Iron Age Hill-Forts and some other Earthworks in Oxfordshire

By J. E. G. Sutton

THE work recently undertaken on Iron Age hill-forts in the Oxford Region, in particular by the Oxford University Archaeological Society, has made some form of gazetteer and review desirable—if only as a pointer to the present limitations of our knowledge. This study is confined to Oxfordshire, since its boundaries, though of little archaeological importance, are readily definable, unlike those of the vague district referred to as the Oxford Region; and further it would be superfluous to include north Berkshire as Mrs. Cotton has covered that county. In Professor Hawkes's system Oxfordshire lies mostly within the Southern Province, and marches with the Western. It covers a large part of his Region 6.[1]

'Hill-forts', as is well known, are by no means always situated on hill-tops, but they normally command good all-round views. By definition the earthworks surrounding (or, in the case of a promontory-fort, cutting off) a hill-fort must have been primarily for military defence, providing more than a mere enclosure. All the sites in List A in the following gazetteer seem to satisfy this criterion; although in several cases the defences and their presumed pre-Roman Iron Age date await the test of excavation.[2] List B includes sites of more dubious nature, and it is most unlikely that every one of these was intended for military defence or is of Iron Age date. Nevertheless excavation may one day prove some of them to be genuine hill-forts. The small rectilinear enclosures are likely to be of various dates, though some, one might suspect from analogies, may turn out to be Belgic.[3] List B could doubtless be added to. Furthermore, earthworks now completely levelled, but known from earlier records or as crop-marks seen from the air, are not considered here, except for the Big Ring at Cassington Mill, which is regarded as a hill-fort and of which a vestige seems to survive above ground. No others, judging from descriptions or appearances, could have merited inclusion in List A. Also omitted are earthwork enclosures reasonably attributable to

[1] References below.

[2] Earlier speculations that hill-forts were Stone Age, Roman or Danish work have, however, been sufficiently discredited by the research of the last half century or so.

[3] i.e. the latter part of the pre-Roman Iron Age.

the Roman, medieval or any other period, and linear earthworks (with one self-explanatory exception—B.12).

As a group, Oxfordshire hill-forts are poorly preserved: few remain with really impressive defences. But even with the most finely preserved examples the *field-archaeologist's* contribution to knowledge is necessarily very limited. Ground inspection can normally reveal, besides a hill-fort's size, shape and situation, the number of banks and ditches and perhaps the position of the original entrance or entrances. Vague indications of bank construction can sometimes be deduced from the shape as preserved, or from exposures caused by erosion or by human or animal activity, helped by a knowledge of the local geology. Very little can be deduced about the layout of an entrance from present ground appearances, except perhaps whether it is markedly inturned or oblique.

Inside Oxfordshire hill-forts the field-archaeologist stands little chance of discovering the positions of buried features connected with occupation, for, excepting those sites in woodland, all have been partially or wholly under plough in recent years, and doubtless at various other times since the Iron Age. Air-photographs are of little help except for the examples on Thames gravel terraces—the Big Ring at Cassington Mill and the Dyke Hills at Dorchester. There is, of course, the chance of surface finds, particularly on ploughed land.

The *excavator* may be able to discover much more than the field-archaeologist, but, whatever the scale and quality of his work, he cannot hope to reconstruct the whole story. For excavations are necessarily selective. One or more cuttings through the defences may or may not be representative of the rest of their length, and there is always an element of doubt in reconstructing from a section of a grass-covered bank and ditch the original ramparts with their stone revetments, timber palisades, breastworks or superstructures, dumps of earth or rubble, as the case may be, especially should there have been a sequence of abandonment or destruction and refortification. To date a period or periods of construction or use, and to correlate them with other sites requires, in addition to possible architectural comparisons, distinctive pottery or other finds from sealed layers in or under the original rampart or in the primary silt of the ditch. And even these finds may pre- or post-date the actual construction to a degree not readily calculable. An entrance is likely to produce more dateable finds and information on structural typology and on the history of a hill-fort as a whole. But the time, labour and difficulties involved in such an excavation, and the grave dangers of committing irreparable damage, should dissuade all but the most experienced and intrepid of excavators from touching a hill-fort entrance.

Excavations inside a hill-fort may be undertaken more in hope than in confidence of discovering traces of occupation; and if these are found, there may be uncertainty in tieing them into the chronology of the defences, or they may, of course, belong to an entirely different period. In recent years on sites with favourable soil and geology the proton-magnetometer has proved invaluable in locating buried features, notably pits, hollows and hut-sites, where moreover small finds are generally most plentiful. But to follow up a magnetometer survey with scattered 'pin-prick' cuttings is unscientific. In order to tackle the virtually untouched problems of the social background of hill-forts and the length and intensity of their occupation, large area excavations with meticulous attention to every minute feature are urgently required.

