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Observations at Salmonsbury Camp, 1983

by B. Rawes
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figure would seem an appropriate combination.

Acknowledgements

I should like to thank Mr E.R. Cochrane of the Guiting Power Amenity Trust, with whom the object remains, for his interest and support, and for permission to publish the figure. An acknowledgement is also due to Mr Colin Trinder of Guiting Power, who made the find.

Sincere thanks are also due to the many individuals (including Paul and John Edwards, John Lees, and Mark Maillard) who have helped with the extensive programme of archaeological survey work in the area undertaken by the Cotswold Archaeological Research group.

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ALISTAIR MARSHALL

OBSERVATIONS AT SALMONSBURY CAMP, 1983

Between 15th August and 2nd September 1983 a watching brief was undertaken on behalf of Western Archaeological Trust and the Department of the Environment on the laying of a pipe by the Thames Water Authority along the line of the southern rampart of Salmonsbury Camp, Bourton-on-the-Water (FIG. 1).

The pipe trench, 0.6 m wide, was dug to a depth of approximately 1 m along the lane which runs on the south-west of the camp, on what is presumed to be the inner rampart. At the south corner of the 'extension' to the camp, the trench, dug on the south-west side of the lane, entered the scheduled area. For 60 m from this point only redeposited gravel was revealed. Then stones appeared on the south side of the trench, much shattered and lying on top of each other, dipping to the north at an angle of about 20°. These continued for 8m, and may have come from a revetment wall. They were lying thick but loosely, and tipped from the south side into the trench. This may have been because the trench was running along the inside of the rampart at this point, the outer part having been eroded or quarried away for gravel in living memory. There were no stones, only gravel, on the north side of the trench.

At the entrance to Bury Bank Farm the pipe trench crossed to the north side of the lane and continued beside the hedge. Skeleton No. 1 was encountered at 14 m from the field gate which is next to the southern end of the inner rampart coming from the north-east. The sheds of the farm lie between the two ramparts, which are not now prominent at this point. The O.S. map shows the two ramparts meeting the lane and rampart at a right angle, which is not usual for the corner of an Iron Age camp. The skeleton was shattered and mostly removed by the J.C.B., but the operations were stopped immediately so that the bones could be collected and the position examined. The skull remained in the side of the trench and lay to the south-east of the other bones, which lay in a dirty gravel deposit of approximately 1.22 m length. It was evident that the

