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The Pre-Belgic Iron Age in the Northern Cotswolds

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EXAMINATION of available evidence from the area suggests that, excluding Belgic material, the Iron Age in the northern Cotswolds can at present be divided into three main phases. This initial division is based on evidence from few sites and is heavily dependent on ceramic assemblages and their association with specific characteristics of hillforts. Although the detailed chronological and cultural inter-relationships between phases are as yet undetermined, evidence suggests that phases 2 (Salmonsbury-Broadway phase) and 3 (Bredon Hill-Danes Camp phase) are approximately contemporary regional variants of later iron age culture (c. 4th/3rd–1st centuries A.D.), and follow phase 1 (Chastleton-Shenberrow phase) (c. 6th–3rd centuries B.C., or later).

PHASE 1—CHASTLETON-SHENBERROW PHASE

Sites: This phase is characterized by large shouldered jars with finger-tip decoration, incised wares and carinated bowls, all of which are paralleled in the earliest iron age of the Thames valley and occur in the northern Cotswolds on hillfort sites with single, dry-stone ramparts as at Chastleton and Shenberrow. The following sites can also be assigned to phase 1 —

<i>Open Settlements</i>	<i>Hillforts</i>	<i>Sites of uncertain status:</i>
Salmonsbury (Dunning, 1976)		
Shenberrow, pre-rampart phase (Fell, 1961)	Shenberrow I (Fell, 1961)	Meon Hill, Knolls, early phases? (Marshall, 1)
	Lyneham (Bayne, 1957)	
Crickley Hill I (Dixon, 1972, 1973)		
	Chastleton (Leeds, 1931)	
Kings Beeches, early phase (Gray and Brewer, 1906; Marshall, 1)		
	Leckhampton I (Burrow <i>et al.</i> , 1925; Champion, 1971, 1976)	
Foxhill, Badsey (Donovan and Dunning, 1936)		
	Crickley Hill II-III (Dixon, 1972, 1973)	
Sandy Lane (Purnell and Webb, 1950)		
(?) Barnwood (Clifford, 1934)		

CHARACTERISTICS

Phase 1 is defined by the following characteristics which occur in association within the area at Shenberrow, Chastleton, Leckhampton, Crickley Hill, and Lyneham, and elsewhere as at Bathampton (Wainwright, 1967), and Rainsborough (Avery *et al.*, 1967).

1. *Hillforts*

Phase 1 hillforts are univallate, with a single, rubble-cored rampart, revetted internally, and externally with dry-stone walling. Basal widths of ramparts vary between 5 m and 7 m (Shenberrow, Lyneham, Leckhampton and Crickley Hill), but reach 12.5 m at Chastleton. Ditches, which are rock-cut and flat-bottomed, with straight, sloping sides, have mean values of 3.5 m for top width, 2 m for bottom width, and 2 m depth. The ditch, if present, was not located by excavation along the scarp at Shenberrow, nor at Chastleton. Similar rampart construction, also associated with finger-tip decorated jar fragments, occurs in the southern Cotswolds at Bathampton (Wainwright, 1967) and also at Rainsborough, periods 1-2 (Avery *et al.*, 1967). Evidence for horizontal timbering within the rampart exists at Leckhampton, and at Crickley Hill where horizontal timbers and vertical supports formed a box construction within the rampart.

Entrances appear to be generally complex, with portal structures, passages and outworks, as at Crickley Hill and Leckhampton. At Chastleton, the partially-excavated entrance is of uncertain plan, but contained a paved causeway and stone gate-post structure. At Leckhampton the complex, bastionned entrance, formerly attributed to the later Iron Age appears best paralleled at Crickley Hill and Rainsborough (Champion, 1976). The outer, period II entrance at Crickley Hill is simple, with two pairs of gates one behind the other, and this developed into a more complex entrance with bastionned gate and hornwork during period III when the rampart was reconstructed.

Internal structures from phase 1 hillforts include post-built longhouses at Crickley Hill in period II, paved floors, possibly of rectangular huts at Shenberrow, and possible rectangular post-built huts at Chastleton. Circular post-built huts occur at Crickley Hill during period III.