So much for the limitations of the evidence and the means of obtaining it. On cultural groupings and comparisons of Oxfordshire hill-forts little can be hazarded at the present stage. Similarly on their purposes—be they cattle-kraals, camps of refuge, defended settlements, head-farms of estates, or tribal centres or capitals? Nevertheless, the typological information tabulated here reveals a variety of combinations, in which such factors as date, cultural affinities and purpose doubtless play their parts.

Mainly for convenience, the arrangement of the lists is by order of decreasing size. The determination of situation type is fairly standard, but based on somewhat subjective criteria. On the other hand, the number of lines of defence is more definite, and no earthwork is regarded as bivallate unless it has a second ditch. (A counterscarp bank is reckoned part of a univallate structure.) On geology, strict accuracy is not claimed in every case, especially as indications on the ground occasionally differ from the evidence of the Geological Survey, notably where there are superficial deposits and along the complex junction of the oolite and the lias.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I should like to thank Mr. David Sturdy for information on certain sites; Mr. John Banks, who visited several of them with me, and Mr. Michael Avery, both of whom have offered valuable suggestions; and the Department of Antiquities in the Ashmolean Museum for permission to consult its topographical records and collections of air-photographs. In general, the latter are not separately acknowledged in the gazetteer.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Most of the sites listed have brief descriptions, in many cases with small-scale plans and profiles of their defences, by William Potts in the *Victoria History of the*

County of Oxfordshire II (1907), 'Ancient Earthworks', 303–49. These descriptions are normally reasonably accurate, though belonging to a time when interpretation and dating of earthworks were comparatively rudimentary. Earlier descriptions of sites in the north of the county can be found in Alfred Beesley, *The History of Banbury* (1841), and four selected hill-forts are included in Nicholas Thomas, *A Guide to Prehistoric England* (1960).

With each site in the gazetteer are included any other important references relating to it individually. No attempt has been made to be exhaustive for minor references.

For adjacent counties, some of the hill-fort sites are included in Thomas (op. cit.), and most are described in the chapters entitled 'Ancient Earthworks' in the respective *Victoria County Histories*, save for Gloucestershire, which awaits to be covered. However, there is a brief discussion of Gloucestershire hill-forts by Mrs. M. A. Cotton in E. M. Clifford, *Bagendon: a Belgic Oppidum* (1961), ch. III. Mrs. Cotton has also written a gazetteer with descriptions of the hill-forts of Berkshire (*Berkshire Archaeological Journal*, LX (1962), 30–52); as well as of rectilinear enclosures in that county (*Berkshire Archaeological Journal*, LIX (1961), 1–35), which may be relevant to some earthworks in the List B for Oxfordshire described below.

The following general works may be of use:

HAWKES, C. F. C., 'Hill-forts', *Antiquity* V (1931), 60–97; in which the ABC system for the British Iron Age was first proposed.

WHEELER, SIR MORTIMER, 'Earthwork since Hadrian Allcroft', *Archaeological Journal*, CVI Supp. (1952), 62–82.

RIVET, A. L. F., *Town and Country in Roman Britain* (1958), ch. II, 'The Celtic Background'. The bibliography at the end of this chapter is particularly useful for individual sites.

FRERE, S. S. (ed.), *Problems of the Iron Age in Southern Britain* (Papers given at C.B.A. Conference, 1958); especially the articles by C. F. C. Hawkes and A. L. F. Rivet. The former revises the ABC, and outlines a system of provinces and regions.

Ordnance Survey, *Map of Southern Britain in the Iron Age* (1962).

LIST A: HILL-FORTS

THE DYKE HILLS

A low-lying promontory-fort covering 114 acres. A right-angled bend in the Thames and it confluence with the Thame are cut off on the north side by bivallate defences. These are best preserved in the east-central section, where the inner bank stands some 10 ft. above the interior, and the outer bank about 2 ft. higher. There is a broad intervening ditch and a slight outer one, and clearly the outer bank must have been built with material from both. The other sections of the banks have been lowered or virtually obliterated. Much of this demolition took place in the 19th century. The gaps through the banks are all apparently post-Iron Age. The original entrance was presumably at the eastern end, against the Thame, where, though poorly preserved, there is a suggestion of an inturn or possibly 'cross-banks', like those of the outer defences of the hill-fort on Bredon Hill in Worcestershire. The Dyke Hills are overlooked by Sinodun Camp, another hill-

fort perched on an isolated chalk eminence above the Berkshire bank of the Thames.

