

ARCHAEOLOGY AND THE M5 MOTORWAY  
*Fifth Report*  
THE EXCAVATION OF A ROUND CAIRN ON COURT HILL,  
TICKENHAM, NORTH SOMERSET, 1969

by H. STEPHEN GREEN  
with contributions by J. G. Evans, H. Jones and B. Westley  
*Edited, with an introduction, by P. J. Fowler*

### INTRODUCTION

Although three Final and five interim M5 reports<sup>1</sup> have already been, or are in process of being, published, a word of introduction is perhaps necessary since this is the first to be concerned solely with Somerset. Early in 1969, all the local archaeological bodies in Gloucestershire, Bristol and Somerset with interests affected by the construction of the M5 motorway combined to form and support an M5 Research Committee. The intention was that the Committee should initiate and co-ordinate the archaeological response to M5, not simply by reacting to the threat of archaeological destruction presented by the motorway but also by trying to take advantage of the enormous opportunity afforded by the cutting of, in effect, a long archaeological section through the landscape.

While the pressures to act quickly were extreme in north Gloucestershire, where construction work was already in hand in 1969, a year's grace was available in north Somerset. The time was used for a systematic ground check of the motorway route and the execution of several advance excavations on sites carefully selected in relation to several factors amongst which not the least were research needs. Only two sites on or very near the route were known initially from existing records, one of them being a small, round mound on Court Hill, Tickenham, described by Grinsell as 'probably a barrow'.<sup>2</sup> He and the editor visited the site again in April 1969 and decided to recommend its excavation to the Committee in view of its probable funerary origin, of the fact that it was the only known probable or possible barrow on the Failand Ridge (or Clevedon Hills), and of the surprising absence of modern, reliable barrow excavations in the Bristol area. The Committee subsequently obtained the services of H. S. Green to direct the excavation in May-June, 1969, and it is his single report which forms this first Somerset M5 paper. Another paper will be necessary for other north Somerset sites which will be listed in sequence from north to south, at which stage the Court Hill cairn will be given an M5 number. So productive has been the Committee's work that material for at least five Final M5 Reports for Somerset alone is already to hand.

#### TICKENHAM, Court Hill. ST 43687219

*Advance excavation by the M5 Research Committee of a cairn 7.50 m diameter x 0.30 m. high revealed two successive burials, respectively a flexed inhumation and a scattered cremation, of the fourteenth and eight centuries b.c. Without the evidence of C14, an Iron Age date might have been assigned to the site on the strength of a scatter of IA sherds in the cairn material. Reconsideration of other supposed IA barrows (Kings Weston Hill, Bristol; Butcombe, Somerset, and Wooley Down, Berks.) suggests that these are more likely to be of Bronze Age date. Finds in Bristol City Museum.*

### REPORT

#### *The Site*

Before excavation, the site consisted of a low grass-covered mound in an area of open grazing ground surrounded by thin scrub. Trackways passed the mound on its west and north sides; the northern trackway, regularly used by horses, had caused some erosion of the side of the mound and some of the stones of what subsequently was revealed as an inner kerb were exposed. The mound lay so close to the eastern edge of what was to be a deep cutting for the M5 through the Failand Ridge that there was some doubt as to whether or not it was to be destroyed. It was reconstituted after excavation and, in the event, was not subsequently removed during construction work.

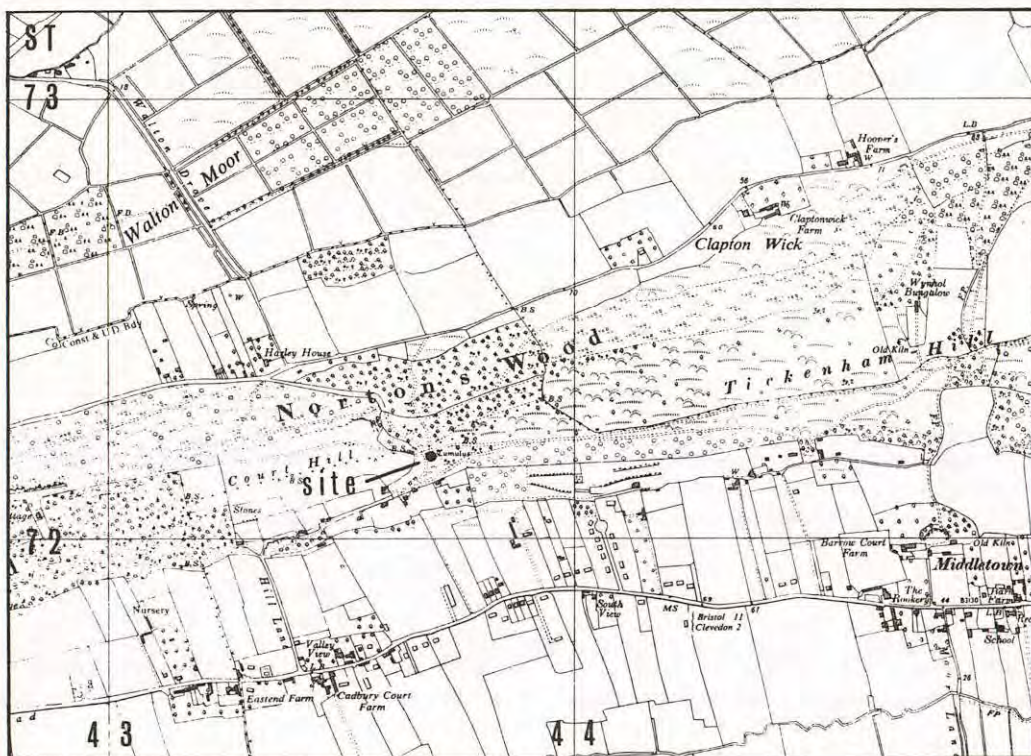


Fig. 1. Court Hill, Tickenham, showing the position of the cairn before construction of the M5 motorway.

Beneath the cairn was a deep glacial fissure<sup>3</sup>, the fill of which as exposed beneath the cairn material was of rounded pebbles varying in diameter from 1-15 cms. The fissure was formed in Carboniferous Limestone; sheet limestone outcropped 65 m. to the NW. The steep, tree-covered north slope of the Ridge began only c. 5 m north of the cairn which, some 75 m. above O.D., was sited on the narrowest part of the Ridge.

