

## THE LATER PREHISTORIC FORTRESSES AT CRICKLEY HILL

Among the more familiar sights in the rolling countryside of southern and central England are the mounds and notched serations of prehistoric hillforts on the skyline of the chalk or limestone Downs. Almost every county in England, Wales and Scotland has dozens of these monuments, and they have provided a focus of interest for antiquaries, surveyors and excavators since the Middle Ages. Despite all the investigations and discoveries on these sites, surprisingly little is certainly known of them. We can catalogue them, and plot their surface features, in almost every case confined to the banks and ditches themselves. Small-scale excavation (which is almost invariably the norm on these sites) can reveal the structure of the ramparts, and may with luck provide pottery, metalwork, or charcoal for dating. From this we know that almost all of the hundreds of sites which have been sampled belong to the first millennium BC. The interiors of these hillforts are normally pretty featureless. Aerial photographs in suitable conditions of light or crop may give clues, and geophysical surveying may reveal something of the complexity of the buried occupation (for example Sharples 1993), but for providing dates and for sorting out the palimpsest of houses, streets and pits within the ramparts, only excavation will serve. Here there is a real problem, since the interiors of the hillforts vary in size between a (quite manageable) acre or two to more than a hundred acres, far too large a potential area for anything more than the most cursory examination.

Sampling of the interiors of forts has accordingly been the normal method of excavation, either by the clearance of a continuous tract or tracts selected in the fort, or by a series of small cuttings scattered across the interior. While this may demonstrate the existence of occupation, and perhaps something of its dating, this cannot give any true picture of the site as a whole, unless one assumes a regimented and uniform pattern of interior buildings (for an example of this see Stanford 19). It should be perfectly obvious that neither functional zoning in a single phase nor variations of the focus of settlement through time can be sorted out by such keyhole digging. Nor is it possible to identify a building more than thirty-odd feet long in a cutting ten metres square, even though in interpretations of sites we sometimes behave as though it was. It was for these reasons that we decided to undertake a complete excavation of the hillfort at Crickley Hill, near Cheltenham, Gloucestershire, in order to provide some account of the function and development of a single site.

Crickley was a suitable site for this treatment. It is a comparatively small hillfort,

measuring about 7 acres on its flat top, and so an excavation could be expected to be completed during the lifetimes of the excavators. Surface indications suggested that the site was comparatively simple: that it was, in short, unexceptional, and so perhaps more typical of the type than the massive sites which normally have attracted the attention of archaeologists. It is surrounded by other sites: the Cotswold limestone edge is capped by a densely packed series of hillforts. Perhaps, we thought, the study of adjacent sites would allow guesses about whether these sites were in fact contemporary, and so provide information about the political geography of the period: attempts to do so solely on the basis of survey had covered southern England with an implausible network of polygons assumed to represent the 'territories' dominated by the forts, despite the uncertainty of the dating (Cunliffe 1970). To seek the strategic purpose of a pattern consisting of motte-and-bailey castles and Martello towers would after all be fairly pointless: and yet the variations in the dates of first millennium BC hillforts may be as great.

Hogg 1971  
118-22

The Crickley project began in 1969 as an attempt to excavate two adjacent forts, Crickley and Leckhampton Hill. Leckhampton proved to be a single-period site, of the early Iron Age, belonging perhaps to the 5th century BC (Champion 1976). Crickley turned out to be much more complex, with occupation falling into about twenty separate phases extending from the early Neolithic (c.3500 BC) to the Post-Roman Dark Ages. For a period of about six weeks annually throughout the past twenty-five years the work has continued under the direction of the author, with the assistance in all of no fewer than six thousand volunteers, and over fifty supervisors and site assistants. All (including the director) have given their labour without charge (with almost all the diggers paying for their board and lodging). So too have the specialists who have undertaken sections of the post-excavation work. It is interesting to note that the work on site has been roughly equivalent to about 380 man-years, worth over £4 million at current professional rates. Apart from the volunteers' own payments for their food and accommodation, the total cost of the excavations to date has been less than £70, 000 from donations and sponsorship.