Air-photographs reveal that much of the interior of the Dyke Hills is littered with pits, long ditches, ditched enclosures, and small circular or penannular ditches, some of which are presumably connected with huts. It remains to be shown, of course, whether all these features belong to the period of the defences. Nor is it certain whether they stretch over the southern and south-western portion of the site, or merely cover the middle and northern parts nearer the banks. It is possible that the Thames took a slightly more northerly course in Iron Age times, in which case the site would have been considerably smaller than it appears.

In 1870 Pitt-Rivers reported on a fresh cutting through the outer bank, showing the successive tips in its build-up. On the dykes he found pottery of ' undoubtedly British production ', and from the ground excavated from the banks and under cultivation in the interior ' abundant evidence of the fabrication of flint implements '.

Burials and various objects, said to be of Iron Age, Romano-British and Anglo-Saxon dates, have been found by casual digging on the banks.

Col. A. Lane Fox (Pitt-Rivers), *Journal of the Ethnological Society of London*, New Series, II (1870), 412–15.

Maj. G. W. G. Allen, *Oxoniensia*, III (1938), 170, fig. 20, pl. XVIII, air photographs.
For Bredon Hill, T. C. Hencken, *Archaeological Journal*, XCV (1938), 1–111.

BINDITCH

This large enclosure of 58 acres, also called Bozedown Camp, is essentially a plateau-fort, though its southern side makes use of the chalk scarp which falls towards the Thames. The univallate defences have suffered badly from ploughing, but are best preserved in the woods at the north-east and north-west, where the bank at its highest stands 7 ft. above the interior. Outside the ditch at the north-west there is a possible counterscarp. There is a gap at the sharp north-western corner, but the original entrance may well be in the destroyed section on the eastern side. The interior has been extensively ploughed.

In 1953 a cutting through the north-eastern defences found the ditch to be of a wide V shape about 10 ft. deep. Fragments of Iron Age pottery and part of a shale bracelet were recovered from the lower fill.

Finds in the Ashmolean Museum and the Department of Geography, Reading University.

P. Wood, *Oxoniensia*, XIX (1954), 8–14, excavation report.

CASSINGTON MILL BIG RING

This was a fairly circular example reckoned to have measured about 13 acres on a slight eminence in the Thames gravel plain. It is known from Major Allen's air-photographs, showing the crop-mark of a broad enclosure ditch with the possible trace of a bank on its inner lip. The photographs are not informative about the western edge, and it is likely that the defences made use of the high bank of the Evenlode on this side. However, the evidence of a pipe-trench in 1965 suggests that the ditch may have curved round a few yards short of the present river bank. Except for this small section, the site was destroyed by gravel-quarrying between 1938 and 1951; but it is apparent that the earthworks had been almost entirely levelled before then. There remains at the north-west, beside the track leading to

the Mill, a slight rise on the ground which probably represents the original bank.

As the gravel-quarrying proceeded, a number of excavations were made in the ditch by the Oxford University Archaeological Society and the Ashmolean Museum. It was generally found to have been a broad V, 10 or 12 yds. wide and between 8½ and 13 ft. deep, whose fill showed that a massive gravel bank had stood on its inner edge, though one section indicated piling on both sides. There were at least two gaps in the ditch. One at the north-east, discovered by the gravel-digger and just discernible on air-photographs, was some 20 ft. wide. A clearer gap at the south was found by excavation to be about 30 ft. wide, but with no road or post-holes between the ditch-ends. Belgic pottery of an immediately pre-Conquest type was found in the primary silt in some cuttings, and it has therefore been suggested that the fort was built against the Roman advance. However, at the southern entrance ' a few pieces of the latest non-Belgic local Iron Age pottery ' were reported below the Belgic wares in the lowest fill of the ditches. It is evident that the ditch remained largely open, though not for purposes of defence, for several centuries, since Romano-British and Anglo-Saxon pottery associated with hearths and burials occur low in it.

The air-photographs show a maze of interior features—pits, ditches, sub-circular and rectilinear enclosures, and ring-ditches. Some of the last have been excavated, both within and without the Big Ring, and those which produced burials or dating evidence, belong, as usual, to the Bronze Age. The other features are probably connected with occupation, but whether they are contemporary with the fort is generally uncertain. Some have been sectioned and are Romano-British. Moreover the pottery and other finds from the site range from Neolithic to Anglo-Saxon, though Romano-British predominate.

Finds in the Ashmolean Museum. Except where otherwise indicated, the following references are to brief notes of observations and excavations at the time of the gravel-quarrying.