#### *The Method of Excavation*

Before excavation, a slight uncertainty existed as to whether the site was really a burial mound. Accordingly, one quadrant only (the south-east) was excavated first of all. It was the only quadrant not bordered by tracks. A large trench, 8.50 m square, was laid out with its north-west corner at the apparent centre of the barrow. The size of the trench was dictated by the following considerations: firstly, the desire to ascertain whether any ditch existed; secondly, in order to ascertain the cairn limits most easily; thirdly, in order to locate any structures associated with the barrow and, fourthly, because of the frequent location of secondary burials of Middle Bronze Age date in the south or south-east sector of a barrow<sup>4</sup>. After the excavation of the south-east quadrant, the other three quadrants were excavated simultaneously, with the exception of the grave-pit which was excavated last of all. The grave-pit was excavated after the removal of the baulks in the central area.

#### *The Cairn Structure*

Two phases of cairn construction were revealed. It is not possible to detect which of the phases is the earlier but for convenience they are labelled 1 and 2 (figures 2 and 3). It is possible that the two phases relate to the two successive burials discovered: it is equally possible that both phases date from the time of the primary burial and that their separation in time is of short duration.

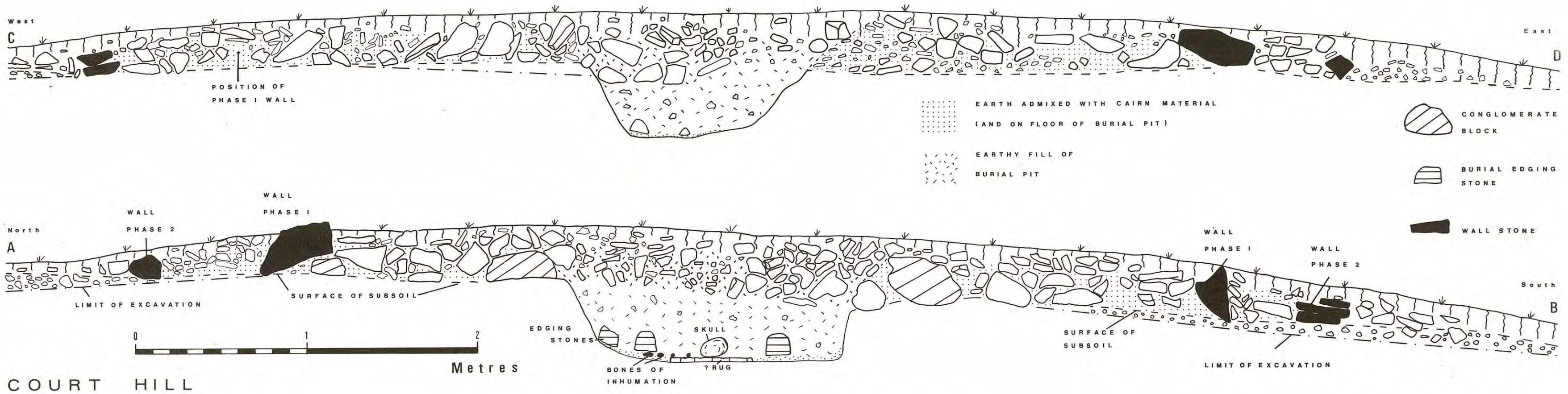


Fig. 3. Court Hill, Tickenham: sections across the cairn (for positions, see fig. 2).

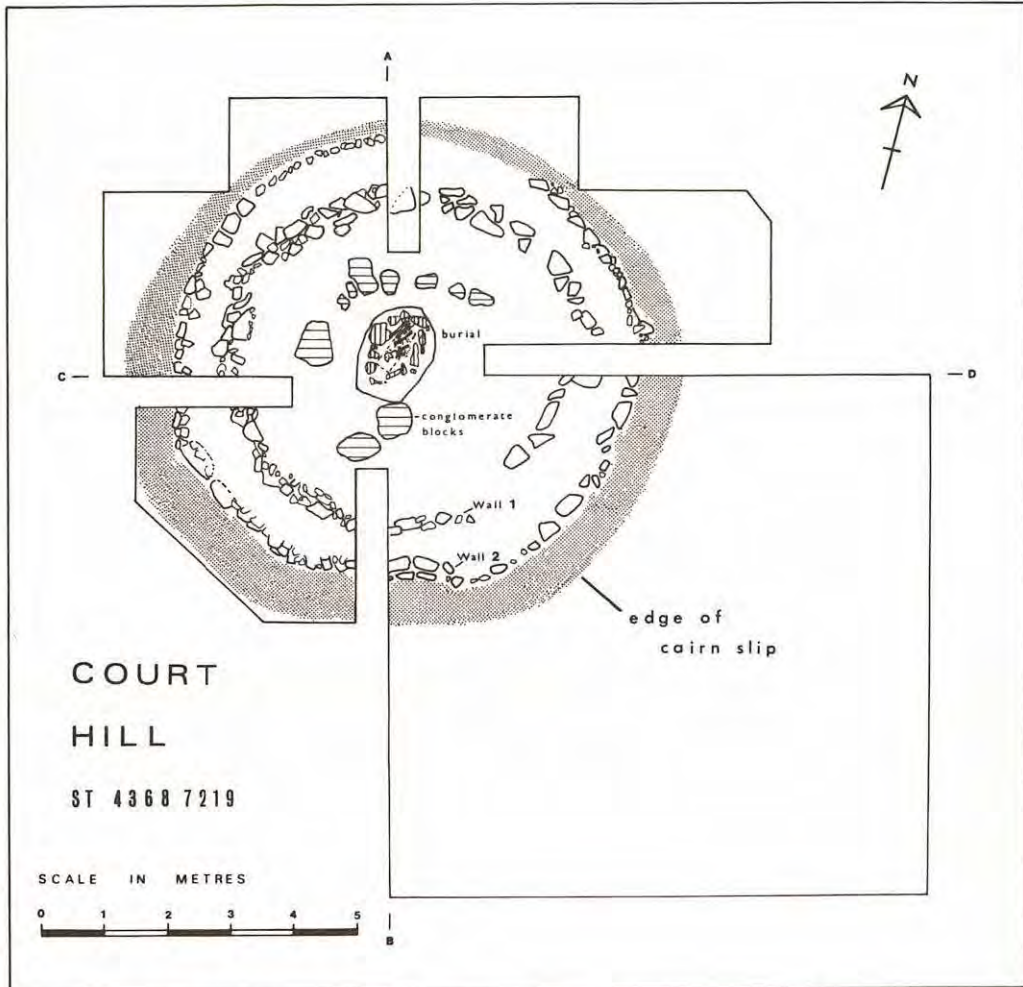


Fig. 2. Court Hill, Tickenham: plan of the excavation showing the main features of the cairn.