Crickley Hill is a roughly triangular promontory which protrudes from the Cotswold edge about four miles to the south of Cheltenham. The sides to the south and the north are steep, nearly 100 metres high at a slope of 1 in 2 or steeper. At the western tail of the promontory a shallower slope allows a narrow access up the limestone edge from the Severn valley. Only on the eastern side of the hill is there a level approach, from the slightly higher plateau of the Cotswolds, and here the defences

of the hillfort run in a curve, with a bank and ditch still standing as grassy mounds in places over four metres high. In the interior of the fort the northern side of the hill forms a fairly level spine continuing the slope downwards towards the end of the promontory: the southern side of the hill drops gently away, becoming in places steep enough for structures on this slope to require terracing. Right in the centre of the interior lies a flat topped knoll, which had clearly once been fortified by a small bank and ditch. When we started digging the date and purpose of this innermost defence was unknown. It proved to be the final phase of a long period of Neolithic settlement, abandoned long before the construction of the hillforts. Elsewhere on the hill we have found evidence for a extensive period of ritual usage on the site, of structures occupied when the defences themselves had been abandoned and the site was practically speaking unenclosed, and of two separate post-Roman settlements, together with medieval and later huts. All of these are discoveries of interest, but the present article concentrates on Crickley Hill during the first millennium BC, when the site reached its maximum size during the building of two successive hillforts.

Our work began in the summer of 1969 at the hillfort entrance, which had been damaged two years earlier in an accident caused by the driver of an earthmoving machine, straying from the adjacent quarry. This entrance area seemed to us likely to provide the most complex sequence, and so give us the fullest story of the development, the best yardstick for evaluating other parts of the site.

The complexity of the ramparts was revealed during the early days of the first season, for the rampart cutting demonstrated that the walls and banks which we uncovered immediately under the turf overlay a ruins of an earlier fortification, entirely buried in its rubble. The sealing-over of the first fort was virtually complete: nowhere was this more apparent than in the entrance area, where we spent almost the whole season cleaning up and examining the very prominent remains of the uppermost fort and its cobbled roadways. Towards the end of the season we removed the roadway within the entrance passageway, in order to clear the cobbling down to the bedrock, only to find the scores of post and stakeholes of a long inturned entrance from the first fort, sheared off along the bedrock by the builders of the later defences, and hidden by the road surfaces.

After three seasons of work we had enough information to reconstruct both entrances. The first hillfort [numbered as **Period 2**] was a comparatively small affair. Its rampart was part stone and part timber, with an inturned and timber-lined

entrance, protected by a rock-cut ditch. This rampart survived in part to a height of about two metres, and so the reconstruction at least of its lower elements is certain. It had a vertical drystone wall as its front face, and a series of two or three small walls set like steps at the rear. Front and rear walls were tied together by a lacing of horizontal beams at three or more levels: the beams were themselves held firm by half-lap jointing against a regular double series of upright posts. We suspect from the amount of stone quarried from the ditch that the front face was originally a little more than three metres in height. How it was finished at the top is more speculative, but the position of the front upright posts was such that they could have been carried up above the top of the rampart to provide the supports for a plank or wattle fence towards the front of the rampart. The entrance passageway was narrow, no more than two metres wide at its most constricted point. It consisted of four separate elements. At the outer side a row of postholes set in a pair of trenches probably held a fence flanking the steep ends of the ditches, perhaps to confine and protect traffic into the fort. These led to a pair of very large postholes, nearly two metres wide and deep, each of which had formerly held three large timber uprights. This presumably was the site of the gate itself. Behind lay a second pair of trenches to support the timber uprights which revetted the ends of the rampart. At the very rear of the entrance passageway another pair of large postholes may have supported a second gate: shallow slots behind these postholes were probably braces to hold the posts upright, particularly necessary when such a gate swung backwards as it opened. The gateway was therefore much simpler than often found: it had no guardchambers or outworks forward into the field. But the double gate arrangement, overlooked by the ends of the ramparts, could have provided an unexpected trap for any unwary enough to pass through the outer entrance.