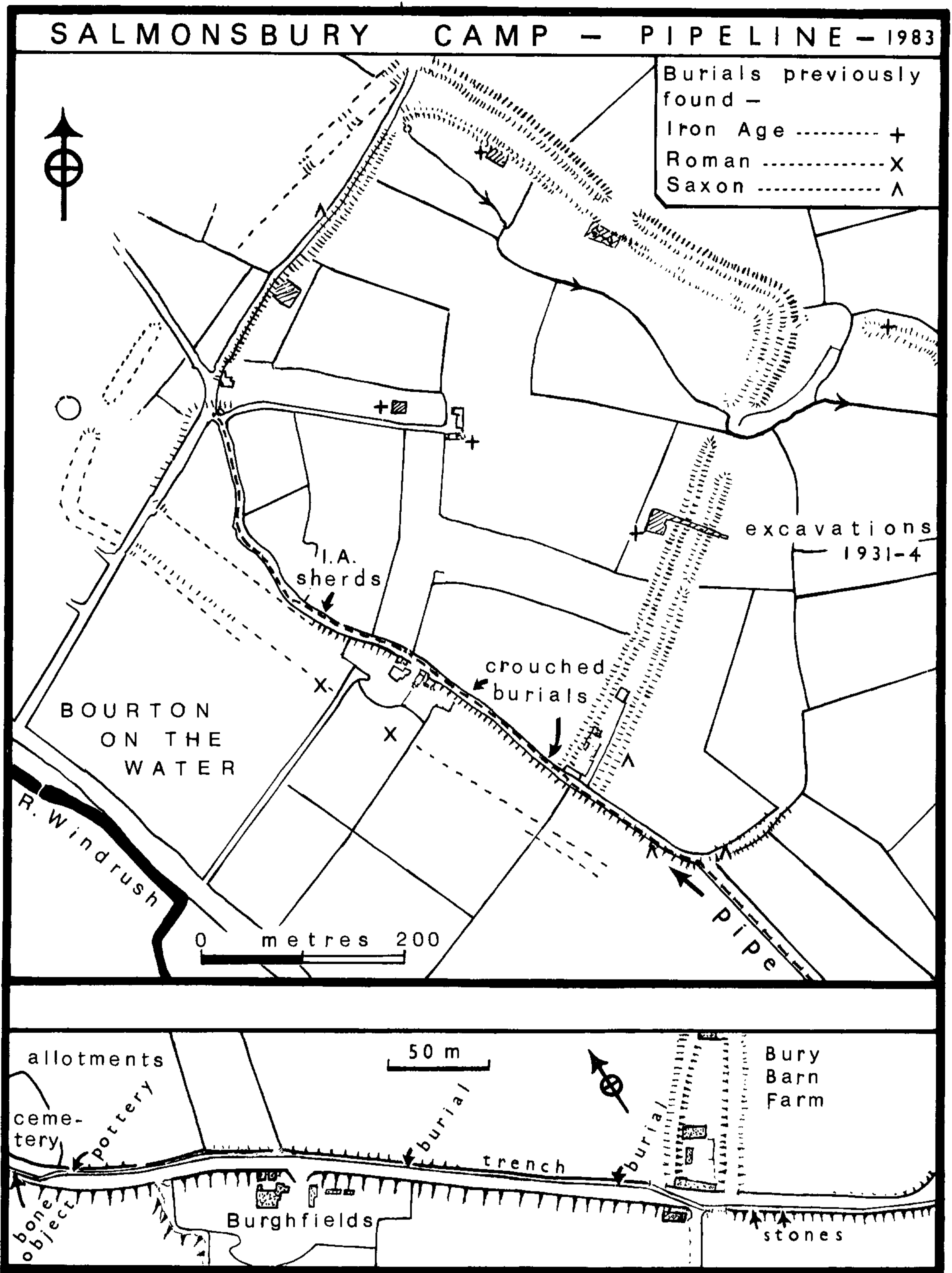


FIG 1. Location map.

body of an adult could not have been extended in this space. The deposit was in gravel at 0.6 to 0.8 m from the present surface. Below the deposit the 0.2 m to the bottom of the trench was of a clean, yellow, sandy gravel. The burial may have been dug into the inner rampart slope with the body contracted and with the head on its side to the south-east.

From this point to the second skeleton was a distance of 130.6 m. Between these points the trench, running along the north edge of the lane, turned up several pieces of china and bottles of the last century from the upper 0.2–0.3 m. Below this the gravel contained no finds. The second skeleton lay across the line of the trench and the J.C.B. bucket removed many bones at one scoop; thus less of this skeleton was recovered. It is possible that parts of the lower limbs had already been removed by erosion of the rampart. The depth of both soil and dirty gravel was greater on the north side of the trench, where it reached to 0.6 m from the surface. The head was lying on the south side in clean compact gravel. As with the first burial no objects were found in association. Similarly it had the appearance of being contracted.

The lane now dips as it approaches the entrance to Burghfields Farm, 20 m further on. It was thought possible that there may have been a southern entrance to the camp here, but no evidence for this was found. The only change in the appearance of the deposit was that the clean gravel was visible only at the very bottom of the trench. Past Burghfields nothing was found until just after the entrance to the allotments, where two rims and a grey body sherd of Iron Age pottery were recovered (FIG. 2, 3–4). From then on for 15 m to within 12 m of the cemetery wall two Iron Age rims and other sherds were found (FIG. 2, 1–2). Some large animal bones, including two horn cores, one of a sheep, the other of an ox, were thrown up. These may have been from the same dark deposit (a pit?) as the pottery.

A bone object (FIG. 2) was found in clean gravel 37 m west from the eastern end of the cemetery wall on the southern side of the lane, the pipe trench having crossed over to avoid digging near the cemetery wall. Opposite the lych-gate the lane curves to the north-west and a footpath continues straight on along what has been presumed to be the rampart. If this assumption is correct, the pipe trench, following the lane, should have entered the camp. However, it continued to cut through gravel, with no sign of occupation deposit. At a point about 9 m beyond the cemetery entrance many flattish stones were encountered at a depth of 0.7 m to 1 m. These stones were tightly packed and may have been the base of a wall or the inner revetment wall of a rampart. Since the trench was only 0.6 to 0.7 m wide it was impossible to estimate accurately the direction of this wall, but its position was consistent with it being a revetment wall if the rampart did continue west and did not follow the lane to the north-west.

