

## CRICKLEY HILL 1982

The 1982 season of excavations lasted from 24 July to 1 September. About 230 diggers took part, with contingents from Spain, Italy, and the United States.

Work concentrated on a single extremely interesting area, at the southern end of the Iron Age rampart on the National Trust Land. Here a total of 2000 square metres was examined, and fell into three distinct divisions.

### 1. Beyond the rampart

A large area was cleared adjacent to the rampart, and extending 30 metres eastwards. This is one of the few places available for excavation, to check whether the fort had a suburb. Other potential settlement areas have either been destroyed (on the County Council land) or are at present covered in hazel scrub. A few features, chiefly postholes, were found, but very little trace of use for dwellings, and we conclude that in this area in the Iron Age there were probably no extramural houses. Analysis of the stratified snails, indeed, strongly suggests that in the Iron Age bushes and trees had been allowed to grow up to the edge of the ditch. A few flints and a worn linear feature in the centre of the examined area derive from the Neolithic roadway which ran towards this part of the site from the South entrance of the Causewayed enclosure. After excavation this area provided a useful spot for the main spoil heap, to avoid damaging the turf more than necessary.

### 2. The Rampart

With one exception the rampart cut confirmed the sequence previously established, notably in the cuts of 1971 and 1979. The earliest rampart was built with a framework of paired posts supporting the timber-lacing, and drystone walls to front and rear. In front was a narrow, deep ditch. As in other stretches, the rampart had been destroyed by fire. The rebuilding was very poorly done, with little attempt to maintain courses, and displayed all the signs of haste. Then, as in other parts of the defences, the

ditch had been widened and the rampart thickened, to produce a stepped front to the wall. But in the 1982 cutting we found the point at which this thickening started (or, more likely, stopped) - abruptly, with a weak right angled corner, as though the builders so far from the entrance had decided that the final 40 or 50 metres of wall before the cliff need not be rebuilt. The re-cut ditch similarly suddenly comes to an end, and the whole gives a remarkably strong impression of a halt called to work in progress.

### 3. Interior

Behind the rampart stratification was complex and informative. Behind the first rampart stood a 4-post structure (without a hearth) which is the fourth in this position, parallel to the wall and about 3 feet from it. It is possible that all were towers or fighting platforms overlooking the defences. After the re-building of the rampart a long rectangular building was constructed parallel to the rear wall. Its front, which was supported on posts on pad stones, may have been open. Its back seems to have rested on the rampart, and it may have been used as a beast house. After the final abandonment of the fort in the 5th century B.C. the rear wall slowly collapsed. When the tumbled stones had slid down the slope and soil had built up over them, a stone-walled circular hut was built over their ruins. Six other similar huts, partially cut into the hill side, are less clearly stratified, but are probably of this period. Their walls were presumably not entirely of stone, for their debris is insufficient. It is more likely that they were earth walled, with the stone slabs at the base for drainage. Each had a hearth towards its centre and an opening towards the South, with cobbling spreading outside and fanning out in an exterior apron. Quantities of very poor pottery were associated with each hut, but dating is provided by the sub-floor layers which produced a few fragments of grey fabric and red fabric pottery of Roman origin, probably late Roman. This collection of huts could, therefore, be of late Roman date, but on the whole they are better, at this stage, considered to be of Dark Age date. This is an extremely important development in our

understanding of the history of the hill, and now extends human occupation to a span of 4000 years, from about 3500 B.C. to A.D.500.

In view of the significance of this discovery, first made towards the end of the 1982 season, it is hoped that further work will be possible in the huts so far exposed, and that cuttings can be put down to include the other scoops visible in the surrounding hillside. Otherwise, the next task for 1983 is to carry out the excavation of the western ends of the long mound, near where the Neolithic enclosure ditches are expected to cross it.

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