The inturned entrance and the timber-laced rampart were both destroyed by fire, and abandoned for at least a few years, while soil was washed down in thin lenses across the ruins. At the end of this period of disuse, a new gateway [Period 3a] was constructed in the centre of the old entrance passageway. This was clearly more flimsy than the old one, and perhaps consisted solely of a pair of gateposts, without the complexity of flanking timberwork and inner gate. The old front wall survived well in places, and here was simply cleaned and patched. Where it had collapsed during the burning of the rampart it was now rebuilt, using the stones from its predecessor. This phase of repair may have been no more than a temporary patching up of the old defences, since the work seems to have been confined to the entrance area: elsewhere, to the south of the entrance, the old front wall stood, delapidated

and collapsing, until the next phase of defence building.

Once again the rebuilding in this, the final period of the hillfort, began in the entrance area. In **Period 3b** the rebuilt gate was demolished and new stone towers were constructed above the front of the old gate, enclosing the front face in solid drystone-built bastions. These projected in front of the old entrance, and so rafts of stone were piled across the old ditch to carry them forward to the bedrock at the outer side of the ditch. At the front of the new bastions two narrow platforms of stone were thrown forwards as hookworks or hornworks to provide a defended courtyard, somewhat similar to a medieval barbican, in front of the entrance. This hornwork was protected by an extension to the old ditch, leaving an unquarried stretch no more than ten metres broad as an approach road. A new outer gate, supported in large postholes, was built on the northern side of the new defences, so arranged that any approaching the works would have to pass with his right side facing the main rampart. Once inside the outer gate, the entrance passageway turned at right angles to confront the main gate, and any aggressor would find himself overlooked by the bastions, by a bridgework above the inner gate, and by the surrounding walls of the hornwork.

This was a complex and imposing entry to the fort, with battlements, or at least wallheads, at three different levels, the hornwork, the main rampart, which stood a little higher, and perhaps the bastions, which may have been higher still. The main rampart, too, was improved in its appearance and effectiveness to the south of the entrance. The older rampart of period 2, repaired during period 3a, still stands nearly three metres high behind a narrow berm. In its original form, the rampart from the bottom of the ditch to its wallwalk top had a height of at least six metres, which may have been made higher yet by a breastwork. All of this was left standing, while a new wall was built in front of it, rising vertically from the bottom of the ditch. Material for the new work was quarried from the outer edge of the ditch, broadening it to nearly twelve metres in all. The resultant defences provided two vertical walls, the lower nearly five metres high to its wallwalk, and the upper rising some two metres higher still. Despite the much greater strength of the new works, the entrance of period 3b had been destroyed by fire. A thick spread of charcoal and burnt stone lay across the entrance passageway, and the walls of the bastions and hornwork were burned bright red by the heat. After this destruction there was no further attempt to refortify the hill.

The settlements that these fortified entrances and ramparts protected has been extensively excavated, with a total area uncovered amounting to some 260 ten-metre squares. Almost all of these squares proved to have evidence for occupation, though the density and type of deposit varied considerably from one part of the site to another, and it is quite clear that the further removed from the Iron Age entrance one is, the thinner was the Iron Age occupation, to the extent that much of the western half of the site must have been open grassland throughout the occupation of the hillfort. Much of the interior of the fort proved to be covered with a very shallow layer of soil, in places no more than ten centimetres deep. The site has never been ploughed, and so considerable quantities of finds and structures survived immediately under the modern turf. But in these areas of shallow deposits, heavily sorted by worms and grass roots, we lack any meaningful stratigraphy. In consequence it is very difficult to demonstrate the overall phasing of all elements of the settlements across the whole hill, though the local sequence of small sections, and of individual postholes or groups of postholes, is possible. Near the rampart, however, the depth of deposit was much greater, and here we were able to distinguish two quite clearly separated periods of occupation. The lower had been buried by the collapse of the first rampart, and so belonged to the first hillfort of period 2. The upper occupation lay above the collapse, and was itself sealed by the débris which had fallen off the final rampart after its own abandonment. It thus belonged to period 3. In addition to this stratigraphic demonstration of sequence, the layout of some of the structures within the fort could be tied closely to the roadways of each fort: the gate through the first rampart, with its narrow inturned entrance, led back to an equally narrow straight hollow way, worn by traffic into the bedrock. Structures which flanked this road should clearly be associated with it: where stratigraphy survived, this too demonstrated that these flanking structures belonged to the first hillfort. The later entrance, in contrast, presented us with a curving roadway whose surface was covered in rough limestone cobbles. These sealed the postholes of both inturned entrance and of the flanking buildings which lay nearest to the ramparts. A series of round houses lay along this road way. Wherever evidence survived, these round houses proved to be later than the structures of the first hillfort (Dixon 1973).