Oxoniensia, IV (1939), 196.
Oxoniensia, V (1940), 3, map; 163.
Oxoniensia, VI (1941), 84; pl. XIII.
Oxoniensia, VII (1942), 104–7, brief report on 1939 excavations by D. B. Harden; pl. IX, air-photograph.
Oxoniensia, VIII/IX (1943/4), 193–6.
Oxoniensia, X (1945), 93–4.
Oxoniensia, XI/XII (1946/7), 5–26, report on excavation of a Bronze Age ring-ditch inside the Big Ring by R. J. C. Atkinson; pl. IA, air-photograph.
Oxoniensia, XV (1950), 104.
Oxoniensia, XVI (1951), 1–4, report on excavation of ring-ditches and part of a Romano-British enclosure inside the Big Ring by J. S. P. Bradford; 79; pl. IA, air-photograph; pl. IXA.

I am grateful to Mr. H. J. Case for other information on the site.

IDBURY CAMP

A roughly circular plateau-fort with the land falling away to both west and east and good all-round views over the Cotswold limestone country. It has univallate defences enclosing about 9 acres. Both the interior and the defences are regularly ploughed. The bank is now slight and best preserved on the sloping ground at the east, and the ditch is just traceable around the larger part of the perimeter. At the north there is a possibility of a counterscarp, which Allen's air-photograph perhaps confirms. The entrance was seemingly at the north-west.

ILBURY

A pear-shaped contour-fort from which clayey slopes fall away in all directions, most steeply to the west. It measures about 6 acres and has univallate defences, whose eastern half is virtually ploughed out, whereas trees and scrub cover the western. Here the bank hardly rises above the level of the interior, but the ditch is well marked, and there appears to be a counterscarp, perhaps modified by a later cultivation terrace. Neither of the gaps at the west and south appears to be original. Ground inspection when the crops were high in July 1961 revealed two causeways at the north-east, the southerly of which looked probably original. But air photographs suggest a more likely entrance at the south-east.

MADMARSTON CAMP

A contour-fort of an irregular oval shape covering about 5¼ acres on a smooth hill-top in clay and marlstone country. The defences consist to the north and east of a bank, ditch and counterscarp bank, but to the south and west are more truly bivallate, consisting of two banks and ditches and a third bank as a counterscarp. The banks have been very much lowered by cultivation. The entrance is at the south, and appears to be oblique with an outer work

In 1957–58 the Oxford University Archaeological Society excavated both on the defences and the interior, which was partly surveyed by the proton-magnetometer. An earlier occupation, probably using a palisade enclosure, was attested by material from the old land surface under the inner bank. The hill-fort and the bulk of the Iron Age material were designated ' Southern Second B '. The inner ditch, where excavated, was 10 ft. deep, and the inner bank was made of piled clay, made firmer by glutinous grey clay. What remained of the second bank was found to be piled clay. The second ditch was found to be narrow and shallow, and it was suggested that this and the counterscarp outside it belong to a later period of construction.

The site was re-occupied in late Romano-British times, but the defences were not re-utilized.

Finds in the Ashmolean Museum.

P. J. Fowler, *Oxoniensia*, XXV (1960), 3–48, excavation report.

TADMARTON HEATH CAMP

A roughly circular plateau-fort on the North Oxfordshire limestone. Its bivallate defences enclose about 5 acres and command good all-round views. The site is crossed by a metalled road, south-east of which the larger part of the fort is now included in a golf-course. The defences are best preserved on the other side of the road, though part of this section bears trees and bushes. At its highest the inner bank rises 4 ft. above the interior. Digging into it twice in this century (on the one occasion to construct a golf-green, on the other to recover a ferret) revealed a stone revetment, in the former case reported to be 5 to 5½ ft. high and 2 to 2½ ft. wide. The outer bank is nowhere preserved more than 2 ft. high. Its outer face is generally the steeper, suggesting perhaps that it was stone-revetted on this side. The second ditch is clear though not prominent, and at the north there is just a possibility of a third bank. The original entrance, which is neatly incurved, is on

the eastern side. To the north-west of the road the interior and parts of the banks are occasionally ploughed.

An affinity with Rainsborough, 9 miles to the east on the Northamptonshire side of the Cherwell (where the Oxford University Archaeological Society has excavated from 1961 to 1965) is suggested by the size and situation of this fort and by the apparent nature of its defences. But scientific excavation is required: a cutting through the defences at the extreme north might prove informative.

A few yards to the south-east of the Camp is an apparently raised platform, squarish and measuring about half an acre, with the remains of an enclosing ditch. Whether it has any relationship to the hill-fort is uncertain.

Notes in the Department of Antiquities, Ashmolean Museum.

For Rainsborough, D. M. E. Avery, J. W. Banks, J. E. G. Sutton, *Proc. Prehistoric Society*, XXXIII (1967), forthcoming.