Hillforts at present attributable to phase 1 are typically small and approximately circular in plan (Chastleton type), except for Crickley Hill which is a multi-enclosure hillfort of cross-bank type. Chastleton-type hillforts resemble in area, plan and siting (Table 1) many other undated hillforts which appear as a distinct group (Rivet, 1961), widespread on the Cotswold scarp and dip slope around the upper Thames tributaries. Analysis of areas of Chastleton-type hillforts (Table 1)

TABLE 1
Chastleton-type hillforts in the Cotswolds

<i>Site</i>	<i>NGR</i>	<i>Area</i> (hectares)	<i>Siting</i>
*Chastleton	SP 258282	1.6	HT
*Lyneham	SP 299214	1.6	HT
*Shenberrow	SP 080334	1.4	S
*Leckhampton	SO 948183	3.5	S
Idbury	SP 229195	3.2	HT
†Langley	SP 008290	2.3	S
Roel Gate	SP 047243	1.0	HT/S
Windrush	SP 181123	1.6	HT
Ilbury	SP 438305	3.1	HT
Beckbury	SP 064299	2.4	S
Dean Camp	SP 165087	4.6	HT
The Castle	ST 664883	2.2	HT
Horton	ST 764844	2.2	S
Norbury	SO 990150	3.3	HT
Arbury	SP 540587	3.4	HT
Abbey Camp	ST 650888	5.3	HT
Ranbury	SP 090009	5.2	HT

KEY:

* Excavated sites

† Hillfort status considered doubtful
(RCHM, 1976)Siting HT Sited on low, level hill-top
S Sited against scarp

suggests a main size-group with mean internal area 2.82 hectares (standard deviation 1.17 hectares). Further excavation is required to determine whether any other sites in this group can be assigned in origin to phase 1.

2. *Open Settlements*

Pre-rampart material from Salmonsbury, Shenberrow and Crickley Hill suggests the occurrence of open settlements on these sites pre-dating the construction of the hillfort. Possible phase 1 open settlements unassociated with hillfort enclosures occur at Kings Beeches, Foxhill, Sandy Lane and (?) Barnwood.

3. *Pottery*

Characteristic pottery of three main types is attributable to phase 1. Large shouldered jars with finger-tip decoration, paralleled in the Long Wittenham-Allen's Pit group (Bradford, 1942; Cunliffe, 1974; Myres, 1937; Savory, 1937) are represented at Chastleton, Shenberrow, Leckhampton, Crickley Hill, Meon Hill, Salmonsbury, and Kings Beeches, carinated bowls of Upper Thames-Wessex types (Harding, 1972; Myres, 1937; Savory, 1937) occur at Chastleton and Shenberrow, and bowls with incised, white-infilled decoration, paralleled at All Cannings Cross (Cunnington, 1923) and Allen's Pit (Bradford, 1942), occur at Crickley Hill and Sandy Lane.

A change in ceramic sequence is evident at Crickley Hill, where the coarse, undecorated 'long-house' ware associated with period II changed during period III (marked by rampart and gate reconstruction, and a change to circular huts after burning) to pottery with finger-tip decoration, and hatched chevrons, and slashing, with white infill, with affinity to material from All Cannings Cross.

ORIGINS AND CHRONOLOGY

Present evidence suggests settlement of the northern Cotswolds during phase 1 by expansion from the upper Thames valley. Pottery from phase 1 sites is closely paralleled amongst the Long Wittenham-Allen's Pit ceramic group, dateable to the 5th-3rd centuries B.C. (Cunliffe, 1974; Harding, 1972). Certain devolved shouldered jar forms from Chastleton have been tentatively dated as late as the 2nd century B.C. (Cunliffe, 1974) suggesting the possibility of persistence of phase 1 traditions into the later Iron Age, but further dating evidence for the later development of phase 1 sites is required before the exact relationship between phase 1 and later phases is clear. Since such sites as Chastleton and Shenberrow have produced little evidence of later iron age influence, the question of abandonment, or persistence of traditions should be considered in relation to dating the end of this phase, and its relationship to phases 2, and 3.

PHASE 2—SALMONSBURY-BROADWAY PHASE

Sites: Phase 2 is represented almost entirely by Salmonsbury where the ceramics and other material, rampart type and structures have wide parallels in other later iron age contexts in southern Britain. The following sites can also be initially assigned to phase 2:—

Open Settlements

Guiting Power (Saville, 1975)
Broadway (Smith, 1946; Marshall, 1)
Kings Beeches (Gray and Brewer, 1906;
Marshall, 1)

Hillforts

Salmonsbury (Dunning, 1931, 1976)
Meon Hill (Marshall, 1)
Knolls (Powell, 1933; Marshall, 1)

CHARACTERISTICS

Phase 2 is defined by the following characteristics of hillfort construction and material assemblage.