*Phase 1* consisted of a cairn, 6 m. in diameter, surviving to its original height of 0.30 m. The cairn was composed of large blocks of conglomerate (which outcrops 50 m. to the north) and of large and small blocks of both freshly quarried and weathered limestone. Demarcating the edge of the cairn and lying at a slope actually on its margin was a ring of blocks of varying sizes (wall 1 on figs. 2 and 3 and pl. I and II).

*Phase 2* comprised a drystone wall (wall 2 on figs. 2 and 3 and pl. I and II), two courses in height for most of its circuit, laid horizontally on the old ground surface at a distance of 0.75 m. from the inner wall: the space between the two walls was then filled up with stones, mostly of small size. There is a possible entrance 2 m in width on the north side.

It is quite possible to reverse the sequence of construction and to interpret the phase 2 wall as a primary freestanding feature demarcating an area for burial and ritual and for the eventual construction of the cairn.

#### *The Burials* (Pls. III and IV)

There were two successive burials. The primary burial consisted of the inhumation of a young man aged 20 to 30 years and about 1.65 m. in height. The body was tightly crouched

## COURT HILL

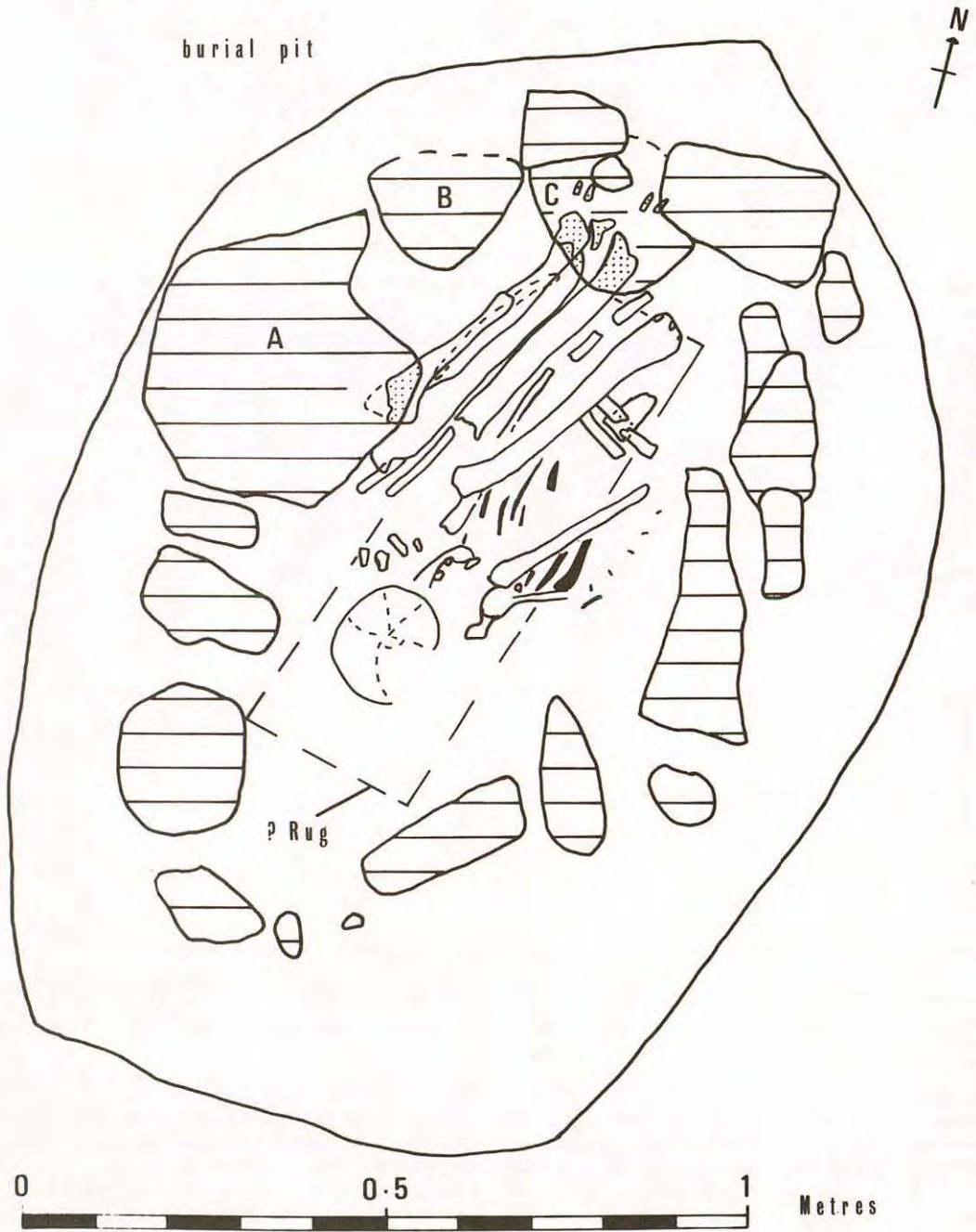


Fig. 4. Court Hill, Tickenham: plan of the burial pit.

and lay in a roughly boat-shaped pit dug 0.40 m. into the subsoil. The body lay over a clearly defined rectangular area of dark soil, 0.80 m. x 0.25 m. x 0.03 m., which may represent the remains of a rug. There is evidence that this young man died a violent death. He may, indeed, have bled to death from the near or complete severing of his left arm, which may have been attached by skin at the time of the burial since the upper and lower arm were positioned in correct anatomical relationship.

This burial was then disturbed by the secondary cremation of a teenage child. This disturbance must account for the damaged and incomplete condition of the skeleton. The cremation was found dispersed throughout the fill of the central pit: the highest fragments of cremated bone lay at a depth of only 15 cm. from the modern surface of the cairn. Fragments of the cremation were found under the stones marked A, B and C on figure 4 and it is clear that either a primary edging to the corpse was disturbed or that the edging is secondary (Pl. IV). Stones A and C also overlay the skeleton and it seems most likely, in view of the fact that the size of stone A precludes any earlier arrangement which would avoid its overlying the burial, that the stone edging is a secondary feature. Confirmation of this would seem to be given by the fact that the stones lay not on the floor of the pit, but on a thin layer of earth.