The validity of this evidence for the phasing of some of the interior structures has been emphasised for two reasons: the type and layout of the buildings is itself most unusual, and in no case is it probable that we are dealing with more than two periods of occupation, periods 2 and 3. In the entrance passageway, in contrast, three

periods [2, 3a and 3b] have been described above. It seems most likely, then, that the second settlement, of round houses, was coeval with the repairs to the entrance, and that it survived into the period of major rebuilding. The first settlement must be contemporary with the first hillfort defences. In every building, of both periods, we found evidence of destruction by fire - charcoal, burnt grain, and fire-reddened rock.

The patterns of postholes allow us to distinguish three quite separate forms of building in the interior. The latest, large and small round houses, are no surprise, since round houses are a commonplace in the later prehistory of Britain. Crickley is unusual in this company only in having, mixed with small round houses, a single very large round house, about 15 metres in diameter. In its size and arrangements this house closely resembles the great Wessex round houses such as Little Woodbury, Pimperne and Longbridge Deverel, but these were the dwellings inside farmstead enclosures, not hillforts. In the excavated examples of forts themselves the round houses are normally of smaller size, similar to the rest of the Crickley houses. Crickley, then, seems to be producing a hierarchy of round houses in its final phase. The houses of the first hillfort, in striking contrast, were almost certainly rectangular aisled structures, varying in length from eight to twenty-four metres, and in width from five to a little more than seven metres. The type is most unusual in Britain, though common enough on the Continent, and the interpretation must therefore be treated with caution. But the shape of the structures (with larger and deeper postholes at their centres, and with a slight bowing of the sides, and the fact that most of these 'rectangular buildings' have a single hearth towards the centre) strongly indicates that they are not rows of small square houses, such as have been identified on other sites, but a new and interesting type. As in the case of the round houses one of these rectangular buildings was much larger than the rest, giving a floor area twice the size of the others. Most had hearths, and so were potentially dwelling houses; so too do the round houses of the subsequent phase.

The third class of structure at Crickley, however, provided no evidence for hearths. This class is a numerous series of small square settings of postholes, forming buildings about three metres square. The stratigraphy of the site shows that these square structures were constructed in both phases of the settlement, and the occurrence of no fewer than 23,000 grains of charred barley in their post-pipes and on the rock around them suggests that the majority of them were used as granaries. They were not, it seems, intermixed with the round and rectangular houses, but lay during both periods in a broad crescent outside the central zone of the houses

immediately inside the entrance. Though some are clearly related to the round house settlement of period 3 and others to the rectangular house settlement of period 2, many are unstratified and could have been built in either of the two major hillfort phases.

Five of these square structures were placed tight against the back wall of the first rampart. Two of these were considerably more massive than the rest of the square type, and none has produced evidence for cereals. The associated finds seem only to be round pebbles: indeed, a shallow pit close to the most northerly of these buildings contained no fewer than 300 egg-sized smooth stones. All in all it seems most likely that the pebbles were intended as sling shots, and the square buildings were tall wooden platforms or towers overlooking the ramparts. The spacing of the ones which have been excavated suggests that there may once have been as many as eight of these structures along the 200 metres of the main eastern ramparts.