WYFOLD CASTLE

A plateau-fort of irregular oval shape, covering about 5 acres in the Chiltern beech-woods. The defences are univallate, consisting of a bank reaching in parts a height of 6 ft., a ditch of equal depth, and a counterscarp bank standing 3 ft. at its highest point. The banks are apparently built of piled gravel. There is a break in the works at the north, where a pond and swampy land substitute. The entrance, which is at the south-west, is a fine oblique example. Trees and undergrowth cover most of the site, but a cutting through the defences should not be too difficult.

LYNEHAM ROUNDABOUT

A roughly circular plateau-fort on Cotswold limestone with good all-round views and enclosing $4\frac{1}{3}$ acres. Its univallate defences are in parts destroyed or badly lowered by a road, quarrying and a plantation. The bank is best preserved at the north-east where it rises 6 ft. above the interior, but the ditch is only visible in the plantation at the west. The gap at the north may represent the original entrance. The interior has been extensively ploughed.

In 1956 the Oxford University Archaeological Society undertook excavations on the defences. The bank was found to consist of piled loam and small stones with low stone revetments at front and back and a possible pavement on the crest. The ditch, where excavated, was a wide flat-bottomed U, 7 ft. deep. Though the excavators concluded that there had been only one building period, the report could conceivably be reinterpreted to show that the ditch was at some time cleaned, and that a stone-faced rampart was superseded by a dump-construction bank.

A few sherds of pottery, reckoned 'A2', were found just inside the bank.

Finds in the Ashmolean Museum.

N. Bayne, *Oxoniensia*, XXII (1957), 1–10, excavation report.

CHASTLETON BURROW

A plateau-fort, again in high limestone country, from which the land falls gently in all directions to give good all-round views. Its shape is between square and circular, and it encloses about $3\frac{1}{2}$ acres. The defences consist of a single steep-sided bank, now covered with trees and bushes, and standing up to 9 ft. above the

interior and 12 ft. above the exterior. There is no definite sign of a ditch. Until recently a roadway crossed the site, making use of the two narrow gaps in the bank at the east and north-west. Both of these gaps could be original. The interior has been much ploughed in recent years.

Excavations took place in or shortly before 1881, and by the Oxford University Archaeological Society in 1928–29. The first as reported are virtually valueless. ' Pits were sunk, and trenches cut.' The bank was sectioned, apparentaly in more than one place, and was said to be ' built up of massive blocks of oolite '. Though it is not unequivocally stated, the account implies that there was no quarry ditch. The second series of excavations was published without any drawn sections or detailed plans. No complete cutting through the defences was attempted, but both sides of the bank were investigated. The lower part of a facing of laid stone blocks was found on the inner side, but the construction of the outer face could not be discovered owing to collapse. The core was of ' loose pieces of limestone mixed with earth '. Outside the excavators failed to discover a ditch, but how the bank might have been built without a quarry ditch was not discussed. A cutting close to the eastern entrance suggested that it was original with a laid stone roadway.

To elucidate the proper nature of the defences of this site further excavation is necessary. Despite vegetation, a complete cutting through the bank would not be impossible. The contention that there is no ditch may well be right, for it is unlikely that it could have been completely filled while the bank still stands so high. Nevertheless absence of a ditch is unusual in this region. Presumably the bulk of the material was obtained by scraping a wide area outside bare of topsoil and the upper limestone, which would explain the lower ground level outside the bank.

In 1928–29 a number of cuttings were made close inside the bank. Hearths and a fair amount of pottery and other objects were found. They are presumed to be contemporary with the defences. On this evidence Chastleton Burrow has generally been regarded as an early and single-period hill-fort of ' Iron Age A ' or ' A2 '.

Finds in the Ashmolean Museum.

J. E. Price, *The Journal of the Anthropological Institute*, x (1881), 124–7, report on excavations of *c.* 1881.

E. T. Leeds, *Antiquaries Journal*, xi (1931), 382–98, report on excavations of 1928–29.

LIST B: OTHER EARTHWORKS, VISIBLE ABOVE GROUND, PROBABLY OR POSSIBLY OF THE IRON AGE

EYNSHAM PARK CAMP

The site situated in wooded clayland consists of two parts, named by Cooper the Camp and the Yard.

1. *The Camp*. A roughly circular or sub-rectangular fort of about 3½ acres, enclosed by univallate defences. The bank stands up to 5 ft. above the interior, and the ditch is up to 5 ft. deep. The entrance is at the south-east. The whole work is covered by trees and bushes. It is definitely a defensive site and appears to be of Iron Age type. It commands its immediate approaches, save to the north where the land outside is slightly, but not seriously, higher.

In 1955 two cuttings were dug through the ditch at the north-east and south-west, but no dating evidence was found. The existence of a square-cut ditch of later date was discovered in the south-western cutting. This may be connected with the yard.