### *The Cairn Slip*

A narrow band of cairn slip surrounded the cairn on all sides (fig. 2). The band was broadest, as one might expect, on the downhill (southern) side of the cairn. The presence of a Roman pot base under the cairn slip in the S.W. quadrant suggests that the slip may result from attempts at agriculture in Roman times.

*The Radiocarbon Dates.* Two samples were submitted to Teledyne Isotopes of New Jersey for radiocarbon analysis. The first sample consisted of bones of the skeleton's right leg and miscellaneous long bone and skull fragments. The sample's weight was 450 g. The date obtained was:

Sample Number	$-\delta C^{14}$	Age	Date
I-5735	339 $\pm$ 9	3325 $\pm$ 100 B.P.	1375 $\pm$ 100 b.c.

Almost the whole of the cremation was submitted. The sample weight was 390 g. The date obtained was:

I-5734	282 $\pm$ 12	2665 $\pm$ 130 B.P.	715 $\pm$ 130 b.c.
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### The Human Skeleton and the Cremation

by B. WESTLEY, B.SC., F.Z.S.

The skeleton is ill-preserved and disintegrating, with many parts missing, e.g. almost the whole of the pelvis, the facial region and most of the digits.

*The skull* had been broken up in antiquity into several parts, and the broken edges are so eroded that the pieces cannot be joined except for a large occipital portion and some pieces of the frontal bone. Because of this erosion, most of the sutures have vanished, but where visible, they are only just fused. Therefore the subject is newly adult, say between 20 and 30 years old.

Fragments of the two temporal bones are present, including the two mastoid processes. These are thick and stubby, indicating strong neck musculature, which would point to the subject being of male sex. The bones of the vault seem very thick, which would support this conclusion.

The interior of the vault of the skull is much pitted, so that hardly any of the meningeal sutures is visible. This may be the 'osteoporosis' mentioned by Brothwell,<sup>5</sup> an abnormally porous condition of the skull area, due to demineralisation of the bone from malnutrition or wasting disease. The fact that the right humerus is deficient (see below) may confirm this, though it is also possible that postmortem decay is responsible for the skull condition.

Of the mandible, only the left and right proximal parts are present. The first bears two molars ( $M_2$  and  $M_3$ ) and the second, the same molars on the opposite side, then a gap, where  $M_1$  has been lost in life, and then a premolar. The teeth are much worn though there is no sign of decay. This type of hard wear is said to occur among people who use sandstone querns, the loose bits of sandstone that finds their way into the bread accounting for the abnormal tooth wear. The first molar, left, is also present but loose, and so is the remains of a premolar.

*The axial skeleton.* The following parts are present:

<i>Scapula</i>	Two fragments, small
<i>Clavicle</i>	One fragment
<i>Ribs</i>	About 30 fragments, none more than 4-5 cm long. This represents about one third of the total human rib material.
<i>Vertebrae</i>	Many fragments, but the total, as above, seems much below the full amount. Only the axis is complete.
<i>Pelvis</i>	A few very small fragments, useless for determining sex.

*The right arm.* The humerus, is abnormally thin, in a uniform way that would seem to show a pathological condition rather than postmortem erosion. The radius and ulna are of a normal size. None of the bones is complete in length and so not measurable.

*The left arm.* The humerus has been chopped into two with a blow just above the elbow, like the work of a butcher. If this was done in life, death must have occurred soon after, as there is no regrowth of bone tissue but a clean-cut edge. The upper part of the humerus is broken into two but can be fitted together. There are shaft fragments of the radius and ulna.

*The right leg.* There is a fragment of the femur shaft, about 32 cm long. The tibia is the only bone showing its complete length, and measures 34.5 cm. It is possible to work out the height of the subject, using the regression equations given by Brothwell.<sup>5</sup> This gives us an individual with a height of 165 cm, or barely 5' 6" if a male, as is to be suspected from the skull. For a female, the estimated height would be c. 162 cm.

*The left leg.* The femur is almost complete but not sufficiently so for measurement of the length. Likewise the tibia is present, of normal appearance, and a fragment of the fibula, about 20 cm. of the shaft. The astragalus and calcaneum are also present in this limb.

*The digits.* Although the human frame bears 56 phalanges that form the 20 digits, there are present only 15 fragmentary phalanges, much eroded and so difficult to sort into their correct positions. Most of them seem to belong to the foot. There are also 8 fragments of metatarsals and metacarpals. The entire human skeleton contains 20 such bones.

*Conclusions.* The subject is probably a man, aged about 20-30 years, of a height of 165 cm. (5' 6"), with much worn teeth and evidence of a possible wasting disease in the upper right arm and cranial vault. His left arm was severed by a blow above the elbow, at or after death.

*The cremated bones.* The burnt remains are small in quantity, well-consumed, and it is not possible to identify most of the fragments though it is apparent that they are human remains. There is a handful of long-bone fragments, likewise skull fragments of which some show very open sutures that indicate a young person, possibly a teenage child, though the distortions of fire make age estimates unreliable. There are three tooth-roots. The bodies of the teeth are usually destroyed in the fire. Also present are one or two animal fragments, representing the following:

<i>Sheep</i>	Metapodial fragments.
<i>Pig</i>	Canine tooth of a young pig.
<i>Bird</i>	5 fragments, possibly domestic fowl.

### The Buried Soil and the Environment

No pre-cairn soil profile was preserved under the cairn (fig. 3) and it is clear that it has been removed either through human agency, before the construction of the cairn or, as Dr. Evans suggests below, subsequently through the agency of earthworms. Part of soil sample II contained a live earthworm.

The similarity in snail fauna between the grave-pit filling and the buried soil makes it clear that turf was stripped from the locality to serve as a covering for the corpse in the burial pit. Although disturbed by the secondary burial, this turf layer has clearly been replaced in its original position (soil sample IV, layer 9b).

It is clear from the land snail analysis that the local environment was a shaded one with woodland and scrub, such as existed close to the site at the time of excavation. There are, however, problems of interpretation (below p. 39): it is possible that the cairn became incorporated in an arable area. The scatter of Iron Age and Roman pottery both on and around it might result from the practice of manuring fields.

The molluscan analysis produces no evidence to support the possibility of two phases of cairn construction widely separated in time.

