Prehistory*, Leicester: Leicester University Press.

Monk, M A & Fasham, P J 1980 Carbonised Plant Remains from two Iron Age Sites in Central Hampshire, *Proc Prehist Soc* **46** 321–44.

Palmer, R 1983 Analysis of settlement features in the landscape of prehistoric Wessex, in Maxwell, G S (ed) *The impact of Aerial Reconnaissance in Archaeology*, London: CBA Res Rep **49**.

———— 1984 *Danebury, an Iron Age Hillfort in Hampshire: an aerial photographic interpretation of its environs*, Royal Commission on Historical Monuments (England) Supplementary Series **6**.

Perry, B T 1966 Some recent discoveries in Hampshire, in Thomas, C (ed) *Rural Settlement in Roman Britain*, London: CBA Res Rep **7** 39–41.

———— 1970 Iron Age enclosures and Settlements on the Hampshire Chalklands, *Archaeol J* **126** 29–43.

———— 1972 Excavations at Bramdean, Hampshire 1965 and 1966, and a discussion of similar sites in southern England, *Proc* **29** 41–77.

———— 1982 Excavations at Bramdean, Hampshire 1973 to 1977, *Proc* **38** 57–74.

Stead, I M 1969 Excavations in Blagden Copse, Hurstbourne Tarrant, Hampshire, 1961, *Proc* **23** 81–89.

Taylor, C 1983 *Village and Farmstead: a History of Rural Settlement in England*, London: George Philip.

Author: Dr Brian Perry, School of Natural Sciences, The Hatfield Polytechnic, College Lane, Hatfield, Herts AL10 9AB