2. *The Yard.* An enclosure of about 8 acres, adjoining the southern side of the Camp and generally clear of trees. It consists of a bank reaching a height of 3 ft. on the eastern side, with traces of a ditch or wide scrape outside it. There is a gap, perhaps not original, where it should adjoin the western end of the Camp's defences, and a bigger break in the coppice at the south. Its eastern end runs up to a pond and thus includes the approach to the entrance of the Camp. The Yard was certainly not intended for defence, as it is dominated by higher land, especially to the east.

The Camp and Yard may well be of different dates. Nevertheless, enclosures adjoining or close to small hill-forts are known elsewhere, normally by cropmarks. A noteworthy example is the ditchwork adjoining Alfred's Castle on the Berkshire Downs, though here again contemporaneity with the fort is not proved.

I am grateful to Mr. H. C. D. Cooper for showing me an account of his excavations.
For Alfred's Castle, M. A. Cotton, *Berkshire Archaeological Journal*, LVIII (1960), 44–8.

CASTLE BANK

A sharp-cornered, almost square enclosure of about 5 acres. On the north-western side the land falls away towards a stream, and here, though the bank does not rise appreciably above the level of the interior, its drop into the ditch and a slight counterscarp outside are prominent enough. The entrance appears to have been on this side. In the other directions the land falls away slightly, and the line of the bank is only just traceable because of ploughing. Except perhaps for its shape, there is nothing obviously un-hill-fort-like about it.

BURROWAY

A roughly circular enclosure of about 5 acres on floodable meadow on an island in the Thames. There is a bank now very lowered, but in parts reaching 3 ft. high, with slight traces of a ditch outside. Casual digging in the interior is said to have revealed suggestions of a stone building, and on the bank evidence of burning.

Mr. E. Pocock, who showed me the site, made a cutting through the ditch in 1962. It was found to be about 16 ft. wide and 6 ft. deep with sloping sides and a flat bottom. A few Iron Age potsherds were found.

A second and much less distinct enclosure appears to intersect on the eastern side.

KNOLLBURY

A roughly rectangular earthwork measuring about $3\frac{1}{2}$ acres and situated on a limestone slope, with the longer axis athwart the contour. It has a single bank, steep-sided at front and back, and highest at the uphill (northern) end where it stands 10 ft. above the interior. Exposures suggest that it was built of piled earth and limestone rubble with perhaps a facing of bigger slabs on the front. Presumably the back would similarly have needed a facing.

There is no definite indication of a ditch, but, as, except at the uphill end, the ground level outside is lower than that inside, it is probable that the material for the bank was obtained by scraping outside. On the south-eastern side the bank has been partially destroyed: the entrance was presumably here. The interior and surrounding land have been extensively ploughed in recent years.

Superficially the defences of this work strongly suggest an affinity with Chastleton Burrow. Its size is the same, and its shape is not so dissimilar. Its siting, however, is unusual for an Iron Age fort in this region.

ROUND CASTLE

This site is covered by trees and bushes and is in a very poor state of preservation. It is of oval shape measuring about 2 ½ acres, and probably had two lines of banks and ditches, but subsequent embanking and ditching make it impossible to be exact about them or about the position of the entrance. Though situated on slightly elevated land where a thin gravel capping overlies the clay, it is probably better described as a plateau-fort than as a contour-fort.

THE WILDERNESS

A square enclosure with sides of about 70 yds. near the summit of Muswell Hill. A bank rises about 4 ft. above the level of the interior. The bank is fairly flat-topped and slopes neatly inwards, which suggests that if it is not comparatively modern it has undergone subsequent treatment. There are traces of a ditch or scrape outside. The gaps in the middles of the east and west sides may both be original. It is commanded by higher land on its southern side, and its primary purpose was probably not defence.

ASH COPSE CAMP

A square enclosure, with interior measurements of about 40 yds., on fairly level limestone. It has a bank standing a foot or so high and traces of a ditch outside. The south-western side, where the entrance presumably was, has been damaged by quarrying. The interior has been under wood or scrub.

STUTTLE'S BANK

The Victoria County History records a small earthwork here, enclosing a flat depression. This has not been definitely identified, but there does exist a considerably ploughed-down bank describing roughly the northern half of a circle. If it did once complete the circle, the enclosure would have measured 5 acres or so, and have merited consideration as a plateau-fort. The land is fairly level at the west, but falls away to the east. The bank is most prominent at the north-east where it makes a smooth rise of about 4 ft. above the ground-level outside, but only about a foot above that inside. A break in the bank at the north is occupied by a hollow that may have been a pond: this is possibly the remains of the feature mentioned in the *V.C.H.* At this point another and less distinct piece of bank stretches away in a northerly direction.

V.C.H. Oxon. II, 334.