1. *Hillforts*

Evidence for hillfort construction during phase 2 comes entirely from Salmonsbury. Here the ramparts are closely-spaced bivallate and of glacis construction, and the entrance is of gap-type with a double-gated structure and possible bridged superstructure. Internal structures include circular, post-built huts and associated storage and rubbish pits. Circular dry-stone huts at Meon Hill may be attributable to phase 2, if associated with the multivallation and occurrence of currency bars at this site.

2. *Open Settlements*

Open settlements producing typical phase 2 material include Broadway and Guiting Power. A rectangular, ditched, enclosure at Broadway (Smith, 1946) produced linear-tooled ware and plain forms (Marshall, 1, Fig. 6) similar to pottery from Salmonsbury period I. Pottery from Guiting Power includes barrel-shaped jars and linear-tooled ware of Salmonsbury type, associated with storage pits.

3. *Pottery*

Pottery characteristic of phase 2 includes linear-tooled bowls, barrel-shaped jars, plain burnished bowls with rounded shoulders and bead-rimmed bowls (Marshall, 1, Figs. 3, 6; Dunning, 1976).

Linear-tooled decoration of small, usually burnished, bowls at Salmonsbury includes a variety of curvilinear burnished, or incised motifs which also occur at Guiting Power. Small burnished jars with parallel cross-hatching covering the body which also occur at Salmonsbury (Dunning, 1976, Fig. 15) are also found at Broadway (Marshall, 1, Fig. 6) and represent a distinct sub-group, possibly later in date, within the Salmonsbury-type linear-tooled tradition. Burnished bowls with rounded shoulders, similar in fabric to linear-tooled bowls, but undecorated, occur at Salmonsbury (unpublished) and the Knolls (Marshall, 1, Fig. 3), and are also paralleled at Bredon Hill (Hencken, 1938).

Barrel-shaped jars occur in a phase 2 context at Salmonsbury, and similar forms also occur at Kings Beeches and the Knolls (Marshall, 1, Figs. 1, 3). Bowls with beaded rims only occur to any extent at the Knolls and Broadway (Marshall, 1, Figs. 3, 6).

4. *Metalwork*

Iron implements from Salmonsbury include types paralleled widely elsewhere on 'Iron B' sites (Dunning, 1976). Iron currency bars occur in possible association with phase 2 material at Salmonsbury, in undated contexts at Meon Hill, South Littleton and Offenham, and also at Bredon Hill, and Beckford, phase 3 sites (Allen, 1967; Oswald, 1972).

ORIGINS, AFFINITIES AND CHRONOLOGY

Phase 2 is not well defined at present, since it is only known to any extent at Salmonsbury, where it is defined by multivallation, glacis ramparts, linear-tooled ware and other distinctive pottery types, and a range of metal-work, including currency bars, and also by crouched inhumation. The occurrence of barrel-shaped jars, or linear-tooled decoration, with affinities to Salmonsbury material at Meon Hill, Leckhampton, the Knolls, Kings Beeches, Guiting Power and Broadway (Marshall, 1, Figs. 1, 3, 4-6) suggest inclusion of these sites in phase 2. However the absence of close parallels between much of the pottery from these sites and the Salmonsbury assemblage, and similarities to much of phase 3 material indicates that further evidence is required to define and subdivide this phase, as well as to determine how far features seen at Salmonsbury are widespread, and can be used to delimit an assemblage distinct from phase 3.

Details of defensive and internal structures are not known for the many other potentially similar multivallate sites. However, if the introduction of closely-spaced multivallate glacis ramparts is a

characteristic of phase 2 (see discussions in Avery *et al.*, 1967, and Cunliffe, 1974), the sites listed in Table 2 might be expected to provide further evidence of phase 2 occupation.

Linear-tooled ware from Salmonsbury is a regional expression of curvilinear decorated pottery styles seen elsewhere in later iron age contexts in southern Britain, as in the Lydney-Llanmelin, Southcote-Blewburton Hill, Glastonbury-Blaise Castle and Hunsbury styles (Cunliffe, 1974). The Salmonsbury-Broadway pottery is fairly closely related on stylistic grounds to the first two of these groups, but its exact affinities and independence as a group awaits analysis of further material. Other multivallate hillforts with glacis ramparts in the northern and eastern Cotswolds and Upper Thames area, which have produced pottery with affinities to the Salmonsbury assemblage occur at Rainsborough (Avery *et al.*, 1967), Madmarston (Fowler, 1960) and Cherbury (Cotton, 1962).