### Court Hill Cairn: Land Snails

by

J. G. EVANS AND HILARY JONES

Six soil samples and two lots of hand-picked shells were analysed as follows:

Sample no.	Provenance	Layer no.	Weight (kg.)
I	Cairn material	2c	2.0
IV	Grave-pit filling	9b	2.0
VI	Burial horizon—soil from among bones	9c	2.0
V	? Rug cast beneath burial	11	0.25
III	Buried soil beneath conglomerate block (? first phase cairn)	6a	2.0
II	Buried soil beneath wall (? second phase cairn)	6	2.0
Hand-picked shells			
I'	Cairn material	2c	
IV'	Grave-pit filling	9a, 9b, 9c	

The results of analysis (table I) have been presented as histograms (fig. 5), each species or group being expressed as a percentage of the total fauna (excluding *Cecilioides acicula* which is a burrowing species whose examples are probably modern). In the table the two faunas from the buried soil (II and III) have been amalgamated for they were more or less identical. In the histograms the hand-picked shells from the soil samples (II and III) have also been amalgamated for the same reasons; and the shells from the cairn material (I and I') have been treated likewise.

sample	Buried soil	Cairn material		Grave			
	II & III	I'	I	IV'	IV	VI	V
<i>Pomatias elegans</i> (Müller)	27	528	21	147	28	74	14
<i>Acicula fusca</i> (Montagu)	3	4	—	6	3	3	+
<i>Carychium tridentatum</i> (Risso)	7	4	—	3	6	30	8
<i>Cochlicopa lubrica</i> (Müller)	4	7	—	3	2	5	—
<i>Vertigo pygmaea</i> (Draparnaud)	1	—	—	—	—	3	—
<i>Pupilla muscorum</i> (Linné)	—	1	—	—	2	14	—
<i>Lauria cylindracea</i> (da Costa)	—	1	—	—	3	23	1
<i>Acanthinula aculeata</i> (Müller)	+	3	—	—	2	—	—
<i>Vallonia excentrica</i> Sterki	15	3	—	4	51	56	1
<i>Marpessa laminata</i> (Montagu)	+	1	—	—	1	—	—
<i>Clausilia bidentata</i> (Ström)	+	3	—	2	2	3	1
<i>Ceciloides acicula</i> (Müller)	64	2	—	—	19	8	1
<i>Helicigona lapicida</i> (Linné)	2	13	1	1	—	+	+
<i>Helix</i> ( <i>Cepaea</i> ) <i>nemoralis</i> Linné	4	320	8	74	1	4	—
<i>Hygromia striolata</i> (C. Pfeiffer)	18	25	1	8	61	14	3
<i>Hygromia hispida</i> (Linné)	1	1	1	—	—	—	1
<i>Helicella itala</i> (Linné)	—	5	2	10	9	18	—
<i>Discus rotundatus</i> (Müller)	126	233	24	69	124	282	47
<i>Vitrea contracta</i> (Westerlund)	25	115	3	64	60	396	26
<i>Oxychilus cellarius</i> (Müller)	26	168	11	208	90	299	27
<i>Retinella radiatula</i> (Alder)	—	+	—	1	1	—	1
<i>Retinella pura</i> (Alder)	1	3	—	—	4	6	—
<i>Retinella nitidula</i> (Draparnaud)	7	16	1	5	9	8	1
<i>Vitrina pellucida</i> (Müller)	—	1	—	—	—	2	—
<i>Agriolimax</i> sp.	—	—	—	—	—	—	1

Table I. Court Hill Cairn: land snails

In a general way, all the assemblages are similar: The Zonitidae (predominantly *Oxychilus cellarius* and *Vitrea contracta*), *Discus rotundatus* and *Pomatias elegans* comprise over 70% of the fauna; *Helix nemoralis* is well represented in the two hand-picked samples (I' and IV'), no doubt due to its large size; and in only two instances do any of the other species exceed 5%. The predominant element is one that is usually described as 'woodland', and indicative of a shaded environment<sup>6</sup>. Open-country species—*Vallonia* spp., *Pupilla*, *Vertigo pygmaea* and *Helicella itala*—are rare, and in some samples virtually absent.

At the same time, the fauna is curiously restricted in the number of species. One would have expected, for instance, *Retinella nitidula*, *Carychium*, *Clausilia*, *Cochlicopa* and *Hygromia hispida* to have been better represented had the environment been one of woodland or scrub. The low numbers of *Carychium* is perhaps a function of local dryness, but the same cannot be said of *Clausilia* and *Helicigona*; the complete absence of *Vallonia costata* also needs explaining for this species can live in a variety of habitats, is tolerant of dryness, and is rarely totally absent from archaeological sites particularly when, as here, other open-country species are present.

Faunas in which a few species are extremely abundant and the majority rare are generally a reflection of a specialised environment, one which has only a limited number of niches.<sup>7</sup> Cultivated land is an example of such an environment, heavily grazed chalk or limestone grassland another. In this case extreme openness can be discounted in view of the sparseness of light-demanding species. Dryness is probably one factor, for limestone, unlike chalk, has poor water-retaining powers. Another factor is possibly the large quantity of limestone rubble on the site after the cairn was constructed. *Oxychilus cellarius* is particularly fond of stone dumps today, and its abundance at Court Hill is probably to some extent a reflection of this aspect of the habitat.

Other factors which may be operating are the age of the habitat and the environment of the surrounding area. (By age is meant the length of time for which the habitat has been in existence, not its archaeological age). It may take many years for a habitat to receive its full quota of snails, the length of time being dependent on the size of the habitat and the number and distance of refugia in the area from which colonising species can disperse. Clearly an isolated cairn such as Court Hill, if surrounded by farmland, would have been colonised less rapidly than a linear earthwork which traverses several types of habitat, and along which dispersal may rapidly take place. The size of a habitat is also important. Of two habitats identical in all but size, the smaller may contain a poorer fauna than the larger. All animal populations have a minimum size below which they are not viable and cease to exist; a habitat too small to support a population of this minimum size does not support the species at all. On the other hand, species which can occur in such habitats may well do so in unusual profusion, due to the absence of some of their normal associates with which they may compete for food, shelter and *lebensraum*.