CORNBURY EARTHWORK I

The remains of a probable rectangular enclosure at the north-eastern end of Cornbury Park. There is a bank rising at its highest 2 ft. above the interior, and a ditch 2 ft. deep. The south-western side, which is 100 yds. long, and parts of the adjacent sides survive.

In view of the interpretation of Cornbury Earthwork II (below), one might wonder whether this one, and other traces of banks in the Park, also date to the Civil War.

LYNEHAM EARTHWORK

Part of a probably rectangular enclosure situated on a slope, first recorded by E. M. Jope. Its eastern side is 70 yds. long, its southern 40. The other two sides have been mostly destroyed, apparently by quarrying. The enclosure was bounded by a bank, now very slight, with a trace of a ditch outside. A gap near the south-eastern corner is probably original.

Note in the Department of Antiquities, Ashmolean Museum.

CORNBURY EARTHWORK II

This is on a slope above the Evenlode, and forms two and a half sides of an open square, measuring about 40 yds. internally, which was obviously never complete. It consists of a shallow ditch with banks on either lip or, on one side, on the outer lip only. The work is broken by a gap that may be subsequent, and there is a hollow inside.

O'Neil's interpretation of this earthwork as a Civil War battery sounds fairly plausible.

B. H. St. J. O'Neil, *Oxoniensia*, x (1945), 73-8.

HARK WOOD EARTHWORK

Crawford identified a promontory-fort here, formed by the confluence of two small streams cut off by an earthwork which he regarded as westward-facing. This interpretation is most improbable. The bulk of the material from the earthwork's ditch is indeed thrown eastwards, but not to make a rampart, as Crawford assumed, for this is the downhill side and is still dominated by the higher land to the west. It is clearly a counterscarp bank to aid defenders facing downhill (i.e. eastwards) from the other side of the ditch. Such a method of constructing defensive works on hillsides is not unusual. The linear earthwork quite probably belongs to the Wychwood Grim's Ditch complex, which, from Harden's excavations, appears to be Belgic work of the 1st century A.D.

O. G. S. Crawford, *Antiquity*, IV (1930), 305, 308–9.
D. B. Harden, *Oxoniensia*, II (1937), 74–92.

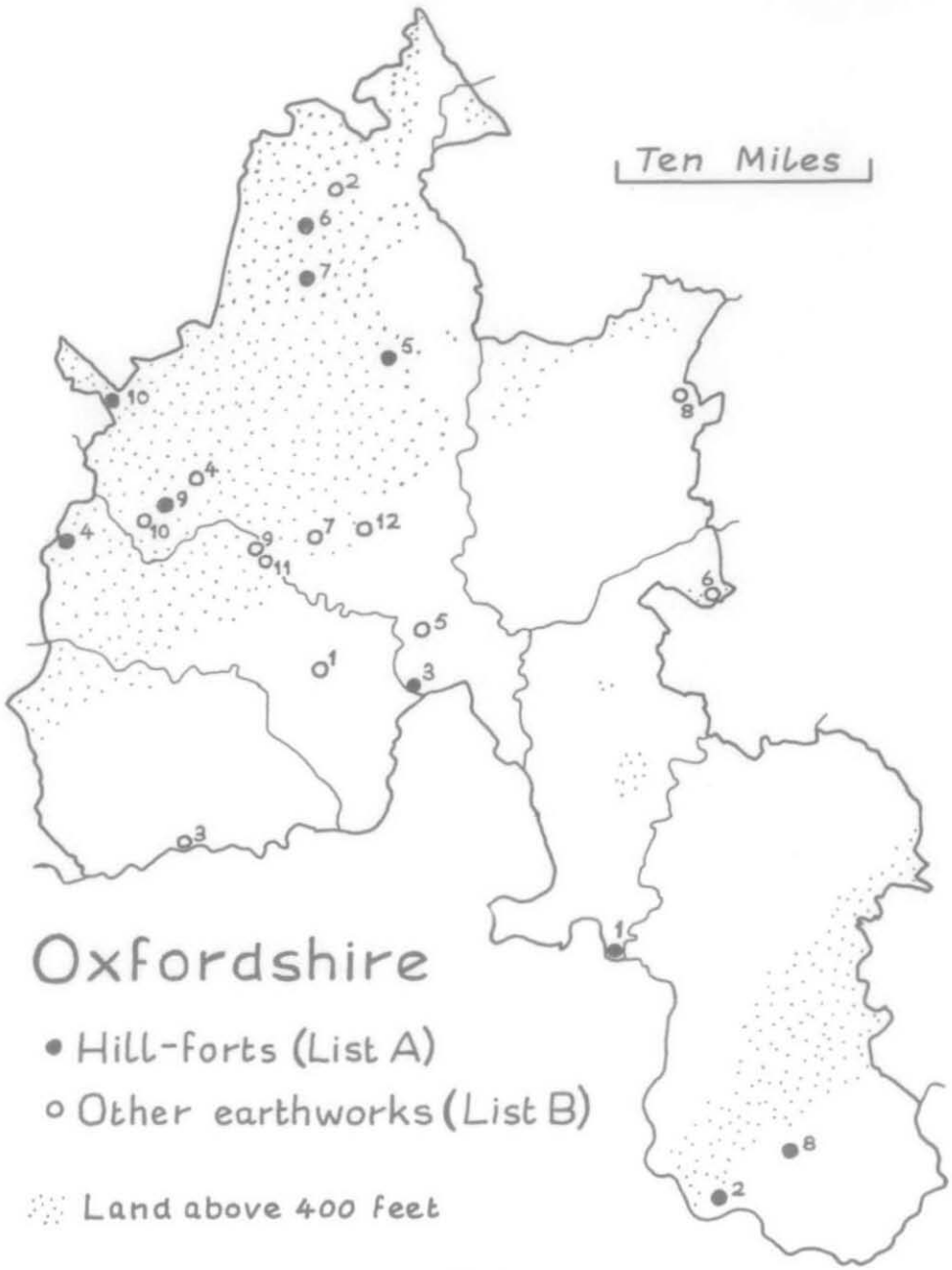
Ten Miles
Oxfordshire
• Hill-forts (List A)
o Other earthworks (List B)
Land above 400 feet