No other features were observed in the stretch to Camp Cottage, where trenching for the pipe finished at the end of the lane. Only three Roman sherds were found; one opposite the cemetery entrance and two near Camp Cottage. This was surprising as Romano-British material had been found in this area in the past.

THE FINDS

Most of the finds previously made at Salmonsbury are now in Cheltenham Art Gallery and Museum, which is where the finds from this watching brief have been deposited.

Pottery

The pottery from the pipe trench has been compared with sherds from the 1931–34 excavations (Dunning 1976). Although exact parallels were not found, the nature of the sherds is similar, except perhaps for FIG. 2, 4.

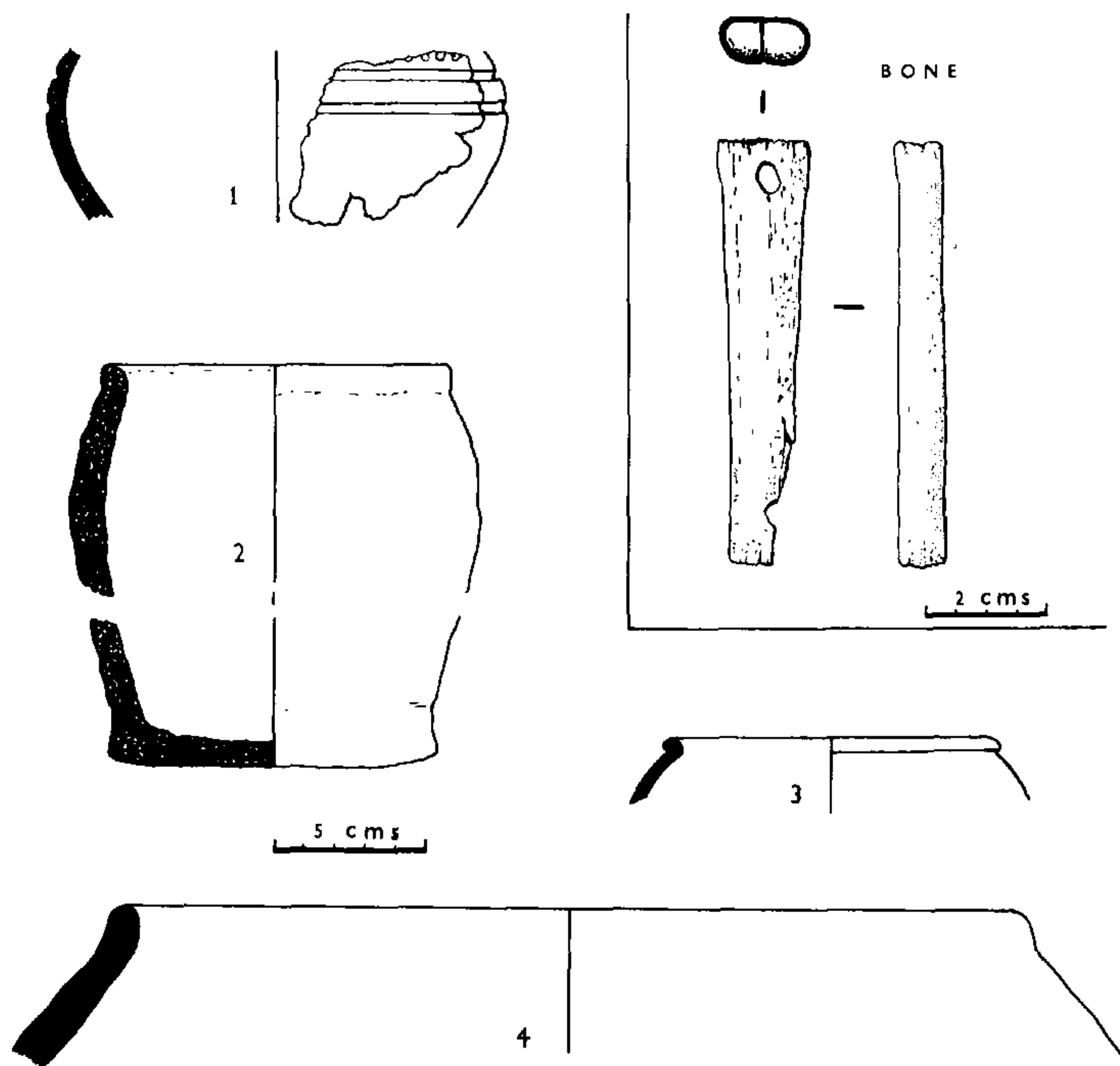


FIG 2. Pottery and bone finds.