The Salmonsbury-Broadway style appears to be the equivalent of the Glastonbury-Blaise Castle style (Cunliffe, 1974) which occurs in the southern Cotswolds as seen at Little Solsbury Camp (Dowden, 1956-9 and 1959-62) and Blaise Castle (Rahtz and Clevedon-Brown, 1959). Glastonbury-type decorated ware, with the exception of a single possible fragment from Leckhampton (Burrow *et al.*, 1925), does not appear to occur in the northern Cotswolds. Affinities of decorated pottery from the Knolls (Marshall, 1, Fig. 3) are uncertain, but several types are similar to examples in the Breedon on the Hill-Ancaster group (Cunliffe, 1974) and also to some unpublished material from a nearby open settlement at Millhampost, Glos. (Marshall, 2).

Barrel-shaped jars suggest, both in fabric, and form, the persistence of elements of earlier ceramic traditions seen in the shouldered jars of phase 1, and continuation of phase 1 pottery forms has been suggested by the late date assigned to some of the devolved shouldered jars from Chastleton (Cunliffe, 1974).

The only evidence at present for relative chronology of phase 2 within the northern Cotswolds comes from Salmonsbury, where phase 2 material was shown to post-date shouldered jar fragments of phase 1 and persisted, possibly into the 1st century A.D., coexisting with the 'Iron C' group in period II. Although glacis rampart construction appears in Western Britain as early as 5th-6th century B.C. at Croft Ambrey (Stanford, 1967, 1974) present evidence from southern and western

TABLE 2
Hillforts with closely-spaced multivallate ramparts in the northern Cotswolds

Site	NGR	Area (hectares)	Siting
*Salmonsbury	SP 173208	21.0	V
Nottingham Hill	SO 984284	50.8	P
Kimsbury	SO 869121	3.2	S
Willersey	SP 117384	19.7	S
Meon Hill	SP 177453	10.5	C
Brackenbury Ditches	ST 747948	1.9	P
†Dixton Hill	SO 986307	1.9	C
†Hailes	SP 056301	0.7	HS
‡Uley Bury	ST 784989	14.5	C
†Nympsfield	SO 800000	5.6	S

KEY:

- * Excavated site
- † Uncertain status (RCHM, 1976)
- ‡ Reclassified as univallate (RCHM, 1976)
- C Sited on top of steep hill
- P Sited across promontary
- S Sited against scarp
- HS Sited on hill-slope
- V Sited on valley bottom

Britain suggests that the appearance of multivallate ramparts of glacis construction in the Cotswold area as at Salmonsbury, associated with the introduction of curvilinear decorated ware may be dateable to the 3rd–1st centuries B.C. Ramparts of dump construction at Rainsborough (period 4a), associated with the Hunsbury-Draughton style (Cunliffe, 1974) have been assigned in origin to the 3rd–2nd centuries B.C. (Avery *et al.*, 1967).

Statistical analysis of the location of multivallate hillforts in the Cotswolds and surrounding areas of the Upper Thames and Severn valleys strongly suggests an increased association with valley gravel and clay soils when compared to earlier hill-forts. This may represent the beginning of an increased expansion into these areas during the later phases of the Iron Age, a process which intensified further during the Roman period (Marshall, 1978).

PHASE 3—BREDON HILL-DANES CAMP PHASE

Sites: Like phase 2, phase 3 is based mainly on a ceramic division, the occurrence of specific forms of linear-tooled and stamped wares. Sites included in phase 3 are as follows:—

Open Settlements

Beckford (Oswald, 1972)

Hillforts

Bredon Hill (Hecken, 1938)

Danes Camp (Thomas, 1957)

Other find-spots of stamped and linear-tooled ware of Croft Ambrey-Bredon Hill type are given in Cotton (1961). Guiting Power (Saville, 1975) and Millhampost (SP 043308) have also produced a few fragments of stamped and linear-tooled ware.