In fig. 5 the Court Hill faunas have been compared with two others from archaeological sites on limestone in Somerset—South Cadbury on Inferior Oolite, and Butcombe on Carboniferous Limestone.<sup>8</sup> The fauna from both is similar to that from Court Hill. Zonitidae are abundant and at South Cadbury, with *Discus rotundatus*, predominate; *Vitrea contracta* and *Oxychilus cellarius* are again the dominant elements. Open-country species are rare, though at South Cadbury this is not true for the whole site; in places the fauna



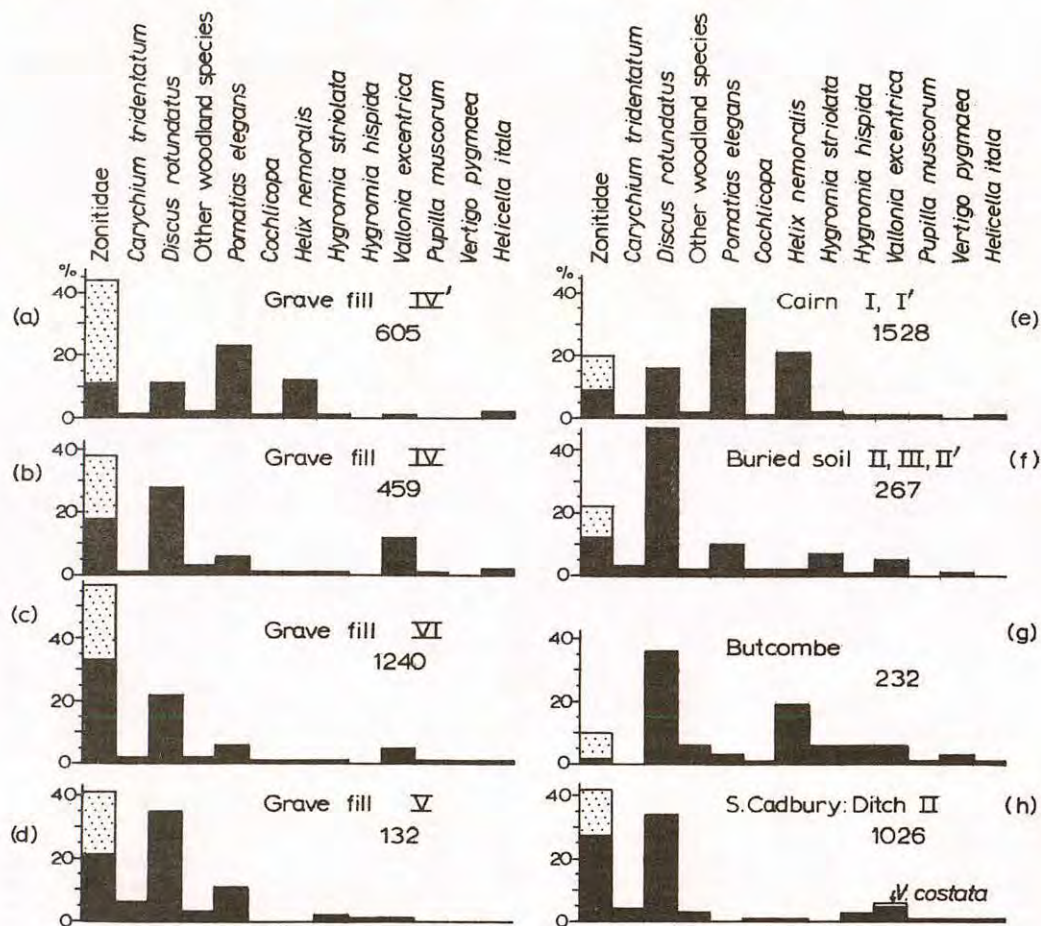


Fig. 5. Court Hill, Tickenham: histograms showing results of the analysis of the land snails with comparative data from Butcombe and South Cadbury.

is dominated by *Vallonia* spp. and *Helicella itala*. That the latter can occur in profusion on these limestone sites encourages the view that their rarity or absence in other faunas is due to local habitat factors and not to climate or some other widespread environmental control, for it must be made clear that in contrast to the Chalk there is little information about subfossil faunas from limestone sites, and therefore no standard for comparison.

*The buried soil (samples II, III):* The fauna is dominated by *Discus rotundatus*, with the Zonitidae as a subordinate element; open-country species, largely *Vallonia excentrica*, amount to 6%. The absence of a strong light-demanding element indicates a shaded environment. This is an unusual feature, for on prehistoric sites, the fauna at the surface of a buried soil is almost invariably of open-country type. Clearance of woodland may have taken place here, but if so, was quickly followed by the construction of the cairn, allowing no time for the invasion of the site by an open-country fauna. Alternatively, the surface of the buried soil and its contained shells may have been deliberately stripped off before the cairn was built. This might account too for the extreme thinness of the soil although in view of the small amount of overlying cairn material, its removal by earthworm action, as described by Atkinson at Stonehenge,<sup>9</sup> is a more likely cause of this feature.

*Grave pit (samples IV, V, VI and IV'):* The fauna differs little from that in the buried soil. Zonitidae are more abundant which may be associated with the carnivorous feeding habits of snails of this family. However, the same feature is noticeable in the ditch fauna from South Cadbury and it is felt more likely that the abundance of Zonitidae at Court Hill is a function of the stony nature of the site rather than of any special attraction to the rotting corpse.

It is noticeable that the numbers of *Vallonia excentrica* increase towards the top of the grave fill—from an initial 1% to 5% and finally 12%—but the significance of this, if any, is unclear.

*Cairn material (samples I and I'):* It is possible that shells were being washed down through the cairn from the

time the monument was built, up to the present day, for the shells in the assemblage were in various states of preservation. Nevertheless, the fauna is similar to those from other levels, and open-country species are virtually absent, so that contamination is not felt to be serious. Today the site is under grass. But formerly the cairn would appear to have been overgrown with dank, and perhaps scrubby vegetation, and perhaps surrounded by arable land—for snails, a refuge of plenty in a hostile waste.

#### THE FINDS

None of the artefactual finds were certainly contemporary with either of the burials. It is possible that the flintwork and the bronze chisel were contemporary with the primary and secondary burials respectively, but such an association is not proven. It is certain that the pottery finds post-date both burials.

All finds have been deposited in the City Museum, Bristol.

#### *The Bronze Chisel (fig. 6)*

The chisel was found at the base of the turf on top of the cairn in the north-east quadrant. The chisel lacks precise parallels but it would seem to date to the post-Wilburton phase of the Late Bronze Age or to the earliest Iron Age. The tang exhibits minute parallel scratch marks at right angles to its longitudinal axis resulting from final trimming of the casting.

I am indebted to David Coombs and D. Gareth Davies for their comments on the chisel (fig. 6); it has also been examined (without result) for traces of microwear by Eleanor Muers.