- FIG. 2, 1 Decorated, Middle Iron Age bowl in gritted ware with a smooth black surface. It has two uneven parallel grooves on the shoulder with a row of indentations above.
- FIG. 2, 2 Undecorated, Middle Iron Age jar. Thick, coarse ware with uneven surface and impregnated with shelly grit.
- FIG. 2, 3 Bead-rim jar. Fine, gritted ware with smooth, black surface. A late pre-Roman Iron Age form.
- FIG. 2, 4 Large jar in hard bricky, sandy ware. An unusual form, probably pre-Roman.

Bone Object

A small bone, shaped into a small, smoothed tube with a hole at either end. It is well polished and delicate, so that any use requiring strength may be ruled out. String may have been passed through the holes. Two comparable objects were found at Maiden Castle, Dorset (Wheeler 1943, fig. 105, 13-14).

Human Remains by Juliet Rogers

The fragmented and partial remains of two skeletons were presented for examination.

SKELETON 1. None of the bones were complete, approximately two-thirds of the skeleton being present. The bone itself was not abraded. All parts of the body were represented. No measurements of maximum length of long bones were possible, so there is no estimate of stature, but the morphology of the pelvis and the skull suggest that this skeleton was female. The attrition of the teeth and a slight degree of new bone formation on the inside of the frontal bone is consistent with an age of 40-50 years. Hyperostosis frontalis interna is a non-symptomatic bone change usually occurring in females after the menopause.

SKELETON 2. This skeleton was also extremely fragmented, less than half of the bones being present. However, most parts of the body were represented. Measurements of the articular ends of femur and humerus suggest that this skeleton was

male. The degree of attrition of the teeth was less than that of the first skeleton; it was consistent with an age range of 25–40 years. The presence of some early signs of spondylosis of the lumbar spine suggests that the age of the skeleton was possibly at the upper end of this range. Only three lumbar vertebrae were present. There was a minimal degree of osteophytosis of the vertebral body margin and hollowing of the superior surface of a vertebral body. This is known as a Schmorl's node and is the result of herniation of the vertebral disc into the surface of the vertebra – a common disorder. No other abnormalities were noted apart from caries in a third lower molar.

The detailed notes and data on these two skeletons are to be deposited with the finds.

Acknowledgements

Thanks are due to the following for their help in facilitating the watching brief and the production of this note: the engineering staff of the Thames Water Authority and its archaeologist, M. Hall; the contractors, Messrs Docwra, and particularly the pipe-laying team of Messrs J. and G. Baker and the J.C.B. operator Mr P. Reilly; A. Saville for his comments on the pottery and general assistance; and finally Dr J. Rogers for her report on the human remains.

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BERNARD RAWES

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A PALAEOOLITH PRESUMED TO BE FROM CHARLTON ABBOTS, GLOS.

The implement which is the subject of this note was acquired recently by Cheltenham Art Gallery and Museums (accn. no. 1982:389) from the Buckinghamshire County Museum at Aylesbury, where it had been sent as part of the collection of the late Mr Bridgstock-Choat of Amersham.

The implement (FIG. 1) is a chunky, bifacially-flaked core tool, measuring 100 mm in length, by 62 mm in width, by 39 mm in thickness, and weighing 185 grams. The raw material is flint, which now has an ochreous yellow-brown colouration over the whole of the flaked surface. The implement is unrolled and in near sharp condition, and is complete except for a small chip at its broader end. Some minor recent edge damage (indicated by arrows on the illustration) allows the original grey colour of the flint to be seen. One terminal has been given a rounded, stubby point, and typologically the implement is best characterized as a handaxe, of somewhat small size and crude aspect, but acceptable within the variability of handaxes of Acheulian type from the English Lower Palaeolithic.

The only information on provenance accompanying the implement is a pencilled label reading 'Charlton Abbots'. This is assumed to indicate the place of finding, and the only Charlton Abbots known to the writer in southern England is the small Cotswold village at NGR SP 034242, 4 km south of Winchcombe and 8.5 km east of Cheltenham. Mrs V. Bridgstock-Choat kindly confirmed numerous visits to the Cotswolds with her late husband, but could supply no details relating to this implement. The village, in Sudeley parish, lies between 183–213 m (600–700 feet) above O.D., on the Cotswold scarp-edge at the head of the valley of the Beesmoor Brook. The area encompassed by the village has a variable geology of Middle and Upper Lias, Cotteswold