The relative sequence of the defences and of the enclosed settlements is now established. The calendar date of the phases, however, remains less sure. Radiocarbon dates have been obtained for timbers from both phases. From the northern gatepost of the final entrance comes a date of  $570 \pm 90$  years bc. From lacing timbers of the first hillfort come dates of  $640 \pm 36$ ,  $570 \pm 400$  and  $60 \pm 80$  bc, all with standard deviations of  $70$  years. These dates fall within the most awkward period for  $C^{14}$  dating in the first millennium, when the plateau of radiocarbon fluctuation was at its worst. All the Crickley dates provide a good probability (93%) of lying in the period from 930 to  $425$  BC, and the first and the second hillfort cannot be separated by  $C^{14}$  determination from each other. This is on the whole a fairly uninformative result. The pottery, however, gives us more precision. The second hillfort is best represented, and contained T-rim, angular and white decorated pottery, all of them types represented in the earliest Iron Age of the region (Harding 1972), and to be dated to the fifth or sixth century BC. Among the fragments from the first hillfort are bucket-like pieces of pottery somewhat similar to those from Chastleton Camp in Oxfordshire, which belong to the period of Late Bronze Age to Iron Age transition. This should be in the seventh to sixth century BC, but no pottery has been recovered from Crickley similar to the fine wares of the full Late Bronze Age, and so some date such as c.600 BC may be appropriate for this first hillfort. The few pieces of metalwork from the site broadly confirm the dating, since the final hillfort was associated with two brooches for which a fifth century dating is probable.

640 ± 60  
360 ± 70  
400 ± 80

73-85  
425-6



In all some nineteen cuttings, large and small, were made through the defences of the hillfort. This is a large number in comparison to the half dozen or so rampart sections which is normally the most which one can expect in an excavation. Each of the Crickley cuttings provided us with data of significance. Some of it was simple detail. In a large cutting well to the south of the entrance we found that the lower tier of the great stepped rampart was so well preserved that a small section of the wall walk remained *in situ*, showing that here at any rate the lower wall had stood nearly four metres high above its footings. To the north of the entrance, where the rampart turns to run above the steep side of the hill, we found an original termination to the first rampart, which had later been extended to give better protection to the flank. Throughout we found that the ramparts had been built starting with the entrance passage and running northwards and southwards from there. In both main phases the ramparts had been constructed in short lengths, each no more than six metres in length, and each ending with a roughly constructed cross wall to revet the core. This is the result of gang work, and suggests that at least three separate groups of builders were involved in the construction (quite apart from any employed in felling and dressing timber, and quarrying and preparing masonry) presumably as teams leap-frogging each other as the work progressed. The implication of this is of a substantial available workforce, and perhaps of some urgency in the building.

The most striking result of the multiplication of cuttings in our excavations is our understanding of the building of the final massive stone defences. The two-tiered front wall was never carried to the north of the entrance, perhaps because of the closeness of the approach road to this part of the defences. To the south of the entrance the double wall was constructed for nearly a hundred yards southwards. At the extreme south of the surviving rampart, however, close to the point where a modern cliff edge cuts off the curve of the defences, we found that the building works were incomplete. The enlarged ditch of the final hillfort came to an abrupt end: further to the south the old ditch of the first hillfort was untouched, and was still partially choked with the *débris* of destruction and silting at the end of period 2. The expanded rampart of the final phase, with its two-tier front, also came to an abrupt end, exactly in line with the termination of the broad period 3b ditch which was its quarry. The end of this new rampart was merely a rough gang break similar to those which we had found elsewhere in the core of the work. To the south of this stopping point the old burnt rampart, with fire-reddened and cracked wall face, formed the only defence.

This reason for this abrupt end to the rebuilding works was still ambiguous: since most of the attention of the prehistoric designers had been paid to the entrance area, here, so far from the entrance, the builders and their patrons might have been less concerned with finish. It might, in other words, have been an intended if clumsy termination.