FIG. 9

LIST A: HILL-FORTS

	Name	*Nat. grid ref.*	*Parish*	*Situation type*	*Interior size in acres, approx.*	*No. of lines of defence*	*Height above sea-level in feet, approx.*	*Geological formation*
1	*The Dyke Hills	SU 573935	Dorchester	Promontory	114	2	150	Gravel
2	Binditch	SU 643783	Whitchurch	Plateau/promontory	58	1	325–430	Chalk and drift
3	Cassington Mill Big Ring	SP 450100	Cassington	Plateau	13	1	220	Gravel
4	*Idbury Camp	SP 229195	Idbury	Plateau	9	1	650	Inferior oolite
5	Ilbury	SP 438305	Deddington	Contour	6	1	420	Lower lias
6	*Madmarston Camp	SP 386389	Swalcliffe	Contour	5¼	1/2	550	Upper lias
7	*Tadmarton Heath Camp	SP 388357	Tadmarton	Plateau	5	2	640	Inferior oolite
8	Wyfold Castle	SU 683810	Checkendon	Plateau	5	1	380	Gravel over chalk
9	*Lyneham Roundabout	SP 299214	Lyneham	Plateau	4⅓	1	650	Great oolite
10	*Chastleton Burrow	SP 258282	Chastleton	Plateau	3½	1	780	Great oolite

Numbers as on the map on page 40.
Sites marked * are scheduled by the Ministry of Works as protected ancient monuments (1961 list).

LIST B: OTHER EARTHWORKS, VISIBLE ABOVE GROUND, PROBABLY OR POSSIBLY OF THE IRON AGE

	Name	*Nat. grid. ref.*	*Parish*	*Situation type*	*Interior size in acres, approx.*	*No. of lines of defence or enclosure*	*Height above sea-level in feet, approx.*	*Geological formation*
1	Eynsham Park Camp	SP 394113	Eynsham	Plateau/slope	3½+8	1+1	300	Oxford clay
2	Castle Bank	SP 406409	North Newington	Plateau/promontory	5	1	500	Middle lias
3	Burroway	SP 308003	Clanfield	Plateau	5	1	200	Gravel
4	*Knollbury	SP 317230	Chadlington	Slope	3½	1	540	Great oolite
5	Round Castle	SP 457138	Bladon	Plateau/contour	2½	2?	360	Gravel over Oxford clay
6	The Wilderness	SP 642155	Piddington	Slope	1	1	600	Portland beds/ Kimmeridge clay
7	*Ash Copse Camp	SP 391196	Spelsbury	Plateau	⅓	1	470	Great oolite
8	Stuttle's Bank	SP 621280	Stratton Audley	Incomplete enclosure		1	350	Cornbrash
9	*Cornbury Earthwork I	SP 352189	Cornbury and Wychwood	Incomplete enclosure		1	330	Oolite/lias
10	Lyneham Earthwork	SP 282207	Lyneham	Incomplete enclosure		1	400	Lias/?oolite
11	*Cornbury Earthwork II	SP 357183	Cornbury and Wychwood	Incomplete enclosure		1	310	Oolite/lias
12	Hark Wood Earthwork	SP 423200	Glympton	Linear earthwork		1	300	Great oolite