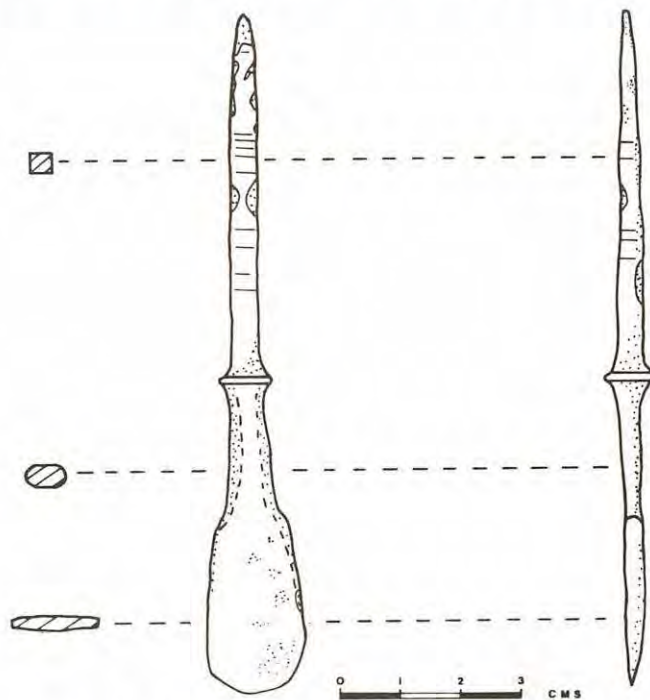


Fig. 6. Late Bronze/earliest Iron Age bronze chisel.

#### *The Pottery*

In all, 66 sherds of pottery were found in, on or around the edges of the cairn. With three exceptions the maximum depth in the cairn (from the turf) of any find was 20 cm. It is plain from the radiocarbon dates that the pottery in the cairn is derived. It must have reached its present position through the action of earth-worms or of burrowing animals. One exception is a Roman pot base (fig. 7b) found at a depth of 30 cm. below the cairn slip against the face of the outer wall in the S.W. quadrant. It is difficult to believe that a sherd of this size is not in an undisturbed position and the potbase may, therefore, be regarded as evidence for disturbance of

the cairn in Roman times for agricultural purposes. I am most grateful to Kevin T. Greene for his help with the following description of the pottery and for drawing fig. 7b-d.

One Iron Age body sherd came from the junction of the base of the cairn and the top of the grave pit at a depth of 0.30 m. where it must be regarded as intrusive.

The upper fill of the grave pit produced one small body sherd. It is black surfaced with an orange interior; it appears to have been refired. The filler is of quartz and limestone grits. The fabric suggests a date in the range Beaker to late Iron Age and therefore it is most likely either residual or intrusive.

*The Iron Age Sherds (fig. 7c)*

Twenty-four sherds are represented. All derive from hand-made pots and have a corky fabric with some quartz filler: colours range from buff to dark grey. One sherd has a thickness of 10 mm. and must derive from a large coarse vessel. The remaining sherds are thin-walled (as fig. 7c). Corrugations appear to be represented on two very small abraded sherds. Sherds from the rim of only one pot are present (fig. 7c) and derive from a pot of later Iron Age type. An almost exact parallel (unpublished) comes from the nearby hillfort of Cadbury, above Tickenham: it has a dark brown corky fabric and was a surface find by A. Selley (Taunton Museum A.633). Excavations by St. George Gray at Cadbury produced late Iron Age pottery.<sup>10</sup>

*The Samian Sherd*

One abraded fragment of f. 37, or just possibly f. 30, was found. It is of Central Gaulish fabric and bears a small ovolo. The suggested date is early second century A.D.

*The Coarse Roman Sherds (fig. 7, a and b)*

With the exception of the pot base (fig. 7b), all the Roman sherds possess a sandy fabric. Types present include a cooking pot in grey ware (fig. 7a), black burnished ware (both plain and with lattice decoration) and a white fabric with a filler of quartz and micaceous sand. The pot base is made from a coarse primary clay: it would appear to be the base of a cooking pot.

The grey ware cooking pot is most probably of first or second century date with the most likely period between A.D. 70-150. The white fabric may be first or second century A.D.

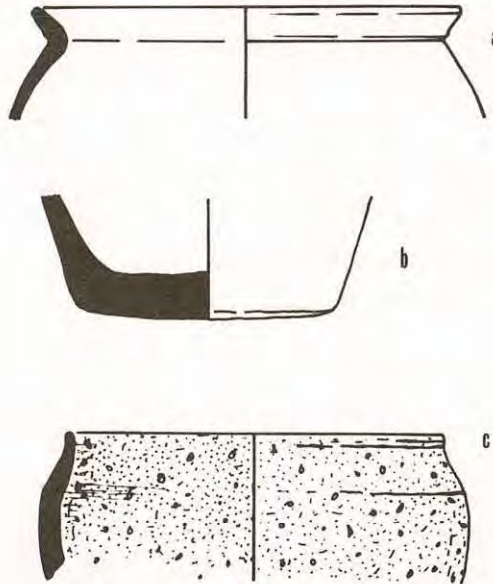


Fig. 7. Roman (a and b) and Iron Age pottery (c).

*Flint (fig. 8)*

A number of worked flints were found superficially on the cairn or around its limits in the south-east quadrant. Only one worked flint, a scraper (fig. 8a), was found in the cairn in this quadrant at a depth of about 7 cm. from the base of the modern turf. The flints may be detailed thus (lettered as on fig. 8): a. Broken fragment of end-and-side scraper, found about 7 cm. deep in cairn. Original scraping angle 70°: scraping angle (where damaged) 85°. b. Disc scraper. Original scraping angle 58°. Damaged angle 90°. This scraper has evidence of utilisation around almost 100% of its circumference, including both the striking platform and the broken area where part of the striking platform has been lost. It seems likely that the loss of

this part of the striking platform occurred as a result of use. Both scrapers exhibit extensive damage by chipping and have clearly been used on hard material: the pressure exhibited seems to have been sufficiently great to have snapped the scraper drawn as fig. 8a. The absence of facets on the striking platform of fig. 8b suggests that the flake from which it was made was not struck from a discoidal core. c. Serrated edge flake. d. Fragment of narrow flake with neatly trimmed edge. Two small waste flakes were also found (not illustrated).