In the next year, therefore, we excavated a section a little to the north, where the surface contours of the collapsed rampart were uneven. Here we found a second length of unfinished gang-work: a six-metre stretch of unimproved old rampart and unrecut ditch between completed rebuildings. This was clear evidence that the work had been interrupted. But what sort of interruption was it? In the woods and thickets immediately outside the rampart field survey had picked up the shallow traces of a partial ring of long pits, looking like a string of sausages outside the rampart. Excavation showed these to be the first stage of an outer line of defences. A series of separate pits had been dug to about half the depth of the ditch of the main rampart. Behind them a double row of postholes had been cut parallel to the ditch, and a rampart had been begun by the building of a front and rear face, and the infilling of the space between with rubble. This building work extended about half way along the length of the main rampart, and came to a sudden end on the flat ground a little to the north of the place where the rebuilding of the main rampart had been abandoned during period 3b. Timber uprights had clearly been already secured in place in the most completed parts of this outer defence, since the rubble core had been piled up around these posts, and the top surface of the rampart core had been burnt bright red by their burning.

All this confirmed the evidence from a small cutting at the extreme west of the hill, where a short length of bank and ditch survived between the cliff edges of modern quarries. Here we found what was probably the last remnant of a western entrance, the side wall only of the entrance passageway on the edge of the cliff, together with the front angle and a metre length of the front face of the rampart. But what was striking was that the ditch was no more than a metre deep, and was unfinished, and the rampart with its timber settings in its core had been left only 70 centimetres high before the timberwork was burnt: this was exactly the same pattern as in the outer works beyond the main rampart at the other end of the site.

The abandonment of the major reconstruction of the fort, then, had clearly been violent. Could we prove that this took place at the time of the destruction of the

whole of the final defences? All these cuttings, after all, were widely spaced, and were in consequence linked by no single stratigraphic sequence. It was possible that the unfinished attempt to build a second ring of defences was linked not to the final fort but to the more flimsy blocking of the damaged entrance of the first hillfort in period 3a.

A study of the pottery provided some evidence to resolve this problem. Three separate contexts gave us the sequence: in the first place, behind the main rampart we had found quarry pits which had been dug to obtain stone to rebuild the rear wall of the rampart at the beginning of phase 3b. Those quarries nearest to the round houses of period 3 contained quantities of domestic rubbish. Those further away were virtually sterile. The quarry pits had therefore been used as dumps during the occupation of the final hillfort during phase 3b. The pottery in the quarries included T-rim pots decorated with thumb prints, but none of the vessels ornamented with incised lines and white paste infill. These incised sherds, however, were found on the occupation surfaces higher than the quarry infilling, and similar pieces were found in the ditches of the incomplete outer ring, together with some T-rim pottery. These were therefore contexts which produced mixed assemblages of material. Subsequently, after the burning of the main ramparts, the ditches silted slowly, with occasional collapses of masonry, presumably through frost action, in the way that Cotswold walls still burst out in the winter. Among this rubble of delapidation we found several layers of occupation with hearths: these were presumably the traces of temporary residents seeking shelter in the lee of the old fort. The pottery from these areas was entirely of the incised type, without any T-rim forms. It seems then that the final stages of the Crickley Hillfort overlapped with a transition, at least in this area, between two well-known pottery styles of the Early Iron Age, and that the outer ring of defences was later than the cutting and partial infilling of the quarries for the back wall of the final rampart: in short, that the start of the outer works was the last stage in the defences of the final hillfort, and that the fire which destroyed the unfinished banks was the same destruction which saw the end of the main fortress.

The pottery provided us with a link with the adjacent site at Leckhampton Hill. Here the excavations of 1925 had produced a few sherds of incised and stabbed decoration similar to those from our phase 3b (Burrow et al 1925). While this is inadequate to prove truly contemporary occupation [that is, occupation on the same day], it suggests that the use of the hillfort at Leckhampton fell into the general period of the final hillfort at Crickley. These two hillforts may thus have been responses to the same

pressure, and each was eventually destroyed by fire and abandoned.

The purpose of the fort at Crickley is now a little clearer than it was. The defences were at first not outstandingly strong, but the intended reconstruction during phase 3b would have produced a defence in depth with strikingly ostentatious treatments of towers and out-thrusting hornwork, probably bristling with tiers of breastworks. All of this is a strong show of fortification, with the implications of a defence against projectiles reinforced by the large numbers of slingshot-sized pebbles recovered during the excavations. The concentration of the completed defences around the entrance approaches to the exclusion of even repairs to the ruined walls elsewhere may well emphasize the visual effect of the design rather than the reality of strength, but even modern 'scientific' fortifications have on occasion proved to have weak links in their construction, and the abandonment of the work and its destruction shows the actuality of threat.