CHARACTERISTICS

1. *Hillforts*

Ramparts at Bredon Hill and Danes Camp include both glacis, and dry-stone revetted wall construction. The outer rampart at Bredon Hill, which consists of a dry-stone revetted wall with a wide berm and V-shaped ditch, was assigned to period II by Hencken (1938) which followed the earlier period I construction of the inner rampart of glacis type.

Bredon Hill therefore appeared to be an exception to the trend for major remodelling in glacis style which appeared during the later Iron Age on many other sites, i.e., Llanmelin (Nash-Williams, 1933) and Rainsborough (Avery *et al.*, 1967). Cunliffe (1974), however, has suggested from functional consideration of the relative positions of the inner and outer entrances that Hencken's period II might be reinterpreted as earlier than period I, suggesting a transition from construction of wall ramparts to glacis ramparts. Ramparts at Danes Camp are of glacis construction, except for the period II cross-bank of dry-stone revetted rampart, which reduced the period I area by one-third. The evidence from Bredon Hill and Danes Camp suggests that although glacis construction appeared in the later iron age phases 2, and 3 in the Cotswolds, dry-stone wall rampart construction continued.

Entrances at Bredon Hill and Danes Camp period II are of bastioned passage-type with gate structures. At Danes Camp, during period I, the entrances were of simple gap-type with gate structures.

2. *Open Settlements*

Stamped and linear-tooled ware of Croft Ambrey-Bredon Hill type occurs amongst material from several open settlements (Cotton, 1961), but the only settlement site excavated to produce such ware in quantity occurs at Beckford (Oswald, 1972). Other unpublished finds of stamped and linear-tooled ware, and pottery of the later Iron Age with affinities to Bredon Hill and Danes Camp

assemblages, have been made on several sites in the Severn-Avon valley listed by Webster and Hobley (1964); it is possible that many of these valley settlement sites may be of Beckford-type, producing phase 3 material.

3. Pottery

Phase 3 is characterized by stamped and linear-tooled ware of Croft Ambrey-Bredon type (Hencken, 1938; Kenyon, 1953; Marshall, 1; Oswald, 1972; Stanford, 1967, 1971, 1966-71, 1974). Stamped decoration is based on zones of chevron, lunate, angular-S, or irregular point-stamps below the rim, and linear-tooled motifs characteristically include narrow zones of burnished diagonals or cross-hatching in a similar position below the rim. Characteristic pot forms include large barrel-shaped jars and a range of smaller bowl and jar forms. Linear-tooled ware differs markedly from that at Salmonsbury, both in the restricted position and decorative variety of the motif and in the form and fabric of the vessel. Plain forms from Danes Camp and Bredon show some similarity to those from the Knolls and Salmonsbury, especially the burnished bowls with rounded shoulders.

ORIGINS, AFFINITIES AND CHRONOLOGY

Sites have been assigned to phase 2 or 3 on the basis of presence or absence of Croft Ambrey-Bredon type stamped and tooled wares, the proportion of these wares present and the general affinities of other pottery forms to the Croft Ambrey-Bredon-Danes Camp, or to the Salmonsbury assemblages. Hence Kings Beeches, the Knolls and Guiting Power, which have produced stamped wares and occur in the area marginal to stamped ware distribution, centred on the Severn-Avon valley, have been assigned on present evidence to phase 2.

Peacock (1968) has demonstrated that the distribution of stamped and tooled wares represents a trade horizon based on centres of production in the Malvern area. Phase 3 in the northern Cotswolds therefore indicates an area of ceramic distribution during the later Iron Age in the Severn-Avon valley and marginal areas of the Cotswolds, rather than a regional sub-cultural entity necessarily distinct in other ways from phase 2. In contrast to the Malvern wares, petrological evidence suggests that Salmonsbury-type linear-tooled ware is of local Cotswold origin, and consideration of its forms and motifs in no way support the suggested derivation of Croft Ambrey-Bredon Hill ware (Dunning, 1976). An origin for the stamped ware motif by expansion from the south-west has been suggested (Cotton, 1961; Kenyon, 1953) from the restricted distribution of stamped ware around the Severn and its similarity to stamped wares in Cornwall.

Excavations at Croft Ambrey have demonstrated that stamped and linear-tooled wares are contemporary and could originate as early as the 4th century B.C. Stamped and tooled wares continued in use at Bredon Hill, as at Sutton Walls, until the undated massacre level, which could represent the expansion of either Belgic or Roman power (discussed in Cunliffe, 1974), and hence could be as late as the mid 1st century A.D.

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