The flint objects described above are made of translucent grey flint now patinated white: this material is quite different from natural fragments of flint which occur in the gravel on which the cairn lies. These fragments are normally less than 5 cm. in maximum dimension, are coloured variously off-white through to cream and yellowish-brown and have patches of black staining; they are also rolled. The source of the flint from which the objects are made is not certain.

#### Recent Finds

A very considerable amount of recent material was discovered during the removal of topsoil on the surface of the cairn. The situation of the cairn commands wide views and may have been a *venue* for picnics. These finds range in date from the 18th to the 20th century. They comprise, *inter alia*, pottery, a clay pipe fragment and a gun flint. All are preserved in Bristol Museum, where a full list has also been deposited. I am indebted to M. Ponsford, of the City Museum, Bristol, for reporting on these finds.

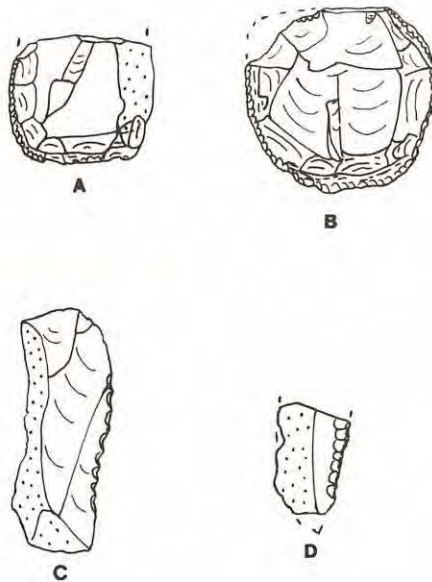


Fig. 8. Flints.

#### SIGNIFICANCE

The presence of Iron Age pottery in the cairn led to the suggestion, during excavation, that the cairn might be of Iron Age date. This suggestion seemed strengthened by the geographical proximity of the Kings Weston Hill barrows which have previously been considered to be of Iron Age date.<sup>11</sup>

These four barrows were of comparable size to the Court Hill cairn: heights ranged from 0.35 m. to 0.475 m. and diameters ranged from 6 m. to 11.35 m. (dimensions after Tratman). Restudy of the finds in the University of Bristol Spelaeological Society Museum has revealed that the pottery fragments (from Tratman's barrow 1) described by L. V. Grinsell as 'Iron Age A' are, in fact, fragments of a collared urn of Bronze Age date and sherds of the collar are represented. Likewise, fragments of a pot from Tratman's barrow 3, imaginatively restored to a biconical shape<sup>12</sup> on the basis of Early Iron Age parallels, seems rather to be derived from a collared urn. Finds from this group of cairns seem to have a minimum time range of Early Bronze Age to Saxon and it seems clear that the thinness of the cairns has resulted in contamination and perhaps disturbance. In the absence of any structural grounds for

considering the Kings Weston Hill barrows to be of Iron Age date, we must conclude that their origin is Early Bronze Age.

It is likely also that the same explanation applies to the round barrow Butcombe 2, at ST 5165 6273, which the excavator believed to be of Early Iron Age date<sup>13</sup>. The Iron Age finds are sealed by no more than 30 cm. of barrow mound and subsequent contamination seems perfectly possible. This is now more likely in view of the increasing evidence for Iron Age occupation of the area.<sup>14</sup>

In this context we may refer to barrows on Wooley Down, Berkshire, which Harding<sup>15</sup> suggests may be of Iron Age date. The only securely stratified material consists of two sherds of 'red gritty ware' variously dated to final Bronze Age or earliest Iron Age in the original report.<sup>16</sup> Two of the Wooley Down barrows produced Beaker sherds and all three sites were very disturbed.

#### CONCLUSION

The Court Hill cairn was built in two phases, not widely separated in time. The primary burial consisted of a young man in poor health who may have died a violent death. Radiocarbon analysis of his bones produced a date of 1375 ± 100 b.c. (I-5735). At the time of construction of the cairn a shaded environment of woodland or shrub existed.

Towards the end of the late Bronze Age, the primary burial was disturbed by a secondary burial pit, dug to receive the cremation of a teenage child. The primary crouched burial was edged with stones at this time. The cremation was dispersed in the fill of the burial pit. A radiocarbon estimate of 715 ± 130 b.c. (I-5734) has been obtained from the cremation.

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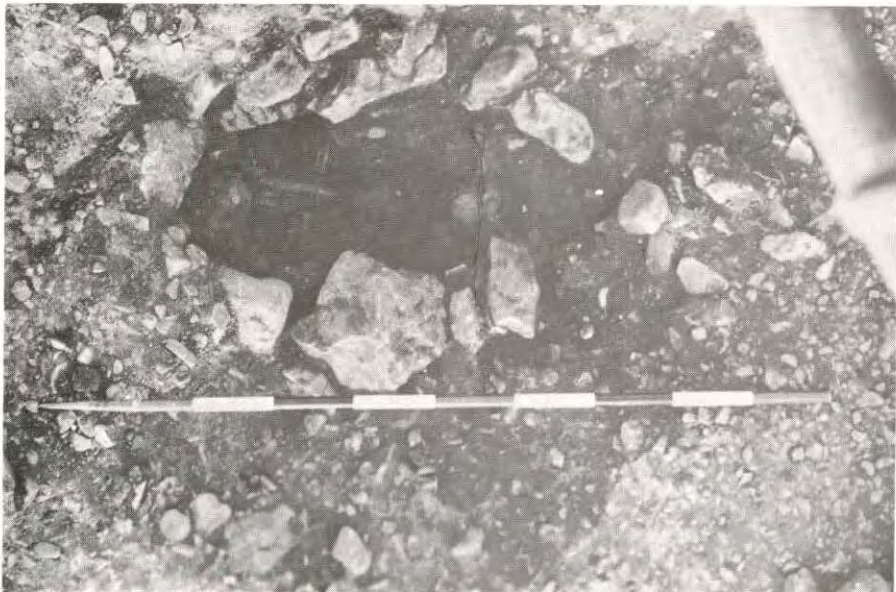
I S.E. Quadrant from the S.E. at an early stage of the excavation. The Outer Kerb, Wall 2, is partially visible. Scale in 0.20 m. divisions.



II Wall 2 in N.E. Quadrant. Scale in 0.20 m. divisions.



III The primary crouched inhumation. Scale in 0.50 m. divisions.



IV Secondary stone edging around the partially exposed primary burial. Scale in 0.20 m. divisions.