More significant is the limited amount of accommodation provided within these strong new walls. In both period 2 and period 3 the interior of the site seems to have housed one large and about a dozen small dwellings. The total population therefore seems to have been small, perhaps more likely to be fewer than 100-200 residents. If this represents a real population, one would expect no more than some 30-60 males in residence. Numbers of this size are too few either to construct [using the gang-work for which we have evidence] or even to defend the works. Thus either we are looking at an artificial population solely of males, or at an élite residence, built and manned by people who lived elsewhere, and whose labours supported the occupants of the hillfort. This latter view seems to be further suggested by the overprovision of buildings for storage. Precise quantities here are made more difficult by the lack of detailed phasing for the four-post structures in the interior far from the defences, but it seems likely that over twenty granaries were available in each phase, providing much more cereal storage than required by the occupants of the dwellings. The phenomenon, when encountered in the numerous storage pits in the rather later chalkland hillforts, has been used to suggest <sup>that the forts</sup> tribal centre-points for storage and redistribution of crops (Cunliffe <sup>1982</sup>), in an agricultural network of hamlets, enclosed farmsteads resembling the lesser medieval manorial centres, and hillforts. This seems a very reasonable conjecture, supported at Crickley by the absence of weeds of cultivation among the samples of grain: this implies that the crop was prepared elsewhere, and was brought to the hillfort as threshed cereal grain (F Green, pers comm). On the whole Crickley would be small as a tribal centre in this classic

153/

Shaples 1941, 113

pattern, but it would form a very reasonably sized fortified citadel for the élite of a hierarchic society. The date of occupation of both periods, perhaps the seventh century to the fifth century, as discussed above, is interesting here, since it should be a little earlier than the the period which saw the growth of the large hillforts of southern England. In consequence Crickley may be an example of a rather older situation, in which population groups were organized into somewhat smaller units than the county-wide tribes of the later Iron Age.

Many problems remain. The styles of construction of defences and settlement layout, and the varied fashions in pottery, differ so substantially between periods 2 and 3 (which were perhaps no more than two or three generations apart) that it seems hard to believe that they were the settlements of the same peoples. But whether one or other or both of these groups were incomers is quite unknown. For what it is worth, the pottery represented in both periods can be matched by the local styles of northern Wessex, and in particular of the Upper Thames Valley, and if any migration took place it need not have come from many miles away. But the ceramics were manufactured (so our thin-section analysis tells us) using clays found close to the site itself, and so both populations may have been purely local. Too little, however, is known of the local Gloucestershire pottery during the earliest Iron Age for comparison to be useful: the area excavated at Crickley represents over 90% of the total excavated area within Cotswold hillforts as a whole.

Harding  
1972,  
plates  
43-6

Both the hillforts at Crickley were destroyed by fire so thoroughly as for it to be certainly deliberate. But whether by enemy aggression or by the inhabitants themselves during migration to another area (as the Helvetii destroyed their own houses and forts when they migrated from Switzerland in the 50s BC) is probably unknowable from excavation alone. Some of the more interesting questions, then, are still without answer, but a quarter-century's digging at Crickley Hill has provided us with many surprises, and an interesting example of what was probably an élite or lordship centre at the beginning of the Iron Age.

A complete account of the Iron Age defences at Crickley (*Crickley Hill I: the hillfort defences*) is now in final preparation to go to the press early in the New Year. It will be about 180 pages A4, fully illustrated with photographs and drawings, and is offered at a pre-publication price of £9.95 (+ p&p of £2.50) from Dr Philip Dixon, Department of Archaeology, University of Nottingham, NG7 2RD. Further volumes on the Iron Age Villages and aspects of the Neolithic fortifications are in preparation, for intended publication during 1994.